

Conference Group for Central European History

Newsletter

Spring 1997

Dear Colleagues,

Here for the first time is the Newsletter in its new format, integrated into our journal, *Central European History*. (The Newsletter is also available on the World Wide Web, at the following address: <http://www.olemiss.edu/~hsgispn/cgceh>.) Hitherto one could belong to the Conference Group without subscribing to *CEH* for the annual sum of \$8.00. This is no longer possible. Starting in January of 1997, membership in the Conference Group is a function of subscribing to the journal, which costs \$38.00 per year. Subscription information is provided on the inside front cover of *CEH*. I hope that if you do not already have an individual subscription you will consider getting one, since the small percentage of the annual subscription cost that is returned to the coffers of the Conference Group helps fund our various professional activities, subsidies, as well as the *Bierabend*.

Kees Gispn

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Business Meeting, New York, New York 4 January 1997

Introductory remarks. Bill Hagen opened the meeting with an expression of deep gratitude to Roger Chickering, who served both tirelessly and expertly as the Conference Group's Executive Secretary and Treasurer for the past eight years. As a token of the Conference Group's appreciation, Chickering received a leather-bound copy of an early edition of Heinrich

CGCEH Budget Summary, 1996

Balance Forward, 7 January 1996	\$4,512.80
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Income

Dues independently collected	16.00	
AHA Interest*	425.00	
Hum Press: Royalties	5050.00	
Total Income		5,491.00

Expenses

Convention Expenses, 1996	100.00	
Book Prize, 1995	500.00	
Friends of GH1	200.00	
NCC Dues	300.00	
Spring Newsletter	671.64	
Fall Newsletter*	675.00	
Transatlantic Seminar	1,000.00	
Subsidy to CEH	1,500.00	
Total expenses		4,946.64

Net Income	544.36
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Balance Forward, 4 January 1997	5,057.16
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* = anticipated

Friedjung's *Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland 1859–1866*. Hagen next introduced Kees Gispén, Chickering's successor for the next four years. The minutes of last year's business meeting were approved.

Report of the Executive Secretary and Treasurer. Roger Chickering reported on the Conference Group's finances. He presented the above overview.

Noting the healthy state of the Conference Group's finances, Chickering moved that some of the surplus funds be invested: \$1,000.00 to the CGCEH's account with the AHA's investment pool, and \$1,000.00 to a Certificate of Deposit that the Conference Group holds in its own name. Having been seconded and following brief discussion, the motion was approved with no opposing votes.

Report of the Editor of Central European History. Ken Barkin reported on the state of *Central European History*. In 1996, five issues were published, vols. 28:2, 28:3, 28:4 (imprint 1995), and 29:1 and 29:2 (imprint 1996). Volume 29:3 was at the publisher's at reporting time, and volume 29:4 will go to the publisher by 1 February 1997. Progress toward catching up with the present is continuing and nearly complete. At 1,010, the number

CEH Publishing Activity for 1996

Volume #	Articles	Review Articles	Book Reviews	Other
28:2	4		16	
28:3	3		14	1
28:4	4	1	15	1
29:1	3	2	14	
29:2	3	1	17	
Total 1996	17	4	76	2
At Publisher's	3	2	21	
In Progress	2	2	15	

Articles accepted : 5

Articles to be revised : 3

Articles at referees : 3

Articles rejected : 21

Book reviews on hand : 36

Book reviews outstanding : 108

Book reviews uncollectable : 17

of subscriptions is about the same as last year. Approximately half of all subscriptions are with institutions. Two special issues of *CEH* are in the works: one on "Women and Weimar" and the other on "Modernity and the Holocaust." A brief statistical summary of *CEH* publishing in 1996 is listed above.

Barkin concluded by noting that *CEH* working conditions improved significantly when he and Assistant Editor Ursula Marcum were able during the past year to move their offices to a new and spacious building.

Report of the 1996 Prize Committee. The next item of business was the report of the 1996 prize committee, which consisted of Volker Berghahn, Kathleen Canning, and Hanna Schissler. The committee was charged with selecting the best book published during 1994–95. Canning, the committee's chair, announced that this year's split book prize went to David Blackburn and Heide Fehrenbach. She read the following statement.

"This year's prize is awarded to two outstanding books. First (in alphabetical order) is David Blackburn's *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Nineteenth-Century German Village*, published by Alfred Knopf in 1994. Through his writings during the past twenty years, David Blackburn has had a far-reaching influence on historical interpretation of nineteenth-century German history. In his persuasive challenges to the so-called Bielefeld school nearly twenty years ago, he urged us to focus on the peripheries of the German Empire and argued for a less monolinear understanding of

German history. Finally, he pointed emphatically and convincingly to the role of religion and denomination in the social mobilizations and fragmentations of the Kaiserreich.

It is against this background that Blackbourn's study of popular religiosity and the reactions it provoked in Marpingen must be viewed. This study is an exemplary analysis in the tradition of Blackbournian grassroots history which examines popular piety and the persistent power of local Catholicism in the small town of Marpingen, located on the western periphery of the German Empire. This book is based on meticulous archival research, including many previously unknown sources, and their careful and creative interpretation.

David Blackbourn's study is also pioneering in terms of its methodology. A historian of great subtlety and sophistication, Blackbourn never quite bought into the dichotomy between a "history from above" and a "history from below." He always appreciated that the two tended to converge or meld and that the real challenge was to capture it analytically. *Marpingen* would have been an excellent book if it had done no more than to retrieve and analyze the story of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in 1876 and their rich and complex meanings for local culture and politics. What makes this book truly outstanding is the way in which it connects these events to the world beyond, to larger processes of socio-economic and political change, to the hierarchies of church and state, and to the power of popular religion. The result is something like a "total history" that offers a sensitive and finely drawn picture of German society, of local cultures and politics and their national meanings, of the unusual interstices between village and nation, popular images and punitive state policies during the Kulturkampf and beyond.

David Blackbourn's *Marpingen* shares this year's prize with the outstanding first book by Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity after Hitler*, published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1995. Fehrenbach's highly inventive study has already influenced the way postwar German culture and society are being analyzed. Innovative and imaginative both in terms of its content and its methodology, Fehrenbach approaches feature films as a crucial source through which the reconstruction of civil society in postwar West Germany can be read. Fehrenbach makes clear that cinema had a vital role in this process, which required that the social and cultural void left by Nazi rule be filled and that the devastation of war and genocide and the trauma of national defeat be overcome. In this sense her book offers a new kind of cultural history that avoids being esoteric, indeed that locates cultural production at the heart of political and social change.

Methodologically sophisticated, Fehrenbach's book is based on a wide

range of sources, which she reads with great skill, rendering cinema a complex site of conflict between German visions of a revived *Kulturfilm* and the often unwelcome influence of Hollywood; between and among authorities of the West German state, the churches, and the American occupiers, drawing in at the same time the generational revolt of young filmmakers and the viewers of German cinema, of film as an industry, and where possible, of its audience as historical agents.

Informed by and attentive to the interdisciplinary arenas of cultural studies and film studies, Fehrenbach's reading of selected feature films of the 1950s is sensitive and nuanced. Indeed, her analysis of the ways in which social and gender identities are shaped through film are among the most convincing and subtle aspects of her book. In the film, *Die Sünderin*, for example, the independent woman of the postwar period became domesticated again, while the *Heimatfilme*, by contrast, worked in complex ways to suppress unpleasant memories of the Third Reich and to construct a new kind of masculinity corresponding to a new, civil society. In Fehrenbach's bold analysis, gender serves to unlock the alleged provincialism of the fifties in fascinating and convincing ways.

Taking film seriously, reading film skillfully is still something rare among historians. Locating film at the heart of the battle for West German national identity is a bold and ambitious endeavor which extends the boundaries of historical inquiry and analysis, an extraordinary achievement for a first book."

Report of the Nominating Committee. Next on the agenda was the report of the nominating committee, comprising Lilly Gardner Feldman, Erik Midelfort, and Charles Maier. Since none of the committee members was present, Bill Hagen made the following requests: 1) that Gerald Feldman and Konrad Jarausch be reappointed to their positions as the Conference Group's liaisons to the Friends of the German Historical Institute; 2) that the Conference Group's executive board be empowered to select and appoint a new Vice-President elect (from east of the Mississippi), since the nominating committee did not manage to complete its deliberations in time; 3) that the executive board be authorized to fix a problem with the rotation of at-large members onto and off the executive board, which first arose when the AHA moved its annual meeting from December to January. The staggered three-year rotation is to be restored by abbreviating or lengthening terms of service for one or two years as needed. In the form of a motion, these request were approved without dissenting votes.

Report of the Archives Committee. The archives committee did not present a formal report, owing to the resignation of committee chair Richard Breitman, when he became department chair, and the resignation of

Christopher Browning. Gerhard Weinberg, the committee's third member, was not present. The fourth member, Carole Fink, was present. She mentioned that the first order of business, unresolved since last year, was reconstitution of a functioning committee. At report time, this work was still in progress.

Report of Friends of the German Historical Institute. Geoffrey Giles spoke in his capacity as President of the Friends of the German Historical Institute in Washington. An effort is underway to make Friends into a tax-exempt organization. Giles then read the following announcement:

In order to recognize young scholars, the Friends of the German Historical Institute are pleased to announce a competition for the best doctoral dissertations in German history, German-American relations, or the history of Germans in North America. The two winners will be given the opportunity to present their research at the Annual Symposium of the Friends in November 1997 at the German Historical Institute. Their travel expenses will be covered and, in addition, there will be a modest cash prize.

Application is by nomination by the supervisor of the dissertation only. In order to qualify, the candidate must have completed the doctoral dissertation in the two years preceding 31 December 1996 at a North American university. The supervisor's recommendation, along with a 1–3-page abstract of the dissertation, should be submitted by 30 January 1997 to:

Professor Vernon Lidtke
Chair, Friends of the GHS Prize Committee
Department of History
The Johns Hopkins University
3400 N. Charles Str.
Baltimore, MD 21218

Finalists will be invited to send copies of their complete dissertation to the committee in March 1997, and it is expected that the winners will be announced in August 1997.

Giles called on the audience to submit nominations to Professor Lidtke. He also asked for continued financial support by the Conference Group to the Friends of the German Historical Institute for the next five years, in the amount of \$200 per year. In the form of a motion, this last request was approved without opposition. Finally, Giles announced plans for a symposium to be held at the University of Florida, Gainesville in April 1998. The symposium plans to bring together ten outstanding younger scholars from North America with ten such scholars from Germany. Giles asked the audience to submit nominations to him.

Report from the Society for Habsburg and Austrian History. On behalf of the SHAH, Lawrence Sondhaus reported: "At its annual meeting in New York yesterday (3 January), the executive committee of the Society for Habsburg and Austrian History voted to pursue a direct affiliation with the AHA. At present, the SHAH is connected to the AHA only through its affiliations with the CGCEH and AAASS (American Association for the Advance of Slavic Studies). The SHAH intends to continue its present affiliation with the Conference Group. The executive committee also approved the election of Franz Szabo to a five-year term on the committee (1997 through 2001), replacing Ronald Coons, whose term expired at the end of 1996."

Report from the German Historical Institute. Manfred Berg briefly reported on the activities of the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. The thrust of Berg's comments centered on a request for continued financial support from the Conference Group for the **Transatlantic Doctoral Seminars in German History**, sponsored by the GHI, the Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University and the Conference Group. Roger Chickering spoke on behalf of Berg's request for \$1,000 per year for the next three years (1997–1999), which was approved without opposing votes.

Report on the Conference Group's efforts on behalf of the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen. Bill Hagen spoke about an initiative of the Conference Group to counter the threatened closing of the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen. He called on those present to sign a petition urging the German government and the geisteswissenschaftliche Sektion of the Max Planck Society to keep alive the Max Planck Institute for History. Hagen then read the following draft letter.

American Historical Association
111th Annual Meeting
New York City

January 4, 1997

Mr. Jürgen Chrobog
German Ambassador to the United States
4645 Reservoir Road, NW
Washington, DC 20007–1998

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We, the undersigned members of the Conference Group for Central European History, an affiliated organization of the American Historical

Association, and other concerned historians, strongly urge the Max Planck Society not to proceed with the threatened closure of the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen.

The Max Planck Institute for History is an indispensable center in the international network of scholarly exchange. This Institute plays a crucial role in communicating German historical research to students and scholars in American higher education. Its research and scholarly mission is not duplicated by any other European scholarly institution, government agency, or university. The reasons to sustain this research institute have been most persuasively stated by numerous individuals and representatives of scholarly organizations, including the President of the Conference Group for Central European History and the President of the American Historical Association.

We respectfully add our voices to those throughout the world who continue to express their deep concern about this matter.

Pages with signatures attached

cc:

- Head of the geisteswissenschaftliche Sektion, Max Planck Society
- Prof. Dr. Hartmut Lehmann and Prof. Dr. Gerhard Oexle, Max Planck Institute for History

Hagen then turned over the floor to Jonathan Knudsen, who had just returned from Germany and reported briefly on the situation in Göttingen. Following Knudsen's remarks there was some discussion of modifying the draft letter and sending it to additional recipients, but in the end a proposal to accept the letters as drafted was accepted with no dissenting votes.

(During the informal part of the meeting and the *Bierabend* immediately following the business meeting, some fifty signatures were collected. Some fifty additional signatures came in during the remainder of January, and the petition with appended signatures was sent off to its intended destination in early February. Since that time, most readers will undoubtedly have learned that the decision has been made in Germany to keep alive the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen, albeit with some budgetary and staff reductions.)

Report on the condition of NPL. Jonathan Sperber spoke briefly about the financial difficulties of the journal, *NPL (Neue Politische Litteratur)*, urging those present to take out a subscription or recommend that their university libraries do so, to help prevent this valuable publication from having to close. (The annual subscription cost of *NPL* is \$63.00, \$47.00 for

students. Subscriptions can be obtained by writing directly to the publisher: Peter Lang Verlag, Jupiterstr. 15, Ch-3000 Bern 15, Switzerland.)

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Article Prize

In January 1998 the Conference Group will award its biennial prize of \$500 for the best journal article published in 1995–96 (and in the journal, *Central European History*, vols. 27–29). “Central European history” is understood to include all German-speaking countries as well as areas previously included within the Habsburg monarchy. The competition is open to articles in English written by scholars who are permanent residents of North America. Deadline for nominations is 15 September 1997. Nominations for the prize may be submitted by authors, journal editors, or other interested members to members of this year’s prize committee:

David Blackburn	Heide Fehrenbach	Larry Eugene Jones
Minda de Gunzburg	Department of History	(committee chair)
Center for European	Colgate University	Department of History
Studies	Hamilton, NY	Canisius College
Harvard University	13346–1398	Buffalo, NY
Cambridge, MA 02138	hfehrenbach@center.	14208–1098
gmiller@fas.harvard.edu	colgate.edu	jones@canisius.edu

* * *

German Historical Institute, Washington Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History 1997

The German Historical Institute in Washington, the Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University, and the Conference Group for Central European History are pleased to announce the third Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History. This year’s theme is “Germany Divided and United, 1945–1989.” The conference, again supported by the German-American Academic Council, will bring together young scholars from Germany and North America who are nearing completion of their doctoral degrees. We have invited eight scholars from each side of the Atlantic for discussion of their doctoral projects. The discussions will be based on papers submitted in advance of the conference, which will be held from 16–19 April 1997 at the German Historical Institute. We shall cover travel costs and lodging expenses. The conference will focus this time on the postwar period, 1945–1989.

The 1998 Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar will center on topics from the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries. Please look for details in the next Newsletter

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Conference Group for Central European History Miscellaneous Announcements

The members of the Conference Group's 1997 executive board are:	
President	Sybil Milton, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Vice-President	Gerald Soliday, University of Texas, Dallas
Vice-President Elect	R. Po-Chia (Ronnie) Hsia, New York University
Immediate Past President	William Hagen, University of California, Davis
At-Large Member (expires January 1998)	Evan Bukey, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
At-Large Member (expires 1998)	Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt, Munich
At-Large Member (expires 1998)	Diethelm Prowe, Carleton College
Editor of Central European History	Kenneth Barkin, University of California, Riverside
Executive Secretary and Treasurer	Kees Gispén, University of Mississippi

The members of the Conference Group's 1997 nominating committee are:

Kathleen Canning	Omer Bartov	Helmut Walser Smith
Department of History	Department of History	Department of History
University of Michigan	Rutgers University	Vanderbilt University
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1045	New Brunswick,	Nashville, TN 37235
kcanning@umich.edu	NJ 08903	smithhw@ctrvax.
	bartov@rci.rutgers.edu	vanderbilt.edu

The executive board is currently trying to bring the archives committee back to full strength. Its current members are:

Carole Fink	Gerhard Weinberg
Department of History	Department of History
The Ohio State University	University of North Carolina
Columbus, OH 43210	Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3195
fink.24@osu.edu	gweinberg@email.unc.edu

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In early February 1997 Sybil Milton submitted the following proposal for an AHA-Conference Group joint session (the Conference-Group spon-

sored session) to the Program Committee for the American Historical Association's 1998 annual meeting in Seattle.

The Nazi Perpetrators: A Reexamination

Chair: Sybil Milton, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

Presenter 1: Henry Friedlander, Brooklyn College, City University of
New York

“Managers and Supervisors in the Concentration Camps and Killing
Centers”

Presenter 2: Christopher Browning, Pacific Lutheran University

“The German Police and their Local Auxiliaries”

Presenter 3: Jürgen Förster, Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt

“Reconceptualizing the Role of the Wehrmacht”

Comment: Michael R. Marrus, University of Toronto

* * *

Readers who would like to post information of interest to the profession or other members of the Conference Group, please contact the executive secretary, Kees Gispen, at the following address:

Kees Gispen

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601-232-7148

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