Letter from the Editor

This issue marks a number of firsts—or semi-firsts—for *Central European History*, which began publishing in 1968. Over the past half century, *CEH* has adopted and maintained a more or less conventional format for scholarly journals, i.e., it publishes "traditional" peer-reviewed articles and (since 1991) book reviews by single authors, sometimes complemented by special issues focusing on a particular theme. This issue marks a partial break with that tradition. In addition to the usual research articles and probing book reviews, it includes a lengthy Review Forum on a single book—Pieter Judson's magisterial study, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*—as well as a featured review about a recent museum exhibition in Switzerland that looks at Europe during the Renaissance. In so doing, *CEH* follows the lead of other journals, including the *American Historical Review* and *German History*, which have boldly introduced these and other invigorating innovations in recent years.

Readers will also notice other novelties in this issue. These include a series of photographs that appear in color not only online but also in the print version—thanks to generous funding from the Central European History Society (CEHS).* There is also a rare review of a monograph that appeared in a language other than English or German, namely, French. This is worth emphasizing because of a tendency on the part of scholars of Central Europe trained or working in Anglo-American or German academic institutions to neglect or be unaware of important work being done in the field elsewhere in the world, especially when published in other languages. This is largely a result of foreign-language limitations—and thus clearly less true of those whose work focuses on the Habsburg Empire. Whatever the reason, this inspired a recent, noteworthy change in *CEH* policy, which now allows for the submission (after consultation with the Editor) of manuscripts in languages other than English. Those that are accepted will appear in English translation, thanks as well to financial support from the CEHS.

The editors are especially pleased that two of the main "novelties" in this issue have to do with eras, countries, and regions that fall within the scholarly remit of the journal, which is dedicated to the history of German-speaking Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the present, but that usually receive insufficient coverage: the "pre-modern" period, as well as Switzerland and the Habsburg lands. As Alexandra Bettag suggests in her review of **"Europe in the Renaissance: Metamorphoses, 1400–1600,"** an exhibition put on last year to mark the opening of a new annex at the *Landesmuseum* Zurich (the former Swiss National Museum), the show ostensibly deals with the Renaissance in Europe as a whole—but says a great deal as well about the relationship of the Swiss to their own history. Besides paying "homage to a glorious epoch of Swiss history," the exhibition is also a hagiographical tribute of sorts to Jacob Burckhardt, the celebrated Swiss historian and art historian usually credited with first developing the term *Renaissance*. In fact, according to the German-born historian and curator of the exhibit, Bernd Roeck, the Renaissance era was essentially Burckhardt's "invention."

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*To be exact, *CEH* published color illustrations for the first time in print in the special double issue that appeared last December. These were a series of color maps in James Retallack, "Mapping the Red Threat: The Politics of Exclusion in Leipzig Before 1914," *CEH* 49, no. 3/4 (2016): 341-82.

The **Review Forum "Imperial Dynamo?"** brings together leading scholars in the field of Habsburg studies—historians William Bowman, Gary B. Cohen, and Tara Zahra, as well as art historian Michael Yonan—to discuss Pieter M. Judson's new history of the Habsburg Empire. In a series of initial statements and a subsequent series of responses (including one by Judson himself), the participants focus on the many innovative insights that indeed make the study a "new history." Calling into question the long-held assumption that *empire* and *nation* stood in binary opposition to one another, Judson shows that the Habsburg Empire was more than just a "holding pattern" of sorts for ethnic groups aspiring to national independence. Millions of Central Europeans remained attached to the Empire, which, he argues, continued to hold meaning for them for a variety of reasons. It was, in short, more than just a "dysfunctional patchwork of hostile ethnic groups and an anachronistic imperial relic." Besides offering a novel assessment of what held the Habsburg holdings together, the study—as well as the contributions to the forum—suggest a number of fruitful areas for fresh, future research.

A few words about the three main articles in this issue, two of which have, in different ways, a Prussian focus: **Jean–Michel Johnston's "The Time and the Place to Network: Werner Siemens during the Era of Prussian Industrialization, 1835–1846"** looks at the important role that social networks—made up of individuals from different social milieu, including civil servants, scientists, entrepreneurs, and members of the military—played during *Vormärz* Prussia's early industrial "take-off." Focusing on the experiences of the young inventor Werner Siemens *before* he became a renowned industrialist, Johnston shows how the free flow of ideas within and between these socially diverse networks encouraged breakthrough developments in seemingly separate spheres, while allowing Siemens and his contemporaries to navigate the "uncertain socioeconomic and political circumstances" of an important transitional period in Prussian history.

The other two articles focus on the post-1945 period and, more specifically, on the history of the German Democratic Republic through the early 1960s. **Marcus Colla's "Prussian Palimpsests: Historic Architecture and Urban Spaces in East Germany, 1945–1961"** argues for a more nuanced understanding of the ruling Communist party's relationship to historic Prussia. Looking at both internal and more public debates about the fate of a number of representative Prussian buildings, memorials, and statues during this early period of the GDR, Colla's richly illustrated article shows that official decisions regarding "historical management practices" were determined by more than just knee-jerk "anti-Prussian" sentiments—the controversial destruction of the Hohenzollern city palaces in Berlin and Potsdam in the early and late 1950s notwithstanding. Efforts to win the loyalty of the masses, shape a new "socialist" identity, and project an image of what a future socialist Germany might look like physically led to a number of surprising decisions that should make us rethink the characterization of the three decades prior to the GDR's "Prussia wave" of the 1970s as more than just a "Dark Age" in which Prussia was portrayed as a "bastion of reaction and an incubator of fascism."

Stefanie Coché's "Power and Society in the GDR Reconsidered: Involuntary Psychiatric Commitment, 1949–1963" provides further evidence in support of revisionist calls over the past two decades for a more nuanced characterization of the relationship between the state and society—between the "rulers" and "ruled"—in the GDR. Looking at compulsory psychiatric admission practices in early East Germany, Coché does more

than merely rehash widespread claims about "agency" on the part of purportedly *eigensinnige* East Germans at the grass roots. Instead, she shows how various segments of "society"— including families, friends, and factories—were forced to compensate in an area of social life where the regime had uncharacteristically abdicated, more or less, its traditional role and responsibility. Contrary to expectations, the East German state did not, as a rule, intervene in forced psychiatric hospitalizations or use them to political ends, but instead abandoned the field to those living and working in the individual's immediate surroundings— a process that, the article argues, is best described as *Vergesellschaftung*, a term briefly used, but then abandoned, in the 1990s.

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