Kenneth Barkin: An Appreciation

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WHEN Thomas Nipperdey died on June 14, 1992, Gerald Feldman wrote the obituary that appeared in *Central European History*. This document was a fitting symbol of the condition of our journal—both its strengths and weaknesses—as Ken Barkin became its editor. One distinguished historian's eulogy to another found an appropriate place here, for the journal was widely recognized as a leading forum of international exchange, a link between scholarly communities in Germany and North America. The obituary appeared, however, in volume twenty-four of *Central European History*, which bore the date December 1991. It thus left the impression that Feldman was a man of extraordinary foresight.

If the one aspect of this episode reflected the eminence that Douglas Unfug had brought to the journal while he was editor, the other spoke to practical problems that had begun to plague it during the final years of his tenure. Production had fallen significantly behind schedule. To those of us on the board of directors of the Conference Group a decade and a half ago, it was clear that maintaining an enterprise like this would entail daunting administrative burdens, which would call in turn for extraordinary determination and organizational skill. Much was at stake, for the survival of both the journal and the Conference Group appeared to lie in the hands of the scholar who agreed to take on these burdens.

The rest is history. The journal's recovery began immediately upon Ken Barkin's arrival in office. It was in fact an editorial feat that Nipperdey died *only* six months after the appearance of his obituary. Within two years, the journal was fully up to date, despite the challenges the editor faced in breaking in a new publisher (a challenge that he faced again several years later). To a significant degree, credit for the achievement belongs to Ursula Marcum, who contributed much of the efficiency, discipline, and good sense that have characterized daily business in the journal's office. Still, Ken Barkin had the wisdom to hire her, and he has provided masterful editorial guidance and a sense of mission to the whole operation. As a consequence, *Central European History* has not only retained the distinguished standing that it enjoyed in the world of historical scholarship, but it has also become a better journal. The issues have become more thematically

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cohesive. The quality of the articles has remained uniformly high, but they have broadened methodologically and now enjoy the company of historiographical essays and comprehensive book reviews.

As Ken Barkin leaves the editorship, he can look back on extraordinary success. To Ken Ledford, he leaves both a distinguished journal and a record of accomplishment that will be difficult to match. Let us wish our new editor every success. To us in the Conference Group, Ken Barkin leaves an achievement for which we must be profoundly grateful. Thanks in large part to him, our organization is today more alive and healthy than it has ever been before. In gratitude, let us all wish him well.

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