
Obituary

Gerald D. Feldman

(1937–2007) Member of the

Editorial Board of

Contemporary European History

Gerald D. Feldman, professor emeritus of the Department of History at the University of California, Berkeley, died on 31 October 2007 at his home in Berkeley at the age of 70. He was a member of the editorial board of *Contemporary European History* from the journal's foundation in 1992.

Gerald Feldman was a pre-eminent political historian and a leading authority on the political, social and economic history of Germany in the twentieth century. He was greatly admired by his colleagues in the United States and in Germany, where he was a frequent visitor, for the breadth and depth of his scholarship.

From 1963 until his retirement in 2007 Gerald Feldman was a faculty member of the University of California Department of History, where he also held the Jane K. Sather Chair. His particular speciality was the German political economy of the first half of the twentieth century. His publication record of more than twenty-seven books that he authored, co-authored or edited, and more than a hundred scholarly articles, earned him international renown and made him one of the most respected and influential historians of his generation. His first book, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany, 1914–1918* (1966), explored the extent to which Germany's political, social and economic institutions were transformed by the demands of war, as heavy industry and socialist labour collaborated in exploiting the opportunities provided by the war. It was a path-breaking study and became an instant classic. It was translated into German and reissued thirty years later.

The series of studies on the German inflation, which Professor Feldman co-authored and co-edited with a number of eminent German scholars in the 1970s, led to yet another classic work *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics, and Society in the German Inflation, 1914–1924*, published in 1993. It won him a best book award in 1995 from the Conference Group for Central European History of the American Historical Association. His investigation of the German insurance industry and its involvement with the National Socialist regime

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resulted, in 2001, in the prize-winning book (the award being made by the German Studies Association) *Allianz and the German Insurance Business, 1933–1945*.

In the 1980s and 1990s Gerald Feldman contributed to a new history of the Deutsche Bank, from its beginnings to recent times. He continued to be deeply engaged in research into German and, more recently, Austrian banks during the period of National Socialism. He charted new paths in investigating the extent of the collaboration of German business with the Nazi regime, and although he was never formally trained in economic or business history, he produced major work in that field. He had a passion for work in the archives, an unwavering commitment to original research and an unflagging energy in the pursuit of historical explanation. He wanted to understand the deeper forces driving German and European history; he was working on history at the foundation.

At the beginning of 1994 Professor Feldman took over the directorship of the University of California Center for German and European Studies, a research centre serving all the campuses of the university. In 2000 the Center became part of the newly formed Institute of European Studies, where Professor Feldman served as Founding Director until 2006. Under his leadership both the Center and the Institute provided generous funding for countless students and faculty whose research focused on Europe. Gerald Feldman was renowned for his devotion to his students. He was also the recipient of many prizes and honours in recognition of his scholarly contributions, including, in September 2000, the prestigious Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. His published work, as a close colleague and friend recently said, will continue to influence our understanding of German and European history for decades to come.

Gerald Feldman was an enthusiastic and tireless member of the editorial board of *Contemporary European History* for over fifteen years. His expertise and wisdom were invaluable to successive editors and to the board as a whole. He promoted the journal among new and established scholars, was a perspicacious reader of submitted work and remained ever-helpful when it came to identifying expert referees or issues that the journal should bring to its readership. He will be particularly missed for the energy, humour and sense of fun he brought to the annual meetings of his board at which he was sometimes accompanied by his wife, Norma von Ragenfeld-Feldman. He would always arrive fresh as a daisy from the other side of the world, his stamina shaming younger colleagues who had travelled far shorter distances. Indeed, he was a man of boundless dedication to scholarship, and was never too tired to contribute to academic meetings on his many interests anywhere in the world. He was also a man of great culture with whom one could talk about anything – literature, music, cuisine. Like all great historians, he loved life.

Patricia Clavin
John Connelly