

From the Editor

THIS brings to an end the exchange in this issue between Professors Feldman and Abraham, which was intended to discuss as fully as necessary the allegations about Professor Abraham's book made by Professor Feldman in the first of these articles. I think the facts of the dispute have now been amply laid out, and any further exchange would deal more with rhetoric than with substance.¹ Professor Feldman fully agrees with this decision, but has asked me to state on his behalf that he stands by his charges, especially the most serious ones, and by his actions. There are, however, several issues raised by Professor Abraham's remarks that call for editorial comment. (I will not comment here on such things as tone, motive, or the appropriateness of actions not related to this exchange, in the case of either author.)

1) The first three of these manuscripts received a good deal of editorial attention. As with any article, I conceived my role to be that of helping the author say what he really meant to say, and say it clearly; I also checked some quotations, especially from documents accessible to me but not to all readers. (The editorial work was complicated by the fact that copies of the unedited versions were circulating widely. I believe there may still be traces in Professor Abraham's closing remarks of an earlier version of Professor Feldman's response.)

When I received the draft of what had been intended as a final statement of five to seven hundred words from Professor Abraham, my first reaction was to say I would refuse to print it, not only because of its length but because of some of its contents. On further thought I decided, as I wrote Professor Abraham, that "it would not be useful for me to make further editorial suggestions about your answer. The features I found objectionable . . . are more pervasive than that, and to try to 'edit' them out would produce a document other than the one you

1. It already has, in some cases. For example, an article by Professor Feldman published in this journal has now been discussed five times (Abraham, *Collapse*, p. 126; above, pp. 172–73, 209–11, 257–58, and 277–78). The second point in the final comment ("That would be some finding indeed . . .") is pure rhetoric, which has nothing to do with the contents of the article.

wrote.” On the other hand, there were some things that clearly called for comment. The only solution I could see was to print Professor Abraham’s answer more or less intact, and to conclude with a brief comment of my own.

2) The next to last sentence of Professor Abraham’s final answer (including its remark about *CEH*’s editor, which I would normally edit out) is misleading in its implication that the delays over the last year in getting this exchange before the public are due to Professor Feldman’s reluctance to do so. Those interested can construct their own chronologies of the various unpublished circular letters. As far as this published exchange is concerned, it began in March 1984 (this is being written in March 1985) with a request from Professor Feldman, who had already approached other journals, that *CEH* consider publishing his charges as soon as possible, in order to get them before the public. His manuscript was ready early in June. In the meantime, in May Professor Abraham had circulated an appeal asking his colleagues not to pass judgment until they had heard both sides. Professor Abraham’s reply (which involved a return to the archives) was ready in mid-November, and Professor Feldman wrote his response within a few weeks. The rest of the time has been taken up by Professor Abraham’s preparation of his closing remarks and by rather complicated editorial work. No one has deliberately delayed the publication of this exchange—least of all Professor Feldman, who initiated it and repeatedly pressed for early publication.

3) The first section of Professor Abraham’s “Reply” goes well beyond a direct response to Professor Feldman’s allegations in his first article. I considered refusing to publish this section, but decided that it was more important to allow Professor Abraham to say whatever he felt necessary to defend himself. (I might have made a different decision if I had known that a rather full account of these matters would appear on the front page of the *New York Times* in a few weeks.)

4) Professor Abraham’s closing remarks go even further beyond the bounds of a discussion of the original allegations.

5) One of the main objections raised to Professor Abraham’s part in the earlier exchange in the *American Historical Review* (88[1983]:1143–49) was the nature of his (unusually lengthy) last word. In it Professor Abraham, after returning to the most important archive, first minimized his mistakes and then accused Professor Turner of “exploiting a few errata” in order to “discredit a detailed and comprehensive argument without confronting it,” for implicitly ideological reasons.

Again having the “last word,” Professor Abraham has again used it to raise “methodological and political issues” in order to attack not only Professor Feldman, but Professor Turner, who has not been involved in this exchange. There is obviously considerable ideological interest in this case: there are some who support Professor Abraham because he stands “on the left,” others who support Professor Feldman because Professor Abraham stands on the left. If Professor Abraham had wished to discuss those issues and attack Professor Turner in this exchange, he had 107 manuscript pages in which to do so, at a time when a reply could be made; I find it inappropriate at this point.

In any case, it is obvious that there is ample space in other publications for discussion of ideological and other issues. I think enough information has been provided here to allow readers to make up their minds on the substantive issues raised by Professor Feldman at the beginning of this exchange.

DOUGLAS A. UNFUG