



Proceedings of the CISH Council Meeting, Helsinki, MAY 13, 2011

Present : Mikhaïl Bibikov, Hans Blom, Pim W. den Boer, Pascal Cauchy, Robert Frank, Andrea Giardina ; Marjatta Hietala, Karen Owen ; Jose-Luis Peset, Hilda Sabato, Jie-Hyum Lim, Wenzhao Tao, Laurent Tissot.

Absent: John Rogister

1. Opening and introduction

The President of the CISH opened the meeting by welcoming the members of the Council and opening the discussion. Previous discussions have permitted a first round of exchanges on the next Congress scheduled for Jinan in 2015.

At the request of Karen Offen, the reflection on the missions of the CISH guides the discussion.

2. Report on the meeting of the Executive Committee, Paris February 2011.

Robert Frank, general secretary, reviews the points evoked during the last Executive Committee that met in Paris last February 18.

- New members

The Argentinian national committee announced its revival: particularly happy news. An association of Melanesian historians (« The International Association of Historical Studies on Melanesia ») bringing together academics from Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, the Salomon Islands, New Caledonia and an Australian university, announced their intention to join the CISH. This proposal will be presented at the General Assembly in Budapest.

Despite this favourable news, the CISH is having difficulties overcoming a geographical distribution of membership that remains that of the UN at its birth. It is thus imperative to find levers to mobilize the international community of historians.

- The CISH/UNESCO Relationship

Faced with a decreasing number of national committees and in the absence of a number of countries within the CISH, it was agreed that UNESCO would be approached in order to create new initiative, raise the awareness and mobilize the members of the international organization.

Contacts have been made and a letter addressed to the General Director, Irina Bokova. M. Jens Boel, responsible for the archives, is our contact point.

To date, it seems reasonable to contemplate:

- The renewal of a contact group between the CISH and UNESCO to be held in Paris
- A discussion around common projects capable of mobilizing the historians the CISH has thus far been unable to solicit.

This last point allows for the creation of new scientific events between the 2 Congresses; the CISH needs these meetings to increase their activities.

As such, it is possible to envision a first colloquium in 2013, at UNESCO, on the state of research in the countries absent from the CISH. A second colloquium could be scheduled in 2014 in Sarajevo, a symbolic city, on the theme of peace.

For the moment it is impossible to envision a provisional budget, it has been agreed to with UNESCO that each individual event will be the object of a specific financial arrangement.

Following the discussion on this subject, it was decided that two events would be too difficult to undertake and that only the second project (2014) would be held. Robert Frank is mandated to undertake discussions with the international organization. It has also been agreed that each member of the Council and more generally of the CISH should be able to lobby their UNESCO national committee to insure that the request of the CISH be properly communicated.

Mickhail Bibikov proposes that one of the sessions of the Council before the Congress (in 2013 for example) be dedicated to a working meeting with UNESCO. The agenda may however be full to the extent that a Council meeting should take place in Jinan in 2015.

- General Assembly in Budapest

Attila Pok confirmed by letter the General Assembly of the CISH in Budapest from September 6th to the 8th, 2012. The « migrations » is the suggested theme for the symposium; « migrations » in a very broad sense: including people, products and ideas.

- CISH Prize

The project to create an international prize was mentioned in Paris in February. It was agreed to in principle, and the project will be submitted to the General Assembly. The goal of the prize will subject to proposals. The question of the financing of the prize was debated; Laurent Tissot has been mandated to contact private foundations.

3. Financial Report

Laurent Tissot presents the financial report. Beforehand, he notified the Council that he is now working closely with a new team.

He notes that his objective was to reduce the operating costs of the CISH. The goal has been reached, mainly due to the suppression of the brochure and the renovation of the website.

Membership dues function normally despite some delays. It is suggested that a list of paid members be published on the website in order for members to know that their dues are up to date.

The Council thanks Laurent Tissot for his report.

Pim den Boer stresses that the revenues of the CISH are based on membership fees, which is quite fragile.

As well, he reminds the Council, that the organizing committee of the Congress is obligated to create a special fund to aid those colleagues who require financial aid in order to participate, in particular, African historians. Generally speaking, he insists that the CISH reflect on the way in which to raise money and proposes to present an inventory of possibilities in Budapest.

In light of the Jinan Congress, Wenzhao Tao and Jie-Hyun Lim bring to the attention of the Council the high price of airfares between China and Africa or Latin America.

4. The 2010 Amsterdam Congress and the 2015 Jinan Congress

- Hans Blom presents his report in the name of the organizing committee of the 2010 Congress. If the Congress was quite satisfactory, the number of participants, 1300, remains weak-barely more than Sydney- and below expectations. More specifically, young historians barely signed up. The report makes recommendations to this effect.

Hans Blom's report will be posted online on the CISH website.

The Council believes it is urgent to deal with the problem of disaffection from the Congress.

Hilda Sabato questions whether the distinction between « specialized sessions », « roundtables », « joint sessions » and « special sessions » was well regarded in Amsterdam and if it is necessary to maintain them.

In order for the Congress to remain attractive, Laurent Tissot emphasizes that the number of sessions must be increased to allow the largest number of colleagues to take part, as well as to significantly increase the number of papers. In order to do this, the organization of the sessions must be rethought.

From his point of view, Wenzhao Tao believes that the reception capacities in Jinan should be sufficient to permit the increase in the number of sessions and participants.

Given the importance of the problem, the lessons of Hans Blom's report on Amsterdam, and after discussion, the Council will make the following proposals at the Budapest General Assembly in September 2012:

- To simplify the structure of the Congress,
- To increase the number of sessions (other than the three major themes that will stay the same) in order to attract the largest number of participants to Jinan,

- To make time for a scientific event, organized by the Council, open to all, in the evening, or at another time during the Congress that is not taken by major themes or other sessions.

All of these issues will be put up for discussion during the General Assembly: they do not change the conditions for the call for proposals for the program of the Congress that open in September 2011.

5. Report of Wenzhao Tao on the Organisation of the 2015 Congress

Wenzhao Tao highlights the significant implication of the Chinese academic and university authorities in the project. Financing is both private and public; in particular, the Shandong province is participating in the financing of the Congress.

The Chinese Historians society is also supporting the organization of the Congress and will be proposing themes.

The date has not yet been decided, but it seems that the end of the month of August is the best period, both in terms of the availability of the facilities, as well as that of people and for the optimum weather conditions.

The Chinese organising committee hopes to bring together/mobilize other neighbouring Asian countries and will also contact the foreign embassies in Beijing. The concern remains as to how to help those historians coming from those countries that can not afford to travel; Help with housing will be provided for as well as exemption from conference fees. However, transportation costs remain a problem.

The members of the Council recommend the rapid implementation of a solidarity fund as was done for Amsterdam. They mention that the fund is one of the conditions for the organization of the Congress and must be created by the host country. The Chinese organisers of Jinan conference were encouraged to get in touch with foundations in order to find money which would finance the participation of scholars coming from developing countries.

The President of the CISH warmly thanks Hans Blom and Wenzhao Tao for their reports.

6. The preparation of the program for the Congress

The call for proposals and the criteria will be addressed to the members of the CISH in September 2011.

To provide for transparency, it is suggested, if it is technically feasible, to post the proposals on the website.

Additionally, the members of the program sub-committee should be able to appoint the services of corresponding external experts (but members of one of the organisations of the CISH) if needed.

The following people are proposed for the program subcommittee: Marjatta Hietala, Robert Frank, Karen Offen, Hilda Sabato, Laurent Tissot, Jie-Hyun Lim, Andrea Giardina, Wenzhao Tao.

The subcommittee meeting will be in Neuchâtel, the 19th and 29th of April 2012.

7. The CISH website

Pascal Cauchy presents the new website of the CISH to the Council: www.cish.org, realized by H  l  ne Naudet.

The website is designed to give an account of the CISH's activities, to multiply links with members in order to be a hub for the international community of historians. It is now possible to put online the papers presented during colloquium. The site will be a multilingual site allowing all the working languages to be used. It needs to be supplied (iconography, content) by the members of the CISH.

The Council congratulates Pascal Cauchy and H  l  ne Naudet for this work and validates the prototype of the site.

In closing, The President of the CISH thanks the members of the Council for their implication in the activities of the Council. The members of the Council present their most sincere thanks to Marjatta Hietala for the warm welcome they all received in Helsinki.

Robert Frank
Secr  taire g  n  ral du CISH