

ICMH Newsletter, Issue 33

August 2020



With this Newsletter we would like to keep you informed about the latest activities of the ICMH community. Special attention goes to the composition of the new ICMH Board.

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A look to the past and a good omen for the future

Massimo de Leonardis – President

This is the last *Newsletter* published under the current Full Board, which was elected in Beijing in September 2015. These five years have been quite intense, with various positive new initiatives but also some obstacles to be surmounted. Three annual Congresses had to be cancelled for compelling reasons. While in the two previous occasions we managed to find excellent alternative solutions, this year we are compelled to renounce our Congress for the well-known reasons beyond our control.

However, we managed to meet all our statutory appointments, first of all the elections of the new leadership for the years 2020-2025 and the approval of the budgets. The Jury of the Corvisier Prize had telematics meetings. This demonstrates the resilience of ICMH and the commitment of its members. Looking to the candidatures presented we see a good combination of continuity and innovation. The recommendation of the Election Committee to proceed by acclamation, as provided by art. art. 16j of our Statutes and enacted last time in Beijing in 2015, should not be viewed as a device to empty the significance of the electoral process, but simply as a means to demonstrate our cohesion and employ in the service of ICMH all the human resources which ladies and gentlemen from various countries made available. Acclamation was approved and on the 4th of September the new Full Board will assume power and will immediately proceed to the nomination of the Vice Presidents and take the first decisions of the new mandate.

Certainly we will miss the precious opportunity to meet in person and for this we have to wait for next year in Athens. Let's hope for a marvellous comeback: the location and the experience of the Greek Commission are an assurance for success. I invite everybody to consider the possibility of presenting papers of high scientific quality.

I wish to recall just the main positive accomplishments. Building on the foundations laid by the previous Board, we inaugurated a new website, much more performant, and a new richer series of the *Newsletter*, which is complemented by regular announcements of conferences worldwide. A new official gift of a military character was adopted. One of our journals assumed the new title of *International Journal of Military History and Historiography*, had a transition to a new Editor, introduced a high level international Advisory Board, and is consolidating its standing among scientific publications. The other one, the *International Review of Military History*, published a series of monographic issues edited mostly by the Spanish Commission. The André Corvisier Prize for PhD dissertations, launched in 2017, had a growing success and contributes to foster contacts with ICMH of a new generation of young military historians. The three Specialized Committees performed with dedication their task and reached new goals. In my opinion, the two main challenges of the next Board will be to enhance the scientific quality of our Congresses and to reap the fruits of the contacts already established to admit new National Commissions.

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The three main offices remain unchanged. Personally, I learned a lot from my experience during the first mandate and I am quite eager to do my best during the next five years

The vitality of ICMH is also demonstrated by the flow of proposals to host our annual International Congress. The Polish Commission, under a completely renewed leadership closely linked to local universities, had immediately accepted with enthusiasm to host the ICMH congress on the occasion of the quinquennial ICHS Congress. A delegation of ICMH will attend the ICHS Congress in Poznań in 2021, but it will be impossible to have our own Congress there. I earnestly hope that Poland will consider hosting the Congress sometimes in the future. Congresses in 2021, 2022 and 2023 will be organized by three long-standing members of ICMH which offer all the required guarantees of success: Greece, Korea, and Turkey. A tentative proposal has been aired for 2024.

I am confident that all members of ICMH and their dearest relatives and friends were not directly affected by the epidemic, which hopefully seems now receding. As military historians we remember well that the carnage of the First World War was also followed by an epidemic, which provoked some 500 million confirmed cases. The death toll may have been anything from 17 million to 50 million, and possibly even more, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in human history. The ephemeral “roaring twenties” followed. Let’s hope and pray for our own period of full recovery, this time with a more conscientious and realistic approach to the issues of stability, peace and prosperity. We study wars and cherish military virtues and traditions. While we are perfectly aware, as the late Michael Howard wrote, that no international system may work without the existence of military power, certainly we are not prone to warmongering.

Election by acclamation of the new Board 2020-2025

Letter of the President of the ICMH Election Committee to the National Commissions

Dr. Piet Kamphuis

To:

The Honorary Presidents ICMH

The Presidents of the National Commissions ICMH

The Secretary- Generals of the National Commissions ICMH

The Presidents of the Bibliography Committee, the Military-Archives Committee and Education Committee ICMH

Subject: Composition ICMH Board 2020-2025

Alphen aan den Rijn, July 13th, 2020

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Dear Colleagues,

Further to the letter of the President of the Election Committee ICMH of June 15th to all national commissions, I may inform you that the Election Committee received only positive responses to its proposal to elect the members of the ICMH Board 2020 – 2025 by acclamation. As no national president exercised his right to ask for a formal vote, the following candidates are appointed:

President :	Prof dr M. de Leonardis
Secretary-General:	Ltcol (GS) dr K. Quanten
Treasurer:	Prof dr J. Hoffenaar
Members:	Col (GS) F. Fontana
	Capt (N) dr J. Hillmann
	Cdr (N) B. Mbue Ngappe
	Mrs dr E. Paschalidou
	Dr H. Raugh jr
	Mrs dr C. Rijnoveanu
	Mrs dr F. Saint-Ramond
	Dr E. Schmidl
	Mrs dr M. da Silva Ferreira
	Col (Rtd) W.Snyder

On behalf of the Election Committee I would like to congratulate the newly elected members and wish them a lot of wisdom in their challenging ICMH position.

Under normal circumstances the ICMH elections would have taken place during the scheduled ICMH Congress in Poznan, Poland. The ICMH Board 2020-2025 would have taken office on Friday, September 4 th, 2020. As there are no valid arguments to change the date for the hand over/ take over, the term of the ICMH Board 2020-2025 will start on Friday, September 4 th, 2020.

The Elections Committee would like to use this opportunity to thank the members of the outgoing Board for their services rendered to our international military-history community. A special word of appreciation goes to those members who leave the Board: vice-president dr H.Pawlsch, Prof dr J. Avenel, Senior Colonel K. Chunqiao, Captain (N) (Rtd) J.M. Blanco Nunez and Prof dr Ch. Inaba. The ICMH owes them a great debt of gratitude.

The Election Committee considers this letter to be the coping- stone of its mission.

With best regards,

Piet Kamphuis
President Election Committee ICMH

The 2021 XLVI Congress in Athens

Dr Efpraxia Paschalidou - Vice President

The XLVI Congress of the International Commission of Military History will be held in Athens, from 29th August to 3rd September 2021, organized by the Hellenic Commission of Military History. The theme of the Congress will be: ***Independence Wars since the XVIII century***. Reason for the choice of the topic is that, the year 2021 marks the 200th anniversary of the Hellenic Revolution of 1821 and the successful War of Independence (1821–1832), a pivotal chapter in Greek history, a struggle which resulted in the establishment of an independent Hellenic state. The Hellenic Revolution of 1821 can be seen as a piece in the puzzle of world history, as an initiative to highlight also other revolutions and wars for independence that flared up at approximately the same century; their significance, the relation between them, the parameters that affected them, the effect each of them possibly had on the rest of the world.

As a part of extended national celebrations, the Hellenic National Defence General Staff is proud to take part in this prestigious event and is fully committed to providing full support for the Congress, in the frame, the guidelines and the traditions of the International Commission of Military History. The rich history of Athens and Greece, along with the detailed organization process of the Hellenic Commission of Military History, provides a guarantee for a constructive and successful Congress.





Future Congresses

Dr. Kris Quanten – Secretary General

During the Full Board Meeting in Sofia (2019), the locations of the following congresses were formally approved.

In 2022 the South Korean Commission will organise the 48th International Congress of Military History in Seoul (28 August - 2 September). The proposed theme is *“Conflicts and confrontations during the Cold War”*.

In 2023 the Turkish Commission proposes to host the 49th International Congress of Military History in Istanbul (2 - 8 September). The theme is *“Commanders, battles and strategies that changed the course of history in the XIX and XX Century”*.

The Corvisier Prize 2020

Massimo de Leonardis – President

The 2020 Edition of the Corvisier Prize for PhD theses in Military History proved to be very successful. Sixteenth candidatures from scholars of seven countries were advanced. The dissertations were of an excellent level and this required a very careful examination by the Jury. At the final telematics meeting on 29th June Dr. Marcel Berni was chosen as the laureate. The title of his dissertations is : *“Leben, Leiden und Sterben ‘kommunistischer’ Gefangener in Vietnams amerikanischem Krieg 1965-1973”* (Out of Action: Life, Suffering and Death of ‘Communist Prisoners’ in Vietnam's American War, 1965-1973).

While it will be possible to enact immediately the other provisions, the award ceremony has to be postponed to next year's Congress in Athens.



Dr. Marcel Berni

Motivation Marcel Berni

The research on the Vietnam War is still almost exclusively an American affair, with most researchers being Americans working at American universities. Even though the questions and methodological approaches have broadened considerably over the last decade, they often remain trapped in an internal perspective. While many research desiderata have been recognized, these have often been very difficult to address in the American context. One of them, which is repeatedly referred to in the literature, is the treatment of those captured Vietnamese who, for various reasons, were not considered prisoners-of-war by the Americans and South Vietnamese.

Marcel Berni from Switzerland is the first to address this topic in his dissertation «Außer Gefecht. Leben, Leiden und Sterben "kommunistischer" Gefangener in Vietnams amerikanischem Krieg». The problem of "opponents" captured in an asymmetrical conflict has many facets. For example, one question that arises is who the opponent is, and who is an uninvolved civilian, but also who is responsible for the prisoners and what laws apply. These questions have been handled very differently by different military apparatuses in different conflicts.

In the first part of his thesis, Berni shows how the American military lawmakers intended to tackle these problems in Vietnam. To this end, he evaluates a wide range of field manuals, military law directives and decrees, as well as pamphlets intended for soldiers in order to demonstrate how, at least theoretically, military law seeped down to the lowest levels of the US military. One of the significant findings here is that military law itself hardly encouraged atrocities.

Berni then goes on to describe the driving factors behind the excessive violence against prisoners, such as a rapidly fluctuating officer corps that hardly intervened in atrocities for reasons of military psychology, uninhibited, rapidly brutalized soldiers, but also the introduction of "body count" in order to measure the American "progress", which all contributed to the shooting of prisoners. Berni then takes a closer look at the atrocities committed against Vietnamese prisoners, such as murder, torture, abuse and sexual violence. He uses a variety of different sources for this. Some of these documents come from known sources that have not yet been evaluated with regard to the issues at hand, such as the files of the Peers Commission and the Vietnam War Crime Working Group. However, Berni adds to these holdings other sources that have not yet been examined at all, such as the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) reports on camp visits or sources of Vietnamese provenance. It is precisely with these additional sources that he can contradict the otherwise predominant American interior views. The multitude of actors involved in the mistreatment of "communist prisoners" also becomes clear. These included various elements of the US armed forces, their allies, the CIA, the South Vietnamese army and the South Vietnamese police. However, the latter in particular are difficult to grasp due to a lack of reliable sources.

Berni devotes another chapter to the various camps in which the prisoners were being kept. These range from reasonably adequately run prisoner-of-war camps to special interrogation centres and prison islands under South Vietnamese administration, where

extremely brutal and dehumanizing conditions prevailed. Here, Berni clearly shows that the American authorities were often relieved to pass on the problem of the “communist prisoners” to the South Vietnamese authorities, and of course they thereby also released themselves from any responsibility. After these rather descriptive parts, Berni moves on to look at how the widespread practice of violence was reported upon in the US media as well as its legal consequences. Here, he can show how little US society was interested in the fate of Vietnamese prisoners – quite in contrast to that of US prisoners-of-war in North Vietnamese custody.

In his epilogue, Berni refers to the continuities in the deliberate refusal of American authorities to classify enemy fighters and sympathizers as prisoners-of-war in the “War on Terror”. Thus, Berni's work not only becomes a critical commentary on current American policy, but also raises the question of whether there is a culturally rooted, specifically American approach to prisoners in asymmetric conflicts. This question is likely to keep researchers occupied for some time to come, and it will also stimulate international comparative studies. Marcel Berni's excellent work can be credited with having significantly advanced this field of research.

For your information, we also give the list of the other candidates with the title of their Phd:

- Azzarelli Andrea : “All’ombra del ‘viceré’: polizie e controllo del territorio tra il Regio Commissariato Civile per la Sicilia e il processo Notarbartolo (1896-1897)”
- Bennett Stephen : “Noble networks. The Nature of Elite Participation from North-Western Europe in the Third Crusade”
- Fletcher William : “‘Scientifics’ and ‘Wycombites’. A Study of the Quartermaster General’s Department of the British Army, 1799-1814”
- Gardner Sophy : “Whitehall Warriors : the political fight for the Royal Air Force, 1917-29”
- Gomez Luz Martin : “La legion espanol en su centenario de los antecedentes a su fundacion”
- Hinarejos Martin Nuria : “El sistema de defensas de Puerto Rico (1493-1898)”
- Lefebvre Benoit : “ Combattre de loin chez les Romains et leurs adversaires. Des réalités du combat aux représentations culturelles (Ier siècle av. J.-C. – IIIe siècle ap. J.-C.)”
- Nicola Martin : “The Cultural Paradigms of British Imperialism in the Militarisation of Scotland and North America, c.1745-1775”
- Moir Nathalien : “Bernard Fall and Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare in Indochina”
- Jethro Norman : “Frontiers of Force: Transnational Security Practitioners and the Evolution of the Global Security Industry in East Africa”
- Patterson Sarah : “The few, the proud : gender and the Marine Corps Body”
- Puncher Sebastian : “The Victorian Army and the Cadet Colleges, Woolwich and Sandhurst, c.1840 – 1902”

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- Reynolds Luke : “Who owned Waterloo? Wellington’s veterans and the battle for relevance”
 - Schneider Benjamin : “No law except the sword : American war criminals and the failure of military justice, 1942-1945”
 - Stöhs Jeremy : “The Evolution of European Naval Power 1989-2019 : Strategy – Force Structure – Operations”.
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Grant to ICMH from the Breidenthal-Snyder Foundation

For the FOURTH time the Breidenthal-Snyder Foundation accorded to ICMH a generous Grant of 2,000 \$, which will be employed to finance the participation to ICMS in Poznań in 2021. Very special thanks are due to the Breidenthal-Snyder Foundation’s President, Col. USAR (Ret.) JD. Willard B. Snyder, member of the ICMH Full Board.



Col. USAR (Ret.) JD. Willard B. Snyder

The Merriman Prize

Dr Marco Wyss, President of the BC of the ICMH and Editor-in-Chief of the IJMH

The Merriman Prize (named in honour of Lancaster’s Dr Marcus Merriman) is awarded for an outstanding undergraduate essay on any topic in the fields of international and/or military history from the ancient world to the present day. Offered by the Department of History in partnership with the Centre for War and Diplomacy at Lancaster University, it is open to current undergraduates at any UK or overseas university. The successful candidate is awarded a prize of £250.

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The winner of the Merriman Prize for 2019-20 is Cadet Daniel Berardino of the United States Military Academy (West Point), for his essay 'Revolution or Evolution? A Quantitative Analysis of the Impact of Artillery on Sieges in the Hundred Years War'.

The judging panel – Dr Sophie Ambler, Professor Michael Hughes and Dr Marco Wyss – deemed the essay to be of 'exceptional quality, in terms of both research and presentation. Engaging with a key historiographical debate, the essay presented sophisticated, rigorous and original research, making an impressive contribution to the field. The material was handled with confidence and clarity, in a way that demonstrated outstanding historical and communicative skills.'

Cadet Berardino said, 'At West Point, I have had the privilege of working with leading scholars in the field of military history. Among those scholars is Professor Clifford J. Rogers, who served as my advisor on this project. Being part of this group endeavor and the subsequent presentation at the 54th International Congress of Medieval Studies has been a formative experience for me as I prepare for a career of service, first as an army officer, and eventually in academia.'

I am honored and humbled to have received the Merriman Prize. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the selection committee – Professor Michael Hughes, Dr Marco Wyss, and Dr Sophie Ambler – for selecting me. I would like to further thank Professor Clifford Rogers and my classmates – Liam Kane, Ryne Hicks, and Zachary Watters – who helped generate the database that I used in my submission. Even though medieval military history is not my area of expertise, studying it has helped me to see continuities in history that I never would have considered. Working with Professor Rogers has been one of the most positive experiences that I have had at West Point.'

The Merriman Prize 2019-20 attracted a number of very strong submissions from across the UK and North America, with essays investigating a range of topics in international and military history broadly defined, from the fourteenth to the twenty-first century, across Europe, Asia, and North America. As the panel noted, the quality and originality of research on display is a testament to the strength and vibrancy of the fields of international and military history.

With such a strong field, the panel was also pleased to award an Honorary Mention to Mr Sterling Mancuso of the University of Toronto, for his essay 'Expulsion Compulsion: Reconsidering the Motivations and Consequences of the 1923 Turco-Greek Population Exchange'. The panel lauded the essay's 'sophisticated approach to an under-addressed historical issue, combining a rigorous historiographical and theoretical framework with use of primary sources.'

Department of History, Lancaster University, 26 June 2020

Further details can be found on the Lancaster University website, here:
<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/history/studentships-and-essay-prizes/>

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News from the National Commissions

Dr. Kris Quanten – Secretary General

We received the following farewell letter from LtGeneral Alexandre **de Sousa Pinto**, President of the Portugese Commession of Military History :



Ministry of Defence
Portuguese Commission of Military History

Ref:

Number: 045/2020

Date: 15Jul20

File: 2.9

Subject: Farewell letter

Dear President and esteemed Colleague

After 16 years as President of the Portuguese Commission on Military History, I have reached the moment to cease my current functions.

Throughout these years, I have had the pleasure to meet a large and diversified number of personalities, participate in several Congresses of the International Commission on Military History and to organize the 2009 International Congress in Portugal (Porto).

In sum, it has been a long, busy but rewarding journey, along which, I have always enjoyed the friendship and collaboration that contributed to ease my presidency.

For all the above I am thankful to you, dear President.

Please accept my warmest regards, that I kindly ask you to convey to the staff and associates of your national commission.

Yours sincerely, *and kind regards*

The President

Alexandre de Sousa Pinto

LtGeneral

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Changes in the composition of the National Commissions

We were informed of the changes in the composition of the following National Commission:

- French Commission
President
Prof dr. Jean D. **Avenel**
- Moroccan Commission
President
Général de Corps d'Armée Bouchaib **Aproub**

Vice President
Colonel Saad **Gaizi**
- Turkish Commission
President
Prof dr. Gültekin **Yildiz**
- Greek Commission
Secretary General
Lieutenant Athanasios **Papadimitropoulos**
- Roumanian Commission
Secretary General
Dr. Carmen Sorina Rijnoveanu