



COAL AND WAR THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE

17-18-19 November 2014

Centre Historique Minier, Lewarde

Invitation to submit a paper

2014 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the start of the First World War. The Centre Historique Minier in Lewarde has decided to commemorate this anniversary through a special programme, and from 17 to 19 November 2014 is staging an international conference on the history of the links between coal and war throughout the world.

There are several aspects to the conference. Firstly, it dwells on the social, cultural and political history of these wars from a highly original viewpoint: that of coal (mining, miners and structures). Of course, coal as an energy source plays a key role in war and peace (gaining control of coalfields) and as a tool (mastering energy as a key component in a war economy), particularly in contemporary times. But this is not the only issue here. The conference is also an invitation to explore reciprocal relationships: the role of coal in war, and the impact of war on the coal mines, societies and mining populations directly or indirectly involved.

The conference is also endeavouring to open up both the chronological and geographical points of view, as it does not intend to be restricted to the 20th century, the First World War and Europe. So the topics submitted could also explore more distant periods, or the different geographical zones involved in coal production, from Asia to the Americas. This event at the Centre Historique Minier is thus aiming for an open, many-pronged approach, contributing to both the history of societies at war and knowledge of the coalmining world.

CONFERENCE TOPICS

➤ Coal as energy for war

Here the question involves exploring coal as a direct or indirect **issue**, in certain world wars or conflicts closer to home – because from the 19th century onwards, coal became a vital weapon in the war economy in terms of metallurgy and transport. The role of coal could be explored as a tool from this point of view (relocation and intensification of production). The topics submitted could also look at the respective influences of shareholders in private companies and a State constantly attentive to this industrial branch, but which tightens its surveillance in times of war.

➤ The impact of war on mining

Wars, especially contemporary wars, which made coal an crucial issue, simultaneously **had an impact on mining conditions** as a result of conquest and occupation, and also the destruction that took place, particularly in the final phase of wars, from the end of the modern period onwards. So papers could explore this impact from different points of view: **the transformation of production techniques and tools**, forms of **reorganisation/intensification of the work** (for example, we know that the German occupation of the North of France and elsewhere during the Second World War had a considerable effect in terms of delayed investment and the over-exploitation of miners) and in some cases the influence of the **reconstruction** of mines on their subsequent modernisation. Iconographical collections concerning the two World Wars could also be a subject for a paper.

➤ **Managers, miners and the mining population in wartime**

The members of mining societies often found themselves in the front line in wartime, not only as **fighters but also as workers and civilians**. Here the focus should be on the ways in which these **societies reacted, resisted or assented to war, and how they survived from day to day** (particularly women and children). We could also dwell on the **specific situation of miners, often posted on site, who were enjoined to fight through their work rather than by taking up arms**. It will be possible to go still further by exploring the **symbolic and material relationship between the figures of the miner and soldier**. Often associated in the collective mind, these two figures could also maintain more concrete relationships, and a description of this aspect could be another approach (the contribution of miners' technical skills to the front, the approaches to command of engineers – who were often officers in times of war – and the figure of the miner as combatant/resistance fighter in a number of social conflicts).

➤ **The position of coal in the political, economic and social settlement of wars**

The impact of war experience, and at the same time the issues at stake in peace settlements, have had a considerable influence on the coal industry. The **consequences of treaties** come immediately to mind (the redefinition of borders and thus the reallocation of coal resources and the question of war compensation) but this aspect does not have to be exclusive. **Post-war periods could also involve other questions, restructuring** (nationalisation; the start of coordinated production management, as with the ECSC in Europe) or **new movements**, particularly as regards the migration of labour.

➤ **Cultural representations of war**

With this final topic, the approach is fairly broad, embracing a wide variety of proposals. In short, it involves **archaeological traces, archives or oral evidence, together with artistic representations** (photographs, paintings, cinema, etc.), concerning coalfields in times of war, and which could contribute to our knowledge of them.

SUBMISSIONS FOR PAPERS

Submissions for papers, about a page long, including the author's titles and qualifications, should be sent by **25 August 2014** to:

André DUBUC, General Manager - Centre Historique Minier, Fosse Delloye, BP 30039, 59287 LEWARDE - Email: adubuc@chm-lewarde.com

The Steering Committee will make a decision at the beginning of september 2014. Lectures will be limited to 20 minutes. The Centre Historique Minier will publish the conference proceedings.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Members of the Centre Historique Minier's permanent scientific team

- André Dubuc, General Manager
- Virginie Debrabant, Head of Archives
- Gérard Dumont, qualified History teacher assigned to the Centre Historique Minier

Representatives of the Centre Historique Minier's scientific committee

- André Brossard, former Chief Mining Engineer
- Marion Fontaine, lecturer in Contemporary History at the University of Avignon
- Thierry Oudoire, curator at the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, Lille
- Janine Ponty, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Franche-Comté
- Denis Woronoff, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Paris I – Panthéon - Sorbonne