

## **History Congress Wraps in Paris – Record Attendance**

(Paris, December 10, 2003) Thunderous applause marked the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress of History Producers today, after a final, full-house session examining "Inside Stories: Witnesses to History" – focusing on three diverse history programs: an intense, riveting look at the dramatization of the Wannsee Protocol in the film *Conspiracy; Invitation to a Hanging*, the story of Jack Shepherd, a famous 18<sup>th</sup> criminal; and the heart-wrenching Japanese film *Drawing A-Bomb Memories*, chronicling the horrors of Hiroshima through the drawings of survivors of the bombing.

The Congress, with well over 400 delegates (a record), opened with a welcoming reception on Sunday evening and got down to business on Monday morning with the keynote address, delivered by Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, one of the world's leading authorities on Russian and Slavic history. Before being whisked away for media interviews about the recent political developments in Russia, Madame d'Encausse cautioned delegates on the danger of closure – the tendency to regard history as finished, and not evolving and changing as new truths are discovered and new interpretations made. She challenged delegates to examine creatively the various crossroads of history: "What could have taken place but didn't?" What if some of the great events had not happened? How would history have turned out differently?

The keynote address was followed by "Fashions and Trends," the best-attended session of the entire Congress, in which an expert panel presented and discussed video clips from some of the best programs of 2003, and showed excerpts from programs that they felt were indicative of the exciting directions in which History television was moving in 2004.

Other Congress highlights included: "The Great Debate" a spirited, brilliantly presented contest in which luminaries from history television challenged or championed the resolution "History Television is Failing its Audience" (overwhelmingly defeated!); "Facts and Fakes" dealt with the issues and controversies surrounding the use of re-creations, reenactments and the manufacture of fake archives; and "The Art of Internationalizing History" was an imaginatively produced and highly entertaining, but in the end serious, look at the perils and pitfalls of international co-productions. There were compelling examples presented of "Collaborating with Historians: Case Studies," looking at three teams of producers and historians whose work together seemed exemplary.

In addition to the many content-oriented seminars, workshops, and screenings, delegates took advantage of the many opportunities to meet with commissioning editors and to interact with one another at social events. Among the latter, the most memorable were two off-site events – a reception at Hôtel de la Monnaie, one of the most stunning neo-classical buildings in Paris; and a highly-regarded reception and dinner at the magnificent Hôtel de Ville, steeped in the history of France and the history of democratic institutions.

The World Congress of History Producers is an initiative of the Banff Television Foundation, with the support of the top international players in history and biography programming. Host Broadcaster of this year's event was France 5 and le groupe France Télévisions. The Editorial Committee and Advisory Council for the History Congress are international in scope and represent many of the pre-eminent producers and broadcasters of this program genre. Next year's History Congress takes place October 27 to 30, 2004 in Toronto, Canada. For more information, go to www.banffmedia.com.

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