



**Inaugural speeches to the annual Congresses of the
International Commission of Military History
by the President, Prof. Massimo de Leonardis
2016-2024**

2016

XLII International Congress in Plovdiv (Bulgaria)

General Theme:

REGIONAL WARS FROM 17TH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT, AND THEIR GLOBAL IMPACTS

Military and Civilian Authorities, Prof. Dr. Dimitar Minchev, President of the Bulgarian Commission of Military History, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, Уважаеми дами и господа,

between 1885 and 1889 the *Orient Express*, the famous luxury train, reached the Serbian town of [Niš](#) by railway; then a horse carriage arrived to Plovdiv, from where the railway took again the travellers to Constantinople. We stopped in Plovdiv and I am expressing our attitude with these simple words: we regret not being in Istanbul, but we are quite happy to be in Plovdiv.

Last year, I concluded the Congress in Beijing inviting to move from an imperial town to another. We cannot say that Plovdiv is an imperial town, but certainly it has been at the crossword of empires and ranks among world's oldest cities, since already in the 12th century BC the previous village evolved into a real town populated by Thracians. In its long history, Plovdiv was known with various different names, as, for example, Philippopolis and Trimontium. Its artistic heritage is famous and protected by the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) and Plovdiv will be European Capital of Culture in 2019.

From 1878 Plovdiv was the capital of the Province of Eastern Rumelia, which in 1885 was unified with the Principality of Bulgaria. On Tuesday evening we shall have the opportunity to attend the celebration of the Anniversary of the Unification of Northern and Southern Bulgaria. This opportunity adds significance to our presence here and value to our cultural programme.

Above all we are extremely grateful to the Bulgarian Commission of Military History, which is organizing its third ICMH International Congress in four years. Moreover, while the 2012 Congress in Sofia was normally scheduled, the Congress in Varna in 2014 replaced one which could not be organized and the present Congress takes place in a real emergency at a very short notice: about forty days, after the cancellation of the event in Turkey. So, the Bulgarian Commission has secured a very important place in ICMH history.

Much credit for this goes to our colleague and friend Col. Prof. Dimitar Minchev, President since 1995 of the Bulgarian Commission, and to Dr. Dobromir Totev, Permanent Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defence, who granted the generous and staunch support of his department.

Permettez-moi un comment personnel. Ceci est ma dixième visite en Bulgarie dans les dernières huit années. Pendant ces visites j'ai eu l'opportunité de connaître ce pays magnifique et sa courageuse et laborieuse population. Grâce au Dr. Minchev et à mon élève le Prof. Kiril Plamen Kartaloff, je peux affirmer que je connais plus régions et monuments du « pays des roses » que beaucoup des Bulgares. Mercredi nous visiterons la vallée des roses. Je ne sais pas si quelqu'un vient du Texas ; dans le cas savez que les roses bulgares ne sont pas jaunes mais rosées ou légèrement rouges.

J'ai dit que nous regrettons de n'être pas à Istanbul et je veux prononcer quelques mots d'appréciation pour la Commission Turque d'Histoire Militaire qui travaillait en étroite et collaborative consultation avec le Bureau Exécutif dans la préparation du Congrès, prenait la décision responsable et courageuse de l'annuler en face d'une situation grave et imprévisible et offrait sa

collaboration dans la gestion des conséquences de l'annulation. J'exprime mes meilleurs vœux à nos collègues Turques, les militaires et les académiciens civils, en effet à tous les intellectuels, en leur souhaitant de pouvoir continuer leur travail en liberté et paix.

Certainement ces événements n'ont pas accru ma réputation d'analyste (ou peut-être de cartomancienne), parce que j'envoyai mon appel à la participation juste à la veille de la tentative de coup d'état et quand le Congrès d'Istanbul fut annulé j'écrivais qu'il était impossible d'organiser un autre Congrès en 2016.

But then Dimitar came to our rescue. After a rapid but thorough consultation, the ExBoard unanimously decided to accept his brave proposal. We considered that an emergency Congress with possible shortcomings (which did not happen however) was better than no Congress. After looking at our programme and at your participation I can say that we took the right decision and I am grateful to all delegates and accompanying persons: your presence here is a testimony that ICMH is a strong organization made of loyal members and able to surmount the most serious difficulties.

We are an organization which does not forget his members who are no longer with us. Tradition demands that during the President's inaugural speech memory is made of the colleagues who passed away in the last year. The death last March of Prof. Dr. John Guilmartin is a great loss for the United States and indeed the ICMH community. A veteran pilot decorated with two Silver Stars he became a renowned military historian focusing on the XVI and XVII centuries but writing also on more recent topics. I ask the audience to observe a minute of silence in his remembrance.

I come now to some remarks on our Congress' General theme: *Regional Wars from 17th Century to the Present, and Their Global Impacts*. I do not pretend to give a comprehensive lecture, just a few comments on two issues.

The first is the relationship between regional and global wars. Our chronology starts at the middle of XVIII century. In fact, in his *History of the English-Speaking Peoples* Winston Churchill¹ describes the Seven Years War of 1756-1763 as the first world war, fought in four continents, a judgement shared by professional historians. Actually, the first hostilities broke out in North America two years earlier; in 1754 the Governor of Virginia sent a military expedition against French positions in the Ohio Valley: British troops were commanded by a 21-year-old Colonel, George Washington. In May 1756 Britain formally declared war to France, when French ships carried troops along the St. Lawrence River in defence of Canada and in Europe the Duke of Richelieu besieged the British fortress in Majorca. Hostilities on the continent broke out on 29th August 1756 when King Frederick II of Prussia, who had formed an alliance with Great Britain, attacked Saxony, one of the small German states in league with Austria. He intended this as a bold pre-emption of an anticipated Austro-French invasion of Silesia.

In Europe the war saw the “reversal of alliances”, with France aligning with the Hapsburg after centuries of confrontation, Russia entering the concert of Europe and the power politics’ competition, and Prussia emerging as a Great Power. In Europe the war regulated issues of balance of power inherited from the past. Outside the Old Continent it settled the imperial balance in favour of Britain, which acquired predominance in Canada and India.

Here the decisive battle was fought in 1757 at Palasi, which may be considered a model of the tactics which in modern and contemporary history allowed smaller European-led troops to prevail over much more numerous indigene forces. General Robert Clive was in command of about 800 Europeans and 2,000 Hindu *sepoys*, with 8 guns and defeated 34,000 Moghul foot soldiers and 15,000 cavalymen, with 53 guns. The victory was due not only to his superior attitudes of commander, to the bravery and the training of his troops, who covered their ammunitions with tarpaulins which

¹ W. Churchill, *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, vol. III, *The Age of Revolution* [London 1956].

protected them from a very strong monsoon rain, which got spoiled those of their adversaries, but also to a clever job of intelligence and diplomacy, which obtained that most of Moghul troops fled the battlefield.

Les guerres de la Révolution française et napoléoniennes ne peuvent pas être définies comme guerres mondiales, même s'ils furent combattus aussi hors de l'Europe. Cependant ils provoquaient un conflit local entre le Royaume Uni et les Etats Unis en 1812-1815 et, surtout, l'invasion Française de la Péninsule Ibérique fut à l'origine du procès d'indépendance de l'Amérique Latine.

The Great War or First World War, occasioned by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria Este, had its roots in mainly European problems: the aspiration of France to recover Alsace and Lorraine, the rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Russia in the Balkans, the preoccupation of the United Kingdom that the German Empire might alter the balance of power in Europe, the naval and commercial competition between London and Berlin. The latter's *Weltpolitik* annoyed Britain, but in my opinion Fritz Fisher's thesis that Imperial Germany aimed to world domination is greatly exaggerated². While the war was fought in the Far East, in the Middle East, in the Atlantic, and in Africa, the focus was on the European Continent. The consequences of the war, or better of the Paris Conference, which produced just a truce not treaties of peace, affected and still affect Europe, in particular Eastern Europe, the Near and Middle East. The war was described as «the suicide of civilized Europe», by Pope Benedict XV³. In 1917 the two future Superpowers appeared on the world scenario: the United States and Bolshevik Russia, from 1922 Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics (USSR).

² F. Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18* [Düsseldorf 2013].

³ Letters *Al tremendo conflitto*, 4th March 1916, and *Il 27 aprile*, 5th May 1917, and Apostolic Exhortation *Dès les début*, 1st August 1917, in *Insegnamenti pontifici*, ed. by Monaci di Solesmes, vol. V, *La pace internazionale*, parte prima, *La guerra moderna*, [Roma 1958] pp. 124-25, 129, and 131-35.

Most historians date the beginning of the Second World War on 1st September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. In fact, however, the Second World War began earlier, on 7th July 1937, when the Japanese Empire launched total war against China. The Tripartite Powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan), lacked strategic coordination and common purposes, as shown by the fact that Tokyo did not attack Russia when on 27th November 1941 German *Panzergruppe 4* was 30 km from the Kremlin. A week after the fall of Singapore, on 22nd March 1942 Ambassador Ulrich von Hassell noted in his diary: «It is said that Hitler himself is not entirely enthusiastic about the gigantic successes of the Japanese, and has said he would gladly send the English twenty divisions to help throw back the yellow men»⁴. On the contrary the United Kingdom and the United States agreed their strategy even before Washington's formal entrance into the war, having military conversations from 29th January and 29th March 1941, which produced decision enforced after the Pearl Harbor attack. Certainly, the Anglo-American Special Relationship was not without dissensions but «was probably the most remarkable alliance of modern history»⁵.

A good history of the Cold War written by an Italian scholar bears the subtitle *The Last Conflict for Europe*⁶. This is correct, but incomplete, since the Cold War involved the entire world. Actually, the period between 1945 and 1989 saw peace in Europe, but not outside. The two blocks clashed in the so called “wars by proxy”, from Korea to Vietnam to the many Communist guerrillas, which were also wars of liberation from colonialism. In some cases, as the confrontation among Israel and the Arab countries, the regional conflicts, which had local motivations, were arbitrarily inserted in the contest of the East-West confrontation. In other instances, many leaders in the Third World took their sides not in the name of ideology but of national interest and sometimes changed allegiance according to circumstance. For example, when the Empire of Ethiopia was pro-Western Somalia was pro-Soviet;

⁴ U. von Hassell, *The von Hassell Diaries 1938-1944* (London 1948), p. 22.

⁵ D. Reynolds, *Roosevelt, Churchill and the Wartime Anglo-American Alliance, 1939-1945: Towards a New Synthesis*, in W. M. R. Louis and Hedley Bull, *The “Special Relationship”. Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* [Oxford 1986] p. 40.

⁶ F. Romero, *Storia della guerra fredda. L'ultimo conflitto per l'Europa* [Torino 2009].

when Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown by the friend of Moscow Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Somali leader Mohamed Siad Barre became pro-Western. As another Italian historian writes⁷, in Europe a fake war was staged, «rich and abstract»; elsewhere true, dirty, «poor and concrete» wars were fought, having already many of the features that those who ignore history wrongly think have appeared only recently.

In general, I would say that knowledge of history helps demythologizing pretended innovations. For example, car bombs already existed in the past: in December 1800 in Paris a carriage filled with gunpowder and nails aimed to strike at First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte killed 22 persons and injured about one hundred. Each historical period had its favourite bomb. In the XIX century it was the “Orsini bomb”, which was named after the Italian Felice Orsini, who in January 1858 killed 12 persons and injured other 156, leaving unscathed Emperor Napoleon III, protected by an armoured carriage. In the XX century was very popular the “Molotov bomb”. Terrorists and fanatics employ the technology available in their age. Already in 1950 Carl Schmitt⁸ described the «industrial partisan», who in the name of a «moral obligation» kills using modern technological means.

To conclude, a few remarks on the sub-theme pertaining to the character of wars. In world history we find many different types of war. Trying to simplify, we may say that we see the alternation of two models of wars, for which we could use two different words employed by ancient Greeks, in particular Plato⁹, in describing conflicts: *στάσις* [*stasis*] and *πόλεμος* [*polemos*]. *Στάσις* is a war among adversaries divided by interests, but in the framework of a shared institutional system and common values. *Πόλεμος* is a war among enemies, divided by opposed visions of the world and political systems. As remarked by Raymond Aron¹⁰, international systems, from an ideological perspective, may be homogeneous or inhomogeneous: the former will generate *στάσις*, as in the periods between

⁷ E. Galli della Loggia, *Il mondo contemporaneo (1945-1980)* [Bologna 1982], p. 259.

⁸ C. Schmitt, *Teoria del partigiano. Integrazione al concetto del politico* [Milano 2005], pp. 110 and 130.

⁹ Platone, *Dialoghi politici e lettere*, ed. by F. Adorno, vol. I [Torino 1970], *Repubblica*, libro V, cap. XVI, p. 426.

¹⁰ R. Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations* [Paris 1962], pp. 108- 113

the peace of Westphalia in 1648 and the French revolution and between 1815 and 1914, the latter will provoke *πόλεμος*, as the wars of religion, the wars of revolutionary and Napoleonic France and the Second World War. The First World War started as a classical conflict of power politics but then acquired an ideological character. Civil wars are mostly *πόλεμος*, because they are the «most “total” wars, during which there are neither limits to aggressiveness nor humanitarian rules»¹¹. I would say that regional conflicts are mostly *στάσις*.

However, in history every classification has its own exceptions. In the various ages, besides the dominant type of war others may be present, maybe in different geopolitical areas, while within the same conflict we may see different typologies of war. For example, during the Second World War we may find both savage brutality and chivalrous episodes typical of the Middle Ages. For example, in June 1940 when Marshal of the Air Force Italo Balbo's plane was mistakenly downed by Italian anti-aircraft batteries, Sir Arthur Murray Longmore, Commander in chief of British Air Forces in the Middle East dropped a message of condolences and appreciation for the famous pilot.

After 1945 and after 1990 it seems that each conflict of past millennia left its heritage. Nowadays unfortunately “organized violence” prevails over “regular” wars.¹²

Many thanks for your attention, merci beaucoup pour votre attention, много благодаря за ВАШЕТО ВНИМАНИЕ.

¹¹ G. Miglio, *Guerra, pace, diritto. Una ipotesi generale sulla regolarità del ciclo politico*, in Id., *Le regolarità della politica. Scritti scelti, raccolti e pubblicati dagli allievi* [Milano 1988], vol. II, p. 772.

¹² See M. de Leonardis, *Ultima ratio regum. Forza militare e relazioni internazionali* [Milano 2013²], in particular chapter III; Bulgarian edition: *ULTIMA RATIO REGUM. Военна сила и международни отношения* [София 2011].

2017

XLIII International Congress in Douala (Cameroon)

General Theme:

LES GUERRES MONDIALES ET LES COLONIES DANS L'HISTOIRE WORD WARS AND COLONIES IN HISTORY

L'organisation que je l'honneur de présider s'appelle Commission Internationale d'Histoire Militaire. Notre caractère international est bien démontré par nos derniers congrès. En 2015 nous étions à Pékin, en Asie, l'année dernier nous étions à Plovdiv en Europe, maintenant nous sommes à Douala, en Afrique.

Dans l'histoire de nos colloques annuels, commencé en 1970, c'est la troisième fois que nous venons en Afrique : c'était Rabat, au Maroc, en 2005, Cape Town, en Afrique du Sud, en 2007, c'est Douala, au Cameroon, aujourd'hui. Après l'Afrique qui borde le Méditerranée et l'Afrique australe, nous venons maintenant dans l'Afrique noire, dans un pays qu'est considéré « l'Afrique en miniature » en raison de sa diversité climatologique, géographique, humaine, et culturelle : plages, montagnes, forêts pluviaux et savanes. Nous venons ici avec émotion et curiosité, convaincues que le Cameroon est le pays idéal pour abriter les discussions de notre Congrès, pour les raisons que je vais esquisser.

Our general theme is *World Wars and Colonies in History*. Actually, during contemporary history, before becoming an independent State, Cameroon experienced close relations with some of the main European colonial powers. Portuguese sailors reached the coast in 1472. They noted an abundance of the ghost shrimp *Lepidophthalmus turneranus* in the Wouri River and named it *Rio dos Camarões* (*Shrimp River*), which became Cameroon in English. The German Empire claimed the territory as the colony of Kamerun in 1884 and with the defeat of Germany in the First World War, Kamerun became a League of Nations' mandate territory of type B and in 1919 was split into French Cameroun and British Cameroon. The League of Nations' mandates were converted into United Nations' Trusteeships in 1946, and the question of independence became a pressing issue in French Cameroun.

On 1st January 1960 French Cameroun gained independence from France. On 1st October 1961, the formerly British Southern Cameroon united with French Cameroun to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. As a heritage of its past, Cameroon is a member of both the Commonwealth of Nations and of *La Francophonie* and French and English are both official languages. Therefore, Cameroon is actually the ideal place to discuss our general theme.

Le période colonial a laissé une hérité mixte dans laquelle se mêlent bons et mauvais souvenirs. J'ose dire que le cas du Cameroun est un excellent exemple de la prévalence d'une atmosphère de collaboration et amitié entre les anciens colonisateurs et les anciens colonisés.

As an Italian, allow me to recall that the President of the Italian Republic Sergio Mattarella in March 2016 paid a State visit in Cameroon, which was reciprocated one year later by the visit in Italy of the President of the Republic of Cameroon H. E. Paul Biya. On this last occasion it was remarked that Italy and Cameroon entertain today «extraordinarily excellent relations in all fields».

There is a certain continuity between our Congresses of 2016 and 2017. Last year the general theme was *Regional Wars from 17th Century to the Present, and Their Global Impacts*. Actually, wars in the colonies may fall in the category of regionals war and some papers dealt with them. This year

we go more deeply into the subject, while we concentrate on the XX century. A few papers deal with the century's first decade, most of them focus on the period of the Great war and beyond.

The Seven Years War of 1756-1763 has been described as the first world war, fought in four continents. Actually, the first hostilities broke out in North America two years earlier and the outcome was a shift of the balance of colonial empires in favour of Britain, which acquired predominance in Canada and India, dislodging France. On the contrary, if we look to the last century, as we do this year, most historians would agree that the First World War of 1914-1918 originated in the European Continent and was focused on it. The German *Weltpolitik* annoyed the United Kingdom, but in my opinion Fritz Fisher's idea that Imperial Germany aimed to world domination is greatly exaggerated. However, the war was fought also in other continents and the peace conference had colonies as one of his problems. Germany was easily deprived of its colonial territories to the benefit of Britain, of the British Dominions, of France, of Japan, of the United States, even if Washington has always rejected the idea of having "colonies". Italy was annoyed for not receiving a fair share of the colonial booty, but it was not a prominent international issue. Much trickier was to divide the spoils of the Ottoman Empire establishing a new map of the Near and Middle East.

Adolphe Hitler n'était pas intéressé à regagner une Empire colonial pour l'Allemagne hors de l'Europe. Il voulait un espace vital (*Lebensraum*) en Europe orientale pour des raisons économiques et stratégiques. En plus, son idéologie raciste considérait les peuples Slaves inférieures. La Deuxième Guerre Mondiale commençait en Europe le 1^{er} septembre 1939 pour des raisons d'équilibre Européen. Mais un Chinois dirait que ceci est une vision euro centrique, et que la guerre, appelé par lui la Guerre Globale Antifasciste, en effet commençait plus tôt, le 7 Juillet 1937, quand l'Empire Japonais déclenchait la guerre totale contre la Chine.

Les Européens combattirent hors d'Europe et employèrent troupes coloniales sur le vieux continent : les Français des Africains, les Anglais des Indiens et des Népalais, les fameux et terribles Gurkhas. Cette participation favorisé le réveil des peuples colonisées, qui était déjà à l'ordre du jour.

La défaite par les Japonais à Singapour sonnait le glas de l'Empire britannique. L'Europe avait complété son suicide comme dominatrice du monde, commencée avec la Grande Guerre.

The real shots of the third world war of the XX century were fired outside Europe. A good history of the Cold War written by an Italian scholar bears the subtitle *The Last Conflict for Europe*. This is correct, but incomplete, since the Cold War involved the entire world. Actually, the period between 1945 and 1989 saw peace in Europe, but not outside. The two blocks clashed in the so called “wars by proxy”, from Korea to Vietnam to the many Communist guerrillas, which were also wars of liberation from colonialism.

I tried to sketch a broad framework for the discussions of this week, which promise to be quite interesting, giving a look to our sixteen panels and to the PhD candidates seminar. It will not be an easy task for the final rapporteur to summarize them. I am relieved that my task is to introduce and not to conclude.

I wish the Congress good scientific work, interesting cultural visits and pleasant social activities. We are all very grateful to our Cameroonians hosts for their clever efforts in organizing in the best way this 43rd International Congress of ICMH.

2018

XLIV Congress in Jerusalem (Israel)

General Theme

THE CREATION OF NEW STATES AND COLLAPSE OF OLD EMPIRES IN THE XXTH CENTURY

Mr Arie Mualem, Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Defence, Dear Col. Benny Michelson, President of the Israeli Commission of Military History, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs,

the activities of the International Commission of Military History run continuously during the entire year. However, the Congress in late summer is certainly our most important annual event.

ICMH Congresses have a very peculiar and valuable pattern which is not very frequent in other scholarly societies. Besides scientific sessions, we have cultural tours, visits to military bases, attendance to military exercises, and social events. Sometimes these activities take place in locations opened just for us. All this offers many opportunities to acquire new insights, establish and develop contacts, exchange ideas, launch projects. In the Congress, the General Assembly provides to National Commissions a unique occasion to express their voice as a corporate body; scholars not affiliated to ICMH have the best opportunity to approach it. Actually, I welcome the presence here of scholars from two countries not yet affiliated to ICMH: Angola and Lithuania. I am glad that also this year many scholars and accompanying persons took this unique opportunity, and I am most grateful

to our Israeli hosts for organizing it. After China in 2015, Bulgaria in 2016 and Cameroon last year, we come now to Israel. A tour which demonstrates that ICMH has a wide geopolitical outreach.

For the second time the ICMH annual Congress is staged in Israel, the previous one being in Tel Aviv in 1984 on the general theme: *Warfare throughout the Ages between Small States and Big Powers*. I wonder how many veterans of that Congress are here today; certainly, our senior President of Honour, Dr. Cornelis (Kees) Schulten, at that time ICMH Secretary General, and my distinguished colleague and friend Prof. Matitiah Mayzel; but also others from Israel: I had not the possibility to compare the lists of participants.

I could hardly see a location as fascinating as the one of this year's Congress. Jerusalem and the entire surrounding territory evoke powerful memories which for three religions, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are sacred. There are few regions in the world with such a rich historical heritage like the Middle East, of which the State of Israel is a fundamental actor. Geographically we are in Asia, but in Israel political culture and institutions are largely European.

During the centuries, this region belonged to various empires, either formally or informally; therefore, is the ideal place to host a Congress on a very original and challenging general theme: *The Creation of New States and Collapse of Old Empires in the XXth Century*.

Actually, without considering previous periods, Palestine was a part of the Roman Empire named *Roman Judea*. Until 1991, before recruits for the Israeli Armoured Corps were formally accepted into the army, they were required to complete a dawn trek to the top of Masada, the site of the last resistance to the Roman Army in 74 a. C. There, they would take their oath of allegiance to the nation of Israel, including the shout: «Masada will not fall again»! The rule of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire lasted until the 7th Century, when started a long period of Islamic potentates, interrupted for about 100 years by the Kingdom of Jerusalem and for a longer period by other minor

Crusader states. Since 1516 Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. From 1923 to 1948, as a Class A mandate of the League of Nations, Palestine was included in the British imperial system.

Allow me a few considerations on the concept of Empire¹. During history, the word «empire» has been used for quite different political, constitutional, and territorial situations. The ancient Roman Empire preserved the appearance of republican institutions and never was a formal monarchy. The restoration of the Empire in Western Christianity through the Holy Roman Empire had institutions quite different from those of the Byzantine Empire, the direct continuation of the Eastern Roman Empire. Neither the Habsburg Empire nor the German Empire, at the moment of its formation, had overseas colonies. The British Empire was not led by an Emperor, since the title bestowed to Queen Victoria in 1876 was related only to India; a minor similar example was that of Italy, where King Vittorio Emanuele III took in 1936 the title of Emperor of Ethiopia. France greatly expanded its colonial empire under the III republic. Nowadays, only Japan has an Emperor, the *Tennō*, “celestial sovereign”, but certainly no longer an Empire. Already in the past, some Monarchs styled themselves Emperors without possessing a proper empire.

This list is focused mainly to Europe and therefore is not exhaustive but suffices to show that the substance of imperial power is more important than its form and that in different historical ages the substance may adopt different forms. Emperor is the top title among nobility ranks, but for historians and geo-politicians is much more important the concept of empire, which is identified with vast territorial holdings and the rule over different peoples rather than the formal title of its sovereign or head.

I will try to identify some features of the Empires. An Empire is much more than a large state and behaves differently. Normally an Empire considers itself the creator and the guarantor of an

¹ For a general introduction to the topic from the point of a political scientist see Herfried Münkler, *Imperi. Il dominio del mondo dall'antica Roma agli Stati Uniti*, il Mulino, Bologna 2008 (original German edition, Berlin 2005). For a general historical perspective limited to modern and contemporary ages see John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405*, Bloomsbury Press, London 2008.

international order which preserves peace and must be defended against chaos; it claims the imperial mission of spreading its own civilization. Time and space are also criteria for identifying empires. Duration makes a real Empire; this would exclude some Asiatic potentates like that of Gengis Khan but also in Europe the German Empire founded in 1871. Both didn't cross what a scholar described as the «Augustean threshold»², meaning the transition from expansion to consolidation, which took place with Roman Emperor Augustus.

Empire evokes a universal domination, but actually different Empires may co-exist, either because they lived distant and without contacts, like the Roman and the Chinese ones during antiquity, or because they had different characters and more or less agreed on their respective spheres of influence, like the British and Czarist empire, or the American and Soviet in contemporary age.

Colonial empires may have different characteristics. The Portuguese Empire, with the major exception of Brazil, privileged commercial bases, while the French and the British dominated large territories, with different institutional means. In governing their territories, while the French privileged a centralist and uniform pattern, the British preferred a variety of institutional forms to control their territories, in some cases they opted for an indirect rule and a «dual mandate»³, leaving in place traditional authorities controlled by a British resident or an advisor.

Colonial empires no longer exist, replaced in many cases by different types of influence, the so-called neo-colonialism. Empires may relinquish the territories' administration and grant political independence to local populations, but later the mother nation may come back controlling commerce, services, information, investments, even military bases or maintaining the possibility of military intervention.

² Michael Doyle, *Empires*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-London 1984, pp. 93-97 and 101-10.

³ Sir Frederick D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London 1922.

In this field a lively debate exists on the American influence in the world. This debate started at the beginning of the XX century, ignited by the U. S. takeover of Philippines, as a consequence of the war against Spain for Cuba, which also fell under the strong influence of Washington. The debate was revived after the Second World War and after the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, Raymond Aron titled « *République impériale* », “imperial republic”, a history of American foreign policy in the second post war period⁴.

The American “empire” is partially different from its predecessors, not just because it derives itself from former colonies, but above all because the direct control of colonies is by now an antiquated way to exercise power in the external world and prevails an informal pre-eminence based on influence and commerce, no longer on territorial dominance. In this respect, we should remember a consideration made about the British Empire, which applies also to the American one. Britain’s colonial possessions, its formal Empire, gave an inadequate and misleading image of the importance of British power, which relied on the informal empire, made of investments and interests in territories not formally controlled. That’s why in the case of Great Britain the expression “imperial system” must be preferred to “empire”⁵. We could similarly say that the United States possess an *informal empire*⁶ or control an “imperial system”; we could also describe them as a post-colonial or post-modern empire. They exercise a hegemony, which is a potential empire not formalized for many reasons.

Joseph Nye measures the power of a State distinguishing between *hard power* and *soft power*⁷. Hard power is the capacity of obtaining a result through incentives and coercion, making the others do what the dominant power wants. Soft power is the capacity of obtaining the same result through a

⁴ Raymond Aron, *République impériale : Les Etats-Unis dans le monde, 1945-1972*, Calmann-Lévy, Paris 1973.

⁵ John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation. The Retreat from Empire in the Postwar World*, Londra 1988, pp. 7, 25, 27.

⁶ An “informal” American Empire is advocated by Richard N. Haas, *The Opportunity. America’s Moment to Alter History’s Course*, Public Affairs, New York 2005.

⁷ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power. The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York 2004, pp. 1-32.

mere power of attraction and conviction, making the others desire what the dominant power wants. You cannot exercise a hegemony without consensus, is the remark of John Lewis Gaddis⁸. The United States have unmatched *hard e soft powers* and are therefore a world superpower.

The Scottish historian Niall Ferguson, now living in America, has no doubts: from the military, economic and cultural points of view, the United States have all the features of past empires⁹. However, he says that the United States are an «empire in denial», unable for many reasons to fully play their role and reluctant to a long-term commitment to manage the international system.

The XX century witnessed the fall of many empires in different waves: after the two world wars, during and after the Cold War. Empires were replaced by national States, even in regions where national sentiments mean little and other forms of aggregation prevail ethnicities, tribes, clans.

Lord Acton in his *History of Freedom* writes: «If we take the establishment of liberty for the realization of moral duties to be the end of civil society, we must conclude that those states are substantially the most perfect which, like the British and Austrian Empires, include various distinct nationalities without oppressing them»¹⁰. However, the Habsburg empire was labelled as «the prison of the peoples», an opinion rightly contested by quite a lot of historians.

The ICMH, as a «non-governmental and non-profit organisation», remains aloof from current political issues, and I will just confine myself to some historiographic considerations. The First World War advanced the application of the principle of nationality, extending it to Central-Eastern Europe and thus completing a new map of Europe which had begun with the Italian and German unifications.

⁸ John L. Gaddis, *Attacco a sorpresa e sicurezza: le strategie degli Stati Uniti*, It. ed., Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2005, p. 109.

⁹ In Niall Ferguson-Robert Kagan, *The United States Is, and Should Be, an Empire*, A New Atlantic Initiative Debate, 17-7-2003, http://www.aci.org/events/eventID.428,filter.all/event_detail.asp.

¹⁰ First Baron Acton, *The History of Freedom and other Essays*, Macmillan, London 1907, p. 298.

Actually, the triumph of the principles of nationality and peoples' self-determination was incomplete. French historian Pierre Renouvin remarked that in 1919 Europe national minorities were approximately a half than in 1914 and that about 30 million of persons still felt foreigners in the State to which they belonged¹¹. That depended not only on the real difficulty of enforcing the principle of nationality in Central-Eastern Europe, but also from the winners' will to take into consideration other factors. «The result was a curious mixture of power and morality, two elements that ever mix badly [...] a compound of morality with economics» – is the comment of American historian René Albrecht-Carrié¹².

An Italian diplomatic historian, adds: «If a balance among the different criteria had been maintained, a satisfactory peace could have been achieved; it was indeed the feeling that this never happened and that, according to different situations, the ethnic, or economic or strategic criterion prevailed, always to the advantage of winners that threw discredit on a peace which should have been fair and generated among the defeated the feeling of having been betrayed»¹³. Actually, from the Paris Conference emerged an armistice for twenty years, not a real peace, as Field-Marshal Ferdinand Foch remarked after the signature of the Treaty of Versailles¹⁴. Moreover, not all problems found a solution in Paris. Next year Congress in Sofia will just address the general theme *Unsettled problems after the 1919 Peace Conference: military conflicts and diplomatic negotiations*.

The previous considerations apply to Europe. If we look to the region of Middle East and North Africa, we see the delusive confirmation or even expansion of Western Powers' control, but actually the path towards independent states had begun.

¹¹ Pierre Renouvin, *Le crisi del secolo XX*, 1, *Dal 1914 al 1929*, It. ed., UNEDI, Roma 1975, p. 162 [vol. VII of the *Storia politica del mondo*, edited by the same author].

¹² René Albrecht-Carrié, *A diplomatic history of Europe since the Congress of Vienna*, Harper & Row, New York 1973, p. 382.

¹³ F. Curato, *Introduzione a La Conferenza della Pace 1919-1920*, ISPI, Milano, 1942, vol. I., p. 17 [my translation].

¹⁴ «This is not Peace. It is an Armistice for twenty years» (quoted in Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, I, *The Gathering Storm*, The Riverside Press, Cambridge Mss. 1948², p. 7).

The Second World War saw the emergence of two dominant superpowers, creating a bipolar system. At the same time, in about 20 years almost all colonial empires had disappeared. Unfortunately, this did not inaugurate an era of peace.

The third wave of independent states came after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet “empire”. After the period in which peace had been guaranteed in Europe by the balance of terror, the *Mutual Assured Destruction*, war devastated again some regions of the Old Continent. Old quarrels reappeared, old and new conflicts aggravated. But, as I said, I will not embark on a review of current situations.

Giving a rapid look to our scientific programme, we may remark that all the three phases I mentioned are dealt by the papers to be presented. If I am not mistaken, about 27 papers consider the First World War and its consequences: about 22 the Second World War, and about 10 the period after the Cold War. Other papers fall across different periods or consider conceptual issues. Understandably, the independence of the State of Israel involved many nations and various papers will present new insights on this.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, I congratulate our hosts for organizing this Congress and I wish all of you five intense days of high level academic and cultural work.

2019

XLV Congress in Sofia (Bulgaria)

General Theme:

UNSETTLED PROBLEMS AFTER THE 1919 PEACE CONFERENCE: MILITARY CONFLICTS AND DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS

Your Excellency the representative of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, Your Excellency Dr Krasimir Karakachanov, Minister of Defence, Col. Prof Dimitar Minchev, President of the Bulgarian Commission of Military History, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, Signore e Signori, Señoras y Señores, Meine Damen und Herren, Uvazhaemi dami i gospoda,

the foundation stone of the Central Military Club, hosting our Congress, was laid in 1895. In that period over all Europe the military, and in particular the officers, formed an elite, enjoying a prominent position in the State and society. It was well deserved, because the armed forces were the pillar which had obtained and guaranteed the independence.

I remember that some years ago, during one of my previous visits to Bulgaria, I was interviewed by a lady journalist of the military television. Her opening question was quite baffling: «Professor, during history there ever was a war which solved any problem or had a useful purpose»? I started my answer saying: «Madam, I remind you that without wars neither your country nor my own would exist as independent Nation States». So it is perfectly understandable that in many cities

there are military clubs hosted in fine buildings like this one, which was paid by the Officers' association and is one of the prestigious locations for cultural events in Sofia.

I need not to rehearse once again the reasons why the ICMH Congress is organized for the fourth time in 8 years in Bulgaria, because these are well known and have been explained various times. Here and today we must only express gratitude to our Bulgarians hosts for Sofia 2019, after Sofia 2012, Varna 2014 and Plovdiv 2016. I would in particular thank Mr. Krasimir Karakachanov, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Ivo Antonov, Director for "Social Policy and Policy on Military Patriotic Education" and Chairman of the Congress' Organising Committee, and of course our long-time friend Col. Prof Dimitar Minchev, president of the Bulgarian Commission of Military History.

Personally, it is my sixteenth visit to Bulgaria since 2009, more or less evenly divided between engagements connected with ICMH and other cultural links depending from my role of Professor of History of International Relations. Certainly you have noted that today I wear a medal with ribbon and a badge. Actually, I share General de Gaulle's opinion, who once said: *«on ne demande pas les décorations, on ne les refuse pas et on ne les porte pas»* («you don't ask for decorations, you don't refuse them and you don't wear them»). But today I could not comply with the third rule, because I am deeply honoured for having received last May from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences the Marin Drinov medal with ribbon and from the ministry of defence the Decoration of honour 1st rank and I feel gratefully obliged to wear these decorations in this opening ceremony.

As an Italian, let me recall that 2019 marks 140 years of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Italy. The Italian Ambassador will attend our closing dinner on Friday evening; today his deputy is sitting here in the front row. Some years ago, Mr. Francesco Calderoli was one of my students at the Master in Diplomacy and Sofia is his first post abroad. Also at the Congress of 2012 the then Deputy Chief of Mission was a student of mine.

This year's general theme has a solid connection with that of last year in Israel, a Congress we all remember with great satisfaction. In 2018 we discussed *The Creation of New States and the*

Collapse of Old Empires in the XX Century, this week we will focus on *Unsettled Problems after the 1919 Peace Conference: Military Conflicts and Diplomatic Negotiations*. Actually the collapse of old Empires after the First World War created a number of problems, some of which were not settled at the Paris Peace Conference.

In this centennial of the Peace Conference, dozens of conferences have been organized on that subject; actually our Congress preferred not to rehearse once again that topic and choose instead to investigate the problems left open by the peace conference.

I will just make few considerations on the peace conference: «This is not peace. It is an Armistice for twenty years», this was the comment made by Field Marshal Ferdinand Foch on the signature of the treaty of Versailles¹. Not differently, in his first encyclical *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio* of 22nd December 1922 Pope Pius XI described the treaties of Paris as an «illusory peace, written only on paper»².

However, the motivations of these two similar opinions were different. The inter-allied Commander didn't discuss the severity of the treaty but the weakness of the clauses to enforce it. On the contrary the Catholic Church talked of a «false peace», with which the «seeds of new wars» were being sown, just because it considered it harshly punitive and unjust.

Actually, historians charge the failure of peace to different factors. Some accuse the revengeful inspiration of the treaties, others the weakness of the guarantees for the preservation of peace, others still, point out to factors not connected with the peace conference or subsequent to it, first and foremost the neo-isolationism of the United States. French famous diplomatic historian Pierre Renouvin stressed «the contrast existing between the strictness of some clauses and the lability of the guarantees provided for their enforcement»³.

¹ Quote in W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, I, *The Gathering Storm*, Cambridge Mss. 1948², p. 7.

² https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19221223_ubi-arcano-dei-consilio.html, n. 21.

³ P. Renouvin, *Il trattato di Versailles*, It. ed., Milano, 1970, p. 122 [my translation].

An Italian diplomatic historian, Augusto Torre, confirmed the opinion of Field Marshal Foch: «The treaty of Versailles and those following it did not establish a peace but a truce. The deliberations of 1919 proved to be more fleeting and ephemeral than those of the Congresses of Vienna, of Paris in 1856 and of Berlin»⁴.

In any case, neither the formal end of the hostilities, on 8th November 1918, after the previous armistices on other fronts, nor the signature of the peace treaties meant the end of bloodshed. In 1919 in an electoral speech in Dundee, Winston Churchill remarked that «Europe and a greater part of Asia were in a welter of anarchy». «Total war had left behind all kinds of detritus that had to be cleared away», is the comment of Churchill's biographer Lawrence James⁵.

A German-British historian, Robert Gerwarth, in his book *The Vanquished. Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923*, writes that, during the years from the official end of hostilities until the treaty of Lausanne of July 1923, «post-war» Europe, was the most violent place in the world, calculating that during those five years the victims of armed conflicts in the Old Continent were much more than four million, which is a figure higher than the casualties suffered in total by the United Kingdom, France and the United States during the Great War. Gerwarth comments that even not exaggerating the “rehabilitation” of pre-war empires shared by many historians it would be difficult to maintain that post-imperial Europe was a better and safer place in respect to that of 1914. The title of the Italian edition of this volume possibly is even more telling: *La rabbia dei vinti. La guerra dopo la guerra* (The wrath of the defeated. The war after the war)⁶.

As a matter of fact, if the majority of territorial disputes saw the confrontation between winners and losers, some territories were contended between new States both emerging as victors from the conflict, as in the cases of *Vil'njus/Vil'na/Wilno* and *Cieszyn/Těšín/Teschen*, claimed respectively by Lithuania and Poland and by Poland and Czechoslovakia. The use of names in

⁴ A. Torre, *Versailles. Storia della conferenza della pace*, Milano, 1940, p. 427 [my translation].

⁵ L. James, *Churchill and Empire: Portrait of an Imperialist*, London 2013, pp. 120-21.

⁶ R. Gerwarth, *The Vanquished. Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923*, London 2017. Italian edition *La rabbia dei vinti. La guerra dopo la guerra*, Bari 2018² (see pp. XII-XIII, XVI).

different languages for the same town reflects the complexity of the historical and ethnic local situation.

With John Horne, another scholar, Gerwarth also edited a collection of essays titled *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*. The introduction opens recalling that until 1923 peace in Europe was shaken by revolutions, counter-revolutions, ethnic strife, pogroms, war of independence, civil wars and inter-states conflicts. Civil wars and inter-state conflicts were inter-connected and bloody as during the Thirty Years' War in the XVII century⁷.

One or more of these types of armed violence affected Russia, Ukraine, Finland, the Baltic States, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Anatolia and Caucasus. Ireland saw a war of independence and a civil war. The Finnish civil war followed the independence from Russia of the former Grand Duchy of Finland, part of the Russian Empire; in six months it provoked more than 36,000 casualties, 1% of the national population.

The main wars between states were fought between Greece and Turkey and between Bolshevik Russia and the reborn Poland (*Polonia restituta*, restored Poland is the name of a high Polish honour), which refused the frontier proposed by the Entente. After alternate events, Poland prevailed and moved towards East its borders with Russia.

Turkey was the only defeated State which managed to change the peace treaty imposed to it at Sèvres in August 1920. Sèvres had been signed by the Ottoman Empire, while the treaty of Lausanne of July 1923 was concluded by the government of the rising Republic of Turkey, proclaimed on the following 29th October, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Between the two treaties, a war was fought between Turkey and Greece; the latter had to renounce all its pretensions on the Turkish territory. Civilians suffered greatly in this conflict and the treaty of Lausanne involved a massive exchange of populations between the two States.

⁷ R. Gerwarth-J. Horne (eds.), *War in Peace. Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, Oxford 2013. Italian edition *Guerra in pace. Violenza paramilitare in Europa dopo la Grande guerra*, Milano-Torino 2013, p. 1.

The conference of peace dissolved without having agreed the frontier between the Kingdom of Italy and the newborn Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later from 1929 Yugoslavia). The issue was settled through diplomatic negotiations between the two countries, firstly with the treaty of Rapallo of November 1920 and then with the treaty of Rome of January 1924. Even if there was no military confrontation between Rome and Belgrade, victims were provoked. In September 1920 the poet soldier Gabriele D'Annunzio leading the so called "legionaries" had occupied the town of Fiume (in Croat Rijeka) where he established a *de facto* "Regency". To implement the treaty of Rapallo, which created the "Free State of Fiume", the Italian government intimated the surrender to the legionaries, who resisted. Twenty-five regular soldiers, twenty-six legionaries and 53 civilians died.

I mentioned this particular problem because it saw the action by para-military troops, the legionaries, who were deserters from the Italian Royal Army and civilian volunteers, a phenomenon which received a new impulse in the post-war years. In Germany they were called *Freikorps*, and played a key role in the Baltic States during their struggle for independence.

The year 1923 was a turning point, which marked a general end of hostilities and disputes. However, in August-September of that year took place the Corfu incident, a diplomatic and military crisis between Greece and Italy, triggered when on 27th August the Italian General Enrico Tellini, heading a commission of the League of Nations to resolve a border dispute between Albania and Greece, was murdered on Greek territory, in Zepi, on the road between Ioannina and Kakavia, along with four members of his staff. Italy sent an ultimatum to Greece and, unsatisfied with Athens' answer, on 31st August a squadron of the Italian Royal Navy bombarded the Greek island of Corfu and landed some thousand troops; Airplanes aided in the attack. The bombardment provoked a number of casualties among the Greek population.

The treaties agreed at Locarno and signed in London on 1st December 1925 seemed to definitely end the post-war period and inaugurate an era of peace. However, Poland was not all happy about these agreements. Col. Józef Beck, future foreign minister, ridiculed the treaties saying:

«Germany was officially asked to attack the east, in return for peace in the west», while Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the “father” of the nation, would say that «every honest Pole spits when he hears this word [Locarno]»⁸.

The culmination of the illusions that “collective security” might guarantee peace was symbolically and deceptively marked by the Briand-Kellogg pact of August 1928. It pretended to abolish wars and was signed by 62 States; only 5 States did not accede to the treaty. Curiously enough Barbados signed the treaty in 1971. Scottish Historian Sir Denis William Brogan comments: «The United States, which had abolished the evils of drink by the Eighteenth Amendment, invited the world to abolish war by taking the pledge. The world, not quite daring to believe or doubt, obeyed»⁹. Alas, the pact lacked any enforcement clause, and in the long run the effect of this declaratory diplomacy was simply to abolish declarations of war, as it happened after the Second World War.

The inter-war period saw a turning point in 1929, opening a decade which precipitated a new war. I will not talk about this period also because most of the papers concern the twenties. Almost 60 papers will be presented, by scholars from 33 countries, 4 of them not yet members of ICMH: Australia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Serbia. I welcome all participants and I wish all of us a successful Congress in every aspect.

Many thanks for your attention, merci beaucoup pour votre attention, molte grazie per la vostra attenzione, muchas gracias por su atención, Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit, mnogo blagodarya za vasheto vnimanie.

⁸ M. Brecher, *The World of Protracted Conflicts*, Lanham, MD 2016. p. 204; P. S. Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies 1919–1925: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from the Paris Peace Conference to Locarno*, ACLS Humanities E-Book, 2008.

⁹ D. W. Brogan, *The French Nation, 1814-1940*, London, p. 267

2020

The Congress was cancelled owing to the pandemic

2021

XLVI Congress in Athens (Greece)

General Theme:

INDEPENDENCE WARS SINCE THE XVIII CENTURY

Professor Syrigos, Deputy Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, General Floros, Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, Major General Rachmanidis, President of the Hellenic Commission of Military History, Dr. Paschalidou, Senior Vice President of ICMH, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, Kerias kai Kirie,

Everybody would be thrilled in coming to Greece, the cradle of European civilization. Our pleasure and excitement are doubled, because this week we have the first opportunity to meet in person since the Congress in Sofia two years ago. As our affiliates are aware, in this difficult period ICMH managed to continue regularly its activities with the only exception of the annual Congress, which was impossible to hold in 2020 in Poznań. Of course, I would not blame at all those of our members who were unable to come here, sometimes under a formal prohibition of their countries' authorities, but certainly I am allowed to highly praise those who are attending. I am sure that their dedication will be rewarded by an excellent Congress.

I have no doubt in expressing this confidence, since the Hellenic Commission of Military History organized this Congress with great courage and competence. Our warmest gratitude goes to General Rachmanidis and his collaborators, first of all Dr. Paschalidou. The Greek Ministry for National Defence gave its full and generous support to the organization and I am particularly glad and honoured of the meeting I will have this afternoon with the Deputy Minister Alkiviadis Stefanis.

For me it is a personal pleasure to see him again after three years; actually, in September 2018 as Chief of Staff of the Hellenic Army he invited the President of ICMH to deliver the keynote speech to the 2nd Land Forces Conference at the Military Academy in Vari.

I also cherish wonderful memories of the XXVII ICMH Congress, held in August 2001 in Athens on the General theme: *Military History and 20th Century Geopolitics*. Previously, in August 1987, Athens hosted the XII ICMH Congress on the General Theme *The First National Fleets: The Use of Steam in Naval Warfare*. Therefore, the Hellenic capital so far is the only town which organized three ICMH Congresses. This year, the bicentennial of the beginning of the Greek war of Independence offers the opportunity to discuss *Independence Wars since the XVIII Century*, a very important topic, which will be dealt by 44 scholars from 27 countries of four continents. The total number of persons present is about 130, a remarkable achievement in this troubled period.

As usual, I will briefly sketch some general reflections on this year's subject. During history, each period saw a prevailing type of war. Within Europe, in modern age we first had the wars of religion between Catholics and protestants. Then the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 introduced the balance of power as the supreme guiding principle of the international system and therefore there were wars against States aspiring to hegemony. Wars of dynastic succession always existed and had two major examples with the war of Spanish succession and the war of Austrian succession. The Ottoman Empire was seen as the common enemy of Christian Europe (albeit not by France), but by the XIX century it was accepted as a legitimate player in the diplomatic game.

With the important antecedent of the United States' war of independence (with the participation of France and Spain in support of the American rebels), the period from the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to the fatal shots at Sarajevo in June 1914 was mostly characterized by wars of independence, from Latin America to Western and Eastern Europe. The principles of nationality and freedom reshaped the map of Europe and gave birth to new independent nation-States.

In some cases, the new States included only a part of the nation and the process of unification lasted a few years or many decades. The Kingdom of Italy was founded in 1861, but acquired Venice

only in 1866 and Rome in 1870. According to a peculiar national view, the First World War was the fourth war of independence for Italy, which obtained Trento and Trieste, Istria and a part of Dalmatia. The Kingdom of Greece established in 1832 included only a small part of the Greek Nation and was enlarged until 1947, when it obtained Rhodes and the Dodecanese islands, which in 1912 Italy had annexed from the Ottoman Empire.

The wars of independence of Greece and Italy were also nourished by the idea of their greatness in Ancient age. The myth of the “third Rome” expressed the aspiration to recover the prestige of the old capital of the Roman Empire, the first Rome, after the centuries of alleged decadence of Papal Rome. Fascism pushed to extreme limits this aspiration to dominate the *Mare Nostrum*. The Greek Declaration of Independence issued in Epidaurus on 15th January 1822 opened with the statement «We, the descendants of the wise and noble nation of the Greeks». Since 1829, the *Megali Idea* (the Great Idea) for almost a century inspired Greek foreign policy, expressing the goal of reviving the Byzantine Empire, by establishing an Hellenic state which would include the large Greek populations that were still under Ottoman rule and all the regions that traditionally belonged to Greeks since ancient times, like parts of the Southern Balkans, Asia Minor and Cyprus.

For the moment, the Declaration of Epidaurus sought to reassure the European Concert of the Great Powers: «The war we are waging against the Turks, far from being founded in demagoguery, seditiousness or the selfish interests of any one part of the Greek nation, is a national and holy war, the object of which is to reconquer our rights to individual liberty, property and honour, rights enjoyed by all the civilized neighbouring peoples of Europe». It also expressed the desire «to assimilate ourselves with our European Christian brethren». However, as I said before, the epoch of the confrontation between the Cross and the Crescent was over, and, at least at the beginning, some Great Powers hesitated in backing the Greeks. The United Kingdom supported the Ottoman Empire fearing that Russia could extend her influence to the Mediterranean; the Austrian Metternich had the same concern and disliked revolutions.

In most of independence wars, the new territorial settlements had to be approved by the European Concert of the Great Powers; for example, this was the case for Greece of the London Protocol of 1830 and for Belgium of the protocol and treaty of 1831, accepted by the King of Netherlands only seven years later. In 1830 also Poland had started a war of independence against the Russian Empire, but found no support from the Great Powers. Louis Philippe, King of the French, was concerned of obtaining the international recognition of his regime, born from the July revolution, Austria and Prussia adopted benevolent neutrality towards Russia. Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Minister, would have liked to see Poland independent but not at the price of upsetting the final Act of Vienna of 1815.

The agreement of the Great Powers was particularly required in the Balkans, where the new States went through a phase of autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, which retained a nominal suzerainty, to obtain later full independence. That was the case of Bulgaria and Romania.

Italy owed her independence as much to diplomacy as to military endeavours. Actually, the three years which saw the creation of the Kingdom of Italy, 1859-1861, saw an anticipation of what in recent years was labelled as “hybrid war”. A regular war between France and Piedmont against Austria was complemented by the invasion of other States without declaration of war, either by the regular army or irregular volunteers, political subversion also based on fake news, occupation of territories legitimized by plebiscites of dubious validity.

Germany was the only country which obtained unification without asking anybody’s permission and relying only on Prussia’s strength (however in alliance with Italy in the war of 1866).

Alessandro Manzoni, the famous Italian writer, in one of his odes described the elements which make a nation: *«una d’arme, di lingua, d’altare, | di memorie, di sangue e di cor»*, that is to say a common language and a common religious faith, civilian and military traditions, the same ethnicity and a shared national passion. Italian and Greek peoples were indeed totally united in their respective religions, Catholicism and Orthodoxy. However, the Italian Risorgimento was largely anti-Catholic and opened a wound which was formally healed only in 1929. In this respect, Italy was an

anomaly, since all national States, the oldest like France and Spain, and the more recent witnessed the throne and the altar closely linked. The national identity of England and Wales was forged by the establishment of a national Church of which the Monarch is the Supreme Governor.

After the First World War the international scenario was largely subverted. Old Empires collapsed. New States obtained independence and an old one, Poland, resurrected after a long period of partition and settled her borders after a war with Bolshevik Russia. National minorities were included in States they did not recognize as their own motherland; these conflicts were exploited by totalitarian and authoritarian powers.

Shortly after the Second World War, colonies gained their independence in Asia, Africa and Oceania, in several cases having to fight against their colonial masters or going through civil wars.

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Communist block ignited a new wave of independent States. The partition of Czechoslovakia and the independence of the Baltic States were peaceful, while the dissolution of Yugoslavia was quite bloody, including wars among new States, internal strife, foreign military intervention and peacekeeping. In that case and in other situations around the world, regular armies and irregular fighters shared the battlefield and civilians suffered dire consequences.

Wars of independence give rise to many ethical and juridical problems: freedom fighters and patriots are rebels for the existing power, terrorism and attacks on civilians are sometimes employed, legitimate repression may easily turn into violent massacres. A more general political question arises: when the legitimate quest for independence of a recognized nation turns into a dangerous secession for less noble reasons? In this respect, we could mention various unsettled situations in nowadays world.

Past ICMH congresses dealt with some of the topics I just mentioned: in 1994 in Warsaw we discussed *National Insurrections since 1794*, in 2011 in Rio de Janeiro we dealt with *Colonial Wars and Independence Wars from the 18th Century to Today*, and finally in 2018 in Jerusalem we talked about *The Creation of New States and Collapse of Old Empires in the XX Century*. The Acta of these

past Congresses and of the current one will constitute a precious bibliography for scholars of military history.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, Kerias kai Kirie, thank you for your attention, enjoy this coming week and in particular our scientific sessions, kali evdomada kai kaló synédrio.

2022

XLVII Congress in Wrocław and Opole (Poland)

General Theme:

THE DEFENSE OF BORDERS IN MILITARY HISTORY, FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE PRESENT DAY

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, Panie i Panowie,

The English proverb says «Time will tell»; in Italian the meaning of the proverb is possibly clearer: «il tempo è galantuomo» (time is a gentleman). In 2020, the pandemic compelled ICMH to cancel the Congress in Poland, but now here we are, after the outstanding Congress in Athens last year. Athens was a wonderful demonstration of courage and resilience; the same can be said about this Congress, while the pandemic has not yet disappeared, the international political situation is in turmoil, inflation is rampant, and war ravages a country neighbouring Poland. I wish to express to the organizers ICMH's deepest appreciation for hosting this Congress and our warmest gratitude to the political, military, and academic authorities which have given their patronage to it.

Actually, this inaugural session takes place in the main building of the University of Wrocław, which is famous for being a pearl of the Silesian Baroque and traces back its origins from the Leopoldina University, founded in 1702. A peculiar and unprecedented feature of this Congress is that on Thursday we will move to Opole, whose university was established in 1994 as a result of

joining one of the best Polish pedagogical academies – the Higher Pedagogical College in Opole – and the Opole branch of the Catholic University in Lublin.

The annual Congress is staged in Poland for the second time in the history of ICMH. Actually, our 20th Congress took place in 1994 in Warsaw on the general theme «National Insurrections since 1794». This year we discuss «The Defence of Borders in Military History from the Middle Ages to the Present Day». Before making some remarks on this theme, I would just briefly mention some historical links between Poland and my own country, Italy.

In the XV century, an Italian lady from Lombardy, Bona Sforza, daughter of the Duke of Milan Gian Galeazzo and of Isabel of Aragon, was the second wife of King Sigismund I Jagellonian, and so became the Queen Consort of Poland and the Grand Duchess Consort of Lithuania from 1518 to 1556.

In the XIX and XX centuries both Italians and Poles struggled to obtain or to recover their independence: Poles fought in Italy and Italians fought in Poland. It is emblematic that the words of the current Italian national anthem mention Poland while the Polish national anthem mentions Italy.

In the basilica of Loreto, a chapel is dedicated to Our Lady Queen of Poland. In a fresco the battle of Vistula is featured and one can clearly recognize Marshal Jozef Pilsudski on horseback. During 1943-45 the Polish 2nd Army Corps, within the 8th British Army, fought in the Italian campaign. Its Commander, General Wladislaw Anders, is buried in the Cassino Polish war cemetery.

As usual, I wish to make some general considerations on our general theme. Borders appear on geographic maps and involve political significance. Napoleon Bonaparte is credited with a sentence which has different versions. One is « Tout État fait la politique de sa géographie » ; another and more suggestive one reads « L’histoire d’un pays est dans sa géographie ». Only a century later, in 1899, the Swedish geographer Rudolf Kjellen coined the term geopolitics, a discipline which has a rather vague scientific tenet, but the self-crowned Emperor had already identified its core.

The concept expressed by Napoleon cannot be applied literally; certainly, the geographic position bears a great influence on the political history of a State but does not fix it in an absolute

manner. As much important are the national spirit and the traditions which are rooted in the country. Concepts as manifest destiny, Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, led in various moments the foreign policies of the United States, Russia and Germany. The myth of the “third Rome” was employed both for Moscow and for the unification of Italy.

Borders well defined by physical geography, as mountain chains, rivers, seas, deserts, the so-called natural borders, a concept firstly expressed by Cardinal Richelieu, can be very useful for a State, in particular if it protected by the seas, as the United States and the United Kingdom. Famous scholar John Lewis Gaddis writes that the United States enjoyed a “free security” since two oceans protected their Western and Eastern Borders while two States not particularly threatening, Canada and Mexico, bordered the North and the South¹. After the raid by the British, who in 1814 set fire to the White House, the American territory was immune from attack until 11th September 2001. The situation of the British Isles was similar: the last invader, with internal accomplices, was William of Orange in 1688. Neither Napoleon nor Hitler were able to invade Great Britain. However, with the advent of aviation the British territory was no longer safe.

The Italian peninsula had well defined natural borders; however, internally divided, was for centuries the battlefield of the Great Powers until it achieved unification in 1861. The largest State before unification, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, had felt safe, since it was surrounded by salt water (the sea) and holy water (the land border with the Papal States), as King Ferdinand II quipped. But Garibaldi’s expedition provoked the breakdown of the Bourbon State.

The geopolitical situation allowed Washington and London to follow an isolationist policy. “Splendid isolationism” is the definition given to the international position of the United Kingdom in the last decades of the XIX century. Less happy were the consequences of the isolation practiced in the early modern age by the two Empires in the Far East, China and Japan. They closed their doors

¹ J. L. Gaddis, *Attacco a sorpresa e sicurezza: le strategie degli Stati Uniti*, Milano 2005, p. 15.

to the rest of the world and took a path leading to decadence, being compelled to face the Western impact in unfavourable conditions in the XIX century.

Aviation allows to attack a State without trespassing its land borders. The United Kingdom suffered small damages in the Great War but was heavily attacked in the Second World War. The development of nuclear weapons destroyed the “free security” of the United States; since 1957 the Soviet acquired the capacity to attack with nuclear weapons the American territory. The acronym MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) described well the ensuing situation.

During and after the Cold War, outside Europe, wars among States continued to exist but the majority of conflicts was of a different and more complex nature. Declarations of war completely disappeared; in many cases there is no longer a clear distinction between war and peace, contradicting the old sentence of Cicero recalled by Grotius: «*Inter pacem et bellum nihil medium*» (there is no middle way between peace and war). In the last decades, the consolidated relationship among State sovereignty, monopoly of legitimate force and control of the territory has weakened. We see international terrorism, international criminal organizations, civil and ethnic wars, transnational wars, external aggressions and revolts, legitimate repressions of violent groups and massive violations of human rights. The fighters are regular soldiers, irregular militias, and civilians. For many of these conflicts and for the cyber wars borders are not relevant.

However, since last February we re-discovered the importance of borders and war between States reappeared in Europe. In the same name of Ukraine is written its geopolitical instability: as you know Ukraine means “over the border”. Ukraine is at the crossroads between East and West, Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Inside the current Ukrainian State and its same capital, Kiev, flows the river Dniepr, which already the Greek Herodotus pointed out as a natural geographic border, and later indicated the approximate watershed between Western and Eastern Ukraine, the first more linked to middle Europe and the Western Slavs, the second leaning more towards Russia. The story of Ukraine, without clear and indisputable borders, has been complex, sometimes dramatic, obtaining stable independence only in 1991. I stop here. A pupil of mine has written the best history of Ukraine, at

least in Italian, numbering 500 pages, my introduction included². It is impossible to say more, without running the risk of superficiality or arousing controversies on current affairs.

About 65 papers by scholars from about 34 countries of four continents will be presented. The scientific sessions are complemented by interesting cultural and social activities as it is in the tradition of ICMH Congresses. Some of us, including myself, last week took also an active part to the XXIII International Congress of Historical Sciences in Poznań.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, Panie i Panowie, thank you for your attention, merci pour votre attention, Dziękuję za uwagę. I wish all of us an excellent Congress, Je souhaite pour tous an excellent congrès Życzę wspaniałego kongresu.

² G. Cella, *Storia e geopolitica della crisi ucraina. Dalla Rus' di Kiev a oggi*, Roma 2021.

2023

XLVIII Congress in Istanbul (Turkey)

General Theme:

WAR AND THE CITY: THE EFFECTS OF ARMED CONFLICTS ON URBAN SPACE AND POPULATION

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, Bayanlar ve Baylar,

My speech is divided in two parts. Unfortunately, the first one recalls an unhappy situation.

In this respect, I have to read the statement approved by the Full Board of ICMH last 17th of August.

«This Congress in Istanbul meets under negative and unprecedented circumstances. One National Commission in good standing is not allowed to participate. This violates Article 8. *Rights and duties* of ICMH Statutes, which states:

«a. National Commissions of the ICMH are entitled to:

- Take part in the ICMH International Congresses as well as in the work of the Specialised Committees; [...]

b. National Commissions of the ICMH are required to:

- Comply with the Statutes of the ICMH; [...] ».

This very unfortunate situation is the result of opposed and subsequent positions taken by the Turkish hosting Commission. Last year in Wroclaw, answering a specific question during the meeting of the ExBoard, the leaders of the Turkish Commission of Military History assured that the participation of the Cypriot Commission would create no problem. Only at the end of May this year, during the meeting of the ExBoard in Istanbul, the leaders of the Turkish Commission informed us that, according to their State's regulations, no person holding a Cypriot passport is allowed to cross the Turkish border, since the Republic of Türkiye does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus, and that moreover there are no possibilities of the Cypriots being able to participate in the congress since its venue is a military installation. Any effort on our part to find a mutually acceptable solution was rejected.

ICMH does not express any opinion on the political issue of Cyprus; we are prevented from doing so by Article 1 of our Statutes which defines the non-governmental and not political character of our organization. However, we certainly regret that political considerations are prevailing over academic ones, configuring another violation of our Statutes.

Given the very late communication by the hosting Commission, it was hardly feasible to cancel the Congress, adding further damage particularly to those who had already registered. However, several National Commissions have decided not to participate or to downgrade the level of their participation. We express our strong solidarity to the Commission of Military History of the Republic of Cyprus.

A Congress goes through three phases: preparation, unfolding, accomplishments after the Congress, as the publication of the Acta. We are committed to collaborating with a profitable execution of the academic programme. The Full Board continues to keep under consideration the general situation, ready to take, if necessary, further decisions ».

As also decided by the Full Board I have to read a Statement by the President of the Cypriot Commission:

«It is with disappointment that we are not able to participate in the XLVIII Congress taking place in Istanbul. I refer of course to the decision of the Turkish Commission of Military History not to accept the Republic of Cyprus Delegation to the works of the International Commission of Military History. I am afraid such a refusal to accept a member state to the works of an international event of the ICMH constitutes “*a serious violation of [the ICMH’s] Statutes*”. From the beginning of the Turkish objections, at the end of May this year, despite their previous assurances that our participation would create no problem, and until the beginning of August, when a final decision not to allow our participation, the Cyprus Commission expressed every willingness to find a mutually acceptable solution; we also made ourselves available to the President of the ICMH, who carried trilateral consultations with Turkey in good faith, seeking a resolution in an amicable manner; most regrettably, his good offices mission and all his efforts were also rejected.

Let me confirm again, here, that if we did actually participate at our Congress here in Istanbul, this would not be the first time any holder of a Republic of Cyprus-European passport visited Turkey; as a matter of fact, Cypriots have always been able to join conferences or other international events hosted by Turkey.

Furthermore, please let me express my deepest regrets for the different pretexts the leaders of the Turkish Commission used against a member of the ICMH in good standing. Most unfortunately, it seems that political considerations prevailed over academic ones and this should have never been the case.

Finally, at the same time, I should like to express my gratitude to you all, the Full Board, and to all the Presidents and the Members of the National Commissions, who expressed their objections

to such pretexts, and for the principled stance taken, and for their strong solidarity, supporting a member of the ICMH. Thank you all, again!».

I now move to a more traditional part of my speech. For the International Commission of Military History, the Congress is the culminating event, which since 1973 is organized every year, featuring six days full of activities: scientific sessions, PhD candidates' panel, cultural visits, social events, in general a forum for worldwide exchanges of ideas. It is a unique and remarkable opportunity offered to the community of military historians. Just to strengthen our sense of community, two years ago we introduced a nice ICMH pin in silver, produced in Cyprus, since Col. Fournaris proposed the idea. Only delegates who have not yet received it previously are invited to collect one pin at the Secretariat desk.

This year we are in Istanbul, the most famous metropolis, albeit not the capital, of the Republic of Türkiye, which just this year celebrates the centennial of its foundation. Actually, while geographically it spans over two continents, the history of Istanbul stretches over more than two millennia and half. Born as Byzánton, from the fourth century before Christ it was known as Constantinople and in 1930 received the official name of Istanbul. It is one of the towns in the world which can be described as an "Imperial city" and was a crossroad of cultures. Coming or returning here (for me it is the fifth time) is in itself a fascinating experience.

Our Congress takes place in an environment which perfectly reflects the identity of the International Commission of Military History, combining culture with military ethos. We are hosted in the impressive campus of the Milli Savunma Üniversitesi, the National Defence University of Türkiye, founded in July 2016. Among its colleges there is the Fatih Institute of Military History Studies.

Thirty years ago, ICMH already held in Türkiye its nineteenth Congress from 17th to 24th August 1993; some people which are here today were already there. The topic at that time was *The*

Study of the Period between the First and Second World War 1918-1939 from a Viewpoint of Military History.

In agreement with the ICMH's governing bodies, the Turkish Commission of Military History selected an original and intriguing General Theme: *War and the City: The Effects of Armed Conflicts on Urban Space and Population*. Well thought sub-topics include the following:

- War and the City in the Ancient Ages
- Technologies and Tactics in Siege Battles During the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period
- Battles in the Residential Areas and Their Effects on the City During Modern Industrial War Period
- The Impact of Air Bombardments Over the Cities
- Civil Wars, Revolutions and Urban Warfare

55 scholars, including PhD candidates, from 24 countries will present papers.

I said that the General Theme is original; however, in recent years it drew increasing attention. The publisher Brill, which has an institutional link with the International Commission of Military History through the *International Journal of Military History and Historiography*, published a collection of essays titled *War and the City in 2020. The Urban Context of Conflict and Mass Destruction*. In the same year, Mary Kaldor and Saskia Sassen published *Cities at War: Global Insecurity and Urban Resistance*, with the Columbia University Press. Previously, in 1991 Gregory J. Asworth published a book just titled *War and City*.

In Military History we can find two conflicts named “War of the Cities”. The first began as a war between the [Swabian League of Cities](#) and the [Bavarian dukes](#) in 1387–1389. It evolved into a war of influence between the nobility and free cities.

During the [Iran–Iraq War](#) an operation from 1984 to 1988 included five series of air raids, missile attacks and artillery shellings on major cities and urban areas initiated by [Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Air Force](#), with the aim of disrupting the morale of [Iran](#). The first phase of air strikes was followed by retaliation by the [Iranian Armed Forces](#). [Iraq](#) attacked major cities in the western half of Iran, including [Teheran](#), [Tabriz](#), [Isfahan](#) and [Shiraz](#), in addition to attacks to Iranian towns and cities close to the front. Iran's retaliations targeted mostly [Baghdad](#), [Kirkuk](#) and [Basra](#).

To Frederick II King of Prussia is attributed this sentence: «The subjects must not notice when the Sovereign wages war». It was the epoch of professional armies and limited wars; the enemy had to be brought to surrender without totally crushing him, since today's adversary might be tomorrow's ally. Unfortunately, since the XX century civilian populations suffer every kind of damages. Aerial bombardments of cities were a major feature of the Second World War. Today, combats often take place inside the cities. Stephen Graham in his article *War and the city* just writes: «Western military strategy was long premised on the avoidance of urban combat, with air strikes the preferred method of subduing large conurbations. Cities were seen as targets, not battlefields. But today, the cityscapes of the global South have emerged as paradigmatic conflict zones».

Already during the Second World War, streets of exact-replica Berlin tenements were created at the Dugway Proving Grounds in Utah, designed by the exiled German architect Eric Mendelsohn. Today this kind of training ground is used by the American and Israeli armies.

I conclude with a quote from the page “War in Cities” of the International Committee of the Red Cross: «It's heartbreaking to watch a city you love die. Yet that is exactly what happens when armed conflicts are fought in the middle of cities, endangering the lives of civilians and the infrastructure they depend on. The humanitarian consequences of urban warfare persist years, and even decades, after the fighting ends».

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames et Messieurs, Bayanlar ve Baylar, many thanks for your attention, merci pour votre attention, ilginiz için teşekkürler.

2024

XLIX Congress in Lisbon (Portugal)

General Theme:

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN POLITICAL TRANSITIONS:

FROM THE 18TH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT DAY

Ladies and Gentlemen, Generals and Admirals,

with great pleasure and confidence, the ICMH annual international Congress comes for the third time to Portugal, where the European Continent ends and the Atlantic Ocean begins, as famous Portuguese poet Luis de Camões (born in 1524) wrote in his masterpiece *Os Lusíades*: «*Eis aqui, quasi cume da cabeça / De Europa toda, o reino Lusitano; / Onde a terra se acaba, e o mar começa*».

Senhoras e senhores, Generais e Almirantes,

com muito gosto e confiança, o congresso anual internacional de la ICMH vem pela terceira vez a Portugal, onde termina o continente europeu e começa o oceano Atlântico, como escreveu o famoso poeta português Luís de Camões na sua obra-prima *Os Lusíades*.

In 1998 the 24th Congress was organized in Lisbon on the General Theme *The War and the Encounter of Civilisations, from the XVIth Century*, and in 2009 the 35th Congress took place in Porto on the General Theme *Warfare in the Age of Napoleon: Precedents, Military Campaigns and Lasting*

Impacts. As a participant to both Congresses I cherish very good memories of their excellent scientific level, of the impeccable organization and of the magnificent visits.

Como participante em ambos os Congressos guardo muito boas recordações do excelente nível científico, da organização irrepreensível e das magníficas visitas.

I remember with great pleasantness the Presidents of the Portuguese Commission of Military History at that times: Gen. Manuel Freire Temudo Barata and Gen. Alexandre Maria de Castro de Sousa Pinto. Current President, Gen. João Jorge Botelho Vieira Borges, is the perfect continuator of a distinguished tradition.

Lisbon is a city very rich of remarkable artistic monuments and spots full of magical atmosphere, which give inspiration the songs of Amália Rodrigues, a reina do fado: among these I will only mention *Lisboa Antigua* and *Barco Negro*, two of my favourites. Moreover, Lisbon's historical role in the birth of modern world makes this town particularly fascinating for historians, and specifically for those of maritime power and empires¹.

As President of ICMH, maybe I should not express any fondness for a specific country. However, with your permission, I cannot refrain from a personal remembrance. I was a young boy when I saw a photo of the Tower of Belem, a few hundred meters from here. Knowing already some history, I was fascinated by the place, since my mind imagined that this stone ship witnessed the departure of so many naval expeditions which toured the world and created a vast colonial empire. This small Portuguese people saw many skies and many lands: «*Do mar temos corrido, e navegado / Toda a parte do Antartico, e Callisto; / Toda a costa Africana rodeado; / Diversos ceos, e terras temos visto*».

Nearby, we have the *Museu de Marinha*, which documents the story of these expeditions, the beautiful *Padrão dos Descobrimentos* which commemorates them and the *Mosteiro dos Jerónimos* a

¹ M. Castro Henriques, *La «atlanticità» di un Paese europeo: il Portogallo*, in M. de Leonardis-G. Pastori (eds.), *Le nuove sfide per la forza militare e la diplomazia: il ruolo della NATO*, Monduzzi, Bologna 2007, pp.145-159.

masterpiece of Gothic and Manueline architecture. After enriching our soul, we can feed the body with the tasty *Pastéis de Belém*.

The Congress takes place at the *Instituto Universitário Militar*, as last year in Istanbul we were at the Milli Savunma Üniversitesi (Milli Savunma Üniversitesi), the National Defence University of Türkiye. These environments perfectly reflect the identity of the International Commission of Military History, combining culture with military ethos. I am most grateful to Lieutenant General Hermínio Teodoro Maio for the hospitality in the Institute he commands. I promise not to molest the 80 peacocks.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the uprising of units of the Portuguese Armed Forces, which on 25th April 1974 put an end to the *Estado Novo* and paved the way to parliamentary democracy. Actually, on 28th May 1926 military action had also terminated the unstable Portuguese First Republic and initiated the *Ditadura Militar* (Military Dictatorship), which in 1928 transitioned into the *Ditadura Nacional* (National Dictatorship), renamed in 1933 *Estado Novo* (New State), by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. So the armed forces were protagonists both of the rise and the fall of an authoritarian regime.

This motivated the choice of the excellent Congress' General Theme: *The Role of the Military in Political Transitions: from the 18th century to the present day*. As usual, I take the liberty of some general comments on it.

Military were protagonists of political changes also in previous centuries. We could just mention the key role of General George Monck in the restoration of the Stuart dynasty in Britain in 1660. Neither all military interventions were of this importance nor were so successful and peaceful.

Various scholars stress that usually the military have a kind of mystical relationship with the

Sovereign². Between a «military with decorations», the King, and a «kind of notary in frock coat»³, the President, naturally the military is more attached to the former. «Military service is fundamentally based on obedience; therefore, for an officer loyalty to the King and allegiance to a dynasty which embodies the military glories of the past are wholly natural attitudes. For him the personification of military honour in a specific individual, is much more concrete than the attachment to abstract concepts, as the State or the constitution»⁴.

Some services or some corps, for example in the Kingdom of Italy, were more royalist than others, as the Navy, the Cavalry, the *Carabinieri* (the equivalent of the Portuguese *Guarda Nacional*). Most Sovereigns had or have specific corps which are their Guard of Honour⁵: for example, in the United Kingdom the Household Division (which is also an elite fighting body), in the Kingdom of Italy the *Carabinieri Guardie del Re* (commonly known as *Corazzieri*, now serving the President), the Habsburg had, in successive periods, the *k.k. Erste Arcièren-Leibgarde*, the *k.u.k. Leibgarde*, the *k.u.k. Trabantenleibgarde*, the *k.u.k. Leibgardereitereskadron*, the *k.u.k. Leibgardeinfanteriekompanie*, the Pope the *Guardia Nobile* (Noble Guard, dissolved by Paul VI) and the Swiss Guard, in Iran the Shah Reza Pahlavi had an Imperial Guard (the elite of it was known the Immortals as the guards of the ancient Kings of Persia), and so on.

In some cases, the Sovereigns could not entirely rely on their guards: at the time of Louis XVI on 10th August 1792, six hundred of the Swiss Guards were killed to defend him, while the *Gardes françaises* joined the ranks of the Revolution. This is an example that in history categorizations have always exceptions. In fact, there are cases in which the military (or a faction of them) were

² J. Evola, *Significato e funzione della monarchia*, published with K. Loewenstein, *La monarchia nello Stato moderno*, tr. it., Volpe, Roma 1969, p. 184. When necessary, all quotes are translated in English by the author.

³ The two definitions are of the Spanish Pio Baroja y Nessi, quoted in J. M. PÉMAN, *Lettere a uno scettico di fronte alla monarchia*, tr. it., Volpe, Roma 1969, p. 78. All Sovereigns often wear a military uniform and are trained in military academies; the only exception is the Emperor of Japan, who must make us forget the past militarism of his country.

⁴ Loewenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁵ A scholarly history of this specific kind of military corps is provided by P. Mansel, *Pillars of Monarchy. An outline of the political and social history of the Royal Guards 1400-1984*, Quartet Books, London-Melbourne-New York 1984.

⁶ K.K. (*kaiserlich königlich*) means imperial royal; after 1867, with the division between the Empire of Austria and the Kingdom of Hungary, it became k.u.k., *kaiserlich und königlich* (imperial and royal).

instrumental in dethroning the Sovereigns. For example, that happened in Portugal in 1910 and in Brazil in 1889.

Spanish language is particularly rich in names which express the great variety of types of military interventions. We have the *golpe de estado*, the *pronunciamento or alzamiento*, the *cuartelazo*, the *intentona*. In Spanish politics between 1814 and 1868 have been counted 34 military interventions; 43 up to 1923⁷. The lack of total success of an *alzamiento* may generate a civil war like in Spain in 1936-1939. In my short speech it is impossible to examine all cases and I will just make few considerations.

The Congress deals in particular with contemporary age since the XVIII century, when military interventions came to be considered an infringement of established constitutional rules, which in most cases do not provide for a political role of the armed forces. According to a scholar⁸, there are no *a priori* interventionist and non-interventionist armies, but rather the military «form an effective pressure group on the organs of government», that acts in the political decision-making process when they consider that the homeland is in danger due to the actions of civilians. In most cases, military interventions are the consequence of the failure of civilian politicians. Probably, the general public believes that military interventions and the regimes they install are inspired by conservative or reactionary views; this is not always true, since there are various examples of progressive, or at least, populist military regimes.

Neither Fascism in Italy nor Nazism in Germany seized power thanks to the military. According to an anecdote the authenticity of which is not sure, the King of Italy asked the head of the Army if it could be trusted if required to suppress Fascists' agitation. General Armando Diaz's answer was ambiguous: «Your Majesty, the Army will perform its duties, but it is better not to put it to the test». Hence, the Sovereign tasked Mussolini to form a government, which obtained a vote of

⁷ J. Busquets, *El Militar de Carrera en España*, Ediciones Ariel, Barcelona 1971, pp. 55–64; S. G. Payne, *Politics and the Military in Modern Spain*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1967, pp. 17–32.

⁸ R. Muñoz Bolaños, *Are we so Different? Military Interventionism in Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States*, <https://doi.org/10.12795/araucaria.2021.i47.19>.

confidence in Parliament. On the contrary, the fall of Fascism was engineered by the King with the support of the Armed Forces. These tried also in Germany to oust the dictator, even organizing a tyrannicide, but without success.

In some areas of the world, the seizure of power by the military is a frequent occurrence. I will just mention only Egypt, which since 1952 and the fall of the monarchy has always been dominated by the military, with a short interval of one year in 2012/2013. In Latin America and in Africa, after decolonization, we saw phases of democratization and periods of military dictatorships.

The so called international community mainly reacts to illegal seizures of power not following legal or moral criteria, but according to *Realpolitik*. We find a famous expression of this policy in the 1930' when Franklin Delano Roosevelt replied to his secretary of state's assessment of the Nicaraguan strongman Anastasio Somoza Debayle – «Somoza's a bastard!» – with the rejoinder «Yes, but he's our bastard».

As I said, there are many examples of military interventions short of the complete seizure of the power. Even in the United Kingdom, the most stable democracy in the world, in 1914 there was the risk of sedition when groups of officers signalled their unwillingness to obey if ordered to stamp down unionist activism against the government's proposals of Home Rule for Ireland⁹. During the Great War, in the German Empire, the High Command of Generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff prevaricated over the government making a compromise peace impossible.

Retired military sometimes take positions that those on active service cannot express with the same freedom. For example, in early May 2021, a group of retired French military officers – most of them holding the rank of general – wrote a public letter to President Emmanuel Macron warning of the dangers facing their nation – especially the wave of Islamic terrorist attacks– and the immediate need to neutralise them. The letter included a significant paragraph warning of the possibility of military intervention in the political decision-making process if this situation was not tackled: «If

⁹ C. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914*, Penguin Books, London 2012, pp. 488-490.

nothing is done, the weakening will continue to spread inexorably through society, eventually leading to an explosion and the intervention of our active comrades in a dangerous mission to protect our civilizational values and safeguard our compatriots at home»¹⁰.

The academic programme of our Congress witnesses the participation of about 182 congressmen, and 71 speakers from 33 different countries. As usual it includes a panel of PhD students. We will have the pleasure to enjoy the hospitality of the ministry of defence, of the chiefs of staff of defence and of the three services and of the Commandant-General of the *Guarda Nacional Republicana*. The post-Congress tour will take participants to outstanding cultural and artistic places.

Ladies and gentlemen, a pleasant and fruitful week is waiting for us; I wish you to fully enjoy it. Thank you for your attention.

Senhoras e senhores, espera-nos uma semana agradável e frutuosa; desejo que aproveite ao máximo. Obrigado pela sua atenção.

¹⁰ <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20210512-french-soldiers-warning-of-civil-war-in-open-letter-told-to-quit>.