

STR Special Portrait: J. Martin Ramirez, M.D., Ph.D., J.D.

Conference Collaborator with STR, Founded CICA (Coloquios Internacionales sobre Cerebro y Agresión)

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Soon after STR officially launched in August 2006, one of the immediate goals of the organization was to provide a means by which researchers and thinkers in the field of terrorism studies could gather to share their ideas and research. Due to the good fortune and serendipitous timing of sabbaticals, Jesus Martin Ramirez, Ph.D., physician, psychologist, and professor at Universidad de Complutense, Madrid, arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts that month to spend six months at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Being a master of organizing such collaboration efforts, Dr. Ramirez and Alice LoCicero, Ph.D., then President of STR, began discussions that since have culminated in two highly successful collaborations – the first CICA/STR Conference on Interdisciplinary Analyses of Aggression and Terrorism in Miraflores, Spain in 2007 followed by the second CICA/STR International Conference on Aggression, Terrorism, and Human Rights in Zakopane, Poland in 2008.



J. Martin Ramirez, MD, Ph.D., JD, Director of CICA

Dr. Ramirez, born in Madrid, has devoted his professional life to the study of human beings and aggression, sharing his findings, and mentoring others in his wake. He told me, “I’ve always been interested in understanding humanity better, and this leads you to a quite multifaceted prospective. This explains the apparently so different studies I have done.” Dr. Ramirez not only studied and received a Ph.D. in Medicine and Surgery (Neurosciences), specializing in neuroscience and the enervation of the brain vessels, at the Institute für Neuropathologie in the Free University of Berlin, he also has advanced degrees in Philosophy and the Art and in Law from the University of Navarra, and Pedagogics on Comparative Education from the European Schools of the European Union.

In 1983, Dr. Ramirez, along with “a few neuroscientists from Europe and America” started an organization known as CICA (Coloquios Internacionales sobre Cerebro y Agresión). The beginning of this organization was “rather unplanned” as six participants from Europe, the USA and Mexico gathered in Fes, Morocco, then crossed the Gibraltar Strait and traveled to Seville, Spain where they discussed the links between the brain and aggression. Thus was held the first of 25 CICA colloquia. The first 10 meetings were held in Seville, attended by participants across the globe, discussing multiple aspects of aggression from a multi-cultural, interdisciplinary perspective. CICA began to address the issue of terrorism in its annual meetings in 1988, long before it became a world-wide subject of interest and concern. Later that year,

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Dr. Ramirez took CICA international, holding its first colloquia outside Seville in Santiago, Chile, making these most important discussions more accessible to South American colleagues. Since then, CICA meetings to study aggression, terrorism, and political violence occurred around the world, in North America, Africa, Europe, Asia (Sri Lanka), and Central America, on an almost yearly basis. CICA meetings are intentionally small and personal, “in an atmosphere of friendship and goodwill.”

The Coloquios Internacionales sobre Cerebro y Agresión is “a rather loose organization,” says Dr. Ramirez. Asked the mission of CICA, Dr. Ramirez responded, “Humans are concerned about violence. Preparing responsible citizens demands attention to the causes and consequences of violent action. But reducing and preventing violence requires an understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon and recognition of the multiple causes of such harmful behavior. Such a basic understanding is necessary if we are to propose positive remedies and point out ways toward peaceful solutions and non-violent alternatives. Major scientific research programs have to address this complex problem. The present social circumstances add a quite timely politically-charged consideration of possible peaceful alternatives to it. A knowledge of aggression is not only a window to understand humanity better, but it also shows that violence involves an intensely emotional individual experience for perpetrators, victims, and for witnesses as well. As part of its effort to focus an interdisciplinary attention on this important individual and societal issue, the CICA [meetings] address different aspects of this topic by scholars from multiple disciplines.”

Dr. Ramirez told me that all participants from past congresses are entitled to become members of the CICA organization. There are no fees. There is “an absolute respect to the ideologies of each member,” thus opening its membership to a truly global community dedicated to the study of aggression, terrorism, and political violence. The International Scientific Council of CICA is comprised of the members who take the initiative to organize and host CICA meetings. Through this “loose organization,” autonomous national groups of CICA continue the mission of the international body.

CICA is proud to have authored the 1986 Seville Statement on Violence, endorsed by the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris and disseminated throughout the world. This statement, (which can be found in its entirety at http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3247&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_

[SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3247&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)) counters the myth that war is part of human nature. The Statement concludes that:

“Biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in this International Year of Peace and in the years to come. Although these tasks are mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors. Just as ‘wars begin in the minds of men,’ peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.”

Given his interest in aggression research, and his intense quest for knowledge, Dr. Ramirez went on to receive a Diploma in High Studies on Defense from the Spanish military university, Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional (CESEDEN). In Fall and Winter 2006, Dr. Ramirez gained expertise in International Security and Terrorism studies through the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He departed Cambridge for Paris in January 2007 where he finished the academic year working on categorizing aggression and sex differences as a “Résident-chercheur“ at the Laboratoire de Psychologie Sociale, Université René Descartes, Paris.

Dr. Ramirez embodies the interdisciplinary philosophy and goals of STR. In his research and teaching in the field of aggression, he approached his studies from an interdisciplinary, multicultural, cross species perspective. His research spanned Europe, Iran, Japan, Southern Africa, and Canada, with subjects “from birds to primates” and humans, on the individual, interpersonal, and international levels, most recently focusing on the war on terrorism. As the reader can well imagine, Dr. Ramirez has disseminated his finding through numerous publications in books, chapters, and professional journals.

References

Seville Statement on Violence (1986). Retrieved September 3, 2008, from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3247&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html