

INTERVENTION OF J. MARTIN RAMIREZ, CHAIR OF CICA, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 6th CICA–STR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Burgas (Bulgaria), September, 9th, 2012

Dobró oiko!

Thanks

On behalf of the President of STR, Dr. Walters, and myself,

1) to the host institutions and local organizers, and specially to professor Tatyana Dronzina

2) to the Bulgarian authorities who have made possible our get-together here. It is a real pleasure to be in this beautiful city, on the Southern Black Sea Coast, full of rich cultural traditions and with a spirit of cosmopolitanism. No wonder, Burgas has been awarded with the National media prize “Bulgaria’s best city”.

3) to all the 80 active participants attending the CICA-STR Conference, either physically or sending their scientific contributions. They come from a total of 23 countries from all the continents: 11 from the European Union (namely Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Rumania, Spain, UK and, obviously, our host Bulgaria) and other Eastern European countries (Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Turkey); five from Asia: Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), Indostan (India, Pakistan), Hong-Kong and Iran; two Africans (Nigeria, ZA), and one from Oceania (New Zealand), as well as delegates from the two American countries that hosted our two previous international conferences (USA and Colombia).

4) to all active and passive participants interested in our subject.

Topics

The conference's richness is also shown in the diversity of the topics that will be addressed. Its scientific program ranges over many ones: Obviously we start with what seems to be our flagship: terrorism, analyzing its dynamics, nuclear proliferation and other new security challenges. Psychological, social and gender implications of violence are also object of consideration. Even if we are interested in focusing our examination beyond local conflicts in any geographical area, the fact of meeting here, in the Black Sea, gives us an opportunity for reviewing the geopolitics of this area, where the conference is hosted, evaluating violence and peace in these East European countries, during the transitions after the 'Cold War' era. And finally, last but not least, we would like to offer some practical approaches to prevention and/or intervention in violence and terrorism, with a special focus on the alternative dispute resolution.

It is also worthy to mention here the excellent choice of our keynote speakers: a world authority in nuclear energy systems, who is also a general in the Spanish Air Force; a Turkish minister of social security; a member of the Parliament, representing those Bulgarian citizens in favor of an European integration; and, last but not least, the first President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Let me make some short considerations about a couple of these points.

Obviously, we all are aware that this conference is taking place in Burgas, a city that unfortunately has even a greater international prominence since the last July 18th, less than two months ago, when it suffered a terrible act of international terrorism. A suicide bomber blew up a bus killing at least five Israeli tourists, the driver and himself, and dozens were injured.

This kind of inglorious actions though is not unique or specific to Burgas. It is hardly the only recent example. Other examples abound: The attack in this city, blamed on the Lebanese-based party-cum-militia Hizbullah,

came on the anniversary of the bombing, also blamed on Hizbullah, of a Jewish community centre in Argentina in 1994, which killed 85 people. And similar acts may happen at any time and in any place. For instance, our CICA-STR conferences have been previously hosted in some places so familiar to terrorism as Spain, Ulster or Colombia, and during our last year conference, held in Southern California, we commemorated the 10th anniversary of the sad events of Sept. 11, 2001 in the US. Only in the United States, more than 2,600 supposed terrorist related incidents are recorded as having occurred in the between the period of 1970 and 2008)!¹ And, about one week ago, relatively no far from here, in *Dagestan*, in Russia's north Caucasus, an influential leader of a Sufi Muslim group was killed with six other people by a female suicide-bomber who approached his house disguised as a pilgrim. This may well spur a new round of anarchic violence in what is already Russia's most conflict-ridden republic.

Motivations

The motivations of such horrible acts of violence and terrorism may also be quite different:

Some people target them to racial, cultural, or pseudo-religious reasons. The murder of six Sikhs at a gurdwara in Wisconsin by a white supremacist earlier last month might be a recent example.

Others think that it be a product of personal or social diseases: Either a mad mind² (Everybody remembers the masskilling of Anders Behring Breivik, in Norway on July 22 2011, which has led to one of the most high profile court decisions on "madness" and crime), or a consequence of a kind of social

¹ LaFree & Bersani, 2012

² For instance, on July 22, 2011, Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people in an Oslo bombing and a shooting rampage at a summer camp for young political activists, probably as a product of a mad mind.

disease, such as the gun violence, characteristic in USA³, probably due to not enough restrictive gun laws.

In my opening remarks at our previous conference, I also mentioned one of the worst rioting in decades, spread through Britain just one year ago, on August 2011. I stressed that IMHO it may have being an eventual expression of a sick society, that glorifies violence, shows disrespect to authority, and says everything about rights but nothing about responsibilities.

Towards a positive outcome

Since I approached already this topic one year ago, during my opening talk at our Irvine conference, today I want to focus my intervention on another very important and positive consideration: in spite of their difficulties, an optimistic and balanced view allows us to assert that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I have to admit that there are mad and bad murdering their fellows, under the form of violence and terrorism. But, in the middle of this tormented world, the vast majority of ordinary people are daily trying to make things better for themselves and their families, and gaining greater control over their own lives.

We have to identify our own personal responsibilities and try to behave in a responsible manner. One way of helping in the right direction will be to educate our children and our students -our academic children-, for looking forward towards a peaceful life, that is not a mere lack of wars or a balance between opposite forces, but a heavenly gift that has to be aimed by all human beings.

³ During the last month, more than one death every day in America, as an average, has being caused by guns. One month ago, on August 5, 2012, a 40 years soldier shouted 7 deaths at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin, and a few days before, a graduate student of neurosciences, James Holmes, killed twelve innocents, and 58 were injured, in a packed Colorado cinema showing the latest gunfire- and explosion-laced Batman movie. And this very motivation was given by Timothy McVeigh, angry because of the unacceptable intromissions of the state in his right to use weapons, when he killed 168 people in Oklahoma, on April 19, 1995. And so on.

It has to be ensured that they understand:

- how to frame moral issues and make judgments about right conduct and about what is good in life, and
- how to establish patiently and tenaciously responsible human relationships respectful with human rights and dignity, and based in truth and freedom, which are inseparable from real justice and peace.

Jesse Richard (2011) is even more specific, pointing at 3 driving 'forces' in the trend toward peace:

- "spreading knowledge (we learn about how to create a better, more participatory political way of life),
- democratizing power to the world masses, and
- connecting with each other globally" (travel, immigration, social networking)⁴.

It is important therefore not allowing hope and optimism to be suffocated by fear and pessimism. Optimism about the state of the world is realism. Optimism too creates self-fulfilling positive feedback loops. So, we will definitively get success in our misión!

I want to believe that the fruit of scientific meetings like this 6th CICA-STR international conference will be an optimistic -and realistic- input towards its solution, because cumulative small moves forward from each of us will eventually yield great leaps toward a better future, changing the world for better.

Burgas (Bulgaria), 9th September 2012

⁴ *The secret peace*, by Jesse Richard (New York: Book & Lader, 2011)

