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ARISTOCRATS FOR PEACE: THE ANTI-DUELLIST CONFERENCE OF BUDAPEST (1908)

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The anti-duellist movement was founded at the turn of the twentieth century at the initiative of the Spanish infante Alfonso de Bourbon et d'Autriche-Este. It was one of the various strategies in favour of peace and against the use of violence in social and political relations that were established during this period. The anti-duelling leagues promoted by Prince Alfonso attempted to change the concept of honour held by males of the elite classes at the time. The most important project taken was the holding of the First International Anti-Duellist Conference in Budapest in June of 1908. The aim of this article is to examine an event that offers information on the mobilising capacity of the European aristocracy and the efforts of aristocrats to find their place in a society with egalitarian tendencies.

Keywords: duel, aristocracy, honour, Europe, pacifism.

Resumo (PT) no final do artigo. Résumé (FR) en fin d'article.

In 1908, the French army officer Joseph du Bourg pondered on the meaning of honour for a man and concluded that honour was “la mise en pratique dans tous ses actes de ce que lui dicte sa conscience”. These words were published in *La Réforme Sociale*, a periodical sponsored by the Société d'économie sociale, the Société bibliographique and the Union de la paix sociale.¹ Du Bourg's article reported on the anti-duellist conference recently held in Budapest, associating its criticism of duelling with the international peace movements that he believed to be gaining strength in Europe. The peace conferences that had taken place in Brussels (1874) and The Hague (1899 and 1907) had promoted a change in thinking with regard to the use of violence in the relations between people and countries. Du Bourg believed the anti-duellist movement to be yet another manifestation of this trend. His words were evidence of a concern that had become a topic of debate throughout Europe since the nineteenth century: duelling as a means of resolving disputes between males.

¹ *La Réforme Sociale*, juillet-décembre 1908, p. 189.

Common to all countries (except for the United Kingdom which, after several centuries of refined practice, had managed to rid itself of this custom),² duelling was the symbolic representation of a concept of masculinity based on honour as the most valuable possession a man could have. Since the eighteenth century, the aristocratic concept of honour had shifted to the elites of the upper middle class, for whom it came to mean the public reputation of individuals (Taylor 1989; Steward 1994). The development of modernity, with its emphasis on individualism and the value of subjectivity, had allowed men to understand honour not as having aristocratic lineage, but as the expression of their own individual conscience, which imposed upon them duties to defend their dignity against others, becoming a guide for moral conduct in order to proclaim to society that they were honourable individuals who were willing to demonstrate this publicly, even at a risk to their own lives. Throughout the nineteenth century, this concept of honour came to be an internationally shared criterion around which the definition of upper-middle-class masculinity revolved. Thus, the respectable male was to defend his honour against all aggressions, which included responding to any malicious comment regarding the conduct of any women under his charge (mother, spouse, daughters or unmarried sisters). Given the limitations in law to protect one's reputation against defamation in the context of growing press freedom, many men felt they had no choice but to fight a duel in order to cleanse their public image.

In spite of the difficulties encountered in eschewing this mentality, novels, plays and essays were published throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries decrying a practice that was considered by certain critics as a barbaric manifestation out of step with modern times. The best-known work was *Lieutenant Gustl* (1900), with which the Viennese writer Arthur Schnitzler had outraged Austrian society by crudely exposing the absurd nature of the challenge. Moreover, the different religious confessions strongly condemned it. In fact, the Catholic Church decreed excommunication for participants in duels and forbade their burial in a consecrated cemetery.³ In this context, an anti-duellist movement began to take shape, culminating in the conference held in Budapest between the fourth and sixth of June 1908. The following pages aim to study this

² This did not imply the disappearance of tensions caused by the legal limitations to the defence of honour (Masterson 2017).

³ *Pastoralis Officii*, encyclical of Pope Leo XIII (12 September 1891): Ad Archiepiscopos et Episcopos Imperii Germanici et Austro-Hungarici, De Prava Duellorum Consuetudine (http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_12091891_pastoralis-officii.html).

convention because several matters of interest converged in it: the wish to redefine the concept of male honour; the ambition to create an international jurisdiction for the defence of honour; the role awarded to the aristocracy in a society with egalitarian tendencies; and how the anti-duellist movement mobilised women and students.

The bibliography on this topic has covered the plural meanings of honour, combining anthropological and philosophical approaches (Pitt-Rivers 1979; Taylor 1989; Steward 1994; LaVaquer-Manty 2006; Welsh 2008; Oprisko 2012). Based on this, historians have focused on duelling as the most common practice in honour conflicts. On the one hand, they have delved into the meanings of the concept of honour and duel in the different cultural and national traditions (Frevert 1995; Nye 1998; Guillet 2008; Gayol 2008; Banks 2010; Zwicker 2011; Martorell 2016; Sánchez 2020). On the other hand, historiography has been interested in the historical events and processes that marked a shift in mentalities and defined the traits of contemporary masculinity, such as the French Revolution (Hampson 1973), the Risorgimento (Hughes 2007) or the expansion of public debate in Western societies (Piccato 2010). The study of novels, plays and short stories about the conflicts of honour have an important place in the bibliography on the topic, given the influence of literature on customs and habits (Reyffman 1999; Wood 2006; Leigh 2015; Pajarín 2019). However, historiography has paid little attention to the anti-duellist movement due to its precarious cohesion and its low public visibility. This article tries to go a little deeper into it by studying its most relevant event: the conference held in Budapest in 1908.

This paper begins by describing the anti-duellist movement. Then it goes on to explain the organization of the conference and the debates among the participants concerning honour and the egalitarian tendencies in the modern class society. The two following sections (3 and 4) deal with the anti-duellist propaganda developed mainly by women and students and the work undertaken by anti-duellist lobbies to improve the laws for the protection of honour. Finally, an assessment of the activity of this movement is carried out in the concluding section.

1. The Anti-duellist Movement in Europe

The driving force behind the European anti-duellist movement was Alfonso de Bourbon et d'Autriche-Este, the brother of the legitimist pretender to the throne of Spain, who resided in Vienna under the protection

of emperor Franz Joseph I.⁴ Prince Alfonso's own religious convictions clearly influenced the ideology of the movement, despite it being open to all political ideologies and religious beliefs. Although some of its members were individuals with progressive leanings, most held conservative convictions, particularly the most reactionary Catholic ideals, such as the aforementioned Joseph du Bourg (a supporter of French legitimism) and Prince Charles of Löwenstein, president of the *Deutscher Katholischer Verein* between 1868 and 1898, and member of the German Reichstag for the *Deutsche Zentrumspartei* since 1871.⁵ In their youth, both Du Bourg and Prince Alfonso had joined the Papal Zouaves to fight for Pope Pius IX against the Italian nationalists. Moreover, Alfonso de Bourbon's leadership furthered the interests of European aristocrats in a movement in which they would play a leading role.

Prince Alfonso explained in the press that his concern for the deep-seated custom of duelling grew after the death of the Count of Bissingen after a challenge in the spring of 1900 and, more particularly, after what was known at the time as the "Tacoli-Ledochowski scandal" (Bourbon 1902). Practically at the same time as Bissingen's death, the young Marquis Antoine de Tacoli, a lieutenant of Hussars in the army of the Austrian emperor, was insulted by another officer, Szilay. According to the code of honour, Tacoli was bound to challenge Szilay to a duel. However, he refused to do so owing to his deeply held religious convictions. Consequently, he was labelled a coward, his commission was withdrawn and he was demoted to the rank of private soldier in the reserve. In other words, Tacoli had suffered the fate of other men who, like himself, had refused to challenge their offenders for different reasons. He had become a social outcast. With regard to his situation, Tacoli consulted Captain Josef Ledochowski, who came from a family of Ruthenian origin known for their loyalty to the emperor and to the Catholic Church and close to the most influential military circles. Ledochowski publicly supported Tacoli's refusal to take part in the duel. As a result of this decision, he was investigated by the army hierarchy and, like his friend, was demoted and consequently humiliated. The decision taken by the army was endorsed by the emperor.

4 Born Alfonso de Borbón y Austria-Este, he typically signed his public documents using his Spanish first name, Alfonso, and his surname in French, Bourbon et d'Autriche-Este. He was born in London in 1849 and was the second brother of Charles, the legitimist pretender to the Spanish and French thrones. After Charles renounced his right to the French crown, he became the claimant to the throne of this country. He held the titles of duke of San Jaime and duke of Anjou, married Infanta Maria das Neves de Bragança and died in Vienna in 1936.

5 In 1908, the Prince of Löwenstein renounced his title and was ordained a priest.

When he became aware of these events, Alfonso de Bourbon, who was friends with Tacoli's father, felt particularly concerned by the matter and decided to pen an open letter to the young marquis in which he explained what he believed was true honour and congratulated him on his decision to refuse to take part in an act that disturbed his conscience. The letter achieved particular international impact because it was published in different periodicals, such as *The North American Review* (August 1902) and *El Correo Español* (6 October 1902) (Bourbon 1908, 61-63). The interest this letter aroused led Prince Alfonso to involve himself more directly in the fight against duelling and its social consequences. His initial idea was to create an anti-duelling league in Austria with the assistance of Baron Bischoffshausen. As he would explain in 1908, the definitive drive to expand the movement and create an international league came from the French lawyer and journalist Henri-Gustave Lelièvre, who contacted him after reading his letter to Tacoli and showed him the importance of a matter that went beyond the borders of the empire.⁶ However, it seemed that the project had already been on his mind at least three months earlier, according to the draft of a letter he wrote to the Hungarian Count Albert Apponyi.⁷

The Austrian league was founded in 1901. Led by Prince Alfonso, it gained the support of figures of renowned prestige and high social standing. Later, given the complexity of the lands comprising the Austro-Hungarian Empire, smaller leagues were founded to bring together individuals with national and linguistic affinities. The process for setting up the other European leagues followed the same pattern: Prince Alfonso assigned a person in his trust with the mission of garnering the necessary support with which to set up the project (Bourbon 1908). After their creation, each of the leagues became autonomous. The Austrian model was soon replicated in France. Alfonso de Bourbon entrusted Joseph du Bourg with leading the movement in that country, which was not without difficulties given the gulf between his ideas and those of the political elites who governed the republic (Bourbon 1908, 65-66). Du Bourg had a loyal friend in the Bonapartist journalist Paul de Cassagnac. In spite of the difficulties, the anti-duellist movement took root in France and aroused great interest, given that the practice of duelling in the country was closely linked to the military values associated with the republic (Nye 1998).

⁶ *The Fortnightly Review*, 1 August 1908.

⁷ Draft letter to Count Apponyi, 14-5-1901, Archivo Histórico Nacional (Spain) (hereafter AHN), Diversos-Archivo Carlista, Alfonso Carlos de Borbón (hereafter, Archivo Carlista-Alfonso Carlos), 122, exp. 2.

In order to create an anti-duelling league in Germany, Alfonso de Bourbon placed his trust in his uncle, Prince Charles of Löwenstein (Bourbon 1908, 64). The social weight of the army and the militarism that was dominant in the German mindset at the time were the main obstacles encountered by Prince Alfonso. Despite this, he succeeded in organising solid opposition to duelling and the German league even came to publish its own magazine. For the Italian league, Alfonso de Bourbon turned to the Marquis of Crispolti, and did the same with the Baron of Albi for the Spanish league. As previously mentioned, the anti-duelling movement declared itself open to all ideologies and political leanings. However, as can be seen in this brief overview, the leaders of the national leagues followed quite a similar pattern: they were all aristocrats and very conservative Catholics, even ultramontane in some cases.

2. Holding the Conference: Reflections on Honour

The task of organising the First International Anti-Duellist Conference fell to the Hungarian league and its leaders Arisztid Dessewffy and Eduárd Gergely. As in the rest of Europe, duelling was a constant concern in Hungary (Kovács 2019), reaching its climax in August 1906 with the duel between two intellectuals, Julius Pikler and Paul Wolfner, both professors of philosophy, who had challenged each other during a session of the Hungarian Sociological Society in Budapest. Dessewffy and Gergely kept in close correspondence with Prince Alfonso for the organisation of the conference, particularly in order to garner support from “personnes de poids”, praising token gestures by public figures such as the letter that General Türr wrote to president Giovanni Giolitti on the matter. The involvement of István Türr in the anti-duellist project was considered a great boost, given that the old general played a major role in the international peace movement since his participation in the Congrès International de la Paix, held in Paris in 1878. It was actually planned that Türr was to chair the anti-duellist conference, but he died a month before it was held, in May 1908.⁸ Moreover, the organisers were particularly interested in having the press report on the support that certain European crowned heads might give to the event, for which Prince Alfonso’s role was key owing to his family’s and his own per-

⁸ Istvan Türr (1825–1908) was a Hungarian soldier and engineer who played a very important part in the process of Italian unification, for which he fought together with Garibaldi. He later became a prominent peace activist.

sonal contacts with the royal families of Europe.⁹ The Spanish Infante also donated 2,000 crowns so that the Hungarian league should have sufficient means with which to hold the conference, and further financial assistance was also received, such as that provided by the Hungarian government.¹⁰

The convention was held between the fourth and sixth of June at the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest. Arisztid Dessewffy replaced General Türr as the chairman and Eduárd Gergely took on the role of secretary general. Baron Johann von Chlumecký, adviser to the Austrian emperor, was appointed honorary chairman. Doctor George Antoni (representative of the German league), Joseph du Bourg (for the French league), Eugène Balogh (for the Hungarian league) and the Marquis of Crispolti (for the Italian league) were appointed vice-chairmen. The secretaries were Doctor August Rumpf (for Germany), Baron Bischoffshausen (for Austria), José María Laguna Azorín (for Spain), Adrien Ilari (for France) and Gino Damerini (for Italy). The imperial government was represented by Doctor Alfred Schober, the imperial minister of justice, and the royal Hungarian government was represented by the secretary of state, Doctor Gustav Töry. Finally, the treasurer was the Hungarian Joseph de Koller. The official language of the conference was French, although a number of the representatives of the German and Austrian empires, who did not speak this language, gave their speeches in German. The sessions were held in the mornings, leaving the afternoon and evenings free for leisure activities and receptions at public institutions (the city hall), private clubs (the Országos Kaszino) and private homes of Hungarian high society (the residence of Madame Béla de Balázs).

The agenda comprised ten items. Firstly, the representative of each of the national leagues presented a report on the state of the anti-duellist thinking in their country and the progress made by their organisations. Secondly, the creation of an international coordinating committee for the movement was proposed. The conference then focused on analysing the types of propaganda that could be used to disseminate their ideas, placing special emphasis on collaboration with the press, the aristocracy and women. When the debate on this matter was complete, the participants turned to the subject of educating the youth on the dangers of duelling and

⁹ AHN, Archivo Carlista-Alfonso Carlos, 100, exp. 1, letters dated between summer and autumn 1907.

¹⁰ AHN, Archivo Carlista-Alfonso Carlos, 122, exp. 2: letter from Dessewffy and Gergely to Alfonso de Bourbon et Autriche d'Este, dated 13 October 1907 and speeches by Gergely and Dessewffy at the opening of the convention (*Compte rendu du Premier Congrès international contre le duel* (hereafter *CR*) Budapest: Éditions de la Ligue National Hongroise contre le Duel, 1908, pp. IV-VI, in AHN, Archivo Carlista-Alfonso Carlos, 122, exp. 2.

proposing the creation of a school textbook for this purpose. Items five to nine on the agenda dealt with matters regarding legislative and legal matters associated with duelling and the defence of honour. For this, a debate was held on the role that the anti-duellist movement could play to lobby for effective prohibition of duels, and the measures that would have to be taken in order to change national laws regarding the defence of honour. The formation of courts of honour was one of the main topics of these debates. Finally, item ten dealt with the search for a location to hold the second anti-duellist conference, at which the effectiveness of the measures adopted would be assessed.

Through the debates held at the conference, the participants reflected on the concept of honour they wished to propose contrasted with the meaning that conventionally served as a justification for duels. This matter was of prime importance because it involved fully redefining both the self-image of males and their public reputation. Throughout the nineteenth century, this matter had been on the mind of many contemporaries, who were convinced that the only way to change the mentality that identified duelling with honour could not come from the law, but from the transformation of customs. This explains why the conference organisers devoted a session to the subject of education, trusting that the youth would bring about this change. In fact, it was agreed at the conference that an art competition should be held that was dedicated to the young, which, as the French lawyer Ilari said, would make them understand that the life of the individual was more important than applause from the crowd.¹¹

In their speeches, the participants attempted to break the association between honour and duelling by making use of two types of arguments. On the one hand, there were those of a religious nature, given the predominance of Catholics among the leaders of the national branches of the Anti-Duelling League. From their perspective, duelling involved, as the Pope had decreed on repeated occasions, both a homicidal practice and an incitement to commit suicide. On the other, there were the arguments of a social nature that had what seemed to be greater scope (because they could be shared by more people), but whose drawback was their limited coercive power. It was not the same thing to feel threatened by excommunication than by a law that rarely punished duellists. Nonetheless, because the religious message did not have as extensive a reach, the members of the anti-duelling leagues became ardent defenders of their cause, using argu-

¹¹ *CR* 1908, 10.

ments based on reason and turning individuals who refused to fight duels into heroes. That was the reason for Prince Alfonso's decision to write his open letter to the Marquis of Tacoli.

During the conference, the argument was reiterated that the true valour of a man lay in challenging a social custom that was a prime example of the barbarity of another age, which was why the participants made frequent mention of their civilising mission. Breaking the mould of convention as regards what honour was and how it should be defended was the best way to counter a widespread prejudice. In order to do this, the assertion was made that society mistook honour for pride and the fear of others' opinions, which implied that the meaning of bravery and cowardice were misunderstood. This way of understanding honour meant that men were only genuinely brave if they were able to defend their religious and ethical beliefs despite censure from society for not fighting duels, putting up with what the ignorant crowd said of them, not yielding to the dictates of fickle public opinion, and remaining steadfast in their convictions.

According to the notion of masculinity prevailing in the society of the time, a man who spurned insults and attacks on his honour by refusing to fight a duel was automatically despised and marginalised from the refined social settings appropriate to his class. Aware of this, the anti-duellist groups understood very early on the importance of the support that the aristocracy and the army could provide for their ideas. The debates at the conference were clear evidence of how the conduct of these two collectives could set an example that would further the cause of the anti-duellist movement. Not only would aristocrats and army officers be the driving force for the movement, but their presence and activism would, on the one hand, bring respectability to their demands and, on the other, give them public visibility to enhance their ability to penetrate the middle and upper classes with their anti-duellist ideas. Were an aristocrat to refuse to fight a duel, the social influence this class still held in many European countries would prevent the individual in question from becoming an outcast. In this way, taking advantage of this status, the aristocracy could be standard bearers for the movement, and they could reformulate their leadership in a world that was leaning towards social egalitarianism.

The collaboration of the army in these initiatives was even more greatly sought, particularly owing to the weight the practice of duelling had among officers in Germany and Austria. In his speeches at the conference, Captain Filippo Abignente strenuously defended the notion that the key to putting an end to duelling was actually to eradicate it from the army. To support it, he gave the example of General Perrone di San Martino, the author of

a short treatise published in 1836, *Petition contre le duel*. The words of the late general stating that duelling was an unjustified use of violence were backed by his reputation as a hero in Napoleon Bonaparte's campaigns and in the Risorgimento. There was no doubt that one could be a military hero and reject duelling as an instrument to resolve differences between soldiers. Abignente even drew attention to the British law of 1844 that allowed the privation of commissions from officers who took part in duels.¹² During the conference, the case of Britain was put forward by the lawyer of the French delegation, Maurice Théry, as an example to be examined in order to draw possible lessons and to understand how the part played by Prince Albert, head of the British royal family, had been fundamental in eradicating duelling in the kingdom, setting an example for the aristocracy and the army.¹³

The most interesting reflections on honour, although overly brief and confusing at times, were made by Count Béla Keglevich. The Hungarian aristocrat confirmed the contradictions existing in contemporary society, in which, despite equal rights, the different classes were strongly differentiated. In his opinion, the key could be found in the accession of new elites to positions of power and influence thanks to their knowledge or wealth. These new elites had assimilated the former aristocratic prejudice of honour, given that their superior social standing was not respected because of their lack of a noble background. There had been a social melding of the nobility and this "classe cultivée" because they led "un genre de vie presque identique". Alongside them was the undefined situation of the middle class, who lacked common interests and a shared view of the world but were eager to distinguish themselves from the common people. Throughout this process of change, clear differences in class together with a marked egalitarianism in relations between people had been consolidated. This new social reality was what caused most of the offences that were later resolved by duels. Keglevich held that the breakdown in social dealings was due to "le tutoiement universel", "la mauvaise habitude de se mêler des affaires d'autrui", "d'exiger des marques d'un respect, qui n'est pas même toujours motivé par des mérites reconnus, ou par une différence d'âge considérable et de supprimer volontairement les règles de la politesse". It was in this imbalance between economic inequality and legal equality that Keglevich found the reasons to explain the persistence of duelling in contemporary society. Regardless of how much was said publicly, the count concluded,

¹² CR 1908, 188-190. The speeches by the members of the Italian anti-duelling league had been prepared by several lawyers specialising in penal law (Federici 1908, 217-227).

¹³ CR 1908, 172-176.

“l'égalité n'est pas possible”. In order to bring an end to the practice of duelling, there was only one decisive way to defend honour, and that was through the laws and courts created for such a purpose.¹⁴

More precise were the words of the German lawyer Tschorniczky, who had been unable to attend the conference. His speech was read out instead by the conference chairman, Dessewffy.¹⁵ It began by explaining that honour was the most valuable possession for individuals and that the duty to defend it was up to the state through the law, which also safeguarded other things of value, such as health, life and freedom. Otherwise, citizens would be obligated to defend themselves, as they did when they fought duels. It also established that honour was difficult to define. While other values such as life and health could be defined and laws passed easily because they were the same for every individual, it was not the same for honour. The meanings given to honour were open to a great deal of interpretation depending on education, social standing and profession. The codes of conduct inherent to each social group influenced the subtleties of language and behaviour that made offences comprehensible to its members, although this might not be so evident to the rest of society. In order to legislate in an appropriate manner, it would be necessary to specify the context in which the offence took place and the characteristics of the offended individual. However, the lawyer encountered a major problem because, in his words, “les bases immuables du droit s'y opposent”. The law should be equal for everybody, which is why ordinary courts were insufficient, and appeals would have to be made to higher courts. After the conference ended, the creation of a code of honourable conduct outside of the dictates of convention continued to be a goal of the movement, as can be observed in the study of the publications of its members (Hofmannsthal 1910).

3. Anti-duellist Propaganda

Bringing about a change in thinking in relation to honour required a great propaganda effort, which had begun before the Budapest conference, for which the national leagues turned to the press. On the one hand, the press allowed anti-duellist initiatives to be discussed. And on the other, journalists were directly involved in the matter with which the movement was concerned. Duels were very common in the world of journalism, both

¹⁴ CR 1908, 167-170.

¹⁵ CR 1908, 182-188.

between journalists themselves and between journalists and other professionals, particularly politicians and army officers. The boundaries between freedom of expression and defamation were often blurred and resorting to the justice system was too slow a resource to restore a tarnished reputation. Many initiatives were taken by the different branches of the league not only to the press with shared ideologies (particularly to the legitimist press), but also to the conventions of the International Union of Press Associations (IUPA). In order to bring the matter of duelling to the press conventions, the first contacts were made at the IUPA event held in Vienna in 1904 (Bourbon 1908, 78–81). The following year, at the Liège convention, it was proposed that duels between journalists should come to an end, and at the event held in Bordeaux (1907), the topic of creating arbitration systems for journalists was discussed.¹⁶

The relationship forged between the anti-duellist movement and the IUPA was a successful strategy, because by 1900 (three years after its founding), the IUPA had members in twenty-four countries and sixty-nine local and national associations (Björk 2016, 43–45, 76). During the anti-duellist conference in Budapest, the proposals presented at the IUPA conventions were deemed to be very positive, which spurred the vice-president of the Hungarian league, Carl Zipernowsky, to propose that telegrams should be sent from the conference to press associations throughout Europe urging them not to publish any news regarding the duels that might be fought in their respective countries, as a way to put an end to “l’espèce de réclame donné par la publicité aux soi-disantes affaires d’honneur”. The proposal was very well received by participants and was entered into the final resolutions of the conference, with the instruction that the matter should be raised at the next meeting of the IUPA to be held in Berlin only a few months later.¹⁷

Besides the press, the anti-duellist movement had been benefited from the activism of women and students since its foundation. The Budapest conference allowed the results achieved by both collectives and the possibilities offered by their actions to be made public. The students were represented by the highly militant Emil von Hofmannsthal, leader of the *Wiener Akademischen Anti-Duell-Liga*, whose patrons were Prince Alfonso and his wife. Duelling had become a sort of rite of passage at Austrian and German universities that was tacitly accepted by anybody wanting to be considered men of honour. Combating this prejudice, which was deeply

¹⁶ CR 1908, *passim*.

¹⁷ CR 1908, 116 and 206.

rooted and imitated by the Jewish and Catholic minorities as a way to be assimilated into the male elite, would be a great challenge (Zwicker 2011). In the description of his activities, Hofmannsthal explained the difficulties encountered by his association, which was even at odds with the academic authorities who tolerated confrontations between students. He also explained the contacts he had held with the German *Freie Studentenschaft* for the purpose of creating an anti-duellist student movement in the German-speaking world. He also took active part in the legal debates at the conference, and his contributions in this area will be studied later.¹⁸

The women involved in the anti-duellist movement were mostly aristocrats, the most active being the Austrians, Poles and Italians, who very soon set up the women's committees of the national anti-duelling leagues. There is insufficient documentation to allow evaluation of whether their participation in the movement contributed to their political mobilisation in order to demand rights for women. It should be taken into account that this period coincided with the height of the suffragette movement. Nonetheless, a direct connection can be established between the international peace movement and the anti-duellist movement through the participation in the conference of a well-known activist, Bertha von Suttner, who had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905 and who had helped to create the Permanent International Peace Bureau and the *Oesterreicher Friedensgesellschaft* (Austrian Peace Society) in 1891. The peace movement prior to the outbreak of the First World War played a significant role in the political mobilisation of women of all social classes.¹⁹

From their speeches at the conference, it can be inferred that the proposals of the female participants were conservative and, in many cases, confessional. They understood that the traditional role of mother and spouse enabled them to exert a strong influence on the prevailing mentality through political and social activism. The minutes of the conference offer us examples of the existence of a solid network of women's associations and meeting to address matters related to the family and, to a lesser extent, to duelling. This is shown by evidence such as the founding meeting of

¹⁸ Hofmannsthal had studied at the University of Vienna, obtaining his doctorate in 1907. He specialised in international law. He left Austria after the *Anschluss* and lived in several different countries. His doctorate was withdrawn in 1941 for reasons of race, owing to the fact he was Jewish. It was restored to him in 1949. (https://gedenkbuch.univie.ac.at/index.php?id=index.php?id=435&no_cache=1&person_single_id=40270).

¹⁹ It could be said that the part played by women in the anti-duellist movement inherited the means for mobilisation from such organisations as the League of Women for International Disarmament, founded by Princess Gabrielle Wiszniewska in 1897 (Cooper 1987, 51–75 and 1991, 211).

the Austrian women's committee held in Vienna on the seventh of May 1907, which brought together thirty ladies of high society.²⁰ The Austrian committee, headed by Princess Schwarzenberg-Trautmannsdorff, and the influence of Bourbon and his wife convinced Countess Szapáry of the need to create a women's committee in the Hungarian Anti-Duelling League. The way had been paved by the successful lecture given in 1905 by the actress Teréz Csillag on women and duelling at the National Theatre in Budapest.²¹ For her part, Princess Czatoryska had founded the women's committee in the Austrian province of Galicia. An important role can be attributed to the several Italian women participants at the conference who belonged to different associations or who had attended such events as the *Convegno Femminile* (1907) and the *Primo Congresso delle Donne Italiane* (1908). The best-known of all of these was Sabina di Parravicino-Revel, president of the *Federazione Lombarda delle Donne* and one of the leading figures of liberal Catholicism in Italy. Also in attendance was Countess Elisa Trivulzio, connected with the Catholic women's movement of Milan through the magazine *L'Azione Muliebre* (Frattoni 2008, 43 ss.; Dawes 2014).

Von Suttner's speech sought to raise the awareness of women about the importance that duelling had for them. She stated that "la question qui nous occupe, le duel, est éminemment féminine".²² In this sense, the Austrian pacifist proposed a change of mentality that would transform the conventional meaning given to valour and honour in the society of their time through women because (in the words of the Austrian Women's League): "Nous ne faisons pas de démonstrations publiques, mais nous travaillons en toute simplicité; en silence et avec persévérance pour faire triompher dans nos familles, parmi nos amis le principe que le duel ne constitue pas la sauvegarde de l'honneur".²³ In other words, women were to understand that they were often the reason for men fighting duels. If women were to refuse to acknowledge that act as one of bravery, as homage paid by men, they would be taking the first steps towards such an eagerly desired change. The same argument, although in a more combative spirit, was used by another of the participants at the conference, Paula Neumann, a member of the Hungarian Peace Society. Neumann asserted that the economic and political situation of the time had led women to become involved in the public debate in favour of their families' welfare. From a perspective that was

²⁰ AHN, Archivo Carlista-Alfonso Carlos, 122, exp. 1: List of ladies.

²¹ CR 1908, 48.

²² CR 1908, 27.

²³ CR 1908, 29.

critical of all types of violence, Neumann explained the close relationship that existed between the mentality that had duelling as one of its expressions of male valour and the warmongering of their time. The Hungarian representative urged women to teach their children the difference between true bravery and vanity, to use the press to defend these ideas and to pressure politicians to change the laws.²⁴

4. Laws and Courts of Honour

Changing the way of thinking as regards duelling also implied the consideration of this practice as a crime and its practitioners as criminals. The laws of all European countries prohibited duels, although duellists typically went unpunished. If death occurred, sentences tended to be shorter than in the case of murder or homicide. If they were fined, the payment of the fine did not mean economic hardship for people of high social standing. In legal terms, duelling was considered a “special crime”. In their speeches, the conference participants did focus on the need to put an end to the consideration of duelling as a “special crime”, which allowed duellists not to be treated as criminals. They repeatedly called on the political authorities of all the European countries to classify duelling as a “common crime”, to which the laws governing violent crimes should apply. The speech by the Spanish military lawyer Laguna Azorín addressed this subject, insisting by all possible means that duellists should be spoken of and dealt with as murderers. In other words, they should be made to feel the social void with which people of honour treated criminals in order to create a moral boundary within the upper classes that would allow them, owing to the status of role models attributed to them, to instil in the rest of society a model of civic conduct based on self-control (Laguna Azorín 1912).²⁵

The student leader Hofmannsthal went further by calling for the removal of civil and political rights from duellists as the most effective means of putting an end to duelling. Hofmannsthal put forward a few interesting reflections on the impunity of duellists and believed that the causes were twofold: on the one hand, there was consent granted by both adversaries who were bound by the same code, which meant that neither they nor their families would report the opponent in case of serious injury or death; and on the other, there were social constraints, in other words, submission to

²⁴ *CR* 1908, 88-92.

²⁵ *CR* 1908, 80-81.

dictates external to one's own conscience. Duelling, in his opinion, was evidence of the immature character of an individual who was incapable of accepting his duties to fellow citizens and his own family. For this reason, he proposed that the practice of duelling should be considered “une raison de prolongation de la minorité”, especially in the case of the young.²⁶

Although in general terms, all the conference participants shared the same ideas concerning the need to eradicate duelling, discrepancies among them soon began to surface. Disagreement arose as the result of another speech by Hofmannsthal. The young Viennese lawyer proposed expelling any members who might have taken part in a duel from the International Anti-Duelling League. In an attempt to moderate the radical nature of this proposal, the chairman of the conference, Dessewffy, was partial to the solution that any member of the league who found it necessary to fight a duel should first renounce his membership. Consequently, something as unpleasant as expulsion was avoided. Other participants disagreed, such as the French representative Du Bourg, who insisted that members should be free to act as they saw fit. One of the members of the German delegation, Professor Hugo Dinger, took a relatively similar approach by explaining that overly radical proposals could undermine all the work the German League was doing in the army by its propaganda. Dinger asserted that it was necessary to understand duellists because, even though duelling was an absurdity, the offended individual had the right to demand respect for his reputation.²⁷ Ultimately, these conflicting opinions on whether the league should be more or less strict with the conduct of its members were evidence of the conviction that honour was not sufficiently protected by law. For this reason, members could not be made to renounce duelling in order to defend their reputation where they considered it necessary. This evidently contradicted the anti-duelling league's own aims. However, it served as an incentive to seek another solution that was better suited with the real possibilities of the association.²⁸

Becoming aware of this situation, the conference participants directed their speeches along two main lines that were defined in the “projet de résolution” put forward for public discussion by Dessewffy.²⁹ Firstly, they decided to take action to lobby governments to make changes to the law

²⁶ CR 1908, 194-195.

²⁷ CR 1908, 108.

²⁸ This debate, which demonstrated the incoherence of certain anti-duellists, even crossed the boundaries of the conference itself (Federici 1909, 42-43).

²⁹ CR 1908, 146.

where duelling was concerned. Secondly, they considered intensifying their campaigns to gain general support for courts of honour. Where the former was concerned, all national leagues were urged to take the initiatives in their respective countries and to present projects to their governments and parliaments, along the lines of what they had been doing, albeit more modestly, until that time. The difference, however, was that all leagues should now act in a coordinated fashion to propose means for action and common sentences for duellists in all the countries associated with the International Anti-Duelling League. The difficulties they were going to face, according to several speakers, would come from the differences in legal and social traditions in the countries committed to the project. In spite of everything, work had already begun in some of them. Shortly before the start of the conference, a bill on duelling had been submitted to the Spanish senate, which was explained by the delegates from that country and recorded in the minutes. The bill set out the introduction of a court of honour to address the demands of individuals affected by insults or defamation.³⁰

Courts of honour were the great aspiration of the members of the European anti-duelling leagues, although they were not a new thing. They had been in use in almost all of the armies in Europe throughout the nineteenth century, and the intention was for them to be transferred to civil life. The problem that arose was their coercive power; because they were not a part of the judicial branch of the state, duellists were not obliged to accept their rulings. In Italy, student associations had begun to consult the most reputable criminal lawyers in order to study the matter, according to the information given by the Marquis of Crispolti in the final session of the conference.³¹ The French lawyer Ilari, based on his own experience, proposed seeing them for what they really were: instruments of arbitration comprising individuals accepted by both duellists. The Spanish bill had chosen a similar route by determining that each of the parties should appoint a judge and that the representative of the judicial branch in the place where the offence took place should choose three impartial and respected individuals from the locality. This would allow the court to consist of representatives of both parties and neutral individuals, which would facilitate acceptance of its ruling by those involved.³²

The final resolutions of the conference took these experiences into consideration and encouraged the national leagues to continue along the

³⁰ *Diario de Sesiones del Senado* (Spain), 2 June 1908, appendix 24.

³¹ *CR* 1908, 197.

³² *CR* 1908, 147-150.

lines taken by every country. Nevertheless, the most enthusiastic conference participants (its chairman, Dessewffy, among them) continued to toy with the idea of internationalising courts of honour. Dessewffy believed that the peace movement was the model to follow because, like war, duelling was not a localised problem; it affected all nations and was ultimately a manifestation of the latent violence in modern societies. He called for the creation of a “code de législation internationale” by which the arbitration courts could abide. The ultimate goal of this was to guarantee that a man who was offended by another could be compensated in any country that was a signatory to this code. In other words, both Dessewffy and other conference participants were considering the possibility of internationalising the jurisdiction of the courts of honour, based on the existence of a common penal code governing the matter. Despite his good intentions, Dessewffy was overlooking the fact that, just as legal traditions were different in each country, so was the cultural significance of honour and dishonour.

5. Conclusion: The Results of the Budapest Conference

The conference came to a close on the sixth of June 1908. From that moment onwards, the administrative processes fell to the *Conseil d'Administration de l'Union Internationale contre le Duel et pour la Protection de l'Honneur*, a council consisting of the members of the conference organising committee. As had occurred with the conference, the Conseil sought the Bourbon's patronage in order to maintain public visibility.³³ This council fulfilled one of the main aims of the conference, which was to carry on with its work and to keep up contact with the national leagues. Its provisional headquarters was set up in Budapest and it took responsibility for publishing the *Bulletin Officiel de l'Union Internationale contre le Duel et pour la Protection de l'Honneur*, whose editor was Eduárd Gergely.³⁴ The *Bulletin Officiel* succeeded in sustaining the topics covered by the conference through reflective articles and news on the anti-duellist movement. Through this publication and press sources, we know that the national committees continued their work in favour of legislative reform in their countries and that this work had an important impact in Italy and Germany. Another

³³ Telegram from the *Conseil* to Alfonso de Bourbon (9 October 1908), AHN, Archivo Carlista-Alfonso Carlos, 122, exp. 1.

³⁴ I have only been able to find the issues of 1912 and 1913 (AHN, Archivo Carlista-Alfonso Carlos, 122, exp. 2).

of the duties of the council was to prepare league meetings with a view to holding the next conference. However, it never came to be held.

After Budapest, the aim was to hold the meeting in Turin in 1910.³⁵ Nevertheless, this did not succeed, although it is not possible to point to a particular cause, given that there is no further information in this regard in the documentation. It was subsequently decided to delay the conference to 1912 with Munich as the venue. However, the German league requested the withdrawal of this proposal because there was a plan to present a bill on duelling to the Reichstag that year. Holding the conference at the same time could be construed by the German government as exerting pressure on political representatives.³⁶ The last documented news regarding the holding of an international league conference was the *Conseil's* proposal to make Innsbruck the venue for 1913. The agenda with its items to be addressed was even prepared.³⁷ However, no further information in this respect is to be found in the press or documentary sources. It is highly likely that, given growing international tension, the council decided to postpone the meeting.

The anti-duellist movement and the Budapest conference offer us an example of the initiatives taken by the aristocracy to become an agent for mobilisation around a cause and, therefore, of their desire to find a place in a world where traditional hierarchies were disappearing. The progressive press was not favourable to these initiatives, even coming to mock them.³⁸ Nonetheless, despite the limited results achieved, these types of platforms encouraged the political involvement of upper-class women, turning them into leaders for women in other social sectors, as had occurred with the Catholic women's movement. Finally, as regards the concept of honour, the reflections made at the conference show the difficulties in redefining a sentiment that was only transformed by the deep social metamorphosis brought about by war. Among those changes was that of the "Western model of virility" (Guillet 2008, 358-369), based on nineteenth-century individualism, which gave way to the new identities created by mass society. After the First World War and the human slaughter that came with it, duelling was seen as something ridiculous and absurd, although it did not disappear completely until decades later. What did die out was the anti-

35 "Die Gründung des Internationales Anti-Duell- Bureaus", in *Mitteilungen des Allgemeinen Anti-Duell-Liga für Österreich*, December 1908, p. 13 (AHN, Archivo Carlista-Alfonso Carlos, 121, exp. 2).

36 *Bulletin Officiel de l'Union Internationale contre le Duel et pour la Protection de l'Honneur*, V (1912), p. 137.

37 *Bulletin Officiel de l'Union Internationale contre le Duel et pour la Protection de l'Honneur*, VI (1913), pp. 165-166.

38 For example, *L'Aurore*, 30 December 1904, 30 April 1905 and 7 June 1908.

duellist movement, a product of the world of yesterday that Stefan Zweig so admirably described in his famous autobiography.

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ARISTOCRATAS PELA PAZ: A CONFERÊNCIA ANTI-DUELISTA DE BUDAPESTE (1908)

O movimento anti-duelista foi fundado na viragem do século XX por iniciativa do infante espanhol, Alfonso de Bourbon et d'Autriche-Este. Foi uma das diferentes iniciativas a favor da paz e contra o uso da violência nas relações sociais e políticas que se estabeleceram neste período. As ligas anti-duelo promovidas pelo príncipe Alfonso tentaram mudar o conceito de honra dos homens das classes de elite da época. A iniciativa mais importante tomada foi a realização da Primeira Conferência Internacional Anti-Duelista em Budapeste, em junho de 1908. O objetivo deste artigo é estudar um evento que nos oferece informações sobre a capacidade de mobilização da aristocracia europeia e o esforço feito pelos aristocratas para encontrar o seu lugar numa sociedade com tendências igualitárias.

Palavras-chave: duelo, aristocracia, honra, Europa, pacifismo.

ARISTOCRATES POUR LA PAIX: LA CONFÉRENCE ANTI-DUELLISTE DE BUDAPEST (1908)

Le mouvement anti-duelliste a été fondé au tournant du XXe siècle à l'initiative de l'infant espagnol Alfonso de Bourbon et d'Autriche-Este. C'était l'une des différentes stratégies en faveur de la paix et contre l'usage de la violence dans les relations sociales et politiques

misées en place au cours de cette période. Les ligues anti-duel promues par le prince Alfonso ont tenté de changer le concept d'honneur des hommes des élites à l'époque. Le projet le plus important était la première conférence internationale anti-duelliste tenue à Budapest en juin 1908. Le but de cet article est d'étudier un événement qui nous offre des informations sur la capacité de mobilisation de l'aristocratie européenne et l'effort réalisé par les aristocrates pour trouver leur place dans une société aux penchants égalitaires.

Mots-clés: duel, aristocratie, honneur, Europe, pacifisme.