

“Mafia Tactics” and Spirited Improvisation: Walter Markov and the International Congresses of Historical Sciences

Katja Castryck-Naumann

ABSTRACTS

The International Committee of Historical Sciences (CISH) and the world congresses, which it organizes every five years, are instructive subjects to understand the changing shape of the historical discipline in the mid-twentieth century. Through a biographical lens, this article traces the participation of Walter Markov, an eminent historian promoting the comparative study of revolutions and of world history, at the CISH congresses between 1955 and 1980. Based on his autobiography, archival records of the CISH, and official congress documentation, we can see a profound conceptual and thematic opening of the congress programmes and the discipline at large – leading to the inclusion of the history of revolutions, world regions, and global pasts – that was initiated by Markov and like-minded Marxist-inspired historians. Polycentric and interactive global history as we know it today emerged, not the least, from the joint interventions of this loose network at the CISH congresses.

Der internationale Verband der Historiker (CISH) und die Weltkongresse, die dieser alle fünf Jahre organisiert, sind aufschlussreich für ein Verständnis des Wandels der Geschichtswissenschaft in der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Im Fokus dieses Artikels steht die Teilnahme von Walter Markov an den CISH-Kongressen zwischen 1955 und 1980. Markov, renommierter in der vergleichenden Revolutionsgeschichte und unter Welthistorikern, hat gemeinsam mit marxistisch inspirierten Kollegen die Kongressdebatten wie die Struktur des CISH geprägt. Anhand seiner Autobiographie, von archivalischer Überlieferung des CISH sowie der Kongressdokumentation wird eine konzeptionelle und thematische Öffnung der historischen Disziplin nachvollziehbar. Die Geschichten von Revolutionen, von Weltregionen und von globalen Prozessen wurden auf den Kongressen als anerkannte Gegenstände des Faches etabliert und auch in der internen Struktur des CISH institutionalisiert. Die polyzentrische und interaktive Globalgeschichte, wie wir sie

heute kennen, ist nicht zuletzt durch die gemeinsamen Interventionen eines Netzwerkes von gleichgesinnten Historikern auf den CISH-Kongressen entstanden, welches sich anhand der Biographie von Markov gut rekonstruieren lässt.

In his autobiography, Walter Markov describes his participation between 1955 and 1980 in the congresses of the International Committee of Historical Sciences (Comité International des Sciences Historiques, CISH). In the original 20 typewritten pages, he reports with much joy and irony about the “learned gatherings where the worldwide scattered mafia of scientific tourism came together”,¹ and he recounts “mafia tactics”, planned with colleagues “at a cheap lunch table of a ‘Trattoria Metropolitana’” under the August sun of Rome during the tenth CISH congress in 1955. At the following congresses, they met as a “loose anti-mafia” until they achieved their goals at the congress in San Francisco in 1975. Firstly, they promoted establishing the history of revolutions as a permanent theme at the CISH congresses, thereby recognizing this history as a noteworthy subject of historical research. This was achieved with the founding of the International Commission for the History of the French Revolution (Commission Internationale d’Histoire de la Révolution Française). Secondly, they advocated a new way of writing world history. Instead of the older Eurocentric and historico-philosophical world histories, new empirically based narratives were to be written, in which the developments of all regions of the world – but especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America – would be examined. Polycentric and interactive global history as we know it today emerged from – among other places, by other actors, and from other endeavours – these projects.²

Working on the basis of Markov’s autobiography and the “mafia” story he tells, the following pages investigate both. At first glance, Markov’s presentation of the CISH congresses as the place where young rebellious historians took centre stage might seem negligible, being considered just the view of an old man who writes about his life as a historian but without the constraints of academic writing. In fact, however, his view of the congresses reveals a collective effort targeting a conceptual and thematic opening of international historiography in the second half of the twentieth century that has shaped the discipline³ as well as the development of the CISH.⁴ This collective effort is not documented in the official records.

1 W. Markov, *Wie viele Leben lebt der Mensch. Eine Autobiographie aus dem Nachlass*, Leipzig 2009, p. 339.

2 On the development of world historiography: J. H. Bentley (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of World History*, Oxford 2011; D. Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History. Theories and Approaches in a Connected World*, Cambridge 2011; M. Middell/K. Castryck-Naumann (eds.), *Narrating World History after the Global Turn. The Cambridge World History* (2015), Thematic Issue, *Comparativ* 29 (2019) 6.

3 L. Raphael, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme. Theorien, Methoden, Tendenzen von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart*, revised edition, Munich 2010; *Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 4 and 5.

4 M. Middell/K. (Castryck-)Naumann, *Historians and International Organizations. The International Commission of Historical Sciences*, in: D. Laqua et al. (eds.), *International Organizations and Global Civil Society. Histories of the Union of International Associations*, Indiana 2019, pp. 133–151; K. A. Makowski et al. (eds.), *With a Zest and in a Refined Form. The International Historical Congress of Historical Sciences in Warsaw 1933, Poznan 2022*, see also the documentation at: <https://ichs2020poznan.pl/en/tradition>. Furthermore, the English translation of Karl D. Erdmann’s history, originally published in 1987: *Toward a Global Community of Historians. The Interna-*

Markov's appearance at the CISH congress in Rome in 1955 should be understood against the background of his personal situation, that is to say, the science policy in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the implications of such a policy for his home university in Leipzig in the early 1950s. The Stalinization of the GDR's higher education system affected him directly, as he was expelled from the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) in January 1951 (rehabilitated in 1955/56). Unlike other scholars, Markov did not turn his back on the GDR but remained in the country where he continued to lead the Institute for General History (Institut für Allgemeine Geschichte) as its director. Thematically, however, he had to reorient his research because the accusation of Titoism made it difficult to continue working on Eastern and Southeastern European history, and the diplomatic history on which he had done his doctorate and habilitation had also become problematic because it fed into the politically charged discussion of imperialism.

The occasion for dedicating himself to new fields of research was the demand for profile-building with which Leipzig University was confronted in 1952. The Saxon Ministry of Science wanted to award contracts for long-term collective research projects. After consulting with his colleagues, Markov proposed a comparative study of colonialism for his institute, which was approved by the political authorities and began in 1953.⁵ Initially, a collectively written handbook on the history of colonial exploitation from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century was to be produced, dealing especially with the historical preconditions and interconnections of national liberation movements in Africa and Latin America. This theme was well chosen. On the one hand, it was politically relevant – decolonial movements in Asia and Africa were being actively observed in the GDR.⁶ On the other hand, it represented a good starting point for developing world history as a history of truly all world regions. Conceptually, Markov and his colleagues were guided by the "indivisibility of history" and the "inability to isolate its individual phenomena". At the same time, they aimed to deconstruct widespread ways of thinking such as the distinction "between large and small states, [as well as] between politically developed, culturally advanced, and historically delayed [areas of the world], consequently often relegated from the first row of the historical stage". Markov and his colleagues regarded

tional Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Science 1898–2000, New York 2005; A. Blänsdorf, Zusammenarbeit zwischen Historikern im geteilten Europa. Das Comité international des sciences historiques und die internationalen Historikerkongresse, 1945–1990, in: A. Fleury/L. Jilek (eds.), Une Europe malgré tout 1945–1990. Contacts et réseaux culturels, intellectuels et scientifiques entre Européens dans la guerre froide (L'Europe et les Europes, vol. 9), Brussels 2009, pp. 183–202.

5 M. Middell, Weltgeschichtsschreibung im Zeitalter der Verfälschung und Professionalisierung. Das Leipziger Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte 1890–1990, vol. 3, Leipzig 2005, pp. 865–925.

6 For example: E. Burton et al. (eds.), Navigating Socialist Encounters. Moorings and (Dis)Entanglements between Africa and East Germany during the Cold War, Munich 2021; M. Middell, Die Entwicklung der Area Studies in der DDR als Reaktion auf die Dekolonialisierungsprozesse der 1950er/60er Jahre, in: Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung 2019, pp. 223–254.

world history as being “untrue” if it “conceals or forgets the share of the non-European, in particular the ‘coloured’, continents”.⁷

Although the planned handbook did not materialize, as empirical knowledge was lacking for the envisaged research-based synthesis,⁸ in just one year the team had developed an innovative and ambitious research programme in world history, which was to be implemented in the years to come.⁹ At all five CISH congresses that Markov attended between 1955 and 1975, he presented the programme’s results, contributing to the formulation of a new standard: serious world history writing begins with a critique of the Eurocentrism embedded in earlier narratives and must be based on source-based world regional/area studies.

In the early 1950s, not only did Markov decide to work on comparative colonial history and on world history, but he also turned to the history of the French Revolution, which he soon examined in the context of a comparative history of the revolution.¹⁰ The impetus for this came from Werner Krauss, whose research was on Romance literature; the two Leipzig scholars had been exchanging ideas about interfaces between their disciplines for some time.¹¹ On the other hand, Markov was inspired to work on this topic after having his first conversations with Albert Soboul in Leipzig, who later succeeded George Lefebvre as chair of the history of the French Revolution at the Sorbonne.¹² Soboul and Markov brought the French Revolution into the congresses of the CISH, beginning with the congress in Stockholm in 1960, and thus put the subject on the agenda of international historical scholarship. In addition, Markov also presented at the congress his comparative works and his studies on the history of Africa, again highlighting the need for a comparative perspective.

Participation in the congresses was appealing: it offered intellectual stimulation and an exchange with like-minded colleagues from other countries, which in the times before the digital age were costly. Additionally, arguments established on the international stage could in turn be used in national debates. The international networking, together with the recognition that came with international exposure, was also a sort of protective shield that allowed courageous statements and risky decisions to be made at home. Finally,

7 L. Rathmann, Walter Markov und die „farbigen“ Kontinente. Persönliche Reminiszenzen, in: M. Neuhaus/H. Seidel (eds.), Wenn jemand seinen Kopf bewußt hinhält. Beiträge zu Werk und Wirken von Walter Markov, Leipzig 1995, pp. 183–186, quote p. 183; W. Markov, Arbeitstagung zur Fragen der Kolonialgeschichte und kolonialen Befreiungsbewegungen, in: Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität 7 (1957/58) 1/2, pp. 99–105, here p. 99; W. Markov et al., Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Kolonialismus und zur nationalen Befreiungsbewegung der kolonial unterdrückten Völker, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft [hereafter ZfG] 8 (1960) = Special Issue on XI CISH Congress, pp. 544–562.

8 Instead, the series “Studien zur Kolonialgeschichte” was edited, published in 11 volumes between 1959 and 1964.

9 W. Markov, Fragen der Genesis und Bedeutung der vorimperialistischen Kolonialsysteme, in: Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität 4 (1954/55) 1–2, pp. 43–60.

10 W. Markov, Jakobiner und Sansculotten. Beiträge zur Französischen Revolutionsregierung 1793–1794, Berlin 1956.

11 W. Markov, Zwiesprache mit dem Jahrhundert, Berlin 1990, p. 223.

12 M. Middell, Le séjour d’Albert Soboul à Leipzig en 1954. Point de départ d’une coopération fructueuse, in: Etudes babouvistes 1 (2002), pp. 80–90.

the congresses acted as a forum in which the structures of one's own discipline could be challenged and reformed. Arguments about structure were usually arguments about substance. Thematic-conceptual and institutional concerns of Markov and like-minded colleagues were closely linked in his work at the CISH congresses.

1. Rome 1955: Networking and Joint Plans

The second post-war congress of historians in Rome in 1955 was marked by an atmosphere of political détente. At the Geneva Summit in July of that year, the Soviet Union, the USA, France, and Great Britain agreed on exchange, cooperation, and joint peace efforts. A year earlier, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia as well as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had rejoined the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and in 1952 the CISH Bureau also invited the countries of the socialist bloc to its next congress.¹³ This invitation was accepted by the authorities of the GDR, which had the State Secretariat for Higher Education put together a ten-member delegation. Although the CISH Board did not nominate anyone from the group for any of the 37 lectures that were held at the congress, some of the delegates were included in the programme as commentators, and naturally the delegation took the floor in the debates.¹⁴

Markov, who shortly before and together with Manfred Kossok developed a concept for studying structures and problems of the Spanish colonial system,¹⁵ commented in a panel on Spanish colonialism where the keynote lectures were given by Jose M. Ots y Capedequi (Spain), Robert A. Humphrey (UK), and Arthur P. Whitaker (USA). These were followed by comments from Richard Konetzke (Federal Republic of Germany, FRG), Max Silberschmidt (Switzerland), and Markov.¹⁶ Familiar with the state of international research, Markov, in a critical commentary of Ots y Capedequi, argued for examining influences from the metropole to the colony also in terms of repercussions, as well as for viewing relations as fundamentally reciprocal: "Spain – positively and negatively – not only gave something to the colonies, but also received it."¹⁷ In addition, he called for a closer look at the adaptation of the Spanish crown to the circumstances and happenings in the colonies. While he supported Konetzke's plea for a social history of the colonial

13 The Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia had joined the CISH in 1926/27, but suspended membership from 1950 to 1954/55.

14 H. Haun, *Der X. Internationale Historikerkongress in Rom und die Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR*, in: *ZfG* 34 (1986) 4, pp. 303–314, here p. 308.

15 M. Markov/M. Kossok, *Konspekt über das spanische Kolonialsystem*, in: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift Karl-Marx-Universität* 5 (1955/56) 2/3, pp. 121–144.

16 The lectures are reprinted in: G. C. Sansoni (ed.), *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienza Storica*, vol. 1: *Metodologia, Problemi Generali*, Florence, 1955, pp. 167–223; the commentaries by M. Silberschmidt and Richard Konetzke, in: *ibid.*, vol. 7: *Riassunto delle Comunicazioni*, Florence, 1955, pp. 29–32–39; Markov's commentary entitled "Sobre la historia de la colonización española", in: *Atti del X Congresso Internazionale*, Roma 11–17 September 1955, Rome 1957, pp. 68ff.

17 G. Schilfert et al., *Der X. Internationale Kongress für Geschichtswissenschaft in Rom*, in: *ZfG* 4 (1956) 4, pp. 773–799.

space that traces indigenous imprints, he also called attention to two gaps in Konetzke's remarks: recognition of the agency of the colonized and the costs that penetration, transculturation, and evangelization entailed for Latin America. Finally, Markov called for a comparative perspective, arguing that since the colonial question had become a world question, its study also required a global view – for him, colonial history could only be written comparatively.

The fact that, except for the panel mentioned above, the history of colonialism was only marginally discussed at the congress in 1955 and that C. M. Ramas,¹⁸ in his concluding lecture of the panel, had underlined that at the next congress world history/general history should no longer be treated without consideration of the “peripheries”, Markov charged himself and fellow historians with a task: “To anyone who pursues the history of the dying ‘colonial age’, arises from it a plethora of tasks that presuppose rigorous work if he wants to pass with honed weapons in Stockholm in 1960.”¹⁹ For him, this included, first, studying the history of non-Western regions systematically and not only as a glance or as an addendum, as had been common until then. Second, this required taking note not only of historiography from imperial centres (both former and contemporary) but also of historiography from former colonies.²⁰ Third, this meant entering a dialogue at eye level with colleagues from non-European historiographies rather than talking about them and about the pasts of their societies. With these points in mind, he summed up the Rome congress:

*Where colonial history otherwise had its say, it abstracted from the colonial question as it presents itself to us and now. Even more, it remained subject to the tutelage of former or still incumbent colonizers. [...] But is it not presumptuous to leave the only presentation and the only communication on East Asia to an American and a Frenchman? Indian, Indonesian, African and pacifist topics were completely missing.*²¹

Here and there, Markov also spoke in other panels, but what happened on the fringes of the official programme was more significant. Personally touching was certainly the reunion with Arnold Toynbee, with whose son, Anthony, Markov had founded the anti-fascist group in Bonn in 1934.²² Scientifically momentous was the aforementioned

18 In the documentation of some of the congresses the first names are abbreviated. Sometimes countries or origins are given, sometimes cities. I refer mostly to the information as stated in the congress documentation.

19 Ibid., p. 799. He would have been pleased to add a footnote to this conclusion in the congress report for the ZfG, in which he referred to the large number of colonial history research institutions in the former empires and saw an urgent need to catch up in the GDR, which could be solved at Leipzig University through an institutional connection of regional studies with historical studies. This shows, among other things, that in the 1950s, the organization of world region studies was being reconsidered in a whole series of university systems and that interdisciplinary research on non-European societies was being pursued not only in the format of US area studies: K. (Castryck-)Naumann et al. (eds.), *In Search of Other Worlds. Essays towards a Cross-Regional History of Area Studies*, Leipzig 2019.

20 W. Markov, *Neuere Literatur der Kolonialzeit Hispanoamerikas*, in: ZfG 4 (1956) 6, pp. 1327–1336.

21 Ibid., p. 790f.

22 Markov, *Zwiesprache mit dem Jahrhundert*, p. 50f.

meeting over lunch in a simple restaurant near the conference, where a coup d'état was being planned.

This was inspired, among other things, by a game-changing event that was taking place in the conference rooms at the same time. Already at the congress in Paris in 1950, historians of the Sixth Section of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in Paris had criticized the prevailing understanding that history was past politics. Now they argued in clear terms for reconstructing historical change above all in terms of social and economic structures. Fernand Braudel organized a panel on trade and industry in early modern Europe. Ernest Labrousse gave a much discussed and groundbreaking lecture outlining an ambitious and comparative research programme dealing with the "bourgeoisie occidentale". Eric Hobsbawm was (by his own account) in charge of the section on contemporary history and delivered several commentaries.²³ It was the period when, among other things, through the productivity of the second generation of the *Annales* school, social and economic historical studies were gaining international acceptance, including within the CISH. Signalling this turning point, the CISH Board incorporated in 1953 the Committee for the History of Social Movements (*Comité pour l'Histoire des Mouvements Sociaux*, founded in 1932) as an internal commission, with the addition in its name of "and Social Structures".²⁴

Encouraged by the assertiveness of the *Annales* historians, but also born out of the annoyance that Marxist-inspired economic analyses had so far found little resonance at the congresses, "a round table of relatively young, Marxist-oriented historians" met in 1955 at the *Trattoria Metropolitana* on Via Cavour.²⁵ Who initiated the joint lunch is not transmitted, but Markov notes in his autobiography who, over the wine that followed, made plans for future joint action: Soboul, George Rudé, Christopher Hill, Hobsbawm, Ernesto Ragionieri, and Sergio Bertelli. Together they wanted to intervene in the debate about a new historiography oriented towards social history – standing alongside the *Annales* historians in the confrontation with the advocates of the status quo, but at the same time setting themselves apart from them. In the words of Hobsbawm, the "ideas of the French were in no way Marxist, except for the historiography of the French Revolution, which, having anchored safely in the port of the Sorbonne, had nothing to do with the school of the *Annales*".²⁶ So the three Britons (who knew each other from their work

23 The papers and accompanying comments are reprinted in: G. C. Sansoni (ed.), *Relanzioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienza Storici*, vol. 4: *Storia Moderna*, Florence 1955. The discussions on the panels can be found in: *Atti del X Congresso Internazionale*, pp. 494–507 and pp. 514–530; H. Cools et al. (eds.), *La storiografia tra passato e futuro. Il X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche* (Roma 1955) cinquant'anni dopo; atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, 21–24 settembre 2005, Rome 2008, here especially the essays by Herman van der Wee and Jacques Revel.

24 The CISH consists of the national associations of historians and thematic commissions. In addition, over time, membership has been expanded to include so-called international affiliated organizations. In 1968, the committee was downgraded to an international affiliated organization; in 2002, it was reintegrated as the International Social History Committee, see Erdmann, *Toward a Global Community of Historians*, p. 374.

25 Markov, *Wie viele Leben lebt der Mensch*, p. 341.

26 Quote translated from E. Hobsbawm, *Dangerous Times. Ein Leben im 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2003, p. 329.

in the Communist Party Historians Group); the historians of the French Revolution, Soboul and Markov; and their Italian colleagues teamed up to help a critical history of power from below to break through the existing way to do history. They were later joined by, among others, Richard Cobb, Kåre Tønnesson, Hilde Koplenig, Kōhachirō Takahashi, Armando Saitta, Kálmán Benda, Witold Kula, Josef Polišenský, Karel Mejdřícká, J. M. Sacher, Victor M. Daline, and Albert Z. Manfred. It was a loose network with a shifting composition, not a stable group, but it was tied together through a historiographical project, which was also a scientific and sociopolitical project and which they advanced in a continuous conversation at the CISH congresses as well as in a series of transnational exchanges.²⁷

2. Institutionalization of French Revolutionary History at the CISH

Those from this circle who worked on the history of the French Revolution used the CISH congresses in a variety of ways to make their research heard in international historians' debates, with Soboul and Markov leading the way. The beginnings of this network were in Leipzig. Krauss had probably organized for Auguste Cornu (Paris) to teach as a visiting professor of comparative intellectual and literary history in Leipzig from 1949 to 1951 and to meet Markov in the process. Cornu brought to Markov's attention Lefebvre's as well as Soboul's studies of the French Revolution, and, inspired by them, Markov decided in the early 1950s to research the political left, the Jacobins, and sans-culottes. Like his French colleagues, Markov wanted to understand the multifaceted nature of the revolutionaries, not to reduce the revolution to a single course, "a process of almost mechanical-law-like uniformity", as the bulk of historiography had done up to that point, according to his view. He was particularly interested in the social diversity of the actors and in those groups in the revolutionary process that had hitherto gone unnoticed:

What and whom does "the" counter-revolution represent in 1793 or 1794 – in contrast, say, to 1789 or 1792 and then again under the Directoire or finally 1814–1815? And even more: what did the "left" mean in the heroic days of the Commune of August 1792, what in the struggle against the Gironde, what again in Year II? [...] Where is the bor-

27 Kula participated, for example, in Stockholm in 1960 in the colloquium on Babeuf organized by Soboul and Markov. At this congress, Kula and Braudel held a colloquium on the history of prices, at which a commission on economic history was founded. It was joined, among others, by M. P. Lesnikov, known from Markov in the Hanseatic Working Group, which became a space of exchange between East and West: XI Kongres Między narodowy Nauk Historycznych W Sztokholmie 1960, in: *Kwartalnik Historyczny* LXVII (1960) 4, pp. 1180–1194; W. Berthold et al., *Die Sektionssitzungen des XI. International Congress of Historians in Stockholm*, in: *ZfG* 9 (1961) 1, pp. 144–180, p. 164. On the close contacts of Kula and Braudel, see Patryk Pleskot, *Intelektualni Sąsiedzi. Kontakty Historyków Polskich Ze Środowiskiem "Annales" 1945–1989* [Intellectual Neighbours. The Contacts between Polish Historians and the Annales], Warsaw 2010; on the network of Hanseatic researchers and the exchange between historians from Warsaw and Paris, see K. (Castryck-) Naumann, *Mitreden über Weltgeschichte. The Participation of Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian Historians in the UNESCO Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind (1952–1969)*, in: *Comparativ* 20 (2010) 1–2, pp. 186–226.

*der between leftist and pseudo-leftist radicalism? Is one justified in operating, however cautiously, with the terms socialism and anarchism? To what extent does the sans-culottes possess a distinct class of its own, from which a social and political programme can be meaningfully formulated? But above all: does such an extreme left co-determine the essence of the revolution, or is it merely a fleeting surge? Is it the bearer of a mission, not of the immediate, but of something future, pointing beyond Babeuf?*²⁸

He wanted to talk to Soboul about these questions and undertake research together. Cornu established the first contact,²⁹ and in December 1954 Markov welcomed Soboul to Leipzig. Already at the first meeting, the common interest and mutual sympathy led to a joint book project.³⁰ Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1955 during the CISH congress, they discussed a trip to Paris by Markov, who wanted to work in the French National Archives in Paris – which was to become an adventurous, because it was illegal, journey³¹ – and they planned an anthology for the 200th anniversary of the birth of Maximilien Robespierre. The authors recruited for this volume for the most part came from the group that had met in the Trattoria Metropolitana.³² Perhaps already in Rome, at the latest during his visit to Paris in 1957, Markov proposed to organize a colloquium for the next CISH congress, in Stockholm – on the fringes of the conference as it seemed impossible to be included into the official programme. In the end, in 1952, the CISH accepted the West German Association of Historians of Germany (Verband der Historiker Deutschlands) as a member representing both German states, while the East German Society of Historians (Historiker-Gesellschaft der DDR), founded in East Berlin in 1958 (or the National Committee of Historians of the GDR [Nationalkomitee der Historiker der DDR], established a little later), was not accepted as a member until 1970. Until then, proposals for the congress programme had to be submitted via the executive committee of the West German association.³³ This limited the scope for action, especially for critical and Marxist-inspired interventions.

28 Markov (ed.), *Jacobins and Sansculottes*, p. XVIII.

29 Markov, *How Many Lives Does Man Live*, p. 361.

30 W. Markov (ed.), *Jacobins and Sansculottes*, followed by: W. Markov/A. Soboul, *Die Sansculotten von Paris. Dokumente zur Geschichte der Volksbewegung 1793–1794*, Berlin 1957; on the debates surrounding both volumes, see Middell, *Weltgeschichtsschreibung*, pp. 900ff.

31 After the invitation to Paris signed by Lefebvre had been rejected by the responsible authorities, Markov took the night train to Paris without a visa, but equipped with a second passport. "Pour un ancien partisan la question des frontières ne se pose pas", unpublished manuscript of the autobiography, Book 6, Chapter 6, p. 3 [hereinafter *Autobiography*].

32 W. Markov/Georges Lefebvre (eds.), *Maximilien Robespierre 1758–1794. Beiträge zu seinem 200. Geburtstag*, Berlin 1958, articles published therein by Manfred Zacher, Cobb, Rudé, Dalin, Medricka, Kálmán, furthermore also Bogusław Lesnodorski (Warsaw). See also the report by Markov in *ZfG* 13 (1965) 8, p. 1434.

33 The National Committee of Historians of the GDR was established on 21 November 1959 and 14 days later applied to be accepted and join the CISH with a letter of endorsement from the Polish Academy of Sciences. After the objection of the West German side, namely Gerhard Ritter (1955–1962, a member of the CISH Bureau and 1962–1965 the vice-president), the application was rejected, see *Comité International des Sciences Historiques*, 105, AS 8, *Allemagne (R.D.A.)*, Archives Nationales Paris (hereinafter *CISH, AN Paris*), for the history of the two German associations of historians see: M. Berg et al. (eds.), *The Assembled Guild. Historikerverband und Historikertage in Deutschland 1893–2000*, Göttingen 2018.

Soboul and Markov also likely estimated at that time that the Soviet tanks in Hungary were ending the political thaw that had come after Joseph Stalin's death and that the confrontation between the blocs would intensify again, with consequences for the overall atmosphere of the 1960 congress. This was a realistic assessment. Heated discussions between the hardliners of both sides dominated that CISH congress, especially in the section on "Methodology". Debates were polarized and politicized not the least because Federico Chabod, in his function as president of the CISH, had campaigned for the release of Domokos Kosáry (representative of the Hungarian historians at the General Assembly in 1948), and this was read as anti-Soviet partisanship for the Hungarian side.³⁴ In this situation, Markov limited himself to critically commenting on Franco Venturi's lecture on the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Europe and to giving a short lecture on Josephinism and Jacobinism in the Commission Internationale des Etudes Slaves;³⁵ he left the ideological debate to others in the 53-member GDR delegation. More important for him was the colloquium on "Babeuf et les problèmes du babouvisme", which took place in parallel to the congress and which he had co-organized with Soboul. Here they exchanged ideas with, among others, A. Galante Garrone (Turin), A. Lehning (Amsterdam), and Maurice Dommanget (Paris), together with Daline (Moscow), Saitta (Pisa), and V. P. Volgin (Moscow), as well as Tønnesson (Oslo), P. Reimann (Prague), and J. Talmon (Jerusalem). The closing address was given by Labrousse.³⁶ During this one-day meeting, this international group of historians working on revolutions agreed upon a common research programme, aiming to work out empirically, and with an interest in the social history, who had carried the French Revolution – citizens, peasants, or workers. Markov built bridges in this group between Western and Eastern European historiography because of "his familiarity with the languages and fates of those historians whose enthusiasm for the democratic ideals of 1793 had often led them into marginality and at times exposed them to repression".³⁷

The colloquium became a blueprint for subsequent meetings. In 1965 in Vienna, Soboul and Markov organized a discussion on Robespierre. In 1970 in Moscow, they put questions of patriotism and nationalism on the agenda. In 1975, the exchange revolved around questions of equality, and the 1980 meeting in Bucharest was entitled "Propriété foncière et condition des terres dans l'Europe napoléonienne".³⁸

34 Blänsdorf, *Zusammenarbeit zwischen Historikern*, p. 194f.

35 Markov, *Wie viele Leben lebt der Mensch*, p. 347. Markov's commentary on Venturi, in: *Actes du Congrès, XIe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques*, Uppsala 1962, p. 186f; R. Rudolf, *XI. Internationaler Historiker-Kongress in Stockholm*, in: *ZfG* 8 (1960) 8, p. 1792.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 1796. The lectures are published in M. Dommanget et al. (eds.), *Babeuf et les problèmes du babouvisme. Colloque international de Stockholm*, Paris 1963.

37 M. Middell, *Vom utopischen Überschuss bei den äußersten Linken. Ein Nachwort*, in: Walter Markov, *Die Freiheiten des Priesters Roux*, ed. by Matthias Middell, Leipzig 2009, pp. 404–429, p. 423.

38 *Actes du Colloque Patriotisme et nationalisme en Europe à l'époque française et de Napoléon*, XIIIe Congrès des Sciences Historique, Paris 1973; *Rapports, XVe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques*, vol. 3: *Organismes internationaux affiliés et Commissions internes*, Bucarest 1980, p. 379–384.

The proposal for a coup d'état against the organizational structure of the CISH congresses – whose sections at that time could only be proposed by national historians' associations, with only a small part of the programme being provided by the few thematic commissions of the CISH – was made by the Soviet historian Manfred at the CISH congress in Moscow, when the group of Marxist-inspired historians met once again. In doing so, Markov recalls, Manfred reminded everyone that although they met regularly at the CISH congresses, they only appeared at the margins of the congresses and not in the official congress programme. To change this, he proposed to apply at the CISH for the establishment of an International Commission for the History of the French Revolution. As stated before, questions of structure were questions of substance. A prospective list of members for such a commission, written by Manfred, received approval by those present, although they were taken by surprise, and although the CISH Bureau initially opposed the list, it recommended, after several adjustments to the list, that the next General Assembly adopt such a commission.³⁹ Thus, "from a regular scholarly meeting on the margins of the congress", which by statute had to promote "private technical discussions" without including them into the "official" programme, grew the International Commission for the History of the French Revolution;⁴⁰ the reason for this success was probably also because Takahashi, a colleague and ally, had become a member of the CISH board and could support the proposal there. At the first business meeting of the new commission on 26 August 1975, Jacques Godechot was elected president, Markov and Takahashi vice-presidents, and Soboul executive director of the commission, assisted by Labrousse, Robert Palmer, and Manfred.⁴¹

Not only the institutionalization of the history of the revolutions that Markov and his comrades-in-arms achieved at the 14th CISH congress but also their proposals for two of the five "grand themes" of the congress were accepted. One of the themes was the "Declaration of Human Rights, 1776 to 1795", proposed to the CISH Bureau by the French National Committee and the GDR and initiated by Soboul and Markov, and the other was the study of revolutions.⁴² Among the 15 speakers on the first topic was Markov, who began his lecture, "Sur les Droits de l'homme", with a strong critique of the opening paper by Roland Mousnier. Therein he made a plea for examining human rights in their historicity, asking "when, why, where, and how the 'eternal' ideas of philanthropy entered the arena of real class antagonisms and became material power as a history-transforming guiding principle".⁴³ Mousnier, on the other hand, presented human rights as a con-

39 In 2001, the group, which until then had been run as an "internal commission", became an affiliated international organization, Erdmann, *Toward a Global Community*, p. 376.

40 Markov, *Wie viele Leben lebt der Mensch*, p. 347.

41 Furthermore, the board was constituted by G. S. Kucherenko (Soviet Union), E. Foster (USA), G. Rudé (Great Britain), E. Schmitt (West Germany), R. Devleeshouwer (Belgium), A. Saitta (Italy), and K. Tønnesson (Norway), in: A. Bauerfeind et al., *Der XIV. Internationale Historikertag in San Francisco*, in: *ZfG* 24 (1976) 4, pp. 442–467, p. 465.

42 Markov, *Wie viele Leben lebt der Mensch*, p. 357. The themes of the other three "grands themes" were the relationship between history and society, historical minorities, and tradition and renewal in Asia and Africa.

43 Markov's report, in: *ZfG* 24 (1976) 4, p. 445; the lecture is published in: *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 232 (1978), pp. 214–219.

stant and universal element of human history. The differing views led to a lively debate, which Markov reported back home in the *Journal of Historical Science* (*Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*). In his conclusion, he argued that a historical study of human rights in a comparative perspective should also be undertaken in the GDR. Here one can see once again the strategic importance of participation in the international congress for shifting science policy in the home context: a scientific or science policy concern is first raised in an international context in order to then be raised at home with reference to its internationally recognized relevance. Accordingly, internationalization also worked as a strategy for implementing reforms or innovations in one's own environment.

At the congress, Soboul and Markov naturally engaged in debates on the second "grand theme", the history of revolutions. Again, they argued for the need to use historically precise terms and to avoid typological comparisons that abstract time and space. They also debated Hobsbawm's analysis of the bourgeoisie and argued with Bernhard Bailyn over the latter's interpretation of the North American case. The congress in San Francisco was the culmination of Markov's participation in historians' congresses, and this not only in staging the study of revolutions.

3. The History of World Regions as Access and Precondition for a New World History Writing

As early as the late 1950s, Markov had begun to study African history in depth. Like with comparative colonial history, he also thought about and researched this topic in a global framework⁴⁴ and questioned fundamental things:

Does our definition, which we derive from the European revolutions, cover at all the totality of revolutionary phenomena in the world? [...] Our scheme of revolution, going back to Marx, is logically based on the experience that was accessible to us – and to him: more or less European history with some periphery or the "offshoots" in America, that is to say, those revolutions that brought bourgeoisie to power or, later, the power of the working class led by its vanguards. Now, look in Africa for a country where there is a full-blown bourgeoisie or a working class sufficiently emancipated "for itself" to drive a revolution along "classical" lines of knitting. And yet some peoples took the liberty of making a "bourgeois" revolution.⁴⁵

Preoccupied with these considerations, he certainly listened to Felix Gilbert's lecture at the congress in Stockholm, which dealt with the history of cultural historiography. In it,

44 In November 1960, he became director of the newly founded Research Center for the History of Asia, Africa and Latin America at Leipzig University, which was restructured in 1965 to become the Council for Asian, African and Latin American Studies. Its work is documented, among other things, in the report for the Moscow Historians' Day: V. Markov/H. Nimschowski/H. Stoecker, *Forschungen zu Geschichte Afrikas*, in: *Historische Forschungen in der DDR 1960–1970. Analysen und Berichte*, Berlin 1979, p. 746–762.

45 Markov, *Zwiesprache mit dem Jahrhundert*, p. 250.

Gilbert singled out Jacob Burckhardt, Johan Huizinga, Oswald Spengler, and Toynbee as examples of how European history could be rewritten based on its external relations; in addition, he argued that general history should be reconceived in light of the experience of an intertwining world. Markov also noted that E. M. Zhukov spoke in the same section on the question of periodization; in a report for the following CISH congress in Vienna in 1965, describing the sources for the history of Africa, he commented on Zhukov's lecture in a footnote: "cette périodisation ne répondait pas toujours aux exigences spécifiques de l'histoire africaine".⁴⁶ At the congress in 1965, there was the opportunity for the first time to discuss non-European history on its own, as the section "Methodology and General History" and the chronologically arranged sections were joined by two new sections, one on the "grand themes" of each congress and one on the "history of the continents".

After the conflict-ridden congress five years earlier, the atmosphere in Vienna was characterized by efforts to reach an understanding; a professional tone prevailed. In the preparation, the historians from the GDR gained more room to manoeuvre. Hans Rothfels (FRG) promised Ernst Engelberg (GDR) and Charles Webster (president of the CISH) that proposals for section topics and reports from the East German Society of Historians would be forwarded directly to the CISH Bureau.⁴⁷ Promptly, the CISH received two proposals from the GDR for the section "Methodology and General History": a panel on "Methods for Universal History Writing" and one on "Evolution and Revolution in World History" (the latter requested in cooperation with the Romanian National Committee).⁴⁸ The second proposal was accepted, while the first was probably rejected since a panel on "Projects and Concepts of World History in the 20th Century" had been submitted by the US national commission, which was somewhat broader in scope.⁴⁹ In this panel, Louis Gottschalk – involved in the UNESCO project on a scientific and cultural history of mankind – gave the keynote lecture. He outlined the traditions of the field up to the present, considering Jawaharlal Nehru's book *Glimpses of World History*, published in 1934, as a moment of change. From that point forward, he argued, progress-oriented and Eurocentric narratives increasingly came under criticism, and after the end of World War II, an interest in hitherto neglected world regions and intercontinental linkages emerged. In the second part of his lecture, Gottschalk outlined how a timely world history could be written: it would be a collective undertaking; basically it

46 F. Gilbert, *Cultural History and its Problems*, in: *Rapports, XI International Congress of Historical Sciences*, vol. 1, Stockholm 1960, p. 40–58; E. M. Zhukov, *The Periodization of World History*, *ibid.*, p. 74–88; the source report can be found in: *Rapports, XI International Congress of Historical Sciences*, vol. 2, Stockholm 1960, p. 177–232, here p. 231.

47 Letter Hans Rothfels to Charles Webster, August 26, 1960, CISH, AN Paris, 105 AS 297.

48 G. Förster et al., *Die Sektionen des XII. Internationale Historikerkongress in Wien*, in: *ZfG* 13 (1965) 8, p. 1392–1432; *Actes, XIIe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques*, Vienna 1965, p. 541–553.

49 *Liste des thèmes retenues et des rapports y afférents*, CISH AN Paris, AS 105 224, *Fd. Michel Francois; Tableau des thèmes de rapports retenue pour le XII CISH, Vienna 1965*, CISH AN Paris, 105 AS 300. The two offers on the history of revolutionary movements – "Le rôle des révolutions dans l'histoire de l'humanité" (Bulgaria) and "Le rôle des révolutions dans l'histoire" (Czechoslovakia / Sweden) were rejected.

would need an internationally composed groups of authors, and, if possible, it should not be under the auspices of national or international organizations but be linked to universities. In this plea, Gottschalk shared his experiences from the UNESCO History Project.⁵⁰

It was a plea with which Markov certainly agreed, for such a way of working had already been established in the early 1950s at the Institute for General History in Leipzig. He obviously shared the criticism that older world histories had been imbued with Eurocentric thinking, which was formulated in the ensuing debate led by Erik Molnár (Budapest). The interventions by László Zsigmond (Budapest), Geoffrey Barraclough (Cambridge), and Godechot (Toulouse), among others, all aimed at decentring established narratives. For them, the central prerequisite was a solid knowledge of historical developments in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.⁵¹ Markov, too, considered it a central task to reconstruct the histories of the world regions empirically and as impartially as possible and to understand them in their own right. Only that way, he argued, could a fundamental change of perspective be achieved and could a truly new world history emerge: “a different view on the potpourri of world history is gained by those who turn their eye from south to north for a change”⁵² – and who collaborate with colleagues from the regions.

The latter was only possible to a limited extent at the CISH congresses. In 1960 in Stockholm, among the 159 lectures, there were only 8 by historians working outside Europe and North America. Even at the congress in Stuttgart in 1980, only 26 colleagues from the Global South presented papers, compared to 156 speakers from Europe and North America.⁵³

At any rate, the congresses broadened their focus to include the history of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In Vienna, Markov was involved in two areas. First, he partook in a panel on decolonization, in which Aleksandr A. Guber (Moscow) and A. F. Miller spoke on political and economic changes and Dietmar Rothermund (Heidelberg) on “The Role of the Western Educated Class in Mass Political Movements in India in the 20th Century”.⁵⁴ Second and more authoritative was the panel on “Le problème des sources de l’histoire de l’Afrique noire jusqu’à la colonisation européenne”.⁵⁵ Here an inventory of sources on African history was discussed, which had been initiated by Raymond Mauny and Jean Glénisson (both Paris) and on which Markov had collaborated. Under their direction, nearly a dozen historians of Africa had compiled sources both inside and

50 Rapports, Xlle Congrès International des Sciences Historiques, vol. 4, Vienna 1965, pp. 5–19; P. Duedahl, Selling Mankind. UNESCO and the invention of global history, 1945–1976, in *Journal of World History* 22 (2011) 1, pp. 101–133; K. (Castryck-)Naumann, Avenues and Confines of Globalizing the Past. UNESCO’s International Commission for a “Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind (1952–1969), in: M. Herren (eds.), *Networking the International System. Global Histories of International Organizations*, Heidelberg 2014, pp. 187–200.

51 Actes, Xlle Congrès International des Sciences Historiques, Vienna 1965, pp. 525–540.

52 Markov, *Zwiesprache mit dem Jahrhundert*, p. 251.

53 Erdmann, *Toward a Global Community*, p. 267f.

54 Förster et al., *Die Sektionen des XII. Internationalen Historikerkongresses*, p. 1400.

55 Liste des thèmes retenues. The Norwegian proposal for a panel on Africa and the European conquest had been rejected.

outside of Africa. Mauny, Glénisson, and Markov had organized the material and analysed the opportunities and challenges that arose from this source situation.

The discussion was dominated by the question of whether the sources should be listed according to the prevailing periodization of colonial historiography, or alternative caesuras would be possible as well as more useful. Markov's conclusion is that "[s]urprisingly enough, such a conventional outline of bourgeois 'colonial history' was quite overwhelmingly rejected".⁵⁶ Whether I. A. Betley's (Nigeria) proposal to establish an International Commission for African History⁵⁷ got lost in this debate, or whether the Nigerian initiative did not find support in the CISH at the time, is difficult to determine. Markov, in any case, was already involved in launching the International Commission for the History of the French Revolution, which already seemed difficult and uncertain. At the congress in Vienna, Markov certainly attended the panel "Bilan du monde 1815". Conceived by Labrousse, it offered a world-historical view of that key year, with presentations by M. Reinhard on demography, Godechot on politics, Soboul on society, and Labrousse on economy.⁵⁸

Five years later, at the congress in Moscow in 1970, the history of Africa, Asia, and Latin America no longer was treated only in the section "History of the Continents" but was also the subject of a panel in one of the chronological sections. It was entitled "Nationalism and Class Struggle in the Process of Modernization in Asia and Africa". On the panel were Herbert Lüthy (Switzerland), Seiji Imahori (Japan), A. Palat (Czechoslovakia), and Imanuel Geiss (West Germany), as well as Franz Ansprenger (West Germany), Comer Vann Woodward (USA), and Markov. They discussed social groups, and Lüthy also focused on transcontinental networks and changes in political structures.⁵⁹ Markov presented his research on the paths and forms of state formation in both world regions after 1945, which he had undertaken with colleagues from Leipzig, Paris, and Moscow. He emphasized that state formations differed greatly, that differentiation is necessary, and that the differences could be explained only to a limited extent by the specifics of the respective colonial systems. Rather, the heterogeneity of the actors played a formative role; in all national liberation movements, there had been struggles over the direction between different political groupings.⁶⁰ According to Markov, the ensuing discussion was a tedious political exchange that ended without a conclusion; not even closing remarks were given.

The atmosphere was quite different another five years later at the congress in San Francisco, which Markov describes as a "landmark" and a "change of guards". After a quarter

56 Förster et al., *Die Sektionen des XII. Internationalen Historikerkongresses*, p. 1400f.; *Rapports, Xlle Congrès International des Sciences Historiques*, vol. 2: *Histoire des Continents*, Vienna 1965, p. 177–232, for the discussion: *Actes, Xlle Congrès International des Sciences Historiques*, Vienna 1965, p. 311–326.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 324.

58 Förster, *Die Sektionen des XII. Internationalen Historikerkongresses*, p. 1397f.

59 The lectures are published in: *Dokladi Kongressa*, vol. 1, part 4, Moscow 1970, pp. 7–178.

60 The lecture is published in M. Kossok (ed.), *Walter Markov. Weltgeschichte im Revolutionsquadrat*, Berlin, 2nd edn 1979, pp. 485–505.

of a century, Michel Francois was succeeded as secretary general by Hélène Ahrweiler, and the medievalist Aleksander Gieysztor, from Poland, was elected president. His election also reflected the international recognition of social and economic history in a *longue durée* perspective. Gieysztor, with his colleagues Kula, Jerzy Topolski, and Andrzej Wyczański, had conducted research with the *Annales* historians at the EHESS in the 1950s and 1960s. The congress programme reflected that the “great old man haunted the congress corridors only as a shadow”, while “the ‘generation of the young of Rome’ came to the fore”⁶¹ – and with them, Markov.

In the preparations for the congress, Markov had again been invited to co-author a keynote paper, this time on the part of the Japanese National Committee, with T. Wakamori and T. Kimbara, who needed an expert on African history for their panel on tradition and renewal in Asia and Africa. While Kimbara’s paper presented continuity and change in the development processes of both regions as well as interrelationships, Markov emphasized differences and argued that simultaneity should not be confused with concurrency.⁶² He agreed with the request from the audience to perceive anti-colonial resistance not only as a reaction but also in its creative momentum. He did not share, however, Ansprenger’s objection that terms such as progress, capitalism, and feudalism are not suitable for understanding historical developments.⁶³ More important to him, at least in this debate, was to demand a broad reception of the works of colleagues from Africa and Asia and a dialogue about it on equal footing. For this, he referred to a roundtable discussion held the previous day. Ad hoc African historians and historians of Africa had met to discuss how to organize a broad participation from Africa for the next congress, spurred by the decision of the General Assembly to admit Senegal to the CISH and to accept the Association of African Histories (Association des Historiens Africains) as an international affiliate organization.⁶⁴

Markov and his colleagues saw the much broader treatment of the history of the world regions in San Francisco and the institutional expansion of the CISH to include members from the Global South as a turnaround; an important step in decentring historiography and the CISH was realized.

4. Internationality and Playing with Scales

The international meetings of historians are only a small part of the many international conferences and colloquia in which Markov participated; still into his old age, being 73, he travelled to Ljubljana, for example. This travelling had its roots in the CISH congress in 1955, where he established contact with the Institute Gramsci (Istituto Gramsci) in Rome, which resulted in a guest lecture in 1959, attendance at the 2nd Congress on

61 Markov, *Wie viele Leben lebt der Mensch*, p. 357.

62 W. Markov, *Tradition and Innovation in Tropisch-Afrika*, in: *ZfG* 23 (1975) 8, p. 879–896.

63 Bauerfeind, *Der XIV. Internationale Historikerkongreß*, p. 449ff.

64 Markov, *Autobiography*, p. 12.

the History of the European Resistance in Milan in 1961, and a series of essays for the institute's journal (*Studi Storici*). By 1966, he had travelled to Klagenfurt for the Austrian Historians' congress, to Copenhagen and Vienna for the International Congress of Americanists, later to Accra (Ghana) and Dakar (Senegal) for the newly established Congress of African Studies, and finally to the 1st International Congress of African History in Dar es Salaam.⁶⁵ Today such a travel record does not sound exceptional; in the middle of the twentieth century though, and especially from a university in East Germany, this was remarkable. It shows Markov's intellectual merits and his strategic skills.

In the aftermath of the lectures he gave, in the discussions, and during the breaks, Markov made a wealth of acquaintances. Some turned into lasting friendships, such as that with Friedrich Katz (USA) – who in 1988, as a professor at the University of Chicago, invited Markov's student Kossok to give a lecture to publicize in the United States Leipzig's research on revolutions⁶⁶ – or that with Jean Ziegler (Switzerland) – who defended him at the 1966 international sociological congress in Évian-les-Bains when he lectured on the nation in sub-Saharan Africa and argued that state power was an essential factor in the national emancipation movements, knowing well that this statement would lead to a discussion on the evaluation of military regimes. Were they an "instrument of revolutionary initiative or bearers of a praetorian role aimed at defending the status quo?" Markov asked and provided an answer that was, as so often, refreshingly unorthodox.⁶⁷ From time to time, the dispute of one conference was continued at another. Markov and I. Hrbek, for example, met again in Dar es Salaam shortly after the CISH congress in Vienna and again discussed questions of periodization.⁶⁸ The more involved he became internationally, the more frequently he received invitations to also teach elsewhere. He did so in 1962/63 at the University of Nigeria and in 1970/71 at the University of Santiago de Chile.

Networking across borders and acting internationally was a strategy for Markov, and his allied colleagues, to change the CISH. This included not only the founding of the International Commission for the History of the French Revolution. A year after the meeting in Vienna, Fernand L'Huillier, a professor at the University of Strasbourg, initiated a meeting of Europeanists to establish a regular conversation about the study of European history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This gave rise to the *Amicale*, an association that was registered in the French register of associations, thereby giving it a permanent framework. It became one of the few places in the context of the Cold War where historians from Eastern and Western Europe met openly and dealt with each other in a tolerant manner so that differences could therefore be addressed without "chasing

65 W. Markov (ed.), *Etudes Africaines. African-Studies. Afrika-Studien. Dem II. Internationalen Afrikanistenkongreß in Dakar gewidmet*, Leipzig 1967.

66 F. Katz/M. Kossok/W. Markov, 32. Internationaler Amerikanistenkongress in Kopenhagen, in: *ZfG* 4 (1956) 6, p. 1256–1258.

67 W. Markov, *La nation dans l'Afrique tropicale. Notion et structure*, in: *L'homme et la société* 2 (1966), pp. 57–64.

68 Förster et al., *Die Sektionen des XII. Internationalen Historikerkongresses*, p. 1401.

utopian convergences or ‘ideological coexistence’”.⁶⁹ Markov strove to establish such an attitude also within the CISH, which is why he soon brought the *Amicale* into the programme of the CISH congresses in “the proven conspiratorial manner [...] in order to strive for affiliation”.⁷⁰ This succeeded at the CISH congress in Bucharest in 1980, when the General Assembly declared the International Association of European Contemporary History (Association Internationale d’Histoire Contemporaine de l’Europe) an affiliate organization, with L’Huillier as president and Markov on the board.

In his well-known book *Jeux d’échelles*, Jacques Revel states, “[C]haque acteur historique participe, de façon proche ou lointaine, à des processus – et donc s’inscrit dans des contextes – de dimensions et de niveaux variables, du plan local au plus global.”⁷¹ A biography of Markov could begin with this sentence, tracing his thinking and acting in all the spaces Revel highlights. One piece of that would be his research on national liberation movements. At first, Markov was reluctant to investigate colonial history up to the present; however, he was unable to resist the urging from the side of the SED leadership in this regard in the late 1950s. Thus, he used the undesired task for his own agenda and responded to the interest motivated by the politics of the day with a conference on “Problems of Neocolonialism and the Policy of the Two German States Toward the National Liberation Movements” in April 1961. The 700 researchers from 50 countries who travelled to the conference quickly rendered the party leadership’s request to treat the topic in a national and national-historical perspective irrelevant.⁷²

For Markov, internationality was an intellectual tool, a protective shield, and a scope for action. He was familiar with it from his childhood and his student days when he moved from Graz to Ljubljana and later to Leipzig and Berlin. He practised it academically as a newly appointed professor alongside and with Heinrich Sproemberg, who headed the second department at the Institute for General History. In this position, Sproemberg had established a colloquium in the early 1950s in which more than 40 historians from the Federal Republic of Germany as well as other European countries met between 1953 and 1957, which created connections that Markov followed up on for his own projects.⁷³ He met Fernand Vercauteren (Liège) and Ragionieri again in Rome, for example, and they quickly made joint plans. The same applies to the Hanseatic Working Group (Hansische Arbeitsgemeinschaft), founded by Sproemberg, in which national and world history,

69 Markov, *Autobiography*, book 7, p. 815 ff. F. Klein, *Drinnen und Draußen. Ein Historiker in der DDR. Erinnerungen*, Frankfurt am Main 2000, pp. 271f. The association met for 18 scientific colloquia between 1971 and 1997, and shortly before the upheavals of 1989 it had almost 400 members.

70 Markov, *Wie viele Leben lebt der Mensch*, p. 357.

71 J. Revel (ed.), *Jeux d’échelles. La micro-analyse à l’expérience*, Paris 1996, p. 26.

72 M. Kossok/H. Piazza/L. Rathman, *Internationale Konferenz über Probleme des Neokolonialismus*, in: *ZfG* 9 (1961) 5, pp. 1094–1103, S. Heitkamp, *Walter Markov. Ein DDR-Historiker zwischen Parteidoktrin und Profession*, Leipzig 2003, pp. 181f.

73 V. Didczuneit, *Geschichtswissenschaft an der Universität Leipzig. Zur Entwicklung des Faches Geschichte von der Hochschulreform 1951 bis zur sozialistischen Umgestaltung* 1958, Dissertation Leipzig 1990, p. 118–125.

European and non-European topics, economic history, and research on cultural transfer were productively linked by colleagues from the East and West until 1961.⁷⁴

5. Conclusion

Following Walter Markov's account of the CISH congresses from the 1950s through the 1970s, one can trace an earnest thread advocating the renewal of world history writing by insisting on the importance of the history of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and offering a perspective not centred on Europe. This approach was developed, discussed, and promoted transnationally, among others, by a small but highly active and imaginative group of Marxist-inspired historians who crossed political borders and constantly traversed the Iron Curtain. They questioned many things, especially seemingly settled notions of the academic discourse in the "West", such as that of the "Third World". At the CISH congress in Moscow, for example, Markov argued,

*In "classifying" Afro-Asian state formation, nothing is factually gained by the metaphor "Third World". It is not a sum of "new states", for "old" ones also count; a merely geographical tricontinentalism does not provide a criterion. Even understood as a tertium comparationis, it would be subjective deception at best.*⁷⁵

This critical thinking and degree of reflection are also exemplary for today's debates, in which collective terms such as Global South or schemes like North-South or East-West are common and thereby, just like earlier container terms, can obstruct the access to historical diversity.

From the outlined events at the CISH congresses, it also becomes clear that a series of today's research interests such as cultural appropriation and transfers, or the interdependence of nationalization and internationalization, have themselves a history. This invites the question of why it is so painstaking to inscribe them into the canon of historical research and to rewrite the grand narratives starting from them. Finally, Markov's narrative of the CISH congresses makes it possible to trace how the professional association transformed itself from the 1950s to the 1970s, opening up to the history of revolutions, world regions, and global contexts – and this from the "margins", from "below", and through "mafia tactics".

74 Middell, *Weltgeschichtsschreibung*, p. 946; W. Markov, *Wie viele Leben lebt der Mensch*, pp. 373ff.

75 *Dokladi Kongressa*, p. 150.