

CORFU – PALACE OF ST. MICHAEL AND ST. GEORGE
Speech by the Representative of the Italian Castles Institute

Dear President Giourgas, Authorities, family members of the Schulenburg family:

dear Greek, Venetian and European friends,

I am deeply honored to represent the Italian Castles Institute at this ceremony commemorating the glorious victory at Corfu in 1716, in which Venetian troops, far outnumbered in soldiers and weaponry, resisted against the seige of the city and defeated the far larger Ottoman fighting force.

The Italian Castles Institute is the most important Italian institute dedicated to the history of military architecture. Our *Glossary of terms related to fortress architecture* is cited in the seige album, which my friend Spiros has kindly given me.

The presence of our institute at Corfu marks the important role played during the seige by the Venetian forts – Forte Vecchio and Forte Nuovo – which Field Marshal Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg himself determined to restore on his arrival at Corfu. We celebrate them here.

But

another motive brings me here as well.

What remains of the seige, after 300 years?

The memory in our hearts, of course; the painstaking research carried out by a number of fine scholars, some of whom are present here today; and the stones of the forts, palaces, arsenals and fountains of the Serenissima which have withstood the flow of time.

I have come here to launch an urgent appeal so that these monuments may be protected, defended and publicized; and likewise, the memory of those who experienced them and endowed them with a soul: above all, Field Marshal Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg.

All too often, beginning with my beloved city, Venice, and spreading throughout the Adriatic, the Ionian, and even as far as the most remote islands of the Aegean, these monuments are ignored, abandoned, or used for purposes incompatible with their nature as “testimonials to civilization”, as expressed in Italy’s *Cultural Law*.

All

of us – Venetians, Greeks, Cypriots, Croatians, inhabitants of the Bay of Kotor, Albanians, Europeans – must strive day by day so that these treasures can be not only preserved and restored, but also promoted, through activities capable of offering jobs to our children and stimulating the economy, at this moment of harsh economic crisis.

But we must act fast!

Our chances are literally slipping like sand through our fingers. European funding for 2014-2020 for the relaunching of our cultural heritage must be used for effective projects allowing us to open work sites as soon as possible, with an eye to authentic trans-border collaboration and partnership.

The master plan for qualifying “The Venetian works of defence between the 15th and 17th centuries” as part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage, must be expanded immediately. Besides the present participants, Italy, Croatia and Montenegro, we must also bring in Greece, Cyprus and Albania. It is inconceivable that the Ionian islands and Crete, which hosted the Venetian presence for hundreds of years, should be excluded from a project promising to create international visibility and inestimable economic gain.

Finally, the governments of countries facing onto the Mediterranean must find the strength to carry out wide-ranging cultural and touristic initiatives, going beyond contingencies of a merely economic or financial nature.

In conclusion, I should like to mention one aspect which today causes a sort of embarrassment. We must forcefully insist that the victory of 1716 was a victory of the West. Field Marshal Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg and the Venetian troops prevented the Ottoman forces from conquering the Adriatic, with consequences that might have vanifed any action by Eugene

of Savoy in the Balkans. While the end of Ottoman expansionism in Europe necessarily calls up the name of Peterwardein, it should also bring to mind that of Corfu and Field Marshal Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg.

At a moment in history in which one speaks of *Untergang des Abendlandes* (reference to Oswald Spengler is wholly intentional here), special tribute is due to those who long ago lost their youth, their health and, in many cases, their life, in order to defend their idea of society and world polity.

Long live the West!

Long live Venice!

Long live Corfu!

Andrea Grigoletto

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