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Press Conference to present the International Study Convention on the theme “The Holy See and Catholics in the post-war world (1918-1922)”, for the centenary of the end of the First World War

At 11.00 this morning, in the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held to present the International Study Convention on the theme “The Holy See and Catholics in the post-war world (1918-1922)”, on the occasion of the centenary of the end of the First World War. The Convention, organized by the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, will take place in Rome from 14 to 16 November 2018. It will be held in two separate locations: the first two days at the Pontifical Lateran University, and the third day at the Hungarian Academy.

The speakers at the conference were: Fr. Bernard Argura, O. Praem., president of the Pontifical Committee of Historical Sciences; and Professor Don Roberto Regoli, director of the Faculty of History and Cultural Heritage of the Church of the Pontifical Gregorian University.

The following is the intervention by Fr. Ardura:

Intervention of Fr. Bernard Ardura, O. Praem.

One hundred years after the end of the First World War, there are many events intended to commemorate one of the bloodiest conflicts in Europe’s history, whose consequences are still felt in Europe and the Middle East. The convention organized by the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, entitled: *The Holy See and Catholics in the post-war world (1918-1922)*, is intended to propose a panoramic vision of the consequences of the war as, we believe, one hundred years after the end of the conflict that bloodied Europe, defined as a “world” war since it involved the courageous participation of many soldiers from the colonies, from Africa to Asia, the time has certainly come to reflect not only on the end of the hostilities, but also on the consequences of the conflict and of the peace Treaties.

Why return to these events? Because many of the wounds that very many people and populations continue to suffer from today have their origin in the conclusion of the war and in the peace treaties.

It is sufficient to evoke some of the consequences of the war to understand the current relevance of what happened almost a century ago, with the Treaties of which the best known is that of Versailles, of 28 June 1919.

Three great empires disappeared after the fall of Tsarist Russia in 1917: the German *Reich* created precisely in Versailles in 1871; the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the quintessential Catholic empire; and the Ottoman Empire, which covered a vast area, from the Balkans to the Near East.

New states with new borders were born: Hungary, Turkey, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Baltic Republics, whereas Poland which had been maintained thanks to her culture, her language and her religion, became a state once again. Germany lost her colonies which were ceded to the victors, France and Great Britain. The Near East was entrusted by the League of Nations to the mandates of France and Great Britain: Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan, with the results we know.

The war claimed 9 million victims, leaving 6 million disabled, 4 million widows and 8 million orphans. In the new situation that was created, new challenges were presented to the Holy See and the Catholic Church – a Holy See, it must be recalled, that was prevented from participating in the peace negotiations by the unresolved “Roman Question”, and posed in view of issues born of changes of borders, of nationalities of the German African colonies, and exacerbated nationalities.

The aim of the convention is for the study of the consequences of this first world conflict to open new paths of reflection not only to nurture our knowledge of a now century-long past, but also to offer new stimuli for reflection useful for building today a world of peace, of serenity and of harmonious human co-existence.
