



The voice of Maria Dolens

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David versus Goliath

Commenting on the progress during the first weeks of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the April editorial we observed how the unspeakable neo-Soviet designs of the Kremlin leader could only be effectively opposed by a combination of three factors: the prolonged resistance of the Ukrainian armed forces, increasingly invasive international economic / financial pressure and the emergence of internal opposition movements on Russian territory.

A month later, the first condition appears to have been met, as the behaviour of the military (and, indeed, of the entire population) in every part of Ukrainian territory is simply heroic. Not even the indiscriminate bombings of civilian targets, the brutal massacres perpetrated by Russian troops in contempt of any sense of humanity nor the power relations inexorably unfavourable to the defenders, seem in fact capable of undermining their morale and the determination to fend off

the invaders. To this end, overcoming often lacerating conflicts of conscience, the "West" has taken upon itself to equip the armed forces of Kiev with ever more sophisticated, efficient and "offensive" weapon systems. In a modern reinterpretation of the historic duel, it is in fact widespread opinion that only a highly technological sling, of the very latest generation, will allow David / Zelensky to face the challenge with Goliath / Putin with some chance of success.

With regard to the second, we have the continued unity of the United States and the European Union in hitting the "Russian system" with ever more extensive and intrusive economic / commercial / financial sanctions, aimed both at large industrial and banking structures and at the private sphere of oligarchs and other figures not far from power.

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EUROPE DAY

Peace is forged together

THE EU ADHERES TO THE MARIA DOLENS MEMORANDUM

The EU adheres to the Maria Dolens Memorandum. Europe Day means Peace Day, since the two are closely linked and have been from the beginning, ever since that distant, but not too far 1950, when the Second World War had recently ended and in all the chancelleries of the old continent there was the risk of falling back into a global conflict.

On 9 May of that year, in Paris, the press was convened for six in the evening at the Quai d'Orsay. A communication of the utmost importance was planned.

The European flag is the hundredth flag to be raised on the Colle di Miravalle

The first words of the speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Schuman, were enough to understand that it would be a date to remember. «World Peace could not be safeguarded without

creative initiatives at the height of the dangers that threaten us. By pooling certain basic areas of production and establishing a new High Authority whose decisions will be binding for France, Germany and the countries that join them, the first concrete foundations of a European federation indispensable for safeguarding Peace will be created». In essence, the idea was to set up a supranational institution with which to entrust the management of those raw materials which at the time were the prerequisite of any military power: coal and steel. That date is still celebrated today in Brussels, while the Council of Europe celebrates the anniversary of its establishment in 1949 on May 5 with the same purposes.

The European flag is the hundredth to be raised at the Rovereto Peace Bell, set for 9 May. The moment could not be more tragic, but neither could it be better suited to remembering that we are working against war even before missiles are launched and anti-aircraft alarms begin to tear the hearts and ears of the civilian population.



Moreover, already in the first sentence of the introduction to the EU *Charter of Fundamental Rights*, proclaimed on 7 December 2000 in Nice and adopted on 12 December 2007 in Strasbourg, it is clarified that «the populations of Europe, in creating an ever-closer union, have decided to share a future of Peace». But not only that, «the Union is founded on the indivisible and universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity». Furthermore, «the principle of democracy and the principle of the rule of law, places the person at the centre of its action by establishing Union citizenship and creating an area of freedom, security and justice».

The path is clear, the objectives precise, it is a question of working consistently. As is the case with the «We are Europa Festival», for example, from 13 to 14 May in Trento, and in particular the Bell on 9 May, with the integration of the European Union to its Peace Memorandum. Together with the Foundation President, Marco Marsilli, and local and international authorities, hundreds of students will arrive in front of Maria Dolens, students who have approached the event in different ways, but have all been able to deepen the meaning of the anniversary. Three groups of schools are involved, each with a different goal. The first is part of the so-called «Ambassadors Project», organized together with the Fondazione Antonio Megalizzi (Antonio Megalizzi Foundation), in which the children will simulate the work of a Parliament, covering the roles of deputies, journalists, technicians and even lobbyists. One way to understand how politics works, to avoid trivialization and not give in to the temptation to assume that “politicians are all the same”. Another group, made up of international students, was able to follow an innovative educational program relative to citizenship education, thanks to the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence established by the University of Trento. Rovereto schools representing the territory will also be involved. To students and adults alike, actors will depict the lives of the founding fathers of the Union. The accession ceremony will then follow in which Michele Nicoletti, president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2018 will be present alongside President Marsilli.

Listening to the notes of the European anthem, while the flag is raised, will provide you with the opportunity to reflect on the fact that nothing is taken for granted, nothing is free, that someone before us has earned peace and that a united Europe is the only tool that we have with which to keep this peace.

EXHIBITION ON THE BELL IN SAN MARINO

From 7 May to 19 June, an exhibition on the Rovereto Peace Bell and the gathering of the Alpine troops will be open at the Italian Embassy in San Marino. This is an opportunity to retrace the history of Maria Dolens with particular attention to the strong “internationalistic” vocation of the Foundation which is evident in the relationships maintained with the Council of Europe - participatory status - since 2006 and with the United Nations - special consultative status - since 2009 as well as by the presence of the flags, within the monumental area, of the nations that have adhered to its “Peace Memorandum” over the years. San Marino officially joined on May 5, 1960.



THE 'UNREDEEMED LANDS' ONE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER THE 'MARCH ON ROME'

Culture and territory

INTERVIEW WITH THE HISTORIAN MICHELE CANONICA



Michele Canonica

Sometimes it's mainly a question of volume. Saying the same things in a different tone can make all the difference, because there is a dialectical link between quantity and quality. This was explained by Michele Canonica, historian, columnist and president of the Dante Alighieri Society, after having been head of the Paris committee for some time. The occasion was the conference held on April 8 at the Rovereto Peace Bell and focused on the theme «1922-2022. The "unredeemed lands" one hundred years after the 'March on Rome'».

It is a touchy subject, as with all topics in history that concern a not-too-distant period, and sometimes, even what is happening in the present day. It all started with romanticism, when «the idea of attributing a collective psychology

With romanticism, the idea of attributing a collective psychology to a population leads to the desire to unify places that refer to the same values in the same nation

to a population leads to the political will to unify territories that refer to a specific culture in the same nation». This, says Canonica, who after the meeting answered a series of questions, «occurred in Italy, and beyond, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Irredentism was in fact one of the assets flaunted by the Liberals before the First World War. For statesmen of Risorgimento extraction, the conflict represented an effective tool with which to conquer the territories that were not yet part of the 'Nation'».

But how does fascism fit into this perspective?

By riding on the discontent from the so-called "mutilated victory", that is, the failure to meet the territorial requests of Rome. Many Italians were exasperated because they saw ex-combatants mistreated and would have liked more respect for the effort made to win the First World War after the disaster in Caporetto. There is a conjunction of various factors that stoke the fire of fascist propaganda, and many firmly believed that Mussolini could have conquered territories linked to Italy on a cultural level and even outside the borders. Thus, an environment was created which was favourable to the affirmation of the dictatorship.

If this is the point of contact between Risorgimento irredentism and fascism, what are the main differences?

The fascists insert a degree of anger, violence and propaganda rhetoric that never existed in the cautious figures of Italian liberal politics. The level of "volume" also led to a qualitative difference in action. But everything was based on the fascist promise to maintain stability, also because the Bolshevik revolution had aroused many fears. Mussolini seemed to have a pragmatically operative program, even though in the years of the dictatorship he did not achieve great results in expanding the Italian presence in Europe and devoted himself to colonial conquests. But at the time of the 'March on Rome' he seemed like a man who had the ability to actively intervene with a resolute tone and way of presenting himself that appealed to the average Italian. Also, for this reason, the decision of Vittorio Emanuele III not to proclaim a state of siege in the face of fascist provocations, opening the way for the regime, was received positively by the population.

Can irredentism be considered a perspective from which to look at Italian history?

Perhaps this is a bit too much, but it was certainly an important component, especially in Trentino and Alto Adige, where tensions have significantly dropped in recent decades. Many see a model of collaboration in these areas between populations of different languages, cultures and sensibilities.

Una carta storico geografica dell'Italia



A historical geographical map of Italy

There is no doubt that between Trentino and Alto Adige there are differences in terms of collective psychology, but they are differences that have found a relatively harmonious conciliation.

How can this perspective help us understand the present?

The deep feelings of a population must always be taken into consideration.

Even when we don't share them. If we look at the war in Ukraine, for example, we are faced with two communities that have a different perception of themselves.

The fascists pursued shared objectives by inserting a degree of violence that had never existed in the proponents of liberal politics

Ukrainians claim a difference from which derives a request for autonomy while the Russian regime makes claims on its neighbouring country, considering Kiev a piece of the so-called Great Russia. In some ways it is irredentism: "We do not want Westerners with the help of NATO and the EU to occupy a land that is ours and therefore we have not waged a war, but a special military operation", they argue in Moscow. It is not a question of sharing, but rather of understanding what is happening in order to find a way to overcome the crisis.

A CONFERENCE ON DON SILVIO FRANCH

On 27 May a conference will be held at the Foundation by Alessandro Martinelli on Don Silvio Franch, who died twenty-one years ago. Born in Cloz on February 22, 1932 and ordained a priest in Trento on March 14, 1959, he worked all his life for dialogue, in particular as a bishop's delegate for Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue and Culture. Secretary and associate to Don Silvio since 1987, Martinelli took over the direction of the *Centro Bernardo Clesio* (Bernardo Clesio Centre) in 2001 and of the *Centro Dio-*

cesano per l'Ecumenismo e il Dialogo Interreligioso (Diocesan Centre for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue) in 2008. Since April 2018 he has been the point of reference for the diocesan 'Caritas' charity and administrator of the *Fondazione Comunità Solidale* (Solidarity Community Foundation). «Preserving the memory - he emphasizes, anticipating the themes of the conference - means continuously repositioning ourselves in the now while maintaining faith in the sense that Don Silvio has always inspired in us. A lofty, profound, demanding sense of life.



HAPPENING AT THE UN

There was no need for war

RUSSIA SUSPENDED BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

On April 7, the United Nations General Assembly approved the suspension of Russia from the Human Rights Council with 93 votes in favour, 24 against and 58 abstentions, due to «the serious and systematic violations and abuses» committed in Ukraine. The Russian Deputy Ambassador to the UN, Gennady Kuzmin, called the vote «a politically motivated illegitimate initiative». Illegitimate, as a criticism, of course, but from what should an expulsion from such an organization be motivated if not a political decision? The question we should ask ourselves is what Moscow has been doing for almost two years in a Council in which to enter one must have made a contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights.

According to data from Amnesty International in 2021, and therefore before the attack on Ukraine, the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were regularly violated in Putin's country. Public assemblies organized by political opposition were almost

completely banned. Laws on “foreign agents” and “undesirable organizations” were widely used to suppress dissent. Threats and attacks were aimed at journalists and activists. Torture and ill-treatment in places of detention remained endemic and judicial proceedings against perpetrators were rare. Enforced disappearances were reported in Chechnya. The authorities failed to address the problem of domestic violence. The LGBT population continued to face discrimination and arbitrary deportations of refugees and asylum seekers continued.

War was not needed to expel Russia from the Committee, but moreover how can you entrust a country with this curriculum with a role in monitoring the protection of human rights in the world?

The last time such a suspension was approved was in 2011, when the measure was taken against Libya as a result of violence against demonstrators by forces loyal to the then President Muammar Gaddafi. In fact, initiatives such as that of April 7 are rare at the UN yet, considering the requisites required to become a member of the Council, one would expect them to be placed more often on the agenda of the General Assembly.

The organisation still includes other countries that do not fully comply with the principles they are obliged to protect

Russia is not the only presence on the Committee that is difficult to justify. One wonders for example, how the election of Venezuela was possible, which certainly does not shine out of respect for human rights. The same doubts could be raised concerning Somalia, at war since 1991, dismembered, partly under the control of the jihadist group al Shabaab, or for that matter Sudan, where ethnic conflict is extremely high, coups d'état follow one after the other and protests by the people are repressed. We could go on, but the conclusion would always be the same: it is difficult to denounce violations of human rights for an organisation in which nations that do not fully apply the principles they are obliged to defend remain members. It is therefore understandable why Russia was not expelled by a unanimous vote.

Perhaps it is time to demand respect for human rights, even in times of peace, at least from the countries called to protect them.



IT HAPPENED TODAY

Consecration of the Bell



May 24, 1925: Ceremony of consecration of Maria Dolens and arrival in Rovereto of Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Margherita of Savoy



May 8, 1998: Second Children's Congress at the Rovereto Peace Bell

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If, for Washington, the unofficially declared will to provoke a regime change in the Kremlin, associated with an almost non-existent relapse on the national level of the blocking of trade with Russia, makes this line of stringency not too uncomfortable, the case for Europe is very different. Brussels, now in its fifth series of sanctions, still hesitates to include the two main sources of "income" for Russia in this list, which are gas and oil (coal will instead be hit starting from the summer). In fact, it seems almost certain that, in the event of their application, very serious repercussions would arise for a certain number of Member States (Italy and Germany at the top of the list), both at the level of their various systems of production and for the "civil" needs of their citizens. It should then be considered how a series of important extra-European G20 countries (China, India, South Africa and Brazil among others) in addition to refraining from the political condemnation of Russian aggression at the UN, continue along the lines of business as usual, seizing the opportunity (and this is especially the case of Beijing) for the lucrative role of privileged partner with Moscow.

Moving on to the third and final factor, it is necessary to recognize how, on the domestic level, President Putin's popularity ratings continue to remain high, a fact confirmed by the only Russian "independent" survey body, the "Levada Center". This, despite the somewhat negative factors connected to the military operations in progress, such as the substantial abandonment of the original plan to subdue the entire Ukrainian state and, at the same time, the substantial number of casualties (in this regard, it is known that their bodies are not always returned to their families for fear of negative repercussions on the morale of the population and the possible occurrence of public protests). Undoubtedly, the systematic closure of newspapers and critical television stations by the Kremlin and the rigid censorship maintained by the regime channels on potentially disturbing news (such as, military failures and losses on the ground) contribute to feed



such popularity only in an artificial way. In any case, even in Russia the motto, "My country, right or wrong" applied in a nationalistic vein to various geographical scenarios seems to meet a level of consensus perhaps not entirely expected.

Support for the Russian leader by the Orthodox clergy is undoubtedly appreciated, with the Patriarch of Moscow Kirill inclined, on several occasions, to justify the armed intervention in the neighbouring (and brother) country which in his view is infested by figures who he identifies as "internal and external enemies". Commenting with us on these statements, Father Francesco Patton, the priest from Trentino who holds the prestigious position of Custos of the Holy Land in Jerusalem, observed that the Orthodox clergy, for a long tradition subject to temporal power, cannot be expected to act of courageous autonomy in accordance with official policy. The same goes for oligarchs, opposition politicians and advocates of civil dissent.

How the situation will evolve and, in particular, whether mediation in the form of diplomatic activity, capable of being accepted by both sides, may finally be established alongside the armed conflict, remains an aspect to be verified.

On the diplomatic front, the direct involvement of the super powers seems necessary

In this last regard, out of prestige and authority, the direct involvement of the super powers, such as the United States, China and, why not the European Union itself, would seem necessary. The substantial uselessness of the "UN system", conditioned by the Russian veto should however be recognized as well as the inevitable failure of the commendable efforts undertaken by "middleweights", such as Israel or Turkey.

We close with the observation that, in Russia, the holiday of May 9 is the most heartfelt with regard to the population, representing the anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the defeat of Nazism. It is a celebration to which, in other times and different circumstances, the rest of Europe could ideally have joined in the unlimited gratitude expressed to the inhabitants of the then USSR for having significantly contributed in preventing the yoke of the swastika from extending over our entire continent.

It seems likely that Moscow, engaged in a consistent concentration of its troops in the nerve centre of the Donbass area, intends to achieve a result on the ground by that date that can be presented for public opinion as a clear military success and, at the same time, as a strategic justification of the "Special operation" initiated on February 24th.

Since the above date is close to the publication date of the new issue of our magazine, we will be able to verify this eventuality more or less "live".

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President