



The voice of Maria Dolens

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The return of Tokyo

Our political analysis this month focuses on an Asian country, Japan, which for some time has found a more than legitimate central position in the international context, after a rather prolonged period of "fog".

The latest confirmation of this "rebirth" comes from the very recent G7 Summit, held under the Japanese Presidency in the martyr-city of Hiroshima and hailed a huge success by the unanimous opinion of the participants. First of all, for the positions of firm condemnation of the Russian Federation and unconditional support for President Zelensky and the Ukrainian government that emerged at the conclusion of the summit. Second-

dly, due to Prime Minister Kishida's decision to extend an invitation, not only to members by right but also to qualified representatives of the Indo-Asian area, such as the presidents of Vietnam, South Korea and Australia and the current presidents of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific Islands Forum.

From this marked policy of involvement what clearly emerges is the willingness of the current Japanese leadership to strengthen existing relations with countries in the area which may provide reassurance in relation to the two main sources of threat perceived by Tokyo.

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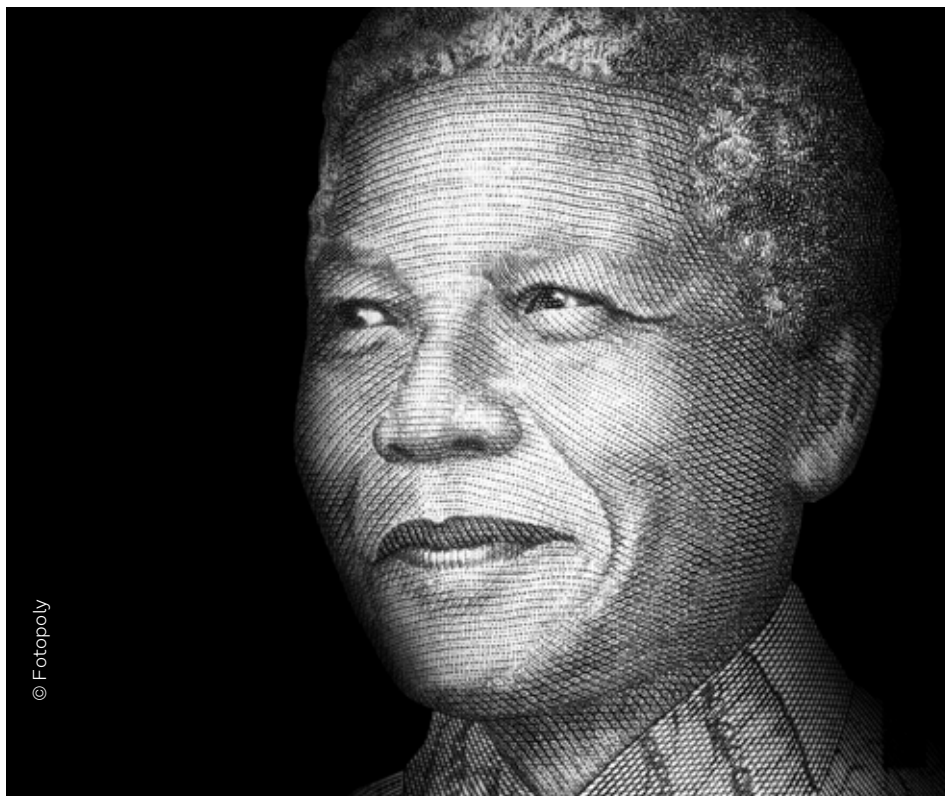
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HAPPENING AT THE UN

The road to freedom

INTERNATIONAL NELSON MANDELA DAY



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Nelson Mandela wasn't called Nelson, and he wasn't even poor. He was born on July 18, 1918 into the royal family of Thembu, a tribe of Xhosa ethnicity who lived in a fertile valley of the Eastern Cape. His real name, in the native language, was Rolihlahla, but the teacher at the British boarding school of Healdtown could not pronounce it, but also did not know that it actually meant «troublemaker». Although the original tribal names were much more suitable for defining the character and aptitude of each boy, the colonials gave random names to the unfortunate, thus

marking them for life, trying to impose a future on them as well.

It is probably just a coincidence, but even Nelson is not just any name. It means «son of Neil» and is used in honour of Horatio Nelson, the admiral who died at the battle of Trafalgar driving back Napoleon's fleet. A sailor, therefore, who didn't stop when danger arrived, who had a precise goal, and who achieved it, even at the cost of his own life. And it is certainly a coincidence, but at the trial following his umpteenth arrest, which would result in his long imprisonment, Mandela concluded his impassioned speech, which lasted 4 hours, with the

words: «I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony... It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die».

He would have been willing to die and came very close during the 27 years he spent in prison for resistance to the South African apartheid regime, before being freed in 1990. Four years after his release, he was president of South Africa. His life has been completely dedicated to an ideal, to values that continue to inspire the world. For this reason, on July 18 of each year the United Nations dedicates an International Day to the memory of his struggle to protect freedom and human rights. The anniversary was established in 2009 by a resolution of the General Assembly, in recognition of Mandela's contribution to the promotion of a culture of peace throughout the world. But in 2015 the focus of the Day was broadened, so as to become an opportunity to focus attention on the issue of human rights in prisons. To this end, a further resolution adopted the so-called «Nelson Mandela Rules», which concern the minimum standards to be respected for the treatment of prisoners. The aim is to promote humane conditions in prisons, raise awareness of the status of prisoners as an integral part of society and recognize the role of those who work in prisons and carry out a particularly important social service.

The «troublemaker» has achieved his goal, his legacy is fruitful and perhaps can be summarized in a single sentence: «There is no easy road to freedom», as he said on May 10, 1994 in his inaugural address as president of South Africa, of which we have published an excerpt on the adjoining page.

INAUGURATION SPEECH, PRETORIA, MAY 10, 1994

Today, all of us do, by our presence here, and by our celebrations in other parts of our country and the world, confer glory and hope to newborn liberty.

Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud.

Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all.

To my compatriots, I have no hesitation in saying that each one of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld.

That spiritual and physical oneness we all share with this common homeland explains the depth of the pain we all carried in our hearts as we saw our country tear itself apart in a terrible conflict, and as we saw it spurned, outlawed and isolated by the peoples of the world, precisely because it has become the universal base of the pernicious ideology and practice of racism and racial oppression.

The time for the healing of the wounds has come.

The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come.

The time to build is upon us.

We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination.

We succeeded to take our last steps to freedom in conditions of relative peace. We commit ourselves to the construction of a complete, just and lasting peace.

We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom.

We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success.

We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world.

Let there be justice for all.

Let there be peace for all.

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.





The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Kairat Abdrakhmanov

HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The strength of minorities

A national minority is «a group which is numerically smaller than the rest of the population, whose members, made up of citizens of the state, are the harbingers of ethnic, religious or linguistic values, different from those of the rest of the population, and are driven to safeguard their culture, their traditions, their religion and their language». Basically, they are people who are “different” from those around them and unfortunately the “different” always need to be protected in some way. Centuries go by but nothing changes, or change comes too slowly: if you’re not like everyone else, for whatever reason, the “others” tend to see you as a danger. This is also why the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) have joined forces for a project to raise awareness of human rights standards.

In recent days, a joint initiative was launched which should provide a «collection of the standards of the Council of Europe and the OSCE on national minorities». It is a web page that «illustrates the long and solid cooperation between the two institutions, as well as their complementarity», according to the statement signed by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, and by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Kairat Abdrakhmanov. «The definition of norms and guidelines – highlights the text – is only one of the important aspects in the protection of human rights. The effective implementation of these standards and the monitoring of their compliance are essential to ensure that they serve the purpose for which they were established and thus contribute to social cohesion, the creation of resilient societies and the maintenance of peace».

The two leaders were keen to reiterate that «in the current difficult geopolitical context, creating close ties between the two institutions is more important than ever». After all, both organizations have been working on this issue for decades. The Council of Europe carries out its mission concerning national minorities through the rules set in the Framework Convention and the Charter of Languages, it controls and monitors the compliance of those states that have signed and organizes cooperation activities which support national authorities in their application and the intergovernmental cooperation for the elaboration of policy instruments. The OSCE, for its part, promotes stability, peace and democracy through an all-encompassing concept of security that covers the political-military, economic and environmental and human aspects. It also established the position of High Commissioner on National Minorities as a means of preventing possible conflicts, through analyses, recommendations and thematic guidelines.

It is a social failure that even today we must still work to protect those who are in the minority in a place just because they perhaps speak a different language from the others. But until there is no longer a need, these initiatives are fundamental.

UKRAINIAN CITIES DURING THE WAR

Every place has its own sound

The amazing thing about war is that in some places everything continues as before... and then the air raid alarm goes off. Between one alarm and another, life goes on, almost normally, but with greater intensity. Each gesture makes more sense, perhaps because it could be your last. There is a composer, Yevhen Filatov, who travels around the country, from Kyiv to Lviv, from Odesa to the Carpathians, to record the sounds of the cities. A "documentary" made up of voices, screams, the removal of cars that were in no-parking spaces, whistles, wind, and people playing anything they can. Each city has its own palette of unmistakable sounds.

There is a little girl who began her career as a "percussionist" by holding a plastic bottle with her legs and clapping her hands on top of it. She then moved on to a thermos flask (with and without a cap, because it chan-

ges sound), to glasses, cans of drinks, plastic tubes, rubber toys that whistle when pressed with two fingers. In short, what you would take to the countryside for a picnic. For safety reasons she can't always go to school, but she has learned to use what she can find instead of wanting what she can't get.

An old lady earns her food by singing in Piazza Sofia, a place with exceptional acoustics. Wherever you are you can hear everything that is happening around you. In the same place, Andriy Chlyvnyuk, of the Ukrainian band BoomBox, sang unaccompanied the first verse of *Chervona Kalina*, a patriotic song written by Stepan Tcharnetsky in 1914. When the Russian invasion of Ukraine began on February 24th BoomBox were touring the US. The singer interrupted the tour to return and enlist in the military. He recorded a video while wearing the military uniform. On February 27, it was online.

And so, a song, which was written in honour and memory of the Sich riflemen buried in a cemetery near Ternopil', went viral. It has been remixed by different artists around the world and is now the symbol of resistance. But in reality, it was already so during the Soviet period, when singing it was forbidden due to its association with the aspiration of the Ukrainian people for independence. Obviously, the patriots sang it as a sign of defiance, risking arrest and sometimes even exile. Today that risk no longer exists, there is war.

And there's also a girl who plays the ocarina in the subway tunnels, because a little beauty is also needed in a daily life made up of continuous tension. But there are also buildings blackened by bombs, statues of poets covered with bags of stones to defend them from attacks, bell tower clocks that strike noon just as sirens announce an imminent air attack. Everyone goes towards the shelters, but without running. Maybe you get used to bombing too. In safer places there is sometimes even a piano that someone tunes regularly between one attack and another. Evidently the out of tune notes are annoying even under the missiles, or more likely immediately after. Paint buckets and iron railings become percussion instruments, but it's better to stay at home at night. And since young people are young, and can no longer go to clubs to have fun as they would like, they have decided to continue dancing during the day. A *Repair Together* rave is organized, which begins early in the morning, with a DJ on an improvised stage and hundreds of young people mixing up concrete to the rhythm of electronic music, moving rubble while dancing and, whoever is able, builds a few walls. Perhaps the young people aren't what they used to be but maybe sometimes they are better. Maybe it is extreme situations that bring out the best in people. But perhaps it would be better not to put this theory to the test. Perhaps we should do our best to prevent situations like these where the best of us needs to come out.





To be continued from page 1...

Their origins are easily identifiable: the People's Republic of China (PRC), responsible at the moment for the "Taiwanese crisis", with hundreds of air and sea crossings last year, and North Korea, the executor of a senseless policy of missile tests implemented by the unpredictable leader Kim Jong-un.

In fact, the security aspect has occupied a prominent place on the political agenda of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, head of government (as well as president of the highly influential Liberal Democratic Party) since October 2021, after having held the posts of Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence. To the electoral promise to guarantee «the total protection of all citizens», he intended to give concrete results, on the one hand through an impressive series of international contacts (19 visits abroad in just 18 months of mandate), on the other hand by promoting the revision of principles so deeply roo-

ted in Japanese society as to seem untouchable. First among them, the reform of the «National Security Strategy», removing the hitherto sacrosanct principle of its exclusive application to the homeland, to authorize its use, if required by the circumstances, also outside national borders. A corresponding doubling (from 1 to 2%) of the share of GDP destined for defence needs was functional to these increased methods of employment and manoeuvring area. Also due to the fact that it has facilitated the supply of military equipment (but excluding weapon systems) to the Armed Forces of Kiev, the new strategy has definitively consolidated the relationship with the United States, which has come to guarantee the basic weapon of nuclear deterrence to its ally, in the event of a threat of aggression.

The late Prime Minister Shinzō Abe (inventor of so-called Abenomics, assassinated by a deranged man last year) is largely responsible for the particularly propitious phase

experienced by the Japanese economy (the third largest in the world by size), with rates of growth, according to experts' forecasts, which are soon destined to surpass those of the United States and China, and with financial indexes unequalled in the last 30 years. If we consider the situation existing at the turn of the new millennium (anaemic growth, galloping inflation, depressed markets, modest impact on the volume of international transactions), one cannot fail to admire such rapid evolution. And, as in the case of any country, the consolidation of economic indicators and greater assertiveness in the political field are factors which, interacting with each other, create an important multiplier effect on the self-esteem of an entire society.

With an encouraging view of the future of the Land of the Rising Sun, the greatest unknown is, as mentioned above, represented by the PRC, the cumbersome neighbour with a population of almost 1.5 billion inhabitants, an area close to 10 million square kilometres and the world's second-largest GDP, 4 times higher than Japan's. After President Nixon's historic visit to Beijing (year of grace 1972) and the associated formalization of the so-called One China policy, it is clear that over the last few decades Europe and the United States have intensified the process of rapprochement with Beijing, driven both by the impressive economic, financial and commercial growth of the PRC, and by a general expectation of a gradual improvement in the standards of democracy and respect for human rights in force there.

This approach had, rather hastily, led the West to resize the geo-strategic importance of Japan within the geographical area to which it belonged. After some time, it must be recognized that in the special ranking of "trusted Allies", Tokyo has made an indisputable comeback, marked not only by the ab-



sence of internal political reforms, but by the very clear refusal of President Xi Jinping to condemn the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the senseless expansionist plans of the “new Tsar” as the US and the EU have done.

Consequently, the presence of Japan in military and security alliances, such as the Quad (with the United States, Australia and India) has provided an immediate advantage together with the Aukus which at the moment is composed of the United States, UK and Australia but which Tokyo is also planning to join.

In a realistic interpretation of his country’s role and geographical location, the extreme political sensitivity of the “Chinese dossier” is perfectly understood by Prime Minister Kishida. After meeting Xi Jin-

ping in November 2022 in Bangkok in the context of the APEC Summit (the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum), the mission to Beijing of Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshimasa Hayashi, whose positions of moderation and balance towards the problematic neighbour are known, is expected shortly.

On the one hand, if the bilateral reasons for friction in the political field are numerous and significant (if we consider the status of Taiwan, the territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, the various positions taken which are judged to be detrimental to Chinese interests and the statement from the recent Japanese-led G7 summit), it is necessary to consider, on the other hand, the scope and importance of the economic interests at stake, well summarized by the presence

of very important Japanese industrial facilities in Chinese territory and, more generally, by the fact that the two countries mutually occupy the first position in the ranking as importers and exporters.

While we wait to know the developments in the various “construction sites” which are currently under way and trust that exclusive recourse to the negotiating method will be made for their solution, one thing appears certain, beyond any reasonable doubt: in defining future international arrangements no country can afford to underestimate Japanese priorities, interests and points of view anymore, now that the Land of the Rising Sun is once more in the picture.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President

IT HAPPENED TODAY

Lech Wałęsa at the Foundation



06 July 2012: on the occasion of the final concert of the «International composition competition "Instruments of Peace"» Lech Wałęsa awards the winner Leonardo Schiavo. Below the Brussel Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Michel Tabachnik

