

# The voice of Maria Dolens

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE PEACE BELL FOUNDATION OF ROVERETO

## Desire for a newfound normality

**W**hen Maria Dolens is in the period of deserved winter rest, the representatives of the Rovereto Peace Bell Foundation are involved in preparing the program of activities for the year 2021. This commitment is made more complex, compared to previous experiences, due to the prolongation of the serious epidemiological emergency. This fact translates into a general insecurity with regard to the time needed to resume events and demonstrations "in person", which undoubtedly constitutes the primary objective to which all the promoting entities tend to focus their creative and organizational efforts regardless of the sphere of competence.

In the case of our Foundation the current, objective situation of uncertainty, in which the health of each individual person represents a priority to be safeguarded, is associated with the observation of how the Colle di Miravalle hill constitutes a privileged area due to its spiritual appeal and scenographic charm. Proof of this is that even in 2020, a year characterized by protracted periods of closure to the public, the monumental space of the Bell of the Fallen despite recording an inevitable decrease in attendance compared to the previous 12 months was able to fair, in terms of percentage, much better than the average of national museums.

Taking this into account, the Foundation is using this period to enhance the image and attractiveness of the Bell of the Fallen also in a hitherto unprecedented

dimension "at a distance" with the concrete support of the Province of Trento and the Municipality of Rovereto. Among the main measures contemplated is a monthly newsletter in Italian and English which has been created and is intended to broaden knowledge in history and current events. The project that allows detailed virtual visits to the monumental area, which can be carried out from the Foundation's website, has also been completed. A more extensive presence on social networks is also planned.

In developing these modern information tools, the intention of the Foundation is clear and that is to allow above all those who do not yet know it to initiate preliminary contact that should be completed - as soon as external circumstances allow - with the discovery of places that are deeply reminiscent and evocative. Foundation collaborators are highly motivated in imagining a return to the usual life of the "Bosco della Pace" Park, the Parco della Memoria (Memorial Park) and the colorful Viale delle Bandiere (Flag Avenue), a path that leads to the reassuring grandeur of Maria Dolens.

On the subject of flags, the 100th member of the Peace Memorandum will certainly be formalized in 2021, a result that places the Foundation in a position of unquestionable prestige compared to other Italian associations in terms of the diffusion and quality of international projection.

*To be continued on page 3...*

### IN THIS EDITION

- 02** Wars and vaccines. 80 million children without treatment
- 04** Acknowledgment of the UN Office for Children and Armed Conflicts
- 05** Happening at the Council of Europe. Special representative against religious intolerance appointed
- 06** Happening at the UN. 27 January Remembrance Day
- 07** Art and Peace. The words of Wole Soyinka
- 08** It happened today. On 4 January, 1952 Don Antonio Rossaro died

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SAVE THE CHILDREN

# Wars and vaccines

## OVER 80 MILLION CHILDREN WITHOUT TREATMENT

**T**he Covid-19 vaccine is coming, thank goodness. The problem is that in many areas of the world they don't have the medicines that have been around for decades that work and could save lives, many human lives. Millions of children trapped in war zones are at risk of dying because they don't have access to well-established and risk-free medical procedures. The problem is that, also due to the pandemic, immunization programs have been suspended in more than 60 countries putting more than 80 million children, all primary school pupils, at risk. This is the equivalent of the population of Turkey.

The alarm comes from a new Save the Children report entitled "Not Immune: Children in Conflict". The spotlight is on the impact that

wars have on the care of children, in particular on their immunization. The overview spans the last ten years. The need for global action to protect children from preventable diseases is evident, especially in war scenarios. The data is clear: two thirds of non-immunized children live in countries where conflict is ongoing and for this they lose out on vital vaccinations.

Diseases such as measles, polio, cholera, pneumonia, yellow fever and diphtheria, for which there are safe and effective remedies, are spreading rapidly in regions where fighting blocks transport and makes it difficult for medical personnel to take action. In reality, weapons actually kill less than curable diseases. Vaccination rates have plummeted in some areas. Immunization levels for diphtheria, tetanus and whooping-cough in Syria

were above 80 percent before the war dropping to 47 two years ago and there is no reason to believe that the trend has reversed. In Ukraine, the national rate dropped from 80 to 19 percent after four years of fighting.

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Immunization programs suspended in conflict zones

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A few months ago, the UN Secretary-General called for a global ceasefire to limit the spread of Covid-19 and allow aid and vaccinations to reach the most vulnerable children and their families. The appeal went unheard. Minors continue to die of measles while adults continue to shoot at each other.

The detailed report describes deadly outbreaks of diseases that could have been prevented with large-scale immunization in the past 10 years, such as polio that hit the northeastern area of Nigeria controlled by Boko-Haram in 2016 and a year later Syria. In the general silence, cholera epidemics have occurred in countries such as Iraq, Somalia and South Sudan. There have been over a million cases in Yemen alone. The direct relationship between war and the spread of infection is certain. If there is one thing that the pandemic has made clear it is that no country is immune from the spread of disease whether it be old or new.

The difference is that wealthy Westerners get sick mostly from new illnesses while for the rest of the world the old diseases are enough.

No two parallel worlds exist however that will never meet. The lack of treatment and vaccines in Africa also creates side effects in our country. Getting vaccines to children living in war zones is not only a duty but is the only way to protect global health, including ours. Humanity cannot allow preventable diseases to cause millions of deaths.

And even if, understandably, major resources have been redirected to fight the pandemic, this cannot be done at the expense of the most vulnerable populations who are experiencing a very serious regression in treatment and prevention. To abandon them now only means to postpone the problem and we can't afford this.

If we can't manage to do it for them we should at least do it for ourselves. It is not a gesture of altruism but is rather healthy Darwinian selfishness.

*To be continued on page 1...*

It should in fact be considered that the network of relations maintained with the diplomatic representations in Rome is accompanied by the qualified partnerships in place with the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and the United Nations in New York. It is the firm intention of the Foundation Board to make the most of this significant milestone of the 100 flags through an ad hoc event which is a testimony of the path followed yet at the same time provides encouragement towards new objectives.

With reference to the further events planned for 2021 (consisting of a mix of conferences and debates, concerts and art exhibitions and poignant events of historical anniversaries) the hope confessed seems to be that of an improvement in the health situation in its entirety, able to allow safe access to the spaces of the Foundation. In this regard, it is worth emphasizing once more how the realization of this more favorable scenario over the next few months also depends on the sense of responsibility of each of us.

In keeping with the tradition of expressing a wish at the start of each new year I hereby express my wish, without any reservation, towards the search for a new-found normality which may allow Maria Dolens to continue her authoritative work of raising awareness of the undoubted merits and undeniable advantages of Peace between States and constructive coexistence among populations towards a wider and more cosmopolitan audience without external conditioning.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President



"SAPIENZA" PRIZE AWARDED

# A time for wisdom

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE UN OFFICE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICTS

«Children are no longer our future, but our present. We must not disappoint them as we have done in the past». Argentina's Virginia Gamba is a real person. She has been on the field for some time and gets straight to the point: in a world characterized by the increase in non-military threats to security, "the factors that trigger or contain conflicts are simply not understood". Collecting the Sapienza Prize, which the University of Rome awarded to the United Nations Office for Children and Armed Conflicts, of which she is special representative, Gamba reflected on the evolution of the role of the UN in the international scenario starting from a very precise analysis: «The suffering of women, children and in general the most vulnerable human beings is not a side effect of wars but their main outcome».

The irregular armed groups operating in different areas of the planet, often motivated by the possibility of obtaining strong economic as well as strategic advantages, "kidnap, rape and recruit children by force, using them as" disposable "resources on the front line". Not only

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The suffering of women and children is not a side effect of the war but the main outcome

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that, after being forced to fight, minors are often arrested, sentenced, mutilated or killed in the doubt that they could be spies.

In this very serious situation, the United Nations Office stands out for its "invaluable action carried out in order to promote the fundamental rights of boys and girls in situations of armed conflict", as stated in the reason for the Award.



Virginia Gamba, UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

In addition, direct diplomatic action is reinforced through youth reintegration programs, awareness campaigns and training courses for future mediators.

Concepts of peace and safety have undergone radical changes over the past 75 years and the way of dealing with conflict must change accordingly. Relying on the function of weapons as a deterrent and the related continuous development of technologies no longer works. New "non-military" threats have appeared in the form of international organized crime and terrorism. Some local conflicts have led to genocides and the return of slavery. This kind of crisis, very different from those of the past, must be faced with precise skills, putting the defense of the weakest first. We need professionals specialized in the defense and promotion of human rights.

The time has come for all of us to act with competence, knowledge of the past and a vision for the future. "Memory is wisdom and wisdom is nothing more than the application of memory in the form of experience and knowledge".



Child soldiers in war zones

HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

# Hate crimes on the rise

## NEW SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR CRIMES RELATED TO RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

**A** new position at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg: Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić has appointed Director of Communications Daniel Höltgen as Special Representative on Anti-Semitic, Anti-Muslim and other forms of religious intolerance and hate crimes.

«No-one should be targeted for what they believe or do not believe. The fight against discrimination, including on grounds of religion or belief, has been at the core of the Council of Europe's mission from the outset. We have been always very active in promoting inter-religious dialogue and fostering peace and stability in our Member States», declared the new Special Representative, Daniel Höltgen.

His mandate envisages to raise awareness and visibility by actively communicating the Organisation's work and the Secretary General's priorities to governments, relevant international organisations, religious institutions, political leaders, influencers and the general public.

He will also put forward specific proposals to the Secretary General on ways to strengthen Council of Europe assistance and advice to Member States on how to combat anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and other forms of religious hatred and hate crimes in line with the European Convention on Human Rights and other Council of Europe relevant standards.

«In recent years, we have witnessed an alarming increase in "hate crimes" in many parts of Europe, often incited and aggravated by hate speech online and offline. The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 to ensure that human rights are protected. Promoting human rights in Europe was a response to what our Continent witnessed around

the Second World War. Seventy-five years later, all forms of religious intolerance and hate crimes are on the rise threatening people and communities and our democracies», highlighted Höltgen.

Last 2020 meeting was organised with the Italian Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Milena Santerini, Professor at the Catholic University of Milan. Ms Santerini was a member of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly from 2013 to 2018 and Rapporteur on combating against racism and intolerance. Given her long standing experience in the field she has been invited to Strasbourg in the near future.

Moreover, seventeen Member States of the Council of Europe decided to establish the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe as an Enlarged Partial Agreement.

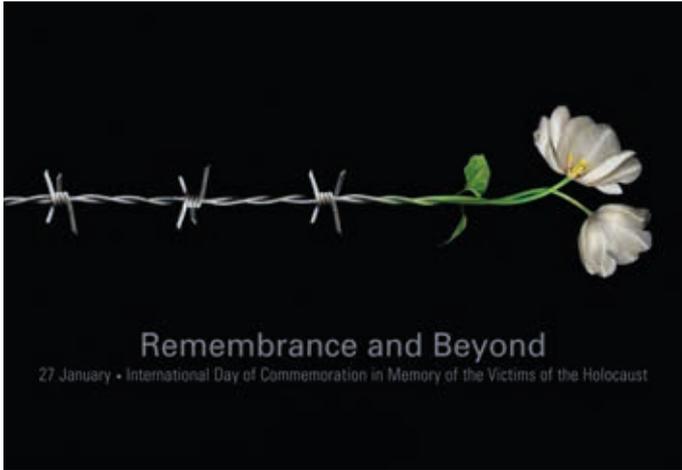
The Observatory's main purpose will be to collect and make available, through a series of regular and thematic reports, factual information on the ways in which history is taught in all participating countries. The main aim will be to facilitate exchange of good practice and mutual learning. It will also serve as a platform for the professional development and networking for European professional associations and institutes active in the field of history teaching.

In the context of rising populism, history education that encourages multi-perspectivity and critical thinking is key to the development of a culture of democracy. By bringing to the fore practices which encourage history teaching in line with Council of Europe values, the Observatory will contribute to strengthening resilience against the manipulation and distortion of history and will help to promote.

Giuseppe Zaffuto, spokesperson for the Council of Europe in Italy.



Daniel Höltgen



HAPPENING AT THE UN

# Less beer and more shoes

## 27 JANUARY REMEMBRANCE DAY

**T**he neo-Nazis may be ignorant but they cannot be ignored. They certainly don't know their history very well as they are usually satisfied with partial reconstructions distorted by ideology. Some deny the Holocaust altogether while others manage to argue that it was a justified massacre. They must be taken seriously and



Citizens of a small German town buy all the beer available and put a neo-Nazi demonstration to a head



There are still those who support crazy ideas such as those that led to the deportation and extermination of millions of Jews



never underestimated but we must remember that sometimes you also need irony to defeat them. For example, you can take their beer away. This idea came from the inhabitants of the German village of Ostritz for when they learned of the imminent arrival in their village of a band of skinheads ready to participate in a festival entitled "Shield and Sword" they went to their only local supermarket and bought all the available cases of beer, about a hundred in all. The police, for their part, confiscated the alcohol that the revisionists had brought from home. Result: the stage remained empty as well as the squares and that day the revolution was postponed. In the place of slogans against Jews, shoes appeared on the street, 2,262 pairs, one for every refugee who died in the Mediterranean last year. A peaceful demonstration which was also attended by the governor of Saxony Michael Kretschmer, who thanked the inhabitants of Ostritz on Twitter: "When right-wing extremists wish to redefine history with their inhuman slogans, we must all oppose".

There are still those who support crazy ideas such as those that led to the deportation and extermination of millions of Jews. And there is still a need to celebrate Remembrance Day every year, adopted by the United Nations on 1 November 2005 to condemn "without reservation" all manifestations of intolerance, incitement, harassment or violence against people or communities. The appointment is held annually on 27 January, the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz extermination camp. But that's not enough. The UN urges every member state to develop educational programs to instill the memory of the tragedy in future generations and prevent the genocide from happening again. Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights moreover, from the UN headquarters they reaffirm that "the Holocaust will forever be a warning to all on the dangers caused by hatred, fanaticism, racism and prejudice". Evidently, however, this part of resolution 60/07 has not fully paid off if there are still people who come together to tell each other made up stories, not of the entertaining kind, but of the Pluto-Judeo-Masonic conspiracy and the trains that arrived on time.

To prevent the crimes of the past from happening again in the future, this is the purpose of Remembrance Day. "Less beer and more shoes" could be a good slogan for next year.

ART AND PEACE

# The words of Wole Soyinka

## YOU DON'T NEED AN ANNIVERSARY TO TALK ABOUT A WRITER

**W**ole Soyinka, awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986, is alive and well yet he is the man who died. He claims it himself in a book he wrote in prison from 1967 to 1969. He was arrested for asking for a ceasefire during the civil war in Nigeria and exposed the situation in Biafra to the world. "The Man Died" is a book of which there is no anniversary since the author is in good health and therefore it is "normal" that nobody talks about it. Most will do so when the splendid eighty-six year old writer from Abeokuta will fly to more distant shores and become a myth. The courage to challenge power to ask for peace, however, is always current and must be remembered every day without waiting for special occasions.

Soyinka's reflection takes root at a precise moment, that in which the prison guards, almost ashamed, began to chain his legs as the result of a direct order: to bend the will of a man guilty of having asked for an end to hostilities. Perhaps they knew that binding him would not be enough. Perhaps they were just agents working in the service of a dictatorship. Perhaps they had no choice. Perhaps they weren't heroes. They certainly didn't stop him.

Oreste del Buono writes in the preface to the first edition of the book in Italian that Wole keeps score, makes life complicated for the torturers, knows the "psychological games" of interrogations, knows how to move among the curious and perplexed looks that follow moving from one prison to another. He is an idealist, not naive. He is brave, he is a writer and he does



what he knows how to do: he writes and denounces. His prose is made up of explicit declarations, vehemently exposed, giving names and surnames in order to uphold an idea of active peace.

Soyinka paid firsthand to defend his ideas against tyranny in Nigeria: he was imprisoned, sentenced to death and forced into exile by the military dictatorship. He is not a hero, but he believes in what he writes and continues to do so because the problems are not over yet. A large part of the population of his country remains hostage to daily violence, especially in the north-eastern regions where the action of Boko-Haram, an Islamist group responsible for years of assault and terrorist attacks, has caused thousands of victims, mostly civilians. Even in this case Wole did not hold back and did not tire of writing and speaking. His words do not lose their effectiveness with age and the call to mobilize against terrorists is clear. It is a battle "which is in every

respect ours, primarily ours," he writes. "We cannot sit idle and watch our innocent girls become slaves to thugs and terrorists. That would be betraying our children and condoning the activity of these kidnappers ". This time they didn't arrest him.

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From 1967 to 1969 he was in prison for calling for a ceasefire during the civil war in Nigeria

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IT HAPPENED TODAY

# The founder

ON 4 JANUARY, 1952, DON ANTONIO ROSSARO DIED IN ROVERETO



*On January 4, 1952, Don Antonio Rossaro, our founder, the creator of the Bell of the Fallen which was cast on 30 October, 1924 with the bronze of the cannons offered by the nations participating in the First World War, died in Rovereto. Here are two vintage photos that portray him at work and next to the universal symbol of Peace.*



*15 January, 1991: High school students in Rovereto gathered around the Bell to protest against the war in the Gulf*