

# The voice of Maria Dolens

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE PEACE BELL FOUNDATION OF ROVERETO



**W**hat do January 27 and February 10 have in common? Apparently not much, apart from the usual cold winter temperatures. In reality very much, in that the two dates have respectively been adopted as "National Holocaust Remembrance Day" and in Italy in accordance with the Laws of the Republic "National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe" thus acquiring a special place of great importance in our country's calendar of official commemorations.

Just to inform the younger generations, on 27 January (1945) Soviet troops occupied the Auschwitz camp, freeing prisoners reduced to human larvae and thus setting in motion the collapse of the Nazi concentration system, intent on the systematic elimination of all "non-Aryans" through criminal logic. Italy decided to establish a public day of remembrance with Law no. 211 of July 2000 and in doing so demonstrated great political sensitivity while furthermore anticipating a similar UN Resolution by a few years.

On 10 February (1947), with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, peace was concluded between Italy and Yugoslavia and consequently put an end to the tragic events along the border, such as the Foibe massacres and the dramatic Istrian-Dalmatian exodus.

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## HAPPENING AT THE UN

# Auction in the square

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE OF THE VICTIMS OF SLAVERY AND THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

«Come, ladies and gentlemen, come. Thursday 3 August, auction in the square. Ninety-four savages in good health just unloaded from Sierra Leone. Thirty-nine adult males, twenty-four females and thirty-one juveniles of reproductive age. Hurry up».

They weren't animals, they were 'negroes' but the difference was slight. A fortnight before the sale, a poster was hung up announcing a special market day in Charleston, South Carolina. A century and a half later, in 1920, the city would give its name to a dance invented by black dockers of the port, which more or less reproduced the movements they made to load and unload goods from ships. Those workers were probably the great-grandchildren of the ninety-four "items" sold to the highest bidder in 1769.

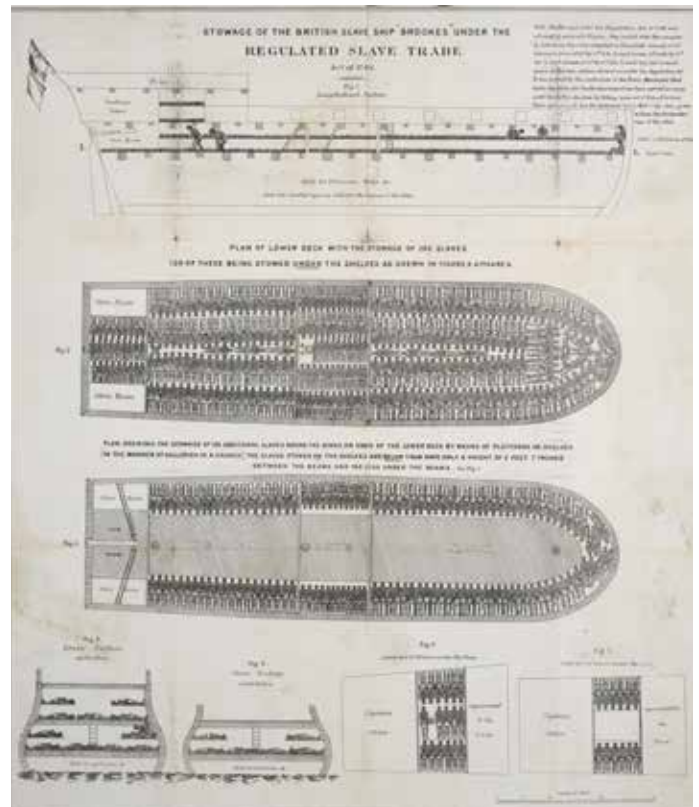
Several must have turned up at the slave auction, because it was convenient. The economy was flourishing, the workforce was almost free and there was very little remorse. It would take another hundred years, a Civil War, the XIII Amendment and a US president to be killed at the theater to stop the trade in men and women violently torn from their lands.

Today the sales have ended but racism has not. Also for this reason, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, established by the United Nations in 2007 and celebrated every 25 March, seems more like an invitation not to forget rather than historical compensation. More or less the announcement that Maria Dolens launches every day with her hundred strokes of Peace.

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The consequences of the most staggering forced migration in history are still just under our noses

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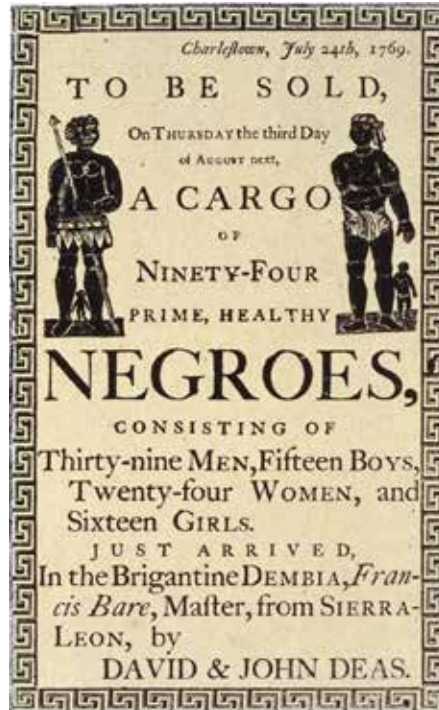
*A plan to "stow" the slaves during the voyage by ship from Africa to North America*

Moreover, the consequences of the most staggering forced migration in history are still just under our noses. Laws are approved in a single day and this is good, but to change a person's mentality takes much longer. In the United States, the racial question is still open and hardly a white person is encountered on death row who is not a prison guard. The abolition of slavery did not abolish discrimination. Black people had to wait until 1955 for Rosa Parks to refuse to get up for a white man who had "priority" before being able to sit on a tram where there was a free seat without worrying about who it was reserved for. And moving on to the present day, we just need to ask ourselves whether the murder of George Floyd would have become a legal case or if it would have been dismissed as an accident at work had it not been for the presence of smartphones.

In Africa, too, the effects of trafficking have not yet been overcome. Between 1600 and 1900, the continent's population plummeted by up to 30 percent in some areas. The cause

of the demographic decline may be attributed to the deportation of slaves together with disease which was often imported. But while the slave traders raided the villages, snatching muscular boys and young women from their families to put in the holds, the main European countries grew rich at the expense of Africa, causing first a deceleration, then stagnation and, finally, the arrest of the economy of one of the potentially richest continents in the world. According to Rahul Mehrotra, a researcher at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Africa loses nearly 90 billion dollars (75.8 billion euro) every year, money that, instead of being spent on education, health services or the economy generally ends up increasing the profits of multinationals or swelling bank accounts in tax havens.

A haemorrhage of capital which, according to the accusation contained in a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad), is equal to the sum of direct foreign investments and development aid that arrive on the continent every year. "Illicit financial flows are a multidimensional problem and it is very difficult to estimate their extent.



This is why the real figure could be very different, "Mehrotra points out, stressing that" there is an entire industry of tax optimization experts who help companies structure their business in order to pay as little tax as possible. In this case, many are wondering if we are facing evasion, therefore an illegal activity or simply the ability to exploit legislative shortcomings .

According to the calculations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), tax avoidance mechanisms cost countries around the world between 100 and 240 billion dollars a year in lost revenue, equal to 4-10 percent of global business income taxes.

The Unctad also reports that 40 billion dollars, around 45 percent of the total illicit financial flows from Africa, may be attributed to the trade in raw materials, in particular gold. A Reuters investigation confirmed that every year "gold worth several billion dollars" is exported from the "Dark Continent", thereby avoiding the taxes of the countries from which it is extracted.

In this way, according to experts, large capital arrives in the West that could conceal the illegal transfer of funds, even if, Mehrotra emphasizes, "the lack of reliable statistics concerning transactions makes it difficult to determine whether the discrepancies truly conceal an offense and what the nature of this offense is".

Slavery is a thing of the past, as is segregation, discrimination almost, prejudice quite possibly but exploitation is certainly not.

"Come on, ladies and gentlemen, come on."

## Italian ambassador in Congo killed

**T**he Rovereto Peace Bell Foundation expresses sympathy for the pain of the relatives of the Ambassador of Italy to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Luca Attanasio, police officer Vito Iacovacci and their driver Mustapha Milambo killed on 22 February in an armed assault. According to a preliminary recon-

struction, the United Nations convoy on which they were traveling was made up of two cars from the World Food Programme and had left Goma, the capital of North Kivu, heading towards Rutshuru, to visit a school project in the area. The attack was launched at Kilimayoka, in the town of Nyragongo. Local authorities are working to reconstruct the exact dynamics of the events.



To be continued on page 1...

With State Law n. 92 of March 2004, our country adopted the decision, not without culpable delay, to honor the sacrifice of these victims and to imprint it in the collective conscience of all Italians for always. By placing these two events alongside each other, we certainly do not intend to ignore the existence of distinct responsibilities as well as the very different number of victims caused by the two phenomena together with the different geographical areas in which the horrible crimes brought to mind by "National Holocaust Remembrance Day" and "National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe" historically took place. On the other hand, what we wish to highlight is the fact that racial hatred, total contempt for human life and the policies of annihilation of the enemy form the absurd "pseudo-cultural baggage" of totalitarian systems and regimes that are ideologically very different. If Europe finally seems to be free of such wreckage (but we must still be vigilant, since the bloody inter-ethnic conflicts in the Balkans didn't take place so long ago), we cannot observe the same situation in other continents where such perverse designs continue to be "scientifically" pursued and are often, unfortunately, also carried out.

As soon as "Maria Dolens" finds her voice after the winter silence she will therefore have to work hard to spread the universal message of Peace and Brotherhood, of which she is such an authoritative interpreter. Her message should be "loud and clear" and should spread far and wide. I very willingly deliver the conclusion of my speech with the insightful words of President Mattarella, pronounced on the occasion of the "National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe": "A crime against humanity, even when many play a part, remains as such, adding to the infamy the guilt of having dragged numerous other people into it".

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President



**HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

# Sport and human rights

**S**port is an important facet of modern life. Sports' governance is facing many challenges in a world that is rapidly changing and it can also, if unchecked, lead to human rights issues. Practicing sport is a human right and a goal shared by all governments.

The 16th Conference of Council of Europe Ministers responsible for Sport, organised in line with the activities of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, has recently adopted two resolutions:

1) A European approach to sport policies: the revision of the European Sports Charter. The Ministers stressed that the revised text should facilitate access to sports for all layers of society, inter alia through investing in infrastructures for the practice of physical activity at the grassroots level, both inside and outside school settings. They also encouraged member States to develop national sports strategies, as well as exchange best practices and experiences. The European Sports Charter, continental pioneering reference point for the development of sport policies, provides normative guidance in the field since its adoption in 1992 with the latest update in 2001 (the Code of

Sports Ethics acts as a complement to it). Since then, sport has changed substantially and therefore the need for a revision.

2) Human rights in sport. Considering the importance of a human rights-based approach while addressing sport integrity issues such as safety, security and service at sports events, combatting doping and the manipulation of sports competitions, the Ministers encouraged member States to further enhance the protection and promotion of human rights in this field, as well as to promote sport and its many social and individual benefits to strengthen society's resilience to global crises.

The session has been chaired by Leftefris Avgenakis, Deputy Minister of Culture and Sport, Greece. Closing speeches have been delivered by Deputy Secretary General Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni and Niels Nygaard, Acting President of the European Olympic Committees.

The next Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport will take place in Turkey.

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

THE BALKAN ROUTE

# The time for politics

## HUNDREDS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS BLOCKED BETWEEN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA

**T**he minimum living space deemed necessary for a person is considered to be three square meters. In Italian prisons this is the norm. In the tents of the Lipa refugee camp, it is most certainly not. Living cramped together is the “normal” condition. It’s snowing, the temperatures have dropped below zero, you can warm up with an electric heater or by staying close. Few masks. Covid is not top priority. The newspapers cover it from time to time but it’s old news since hundreds of asylum seekers have been stuck for quite some time in this small town in Bosnia and Herzegovina, near the border to Croatia, which in those parts represents the gateway to the European Union. At the end of December, the camp burned down and now approximately nine hundred people live in makeshift shelters, while just as many have moved to other areas of the region, but still have no better accommodation.

Yet the so-called “Balkan route”, which has become the main access route for refugees to the Old Continent since 2015, should be closed. For just over a

year, hundreds of thousands of people, mostly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, arrived in Europe via Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria. Since March 2016, however, the border has become a wall following the agreement between the European Union and Turkey.

The result was not to stop the desperate fleeing wars but was as it turned out to only make their journey more dangerous and more expensive. Barbed wire is not enough to discourage those who cannot stay where they are because they risk their lives. Today around 130,000 people are stranded in refugee camps in Greece, North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia. They often got there by relying on traffickers. The only way they had.

Almost everyone would like to seek asylum from the EU, but cannot as they are rejected by the Croatian border police, oftentimes with methods judged violent by numerous non-governmental organizations. Bosnia and Herzegovina, a state in severe economic difficulty and intertwined with ethnic tensions, does not seem capable of dea-

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The European Union allocates funds for humanitarian purposes but prevents migrants from entering

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ling with the crisis. As a consequence, the difficulties, as always, radicalize the various positions and some have begun to interpret the migratory flow as a “Muslim invasion”. At the beginning of January, Brussels announced that new funding would be added to previous contributions thereby bringing the total to 13.8 million euro since 2018. But money is not enough to solve the crisis, politics is needed.

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The Lipa refugee camp was destroyed by a fire and the refugees are living in tents under the snow

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## A LOOK AT THE BORDER

# Barrier and point of contact

**T**he pomerium may not have been the first boundary, but it certainly went down in history. When Remus crossed that furrow which his twin Romulus had considered an insurmountable limit, he was pierced by a sword, or a spear, who knows. The legend has various versions, but it perfectly clarifies one of the meanings of the word border: on this side there is me, on the other you. But this vision is impaired. In fact, the Latin etymology of "border" certainly contains the idea of limit (finis), but it is preceded by the prefix with thereby emphasizing the distinct ability of that imaginary line to "hold together" the two dividing parts.

It is always a question of perspective. If it is true that when Caesar passed the Rubicon river in arms he did so to take what was on the other side or that the Berlin wall was built to avoid communication between two areas of the same city then, at the same time, it is also true that Marco Polo crossed several borders to bring back a letter from Kublai Khan for the Pope, precious fabrics and an experience that from that moment on made him see in every foreigner a diversity to discover. Open or close, this is the dilemma. It depends on the circumstances. Today, for example, many borders have been closed to prevent the virus from spreading. But this is nothing new. In the nineteenth

century, the Papal States established a "cordon sanitaire" (sanitary cordon) on the northern border, more or less between Lazio and the current Marche, as a preventive measure of isolation between communities affected by infectious diseases of an epidemic nature. A study by Marco Corradi, historian and the man behind the Fas publishing house in Ascoli Piceno who is about to publish the results

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An imaginary line that separates and at the same time holds two realities close together

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The pink seesaws that "bring down" the wall between the United States and Mexico

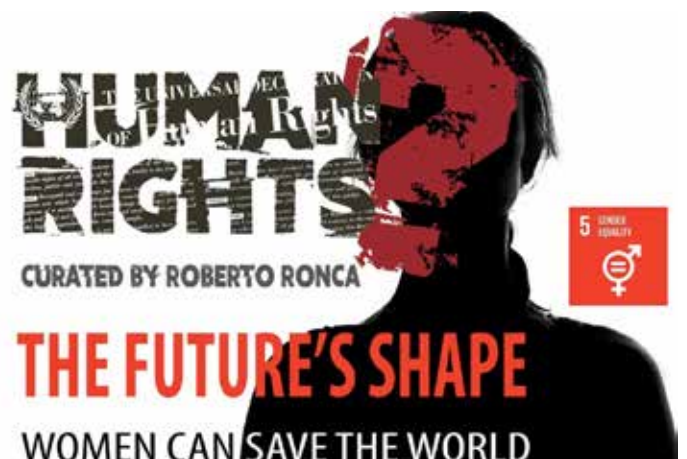
of his latest research, shows that it was precisely through "border management" that it was possible to stem the epidemic. Just like today.

Fences can save our lives or kill us, it's up to us. In Europe, the practice of building barriers has caused maybe a few dozen wars, including world wars. The idea of eliminating them, which over time has led to the European Union, has so far guaranteed an abundant seventy years of Peace. Schengen beats barbed wire hands down. Divide, unite, protect, save, condemn, live, die. The border does all this and does it at the same time depending on which side you are, that is to say if it is open, closed, hermetic, penetrable, natural, artificial, recognized or imposed. It is an elusive concept, which can be bent to different interpretations, even opposite ones. Colle di Miravalle could be a good observation point from which to observe this.

8TH OF MARCH

## Very little to celebrate

**T**here is little to celebrate, and in fact, 8 March is not a feast day but is rather a time for reflection. It is called International Women's Day. The problem is that rights are not yet guaranteed everywhere, social triumphs up to a point, gender-based violence is on the rise and discrimination is constant. Yet we celebrate. It wasn't always like this. In the past there were mostly demonstrations and before that still, nothing. Until the nineteenth century gender equality wasn't even mentioned. Even the French revolutionaries, in particular the Jacobins, recognized women as little more than second-class citizens, to say nothing of the Napoleonic code that certified submission in black and white. From the beginning of the last century, things began to change, but each country followed its own path. It took until after World War II to start claiming, all on the same established day, one thing that should be taken for granted: equal opportunities. It is not a question of quotas or special procedures, but of education and respect starting in the kindergarten. Also, simply, of market laws: same job, same salary. The UN invites us to act so that effective gender equality may be achieved in the world by 2030. We are short on time but we hope to make it. We might start in this



way: on 8 March maybe we could still give mimosas but after celebrating we take a moment to reflect. Then for the other 364 days of the year we do something. Our foundation has tried to do just this by calling 141 artists from 31 countries to express themselves on gender equality. The exhibition is entitled «Human Rights? The shape of the future #Womenscansavetheworld» and was open from August to October but not on 8 March. This date is for reflection.

## Series of conferences at the Bell

**T**hree conferences organized by the foundation will take place in March. The meaning, history and relevance today of Maria Dolens will be at the center of a brief cycle of two meetings held by Professor Armando Vadagnini. On 9 and 16 March at 5.30 pm, the historian, author of numerous publications and one of the leading experts on the subject will hold two webinars open to all. Tuesday 9 March Vadagnini will focus on the theme "The Bell of the Fallen from its origins to the '80s: a path of constant strengthening of its "mission" throughout the territory and internationally". The following week, on 16 March, the focal point will be "The Bell of the Fallen: grappling with the new challenges posed by a constantly changing reality and its increasing role as protagonist of Peace". Tuesday 23, however, will be the moment of art with the presentation of the exhibition «Human Crossing | Footprints of Culture and Peace » while the inauguration will take place on 17 April. Roberto Ronca, curator of the exhibition and art critic Caterina Orioli will elucidate the poetics of the artists Pablo Caviedes and Giulio Orioli, the protagonists of the event. The meetings will be preceded by an introduction from Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President. For information on how to participate, consult the website [www.fondazioneoperacampana.it](http://www.fondazioneoperacampana.it).



IT HAPPENED TODAY

# Tara Gandhi at the “Colle” hill of the foundation



8 March, 2003: Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee visits Maria Dolens. Reggente Pietro Monti, Foundation President offers a miniature of the Bell as a gift to Mahatma's granddaughter in the presence of Roberto Pinter as representative of the Autonomous Province of Trento and the mayor of Rovereto, Roberto Maffei



23 March, 2016: The new Maria Dolens clapper made by the Capanni company is positioned



14 March, 1948: Cardinal Secretary of State to His Holiness Pius XII sends the Pontiff's "reflection" to be engraved on Maria Dolens