

The voice of Maria Dolens

MONTHLY NEWLETTER FROM THE PEACE BELL FOUNDATION OF ROVERETO



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When - several decades ago now - leaders of the governments believed that the time had come to identify a day to celebrate Europe in the calendar their choice was directed, without hesitation, towards a "Europe Day" on 9 May. In fact, two events of great significance occurred on this date: first, the definitive Nazi capitulation in 1945 which put an end to the horrors of the Second World War; then, five years later, the public presentation by the then French Foreign Minister Schuman (German by origin, a not entirely insignificant detail) of the *Declaration* bearing his name. It is considered the point of initiation and at the same time of no return, of the European cooperation project destined, through a series of challenging intermediate stages, to give life to today's European Union.

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Europe Day

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was Brussels. We've been told that from the beginning, but we tend to forget it. "Europe cannot be built at once, nor will it be built all together; it will arise from concrete achievements that above all create real solidarity". When writing the *Schuman Declaration*, the founding fathers had clear ideas and two world wars behind them. They knew what it meant to be divided and opposed. Thanks to

them, we have never been bombed, targeted by snipers, sent to the trenches or to fly a fighter. We who may live safely in our cozy homes, Primo Levi teaches, risk forgetting not only what we have received as a gift, but above all that "World Peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts, proportional to the dangers that threaten it". It is almost a poem, embedded in the Charter on which Europe is founded. Peace and creativity. The daily bread of Maria Dolens.

Marcello Filotei (Editor)

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NINTH OF MAY EUROPE DAY

An irreversible process



March 19, 1958: Robert Schuman chairs the first meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the EEC

To be continued on page 1...

Robert Schuman, the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and our fellow countryman Alcide De Gasperi, who was Prime Minister on several occasions, are universally recognized as having made this process irreversible. On closer inspection, by choosing May 9, the European heads of state and government intended to highlight two essential basic concepts, on which to validate, without exception, all subsequent decisions. In the first place, the European territory, devastated in just over twenty years by two appalling fratricidal wars, would be transformed from that moment on into an area of peace and civil coexistence between nations and their respective populations.

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On May 9, 1950, with the Schuman Declaration, the cooperation project destined to give life to the European Union was born

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In addition, gradually increasing forms of interaction, economical, financial and political, would contribute to guaranteeing levels of prosperity and social well-being in the European area (initially made up of only 6 founding countries, including Italy) which would be - in the words of another great pro-European, Jean Monnet - unattainable by the individual nation states, in consideration of their small size.

From our standpoint today, we must recognize that these fundamental commitments have been kept over the years. An objective assessment of the facts leads us to note, and it is true, that in its long journey, the “European ideal” has also known less fortunate moments. Without recalling more distant precedents, the bloody Balkan conflict of the 1990s comes to mind and, more recently, the unprecedented, and consequently traumatic, abandonment of the Union by one of its members, Great Britain, at the conclusion of the “Brexit”. In addition, the procedures implemented by Brussels to coordinate measures in order to combat the pandemic in progress were not without criticism, according to a significant number of evaluations.

Despite some inevitable attenuation, however, it must be admitted that the wide-ranging vision of the “founding fathers” confirms its full validity even today, reaffirming the correctness of the motto *in varietate concordia* that they devised for the new community structure.

In fact, the European Union represents an ideal means through which to successfully overcome the global challenges of the 21st century which need to be faced on an equal footing with the other major players in the international situation, the United States and China. Within its territory, there is the freedom of movement of goods, capital and services, while the single currency, in addition to facilitating our everyday life, has positive effects on price transparency. Without mentioning the fact that there are now over 4 million students who have availed of the "Erasmus" program in order to experience university life in countries other than their own and that the "Schengen area" allows free movement between member states in the absence of any customs control.



Also, the list of *made in Europe* benefits could be much broader, if we included additional collaboration sectors common in all "27" member states, such as agriculture, the environment and culture among others.

Returning to the initial considerations, from the moment of its establishment "Europe Day" has been animatedly celebrated in Brussels and Strasbourg, as well as other EU capitals with ceremonies of various kinds. With them, a prominent role has usually been reserved for *open door* initiatives. Through such initiatives the headquarters of the Institutions, including the decision-making "sancta sanctorum", have been made accessible to ordinary citizens, often encouraged - through specific simulation processes - not only to attend reproductions of sessions of Parliament or of other community bodies, but also to take part actively by assuming the role, albeit only "honorary" and for one day only, of members of the Institutions.

Due to the emergence of the virus, for the first time in many years, 2020 led to the interruption of this highly popular tradition, replaced by a series of virtual events, still useful, in order to make up for the inevitable physical distancing.

At the time of writing, it seems that, albeit with a series of limitations, in 2021 it will be possible to re-propose meetings "in person". The homage that our Foundation intends to pay to Europe will therefore be significant even if it is of necessary small proportions.

“Despite some inevitable attenuation, the wide-ranging vision of the “founding fathers” confirms its full validity even today

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Fortunately, free from such earthly conditioning, Maria Dolens will not fail in any case, on 9 May, to dedicate her evening tolls also to European ideals, trusting that they may even emerge strengthened, in terms of cohesion and solidarity, from the difficult test with which we have all been confronted for over a year.

A few days earlier, on May 5, our Bell will be sure to address a sympathetic thought also to the Council of Europe, which will commemorate the 72nd anniversary of meritorious and irreplaceable activity in favor of the principles of democracy, the rule of law and the affirmation of human rights.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President



HAPPENING AT THE UN

The Algerian example

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LIVING TOGETHER IN PEACE

Algeria is a complex country. It is experiencing a far-reaching political and economic crisis, but also a constant tension to resolve it in favor of a peaceful coexistence based on dialogue. A president who didn't want to give up his position even after several terms, oligarchies that are difficult to overthrow and a flow of protests against the ruling class which is practically continuous. Young people, however, take to the streets to claim the right to a more accomplished democracy, not simply to act as substitutes for those in power.

In recent years, the demonstrations have been portrayed as "anti Bouteflika", but in reality the discontent of citizens does not seem to be limited to the work of the former head of state, who left the political context at over eighty years of age in 2019 after two decades of domination.

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Located at the crossroads of a myriad of traditions and languages, the African country promotes harmonious coexistence all over the world

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Abdelmadjid Tebboune took office in December two years ago and the country is preparing for new parliamentary elections. The population, however, remains in the square.

The social and economic restraints from which the protest arose in February 2019 have not been loosened. And after a temporary suspension of the demonstrations, due to Covid, the marches have resumed.

In such a situation one would expect a tendency towards authoritarianism, with the myth of the "strong man" ruling but no, at least not entirely. In addition to being the largest country in Africa, Algeria is also a point of reference in the culture of dialogue, both on that continent and beyond. The International Day of Living Together in Peace, which for three years has been celebrated on May 16, represents the international community's recognition of the efforts made by Algiers to promote mutual respect and tolerance.

It all started on 8 December 2017, when the United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution presented by Sabri Boukadoum, who in the meantime had become foreign minister. The vision was clear: Algeria is located at the crossroads of a myriad of religions, traditions and languages and for this reason the goal of local institutions can only be to promote harmonious coexistence. Without distinguishing between nationality, gender, language or religion. The sub-text is even clearer: try it yourselves, those of you living in a less complicated situation.

In a historical moment in which the economic crisis almost naturally leads us to defend ourselves from the other, experienced as a threat rather than as a resource, it may be useful to refer to a country where coexistence with that which is different is constant, structural. The road has been mapped, the goal is to live together in Peace and May 16 is the date to remember this by. Every evening a reminder also comes from Maria Dolens at 9.30 pm. It is true that the premises are closed, but there is always streaming.

HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Memory and future

INTERNATIONAL ROMA DAY



«A community that is fully aware of its history and culture is more likely to look at the present and the future with confidence», stated Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, on the occasion of International Roma Day.

The history of the Roma people is the story of a still open wound: hundreds of thousands were victims of the fascist forces' brutality, executed from the Baltic to the Balkans. In Germany, only a few thousand Sinti and Roma survived the Holocaust and the concentration camps, the so-called Zigeunerlager (lagers meant only for Roma families), where they were exterminated or lost their lives because of the deplorable living conditions. Yet the mass killing of Roma people was not even raised at the Nuremberg trials.

The Council of Europe organized, in this framework, an online conference – «Roma Youth: Together for Emancipation and Empowerment, The Role of history in the participation and inclusion of Roma young people» – whose aim, as ambitious as it is essential, was to reawaken a collective memory and bring to light a past that must not be forgotten.

Indeed, teaching Roma and Travellers history as well as Roma Holocaust Remembrance are priorities of the current Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Travellers Inclusion.

Sadly, the problem of collective stigmatisation of Roma and Travellers is more actual than ever, affecting not only adults, who have to face discrimination in the job market, but also children, who are often segregated and bullied in schools.

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The teaching of the history and the commemoration of the victims are the priorities of the Strategic Action Plan of the Council of Europe on the integration of Rom and Camminanti nomads

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Furthermore, the current severe health emergency has exacerbated their condition of segregation. Indeed, distance learning measures have excluded Roma and Travellers children from school due to lack of internet and computer access. Moreover, in many cases, Roma families live in slums, while thousands of European Roma remain still today stateless, and many lack personal identity papers to prove who they are.

The brutal history of the Roma massacre should not leave echoes of discrimination, but should nourish messages of inclusion, hope and equality, in order to firmly fight prejudicial generalisations and hate speech.

«As we celebrate International Roma Day, let us commit ourselves to acknowledging history and addressing current problems. In doing both, we can look forward to a brighter future for Europe's Roma and Travellers and thus for Europe as a whole», concluded, with a message of hope, the Secretary General.

Giuseppe Zaffuto, spokesperson for the Council of Europe in Italy

FLAGS

Every story has its colors

Two things cannot be changed in life: who your mother is and where your sports loyalty lies. There is no question about your mother, for the rest there have been some exceptions, but it is a rare and negligible event.

Getting excited whilst following a competition, siding with one team or the other according to the colors worn is almost the norm. The sense of belonging is deep, it is linked to something atavistic that partly escapes us and is completely independent from the protagonists. It is enough for a player to change his shirt and he is thrown off the empyrean. There is no appeal, the sentence is firm, the crime is high treason, the penalty is applied with immediate effect.

Are some color pairs better than others? Maybe, but that's not enough. Is there a grain of truth in the superiority that we recognize in the banners that identify us? Unlikely. So why do we go wild without restraint behind certain colors?

The flag is a cultural issue. It was born in the military field to distinguish the position of one's troops from that of enemies during a battle. This is why it brings with it the idea of a group of people united by the same purpose, sometimes by the same fate. But if it originally indicated "simply" where the "goodies" and the "baddies" were located, over the centuries it has become the symbol of a relationship, of a profound belonging where our chance for

happiness is in the hands of a stranger standing in front of the penalty spot in the interminable moment before the referee's whistle.

A banner that "flutters in the wind" is enough to put the history of the country, business, betrayal, pride, determination, "women, horsemen, arms, loves" back on track. This is why we admire those who "carry the flag high" and consider those who change it a traitor, so we always place that symbol at the highest point, and when not possible in the most visible.

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A banner that "flutters in the wind" contains the culture of an entire country within

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This is what is presented to Maria Dolens when an ambassador from a distant country arrives on the Colle di Miravalle and walks slowly towards the flagpole accompanied by the President of the Foundation, the local authorities, the municipal police in parade uniform and the whole city of Rovereto: the heart of a people, its expectations, its singularity and the aspiration to embrace other men who are unique and at the same time equal. This is why 99 banners wave every day in this place of Peace. It is not a parade or even a display of "internationality", it is the aspiration to represent the flag of the flags, to keep them all together, compact, almost merged into a global white that unites and contains them. Who knows if our hero thinks about all this before taking a penalty kick? And who knows if we may ever be proud of the colors we have in our hearts without hating those of the goalkeeper.

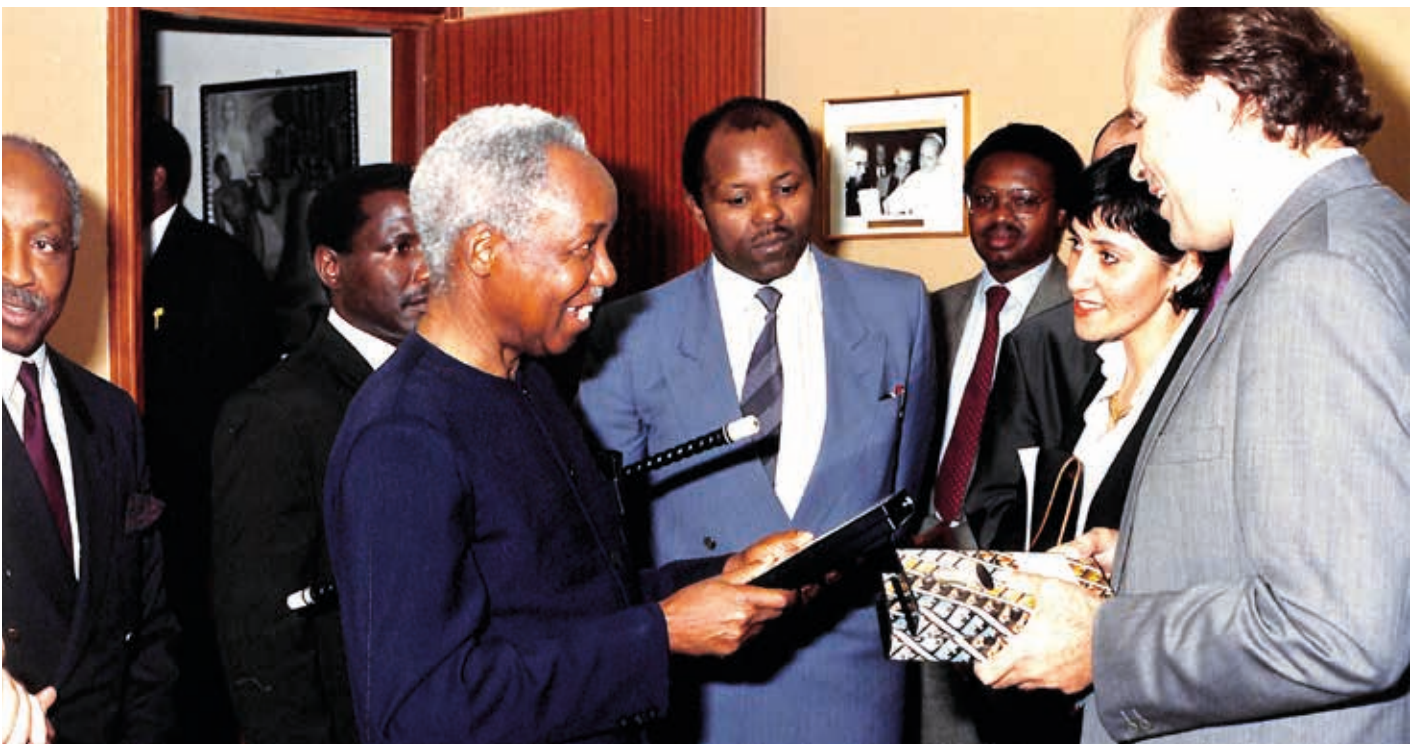


IT HAPPENED TODAY

All religions at the Bell



May 2, 1987: World Conference of Religions for Peace around the Bell of the Fallen



May 12, 1990: Tanzania joins in the presence of its former president Julius Nyerere

IT HAPPENED TODAY



May 23, 1997: The first Children's Congress at Colle di Miravalle



The flag of the Roma-Sinti people is raised on the Colle di Miravalle in the presence of Reggente Alberto Robol, President of the Foundation together with the MEP of Rom origin Juan de Dios Ramirez Heredia