

The voice of Maria Dolens

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE PEACE BELL FOUNDATION OF ROVERETO



Al By the time this issue of Voce di Maria Dolens becomes available online, the echoes of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games will have inevitably faded as more topical issues come to the fore, as is normal in any society that quickly “burns through” the latest headlines. After all, the dramatic images arriving from Kabul Airport as we celebrated a national holiday here in Italy on 15 August – reminding us of another unforgettable, tragic evacuation that took place almost fifty years ago in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) – highlighted how the concept of the “Olympic Truce” seems to have retained its meaning to this day.

Even so, it feels an apt time to reflect on a sporting event characterised by a somewhat unique lead-up in terms of organisational dif-

ficulties. The risk of cancellation lingered right up until the eve of the opening ceremony, but the Games nevertheless managed to transform themselves – subverting the predictions of many supposed prophets – into an undeniably successful event in terms of media and values.

It was primarily a sporting triumph for Italy, and the medals (the largest cohort received at any Olympic Games) cannot fail to evoke legitimate feelings of pride. The splendid gold medal won by sailor Ruggero Tita – the first athlete from Trentino to stand at the top of the podium in a summer Olympic Games – contributed to this feeling, allowing us to embrace a decisive feeling of community spirit.

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LOGO A



LOGO B



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HAPPENING AT THE UN

An Opportunity to Take Stock

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

“**T**here are things never to be done, neither by day nor by night, neither by sea nor by land. For example: war”. Gianni Rodari knew how to speak to children, and to all of us who retain the ability to feel some sense of wonder every now and then, to be moved when it happens, to be indignant when necessary, and to try to change things when possible. Attempting to put a stop to all conflicts would be somewhat naïve but it’s important to keep tabs on current affairs and to remember that it is not always possible to leave the house without encountering a land mine in some parts of the world. The International Day of Peace presents us with a good opportunity to do so. The day is celebrated every year on 21 September at the behest of the

United Nations. The day was originally set for the third Thursday of September, but a resolution passed on 7 September 2001 established a date that will always remain the same, rendering it difficult to forget or avoid.

The initiative’s purpose is to urge organisations and individuals to focus on promoting educational activities on the theme of global peace. In a world afflicted by war, this is a particularly useful day to remember some of the most serious global crises. Every day, the news presents us with terrifying images of death and destruction. We often find it overwhelming and find ourselves reaching for the remote to change the channel. That’s understandable. Unfortunately, however, the situation is much worse than we see on the news. Most conflicts are not

reported by the mass media, and cameras fail to witness massacres that take place in areas of the world completely cut off from the media network. Partly because it is difficult to keep track of everything and partly because we tend to ignore crises if they have no direct repercussions on our lifestyle or land.

Conflicts continue to affect several continents in 2021. They are concentrated in Africa and the Middle East, but there are also clashes in the Americas. The equatorial band runs through the middle of these continents and according to experts, the most common reason for conflict is water, but we don’t talk about it enough.

“The goal is to urge people to focus on promoting educational activities to foster dialogue”



The reasons given for declaring war have tended historically to be linked to “lofty ideals”. It is almost always a question of defending honour, tradition, identity, or the achievements of our forefathers. We start full of hope for the future, arm in arm, in the belief that the conflict will not last too long. We usually return after several years, our numbers greatly reduced, without fully understanding what it was all for. Historians explain to the great-grandchildren of those embroiled in war that the reasons were strategic and geopolitical, in one word: econom-



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Conflicts continue to affect various continents in 2021. These are mainly concentrated in Africa and the Middle East, but there are also clashes in the Americas.

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ic. In the future, our descendants will probably study the year 2020, and how competition for “blue oil” increased due to the growing world population, climate change, irregular rainfall, and severe drought, with serious consequences for many areas of the planet.

Some people, however, have been reporting on this issue for a while. “If there is no water, people will start to move. If there is no water, politicians are going to try and get their hands on it and they might start to fight over it”, warned Kitty van der Heijden, Director General for International Cooperation at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “It’s threats like these that keep me up at night”, stated the diplomat in a webinar hosted by the World Resources Institute (WRI), a US-based research group. According to the WRI, 17 countries face “extremely high” water stress levels, while more than two billion people live in countries that suffer from “high” water stress.

The latest report from the International Crisis Group confirms that most ongoing armed conflicts are occurring in Africa. Libya is a powder keg, while violence is escalating in Mali following the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita following months of mass protests and a military coup.

The Middle East has always been in the eye of the storm, and this regularly gets reported on by the media, but Syria is not the only country at war in the region. The situation is also critical in Lebanon and especially in Yemen where there has been no peace since the Arab Spring of 2011, the popular uprising that forced President Abdullah Saleh to resign. The ensuing conflict resulted in the deaths of over 250,000 people.

More than half of the casualties were indirectly caused by the clashes due to a lack of provisions or health care. Today, for the fourth consecutive year, the Arab country is experiencing the most serious humanitarian crisis in the world and is on the verge of famine. Over 80 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and at least 20 million people need assistance. We don’t even talk about Palestine and Israel any more; it is taken for granted that violence will re-emerge periodically.

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Water is the most common reason for conflict today.

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Meanwhile, conflicts also continue in Colombia, where the pandemic has contributed to a dramatic increase in violence. Several armed groups have tried to exploit the health crisis to extend control over the region, including to recruit new fighters. Civilians have died by the dozen due to bombs and attacks.

The International Day of Peace cannot solve everything. But it does provide us with an opportunity to take stock, to try to understand what is happening, and above all to remember that there is one thing you should never do “by day nor night, by land nor sea”.

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Secondly, and above all, success was enjoyed by all the entities directly involved in the Games (Japanese hosts, members of the IOC, national delegations), who did not surrender in the face of their most stealthy and fearsome global opponent: the pandemic. Despite securing a partial victory in postponing the games by 12 months and in forcing athletes to compete in half-empty stadiums, COVID-19 was no match for the strength of the sporting world, which was bolstered by strong feelings of collaboration and solidarity.

That being said, the stakes were very high. Erasing Tokyo 2020 from global history would have meant categorising the COVID-19 pandemic as a tragedy equal in gravity to the two world wars, the only reason for which the Olympic Games have ever been cancelled (in 1916, 1940 and 1944). Even if we were to set aside the numerous careers halted forever in their tracks, the eight-year long interruption of a major world sporting event would have seriously dampened our Olympic spirit. This spirit is embodied in the growing participation of world nations in the medal tables (the last time Tokyo hosted the Olympic Games in 1974 only 35 countries participated. This number grew to 48 in Seoul in 1988, to 82 in London in 2012, and currently stands at 93).

Against this backdrop, I am convinced that the effects of the 2020 Olympic Games will not fail to reflect positively, both in Italy and in other countries, on our everyday life. The determination (not to be confused with recklessness) and respect for the rules (through their active implementation) demonstrated by all participating athletes will help us tread the difficult path back towards routine after the summer break. A return that, at work, school, cultural events, and social and charity meetings, we hope will take place under the banner of a "new normal" thanks to the ever wider and committed uptake of the vaccine.

My final observation is reserved for Maria Dolens, who, in following the Olympic Games with her traditional impartiality, expressed her satisfaction in her own language (and sound), noting that the members of Italy's winning 4x100 relay team were, in their starting order, a man from Sardinia, a man from Brescia born in Texas, a man from Cremona born to Nigerian parents, and a man from Lombardy with island roots. In short, an apt cross-section of today's multi-ethnic Italy.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President

HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

20 years of the European Day of Languages



The European Day of Languages (EDL) turns twenty this year. Established in 2001, on the initiative of the Council of Europe and in collaboration with the European Commission, the EDL is celebrated every year on 26 September. The initiative's overall aim is to draw attention to Europe's rich linguistic and cultural diversity, which

we should strive to maintain and encourage. The day also shines a light on the need to increase the range of languages taught, to develop multilingual skills, and to enrich inter-cultural understanding. This moment of reflection also presents us with an opportunity to celebrate all the languages spoken in Europe, including those that are less widespread and those spoken by migrants.



The more languages we speak, the more cultures we understand, and the fewer wars we fight.



It is estimated that there are over 225 indigenous languages in Europe, not counting those spoken by citizens from other continents. The European Day of Languages pursues several objectives, which include raising public awareness of the importance of language learning to foster multilingualism and inter-cultural understanding, promoting Europe's rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and encouraging language learning in and after school.

Giuseppe Zaffuto, spokesperson for the Council of Europe in Italy

IN CONVERSATION WITH THE DESIGNERS OF OUR NEW BELL LOGO



A “Tailor-Made” Logo

LOGO A



LOGO B



The refresh was necessary, the responsibility was great, and the turnaround was tight. 4 October – the anniversary of the Maria Dolens Bell’s first toll, and the day of our new logo’s grand reveal – was fast approaching. We needed creative people, capable of listening to our ideas and translating them into concise imagery. We entrusted the task to a design duo with an elegant, concise style: barbericonzatti.design (BC.D).

Ivonne Conzatti and Luciano Barberi compare their creative approach to the art of tailoring. Their services range from design to visual work, artistic direction, and installations but their aim is always to deliver a “tailor-made” product to the client. “The Campana dei Caduti Foundation asked us to design a new logo while ensuring the bell remained recognisable and certain themes were rendered more explicit, such as peace, sound and the universality of Maria Dolens’ message”, they explained to us in a quick catch-up between meetings.

How did you approach the task?

We worked on nine proposals in close collaboration with the foundation’s senior trustees. Each proposal contained distinct and recognisable themes, and the starting points were always the themes of peace and sound.

How did you narrow down your selection?

We presented our proposals to the trustees and the two that received the highest number of votes were chosen to be put forward for a local community vote. We are interested to see which one will be chosen.

What are the ideas behind the logos? Let’s start with logo A.

The proposal for logo A stems from the concept of a bell tolling. The logo depicts the local community as a set of distinct elements. It features lines inspired by a musical stave that become softer and softer, symbolising the ringing of the bells. The colour palette is discreet and understated.

And what about logo B?

With this proposal we created an outline of a bell using the initials of the words *fondazione*, *campana* and *caduti*. The logo depicts the outline of the Maria Dolens bell in a contemporary key, using the foundation’s colour palette and a hint of green in homage to Rovereto, the Città della Quercia..

WOMEN AGAINST WAR IN SREBRENICA

Raspberries for Peace



Over one hundred thousand dead, more than two million displaced, cities destroyed, and so many remains, including human. It takes a visionary to think about raspberries. But some people can find a reason for rebirth in almost anything. Of course, berries are not enough, you also need trust, intelligence, good will, and people capable of leaving behind suffering and pain to start a new dialogue. It's daytime outdoors in Bratunac, Srebrenica. It's the year 2003 and an agricultural cooperative is flourishing in the region where the Bosnian war was at its most brutal from 1992 to 1995. A place, on the western bank of the River Drina and on the border with Serbia, where women, once refugees or displaced persons, decided to start again, to return to life without asking themselves what ethnic group their neighbour belonged to,

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A multi-ethnic agricultural cooperative flourished in 2003, in regions hit particularly hard by the war in Bosnia.

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to talk, to confide in each other, to cry, to laugh, and to work to grow “raspberries for peace”. Almost twenty years after the Zajedno-Insieme cooperative was founded, its jams and juices are also sold in Italy, but the road to recovery remains long. After all, Skender Hot and Rada Žarković – left alone at the helm of the company – chose to put their idea into practice in a region that was hit particularly hard by the Srebrenica tragedy, a city where Bosnian Serb troops killed and buried thousands of Bosnian Muslims (“Bosniaks”) in mass graves in July 1995, an act that would later be named a genocide by the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague in 2004.

Having escaped the tragedy, some women wanted to return to the region and accept the challenge put to them by Rada and Skender, two out-and-out pacifists, who have never stopped asking for an end to the fighting since the outbreak of the conflict in Croatia in 1991. It was through a network of anti-war associations in the Balkans that Rada encountered Italian civil society, consequently laying the foundations for the birth of Zajedno-Insieme, whose name refers to the strong relationships built over the past decade.

There were many difficulties to overcome. The bureaucracy took its toll, raising funds to purchase a facility proved complicated, the machinery for filtering and cleaning fruit was expensive, the cold chain was fragile, and transporting produce was a complex process. But the biggest obstacle of all was the lack of trust. Pain leaves deep marks on people and local administrations. Projects that encourage dialogue in regions that have suffered the great tragedies of genocide and war struggle to take off. Zajedno-Insieme managed to do so with raspberries. Peace is a match for almost anything.

IT HAPPENED TODAY

Lech Wałęsa visits the bell



14 September 2010: the former President of Poland and Nobel Peace Prize winner Lech Wałęsa visits the foundation. On the right, Regent Alberto Robol stands on the Viale delle Bandiere.



Lech Wałęsa signs the Book of Honour



Lech Wałęsa stands in front of Maria Dolens

IT HAPPENED TODAY

The Accession of the Russian Federation



20 September 1998: The Accession of the Russian Federation. Director Pietro Monti carries the Russian flag, which will be hoisted on the flagpole, followed in the centre by the Representative of the Moscow Foreign Ministry Victor Lopatnikov. On the right stand those honouring the newly raised Russian flag.

Chess for Peace



21 September 2017: The International Day of Peace 21 September – the International Day of Peace. Two great chess masters, the Russian Vladimir Dobrov (right), and the Ukrainian, Valeriy Nevyerov (left), compete at the Colle while troops from Kiev and Moscow engage in combat in the Donbass region.