



# The voice of Maria Dolens

n.16  
Year II  
January 2022

Monthly newsletter from the Peace Bell Foundation

## ANGELA MERKEL LEAVES THE SCENE

# A void to fill



**T**he definitive departure of Angela Merkel, which took place in Berlin on 8 December in connection with the oath and subsequent handing over to her successor, the social-democratic Olaf Scholz, leaves a void that is difficult to fill not only in her native Germany but in the whole continent of Europe and, of course, beyond.

I have intentionally omitted to associate the word "void" with any adjective, although "political" is of course the one that best fits the present circumstances. Indeed, far from being confined to a specific sector of activity, the withdrawal from the spotlight of the one Chancellor Kohl once called with paternal affability *das Maedchen* ("the girl", except at a certain moment when he felt her enormous determination and strength of character at his own expense) embraces the last twenty years of German history, understood in its entirety.

Judging from her first years of life, for Angela Dorothea, born in Hamburg to a family with solid German-Eastern roots (the choice of a "DDR-stamped" success during the official farewell ceremony by Nina Hagen speaks volumes on the strength of the link to her origins), the achievable goals seemed to be above average, but certainly not unlimited.

After completing her university studies, she was rewarded a seat in the Bundestag for her commitment to the local democratic movements that had sprung from the ruins of the Honecker regime, nothing that would predict such a bright future on the national, European and world stage. In fact, a series of significant objective obstacles stood in the way. The first, and most important, the fact of being a woman, considering that from Adenauer onwards Germany had been governed exclusively by *Kanzler* declined only in the masculine.

*To be continued on page 8...*

### IN THIS EDITION

## 02

**Happening at the UN**  
International Day of Education

## 04

**Happening at the Council of Europe**  
More power to women

## 06

Leaders pour la Paix

## 07

**It happened today**  
Pope Francis and the Rovereto Peace Bell

## HAPPENING AT THE UN

# Studying to escape hunger

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION

«It should be taught in school». More or less, we hear this phrase in every cultural debate over and over again. Musicians would like all children to at least listen to Mozart, philosophers would have them repeat Plato by heart, scientists that they be initiated into mathematics and farmers wish them to at least be able to distinguish an apple tree from a pear tree. All just and important claims, but effectively irrelevant on a global scale. While we run to take the little ones swimming, to judo, choir practice and sometimes even to community farms, 258 million young people born on the same planet do not attend school, while 617 million children and adolescents cannot read or do subtraction.

Education is a human right, as well as a public resource, but at the moment it is a kind of chimera, especially in developing countries.

If things do not change according to the UN, «countries will not be able to achieve gender equality



and break the cycle of poverty that is leaving millions of children, young people and adults behind».

In short, for us in the developed world, studying means being more aware, which is no small feat, but in some areas of the world it is a question of avoiding falling into the abyss of famine.

For this reason, International Day of Education is celebrated on 24 January, an anniversary established by the United Nations in 2018 with the aim of reaffirming the crucial role of education in building sustainable and resilient societies. In 2021 and throughout 2022 the theme on which the events are focused is summarized with the title «Recovering and revitalizing education for the "Covid-19 generation"». Already on January 25th, a global event will be held that will focus on «The heroes of learning, innovation and finance».

Education is a human right, as well as a public resource, but at the moment it is a kind of chimera, especially in developing countries

After all, the pandemic could not be ignored, as schools are one of the sectors most affected by the emergency we are experiencing.

The global learning disruption was unprecedented in terms of severity. The closure of schools, universities and other institutes, as well as the interruption of many other learning and literacy programs, is estimated

The global learning disruption caused by the pandemic was unprecedented in severity



to have affected the lives of approximately 1.6 billion students in over 190 countries.

But like any crisis, this too can be an opportunity.

It goes without saying, but if they have been saying it for a few thousand years, maybe some truth lies

within. It is a matter of questioning the experts so as to understand how what we have had to do in this period out of necessity can be reshaped and improved, as the UN asks, in order to place «education and lifelong learning at the centre of recovery and transformation towards more inclusive, safe and sustainable societies».

In some areas of the world, acquiring knowledge is the only way to avoid falling into the depths of poverty



With the adoption of resolution 73/25, the United Nations wished to highlight once more «the firm political will to support transformational action for inclusive, equal and quality education for all». It is now up to the Member States, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and civil society as a whole not only to celebrate a day dedicated to education every year on 24 January, but also to do something to spread all the knowledge that «should be taught in school».



## HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

# More power to women

Ten years have passed, but little has happened. When the «Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence» was opened for signature in Istanbul in 2011, it was hoped that after a decade the outcome might be more positive. «According to United Nations statistics, approximately 736 million women worldwide - almost one in three - have experienced violence by a partner, non-partner sexual violence or both at least once in their life. And this figure does not include sexual harassment and forms of violence such as stalking, forced marriage and female genital mutilation». This was highlighted in a joint statement by the Italian Minister for Family and Equal Opportunities, Elena Bonetti and Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić. «The Italian presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe places women's empowerment as a priority, which includes the defence and promotion of women's rights. We cannot remain idle

in the face of increasing online threats of gender-based violence, especially since this easily materializes in the "physical" world» the statement continues. Also, for this reason, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of last November, on the eve of the United Nations **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women**, some general recommendations were published on «the digital dimension of violence against women». The text deals not only with online acts of violence - such as sharing humiliating images, insults or threats of death and rape - but also with crimes perpetrated through tracking technologies reported by cybersecurity companies.

But there is still a long way to go. Aside from the fact that, the "Istanbul Convention" already bears a mark of the difficulties in proceeding in the name alone. In fact, the Turkish government after having promoted the agreement by opening it for signature on 11 May 2011, has recently decided to withdraw, emphasizing how complex it is to act on these issues in the international arena.

Still the objectives are clear: to prevent violence against women, protect those who are victims of it and ensure the prosecution of those responsible. But the convention does not stop there because at the same time «it encourages an integrated policy» and «also criminalizes specific offences, such as stalking, forced marriage and female genital mutilation» express Elena Bonetti and Marija Pejčinović Burić, also pointing out that «where it was applied it worked well».

In short, according to the statement «the Istanbul Convention is the most advanced internatio-

We cannot stand idle in the face of increasing online threats of gender-based violence



nal instrument available to European states and its full implementation is the most effective way to defend women's rights».

For this reason, one of the objectives of the Italian presidency is to encourage further signatures and ratifications of the treaty.

Also, because the pandemic is aggravating the situation. «During the lockdowns - the joint statement continues - the cases of domestic violence and abuse against women have grown dramatically». It is urgent and necessary to bring issues such as the participation of women in the labour market, family support services and the promotion of female leadership to the top of political agendas of all the countries within the Council of Europe. In particular, it is necessary to take advantage of the exceptional opportunity that is given by the recovery programs.

Women's empowerment is essential for the prevention of violence. An autonomous, free, independent person is stronger, less vulnerable and ready to defend their rights. This applies to any sex. But it's only guaranteed for one.

## CONFERENCE IN VENICE

### THE ROLE OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN EUROPE

«Crime and Criminal Justice - The Role of Restorative Justice in Europe». This was the theme of the Conference of Ministers of Justice organized by the Italian Presidency in Venice from 13 to 14 December last. The event - attended by the Italian Minister of Justice, Marta Cartabia, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (CoE), Marija Pejčinović Burić, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE, Rik Daems and the President of the European Commission for Democracy through Law, Gianni Buquicchio - has the goal of advancing the debate in criminal matters based on the analysis of data, not only from European sources, and taking into account the best practical experiences in the Member states.

The intention of the Italian Presidency is to promote ample debate on the current use of restorative justice by the various criminal jurisdictions in Europe and on the obstacles encountered in making it accessible and available at every stage of the criminal proceedings. Rome also presented the «Venice Declaration on the role of restorative justice in criminal matters», anticipating greater application of this resource in the

member states of the Council of Europe. The discussion ended with the hope of a wider use of restorative justice as a complement to criminal proceedings, especially in relation to minors. More generally, the experts noted the need for greater dissemination of training on the subject.



Martin de Vos, «Peace and Justice» (oil on wood, 16th century)

## LEADERS POUR LA PAIX

# Politicians who don't retire

There are people who have worked as politicians or diplomats accumulating enormous experience which, at the end of the mandate, risks being lost. Democracy works like this, and it works well: you cannot remain in office indefinitely as happens in forms of government that in the West are referred to as regimes. However, it might be useful to find a way to continue to capitalize on the knowledge of people who have successfully exercised what Otto von Bismarck brilliantly called "the art of the possible, the science of the relative".

For those who persist in thinking that it is not true that politicians «are all the same» because we are not «in an Alberto Sordi film», as Nanni Moretti cried in his film *Ecce Bombo*, a sign comes from Leaders pour la Paix, a multicultural organization that brings together men and women experts in politics, coming from every corner of the world, without any religious or ideological discrimination. Former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, president of the association, has repeatedly explained that the initiative stems from the concern re-

garding «the increase in international tensions and the increasingly decisive use of violence». In this situation, the Leaders pour la Paix intend to place themselves «at the service of an inclusive multilateralism based on the pedagogy of Peace, mediation and participation of all the active members of society». «The tragedies of migrants, the grave scars of the pandemic, the anxieties of young people and the parallel escalations of selfishness, violence and despair are at the centre of our concerns» he added, announcing that in the awareness «of the crucial role of education in prevention» the decision was made together with his collaborators «to create an international network of itinerant workshops of Peace». The aim is to provide an academic background that facilitates the understanding of the world and its challenges, in particular to young people in countries at risk of war or already in conflict, to give them «the necessary tools to be perpetrators of Peace in their own environment».



The former French prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin

Leaders pour la Paix are not tired of working, even if they have retired. They have no social, religious or cultural prejudices. They work on the same concepts underlying the message launched by the Rovereto Peace Bell every evening, since 4 October 1925. And anyone who follows the path marked by Maria Dolens will always be at home on the Colle di Miravalle, because politicians are not «all the same», not even in Alberto Sordi's films.

An organization that brings together experts from all corners of the world, without any religious or ideological discrimination



IT HAPPENED TODAY

# Pope Francis and the Bell

*At this moment we are connected with Rovereto, in Trentino, where there is the large bell called "Maria Dolens", built in honour of the fallen of all wars and consecrated by Blessed Paul VI in 1965. Soon we will hear the tolling of that bell. May there never be wars again - never again wars! - but always the desire and commitment for peace and fraternity among peoples. (The words of Pope Francis after the Angelus of January 1, 2015 on the occasion of the XLVIII World Day of Peace).*



ANGELA MERKEL LEAVES THE SCENE

# A void to fill

*To be continued on page 1...*

The second was linked to her coming from an already communist Land, with the stigma of a socio-cultural path considered inferior to her peers raised in Cologne or Hanover. Even her scientific training provoked critical evaluations from the right in political circles represented to a very large extent by jurists, political scientists and historians. Competence, rigor, strategic vision, willingness to dialogue and, where required, a use of authority without half measures have been the main qualities that have allowed her to make her way, over the years, with increasing recognition both in Germany and abroad.

At the time of the announcement of her leave, which took place well in advance of the most recent German election, the results obtained were evident to all, perfectly epitomized in her four successive terms as Chancellor (2005-2021). A fifth, largely within her reach, was excluded according to many neutral observers only by her choice not to run.

This is certainly not the place to take stock of Angela Merkel's work, which would require much more space. In a brief summary and limiting ourselves to international politics alone, the "Iron" Chancellor (a term shared in Europe with Margaret Thatcher) was undoubtedly a firm and loyal supporter both of the founding values of the European Community and of the transatlantic link with the United States. The aforementioned despite the presence, within the German political and financial/economic world, of visions based on an awareness of the continental supremacy of Germany (the well-known image of the "locomotive" driving all the other wagons) which, as one example of many, tend to result in a limited understanding regarding the more fragile economic systems of the "southern side".

A fifth term, widely within her reach, was excluded according to many neutral observers only by her choice not to run again

I conclude the portrait of Angela Dorothea with an image and a sentence. The image is that of the exiting *Kanzlerin*, sitting at the table of the heads of the national delegations, on the occasion of the G20 Summit held in Rome last October, with Chancellor-designate Scholz disciplinedly placed in the second row to listen and, who knows, perhaps also to take notes. A truly enviable model of "democratic coexistence". The sentence is more recent, against the background of the disastrous epidemiological situation in Germany and concerns Angela Merkel's acknowledgement of «how competent Italy has been» in the fight against the pandemic, thanks to a well-chosen mix of political decisions and technical-sanitary measures.

Some wished to read a "belated repentance" into these words of the former Chancellor for the criticisms expressed against our country over the years of her mandate. Personally, I favour the sincerity of the compliment, which fits in well with her empathic attitude towards Italy, confirmed by the annual period of holidays in Ischia, naturally spent in the company of her husband, Herr Sauer. The newfound freedom from government posts will contribute, we sincerely hope, to make her future stays even more pleasant.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President