



The voice of Maria Dolens

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De bello libico

In democratic systems, electoral exercise represents the highest moment in terms of the involvement of the population in the institutional life of a country, as it is associated with the prerogative of electing its own rulers. As a rule, it ends with the reconfirmation of those who have proven themselves valid and with a good riddance to those who in contrast have proved themselves incapable.

Of course, the value of the above consideration emerges in the presence of authentically democratic and pluralist states, respectful both of the traditional tripartition of powers and of the fundamental rights, and related freedoms, of their citizens. Recourse to the polls cannot, in fact, alone guarantee the ideal situation described above. History, but also current events, offer numerous testimonies of politi-

cal systems careful in calling their citizens to vote on a regular basis, but the fact remains that inevitably your typical autocrat, already firmly established in power, is the one who emerges as the winner - usually with an overwhelming majority.

This assumption serves to introduce the subject of this analysis, Libya, which the international community had, in fact, recently "summoned" to vote with excessive haste, furthermore, on the date of a deep-seated, collective calling, that is to say December 24th, a national feast day.

As is widely known, the elections, which remained in the balance right up to the end, did not actually take place, due to the glaring absence of the minimum conditions necessary for the exercise of a vote that could be defined as «free and inclusive».

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An “Informal” artist

THE PASSING OF MUKY

Last week Wanda Bera-si, known to everyone as Muky, passed away at the age of 95, after having dedicated her entire life to art. She originally came from Trento, lived in Bolzano and then later in Rome, where she studied at the German Academy of Villa Massimo, coming into contact, in particular, with Marino Mazzacurati, Leonardo Leoncillo and Renato Guttuso. She arrived in Faenza in 1955 and immediately immersed herself in the city starting to make friends with potters, artists and intellectuals. Following this however, it was clear to her that, even in Faenza, tradition often turns out to be more of a burden than a springboard. She is an artist with a multifaceted personality, poet, painter, sculptress, ceramist, she counted hundreds of exhibitions and many prestigious awards both in Italy and abroad.

In her house, a mythical place as if time had no place but personal possessions were happily placed, she was surrounded by objects, memories and decorated mannequins, sometimes even disturbing. In her company, time flew by, amidst anecdotes and tales of her artistic, poetic and worldly life. Her stories, never nostalgically blocked on the past, but always projected onto today and tomorrow. Even friends confirm how perfectly lucid they found

Sculpture was the expressive means that more than any other allowed her sensibility to take full shape



Muky portrayed by Maurizio Galimberti

her, able, from the initial argument, to range in every direction with apparently insignificant connections which then turned out to be quite pertinent, from a point of view that she immediately identified, while often whoever listened to her had to be led slowly to focus on them.

Very sensitive to the problems of the people and the world, deeply pacifist, animal rights activist, ecologist, vegetarian, teetotaler,

more than sparing in eating, very thin, very lively eyes, hands made strong by a life spent kneading clay, very ethereal and delicate on the outside while equally energetic and determined inside, she had a beautiful smile, sweet and yet proud. An eclectic artist, Muky was creative in all respects, with an inner charge, an enthusiasm, a curiosity and an interest in the world, as well as a working capacity, more unique than rare.



Muky, «Anti-Conformist Nativity Scenes: Christmas 1995/1996 - Peace Process»

Her «Presepi Contro», donated to Maria Dolens, portray hope in war scenarios

In Muki's multifaceted activity, sculpture was certainly the expressive means that more than any other allowed her sensitivity to take full form. Specifically, the ceramic sculpture, created with that magical material, the product of earth and water which then dries in the air and comes into contact with the indomitable fire. It is a medium that is anything but neutral, as indeed no communicative medium is: in a continuous dialogue between chemical-physical aspects and ideal, poetic, philosophical aspects, ceramic gives space to ideas and sensibilities in the most fantastic way. As an all-embracing representative of the informal art movement, Muki had for a long time dedicated herself, among other things, to the creation of multi-material installations.

Of her works, scattered throughout Italy and all over the world, there are several in Trentino dated between 1960 and last year. The most important and articulated is undoubtedly the beautiful and rich series of *Presepi Contro* (Anti-Conformist Nativity scenes) donated to Maria Dolens and always exhibited here during the Christmas period. This donation, promoted by Iva Berasi (her distant cousin) and by Silvio Cattani, her friend since he was dean of the Higher Institute for Artistic Industries of Faenza, while continuing among other things to be dean of the Art Institute of Rovereto, is explicit in its common ethical values shared by that artist and this Foundation. The *Presepi Contro* Scenes portray hope, through the birth of the Child, Saviour of the world and Prince of Peace, in the scenarios of wars and the many tragedies and dramas that span across the contemporary world. Certainly not the result of a specific commission or the need to participate in a competition, they arise directly, like all her works, from a profound human sensitivity.

Towards the end of the year, many, if not all, spontaneously take stock, to think carefully on the most significant moments of the period that is about to end. This is *Presepi Contro*: a reflection; a critical reflection, often even bitter. To give just a few examples, in 1989 Muki wanted to stigmatize the humanitarian disaster that Cambodia was experiencing; in 1990 her Child was born in Kuwait where «the sand is the place of the wind»; the following year he was born among the roses of the desert, yes, but above all among the bullets of southern Morocco, «a scream among the chrysanthemums»; in 1993, in Somalia, she highlights that «The memory of war is war»; in 1994 a particularly significant and dramatic place was identified with Sarajevo; in 2001, like everyone else, she was shocked by the attack in New York and Washington on September 11, which caused numerous deaths, directly and indirectly, immediately and remotely. In the midst of so much grief and suffering, however, the Child continues to be born, to give hope, to show us that life is still to be lived.

Pietro Marsilli



Undersecretary Benedetto Della Vedova during his speech at the Parliamentary Assembly

HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

A “people-friendly” future

The Council of Europe is a fundamental part of the collective effort to face global challenges. This is the starting point of the speech that the Undersecretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Benedetto Della Vedova made on 25 January in front of the Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg, illustrating the salient points of the initiatives promoted by the Italian Presidency inaugurated on 17 November last. The Council of Europe, he reiterated, represents «the continental emblem of the protection

of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the expression of a multilateral vocation in which Italy fully recognizes itself». It is important, he continued, to converge on a common project that guides the commitment and work of each of the Member States in the right direction. The meeting of foreign ministers which will conclude the term of office on 20 May next in Turin could also serve this purpose.

In these three months, Rome has never ceased to emphasize the need for a renewed concrete and cohesive commitment in order to relaunch the common values and principles that were the basis of the decision to join the organization. The aim is to build a «a “people-friendly” future» and to achieve this the Italian Presidency is focusing on the promotion of women’s rights, the fight against gender-based violence, children’s rights, youth policies and the protection of cultural heritage.

Special attention is also paid to the impact of Artificial Intelligence on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Strasbourg represents «the continental emblem of the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms»

«We expect that in May it will be possible to reach an agreement to define the field of action of the Council of Europe on this central issue for our future. Not to limit development, but to ensure that it declines in terms that respect human rights», said the undersecretary, highlighting that «a mix of non-binding and binding instruments seems the most appropriate solution and in line with the orientation of the membership». Already in May, on the occasion of the ministerial meeting, «the start of negotiations for the definition of an appropriate transversal regulatory instrument» could be announced.

It is necessary to relaunch the common values and principles that were at the basis of the decision to join the organization



**SERGIO MATTARELLA
RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT**

A STATESMAN

When the threshold of the 505 votes necessary to reach the quorum is exceeded, the electoral college breathes a sigh of relief and bursts into great applause. It is January 29 and Sergio Mattarella is re-elected to the presidency of the Italian Republic. He

is the point of balance of opposing strategies that seem to have left significant consequences among the parties that make up the vast majority that supports the government led by Mario Draghi. At the end of the count there were 759 votes, more than those obtained by Francesco Cossiga in 1985, by Carlo Azeglio Ciampi in 1999 and by Giorgio Napolitano on his re-election in 2013. After a week of negotiations and "rejected" candidates, even excellent ones, the situation was unblocked after the seventh failed vote. The group leaders went up to the Quirinale Palace to ask Mattarella to remain in office and got the answer: «I had other plans for the future but I'm available». Despite his age, 80 years old last July 23, and after having repeatedly stres-

sed that he wished to retire to private life, the outgoing Head of State agreed to continue in office also because the «serious emergency on the health, economic and social front call for a sense of responsibility and respect for the decisions of the Parliament». These conditions «do not allow one to shirk the duties to which one is called and naturally must prevail over other considerations and different personal perspectives». Now the question that observers ask themselves, especially abroad, is how long will the second term last? In the hope that it will end regularly in 2029, all that remains is to wish a statesman who has put the good of his country before himself good luck in his work.

FAREWELL TO DAVID SASSOLI

THE STRENGTH OF A MILD MAN

Freedom, rights and development were the pillars on which stood the entire political career of the President of the European Parliament David Sassoli, who died on 11 January at the end of a long illness. The frequent smile that illuminated his face as an eternal young man was in actual fact a reflection of his ability to converse with everyone, with political opponents in particular since anyone can talk to friends. Firm without being overbearing, he had also maintained his sense of irony as a politician that had allowed him to do the "Mexican wave" with the Italian celebrity Fiorello while, in his previous career, he was a newsreader for Tg1. Sassoli opposed those who take themselves too seriously and believe that the strongest is the one who shouts the most with his mild-mannered disposition. This resulted in a determination that looked to the future, that laid the foundations for a deep integration process, planned concrete responses to the needs of citizens, defended the founding values of freedom and brought home results when the dust raised by the empty words of the showmen settled. Never underestimate the quiet ones, especially if they are determined to recover «the pioneering momentum of the Founding Fathers, who were able to put aside the hostilities of war, put an end to the damage by nationalism by giving us a project capable of combining Peace, democracy, rights, development and equality», as he was not afraid to say

on 3 July 2019 in the speech of his inauguration as president of the European Parliament. A clear, anti-sovereign program, openly opposed to those who «bet on the decline of this project, fuelling divisions and conflicts that we thought were a sad reminder of our history». And these are not general principles, but concrete issues, because it must be «clear to everyone that no government in Europe can kill, that the value of people and their dignity are our way of measuring our policies. That here no one can silence their opponents, that our governments and the European institutions that represent them are the fruit of democracy and free elections. That no one can be condemned for their religious, political or philosophical faith. That in Europe girls and boys can travel, study and love without constraints». The man who died was a European citizen, a native democrat, who earned the respect of his opponents without giving up his ideas, firmly convinced that «Europe is not an accident of history».



HAPPENING AT THE UN

The razor of shame

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE
FOR FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

All you need is a razor, sometimes a razor blade. It hurts, it's true, but grandmother, mother, all your older sisters and friends have already done it. Almost all. It's normal. After all, it's time to get married, to grow up. And then what would the people, the village, the religious leaders, the men say. The men in particular.

How can a little girl stand up to her whole world to prevent being subjected to genital mutilation? She can't, at least by herself. It would take an enlightened father, because the mother generally has no say in the matter. There are some, but they are rare. It takes a man who must have courage, but also the economic capacity to abandon everything and change his life. It seldom happens, and this is how every year around three million girls in the name of tradition are subjected to this unacceptable practice, which has permanent physical and psychological consequences.

Most of the young women who are subjected to mutilations are found in 29 African countries while a much smaller proportion live in Asia, in Muslim-dominated areas. The phenomenon is complex, it includes traditional practices ranging from incision to partial or total removal of the external genitalia, and can also vary greatly in different areas. Despite being recognized internationally as an extreme

violation of women's rights and integrity, this remains a scourge that cannot be eradicated. The United Nations has organized the «International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation» every year since 2012, on 6 February, so that we don't forget this. The aim is to keep the spotlight on a universal problem that also affects Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, where many immigrant families continue to respect this tradition.

The mutilations are carried out mainly by women, sometimes midwives, rarely obstetricians. Their work is not considered of particular value, the remuneration is low. Their livelihood is largely linked to the outcome of these interventions. Ladies who are no longer

Most of the young women who undergo these practices are found in 29 African countries while a much smaller proportion live in predominantly Islamic regions of Asia

young, who have been victims of the same practice, over time have had to accept it and then they themselves become the instrument of what the UN defines as «the manifestation of a deep and rooted gender inequality».

Maybe some young girls have thought of allying with their friends and rebelling against their grandmother, their mother, all their older sisters and especially their father. But these are things you only see in television series. Indeed not even there. Nobody tells these stories on Netflix, and often not even in the newspapers.



IT HAPPENED TODAY

Nilde Iotti at the Colle



February 26, 1991: The President of the Chamber of Deputies Nilde Iotti visits the Colle di Miravalle, receives a replica of the Bell from the hands of the Foundation President Reggente Mario Monti (top) and gives a speech (above)

February 20, 1984: Pietro Monti (left) just appointed Foundation President

De bello libico

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On the other hand, how can you choose your leaders in a territory where foreign contingents (primarily Turks and Russians) are still present and ready to intervene at the slightest opportunity? And in which the west (Tripolitania) and east (Cyrenaica) of the country respond to separate authorities, in constant conflict with each other and able to count on their own dedicated militias? And, also, in a territory where there is no complete certainty regarding the names of the candidates to be submitted to voters, but where a wanted man for crimes against humanity of the International Court of The Hague is guaranteed in that list, that is to say Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of the deposed (and brutally killed) former dictator?

We stop here, but the list of the very serious dysfunctions existing in Libya today could still be very long. A new, in-depth reflection on them is required by the international community involved in the mess of this tormented geographical area.

The so-called Berlin Conference took place in June last year, with the participation of 17 countries, including Italy, France and Germany on the European front, alongside Egypt, Turkey, Russia, Tunisia, Algeria, the Arab Emirates and others. Even a few months later, this format continues to ensure a wide representation of the main interests at stake, a *conditio sine qua non* for the achievement of an indispensable agreed understanding. Perhaps a decisive contribution could be made to the latter by the new special advisor for the United Nations, the American diplomat Stéphanie Williams, chosen by the secretary general António Guterres precisely in consideration of her specific experience in the area, gained in previous positions of responsibility.

At this point, the error to be avoided is above all that of gi-



Italy could advance, in 2022, as the organizer of new international negotiations in a country very close to us for political and economic reasons

ving a new and undue acceleration to a process of "sedimentation" of internal Libyan structures, both political and military as well as in terms of territorial balances, a process that could take a long time.

Obviously, adequate pressure must be maintained by the international community on the "strongmen" of the country, be they Prime Minister Dbeibah, the "boss" of Cyrenaica, General Haftar, or the president of the Tobruk Parliament, Saleh, in order to reach a consolidated agreement, avoiding the dangers of "derailment".

At the same time, the second danger to be avoided is that of removing the case from the international agenda, as unfortunately happened in relation to Afghan affairs, despite the very serious humanitarian situation that arose following the entry of the Taliban into Kabul. Consequently, postponing the elections for a few months, in the face of such a prospect, does not seem such an excessive evil.

In the meantime, Italy could play an important role, also due to its very strong political, economic (energy), social (migrant) and other interests linked to the stabilization of the south-mediterranean country.

Once the new tenants at the Quirinale Palace and Chigi Palace have been established, our country could advance as the organizer of new international negotiations concerning Libya in the course of 2022, obviously in the presence of certain conditions present throughout the territory and with the consent of all the parties involved. Certainly a challenging initiative but capable of bringing valuable dividends in terms of our international image and credibility.

In a completely different context, I consider it only right to mention here, the two dates of the «Holocaust Remembrance Day» (January 27) and the «National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe» (February 10), since they extend over the publication of two issues of the «Voice». I refer to the two recurrences for their extraordinary significance, both historical and as a warning for the future and which for some years have been opportunely included in the Laws of the Republic in the calendar of official commemorations of our country and which we have extensively covered on these pages.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President