



# The voice of Maria Dolens

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## BRASIL



### ELEIÇÕES

### 2022

#### PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN BRAZIL

# Opposing visions

On 2 October, exactly one week after the vote in Italy, Brazilian voters (eligible voters are estimated at around 150 million) went to the polls to elect their 39th President. At first glance, the juxtaposition between the two dates might seem forced, or even irrelevant, since they are in fact two different systems, the Italian parliamentary and the Brazilian presidential where the system aims to directly designate a new Head of State.

Yet, there is a link and it is represented by the fact that Brazil, historically one of the main destinations for emigration from the Peninsula, has regularly contributed, from 2006 to today, to the structure of our parliament. It was in that year in fact that law 459/2001 was first applied which allowed Italians and their descendants residing abroad the right to vote in political elections and referendums in the presence of certain conditions. Since the 15th Legislature, inaugurated in 2006, the seats of Montecitorio (Chamber of Deputies)

and Palazzo Madama (Senate of the Republic) have thus, from time to time, welcomed at least one elected member resident in the largest state of South America.

But, having finished the digression, let us return to the main theme, the election of the new occupant of the Planalto, the equivalent of the Italian Quirinale. In addition to minor candidates with no chance of success there are two "main" contenders, very different from each other, competing not only for political positions but also due to personal history.

The "challenger" is Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, 76, former President for two terms (from 2003 to 2011), who subsequently ran into a legal case for embezzlement and corruption with boundaries never fully clarified, where for 18 months (from April 2018 to November 2019) he was placed behind bars, later being cleared of the charges and "rehabilitated".

*To be continued on page 8...*

#### IN THIS EDITION

## 02

**Happening at the Council of Europe**  
Mission Belarus

## 03

**Happening at the United Nations**  
Chinese crimes against the Uyghurs

## 04

Armenia adheres to the Peace  
Memorandum

## 05

**The death of Mikhail Gorbachev**  
A singular man

## 07

**It happened today**  
The recasting



## HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

# Mission Belarus

## REGULAR DIALOGUE WITH DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION FORCES

In democratic countries, entering the lists that parties present to voters is a coveted goal. Some places have no vote and are governed by various kinds of monarchs. But there are also nations where the mere act of running as candidate is an act of courage. One of these is Belarus, ruled continuously since 1994 by the same president, Aljaksandr Lukašënka, strongly supported by Moscow and practically immovable. After the invasion of Ukraine, the strongman of Minsk obviously sided with Putin, suffering substantial economic sanctions and suspending all relations with the Council of Europe.

In 2020 a vote was taken in this Eastern European state which is a kind of crossroads bordering to the west with Poland and Lithuania, to the east with Russia, to the south with Ukraine and to the north with Latvia. The result was what everyone expected: Lukašënka was confirmed at the helm of the country. The opposition denounced serious fraud, and this too was expected. Opposition candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya had to flee to Lithuania before moving to Poland where she is working for a non-violent transition leading to real democracy in Minsk.

The electoral outcome has not been recognized by the countries of the European Union, but so far, this position from Brussels has not led to concrete results. A first step, however, has just been taken by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, which has decided to hold regular dialogue with representatives of the Belarusian democratic opposition forces.

The commitment was made following a fruitful exchange of views between the representatives of Strasbourg and Tsikhanouskaya on 6 July. The organization invited the Secretary General, Marija Pejčinović Burić, to set up a "Contact Group" in cooperation with representatives of Belarusian democratic forces and civil society. This Group will submit regular reports on its activities.

The Chair of the Committee of Ministers, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, said that «in the framework of its rotating presidency, Ireland has prioritised institutional support for those who wish to build a democratic and free Belarus, one that will work with its European partners to protect human rights and promote the rule of law». Such a decision, he added, «allows this mobilization to be carried out in a more systematic way». Tsikhanouskaya echoed him, stressing that the decision just taken «will ensure more Council of Europe in Belarus and more Belarus in the Council of Europe».

After the disputed elections that saw the reconfirmation of President Lukašënka, opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya had to leave the country

HAPPENING AT THE UNITED NATIONS

# Chinese crimes against the Uyghurs

THE REPORT FROM THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



«**S**erious human rights violations» against Uyghurs and «other predominantly Muslim communities» have been committed in what China refers to as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). This is claimed not by reports from dissidents in exile but from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The document was published on the last day of office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet from Chile, who on September 1 stepped down for the Austrian Volker Türk.

The text is clear: «The allegations of torture or ill-treatment are credible». The OHCHR argues that the extent of

arbitrary detentions against Uyghurs and other people «may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity».

The local authorities claim they wish to respond to terrorists of the Uyghur minority with a strategy that

Faced with clear violations of international law, the UN urges the Beijing authorities to take «prompt steps»

involves the use of «Vocational education and training centers» (VETC), in essence re-education camps. But according to the experts of the UN headquarters there are numerous violations in this context.

According to the report government policy in Xinjiang, in recent years, «has led to interlocking patterns of severe and undue restrictions on a wide range of human rights». Although the VETC system, as China claims, «has been reduced in scope or wound up», according to the OHCHR, «the laws and policies that underpin it remain in force», leading to widespread use of arbitrary detention. Faced with blatant violations of international law, the United Nations Human Rights Office urges the Beijing authorities to take «prompt steps» to release all those arbitrarily imprisoned in the region, to inform the detainees' families of where their loved ones are and to help establish «safe channels of communication».

However, the Chinese response does not leave much hope. According to the Beijing government, the authorities of the Xinjiang region operate according to the principle of equality of all before the law, «and the accusation that its policy is» based on discrimination «is groundless».

As often happens, the UN does not seem to have the tools to intervene directly. United Nations spokesman Stéphane Dujarric stated that Secretary General António Guterres «sincerely hopes that the Chinese government will accept the recommendations made in the evaluation», while stressing «the importance of the independence» of the OHCHR. Guterres, Dujarric continued, «appreciates system-wide cooperation between China and the United Nations on a whole range of issues. China is a very valuable partner and we hope that this cooperation will continue».

# The accession of Armenia



Top: The Armenian flag is hoisted on the flagpole next to Maria Dolens. Above: Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to the Italian Republic, Tsovinar Hambarzumyan, during the speech of accession to the Peace Protocol. Adjacent: Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President is accompanied by the Ambassador and the Mayor of Rovereto, Francesco Valduga along the Avenue of Flags.

# A singular man

## THE DEATH OF MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

**M**ikhail Gorbachev, who died in Moscow on August 30, was a most singular individual. When he became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on 11 March 1985, he was only 54 years old. Before him lay the prospect of decades of absolute power, seasoned with a dose of palace intrigue, riches more than enough and a pinch of fear for the constant danger of being poisoned and subdued amid the honours reserved for the heroes in the rooms of the Kremlin. In short, he is the typical dish of a dictator. But he is a singular type, absolute power is not enough for him. He decides to include two new ingredients in the recipe for his country: a handful of reorganization and a smear of transparency. This is why anyone in the West knows at least two words of Russian: perestroika and glasnost, revolutionary words that overflowed from newspapers and televisions in the 1980s and which are now relegated to history books.

Gorbachev represented an absolute novelty. The young secretary introduced himself by loosening the grip of censorship and the political police on society. The impact on freedom of the press and opinion was immediate. Soviet citizens were also granted the right to travel anywhere in their country, which until then was subject to such a num-

ber of permits to be rendered practically impossible. Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1990, between 1985 and 1991 he negotiated the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall and nuclear disarmament.

Of course, not everyone likes to hand over slices of power, and some in his government found the new course somewhat rash. Furthermore, the USSR was going through a period of serious economic and political crisis, which had made the regime unable to cope with autonomist forces. So, the man who wanted more freedom was taken hostage in his vacation home in Crimea and elements of his own executive tried to depose him.

It was August 21, 1991, people took to the streets in Moscow to defend the freedom they had just won, but as often happens, someone saw further ahead than others. The president of the Russian Republic, Boris Yeltsin, after leading the popular resistance and having imposed the liberation of Gorbachev, nominated himself the real holder of power, relegating the actual Soviet leader to the background.

Sometimes complex historical events can be summarized in one sentence. Here we need a photo, the one in which Yeltsin points his finger at Gorbachev in front of thousands of Soviet deputies, ordering him to immediately dissolve the CPSU.

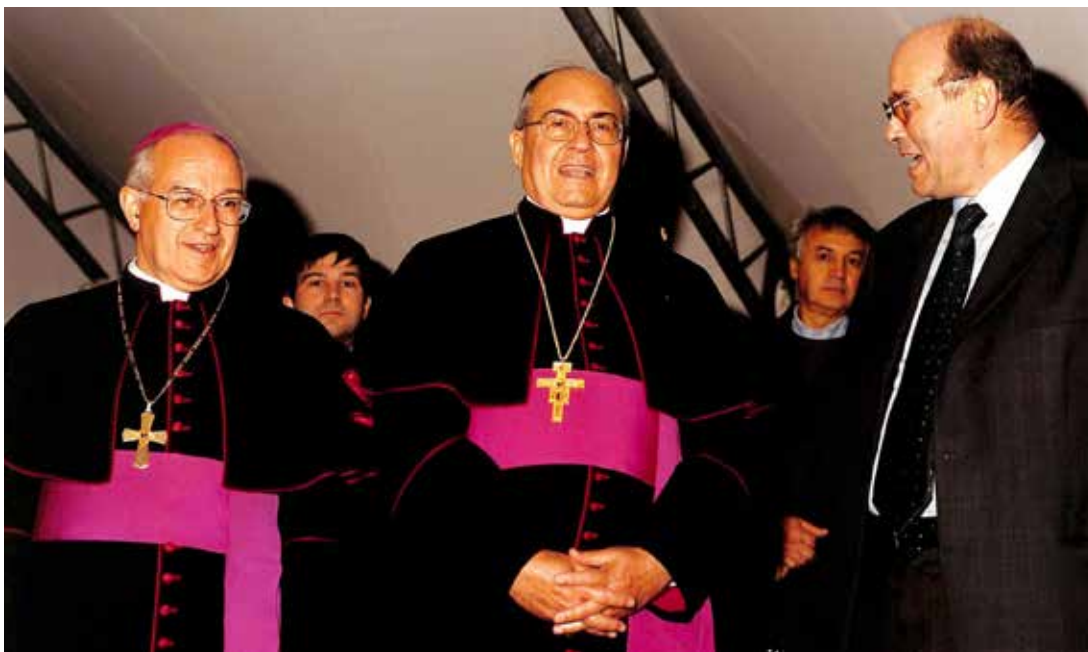
Thus ends the Soviet Union and the political parable of a man who wanted to reform it. What happened to Russia in the following years is there for all to see. Despite this, Gorbachev, however much he was greatly appreciated abroad, has always had a very bad reputation at home. He could have continued with a despotic "reign" but he was a singular man.



IT HAPPENED TODAY

# The Netherlands at the Bell

October 3, 1971: Visit to the Bell by the Consul General of the Netherlands P. W. H. Schaeplan



October 31, 2001: Visit to the Bell by Archbishop Leonardo Sandri, Substitute of the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, accompanied by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Trento, Luigi Bressan, and welcomed by Reggente Pietro Monti, Foundation President

IT HAPPENED TODAY

# The recasting

12 October 1938: Maria Dolens is recast at the Cavadini foundry



To be continued from page 1...

He was a convinced supporter of the need for wide openings in the economic and social field in favour of the less affluent classes of the Brazilian population, in particular the working class, peasants and indigenous communities which, in many cases were well below the threshold of material survival. And as so, in the years of activity in Brasilia as Head of State he promoted extensive programs to support them, in particular the so-called *Bolsa Família*, which made all basic food available to less well-off families free of charge. These measures had allowed him, especially during his first mandate, to reach extraordinarily high popularity ratings, such as to even hypothesize a candidacy for Secretary General of the United Nations.

The “defender” is Jair Bolsonaro, ex-military (army captain), leader of the populist and nostalgic right, elected in 2018 (in the absence of Lula who was at that time detained) also in response to a “Pt” government which, in previous years, had led the country to a marked decline in the economic field as well as to a very strong social polarization (which remained so even after the change of government).

He is referred to by opponents as “the Trump of the Tropics”, both for the tendency towards over-the-top behaviour and - a decidedly more serious circumstance - for the obstinacy to often and willingly deny evidence of the facts (it is enough to recall the protracted denial and subsequent unsuccessful management of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a tragic death toll of 700,000). For reconfirmation of his position, he can count on three important constituencies. They are the military, from which he hails, the Evangelical Church (increasingly rich and influential in the local scene, a quarter of the members of congress are openly part of it) and, finally, the composite agropecuary lobby (also encompassing gold prospectors, timber traders and agricultural speculators) in favour of continuing deforestation policies in the Amazon. The latter, in spite of the vibrant protests also of international public opinion, have intensified under his mandate, and at a rapid pace. As an example, experts calculate



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that in just one month of 2022, deforestation affected an area equivalent to that of the city of Sao Paulo, where approximately 15 million people live.

Returning to Lula, in an attempt to “intercept” at least a part of the moderate vote and to attract consensus also from industrial and financial circles, certainly not in favour of him, the former trade unionist seems to have attenuated the more extremist positions in the course of his campaign. He has supported some “centrist” political groups alongside the PT and chose the former governor of San Paolo, Geraldo Alckmin, who is among the most authoritative exponents of these movements as his deputy.

In the international arena, as a reaction to Bolsonaro’s substantial immobility which is more concentrated on internal issues, Lula has become the interpreter of two distinct proposals. The first goes in the sense of enhancing the presence of Brazil among the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), regaining that leading role that has been decidedly receding in recent years. The second concerns the establishment of a “South American currency”, shared among the members of the Continent, to be used primarily for financial and commercial transactions, thus putting an end to the “dictatorship” of the US currency which, at the moment, has the advantage of an apparently unassailable position.

Election forecasts are unanimous in assigning the “challenger” a still substantial advantage, even in the face of an undeniable phenomenon of recovery of support for the current President. Bolsonaro has evidently benefited from favourable economic indicators (among which is the

positive trend of agricultural harvests and substantial control over unemployment and inflation levels) as well as the adoption of “spot” measures (such as the de-taxation of petrol) which have long been claimed by the population.

In these circumstances, analysts believe it is unlikely that one of the two candidates will reach the threshold of 50 per cent of the votes in the first round and the need for a second round is taken for granted. In fact, it has already been set for October 30th. For both events, Brazil may use an electronic voting system, as fast as it is reliable, which makes it possible to know the results of the polls in a very short time. The fact that President Bolsonaro - also in this case using an expedient already used by Trump - has in recent statements questioned the impartiality of the system, may be indicative of his fear of never recovering his current advantage.

By the time this issue of “The Voice of Maria Dolens” is available to our readers, we will know, as everything seems to indicate, if the name of the new President of Brazil will not be known until the end of October. The extent of Lula’s success on 2 October (a fact that does not seem controversial) will certainly constitute an important objective factor regarding the balance of power between the two contenders. Furthermore, due to the inevitable repositioning of candidates and eliminated parties in the first round it will not be possible to predict the final outcome of the elections and consequently the name of the 39th Brazilian President.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President