



The voice of Maria Dolens

n.32
Year III
April 2023

Monthly newsletter from the Peace Bell Foundation



The incriminated

After the in-depth examination of the Russian/Ukrainian conflict from the previous editorial, it was my intention to dedicate this month's reflection to a different geographical area.

Breaking news of extraordinary importance leads me to desist from this intention and that is the arrest warrant issued on 17 March by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague against the Russian president Putin for war crimes, that is to say, «for having deported children and Ukrainian teenagers in Russia». At the same time, similar proceedings were established for the Commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, directly responsible for the forced tran-

sfers of young Ukrainians (many of them war orphans or refugees from Donbass) from their places of residence in order to "welcome" them in public welfare centres or Russian families.

Bearing in mind the obvious difficulty of quantifying a phenomenon of such odious gravity with precision, reliable indications place the number of deportations at well over 10,000 cases.

The arrest warrant, a result of investigations that essentially began the day after the invasion of Moscow troops and in collaboration with the Ukrainian Courts, was signed by three judges of the ICC, including the Italian Rosario Aitala.

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Editor
Marcello Filotei
marcello.filotei@fondazionecampanadeicaduti.org

Enrolled at the ROC, an Italian association for journalists specializing in Communications n. 35952

PEACE BELL FOUNDATION OF ROVERETO

Colle di Miravalle - 38068 Rovereto
T. +39 0464.434412 - F. +39 0464.434084
info@fondazioneoperacampana.it
www.fondazioneoperacampana.it

DESIGN

OGP srl
Agenzia di pubblicità
www.ogp.it

HAPPENING AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Democracy and freedom of the press

«A free press is not a privilege but a necessity for any population». Thomas Jefferson, born in 1743, had clear ideas. In 2026 two centuries will have passed since his death, a period that was still not enough to get the concept across. He and the other giants portrayed on Mount Rushmore, gentlemen like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, will still have to wait with their gaze stretched towards the horizon. At this moment in time the right to independent information is a mirage for most countries in the world.

Generally, in a democracy you can write and say what you want, maybe certain news is spread less than others, some newspapers are parti-

cularly partial, but they don't arrest you for «dissemination of false news and disturbance of public order» as happened to Mahmoud Hussein in Egypt or for having «caused disputes and disturbed public order» as in the case of the Chinese Zhang Zhan, guilty of reporting on the Covid-19 pandemic in Wuhan. "Public order" is never lacking in these cases.

The problem is that democracies are in a clear minority on the planet. There are currently 193 countries that have joined the UN. According to the index elaborated by the Economist Intelligence Unit, there are just over 20 «complete democracies» and around fifty «imperfect» ones. Given the natural fickleness of human beings, numbers change continuously. However, it can be said with certainty

that large areas of the planet are governed by non-democratic regimes, even when they define themselves otherwise.

One of these is Belarus, a presidential republic, where Aljaksandr Lukašënka has ruled continuously since 1994. The last time he was re-elected in 2020 polls gave him close to 20 percent of the vote, while after counting it emerged that he had instead obtained approximately 80 percent of the vote. The opposite happened to his main opponent, Svjatlana Cichanoŭskaja, who seemed to be around 65 percent and instead stopped at just over 10. Immediately afterwards she had to leave the country to avoid disturbing "public order" and getting arrested. Many journalists and others working in the media in the country are in exile with her. And the Council of Europe has dedicated a workshop to these to examine initiatives aimed at strengthening support for the diaspora. This is the first of the many activities agreed within the framework of the "Contact Group" set up to develop cooperation between Strasbourg and the forces in exile, the only ones that can guarantee a democratic transition and the consequent freedom of information. Thomas Jefferson waits on the mountain.





HAPPENING AT THE UN

Women and IT

A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FOUNDATION AT THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

After three years of interruption due to the pandemic, the Rovereto Peace Bell Foundation has once again "landed" in New York, in the form of its president Marco Marsilli and its director Morena Berti. It did so at the beginning of March in occasion of the annual working session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which within the United Nations represents the most important and attended event dedicated to the "radiography" of the female condition from the point of view of the achievement of gender equality and the effective empowerment of women in today's society. The recently concluded edition - the 67th in history - was further enriched, given the coincidence in timing with the celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March.

For the record, the first presence of the Rovereto Peace Bell Foundation at the CSW was shortly after obtaining special consultative status by the Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc) of the UN in 2009, and has translated, to date, in 7 participations. The co-financing of a social-health facility in Senegal, which took place in that period, for the hospitality and assistance of single mothers

in difficult situations, was at the origin of the choice of the Foundation's representatives to favour this event over others which have an equally natural setting in Ecosoc.

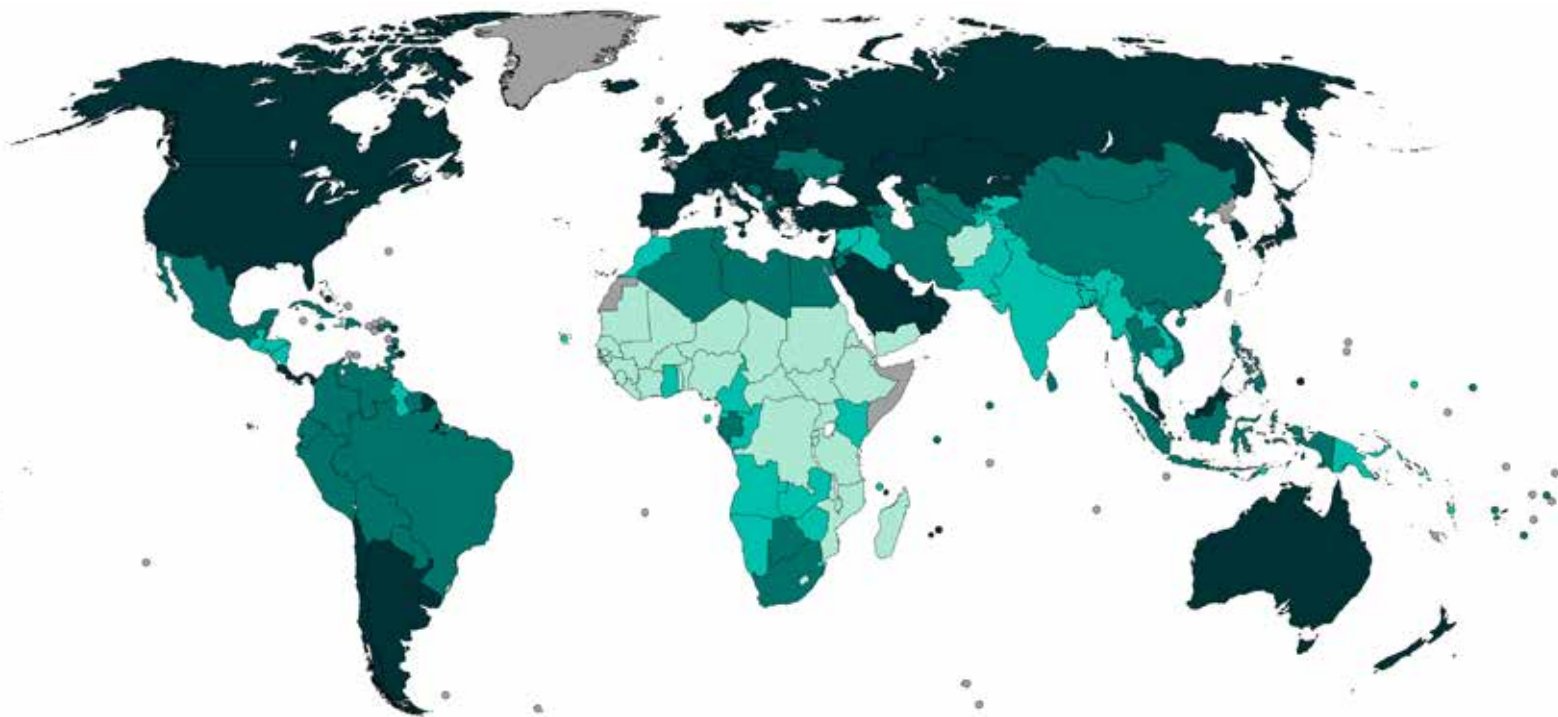
The specific theme for 2023 was very actual, focusing - in extreme synthesis - on the analysis of the causes of more limited and difficult access of the female component compared to its male counterparts to the "world of IT", with serious repercussions of a professional, social and cultural nature. Not being able to go into too much detail here for reasons of space, for further information please refer to the website www.ngocsw.org. The nature of the issues examined attracted a large number of official representatives to New York. The Italian delegate Eugenia Roccella, Minister for Equal Opportunities, Natality and Family, was also co-organizer of two highly appreciated and attended side-events, respectively focused on digital education and on genital mutilation / child brides. Themes, on closer inspection, only apparently distinct from each other, as they share the observation of how the female element is, mainly or even exclusively, the victim. The Foundation, alongside the other Italian NGOs present,

attended these events owing to the invitations of our Permanent Representation.

During their stay in New York, the Foundation President and Director were also able to hold separate talks with the permanent representative, ambassador Maurizio Massari, and with the director of the New York Italian Cultural Institute, Fabio Finotti. With these qualified figures, possible initiatives were drawn up that the Foundation might promote in the "Big Apple" to celebrate the anniversary of its centenary in 2025.

Before returning to Italy, the last engagement consisted of a convivial meeting with the local *Circolo della Trentini nel Mondo* (Trentini in the World association), set up in Ridgewood (Queens) in 1963, which took place in an atmosphere of friendly informality with particular thanks to the cordial hospitality of the president Stephanie Auman and her collaborators.

Due to a coincidence of dates, the group of Trentino coordinators was visiting Colle di Miravalle in those same days as part of a work trip and training course organized by the competent services of the Province of Trento. Against this background, the connection via zoom with the coordinators on the one hand, and our face-to-face visit to the Ridgewood office on the other, represented the classic two sides of the same coin, and ended up strengthening the relationship even more between Trentini in the World and the Bell of the Fallen that already presents itself as solid and mutually beneficial.



Mapa dell'indice di sviluppo umano per quartili (Rapporto 2020, basato su dati 2019, pubblicato il 2020). ■ 0.800–1.000 (Molto Alto) ■ 0.700–0.799 (Alto) ■ 0.550–0.699 (Medio) ■ 0.350–0.549 (Basso) ■ dati non disponibili

MEASURING DEVELOPMENT

Not only GDP

In 1990 the Pakistani economist Mahbub-ul-Haq, special consultant of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) arrived at the definition of the Human Development Index (HDI). The intention was to «shift the focus of economic development from Gross Domestic Product to people-centred development policies». Previously, using the per capita GDP as a reference indicator, the attention of policymakers focused exclusively on the monetary value of the goods and services produced in a given territory in a year, i.e., on purely economic growth thereby losing sight of some essential elements for the well-being of man. In fact, per capita GDP has two main defects: first, gi-

ven that the total value of the goods and services produced is divided by the population, it masks the unequal concentration of wealth in the hands of a few; second, it only measures growth in production, without considering capital (human and natural) that is lost in the process. If development is seen as the creation of an environment conducive to the full mobilization of everyone's potential, it becomes essential to broaden the horizon of research and measurements to other parameters. Economic growth alone does not guarantee human development intended as the satisfaction of essential needs, the expansion of opportunities or the freedom to make choices concerning one's life.

Immediately after its definition, the HDI was implemented by the UN as a measure of the quality of life in the various countries of the world. Since 1990, a «Report on human development» has been published by the UNDP in which 140 countries are classified into four groups with different levels of human development: very high, high, medium and low. In addition to the economic factor (represented by per capita GDP), the HDI combines indicators such as literacy and life expectancy at birth. The goal is to measure which countries are in a position to create an environment capable of providing a longer, healthier and more creative life.

Other indices have been introduced in the various reports that have appeared in the last three decades, the result of further elaborations and distinctions in the statistical data: the Human Poverty Index (Hpi) which de-

scribes the cases of deprivation of the three fundamental dimensions of the HDI (economy, education, health) such as the probability of exceeding a life expectancy of 40, the presence of functional illiteracy (inability to use reading, writing and calculation skills in daily life), the percentage of the population without water; long-term poverty and unemployment (for developed countries); the Gender Development Index (Gdi) which measures the results achieved in the same variables, but taking into account the inequalities between men and women; the Gender Empowerment In-

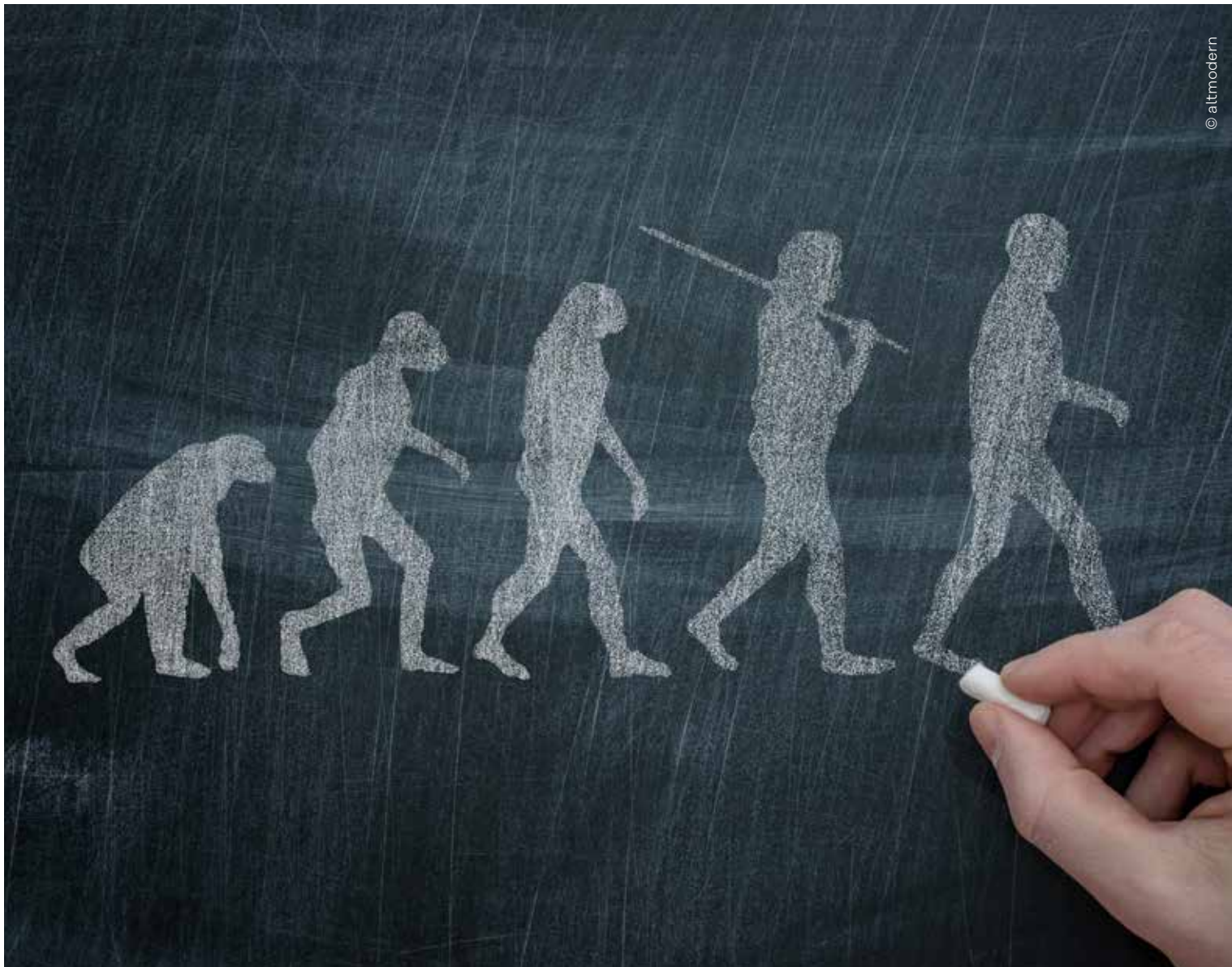
dex (Gei), which evaluates and measures how much women are placed in a position to actively participate in economic and political life.

Over the years, the findings made regarding the HDI, especially those of a technical nature, have made it possible to improve the calculation methodologies. In particular, the HDI has been "accused" of not highlighting the inequalities existing between social classes or ethnic groups within the same country, of neglecting human rights, of not containing indicators relating to freedom and culture, of failing to consider

the need for a valid ecological dimension. Precisely in response to this last criticism, an "environmental pressure" index was added in 2020 on an experimental basis.

Therefore, the political value of the HDI remains beyond any doubt, although it might sometimes run the risk of concealing rather than revealing. Also, for this reason its use by policymakers has progressively increased, as has the attention towards human development issues in general.

Andrea Fontemaggi



FENIA KOTSOPOULOU AND BLUER SIDE BY SIDE

Two perpetual motions

THE "HUMAN CROSSING. FOOTPRINTS OF CULTURE AND PEACE AT THE BELL" EXHIBITION

It is possible to visit the «Human Crossing Footprints of culture and peace», exhibition, dedicated to Fenia Kotsopoulou and Bluer, until 4 May. It is a representation of the journey of mankind, says the curator Roberto Ronca, in which we are accompanied by «two aesthetics, two completely different narrative worlds but which converge in the refusal of any discrimination». «In this event – he continues – I wanted to weave two distant minds together, but with one element in common: the pursuit of continuous improvement».

Fenia, explains Ronca, «considers the situation of women and society and does so through her physicality. Her weapon is her body, and she has no fear of using it. She has nothing superfluous and always reports a story free from any frills in an extremely raw and often ruthless way. For her, peace is the breaking down of all types of violence, and the greatest violence is the lack of respect between human beings». Her videos, he continues, «are often painful because they place you in front of your limits and they do it with irony and sarcasm». Direct, sometimes brutal images «that pulverize your deepest convictions. Fenia is continuously transformed, becoming exactly what she wishes to convey».

Bluer, on the other hand, paints with many materials, «He imprisons the colours, closes them in magic boxes that transform them and proceeds in a continuous search for images and meanings». An artist who con-

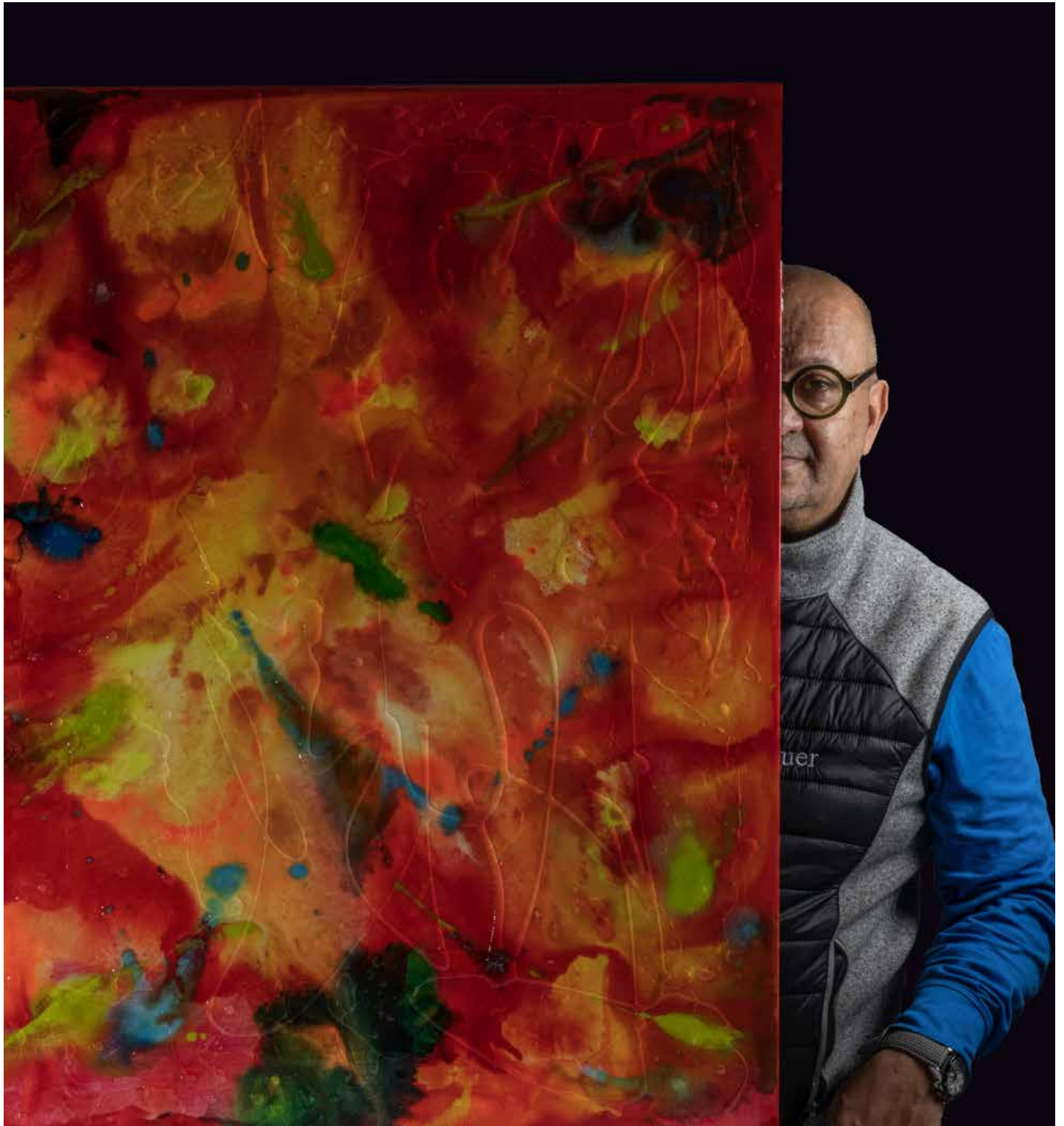
tinually finds new techniques cannot stop collecting nature at its best. Ronca defines him as «a creator of archives» adding that «if the metaphor of peace can be represented with infinite images, as the Universe



has taught us, so Bluer takes some of these elements and reinvents them». He does it by redesigning what nature offers, «but the Sun is not just the Sun, the sea is not just the sea».

Everything contains a message and Bluer delivers it in a way that can be understood by as many people as possible.

Two personalities who are never satisfied. They continue to express their ideas in always different, new, unexpected ways that leave the observer perpetually amazed. Fenia and Bluer, concludes Ronca, «are two perpetual motions which, while going in totally different directions, cross their observation points on a common perspective: the evolution of the human being».



Bluer

To be continued from page 1...

Following these measures, President Putin and his close collaborator are now liable to immediate arrest should they enter one of the 123 signatory states of the Statute which was adopted at the Rome Convention in 1998 and came into force 4 years later.

If we recognize that such a hypothesis is implausible (since the Head of the Kremlin is notoriously immune from any sense of guilt and, consequently, has no intention of handing himself over to the judges), the angry reactions from Moscow (with the “hawk”, vice-president Medvedev, as the usual crude spokesman) regarding the arrest warrant as “scrap paper” would appear to be unfounded.

Of course, the Federation is part of a contingent of countries (to which, incidentally, also the United States belong, due to the very strong pressure exerted by the Pentagon) which, since they neither signed nor subsequently complied with the Statute, can at least in theory, claim not to be bound by its terms. At the same time, it appears evident, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the indictment, as well as the relative penalizing restrictions of movement, inflict a severe blow on the international “status” of one of the most important world leaders, equating him to a more modest rank, of figures who have in the past been recipients of similar measures (the former Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir, the former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and the former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic). Moreover, upon more thoughtful reflection, it is clear how the stigma of the Court goes far beyond the single person affected, be that a leader, but also involves the political credibility of an entire ruling class which, on a national level, continues to firmly recognize its leadership despite the obvious criminal traits.

It then happened that the 40th meeting between the current Russian and Chinese presidents took place in Moscow, practically the day after Putin was indicted. Officially, Xi Jinping’s visit obviously did not stray off the beaten path. Renewed public declarations of indissoluble partnership, signing of bilateral agreements and deals (according to the arrangement: hydrocarbons in exchange for advanced technology of various kinds), shared development of a large Eurasian space, in the name of a renewed multipolarity and as an anti-Atlantic and anti-western strategy. In the full-course “menu” the guest cannot miss the reiteration of that “benevolent neutrality” which can also be found in the proposal for a Chinese 12-point Peace Plan, rejected internationally for its characteristics of vagueness and even contradiction (at the same time it must be acknowledged that no trace of an alternative plan, even in the presence of a large number of multilateral bodies, exists after more than a year of conflict).



That said, beyond the official defences and the vaunted assurances of “close friendship”, it certainly does not seem difficult to recognize that this specific visit to Moscow by Xi Jinping has essentially inaugurated a new model of Russian/Chinese relationship. A relationship no longer characterised by a substantial balance of forces and interests, but from now on marked by an increasingly pronounced political/military, geo-strategic and economic-financial dependence of Moscow on Beijing. The consequences of an imposed detachment from a parity agreement, despite the Russian efforts to keep them under wraps, at least initially, will however manifest, consistently, in the longer term.

To conclude, let us try to recall the objective international situation enjoyed by Russia in February 2022, on the eve of the atrocious aggression. Almost unanimous belief that the mobilization by Moscow along its borders responded only to the necessity to train troops, without any aggressive intention; statements by various Western politicians (including Macron and Scholz) regarding the need for NATO to renounce new memberships; expressed US eagerness to avoid any form of involvement in Eastern Europe with a related willingness to make concessions; broad recognition of the need for Russian energy supplies from the West, with flows to be guaranteed also with regard to the future.

In short, a “war” already won in advance by Moscow without the need to fire a single shot or lose a single soldier, has been transformed for Vladimir Putin, due to a perverse combination of impossible neo-imperial demands and very serious underestimation of the reactions of the country under attack and its allies, in a sort of dead end, in an increasingly impervious obstacle course and increasingly devoid of exits.

In light of this, the well-known adage of one of our former Prime Ministers according to which «power wears out those who don’t exercise it» should at least be amended with the phrase «...unless it makes those who hold it lose their mind». The new “Tsar” will likely remain the most apt example of this for as long as he lives.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President