



# The voice of Maria Dolens

n.45

Year IV  
May 2024

Monthly newsletter from the Peace Bell Foundation

## Turkish hope



That the results of so-called «local elections» often end up rewarding the parties which are in opposition on a national scale is a well-known phenomenon in almost all countries and democracies.

Due to the fact that they often take place in the intervals of political sessions, they pick up on citizens' dissatisfaction with "vote-catching" promises not fulfilled by the Executive in power, such as the drop in unemployment, the control of public debt

or improvements in healthcare or schools. Even though they do not have an impact on major international issues, the results of the local elections (especially if they represent several regional realities) are no longer taken lightly by experts and political analysts as in the past but are considered to be well-founded "forecasts" of possible changes in the mood of the electorate.

For this to happen, of course, the presence of fair and free elections is necessary.

*To be continued on page 6...*

### IN THIS EDITION

## 02

**Former Foundation President Alberto Robol donates 10 Works to the Foundation by Luigi Capriotti**

Wartime Angels

## 04

**Stories of "Trentini nel Mondo"**  
Paolo Chesi from Val Rendena to Nuremberg

## 08

**For Whom the Bell Tolls**  
The Arrogant Poet

FORMER PRESIDENT ALBERTO ROBOL DONATES 10 WORKS TO THE FOUNDATION BY LUIGI CAPRIOTTI

# Wartime Angels

Over the past few days there have been ten angels at the Bell of the Fallen. In actual fact, for decades, there have been several who have been working for peace every day even when it seems there is no longer any hope. The ten who have just arrived however are sculptures. Before settling in Trentino, the works of Luciano Capriotti, known in the art world as Capri Otti, made a stop in Strasbourg for an exhibition at the Council of Europe, and it was there that Senator Alberto Robol, former president of the Foundation, came across them in 2000.

During the donation ceremony which took place on the Colle di Miravalle hill on April 20th he explained, «It all started with a gesture of courtesy. Giovanni Baiocchi, one of the more intelligent officials, asked me to come in and take a look at the works.

I did it as a common courtesy, but I was consequently



Luciano Capriotti, *Wartime Dove* (2023)



The former president Alberto Robol during a mission in Geneva at the United Nations offices

impressed. I saw one angel but bought them all, on the condition that they be delivered to my cabin in Moietto». It was there, at 930 meters above sea level (as he is keen to emphasize when telling friends), that a few weeks later a van arrived loaded with beauty.

Those who know him well were not surprised by such a gesture as Robol has always been a man of astounding visions, great impulses and marked generosity. The same generosity that led him to donate the works to the Foundation, the ideal place to conserve and show them to as many people as possible.

The ceremony took place on Saturday 20th, in the presence of the artist, Luciano Capriotti, Mayor of Rovereto Giulia Robol, Secretary to the Foundation Paolo Mirandola, who read the official act, and Ambassador of Ukraine to the Holy See Andrii Yurash, great friend of the sculptor, but above all of peace. All under the watchful eye of the host, the foundation president, Ambassador Marco Marsilli, who opened the proceedings by thanking, among others, the European official responsible for the meeting, who in the meantime had moved to the Foreign and Defence Commission of the Senate but didn't wish to miss the event.

After the usual and inspiring introduction by the children's choir, *Minicoro di Rovereto*, directed by the tireless Maestro Gianpaolo Daicampi, it was Marsilli him-





A moment from the meeting at the Bell that took place on April 20th. From the right, Maestro Luciano Capriotti, Mayor of Rovereto Giulia Robol, Foundation President Marco Marsilli, Ambassador of Ukraine to the Holy See Andrii Yurash and Secretary to the Foundation Paolo Mirandola. In the background the former president Alberto Robol, meeting virtually.

self who opened the proceedings by thanking his predecessor for always providing those who know him with «ideas for cultivating hope». This was followed by an address from the mayor, who did not limit herself to a formal intervention, but also mentioned her personal experience with «Uncle Alberto». It was then the artist's turn to illustrate the significance of a work that has changed its name over time according to the evolution of events. The ten figurines were initially called *Angels of the Passion*, but this reinterpretation of Bernini's masterpieces that dominate Rome's Ponte Sant'Angelo was recently renamed *Wartime Angels*. Each of these "lost-wax casting" bronze works, unique, impossible to reproduce, «carries with it a different instrument of the Passion of Christ, a symbol of the pain inflicted on the innocent, which in this contemporary reinterpretation



Luciano Capriotti, one of 10 *Wartime Angels* (2000)

becomes a symbol of the suffering caused in wars that have no borders and have no end».

But there were more gifts to come. In fact, Ambassador Yurash also wished to leave a mark on the Colle di Miravalle hill by giving the Foundation another of Capriotti's works, created in 2023: *Wartime Dove*. It is a work in glazed ceramic, a medium chosen for the fact that it is very delicate. In its chest, between its open wings, the fragile symbol of peace shows a deep wound produced by a fragment of a Russian missile launched on the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. That small splinter causes great pain. The dove suffers, hurts, endures, but is not dead and above all, the artist highlights, «has within itself the vitality to heal that terrible wound». Perhaps also for this reason the right place to keep it is Colle di Miravalle, a place where, as pointed out by Ambassador Yurash, things happen that «help us find the strength to continue believing in the future».

## STORIES OF TRENTINO PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

# Paolo Chesi from Val Rendena to Nuremberg

*We asked various descendants of Trentino emigrants to tell their stories firsthand, emphasizing how their origins have guided and influenced them in life. This would not have been possible without the active and cordial collaboration of the "Trentini nel Mondo" Association, founded in 1957, working for social solidarity and as support for aggregation and assistance for Trentino migrants and their descendants. The figure we present in this issue is Paolo Chesi, who lives in Nuremberg and is originally from Val Rendena.*

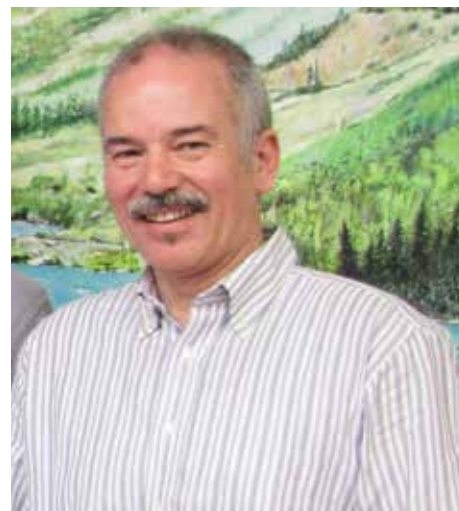
**M**y name is Paolo Chesi, I was born in 1958 in Nuremberg, Germany where I currently live. I have a knife shop on Bindergasse, a street in the old town. In 2022 I celebrated 120 years of activity and on this anniversary the city Chamber of Commerce awarded the shop a certificate of merit and the local newspaper, «Nürnberger Nachrichten» dedicated an article to me entitled *Die Meister der scharfen Klinge* (The masters of sharp blades). They were two initiatives that gave me great satisfaction, which I shared with my entire family, starting with my wife Antonella and my son Raffaele, who work with me in the shop. In fact, it is thanks to the family that this important goal was achieved: my immediate family and my family of origin.

My roots are in Val Rendena, which has always been famous for its "moletti", as knife sharpeners are called in the valley, and who have a very original history. In the past, the inhabitants of

My grandfather Paolo left Fisto in 1902 to arrive in Nuremberg where he opened a knife grinding workshop

the valley spent the summer months working the land and raising cows in the mountains and then, in autumn, accompanied by a son or grandson, they moved to the big cities, such as Bergamo, Milan and Piacenza where they sharpened knives and scissors throughout the winter. Then in the spring they returned home to Rendena.

At the end of the 19th century there was a period of severe poverty in the valley and many left Val Rendena, heading towards Austria, Germany,



Paolo Chesi

Switzerland, France, Great Britain, or even went overseas, where they sought their fortune as knife sharpeners.

My grandfather Paolo, together with two of his brothers, left Fisto, a hamlet of Spiazzo, in 1902 to go to Innsbruck and then to Munich, before finally arriving in Nuremberg, where he found the place to open his knife grinding workshop.

My father Vittorino began working in my grandfather's shop when he was eighteen. On January 2, 1945, during the Second World War, Nuremberg suffered a massive bombing, which destroyed it completely.



Paolo Chesi (right) and his wife Antonella Collini receive a certificate for 120 years of activity



I know what it means to live as a foreigner which is why I help those who come to Germany looking for work and new opportunities

The house and shop were also damaged. With great determination my father rebuilt them together with one of his brothers.

In 1980, the year in which I finished vocational school where I had learned to be a knife grinder, I began to work alongside my father: when he died in 1987, I took over as owner. Together with my wife we have expanded the shop, making it increasingly specialized, and we have modernized the laboratory, in which kitchen and gastronomy knives are sharpened as well as scissors for tailors and hairdressers, razors, lawnmowers and other gardening tools.



Paolo Chesi's grandfather in an antique photo

In the old town of Nuremberg, there are businesses selling second hand objects, including knives and cutlery. When customers arrive asking to restore kitchen and table knives and cutlery in terrible condition, dating back decades, it gives me particular joy to see their satisfaction at the end of the job, when I return the items they brought restored back to life.

If I look back, I must say that my activity has given me a lot of satisfaction, above all because I have carried on a profession that is very close to my heart. In 1987 there were eight shops similar to mine in Nuremberg: now I am the only one left. And I'm happy because the business definitely has a future: in fact, luckily, I was able to pass on my same passion for this type of work to my son Raffaele, who is twenty-eight years old, just like my father had done with me. Raffaele attended an artisan academy and passed the Meisterprüfung (the craft master's exam) with excellent results.

I met my wife during my holiday periods in Trentino

Looking back, I must recognize that as a child I was lucky that both my parents, father Vittorino and mother Angela Villi, also born in Fisto, in Val Rendena, wanted to raise me bilingual. When I went to kindergarten at the age of three, I only knew Italian. In those years, hanging out with my German peers, I learned their language. I remember that in elementary school, in the school we attended, there were only two foreigners: myself and a Spanish boy. It was a difficult and tough experience, which like other episodes that occurred in the following years, contributed to shaping my character.



Paolo Chesi with his son Raffaele in their shop

I understand what it means to live as a foreigner in a country and this is why I dedicate part of my free time to helping those who come to Germany in search of work and new opportunities. Not only the people from Trentino or Italians, obviously, but all those defined as "asylum seekers" and who generally must face big problems with the German bureaucracy. I help them to find accommodation or a job, make family arrangements, but above all to learn the language.

Even though I was born in Germany, my relationship with Trentino is strong, deep, and if I manage to cultivate it, it is also thanks to my wife, Antonella Colini, also from Val Rendena, from Spiazza to be precise. We met during my holiday periods in Trentino and married in 1987. In addition to Raffaele, we had two daughters: Silvia, born in 1989 and Martina, in 1991, thanks to whom we became grandparents of Elia and Valentina. We managed to raise our three children bilingual: they speak both German and Italian perfectly and they too are very attached to Val Rendena. Martina lives in Belgium, while Silvia and Raffaele live in Nuremberg.

Thanks to them and our relatives in Trentino, we have a social and family life both in Nuremberg and in Val Rendena, and this is a privilege that makes me a truly lucky person.



*To be continued from page 1..*

Few doubts can in fact exist in relation to the fact that in Belarus, Nicaragua or North Korea (to cite a few but pertinent examples) every type of competition (including for instance that of block manager where it exists) will end with the inevitable, bombastic affirmation of a representative of the regime, as autocracies cannot allow the monolithic pyramid of power to be questioned in the slightest, at any level of the hierarchical scale, even the lowest.

Returning to the subject of the local elections, on March 31st the voters of Turkey were called to the polls to express their preferences in relation to 81 provinces, namely the entire national territory. The observers sent by the Council of Europe described the voting procedures as «correct», except for sporadic and insignificant infractions that emerged during the electoral campaign.

The democratic opposition parties, who were defeated in the presidential elections last May, conquered just under half of the provinces (35) and metropolitan cities (14 out of 30), also prevailing with very clear advantages in the 4 major cities of the country, Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Adana.

The main component of this group, the «Republican People's Party» (CHP) has overtaken the pro-government «Justice and Development Party» (AK Par-

ty) in terms of percentage of votes obtained, 37.7 percent against 35.5, for the first time in its history.

On the negative side of the scale, it must be recognized that the AK Party's loss of consensus is also the result of the undeniable affirmation of Fatih Erbakan's «New Welfare Party» (YRP). This acronym, a decidedly misleading but faithful translation from Turkish into English, identifies the party with the greatest radical/Islamist and nationalist connotation, which has become the third absolute force in the country.

With the reassurance of this data, Mayor of Istanbul Ekrem Imamoglu, easily re-elected in his mandate as mayor, has authoritatively put himself forward to succeed «Sultan Erdogan» in the 2028 presidential elections, trusting that, in the meantime, the Turkish Law Courts definitively exonerate him from the ridiculous accusation of offending the institutions which had, in fact, prevented him from appearing last year, facilitating the reconfirmation of the current president. For his part, the latter - while giving top priority to the difficult economic situation of the country and denying a weakened general opinion towards him - absolutely acknowledged the defeat, inviting his supporters to engage in «self-criticism» and to draw lessons for the future.

In summary, even in Turkey the recent round of local elections has reiterated what we outlined at the beginning of the article. Upon reflection, this is a significant finding as it comes from a nation which, in the current geo-political context, deserves the – at times abused – qualification of “key” as regards the preservation of international structures and balances.

Let’s review the most important features together:

- due to its geographical location, an indispensable hinge state between the “West” and the Islamic world, a role that is even more decisive in light of Iran’s recent, direct involvement in the post-October 7 events;
- from 1952 to today, a convinced and reliable member of NATO, but very far from any prospect of joining the European Union;
- the only member of the North Atlantic Alliance (if we ignore Orban’s “obstinacies”) not to have complied with the sanctioned measures against Russia, on account of that position of ambiguous balance between the two contenders which allows Ankara margins of intermediation between Moscow and Kiev (in the case of the so-called «Grain Deal» crowned, it must be recognized, with an objective success);
- territory of (precarious) residence of millions of Afghan, Iraqi and Syrian refugees, among others of various nationality, for whom the Turkish authorities occasionally threaten the opening of the barriers and the consequent mass exodus towards European

countries (which grant them substantial funding to facilitate their arrival and detention);

- regarding the question of the Middle East, has attested to positions of unequivocal condemnation towards Israel for its management of the situation in Gaza, without being able to deny the evidence of a serious problem of internal terrorism, especially on its southern borders (Hezbollah and PKK). In this regard and despite the documented atrocities, Erdogan does not appear to include Hamas, in light of his very recent meeting with the leadership of the movement.

In a recent edition of the «Voice» (number 42 of last February) we highlighted the particularity of 2024 as the electoral year par excellence, with 2 billion people called to vote. We also anticipated that from their overall outcome it would be possible to evaluate the resilience of democratic and liberal systems as well as their ability to cope with the disturbing phenomenon of the advance of autocracies and “managed democracy” in almost all continents.

From this point of view, the indication coming from Turkey must certainly be judged, albeit with some inevitable attenuation, as being pointed in the right direction. We trust that similar positive results will emerge shortly from the complex Indian electoral mechanism (one month in duration).

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President





FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS - P8

# The arrogant poet

Everything had worked out well, but the Bell didn't sound so good. And a lot of what was surrounding it wasn't sounding too good either. Don Rossaro had joined the fascist regime, but without denying the universal character of Maria Dolens. Many, however, tried to transform the meaning of that symbol to individual interests. Some had even started to earn something from it. There had been documentaries on the meaning of her symbolic presence in Rovereto, articles in many newspapers, ceremonies, stamps and awards, but also lawsuits with the foundry for the poor outcome of the work and frictions with a film company for the rights to the proceeds of the films. Then there were those who wanted to move the Bell. And it wasn't just a question of the view.

On 17 June 1932, in the municipality of Rovereto, with the significant absence of Don Rossaro, a meeting was held at the end of which, «everyone agreed in declaring that, having respected the two great concepts of Humanity and the Fatherland so that they are clearly distinct yet at the same time in harmony with each other, it is advisable to transport and definitively relocate the Bell of the Fallen to Castel Dante». Thus, the disagreement arose again between those who linked the sepulchral monuments to an exclusively national vision of the war and those who were committed to overcoming old enmities by proposing a message of brotherhood between peoples. In short, it was necessary to understand how «very distinct» the concepts of Humanity and Fatherland were, and how «compatible» they were with each other.

The founder, obviously, also for religious reasons leaned more towards Humanity and was against a project that denied the very spirit of the Bell that had been created to commemorate the fallen of war, regardless of faith and nationality. For some wished to move Maria Dolens to the Ossuary of Castel Dante and the monument to the Trentino martyrs, where in contrast the intention would be to pay homage only to the soldiers of the Italian side.

But it wasn't enough, because now that the Bell existed everyone wanted to make it ring to celebrate their successes or the most varied of occasions. The priest was often asked to allow it to be started outside of the official «nighttime hour», thus violating the second article of the statute. It was above all the local fascist leaders who insistently asked for exceptions to this rule, both to celebrate regime events and in the case of visits by illustrious figures.

Don Rossaro never allowed it, but on the afternoon of March 18, 1928, he heard the Bell ring at an unexpected time. He ran to the Malipiero bastion and found Gabriele D'Annunzio there, who with a group of fascists had forced the «good bell ringer» to start the electric mechanism that moved the Bell. A few days later, fiery letters were sent to various authorities, as well as Mussolini. The style was direct, and the words were clear: «deplorable violence and arrogance». «A very different homage – Don Rossaro complained to a friend – was expected from the “Soldier Poet” to the Sacred Bell, who with pity weeps and daily exalts so many of her humble comrades who died as heroes. The very painful impression aroused in the city prompted unanimous and unsparing indignation, and this act will remain in the history of the Bell not as a kind act of the Soldier Poet, but as a deplorable gesture of reckless arbitrariness».

