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dei Caduti

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# The Voice of Maria Dolens

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Centenary of the Bell

## A woman at the helm of the UN

**T**he eightieth session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which will open in New York on 9 September, followed two weeks later by the more prominent segment traditionally attended by presidents and heads of government, promises to be particularly significant for the largest, best-known, and today perhaps most scrutinised multilateral organisation.

Beyond the inevitable celebrations—which will engage nearly the entire membership in commemora-

tive side events, including a special plenary session of the General Assembly, an exhibition of historical documents including the original Charter, significant participation in 'Expo Osaka 2025,' and many other initiatives—this will be the ideal moment to address, with candour, how the 'Glass Palace' might regain, on the international stage, if not the central role it played for several decades after the Second World War, at least a position of acknowledged relevance.

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Editor  
Marcello Filotei  
marcello.filotei@fondazionecampanadeicaduti.org

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**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



Helen Clark in Iran

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Both the clear intentions of its founding members and the high principles enshrined in the Charter, signed in June 1945 in San Francisco, committed the community of States to pursue the goals of Peace, development, security, and respect for human rights, recognised as global and indivisible assets. While, 80 years on, these goals remain as vital and urgent as ever, the legitimate question arises as to whether the world's most inclusive organisation is capable of successfully addressing the unprecedented challenges of the twenty-first century—challenges marked by their variety and the severity of their consequences.

There is little doubt that the global crises we are currently facing—prolonged wars with limited prospects for resolution, mass migrations, radical climate change, worsening social inequalities, the escalating strain on global cooperation, and the threats posed by the rise of authoritarianism—have laid bare the urgent need, both in New York and across the world's capitals, for determined and courageous leadership, willing to regard dialogue and negotiation as the essential tools—almost the “weapons”—to resolve the many areas of conflict now affecting our planet.

At the time of writing, the agenda for the New York proceedings has not yet been finalised in detail, preventing us from offering a fully comprehensive overview. One topic of exceptionally high political sensitivity—the recognition of the State of Palestine—can, however, already be expected to feature on the various agendas, given the declared intention of some major “Western” countries (France, the United Kingdom, and Australia) to proceed in this direction during the eightieth UNGA, “subject to certain

conditions”. If these conditions are met and the plan comes to fruition, it would not only result in a further increase in the number of UN members willing to take this significant step, but also signal a regained “pivot” role for the United Nations itself, potentially countering the prevailing view of its worryingly marginal role.

We would like to devote the final part of our analysis to a dossier of undeniable importance and to a development that appears to be emerging with growing authority. The ‘dossier’ in question concerns the current Secretary-General, António Guterres of Portugal, and his second and final term, which is set to expire at the end of 2026. Also owing to the complexity of the appointment process—over which each permanent member of the Security Council may exercise a veto—the selection of the tenth Secretary-General of the organisation (or the eleventh, if one counts Gladwyn Jebb of the UK, who served briefly as interim from 1945 to 1946) is likely to commence, albeit discreetly and behind the scenes, during the upcoming General Assembly.

The emerging “trend” relates to the recent public statement by the former foreign ministers of the Latin American and Caribbean countries (the so-called GRULAC group, comprising 33 members), who unanimously expressed support for a future female Secretary-General—preferably from their geographical region—to finally put an end to a “prolonged, unjustified gender discrimination”.



Gro Harlem Brundtland





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In this regard, several highly respected female candidates in the past—particularly Gro Harlem Brundtland from Norway, the New Zealander Helen Clark, and Irina Bokova from Bulgaria—had been seriously considered for the post, but ultimately succumbed to their male competitors. To conclude, it should be noted that even within what has so far been an exclusively



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Irina Bokova

male domain, the principle of rotation among continents has only been applied sparingly, as confirmed by the fact that half of the selected Secretaries-General (including the current one) have come from Europe.

Against this backdrop of repeated setbacks, the appointment of a woman would thus be a virtually “revolutionary” choice, grounded in the principles of Peace, solidarity, and cooperation, which—according to the aforementioned GRULAC document—an unprecedented female occupant of the Glass Palace would be particularly well positioned to promote and implement within the context of future global governance.

To sum up, the clear stance described above appears, in principle, far from misplaced and indeed worthy of serious consideration. For it to be put into practice, however, a series of significant obstacles must be overcome, the most challenging of which will undoubtedly be securing the unanimous “green light” from the five permanent members with veto power. As is well known, although these members cannot put forward their own national candidates, they are traditionally extremely vigilant in preventing the appointment of any individual—regardless of gender—who does not have their full trust and unconditional approval.

Reggente Marco Marsilli, Foundation President

## FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS - P 20

THE DIRECTORSHIP OF PIETRO MONTI

# Between memory and the future

When Pietro Monti was called to lead the Campana dei Caduti Foundation in February 1984, the institution found itself at a pivotal fork in the road. A lengthy legal dispute with the War Museum had slowed down its activities, leaving the Colle di Miravalle in a state of uncertainty—halfway between memory and oblivion. With Monti, the third Director in its history after Don Antonio Rossaro and Father Eusebio Iori, the Bell found a new direction: it was no longer merely a custodian of memory, but became a workshop for dialogue and reflection on contemporary conflicts.



The Director Pietro Monti at the Ceremony for Europe Day

The task was far from simple. The institution carried sixty years of layered history on its back. Founded in 1924 as a symbol against war, it had faced the risk of being absorbed into the nationalist rhetoric during the Fascist period. However, later, under Father Iori, the Bell embraced an international outlook with the creation of the Piazzale delle Genti. Monti inherited a valuable, though sometimes burdensome, legacy. His twofold mission was clear: to make the Bell's message increasingly relevant without betraying its roots, and to equip the institution with practical tools to accommodate its growing visitor flow.

The first major turning point came in September 1984, just months after his appointment, with the "Riflessioni sulla Pace" (Reflections on Peace) conference. After years of limited activity, the Foundation once again emerged as a promoter of high-profile cultural initiatives of considerable international relevance. The discussions highlighted a crucial insight: every era interprets its symbols differently. The Bell, born as a warning against war, could now serve as a platform for human rights—a place where the younger generations could be educated and meet. Monti recognised that symbols hold immense significance at the moment of their creation, but must also resonate with people across other generations; otherwise, they lose their deepest meaning: "Peace is always Peace, but



Visit of the Dalai Lama (from left: Rovereto councillor Donata Loss, the Dalai Lama, and Director Pietro Monti)

Peace, war, or human rights change over time—not in their essence, but in how people perceive and experience them". Thus, unless they are renewed, even the most powerful symbols risk losing their impact.

This perspective led to one of the most significant projects of Monti's directorship: the International University of Peace Institutions (Unip), launched in the early 1990s. With support from the Province and in collaboration with the University of Trento, Unip brought an international scientific committee and practitioners from dozens of countries to Rovereto. It was not a university in the traditional academic sense, but a space where those working on the frontlines of peace initiatives could receive training and exchange ideas and skills. The topics addressed ranged from social conflicts in Brazil and the Balkan wars to the role of the media, globalisation, and indigenous peoples' rights.

The impact was substantial. Through Unip, the Bell positioned itself on an international map extending far beyond the memory of the First World War.





Visit of the President of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi on the occasion of the Ceremony for the 75th Anniversary of the first tolling of Maria Dolens (from left, the Regent, Pietro Monti, the President of the Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, behind them the then Minister of Defense, Sergio Mattarella).

A few tensions did arise, however. Certain local groups sought a greater “return” of activities to the region, fearing it might be overshadowed by the initiative’s international focus.

Monti, however, saw the presence of people from thirty countries in Rovereto as a valuable asset for the community, even if its benefits were not immediately measurable. This tension between local and global perspectives accompanied Unip’s trajectory throughout.

Alongside education, the Foundation promoted research and information. This led to the creation of the Balkans Observatory, a response to requests from NGOs operating in the former Yugoslavia. The centre became a reference point for monitoring projects, assessing their effectiveness, and collecting data in a crucial European region during the 1990s. The Bell thus evolved into a hub of a civil network actively engaged in crisis zones.

Yet Monti’s vision extended further. Another key area of engagement was interreligious dialogue. Thanks to the efforts of Vice Director Don Silvio Franch, the sixth World Assembly of the World Conference of Religion and Peace was held in 1994—first with an audience with the Pope in Rome, then with sessions in Riva del Garda, where representatives from religions around the globe gathered. It was a moment of worldwide significance, supported logistically by the Foundation, with a crowd of believers praying at the foot of the Bell. “I would say it was a great event,” Monti reflected, noting that he was unsure “to what extent the people of Trentino grasped its importance, also because the local press was not very responsive or engaged; but in my view having the Patriarch of Constantinople and other prominent religious leaders in Riva del Garda was something truly extraordinary for the society of Trentino”. “I believe it is difficult to measure the practi-

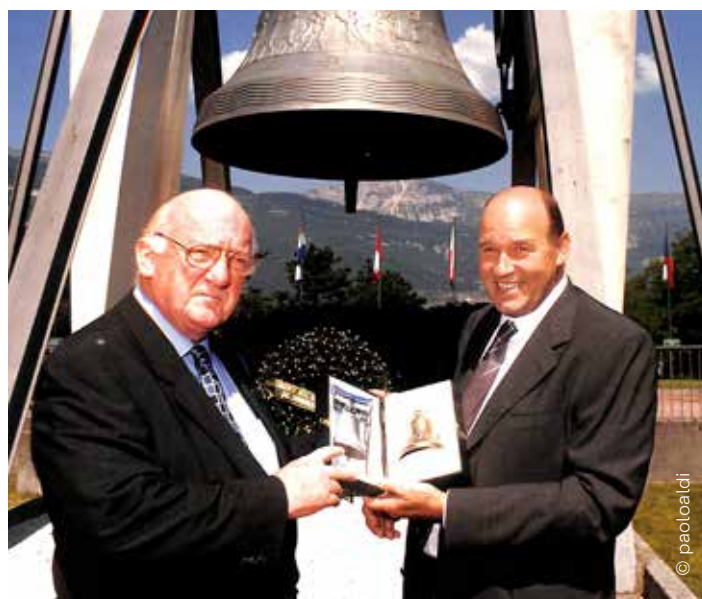
cal results of such initiatives here too,” he continued, adding that “coming together, talking, and praying together serves a purpose. Understanding whether this goes as far as to influence moments of conflict is much harder”.

Monti’s directorship also left a mark in tangible ways, such as transforming Miravalle into an open, welcoming space. In 1986, the International Year of Peace, a concert by Miriam Makeba opened new perspectives: the Bell became a place of culture and dialogue through music. In subsequent years, events dedicated to Africa, featuring international artists and local groups, showed that the memory of war could coexist with new forms of dialogue and solidarity.

After nearly two decades of tireless commitment, Monti concluded his directorship, leaving behind a Foundation profoundly transformed. It was more organisationally robust, thanks in part to institutional support, and it was recognised as an institution capable of addressing major peace issues on a global scale. The legacy of his regency was not merely preserving the Campana, but guiding it beyond the memory of war into the complexities of the present.

His vision had been clear: symbols only stand the test of time if they speak to people across generations. Under his leadership, the Campana dei Caduti learned to speak not only to war veterans, but also to NGO workers worldwide, Peace mediators in the Balkans, religious leaders of all faiths, and young people confronting globalisation both as a challenge and an opportunity.

Since then, the daily tolling of the Bell has served not only as a reminder of the past, but also as an invitation to reflect on the present through the lenses of rights, dialogue, and coexistence among peoples.



Assembly of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe joins the Foundation (from left: President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Lord Russell-Johnston and Director Pietro Monti)



THE HAYDN ORCHESTRA AT THE CAMPANA DEI CADUTI FOR THE FIRST TIME

# Music for reflection and hope

On the Colle di Miravalle, music spoke to the heart. On 21 July, in front of the Bell, a universal symbol of peace and memory, a concert took place, intertwining art with reflection, beauty with awareness. The evening featured the Haydn Orchestra of Bolzano and Trento, conducted by Nicola Valentini, alongside baritone Bruno Taddia. An audience of more than 400 listened intently to a thoughtfully curated program that both examined the present and opened a mindful window onto the future. It was the first time the Haydn Orchestra performed at the Colle, and since the Centenary of Maria Dolens is not merely a celebration of the past, but above all the beginning of a new journey, this evening appeared as a promising signpost. The initiative was made possible thanks to a fruitful collaboration between the Municipality of Rovereto, the Haydn Foundation, and the Bell. Before the concert, the Director Marco Marsilli highlighted that the initiative aligns "with the direction indicated by the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, who during his recent visit to the Campana dei Caduti stressed how the current international situation calls for 'a revival of the message that was launched from here a hundred years ago.'" In the same vein, Paul Gasser, President of the Haydn Foundation, emphasised that "for the Foundation and the Orchestra, it is a pleasure and an honour to collaborate with the Municipality of Rovereto and the Campana dei Caduti". "We are confident," he concluded, "that music, with its universal language, will this evening

strengthen the message of peace that this evocative site in Rovereto, through the presence of Maria Dolens, naturally evokes". The Mayor of Rovereto, Giulia Robol, also reaffirmed that "Peace is not a utopia, but a collective work, a harmony built day by day". Music, like the Bell, she added, "reminds us that even from the darkest moments a melody of hope can arise".

Marcello Filotei, Artistic Director of the Campana dei Caduti and editor of this monthly publication, briefly explained the concept behind the musical programme: "It was conceived as a journey beginning with reflection on the ongoing conflicts in certain regions of the world, moving through hope, and culminating in a quiet, understated joy".







The evening opened with two of Jean Sibelius's most evocative works: *Valse triste* (1904) and *Scena con gru*, completed in 1906. Not merely splendid concert pieces, they are also musical reflections on the fragility of the human condition and the silences that accompany great change. In times marked by conflict and instability, these compositions resonate as a meditation on the uncertainty of our era. According to Ralph Vaughan Williams, "only Sibelius could make the sound of C major completely new." These prophetic words, spoken by one of the Finnish composer's peers, describe his ability to give a voice to the inexpressible, through soundscapes suspended between melancholy and vision, combining simplicity with depth of thought. Like a butterfly - at once splendid and desperate - that cannot find a place to rest.

This was followed by *Pax Virginis* by Virginia Guastella, winner in 2008 of the International Composition Competition "Strumenti di Pace" (Instruments of Peace), an initiative that unfolded over three biennial editions and brought major figures of contemporary music to the Bell, including the unforgettable Ennio Morricone, who gifted his *Jerusalem* to Maria Dolens. Guastella's composition led the music into a deeply personal spiritual realm, shifting between passages of intense expressiveness and sudden moments of rarefied stillness. Conceived as a

sonic meditation on Peace, the work interlaces words from three major religious traditions: the Psalms of the Old Testament ("May the mountains bring Peace to the people, and the hills justice!"), the Gospel of Matthew ("Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God"), and the Quran ("Peace be upon you, for you have been steadfast"). Seventeen years after its composition, the work remains, regrettably, profoundly relevant, as it explicitly calls for a path toward the peaceful coexistence of peoples who adhere to monotheistic religions. Bruno Taddia's warm, resonant voice rendered these verses vibrantly, blending with great elegance and naturalness with the orchestra, which created a soundscape charged with tension and hope.

The evening concluded with Franz Schubert's Fifth Symphony, bringing a breath of quiet serenity. Free from any hint of triumphalism, the work speaks in a luminous and sincere language, evoking a serene, quiet joy that offers both refuge and comfort. In this context, Schubert is not escapism but a remembrance of everything what is worth striving for: beauty, harmony, shared life, dialogue, and Peace.

The audience, at times visibly moved, applauded long and enthusiastically, showing that they had grasped the common thread uniting the different



pieces: the urgent need for Peace, the power of hope, and the ability of music to unite, heal, and inspire. Despite the success, out of respect for the location and the journey of the performance, the artists refrained from self-congratulatory encores. The purpose of the performance was rather to reflect on what had occurred. And, as always on the Colle di Miravalle, reflection is guided by the hundred solemn tolls of the Campana dei Caduti that conclude every event. Once again, at a time when words often seem empty, it was music that restored our sense of the present, with sobriety and profound emotion.







# Concert for Peace with Noa and Miriam Toukan

**R**ain failed to stop the Concert for Peace, held on 1 August on the Colle di Miravalle. Despite the bad weather, Israeli singer Noa and Palestinian singer Miriam Toukan performed beneath Maria Dolens, carrying a message of hope and dialogue. The initiative, organised by the Mu-

nicipality of Rovereto and the Santa Chiara Cultural Services Centre of Trento in collaboration with the Campana dei Caduti Foundation, used art to reaffirm a message that is central to every event on the Colle di Miravalle: coexistence is possible, but it must be nurtured every day.

