

*“Where there is danger, there grows what saves”*

Friedrich Hölderlin, in Patmos

11.IX.2001 – 7.X.2024. The brutal attack on the Twin Towers in New York and the brutal terrorist violence of Hamas mark the dawn of the new millennium and constitute reference dates for a new era in the Mediterranean region, which is already conditioned by climate change, by the affirmation and crisis of international finance, and by growing migratory flows that have transformed the *Mare Nostrum* into the cemetery of a genocide produced by financial selfishness and political pettiness.

The Mediterranean is no longer the hub of the West-East conflict, typical of the Cold War after the Second World War, but a place of confirmation of the decline of the hegemony of the West. That hegemony is reduced to identifying itself in 2003 in the disastrous invasion of Iraq by a multinational coalition led by the USA with the neocolonial claim of George W. Bush jr. to impose democracy on that country after the defeat and killing of Saddam Hussein, and in recent months – after the massacres of Hamas – the shameful image of Israel reacting to terrorist violence with the massacre of tens of thousands of defenseless Palestinian civilians. And the US-EU axis appears incapable of finding diplomatic ways to reach a ceasefire, hence it passively suffers the wicked choices of the Israeli Government and the consequences of the failure of the attempts of US President Biden to stop Israel, which is responsible for what is now a genocide. It is a massacre that fuels not only hatred due to belonging to Israel or Palestine, but hatred due to religious faith.

The Netanjahou government becomes a negative symbol of the West, but is also the heaviest enemy of the people of Israel, provoking reactions to the detriment of the Jewish people in the world. And while the Jewish people, who have suffered terrible violence in the name of racial and religious hatred, deserve the utmost respect, History reminds us that it will be hard to extinguish religious hatred.

After the Second World War the West had taken on the face of a US and a Western European alliance opposed to the Soviet Union. During the years of the Cold War, “satellite” countries in the various Souths of the world were connected to either leading Western countries or the Soviet Union.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022 has once again made the decline of Western hegemony legible in the heart of Europe, posing a question that is a call to responsibility and a guilty “distraction” of the US/EU axis: Where were the US and EU in 2014 when pro-Nazi Ukrainian militias (recognized by Kiev and trained by NATO instructors and still used today by Kiev and the West) operated in Donbass, killing defenseless citizens? And the West, incapable of promoting solutions and paths to peace, today finds itself mired in a war destined to have no end or to record the military victory of Vladimir Putin’s Russia.

Again, with more specific geographical reference to the Mediterranean, the brutal massacres of 7 October 2024 by Hamas posed the same question, which is a call to responsibility and guilty “distraction” of the USA and the EU: Where were the USA and the EU when, for decades, Israel militarized the Gaza Strip and persecuted defenseless Palestinians in defiance of human rights and United Nations resolutions?

And, again in reference to the Mediterranean, a similar question can be asked about the continuation of an unacceptable Western neocolonialism to the detriment of African peoples, which is confirmed by an unstoppable instability of the current regimes and makes Africa a place of Russian and Chinese neocolonialism.

Climate change produces already massive desertification and hunger, unstoppable migrations, while the financialization and globalization of the economy, with their recurring excesses and crises, facilitate genocides, wars and terrorism, to the detriment of defenseless and migrant populations, and new forms of colonialism thus find in the Mediterranean area a breeding ground made up of fragmentation, conflicts and conditions of institutional confusion. Concomitantly, there is a progressive loss of spirituality, or, even worse, the instrumental use of spiritual values: fanaticism and violence are thus championed from time to time by devious interests, as well as fears, and mixed racial and religious references.

In this context, new protagonists emerge such as India and China, who “hide” their military apparatus, making the numbers of their respective populations weigh – each of the two countries with over a billion inhabitants – as well as their financial and planning resources, the construction of infrastructural works, and their potential for corruption to the detriment of hundreds and hundreds of millions in absolute poverty. China, in particular, is

characterized internally by systematic violation of human rights, while still keeping capitalism and communism within itself, and hence conditions that are typical of the global South and conditions typical of the North interact, from time to time presenting a different and captivating face, i.e., with communist or capitalist realities, from the North or from the South of the world. A heavy neocolonialism without the display of armies follows, which appears less unacceptable (but is equally heavy) than Western neocolonialism with its historical burden of military violence.

It may seem off topic that I refer to spirituality, understood as a vision inspired by respect for the human rights of each and every one. Yet, spirituality today means for me democratic brotherhood, beyond the traditional contrast between the primacy of freedom over equality or the primacy of equality over freedom. And I am convinced that the present, and even more future, condition of the Mediterranean is so serious as to require a radical change of spiritual perspective, through the research and choice of fundamental principles that, moreover, are widely codified in Universal Declarations and Conventions on human rights, and call for the consequent coherence of economic, cultural and political actions.

My proposal is to return to placing at the center of attention and reread, in the light of the times in which we live, values and references such as Race, Identity and God, all of which have been widely manipulated, obscured, considered instrumentally at the service of partisan interests and neocolonial claims starting precisely from the Mediterranean.

The first part of this proposal is to reject the belief that identity depends exclusively on the blood of parents and, instead, acknowledge that identity is an unrepeatable and individual act of freedom and personal experience. Approximately 8 billion human beings coexist on our planet and each has a different identity, differently composed. As many human beings as there are, as many as there are identities.

The second part of this proposal is to defend the one human race. Anyone who distinguishes men and women on the basis of a plurality of races prepares marginalization, intolerance, genocide.

In the Mediterranean, these last two propositions lead to the denial of the category of so-called, i.e., closed in itself. “migrants”: we are all human beings, belonging to the same

race, all equal and all different without any discrimination between those born in a given reality and those who find themselves living in that reality.

A final part of this proposal for a radical change of perspective concerns God. Whoever believes that God is one (and I believe that God is one) will have to accept that someone meets God in the square of Allah, someone in the path of Jesus Christ, others in the avenue of Yahweh, but also in the paths of Shiva, Buddha or Confucius as well as in the path of reason. It is necessary to reject religion used as the “opium of the people” and respect religious faith as an impulse and choice for the liberation of every human being.

The Mediterranean, rich in history and cultures, faiths and languages, can be an extraordinary miscellany, a mosaic of civil coexistence, an interdependence experienced as an alternative and against intolerance and conflicts. Is this, just mentioned, an abstract and simplistic response to such a complex and concretely violent reality?

Yes and no, at the same time.

The answer depends on the will and ability to contribute – from the world of schools to that of information, from the world of economics to that of finance, from the world of the family to religious and even artistic realities – behaviors, concrete actions, lifestyles. All this is certainly difficult; and it alone is not enough. It is essential that this change of perspective becomes widespread awareness, but it is equally and completely necessary that this radical change of perspective becomes political action, a compass of orientation for States and international organizations.

This vision, this change of perspective in the politics and in the policies of the many States, is struggling to manifest itself, despite the many strong calls from artists, intellectuals, associations of citizens and spiritual leaders (from those condemned to the torture of migrations and dictatorships to artists and Nobel Prize winners, from isolated prophets of a new time to religious leaders such as Pope Francis). The European Union’s political choices currently appear not to be adequate to the ambitions and potential of the EU, which is itself one of the most extraordinary democratic institutional innovations of the history of humanity. And today, everyone understands that the role of European Union is essential for the future of Mediterranean and for peaceful international coexistence.