



News from the G7: an unrealized dream

Odessa, February 10, 2022. 11 pm.

I am in this city for a meeting of the "United States of the World". Today's American news reports say that, according to reliable sources, hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers are near the borders with Ukraine for "military exercises": President Putin confirms and reassures the West, which is worried about a possible invasion.

I spend the night immersed in infinite fears: for the weak leadership of the current president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelens'kyj (defined as an actor, director, screenwriter and comedian, before being a politician and statesman); for Valdimir Putin's "dark" plan to take revenge for the insults received from Zelensky and for an overly "Westernized" Ukraine determined to join the European Union and NATO; for the awareness of the "betrayals" of the West towards ancient commitments undertaken by presidents Kennedy and Khrushchev.

Cuba, October 28, 1962. 4 pm.

Everyone breathes a sigh of relief. With the Cuban crisis, the world risked falling towards nuclear war. The catastrophe is avoided only thanks to the decision of the two leaders, the American John F. Kennedy and the Russian Nikita Khrushchev, to trust each other against the advice of their respective advisors.

At that time I was 8 years old and the information came from the news through one of the first black and white televisions. My father Raffaele appeared worried: although aware of his simple role as Mayor of a small town, he often discussed this topic with Pietro Nenni, Sandro Pertini and other politicians who were friends of him.

“Such a courageous act - my father stated - was certainly influenced by John XXIII who, with his message of peace and renewal, warned the world of a possible humanitarian catastrophe”.



Rome, 22 November 1963. 12pm.

I accompany my father to Rome to a political meeting. It's a Friday and he decides that we would stay in Rome to continue his meetings the next day. Suddenly the news breaks of the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas.

The mystery surrounding the assassination of the American president extends back to a meeting on October 19, 1962, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, in which the President resisted pressure from his Joint Chiefs of Staff to bomb and invade Cuba as he left the room, a hidden tape recorder continued to play, capturing the generals' contempt for the President and their determination to escalate the conflict to all-out nuclear war. They wanted to win the Cold War.

General Curtis E. LeMay, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, implemented this intention. In the midst of the Cuban crisis, he ordered his bombers, armed with nuclear warheads, to pass the turning point towards the Soviet Union and launch a test ballistic missile, to provoke the adversary's reaction which, in turn, would trigger an all-out nuclear attack by superior US forces. Luckily the Soviets didn't take the bait.

The mystery surrounding the events in Dallas goes back even further, to the failed invasion of the Bay of Pigs in April 1961 by Cuban exiles trained by the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency, the US secret services). Kennedy later realized that the CIA had deceived him about the imminent Cuban popular uprising against Fidel Castro and the guerrilla warfare that the Cuban exile brigade would unleash. They had attempted to force the President to authorize an invasion by assault forces to save the situation. Kennedy, however, had the courage to accept defeat. As he himself later told his friends, «They couldn't believe that a new President like me could not panic and not at least try to save face. Well, they didn't understand anything about me." Kennedy was furious with the CIA over the incident. The New York Times later reported that Kennedy told one of his administration's top officials that he wanted to "blow the CIA to smithereens and throw them to the winds."

Odessa, February 10, 2022. Midnight.

The nocturnal tension assails me, aware, having known and experienced them well, that the United States of America represents a young nation, in which very often only "white" and "black", "good" and "bad" exist. ”: in those moments I review the drafts



of confidential documents in which the fixed idea of many leaders of the US administration is the elimination of Russia, its defeat. How is it possible to imagine something like this? How is it possible to eliminate the largest country in the world with a thousand-year history?

The tension gradually loosens and transforms into a conscious dream where the protagonists of this story appear distinctly: President Zelensky, who becomes an instrument of the USA to implement their ancient plan: the defeat and elimination of Russia; President Putin, who decides to redeem himself by invading Ukraine; the European Union, without its own role, which joins the USA together with a NATO determined to defend its actions. The result is a new war that can turn into the "third world war" with hundreds of thousands of innocent victims, immeasurable damage to people, "urbicides" and "memoricides".

What to do? Thanks to my innate volcanic nature and creativity - in the dream - I find myself in a welcoming place, by the sea, where on a platform there is a large oval table surrounded by centuries-old olive trees and where, by miracle, the "Great Ones" of the earth appear - including the Pope - to ask Putin not to invade Ukraine. Still in the dream, abusing a visibility that does not belong to me, I assume the role of coordinator of the meeting and formalize a compromise proposal:

"Dear President Putin - I say to the illustrious present - the representatives of the main countries of the world including Pope Francis are sitting around this table: tell us what you want to avoid an unjust and terrible invasion for the whole world. Our irrevocable proposal is that Crimea be definitively assigned to it with the possibility for the pro-Russian Ukrainian provinces to assume a role of autonomy with models similar to other countries".

Thanks to the place, the presence and the complicity of President Putin - in the dream! - accepts and embraces those present one by one. Utopia? Science fiction? No. Just a high vision, between the "beyond" and the "other", of a Politics with a capital "P".

Savelletri, 14 June 2024. 10 am.

As president of the Mediterranean Foundation and Secretary General of the United States of the World, I had the opportunity to participate as an observer in ten G7s, of which 7 were held in Italy: in Venice in 1980 and 1987, in Naples in 1994, in Genoa in



2001, in L'Aquila in 2009, in Taormina in 2017, in Savelletri (a hamlet of the municipality of Fasano, in Puglia, which has around 700 inhabitants) in 2024.

I have deliberately not associated the names of the cities in which the previous summits took place with that of the actual site of today's meeting, the "Borgo Egnazia" resort, because it is a "non-place" without any meaning and not comparable to cities like Naples, Venice, Taormina, Genoa, L'Aquila: artificially built, its legitimate exclusive purpose is the carrying out of a powerful commercial activity which has nothing to do with the emotions of the real villages or cities mentioned where memories, knowledge and emotions: with sixteen hectares between Fasano and Savelletri, in the middle

road between the Apulian countryside and the sea, it is an exclusive resort where talking about luxury is an understatement. A summer suite can cost up to 4,500 euros per night and is a place used to welcoming VIPs: the singer Madonna chose Borgo Egnazia in 2021 to celebrate her birthday and among the illustrious guests there are David Beckham and Justin Timberlake, who chose the Apulian resort for his honeymoon with Jessica Biel, and many others.

Today this place is the most "protected" in the world: skies, seas and roads are armored and the level of controls has been raised to the maximum: the Schengen treaty has also been suspended with special measures that mainly concern Savelletri, Fasano and Brindisi. There are 7,500 security men and women involved in controlling this area of Puglia. In particular, there are 5 thousand agents, carabinieri and financiers. From yesterday 12 June until 16 June, even residents in maximum security areas will be able to access and circulate near the summit locations only with special passes. Bathing will then be prohibited for everyone. Anyone who has to reach the areas close to the resort will be subjected to meticulous security checks escorted by the police.

I state these things without any controversy but as a simple, humble witness and actor of more than 11,000 events held in 180 countries in the last 37 years and which make me fully aware of the difficulties and problems with unforeseen events that summits of this type can produce, also considering the extraordinary presence of Pope Francis who today will speak about "Artificial Intelligence" to the great people of the world present.



Today is my seventieth birthday: some journalists and diplomat friends reminded me of it. It is also the birthday of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz who receives best wishes from his colleagues with a chorus sung by Joe Biden. On this same day, Donald Trump and the American flag, born on June 14, 1777, celebrate their birthdays: the only one present "on two celestial bodies, a universal symbol of freedom".

In dialogue with some diplomats, we agree that the aggression against Ukraine that began on 24 February 2022 represented a scandalous violation of international law and that the commitment made by Moscow with the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 bars the way to any attempt at political justification; however, it is difficult to deny that the West has constantly fueled, since the beginning of this century, the desire for revenge on Russia, heavily humiliated by President Bush senior in 1990.

For this reason it was necessary to know that, sooner or later, territorial revisionism would manifest itself, in particular towards the historically and culturally "Russian" regions (Belarus and eastern and southern Ukraine) and the new states with significant Russian-speaking minorities. However, it could be neutralized or mitigated by the interest in building a true partnership with Western Europe. An economic, technological and security partnership in the face of the challenge of Islamic terrorism that never existed. It was not farsighted to remind the Russians at every turn that they were the losers of the Cold War, to criminalize them because they maintained an insignificant military base in Abkhazia and one in Transnistria (at the cost of paralyzing the work of the OSCE), to proclaim the moral superiority of a alleged "Alliance of Democracies". But above all, extend NATO eastward to the borders of the Russian Federation and promise to one day include its southern neighbors, Ukraine and Georgia. This inevitably generated an encirclement complex, even if it did not constitute a concrete strategic threat. Errors of Western strategy which do not attenuate in the slightest the full condemnation of Russia for the invasion and the war crimes committed but reveal a clear unpreparedness and superficiality.

Our conversation is interrupted by the images on the screens and the noise of the helicopter in which Pope Francis is traveling. As soon as he gets off he tells President Meloni "I'm still alive" and then gets on the electric car with her heading inside the resort for bilateral meetings and for the subsequent session dedicated to artificial intelligence.



A shiver runs through my body when I see the oval table surrounded by olive trees with Heads of State and heads of international organizations around it: it is the same table in my dream in the night of Odessa, surrounded by olive trees, with the symbol of the olive tree as a sign of peace, the flags in the background, the great men of the earth gathered.

Next to Pope Francis are Presidents Macron and Meloni, in front of President Biden and then followed by the Algerian President Tebboune, the Argentine President Milei, the President of the African Development Bank Adesina, the President of the World Bank Banga, the President of Brazil Lula da Silva, President of the United Arab Emirates bin Zayed, King Abdallah II of Jordan, President of the International Monetary Fund Georgieva, Prime Minister of India Modi, President of Mauritania Ghazouani, Secretary General of the OECD Cormann, President of Kenya Ruto, the UN Secretary General Guterres, the Tunisian Prime Minister Hachani, the President of Turkey Erdoğan.

Before his speech, Pope Francis goes around the table and greets the participants, exchanging a few words with everyone, trying to speak to the hearts of the people and not to the Heads of State: it is as if he were asking all of them to each take a step back and then make one forward all together.

I carefully follow every word that is uttered for more than three hours: as in tradition everything was prepared by diplomats, advisors, Sherpas and the main considerations are summarized in the final declaration which also reports the results of the other five work sessions dedicated to ' Africa, climate change and development, the Middle East, Ukraine, migration, the Indo-Pacific and economic security, in addition to the 'outreach' session with the nations and international organizations invited on Africa, the Mediterranean, intelligence artificial and energy.

Savelletri, 15 June 2024. 2.15 pm.

The work of this G7 concludes with President Meloni's press conference. After 40 minutes of speech on the importance of the event - which "does honor to Italy which has charted an important course" - she answers the questions of about ten journalists. Paolo Cappelleri of ANSA underlines the shame of the brawl in the Chamber with the dispute between deputies that overshadowed the G7, Roberto Chinzari of TG1 asks



what was most striking about Pope Francis' intervention and so on through calm and coordinated questions.

A young journalist from the "New daily newspaper of Puglia" concludes by asking President Meloni for an assessment of the choice of place: the President states that she is enchanted by the welcome, the roots, the food and the traditions of the region and says that in yesterday's dinner evening, enchanted by the voice of Andrea Bocelli, guests were able to enjoy illuminations, artisanal objects, gastronomic delights, popular ballads (taranta and pizzica) and so on for a long list.

Without any controversy I limit myself to making these simple considerations and assessments.

A joyful party, similar to a joyful wedding, in a pleasant extra-luxury place with songs, dances and lights is appropriate when the general climate is harmonious and not like in this very difficult moment.

Given the current tragic situation in which the survival of the human race is at risk - considering the attacks on the environment and the ongoing wars - it would have been more appropriate to welcome everyone with great austerity and rigor in a significant, symbolic and austere place more suitable for circumstances.

Before leaving, I met one of the "historical" collaborators of Turkish President Erdoğan: he accompanied his President to our headquarters in Naples in September 2005 and, on that occasion, in the company of some ministers, he asked our institution for help to speed up membership of Turkey to the European Union. Vetoes and fears prevented the realization of that process which could have ensured peace and greater dialogue with the moderate Islamic world.

On the way back to Naples, a few kilometers from the resort, I meet Luigi Cafario, a farmer intent on plowing the arid land. I stop to ask for directions. After replying politely in Apulian dialect he says to me: "Doctor, has this chaos ended? I know, they won't do anything and we will always be worse, worse, worse...".

I greet the interlocutor and think of the oval table of my dream in Odessa, which perhaps could have been realized with a lofty vision here in Puglia: on the condition of knowing how to "dare" and want - truly and with determination - to affirm the "Power of love" where, once again, the "Love of Power" was affirmed.



In today's newspapers I read the results of the agreement between the USA and Ukraine on the supply of new weapons, the modest results of the Lucerne conference on Ukraine and, above all, the incredible announcement by Elon Musk that he gets a salary from Tesla shareholders of 56 billion dollars, a sum never earned by any company director in history: Tesla flies to Wall Street, where it rises by 7.63% after Elon Musk reported having obtained the necessary votes for his strong compensation of two million cars sold in 2023 with a turnover of over \$97 billion.

In Ukraine, Israel, Palestine and many other parts of the world, people continue to die. The number of the poor and the underprivileged increases dramatically.

There is a lack of true international collaboration. Equality, social justice and peace continue to be an unattainable dream.