

Margherita Zoebeli from Zurich to Rimini. A life devoted to childhood

Edited by

Dorena Caroli, Tiziana Pironi, Ilaria Bellucci,
Monica Maioli, Mara Sorrentino



Transnational History of Education and Civilizations

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFP	Archivio Fotografico dei Positivi della Raccolta storica della Biblioteca civica Gambalunga di Rimini (Photographic Archive of the Positive of the Historical Collection of the Gambalunga Public Library of Rimini)
AMG	Allied Military Government
AMZ	Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive)
BGR	Biblioteca civica Gambalunga, Rimini (Gambalunga Public Library)
CEIS	Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre)
CEMB	Centro Educazione Musicale di Base, Rimini (Basic Music Education Centre)
CEMEA	Centri di Esercitazione ai Metodi dell'Educazione Attiva (Active Education Methods Training Centres)
CEPAS	Centro di Educazione Professionale per Assistenti Sociali (Centre for Professional Education for Social Workers)
CIDEF	Centro di Innovazione, di Documentazione Educativa e di Formazione (Centre for Innovation, Educational Documentation and Training)
CIRSE	Centro Italiano per la Ricerca Storico-Educativa (Italian Centre for Historical Research in Education)
CLN	Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (National Liberation Committee)
CTS	Cooperativa della Tipografia a Scuola (Typography at School Cooperative)
DSS	Dizionario Storico della Svizzera (Historical Dictionary of Switzerland)
ECA	Ente Comunale di Assistenza (Municipal Assistance Agency)
ENAOLI	Ente Nazionale Assistenza Orfani dei Lavoratori Italiani (National Board of Orphan Assistance for Italian Workers)
ETH	Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology)
FICE	Fédération Internationale des Communautés d'Enfants (International Federation of Children's Communities)
FIER	Fédération Internationale des Enseignants de Rythmique (International Federation of Eurhythmics Teachers)
ICEM	Institut Coopératif de l'École Moderne (Cooperative Institute of the Modern School)

IRPA	Istituto Regionale per l'Apprendimento (Regional Institute for Learning)
IRRSAE	Istituto Regionale di Ricerca e Sperimentazione e Aggiornamento Educativi (Regional Institute for Educational Research and Experimentation and Update)
ISF	Internationale Socialiste des Femmes (Socialist International Women)
ISME	International Society for Music Education
JLR	Jeunesse Laïque Républicaine (Republican Lay Youth)
MCE	Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Movement of Cooperative Education)
MZ	Margherita Zoebeli
ONAIR	Opera Nazionale di Assistenza all'Italia Redenta (National Work of Assistance to Redeemed Italy)
ONMI	Opera Nazionale per la protezione della Maternità e dell'Infanzia (National Maternity and Child Protection Organisation)
OSEO	Oeuvre Suisse d'Entraide Ouvrière (Swiss Workers' Mutual Aid Society)
SAH/SOS	Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk / Soccorso Operaio Svizzero (Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation)
SCI	Servizio Civile Internazionale (International Civil Service)
SEPEG	Semaines Internationales d'Études pour l'enfance victime de la Guerre (International Weeks of Study for Children Victims of War)
SIA	Solidarité Internationale Antifasciste (International Anti-Fascist Solidarity)
SIEM	Società Italiana per l'Educazione Musicale (Italian Society for Music Education)
SIFF	Switzerland International Film Festival
SOS/SAH	Soccorso Operaio Svizzero / Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk (Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation)
SSK	Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten (Swiss Donation for the Victims of War)
UDI	Unione Donne in Italia (Italian Women's Union)
UIPE	Union Internationale de Protection de l'Enfance (International Union for Child Protection)
UISE	Union Internationale de Secours aux Enfants (International Union for Child Relief)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany)

Introduction

Dorena Caroli, Tiziana Pironi, Ilaria Bellucci,
Monica Maioli, Mara Sorrentino

This volume collects the proceedings of the conference dedicated to Margherita Zoebeli entitled *Margherita Zoebeli (1912-1996). A centodieci anni dalla nascita. Una vita per la pedagogia attiva al servizio dell'infanzia (Margherita Zoebeli (1912-1996). One hundred and ten years after her birth. A life for active pedagogy at the service of childhood)*. The conference was held on 18 and 19 November 2022 at the University Campus of Rimini, Italy. It was organised by the Department of Education Studies “Giovanni Maria Bertin” of the University of Bologna, in collaboration with the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation, the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre - CEIS) and the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) in Rimini¹.

The main objective of this two-day conference was to reflect, on the basis of archival documents, on the valuable work carried out by the Swiss educator and pedagogist who moved to Rimini at the end of the Second World War. Thanks to Margherita Zoebeli and her national and international contacts, the Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village), which she founded and which later became the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss

¹ The conference was organised by Dorena Caroli and Tiziana Pironi, Full Professors of History of Education at the Department of Education Studies “Giovanni Maria Bertin”, in collaboration with Monica Maioli, President of the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation), Ilaria Bellucci from the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre - CEIS), Mara Sorrentino (archivist-librarian of the Biblioteca Civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) in Rimini) and with the help of ICARO group, showcasing the documentary film *Lo spazio che vive (The space that lives)* (2022), a work by Rimini director Teo De Luigi, who died a few weeks before the conference. The event was sponsored by the Department of Education Studies “Giovanni Maria Bertin” and the University Campus of Rimini under the auspices of the Centro Italiano per la Ricerca Storico-Educativa (Italian Centre for Educational Research - CIRSE), the “Gina Fasoli” Active Teaching Research Centre and by the Festa internazionale della Storia (International History Festival) of the University of Bologna.

Educational Centre - CEIS), became a true workshop of active pedagogy in the post-war years. The aim of the conference was thus to focus on the pedagogical and educational value of the choices made, certainly influenced by the situation of the time, while underlining their relevance for today's training of educators and teachers, a training that is becoming increasingly important in view of the new challenges and emergencies that education is facing today².

The conference strived to investigate the pedagogical and documentary heritage of CEIS for the students of the following Degree programmes: Primary Teacher Education, Expert in Social and Cultural Education, Educator in Childhood Social Services, and Planning and Managing Educational Interventions in Social Distress.

Professional development has always been a flagship of CEIS, which has always been a point of reference for the training of teachers and educational professionals and a research ground for renowned pedagogues from various Italian universities. Moreover, the different activity enabled CEIS to launch courses for social and educational workers in the 1980s in cooperation with the Department of Education Studies of the University of Bologna – the Centro di Innovazione, di Documentazione Educativa e di Formazione (Centre for Innovation, Educational Documentation and Training - CIDEF).

It is also worth mentioning that on 23 January 1989, Margherita Zoebeli, Paulo Freire and Mario Lodi were awarded honorary Degrees by the University of Bologna, on the proposal of the Department of Education Studies and the Degree Course in Pedagogy. On that occasion, Andrea Canevaro, the then director of the Department, stated that the decision to award this distinction was motivated by the need to «search in the present for that part of history to which we can give value»³. He considered that what they all had in common was their commitment to the field of education, which had led them to work «in reality, with institutions, risking every day to be trapped and trying every day to ‘reinvent the world’»⁴.

² It is precisely because of the importance of CEIS' activities over the years that an interdisciplinary research group was set up at the Department of Education Studies "Giovanni Maria Bertin" on 19 July 2023. The group was established thanks to the collaboration between CEIS and the Department and brings together scholars and researchers from different fields.

³ A. Canevaro, *Fra l'imprudenza e il coraggio*, in «L'Educatore», 24 (July 1989), p. 6. In this issue, the magazine devoted special attention to the event entitled "Le Lauree *Honoris Causa* alla scuola e agli educatori di tutti" (Honorary Degrees for everyone's school and educators), and published in full the lectures delivered by Zoebli, Freire and Lodi during the award ceremony in the Aula Absidale di Santa Lucia.

⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 5-6.

In her speech to a packed conference hall, whose title “*Il progetto-sogno educativo*” (*The educational dream-project*) said it all, Margherita Zoebeli reflected on her more than 50 years of experience, guided by the idea that «a different kind of education can change the world», a conviction that led her to conclude her speech with these words: «Faith in humanity has never failed me, despite the exaggerated individualism of our society, the many wars across the planet, the social injustices in every part of the world»⁵.

Over the years, an intense scientific activity has sought to promote the educational legacy of CEIS, recognising its innovative nature⁶. Margherita Zoebeli and her activities have been the subject of historical studies and research projects, starting with the collection published after her death, edited by Teo De Luigi and Stefano Pivato, *Memoria come futuro. Cinquant'anni di vita del CEIS*, which presents a series of essays, accounts and photographs⁷, with a preface by Rita Levi Montalcini. Having visited CEIS and met Margherita Zoebeli, Rita Levi Montalcini recognised the extraordinary value of her work. She stated: «I think that CEIS should be seen as a value to be developed, not only to remain as it has been for 50 years, but to become a symbol of human relations, of what I would call solidarity rather than friendship, to give young people correct information and never, NEVER to talk about racial hatred»⁸.

In 2011, on the initiative of Carlo De Maria, a conference was organised by the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation) and CEIS, which was the starting point for a series of historiographically significant studies, reconstructing in particular the network of relationships that Zoebeli had woven while creating her educational experiment⁹. These in-

⁵ M. Zoebeli, *Il progetto-sogno educativo*, in «L'Educatore», (24 July 1989), p. 15.

⁶ See for example the history of CEIS as seen by children: L. Biondelli, R. Calieri, A. Fabbri, N. Gallazzi, G. Sapucci & G. Zannucoli (eds.), *A scuola nel Villaggio. Parole chiave ed esperienze del CEIS di Rimini. Rilettura e aggiornamento delle parole chiave del Centro Educativo italo svizzero di Rimini, a sessant'anni dalla sua nascita. Un contributo all'impegno educativo della città e al rinnovamento della scuola italiana*, Gardolo (TN), Erickson, 2008.

⁷ T. De Luigi & S. Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro. Cinquant'anni di vita del CEIS*, presentation by R.L. Montalcini, Rimini, Maggioli Editore, 1996.

⁸ R.L. Montalcini, *Introduzione*, *Ivi*, p. 7.

⁹ C. De Maria (eds.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*. Proceedings of the conference held at the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) (Rimini, 7 May 2011), Bologna, Clueb, 2012; Id., *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, Roma, Viella, 2015. See also the recent collection *Utopia e concretezza: ricordiamo Margherita Zoebeli a 110 anni dalla nascita/Utopia and pragmatism: remembering Margherita Zoebeli 110 years after her*

clude Tiziana Pironi's research, focused on the pedagogical role that the so-called (at the beginning) Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village) has played over the years as a centre promoting active and cooperative education throughout Italy¹⁰.

Equally important has been the research that has examined CEIS from an architectural point of view. In the introduction to the collection *Lo spazio che educa. Il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini*, the editors point out that even in the original design of the Village, planned by Schwarz together with Margherita, particular importance was attached to community life with a specific arrangement of pavilions, articulation of the outdoor spaces, a communal square and smaller squares, and to greenery. Even today, the outdoor and indoor spaces invite children, parents and adults who visit the centre to linger, they encourage encounters and dialogue with nature and with others, promote discovery, invention, experimentation and self-government. The urban design of the village thus becomes the main mediator of an education in sociality, in the individual's sense of belonging to the community, where well-being is also guaranteed by the quality and care of the natural and built elements, by creative and responsible participation in the care of such places and things, as an integral part of the community itself.

In the same vein, in 2017, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of CEIS, Andrea Ugolini published a volume collecting the contributions of the conference organised by the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation) and the Centro Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre). On this occasion, the concept of space behind the layout of the Village was examined in depth and from its inception, also considering it in a European dimension¹¹.

Finally, a few days after the conference, Christian Raimo published a book in which he devoted a chapter to the experience of Margherita Zoebeli. He saw her as a woman deeply imbued with anti-fascist sentiments, whose «educational ideal was one and the same with her militancy in the Spanish Civil War or her commitment to the Resistance»¹². While describing a school

birth, in «Clionet. Per un senso del tempo e dei luoghi. Rivista di Public History: storie, percorsi, saperi, arti e mestieri», <https://rivista.clionet.it/autore/carlo-de-maria/>, last accessed: 11/08/2023.

¹⁰ See in particular the chapter *La comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli: il CEIS di Rimini*, in T. Pironi, *Percorsi di pedagogia al femminile. Dall'unità d'Italia al secondo dopoguerra*, Roma, Carocci, 2014, pp. 151-179.

¹¹ A. Ugolini (ed.), *Ruderi e baracche. Bambini. CEIS: Riflessioni a più voci su un'architettura speciale*. Texts by K. Fabbri, A. Lambertini, M. Maioli, T. Matteini, S. Morri, M.L. Stoppioni, A. Ugolini, Firenze, Altralinea Edizioni, 2017, pp. 17-18.

¹² C. Raimo, *L'ultima ora. Scuola, democrazia, utopia*, Milano, Adriano Salani Editore, 2022, pp. 219-243 (in particular p. 243).

that, on the basis of what CEIS has achieved, must become a guarantee of social advancement, Gianluca Argentin recently underlined how, unfortunately, this guiding principle is today dramatically compromised¹³.

Given the lively educational dynamics of today's society, the conference organised on 18-19 November 2022 focused on the activities that Margherita Zoebeli carried out over the decades: the didactic innovation in kindergartens and primary schools, the approach to juvenile deviance and disability, the training of teachers and educators and the network of professionals of the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre).

Research in the Fondo d'Archivio di Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive Fund) has brought to light new and largely unpublished aspects of the work of the Swiss educator and pedagogist, as can be seen from the contributions collected in this volume, which are the papers presented at the conference arranged thematically. In the first part, the various essays examine in depth the following aspects: the network of international relations that underpinned Margherita Zoebeli's work at the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation (Pironi); the centrality of expressive activities in the initiatives she promoted for children during the Spanish Civil War (Meda); the relationship between pedagogy and architecture in the construction of the Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village) (Maioli); the relations that Margherita Zoebeli established with other avant-garde initiatives, such as the Scuola-Città Pestalozzi in Florence (Betti); and the importance of CEIS in the promotion of cooperative pedagogy in Italy (D'Auria).

The second part gathers those contributions that reconstruct the history of the educational institutions created by Zoebeli in the Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village), and, in particular: the evolution of the kindergarten considered in relation to the national and international context (Caroli); the contribution of the Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village) to the development of open-air schools in Italy (D'Ascenzo); the activities of the summer camps in the second post-war period on the initiative of Margherita Zoebeli (Salustri).

The third part analyses in detail those experiences and didactic activities within the CEIS that were innovative and, in some way, pioneering for local and national schools such as: the inclusion of children with disabilities (Caldin-Sapucci); the use and creation of children's books in pedagogical activities within the Village (Grandi); the new musical approach by children (Addessi). Finally, given the importance of photography in Margherita Zoebeli's teaching activities, a section dedicated to the photographic archive

¹³ G. Argentin, *Nostra scuola quotidiana. Il cambiamento necessario*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2021.

could not be omitted, as it also documents CEIS activities through the lenses of famous photographers of the time (Sorrentino).

At the end of the third part, Cristina Gambini (Gruppo Icaro) presents the interesting documentary dedicated to CEIS, made in 2022 by director Teo De Luigi, who died a few days before the conference. Finally, the Appendix, edited by Maurizio Boarini, brings together six testimonies from current and former educators at CEIS, whose experience spans more than twenty years. These are voices that, in a trip down memory lane, maintain an immediate style, unfiltered by editorial work, and preserve the spontaneity of the educational relationship developed with the children.

The editors would like to thank everyone at the University Campus of Rimini who contributed to the organisation of the event, including its President, Alessia Mariotti, and all the staff for their professionalism. They would also like to thank the staff of the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) in Rimini, who constantly facilitated the research of the sources and allowed the publication of the photographs held in the Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive). They are also grateful to Gruppo Icaro for the screening of Teo De Luigi's documentary, *Lo spazio che vive* during the conference.

Through this close collaboration between the University and the local authorities of Rimini, the editors hope that CEIS will continue to support and accompany the children in their growth, as interpreters of the values of freedom, solidarity and democracy.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

PART ONE

Margherita Zoebeli
from internationalism to activism

Caring for youth to save humanity: Margherita Zoebeli's educational intervention on the international network of the Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation

Tiziana Pironi

Premise

The objective of this contribution is to reconstruct the fabric of the relationships which were at the basis of the founding and development of the activities of the Soccorso Operaio Svizzero / Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk (Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation, SOS/SAH), of which Margherita Zoebeli's educational action was a part. In the name of a project-intervention, in favour of the most disadvantaged childhoods, various personalities stand out, for the most part female who brought together their initiatives for the construction of a better world, all being animated by pacifist ideals and human emancipation.

It is highlighted how, in the climate of a Europe torn apart by wars and totalitarianism, the aid network implemented for refugee children affected by serious psychological traumas, finds valid operational indications in the pioneering studies offered by the child neuropsychiatry of the time. What emerges above all is the awareness that the hardships suffered during childhood in serious emergency situations must be addressed on the basis of accurate educational professionalism. This is a need which was strongly pursued by Maria Montessori at the height of the First World War which was also known within the humanitarian circuit and international pacifism.

Strengthened by this wealth of ideas and experiences, in the name of a pedagogy aimed at intervening against a childhood marked by neglect and abandonment, Margherita Zoebeli gave life to the Italian-Swiss Village, a true experiment in community education and, at the same time, a new model of human coexistence.

1. The activity of the Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation (SOS/SAH) in favour of disadvantaged children

In 1932, twenty-year-old Margherita Zoebeli, already very politically active within the Swiss Socialist Youth movement, approached the world of education when the Proletarian Aid for Children involved her in initiatives aimed at the children of unemployed workers. Thus began her activity within this solidarity organisation, promoted by the Swiss Trade Union, together with the Swiss Social Democratic Party and women's associations, in order to deal with the impact of the economic crisis on workers as, after 1929, there had been mass layoffs in the textile and watchmaking industries. The children of the unemployed were the most vulnerable victims of the situation which had occurred in families due to the loss of work, and consequently holiday camps were organised to host them during the summer months in collaboration with the Friends of Nature.

Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann (Fig. 1) was the soul of that project which, in a short time, given the serious humanitarian situation on the international level, took on a much broader dimension; under her direction, the Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation (SOS/SAH) was established in 1936, the main objective of which was to focus its action upon the cause of refugees, in particular minors¹. Born in 1889 in Zurich, to a family of Lithuanian Jews, Regina Fuchsmann married the philologist Paul Kägi, who she met at the University of Zurich. Already a primary school teacher, in 1913, she had undertaken studies to obtain a teaching diploma for secondary school. Having acquired her degree, she taught privately, as the Swiss legislation at that time did not allow married women to teach in public schools. The awareness of the serious injustices suffered by women had pushed her to the decision to create in

¹ Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation (SOS/SAH) was founded by Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann (1889-1972) who directed it until 1951. She was later among the founders of Helvetas (1955), the first Swiss aid organisation for the development of non-European countries, based on political and religious neutrality. In 1961, the University of Zurich awarded her an honorary doctorate. She was remembered by the Italian-Swiss Centre of Rimini on the occasion of her death: «She died in Zurich at 82 years of age, after having spent her life trying to help children affected by war, misunderstanding and abandonment, and by disabilities. She was a great friend, founder of the Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation (SOS/SAH) and founder of the CEIS (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre); those who knew her by having worked with her when the village was built, and those who came later and learned from others how much the CEIS owed to Regina, deeply miss her» (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre Association of Rimini, *Third annual meeting*, 12 May 1973, Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive, hereafter AMZ), Biblioteca civica Gambalunga di Rimini (Gambalunga Public Library of Rimini, hereafter BGR), Misc. C. 959, Op. 1, p. 4.

Schaffhausen where she lived between 1918 and 1932 – the Schaffhauser Frauenzentrale Association in favour of home workers, which she presided over from 1923 to 1925. Her political commitment to the Socialist Party and to the cause of women's emancipation was strongly permeated by pacifist ideals, nourished by the awareness that the first The World War had represented a crucial passage, fraught with tragic consequences on a humanitarian level².

Having moved to Zurich in 1932, Regina Fuchsmann directed the Relief Organisation for the children of blue-collar workers from 1933, intent on finding a concrete remedy for the psychological problems and emotional suffering of the most disadvantaged childhoods, making use of the support offered by pioneering studies in the field of child psychiatry which had found a main centre of development in Vienna in the 1920s. Moreover, the sensitivity she nurtured towards the most vulnerable childhood had been profoundly marked by her maternal experience, as her son Peter (1919-1942) was suffering from childhood schizophrenia. For this reason, as she herself wrote in her autobiography, she tried to find out all she could regarding the new approaches offered in the psychotherapeutic field, including that of the German psychologist Charlotte Bühler who would later lay the foundation of humanistic psychology, together with Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow³.

Let us not forget that the point of reference for the educational experiences undertaken by the Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation (SOS/SAH), as Margherita Zoebeli would remember, was the customised psychology of Alfred Adler⁴. The research of the Viennese psychoanalyst had, in fact, highlighted the importance of a family and school context which would favour

² M. Bürgi, *Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann* (translated into Italian by V. Ferloni), in Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (ed.), *Dizionario Storico della Svizzera*, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/009339/2014-11-26> (last accessed 06/05/2024); M. Fleury, *Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann, socialiste et militante humanitaire*, in M. Vuilleumier, C. Heimberg (eds.), *L'autre Suisse: 1933-1945. Syndicalistes, socialistes, communistes. Solidarité avec les réfugiés*, Carouge, Éditions d'En bas, 2003, pp. 41-45 (Actes de la Journée d'étude du 27 mai 2000).

³ R. Kägi-Fuchsmann, *Das gute Herz genügt nicht. Mein Leben und meine Arbeit*, Zürich, Verlag Ex Libris, 1968, p. 103. I thank Daniela Bernasconi for making the Italian translation of the text available to me on behalf of the Margherita Zoebeli Foundation.

⁴ The reference to Adlerian psychology is recalled by Margherita Zoebeli in the *Notes and proposals for discussion on the problems of education in the CEIS and IMPP*, Rimini 8 February 1973, in AMZ, Misch. C 959, op. 2; as well as in M. Zoebeli, *Dialogo radiofonico di Michele Gulinucci. Radio Tre, 21 marzo 1993*, in Margherita Zoebeli Foundation (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il Ceis. Documenti di un'utopia*, Rimini, Edizioni Chiamami Città, 1998, p. 19.

the full development of the subject's unique and one-of-a-kind personality from early childhood⁵. Beginning in 1920, the first psycho-pedagogical consultancies were established in Viennese schools on Adler's initiative; they were made up of a team of psychotherapists, pedagogists and educators who provided free consultancy to pupils, teachers and general practitioners⁶.

At the centre of the educational problem, based on the Adlerian approach, there was the question not of what but of how to create a community in which everyone could develop his/her own creative potential. Moreover, Margherita Zoebeli would later state that, within the SOS/SAH activities, seminars and working groups were held in which «we had to discuss how to organise a community, how to create a place for each child and how to enhance the resources of each child»⁷.

The educational intervention concerning childhood marked by neglect and abandonment was therefore supported by a cutting-edge theoretical and experimental approach, developed at the complex crossroads of Vienna between the two wars, which was not surprisingly defined by Rudolf Ekstein as «the cradle of application of psychoanalysis to education»⁸.

Think of the experiences of Siegfried Bernfeld who, in 1919 together with Wilhelm Hoffer, had created the Kinderheim Baumgarten (Baumgarten children's home), based on the new therapeutic model of community life, and which welcomed approximately three hundred children and adolescents from three to sixteen years of age, war orphans, many of them Jews, who were found scattered in Moravia, Galicia, Russia and Poland⁹. Also in those same years, August Aichorn experimented with the opening of model communities in northern Austria, aimed at refugees «criminal and asocial adolescents, but also difficult and neurotic children as well as adolescents of various kinds»¹⁰.

In this sense, psychoanalysis was applied to an education based on observation, dialogue, empathic listening, and respect for the individuality of each person, in convergence with the principles of active pedagogy, which was found at one of the main centres of development, the J.J. Institute Rous-

⁵ A. Adler, *Prassi e teoria della psicologia individuale*, Roma, Astrolabio, 1947.

⁶ See R. Raimondo, *Maria Montessori and Anna Freud: links and influences between pedagogy and psychoanalysis*, in «Rivista di Storia dell'Educazione», 8/2 (2021), p. 77.

⁷ Zoebeli, *Dialogo radiofonico*, cit., p. 19.

⁸ R. Ekstein, *L'infusso della psicanalisi sull'educazione e l'insegnamento*, in G. Ammon (ed.), *Pedagogia e psicanalisi*, Rimini-Firenze, Guaraldi Editore, 1975, p. 39.

⁹ Raimondo, *Maria Montessori and Anna Freud*, cit., p. 77.

¹⁰ A. Aichhorn, *Gioventù disadattata* Roma, Città Nuova, 1978, p. 16 (original edition, *Verwahrloste Jugend. Die Psychoanalyse in der Fürsorgeerziehung. Zehn Vorträge zur ersten Einführung*, Leipzig, Wien, Zürich, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1925).

seau founded in 1912 in Geneva. Therefore, the Viennese School found particularly fertile ground for diffusion in Switzerland, thanks above all to the Psychoanalytic Society of Zurich and the Swiss Society of Pedagogy; in particular, the latter organised continuous training courses aimed at teachers, at the Pestalozzi-Fellenberg-Haus, founded by Schneider in Bern¹¹.

The Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation (SOS/SAH), thanks to this theoretical and experiential material, therefore focused its interventions on children and adolescents whose medical certificates frequently reported the following characteristics: «anaemic, malnourished, nervous, delayed in psychophysical development, at risk of tuberculosis»;¹² holiday homes were organised for them, and where possible, hospitality with families, in the awareness expressed by Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann that «for children of this kind, small private homes were needed similar to a family unit»¹³.

They were initiatives which conformed to a broader project, on the basis of which education was understood to be a tool for human promotion and social change we could say with a view to building a better world.

2. Childhood in war

With the new scenarios that opened in the 1930s of a Europe in the grip of wars and totalitarianism, the main task of the SOS/SAH became that of providing assistance to refugees. The Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation (SOS/SAH) took on a crucial role, dealing with the expatriation of those persecuted by Nazism and fascism when they took refuge in Switzerland. But it was with the Spanish Civil War that the SOS/SAH found itself involved in a vast and complex operation at the service of a common cause, carried out in synergy with Swiss associations, among which the Association of Socialist Women, the International Civil Service (SCI), the Swiss Caritas, the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom, and the Quaker movement all stood out; they were associations which found a connection in the Swiss Committee for the Help of Children of Spain, under the direction of Rodolfo Olgiati¹⁴.

¹¹ See J. Moll, *La pédagogie psychanalytique. Origine et histoire*, Paris, Dunot, 1989, pp. 39-42.

¹² Kägi-Fuchsmann, *Das gute Herz genügt nicht*, cit., p. 106 (trans. by D. Bernasconi in progress).

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Rodolfo Olgiati (Lugano, 1905 - Bern, 1986) distinguished himself from his youth for his pacifist and humanitarian activity. Having graduated as a mathematics and physics teacher at the ETH in Zurich, he taught from 1929 to 1932 at the Odenwaldschule in Heppenheim, created in 1910 by Paul Geheeb. The progressive education movement had

In May 1937, the first humanitarian workers left Switzerland headed for Spain on board trucks, with the main objective of providing, in addition to immediate relief to the population, the evacuation of children and mothers with newborns from the cities bombed by Franco's supporters in order to settle them in safe places along the coast, setting up makeshift barracks for infirmaries, kitchens, schools, nurseries, summer camps. Aid to civilians living in the republican zone was coordinated by a team of volunteers, including Rodolfo Olgiati, Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann, Marianne Flügge-Oeri¹⁵ and Anna Siemsen¹⁶ who set up homes for children in Catalonia.

a great influence on his thinking and actions. During the Spanish Civil War, Olgiati was secretary of the Committee for Swiss Aid to the Children of Spain, and coordinated humanitarian rescue operations from 1937. In January 1942, when the "Swiss Cartel for the Relief of Child Victims of War" was transferred to the Swiss Red Cross, Rodolfo Olgiati brought his organisational experience with him, but resigned at the end of 1943. From 1944 to 1948, Olgiati was head of *Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten* (Swiss Donation for the Victims of War, SSK; in French *Don suisse pour les victimes de la guerre*), a National Swiss Organisation for post-war reconstruction, which in 1948, became Swiss Aid to Europe. Specifically, Olgiati managed support for the displaced population in Germany in collaboration with Marianne Flügge-Oeri who had also been part of the Swiss Aid to Europe. From 1949 to 1970, Olgiati was a member of the International Red Cross with headquarters in Geneva. In 1955, together with Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann, Rodolfo Olgiati was one of the main founders of the Swiss organisation for development aid for non-European countries (Helvetas). During his life he also worked for the creation of a civil service alternative to the military one in Switzerland, see A. Schmidlin, *Rodolfo Olgiati* (translated into Italian by V. Ferloni), in Swiss Academy of Human and Social Sciences (ed.), *Dizionario Storico della Svizzera*, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/009050/2009-11-02/> (last accessed 06/05/2024); N. Schmöller, *Creative Recursos in humanitarian aid in Spain and in France (1937-1943)*, Madrid, UNED, 2019, pp. 61-73.

¹⁵ Marianne Flügge-Oeri (Basel, 1911 - Hanover, 1983) was a pioneer for women's rights and female education in Lower Saxony. After graduating from high school in Basel, she did social work for a year among the Quakers in the slums of London. Beginning in 1931, she studied law at the Universities of Basel and Geneva where she received her doctorate in 1936. She then went to Sweden where she worked on adult education and the political education of women. During the years of the Spanish Civil War, she became part of the management of the Swiss Aid Committee for the Children of Spain. She was part of the Evangelical Church, D. Münkner, *Marianne Flügge-Oeri, Eine Expertin für Frauenbildung*, in Münkner, *Predigt und Gemeindeaufbau*, Selbstverlag, Hannover, 2000.

¹⁶ Anne Marie Siemsen (Mark, 1882 - Hamburg, 1951) was a German politician, pedagogist and writer who stood out for her pacifist and pro-European activity. Her political-pedagogical conception had as its objective the formation of individual personalities within a supportive, peaceful, plurilingual, multicultural and multireligious community. From a Protestant family, she was among the first women in Germany to graduate and

The following year, in 1938, on behalf of the Committee and on the specific mandate of the Internationale Socialiste des Femmes (International Socialist Women) (ISF), Margherita Zoebeli reached the Catalan town of Puigcerdà, located a few kilometres from the French border, to deal with the assistance and education of orphans hosted in a summer camp. With the start of the Spanish Civil War, the republican forces gave rise to the organisation of the so-called «colonies scolaires» («school camps») which quickly became the home and school of all the children evacuated from Madrid¹⁷. During the bombing of Barcelona on the part of the Francoists, Zoebeli managed to organise expatriation and save the little refugees who had been entrusted to her, undertaking a journey which led them to reach a summer camp near the beach of Sète in the South of France; here she had the opportunity of personally meeting Célestin Freinet whose pedagogy she would later refer to after the Second World War at the Italian-Swiss Village in Rimini¹⁸.

As has often been observed, even during that clandestine journey through the Pyrenees, under conditions bordering on survival, the Swiss educator wondered how it would be possible to foster a collaborative and reassuring climate for the children entrusted to her. Many of them were orphans, found exhausted and dispersed among the ruins of the cities, and it therefore be-

obtain a doctorate in Philosophy, later teaching in German high schools. The First World War marked a turning point in her life; she joined the anti-militarist Social Democratic Party, and joined various pacifist and feminist associations. In the 1920s, she became a member of the Düsseldorf city council (on behalf of the USPD), dealing with school problems; in 1923, she began teaching Pedagogy at the University of Jena. Elected to the German parliament in 1928, she voluntarily resigned two years later, not sharing the party's support for rearmament, and then definitively left the USPD; later, due to her position, the Thuringian government stripped her of the title of full professor. With the advent of Nazism, she fled to Switzerland, having married Walter Vollenweider (1903-1971), local secretary of the Swiss Workers' Youth, in 1934, and joined the Socialist Party. Returning to Germany at the end of the Second World War, she taught Pedagogy at the University of Hamburg. Regarding her activity during the Spanish Civil War, together with Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann, see the interesting contribution by Luís Manuel Calvo Salgado, *Swiss humanitarian, during the Spanish Civil War: The journey of Anna Siemsen and Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann*, in «Culture & History Digital Journal», vol. 8/2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.3989>.

¹⁷ Regarding the transformation of these summer camps into educational communities along the lines of similar experiences organised by the international New Education movement, see the article by S. Braster and M. Andrés del Pozo del Mar, *Summer Camps in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939): The Images of the Community Ideal*, in «Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education», n. 4 (2015), pp. 455-477.

¹⁸ On C. Freinet's Hospitality of Child Exiles from Barcelona: E. Bottero, *Célestine Freinet. Storia e attualità di una pedagogia*, Edizioni Junior, 2025, pp. 83-85.

came necessary to seek the most appropriate strategies to heal their mental wounds¹⁹.

It was a problem which had aroused the sensitivity and interest of Maria Montessori during the First World War, leading her to the White Cross project as she named it with the aim of training educational personnel specialised in the treatment of mental trauma suffered by children in places of conflict²⁰. She had therefore made an appeal to various personalities from the world of politics and culture, in particular Augusto Osimo, then president of the Humanitarian Society:

I am writing to interest you in the 'White Cross', the white cross of children. It involves establishing a White Cross for children, parallel to the Red Cross for soldiers wounded in war. In this war of people, children are victims, especially worthy of prompt attention [...]. Especially in occupied territory, children can no longer be considered as 'children of the wounded', who must be 'treated'. Psychic 'shocks' [sic] in children (fright, etc.) represent real 'wounds [...]. Doctors treating nervous diseases and especially trained teachers are, in the 'White Cross', what surgeons and nurses are in the 'Red Cross' [...], and they would go to serve children [...]. The Humanitarian Society in Italy should take up this work which falls within its modernly beneficial sphere of action, and should stimulate and coordinate the initiatives intended to gather the innocents, the seeds of tomorrow's life, on the field of massacre, to save them, and thus prepare the fruits of peace. Today's children are the forces of reconstruction which we hope to count on in the post-war period [...]. Save children: here is the cry of those who work for humanity today²¹.

¹⁹ We can find the distinctive feature which characterises Margherita Zoebeli's educational work in the words expressed, after her death, by Raffaele Laporta: «Her educational experience was not born in the school, but from the ruins of cities and towns at war, from the collection of refugees, from groups of young creatures on the run to be welcomed and made to live together. Making them live and relive meant providing emotional and intellectual shelter for their profound traumas and guiding them out of social catastrophes to learn the normality of life and culture», R. Laporta, *Presente finchè duri amore*, in Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura*, cit., p. 11.

²⁰ T. Pironi, *Da Maria Montessori a Margherita Zoebeli: l'impegno educativo nei confronti dell'infanzia traumatizzata dalla guerra*, in «Annali online della didattica e della formazione docente», n. 12 (2016), pp. 115-128.

²¹ The letter is reported in *Il Metodo Montessori e l'opera della Società Umanitaria* (extracted from *L'Umanitaria e la sua opera*, Milano, Humanitarian Society, 1922, pp. 268-271).

In that undertaking, which however failed to materialise, we can find – in my opinion – that ideal motivation destined to fuel the initiatives undertaken by Margherita Zoebeli. Undoubtedly, between the two wars, Maria Montessori's proposal was well known within the circuit of international humanitarianism and pacifism, also fueling a debate in the world of psychiatry on the educational methods with which to deal with childhood trauma.

The Children's Homes set up by her for the little survivors of the Messina earthquake in 1908, and subsequently, in 1916, by her pupil, the New Yorker Mary Cromwell, for the Belgian and French refugee children, had convinced her of how necessary educational strategies designed for the care of environments and relationships were to build an educational setting in situations of extreme disaster²². Unlike forced hospitalisation, childhood is a safe and welcoming place where being able to carry out activities answering children's needs would not only have "cured" the cognitive and emotional disorders of the young survivors, but at the same time, it would have offered an important contribution to promoting lasting peace among future generations²³.

Moreover, Maria Montessori's pacifist commitment remained unchanged over the years, in full awareness that wars were the promoters, as well as the direct consequence, of a sick and "degenerate" society, and that it was therefore necessary to care for the mental health of human beings from birth²⁴. In 1932, at the famous Peace and Education conference which she delivered at the Bureau international d'éducation (International Bureau of Education), she had stated that the seeds of war lurked in the authoritarian relationships between adults and children²⁵.

²² We can find clear convergence with the work of Anna Freud, an advocate of the War Nursery during the Second World War. As Egle Becchi writes, for Anna Freud «ideas must be operational, they must be put into practice, in well-thought-out places, where they can be used for further reflection», E. Becchi, *Anna Freud. Infanzia e pedagogia*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2021, p. 32.

²³ In fact, Maria Montessori wrote «We need to train personnel who know the situation and do not want to go to normally organised hospitals, but to carry out their work in catastrophic situations, on disaster sites», M. Montessori, *La Croce bianca*, in «La Cultura popolare», 9 (1917), p. 663.

²⁴ T. Pironi, *Percorsi di pedagogia al femminile. Dall'unità d'Italia al secondo dopoguerra*, Roma, Carocci, 2014, pp. 50-53. For an in-depth analysis of pacifism, Montessori, see the recent volume by E. Moretti, *The best weapon for peace. Maria Montessori, Education, and Children's rights*, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2021.

²⁵ «The obedience to which the child is subjected in the family and in school, an obedience which does not admit reason and justice, prepares man to be submissive to the fatality of things», M. Montessori, *La pace. Bureau international d'éducation* –

Regarding the common thread of an emergency pedagogy to remedy the mental traumas suffered in childhood, we find that universalistic inspiration which Margherita Zoebeli and Maria Montessori had in common, condensed in the words of the latter when she wrote «the only way out for the individual is that all humanity is saved»²⁶.

3. The urgency of reconstruction: The Italian-Swiss Village of Rimini

In 1944, the Swiss government approved the creation of *Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten* (Swiss Donation for the Victims of War, SSK; in French *Don suisse pour les victimes de la guerre*) which brought together a federation of organisations engaged in welfare, with the task of developing intervention projects in the most affected areas. Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann coordinated aid for the victims of the conflict and for reconstruction in Europe as co-founder of Swiss Donation for the Victims of War (1944). The establishment of social centres was therefore planned in the main European cities devastated by the war (the so-called 12 cities programme), consisting of groups of barracks, which were to serve as canteens, workplaces for women, schools and nursery schools for children, homes for orphans, and recreational and cultural venues for adults²⁷. One of the main centres was built in Lille, on the border between France and Belgium, which had been hit hard by the German advance through Holland and Belgium towards southern France. As Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann writes in her autobiography, in

the tangle of ruins of Lille, the Social Centre was born with the aim of re-awakening the spiritual life of the population: two large day rooms where children could stay and play, a section for newborns, a welcoming lounge for the elderly, three rooms for nurseries, and dining rooms for ‘their’ children and for those from other parts of the city if their homes were destroyed²⁸.

Geneva, 1932, in Ead., *Educazione e pace*, Roma, Edizioni Opera Nazionale Montessori, 2004, p. 20.

²⁶ M. Montessori, *L'autoeducazione nelle scuole elementari* [1916], Milano, Garzanti, 2000, p. 244.

²⁷ Kägi-Fuchsmann, *Das gute Herz genügt nicht. Mein Leben und meine Arbeit*, cit., p. 244.

²⁸ *Ivi*, p. 242. Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann stated that the home for newborns in Innsbruck, the pedagogical nursery in Vienna, and the Italian-Swiss Centre in Rimini had become permanent structures.

Given the urgent need to have trained personnel, «special and permanent courses» were organised in Zurich and Geneva, aimed at teachers of nursery schools, kindergartens and educational services of all kinds²⁹.

As is known, in May 1945, the new mayor of Milan, Antonio Greppi who, during fascism, had found refuge in Switzerland, thanks to the SOS/SAH, acted as an intermediary with Swiss Donation for the Victims of War, forwarding requests for help from Arturo Clari, the newly elected socialist mayor of Rimini. The Swiss association immediately responded to the appeal and appointed a commission to organise humanitarian aid³⁰.

On 17 December 1945, Margherita Zoebeli arrived in Rimini, a member of a delegation of four people (in addition to the architect Felix Schwarz there were Alberto Panizzi and Barbara Seidenfeld)³¹. Moreover, the experience with the Spanish refugee children was the dress rehearsal for the social and educational commitment promoted in Rimini, the most bombed Italian city, after Cassino. She immediately became the driving force behind the project for the creation of a social centre and a structure for orphans, not to be conceived according to the usual welfare criteria. On the basis of the principle of «helping to help each other», the launching of professional courses, workshops for women, a library, a nursery school and a home for orphans was contemplated. In April 1946, before the official inauguration, symbolically established on 1 May, thirteen wooden barracks had already been erected to accommodate a nursery school and a home for orphans as well as various craft workshops.

A fundamental contribution was offered by the architect Felix Schwarz who, together with Zoebeli, had developed the project for that Village in Zurich in November 1945 which, in a short time, became very famous for having implemented a true model of community pedagogy³². A priority task was

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ For additional information regarding the activity of the Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation (SOS/SAH) in Italy, see C. De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro-educativo-Italo-Svizzero di Rimini*, Roma, Viella, 2015.

³¹ See C. De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra. Atti del convegno tenutosi al Centro educativo italo-svizzero Rimini, 7 maggio 2011*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012.

³² Felix Schwarz (Bremgarten, 1917 - Zurich, 2013) graduated with Hans Hofmann from the Polytechnic University of Zurich. In the 1940s, he collaborated with Alfred Roth and Aldo van Eyck for the development of cutting-edge architecture intended for new educational institutions; he was then a professor at the school of architecture of the University of Geneva from 1969 to 1971, see T. Freivogel, *Felix Schwarz* (translated into Italian by F. Luisoni), in Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (ed.), *Dizionario Storico della Svizzera*, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/027421/2021-03-08/> (last

to build a building which would house orphaned children and adolescents whose psycho-physical conditions were seriously compromised by the deprivations and consequences of the war. Zoebeli thought about creating an environment capable of reconstituting the intimate and protective one of “homes”, and of the nursery, in order to re-establish primary needs on an affectionate and emotional level as opposed to the authoritarian and depersonalising logic of an institute: «The Children’s Home which, on the basis of the well-known Pestalozzian ideal, had to foster a reassuring and welcoming climate, and for this reason was defined by Raffaele Laporta as «an example of a human entity, half family, half society»³³.

This peculiarity was later pointed out by Zoebeli herself during a radio interview: «Casina is the name that the children gave to the house where we welcomed them, a group of twenty children between three and six years of age, all victims of the war, orphans»³⁴.

Since 1943, in Zurich and in the main Swiss cities as mentioned there had been fundamental preparatory work which had seen the Swiss Worker’s Relief Organisation (SOS/SAH) and the Swiss Donation for the Victims of War (SSK) at the forefront of organising courses for the training of personnel capable of intervening in areas devastated by war³⁵. From those meetings, held in seminar form, the SEPEGs (Semaines Internationales d’études pour l’enfance victime de la guerre) were founded. They immediately took on an international dimension, calling for the collaboration of a pool of experts (pedagogists, doctors, psychiatrists, judges) willing to work in teams on studying the problems of childhood victims of war. The first international SEPEG conference was held in Zurich in September 1945, chaired by Heinrich Hanselmann³⁶ and Oskar Forel³⁷, two psychiatrists who had created in-

accessed 06/05/2024).

³³ R. Laporta, *Presente finché duri amore*, in Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura*, cit., p. 11. In 1962, the Children’s Home was enlarged with the construction of a new pavilion, which made it possible to accommodate, in a comfortable environment, approximately sixty problematic and disturbed children who were sent to the Rimini Centre by various welfare bodies (ENAOI, ONMI, Provincial Institutes for Children) as well as by various Provincial Administrations and medical-psycho-pedagogical centres from every part of Italy (*Notes on the activities carried out by the CEIS*, AMZ, Misc. C. 1115).

³⁴ Zoebeli, *Dialogo radiofonico*, cit., p. 44.

³⁵ Kägi-Fuchsmann, *Das gute Herz genügt nicht. Mein Leben und meine Arbeit*, cit., p. 230.

³⁶ The Swiss psychiatrist H. Hanselmann (Wald, 1885 - Ascona, 1960), after obtaining his doctorate in Psychology in 1911 from the University of Zurich, moved near Frankfurt, where he directed an observation centre for young people with behavioural disorders until 1916. Returning to Zurich following the outbreak of the war, he became the first

novative experiences on behavioural disorders in their curative pedagogy institutes in Zurich.

Subsequently, SEPEG meetings were held in France, Germany, and Sweden. In Italy, in 1947 and 1948, two SEPEG seminars took place at the Italian-Swiss Village where eighty of the most famous psychiatrists and pedagogists (including Ernesto Codignola, Lamberto Borghi, Aldo Visalberghi), doctors, and sociologists coming from Italy, Switzerland, France and the United States, met for two weeks to address the problems of the so-called “difficult children”³⁸. Carleton Washburne, a member of the Allied Commission who was in Italy at the time, also took part in the 1947 seminar. The second SEPEG meeting, organised in Rimini from 4 to 14 May, was introduced and chaired by Ernesto Codignola who presented the experience of Pestalozzi Scuola-Città, which he directed³⁹. The activities of SEPEG ended at the beginning of the 1950s, with the end of the reconstruction emergencies; however, those intense days of study and discussion on the topic of juvenile hardship and deviance favoured those initiatives which led to the establishment of the medical-psycho-pedagogical centres in Italy. Moreover, the first centre was established right at the Rimini Centre in 1953 under the direction of Margherita Zoebeli; it was organised thanks to the fundamental support of Swiss neuropsychiatrists. To allow the creation of the medical-psycho-pedagogical centre, scholarships in differential-curative pedagogy were granted, thanks to funds from Switzerland. The Centre offered a consultancy service to all school-welfare services in the Romagna area for the diagnosis and treatment of intellectual and behavioural anomalies, including the first cases of autism and anorexia⁴⁰.

director of the institute for curative pedagogy. He was secretary of the Pro Juventute until 1923, G. Heese, *Heinrich Hanselmann* (translated into Italian by D. Idra), Swiss Academy of Human and Social Sciences (ed.), *Dizionario Storico della Svizzera*, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/009029/2017-03-16/> (last accessed 06/05/2024).

³⁷ After graduating in Medicine, Auguste’s son, Oskar Forel (Zurich, 1891 - Saint Prex, 1982) specialised in psychiatry in Bern and directed the Swiss Society of Psychiatry. In 1934, in Prangins, on Lake Geneva, he founded the Les Rives psychiatric clinic where illustrious people from all over Europe were treated. During the Second World War, he was actively involved in helping refugees, C. Müller, *Oscar Forel* (translated into Italian by L. Rima-Cassina), Swiss Academy of Human and Social Sciences, *Dizionario Storico della Svizzera*, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/019717/2005-01-21/> (last accessed 06/05/2024).

³⁸ G. Pagliazzi, *Il rinnovamento educativo dopo il 1945*, in «Scuola e Città», 18 (1967), pp. 294-302.

³⁹ E. Codignola, *Le Sepeg*, in «Scuola e Città», 7 (1950), pp. 248-254.

⁴⁰ Notes on the medical-psycho-pedagogical activity carried out by the I.S. Educational Centre from 1946 to today, AMZ, Misc. C. 1111, pp. 1-3.

The Rimini Centre soon qualified itself as a cutting-edge pedagogical laboratory as its attention to the problems of children in difficulty made it possible to experiment with individualisation techniques in learning (Fig. 2). The “casina”, initially intended for war orphans, was then transformed into the “birch”, a building characterised by the tree of the same name which was planted in front of it; it was designed by the architect Giancarlo De Carlo in order to host «social orphans and children with complicated family problems»⁴¹. Following the path traced by Margherita Zoebeli, international co-operation intervention projects were subsequently launched at the Italian-Swiss Centre in countries involved in war or in serious socio-economic situations. In referring to what had been achieved by Margherita Zoebeli, Andrea Canevaro wrote that the initiatives and activities of help to be promoted in the community shelters for traumatised boys and girls «were delicate activities [...]. Because in order to really help us grow, and so that help becomes education – therefore reciprocity – it is necessary to be able to “live together in an ‘us’” which, at the same time, allows us not to erase the possibility of saying ‘It’s me’ and feeling loneliness without this necessarily becoming abandonment»⁴².

Translated by David Goldsmith

⁴¹ Zoebeli, *Dialogo radiofonico*, cit., p. 45.

⁴² A. Canevaro, *Introduction*, in A. Canevaro, M.G. Berliani, A.M. Camasta (eds.), *Pedagogia cooperativa in zone di guerra*, Trento, Erickson, 1998, p. 157.



Fig. 1 – Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann, ca. 1950 (Photo Elsbeth Schaffner, AMZ, CEI-0253_020).



Fig. 2 – Pierre Bovet, Continuing vocational training course for nursery school teachers, CEIS, 1952 (AMZ, CEI-0252_013).

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The main objective of the conference (18-19 November 2022) was to study, through archival documents, the valuable work carried out by the Swiss educator and teacher, who moved to Rimini after the Second World War. Thanks to Margherita Zoebeli and her national and international contacts, the Villaggio Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Village) she founded, later the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre - CEIS), became a true workshop of active pedagogy in the immediate post-World War II period.

The contributions focus on the pedagogical and educational value of her choices, considered in the context of the time, while also trying to highlight their relevance for today's training of educators and teachers, a training that is becoming increasingly important in view of the new challenges and emergencies that education has to face.

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