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

Edited by
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This series of volumes aims to publish monographs or collective volumes, both in Italian and other languages, concerning the history of pedagogy as widely understood within the Italian university field M-Ped/02. The studies will address issues that include the history of pedagogical ideas, education and educational institutions in general, and, in particular, preschool institutions and children's literature. Particular attention will be devoted to transnational and comparative dimensions of the educational problems and to pedagogical transfers of the past, which allows us to grasp the circulation of educational models and reciprocal influences at an institutional and cultural level. The multiple approaches of cultural history will also be adopted for the interpretation of the educational reforms and institutions of the different historical periods.

The volumes are subjected to double-blind review.
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On the cover: Margherita Zoebeli with children from the Italian-Swiss Educational Centre – CEIS (1954), Photopress Zürich (AMZ, CEI-0253_025), previously published in the Swiss weekly Cooperation, n. 26 (1954).

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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)

We renew our greetings… a few months later

Maurizio Fabbri and Ira Vannini

With the Conference *Margherita Zoebeli (1912-1996). One hundred and ten years after her birth. A life for active pedagogy at the service of childhood*, a new season of collaboration opened between the Department of Educational Sciences "Giovanni Maria Bertin" of the Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna, CEIS – Italian-Swiss Educational Centre and the Zoebeli Foundation of Rimini.

We are pleased to bring our greetings to the Conference, on the Rimini Campus, and we again thank the promoters Dorena Caroli and Tiziana Pironi, who masterfully organized the days of study dedicated to the figure of Margherita Zoebeli, a very significant Italian pedagogist in the history of post-World War II Italian pedagogy, who can also be considered one of the main female figures of twentieth-century pedagogy.

Already in the past, thanks to various professors of our Department of Educational Sciences – deeply committed and involved in the CEIS and Foundation project – and thanks to the intense activity of Andrea Canevaro, the collaboration with the Italian-Swiss Educational Centre had been significant and fruitful. We are convinced that such collaboration can still find energies for shared planning today, in the dual perspective of contributing to the educational quality of the territory and to the quality of the training of future educators and designers of Rimini curricula. In this direction, it is worth mentioning the start of a new phase, with the establishment of a working group, composed of faculty members from the Department of Educational Sciences "Giovanni Maria Bertin" and teachers and educators from CEIS, aimed at revitalizing the traditional relationships of dialogue, collaboration and planning: relationships formalized by the renewal of the agreement between CEIS and the Department.

The special institutional attention with which the conference was surrounded fills us with confidence for the development of our Department within the Rimini Campus. Again, we want to thank the Mayor of Rimini Jamil Sadegholvaad, the Magnificent Rector Giovanni Molari, and the Vice

Rector for Teaching and Education Roberto Vecchi for the words they dedicated during the Conference to a common project within the educational system and services of the Romagna territory. A heartfelt thank you to Alessia Mariotti, President of the Rimini Campus Board, for supporting this conference with particular organizational efficiency and care in relationships. We are still grateful to our colleagues Roberta Biolcati and Dario Tuorto, directors, respectively, of the Second Cycle Degree in *Planning and managing of educational intervention in social distress* and of the First Cycle Degree in *Expert in Social and Cultural Education*, for their commitment in this part of Romagna, distant only geographically from the Bologna Department. The active participation and interest of the students made all of us confident of the development and professional potential they themselves will benefit from within the vibrant and supportive territory of Romagna.

Margherita Zoebeli's ideas and pedagogical practices can, even more so today, be considered an important source of inspiration for all those who work in the field of education: educators and planners, trainers, teachers, territorial actors, policy makers and the civil community, who are facing the challenges of a complex and problematic present for children and young people, especially where there are conditions of inequality and social hardship. We have a very strong responsibility to guide educational policies and practices in our territories, in order to accompany all young people towards balanced paths of growth, development of critical awareness, and experiences oriented towards respect for others, democratic citizenship and active participation.

Just as Marguerite Zoebeli was able to deal with the problems of children affected by the traumas of war, educators today unfortunately also face dramatic problems that primarily affect the younger generation. Educational poverty, migration of minors, flight from wars, domestic and gender-based violence are huge issues that afflict us and urge us to deploy all our planning energies and pedagogical skills to identify some, small but invaluable, way out, even more so by looking to the example of the great women of our history, their strength, courage and political and social commitment.

We hope that, thanks to this Conference, the work of Margherita Zoebeli, who arrived in Rimini on December 17, 1945, and founded a Children's Village that was and still is a model of educational commitment, will be increasingly analyzed, studied, and deepened with critical awareness and historical intelligence, so as to offer a reference model for the educational professions. Our best wishes go to the Students who have chosen this difficult and beautiful profession, both challenging and generous, which is constantly confronted with a reality that changes abruptly and tends to get ahead of the times with the commitment gathered in projects of transformation and growth.

Margherita Zoebeli, creating a community in a plural world

Giovanna Guerzoni

Reflecting on the life of Margherita Zoebeli, one hundred and ten years after her birth, is important not only as a contribution to the history of socio-educational services in Italy, but also as a "political act". Margherita Zoebeli's life and ideas create a space where academic reflection meets the ability of communities to take local action – in Rimini, in this case. As a politically engaged educator and pedagogue, her life was directly and indirectly linked to the history and educational policies of Rimini from the post-Second World War years onwards.

Perhaps it is only now, after enough time has passed, that we can piece together not only her biography and pedagogical thought, which influenced the reconstruction of post-war Rimini, but also consider the numerous possible changes, whether by analogy or difference, with the present day. This allows us to recognise the importance of Margherita not only for those involved in education, but also for anyone living, studying or playing an active role in present-day Rimini[1].

Through the overview of her life, thoughts and choices of Margherita Zoebeli – who, as the conference organised by Dorena Caroli and Tiziana Pironi has underlined, we might today, perhaps inappropriately, define as "activist". Nevertheless, we can delve into a historical period whose everyday life we have perhaps partly forgotten. During the Second World War, buildings and infrastructure in Rimini were completely destroyed, and the entire area was in a state of extreme poverty. A young woman with a long-standing political commitment to childhood and an international network of contacts in the field of pedagogy, aimed to create an unprecedented educational experience. For Margherita Zobeli, the future of a community lay with

[1] See C. De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia*, Roma, Viella, 2015; Id., *Utopia e concretezza. Ricordiamo Margherita Zoebeli a 110 anni dalla nascita*, in «Clionet», n. 6 (2022); see also G. Fofi, *Margherita Zoebeli e il lavoro di comunità*, in «Quaderni Cisl. Scuola e formazione» (2016), pp. 54-55.

the boys and girls who had emerged from the trauma of war. However, she also believed that it was closely linked to the reconstruction of urban contexts as "pedagogically conceived spaces". Experimenting with new values of community development, education, growth and attention to inequalities shapes a concrete yet utopian path of community development based on education for active citizenship and, therefore, inclusion for all.

It is the youngest and most marginalised who can rebuild a community torn apart by war. Through dialogue between the past and the current situation, with education driven by politically and socially engaged pedagogy and supported by exchange with innovative international figures such as Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, Ernesto Codignola, Francesco De Bartolomeis, Lamberto Borghi, Aldo Capitini and Célestin Freinet, we can rediscover Margherita Zoebeli's contributions to pedagogy, educational practices and community life, as well as her forward-thinking approach[2]. However, delving into her life and work can also lead to a sense of disorientation. On the one hand, we observe social interactions, family life and childhood experiences that differ greatly from those of today. On the other hand, Margherita Zoebeli's actions seem to resonate with our present situation, in which we are once again confronted with the deafening and unjust reality of war in Europe and the Mediterranean. These aspects reveal the true face of violence: disruption to family life and education, and the violation of children's rights. They urge us to reflect on issues that seem impossible to solve by supporting pacifism alone, and to ask ourselves what kind of solidarity can guarantee the future of communities torn apart by war.

Of the many aspects of Margherita Zoebeli's life and work, I would like to focus on three issues that I feel are particularly relevant today. The concept of "community development" that emerges from the experience of the Italian-Swiss Educational Center (CEIS) is based on the decision to start again from childhood. This reveals Margherita Zoebeli's awareness that the effects of war are not only destruction and death, but can also be passed down through the generations. This hinders cultural transmission and the idea of "creating/making a community" over time. This is epitomised by the "trivial" aspects of daily social life that constitute the glue of a community. These aspects nourish social relations, such as friendship, respect, mutual aid and love. Their absence can lead to uncertainty about the future. This is particularly damaging for those who find themselves at this juncture with "their whole life ahead of them".

[2] 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», 8/12 (2016), pp. 115-128.

For Margherita Zoebeli and CEIS, "developing a community" involved establishing an educational community that can experiment with innovative teaching methods and help to overcome the initial emergency phase. It also concerned raising awareness on the strategic importance of educational policies in a rapidly changing social and cultural landscape.

While it may seem far-fetched, the story of Margherita Zoebeli and CEIS in Rimini embodies the qualities of a community organiser[3]. This involves addressing issues related to education, training, and inclusion through committed activism that considers the impact of educational interventions on social contexts. The story of the small CEIS community and its relationship with the city highlights the importance of avoiding any form of educational instrumentalism in order to affirm that "other worlds" are possible: worlds without war, where marginalised people have a voice, and where education for inclusion begins with a "community of practice"[4]. Thus, the life of Margherita and the history of CEIS, spanning the 20th century, remind us that education is a political act in itself, it means promoting inclusion and fighting social inequalities, while recognising the value of differences.

On closer inspection, the international scope of Margherita Zoebeli's life and work is highly relevant: her commitment to childhood – or rather, to children – reveals a strong criticism of border politics, which seem to deny humanity, both then and now, and which often affect childhood itself. It is no coincidence that the CEIS experience has, in recent years, led to the international cooperation project, Educaid. Educaid, of which CEIS is a founding member alongside local social cooperatives and the University of Bologna, has gained valuable experience working in various countries, from Palestine to South America. The organisation is driven by the belief that active and inclusive educational practices must be promoted both nationally and internationally in order to trigger processes of educational and social renewal, thereby overcoming the exclusion and marginalisation of children and adults (EducAid[5] Statute, 10 May 2004). Therefore, we must take this opportunity to learn more about Margherita Zoebeli's life, her pedagogical thinking, her ideas about community and her work on behalf of children. In a world that seems to be in a constant state of emergency, leaving us with

[3] B. Hooks, *Insegnare a trasgredire. L'educazione come pratica della libertà*, Roma, Meltemi, 2020.

[4] E. Wenger, *Comunità di pratica. Apprendimento, significato e identità*, Milano, Raffaele Cortina, 2006.

[5] EducAid is an NGO based in Rimini (Italy) which has been operating in the field of international cooperation for over 20 years in the sectors of education, psycho-social support and promotion of rights of the most vulnerable groups in various countries of the Global South.

little time for the in-depth reflection necessary to consider our responsibilities, especially with regard to childhood, the story of Margherita Zoebeli and CEIS demonstrate how we can create a new future by supporting young people.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

Introductory remarks

Emma Petitti

The Asilo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten), founded after the Second World War in a torn and destroyed city, has over time become a real point of reference not only for Rimini, but also for the region and the country. This innovative pedagogical model has been able *to put the child at the centre* of its activities and has also used the internal and external spaces as part of the project.

Reflecting on the early days of CEIS, our thoughts go to the current situation, to the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, after which the kindergarten, once again, immediately promoted recreational activities for young refugees and their families.

Over the years, thanks to the initiative of *Margherita Zoebeli*, the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) has become a reference point for state-of-the-art education, bringing together doctors, psychologists and pedagogists from all over the world.

The basic idea has always been an *active pedagogical model*, with the child at the centre of all activities, *an innovative model also from a cultural point of view*, with the city of Rimini as a backdrop, and the Centre becoming a piece of the city's history.

The Legislative Assembly of the Emilia-Romagna Region, which I represent, has strongly supported the documentary film *Lo spazio che vive* (The space that lives), produced by Gruppo Icaro, CEIS and Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation): the story of an institution that has left an indelible and significant mark on the city of Rimini and on all those who have come into contact with it.

Talking about this work also allows me to remember two great people who recently passed away: the Rimini director Teo De Luigi, who directed the film, and Andrea Canevaro, the father of special education, who worked for years with Margherita Zoebeli and the CEIS teachers and who gave a valuable interview in the documentary.

CEIS has been the driving force behind the kindergarten experience throughout the region, and its experience has had a very important influence on Italian pedagogy and beyond.

The Emilia-Romagna Region has always been very supportive of schools that improve pedagogy, taking into account all the aspects of it, including the *importance of space* for children.

We also believe that *focusing on children is the most important investment* to lay the foundations for the present and future of our society.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

Address by the President of CEIS (Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero, Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) in Rimini[1]

Romano Filanti

First of all, I would like to thank the President of the City Council, Giulia Corazzi, for her invitation, which I gladly accepted.

I first entered the CEIS building as a parent. In April 1995 I joined the Board of Statutory Auditors, in April 2014 I joined the Board of Directors as Director and Vice-President, and since October 2021 I have been President of CEIS, which I have the honour and pleasure to represent tonight.

The 28 years that I have spent at CEIS are, of course, nothing compared to the 77-year history of the institution, which was established first as a community centre, then as a kindergarten and is now the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre). And tonight, we are here to talk about our history.

My speech will be inspired by the book *Memoria come futuro* published on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of CEIS[2] by Teo De Luigi, a filmmaker from Rimini who died in October 2022, about whom I will speak later, and by Stefano Pivato, Professor of Contemporary History, Councillor for Culture of the Municipality of Rimini from 1999 to 2009, and Professor at the University of Urbino, of which he was Rector from 2009 to 2014.

I am sorry to return to the past and to those terrible post-war years, but it is useful in order to put today's situation in context, because it was during those years that the foundations of today's CEIS were laid.

As Oreste Delucca wrote, «after the Second World War (1945-1946), the situation in Rimini was truly tragic: 396 bombings suffered in 11 months,

[1] This address was taken and adapted from a speech delivered at the Conference, and given in full during the Rimini City Council meeting on 21 February 2023: See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ko2KPpJRR8U (last accessed 06/05/2024).

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

607 civilian victims, 4,189 buildings razed to the ground, 3,155 severely damaged, 1997 damaged, with a destruction coefficient of more than 82%»[3].

The devastated city of Rimini sent out a call for help, which was immediately answered by the Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation, as a sign of solidarity with those most hit by the war.

In August 1945, after an initial inspection in Rimini by the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation, it was decided to build a community centre and a kindergarten for the city's orphaned children.

The then Deputy Mayor, Gomberto Bordoni, together with Margherita Zoebeli (who later became the Director of the centre), personally oversaw the construction of the Community Centre and Kindergarten.

In December 1945, Margherita arrived in Rimini with a project drawn up by the architect Felice Schwarz and herself to coordinate the works that would lead to the construction of the centre and a kindergarten made up of 13 wooden huts that could accommodate up to 200 children.

The site chosen was the one next to the Roman amphitheatre – and therefore approval of the Archaeological Heritage Office was to be obtained – because it was owned by the municipality of Rimini but also because, although it had been hit by bombs, it was free of rubble, far from neighbouring houses and close to the city centre[4].

The City Council adopted the following 4 resolutions, which gave life to the project of architect Schwarz:

Resolution of 04/01/1946 "*Programme for the construction of a kindergarten made of barracks*" appointing Councillor Bordoni to represent the town council in its relations with the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation;

Resolution of 01/02/1946 "*Approval of the estimate for the construction of the kindergarten made of barracks donated by the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation"* replacing the Asilo Baldini (Baldini kindergarten), which had been destroyed during the war and therefore had to be financed with public funds. Estimated cost £2,980,000.

Resolution of 12/04/1946 "*Approval of the Statute of the Giardino d'Infanzia italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Kindergarten)*" with the name "Giardino d'Infanzia Italo-Svizzero" (Italian-Swiss Kindergarten) Remo Bordoni. The resolution and the statute approved by the City Council recognised that the project for the construction of the kindergarten had been approved by the Ministry of Public Education, as the area chosen was subject to archaeological constraints due to its proximity to a Roman amphitheatre.

[3] O. Delucca, *Nasce il centro italo-svizzero*, in T. De Luigi & S. Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro*, cit., p. 11.

[4] *Ivi*, p. 16.

Resolution of 23/04/1946 "*Appointment of a provisional commission*" for the management of the Asilo italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten). Therefore, in accordance with article 30 of the statutes («in the first days, the kindergarten was managed by a provisional commission appointed by the City Council, under the supervision of the Council itself»), the administration appointed the "Provisional Administrative Commission", chaired by deputy mayor Bordoni Gomberto and made up of ten members, mostly representatives of the municipality and public institutions. It would remain in office until March 1950[5].

The land on which the centre and the kindergarten were built was divided into two plots because of their double function:

– The southern part of the site was for children to play and work, and included the five classrooms of the kindergarten, the orphanage, the washhouse and the refectory;

– The northern part of the site was designed for adults. Here were installed offices, workshops (shoes, clothes, furniture), showers and the cultural room.

The Asilo italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten) was officially opened on 1 May 1946.

The people of Rimini welcomed the opening of the Centre and the barracks, built among the rubble of a destroyed city, which were both a boost to reconstruction and a strong sign of solidarity.

The centre immediately took in 150 children (aged 3 to 6) and 20 war orphans.

In 1947, it also opened a primary school for economically and psychophysically disadvantaged children[6].

The school adopted a new way of teaching, one that focused on the children and their needs. This pedagogical method is still the mainstay of CEIS today.

From the beginning to the present day, thousands of Rimini's inhabitants have attended CEIS, and several books have been written about Margherita Zoebeli and the CEIS barracks, the only ones left in Europe.

If the amphitheatre is an undeniable part of Rimini's history, so is CEIS: a "unique" school that, under Margherita's guidance, has become and continues to be a national and international reference point, a destination for scholars and the recipient of numerous awards. CEIS is not only at the service of its own community, but also participates, through EducAid, in several

[5] Resolutions of the Rimini City Council, *Ivi*, p. 16. See also the municipal archive of Rimini, Town council resolution series.

[6] O. Delucca, *Nasce il centro italo-svizzero*, in De Luigi & Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro*, cit., pp. 21-24.

international cooperation projects around the world (Armenia, El Salvador, Palestine, Kenya, Tunisia).

CEIS is a centre of excellence, not only in Rimini, but worldwide.

Today CEIS is a nursery, a kindergarten and a primary school attended by 320 boys and girls, of whom 9% have severe disabilities and are co-integrated in the classrooms.

The semi-residential community "La Betulla" is designed for minors (from secondary school and junior high school) in situations of social and family hardship, who are looked after by our educators.

The Press Centre is located in the CEIS Village and accomodates adults with mental health problems and developmental disabilities.

The Dyslexia Laboratory was established in 1976 to help children with reading and writing difficulties.

Today CEIS has 260 employees and about 60 members, including the Municipality of Rimini.

It is a charitable and non-profit organisation.

The famous filmmaker from Rimini, Teo de Luigi, portrayed and narrated it excellently in his film *Lo spazio che vive* (The space that lives). A documentary film on the 75 years of CEIS history, whose national premiere was held in Rimini, at the Fulgor and Tiberio cinemas, with 4 screenings, on 9 May 2022. About 650 people attended the 4 screenings.

Further screenings followed in 2022 and the film was seen by a total of about 1400 people.

This sometimes very moving documentary has touched people's hearts. I myself was moved when I saw it for the first time, as soon as it was cut.

Today we are showing the documentary film free of charge to the Town Council and all our citizens.

Unfortunately, our beloved Teo died in October 2022, but he left us his love for this *temple of Italian and international pedagogy*. He left us *Lo spazio che vive* and when you enter the gates of CEIS, you feel that you are breathing a different kind of air. A place to spend time in, filled with a sense of belonging and pride.

Yes, we are proud of our CEIS.

I would like to remember another great friend of CEIS, Andrea Canevaro, who also died in May 2022, Professor Emeritus of the University of Bologna, a great pedagogue and the father of special needs education.

I would like to end this speech by quoting a passage from Rita Levi Montalcini's preface to the volume *Memoria come futuro*: «This is what is important when we talk to children and young people: the future […]. Today, however, I think it is much more important to talk to children between the ages of 3 and 9. This is the age when young people absorb poisons and prejudices, this is the age we have to deal with. The age of childhood is a 'kin-

dergarten' of primary importance, because it when the young person is formed by what we tell them and show them […]. All this stems from the fact that children, even at a very young age, can be branded with hatred for life. That is why I believe 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. This is what I admire and what I hope CEIS will continue to do in the years to come… and I would like to see, not only local and regional authorities, but everyone contribute to achieve this aim. Such a valuable experience should have a real future here in Rimini»[7].

I would like to thank the Mayor, the President of the City Council, the Councillors and the Executive Councillors for giving me the opportunity to speak and for listening to me.

I will leave you with a quote from Margherita Zoebeli: «I am convinced that only education can change the world».

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

[7] R.L. Montalcini, *Presentazione*, in De Luigi & Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro*, cit., p. 7.

Address by the Director of the CEIS (Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero, Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) in Rimini

Ilaria Bellucci

To have the opportunity to speak about the educational experience of CEIS, Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre), in front of an audience of students who are training to become future educators is a great opportunity for which I would like to thank, personally and on behalf of CEIS, Professors Tiziana Pironi and Dorena Caroli for their strong desire and practical support in organising this conference, all those who made these two days of study possible, the entire Department of Education Studies "Giovanni Maria Bertin" of the University of Bologna and the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation).

In addition to being an opportunity for discussion and professional growth, the specific nature of the audience to which the conference is addressed represents a great responsibility for those who, like us, strive to be a welcoming place, from a human and working point of view, and, above all, an educational environment where what has been learned during the university years can become daily practice, to be built together, integrating the history – or rather the identity – of CEIS with the fresh perspectives and ideas of new teachers and educators.

In my opinion, these are the main characteristics – the core values and the innovation (even, and perhaps especially, in the seventy-seven years since its foundation) – that CEIS has been able to preserve and constantly promote. It has always emphasised the importance of never remaining the same, of not succumbing to the strong and understandable temptation to fall back on pre-established schemes and models, but of spending time – a lot of time! – to get to know the children, as a group and as individuals, and what each of them has to give. This is what makes this experience unique in the Italian educational scene. And the credit for this goes to Margherita Zoebeli (Zurich, 7 June 1912 - Rimini, 25 February 1996) who, as Tiziana Pironi wrote in the Treccani *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, «was always somewhat reluctant to turn the operational pedagogy of CEIS into a specific

method… She did not write a didactic manual, but rather preferred to focus on the constantly evolving nature of her work, which was based on finding concrete responses to different situations, without ever crystallising into a single methodology»[1].

Margherita's choice, like all her choices, was a conscious one. Her extensive work with children, especially the most vulnerable, led her to believe that what is needed in education is a sincere interest in the other, expressed through listening, acceptance, lack of judgement, responsibility and essential and appropriate training. At the operational level, this approach, which is rooted in active pedagogy, translates into very precise structural, organisational and didactic choices: the educational project must be known and shared by all the actors involved. While respecting their different roles and competences, they develop, modify and question it in order to always find the most appropriate strategies, means and tools for *that* child or *those* children, in that particular situation. Not a method, not a manual, but a daily and constant willingness to rethink one's role and interventions, and to take the necessary action from time to time. A living educational context that takes the form of an educational and training community in which everyone – teachers, educators, clerks, maintenance workers, cooks, caretakers, children, parents – is asked to do their best, not in competition or for the satisfaction of others, but because they are aware that for things to work, everyone must play their part, according to their possibilities.

To work in the village is to accept this challenge, it is to believe that one's contribution is of value and to be ready to prove it. Not having a precise method to refer to may at first seem destabilising for those working in the inherently difficult and delicate world of education, but it is actually a condition of freedom and autonomy, a guarantee of democracy and quality.

I wish that students who are training to become educators may directly experience the enormous power of self-determination, so that it becomes a drive and a goal to be achieved in working with children, and a tool for professional growth.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

[1] T. Pironi, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 100, 2020, *see Zoebeli*, *Margherita*, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/margherita-zoebeli_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/, (last accessed 28 August 2023).

Address by the Director of the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) in Rimini

Nadia Bizzocchi

Good morning,

I am very pleased to bring you the greetings of the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) and its librarians. I would like to thank the organisers of the conference for allowing me to present the Library's role as custodian and guardian of the Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive).

The Biblioteca civica Gambalunga is the public library of Rimini. Its mission is to promote reading, knowledge of contemporary culture and access to information resources for the entire community. Thanks to its centuries-old history, the library is also the guardian of the city's historical memory, of its collective history, recorded in the documents of the archives of institutions and organisations, and in the archives of ordinary and distinguished citizens who have contributed to the development and success of the community.

This is the case of Margherita Zoebeli and her archives, which are kept in our library. The archive is made up of personal, professional and study documents and photographs relating to the activities of the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) (1946-1992), which she collected herself. After her death, these documents became part of the archives of the Foundation that bears her name. The archives were transferred to the library in 2015, following an agreement between the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation), the CEIS Association and the Municipality of Rimini. An agreement that came about under special circumstances.

2014 marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Rimini from Nazi fascist occupation, and to celebrate the occasion the Library organised a photographic and documentary exhibition. Oriana Maroni, then in charge of the Library's modern collections and curator of the exhibition, while searching for photographs of Rimini in the early post-war period, had the opportunity

to access the materials held by the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation) at CEIS and immediately recognised their important historical and documentary value.

In order to make them known and accessible to everyone, she suggested to the then President of the Foundation that they be deposited in the library, catalogued, digitised and promoted. The opportunity offered by the digital catalogue to communicate and share information has made it possible to activate interesting international collaborations. We have received several requests for digital copies, particularly from Swiss research centres[1]. This has led to collaborations and exchanges of knowledge that have made it possible, for example, to gather more information on photographers and their archives or on important people in the life of Margherita Zoebeli[2].

The Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive) can therefore be considered a good example of the importance of collaboration between conservation institutions and research centres such as universities (today's conference is a case in point). The Library considers this collaboration to be vital and strategic in order to make its documents and materials available for discovery and study. And precisely because I am speaking to an audience of students and future (and current) researchers in the field of educational studies, I would like to draw your attention to some collections of archival documents held by the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library), which you could study in the future. I am thinking of the collection of Vincenzo Mascia, primary and secondary school teacher, Councillor for Public Education of the Municipality of Rimini from 1965 to 1970, and University Professor in Urbino in the 1970s[3].

[1] Among them was the "Kulturhaus Helferei", the Italian Cultural Institute in Zurich, which organised the conference *Una scuola svizzera per una città distrutta: Margrit Zöbeli e il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (CEIS) (A Swiss School for a Destroyed City: Margrit Zöbeli and the Italian-Swiss Educational Centre - CEIS*) on 21 April 2022, with lectures by the contemporary historian Carlo De Maria and Verena Flubacher, Margherita's collaborator.

[2] Among the archives that hold photographs useful for the research into CEIS and its origins are the Swiss National Library, which holds the archives of the Swiss Donation Organisation (https://www.helveticarchives.ch, last accessed 06/05/2024), and the Swiss Social Archive in Zurich (https://www.sozialarchiv.ch, last accessed 06/05/2024), which holds the archives of the SAH and the OSEO, as well as the archives of SOS, the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation, which in 1945, through Margherita Zoebeli, came to the aid of the people of Rimini, who had been severely affected by the war.

[3] The Vincenzo Mascia Fund contains more than 8.000 bibliographical references, including monographs, journals, brochures, and dissertations, which can be searched in the *Scoprirete* online catalogue (https://scoprirete.bibliotecheromagna.it, last accessed 06/05/2024).

Vincenzo Mascia's pedagogical and research activity coincides with a decade in which a network of kindergartens was established in Rimini and, more generally, with a period of investment in the development of educational services and school buildings. In the public documentation (local newspapers, municipal brochures, photographs from the press office) we can find traces of this activity and of that of Enea Bernardi, head of the public education sector of the Municipality of Rimini, who, in close contact with Margherita Zoebeli, was behind that innovative period of public education policy mentioned above[4].

In conclusion, I would like to say that the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) is ready and willing to work closely with you, the University, its students and researchers, by offering its services, its premises and its collections, in the firm belief that this exchange can be beneficial for both institutions and for research. I would like to thank you for your attention and wish you all the best for today's meeting.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

[4] The working papers of Enea Bernardi (1922-1998) were acquired by the Biblioteca Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) in 2022 as a donation from his heirs.

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 Rimini[1].

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 today[2].

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 nature[6]. 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 photographs[7], 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 experiment[9]. 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. Zannuccoli (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 Italy[10].

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 dimension[11].

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 compromised[13].

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 vention 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 minors[1]. 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 level[2].

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 Maslow[3].

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 Adler[4]. 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 childhood[5]. 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 practitioners[6].

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 Poland[9]. 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'influsso 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 Bern[11].

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 Olgiati[14].

[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-Oeri[15] and Anna Siemsen[16] 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 Madrid[17]. 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 Rimini[18].

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 wounds[19].

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 conflict[20]. She had therefore made an appeal to versus 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 today[21].

[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 disaster[22]. 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 generations[23].

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 birth[24]. 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 children[25].

[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 Coltura 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 adults[27]. 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 reawakening 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 destroyed[28].

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 kinds[29].

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 aid[30].

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 pedagogy[32]. 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 war[35]. 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 Hanselmann[36] and Oskar Forel[37], 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 (ENAOLI, 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 directed[39]. 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 anorexia[40].

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 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 cooperation 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. Berlini, 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).

Children's spontaneity and artistic expression in Margherita Zoebeli's educational practice

Juri Meda

Preface

In this contribution, I will not separate the topic of rescue and assistance to children, who were victims of war, from the topic of children's graphic expression and its great valorisation in the educational initiatives Zoebeli promoted in accordance with her pedagogical orientations and, in particular, her adherence to Freinet's pedagogy. In fact, these two topics are not separated and I believe that they strongly intersected in Zoebeli's life experience. I will try to demonstrate it on the following pages, starting from a very significant experience she had in her youth, many years before arriving in Italy.

1. The experience in the *colonias escolares* during the Spanish Civil War: in search of a genesis

Let's take a step back in the Spanish Civil War. Given the terrible conditions of most children in Madrid and considering the fact that the civilian population was afraid of Franco's military forces – the *Consejo de Defensa de Madrid* created a *Comité de Auxilio de Niños* with the task of organizing the evacuation of children from the Spanish capital city on November 13th, 1936. The evacuation was carried out by moving the children to the so-called *colonias escolares* in the areas which were controlled by the Republican Government. In the following months, children coming from Catalonia, the Basque Country and the Asturias were also evacuated along with the intensification of aerial bombings of cities: according to recent studies, more than five hundred colonies in Spain welcomed 45,248 children[1] in September 1937.

[1] For the public representation of these children's communities, even for propaganda purposes, please see: S. Braster and M. Andrés del Pozo del Mar, *Children's Colonies 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.

The educators, who were charged with taking care of the children in these *colonias escolares* during those stormy months when the war front continued to move and the battles were becoming increasingly bloody, had to find a way to get in touch with them. These children were deeply traumatized by the sudden separation from their families, suspicious of adults and closed in a silence which was difficult to break.

For this reason, they extensively started resorting to forms of children's spontaneous graphic expression for therapeutic purposes in order to establish a contact with them[2], as well as to help them to overcome the traumas of separation from their families or, even worse, the loss of their parents, who died because of war.

Among these educators, for example, the colleagues Rose Duroux and Catherine Milkovitch-Rioux[3] studied Alfred Brauner[4] and his wife Françoise, who started analysing a series of drawings, which were collected in Barcelona and in some Catalan schools in 1938, underlining how significant are drawings, which were made by minors, who were directly involved in war events and victims of traumas[5]. By analysing children's graphic language from a psycho-pedagogical perspective, they demonstrated that the traumas, which had been produced by the violence children suffered in war in their

[2] For the widespread use of this practice within the *colonias escolares*, see: J. Meda, *Propaganda a mano libera. I disegni dei bambini spagnoli durante la guerra civile*, in «Zapruder», 10 (2006), pp. 74-81; A. Alted Vigil, R. González Martell and M.J. Millán, *A pesar de todo dibujan… La Guerra Civil vista por los niños (Madrid, 29 de noviembre de 2006-18 de febrero de 2007)*, Madrid, Ministerio de Cultura / Biblioteca Nacional, 2006, pp. 41-51; N. Padrós Tuneu, I. Carrillo i Flores, J. Casanovas i Prat, P. Prat Viñolas, A. Tort Bardolet and A. Gómez Mundó, *The Spanish Civil War as seen through children's drawings of the time*, in «Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education», n. 4, 2015, pp. 478-495; V. Sierra Blas, *¿Una guerra en miniatura? La Guerra Civil española escrita y dibujada por los/as niños/as*, in S. Valero Gómez and M. García Carrión (eds.), *Desde la capital de la República: Nuevas perspectivas y estudios sobre la Guerra Civil española*, Valencia, Universidad de Valencia / Servicio de Publicaciones, 2018, pp. 327-356.

[3] R. Duroux and C. Milkovitch-Rioux, *J'ai dessiné la guerre. Le regard de Françoise et Alfred Brauner*, Clermont-Ferrand, Presses de l'Université Blaise Pascal, 2011; Rose Duroux and Catherine Milkovitch-Rioux, *Enfances en guerre. Témoignages d'enfants sur la guerre*, Genève, L'Équinoxe/Editions Georg, 2013.

[4] Therefore, it is no coincidence that Alfred Brauner received the «Margherita Zoebeli – La bussola dell'educazione» Award in Rimini in 2002.

[5] See A. Brauner, *Los niños españoles y las Brigadas internacionales*, Barcelon, Comité Pro-Niños Españoles de las Brigadas Internacionales, 1938; Id., *Ces enfants ont vécu la guerre*, Paris, Éditions Sociales Françaises, 1946; A. and Françoise Brauner, *Dessins d'enfants de la guerre d'Espagne*, Saint-Mandé, G.R.P.E., 1976.

psyche, were represented in their drawings and could be also treated, if identified through a correct interpretation.

Margherita Zoebeli also arrived in Spain in that context in 1938. In her biography published on *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* in 2020, Tiziana Pironi notes that during the Spanish Civil War, the *Internationale Socialiste des Femmes* (IFS) commissioned Zoebeli to take care of little orphans in one of these *colonias escolares* in Puigcerdà, a Catalan town in the eastern Pyrenees, a few kilometres from the French border[6].

In the small town of Puigcerdà, there were at least two centers[7]. The first one was the *hogar-escuela*, which was created in October 1937 by the *Solidarité Internationale Antifasciste* (SIA) with more than twenty centers of this type in Catalonia and the Valencian Region. It had been placed in a villa, which had been abandoned by its owners, on the edge of the town's artificial lake, and was a place of welcome for Spanish children, who had evacuated from the northern regions – the Asturias and the Basque Country – and had gone towards France. The structure was able to give shelter to about fifty children[8].

The second center was the *Sanatorium suisse d'enfants espagnols*, which was founded in February 1937 thanks to the commitment of the *Association des Amis de l'Espagne Républicaine* in Geneva, which was intended to provide accommodation for around a hundred children, with about twenty staff members'[9]. In the Swiss sanatorium, there was the communist doctor from

[6] T. Pironi, *Margherita Zoebeli*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 100, 2020 (https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/margherita-zoebeli_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/; last accessed: 14/01/2025). The same data are also drawn on by Goffredo Fofi (*Le nozze coi fichi secchi. Storie di un'altra Italia*, Naples, L'Ancora del Mediterraneo, 1999, pp. 150-156) and many other authors, who are not quoted here for the sake of brevity.

[7] A children's colony, which was promoted by the Quakers of the *American Friends Service Committee* (Sébastien Farré, *Colis de guerre. Secours alimentaire et organisations humanitaires (1914-1947)*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014, pp. 105-119) is also documented in Puigcerdà in those months. The American Quaker Committee promoted a publication, which was entirely composed of drawings by Spanish children victims of the Civil War and destined to raise funds for their own rescue, and which had an extraordinary success: *They still draw pictures: a collection of 60 drawings made by Spanish children during the war*, New York, Spanish Child Welfare Association of America for the American Friends Service Committee, 1938.

[8] See V. Cionini, *Solidarité Internationale Antifasciste. Une organisation «proto-humanitaire» dans la guerre d'Espagne. 1937-1939*, sous la direction de Isabelle Renaudet, Université de Provence, Mémoire de Master 2, année 2007/2008, p. 64.

[9] References to this structure were found within the following archives: Arxiu Comarcal de la Cerdanya in Puigcerdà, collection «Colleció de manuscrits i documents solts de l'Arxiu Comarcal de la Cerdanya», dossier «Documents i correspondència relativa a

Geneva, Roger Fischer, one of the founding members of the *Centrale Sanitaire Suisse*[10], and André Pasche, who was its director[11].

In both these structures – like in many other *colonias escolares*, which were promoted in those years –, it is reasonable to think that children's drawing was widely used as a tool to allow these children to express their feelings and to free themselves from the traumas they suffered because of war, and it is reasonable to think that Zoebeli came into contact with this educational practice there for the first time.

However, further research reveals some doubts about the right position of the *colonia escolar* where Zoebeli served. In fact, according to some research by Salomó Marquès and José Moreno, there was the colony of Alba de Ter, which was managed by the teacher Miquel Fornaguera i Ramon, near Ripoll – just sixty kilometres away from Puigcerdà towards the coast –. In his memoirs, this teacher remembers that the colony was sponsored by the *Aide Suisse aux Enfants Espagnols*. When Franco's air force bombed Ripoll between 22 and 25 January 1939, it was decided to move the children to safety to France across the border at Portbou, approximately 120 kilometres away. They were a group of 150 children mostly coming from the Asturias, but there were also some coming from the Basque Country, Madrid and Catalonia[12].

Those Spanish children – whether they had evacuated from the colony of Puigcerdà (which was bombed on January 23rd, 1938) or from the colony of Ripoll – were moved by Zoebeli to a summer camp on the coast, near Sète, in southern France, about 120 kilometres away from Portbou.

At this point, information is conflicting: according to some people, the Swiss educator would have had the opportunity to personally meet Célestin Freinet here and would have later referred to his pedagogy; according to

l'existència d'un sanatori per nens refugiats durant la Guerra Civil espanyola a Puigcerdà "sanatorium suisse" fundat el febrer de 1937 sota la proteccio de l'Associació d'Amics de l'Espanya Republicana (1938)»; Archives d'Etat de Genève, fonds «Union Internationale de Secours aux Enfants (UISE) / Union Internationale de Protection de l'Enfance (UIPE)», dossier T Ri/67-3 «Actions de secours suisses durant la guerre civile espagnole: coupures de presse, propagande, appels et rapports du Groupe de Puigcerdà (Sanatorium suisse d'enfants espagnols de Puigcerda)» (1937-1940). No explicit reference to Margherita Zoebeli and her mission in Puigcerdà was found in both dossiers.

[10] B. Studer, *Un parti sous influence: le Parti Communiste Suisse, une section du Comintern 1931 à 1939*, Lausanne, L'Age d'Homme, 1994, p. 642.

[11] N. Ulmi and P. Huber, *Les combattants suisses en Espagne républicaine, 1936-1939*, Lausanne, Antipodes, 2001, p. 209.

[12] S. Marquès and J. Moreno, *El magisteri Gironí d'Esquerra a l'exili de 1939*, Barcelona, Fundació Josep Irla, 2012, p. 63.

others, children would have later found shelter in Célestin Freinet's school, in Vence, which is however over 350 kilometres away from Sète[13].

According to our research, there was a summer camp of the French *Jeunesse Laïque Républicaine* (JLR), which was equipped with 750 beds and active in 1939[14], on the beach of La Corniche in Sète, even if we know that in 1931– also in Sète – the Freinetian teacher Léo Rousson[15], a communist activist, and other colleagues had founded the first colony of the association *Énfance ouvrière au grand air*[16], which was aimed at the workers' children coming from the city of Alès, and then a second one in Masméjean in 1932. In that tragic context, the welcoming structures in Sète were in direct contact with the Swiss authorities so much that on January 31st, 1939, 58 Spanish children, who had been accompanied by the director of the *sanatorium suisse* in Puigcerdà, André Pasche, and Léon Nicole, the leader of the *Parti Socialiste Suisse*, arrived from there. They were first examined at the cantonal hospital and then entrusted to the care of some families from Geneva[17]. There is no evidence – from the documents we analysed – that Margherita Zoebeli was on this train, but most likely on one which left a few weeks earlier since its archive contains a drawing by the Spanish eight-year-old girl, Pera Traveria, which was made in Sète on December 7th, 1938, so it is reasonable to assume that she was already there in December 1938[18].

[13] See 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», 8, 12 (2016), pp. 115-128.

[14] Further information about the establishment of an «hôpital pour réfugiés espagnols dans le camp de vacances de Jeunesse Laïque de Sète» is in: Archives départementales de l'Hérault, collection «Préfecture de l'Hérault», series «Étrangers et nationalité (1934-2014)», *2 W 625/2 – Accueil des réfugiés espagnols. Création d'un hôpital à Sète (1939-1942)* and *2 W 622/1 – Camp d'Agde. Mise en place et fonctionnement (1939)*. On this centre, see also: V. Parello, *Des réfugiés espagnols de la guerre civile dans le Département de l'Hérault (1937-1939)*, Perpignan, Presses universitaires de Perpignan, 2010, pp. 103-127; R. Mirón González, *Asistencia y Condiciones Sociosanitarias de los Exiliados Españoles en el sur de Francia, 1936-1945*, Madrid, Ministerio de Sanidad, Consumo y Bienestar Social – Secretaría General Técnica – Centro de Publicaciones, 2019.

[15] He launched the educational association *Enfance ouvrière au grand air* in Alès and he is quoted as a pioneer of the Freinetian method in the École publique de Le Masdieu – Gard (80 kilometres away from Sète) where he published the mimeographed journal «Enfantines» with his pupils, and ten engravings taken from drawings by the thirteen-year-old José Martinez, undoubtedly a little Spanish refugee, was published in issue no. 88 of February 1938 (https://www.icem-pedagogie-freinet.org/node/47957; last accessed: 14/01/2025).

[16] A.Vielzeuf, *Quand le Gard résistait*: *Volume 1*, Nîmes, C. Lacour 1996, p. 109.

[17] *Un convoi d'enfants espagnols arrive à Genève*, in «Feuille d'Avis de Neuchatel», n. 26, February 1st 1939, p. 6.

We do not exactly know where the Spanish children, who evacuated with Zoebeli, were subsequently moved, but it is reasonable to think that they continued to spontaneously express through drawing there, too. It can be deduced from the drawing by the nine-year-old Manuel Casall, most likely coming from Albacete, that is reproduced in the virtual exhibition *L'art d'enfants pendant la Guerre civile d'Espagne*[19] of the *Ministère des Services au Public et aux Entreprises* in Ontario, Canada. The drawing (Fig. 1) has the title *Cerro el lobo* (Eng.: Wolf Hill) and is preserved among the papers of Alexander Albert MacLeod, the President of the *Canadian Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy*[20]. The – undated – drawing was made in an unidentified *Colonia de niños huerfanos* at Villa Teddy[21] in Sète and demonstrates how the practice of graphic expression was systematically used in this context – together with the drawings by Pera Traveria, Dionisio Rosello and José Ponce, which are preserved in Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (AMZ) at Gambalunga Public Library in Rimini (Figs. 2-4).

This fact leads us to wonder whether the link between Margherita Zoebeli and Célestin Freinet was actually Léo Rousson, given that no reference is made to Freinet in Sète in 1938. There is more. What has been reconstructed so far leads us to think that the extraordinary attention Zoebeli paid in children's drawing during her subsequent educational experience precisely dates from this one and the use of children's graphic expressions she saw in the *colonias escolares*, even before meeting Freinet's techniques in France.

This experience represented an important test for her subsequent educational activities, making her aware that caring for children, which had been traumatized by war events, required a very high psycho-pedagogical competence, which allowed her to correctly treat neuroses and psychopathologies, which had been generating in them in those contexts.

[18] Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find more precise documentation on the matter at the moment.

[19] https://www.archives.gov.on.ca/fr/explore/online/spain/index.aspx (last accessed: 14/01/2025).

[20] https://www.archives.gov.on.ca/fr/explore/online/spain/big/big_01_cerro.aspx (last accessed: 14/01/2025).

[21] A list of Spanish children housed in this facility is published as Appendix 8 to the volume: Parello, *Des réfugiés espagnols de la guerre civile dans le Département de l'Hérault (1937-1939)*, cit., pp. 195-196.

2. The activity in *Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero* during the second post-war period

Therefore, we can find the distinctive feature characterizing the beginning of Margherita Zoebeli's educational work in the words Raffaele Laporta expressed after her death:

> Her educational experience was not born at school, but from the ruins of cities and countries at war, gatherings of refugees, groups of fleeing young creatures to be welcomed in order to live together. Making them live and relive had meant providing emotional and intellectual shelter for their deep traumas and guiding them out of social catastrophes in order to learn the normality of life and culture[22].

The war – first the Spanish Civil War, then the total war on the Italian front – is the framework where Zoebeli places her educational intervention, the one which defines its horizon of meaning. «Making minors live and relive» their traumas through spontaneous graphic expression, free drawing, is a technique she will continue to use even when – during the second post-war period – she moves to Rimini and founds the *Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero* (CEIS)[23]. However, artistic expression has been giving up its psycho-therapeutic values over time and took on a more markedly pedagogical value as when Zoebeli decided children had to create an annual calendar[24]

[22] R. Laporta, *Presente finché duri amore*, in *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il CEIS. Documenti di un'utopia*, edited by Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli, Rimini, Chiamami Città, 1998, p. 11.

[23] For this institution and the pedagogical project underlying it, please see: C. De Maria, *Margherita Zoebeli e il lavoro per l'infanzia vittima della guerra*, in E. Appetecchia, *Idee e movimenti comunitari: servizio sociale di comunità in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra*, Rome, Viella, 2015 pp. 261-280; C. De Maria, *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. Various photographs relating to the educational activities, which were carried out within the Italian-Swiss Educational Centre in Rimini during the period immediately following the Second World War, are reproduced in two volumes indicated below: R. Olgiati, *Die Schweizer Spende: 1944-1948*, Bern, Zentralstelle der Schweizer Spende, 1949; W. Bischof, *Standpunkt*, Zürich, Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016. Rösli Mandel – the wife of the Swiss photographer Werner Bischof, the author of the photographs in the volume just mentioned – worked as a social worker at the Italian-Swiss Educational Centre in Rimini from 1946 to 1949, when she got married. Thanks to Karin Priem for the bibliographical suggestions provided.

[24] M. Castiglioni, F. Montanari and M. Zoebeli, *Il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero*

starting from 1969. As Tiziana Pironi rightly observed, CEIS spaces were organized «in such a way as not to create rigid and unchangeable blocks, but as a set of plastic environments, which were always adaptable to the occurrence of new needs: small tables children could easily move; different corners to stimulate various aesthetic-expressive-creative activities; flexible organization of workshops»[25]. Zoebeli chose to put children and their expressive needs at the centre of her school. For the Swiss educator, different forms of expression they practised were the main channel through which they built a solid and significant educational relationship.

However, this choice was also influenced by two figures, who were a constant point of reference for the Swiss educator: the psychologist Alfred Adler, who had worked for the prevention of children's neuroses and juvenile delinquency in Vienna in the early twentieth century; and the German artist and educator Arno Stern, who had worked as an educator at an institute for war orphans during the post-war period, proposing they produce simple pictorial forms and, subsequently, developing his own original theory on the intricate relationship between non-verbal languages and children's graphic expression[26]. Both these figures had a strong influence on Zoebeli, who decided to use drawing as a therapeutic resource for the treatment of children's traumas in her own Centre, as well as – more in general – as a privileged way for children to express their inner world, in line with what many other teachers adhering to *Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa* were doing in those years[27].

There is a deep pedagogical inspiration in this choice. In fact, as Tiziana Pironi noted, Adlerian individual psychology «puts the educational problem at the centre, posing the question […] of how to create a community in which everyone can mostly develop their own potential creative resources. In this

nei disegni dei bambini. 25 anni al CEIS in una rassegna di calendari, Rimini, Edizioni Chiamami, 1993.

[25] T. Pironi, *La comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli: il CEIS di Rimini*, in T. Pironi (ed.), *Percorsi di pedagogia al femminile. Dall'Unità d'Italia al secondo dopoguerra*, Rome, Carocci, 2014, pp. 151-176 (see p. 162).

[26] Particular reference should be made to Stern's studies on children's creativity: *Aspects et technique de la peinture d'enfants*, Neuchatel-Paris, Delachaux & Niestle, 1956; *Compréhension de l'art enfantin*, Neuchatel-Paris, Delachaux & Niestle, 1959; *Une grammaire de l'art enfantin*, Neuchatel-Paris, Delachaux & Niestle, 1966; *Une nouvelle compréhension de l'art enfantin*, Neuchatel-Paris, Delachaux & Niestle, 1968.

[27] There we must think above all of Mario Lodi, one of MCE leading exponents, who worked in those years at the primary school in Vho di Piadena, where he greatly encouraged his pupils' spontaneous expression through free drawing in the attempt to recover their most authentic dimension and to reawaken their natural aptitudes, which had been soothed by passivity and superficial factual knowledge.

sense, educating means providing the tools to bring out that unrepeatable individuality, which does not intend to adapt to any pre-established model suited to a group»[28].

So, the Adlerian creative concept found an explanation in the CEIS educational project where an attempt was made to make sociality and individuality interact together, placing children, who were able to develop their personality to the best, at the centre. The wide range of different proposed activities allowed frequent gratifying experiences to children in difficulty in order to reinforce their need for self-esteem, giving them security at an emotional-relational level, decreasing their aggressiveness and arousing their positive interests, which emerged especially in manual and expressive activities to be developed in a cognitive and creative sense[29].

Then, it is no coincidence that the central aspect of the pedagogical activism Zoebeli practised was precisely caring the children's aesthetic education through drawing and painting activities, but also poetry. In fact, she was convinced that «if children can express their creativity and freely move with their body, they will be able to easily express their thoughts and feelings orally or in writing»[30]. She encouraged the importance of manual and creative activities in every way[31].

These are just some initial working notes on a topic – the deep attention Margherita Zoebeli paid to children's spontaneity and artistic expression in her educational practice –, which will necessarily have to be the subject of further investigations.

Translated by Antonella Di Pasquale

[28] Pironi, *Da Maria Montessori a Margherita Zoebeli*, cit., p. 123.

[29] For these concepts, please see in particular: M. Zoebeli, *Le possibilità creative del bambino*, in M. Castiglioni, F. Montanari and M. Zoebeli (eds.), *Il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero nei disegni dei bambini*, cit., pp. 20 et seq.

[30] G. Devastato, *Lavoro sociale e azioni di comunità. Metodi e strategie per nuovi spazi comunitari nelle utopie concrete dei maestri e nelle riflessioni attuali*, Santarcangelo di Romagna, Maggioli Editore, 2016, p. 276.

[31] The central role of manual and creative activities in her pedagogy clearly emerges in the article: M. Zoebeli, *Le esercitazioni con materiali e tecniche*, in «Scuola e Città», 16, 2-3 (1965), pp. 107 et seq.

Fig. 1 – *Cerro el lobo* (Eng.: *Wolf hill*), drawing by Manuel Casall (9 years old), ca. 1936-1939, Sète (Collection Alexander Albert MacLeod, Archives Ontario, F 126-4- I0029900).

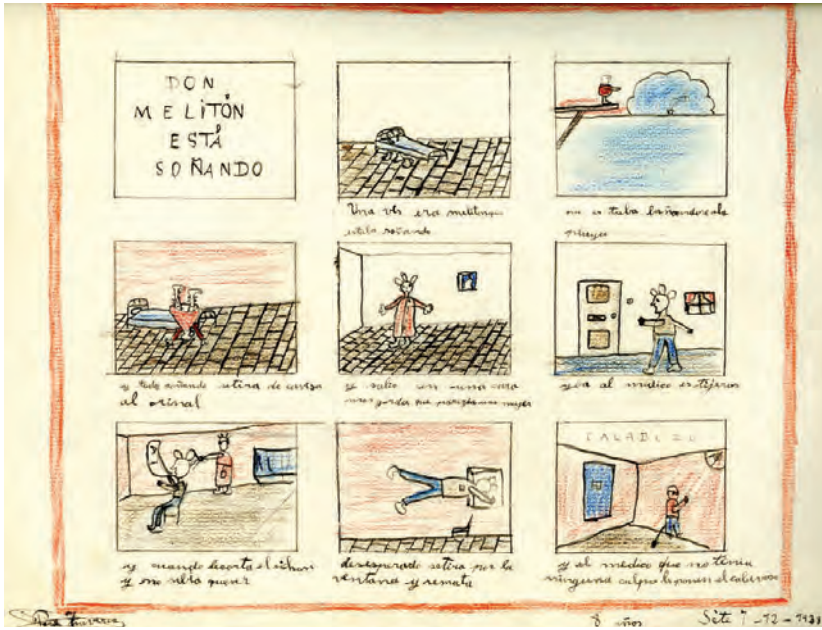


Fig. 2 – Drawing by Pera Traveria (8 years old), 1938, Sète (AMZ, envelope 7, dossier 2).

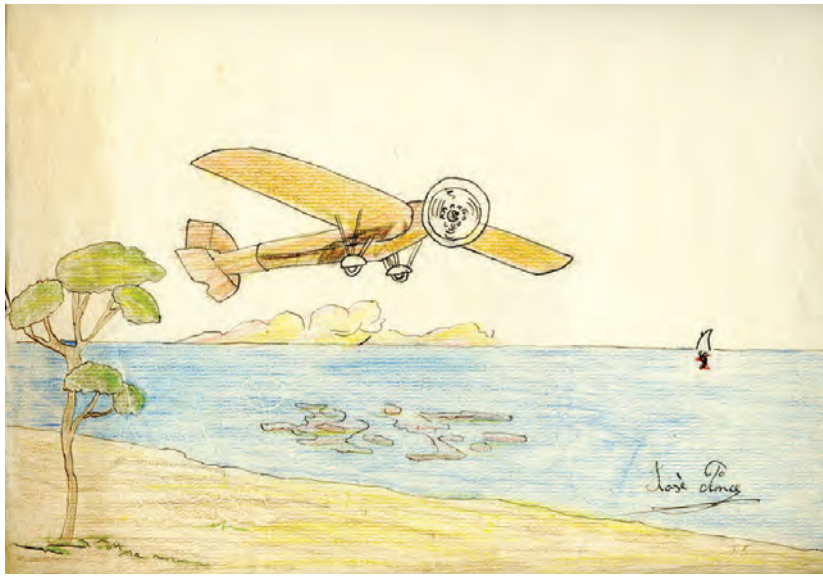


Fig. 3 – Drawing by José Ponce (age not specified), ca. 1938, Sète (AMZ, envelope 7, dossier 2).

Fig. 4 – Drawing by Dionisio Rosello (age not specified), ca. 1938, Sète (AMZ, envelope 7, dossier 2).

Architectural traces of a new pedagogy by Margherita Zoebeli

Monica Maioli

What children need is space, not architectural luxury[1]
(Alfred Roth, 1950)

The CEIS, Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) in Rimini always surprises, amazes and wins the heart of anyone who passes through one of its three entrances. The features that make this school space so functional have been the subject of a long research project started by the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation) at the end of the 1990s[2] and continued by the working group coordinated by Professor Andrea Ugolini of the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna[3].

The initial research group brought to light the direct link between CEIS and the architectural movement of the *nouvelle école* theorised in the mid-1940s by Alfred Roth[4] to give architectural form to a «new pedagogy».

[1] Original quotation.

[2] The research group, active from 1998 to 2012 included Elisabetta Dubach, Eleonora Forlani, Monica Maioli, Rodolfo Pasini. The results and findings are collected in the book E. Dubach, E. Forlani, M. Maioli, R. Pasini (eds.), *Lo spazio che educa. Il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2012.

[3] The group coordinated by Andrea Ugolini published the thesis *La sostenibile consuetudine della cura. Studi e proposte per protocolli conservativi del Centro Educativo Italo Svizzero Ceis* by Chiara Mei, Manuela Mignani and Selina Morri, co-supervised by Kristian Fabbri. It organised the conference *Ceis I Care. Ruderi, baracche e bambini. Riflessioni a più voci su un'architettura speciale* (2016). Studies and proposals have been included in the publication edited by A. Ugolini, *Ruderi, Baracche, Bambini. Ceis: Riflessioni a più voci su un'architettura speciale*, Firenze, Altralinea Edizioni, 2017.

[4] Alfred Roth (1903-1998), architect, professor at the *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule* (ETH) in Zurich was a student of Karl Moser and worked with Le Corbusier. A member of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM), he was one of the leading figures in modern European architecture. Among his works are *La Nouvelle*

The project for the Centre was conceived in Zurich, in the same cultural context where Roth operated, from the collaboration between Margherita Zoebeli and the architect Felix Schwarz, who through his wife Lotte Benett[5], was involved in the post-war international relief activities of the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation.

In the summer of 1945, the city of Rimini was finally free of the Nazi fascist occupation, but it had been completely destroyed by the hundreds of bombs dropped between November 1943 and September 1944 (Fig. 1). The Municipality decided, with the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation[6], to build a community centre to provide first aid to the population who had lost everything during the war, and an orphanage to take in the many children without parents or relatives.

The particular moment when the centre was built (January - May 1946) – when the city was almost razed to the ground, its citizens had lost everything, and groups of orphaned or abandoned children wandered among the ruins – increases the value of an urban and architectural project creating spaces. They were consistent with the social, cultural and educational project entrusted to Margherita Zoebeli by the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation[7].

1. The project

Margherita Zoebeli often refers to the fundamental choice she and Felix Schwarz had to make when they were designing the Centre in the autumn of 1945. They knew they could count on thirteen wooden barracks that had been abandoned by the Swiss army but they did not want «to build a con-

Architecture Die neue Architektur The New Architecture 1920-1940 [1948], Zurich, Les Editions d'Architecture, 1975, and *The New School Das neue Schulhaus La Nouvelle École* [1950], Zurich, Girsberger, 1957, which promoted the principles of the modern movement.

[5] Lotte Benett (Hamburg, 1910 – Zurich, 1972) fled nazi Germany and found shelter in Switzerland in 1934; she married Felix Schwarz in 1944. Author of the novel *Die Brille des Nissim Nachgeist. Die Emigranten pension Comi in Zürich 1921-1942*, Zurich, Limmat, 2018. Published only in 2018, it constitutes a unique testimony to the conditions of life in exile.

[6] The Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation was active in Rimini until 30 June 1948 within/through the Swiss Donation Organisation, and would later operate autonomously.

[7] This report is based on the following sources: the plan drawn by Felix Schwarz, the images of the CEIS photographic archive kept at the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library), the direct testimony of the protagonists collected in documents, interviews, books, the published studies on CEIS supplemented by fieldwork and direct observation and use of the site.

centration camp-like centre, with barracks lined up parallel to each other»[8]. They believed that «the arrangement [of the barracks] should have an educational value that encourages the formation of autonomous groups»[9] and provide «a place where these groups can gather»[10]. Margherita considers/describes the classrooms as houses and just «like houses, they have their own garden and ground around them»[11].

The name given to the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) is also distinctive and emblematic: it was immediately called the 'village' by the young guests who lived there[12]. Unconsciously, they recognised the urban quality of the space layout with classrooms that look like houses, winding paths that look like streets, flowerbeds designed like gardens, and the open spaces organised as meeting points, like the square or the marketplace of a small town, or a village.

2. The area

The choice of the location was somewhat forced. In an almost completely destroyed city with piles of rubble everywhere, interrupted only by bomb craters, it was not easy to find an area that could be easily levelled out to quickly build the Centre. Preference was given to the amphitheatre hemicycle where the large bomb craters had already been filled with the rubble of nearby houses and, presumably, also the nearby Castelfidardo military barracks, which had been completely destroyed.

The area on which the Centre was to be built was described as follows by Felix Schwarz on his arrival in Rimini in December 1945: «When we arrived, people were still clearing the rubble of houses destroyed in the bombing raids, which had filled part of the old area. The walls of the amphitheatre had disappeared, except for the lower ones, on the sea side»[13].

«The land had probably been abandoned, forgotten by the city, despite its proximity to the Malatesta Temple. When I first saw it, it was already filled in and levelled with rubble. The planning had already begun»[14].

[8] Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il Ceis. Documenti di un'utopia*, Rimini, Edizioni Chiamami Città, 1998, p. 28.

[9] *Ibidem.*

[10] *Ibidem.*

[11] *Ibidem.*

[12] *Ibidem.*

[13] Dubach, Forlani, Maioli, Pasini (eds.), *Lo spazio che educa*, cit., p. 35.

[14] *Ivi*, p. 40.

The Municipality of Rimini was responsible for development, since «there was […] no electricity, no sewage and no real road»[15]. Development works were coordinated by a young municipal surveyor, Enzo Zavatta, who recounts: «The work consisted mainly of cleaning up the area, which was devastated. We never found any bombs, but they had left their mark and most of the columns of the amphitheatre were completely destroyed. It was therefore necessary to level and excavate the area to a depth of about one metre, pour concrete and erect 30 x 30 [centimetre] piers» (Figs. 2-3).

3. The different spaces outside and inside the thirteen barracks

The arrangement and fitting together of the barracks (Fig. 4) responded to Felix and Margherita's need to «create a space that would move away from the *warlike barracks*»[16]. It also embodied another important recurring theme in Margherita's pedagogy, the need to «create open spaces, that is, free spaces»[17] as «teaching should not take place exclusively in the classroom»[18].

CEIS is characterised by a wide array of different spaces, there are no areas that look the same, there is a great variability in size, shape, relationship and orientation.

In the original plan, the open space was divided into ten areas by the arrangement of the barracks (Figs. 5-11). These areas constitute spaces following one another along the centre's paths and offer constantly changing sequential views.

The spaces created are not monumental, nor are they accentuated; they are typical Swiss spaces, an expression of a culture that is opposed to totalitarianism and deeply democratic.

The gaze, whether of an adult or of a child, can fully encompass the individual spaces in which one finds oneself, but not their entirety.

Thanks to the position of the barracks, all buildings have surrounding grounds, creating direct contact between the inside and the outside of the classrooms, as well as communal spaces where the community meets, one of which is a *piazzetta* (*small square)* (Fig. 12).

The area where CEIS rises is also a mysterious space, with less crowded corners, but not a frightening one, in short, it is a space to be discovered independently, where one can also get lost or isolate just like in a city. For

[15] *Ivi*, p. 38.
[16] *Ivi*, p. 37.
[17] *Ibidem*.
[18] *Ibidem*.

Margherita it is «very important that children also have the possibility to isolate themselves. They can do this (…) especially outside in the garden»[19].

4. Creating the garden

The garden was designed and developed at the same time as the barracks. The garden was very important to Margherita and to those who helped her in this project, it is not a waste of space to be organised later, but one to be designed and built at the same time as the barracks: «The inside and outside areas are built according to the same criteria, they offer the chance to carry out group activities, activities in small groups and to self-isolate»[20].

The nature of the grounds, full of war debris, made it very difficult to plant trees, therefore holes were dug up and filled with good soil from the countryside. The same was done for the flower beds and shrubs, and slowly the garden began to take shape. All this happened to the amazement of the people of Rimini, who could not understand why they also wanted to have a "park"[21] (Fig. 13).

The garden is full of physical suggestions, the trees, shrubs and flowerbeds, the entrances, the fountain with its circular basin and the drinking fountains, the psychomotor games, which according to Margherita, offer children «experiences […] of motor play, discovery, invention, experimentation with their own bodily resources»[22] (Figs. 14-15). Margherita and those who have taken on the responsibility for the CEIS have continued to make sure «that the environment retains its characteristics of stimulating educational initiative and high social usability»[23]. The classrooms and the garden are maintained by the community that uses them and over the years have been improved with additional elements to "stimulate the educational initiative" such as the 'doll's house' (Figs. 16-17), the 'montagnola' (the 'hill') (Fig. 18), with its tunnel of great mystery, which offers a view of the small

[19] Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura*, cit., p. 30.

[20] *Ibidem*.

[21] «… From the very beginning I made a project that included greenery, which seemed absurd to the people of Rimini. They did not understand why we also wanted to have a "park", a garden for us» (Felix Schwarz) in Dubach, Forlani, Maioli, Pasini (eds.), *Lo spazio che educa*, cit., p. 36. See also F. Schwarz, *Il centro sociale di Rimini*, in «Domus», n. 214 (1946).

[22] Margherita Zoebeli's speech when she was awarded an honorary Degree by the University of Bologna (23 January 1989), in Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura*, cit., p. 56.

[23] *Ibidem*.

square and classrooms in the surrounding barracks from a greater height, the seating area where one can stop, observe, and chat.

5. The wooden barracks

The CEIS barracks are a system of prefabricated wooden modules that can be assembled with a certain freedom and flexibility, and this is precisely what Margherita appreciated, as Felix Schwarz recalls: «when a barrack was built, we had the freedom to change the interior, thanks to the interchangeability of their walls»[24].

The «slum kindergarten», as CEIS is sometimes referred to, stands out in the history of school architecture as a forerunner of flexible school buildings, and can be counted among the pavilion schools that, as Alfred Roth argues, subverted the «idea of the school-palace, rigid and colossal»[25].

The original wooden barracks, four of which are still in use today, are 30 metres long, 7 metres wide and 7 metres high at the ridge of the roof[26]. Each barrack houses a classroom and the inside is varied and different in terms of size, exposure, windows, furnishings, objects, and mode of use.

The concept of the 'classroom', as it has become established in the Italian collective imagination, is not applicable to the barracks. In the centre is the toilet and sanitary block – the only part made of brick – which asymmetrically divides the rectangular space of the barrack, resulting in a bigger and a smaller room. The two rooms and the toilets overlook the welcoming entrance area, designed not only for passage, but also for stopping and chatting. Behind the toilet block, there is an area for individual or small group study and a 'soft corner' (Fig. 19), which can be accessed from the small and large rooms. If necessary, additional spaces can be created, e.g. for nappy-changing non-self-sufficient children, or for other needs of children and teachers.

Everything is within the children's reach, and the position of the desks and chairs can easily be changed during the day, for example, much of the floor can be cleared, chairs can be arranged in a circle, small or large islands can be created with aggregations of desks for group work or lunch. No teacher's desk creates a hierarchy in the room.

[24] Dubach, Forlani, Maioli, Pasini (eds.), *Lo spazio che educa*, cit., p. 45.

[25] Roth, *The New School. Das neue Schulhaus. La Nouvelle École,* Zurich, cit., p. 35.

[26] For a description of the construction details of the barracks see S. Morri, *La consuetudine della cura. Studi e proposte per protocolli conservativi del Centro Educativo Italo Svizzero Ceis*, in Ugolini (ed.), *Ruderi, Baracche, Bambini*, cit., pp. 153-156.

The organisation of the barracks creates a dynamic that can be felt by anyone who spends time there, even for a few hours. It calls for discovery, movement and concentration, stimulating the children's autonomy and ability to make decisions. In this way, the built environment «becomes the mediator of an education in sociality, in an individual's sense of belonging to the community»[27], where «on a daily basis children are called to experiment and put themselves and their community to the test»[28].

The dialogue between the inside and outside of the barracks is very interesting. The windows on all four sides of the barrack offer views of the variety and lushness of the garden and the ever-changing spaces created by the barracks. The use of the whole barrack and the transformation of its internal layout throughout the day also change the views of the outside, allowing children and adults to perceive themselves in ever different contexts. This breaks the monotony and static nature of being in the classroom.

This, together with the daily commute to the kitchen and to music, motor and English lessons, gives those who attend CEIS the idea that the classroom is both inside and outside the barracks.

The wooden barracks, which have been used daily for schooling for over seventy-seven years, offer a high level of comfort[29]. They provide the children with an unusual spatial and living experience in which wood also plays a very important role, as emphasised by, Grazia Gobbi Sica[30], one of the first students at CEIS, and Armando Barp[31] who worked at CEIS with Giancarlo De Carlo[32].

«[…] The relationship with the material was completely different from the experience in our homes: to have wooden walls and wooden floors both

[27] Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura*, cit., p. 56.

[28] *Ivi*, p. 36.

[29] See K. Fabbri, *Misurare per conoscere. Studio delle caratteristiche microclimatiche ed energetiche del Ceis per la valutazione delle condizioni di comfort e conservazione*, in Ugolini (ed.), *Ruderi, Baracche, Bambini*, cit., pp. 108-129.

[30] Grazia Gobbi Sica, professor at the Department of Architecture at the University of Florence and at the New York University in Florence, was one of the first students at CEIS in the second half of the 1940s.

[31] Armando Barp, a professor of town planning at the IUAV in Venice, became acquainted with CEIS in 1965 when he worked with De Carlo on the replacement project of the original settlement (1965).

[32] Giancarlo De Carlo (1919-2005), architect, urbanist and architectural theorist, lecturer at the Universities of Venice and Genoa, founder of Team X. For CEIS he designed the building that houses La Betulla (1959) and a new school commissioned by Margherita Zoebeli to replace the original settlement (1965).

in terms of colour and touch - brought us closer to a different, almost unknown world»[33].

«At CEIS, the things that immediately struck me were the barracks, which were autonomous classrooms and the wood, which […] created a cozy environment for the children: entering a house made entirely of wood with children sitting on the floor, immediately gave me the feeling of a very pleasant space. And I remember that feeling very well. It was like walking into an old mountain chalet. And that space was suited to its function, even though it was created for other purposes!»[34].

6. The furniture

Another element that characterises the architectural traces left by Margherita Zoebeli's pedagogy is the care and attention given to the furniture, instruments and illustrations used to create a stimulating and intimate environment.

The pictures of the original kindergarten show a classroom layout with desks and chairs that could be easily moved by the children, with the blackboard in an accessible position and with games, hoops and musical instruments within reach of children (Fig. 20). If it is not surprising to see a kindergarten classroom so organised and equipped today, but it must be remembered that the photograph was taken in 1949. Free access to and use of furniture and tools by the children makes them both personal and collective objects, encouraging care and respect.

The classrooms were also furnished with homemade or salvaged furniture and materials, as well as furniture for informational and organisational purposes, such as the daily task board and clock that are present in every classroom (Fig. 21). Much of the furniture and materials available in the barracks now, as then, are not exclusively for strictly co-educational activities, but also for creative, manipulative, imaginative ones.

[33] *Le radici di un'educazione allo spazio. Intervista a Grazia Gobbi Sica […]*, in Dubach, Forlani, Maioli, Pasini (eds.), *Lo spazio che educa*, cit., p. 72.

[34] *Progettare spazi per l'esperienza educativa. Intervista ad Armando Barp […]*, in Dubach, Forlani, Maioli, Pasini (eds.), *Lo spazio che educa*, cit., p. 140.

7. Taking care of the barracks

The research carried out by the University of Bologna emphasises the care of these barracks and the garden[35], and points to another peculiarity of Margherita Zoebeli's CEIS.

> Margherita believed in an «educating environment» which in CEIS is designed and implemented to become «a 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 such care of places and things, as an integral part of the community itself»[36].

The care that the wooden barracks and the garden have needed for over seventy-five years cannot be guaranteed by two caretakers alone, and it has been achieved by involving the entire community, including the children.

According to Margherita: «Each group living in the school village shares with the others both the enjoyment of the environment and the responsibility for its care»[37]. This responsibility of "taking care" of the place is still part of the organisational structure of CEIS[38], as teachers and educators assert in an important collective work, and it is taken up by the children «through examples, explanations, arguments, and the sharing of commitments»[39] that are collectively referred to as *service*[40].

«Distributing notebooks, arranging games and books, delivering messages, announcements, photocopies, answering the intercom, setting the table, clearing the table, sweeping»[41] are tasks that are part of the daily services that the children carry out on a rotating basis, so that «caring for one's place of work and living is an integral part of education: without constant, concrete care for the environment, a person cannot establish bonds, including emotional ones, with places»[42].

[35] Ugolini (ed.), *Ruderi, Baracche, Bambini*, cit.
[36] Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura*, cit., p. 56.
[37] *Ibidem.*
[38] Biondelli, Calieri, Fabbri, Gallazzi, Sapucci, Zannuccoli, *A scuola nel Villaggio. Parole chiave ed esperienze del Ceis di Rimini*, Trento, Erickson, 2008.
[39] *Ivi*, p. 89.
[40] *Ivi*, pp. 89-93.
[41] *Ivi*, p. 90.
[42] *Ibidem*.

8. CEIS, a prototype

Margherita Zoebeli's pedagogy also gave great importance to spatial skills. In 1946, in the design and construction of CEIS, she considered methodological but also spatial skills, as defined in a recent book edited by Carro and Tosi for Indire: «Spatial skills are the awareness of one's physical environment and its impact on formal and informal activities, as well as the ability to use or modify this environment to achieve professional objectives»[43] (Fig. 22).

Subverting the authoritarianism of the Italian school after twenty years of Fascism, reaffirming the principles of democracy and the centrality of the child in education were objectives that Margherita also pursued through the physical awareness that comes from inhabiting a space. In her pedagogy and method, which she passed on to the teachers and all the staff at CEIS, the organisation of space, both inside and outside the barracks, becomes an element to create learning environments in which methods, principles and pedagogical objectives can be applied consistently and successfully.

At CEIS, thanks to the flexibility offered by the barracks and to the spatial skills passed down through generations of teachers and staff members, the ability «to master the range of possible alternative teaching and learning spaces»[44] and thus to manage and vary the educational set-up according to the didactic approach chosen each time, can be seen on a daily basis.

Margherita was also a master in this field, initiating and consolidating CEIS knowledge, know-how and practices of active configuration and reconfiguration of space to achieve specific pedagogical objectives.

Over the years, her pedagogical work on spatial awareness and specific skills has been enriched by the contributions of the entire school community. Today, the same school community continues to live by these principles and practice, proving that in such a flexible, aware and suitable context, it is much easier to accept and take into account the individual characteristics and needs of each child. The spaces in the barracks and the garden are easily adapted to meet these needs and to include the children in the community.

If we recognise that an innovation is only accepted if it is understood and if the tools to put it into practice are available[45], we understand the impor-

[43] R. Carro, L. Tosi, *Lo spazio della scuola. Architetture scolastiche e cicli pedagogici*, Roma, Carocci, 2023, p. 80 et seq.

[44] *Ivi*, p. 74.

[45] *Ibidem*, «[…] teachers refuse to be seen as mere implementers of change in their professional practice and support innovation only when they understand it and have the skills to act on it».

tance of Margherita Zoebeli's pedagogical work was in creating a spatial culture that includes active didactics.

For years we have thought that CEIS could speak to architects and those who design schools and community spaces. Of course it can, but CEIS speaks first and foremost to teachers and to those who use and design public spaces, teaching them the spatial skills that will make it possible to incorporate spaces, both indoor and outdoor, into the pedagogical project, whatever the field of application: school, social, reception…

The available evidence[46] and the research carried out by international networks, such as «the Manifesto 1+4 Educational Spaces for the School of the Third Millennium» by Indire perfectly summarise this approach, but also develop and fine-tune operational tools, identifying flexibility as a necessary feature of the school environment, so that the school becomes «an instrument that teachers can manipulate, in order to make the daily changes that education requires»[47].

Research shows that spatial awareness and skills are still lacking in the daily didactic practice of Italian schools. In Rimini, we are fortunate to still be able to experience Margherita Zoebeli's pedagogical project at CEIS, also because of the specific spatial skills that have been developed and passed on from generation to generation.

CEIS, as also suggested by Andrea Canevaro[48], can become a prototype, or better a prototype environment, in which to learn the flexible use of space in active education. For this reason, moving CEIS somewhere else would certainly allow it to retain its characteristic methodological competences, but it would mean losing forever an emblematic ground for spatial competence. At CEIS, thanks to Margherita Zoebeli's pedagogy, methods of using space for educational innovation have been developed that are increasingly relevant and needed in today's schools, methods that can train new generations of teachers in the conscious manipulation of school spaces.

Margherita Zoebeli's legacy is to be found at CEIS, in the CEIS of yesterday which lives on in the archives, in that of today that lives on in the di-

[46] D. Mitchell, *Cosa funziona realmente nella didattica speciale e inclusiva. Le strategie basate sull'evidenza*, Trento, Erickson, 2018, pp. 313-327.

[47] Carro, Tosi, *Lo spazio della scuola*, cit., p. 81.

[48] «It would be interesting to promote the experience of the Village School with a national training project that would involve a transmission *by contagion*, not only empirical but certainly verifiable in practice, and therefore credible and assumable», A. Canevaro, *La proposta del Villaggio: una buona prassi*, in Biondelli, Calieri, *A scuola nel Villaggio*, cit., p. 11.

dactic practice, in the village and its flexible spatial layout, that's where we find the traces of her pedagogy.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

Fig. 1 – Bombs on Rimini, autumn 1944 (Biblioteca civica Gambalunga, Photographic Archive, AFP-4653).

Fig. 2 – Rimini. 1946. Municipal workers coordinated by surveyor Enzo Zavatta dug by hand with makeshift tools the one-metre-deep holes to be filled with concrete on which the 30 by 30-centimetre pillars for the CEIS wooden huts would be placed (AMZ, CEI-0242_015).

Fig. 3 – 1946. The land on which the CEIS was built was filled with the rubble of destroyed houses (AMZ, CEI-0365_008).

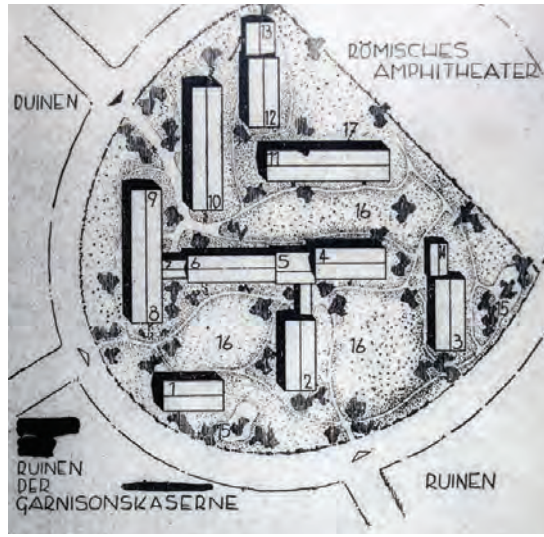
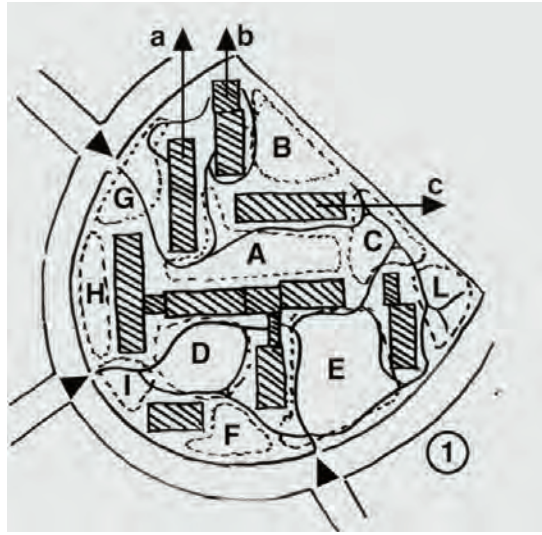


Fig. 4 – Felix Schwarz 1945-1946, Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre), Rimini, floor plan. First project for the accommodation of the barracks developed with the contribution of Margherita Zoebeli for the pedagogical aspects. The numbers correspond to the following uses: 1-4 kindergarten; 5 washroom and toilet; 6 orphanage; 7 kitchen 8 refectory; 9 infirmary; 10 culture barrack; 11 workshops; 12 laundry; 13 showers; 14 carpentry; 15 sandpit; 16 playground; 17 workroom.



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Figs. 5-11 – The sketch shows the ten areas (from A to L) into which the open space was divided in the original project (sketch by Monica Maioli, in Dubach, Forlani, Maioli, Pasini (eds.), *Lo spazio che educa*, cit., p. 16), the pictures testify to the dimensional, vegetative, morphological, functional and furnishing of the centre. In order: Fig. 6 – area A (CEI-0361_033); Fig. 7 – area A (CEI-0361_131); Fig. 8 – area D (CEI-0361_005); Fig. 9 – unidentified area (CEI-0361_132); Fig. 10 – area G (CEI-0361_020); Fig. 11 – area G (CEI-0361_029). (Photo Ernst Koehli 1949, in AMZ, *Album Giardino d'infanzia*).

Fig. 12 – CEIS, 1946. Bird's eye view, the small square in the foreground. We can also see the bell tower and the side of the Malatesta Temple (AMZ, CEI-0244_032) in the upper left corner.

Fig. 13 – CEIS 1946, children at work planting flowerbeds, a tradition that has been repeated every year since 1946. The dark «good soil» used to create the garden, can be seen in the holes dug in the rubble (AMZ, CEI-0245_002).

Fig. 14 – CEIS 1947, one of the psychomotor games still present in the garden (AMZ, CEI-0365_088).

Fig. 15 – CEIS 1946, the water pool, the centre of activity from the earliest months, children and teachers sitting on the edge of the pool, standing on the right is Margherita Zoebeli (AMZ, CEI- 0364_314).

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Figs. 16-17 – CEIS 1960s doll's house (AMZ, CEI-0082_025 and CEI- 0082_026). It was built in the garden, during the 1959-60 school year, by the children themselves, with the help of Gaetano Gervasio, who writes in his autobiography that «Each child from the village brought a real brick and 'walled' it (with lime), according to a drawing by the boys from the V grade, qualified as architectural experts among children». It was a 'game' that lasted for months. […] The children often walked around me while I worked, preparing to apply my 'lessons' to their own work», in Gaetano and Giovanna Gervasio, *Un operaio semplice. Storia di un sindacalista rivoluzionario anarchico* (1886-1964), Milan, Zero in Condotta, 2011.

Fig. 18 – CEIS 2022, the tunnel crossing through the *montagnola* (the *hill)* (Photo Monica Maioli).

Fig. 19 –CEIS 2022, the soft corner is created in a niche with a mirror, the warm and fragrant materials, like the wood of the huts, make it an intimate and very cosy environment (Photo Monica Maioli).

Fig. 20 –CEIS 1949, the kindergarten furniture, a pioneering experience for Italy at the time (Photo Ernst Koehli, AMZ, CEI-0361_017).

Fig. 21 – CEIS 2022, in the centre, the board made by the teachers and children themselves, which distributes the daily and weekly tasks necessary for community life; on the right top corner, the clock present in each barrack, which relieves the teacher of the control of time (Photo Monica Maioli).

Fig. 22 –CEIS 1989, in the space freed from desks and chairs, teachers organise the game “under the cloth” (AMZ, CEI-0139_001).

The contribution of Margherita Zoebeli and the CEIS to the development of activist pedagogy in post-war Italy[1]

Carmen Betti

Introduction

Much has been said and written about Margherita Zoebeli (1912-1996) and the CEIS Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) – created in Rimini in 1946 and still functioning –, and therefore it is not easy to add something new. Reflecting on the less traveled paths, since it has been a subject only occasionally recalled, this chapter aims at reconstructing the relationships which were established early on, and developed into a fruitful collaboration with Scuola-Città Pestalozzi in Florence, and therefore with the well known Italian educationalist Ernesto Codignola (1885-1965). He was its founder, together with the group of scholars who gravitated around him and the family publishing house, La Nuova Italia. This publisher is unanimously acknowledged as having played a primary role in the development of activist pedagogy in Italy.

The CEIS and Scuola-Città Pestalozzi – the latter taking root in one of the most desolate neighborhoods of Florence at the time, Santa Croce – were two avant-garde educational initiatives which, together with a few others which were not as interconnected and dynamic, began to operate between 1945 and 1946, clearly different from schools of the past. In fact, the emphasis was on community spirit, cooperation, interest in learning, the active

[1] I am grateful for many indications, as well as for the revision of the Italian version of the text, to Dr. Lando Landi, who taught for several years at Scuola-Città Pestalozzi and taught courses on the didactics of history and science education at the CEIS as well as being the author of several volumes on the subject. I am equally indebted, for the aforementioned reasons, to Dr. Maria Rosaria Di Santo, who is very familiar with the issues discussed in the present work, as stated in two of her works: *Al di là delle tecniche. La pratica educativa di Aldo Pettini*, Milano, Prometheus, 2015 and *Mario Lodi e la "Biblioteca di lavoro"*, Parma, Edizioni Junior, 2022.

participation of children and the involvement of families in contrast to previous practices based on discipline, obedience and order.

The purpose of this contribution is to focus on their different but synergistic contributions, both theoretically and operationally, to the promotion of pedagogy and active schooling in Italy. Margherita Zoebeli and the Scuola-Città Pestalozzi group juggled a reality which was hostile in more ways than one, no doubt because of material difficulties, but no less so due to the political context in which anything which did not stand under the aegis of Holy Mother Church and Christian Democracy was looked upon with distrust and not favoured. It is, moreover, no coincidence that the Ministry for Public Education had been entrusted, after the referendum of 1946, to Guido Gonella (1905-1982), a man very much in the Vatican's secret chambers, provocatively defined in secular circles as the Minister of private education.

In a letter written to Adriano Olivetti (1901-1960) in 1949, Margherita described the difficulties encountered by «a secular institution in that context»[2]. As an example, it is worth mentioning the request for the legal recognition of the elementary school she activated in 1947, which received a response only in 1953 and only after the official intervention of the Swiss Legation stationed in Rome[3]. Scuola-Città Pestalozzi, although better represented in political circles, given the support of Tristano, the son of Ernesto Codignola, who was among the leaders of the Partito d'Azione (Action Party), also encountered its own obstacles, especially with the Florence city council.

1. But who was Margherita Zoebeli?

Margherita arrived in Rimini in the second half of December 1945, on behalf of Swiss Donation for the Victims of War[4], a charitable institution which brought together several humanitarian associations, including the socialist-inspired organisation Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation[5], which was also Zoebeli's orientation; the latter was charged with organising an immediate relief effort aimed at the population of the city of Rimini in the Italian region of Romagna, primarily at the most vulnerable category of the population, namely children, in response to the heartfelt request of the socialist

[2] C. De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia*, Roma, Viella, 2015, p. 103.

[3] *Ivi*, p. 94.

[4] Dono Svizzero alle Vittime di guerra / Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten.

[5] Soccorso Operaio Svizzero / Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk.

mayor, Clari, appointed by the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (National Liberation Committee, CLN). Many of them had, in fact, lost both parents, and all of them, indiscriminately, were severely traumatised. In fact, 90 percent of the city's homes had been razed to the ground. Together with the city of Cassino, Rimini was not by chance called a «martyr city among its Italian sister cities»; the scenario was in fact really apocalyptic[6].

The work of the small cadre of young people who had arrived from Zurich thus began toward the end of December 1945; however, preparation had begun earlier[7]. The project, put together by several people including Felix Schwarz, architect, and Margherita Zoebeli, educator, envisioned «the construction of a building which was to house 20 orphans, 3 to 6 years of age […], a kindergarten aimed at the children of the city of Rimini, a social center, open to residents, with several craft workshops»[8]. The environment designed to accommodate orphaned children was characterised, unlike the inhospitable existing orphanages, in such a way as to «reconstitute the intimate and protective environment of the 'home', of the nest, in order to re-establish basic needs on an affectionate and an emotional level; against the authoritarian and depersonalising logic of the institution, the Children's Home was thus born»[9].

In Florence, the point of reference was Pestalozzi, but it was also, as architect Schwarz wrote in 1946 in a local periodical, the theories of the ideal city, inspired by the British artist and writer William Morris (1834-1896). For her part, Margherita had already delved into the thinking of Maria Montessori who, in this regard, had expressed strongly innovative ideas. Briefly, attention to the location and characterisation of the environments, both exterior and interior, was maximal, as they were considered to be decisive for the nature and quality of the educational milieu and didactic work[10]. Sliding blackboards, no teacher's desk, light and movable tables, not for one child but for several children, and stools such that they could be used as building cubes. An unprecedented school scenario which disoriented pre-war trained teachers; this was one of the first stumbling blocks to be circumvented here, as in Florence.

[6] These are the words of the mayor, Arturo Clari, *Ivi*, p. 77.

[7] *Ivi*, p. 80.

[8] T. Pironi, *Percorsi di pedagogia al femminile. Dall'Unità d'Italia al secondo dopoguerra*, Roma, Carocci Editore, 2014, p. 154.

[9] *Ivi*, pp. 154-155.

[10] T. Pironi, *Per una pedagogia dell'utopia concreta: La comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli*, in C. De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*, Bologna, CLUEB, 2012, p. 66; C. Raimo, *L'ultima ora. Scuola, democrazia, utopia*, Milano, Salani, 2022, pp. 233 et seq.

Margherita, who would later never leave Rimini, was a young woman of 33, with much volunteer and professional experience already under her belt, including being a social worker and a teacher in the primary school. She had prolonged and multi-purpose psycho-pedagogical training, even at the university level, and had, as her point of reference, the thinking and writings of Alfred Adler, the founder of psychodynamically oriented psychology; thus, she had a solid, avant-garde preparation from a libertarian perspective. When she came to Rimini, therefore, she was not a novice in socio-educational and relational matters. On the contrary, as Tiziana Pironi wrote, she was fully «aware that the care of children traumatised by the events of war required precise educational professionalism». And she soon also took to reflecting «on the relationship between emotional deficiencies and intellectual development»[11].

Precisely because of these assumptions, which were the fruit of an awareness gained alongside the many orphaned children whom she had personally pulled out of the rubble, Zoebeli's active pedagogy was characterised from its inception, by exceptional human inspiration and, at the same time, by a strong libertarian character, with the aim of bringing out the unrepeatable individuality of each child, his or her unique and original personal style which had been inhibited by trauma. Essentially, educating was, for her, a process which required great respect, tact and delicacy. In her organisational and widely political work, she was flanked and supported by Barbara (Deborah) Seidenfeld who was paid by Workers Rescue as bursar, but was, in fact, deputy director of the Village. The latter was an unobtrusive figure, also of socialist orientation, long known for her anti-fascist commitment and highly regarded in contemporary socialist circles, to whom she would often turn for some financial support as, beginning in 1948, that of the Swiss Aid decreased[12].

Regarding Margherita, it has repeatedly been said that she was a true, great teacher, not only in school but in life. In effect, she disseminated support and human warmth to children as well as adults in emergency situations. She did it in Switzerland, helping Jewish families who took shelter there to escape the mounting racial climate of Hitler's Germany and then Fascist Italy; she did it again in Spain where she had gone to save children in Barcelona from the fury of the civil war unleashed by Franco. She went to Italy to offer her loving and competent relief to the people of Rimini, and decades later, she crossed the ocean in order to spread the principles of a child-friendly pedagogy to teachers in Nicaragua. Not surprisingly, Laporta wrote

[11] Pironi, *Percorsi di pedagogia al femminile*, cit., pp. 152-153.

[12] De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia*, cit., p. 91; Raimo, *L'ultima ora. Scuola, democrazia, utopia,* cit., pp. 228-229.

«Her experience of education was not born in school, but came from the ruins of cities, from the gathering of refugees […]. It was not a pedagogy of school, it was a pedagogy of life […]»[13].

It is precisely her particular approach which stimulates to emphasise that activist pedagogy should not be understood as monolithic as it is varied, and rich in different solutions and contributions, but with a single goal: the enhancement of each subject in training so as to facilitate children's development, autonomy, and creativity. It should be stressed that it is not a matter of unlimited autonomy, as has often been understood, indeed misunderstood, but of consciously oriented work, moving from the experiences of the children themselves, respecting, as mentioned, their rhythms and inclinations. In essence, these are the cornerstone principles of activism.

2. First steps in Rimini and Florence

As mentioned, Margherita crossed the Alps in mid-December 1945 and headed, among a thousand obstacles, to Rimini. Almost a month later, porters at the local train station unloaded the first of 30 railroad wagons, loaded with materials, converted from previous military use to civilian use, to erect the planned 13 barracks, work in which were engaged, in addition to Margherita, the aforementioned architect Felix Schwarz, Alberto Panizzi, a worker in Zurich of Italian origin, and a young surveyor, Enzo Zavatta, made available by the municipality, together with the land, that of the Roman amphitheatre, at the time filled with rubble, on which to erect the various pavilions[14].

But «if Sparta wept, Athens did not laugh»; all of Italy was a heap of material, and moral, psychological and, of course, cultural rubble. Nevertheless, although on its knees after twenty years of fascism and five years of bloody, even fratricidal, war, the country experienced a strong frisson of rebirth. From many quarters there emerged a desire to leave the fascist dictatorship behind and turn over a new leaf. However, it did not escape the most learned, that it was not enough to want a different world in order to achieve it in earnest, and that it was necessary to create, beyond democratic laws, the conditions in which they could walk with the legs of men, re-educating or educating them to feel that they were citizens, repositories of rights and duties, and responsible members of the community to which they belonged.

[13] R. Laporta, *Presente finché duri amore*, in Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il Ceis. Documenti di un'utopia*, Rimini, Edizioni Chiamami Città, 1998, p. 11.

[14] De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia*, cit., p. 84.

It is from this awareness and from the confidence that such a goal was achievable, that that exceptional operation of pedagogical and didactic refounding originated, from which the movement of active pedagogy or, speaking from the point of view of Dewey's progressive pedagogy, which had as its spearheads, among the few alternative realities initiated, Rimini and Florence, or rather first Florence and immediately afterwards Rimini. In fact, as is well known, in Florence, the Tuscan capital in fact, as early as January 1945, therefore with still part of northern Italy occupied by the Nazi-fascists, the first elementary school of an activist nature, Scuola-Città Pestalozzi, was opened, founded by Ernesto Codignola, starting during autumn 1944 and immediately pointed to, after the Liberation, as an exemplum, for the general scholastic reorganisation of the country.

But who was Ernesto Codignola? Codignola was a philosopher, and lecturer at the Faculty of Education in Florence who had written extensively on education. He had been a close collaborator of Minister Gentile on the 1923 reform on which he had worked regarding the transformation of the normal school, responsible for the training of teachers, into an Istituto Magistrale (a four-year teacher's college). Up to the very early 1930s, he had been a fascist who was anything but misaligned, as well as a follower of Gentile; however, after his failure in the politics of 1934 and especially after his humiliating ousting from the leadership of the important cultural body, also in that same year, he began to distance himself from it rapidly because he was disappointed and due to the influence of his son, the young Tristano, a convinced anti-fascist like his teacher, the jurist Piero Calamandrei[15]. Florence, between the 1930s and 1940s, was – along with Pisa – among the most active sites of antifascism, and in particular, Tristano exposed himself to the point of being sent into exile, from which he returned after two years – in 1942 – more antifascist than before.

It should be pointed out that the Codignola family had, as did Margherita Zoebeli, and as we shall soon see, rare resources; the Codignolas could avail themselves of a publishing house in which they were the majority shareholders. This refers to La Nuova Italia, active since 1926, first in Venice and then from 1930 in Florence, after a brief interlude in Perugia which, in the postwar period, played a fundamental role in the dissemination of activist psycho-pedagogical literature[16]; dwelling on the Codignolas, and in particular on Tristano, is not out of place, as will be seen below.

[15] For the Board of Culture which managed schools in Emilia Romagna and Tuscany, see G. Cives, *L'attività dell'Ente di Cultura*, in «Scuola e Città», 4-5 (1967), p. 289.

[16] C. Betti, *La Nuova Italia*, in G. Chiosso (ed.), *TESEO '900. Editori scolastico-educativi del primo Novecento*, Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 2008, p. 388.

Tristano, known as Pippo in the circles of the partisan resistance and the local Action Party, of which he became head shortly after his return to Florence from confinement, played a fundamental role in the reception and diffusion of Deweyan thought and consequently of activism in Italy. First of all, because it was he who, immediately after the liberation of Florence on August 11, 1944, urged his quite bewildered father to found a model primary school, inspired by democratic values, in order to educate children in active citizenship; this had the immediate praise of Carleton Washburne[17]. He was also, more than his father Ernesto, who soon stepped aside, who charted the publishing policy of the family publishing house which worked, as mentioned, on the dissemination of Dewey's thinking by publishing two political works in 1946: *Liberalism and Social Action* and *Old and New Individualism*, and in 1949, *School and Society and Democracy and Education*, all world-renowned[18].

Returning to Florence's Scuola-Città Pestalozzi, one wonders how a man like Ernesto Codignola *senior*, only a few years earlier gravitating to fascist circles, could have built something authentically democratic[19]. He did not operate alone; he was helped by his wife, Anna Maria Melli, herself a teacher, and above all by an assistant at the Magisterium of Florence, Margherita Fasolo, who had, instead, been a partisan relay girl and was also active in the Action Party, as well as being a teacher at the local teacher's college. Thanks to Margherita Fasolo's decisive political-pedagogical contribution, the Scuola-Città Pestalozzi was established in just a few months, and its name made explicit its organisation, that of a self-governing miniature city, with a mayor, a council, aldermen, and a court of honor, that is with the typical decision-making and controlling bodies of a city in which the children themselves had an active part, together with their teachers and those who ran it.

If in Rimini the initial focus had been on treatment, that is, restoring the boys' affectionate-emotional balance, here the prevailing intent, one understands, had instead been moral and political together, that is, the creation of

[17] E. Codignola, *Scuola-città Pestalozzi. Educazione e iniziativa individuale*, paper given at the course of the SEPEGs, held May 4-14, 1947, in Rimini, Italy, in Id., *La nostra scuola*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1970, p. 141-150.

[18] C. Betti, *L'incidenza del pensiero e dell'opera di John Dewey e della pedagogia attivistica internazionale sul rinnovamento e sulla democratizzazione del sistema scolastico nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*, in R. Sani (ed.), *L'internazionalizzazione del sistema scolastico e universitario italiano dall'Unità a oggi (Macerata, 17-18 May 2022),* in «History of Education & Children's Literature», 2, 17 (2022), p. 150.

[19] G. Turi, *Il "fascismo ideale" e la disillusione di Ernesto Codignola*, in G. Tassinari and D. Ragazzini (eds.), *Ernesto Codignola pedagogista e promotore di cultura*, Roma, Carocci, 2003, p. 29.

a school which would restore social living to boys destined, because of their living environment, to deviance and prepare them to abide by democratically shared rules[20].

Already from what we have examined, obvious correlations emerge between these two realities, different but complementary. First of all, as Scuola-Città Pestalozzi had been the first example of an active, full-time school (8am to 6pm) in the postwar period, and then because a very powerful dialogue soon began between Margherita Zoebeli and the Florentine exponents, Codignola in particular, which was fundamental for both of them, even in their specificities. It could not be ascertained precisely how such contacts got started. It seems that the invitation came from Scuola-Città Pestalozzi and that the CEIS was, among the not so many existing innovative realities, not only the first to respond but also the most favourable to a collaborative exchange. However, it could be that the intermediary was the Swiss Consul in Florence who approved of the experiment initiated by Codignola with whom he had a relationship, or Washburne who was attentive to the new educational realities which were appearing in Italy[21].

Shifting our gaze from the Florentine scenario to that of Rimini, it should be noted that Margherita, after the opening of the orphanage, called the "Children's Home" or more simply "la Casina", in the spring of 1946[22], and after the construction of the community centre and kindergarten in 1947, she opened a first primary school class into which she would take in children who were leaving kindergarten because of their age, and who still had to deal with quite a few traumas which had obvious repercussions on learning. She understood that they had to be treated with great care, without forcing or imposing. She had no small difficulty in finding suitable teachers for such a delicate function as those trained earlier were unable to appreciate group work and the background buzz when pupils worked together, cooperating.

[20] This is how its founder Pestalozzi motivated the birth of Scuola-Città: «The school we founded in Florence wants to be a city, in which children live civic life seriously and are forced to resolve the innumerable moral questions that arise from the contrast or meeting of wills […] Scuola-Città is a hive where there are no idle drones […] The little Apaches of S. Croce were gradually won over to the concept of law […]», see Codignola, *Scuola-città Pestalozzi. Educazione e iniziativa individuale*, cit., pp. 143-144.

[21] E. e A. M. Codignola, *La Scuola-Città Pestalozzi*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1969. This edition was edited only by A. M. Melli, Ernesto Codignola's wife, after he passed away in September 1965.

[22] Although the kindergarten had already been in operation since April, the Village's inauguration took place, symbolically, on May 1st, 1946, amid red flags and the notes of the Internationale, which worried local Catholics and moderates not a little, see De Maria, *Introduzione. Per una biografia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa*, cit., p. 20.

So much so that she brought in some young teachers from Switzerland who completed their apprenticeship there and, at the same time, start the new school course[23].

Among other things, the parallel opening of the kindergarten and the first grade sections was also experimented with, to encourage the exchange of experiences among children as well as teachers. Never before had such an arrangement been implemented. And this is just one of the many innovations put in place. In brief, an activist type of school was born in Rimini, with strong libertarian inflections not found elsewhere, not even in the Florentine school, although there was a strong community spirit, and there was group work and a continuous exchange among pupils, and with and among teachers, favouring activities of a practical type, inspired by the children's experiences.

In Florence, as in Rimini, the initial project underwent an expansion: in fact, at the Village, after the kindergarten a primary school was opened. At Scuola-Città, a sixth grade was established after the canonical five years, followed by the seventh and eighth grades, that is, the well-known three-year post-primary school for the fulfillment of compulsory schooling, which functioned as such until the establishment of the only middle school in 1962. In fact, it was intended to prevent all the educational work accomplished from being dispersed either in one of the traditionally functioning post-elementary schools or due to early school dropout, as was repeatedly the case[24].

In the first analysis, in both realities, they proceeded by constantly monitoring and modifying the trajectory, based on what emerged from the outcomes and meetings among all the "actors" involved. In particular, Margherita moved with the caution of an experimenter: «We thought – she said – about organising our primary school in such a way as to develop a different methodology: individualising learning, introducing a second teacher into the classroom, collaborating with a psychologist and a doctor»[25]. Codignola, who was unquestionably introduced to the subject, expressed, perhaps, a somewhat more dirigiste, if encapsulated, outlook than in the past: however, even in Florence, there were two teachers per class and constant checks between them and other colleagues.

The different legal condition of the two schools should not be any less underestimated. Scuola-Città Pestalozzi was established as a state elemen-

[23] *Ibidem.*

[24] *Il corso postelementare*, in E. e A. M. Codignola, *La Scuola-Città Pestalozzi*, updating training courses, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1975, pp. 34-40. This edition was also introduced and edited by Anna Maria Codignola alone, given the passing of her husband exactly ten years earlier.

[25] *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il Ceis*, cit., p. 42.

tary school with «educational differentiation», that is, experimental. As such, it enjoyed wide margins of autonomy in the setting of work and in the choice of teachers who were appointed cautiously *ad annum*; yet, it was subject to the supervision of the director of the relevant educational circle. It was also flanked by a foundation which supported it financially, thanks mainly to private handouts[26]. Unlike this, the Swiss-Italian Village elementary school was born as a private school, thus with fewer regulatory constraints and certainly greater autonomy. Only in 1953 was it transformed, after a long wait as we mentioned, into a parish school, but even this legal status guaranteed it autonomous choice of teachers and, of course, teaching autonomy.

Additional differences are found in the setting of the two school experiences. The CEIS had classrooms located in former military barracks, converted, surrounded by nature and arranged in such a way as to delimit "private" spaces and others in common, in order to encourage interpersonal relations but also recollection. Architecturally speaking, it was undoubtedly better performing than Scuola-Città which was instead arranged in an old mansion on several floors thus with stairs to climb up and down, and very high and austere rooms and acoustics unsuitable for school needs. There was also here a large garden around it, where the children could go, but with certain prohibitions so as not to damage it, unlike Rimini, where not only were there no restrictions whatsoever, but pupils were encouraged, using gymnastic equipment, considered "dangerous" elsewhere, to overcome fears and uncertainties, and to test themselves. It is here that, as we have already mentioned, the entire setting of the different pavilions had not been the result of randomness, but of thoughtful and discussed choices, in the knowledge that the organisation of the spaces, inside and outside, gave a non-random imprinting to the educational work; the example that the gate was always open is worth mentioning. This was certainly a distinctive quality of the Rimini Centre, not coincidentally called "Village" by the boys themselves, because there was an air of closeness there.

[26] «Statuto della Fondazione Scolastica "Giulio Gori" (Patronage of the Scuole-Città Pestalozzi)», in Codignola, *La Scuola-Città Pestalozzi*, cit., pp. 229-230. In the oft-quoted report given by Codignola to SEPEG in Rimini in 1947, one can read, «We did not lack support. Carleton Washburne (founder of the Winnetka School, very well known in contemporary pedagogy, then director of the Office for Education at the Allied Military Government) on an occasional visit of his immediately understood the importance of School-City, with fine intuition foresaw its additional development and patronized the idea from its inception. Mr. Steinhauslin, Swiss Consul General in Florence and his wife were also generous in their assistance to us from the very beginning. The acting superintendent of studies, a fine and intelligent humanist, Alessandro Setti, was generous in assisting us», see Codignola, *La nostra scuola*, cit., p. 141.

3. Florence's other "School" and relationship with the CEIS

Before going on to analyse other denotative aspects of the Village, then the CEIS, it is necessary to add that Florence, in addition to the Scuola-Città Pestalozzi and the related experimental teaching activity, was also in the vanguard for activist pedagogical reflection. It was so for many years precisely thanks to the publishing house La Nuova Italia which, as mentioned, hastened to have the books of John Dewey translated and published as well as those of other important European innovators: Ovide Décroly, Edouard Claparède, Adolphe Ferrière e Jean Piaget and so on. It was a veritable outpouring of works, previously either never translated or never circulated on a large scale because of Gentile's disdain for psychology which, for him, was a pseudoscience, and for methodics, or methodology which, more than useless, he considered harmful as it inhibited each teacher's search for his/her own method.

Briefly, thanks to the editorial line of La Nuova Italia and its already appreciated series *Educatori antichi e moderni* (Ancient school and modern educators), literature of secular orientation which was entirely new began to circulate among teachers from the 1950s onwards. As a result of works belonging to the pedagogical thought of "personalismo" (centred on individual dignity and freedom) and to Catholic inspiration, thanks to the efforts of a dynamic group of young scholars which had formed after the immediate postwar period around the publishing house and the magazine «Scuola e Città», founded by Ernesto Codignola in the spring of 1950. These young people, many of whom were maturing at the time, subsequently gradually entered the university environments of the central-northern part of the country where, for half a century, they characterised the Italian pedagogy of secular-progressive orientation. Franco Cambi, a well-known Italian scholar, professor of history of Pedagogy at the University of Florence, spoke in this regard, perhaps a little emphatically, but not entirely out of place, of the so-called "School of Florence"[27].

But who were these young scholars who, at a rapid pace, translated and introduced avant-garde foreign literature into Italy? They were, first and foremost, Lamberto Borghi, Francesco De Bartolomeis, Raffaele Laporta, Aldo Visalberghi and then Gastone Tassinari, Santoni Rugiu and others, whom I will not mention: scholars who began to regularly frequent, together with Ernesto Codignola but also alone, the CEIS, and the various initiatives and conferences organised there, reporting and intervening in the debates

[27] F. Cambi, *La "scuola di Firenze". Da Codignola a Laporta (1950-1975*), Napoli, Liguori Editore, 1982.

or, even staying there for long periods, such as De Bartolomeis, whom I will speak about soon.

Briefly, in the context of the vast operation of pedagogical and didactic refoundation which began immediately after the Second World War, Margherita Zoebeli and the Swiss Village were present from the very beginning, at both an experimental and a theoretical level as the Italian-Swiss Village did not limit itself to just experimenting. Having spaces and also financial resources, which were found not without effort but with great commitment both in Italy and abroad, it promoted and organised meetings, conferences, and national and international seminars on methods and didactics, on the training of teachers and educators (starting from those of very early childhood) and on spaces and architecture. These were all decisive themes for inaugurating new study and didactic paths in which the biggest names in the sector intervened, Italian but also Swiss, French, and American, thus becoming a fruitful crossroads for the interception of ever new ideas and proposals at both a theoretical and a practical-experimental level.

In summary, CEIS was configured very early, autonomously and in harmony with Florence, as a laboratory and as a driving force for the pedagogical and didactic renewal of our country in an activist sense. As a demonstration of its centrality in the international panorama, it is enough to say that, in 1947 and 1948 at the Village, there were two SEPEG meetings – Semaines internationales d'étude pour l'enfance victime de la guerre (International study weeks for childhood victims of war) – that is, two international study seminars, inspired by the Swiss in which pedagogists, doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers met to discuss the consequences of the war on minors. These scholars usually came from the main European countries as well as from the United States, and reported on the educational experiments and studies that took place there. It was a highly effective broad look, a kind of open window on the socio-psycho-pedagogical world. At the SEPEG Week of 1947 in Rimini, the leading exponents of Italian secular pedagogy, such as Ernesto Codignola – who gave the opening speech – and Lamberto Borghi spoke. A very fertile partnership developed between them after that first meeting which had taken place in person exactly there[28]. Borghi had just returned from the United States, after being exiled due to the racial laws of 1938 as he was from a Jewish family.

Ernesto Codignola's wife, Anna Maria Melli, also spoke effectively in Rimini regarding the importance of the Maestro in the reconstruction of the country, and how it was therefore necessary to take responsibility for his training. There was also Maria Comandini, a social worker originally from Cesena, the wife of the philosopher Guido Calogero, the founder of liberal

[28] De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia*, cit., p. 131.

socialism together with Capitini and in close collaboration with the Codignolas[29]. She had gone to Rimini together with Cesare Musatti, a young psychologist at the time, later one of the leading names in the sector in Italy[30] Both were involved in the organisation of CEPAS, that is, the school founded the year before in Rome by Guido Calogero, for refresher courses for social workers[31].

There was also young Aldo Visalberghi, soon to become one of the finest scholars and experts on Dewey as well as on Carleton Washburne himself who was the well-known head of the Allied troops education subcommittee, a notable supporter of Dewey's thinking. The Rimini Weeks which, in fact, lasted for ten days, were also at the origin of the founding of medical-psycho-pedagogical centres in Italy. The 1948 SEPEG dealt precisely with the theme of "difficult kids". For the second time, Ernesto Codignola opened the proceedings, speaking about the activity of the SEPEG in Italy starting from 1945 and of Scuola-Città, regarding the topic discussed[32].

As early as the end of 1947, Codignola had announced the creation of a medical-pedagogical team at the Florentine school.[33] But who were these young scholars who translated and introduced avant-garde foreign literature into Italy at a rapid pace? They were, first and foremost, Lamberto Borghi, Francesco De Bartolomeis, Raffaele Laporta, Aldo Visalberghi and then Gastone Tassinari, Santoni Rugiu and others, whom I will not mention: scholars who began to regularly frequent, together with Ernesto Codignola but also alone, the CEIS and the various initiatives and conferences organized there, reporting and intervening in the debates or, even, staying there for long periods, such as De Bartolomeis, whom I will speak about soon.

However, the first centre was promoted right in the Rimini Village, with the help of Swiss neuropsychiatrists[34]. It was aimed at the population, schools and various welfare institutions in the Romagna area, also acting as a cutting-edge psycho-pedagogical and differential teaching laboratory through which the need for interventions and individualised work plans for all pupils in general was soon highlighted, to encourage their learning[35].

A relationship between Rimini and Florence, which was additionally cemented in 1948 on the occasion of the founding in Trogen, near the Pestalozzi village in Switzerland, of FICE, or the Fédération internationale des

[29] *Ivi*, p. 138.
[30] *Ivi*, p. 134.
[31] *Ivi*, p.115 e segg.
[32] G. Pagliazzi, *Il rinnovamento educativo dopo il 1945*, in «Scuola e Città», 4-5 (1967), p. 301.
[33] *Ivi*, p. 300.
[34] *Ivi*, p. 131.
[35] Pironi, *Percorsi*, cit., p. 156.

communautés d'enfants (International Federation of Children's Communities), of which the CEIS and Scuola-Città Pestalozzi were among the founding members, with the assignment of the role of contact for Italy to Margherita Zoebeli[36]. A few years later, in 1950, the first CEMEA delegation was founded in Florence on the initiative of the aforementioned Margherita Fasolo while, in 1951, two teachers from the Village went to France to follow CEMEA courses which were soon to take place in Rimini starting in 1954. They were aimed at school personnel from all over Italy, an appointment which was renewed year after year[37]. In fact, Zoebeli and Codignola were in unison, firmly convinced that it was necessary to commit to creating all the useful opportunities to promote more adequate training of teachers, a prerequisite for the quality of teaching and educational work[38].

4. Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero, CEIS (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) as a "maternal womb"

Over the course of a few years, the CEIS, like the Scuola-Città Pestalozzi, became a destination for pedagogical "pilgrimages" by Italian and foreign teachers interested in learning about the original work that was being done there. They were two very well-known realities appreciated much more abroad than in Italy. Margherita in particular, with a great sense of hospitality, welcomed everyone, encouraging them to break out of their school routine and try new paths, as happened after an "historic" meeting held on June 2, 1951. On that date, in search of new teaching methods, some teachers had gone to the Village; they included Giuseppe Tamagnini, Anna Fantini, both from the Marche, Aldo Pettini from Florence, and seven other teachers. They were all interested in the Freinet techniques, or rather the techniques of the French teacher from Vence who Margherita Zoebeli had met in person upon returning from Spain in 1938 in the company of children rescued from the bloody civil war which was raging in that country. The meeting of June 2nd, 1951 was at the origin of the founding of the Cooperativa della Tipografia a Scuola (later known as MCE) a few months later. It was founded in Fano on 4 November 4 of that same year and then held its 1st Congress right at the

[36] De Maria, *Introduzione. Per una biografia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa*, cit., p. 25.

[37] *Ibidem*.

[38] This is what Codignola said in Rimini in 1947, during the SEPEG Week: «Italian teachers […] are completely unprepared for such a difficult task […] Many are apathetic and indifferent, and conceive of school as a profession», see *Scuola-Città Pestalozzi. Educazione e iniziativa individuale*, in Codignola, *La nostra scuola*, cit., p. 145.

CEIS, in June of the following year, that is 1952, where Ernesto Codignola also spoke. Two years earlier, in 1950, he had invited Freinet to Scuola-Città Pestalozzi, giving testimony of it in the magazine he founded and directed «Scuola e Città» («School and City»). At that Congress, at the Village, there were also Francesco De Bartolomeis, one of the shrewdest scholars of educational problems of the post-war period, and Célestin Freinet himself[39].

On the basis of this analysis, it is easy to understand the position occupied by the CEIS in the national and international panorama. The CEIS has represented a sort of beacon which attracted scholars of pedagogical theories and experimenters in the methodological-didactic field, together with teachers, and secondary school professors, creating an unprecedented and very fruitful osmosis. If this was possible, it was certainly due to the pedagogical, political and ethical stature of Margherita Zoebeli, who was able to give the CEIS a very singular imprinting, that of openness to the new, of welcoming and of the ability to promote rights from its foundation. The CEIS was certainly like a sort of maternal womb for orphaned children, but also for teachers disoriented and dissatisfied with their work, and in search of new stimuli, as well as for researchers and scholars of psycho-pedagogical problems at university level.

Of the many merits of the CEIS, in my opinion, at least three are to be strongly highlighted as they are at the origin of the renewal of our entire school system. I refer in particular to the attention, completely pioneering, reserved for nursery school (3-6 years), the educational significance of which was, at the time, completely underestimated in Italy and perhaps also, for this reason, not very widespread and abandoned to private initiative, usually religious. I mentioned above the prolonged stay of Francesco De Bartolomeis at the CEIS. In fact, he remained there for an entire month when he realized that the demand for infrastructures aimed at childhood was increasing in Italy, as was the entry of women into the productive world, in order to study up close the singular organisation of the environment and the educational work aimed at children from 3 to 6 years of age.

Aware that children of that age had peculiar characteristics, he worked to ensure that the resulting infrastructural growth did not take place on the model of existing schools, primary schools first and foremost. From full immersion in the Village, he wrote one of his best and most useful books: *Il bambino dai 3 anni ai 6 anni e la nuova scuola infantile* (*The Child from 3 to 6 Years and the New Nursery School*), published in 1968 in accordance with law 444 which established the state nursery school in the same year. De Bartolomeis dedicated it to Ernesto Codignola and his nephew Jacopo;

[39] De Maria, *Introduzione. Per una biografia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa*, cit., p. 26.

however, he was generous with a thousand thanks and appreciation for Margherita, and arranged for there to be a rich photographic reportage at the beginning – approximately forty pages of photos – regarding childhood life at the CEIS, on the corners and centres of interest, inside and outside the "barracks".

Moving on to discuss the second merit of the CEIS, one cannot fail to point out as highly meritorious the commitment reserved for welcoming children with behavioural problems, or with some disability, into the classes of the so-called able-bodied children. In 1953, as I have already mentioned, a psycho-pedagogical medical centre was opened there, which foresaw the opening of new horizons for all children and young people with disabilities in our country[40]. In my opinion, the third merit concerns the architectural aspect and the value of the environment in which the children and young people lived for a good part of their day, which I will not dwell on, having mentioned it.

That said, it is not surprising that Margherita received many expressions of esteem and was asked for pedagogical, didactic and also architectural consultancy by the local authorities of various cities, such as Rimini, Empoli and others, following the increased need to establish, starting in the 1960s, a network of new services for children[41]. It is worth remembering that, in 1961, at the Faculty of Education in Florence, an unusual seminar took place, not by chance, which saw both pedagogists and urban planners working together; among them was Margherita Zoebeli, together with Borghi, De Bartolomeis and the urban planner Ludovico Quaroni. A meeting which has become historic and which was rightly highly publicised as it marked the beginning of an unprecedented collaboration between experts from distant but converging sectors in the construction of more functional school buildings.

For Margherita, the 1960s were very intense and also very rewarding. It was a decade which saw, for many reasons, a truly exponential interest in school and education. These were the years of the Center-Left, following the opening of the Partito della Democrazia Cristiana (Party of Christian Democracy, DC) to the Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party, PSI). It is no coincidence that this period was called the "season of hopes" for the development linked to the economic boom and for the attention given to the spread of education at a popular level. In fact, the two most important laws date back to this decade: the one establishing a single middle school and, as mentioned, the one establishing a state nursery school.

[40] *Ivi*, p. 32.
[41] *Ivi*, p. 33.

However, as is known, these were also years of strong and strident contrasts between old and new models and lifestyles, in all sectors, at their origin, and at the end of the decade, of the well-known Student Contestation, which soon spread to the world of work and to many, many other areas, from medicine to the judiciary, to psychiatry, to art and to entertainment. Margherita, as is known, was also affected and was heavily criticized, and here I end my analysis, but not before recommending reading the minutes of the conference held approximately ten years later, in 1979, at the CEIS in collaboration, not by chance, with the University of Florence, with the aim of taking stock of the active school. This is a very important document as, after more than thirty years, it contains the reflections of the initial protagonists: Margherita Zoebeli, Lamberto Borghi, Francesco De Bartolomeis, Raffaele Laporta, and obviously others, who had gradually joined together in the shared educational battle, including Lidia Tornatore, who in 1958 took over the leadership of Scuola-Città Pestalozzi, succeeding Raffaele Laporta, who had directed it for five years, starting in 1953, after Ernesto and Anna Maria Codignola had retired[42].

Translated by David Goldsmith

[42] L. Borghi, *Introduzione*, in *L'educazione attiva oggi: un bilancio critico*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1984. Ernesto Codignola's contribution is missing as he passed away on September 28, 1965.

Margherita Zoebeli and the Movement of Cooperative Education (MCE) in Italy in the post-war period

Anna D'Auria

Introduction

The Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Movement of Cooperative Education, MCE) has a deep relationship with Margherita Zoebeli. It is thanks to her that in June 1951 Aldo Pettini, Anna Fantini, Giuseppe Tamagnini, Rino Giovannetti met at CEIS and a few months later, together with other teachers, in the city of Fano formally created the Cooperativa della Tipografia a Scuola (Typography at School Cooperative, CTS), transformed in 1958 into MCE.

The pioneers of the MCE shared with Margherita Zoebeli the same questions about the fate of Europe and humanity after the experience of Nazism and Fascism. Above all, with the same educational fervor, they worked on a common project: to socially and morally rebuild the country through an emancipatory education as the primary instrument of social progress and peace, according to the democratic needs of the nascent Constitution. But to achieve this, there was a need for a radical rethinking of educational and scholastic institutions, of the educational relationship, of the role of the teacher.

1. The difficult post-war years

The experience of fascism and then of the war had caused enormous damage to a school system that had already been deeply classist. In the post-war period, the Italian school system was in extremely difficult conditions due to widespread material poverty and the very low level of education. In 1951 only 44% of children in the south and on the islands obtained an elementary school diploma. In the north they did not exceed 71%[1].

[1] Source: data from Istat, Serie Storiche, Istruzione, Tav. 7.1. See: https://seriesto-

After having made schools and teachers instruments of propaganda for fascist ideology, after the regime fell, very little attention and care was given to the professional training of teachers. In the immediate post-war period, in fact, the prevailing concern was to purge the programmes and school publishing of the elements of self-representation of the fascist regime. Also the attempts of Carleton Washburne, Allied government commissioner for education, to also introduce elements of Deweyan activism, did not find consensus among «[…] the Italian ministers, liberals of idealistic education, who agreed only on the theme of fascistization and the restoration of the "ideal freedom of our classrooms", but were not very sensitive to the new social and cultural needs […]»[2].

Thus, the unpreparedness of teachers, their subordination to their superiors and to the ministry, and a highly authoritarian school structure meant that Washburne's 1945 programmes remained largely unfulfilled and classrooms continued to be dominated by directive, passivising, and highly selective teaching.

In 1947 Dina Bertoni Jovine wrote: «Fascism has passed, the war has passed, one of the most intricate and tragic eras that history can remember is unfolding before our eyes but the school does not see, does not hear, does not participate»[3].

The pedagogical idealism hindered the renewal of the school and the skepticism expressed by the democratics themselves who shunned any experimentation, leaving the discussion on education to public rhetoric alone. As Codignola wrote to Zoebeli in January 1950, without any effective and sincere participation in concrete problems of social life, and with indifference, skepticism and aridity.

> «In such a climate in the state school there was no room for diversity, differences and divergences: there was none for teachers, who since the twenties had been bent in a subservient attitude to the dominant power, and consequently there was even less for students. The Italian school was pervaded by a conservative obscurantism and, especially in elementary school, was burdened by a strong confessional climate […]»[4].

riche.istat.it/index.php?id=1&no_cache=1&tx_usercento_centofe%5Bcategoria%5D=7&tx_usercento_centofe%5Baction%5D=show&tx_usercento_centofe%5Bcontroller%5D=Categoria&cHash=1b020e5419ca607971010a98271e320 (last accessed 16/11/2023).

[2] A. Santoni Rugiu, *Storia sociale dell'educazione*, Milano, Principato Editore, 1979, p. 667.

[3] D.B. Jovine, *Storia della didattica*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1976, 57.

[4] R. Rizzi, *Dare di sé il meglio. La pratica educativa di Anna Marcucci Fantini*, in «Quaderni del Consiglio regionale delle Marche», 32 (2001), p. 18.

In this phase, in fact, the pedagogical orientation of Catholic intellectuals was very present, who already on the eve of liberation in the Camaldoli Code placed Christian values at the basis of every educational discourse and affirmed the impossibility of a secular school as an "incomplete and programmatically deficient school".

As Antonio Santoni Rugiu states, «external pressures from democratic groups of teachers, largely coming from the ranks of the resistance or militant anti-fascism, who instead called for a more radical revision of the traditional pedagogical presuppositions»[5] arose on this political-pedagogical background, lacking in terms of a secular educational project for the social and democratic formation of the citizen and in terms of reflection and research for the development of anti-authoritarian teaching practices.

They recognized education and school as having a precise social function of emancipation at the basis of which was, and still remains to be forcefully claimed today, the strong identification of the connection between education and democracy. They were teachers, educators, university professors who, animated by a strong educational passion and political-social commitment, independently of bureaucratic-administrative interventions that fell from above, committed themselves to building from the bottom, starting from school, new forms of civil coexistence, working on possible changes in the given conditions, with experimentalism and a spirit of research for a teaching capable of producing a material transformation of the life of the class and of teaching activities.

«It was as if after fascism and the war, as had happened on the eve of the independence of the homeland, a civil and political redemption of the national community was underway, starting right from childhood»[6].

In this climate of enthusiasm, in the period immediately following the Liberation, the Rinascita boarding schools were born in various Italian cities: in Rome the experience of Scuola viva by Carmela Mungo; in Florence the Scuola-città Pestalozzi by Ernesto and Anna Maria Codignola; in Rimini the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero of Margherita Zoebeli; the first nuclei of the Centri di Esercitazione ai Metodi dell'Educazione Attiva (Active Education Methods Training Centres, CEMEA) and in Fano the Cooperativa della Tipografia a Scuola (Typography at School Cooperative, CTS). Pedagogical minorities that in the following years grew within and together with the struggles for the emancipation of the subaltern classes and the birth of social movements for rights, prepared since the post-war period the politi-

[5] Santoni, *Storia sociale dell'educazione*, cit., p. 667.

[6] C. De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia - Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, Roma, Viella, 2015, p. 128.

cal-pedagogical and cultural ground for the season of the great reforms of the school.

2. The role of CEIS in the birth of CTS

M. Zoebeli and CEIS represented a strong driving force and exchange of experiences for these autonomous movements that met in Rimini in common socio-pedagogical and didactic research, also connecting with what was most innovative abroad: in the United States (in 1949 *Democracy and Education* by John Dewey had been translated into Italian), in France and Switzerland, where a work of reflection for the modernization of the school had already been started.

Trained at university on the methods of the active schooling, Zoebeli arrived in Rimini and found the teachers' training very backward: lacking a culture of group work, they did not pay attention to the knowledge of the child and to reflection on teaching practices, limiting themselves to passive obedience. It was also to allow them to experience significant training experiences that she organized meetings at CEIS with other teachers, educators who were experimenting with new teaching practices.

She immediately made contact with Scuola-Città Pestalozzi, where in 1950 Célestin Freinet was a guest; with the experience of Scuola viva in Rome of Carmela Mungo who with Zoebeli organized a three-day exchange between students; with the first nucleus of the Italian CEMEA, of which she hosted the training courses from 1950 and for the following 10 years. And in 1951 she hosted a meeting between the teachers who after a few months gave life to the CTS. «There was a time when Margherita Zoebeli was one of the focal points of Italian pedagogy. Ernesto Codignola and Lamberto Borghi, the leaders of post-war secular pedagogy, went to meet personalities of European pedagogy at her place, in the CEIS, the "Village" of her children; Francesco De Bartolomeis collected in CEIS nursery school the experiences that he would have included in one of his most beautiful books; Bogdan Suchodolski stopped by her during his Italian travels; Célestin Freinet came to CEIS from his Vence to chair the meetings of the members of MCE (the Movement for Educational Cooperation) with Giuseppe Tamagnini […]»[7].

Giuseppe Tamagnini was one of the pioneers of the MCE. A trainee teacher from Fano, he had heard from Ernesto Codignola (as Zoebeli re-

[7] R. Laporta, *Presente finché duri amore*, in Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il Ceis. Documenti di una utopia*, Rimini, Edizioni Chiamami Città, 1998, p. 10.

counts in the interview given to Laporta) that a new pedagogical experience was underway in Rimini, so he brought his students from the teacher training institute to CEIS for the traineeship.

Tamagnini was looking for practices that could be consistent with the educational theories he shared. He noted the strong backwardness of teaching in Italian schools, which was centred on the passive repetition of content, the separation and hierarchy between theoretical knowledge and manual activities, the absence of spaces (for the use of words), the expression of creativity, of the body, of the social dimension.

From reading a quote in a work by Aldo Agazzi he had learned of the existence in Cannes of a popular school, by a teacher who had introduced new techniques into the class such as typography, the newspaper, correspondence, free text, living calculation…

Freinet defined these teaching practices as 'techniques of life' because they were inspired by respect for the freedom and creativity of children and based in all their articulations on relationships of cooperation and solidarity between children and between children and teacher.

From the first epistolary contact with the French teacher, Tamagnini was allowed to reproduce the typographic complex and began the first experimental experiences with two teachers: Rino Giovanetti from Pesaro and Anna Marcucci Fantini from Fano.

With the latter, he edited the publication in April 1951 of the first Italian school newspaper, "La Tratta".

«Since Tamagnini had already taken his students to visit the educational experience of the Italo-Swiss Village (an isolated example of 'active education') several times, he contacted its director, Margherita Zoebeli, and proposed organizing a first demonstration meeting in her Centre in Rimini. He immediately received enthusiastic approval from Zoebeli, who had already had the opportunity to meet Freinet in the 1930s (who had hosted her in his school in Vence with some Spanish children, children of refugees who had fled the Spanish civil war)»[8].

The meeting was held on June 2, 1951 and was attended, in addition to Tamagnini, Margherita and the CEIS staff, by teachers from various parts of Italy.

Aldo Pettini, who had heard of the initiative from Marina Manzoni, a CEIS teacher he had met at a CEMEA internship, recounts that meeting as follows: «[…] I received news that there would be a meeting at CEIS to discuss correspondence and school newspapers. The names of the participants

[8] R. Rizzi, *L'ideale e l'impegno, Giuseppe Tamagnini pioniere pedagogico della Cooperazione Educativa in Italia*, in «Quaderni del Consiglio Regionale delle Marche», XXV/33 (2020), p. 105.

were unknown. I rushed over, I knew Margherita Zoebeli with some of her teachers. There was also a gentleman, Prof. Tamagnini with three other colleagues: they were handling a strange thing: the Freinet press (a new name for me) with which they printed pages»[9].

On that day, Giovannetti and Fantini showed the work done in their classes: the free text, the collective editing, the composition and duplication of the school newspaper with the small typographic complex. Above all, we discussed the educational purposes that these new teaching techniques intended to pursue and promote.

Aldo Pettini underlines that it was a group of pioneers who enthusiastically moved to conquer new lands, finding not so much the "doctrine" of the new education, somehow known, as the much desired "what" and "how to do"[10].

At the end of that day a committee composed of Giuseppe Tamagnini, Aldo Pettini, Anna Fantini, Rino Giovanetti, Lidia Biagini and Marina Manzoni decided to lay the foundations for the creation of a teachers' cooperative, organize a vast network of school correspondence; collect material and print it to share with others; draft a monthly bulletin and prepare a meeting in Florence that was held the same month at Scuola-Città Pestalozzi.

Thanks to CEIS, the Typography at School Cooperative (CTS) was born, which a few months later was formally established in Fano. In June of the following year, the first association congress was held at CEIS and on that occasion Pettini would write that Margherita also took care of food and lodging «giving concrete testimony of what an educational community is»[11].

At this congress, Célestin Freinet, Ernesto Codignola, Raffaele Laporta, the teachers of CEIS, others from various Italian cities, didactic directors, educators of CEMEA were present. Margherita curated an exhibition of the materials of the printing house and of the school newspapers, and on this occasion the opportunity was taken to activate correspondence practices and form national work groups.

3. The value of cooperative practices

From the first meeting, Margherita Zoebeli and the pioneers of the CTS agreed on the rejection of directive teaching, of a teaching centered on individual-competitive work, on the use of a single source of knowledge: the teacher and the book, on the frontal lesson-book-grade verification circuit,

[9] A. Pettini, *Origini e sviluppo della Cooperazione Educativa in Italia. Dalla CTS al MCE*, Milano, Emme edizioni, 1980, p. 17.

[10] *Ivi*, p. 20.

[11] *Ivi*, p. 29.

but also on the closed doors and gates of classrooms and school buildings. They recognized in Freinet's anti-authoritarian techniques a precise social function: to place cooperation as a fundamental dimension of class life, free from any form of domination and alienation for the development of a democratic conscience, not only in children, but also in teachers.

«The aim set by the CTS is to make people understand not so much the mechanical use of the typographic complex or the file card cabinet, but the wave of humanity that can emerge in the school through them»[12].

The free text, the class library, correspondence, the role of materials organized by the teacher, the spaces for speech, decision-making and responsibility guaranteed by the cooperative organization of the class allow for the creation of collaborative social relationships, personal autonomy, the co-construction of knowledge as a common good. Practices that implicitly become curriculum because they bear a specific vision and conception of the world: democratic, supportive, inclusive.

Zoebeli defined the meeting with the pioneers of the CTS as a fortunate meeting because it was based on the adherence to the same educational principles that Tamagnini had presented in the report he gave in June 1952 at the opening of the first CTS congress that Zoebeli had hosted in Rimini and that still today constitute the common ground of commitment and cooperation between the CEIS and the MCE.

– The need for individualized teaching starting from the world of the child, of every child, recognizing their cultural dignity, personal history, educational needs in an intentionally intercultural pedagogical horizon.

– The need to start from the children's direct and concrete experience, from their relationship with the broader context of life inside and outside school, always placing contents and operational acts in a direct relationship. Operationality is placed as a fundamental element of learning to learn by acting and considered an essential condition to develop the autonomy that for Zoebeli was not only necessary to reinforce the identity of the individual, but to put them in a position to be able to actively participate in the functioning of democracy.

– The attention to the educational value of space, which Margherita called 'friendly space', as a mediator of relationships, sociality and doing things together.

> In fact, the classroom, always spacious, offers different corners: the painting corner, the construction corner, the dolls corner, the story or fable corner and so on. On the walls, always easily reachable by the little ones, are placed the shelves containing illustrated books and various materials. The sound and

[12] *Ivi*, p. 71.

> rhythm instruments, the colored circles, etc. are hung up. A large blackboard is placed on one of the walls, low and accessible to the little ones. […] Both the tables and the chairs are easily moved by the children and thus allowing the classroom to be quickly transformed into a free room for representation and dramatization, rhythm or collective play, now in an environment duly arranged according to the needs dictated by a certain organized activity[13].

– The cooperative organization of the class to build democracy through democracy; to experiment with oneself in function of oneself, but also of the community (see Zoebeli) and «to allow each person to become a conscious member of a collective in which, in order not to get lost, his individuality is sublimated in the conquest of a superior value that gives the child social awareness, sense of responsibility, critical capacity, spirit of solidarity, in a word human maturity»[14].

Above all, what was shared was the deep conviction that change could be promoted starting from school where it was not the programmes that counted but the teachers. Hence the centrality of training. The training to become a teacher had to focus on the reflective dimension, research, to connect theory and practice, disciplines, to identify transversality, to operate mediation between formal knowledge and the subject who learns, considering knowledge and understanding a shared heritage and a territory of encounters between human beings.

Other points of common reflection and experimentation were: the value of full-time as a precise educational project; the school-territory relationship (the innovative impetus of the CEIS in the relationship with the territory has paved the way for the commitment in the same direction of Bruno Ciari in Bologna, Fiorenzo Alfieri in Turin, Mario Lodi in Piadena); the need to invest in the international dimension of the political-pedagogical action (which is at the basis of the very birth of CEIS), in order to share the aims of education, promote exchanges, synergies between pedagogical research in various countries.

But above all, what characterized the meeting between Margherita Zoebeli and the pioneers of MCE was the pioneering spirit and a militancy in which there was no solution of continuity between professional and private life. A full educational commitment, consciously centred on a political use of the teacher's profession for a pedagogy of emancipation and the construction of an educational system and a school capable of reflecting on themselves, of experimenting, of researching, to become guardians of democracy.

[13] Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura*, cit., pp. 29-30.

[14] G. Tamagnini, *Relazione generale*, Rivista Cooperazione Educativa, II/10-11 (1953), p. 3.

4. For a pedagogy of hope

It is more significant than ever today to retrace the history of these educational minorities born on the ruins of the Second World War in a present in which other ruins cross our time: inequalities, cultural and educational poverty, abandonment and educational failure, individualism, populism; competitiveness and social irresponsibility having in the background wars, the climate crisis, the differences between the many Souths and Norths of the world. As then, there is a strong need for a cooperative, determined and tenacious commitment to promote a liberating education.

«The deepest essence of democracy lies in the liberation of the intelligence of our children and in their full and active participation in all the social activities of the school […]. The importance, ultimately, is not that a child has learned sooner or later to do a certain thing, or that they know how to do certain things more or less.

The important thing is that they are intellectually and socially free and that they have little or nothing to do with conformism, with the passivity and mental inertia, with the moral narrow-mindedness, the social immaturity that characterizes a large part of our people»[15].

Schools have changed, contexts have changed and despite the years that have passed since Ciari's writing, the educational emergency is the same as then and, as then, calls educators, teachers, university professors to build the pedagogical conditions to go beyond the present and look to the future, abandoning all fatalism, all resignation to actively and responsibly insert themselves into the course of history. Margherita spoke of 'a progressive education', capable of going against the current of society to build a future not of repetition but of alternative.

In recent decades, in neoliberal societies, schools have been asked mainly to guarantee the acquisition of skills that are functional to the promise of economic success of the individual and to the evolution of the needs of the labour market. The consequence has been the failure to take care of broader dimensions of being that are the basis of democratic social life: the ability to relate to others, with openness to dialogue and comparison; feeling part of a collective and the development of emotional awareness; curiosity and the exercise of criticism, together with an interest in knowledge and learning; the acquisition of a public ethic and the motivation to act to transform oneself and the world. These are precisely those dimensions of being on which Zoebeli and the MCE teachers placed (and place) the purpose of their educational commitment, but which the school struggles to recognize and develop.

[15] B. Ciari, *Tecniche e valori*, in Pettini, *Origini e sviluppo della Cooperazione Educativa in Italia. Dalla CTS al MCE*, cit., pp. 96-97.

For a long time, school policies have not addressed the problem of exclusion, of explicit dropout, of implicit dropout which also sees those who achieve scholastic success deprived of basic skills to actively integrate into society. Such policies have delegated to professionals "of disability" and their technical-medicalizing gaze, the resolution of the problems of those who do not conform to the rhythms, the methods of reproductive schooling, the standardized results, the labelling and the categorizing girls and boys. The prevailing paradigm is the 'therapeutic paradigm' that traces most of the problems of school subjects to causes that can only be interpreted in a clinical way, without taking into account the complexity of each person and of educational action. In this logic, the solution has become 'treating to adapt' rather than intervening on the structural and pedagogical conditions, on the means to allow the school to take charge of each person's life project, encouraging the expression of subjectivity, of potentialities, thus emancipating them from conditioning.

It is the sensitivity to the context, in its broadest sense, that represents the structure that welcomes or rejects, that enhances or selects, that emancipates or confirms and amplifies the starting social-cultural differences. Context is here understood as an implicit curriculum, which occupies the most significant space of the educational relationship, with a strong symbolic value because it is the bearer of models and theories of learning, of a precise vision of school and society, and conception of the world.

In this historical phase in which there seems to be weak thought on school and education, it is necessary to claim a pedagogy that thinks of the person, of the citizen in all their dimensions of life, as an ecological subject, a crossroads of significant relationships and cultures. The commitment to a democratic education is the most significant counterargument to the regressive, conservative and authoritarian pressures that in our time increasingly put, not only the happiness of individuals, but social cohesion and democracy itself at risk.

Policy makers, teachers, educators, but also parents and all of civil society are called to radically rethink their role; they have unavoidable responsibilities regarding the construction of a possible future, of an open society starting from recognizing the centrality of educational services and schools, of educational work and the values that must inhabit them, of the profession of educator and teacher. The places and subjects that deal with education have a fundamental role in building the foundations of a different model of coexistence by placing as an educational axis the formation of the citizen of the world, who lives and acts in the awareness of interdependencies, interconnections between themselves and others, between peoples, living species.

Above all, as Margherita Zoebeli and the pioneers of MCE did, it is necessary to take on oneself and one's profession as a teacher the decisive

role in being a determining part of the change to be undertaken in order to to contribute to the democratic rebirth of the country and for a new humanism.

Theirs was a pedagogy of hope to inspire political-pedagogical commitment in this 21st century, being clear that no education, no pedagogy is possible without hope for change. Without utopia.

«Socialism today, for me, should not change at all. I am not talking about politics, I am talking about the socialist society that wants equality for all, equal opportunities for development for all citizens. The socialist ideal does not seem to me to have changed, and above all I believe that we will have peace in society only through education and not through weapons. We educators should find all the means, all the methodologies to educate man to communication, cooperation, tolerance. I believe in education»[16].

Translated by Lucia Biondelli
Revised by Kathleen R. Amos

[16] 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. 51 et seq.

PART TWO

Margherita Zoebeli and the renewal of educational institutions

The evolution of Margherita Zoebeli's kindergarten in a local, national and transnational perspective (1946-1968)

Dorena Caroli

Introduction

This article aims to reconstruct part of the history of the kindergarten founded by Margherita Zoebeli in 1946 and opened on 1st May 1946. The kindergarten was a key institution in the history of pre-school education, not only because of the type of children who originally attended it, but also because of the evolution of its activities between 1946 and the 1980s, when its name changed from *giardino d'infanzia* (kindergarten) to *scuola materna* (maternal school) and later *scuola dell'infanzia* (infant school).

The evolution of the children's activities in the school is reconstructed here through original documents from UNESCO and the Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive)[1]. UNESCO sponsored the Fédération Internationale des Communautés d'Enfants (FICE), of which the Rimini kindergarten was a member from 1948. From the war years until the end of the 1960s, the internal organisation of the kindergarten combined various elements, based, on the one hand, on the German Froebel approach – which was very popular in the pre-school institutions of the time – and, on the other, on innovations developed through direct contact with the experts of the time or through reading their works. The latter helped Margherita Zoebeli introduce new elements into her pedagogical practice, as the type of children at the centre changed over the years. However, in order to understand the circulation of ideas in pre-school institutions (now referred to as the integrated 0-6 system or ECEC system), a transnational research ap-

[1] The Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive), later AMZ, is held at the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library) in Rimini. The author would like to thank Mara Sorrentino for finding many rare and valuable documents. Note: The papers of Margherita Zoebeli, kept in the archive under her name, without title, are quoted using the first words of each document (incipit). The documents, often undated, have been dated on the basis of their content.

proach is particularly effective in shedding light on the dynamics of their transformation[2].

Margherita Zoebeli and her activities at the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) have been the subject of many authoritative studies, especially after her death in 1996[3]. Her biography is rather unique: she began her training as an educator by organising summer camps for the children of socialist exiles and the unemployed in Switzerland with the support of the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation. In 1938, during the Spanish Civil War, she rescued a hundred children, and took them from Barcelona to the beach of Sète in France, where she organised a children's home camp[4]. She arrived in Rimini on 17 December 1945 with a team from the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation consisting of Barbara (Deborah) Seidenfeld Stratiesky (who was to become the treasurer of CEIS), architect Felix Schwarz (1917-2013), who was in charge of setting up the prefabricated wooden barracks in the area next to the Roman amphitheatre, and a fourth member, Alberto Panizzi, an Italian national living in Zurich[5].

The presence of the architect Felix Schwarz was important because, together with Margherita Zoebeli, he had the idea of organising the wooden barracks from Switzerland by creating clusters or separate architectural units on the unexcavated part of the Roman amphitheatre. Their arrangement was not intended to resemble a concentration camp, as Monica Maioli writes:

[2] D. Caroli, *Day Nurseries in Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Challenge of the Transnational Approach*, in E. Roldán Vera, E. Fuchs, Palgrave (eds.), *The Transnational in the history of Education. Concepts and perspectives*, London, 2019, pp. 69-100; Ead., *Introduction*, in D. Caroli (ed.), *History of Early Education Institutions in Europe from WWII until the Recent Reforms*, Bologna, Clueb, 2022, pp. 7-19.

[3] This research is based on the pioneering study by 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; Id., *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, Roma, Viella, 2015; G. Sapucci, *Breve storia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in L. Campioni, F. Marchesi (eds.), *Sui nostri passi. Tracce di storia dei servizi educativi nei Comuni capoluogo dell'Emilia Romagna*, Parma, Edizioni Junior, 2014, pp. 449-452; Id., *L'esperienza del CEIS dopo Margherita Zoebeli*, in L. Campioni, F. Marchesi (eds.), *La strada maestra. Tracce di storia delle scuole comunali dell'infanzia nei Comuni capoluogo dell'Emilia-Romagna*, San Paolo D'Argon (BG), Zeroseiup, 2018, pp. 72-80.

[4] On that occasion Zoebeli met C. Freinet in Vence, France; see 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, p. 162.

[5] See De Maria, *Introduzione. Per una biografia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa*, cit., pp. 1-39; T. Pironi, *Per una pedagogia dell'utopia concreta: la comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli*, *Ivi*, pp. 39-58.

«We thought that the arrangement should have an educational value, encouraging the formation of autonomous groups; at the same time, we wanted a place where these groups could meet. Just as there is a square in the city, there is a square in the village. The classrooms, like houses, have their own garden and grounds around them. Felix Schwarz achieves these aims by arranging the thirteen wooden huts in such a way as to create ten different areas that follow one another, that open and close, that can be viewed or walked through, spaces that differ in size, shape, vegetation, views of the huts, and views of the city»[6].

Schwarz's concept of space was also compatible with the principles of active pedagogy that had been developed at the kindergarten over the years. In designing CEIS, Schwarz also consulted with the young Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999), a Dutch colleague from the University of Zurich, who had designed playgrounds in Amsterdam in the 1960s. As Anna Lambertini's study shows, the kindergarten experience was important also for van Eyck who shared innovative ideas with his close friend Schwarz[7]. The specific layout of the 13 CEIS barracks, which opened up to the surrounding garden and more generally to the city and the community of Rimini, contributed to the school-community concept, and also included outdoor community activities.

After arriving in Rimini at the end of 1945, thanks to the contribution of two Swiss organisations (the Swiss Donation for the Victims of War[8] and the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation)[9], Zoebeli organised, at the beginning of 1946, the Community centre and the institutions that would make up the Villaggio svizzero (Swiss Village). The kindergarten opened on 1st May 1946. The following year saw the opening of the first class of the primary school (which was completed in 1953 and officially recognised in 1955) and the orphanage. The children's home, also known as the 'Casina', for 20 children (orphans and children with special needs) opened in 1952 (thanks to funding from the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation and the Pro Rimini Association in Zurich), later widened in 1961[10].

In order to explore the evolution of the kindergarten into an infant/preschool institution, this article will adopt an analytical method that combines

[6] M. Maioli, *1946 - Un'avanguardia svizzera a Rimini*, in A. Ugolini (ed.), *Ruderi, Baracche, Bambini. Ceis: Riflessioni a più voci su un'architettura speciale*, Firenze, Altralinea Edizioni, 2017, pp. 54-73 (see in particular pp. 59-61).

[7] A. Lambertini, *Come quando cade la neve. Aldo Van Eyck e il progetto dello spazio ludico*, in Ugolini (ed.), *Ruderi, Baracche, Bambini*, testi di K. Fabbri, A. Lambertini, M. Maioli, T. Matteini, S. Morri, M.L. Stoppioni, A. Ugolini, cit., pp. 74-87.

[8] Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten, SSK.

[9] Soccorso Operaio Svizzero / Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk, SOS.

[10] De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, cit., p. 75 et seq.

different perspectives on Margherita Zoebeli's pedagogical work. The analysis is divided into four parts, some of which overlap chronologically. The first part describes the main features of the kindergarten at the time of its opening. The second (in two sections) presents three scientific conferences that Margherita Zoebeli attended as the director of the CEIS, and which were fundamental for the development of her pedagogical work and method characterised by a series of 'cultural transfers' or pedagogical ideas that she drew from different experiences and experts, and which she gradually adapted to her practice. These were the two SEPEG weeks held in Rimini in 1947 and 1948, and the Conference of Directors of Children's Villages held in Trogen (Switzerland) in 1948, under the auspices of UNESCO[11]. The third part describes how the activities of the kindergarten gave substance to the idea of a community, i.e. a children's village, which CEIS has adopted over the years. The fourth part focuses on the development of the kindergarten first into a "scuola materna" (maternal school) and then into an infant/pre-school, a complex phase in the work of Margherita Zoebeli, who drew on other stimuli and ideas that enriched her already highly original experiment[12].

As can be seen from the written reflections that accompanied Margherita Zoebeli's activities, which are preserved in her valuable archives, the process of renewal that this institution underwent can be explained by the pedagogical action of its founder, which was at the same time educational, scientific and political. Margherita Zoebeli was in constant contact with a network of partners and colleagues at a local, national and international level for constant scientific updates. Although open to the prospect of transnational circulation of ideas in order to improve activities, the pedagogist always kept a close eye on the development of kindergarten and school education in Italy, also with a view to the future integration of children into local schools. Because of this complex situation, the CEIS kindergarten, in turn, became a point of reference, inspiring the debate that preceded the adoption of Law n. 444 on the establishment of state maternal school in 1968.

[11] S. Bouisson, M. Gardet, M. Ruchat, *Bringing Everyone to Trogen: UNESCO and the Promotion of an International Model of Children Communities after World War II*, in P. Duedahl (ed.), *A History of Unesco. Global Actions and Impacts*, London, Palgrave, 2016, pp. 99-115.

[12] We will not talk here about the training of teachers/educators which started with the organisation of courses by CEMEA, Centri di Esercitazione ai Metodi dell'Educazione Attiva (Active Education Methods Training Centres) in 1954, already discussed by other authors: Pironi, *Percorsi di pedagogia al femminile. Dall'unità d'Italia al secondo dopoguerra*, cit., pp. 168-172; L. Maggioli, *Un progetto educativo che si realizza*, in Campioni, Marchesi (eds.), *La strada maestra*, cit., pp. 68-70.

1. The opening of the "Remo Bordoni" kindergarten

In post-war Italy, there were both kindergartens and infant schools for pre-school children, and the problem of the relationship between confessional and state schools remained unresolved and was at the forefront of political debate[13]. For her Villaggio svizzero (Swiss village), Margherita Zoebeli kept the name of Froebel's *kindergarten*, which was conceived as a continuation of Pestalozzi's work centred on the child's need for play and activities with the famous gifts (*Spielgaben*) and various occupations. Zoebeli may have attended a kindergarten in her childhood, as most children do, and was familiar with the beneficial aspects of pre-school education for a child's development[14].

In post-war Rimini, the kindergarten in the Villaggio italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss village) was an important innovation for several reasons. As Stefano Pivato noted, since the spring of 1943, the children had been attending neither kindergarten nor school. The school buildings had either been bombed or occupied by evacuees. It is therefore likely that the youngest children were hidden in shelters or basements, or were displaced. Older school-age children had spent half of their lives witnessing scenes of destruction and death, not to mention food shortages and lack of hygiene. The return to normal life was slow: reopening the infant schools was difficult because, in Rimini, as in the rest of the country, the local administrations did not have sufficient funds for childcare. The delay in the opening of the city's historic Baldini infant school, a Catholic institution, was a cause for political turmoil in the debate on education. Controversy also accompanied the work of Margherita Zoebeli, while the women of the UDI, the Unione Donne Italiane (Italian Women's Union) insisted on the opening of children care services[15], because as everywhere else, they were tired of the bureaucracy of those run by the ECA, the Ente Comunale di Assistenza (Municipal Assistance Agency) or ONMI, the Opera Nazionale per la protezione della

[13] E. Catarsi, *L'asilo e la scuola dell'infanzia. Storia della scuola "materna" e dei suoi programmi dall'Ottocento ai giorni nostri*, Scandicci (Firenze), La Nuova Italia, 1994/2000, p. 225.

[14] By 1861/1862, kindergartens had become quite common in Switzerland, and from the beginning of the 20th century Agazzi's and Montessori's educational practices were also adopted in French-speaking Switzerland, M.E. Schärer, *La pédagogie fröbelienne dans l'éducation préscolaire en Suisse romande: 1860-1914*, in «Revue Suisse de sciences de l'éducation», 25/2 (2003), pp. 287-307.

[15] In this passage, reference is made to aspects already described in detail by S. Pivato, *La ricostruzione della scuola a Rimini: realizzazioni e dibattiti*, in T. De Luigi, S. Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro. Cinquant'anni di vita del CEIS*, presentation by R.L. Montalcini, Rimini, Maggioli Editore, 1996, pp. 44-49.

Maternità e dell'Infanzia (National Maternity and Child Protection Organisation).

When it opened (Fig. 1), the CEIS kindergarten took in 150 children, housed in three barracks, divided into four classrooms, each with two teachers. As Lidia Maggioli's reconstruction shows, the children in the kindergarten were mainly orphans, illegitimate children, children from large families or destitute children[16]. They were admitted free of charge from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and were given breakfast and lunch. The classrooms, marked with colours, were equipped to allow spontaneous activities: mobile stools and beds, cots for daily rest and equipment for quick continuation of activities; there were also special corners[17] dedicated to specific activities. Medical and paediatric assistance was also provided (thanks to the presence of Dr Monticelli and Dr Bongiorno, who also looked after the staff). The children also received clothes and underwear thanks to volunteers (some of whom later came from Switzerland, such as Frida Helena Wyss, 1936-2022) who helped with administration, social work and sewing in the special workshop. This educational service was particularly appreciated by left-wing circles, the Socialist Council of Rimini[18], with which Margherita Zoebeli had been in close contact since her arrival in Rimini.

During the first year, Zoebeli used the pedagogical methods that she had tried out in previous experiences, such as involving all the children in indoor and outdoor activities. From 1947 onwards, however, thanks to her collaboration with Italian and foreign experts, she was able to reflect more consciously on the education and re-education of children who had suffered severe war trauma, as well as on the solutions developed abroad and in other Italian cities. The certainty that she was not alone gave her courage and she realised that the future of education laid in constant exchange and updating.

1.1. The kindergarten: an educational community for children victims of war

In order to analyse how complex didactics were developed in the kindergarten and how Zoebeli adopted a broader pedagogical framework that conceived the kindergarten as a community of children, three important moments should be considered, as they are central to the transnational circulation of a plurality of pedagogical ideas that were the starting point for the Swiss pedagogist's innovations.

[16] Maggioli, *Un progetto educativo che si realizza*, in Campioni, Marchesi (eds.), *La strada maestra*, cit., pp. 61-71 (in particular p. 67).

[17] *Ibidem*.

[18] *Ivi*, p. 68.

The first two moments were two events organised at the CEIS: the two-week International Conferences for Children Victims of War (Sémaines Internationales d'Études pour l'Enfance Victime de la Guerre, SEPEG), supported by the Swiss Donation Organisation. They were held from 4 to 15 May 1947 and one year later from 4 to 14 May 1948[19]. The two conferences in Rimini were attended by a large number of foreign and Italian pedagogists, some of whom attended both[20]. The third, less known but equally important moment was Margherita Zoebeli's participation in the first meeting of the International Federation of Children's Communities (*Fédération Internationale des Communautés d'Enfants*, FICE) in Trogen, Switzerland where the Federation was founded under the patronage of UNESCO[21]. Through these meetings Margherita Zoebeli became familiar with the principles of active community education, as described by the leading theorists of the time, which enabled her to develop the idea of the kindergarten/infant school as a community of children.

At the first SEPEG conference, held on 13 May 1947 (Fig. 2), Margherita Zoebeli gave a short presentation entitled *Technical questions concerning the management of kindergartens*, in which she expressed her appreciation for the Montessori method, as Tiziana Pironi pointed out[22], of which she retained the attention to the environment and, as we shall see, the "materials" used for kindergarten activities. On this occasion, echoing some of the speeches made during these days, Zoebeli proposed to draw up a programme for future work on «new educational programmes», dealing with issues such as active schools, the reform of teacher training, the introduction of psychology into the curriculum, vocational schools, the teacher's library and the re-education of street children. Zoebeli concluded that «it is no coincidence that this SEPEG meeting is being held in Rimini, in one of the most devastated cities in Italy, where 50 per cent of the houses have been destroyed, while 25 per cent have been seriously damaged and only 25 per cent of all houses have not been affected»[23].

[19] They had been held in Zurich and Milan in previous years, C. De Maria, *Margherita Zoebeli e il lavoro per l'infanzia vittima della guerra*, in E. Appetecchia (ed.), *Le idee e i movimenti. Servizio sociale di comunità in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra*, Roma, Viella, 2015, p. 243.

[20] *Ibidem*.

[21] AMZ, Envelope 12, Writings and Notes. File. Minutes of public speeches. Report presented at the 1948 FICE meeting in Trogen in 1948 *Giardino d'infanzia Italo- svizzero al nome "Remo Bordoni"*, Rimini, pp. 1-5.

[22] T. Pironi, *Per una pedagogia dell'utopia concreta: la comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa*, cit., pp. 59-81.

[23] AMZ, Envelope 18. Writings and Notes on CEIS, file: Documents on SEPEG (1947-1948); M. Zoebeli, *Questioni tecniche concernenti la direzione delle case d'in-*

Among the participants to the first conference (teachers, professors, headmasters and school inspectors, scholars and experts) were also prominent figures such as the pedagogist Ernesto Codignola, promoter of the "Scuola-Città Pestalozzi" in Florence and Carleton Washburne, a pedagogist who had been a student of John Dewey. Appointed as head of the Allied Forces sub commission for educational reform in liberated Italy during World War II, Washburne had supported the SEPEG conferences from the very beginning. In his speech, Codignola analysed the achievements of the new schools but also recalled their failures, namely interpreting the concept of freedom in an anarchic sense, as the famous Russian writer Lev Tolstoy did. He went on to discuss the importance of self-government, which is a fundamental principle in active pedagogy, which should not be seen as «subjectivity inspired by arbitrariness», but rather as «the result of inner discipline, the conquest of freedom, where freedom is understood as the internalisation and not the abolition of authority. Free is the person who has internalised the law»[24]. Speaking of his own experience in Florence, Codignola stressed that the school «is a city, in which the little ones really experience civic life». Children stay in the school all day long and work in shifts organised by the pupils under the guidance of the teacher, taking care of everyday tasks (eating, cleaning, various activities), which makes the school «similar to a beehive». The pedagogist went on to stress that, in such a context, even the most difficult children internalise the law[25].

Carleton Washburne's lecture, entitled *Winnetka Schools* was significant for the interweaving of experimentation and reflection[26] from his experience as a teacher and which was undoubtedly a great inspiration to Margherita Zoebeli. He began working in a rural multi-grade school where each child had a different problem. He then moved to a school for children aged 9 to 11, defined at the time as 'abnormal', who could not attend public schools (cleft lip, deaf, stuttering, undisciplined children and children with mental disability). He realised that each child needed a specific method, which was applied thanks to the presence at the school of trainees from the University of Chicago. Later, when Washburne was appointed superintendent of schools in Winnetka, a suburb of Chicago, he was able to experiment with the method he had developed over the years. Based on the principle of individual

fanzia, Conference *Semaines Internationales d'Études pour l'enfance victime de la guerre (SEPEG)*, 10th day, pp. 1-5.

[24] E. Codignola, *Scuola-città Pestalozzi. Educazione e iniziativa individuale*, 1st day, Sunday 4 May 1947, *Ivi*, pp. 1-12.

[25] *Ivi*, p. 3.

[26] Second day. Monday 6 May 1947. Second lecture by Prof. Carleton Washburne pedagogist, University professor in the US. *Le scuole di Winnetka*, *Ivi*, pp. 1-5.

adaptation to education, he established a common minimum programme of knowledge that children should acquire at their own pace in a social and co-operative spirit[27].

The Winnetka programme was nuanced in theorising education as a social function and it also reflected on teacher training. It provided for evening discussion groups of teachers on the organisation of teaching (the aim of which was, however, to leave the children free). Education was to be conceived in its totality in order to meet the needs of the children. Based on the assumption that every child needed 'physical, emotional and mental health', the environment had to provide 'air, light, beauty' to invite children to experience movement. In addition, teachers could rarely use punishment, but had created special manuals to teach children to work on their own. In Winnetka's complex programme, both the kindergarten and the other schools were based on self-government: «there are elections, cooperatives, animal husbandry, organisation of festivals»[28]. This programme, which aimed at the happiness of the individual, gave Margherita Zoebeli food for thought and she drew some elements from it to organise individualised learning, although the primary school in the Villaggio svizzero (Swiss village) of Rimini maintained the division of children into age classes.

The second SEPEG conference (Fig. 3), held exactly one year later at the CEIS, was an opportunity for Margherita Zoebeli to share ideas, activities and educational strategies. She gave a presentation on the activities of the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre)[29]. The conference was opened by the President of the Italian SEPEG, Ernesto Codignola, and chaired by Henry Bourquin, who, with his wife, ran the Vennes re-education school near Lausanne (from 1940 to 1948). The presentations covered a wide range of topics, focussing on three fundamental themes for the post-war period: the role of schools in prevention and social work, and rural schools; the work of the Sèvres Orientation Centre (France) and the prevention of risk behaviour; and finally, the re-education of deviant children. The presentation described innovative post-war institutions that sought to develop new educational programmes for children who had experienced war.

Interestingly, Maria Calogero, co-founder of the Centro di Educazione Professionale per Assistenti Sociali (Centre for Professional Education for Social Workers - CEPAS) in Rome, presented a report on social work and schools, stressing that social workers and teachers have the same role as educators, especially in rural areas. Calogero gave the example of Czechoslo-

[27] *Ivi*, p. 2.
[28] Original quotation, see *Ivi*, pp. 3-5.
[29] AMZ, Envelope 18, File 2. Documents on SEPEG (1947-1948).

vakia, one of the most devastated areas in Europe, where teachers and social workers were equally in demand after the Second World War[30]. Together with Ernesto Codignola and other participants, Calogero was the initiator of a motion that was unanimously adopted on 13 May 1948, which paid much more attention to primary schools than to kindergartens or other institutions for minors. This motion proposed that the problem of education and rural schools in general should be addressed; that teachers should have a humanistic background as well as a psycho-pedagogical background; and that the re-education systems of juvenile homes should also be reformed, without, however, formulating precise lines of action[31].

In order to improve school education, a medical-educational service should be set up in every municipality and provincial capital to provide teachers with up-to-date specialist assistance in the field, in accordance with the latest scientific findings; this service was also to be extended to middle schools. The training of social workers and psychologists for medical-educational clinics should be promoted so that these services can also be provided in schools. The question of the salaries for teachers, «the men and women of the school», was also raised as an essential element, so that teachers could «devote themselves with peace of mind to the moral rehabilitation of the nation and to the training of the citizens of tomorrow»[32]. The motion also proposed financial support for educators – the «people who are committed and competent in the field of children's education» – so that they could be trained in Italian and foreign training centres[33].

The reports of these SEPEG weeks, which took place two and three years after respectively the end of the war, in a climate of reconstruction, brought to light not only the problem of the education of children and adolescents in terms of training and future integration, but also that of the impaired health of children and the training of educational staff. Although it is not possible to offer a complete summary of all the considerations made, those described above were a major source of inspiration for Margherita Zoebeli's work.

[30] M. Calogero, *Assistenza sociale a scuola*, *Ivi*, pp. 1-8.

[31] *Testo della mozione proposta dal Comitato promotore ed approvata all'unanimità nella seduta del giorno 13 maggio al Centro sociale italo-svizzero a Rimini*, Conference *of the Semaines Internationales d'Études pour l'Enfance Victime de la Guerre (SEPEG*, *Ivi*, pp. 1-2.

[32] *Ibidem*.

[33] *Ibidem*.

1.2. Participation in the Fédération Internationale des Communautés d'Enfants (International Federation of Children's Communities, FICE)

Margherita Zoebeli attended the first meeting of the FICE held in Trogen, from 4 to 11 July 1948 (Fig. 4). During this meeting, which laid the foundations for the creation of the Federation itself, CEIS and its institutions became part of this European network of children's villages. Created in various European cities after the end of the war, these institutions or villages all shared the principle of social/community pedagogy, which was then being discussed from the perspective of the new education movement. In fact, these institutions were forced to make a virtue out of necessity, as there was a shortage of staff, and therefore children were involved in the running of the institutions in which they lived. The conference was attended not only by Carleton Washburne, but also by the directors of all the major European children's communities, psychologists and experts from various fields. Of particular importance was the participation of the Swiss psychiatrist and educationalist, Marie Berta Meierhofer (1909-1998), who described the first experiences of medical education in the Pestalozzi Children's Village in Trogen. Among the representatives of the children's communities was also Father Antonio Rivolta (1898-1981), founder of the first Children's village opened in Italy, in Civitavecchia.

Among the archival documents is the manuscript of the speech given by Margherita Zoebeli on 4 July 1948, with the title *Giardino d'infanzia italo-svizzero al nome di Remo Bordoni (The Remo Bordoni Swiss-Italian Kindergarten)*[34]. Her speech was a detailed presentation of the activities carried out over the previous two years at the kindergarten, which had been opened thanks to two Swiss organisations for war-affected countries. She described both the organisational and logistical aspects as well as the number and type of children accommodated. In terms of organisation and logistics, the pedagogist described the thirteen barracks, equipped for education and schooling, with a kitchen, an infirmary, showers, carpentry and tailoring workshops. In the kindergarten the children enjoy: «a certain autonomy and independence, and a large garden is available for outdoor education, games and gardening». The aim was to «help children develop in a healthy atmosphere, to help underprivileged children overcome mental suffering and the consequences of war deprivation, to contribute to the study and research of new pedagogical forms, to prepare small groups of educators for active schooling and new education)»[35].

[34] Presentation given at the first FICE Conference held in Trogen, Switzerland in 1948, see Giardino d'infanzia italo-svizzero al nome "Remo Bordoni", Rimini, AMZ, proceedings of public speeches, Envelope 12, Writings and notes, pp. 1-5.

[35] *Ivi*, pp. 1-2.

In terms of numbers and types of children, 150 attended the kindergarten only during the day, while 20 war orphans lived there permanently. Admission was based on the child's health and economic situation. The selection of the children was entrusted to the doctor and social workers. Admitted children were divided into four kindergarten classrooms under the supervision of the "gardener-teacher". The 20 children from the orphanage who attended either the kindergarten or the primary school were divided into two groups, each under the supervision of an educator[36].

The proceedings of the conference of directors of children's educative communities held in Trogen-Heiden were later published but they do not include Margherita's presentation, only a report signed by the deputy director of the Centro Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Centre), Barbara Stratiesky. Margherita Zoebeli is mentioned as an alternate member of the FICE Coordination Committee, together with Father Antonio Rivolta[37]. The International Federation of Educational Communities, founded at the end of the conference on 10 July, was chaired by Robert Préaut, with René De Cooman (Belgium) as vice-president; Ernesto Codignola and Maria Meierhofer (Switzerland) as members, and Elisabeth F. Rotten (Switzerland) as treasurer.

Among the papers presented at the conference, that of the American pedagogist Washburne was particularly interesting, when compared with the one he had given in Rimini the previous year[38]. His lecture was relevant because it described the advantages of modern education – i.e. those of the new education – over traditional education, which had undoubtedly influenced the practice of many European communities at a transnational level. His lecture can be divided into two parts, with the first describing the advantages of modern education for war-affected children, and the second outlining important educational principles in children's villages.

In the first part, he stated that the principles of the new education were particularly suitable for two particular categories of children, those traumatised by war and those with various forms of disability. For children traumatised by war. He stated that modern education, unlike traditional

[36] *Ibidem*.

[37] See the section on the Giardino d'infanzia Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten) in *Enfants sans foyer. Compte rendu des travaux de la conférence des directeurs de communauté d'enfants Trogen-Heiden, Suisse*, préparé par le dr. Thérèse Brosse, Paris, Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture, UNESCO/Imprimerie Dupont, 1950, pp. 20-21.

[38] C. Washburne, *Rapport sur l'éducation moderne et les enfants victimes de la guerre. Réunion des directeurs de villages d'enfants tenue du 4 au 11 juillet 1948*. Paris, 25 juin 1948, Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'Éducation, la Science et la Culture UNESCO/ED/Conf. 1/9, pp. 1-12.

education, included moments of physical, aesthetic, social and practical (manual) education and that these were highly effective. Modern education, he insisted, put into practice the principle of «a healthy mind in a healthy body» through physical exercise under the supervision of a teacher, appropriate spatial arrangements and medical (dental) examination. These practices had to be accompanied by the teaching of the principles needed «to lead a healthy life and avoid risks». Education had to meet these objectives, which were as important as the child's intellectual development[39].

With regard to children with some form of disability (translated in French as *infirmité*), the pedagogist stressed the importance of not separating children with disabilities from children without disabilities. He referred to the example of the Prague institute founded by the famous František Bakula (1877-1957), which «proved that children with severe disabilities could lead happy and independent lives if they received the appropriate education»[40]. The American pedagogist proposed an inclusive educational program. For example, a deaf child should attend classes with non-deaf classmates, although he/she should be separated for the time necessary to learn lip-reading. He reiterated that the modern school should be concerned with «the education of all categories of physically deficient children» by using special methods to help them participate in community life[41].

Washburne then went on to speak at length about the moral health of children, stating that in order to lead a happy and balanced life, each child must be able to enjoy three basic affective conditions, namely «the possibility of freely expressing his or her personality, a sense of security and a sense of collective solidarity»[42]. The twofold aim of the modern school was to guide the child towards acceptable forms of self-expression and to help him/her acquire inner discipline. In addition, the modern school was to offer them the opportunity to express themselves through numerous creative, artistic, and manual activities in a variety of media (painting with pencils, fingers and crayons, charcoal, chalk, clay); the composition of vocal or instrumental music; the writing and performance of music; the writing of prose or poetry and oral expression (lived experiences, storytelling, free discussion); and finally, free time for research activities and intellectual pursuits.

[39] *Ivi*, p. 3.

[40] *Ivi*, p. 4. On the history of this institute see D. Caroli, *Ludmila Durdíková, a teacher and writer for children from Prague to Paris (1899-1955)*, in A. Cagnolati (ed.), *Women and Children's Literature. A Love Affair?*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2021, pp.25-43.

[41] Washburne, *Rapport sur l'éducation moderne et les enfants victimes de la guerre*, cit., p. 4.

[42] Original quotation, *Ibidem*.

Children with disabilities also had to be included in these activities. «For the psychologically unstable child, artistic creation is often a liberation. Music, art, handicrafts, creative expression through language and rhythm have been used very effectively in institutions dealing with neurotic and delinquent children. Their usefulness will be even greater in the case of schoolchildren who show a distressed or disturbed sensibility as a result of war, displacement, loss of parents or any other kind of misfortune»[43].

Moral health was based on another important aspect, namely a sense of security, for which he referred to the psychologist Alfred Adler's concept of 'courage', a feeling that is usually developed within the family. In the absence of a family, the teacher in the modern school had to help create this sense of security. In the school, the teacher, endowed with special skills, had to make the children feel the affection and understanding usually provided by parents. School premises had to be comfortable to facilitate this sense of security. The modern school also had to respect each child's level of moral development and give him or her appropriate tasks so that he or she could «gain confidence in his or her abilities and the courage to go forward»[44].

A sense of security was particularly important for children who had lost their families and homes. In general, ideal schools were children's villages, as reiterated by Washburne, who stated that a children's village consisted of a group of families «with a foster mother and a foster father and a limited number of children, usually not more than 12; in practice, each house has no more than a few children»[45]. Within these families/villages, the sense of security was based on a sense of belonging to the group, i.e. collective solidarity. It was a feeling that came from working towards a common goal. The modern school realised this principle, by being organised on a democratic and cooperative basis. In groups, children discussed collective decisions and took responsibility. The teacher tried to correct wrong attitudes and supervise group decisions. In this sense, the school promoted the autonomy of group thinking and action and helped to develop a sense of responsibility. This type of school/village also had to be inclusive of children with disabilities.

The three aspects mentioned above, namely freedom of expression, a sense of security and a sense of collective solidarity were the cornerstones of modern education, which also had to promote the full development of the personality of every human being, seen «as an active and responsible member of a series of supportive collectives - the family, the community, the State and, finally, the world society»[46].

[43] Original quotation, *Ivi*, p. 5.
[44] Original quotation, *Ivi*, p. 6.
[45] Original quotation, *Ibidem*.
[46] Original quotation, *Ivi*, p. 9.

In order to promote the free development of the child's personality, Washburne believed that research in the social sciences was essential, and that the school itself should make every child aware of his/her own aspirations and talents, and, through vocational guidance, help him/her discover and integrate those talents into the economic organisation. The modern school, with the help of research in psychology, would help to impart various fields of knowledge, to elaborate group ideas and to develop thinking. Finally, the principle of moral conscience was the result of social solidarity, developed through the child's sense of responsibility towards the family/village. Inclusion in educational institutions was intended to encourage this approach, transforming the school into a «miniature community»[47].

Washburne's reflections on the principles of modern education are useful in shedding new light on some aspects of the teaching method that Margherita Zoebeli introduced not only in the kindergarten but more generally in the village's educational institutions. These include, for example, various expressive activities, individualised learning in the primary school and the inclusion of children with disabilities, the constant development of new activities in the kindergarten, active participation in the management of certain moments of community life (distribution of lunch and organisation of public events), and a sense of community resulting from the involvement of children and parents.

Among other important presentations at the conference was Marie Meierhofer's presentation of the first medical-pedagogical centre in the children's village in Trogen, which was set up between May 1946 and January 1948 in an international village, that took in children of different nationalities (French, Polish, Austrian, Hungarian and German) who had been traumatised by the war. The most critical case was that of the Polish children who had changed language, social environment, religion and nationality as a result of the various relocations. Re-education proved difficult because the children, who suffered from various forms of psychological or behavioural disorders, had a so-called "memory without a past" with which to construct the present. On the basis of these inspiration and examples, Margherita Zoebeli realized in 1953 that she had to open a medical-pedagogical centre, with a team working under the direction of a paediatric neurologist, to treat difficult cases both at the CEIS and in the public schools of Rimini[48].

[47] *Ivi*, pp. 11-12.

[48] In the first year 145 children underwent medical examination, see: De Maria, *Introduzione. Per una biografia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa*, cit., pp. 1-39; Sapucci, *Breve storia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in Campioni, Marchesi (eds.), *Sui nostri passi. Tracce di storia dei servizi educativi nei Comuni capoluogo dell'Emilia Romagna*, cit., pp. 449-450.

Margherita Zoebeli's contacts with FICE and UNESCO continued even in the following years, as shown by the correspondence preserved in the archives, until 1991. The reply from 17 August 1948 from Philip Sojak, Head of the Reconstruction Department of UNESCO, testifies that Barbara Stratiesky, as Vice-Director of the Giardino d'infanzia italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten), had sent a letter and four photographs of the children's community[49].

After a visit to CEIS in the summer of 1956, Anthony Weaver, secretary of the English section of FICE, wrote a letter to Margherita on 28 December 1956, expressing his satisfaction at having seen the work first-hand. He drew her attention to two books she had asked for: the first was *Homer Lane and the Little Commonwealth* (1948) by Elsie T. Bazeley (1882-1936), who had worked in the community mentioned in the book itself; the second was Homer Lane's *Talks to Parents and Teachers* (1928). He ended his letter expressing the hope of meeting her in London the following year[50].

In the meantime, Margherita Zoebeli had become secretary of the Italian section of FICE and took part in the international meeting held in Israel in 1958[51]. The meeting took stock of the situation in the different countries of Europe and «stressed the importance of the Federation for educational organisations». Margherita was asked to draw up a statute in line with the educational experience of the community and to organise meetings of Italian educators at the Olivetti headquarters in Ivrea with a view to organising the International Conference «Community and International Education». According to the information contained in the letter written by the Florentine teacher Idana Pescioli (which we shall mention again later), the introductory speech, on that occasion, was to be given either by Lamberto Borghi, Vice-President of the Italian FICE (President of FICE, Codignola), or by Francesco Bartolomeis, another scholar in close contact with the CEIS. International experiences were to be discussed and the leaders of the different communities (Scuola-città, Villaggio Artigiano, Cagnola Village in Rasa di Varese, Rinnovata) were to be invited[52].

Contacts with FICE were important for the promotion of community pedagogy. It can be assumed that Margherita Zoebeli's contribution was written in English, in view of her participation in the FICE Congress in

[49] AMZ, Envelope 18 File. 2. Conference of the *Semaines Internationales d'Études pour l'Enfance Victime de la guerre*.

[50] AMZ, Envelope 2 Correspondence Letter to Margherita Zoebeli, Letter (in English) by Anthony Weaver (28 December 1956).

[51] AMZ, Envelope 4 Private correspondence. File. 1. Correspondence. Letter to Margherita Zoebeli, letter by Idana Pescioli from 24 May 1958.

[52] *Ibidem*.

Vienna in 1967. In her contribution, Zoebeli traced back twenty years of the CEIS kindergarten, explaining the reasons for the name, the content and the pedagogical methods, which she often described with the help of photographs (which she showed on that occasion). The pedagogist explained that "the kindergarten" of the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) had contributed to the study of the future of childhood schools in Italy (*infant schools*). For many years, the Centre had developed and tried to carry out psycho-pedagogical field experiments had offered critical contributions to the problems of education for children between the ages of three and six; indispensable tools for intellectual, social and affective education; the opportunity for architects interested in school building to develop new concepts and functional guidelines for *infant schools*; the professional training for teachers through residential training courses.

Zoebeli explained that this pre-school institution was first named "giardino svizzero", but in 1966 it «has been named "scuola materna" (*maternal school*) because from its very beginning, at the end of the war, it had to be integrated in the Italian school-system that had different orientations according to the methods applied»: "giardini d'infanzia" (*kindergartens*), "case dei bambini" (*infant homes*), "scuole materne e asili infantili" (*infant school*). She also emphasised that: «We have named it "scuola materna" (*maternal school*) because this definition is the nearest to our conception, i.e. the conviction that [the] child from 3 to six needs a school»[53]. The pedagogist explained that she would have liked to abolish the adjective "materna" (*maternal*), which seemed rhetorical to her, since it was an institution in its own right that did not have the role of complementing the family. The family, as the centre of the child's world, could not be replaced, but it was not enough for the child's psycho-physical development and the harmonious structuring of their personality. «The child needs at the same time the school, that allows him to extend his social relations, satisfies his curiosity, his desire of penetration of the physical and social space»[54].

The pedagogist added that «our "scuola materna" owns the requisites that allows to offer the child situations of formative experiences in the field of social-affectivity, it enlarges the field of expressive-constructive activities, and ever again allows news adaptations of various type, which are indispensable for the future integration of the child in primary school»[55]. The pedagogist added that «our *kindergarten* can offer the child formative ex-

[53] AMZ, Envelope 12, Writings and notes, File Working material and scattered notes. Typewritten report in English: M. Zoebeli, *During the 20 years of its existence…* (probable date 1966), pp. 1-8.

[54] *Ivi*, p. 1-2.

[55] *Ivi*, p. 3.

periences of social affectivity, to widen the field of expressive and construction activities, and above all to allow for adaptation, all of which is essential for future integration into primary school». The guiding principle of the pedagogical activity was the satisfaction of the child's intimate needs, i.e. socialisation that is part of the child's development and the interaction with the environment. This principle guided the pedagogical intervention, the choice of furniture, teaching materials and content. Finally, she specified: «We never talk of teaching of subjects (as applied by Montessori), but we always talk of educational activities, favourable to the social, affective and intellectual ripening of the child»[56]. Even without anticipating the teaching of school subjects it has been observed that «allowing children to freely choose their own activities gives them autonomy and develops a sense of initiative and responsibility»[57].

In the same presentation, Margherita Zoebeli also referred to the famous passage by Francesco Bartolomeis (taken from *La psicologia del bambino e l'educazione nella scuola di Rimini*, 1957), according to which the children in Rimini were capable of engaging in «quiet and concentrated activities». Entering the classroom in the morning, one could observe the children engaged in a variety of activities. The children were free to choose their own activities and their interests and pace in the execution of activities were respected. The teacher and two assistants went around the tables arranged according to the activities; they «talked to the children, helped them in construction and technical activities to overcome difficulties, and guided them. Their role is to prepare the materials and the environment»[58]. During the day, children carry out activities of their own choice, activities guided by the teacher (to help the child acquire knowledge or specific skills) and have moments of collective life with listening and talking (Fig. 5). Zoebeli concluded that «the method used in this type of centre promotes the development of a high degree of community spirit and at the same time stimulates the child's creativity. Interests emerge in the school, where different educational activities promote different types of development. The first rudimentary plan for group or individual work is thus born. The teacher prepares the materials, encourages the children to participate in activities and helps them to carry them out»[59].

Zoebeli used photographs to show the different expressive activities that were carried out, the manual skills that were acquired and the advantage of having kindergarten and primary school children working together (Figs. 6-

[56] *Ibidem*.
[57] *Ibidem*.
[58] Original quotation, *Ivi*, p. 4.
[59] Original quotation, *Ivi*, p. 5.

7). In particular, this gave the children great confidence when they moved on to primary school[60].

Margherita's correspondence includes other letters of invitation to the FICE conferences that were to be held in the following years, up until the one in Israel in 1991. This constant international exchange gave Margherita Zoebeli many ideas that she would later incorporate into her pedagogical practice, constantly updating it on the basis of new scientific developments in the field of psycho-pedagogy.

2. The doll's corner in the kindergarten: educating to the feeling of safety

Since its opening, the educational activities of the kindergarten have been very varied and have included manipulation with wooden toys, singing and music, the organisation of the Christmas pageant, "corner activities" (inspired by the centres of interest of Célestin Freinet, who personally visited the CEIS in 1952), free drawing and theatrical activities with masks. In general, the layout of the interior (with tables, blackboards and movable stools), which Zoebeli borrowed from Montessori, was designed to allow both individual and group/cooperative activities[61]. Outdoor activities included gardening, physical exercise and events open to the outside world.

A careful chronological reconstruction of the children's activities is not an easy task and requires a method of analysis that relates Margherita's writings of various kinds (notes and reports) to the photographs taken by Margherita, her colleagues and photographers to document the educational practice and the daily life of the children in the village. The visual perspective provided by iconographic sources[62] is useful in understanding the scope of the innovation introduced by the pedagogist in the kindergarten[63]. With regard to the indoor and outdoor activities in Froebel's original kindergarten model, Margherita had to make a compromise: for indoor activities she kept the small coloured cubes, cylinders and wooden blocks derived from Froebel's method. For outdoor activities, she chose gardening, which continued

[60] *Ivi*, p. 6.

[61] This aspect has been studied by Pironi, *Per una pedagogia dell'utopia concreta: la comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa*, cit., pp. 59-81.

[62] In this respect, see I. Dussel, *The Visual Turn in the History of Education: Four Comments for a Historiographical Discussion*, in T.S. Popkewitz (ed.), *Rethinking the History of Education. Transnational Perspectives on Its Questions*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 29-49.

[63] See some examples of the valuable collections published in: De Luigi, Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro. Cinquant'anni di vita del CEIS*, cit.

to be a central element of aesthetic and physical education in the open air. In the following years, a small area with mould and sand was added to the garden for the younger children to play outside (in the absence of other manipulative materials). For the older children, a Swedish ladder was also installed to encourage coordinated movement and balance when climbing. These sense-motor activities helped them gain autonomy and a sense of safety while performing (potentially risky) movements. The exercise of circling around the fountain, in which everyone participated, was also common as it promoted a sense of belonging to the community, where everyone felt equal and bound by a sense of solidarity.

As the photographs show, activities in the kindergarten included not only games, but also everyday tasks (e.g. cleaning shoes in groups or arranging towels). From 1947, a very special corner was set up, the doll's corner, a space for playing with dolls and a number of small beds were placed there for resting (Fig. 8)[64]. Later, in 1950, a child-sized playhouse was built. It was a playhouse that was freely accessible to the extended family of children in the community. It was a privileged space for nurturing the sense of safety and protection that Washburne had described in Trogen. It could also be experienced as a space open to all children, who could interpret, represent and recreate a new little universe, as Margherita Zoebeli described it a few years later (as we will see below). The house and the doll embodied a sense of family, with the care and safety that this represented, especially for children affected by the war. It should be noted, however, that this child-friendly toy house was nothing new, as it was also depicted in a classic children's book, *La casa della bambola. Un omaggio per brave bambine* by the German illustrator Lothar Meggendorfer (1847-1925). Zoebeli borrowed it from Swiss and German culture and used it to recreate a sense of family and community[65].

[64] AMZ, photographic archive, folder 1 CEI_245foto40-41.

[65] By the end of the 19th century, these miniature wooden toy houses were very popular in Germany and Switzerland (the Lugano Museum in Switzerland has a remarkable collection). They were small, multi-storey houses with an open wall so that the child could play with the objects in the different rooms. In 1887, a famous pop-up book began to circulate, entitled *Das Puppenhaus*. *Eine Festgabe für brave Mädchen* by the Munich-born German illustrator Lothar Meggendorfer (1847-1925), famous for his hardback and animated books. The open pages of the hardback book showed not only the verticality of the multi-storey house, but also the life of its inhabitants in the surrounding community: the father rides his bicycle to work, while the mother is busy shopping at the delicatessen, see L. Meggendorfer, *Das Puppenhaus*. *Eine Festgabe für brave Mädchen*, 6th ed., Esslinger, J.F. Schreiber, reprint Esslinger Verlag, 2007 (English edition: The *Doll's House*. A Reproduction of the Antique Pop-up Book, London, Puffin, 1978).

In the CEIS archive there are two photographs from 1950 and 1951 showing activities with the doll's house in the classroom. The first, from 1950, shows a little girl with a pram in front of the toy house (Fig. 9). It was made of plywood with an open door and window; it was placed in the corner of the well-lit barrack and was slightly lower than the ceiling. Next to the walls, under the windows, there is a small table with wooden toys on the left and a low shelf with other toys (a teddy bear and a puppet theatre)[66] on the right. In the second photograph, however, the house appears against the background of the children's activities who are sitting at the tables and playing in the presence of three teachers (Fig. 10). A wooden rocking horse, a common toy in kindergartens, can also be seen in the background[67]. Together with the wooden rocking horse, the doll was one of the few toys available at the time[68]. In one photograph, a little girl pushes a pram with a doll, a symbol of care and memories of past moments to be relieved in order to feel like a child.

In addition to this indoor doll house, there was also a doll's house for outdoor activities, later built in brick in 1960 thanks to the anarchist bricklayer Gaetano Gervasio (1886-1964) and officially opened in 1961 (Fig. 11)[69]. Gervasio, the father of Giovanna Carbonaro with whom Zoebeli was in contact, was one of the most important figures in the libertarian movement of the 20th century and exchanged letters with Margherita Zoebeli in which they both commented on the political events of 1960 and 1961.

The Doll's House was the centre of many activities that restored moments of normality. A composition written in 1961 by a 3rd grade child reads as follows: «Today we went to see the doll's house, which is only for kindergarten children to play in. We would also like to play in that wonderful little house

[66] AMZ, photographic archive Folder 3, CEI-248_004 (1950).

[67] AMZ, photographic archive Folder 3, CEI-250_017 (Teachers from the 1st vocational training course observe teaching in the yellow classroom (1951)).

[68] The rag doll was the main character in the story of the short film entitled *La bambola. I monelli della domenica* by Flavio Nicolini (1924-2015), a director from Santarcangelo di Romagna, known for his educational cinema. This short film was shown at the CEIS in 1952 and probably helped to make the game more stimulating. The protagonist of the story is Rosanna's doll, the only toy of a group of children from the Romagna countryside. Stolen from Rosanna by some children who use it to throw javelins or play volleyball, at the end of the story the doll is picked up by a child. He stops to rock it and holds it in his arms before returning it to its owner. F. Nicolini, *Il "paese" di Margherita*, in De Luigi, Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro. Cinquant'anni di vita del CEIS*, cit., pp. 50-53. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tGTQS75ZVE, last accessed: 12 January 2024.

[69] AMZ, CEI-264_001 (1960); CEI-266_007 about (21 June 1961); CEI-266_008 (21 June 1961).

that looks like the Seven dwarfs' house among all those trees. Last year, when everyone was carrying bricks, we didn't think it would be so good: with the wooden roof, the fireplace that can burn, the little terrace, the shutters, the ladder to go upstairs. It's really a masterpiece, in short, it's a real house»[70].

Other aspects of this original active method included music, singing, dancing, drama and puppetry, as well as other "corner activities", which can be traced back to Célestin Freinet's centres of interest. For music, the pedagogist had a musical background and could play the violin; every year, she invited Ernst Klug from the Pestalozzi village in Trogen. For motor activity and physical expression, the method included drama, masks and shadow play. Mimi Scheiblauer, a student of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, was brought in to stimulate the children with rhythm, which also helped with special education. At the end of the 1955-56 school year, within a residential internship, a play was organised in which a feast at the Malatesta court was re-enacted, with children and adults playing the different roles; Margherita Zoebeli herself played the role of Isotta[71], a cultured and courageous woman who took over the government of the city after Sigismondo's death.

The pedagogist's work was characterised by constant reflection, both on the legacy of the past and on the psycho-pedagogical research published at the time. Her writings, notes and reports reveal the process of searching for her own pedagogical method, which reflected her habit of synthesis, re-elaboration and reflection. Writing was the basis of her practice for interpreting the changes that were taking place not only in Rimini, but in the whole country to which the pedagogue turned her gaze from the post-war period until the 1970s.

3. Expressive activities, developments in the kindergarten and public debate

Among the expressive activities, drawing was central for Margherita Zoebeli because her reflections on aesthetic education led her to theorise more deeply about individual spontaneous activities and group activities (Figs. 12-13).

Before turning to the didactics of Arno Stern (1924, then living in Paris), a Swiss painter famous for his didactic method of spontaneous painting, it

[70] AMZ, ZOE-070_32, article taken from «Villaggio nostro», 15 June 1961. It was a single issue edited by CEIS.

[71] G. Honegger Fresco, *La formazione di educatori e insegnanti*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa*, cit., p. 116.

can be assumed that the work of Herbert Read (1893-1967), a poet and famous English art critic, pacifist and Marxist, was fundamental to her. The organisation of educational activities at the kindergarten changed in the second half of the 1950s, with the publication of the Italian translation (in 1954) of Herbert Read's work, *Educare con l'arte* (*Education through art*), first published in 1943 and then in a revised edition in 1958[72].

The dilemma of whether children's drawing is play or art, a *fil rouge* in the English scholar's work, was also crucial for Margherita Zoebeli, helping her to better reflect on her community's educational strategies. Read echoed Maria Montessori's view that «drawing cannot, or should not be taught […]. It should be a spontaneous activity, a free expression of the child's own self, own thoughts»[73]. With regard to this vision, however, he believed that there was also a technical development in the children's drawings, which, despite their spontaneity, manifested an external social conditioning. This was because education had a dual purpose, namely individual and social, which was specifically implemented in the activities at CEIS. Read stated that «the purpose of education can then only be to develop, at the same time of the uniqueness, the social consciousness or reciprocity of the individual. As a result of the infinite permutations of heredity, the individual will inevitably be unique, and this uniqueness, because it is something not possessed by anyone else, will be value to the community»[74]. Read also discussed various activities for kindergarten children, that contributed to aesthetic education, such as rhythmic or percussion activities that should precede drawing, painting, manual work, mimicry and drama play[75].

With the aim of furthering her ideas about the child's need for spontaneous activities to achieve integration into society, Zoebeli tried to make a clearer distinction between individual and group activities.

The educational activities carried out at the CEIS, particularly drawing, began to be presented to the public through a series of exhibitions. On 15 December 1957, an exhibition was held at the Municipal Theatre in Rimini to document both these activities and the training of kindergarten teachers in active school methods. On this occasion, Margherita Zoebeli received a visit from Idana Pescioli (1922-2016)[76], a teacher she had probably met

[72] H. Read, *Education through Art*, London, Faber and Faber (1943), 1958; it. trans. *Educare con l'arte*, foreward and translation by G.C. Argan, Milano, Edizioni di comunità, 1954.

[73] H. Read, *Education through Art*, cit., p. 115.

[74] *Ivi*, p. 5.

[75] *Ivi*, pp. 232-236.

[76] Idana Pescioli was a Florentine pedagogist interested in the improvement of public primary schools, committed to the dissemination of active school methods and the promotion of the CEMEA and MCE movements.

through the network of the Cooperativa della Tipografia a Scuola (Typography at School Cooperative), founded in 1951[77]. In her report, Pescioli detailed the achievements of the CEIS kindergarten over a decade. The exhibition reflected the «creative potential of the children», not to be understood as spontaneity but as «self-expression, through this or "that technique"»[78]. This process of «expression went hand in hand with that of the development of intellect and character, which is as much individual as it is social, through activating methods and various techniques, cultural conditioning, group life and cooperation. Life at the Centre is presented in a series of photographs which, by showing the "free and real" children engaged in various activities, enable those who work with the children to go beyond the photograph and to trace back the stages of their growth»[79].

The press and experts of the time paid much attention to the Swiss pedagogist's educational method. An article by the partisan and businesswoman Maria Luigia Guaita (1912-2007) appeared in «Il Mondo» in 1957 under the title *Foglietti di viaggio. Una scuola modello* (Travel sheets. A model school). It talked about the kindergarten in Rimini and described Margherita as «a slender, diaphanous woman, who runs this centre she has created with miraculous strength, Swiss constancy and all-Latin gentleness»[80]. In the same year, 1957, the pedagogist Francesco De Bartolomeis wrote that the children at the CEIS were able to «devote themselves to calm and serene activities, to play lively without incidents, to take initiatives, to move around the classroom without causing disorder or disturbance, to cooperate: they were free and deserved to be so because in freedom they built their personalities and had experiences that expanded their world into a richer web of social relationships»[81].

In the public lectures she subsequently gave, including those in Rome and Florence, the pedagogist described artistic activities in particular as a symbol of the educational results achieved in her community project, which combined the principles of freedom and socialisation of children. In 1958 she gave a futrther lecture at the Basso Foundation in Rome, which was also the occasion to exhibit the children's drawings. Margherita Zoebeli empha-

[77] AMZ, Envelope 10, File 3. Preparatory notes for lectures given at CEMEA courses or in other training courses for educators; Idana Pescioli, *La mostra del Centro educativo italo svizzero* (20 December 1957), pp. 1-6.

[78] *Ivi*, pp. 2-3.

[79] *Ivi*, p. 2.

[80] AMZ, envelope 26, miscellaneous, 6 August 1957, pp. 1-5.

[81] F. De Bartolomeis, *La psicologia del bambino e l'educazione nella scuola materna*, Torino, Loescher, 1957, pp. 72-73, 271; the passage was reported by I. Pescioli e M. Zoebeli, *La scuola materna del Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, in «Scuola e città», 2/3 (1965), pp. 177-190 (especially at pp. 189-190).

sised the creative potential of kindergarten and primary school children (aged between 4 and 11). The children's activities at the Centre included drawing, painting, clay work and printing on fabric. She pointed out that these were not «selected or particularly gifted» children, but «children who find in the school environment (kindergarten or primary school) the free expression of their inner world. The youngest express through painting what they cannot yet express through language. The older children describe their experiences more vividly in colour. All the works show the richness of the child's inner world, their expressive power, their spirit of observation, the joy of colour and the child's innate sense of tonal balance»[82].

In 1960, she returned to these themes in a long, very dense, eloquent and politically significant report for the Provincial Administration of Florence[83]. In the first part, she summarised the first fifteen years of CEIS activities, while in the second part, she elaborated on the importance of an appropriate teaching method for pre-school children.

In the introduction, Margherita described her own experience and the collaboration between CEIS and the Municipality of Rimini: «From the beginning, relations with the municipal administration have always been close; the Centre is managed by a committee appointed by the Municipal Council but it has never acquired legal personality. The project for the municipalisation of our kindergarten has not yet been implemented due to a series of administrative and financial problems, as well as a lack of funds on the part of the municipal administration. However, the kindergarten benefits from a municipal subsidy, that is included in the municipal budget every year»[84].

Zoebeli went on to explain that, as a result of the educational results achieved with 3-6-year-olds, the administration had asked her to assist in «the implementation of a vast programme for the construction and management of municipal kindergartens, following the principles and guidelines of our educational work, including construction, equipment, teaching materials, pedagogical and administrative organisation»[85]. She then lamented and criticised the fact that this consideration was at odds with the city's conservative approach to the CEIS kindergarten: «In Rimini, as in the rest of Italy, kin-

[82] AMZ, envelope 10, Writings and notes, folder 1, Preparatory notes for lectures given at CEMEA courses or in other training courses for educators, typewritten report by Margherita Zoebeli at the Foundation, speech given by M. Zoebeli at the Basso Foundation in Rome, pp. 1-19 (1958).

[83] AMZ, envelope 18, Documents and correspondence on the CEIS: Provincial Administration of Florence (typewritten report, 1960), pp. 1-9 (the date is not specified but it is confirmed by the reference to the first fifteen years of CEIS and to municipal elections).

[84] *Ivi*, p. 1.

[85] *Ivi*, p. 2.

dergartens are organized according to social and religious interests. The result is a kindergarten of assistance, of charity, of the poor»[86].

In her speech, she identified three types of kindergartens that do not allow children to have social relationships with each other: «the kindergarten for poor children», «the kindergarten for the children of the wealthy, who are driven to school by car, and belong to a small community of privileged people» and the «remarkably parochial kindergarten». The pedagogist went on to say that the CEIS kindergarten was none of these and that it has stood its ground with courage in the face of unfair criticism: «During the election campaign last April CEIS was accused of Protestantism, of communism, it was called a "foreign school", as if we did not live in a republic that guarantees the right to life and freedom of thought for all. Our kindergarten, despite all the difficulties, has become firmly established, precisely because of its pedagogical and social approach»[87].

In the second part she explained the political significance of the choices of the kindergarten: children from all social backgrounds are welcome, thus ensuring «the coming together, not only of children from all social classes in the Municipality of Rimini, but also of parents from all social classes». Children, she continued, need a kindergarten that is «a centre of life, a place of social, emotional and intellectual experiences, of experiences that encompass all areas of the personality of the child from 4 to 5 years old». The kindergarten provides «a series of elements necessary for the full psychophysical development of the child, and it must complement the education of the family, and be extension of the child's experiences»[88].

Zoebeli wrote that the kindergarten satisfies the need for safety, by creating an atmosphere of family (which is responsible for this task) and other needs for expression, movement, activity and discovery of the world, in order to stimulate children who are more withdrawn to improve and broaden every experience. This was possible thanks to different forms of play, contact with different materials and functional teaching aids, contact with nature, animals, natural elements, water and sand, childlike activities (expressive, constructive, practical and social ones), taking on small responsibilities and participating in group life. Zoebeli also pointed out that «another task of the school is to manage and coordinate all these activities, to bring them from the individual level to the group level, to a more conscious level»[89].

Her kindergarten, which she described as a "centre of life", was also special because of the indoor and outdoor environment that provided the

[86] *Ibidem*.
[87] *Ibidem*.
[88] *Ivi*, p. 3.
[89] *Ivi*, p. 4.

framework for the activities. Margherita Zoebeli then reported on the recent celebration of the 15th anniversary of CEIS, where some of the former students were invited to share their memories. She spoke at length about the environment: «The children have the most vivid memories of the spacious and cheerful setting of the kindergarten: it has contributed the most to the development of their personalities. They say that they felt that they were the masters of the village: they call it 'our' village and they say they discovered friendship, conversation, nature and so on»[90]. Outside, in the garden, there were sensor-motor games, climbing, swinging and sliding activities. There was a large tree trunk and another trunk on the ground that became an aeroplane, a ship, a tool for balance exercises. There was also a climbing tower, a swing and a large net hanging vertically from a frame.

Inside, the classrooms were colour-coded; there was a doll's corner and a construction corner in front of the entrance; the walls were lined with musical instruments and other play materials; the whole child-friendly environment «not only invites the child to be active, but also encourages tidiness, organisation and tidying up». This helps with orientation and naturally teaches the child to organise his/her own things. Having visited a kindergarten classroom a few days earlier, she had noticed that in the 30-40 square metre classrooms, each child had about 3 metres of space available (as opposed to the 1.20 metres in Italian maternal schools). She observed that four children were busy building a ship out of large wooden blocks, taking turns as captain and soldiers to play a sea battle.

The children were engaged in several activities at the same time, such as imitative, imaginative, sensor-motor and expressive play. Five children «played in the doll's house built in the classroom, dividing up the tasks: one girl was the mother, one was the aunt, there was an uncle and there were two children; they were dressed in school uniforms and wore a headscarf on their heads; the mother had put on a veil as a sign of special respect. These children played neatly with the doll, went for a walk with the doll, set the table, arranged lunch for the two children, and had a very cheerful conversation about the party that was to be held the next day»[91]. Other children drew a house with two children holding hands and a bicycle ride, respectively. The ride was the *Giro d'Italia*, which had recently passed near the school. Four children, boys and girls, were busy weaving a carpet for the doll's house, others were playing with wooden building materials and another was stringing beads[92]. The teacher's role was described as that of an observer who would intervene if the play became too violent.

[90] *Ivi*, p. 5.
[91] *Ivi*, pp. 6-7.
[92] *Ivi*, pp. 8-9.

These descriptions formed the basis of some of Margherita Zoebeli's writings published in the following years. It is worth noting that she has been neglected in the history of education textbooks published in Italy, precisely because it is believed that she did not write anything about her method. In fact, she is the author of writings that deserve further attention and dissemination among specialists and non-specialists alike. In the first half of the 1960s, the debate on pre-schools also prompted the journal «Scuola e Città» to devote an issue in 1965 to kindergartens, with the participation of Lamberto Borghi, who had returned from the United States a few years earlier and was already well known for his work *Educazione e autorità nell'Italia moderna* (1951)[93]. The title of Borghi's article, *Un vuoto educativo da riempire* (An educational void to fill), was indicative of the educational emergency. Describing the CEIS kindergarten as one of the best experiences, Borghi focussed on the problems of child development, between the ages of 3 and 6, in order to stimulate reflection on the preschool reform. He stated that education «must enable the child to adapt actively and progressively to an environment wider than the family, in situations of increasing autonomy and equality in contact with peers»[94]. He concluded with the double wish to create a network of free kindergartens and to start training kindergarten educators.

In the same issue, Margherita Zoebeli published two articles, the first entitled *Le esercitazioni con materiali e tecniche* (Exercises with materials and techniques) and, the second, in collaboration with the already mentioned teacher Idana Pescioli, *La scuola materna del Centro educativo italo-svizzero* (The Italian-Swiss educational centre's kindergarten).

In the first of her articles, Zoebeli focussed on the function of exercises in the pre-school development, referring to two authors, namely the American psychologist Arnold Gesell (1880-1961) for the concept of maturational theory and the Italian child psychiatrist Giovanni Bollea (1913-2011) – promoter of the rebirth of child neuropsychology in Italy – for child psychomotricity[95]. The subdivision of the exercises into two types, individual

[93] For a recent reprint see C. Betti, *Un'opera storico-educativa di rottura nell'Italia della Ricostruzione*, in L. Borghi (ed.), *Educazione e autorità nell'Italia del dopoguerra*, Introduction by C. Betti and F. Cambi, Parma, Junior, 2021, pp. 7-25 and F. Cambi, *Intorno a un testo classico della pedagogia italiana post-bellica*, *Ivi*, pp. 27-38.

[94] L. Borghi, *Un vuoto educativo da riempire*, in «Scuola e città», 2/3 (1965), pp. 73-75.

[95] Before this date, the only works available in Italian were: A. Gesell, F.L. Ilg, *Il bambino nella società d'oggi*, with Janet Learned and Louise B. Ames, Milano, Bompiani, 1956; G. Bollea (ed.), *Dispense di neuropsichiatria infantile*, from the lessons of professor Giovanni Bollea, Roma, Università di Roma, 1961. For Gesell's maturational theory see D. Caroli, *Per una storia dell'asilo nido fra Otto e Novecento*, Milano, Fran-

(spontaneous and non-spontaneous) and collective, and the description of the materials used for play, were the backbone of the CEIS kindergarten didactics[96].

These didactics embodied a specific pedagogical method that included activities and materials, based on a dynamic concept of space (the classroom with mobile furniture) and the role of the teacher, which varied according to the activity and the age of the children. The organisation of the exercises was dynamic, depending on the environment, and the role of the teacher was changeable. These aspects were woven together by a kind of circularity that made the activities stimulating and kept the children constantly active, leaving no room for inertia or boredom. The individual and spontaneous exercises did not take place in an individual/collective sequence and were not proposed by the teacher. The individual exercises were prompted «by the collective form of the story, by the conversation on the topic that stimulates the community (rhythmic exercise, imitative gymnastics, attention game, etc.)». In fact, Zoebeli specified that «the sense-motor exercise, in a context of interest and thus supported by an emotional charge, leads to applied expressive activity (drawing, painting, modelling work) and gives rise to imitative play»[97].

Zoebeli paid particular attention to materials for spontaneous play (to use Montessori's definition), which corresponded to the child's developmental stage and to the «ideas about the organisation of life in a community of children»[98]. Materials were useful for developing manipulative skills, working with the hands, and perceptual-motor coordination. She also noted that quality materials and toys were not yet available on the Italian market, although «high quality construction materials (Matador Ki, Lego, Bilofix and Coloredo)» were beginning to be sold on the market. There was also a lack of furniture that would allow social activities suitable for children (lunch, rest and play). With regard to the development of state kindergartens, the pedagogist hoped that «working tools, patented materials of educational and training value […] suitable for psychophysical, affective, mental and intellectual development' would be developed»[99].

To compensate for the lack of materials, the teacher could encourage the children to collect "poor materials" (pebbles, berries, leaves, newspapers, illustrations), as they would be emotionally involved and therefore activity-

coAngeli, 2014, pp. 336-340.

[96] M. Zoebeli, *Le esercitazioni con materiali e tecniche*, in «Scuola e città», 2/3 (1965), pp. 107-111. For quotations from this article [*sic.*].

[97] *Ivi*, p. 107.

[98] *Ibidem*.

[99] *Ivi*, p. 108.

oriented. Indeed, «this interest triggers an interweaving of individual, guided, free, group and collective activities». For the activities, the classroom did not have a fixed layout, but became a living room where, throughout the day, «the community would gather to chat, sing, play or look at a glossy book». In this context, the materials are used together. Afterwards, «the classroom is transformed into many corners or areas for multiple, individual and group experiences with the materials. For the youngest children, individual engagement with the material of choice prevails»[100].

Two illustrated diagrams attached to the article provide a better understanding of this "activating" dynamic approach in which the pedagogical role of the teacher also changed according to the two types of activities. As the organiser of the activities, the teacher had a different role depending on the exercise: she observed the child's behaviour (perseverance, creativity, orderliness), provided the materials, stimulating new experiences. In the two diagrams, the arrangement of the furniture in the classrooms shows the children and the teacher both during collective activities with or without materials, and during individual, organised and guided exercises, with the small tables grouped according to the activities[101].

Collective activities with materials take place in a designated area to bring the whole community of children together. Zoebeli stated that «the circle is suitable for exercises that require the joint attention of all the children. Each child derives centrality and satisfaction from this active arrangement: there is neither first nor last, neither one in front nor one behind. The inside of the circle becomes the scene of the play: the children take turns at being actors and spectators»[102].

The individual exercises, free or in small guided groups, with a variety of techniques and materials, were carried out after the «collective community had divided into small groups, working around tables in designated spaces, for example in the doll's house, and in free spaces: everyone moves freely, at their own pace and at their own level of maturity»[103]. In this context, the teacher's role is to observe, to intervene from time to time, and not to interrupt the children's play, in order not to discourage their interest, until the teacher feels she/he can redirect it towards the development of another aspect of the child's personality[104].

This particular organisation of teaching was further explored in an essay (published in the same issue of «Scuola e Città»), written with Idana Pe-

[100] *Ibidem*.
[101] *Ibidem*.
[102] *Ivi*, p. 109.
[103] *Ibidem*.
[104] *Ibidem*.

scioli[105] and preserved in the archives in the form of a report from 1960. The paper stated that the child needs «an educational environment rich in socialisation opportunities»[106]. The social environment was emphasised as «a structural factor of their personality» since it guarantees both expressive activities and the social relationships that are indispensable for the harmonious development of the personality.

At the beginning of a report written in 1966, Margherita Zoebeli returned to the kindergarten and stated that she had it written at the request of professor Renato Coèn[107]. The pedagogist explained that Italian kindergartens were lagging behind due to a lack of state interest and that a bill (presented to the government two years earlier) on public kindergartens was currently being discussed. The CEIS kindergarten itself had accepted only poor children in its first ten years, but «today the poor child plays alongside the son of the most famous doctor in town». Demonstrating her knowledge of the history of education, she mentioned the methods of Aporti, Froebel and the Agazzi sisters. Their didactics were the most popular in Italy, while Maria Montessori's method, «which for the first time introduced the principle of experimentation and scientific pedagogy», was more popular abroad[108].

Two years later, the kindergarten educational method used at CEIS was presented as a model to be followed by Francesco De Bartolomeis in his 1968 book *Il bambino dai tre ai sei anni e la nuova scuola infantile*[109]. The publication of black and white images of children's activities inside and outside the classroom also promoted and updated teaching methods in state kindergartens, whose law was passed in the same year. Margherita Zoebeli paid close attention to the changes in the kindergarten legislation to ensure that the CEIS kindergarten, although private and more innovative, provided quality education in accordance with the law.

Finally, Zoebeli introduced a series of activities in the kindergarten aimed at the moral, aesthetic and physical education of the child, which in the fol-

[105] I. Pescioli and M. Zoebeli, *La scuola materna del Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, in «Scuola e città», 2/3 (1965), pp. 177-190; see the full analysis of this essay by Pironi, *Per una pedagogia dell'utopia concreta: la comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa*, cit., pp. 59-81.

[106] Pescioli, Zoebeli, *La scuola materna del Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, cit., p. 177.

[107] Works published during these years include: R. Coèn, *Il piano Dalton*, Bologna, O. D. C. U., 1953.

[108] AMZ, envelope 12 Writings and notes, file: Proceedings of public speeches (1960-1990). Speech by Margherita Zoebeli n. 20, *Dietro invito del prof. Coèn ho accettato di parlare della scuola materna* (possible date: after 1966), pp. 1-5.

[109] F. De Bartolomeis, *Il bambino dai tre ai sei anni e la nuova scuola infantile*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1968.

lowing years, contributed to the modernisation of other pre-school institutions (maternal schools and day nurseries) in Rimini, also thanks to Antonio Cialabrini, Head of maternal schools and Infant Services for the Municipality of Rimini (1975-2003)[110]. In 1976, Margherita Zoebeli handed over responsibility for CEIS to Gianfranco Iacobucci, who remained in charge until 1986[111]. During a visit to CEIS in the early 1980s, Antonio Rossetto, a school inspector from Como, used the term "Froebelism" to describe the original model of the CEIS kindergarten, although he observed the profound evolution of his didactics. The article was accompanied by a photograph of a doll's house with curtains on the door and windows: a comparison with the original photographs shows that this was not the original CEIS doll's house, although it influenced it[112], just as it had inspired the new active didactics that were becoming popular in Italian pre-school institutions.

The name of the CEIS changed again at the end of the 1980s, when the term "scuola materna" was replaced by "scuola dell'infanzia". In 1986/1987, when drawing up the list of activities programmed at the CEIS, in accordance with the new main objectives (the stimulation of curiosity, observation, understanding, creativity and orientation), Margherita formulated the methodology for achieving these objectives with a scheme that was a precise scientific demonstration[113]. This typewritten report is preserved in the archives, with an annex containing a copy of the Italian law n. 647 «Orientamenti dell'attività educativa nella scuola materna emanati con decreto del 10 settembre 1969», which shows that Zoebeli was always very attentive to the national macro-context, while trying to draw inspiration from the latest scientific research. Another document, dated 14 March 1987, states that the "scuola dell'infanzia" of the Centro Educativo italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) was attended by 86 children, including 8 with disabilities[114], demonstrating that Washburne's lesson on the inclusion of children

[110] F. Zangari, *Nidirimini: la storia di un progetto verso la costruzione dell'identità*, in Campioni, Marchesi (eds.), *Sui nostri passi. Tracce di storia dei servizi educativi nei Comuni capoluogo dell'Emilia Romagna*, cit., pp. 437-448.

[111] G. Sapucci, *Breve storia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in *Ivi*, pp. 449-452; Id., *Margherita Zoebeli*, in L. Campioni & G. Sapucci (eds.), *La bellezza degli inizi. Pedagogisti in Romagna*, Città di Castello (PG), Zeroseiup, pp. 221-241.

[112] A. Rossetto, *Froebel e gli altri nel CEIS di Rimini*, in «Zerosei», 7/9 (1983), pp. 22-25.

[113] AMZ, envelope 26, Scuola dell'infanzia – CEIS. Update of the general programme (1987/88), pp. 1-5. See educational guidelines for state kindergartens (1969), in Catarsi, *L'asilo e la scuola dell'infanzia. Storia della scuola "materna" e dei suoi programmi dall'Ottocento ai giorni nostri*, cit., pp. 441-471.

[114] AMZ, Envelope 26 Miscellaneous, Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre), report from 14 March 1987, pp. 1-8 (bifolium).

with disabilities (heard in Trogen some twenty years earlier) was being implemented from the earliest years of the child's education. Margherita Zoebeli teaches that the history of education is a common heritage of ideas and practices from which we can continually draw inspiration.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

Fig. 1 – Opening of the kindergarten in the presence of the authorities of the city of Rimini and of Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann, 1st May 1946 (Photo by Moretti Film, AMZ, CEI- 0364_114).

Fig. 2 – First SEPEG in Rimini, 4-15 May 1947 (Photo by Moretti Film, AMZ, CEI-0291_001).

Fig. 3 – Second SEPEG in Rimini, 4-14 May 1948 (AMZ, CEI-0291_003).

Fig. 4 – Members of FICE (*Fédération Internationale des Communautés d'Enfants*) in Trogen on the day of its foundation in 1948 (AMZ, CEI-0291_015).

Fig. 5 – Kindergarten room, 1946 (AMZ, CEI-0364_128).

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Figs. 6-7 – Individual activities in the kindergarten, 1946 (AMZ, CEI-0364_191 e CEI-0364_192).

Fig. 8 – The doll's corner, 1946 (AMZ, CEI-0245_041).

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Figs. 9-10 – The doll's house, 1950 and 1951 (AMZ, CEI-0248_004 and picture by Poggi CEI-0250_017).

Fig. 11 – The masonry dollhouse 1961 (AMZ, CEI-0264_001).

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Figs. 12-13 – Expressive activities, painting and drawing, 1949 and 1951 (AMZ, Picture by Koehli CEI-0291_063 e CEI-0367_029).

Italian schools after the Second World War, Margherita Zoebeli's outdoor education and pedagogical innovation in Rimini

Mirella D'Ascenzo

1. The genesis of the Italian-Swiss Village and the work of Margherita Zoebeli

On 1st May 1946, the inauguration ceremony of the Asilo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Social Centre, later Italian-Swiss Educational Centre - CEIS) was held among the ruins of the Roman amphitheatre near the train station in Rimini. The site contained not only the ruins of the Roman Empire, but also the ruins and rubble of a town that had been repeatedly and violently bombed during the final stages of the Second World War, considered a crucial sea and land communication route between the port and the station. The ceremony was both simple yet formal, but faced criticism as 1st May was on one hand a socialist holiday, marking International Workers' Day, and on the other, the Feast of Saint Joseph. The newspapers of the time described the ceremony and the authorities who attended it, reporting the waving of red handkerchiefs to the tune of the socialist anthem, L'Internationale (The Internationale), precisely as the bishop entered the Social Centre's gates. This was a great provocation in an Italy striving to achieve a new cultural and political balance.

For months, displaced men, women and children had been camping out in that semi-destroyed space in conditions of marginality and emergency, perhaps hoping for a different future but with a fearful heart and a hungry stomach[1]. The mayor, Arturo Clari, had requested the help of Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten (Swiss Donation for the Victims of War, SSK), a Swiss governmental institution tasked with coordinating the aid given to countries hit by the war along with other organisations, including the Soccorso Operaio Svizzero (Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation, SOS), a charity supporting migrants and the unemployed. Through the mediation

[1] E. Cortesi, *L'odissea degli sfollati. Il Forlivese, il Riminese e il Cesenate di fronte allo sfollamento di massa*, Cesena, Il Ponte Vecchio, 2003.

of Antonio Greppi, the socialist mayor of Milan who sought refuge in Switzerland during the Fascist regime, a delegation of four people was sent by the Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation to Rimini in December 1945: Alberto Panizzi (a Zurich-based worker of Italian origin); Deborah (known as Barbara) Seidenfeld, the architect Felix Schwarz and Margherita Zoebeli, who in the previous months had made contacts with the authorities in Rimini to plan their intervention. These people came from the Swiss socialist world, and had been providing care and assistance to child war victims for some time[2], particularly Margherita Zoebeli, on whose life both before and after Rimini there is plenty of information, thanks to some precious contributions[3], still to be investigated. So, one hundred years following its birth, it certainly makes sense to investigate the role played by this extraordinary social animator and educator who, in contrast to others, produced no systematic theoretical writings on her educational experiences, except for some contributions found in collective works in which she offered some significant yet poorly organised insights, as if wishing to avoid leaving any complete autobiographical memories.

[2] On the very important role of Barbara Seidenfeld and her sisters in caring for children, refer to S. Galli, *Le tre sorelle Seidenfeld. Donne nell'emigrazione politica antifascista*, Firenze, Giunti, 2005.

[3] M. Castiglioni, *Una scuola una città. Il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini (CEIS*). With original photos by Werner Bischof, Venezia, Marsilio, 1991; M. Amadori, M. Castiglioni, F. Montanari, *M. Zoebeli, Il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero nei disegni dei bambini, 25 anni al CEIS in una Rassegna di Calendari (1969-1993*), Rimini, Edizioni Chiamami Città, 1993; T. De Luigi, S. Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro. Cinquant'anni di vita al CEIS*, Rimini, Maggioli Editore, 1996; Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (eds.), *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il CEIS, Documenti di un'utopia*, Rimini, Edizioni Chiamami Città, 1998; L. Biondelli, R. Calieri, A. Fabbri, N. Gallazzi, G. Sapucci, G. Zuccoli, *A scuola nel Villaggio. Parole chiave ed esperienze al CEIS di Rimini*, Trento, Edizioni Erickson, 2008; C. De Maria*, 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; E. Dubach, E. Forlani, M. Maioli, R. Pasini (eds.), *Lo spazio che educa*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2012; C. De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, Roma, Viella, 2015; 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», 1 (2015), pp. 115-218; T. Pironi, *Nascita di una pedagogia degli spazi a misura di bambino*, in V. Gherardi (eds.), *Spazi ed educazione*, Roma, Aracne, 2019, pp. 41-56.

2. The rebirth of the Italian school

A little after a year following the end of the Second World War, on 25 April 1945, there was some lively debate on the possibility of the women's vote to choose between the monarchy and the Republic, the referendum held one month after the birth of the Asilo Italo-Svizzero, on 2 June 1946. The Republic was born. It was born in an Italy still very much politically and civilly divided, an Italy still squabbling between winners and losers, reckoning between different political factions, hate and revenge, with fascism officially defeated.

The post-war period had begun, a season rich in continuity and discontinuity, between conservation and renewal. On one side, death and material destruction, on the other the desire to rebuild, then made possible also by the aid provided by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration - UNRRA and later the US Marshall Plan. The Fascist regime had been stopped, but the top-down, rigid authoritarian system of powers and institutions, often with the same figures still in key positions in the institutions, those who had mysteriously and unexpectedly escaped the purging processes, seeking to mediate with the new desire for freedom, free speech, democracy combined with the hope for a new and better world. On one hand, an economic system based on agriculture and the countryside, and on the other the increasing industrialisation were leading to the economic boom from the late Fifties, with a more affluent population who owned televisions, a Piaggio Vespa, a Fiat 500, had holidays in August and enjoyed those household appliances that helped to ensure women's freedoms, *in primis* the washing machine! On the other, as the countryside was progressively transformed and mechanised, people from the mountain areas and central and southern Italy migrated to the industrialising north, profoundly changing the face of social and school life, with migrants who spoke dialects that were incomprehensible in the north and were forced to the margins of culture and society, despite being Italian citizens themselves[4].

For schools, in 1945 the *Programmi didattici per la scuola elementare* (Education programmes for primary school) were issued, inspired by freedom of speech and expression, cooperation, democracy, promoted by the Allied Forces Commission headed by a special military figure, Carleton

[4] On the social and economic aspects of the period, see P. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi*, Turin, Einaudi, 1989; G. Crainz, *Storia del miracolo economico italiano: culture, identità, trasformazioni fra anni Cinquanta e Sessanta*, Roma, Donzelli, 2005; A. Cardini (ed.), *Il miracolo economico italiano (1958-1963)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006; S. Oliviero, *Educazione e consumo nell'Italia repubblicana*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2018.

Washburne was a student of John Dewey and a supporter of the American active and progressive school[5]. These *Programmi didattici* had little effect on the more common, concrete and real teaching methods in a school driven by pedagogical and educational inertia, built around a traditional and authoritarian model that was born long before fascism and was even more consecrated during the Fascist period, as an expression of a hierarchical, pyramid-shaped society in which teachers were both delegates and officers of their "kingdom", the classroom. In the post-war period, part of the teaching category worked on this shift from everyday traditional and authoritarian teaching practices anchored in the past towards the innovative indications of national programmes. They came from both the Catholic[6] and secular areas, the latter particularly from the Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Educational Cooperation Movement, MCE) set up in 1951 in Fano (Ancona) by a group of teachers led by Giuseppe Tamagnini. The MCE aimed to recover the best active and democratic teaching practices inspired especially by the techniques of Célestin Freinet, including classroom printing, inter-school correspondence, live calculus, the natural method for reading and writing and the cooperative method in the class[7], fostering a radical change in the organisation of teaching and classroom relations, as well as the role of the teacher, symbolically moving the teacher's desk to the side of the classroom.

The Italian Constitution was issued in 1948, In Articles 30, 33 and 34, it defines the freedom of teaching, compulsory schooling and the right to education, fundamental principles around which a lively debate developed, linked to the conflicting interpretations of various political moments that characterised Italian society, and continue to do so today.[8] An Italian school

[5] E. Catarsi, *Storia dei programmi della scuola elementare (1860-1985)*, Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1990.

[6] For the Catholic area, refer briefly here to G. Zago, *Itinerari e proposte di rinnovamento pedagogico e culturale nel sistema formativo italiano del secondo dopoguerra: l'area cattolica*, in A. Ascenzi, R. Sani (eds.), *L'innovazione pedagogica e didattica nel sistema formativo italiano dall'unità al secondo dopoguerra*, Roma, Studium edizioni, 2022, pp. 372-400.

[7] G. Tamagnini (eds.), *Didattica operativa. Le tecniche Freinet in Italia, Frontale, Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa*, 1965; A. Pettini, *Origini e sviluppo della cooperazione educativa in Italia. Dalla CTS al MCE (1952-1958)*, Milano, Emme Edizioni, 1980; R. Rizzi, P*edagogia popolare. Un itinerario di ricerca e azione coopera-zione. Memoria e identità di un Movimento innovativo di* maestri. Historical notes on the MCE, Ortacesus (Cagliari), Sandhi editore, 2015; R. Rizzi, *Pedagogia popolare: da Célestin Freinet al MCE-FIMEM. La dimensione sociale della cooperazione educativa*, Foggia, Edizioni del Rosone, 2017.

[8] M. Galfrè, *Tutti a scuola. L'istruzione nell'Italia del Novecento*, Roma, Carocci,

that slowly got back on its feet and, in those ten years between 1945 and 1955, a considerable number of cultural and educational innovations were introduced into primary school programmes, including those of Margherita Zoebeli and the Asilo Italo-Svizzero. Initially, Zoebeli and her group of collaborators sought to respond to the essential needs of individuals and families, taking charge and caring for their children in a Kindergarten garden set up for one hundred and fifty children, with craft laboratories, a library and a specific barracks for around twenty orphans, which they called 'casina' ("the little house"), as Zoebeli herself told in a rare interview[9], underlining the central focus of a family and community dimension. The primary school was opened in 1947, and the full five-year cycle was confirmed in 1953.

Some general difficulties were noted, also in the definition of the specifically scholastic intervention of the educational project. Zoebeli found herself in a foreign land, sent by the Swiss Worker's Relief Organisation to a politically socialist town but with strong Catholic and moderate roots, with the risk of marginalisation and rejection. Zoebeli herself reported the resistance they came up against from the local people of Rimini; diffidence towards a Swiss woman who was perhaps considered foreign to the town, where schools were slowly getting back to normal and which enjoyed significant inputs in the following years, including school education[10].

This was also perhaps what assured the determination to create a different, innovative, secular, international project, open to potential cooperation which, in some way, also legitimised the very existence of the school, its difference, originality and quality. Between 1947 and 1948, the Asilo Italo-Svizzero hosted the first and second international seminar on the problems affecting children who were victims of the war, organised by the International Study Weeks for Child Victims of the War (SEPEG - *Semaines Internationales d'Etude pour l'Enfance victime de la guerre*), with the participation of Carleton Washburne, Ernesto Codignola, his wife Anna Maria Melli Codignola and Lamberto Borghi, all founders of that which was

2017; F. De Giorgi, A. Gaudio, F. Pruneri (eds.), *Manuale di storia della scuola italiana*, Brescia, Scholè, 2019; S. Santamaita, *Storia della scuola. Dalla scuola al sistema formativo*, Milano, Pearson, 2021.

[9] Zoebeli, *Dialogo radiofonico di Michele Gulinucci. Radio Tre, 21 marzo 1993*, Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (eds.), *Paesaggio con figura*, cit., p. 24.

[10] F. Zangari, *La città di Rimini e le scuole comunali dell'infanzia: storia, innovazione e creatività*, in L. Campioni, F. Marchesi (eds.), *La strada maestra. Tracce di storia delle scuole comunali dell'infanzia nei Comuni capoluogo dell'Emilia Romagna*, Bergamo, Zeroseiup, 2018, pp. 399-436.

later called the "Florence school"[11], the nerve centre of the renewal of secular education in the post-war period[12].

In 1952, the Asilo Italo-Svizzero hosted the first national conference of that which was to become the *Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (educational cooperation movement*), then called the "*Cooperativa della tipografia a scuola*", founded by Giuseppe Tamagnini, Aldo Pettini and Bruno linked to Freinet's Cooperative Institute of the Modern School (ICEM - *Institut Coopératif de l'Ecole Moderne*), attended by Ernesto Codignola, Francesco De Bartolomeis, Vittorio D'Alessandro, Raffaele Laporta and the founder himself of the French movement, Célestin Freinet. Free text, school printing, inter-school correspondence, free drawing and painting, the natural method for teaching to read were the educational techniques of Freinet and the group of innovating teachers in the Fifties, including Mario Lodi, the centenary of whose birth was recently celebrated[13].

Zoebeli wove many ties and threads with the pioneering educational men and women of the time, including Margherita Fasolo, student of Codignola, Carmela Mungo, director of the "Scuola Viva" and former teacher at the open air schools in Rome, Adriano Olivetti, Aldo Capitini and Marcello Trentanove, a primary school teacher from Empoli with a degree in philosophy who was interested in Freinet's educational cooperation and techniques. In 1953, the Asilo Italo-Svizzero hosted the first course in Italy run by CEMEA (Training centres for active learning methods), residential

[11] F. Cambi, *La scuola di Firenze. Da Codignola a Laporta 1950-1975*, Naples, Liguori, 1982; the term was later diluted in consideration of the role played also by the "bottom-up" and not purely academic 'school in action', see F. Mattei, *La «Scuola di Firenze»?*, in F. Cambi, P. Federighi, A. Mariani (eds.), *La pedagogia critica e laica a Firenze: 1950-2015. Modelli. Trasformazioni. Figure*, Firenze, Firenze University Press, 2016, pp. 141-146 and C. Betti, *L'altra scuola di Firenze*, in «Ricerche pedagogiche», 200-201 (2016), pp. 32-41.

[12] R. Laporta*, L'educazione nuova nel secondo dopoguerra*, in *Ernesto Codignola in 50 anni di battaglie educative*, in «Scuola e città», 4-5 (1967), pp. 306-322; G. Tassinari (ed.*)*, *La pedagogia italiana nel secondo dopoguerra*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1987; C. Betti, *Itinerari e proposte di rinnovamento pedagogico e culturale nel sistema formativo italiano del secondo dopoguerra: l'area laica*, in Ascenzi, Sani (eds.), *L'innovazione pedagogica e didattica nel sistema formativo italiano dall'unità al secondo dopoguerra*, cit., pp. 336-354.

[13] As regards the centenary of Mario Lodi, on 25 October 2022 a conference was held, entitled "L'eredità di Mario Lodi per la scuola del Duemila" ("*Mario Lodi's school legacy for the 21st century*") organised by the Department of Educational Science of the University of Bologna at the Stabat Mater hall in the municipal Archiginnasio Library in Bologna, see M. D'Ascenzo, C. De Santis, S. Loiero (eds.), *L'eredità di Mario Lodi per la scuola del Duemila*, Roma, Tab edizioni, 2023.

courses also for summer camp educators; Bice Baldeschi Libretti, Margherita Fasolo and Marcello Trentanove and dozens of in-service teachers took part, learning about active education with lessons, group activities, manuals and practices[14]. Substantially, the Asilo Italo-Svizzero began to become one of the main spaces for debate and experimentation of Italian pedagogy in the cultural and scholastic renaissance of the post-war period.

3. Zoebeli's innovation as an open air school in the documentation of the Ministry of Public Education

As explained, Zoebeli's experience was from the outset a secular institution from the socialist area, supported by the Rimini's socialist-communist administration; it was subject to considerable surveillance by the state authorities, particularly the Ministry of Public Education, controlled strictly by the Christian Democrats in power, also with a view to standardising the complete primary school cycle; it was supported by the Department of Education in Rimini but opposed by the Ministry of Public Education due to local political resistance. According to the in-depth reconstruction by Carlo De Maria, only the pressure of the Swiss Legation was able to halt the procrastination of the Ministries of the Interior and of Public Education. And yet, some positive assessments of Zoebeli's experience were found at ministerial level. In addition to the archive documentation, already widely illustrated in De Maria's accurate reconstruction, positive reports on the school run by Zoebeli were given in some official texts of the Ministry, and the school was included in the category of open air schools and new schools. The Asilo Italo-Svizzero was also presented at the International Open Air Education Exhibition held in Florence in 1949, which saw the participation of Italian municipalities and foreign countries working in both special open air schools for weak children and those suffering from tuberculosis as well as extra- and para-scholastic organisations involved in open air education «in order to provide the children with the benefit of the air and sun, and to ensure that school can become closer to real life»[15]. One of the institutions that chose to participate in this international event was precisely the Asilo Italo-Svizzero, with children's drawings hanging on the stair walls and photographs:

[14] B. Libretti Baldeschi, *Il pensiero e l'azione dei Ceméa*, Milano, Studio Stampa, 1996.

[15] Italian committee for open air education, *Guida dell'esposizione internazionale delle scuole all'aperto, Firenze 9 maggio-30 giugno 1949*, Firenze, Centro Didattico Nazionale, s.d., p. 4.

RIMINI
The "Remo Bordoni" Asilo Italo-Svizzero, funded by Swiss Donation for the Victims of War and inaugurated on 5 May 1946. The photographs show the wooden huts used by 150 children aged from 4 to 6 and 58 more attending the primary school. Scenes of children resting, playing, studying and working outdoors, drawings by the children, presented here in the documentation of the activities carried out[16].

Some time afterwards, another important document from the Ministry of Public Education recorded the positive experience of the Asilo Italo-Svizzero in an important book published in 1950. In its introduction, the Minister Guido Gonella, from the Christian Democrat majority leading the government, described the terrible situation of Italian schools:

> at the end of the war, in 1945, schools were lacerated by wounds and mutilations of all kinds, and restoring life to such a destroyed body seemed a desperate enterprise to even the best spirits. Devastation everywhere, ruins and a shortage of means to meet a huge amount of needs: many buildings had been destroyed and severely damaged and others mostly requisitioned for military use or other civil needs; most of the school furniture and scientific equipment had been destroyed or stolen; the staff were often lost or consumed, in both body and spirit; orphans and abandoned children to be educated and restored to social life; young people let down and humiliated by futile fighting, imprisonment or starvation in the concentration camps, who had to recover, even before knowledge, their self-confidence and confidence in others. In addition, most of the time economic hardship forced people to deal with the urgent problems of everyday life before dealing with the problem, considered less imperative despite being more important, of their moral reconstruction[17].

Gonella illustrated the work done by the 'Democratic Government of the Nation' (with capital letters) after the war, an even more significant work as the book was published just before the V UNESCO General Conference in Firenze, and explicitly mentioned its intention of cooperating with the United Nations to «increase the cultural heritage of civilisation»[18], thus placing the Italian work, and that of its government, in an international framework.

[16] *Ivi*, p. 14, the date of 5 May is original in the aforementioned document.

[17] Ministry of Public Education, *La ricostruzione della scuola italiana. Dalla fine della guerra alla riforma degli ordinamenti scolastici*, Roma, Publication by the National Education Centre,1950, p. 5.

[18] *Ivi*, p. 7.

The book illustrated graphs on primary, secondary and university education, referring also to the *National Inquiry for School Reform* promoted in previous years. It presented the organisation of schools from 3 to 14 years: municipal or private, non-mandatory infant school from three to six years, with references to the models of Aporti, Froebel, Agazzi and Montessori; primary school had five mandatory years and, for rural schools, took the form of joint classes[19]; a single middle school, with Latin or professional training as the possible choices, from 11 to 14 years, completed the compulsory schooling[20].

The writing then shifted attention to 'educational recovery', defined as the «normalisation and reorganisation of school services»[21] for each school sector. The book referred to the most innovative educational and school experiences. In particular, it referred to the 'Rinnovata' infant school in Milan, founded by Giuseppina Pizzigoni before the war, the "Pezzi infant school", the Vialba infant school in Milan, the (Montessorian) "Casa del bambino" in Genoa, the ONAIR infant schools and especially the "Remo Bordoni" Giardino d'infanzia (kindergarten) in Rimini run by Margherita Zoebeli with a full-page image of different times of school life[22], a clear sign of the ministry's appreciation and positioning of this pedagogic and educational experience among the innovative ones of the period (Fig. 1).

For primary education, quantitative data accompanied by pictures referred to avantgarde schools, including the Gabelli in Belluno founded in the 1930s by Pierina Boranga, a former student of the Pizzigoni in Milan, supporter of outdoor schools and outdoor education, as well as active schools. Precisely in the section on "Open air school", once again the compiler included Zoebeli's experience:

> the Asilo Italo-Svizzero was set up in Rimini after the war, and was completed by the establishment of a special primary school[23].

For the Ministry of Public Education, the Italian-Swiss primary school was an open air school and as such 'special', as open air schools became special in 1933, as we will see below. In the same book, the 'Remo Bordoni' Asilo Italo-Svizzero was mentioned again, this time in the group of new

[19] "In rural areas and, generally, in places where the population is poorly agglomerated, primary schools are organised in joint classes", *Ivi*, p. 11.

[20] On Gonella, see G. Chiosso, *I cattolici e la scuola dalla Costituente al centrosinistra*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1988.

[21] Ministry of Public Education*, La ricostruzione della scuola italiana*, cit., p. 51.

[22] *Ivi*, p. 55.

[23] *Ivi*, p. 73.

schools, understood as experimental schools adopting different educational techniques that

> took hold in the period from 1945 to 1950 with experiments that deserve special attention. These schools offered a particularly fertile terrain for new methods, team work, forms of self-government and collectively organised activities[24].

Among these, in addition to the Asilo Italo-Svizzero were Zeno Saltini's "Città di Nomadelfia" in Carpi (Modena), Pizzigoni's "Scuola Rinnovata", the Ugo Bartolomei Montessori school at Villa Paganini in Rome, the Mezzaselva rural school in S. Cesareo (Rome), the Scuola Viva in Rome run by Carmela Mungo and the Pestalozzi Scuola-Città in Florence.

This picture shows how the Ministry of Public Education did not refer only to openly Catholic experiences, as could be expected, at least according to a narration focused on the dichotomy and dialectic between secular and Catholic factions, studied extensively by school historiography, driven also by political reasons emerging in the Fifties of the Cold War and the conflict between the Christian Democrats and the left-wing forces. The official publication introduced by the Christian-Democrat Minister Gonella and published by the Ministry for Public Education directed by him in 1950 reported the interesting and dynamic experiences of active schools – partly unknown to historiography today – including those of Zoebeli's Asilo Italo-Svizzero. This was a recognition of the originality and quality of the experience in Rimini well beyond the political juxtapositions that are so rooted in historiography but perhaps not practised by the people of the school world and the state and ministerial administration of the time. In 1950, the Asilo Italo-Svizzero was considered as innovative both as a kindergarten and an open air primary school, as well as a new school that adopted differentiated teaching methods; in all three cases, it was considered by the Ministry for Public Education as a school of pioneering teaching innovation.

As explained, the Asilo Italo-svizzero was part of the group of open air schools, an element that has not yet been considered in historiographical terms. At the time, open air schools referred to primary schools founded in the early 20th century in Europe and worldwide for fragile pupils at risk of tuberculosis in an outdoor setting, originally quite simple but progressively developed in terms of both the educational practices introduced and the architectural and urban setting[25]. Open air schools also adopted hygiene-based educational practices including super-nutrition, specific and natural

[24] *Ivi*, p. 74.
[25] M. D'Ascenzo, *Per una storia delle scuole all'aperto in Italia*, Pisa, ETS, 2018.

medical gymnastics, heliotherapy as well as teaching practices linked to specific primary education but with shorter lesson times, less frontal teaching and a more cooperative and democratic approach, with gardening, horticulture and animal husbandry fully integrated into the school subjects. In time, open air schools, set up in particularly for medical and hygiene reasons, developed forms of pedagogic and didactic innovation consistent with those of the new and active schools of the period, developing practices that many, even then, thought should be adopted in common schools for everyone[26].

In fact, the Asilo Italo-Svizzero had a lot in common with the open air schools of the early 20th century. First of all, the pupils: in poor health, hungry, physically and socially fragile, often war orphans and/or psychologically fragile and marginalised, in need of everything, including personal hygiene. Not by chance, it was precisely in Rimini, at the Asilo Italo-svizzero during the weeks of SEPEG 1949, that ample space was devoted to the issue of hygiene, which had become dramatically important following the tragic war events:

> this was the childhood of those who grew up during this period in Italy and in countries affected by the war. The long tempestuous period that devastated and destroyed homes and families left a deep furrow of physiological and psychological poverty in childhood, the real victim of the war, and we school doctors see this every day on a vast scale. We doctors must repair the damage to the body, the educators and psychologists the damage to the soul, no less serious than the former. The only true health lies in the harmony of the physical and spiritual energies, Hippocrates' aphorism: "mens sana in corpore sano" must not be forgotten by those dealing with children's hygiene, because it is of fundamental importance[27].

Moreover, the primary school opened by Margherita Zoebeli in 1947 taught not only the children of the kindergarten opened in 1946 and those from the primary school but also those who escaped from the common state

[26] M. D'Ascenzo, *Il patrimonio storico-educativo delle scuole all'aperto*, in A. Ascenzi, C. Covato, J. Meda (eds.), *La pratica educativa. Storia, memoria e patrimonio. Atti del 1° Congresso nazionale della Società Italiana per lo studio del Patrimonio Storico-Educativo (Palma de Mallorca, 20-23 novembre 2018)*, Macerata, Eum Edizioni, 2020, pp. 437-451; Ead., *L'innovazione pedagogica e didattica delle scuole all'aperto da scuole speciali a scuole per tutti*, in Ascenzi, Sani (eds.), *L'innovazione pedagogica e didattica nel sistema formativo italiano dall'unità al secondo* dopoguerra, cit., pp. 315-332.

[27] J. Botti, *L'igiene dei bambini e degli educatori*, SEPEG conference, day VII, 10 May 1947, ds., in AMZ/BGR, *Atti e carteggi relativi al CEIS*, folder 18, p. 1.

school due to problems of disadaptation, the 'urchins', all in all the "Broken Hearts", those who did not fit into the traditional, authoritarian school with its standardising severity and punishments. This was yet another of the similarities with Italian and European open air schools, which welcomed not only children in poor health but also pupils who were excluded or rejected from common schools or considered to have retarded physical and intellectual development, often not attending school due to work or family poverty, so in both cases subject to truancy or drop-out. An additional element that Zoebeli's Asilo Italo-Svizzero shared with open air schools were the barracks. Like the first open air schools, they were set up in the Döcker barracks – Germany – or in Red Cross barracks previously used for military purposes, also in Italy, so the first wooden barracks decommissioned by the army were what characterised Zoebeli's Asilo Italo-Svizzero, even if arranged in a very different order to that of the military in order to offer a familiar sense of community, as has been widely studied.

Another aspect of the Asilo Italo-Svizzero as an open air school was the set of hygiene practices, found both in open air schools and in the Asilo Italo-Svizzero and the primary school, also represented by the round fountain that can be seen in many period pictures, common to all major open air schools in and beyond Italy, a place to wash feet, play and socialise.

A further element that linked open air schools of the time to the Italian-Swiss Village was the central community dimension, the objective and practice of personal autonomy and collective responsibility, as well as forms of self-government, so dear to many open air school experiences, even during the Fascist period[28], but obviously here without the ideological dimension of the Regime.

Another common aspect was the centrality of the open air school, the outdoor educational space typical of the Italian-Swiss Village; a space understood as a place of spontaneous learning but also mediated by the teacher, studying subjects starting from observation, the real, the touched and the experienced. This was in fact what happened in open air schools: teaching focused on the outside, the open air, for all school subjects, in a profound and constant dialogue with the natural environment and the external socio-cultural territory, anticipating the fields of education in and with nature and the *outdoor education* of today.

Margherita Zoebeli left little pedagogic and educational writings. There are some reports, articles, correspondence, her archive, but she never framed her pedagogic knowledge in a complete, theoretical written text, left for posterity, as an individual story and memory for the collective history of her creature, the Italian-Swiss Village, which went on to become the Italian-

[28] D'Ascenzo, *Per una storia delle scuole all'aperto in Italia*, cit.

Swiss Education Centre (CEIS). Oral memories tell of her reticence in exposing herself[29] and her more "operational" actions, despite her attention to developing good pedagogic practices in Italy and abroad. Precisely due to this characteristic and her extraordinary organisational skills, the Italian-Swiss Village became a crossroads of secular pedagogic and educational innovation in the post-war period, a fertile teaching laboratory that also trained new generations of teachers. A teaching laboratory reminiscent of that teaching laboratory "par excellence", that of Pestalozzi in Yverdon in the early 19th century, another crossroads of important pedagogic debate and renewal, just like Margherita's school in Rimini, a fertile place for educational innovation in schools after the Second World War, the heritage of which is still very much alive today.

Translated by Julie Wood

[29] C. Brolli, *I maestri e Margherita. Dieci conversazioni su Margherita Zoebeli, più una*, Dissertation on the History of Education, School of Psychology and Education Sciences, Degree Programme in Social and Cultural Educator, Academic year 2016-2017, Supervisor Prof. Mirella D'Ascenzo.

Fig. 1 – Life and activities of children at the "Remo Bordoni" kindergarten in Rimini (directed by Marghera Zoebeli), image published in: Ministry of Public Education, *La ricostruzione della scuola italiana. Dalla fine della guerra alla riforma degli ordinamento scolastici* (The reconstruction of the Italian school. From the end of the War to the reform of the schools system), edited by the Centro Didattico Nazionale / National Educational Center, Rome, 1950.

The Summer Colonies of Margherita Zoebeli

Simona Salustri

At the Rimini Sea
How beautiful is the sea of Rimini
With its beautiful blue water
And I'm so happy to stay there.

(G. C.)
«Lieto Mosaico-Colonia marina dei bambini ticinesi di Rimini»[1], July 1953, Rimini

1. Margherita Zoebeli and the integrated pedagogical approach

In 1998 the pedagogist Raffaele Laporta, while analysing the life, studies and work of Margherita Zoebeli, with whom he had had fruitful cultural exchanges, wrote:

> There was a time when Margherita Zoebeli was one of the fires of Italian pedagogy. Ernesto Codignola and Lamberto Borghi, the leaders of post-war secular pedagogy, used to meet well-known exponents of European pedagogy at her Italian-Swiss Educational Centre, in her children's 'Village'; Francesco De Bartolomeis collected experiences in the Village nursery school, which he would later bring together in one of his most beautiful books; Bogdan Suchodolski stopped off at the CEIS (Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero) on his Italian trips; Célestin Freinet came to the CEIS from his native Vence to preside over the meetings of the members of the Educational Cooperation Movement with Giuseppe Tamagnini; Ludovico Quaroni came by to give advice; and Giancarlo De Carlo, the architect of the new University of Urbino, designed the 'Betulla', the boys' house for CEIS[2].

[1] Quotation retrieved from the magazine «Happy Mosaic - Ticino children's Seaside colony».

[2] R. Laporta, *Presente finché duri amore*, in Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il Ceis. Documenti di un'utopia*, Rimini, Edizioni Chiamami Città, 1998, p. 10.

And continuing in his reconstruction he added:

> the pedagogy [of Margherita Zoebeli] had overcome the physical and material devastation of the wars […] it offered a refuge from family sufferings and the violent or subtle malaise of the new society. It was not a pedagogy of instruction, it was a pedagogy of life, in which school was perhaps its most vibrant component, maturing in step with the unfolding and progress of community life itself. It was a pedagogy that evolved with life[3].

The basic idea behind Margherita Zoebeli's pedagogical approach envisaged an integrated involvement of individuals by going beyond the traditional sphere of school time to shape not simply adults, but citizens.

Out of the rubble of the war, and as the population's welfare emergency was coming to an end, already in 1947, the CEIS – then still simply called the *Asilo Svizzero* and later the *Giardino d'infanzia* (Kindergarten) – established a series of periodic activities that quickly became part of the life of the Centre and of the community that was growing around it[4]. Among these – echoing the reflections of Enea Bernardi in his report to the 1979 conference in Venice held on the occasion of the International Year of the Child – were the women's work courses, the apprenticeship courses for teachers, the training and refresher courses for school personnel, and, last but not least, the creation of a «summer camp for 100 children from 6 to 12 years of age of both sexes, preferably chosen from among orphans, the illegitimate, the poor, the organically maladjusted or unstable, and therefore in need of special assistance»[5].

[3] *Ivi,* p. 11.

[4] C. De Maria, *Margherita Zoebeli e il lavoro per l'infanzia vittima della guerra*, in E. Appetecchia (ed.), *Idee e movimenti comunitari. Servizio sociale di comunità in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra*, Roma, Viella, 2015, pp. 261-279; Id. (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012; *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, Roma, Viella, 2015 and Id., *Utopia e concretezza: ricordiamo Margherita Zoebeli a 110 anni dalla nascita*, in «Clionet», 6 (2022), pp. 8-14.

[5] Relazione di Enea Bernardi, *Il CEIS di Rimini: storia e problematiche*, Convegno internazionale Apprendimento e processi di integrazione sociale 27-30 September 1979, Università Ca' Foscari, Anno internazionale del bambino, in Archivio Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Archive, AMZ), Corrispondenza, Appendici b. 7, fasc. 1 *Corrispondenza privata signora Margherita (1946-1991)*.

2. The colony (holiday camps) and its early years

The first written documents relating to the colony can be found in the *Regulations* dated 4 May 1949, which partly mirror the proposed internal regulations for the Ticino mountain colony in Austria. The document states that «the director of the colony is Miss Margherita Zoebeli, who is responsible for the smooth running and management of the colony», assisted by Prof. Manlio Monticelli, a specialist in children's diseases, who was entrusted with the colony's healthcare. The *Regulations* do not refer to the selection of children as indicated by Bernardi, but merely state that the age range was between 6 and 12 and that the children had to have a medical certificate attesting their need for seaside treatment[6]. Colony life thus began with just a few initial rules on community living and was driven by the urgent need to continue the precious Rimini initiative in the summer too. The idea behind the opening of a seaside holiday camp in Italy originated from an initial experience in the immediate post-war period, which saw the then Italian-Swiss nursery school, in collaboration with the municipality of Rimini, place 120 children between the ages of 6 and 14 in an Austrian colony to allow their mothers to work during the summer and offer the most disadvantaged children, or those in need of care, a safe, welcoming and recreational place[7].

The difficulties of the trip to Austria were manifold, both organisationally and financially. One of the central issues was the role taken on by the caregivers. Six teachers from the Italian-Swiss nursery school, plus a young assistant, travelled with the children; their task, based on «a high sense of cooperation», had to be carried out with an awareness that it was not merely a matter of «leading the children to pasture in the mountains as one leads sheep», but of creating «a living school, part of an active life» for which they all had to be didactically prepared, also through the use of material to be used in the daily activities with the children. This was a first and important sign of what was to be a continuous investment in staff training by CEIS, so that the young guests could return home in better health and, above all, enriched by an experience of «friendship and cooperation»[8].

Zoebeli put a lot of effort into organising this trip, as she was well aware of the importance of colonies, which she had already experienced in Sète, France[9], a country where she had first been introduced to the method of the

[6] AMZ, Atti e carteggi relativi al CEIS, b. 17/1, fasc. 5 *Colonie di vacanze*, Colonia estiva-giardino di infanzia italo-svizzero Rimini, 4 May 1949.

[7] *Ivi*, Manoscritto s.f., s.d.

[8] *Ibidem*.

[9] G. Fofi, *Le nozze coi fichi secchi. Storie di un'altra Italia*, Napoli, L'Ancora del

pedagogist Célestin Freinet just before the Second World War[10]. In the second half of the 1930s, the Swiss socialist movement had set up a house in the foothills of the Pyrenees to take in the youngest victims of the Spanish Civil War, most of whom were originally from Barcelona, and Zoebeli had been involved until, when they were forced to flee, she organised their expatriation. As Tiziana Pironi insightfully pointed out, Zoebeli's activities always combined her anti-fascist commitment «with the objective of how to create activities that would stimulate the children's cooperation, favouring a protective and safe environment on an emotional level. Many of those fleeing children, found scattered among the ruins of cities, no longer had parents; it was therefore a matter of healing the wounds of a childhood subjected to the harshest deprivation»[11].

Linked to this was the idea of creating a context within which the individual could be fully valued in order to enrich the scope of his or her social experiences, starting with their relationships among peers and with adults. The idea of community, also present in the colony, was based on the close correlation between the individual and society, in which individuals, with their subjectivity, contributed to the evolution of the community set-up. In order to achieve the growth of future citizens, an autonomous and creative development therefore needed to be encouraged that could only take place in a climate of well-being.

In Zoebeli's approach, the seaside colonies fully met these goals, besides meeting the narrower welfare objectives that gave continuity to what had been achieved in the nursery school environment. This perspective offers a key to understanding the great efforts made to re-use and adapt the spaces to accommodate children during the summer period as well. It was not only an attempt to respond to the many unmet requests in the initial phase of the Ticino colony in Austria, but also the desire to encourage the development of an experience that was less costly and closer to the families.

The colony experiment of the Italo-Swiss nursery school was therefore part of a new season for the colonies after the Second World War, when the educational aims gradually replaced the vision of indoctrination attributed

Mediterraneo, 1999, p. 153.

[10] G. Sapucci, *Un esempio di scuola progettata: il CEIS di Rimini*, in G. Cavinato, L. Canetti, *I fili e i nodi dell'educazione. Sulle tracce di Célestin Freinet*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1999, pp. 263-267.

[11] T. Pironi, *La comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli: il CEIS di Rimini*, in Ead., *Percorsi di pedagogia al femminile. Dall'Unità d'Italia al secondo dopoguerra*, Roma, Carocci, 2014, p. 152, and Ead., *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», 12 (2016), pp. 115-128.

to them by the Fascist regime, so becoming fully part of the new forms of pedagogical activism[12].

The documents in Margherita Zoebeli's archives highlight this change, together with the challenges encountered to cope with the economic difficulties and the adaptation of space, to organise the many activities, and to train the teaching staff in the new educational requirements.

In Rimini, between 1st July and 15th September 1949, after some work to adapt and extend the premises, 63 children from the Trade Unions in Ticino were hosted for 30 days; 15 children were hosted for 31 days as part of the Swiss Workers' Relief Holiday at the Sea initiative; two groups of 30 children were hosted, each for 28 days, for Rimini residents in need of assistance; and a group of 20 young people from Zurich was hosted too. In addition, 46 adults and 13 children were accommodated in the specially refurbished guest rooms, divided into four groups, each of which stayed for 14 days. The management of the Rimini premises was therefore not straightforward, especially from an economic point of view, as the contribution paid for the guests did not fully cover the costs; staffing was also not ideal, as the teachers were entitled to holiday leave and the director was forced to take on new ones for the summer[13].

As proof of the great demand for accommodation, before the summer of 1949 Zoebeli was already busy looking for a house to rent in Cattolica to add rooms to the facilities in Rimini. The extension in Cattolica was also under financial constraints; however, it managed to accommodate 35 children for 45 days from the Assistance Committee of the Italian Consulate in Paris (children of Italian immigrants)[14]; 30 children from the Italian Centre for Social Solidarity for 20 days; and 20 children from different parts of Italy for 45 days. They were joined by adults and children from the Naturfreunde Association, which donated 75,000 lire to set up a camp for its members in the park of Cattolica[15].

This represented a significant commitment that put a strain on the work of the few employees – the nursery school's staff initially numbered no more than 9 – but which encouraged the director to ensure that the summer or-

[12] T. Pironi, S. Salustri (eds.), *Oltre la scuola. Colonie per l'infanzia e esperienze educative in Italia (1945-1975)*, in «E-Review», 10 (2023) (https://e-review.it).

[13] AMZ, Atti e carteggi relativi al CEIS, b. 17/1, fasc. 6 *Mosaico marino estate 1952*, Sommertätigkeit 1949 des Giardino d'infanzia Italo-Svizzero, Rimini s.f., 9 December 1949.

[14] *Ivi*, Lettera del Console generale a Margherita Zoebeli, 24 October 1949.

[15] *Ivi*, Sommertätigkeit 1949 des Giardino d'infanzia Italo-Svizzero, Rimini s.f., 9 December 1949.

ganisation could also respond to the new educational goals as quickly as possible.

3. Life at the colony

To reconstruct life during the summer stays at the CEIS reference can be made to the numerous reports from the teaching staff, which prove to be an indispensable source for understanding the evolution of the organisation of the colonies.

In 1955, thanks to the report written by Giorgio Scabbia, one of those assisting in the organisation of the Rimini colony, we can gain an understanding of what the colony experience looked like a few years after its establishment. From its outward appearance, the Swiss colony reflected its educational and democratic objectives by placing the life of its young guests at the centre. They were divided into groups (each consisting of between 17 and 20 children) and were entrusted to a teacher, often aided by a helper, both of whom were able to give affection and assurance to the children by recreating the family environment, as it was often a man and a woman acting as father and mother. The children, on the other hand, were given the essential tasks of communal life: setting the table, making the beds, helping in the kitchen, distributing food, according to their aptitudes, with the aims of empowering them in their growth, creating community and enhancing the talents of individuals.

From an initial reading of the many copies of the timetable in the archive, it might seem that the daily organisation was very similar to that of the Fascist period, marked by defined and organised timetables, but the very fact that the timetable was specified to be adaptable to the weather, the seasons and the age of the children is indicative of the many significant differences between the Fascist period and the pedagogical model on which Zoebeli's Rimini holiday camps were based, with the young guest and his or her needs at the centre.

The daily routine was divided between beach activities, organised games and activities alone, which left much to the freedom of individuals because it was believed there was no need for constant adult supervision, unless it was the time for swimming or going in the sea. Gymnastics had the sole purpose of warming up one's body just as the sun did, as the children's time in the sun was limited. Meal organisation also reflected the democratic spirit of the colony: the caregivers ate and conversed with the children, and the younger ones, if they wished, could also eat outside under the trees in the garden. After lunch, the young guests were left to have an afternoon rest, without being obliged to sleep; depending on their age, they could spend

their time reading, an activity which – Scabbia emphasised – had to be improved by building a specific library, as the guests initially only had the children's magazines they received from home. From 4.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. – a time that was later extended to 6.30 p.m. – the children were called to join group activities (singing and dancing, sewing, theatre, sports games, etc.) and could move between the groups, each led by an assistant, to foster friendships and collaborations; everything was aimed at transforming the colony into a single community and at avoiding rivalries and isolation.

Of course, it was difficult – as Scabbia wrote – to take into account everyone's aptitudes, but it was necessary to work hard to do so, rethinking the groups and their activities according to the needs of individual groups in the colony. Much of the work, and therefore the success of the colonies, was in the hands of the staff, who needed to meet daily to discuss organisational and educational problems and to propose new activities with full freedom of choice for both teachers and guests.

It should also be pointed out that the children could share with others what they had learnt and achieved in the theatre, puppet and shadow puppet groups during the parties held during the week and at the big party organised for Sunday, where everyone was called upon to share something around a common theme[16]. The relationship with the outside world was constant, not only through the letters, sent home by the young guests without any censorship, but also through the increasing number of trips organised over the years to enrich the activities[17]. In the continuous relationship between the inside and outside, this openness contrasted with the closure imposed by the totalitarian regimes[18].

In order to better share achievements, an important novelty was also introduced from the 1955 August camp: the production of a self-published newspaper, which soon became an element of continuity over time. In the Zoebeli archive, there are in fact several copies of the colony magazine from the 1950s and 1960s. In it, several articles present the various activities accompanied by poems and illustrations created by the children to remind them

[16] *Ivi*, fasc. 1 *Relazioni ferienkolonie*, Considerazioni e riflessioni di un assistente sull'organizzazione e il funzionamento della Colonia estiva del Giardino d'infanzia italo-svizzero di Rimini a firma Giorgio Scabbia, 1955.

[17] *Ivi*, Relazione sull'attività svolta dalla colonia estiva istituita presso il Giardino d'infanzia italo-svizzero di Rimini durante l'estate 1955 s.f., 16 settembre 1955. As evidence of the freedom of children to communicate with their families, the report recalls that «parents [were] alarmed by letters from children in which several times inaccurate information was given about epidemic diseases».

[18] T. Pironi, *Educating to Beauty: the aesthetical value of child of infants' educative institutions in the Twentieth century's pedagogy*, in «Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica», 1 (2017), pp. 111-122.

of their time at the camp, but the magazine was obviously also useful for publicising the educational impact of the colony to families and anyone who came into contact with these mimeographed copies.

4. The many young guests

In 1955 the children from Canton Ticino were divided into three shifts: 79, 162 and 202 children per camp respectively, sent by the Chamber of Labour in Bellinzona; they were joined by 26 children from the Engadine (Swiss Alps), 34 from Austria, 81 from Molinella (children of labourers and workers through the Massarenti Cooperative and the Municipality), 4 from the Swiss school in Florence, and others at the request of individual families. Given the high numbers occupying the buildings, which were used for the holiday camps during the summer, the children over 12 were placed in a rented house near the sea. It was a matter of organising camps for young people of different ages from very different backgrounds, while often having to manage their accommodation in the same periods. The reports show that while the reception was easier for the children from Ticino because they were already familiar with the environment and the method adopted by the CEIS, having attended the Centre the previous year, the integration of the refugee group was more problematic because of the traumas suffered by the children during the war[19]. The numbers achieved undoubtedly demonstrate the success of the Rimini colony experiment, which after almost a decade had become well established, but above all they attest to the extensive network of relations woven by CEIS at an international level.

The following year, in 1956, the increasing numbers demanded further expansion: for the first time since the birth of the Italo-Swiss Children's Garden 10 years before, the colony welcomed children in Igea Marina hosted at the Pater Meus colony facilities. It was directed by Vittorio Vitale, a former CEIS staff member, who undertook to transfer the educational model applied in Rimini to the new site – the future Ticino trade unions colony – (Figs. 1-3). Almost 600 children (of whom 357 from Ticino, 31 from Germany, 31 from the Caritas charity in Bolzano and 179 from the Italian Red Cross) attended the colony in Igea and were in addition to the 358 hosted in Rimini, including 79 from Ticino and 15 from the Engadine[20].

[19] AMZ, Atti e carteggi relativi al CEIS, b. 17/1, fasc. 1 *Relazioni Ferienkolonie*, Relazione sull'attività svolta dalla colonia estiva istituita presso il Giardino d'infanzia italo-svizzero di Rimini durante l'estate 1955 s.f., 16 September 1955.

[20] *Ivi*, fasc. 3 *Colonie estive*, sfasc. *Colonie Rapporti e relazioni sulla colonia*, Brevi cenni sull'attività delle colonie marine nell'estate 1956 s.f., 4 March 1958. In the source

Divided into various shifts, from 1st June to 30th September 1956, the guests at the two holiday camps spent their summer under the vigilant supervision of the health and administrative authorities who, as the report dated 4th March 1958 states, could only express themselves «favourably on the active spirit that reigns […] in the colony, which has led to notable educational results». The hope was therefore that the Colonies Committee reporting to the Trade Unions would decide to buy the facilities in Igea Marina in order to continue and expand the summer activities[21].

The reputation of the CEIS colonies grew year by year and in the summer of 1957, with 195 beds per shift in Igea and 150 in Rimini, the excessive number of applications from some institutions compared to camp capacity seemed to be the main management problem, which affected the growing expenses and the need to redefine the daily fees charged to individual institutions[22]. In 1959, out of 1,035 children hosted in the two Italo-Swiss colonies in Lugano and Rimini, 488 were in Emilia-Romagna, where there were 10 management staff members (of which 3 oversaw both Rimini and Igea), 9 domestic staff, plus a lifeguard and a gardener, 19 teachers and 11 helpers in Rimini and 7 domestic staff, 21 teachers and 8 helpers, a lifeguard and an assistant lifeguard in Igea[23].

As the activities of the two colonies expanded, their management became increasingly demanding, also due to the increase in regulations regarding for example, permits for the management of premises or food handling; besides these, other problems concerned the facilities, which were increasingly insufficient to meet the growth in the number of requests for hospitality. From the early 1960s, the assistants' reports from the individual summer shifts, while emphasising the positive pedagogical aspects of the camps, complained about the inadequate amount of drinking water in the bathrooms, the refectories' lack of flexibility, or the limited space to manage the children on the beach[24].

The children's care was always the first priority. Not only the activities, the healthy air, but also the food, divided into five balanced meals, contributed to the success of the colonies. This is confirmed in a report by the doctor in charge for the first week of July 1960: Dr Idana Pescioli could only

the total number of guests reported for the colony of Igea is 557, less than the sum of the guests of the individual groups.

[21] *Ibidem*.

[22] *Ivi*, Relazione sull'attività dell'associazione italo-svizzera colonie marine nell'anno 1957 s.f., 4 March 1958.

[23] *Ivi*, Relazione sull'attività dell'associazione italo-svizzera colonie marine nell'estate 1959 s.f., s.d.

[24] See Relazioni, *ivi*, fasc. 4.

enthuse about the health of the guests due to the excellent facility management[25].

5. Staff training

A fundamental role in the activity of the colonies was played by the teachers. From the immediate post-war period Zoebeli was clear that the responsibility for the success of the colonies was linked to the didactic preparation of these "vigilitrici" or female supervisors[26] – this was the term used in the Fascist period and was still in place at the end of the 1940s[27] – therefore it was necessary to provide training for these professionals.

In the first years of the colony's life, as mentioned, the teachers working with the guests met daily to exchange ideas and to plan new activities for the children; over time their preparation became more structured and the CEIS invested throughout the year.

Already, in 1953 the CEMEA (Centri di Esercitazione Metodi di Educazione Attiva - Exercise Centres for Active Education Methods), which focused on training and refresher courses for teachers[28], offered a workshop to train colony teachers at the Italian-Swiss Educational Centre over 10 days, with the participation of over 60 people. The course, as Marcello Trentanove the CEMEA regional delegate at that time recalled, was offered again in 1959 with 50 participants[29], and became a fixed appointment among the

[25] *Ivi*, fasc. 1. *Relazioni Ferienkolonie*, Rapporto settimanale della vita in colonia 4-10 luglio 1960 a firma Idana Pescioli, s.d.

[26] *Ivi*, fasc. 5 *Le colonie di vacanza*, Manoscritto s.f., s.d.

[27] S. Salustri, *Le vigilatrici nelle colonie di vacanza fasciste e l'organizzazione della pedagogia fascista* (Воспитательницы в детских летних лагерях и организация педагогики фашизма, на ит. яз.), in G.B. Kornetov, D. Caroli (eds.), *Sapere storico e pedagogico all'inizio del terzo millennio: retrospettiva storico-pedagogica della teoria e della pratica della formazione contemporanea* (Историко-педагогическое знание в начале III тысячелетия: историко-педагогическая ретроспектива теории и практики современного образования), vol. 2. Ricerche di storia dell'educazione di autori europei, Mosca, ASOU, 2021, pp. 207-217.

[28] The first nucleus of CEMEA was founded in Florence in 1950 by Margherita Fasolo assisted by Ernesto Codignola. CEIS was soon considered the best place to host the many didactic and pedagogical initiatives of active education. For CEMEA, see: M. Clementi, *I Centri di esercitazione ai metodi dell'educazione attiva*, in «Riforma della scuola», 10 (1960), pp. 26-28.

[29] AMZ, Atti e carteggi relativi al CEIS, b. 17/1, fasc. 6 *Mosaico marino estate 1952*, Elenco degli stages effettuati dai CIMEA presso il centro educativo italo-svizzero dal 1953 al 1969 a firma Marcello Trentanove, s.d. e ivi, fasc. 3 *Colonie estive*, fasc. *Colonie*

many meetings organised at CEIS, and made an important contribution to the publication of a series of manuals dedicated to holiday camps[30].

The reports – which we cannot analyse in detail here – show how the courses were also created taking into consideration the requests of the teachers who learned how to manage the various phases of life at the holiday camp, mainly focusing on the child's needs when introducing new activities. The relationship, based on mutual understanding and cooperation, established between the teaching staff and the director served to create a serene environment in which the children would feel more comfortable. The course manuals were of fundamental interest for the camps, thanks to which the teachers and directors learned the importance of manual activities and the use of materials, as well as having lists of books on pedagogy and psychology to draw on for their training[31].

The continuous training for the teachers also served to resolve the problems of communal living, which arose from year to year, among the many guests and between the external group leaders who accompanied the guests and the teachers themselves[32]. In this regard, for example, there was the clash that took place in 1970 between the CEIS teachers and the leaders accompanying the group from Martigny, who were adults accustomed to using force and physical punishment on children, and reluctant to change their methods[33]. The commitment to training the teachers also made it possible to overcome critical problems in the organisation of the groups and in the management of the spaces and the many activities in facilities that in the 1960s and 1970s were hosting hundreds of children every week[34].

6. What remains of the experience of the CEIS colonies?

In the Zoebeli archive, one of the last reports on the colonies is dated 27th November 1972. The date is not surprising if we consider that the Seventies

Rapporti e relazioni sulla colonia, Relazione sull'attività dell'associazione italo-svizzera colonie marine nell'estate 1959 s.f., s.d.

[30] G. de Failly, *Il monitore-la monitrice*, traduzione di B. Libretti Baldeschi, Milano, CEMEA, 1963.

[31] AMZ, Atti e carteggi relativi al CEIS, b. 17/1, fasc. 4.

[32] See the various pages dedicated to the teachers in the report of the summer 1972: ivi, fasc. 4, Colonia Ticino Igea Marina estate 1972 Relazione finale sui due turni di colonia Rimini 27 November 1972, s.f.

[33] *Ivi,* fasc. 8, *Relazioni colonia 1968 Ticino Serena,* Colonia Primavera Igea Marina Rapporto finale sui due turni di colonia dell'estate 1970 Rimini 1 September 1970, s.f.

[34] *Ivi*, fasc. 7, *Colonia Croce Rossa 1969 Igea 1963*, Colonie dei sindacati Lugano - Colonie 1968 Estratti relazioni monitori colonie Ticino e Serena s.f.

marked the end of the colony model, which was affected by social changes and the development of mass tourism[35]. From the report it appears that the aims of the colony had not changed compared to those adopted initially: the recreational-therapeutic activities that were offered, as well as the democratization of the spaces, were now a fixed feature for Rimini and Igea Marina. The initial challenge accepted under the extreme conditions of the immediate post-war period by Margherita Zoebeli had certainly borne fruit. While on an architectural level the Igea Marina colony, located in viale Pinzon 237, must today share the sad fate of most buildings that were part of the history of colonies in Italy and especially in our Region[36], from a pedagogical point of view the colonial experience has left an important mark both on pedagogical experimentation and on the growth of the young guests. The thousands of young girls and boys and adolescents who stayed at the Rimini site and then at Igea Marina over a period of almost thirty years were able to enjoy an innovative approach that, by allowing them to measure themselves continuously against their peers and the adults, in a climate of psycho-physical well-being, positively influenced the development of their personalities and contributed to forming better citizens.

Translated by Simona Salustri
Revised by Janet Anne Duggan

[35] S. Pivato, *Andare per colonie estive*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2023.

[36] We discussed the topic at the international conference: *Towards new summers. Past, present and future of holiday camps for children in Europe*, Ravenna 15th and 16th September 2022.

Fig. 1 – Swiss Ticino colony, Igea-Marina, external view, 1959 (AMZ, CEI-0372).

Fig. 2 – Swiss Ticino Camp, Igea-Marina, beach games, 1955 (Photo Decio Camera, AMZ, CEI-0045_048).

Fig. 3 – Swiss Ticino colony, Igea-Marina, construction of a kite, 1955 (Photo Decio Camera, AMZ, CEI-0045_021).

PART THREE

The CEIS, past and present

Margherita Zoebeli, the Rimini CEIS and special pedagogy for an inclusive school

Roberta Caldin e Giovanni Sapucci

I am Giovanni Sapucci, former director of the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre, hereafter CEIS). In this speech, I am also speaking on behalf of Prof. Roberta Caldin. I've agreed upon the contents with her. I would like to begin with the words of Raffaele Laporta, a pedagogist and great friend of Margherita and the CEIS.

In his introduction to the book *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il CEIS* (Landscape with people. Margherita Zoebeli and the CEIS), Laporta wrote that Margherita Zoebeli's «educational experience was born not in the classroom but from the ruins of cities and countries at war, gathering refugees and groups of young people together to welcome them and provide them with a place to live together»[1].

This meant accommodating their traumas and helping them learn the normalcy of life, of culture. All this was possible by providing them, first of all, with food, hygiene, clothes and shoes, and shelter for sleeping living. Providing safety. Then from safety comes singing together, the ability to laugh and to draw, to recount their dreams for that day: in school as in life… a pedagogy that evolves with life, through the constant updating of the educational work at the CEIS and school.

«This was the effect of not enclosing her work in a method»[2]. According to Raffaele Laporta, this was Margherita Zoebeli's pedagogy.

A pedagogy that, in anticipating far in advance the most modern concepts of special pedagogy and inclusive education, is based on sound scientific knowledge and a willingness to act concretely on social realities.

[1] Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il Ceis. Documenti di una utopia*, Villa Verucchio (RN), La Pieve Poligrafica, 2007, 2nd ed., p. 11.

[2] *Ibidem*.

A pedagogy that views school as a place for an education that can change the world, where every child feels safe, thrives, and is actively involved in situations of intense social life in the classroom and school.

A school, that is, capable of:

– encouraging interpersonal exchange;
– arousing the pleasure of communicating and listening;
– facilitating and enhancing verbal and non-verbal modes of expression;
– welcoming and valuing the interests of every child;
– encouraging many real-life experiences inside and outside the school.

All this with the knowledge that a rich social life promotes well-being, with especially positive social, emotional, and cognitive spillovers and hence, spillovers on the quality of education interpreted as culture, knowledge, and know-how.

Margherita taught us that all this is possible if schools and communities know how to recognize the different inclinations and needs of children, uniting them with the needs they all share: to be together with others, to communicate, socialize, get excited, and learn.

This is the framework for how Margherita and all the CEIS's work focuses attention on children with disabilities. A reinforced (not special) attention to their social needs. A constant and continuous attention, so that those needs are always incorporated into the project of the entire class and entire school, as well as into the individualized educational project.

This means organizing the school environment by knowing how to carry out many different activities – in terms of content, type, and social and operational context – through a complex organization of schoolwork that may take on different forms: individual, large, and small groups; workshops; manual and expressive activities; and numerous free and organized games.

Situations that, in focusing attention on children with difficulties, allow "everyone" to experience many well-organized social, emotional, relational, and learning experiences.

Attention that extends to the inclinations and needs of every child in the class, creating an education that recognizes and promotes each one's differences.

This is how a climate of reciprocal exchange and recognition is created at the ECIS.

Enea Bernardi, another great friend of Margherita and one of the main architects of the City of Rimini's system of municipal pre-schools, stated that the CEIS created a climate and environment «that called every child, whatever their intellectual and learning potential, to participate in their own

process of mental, social and civil formation»[3], a formulation that already defined some key elements of what we now term one's "life plan".

In her first lecture at the University of Bologna – on the occasion of receiving an Honorary Degree – Margherita said:

> «A community of children and adults, in which each member is urged to make a concrete contribution to making coexistence work, abiding by the rules created together.
> A community in which opportunities for work and play are so rich and diversified as to guarantee frequent experiences of success and social esteem even for the weakest, who in this way build self-esteem they often didn't have before and reinforce it»[4].

The CEIS demonstrates a "collaborative" organizational model that can meet the individual and social needs of pupils… this applies to all pupils and, therefore, to those with "severe" disabilities as well. For many years, CEIS pupils with complex and severe disabilities have been completely integrated into ordinary classes, where all the assistance they require is implemented in a well-structured way based on the Individualized Educational Plans agreed upon with teams of local specialists. These efforts are carried out with classmates, producing a mutual recognition effect that is of great value for everyone.

Great efforts have been made and are being made to continuously train teachers and educators so that they are always able to perform at their best with pupils with severe disabilities and to organize and reorganize school environments and the structure of activities to ensure specialized responses to the condition and needs of these students.

For children with severe disabilities, inclusion in the class and its everyday routine ensures a rich network of meaningful relationships with classmates, teachers, and the school community. The specialized work implemented for them is thus much more valuable than if it were carried out in a separate environment, no matter how specialized.

An experience that has significantly encouraged the involvement of classmates and the construction of a realistic vision of the differences and, above all, the potential of each child, no matter their disability.

[3] M. Castiglioni et al. (eds.), *Una scuola una città. Il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1991, p. 74.

[4] *Intervento di Margherita Zoebeli in occasione del conferimento della Laurea honoris causa in pedagogia all'Università di Bologna*, in Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura*, cit., p. 57.

An experience that has brought out the desire of many children in the class to get to know their classmates who are apparently unable to actively communicate and act, ask teachers many questions, attempt a real reading of behaviours and try out many different forms of communication. An extremely valuable experience for everyone's growth.

In many cases, classmates are a great help to teachers, discovering signals and skills that the latter cannot always grasp and "see" effectively. Classmates are often particularly effective "interpreters" of the communication methods of their classmates who have serious communication difficulties.

Thus, an environment in which all children can experience practical experiences of "collaboration" and "contact" in spontaneous and organized situations such as – for example – different daily routines, workshops for manual and expressive activities (cooking, handling different materials, psychomotor activity, etc.), and in many other moments of life in the classroom and school. In Margaret's view, situations when the hint of a smile or body language signal a sense of belonging to the group.

The concrete experience of the CEIS, vouched for by many generations of Rimini children, tells us that the Village and its school are a place where everyone gladly enters each day, a place where everyone feels good and comfortable and is in the best conditions to offer their best self.

All parents, of both disabled and non-disabled children, highly rate the quality of the CEIS school, in terms of both social relations and academic achievement.

I am quite convinced that this is possible precisely because the CEIS was devised as an educational environment where pupils with the greatest difficulties are the centre of everyone's attention. Attention that has favoured an approach of recognizing individual differences that concern not only children with disabilities but all children.

The generalized differentiation of teaching is needed for all the children, substituting lectures with group work and many support activities for individuals and small groups.

Well-being is an important condition in and of itself.

In schools – as demonstrated by the experience of the CEIS and many other educational and school experiences (often little-known or forgotten) – well-being is a condition that decisively fosters quality learning in the school for all pupils/students and not just those with disabilities.

A condition that enables the best development of the cognitive, social, and emotional potentials of each one.

Children who enjoy well-being are certainly far more willing to do their best to meet the demands of academics and life in the school community, which sometimes appears to be very difficult and demanding stumbling blocks.

The relationship between well-being and learning leads me to express some thoughts on the issue of "merit", as many (Luca Ricolfi, Paola Mastrocola, Ernesto Galli della Loggia, Angelo Panebianco, among others) have taken it upon themselves to defend the new government's decision to insert the term "merit" in the name of the ministry.

In his most recent book Christian Raimo[5] states that many have spoken out in defence of "merit", focusing in particular on the defence of individual merit. The scholar argues – rightly so, in my opinion – that this rationale corresponds to a classist perspective that serves to widen inequalities and leave the most vulnerable behind.

I found this reference in a 5 November 2022 article by Marco Balzano in Corriere della Sera, entitled *Ridateci un po' di pedagogia. Da Gianni Rodari alla svizzera Zoebeli: l'identità che la scuola deve ritrovare* (From Gianni Rodari to the Swiss Zoebeli: the identity that schools must rediscover). In this article, Balzano presents Raimo's book and highlights the need to recover the history of our schools to capture the extraordinary contribution of such individuals as Margherita Zoebeli, Mirella Casale, Mario Lodi, Gianni Rodari, Tullio De Mauro, and many others.

The CEIS is an educational community that welcomes all children while considering all their dimensions: cognitive, social, emotional, and relational. A community whose main objective is to draw out and nurture the merits of every pupil.

To do this, the school carries out continuous, tactful and at times difficult work to get to know each child and identify their different characteristics: character, interests, skills, difficulties, inclinations, and every other aspect that characterizes them.

A path pursued through constant daily action, creating educational and relational situations in which every child can:

– *freely express their thoughts* through multiple languages, verbal and non-verbal;
– *have the opportunity to experiment* in many situations and experiences;
– *engage with learning paths based on practical experience*;
– *discover and manifest their interests* as elements that teachers account for when designing an educational pathway for the students.
– *develop their learning based on what they already know*. Margherita always focused on this aspect, highlighting an educational principle that emerged from her experience working with children with the greatest difficulties, yet which holds for all children: to develop new knowledge

[5] C. Raimo, *L'ultima ora. Scuola, democrazia, utopia*, Milano, Adriano Salani Editore, 2022.

and skills, one must begin with the strengths of each child, from what they are already able to do, in an environment that does not focus on competition to draw out the "best". On the contrary, she sought every day to ensure that children could work together, an indispensable condition for revealing the POTENTIAL AND SPECIAL MERITS OF EACH ONE; thus interpreting in a particularly meaningful way Article 34 of our constitution;

– *live in an academic environment that is looked after and consciously employed* by teachers as a tool for indirect education and training. Since the first design of the Village, Margherita dedicated careful attention to the quality of all school premises, considering them tools for an indirect education that provides important stimuli for the education and development of children;
– *be engaged in a general educational project* based on a foundation of deep-rooted democratic values, reinterpreted in light of continuous social, cultural, and economic changes, and especially focused on the condition of childhood;
– *live in an academic environment that can help and support them* in difficult situations.

In a community like this, teachers and educators obviously hold a very important position.

At the CEIS, teachers and educators are required to cooperate with the group and for the group. This does not mean that their professional and personal individuality is overshadowed in any way; on the contrary, their individuality is valued precisely by being able and having to work and cooperate with a group.

In this regard, Margaret stated that «if a teacher cannot collaborate with their colleagues, how can they teach children to cooperate in the classroom and at school?»

Margherita was convinced of the need for teachers to overcome the "individualist" vision of traditional schooling – with reference to Célestin Freinet and the Movement of Cooperative Education (MCE) – from the Village's earliest days. She continuously fostered a cooperative culture of teaching, continuing education and the work of teachers' groups as decisive conditions for individual and collective professional growth.

The "freedom to teach" of each teacher is fully expressed within a group that cooperates to forge a shared and co-constructed general education project.

Working in a group with continuous discussions and teamwork enables teachers to act as a unified entity. As with each child, each teacher is recog-

nized and valued for their skills and inclinations, allowing them to provide an original contribution to the group's cohesive action and richness.

This approach to organizing educational work has been progressively refined over time.

A process that – with the decisive and expert contribution of then-rector Gianfranco Iacobucci – has accelerated sharply since the 1970s to expand and reinforce the teaching group, unifying parallel classes and considering special needs teachers and educators assigned to children with disabilities in the two parallel classes as an integral part of the group, in addition to the subject matter instructors.

Margaret argued that implementation of the educational project of pupils with disabilities must not be delegated to the special needs teacher alone, as this only apparently removes the obstacles to integration.

The educational project of individual pupils must be incorporated into that of the whole class, as children with "handicaps" – as they were known in Margherita Zoebeli's time – are members of the school community.

From an organizational point of view, for some time every class at the CEIS has been assigned to a large group of teachers and educators from the two parallel classes. This group operates as a team to govern, through meticulous and flexible management, all aspects of class life.

The continuous adjustments and revisions necessary to welcome and nurture children's emerging interests might evoke a confusing situation, but it's not. Teachers and educators devote great care, through many team meetings, to ensure that organizational changes and adjustments always aid the effectiveness of their work. The children, as well as (naturally) every teacher and educator, are aware of these coordinated efforts so that everyone has the necessary reference points for their own contribution.

The CEIS's educational environment requires teachers and educators who are motivated and do their best to acquire and enact high-level pedagogical, methodological and instructional skills, obtainable from specialized basic education and equally specialized continuing education.

Qualifications that can best be expressed when they are applied to a project like the CEIS, in which everyone – child and adult – is valued for their skills, merit, and potential.

A project based on values, principles and methodologies that come from afar and which, since the birth of the CEIS, have been the safest and most authoritative basis for courageously addressing the challenges of the future.

Challenges that, up to now, have been faced with the necessary clarity, without fear and with awareness of the risks to be undertaken that each challenge entails.

I am certain that the CEIS will be able to continue to do so with the active commitment of all its professionals and administrators, who will have to be

very careful to avoid every deviation into uncritical and nostalgic perpetuation of an important, yet distant, past.

A past strongly characterized by Margherita's work, which the CEIS has been able to propagate through the work of all those who have succeeded her in the last 40 years, utilizing and reinterpreting – with the aid of new studies, research, and experiences – the original values and many intuitions of the first 30-35 years to face ever-new educational challenges posed by the continuous evolution of society: thus keeping intact the modernity and innovation of the CEIS's experience.

Indeed, the CEIS is a truly modern project even today, to which the scholars, institutions, and schools of our city and our country should dedicate the attention it deserves.

The CEIS continues to be a concrete example of an effective and truly "inclusive for all" educational organization. An example not easily transferable in its totality, but it could certainly provide precious inspiration for the indispensable reform and modernization of Italian schools.

Translated by Carrie Huffaker

Narrative horizons at the CEIS in Rimini: a long history of books, stories, active teaching and young authors

William Grandi

1. Finding a treasure map in the archives: the 1947 list of CEIS books

This contribution offers only a partial presentation of a broader topic, and here we investigate just a few of the potential elements of the very complex issue of the relationship between children's literature and the educational model fostered by Margherita Zoebeli. Here, priority has been given to "seminal" factors, in the sense that these points can lead to broader and more in-depth research in future.

It should be noted that the historical and pedagogic research methodology adopted is linked to narrative analysis, according to Antonio Faeti's hermeneutic lesson: this investigative approach invites us to cross-reference archive documents and historical sources with children's narrative texts in order to identify a framework of significant pedagogic meanings.

The first element on which we should focus our attention is the presence of children's literature at the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre, CEIS) right from the outset, as demonstrated by a precious archive document of the Italian-Swiss Centre dated 1947, just after its foundation[1].

On the other hand, the second element to be tackled concerns the stories and fables produced directly by teachers and children at the CEIS, later published in pamphlets and small volumes. In this case, the topics, pathways and origins of a special teaching method for narrative texts and stories for children are described.

The two focuses of this contribution therefore concern both the origins of the CEIS and its past and present educational pathways.

[1] In this regard, I would like to thank my colleague Dorena Caroli, who generously indicated the above-mentioned documentation, thus facilitating my investigation of its contents.

We will start from the first part of this research, the eight-page CEIS list of children's books, contained in a specific folder in the Margherita Zoebeli Archive[2]. This list, entitled «Books for children and adolescents» is given in a precious, ordered and meticulous type-written report. The book titles are grouped into six categories: the first five correspond to the related primary school classes, while the last has the generic title of "Adolescence". Each group lists the related books in alphabetical order according to the surname of the author, in line with the conventional bibliographical system. The list for year-1 primary classes has 18 books, year-2 has 26, year-3 50 books, year-4 42, year-5 64 and, finally, there is a list of 60 books for adolescent readers, a total of exactly 260 books. Considering the state of the city of Rimini after the terrible Second World War bombings, the number of books the CEIS put at the disposal of children can be deemed impressive.

Browsing through the list, it is clear that most books are by national authors, although there is a considerable and significant presence of foreign classic writers, including Jules Verne and Mark Twain.

The list does not give the year of publication of the books, merely their author, title and publisher. To generically understand the period in which these books were published, we therefore have to use bibliographical research methods. First of all, it should be noted that many of the books were published by Marzocco, along with the famous UTET children's series "La scala d'oro" (The Golden Staircase) and the Paravia collection "I bei libri" (Nice Books). Precisely in this regard, therefore, it is worth giving some other publishing data which can more accurately date the CEIS book collection. First of all, the Marzocco publishers rose from the ashes of Bemporad (which had to change its company organisation following the Italian racial laws of 1938) and this dates a significant number of the books published just before the start of World War II. The "La scala d'oro" books were published from the start of the collection itself, in 1932, and many of them were reprinted in the early Forties. Similarly, the books in the Paravia "I bei libri" series were also reprinted in the early Forties. Based on this evidence, we can reasonably state that a significant part of the CEIS book collection was fairly recent in those years, and therefore, quite modern for the times. Furthermore, the presence of many Marzocco, Utet and Paravia editions (as well as some from Mondadori, Vallecchi and SEI) allow us to understand the very high quality of the printing, graphics and contents of these books. At the time, these publishers were among the best in the children's narrative sector; the price of the Utet "La scala d'oro" and Paravia "I bei libri" book collections were not for every pocket, as the quality of the paper, the illus-

[2] *Libri per l'infanzia e per l'adolescenza*, 1947, book catalogue (unknown recipient), in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis*, AMZ, file 18.

trations and even the book binding, with rigid covers, were obviously intended for a wealthy clientèle. In fact, these collections were for upper class children, as Antonio Faeti remarks, for example, in relation to "La scala d'oro"[3]. The idea that these lovely books – lovely still today, according to our modern criteria – could finally also reach a broader audience of children through small school libraries is something that touches deep pedagogic chords, especially if we think of the widespread poverty in Rimini after the war.

This thus pushes our hypothesis to bolder fields, trying to understand the provenance of these books. It is difficult – though not impossible – to image the books being purchased, but it is more likely that they were donated or recovered from private or public collections that were perhaps lost or dispersed as a result of the war. This theory may be supported by the fact that, out of the 260 books, at least 13 (5% of the total) have no indication of the publisher, as if they had no cover, and so this was assumed merely from the contents of the surviving pages. The lack of an indication of the publisher cannot be due merely to an oversight of the person drafting the list; as we have said, the list was drafted meticulously and always precisely indicates the name of the publisher. If a book has been printed by more than one publisher, this information is given faithfully in the list. The fact that several books have no indication of the publisher makes us think of recovered copies, with incomplete layouts and no bindings. And this is quite understandable: in emergency situations – and Rimini was in just that in 1947 – even partial or slightly damaged books could easily have been accepted for the school shelves in order to offer children interesting books to read. But the matter in any case deserves further investigation.

Now let's take a look at the quality of the narrative choices for each age group. The books proposed to year-1 children are mostly poetry collections or short stories and fairy tales. The most represented authors are Milly Dandolo – stories – and Lina Schwarz – poetry, with three books each. But other important children's authors of the time were also well represented on the shelves, including Maria Tibaldi Chiesa and Gherardo Ugolini (along with a classic like La Fontaine). One thing is striking: as children's literature scholars well know, the "La scala d'oro" collection meticulously indicated the target age of each publication in the series. Curiously, the person who drafted this catalogue didn't always follow the publishers' suggestions: *Piccoli racconti* by Milly Dandolo and *Le storie meravigliose* by Mary Tibaldi Chiesa were recommended by the curators of the collection for seven-year-

[3] A. Faeti, *L'oasi nel salotto, iconografia e industria culturale negli anni Trenta*, in R. Barilli (ed.), *Gli Anni Trenta. Arte e cultura in Italia*, Milano, Mazzotta, 1982, pp. 435-440.

olds, while in this list the two books are intended for year-1 children, so younger. What could have pushed them to make a different choice to the publisher's recommendation? It was probably due to a lack of specific books for the six-year age group. After all, these books were not impossible for a child who has just begun to read to use, perhaps accompanied by an adult. This divergence, perhaps due to the lack of available texts, is also confirmed by the fact that the two books mentioned are also in the list for year-2 readers.

With regard to the list of books for year-2, it should be noted that these also include *Pinocchio* by Collodi, a few books of poems set in nature by the writer and translator Rosa Fumagalli and a couple of books by the canon Christoph von Schmid, offering a selection of his short stories written specifically for schools. This is particularly interesting, as the Bavarian priest was a key figure across Europe for much of the 19th century with his books for primary school readers. With specific pedagogic intentions, von Schmid[4] had structured his own narrative genre for children based on encouraging, curious and therefore stimulating short stories with an explicit ethical and educational lesson or moral at the end. Incidentally, the Bavarian canon's literary and educational action was clearly influenced by the pedagogic thought of Pestalozzi. While today von Schmid has been – perhaps too superficially and hastily – forgotten, it should be noted that his works were commonly featured in school reading lists at least up to the 1950s. It is equally important to note that – as explained – von Schmid was in many aspects one of the most important authors of short stories for schools. His stories were renowned for their lightning-fast plots and often disconcerting, yet educational, conclusions; the origins of this children's genre lie in Enlightenment, with some even older roots, but this narrative form has in any case undergone significant changes over time, as far as Gianni Rodari's *Telephone Tales*. But we also find traces of this touching and concise narrative form in the children's literature productions of the CEIS in recent years, bearing witness to the interesting continuity between educational practices and the history of children's narrative genres.

Returning to our typed lists, we see that year-3 pupils are offered many of the great classics, including Andersen's fairy tales, novels by Maeterlinck and Vamba, as well as the fables of Capuana, Paola Lombroso Carrara, the Brothers Grimm, Perrault and Gozzano. Without however forgetting that the list also contained a mythological adaptation for children of Hawthorne, Ki-

[4] W. Grandi, *Prima dei Grimm, per madri e per bambini. Il romanzo "Genoveffa di Brabante" (1810) del canonico Christoph von Schmid (1768-1854) tra fiaba, leggenda, scuola e letteratura per l'infanzia*, in «Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche», 27 (2020), pp. 208-222.

pling's animal stories and, once again, another book by von Schmid. All in all, a selection composed mainly of fantastic stories and fairy tales by famous and important authors.

The list for year-4 pupils includes a few popular science books such as those by Pierina Boranga[5], an authentic pioneer of this genre at the time, and *Ciondolino* [*The Prince and his Ants*] by Vamba. Also in this case, there are other great classics, including Alcott's *Little Women*, Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and De Amicis's *Cuore* [*Heart*][6]. There are also several collections of fairy tales, including some from foreign (Finnish, Russian and Indian) traditions. Elements of fantasy still prevail, but realistic and popular readings also begin to be proposed.

The collection of books for year-5 pupils includes interesting adaptations of mythology for children, by authors including Laura Cantoni Orvieto, Giannino Marescalchi and Olga Visentini. This was probably to comply with a tradition that was very common in Italian schools from 1923 (the year of the Gentile school reform) and supported by the pedagogue Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, who thought it necessary to offer children Greek and Roman myths in primary school with a view to the potential access by some of these pupils to the grammar schools[7]. The list also includes a limited yet important collection of popular science books. But for the last year of primary school, the list also has a significant number of classic children's literature books, including *The Paul Street Boys* by Molnar, *Misunderstood* by Montgomery, *Captains Courageous* by Kipling, *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* by Lagerlof, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Twain and many others besides. This presence of classics seems to mark a moment of passage: the child-reader is no longer merely the recipient of light, curious, entertaining or educational stories but – on the threshold of adolescence – also becomes the recipient of complex plots, engagingly emotional twists and narrative viewpoints that are not always comforting.

Again, to confirm this, the list for adolescent readers has many interesting classic titles, including the novels by Dickens, London, Stevenson, Malot, Kipling, Vamba and Verne. There is also a significant presence of popular science and technical books, including *Il bel paese* (*The Beautiful Country*)

[5] L. Todaro, *Bambini e natura nella pedagogia italiana del Novecento: l'opera innovatrice di Pierina Boranga*, in «Pedagogia Oggi», 1 (2018), pp. 229-245.

[6] For a critical, historical and narrative framework of these classics of children's literature and others discussed here – also in relation to their pedagogic and educational impacts – see A. Nobile, *Letteratura giovanile. Da Pinocchio e Peppa Pig*, Brescia, Editrice La Scuola, 2015.

[7] G. Lombardo Radice, *Accanto ai maestri. Nuovi saggi di propaganda pedagogica*, Torino, Paravia, 1925, pp. 233-234.

by the priest and scientist Antonio Stoppani, and yet another book by von Schmid. Poetry is almost entirely absent. Finally, it is curious to note, but only up to a point, the presence of classics of Unification of Italy literature including *Ettore Fieramosca* by D'Azeglio and *Da Quarto al Volturno* (*From Quarto to Volturno*) by Giuseppe Cesare Abba: the tragedy of the second world war had not deleted a certain tradition of Italian history and civil education, recovered after the war, with the intention of opposing the fanatic chauvinism of fascism with the popular and liberal patriotism of the democratic Unification.

The choices made in drafting this list of books, grouped together by school years, respond to quite common criteria for the time, such as the inclusion of poems and fairy tales especially for early readers. The impression we have when scrolling through these sheets is the desire to offer stories that are compatible not only with the children's age but also their educational and aesthetic needs: a pedagogic lean to reading that bore witness to the significant educational commitment that still today marks the CEIS's work.

2. Active education and narrative creation

Now we come to the second point in this investigation, which is to analyse the narrative products designed and produced by the teachers and children at the CEIS. This is an initial reconnaissance of a field that promises to be very interesting and extensive. The basis for this analysis is a body of texts composed by: *Michka. Una fiaba di Natale* (*Michka. A Christmas Fairytale*)[8], freely adapted by the year-3 pupils at the CEIS in 1985; *Il leone e il topo* (*The Lion and the Mouse*) written by Dalila Iacobucci (teacher at the CEIS) in 1999, as a leitmotiv for the year-1 activities, then illustrated by the pupils; *Il vecchio pioppo* (*The old Poplar*) written by Francesco Franco and illustrated by Maria Laura Zanzani (both teachers at the CEIS) for year-1 pupils in school year 2001/02; *Margherita. Una storia da raccontare* (*Margherita. A Story to Tell*) written by teachers and children at the CEIS (and illustrated by the children) in school year 2015/16; finally, *Rimi,* from an English text translated into Italian by teachers and collaborators of the CEIS in 2020 and illustrated by the children at the centre.

These are light books, designed autonomously and printed by small local printers, specifically for a child audience: they are therefore characterised by visual and typographic details suited to this kind of use, including, for

[8] Children from year-3, CEIS, *Michka. Una fiaba di Natale*, Rimini, Maggioli Editore, 1986. It is noted that the book is accompanied by an interesting preface by Flavio Nicolini.

example, large pictures, large, well-defined fonts, short, clear texts, colours and images taken explicitly from children's drawings. It is worth underlining that the genesis – or at least the underlying inspiration – of most of these texts and contents can clearly be traced back to an active and collaborative narrative production based on the model of Freinet, who had demonstrated the limits of textbooks imposed from above, instead opting for the self-production of stories and contents, also using school printing tools for printing them in class for this purpose. The creation and re-working of stories in a collaborative, non-competitive setting, through a "hands-on" approach to the construction not only of the story and related illustrations, but also the actual page layout, paint a picture of the teaching of the approach to children's literature (often actively created by the children themselves) that falls fully within the active teaching and group work climate of Freinet's pedagogy. These CEIS books also appear to always come (in their apparently naïve yet concrete and well-studied form) from group works, collaborative activities in the classroom, where the individual – whether teacher or pupil – does not emerge as such but only in as much as connected to the work of colleagues and classmates in a joint creative act that allows the child to be educated in a spirit of peace and tolerance[9]. Not by chance, Freinet was one of the leading pedagogic lights ministering the CEIS experience from the outset.

In purely literary terms, most of these stories fall in a specific field which has always been very close to the child's imagination, that of the narrative universe of the moral parable derived from fairy tales. In fact, the protagonists of these stories relate to the world of ancient fables and fairy tales, but are not merely relics of the past; the characters created by the children and teachers at the CEIS are interwoven with emotions and intentions that do not fade into manneristic sentimentalism, in a narrative cliché of yesteryear or an astounded yet detached adventure, but instead acquire, throughout the stories, a different, updated, participatory consistency, in line with the imaginative – and often ethical – urgencies of these young, contemporary narrators. And thus, the many animals and plants starring in these stories revised by the CEIS, as well as the children and the toys, the divergent adults and surprising objects crossing and animating these pages of self-produced narrations, have new profiles, able to satisfy the imagination of a child thirsty for goodness, justice and peace. To the disenchanted and perhaps cynical adult gaze, the simple search for love, happiness and generosity that animate these stories may seem naive: but the CEIS children's books are not made

[9] C. De Maria, *Introduzione. Per una biografia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012, p. 9.

to confirm prejudices, rather to break through the scepticism and let in a ray of sunshine, spring and utopian energy.

These narrations tell of the "untimely", and pedagogically speaking this category (the "untimely")[10] leads to all those necessary and very profound acts that can counter the wear of time: and thus, for example, dominating egoism is juxtaposed with the total altruism of the little bear Michka, who in a fairy tale by the children at the CEIS renounces his new-found freedom and returns to being a simple stuffed toy for a poor child to play with.

Similarly, general ingratitude is juxtaposed with the courage of Pasticchia the mouse, who in an explicitly Aesopian fable saves the lion Maone from an attacking gladiator, because years earlier the lion had freed the young mouse. Or again, the contemporary forgetfulness that burns every memory on the altar of ephemeral novelty is juxtaposed with the old poplar tree that stars in another CEIS story: a story in which precisely that tree – which once really existed – reminds of the birth of the Italian-Swiss centre in which it was planted in 1945; and that poplar reminds of the happy cries of both the first children and the more recent pupils; and again, the poplar reminds us of the passing seasons and the cycles of the sun and the moon, up until, with serene calmness, it reminds of the moment in which – sick – it was cut down, only its trunk remaining for the children to embrace and play on. Nothing gets wasted at the CEIS.

These written works of the CEIS also become documentation and testimonial, sharing and dialogue: this is the case of *Margherita. Una storia da raccontare*, the result of the historical reconstruction by teachers and children with a view to caring for the present while recognising the past, embodied by the will, devotion and commitment of Margherita Zoebeli. The book is a charming and accurate mosaic of fragments of the history of the CEIS and its founder: from the tough beginnings to present and future educational horizons. These are fragments of history and of stories that are offered by former teachers and pupils of the CEIS, in an inter-generational dialogue with the new teachers and pupils, seeking to reconstruct an educational path that has challenged time and continues to remain a model today. The crumbs of memory and facts match perfectly, like an ideal mosaic in which, with simple words designed for children and often written by children, we breathe the history of an adventure that, even before pedagogic, is human. It is perhaps not by chance that the children's drawings accompanying many of the texts were produced using the pointillism technique that creates a complex image from many coloured frag-

[10] G.M. Bertin, *Nietzsche. L'inattuale, idea pedagogica* (*Nietzsche. The Untimely, a pedagogical Idea*), Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1977, p. 2.

ments placed alongside each other, charming mosaics composed by the children's hands.

And finally, the both happy and touching story of *Rimi*, the puppet made for the children at the CEIS, but which ended up among the children of a school in Philadelphia, deserves a mention. The story, written by the US children's author Daisy Newman (1905-1994), a Quaker, tells of the adventures of the puppet Rimi (like Rimini) who, after having enjoyed the laughter and attention of the children at the CEIS, was sent overseas as a gift for the Friends' Center School (a Quaker primary school) where some American children, who had been very generous with their Italian peers, were studying. *Rimi* is a modern Pinocchio, less of a mischief-maker but equally enterprising, able to demonstrate universal brotherhood among children who share the same desires for peace, joy and affection. The book shows the English text alongside the Italian adaptation with large, coloured and tidy print, suited for use by children. The words are accompanied by the drawings of the children from the CEIS (from nursery to primary school) who lightly and precisely interpret the different parts of the story. The artisanal graphic layout is easy and pleasantly off-scale, just as happens in the pupils' writing books. We can also see the encounter of narration and creativity, educational presence and children's spontaneity, in this book.

This "artisanal" narrative production, born among the wooden houses of Margherita's school in Rimini, carries our minds to other similar innovative experiences of children's writing in our country. First of all, we need think only of the notebooks of the school in San Gersolé, Tuscany, run by the teacher Maria Maltoni (1890-1964) and, secondly, also the stories produced in the school in Vho, Lombardy, by the teacher Mario Lodi (1922-2014)[11].

The ideal line joining Maltoni, Lodi and Zoebeli is clearly visible in this pedagogic activism – bound to a perspective of radical renewal in the way of "doing school" – in which the self-production of texts by the pupils is one of its most interesting expressions. On one hand, Maltoni's experience can be considered one of the ideal sources of educational experimentation immediately after the war in the nearby Pestalozzi city-school in Florence (not by chance, this school shares similar educational horizons to those of the CEIS). On the other, Lodi's work in the school in Vho is profoundly linked to the work of the MCE (Educational Cooperation Movement), whose educational offerings have represented and still today continue to represent one of the operational sources of the educational structure founded by Margherita Zoebeli. Both the notebooks in San Gersolè and the books in Vho were published by the prestigious Turin-based publisher Einaudi: there was even an anthology of Maria Maltoni's pupils' notebooks that had the privilege of

[11] M. Lodi e i suoi alunni, *Cipì*, Turin, Einaudi, 1972.

being prefaced by Italo Calvino[12]. Such an important publishing house underlines the interest that not only the school context but more generally the Italian intellectual world paid to this new way of creating books, stories, texts and contents for children, with children and starting from children.

The interesting thing is that this precious education tradition has not been lost. Indeed, these vital methods of connecting children's creativity with narration are still used at the CEIS today. As we have seen browsing the texts of the school in Rimini – but equally easy to understand by reading the books produced in the classrooms in San Gersolè and Vho, – the teacher is not a passive spectator of what the children produce, nor the unseen director of these stories. Adults are rather the connectors of thoughts, those who collect the stories triggered through questions, dialogues, curious facts, gazes, fragments of meanings and memories and feed them back to the groups of children. This is a two-way project between teachers and pupils, a work that seeks its meaning starting from the concrete life of childhood. These simple, original and yet so surprising narrative projects reveal an every-day life made of close observations, imagination, play and, at times, even drama. Emerging from those stories is an image of childhood that is far from superficial and banal: the childhood in the schools of Maltoni, Zoebeli and Lodi is thoughtful, attentive to detail, capable of wonder and the discovery of great knowledge in small things. We can say with some degree of certainty that in the CEIS's short stories – as well as those from San Gersolè, Vho and all the other many Italian schools that have adopted these methods – there is a little of the childhood heart: this is an "Aristotelian" heart, made not only of emotions and sentiment but, as the ancient philosopher stated, composed also of intelligence and soul. Reading these little stories, we discover the tensions, curiosities and reasons that amaze children and which their teachers are able to gather with respectful attention.

This short journey among the children's books of the CEIS offers new possibilities for research: it would in fact be useful to verify – investigating the decades of life of this school – which elements of continuity and discontinuity marked the relationship between educational design and children's narration. That is to say, it would be necessary to survey the bookshelves that the children of the Centre have had at their disposal, and created themselves, during almost eighty years of activity. This mix of children's books and self-produced narration is also worth investigating to see how the former influenced the latter and, obviously, how the latter determined any criteria for selecting the former. The CEIS has shown a strong awareness of its own educational pathways, and this must inevitably have impacted its choice of

[12] I. Calvino, *Prefazione*, in M. Maltoni (ed.), *I quaderni di San Gersolé*, Turin, Einaudi, 1959, pp. 5-8.

children's literature. This research hypothesis deserves to be investigated further, as the work done in this school represents a very precious pedagogic experience also for other schools. Understanding how the approach to children's books and stories has matured in Rimini can help to better design the related educational action elsewhere.

To conclude, it is clear that the CEIS is also a place of tales, stories and narrations, a place of plots and books to be discovered. But above all, it is a place where the narrated stories are created and unfold in the children's hands, for an education that looks to a better tomorrow.

Translated by Julie Woody

Music education at the CEIS. Methods and practices from a survey in Margherita Zoebeli Archive[1]

Anna Rita Addessi

Introduction

This chapter will present an overview of the documents consulted in the Margherita Zoebeli Archive (AMZ) concerning the musical activities carried out at the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre, CEIS) since its foundation (1946) until 1995, one year before the death of Margherita Zoebeli. Then it will focus on the writings of Margherita Zoebeli regarding music and music education, and a particular attention will be devoted to the manuscript *Riflessioni sull'educazione musicale nella scuola elementare* (Reflections on music education in primary school), which is shown in Figures 4-7 and translated in English in Appendix 2[2].

Margherita Zoebeli's interest in music and music education is well known. In an interview with Raffaele Laporta in 1991, Margherita Zoebeli declared that «even the course of music education that I followed at university was so fruitful and interesting that I was able to share this passion with many others and transmit it into the course of my entire life»[3]. Furthermore, it was possible to find direct testimonies of people who worked with her. For example, in 1976, a chapter written by the CEIS of Rimini, published in the book edited by Gian Luigi Zucchini[4], describes the activities of rhythmics

[1] I would like to thank Dr. Mara Sorrentino, for her assistance in the AMZ and Maestro Romeo Selvatici for having given an interview with great kindness.

[2] This is the first publication of a text by Margherita Zoebeli regarding music education, and I'm grateful to the Margherita Zoebeli Foundation for their kind concession.

[3] *Colloqui tra Margherita Zoebeli e Raffaele Laporta*, in M. Castiglioni (ed.), *Una scuola, una città: il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1991 (available at the following link: https://www.educareallaliberta.org/una-scuola-unacitta-marsilio-colloquio-tra-margherita-zoebeli-e-raffaele-laporta/, last accessed 15/05/2024).

[4] CEIS-Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini, *L'insegnamento della ritmica nella scuola materna ed elementare*, in G. L. Zucchini (ed.), *Animazione musicale e disadattamento* (Musical animation and maladjustment), Rimini-Firenze, Guaraldi, 1976, pp. 125-131.

carried out at the CEIS in the kindergarten[5] and primary schools and, above all, the music therapy activities. A few years later, Grazia Honegger Fresco wrote: «Margherita knew how to play the violin and was invited every year to the Village of Trogen in Switzerland by the very fine musician and educator Maestro Klug. From Zurich, she also brought in the students of Mimi Scheiblauer, the great pupil of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze who knew how to spark interest through music even in the dullest children […]. There, the children played music and sang with the same confidence with which they painted or played»[6]. A few years ago, Andrea Canevaro, interviewed by Enrico Bottero, stressed the importance that music and music education had for Margherita Zoebeli[7]. Finally, in an interview I conducted in October 2022, the current music teacher at the CEIS, Romeo Selvatici, extensively confirmed, with biographical details, the passion and, at the same time, the thoughtful choices and targeted education pursued over the years, and in particular, in the last years of her life, by Margherita Zoebeli for music education[8].

However, to date, there is no systematic study regarding Margherita Zoebeli, music and music education at the CEIS. The investigation which I conducted in the Archive has allowed us to lay the foundation for a systematic and documented study on Margherita Zoebeli, music and music education, and outline a more complete vision of music education at the CEIS, from a historical perspective.

1. The documents consulted in the Margherita Zoebeli Archive (AMZ)

The materials presented herein were consulted between October and November 2022, and concern a time span starting from 1946 which, let us remember, is the year the CEIS was founded, to 1995, one year before the

[5] In Italy, the term "scuola materna" indicates the pre-school organisation aimed at children 3-5 years old. In the UK, the term "nursery" indicates the pre-school organisation for 2-4-year-old children, and kindergarten the pre-school organisation for 5-year-old children. For this reason, both terms were used to translate "scuola materna" into English: nursery/kindergarten.

[6] G. Honegger Fresco, *La formazione di educatori e insegnanti*, in C. De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012, p. 116.

[7] *Margherita Zoebeli: educazione e impegno umanitario. Enrico Bottero ne parla con Andrea Canevaro*, 7 December 2020, on the Gessetti Colorati Youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo35k2L8kzg, last accessed 05/15/2024.

[8] Interview carried out on 11 November 2022, in Rimini, on the CEI premises.

death of Margherita Zoebeli. The documents consulted are contained in the following folders[9]:

– "Busta 26" (envelope 26) and "Busta 28" (envelope 28): the envelopes contain many handwritten and typewritten paper documents, or printed documents relating to music and music education. It is the largest part of the consultation;
– "Busta 18" (envelope 18): some documents regarding music;
– *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario. Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero*, ciclostilato ds. (Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory. Italian-Swiss Educational Centre, typewritten cyclostyled version), 1995, pp. 90, in BGR;
– Correspondence with Ernst Klug.

1.1 Types of documents

The documents consulted consisted of manuscripts, typescripts, and publications, and range from some notes to more demanding writings, such as projects, reflections, and publications (magazines, newspaper articles, bulletins, books, leaflets, ministerial publications). There are many musical scores, manuscripts and photocopied prints, some music books and numerous music seminar brochures. Some manuscripts by Margherita Zoebeli, particularly significant for our research, stand out as well as short notes and typescripts which can be attributed to her. The documents collected in envelopes 26, 28 and 18 are of a different nature, and are collected in no particular order. It was therefore necessary to make groupings based on some categories, which are the following:

– Writings of Margherita Zoebeli: manuscripts (notes, reflections, revisions, planning schedules), typescripts (mostly projects), captions from the *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario. Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero* (Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory. Italian-Swiss Educational Centre), Rimini, 1995
– Correspondence
– Music education and training projects
– Music seminars held at the CEIS
– Seminars and conferences on music education not held at the CEIS
– Musical scores (manuscript or printed)

[9] The iconographic documents, audio documents and other envelopes were not consulted.

– Musical notes
– Books
– Magazines
– Lists of books
– Brochures of concerts or other events
– Ministerial documents.

1.2 Chronological list of the documents

I proceeded by assigning a date to each of them. In some cases, it was easy as the documents themselves reported the date of their writing or publication. In other cases, it was possible to trace the date through a contextualisation of the events, and in other cases, hypotheses were made. Some documents remained undated. It was therefore possible to sort the documents consulted according to chronological order, shown in Appendix 1. The table presents the production date of each document, a brief description of the content, the type of document, the location in the AMZ and, in the case of MZ's writings, the author.

The overall picture that emerges is particularly impressive, both for the substantial number and variety of materials, and for the time span 1946-1995. The list begins with an issue of the magazine «Der schweizerische Kindergarten» (The Swiss Kindergarten), dated 15 May 1946, containing a series of articles on music education. We remind that Margherita Zoebeli arrived in Rimini at the end of 1945. The issue of the magazine is held together with two typed pages entitled *Gymnastik verbunden mit Musik?* (Gymnastics combined with music?). This is followed by another typed text entitled *Educazione ritmica musicale* (*Musical rhythmic education*), containing the text of the conference that Miss Mandel, educator of the Italian-Swiss kindergarten in Rimini, held at the SEPEG-Semaines Internationales des Enfants Victimes de la Guerre (International Study Weeks for Childhood Victims of War), in 1947. The four issues of the magazine «L'École Maternelle Française» (French Nursery School) date back to 1952 and 1953. In these pages, it is possible to find numerous articles regarding music initiation experiences conducted with children: singing, exploring and recognition of sounds, voices, rhythmic movement, use of music in an interdisciplinary sense for the discovery of self, of one's body, and for the acquisition of musical concepts and vocabulary.

The list ends in 1995, with the captions of the *Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory. Italian-Swiss Educational Centre*[10], in which the ac-

[10] *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario. Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero*, cit.

tivities of music education, motor skills, rhythmics and construction of the bamboo flute conducted at the CEIS are summarised. Between the first document of 1946 and the last of 1995, there were musical training projects organised by the CEIS, seminars, magazines, books, notes, reflections and writings. There are many musical scores, handwritten or printed, in numerous copies, a sign that they were used to be sung or played in groups.

This chronological list of the documents show that music education was present in Margherita Zoebeli's project from the beginning, and that she was aware of the then most modern teaching music methodologies for children and for teachers.

2. Music education and training projects

In the documentation consulted, there are two large-scale projects regarding music education, organised by the CEIS in collaboration with other organisations: one for teacher music training and another for music education and behavioural disorders. The documentation is particularly rich and detailed, and shows not only Margherita Zoebeli's interest in music education, but also how she pursued this interest by inserting music education into the CEIS in a structural way.

2.1 Basic music training course aimed at state and non-state primary school and kindergarten teachers of the Rimini district (CEIS, 1988-89)[11]

This basic music training course for teachers, from 1988-89, is widely documented, both in its planning and in its implementation phases. The organising bodies appear on the frontispiece of the project: the Municipality of Rimini, the Associazione Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero "Remo Bordoni" ("Remo Bordoni" Italian-Swiss Educational Centre Association) of Rimini, and the CIDEF - Centro di Innovazione Documentazione Educativa e di Formazione (Centre for Innovation in Educational and Training Documentation). The organisational management was carried out by the CEIS. The course was organised in collaboration with the CEMB - Centro Educazione Musicale di Base (Basic Music Education Centre), chaired by Giordano Bianchi, and with the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the University of Bologna, in particular with Prof. Mario Baroni, then professor of Musi-

[11] *Corso Formazione musicale di base rivolto ad insegnanti di scuola elementare e materna statale e non statale del circondario di Rimini,* AMZ, envelope 28 (also in envelope 26.A).

cology in the Faculty, who was entrusted with the scientific supervision of the project. It is important to underline this collaboration with Prof. Mario Baroni because it shows that the musicological section of the Faculty also contributed to the historic collaboration of the Faculty with the CEIS. In fact, under the coordination of Mario Baroni, the musicological area of the Faculty has begun, from its foundation to recent times, one of the major national and international laboratories for research in the fields of music education and musical training of teachers.

The typescript presents and describes in detail the premises, the objectives and the structure of the course, the number of participants, the program planned for the 1st year of the course, the methodological indications, and the groups of trainers: Mario Baroni and the musical pedagogy experts of the Bologna Conservatory, and Giordano Bianchi and the CEMB animators.

Course activities and methodology. The activities described include vocal activities, exploration, invention, and dramatisation, and are mainly based on active and creative methodologies. Being aimed at teachers, the activities also include moments of reflection regarding the methodological aspects of music education. This element will recur in all the documentation consulted; Margherita Zoebeli's attention to the training of generalist teachers in music education is repeatedly documented by these materials. In summary, the titles of the following training activities are listed:

– Timbral research as the basis of composition and improvisation
– Song as the fulcrum of teaching activity
– Itinerant methodologies
– The melodic invention between orality and vocality
– Playing with words
– Listening
– Dramatisation
– Music education planning
– General reflections on the methodological aspects of music education
– Evaluation of the experience
– Available subsidies and audio documentation: first nucleus of the CEIS audio library.

The presence of various documents, including calendars with the days and times of the courses and the lists of participants, written by Margherita Zoebeli herself, allow us to imagine how MZ was involved in the project in all its phases, from conception to writing, to institutional aspects, up to the concrete implementation of the courses, day after day, hour after hour.

2.2 Experimental Project. Music education and behavioural disorders, from the 1992/1993 to the 1996/97 school year[12]

The project was prepared to be presented to the Ministry of Public Education in 1991: the AMZ contains the text of the accompanying letter to the Ministry of Public Education. The planning phase is widely documented and testifies to Margherita Zoebeli's interest in music education and in the problems of inclusion and behavioural disorders of children. The documentation includes 10 typed pages of presentation and description of the project (the typescript is registered with number 294, 7/10/1991), the letter to the Ministry of Public Education, the report of the School Director of Rimini, and copies of the minutes of the Board of Administration of the CEIS (dated 9/9/1991) in which Margherita Zoebeli presented the report and the project was approved. Envelope 28 also contains various documentation of the preparation of the project: a draft of the project with various corrections and notes by Margherita Zoebeli; a manuscript with *Risultati della ricerca* (Research results) and another typescript *Motivazioni Obiettivi Indicazioni metodologiche* (Motivations Objectives Methodological Indications) with notes by MZ; other handwritten sheets by MZ, with a calendar and organisation of classes; a manuscript sheet by MZ with notes on *Ricerca* (*curriculum*) e *Ricerca* (*formazione*) (Research, curriculum and Research, training), and more loose sheets with material cost estimates. A rich documentation, therefore, which testifies as to how MZ oversaw the writing of the project, corrected the drafts, wrote the methodological indications, and personally followed its organisation. In the text of the project, we read:

> The problem we intend to address is to see if and how music education – conducted in certain organisational situations, in a specific educational context and with an appropriate methodology for a duration of four years – can make a significant contribution to the treatment and recovery of behavioural disorders, in particular those resulting from relational difficulties, in the presumption that music, a sphere of expressive experience of great immediacy and genuineness, contributes to unlocking attitudes of mistrust, closure, hostility, and rebellion towards people and things and, in particular, towards the entire sector of instrumental learning when these present themselves with some difficulty[13].

[12] *Progetto di Sperimentazione. Educazione musicale e disturbi del comportamento, dall'anno scolastico 1992/1993 all'anno 1996/97*, AMZ, envelope 28.

[13] Original text: «Il problema che si intende affrontare è quello di vedere se e in che modo l'educazione musicale – condotta in certe situazioni organizzative, in un determinato contesto educativo e con una appropriata metodologia per una durata di quattro anni

3. Music seminars and music education at the CEIS

Also documented is a consistent presence of music and music education seminars held at the CEIS, in addition to those included in the two projects already presented, starting from those of 1955 conducted by Ernst Klug (three of whose handwritten letters to MZ are also preserved), composer and music teacher at the Pestalozzi Village in Trogen in Switzerland (Fig. 1).

The documented seminars are the following in chronological order:

– 1955: *Un corso di musica e canto per l'aggiornamento dei maestri del centro pedagogico Italo-Svizzero* di Rimini (A music and singing course for updating the teachers of the Italian-Swiss pedagogical centre in Rimini), 1st course, April 1955. Description of the seminar led by Ernst Klug.
– 1986: *La ritmica secondo il metodo Dalcroze* (Rhythmics according to the Dalcroze method). Teacher: Ada Loiacono Husain.
– 1987: *Campo musicale internazionale 1987, gruppo costruzione flauto di bambù* (International musical camp 1987, bamboo flute construction group), collaboration with A. Maria Wild.
– 1994: *Alla ricerca di suoni fiabeschi* (In search of fairy-tale sounds), refresher course and musical training; practice of descriptive sound on storytelling, dramatisation, singing and movement. Teacher: Marlies Maurer, CEIS Rimini.
– 1995: bamboo flute-making course, «the most suitable method for introducing adults to the reading of musical notes is to build a bamboo flute»[14].

Finally, in the the typescript "Un corso di musica e canto per l'aggiornamento dei maestri del centro pedagogico Italo-Svizzero di Rimini" (A music and singing course for updating the teachers of the Italian-Swiss pedagogical centre of Rimini), we can read:

> «In Rimini, stimulated by the suitable environment, the children discovered the notes of familiar songs and the sounds of well-known animals in the per-

– possa dare un contributo significativo al trattamento e al recupero dei disturbi di comportamento e in particolare quelli che derivano da difficoltà relazionali, nella presunzione che la musica, una sfera di esperienza espressiva di grande immediatezza e genuinità, contribuisca a sbloccare atteggiamenti di sfiducia, di chiusura, di ostilità, di ribellione verso persone e cose e in particolare verso tutto il settore degli apprendimenti strumentali quando questi si presentano con qualche difficoltà», *Ibidem*.

[14] Original text: «il metodo più adatto per introdurre persone adulte nella lettura delle note musicali è quello di costruire un flauto di bambù».

cussion of the xylophone, the percussion of metal pipes, the sound of bells in the morning or evening, the high voice and the low voice; and in the melody, as in the written language, the phrases, etc.»[15].

4. Magazines and publications

The Archive contains magazines, books, articles, and newspaper clippings which concern music education and which testify to the attention that MZ paid to updating and experiencing more advanced and documented music education activities in the educational community and international music. The publications are in Italian, French and German. Of note, as far as chronology is concerned, is the issue of the magazine *Der schweizerische Kindergarten*, from 1946, which demonstrates MZ's interest in music education since her arrival in Rimini, following the active teaching, in particular but not exclusively that of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, which sees music education combined in a synergistic way with gymnastics and dance[16]. At the same time, we find magazines from the 1980s and 1990s, such as *Musica-Scuola* (Music School), an expression of the most recent thought and music educational experiences, which valorised the principles of creativity and expressiveness, the new repertoires, the communicative dimension of musical language, placing the child at the centre of the learning experience[17]. In the magazines, there are numerous highlights in the sections regarding the music education of children.

Magazines:

– «Der schweizerische Kindergarten» (The Swiss Kindergarten), 15 May 1946, and two typed sheets *Gymnastik verbunden mit Musik?* (Gymnastics combined with music?)
– «L'École Maternelle Française» (French Nursery School), four issues (1952-1953).

[15] «A Rimini, stimolati dall'ambiente adatto, i bambini scoprivano nella percussione dello xilofono le note di canti familiari, il verso di animali noti; nella percussione dei tubi di metallo il suono delle campane al mattino o alla sera; la voce alta e quella bassa; e, nella melodia, come nella lingua scritta, le frasi, ecc.».

[16] C. Dauphin, *Didattica della musica nel novecento*, in J.J. Nattiez (ed.), *Enciclopedia della Musica*, Einaudi, 2001, vol. 2, pp. 785-803.

[17] R. Deriu, *Tendenze recenti nella didattica dell'educazione musicale*, *ivi*, pp. 804-821; A.R. Addessi, E. Piras, *L'educazione musicale negli anni Ottanta, un'epoca di cambiamenti*, in «Bibliomania», 50 (2020), pp. 1-9 (doi:10.48276/issn.2280-8833.5795).

– «L'educatore» (The Educator). Documents. Educational programs for primary schools, Presidential decree 12/2/1985, n. 19 supplement.
– «Bulletin FIER Fédération Internationale des Enseignants de Rythmique» (FIER Bulletin International Federation of Rhythmic Teachers), 5 December 1986.
– «Ghilda Svizzera dei flauti di bambù» (Swiss Guild of Bamboo Flutes), two issues from 1988 and 1989, respectively.
– «MusicaScuola» (Music School), number 9, 1988.
– «Lettera» (Letter), monthly magazine of Pro Civitate Christiana, 1990.
– «Bollettino 94/95» (Bulletin 94/95), Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero CEIS (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre), Centro di Innovazione Documentazione Educativa e Formazione – CIDEF (Educational Documentation and Training Innovation Centre), Centro di Documentazione "G. Iacobucci" (Documentation Centre "G. Iacobucci"), Rimini.
– *Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero* (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre)-CEIS, Bollettino, 1994.

Newspaper articles:

– *Kind und Musik* (Children and Music), in «BZ», 11 October 1982: it contains a brief introduction and three sections: 1) *Kinderderechte Einfuhrung* (Introduction of Children's Rights) of Katharina R., Kindergärtneri und Musikpädagogin (kindergarten and music teacher); 2) *Spielgrenzen* (Play Limits) of J. Werner, *Spielzeug und Musik* (Toys and Music); 3) *Als Entwicklungs-Hilfe* (As a development aid) of E. Hermann, Oberstufenlehrer Rudolf-Steiner-Schule (upper school teacher, Rudolf Steiner School).
– Roland Luder, *Anstatt gerechnet und gelesen wird nun mehr gesungen und getanzt* (Instead of counting and reading, there is now more singing and dancing), in «Stadt Bern», 21 February 1989.

Book:

– *1945-1967 Il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini* (The Italian-Swiss Educational Centre of Rimini), organised by the Associazione Amici del Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Association of Friends of the Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) of Rimini, La Nuova Italia Editrice, Florence.

Music book:

– Benito Corradini, *Musica viva. Ritmica, intonazione, e lettura dei suoni*

per l'avviamento allo studio della musica (Living music. Rhythmic, intonation, and reading of sounds for the introduction to the study of music), Carish, Milano, 1971.

Finally, it is interesting to point out, among the materials of the experimental project (see § 2.2), a handwritten sheet containing a list of the then most recent publications on new trends in education and music education[18]:

- Gino Stefani, *Insegnare la musica. Proposte di animazione e didattica* (Teaching music. Proposals for animation and teaching), Rimini, Nuova Guaraldi (1977).
- Edgar Willems, *La Préparation musicale des tout-petits* (Musical preparation for toddlers), Lausanne, M&P Foetish (1970).
- Maurizio della Casa, *Educazione musicale e curricolo* (Music education and curriculum), Bologna, Zanichelli (1985).
- Suse Böhm, Peter Keetman, *Spiele mit dem Orff-Schulwerk. Elementare Musik und Bewegung für Kinder* (Play with the Orff school work. Elementary music and movement for children), Stuttgart, Metzler (1975).
- Alain Gassion, *Le rythme, source d'équilibre. La méthode Orff appliquée à la rééducation de la psychomotricité* (Rhythm, source of balance. The Orff method applied to psychomotor rehabilitation), Paris, Zurfluh (1973).
- Johannella Tafuri, *Didattica della musica e percezione musicale* (Music teaching and musical perception), Bologna, Zanichelli (1988).
- Andrea Canevaro, *I bambini che si perdono nel bosco. Identità e linguaggi nell'infanzia* (Children who get lost in the woods. Identities and languages in childhood), Firenze, La Nuova Italia (1999).
- Luciano Bazzocchi (ed.), *Il bambino e la musica: riflessioni ed esperienze di educazione musicale a confronto* (The child and music: reflections and experiences of music education in comparison), Bologna, Nicola Milano Editore (1990).
- Giulia Cremaschi Trovesi, *Dal suono alla parola – dal suono alla musica* (From sound to word – from sound to music), Bergamo, Juvenilia (1987).

[18] AMZ, envelope 28.

5. Captions from the *Photographic Archive 1946-1994*

The captions of the *Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory. Italian-Swiss Educational Centre* (Rimini, 1995)[19], presumably written by Margherita Zoebeli, are particularly interesting for the purpose of this study. Generally speaking, this *Inventory* mainly documents choral, flute, rhythmic and dance activities. The seminar and project activities present in the rich documentation of envelopes 26 and 28 (see § 2 and § 3) appear to be absent.

Below are some excerpts from the captions regarding rhythmics in the kindergarten, music education and singing in the primary school, the international music camp held at the CEIS in 1987, and the group concerned with constructing bamboo flutes:

– *La scuola materna - La Ritmica* (Kindergarten – The Rhythmics)
  […] listening to sounds in different situations (sitting, moving), listening to a rhythm given by a percussion instrument, music suitable for mastering the body in movement based on a pre-established signal[20].

– *La scuola elementare - Educazione musicale e canto* (Primary school - Music education and singing)
  One of the first concerns of the CEIS management was to introduce music education starting from nursery school, and to create professional skills and awareness of the importance of this discipline for education and training in general in teachers[21].

This is followed by a description of the activities of singing in a choir and the use of the flute, the latter practised «for 40 years» by «volontari svizzeri con una buona formazione musicale e di metodologia d'insegnamento nell'uso del flauto» (Swiss volunteers with good musical training and teaching methodology in the use of the flute).

– *Campo musicale internazionale 1987* (International music camp 1987)

[19] *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario. Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero*, cit.

[20] Original text: «[…] ascolto dei suoni in diverse situazioni (seduti, in movimento) ascoltando un ritmo dato da uno strumento a percussione, musica adatta al dominio del corpo in movimento sulla base di un segnale prestabilito».

[21] Original text: «Una delle prime preoccupazioni della direzione del C.E.I.S. è stata quella di introdurre fin dalla scuola materna l'educazione musicale e di creare nelle insegnanti le capacità professionali e la coscienza dell'importanza di questa disciplina per l'educazione e per la formazione in generale».

The activities of the construction and the use of the flute, drama, rhythmic-musical games and leisure activities are described: «una gita sul mare e bagno» (a trip to the sea and swimming).

– *Gruppo costruzione flauto di bambù* (Bamboo flute construction group), collaboration with A. Maria Wild – bamboo flute construction course: the most suitable method for introducing adults to the reading of musical notes is to build a bamboo flute. At the same time as building the instrument, the teacher learns step by step how to use the flute itself. For many years, courses designed for the construction of these flutes have been organised at the CEIS, led by Swiss specialists[22].

6. Eurhythmics, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Mimi Scheiblauer

The link between the music education of the CEIS and the so-called active methods of music education translates into the experience and educational perspective of Margherita Zoebeli, mainly through Eurhythmics, according to the Swiss musician, pedagogue, and composer Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950). Dalcrozian eurhythmics is one of the three great areas in which Dalcroze's methodological proposal is developed. Eurhythmics here is not only understood as a phenomenon referring to musical time, but as the articulation of a broader sound expression which is experienced, in Dalcrozian's proposal, through movement and the body. Everything that is musical matter can, according to Dalcroze, be translated and expressed with the movement of the body[23]. As demonstrated in the essay edited by the Italian-Swiss Educational Centre of Rimini[24], Margherita Zoebeli had particular connections with Dalcroze's student, Mimi Scheiblauer (1891-1968) who, more than others, committed herself to using Dalcroze Eurhythmics for the inclusion of children with behavioural problems. In the documents con-

[22] Original text: «Il metodo più adatto per introdurre persone adulte nella lettura delle note musicali è quello di costruire un flauto di bambù. Contemporaneamente alla costruzione dello strumento l'insegnante impara passo per passo l'uso del flauto stesso. Da molti anni si organizzano al CEIS corsi per la costruzione di questi flauti, guidati da specialisti svizzeri».

[23] É. Jaques-Dalcroze, *Le Rythme, la musique et l'éducation*, Lausanne, Édition Foetisch, 1920 (*Rhythm, Music and Education*, Pyrford - Surrey, England, The Dalcroze Society, 1967).

[24] CEIS of Rimini, *L'insegnamento della ritmica nella scuola materna ed elementare*, in Zucchini (ed.), *Animazione musicale e disadattamento*, cit.

sulted, there are numerous testimonies of MZ's attention and propensity for the practices and concepts of Dalcrozian eurhythmics.

Below is the list of documents present in the AMZ:

- 1946: *Der schweizerische Kindergarten* (The Swiss kindergarten), 15 May 1946, and two typed sheets *Gymnastik verbunden mit Musik?* (Gymnastics combined with music?).
- 1947: *Educazione ritmica musicale* (Musical rhythmic education), typescript of the conference by Miss R. Mandel, educator of the Italian-Swiss kindergarten in Rimini, at the SEPEG-Semaines Internationales des Enfants Victimes de le Guerre, 10 May 1947.
- 1952, 1953: «L'École Maternelle Française» (French Nursery School), four issues of the magazine containing the description of rhythmic activities with children.
- 1986: *Le Rythme*, ISME XVII-International Society for Music Education, red folder containing other materials. The XVII ISME conference took place in Innsbruck, 6-12 July 1986.
- 1986: *Bulletin FIER-Fédération Internationale des Enseignants de Rythmique* (International Federation of Eurhythmics Teachers), 5 December.
- 1988: *Berufsverband musikalisch-rhytmischer Erzieher* (Professional Association of Musical and Eurhythmics Educators), eight typed sheets (communications and course programs such as, for example, *Rhythmik/Improvisation*, Zurich Conservatory, 1988/89 of the *Schweizerischen Berufsverband musikalisch-rhythmischer Erzieher* (Swiss Professional Association of Music and Eurhythmics Educators), founded by Mimi Scheiblauer in Zurich in 1964 (see Fig. 2).
- 1988: *Rhythmik*, of A. Maria Wild, a folder containing 3 sheets.
- 1995: Caption of the *Archivio Fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario* (Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory):

> Eurhythmics: it is the opportunity to experiment multiple aspects of learning regarding everyday life, but also for school disciplines, knowledge of space and orientation in space, and at the same time, the putting into practice of concepts, such as above, below, next to, together, etc., inventing various body positions, listening to various sounds in different situations (sitting, moving), listening to a rhythm given by a percussion instrument, and music suitable for the dominion of the body in movement on the basis of an established signal[25].

[25] Original text: «La ritmica: è l'occasione per sperimentare molteplici aspetti dell'apprendimento di vita quotidiana, ma anche per le discipline scolastiche, conoscenze dello spazio ed orientamento nello spazio, e insieme la messa in pratica di concetti quali sopra, sotto, accanto, insieme, etc., inventare varie posizioni del corpo, ascolto di vari

– The CEIS has organised many practical-theoretical courses for improvement in the field of rhythmic-music education in collaboration with specialists in the sector.
– 1986: *La ritmica secondo il metodo Dalcroze* (Rhythmics according to the Dalcroze method), edited by Ada Loiacono Husain, typescript.

7. Music and music therapy

The *Progetto di Sperimentazione. Educazione musicale e disturbi del comportamento* (Experimental Project. Music Education and Behavioural Disorders) of 1992-93 (see § 2.2) bears witness to the important point of arrival of a long process in which the inclusive potential of music education is emphasised and utilised in particular in the educational sphere for children with behavioural disorders. As the 1976 CEIS text states:

> Since its foundation, the CEIS in Rimini has considered music therapy as one of the fundamental activities of its entire pedagogical and educational endeavour […]. The educators who came from Switzerland at that time had had the opportunity to get to know and learn the techniques of the famous teacher of rhythmic education, Professor Mimi Scheiblauer[26].

This vision of music education in a social and therapeutic context was vigorously pursued by MZ, particularly when addressing children traumatised by war events. In addition to the above-mentioned project, we found numerous other documents testifying to the practices implemented at the CEIS under MZ's leadership. These include the typescript signed by Costanzo Capirci, a school teacher who worked mainly on music education for the blind, entitled *La musicoterapia. Puntualizzazioni - Esperienze - Prospettive* (Music Therapy. Clarifications - Experiences - Perspectives) (c. 1980), which contains emphases probably by MZ herself, and the typescript *Il metodo linguistico-matematico-musicale. Una nuova didattica per porta-*

suoni in diverse situazioni (seduti, in movimento), movimento ascoltando un ritmo dato da uno strumento a percussione, musica adatta al dominio del corpo in movimento sulla base di un segnale stabilito».

[26] Original text: «Sin dalla sua fondazione, il CEIS di Rimini ha considerato la musicoterapia come una delle fondamentali attività di tutto il suo sforzo pedagogico ed educativo. […] gli educatori allora venuti dalla Svizzera avevano avuto l'opportunità di conoscere e apprendere le tecniche della famosa insegnante di educazione ritmica, la professoressa Mimi Scheiblauer», Ivi, p. 125.

tori di handicap (The linguistic-mathematical-musical method. New didactics for handicapped people), by Giordano Bianchi, presumably material produced in connection with the courses Bianchi conducted at the CEIS.

Particularly significant are two handwritten sheets (envelope 26.A) in which MZ herself notes some aspects of music therapy, of «ludoterapia col suono» (play therapy with sound) (Della Bella), and of Giordano Bianchi's linguistic-musical method. In the notes, MZ writes: «In tutti i casi in cui la parola fallisce…la musica trova il suo campo» (In all cases where speech fails… music finds its field).

8. The bamboo flute

From Switzerland, Margherita Zoebeli introduced the educational music practices of the *Swiss Guild of Bamboo Flutes*, an association that founded the path of musical learning and practice regarding the construction of bamboo flutes, and thus on their instrumental and musical use. Anna Maria Wild, one of the most famous teachers trained in the Swiss Guild, of which she was also president, held courses at the CEIS for three years. In the captions of the *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario*, we find the International Music Camp 1987, organised by the bamboo flute construction group:

> The course took place in the CEIS for years, thanks to the collaboration of A. Maria Wild, Françoise Dully and other specialists who came monthly to lead a group of Rimini teachers. Romeo Selvatici was trained in this group and now continues to train new teachers in the area of flute construction and use. Camp activities: flute making and use, dramatisation, rhythmic-musical games and leisure activities, a trip to the sea and bathing […]. Bamboo flute making course […]: the most suitable method for introducing adults to the reading of musical notes is to make a bamboo flute[27].

[27] Original text: «Il corso ha luogo nel CEIS da anni grazie alla collaborazione di A. Maria Wild, Françoise Dully ed altri specialisti che vengono mensilmente per guidare un gruppo di insegnanti riminesi. In questo gruppo si è formato Romeo Selvatici che ora continua a sua volta l'attività di formazione di nuovi maestri nell'area di costruzione ed uso dei flauti. Attività del campo: costruzione ed uso del flauto, drammatizzazione, giochi ritmico-musicali ed attività di svago: una gita sul mare e bagno […]. Corso di costruzione di flauto di bambù: […] il metodo più adatto per introdurre persone adulte nella lettura delle note musicali è quello di costruire un flauto di bambù», *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario*, cit.

These activities later gave rise to the foundation of the Italian Guild, whose founders included Romeo Selvatici himself[28]. Again documenting the link with the Swiss Guild, there is an issue of the magazine *Ghilda Svizzera dei flauti di bamboo*. *Rapport semestriel Automne* from 1988, and a 1989 issue in German, French and Italian. Finally: a brochure of a concert given by Anna Maria Wild with the Bamboo Flute Group.

9. Musical repertoires: handwritten and printed scores

In the folders consulted, there were approximately 20 handwritten or printed music scores, for choral and instrumental music (flutes and guitar). There were many copies of some of them for choral and ensemble music activities, presumably used by teachers. The repertoire mainly included monodic songs, which could also be performed in canon, and polyphonic songs for two voices, from the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th centuries (*rondelli*, *laude*, *frottole*, hymns) and, as regards instrumental music, duets and trios for soprano flutes and guitar, with popular or dance themes, mostly Austrian and European. Of these music scores emerges the more modern *Blumenlied* by Bela Bartók.

These documents confirm what Honegger Fresco wrote: «for the educators who were preparing the repertoire for the camps or for the schools – wanting to exclude the banality and moralism of too many "suitable" songs, among the corny and childish – was not easy to find; here are canons, ballads, and folk songs»[29]. Below is the list of music scores:

Vocal repertoire (manuscripts)

- *Rosa Fragrans*, XIII century, rondello, English anonymous
- *Hymn to St. Magnus*, XII century
- *La mia prima frottola,* Antonello Marot, XIV century
- *Monto a cavallo*
- *Cantio dal Jistebnický Kancionál,* 1420 (Fig. 3)
- *Voi ch'amate lo criatore*, lauda XIII century

[28] Interview with Romeo Silvestri, cit.

[29] Fresco, *La formazione di educatori e insegnanti*, in De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*, cit.; original text: «…per gli educatori che si preparavano per le colonie o per le scuole il repertorio – volendo escludere la banalità e il moralismo di troppi canti "adatti", tra melenso e bambinesco – era di non facile ricerca: ed ecco canoni, i canti a ballata, le canzoni popolari».

– *Wirf den Ball*

Instrumental repertoire (printed)

– *Weckruf (aus Alt Österreich)*, for three soprano flutes and guitar ad lib., arr. by Rudolf Schäfer
– *Kleine Stücke Nr. 15-18*, for two soprano flutes and guitar, by Rudolf Schäfer
– *Blumenlied*, for recorder and guitar, by Bela Bartók
– *Flute duets*: tourdion, pastourelle, kontratanz, Französisches Tanzlied.

10. Margherita Zoebeli's writings

Finally, of particular interest, are several writings by MZ: typescripts, manuscripts and the captions of the *Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory* (Rimini, 1995)[30]. Among the typescripts which can be attributed to MZ, we highlight the *Corso di formazione di base rivolto ad insegnanti di scuola elementare e materna statale e non statale del circondario di Rimini al CEIS 1988-89* (Basic musical training course aimed at state and non-state primary and kindergarten school teachers in the Rimini district at the CEIS), and the *Progetto di Sperimentazione – Educazione musicale e disturbi del comportamento* (Experimentation Project - Music education and behavioural disorders), from the 1992/1993 school year to the 1996/97 school year (see § 3). Additional investigation may highlight the attribution of other typescripts to MZ, such as *Formazione musicale di base I° anno 1988-89. Relazione finale* (Basic musical training 1st year 1988/89. Final report).

Margherita Zoebeli's manuscripts include short notes (for example the two sheets on music therapy presented in § 7), organisational sheets of the music education courses and seminars organised at the CEIS (calendars, timetables, groups), annotations (short notes, highlighted) on typescripts or texts, and finally, 9 sheets containing the MZ's notes of the seminars that she presumably attended in Forlì on 13 and 14 May 1988, which included her *Riflessioni sull'educazione musicale nella scuola elementare* (Reflections on music education in primary school).

The 9 handwritten sheets are collected in AMZ envelope 26.A and contain notes dated Forlì, 13 and 14 May 1988, presumably taken during the seminars of several Italian experts in music teaching and research of the period: Johannella Tafuri (then president of the SIEM-Italian Society for

[30] See § 5.

Music Education), Anna Maria Freschi, Egidio Giorgioni, Mennini Raphael. The titles and topics of the seminars are varied: motivations and experimentation in music education, interdisciplinarity, the Kodály method, new music education programs, the presence of the expert in the school, experience with children and the need to formalise experimentation. These themes represented the most recent experiences and theories of music education which pointed out, as compared to the previous experiences of the active teaching of historical methods (Dalcroze, Orff, Willems, Kodály), the importance of creativity, the use of new musical repertoires, and above all, the expressive needs of children[31].

10.1 Reflections on music education in primary school (1988)[32]

The last 4 pages of the Forli manuscript have the following title: *Riflessioni sull'educazione musicale nella scuola elementare* (Reflections on music education in primary school), probably reflections written by MZ after following the seminars. These *Riflessioni* are particularly interesting and represent a very personal synthesis of the topics covered in the seminars. The manuscript is shown in Figures 4-7 and has been transcribed in English in Appendix 2 (of this Chapter).

I would like to point out some aspects which make these pages particularly significant. First of all, music is seen as an important expressive language for the child: a language, therefore, which can be approached through the structuralist and semiotic schemes particularly used in those years. The proposed learning method extends from the global to the analytical, from the understanding of the meaning to the analysis of the signifier, and supports a vision of music education which proceeds according to a spiral process rather than on the basis of objectives hierarchically placed in temporal sequences. Zoebeli writes:

> Music Education, it can hardly take on the characteristics of a discipline, and it is equally difficult to plan it rigidly in terms of objectives hierarchically placed in temporal sequences. It is necessary to imagine a path not intended as a sum of experiences but as a spiral[33].

[31] Deriu, *Tendenze recenti nella didattica dell'educazione musicale*, cit.; Addessi, Piras, *L'educazione musicale negli anni Ottanta, un'epoca di cambiamenti*, cit.

[32] Original text: «Riflessioni sull'educazione musicale nella scuola elementare» (ms), AMZ, busta 26.A.

[33] Original text: «*l'educazione musicale* difficilmente può assumere le caratteristiche di una disciplina ed è altrettanto difficile programmarla rigidamente in termini di obiettivi gerarchicamente collocati in sequenze temporali. Occorre immaginare un percorso non

Zoebeli identifies "nodi" (nodes) as «obiettivi da tenere presenti nella programmazione in modo flessibile» (objectives to be kept in mind when programming in a flexible way), and summarises these objectives in three points: 1. broaden the child's experiences in the musical field; 2. encourage reflection on musical language starting from the meanings to approach the signifiers (awareness), and 3) encourage the acquisition of interpretative tools of reality.

What emerges in these writings is the fundamental importance attributed by MZ to the music education training of kindergarten and primary school generalist teachers. Their education should develop both "in the field" in schools with children, and in training courses which are not short-term, but at least biennial, if not permanent, and which have as their objectives the experimentation and research of shared, redefinable and flexible theories, as well as the acquisition of some technical and grammatical elements of musical language through concrete experiences:

> In the training courses, the teachers should adopt the same methodology recognised as valid for children from the global complex to the analytical. It is then up to the teacher to bring his/her own personal experience into the school activity with a specific group of children[34].

Finally, I would like to draw attention to another important aspect present in Margherita Zoebeli's *Riflessioni*. She writes: «tali corsi si propongono in primo luogo di rimuovere alcuni stereotipi degli insegnanti» (these courses aim first and foremost to remove some stereotypes of teachers). In fact, the issue of teacher stereotypes regarding music education has been addressed by the most recent research on music teacher education. Zoebeli's attention to this topic is very significant because it is in tune with, and in some respects anticipates, this research which has investigated the influence of teachers' conceptions of music on their professional identity and their way of teaching music education.

Some studies have shown how the teachers' education course can represent one of the privileged occasions to create changes in stereotypes and social representations of music and music education, as indicated by Margherita Zoebeli. Here I would like to cite, among others, an empirical study we conducted with students of the Degree courses in Primary

inteso come sommatoria di esperienze ma come una spirale».

[34] Original text: «Nei corsi di formazione si adotta con gli insegnanti la stessa metodologia riconosciuta come valida per i bambini dal globale complesso all'analitico. Sta poi all'insegnante calare la propria esperienza personale nell'attività scolastica con un determinato gruppo di bambini».

Teachers' Education at the University of Bologna and the University of Modena-Reggio Emilia in which we observed how some social representations of music and of the "musical child", possessed by the students (future teachers), have changed during their participation in music education methodology courses, strengthening their sense of self-efficacy with respect to their future role as generalist music teachers, as hoped for by Margherita Zoebeli in her *Riflessioni*[35].

Conclusions

The documentation consulted in the AMZ made it possible to open a new window on an extraordinarily rich world of ideas, experiences, research and practices realised by Margherita Zoebeli at the CEIS which were still little known and which merit additional study in the future. A systematic presentation of the documentation consulted, and some important keys to interpretation and research were given herein which brought to light some original features of Margherita Zoebeli's approach to music, to the music education of children, and to teacher's education.

In summary, the documentation consulted highlighted the following aspects:

- the essential importance attributed by MZ to the music education of the child;
- MZ's interest in carrying out an in-depth study of the contents, methodologies, practices of the most recent educational-musical approaches;
- MZ's commitment to researching and learning about different theories and approaches to music education through readings, documentation, and participation in seminars;
- the importance attributed by MZ to the training of nursery/kindergarten and primary school teachers for music education;
- MZ's commitment to the implementation of music education projects with children, teachers and trainers;

[35] A.R. Addessi, F. Carugati, *Social representations of the "musical child": An empirical investigation on implicit music knowledge in higher teacher education*, in «Music Education Research», 12/3 (2010), pp. 311-330. See also: F. Seddon, M. Biasutti, *Non-music primary school specialist trainee teachers' confidence in teaching music in the classroom*, in «Music Education Research», 10/3 (2008), pp. 403-421; S. Hallam, P. Burnard, A. Robertson, C. Saleh, V. Davies, L. Rogers, D. Kokatsaki, *Primary-school trainee teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness in teaching music*, in «Music Education Research», 11/2 (2009), pp. 221-240.

– the importance attributed by MZ to music education and music therapy in a perspective of social inclusion.

It is possible to observe a transition which occurred approximately during the second half of the 1980s. There was an initial period in which MZ took advantage from her Swiss education and culture, characterised by active methods based on body experience and ethnic repertoires, in particular the Dalcrozian eurhythmics and the Swiss Guild of Bamboo Flutes. This was followed by a second period which evolved in contact with the Italian teachers and experts in music education, including the musicological area of the Faculty of Education in Bologna, characterised by the recent music education methodologies which emphasised creativity and the concept of music as a communicative and expressive language.

Several witnesses and scholars have preserved and brought to light Zoebeli's social and educational commitment, and the profound motivation which led her to design and create the CEIS in Rimini, as has recently been thoroughly documented by the contributions contained in this volume. In light of the documentation consulted in the AMZ, I can conclude that one of the main pillars of the project and of the social approach to education which Margherita Zoebeli pursued and implemented at the CEIS in Rimini was represented by music and music education and that their consideration will be essential to understand the vision and the legacy of Margherita Zoebeli.

Translated by David Andrew Goldsmith

Appendix 1

Chronological table of documents consulted in the AMZ. The list includes year, short description of the document, typology, and location.

YEAR	Document	Type	Location AMZ
1946	«Der schweizerische Kindergarten», 15 May 1946; *Gymnastik verbunden mit Musik?*	Magazine and 2 typescript sheets	26.B
1947	*Educazione ritmica musicale* Conference of Miss R. Mandel, Italian-Swiss kindergarten educator in Rimini, at the SEPEG-Semaines Internationales des Enfants Victimes de la Guerre, 10 May 1947	Typescript	18, folder 2
1952	«L'Ecole Maternelle Française», n. 30/3, December 1952	Magazine	26.B
1953	«L'Ecole Maternelle Française», n. 30/5, February 1952	Magazine	26.B
1953	«L'Ecole Maternelle Française,» n. 30/6, March 1953	Magazine	26.B
1953	«L'Ecole Maternelle Française», n. 30/7, April 1953	Magazine	26.B
1955	*Un corso di musica e canto per l'aggiornamento dei maestri del Centro Pedagogico Italo-Svizzero di Rimini, 1° corso, aprile 1955*. Four pages of description of the music course of Ernst Klug at CEIS	Typescript	28
1967	*1945-1967 Il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini*, edited by the Associazione Amici del Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero of Rimini (La Nuova Italia Editrice, Firenze)	Book	28
1967	Letter from Ernst Klug to Margherita Zoebeli	Manuscript	Corrispondenza
1968	Letter from Ernst Klug to Margherita Zoebeli	Manuscript	Corrispondenza
1971	*Musica viva. Ritmica, intonazione, e lettura dei suoni per l'avviamento allo studio della musica*, Carish, Milano, 1971	Book	26.B
1972	Letter from Ernst Klug to Margherita Zoebeli	Manuscript	Corrispondenza
1974, 1985-1986, 1989	Several ministerial documents regarding experiments in elementary and nursery/kindergarten schools	Ministerial documents	28
1982	*Kind und Musik*, in «BZ», 11 October 1982 (Contains a brief introduction and three sections*:* 1) *Kinderderechte Einführung* of Katharina R., Kindergärtneri und Musikpädagogin; 2) *Spielgrenzen* of Werner J., *Spielzeug und Musik;* 3) *Als Entwicklungshilfe* of Hermann E., Oberstufenlehrer Rudolf-Steiner-Schule)	Newspaper article	26.B
1985	«L'Educatore», documenti. Programmi didattici per la scuola primaria, dpr 12/2/1985, n. 19 supplement	Magazine	26.A

1986?	*La ritmica secondo il metodo* Dalcroze, didactic project proposed by Ava Loiacono-Husain	Typescript	26.A
1986	LE RYTHME XVII ISME-International Society for Music Education	Folder	26
1986	«Bulletin FIER Fédération Internationale des Enseignants de Rythmique», 5 December 1986	Magazine	26
1988	«Ghilda Svizzera dei Flauti di bambini. Rapport semestriel», Autumn 1988	Magazine	26.A
1988	«MusicaScuola» (Music School), n. 9, 1988	Magazine	26.A
1988	9 sheets with handwritten pages by Margherita Zoebeli, containing notes dated Forlì, 13-14 May 1988 and the *Riflessioni sull'educazione musicale nella scuola elementare*	Manuscript (MZ)	26.A
1988	*Corso Formazione musicale di base rivolto ad insegnanti di scuola elementare e materna statale e non statale del circondario di Rimini*. Municipality of Rimini, Associazione Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero "Remo Bordoni" Rimini, CIDEF-Centro di Innovazione, Documentazione Educativa e di Formazione.	Typescript (possible attribution to MZ)	26.A; 28
1988	Estimate, times and fees for the *Corso Formazione musicale di base*	Typescript and manuscript (MZ)	26.A
1988	Letter, Ravenna, 15 April 1988	Typescript (correspondence)	26.A
1988	13 pages containing material regarding the Corso Formazione musicale di base	Typescript	26.A
1988	CEIS letter to the maestro Giordano Bianchi, 7 November1988	Typescript (correspondence)	26.A
1988	Request for exemption to the Ministry for the *Corso Formazione musicale di base* 1988/89, 8 November1988	Typescript	26.A
1988	Calendar of the *Corso Formazione musicale di base*	Manuscript (MZ)	26.A
1988	Letter to maestro Bianchi, 21 December 1988	Typescript (Correspondence)	26.A
1988	Form sent to the MCE for publication in the *Information* notebook (*Corso Formazione musicale di base* form)	Typescript and manuscript (MZ)	26.A
1988?	Music therapy notes	Manuscript	26.A
1988	3 CEMB brochures, Municipality of Milan, Lombardy Region	Brochure	26.A
1988	*Rhythmik*. Folder with several materials, of A. Maria Wild	Typescript and photographic material	26.A

1988	*Berufsverband musikalisch-rhytmischer Erzieher.* Eight typed sheets with communications and course programs of the Swiss Professional Association of Music and Eurhythmics Educators	Typescript	26
1989	*Corso Formazione musicale di base*. Organisational chart for the days 5-6-7 January 1989	Typescript with handwritten notes	26.A
1989	*Corso Formazione musicale di base*, 5-6-7 January 1989, organisational chart for CEMB experts; daily organisation chart for the 9-10-11 January 1989 course	Manuscript (MZ) and typescript	26.A
1989	*Corso Formazione musicale di base.* 2 sheets with lists of participants	Manuscript	26.A
1989	*Corso di educazione musicale per insegnanti di scuola materna ed elementare,* CEIS, Rimini, February-June 1989	Typescript	26.A
1989	Organisational chart of the February, March and May 1989 meetings		26.A
1989	*Corso Formazione musicale di base* letter and invitation; course programme	Typescript	26.A
1989	*Corso Formazione musicale di base* calendar with teachers' days and hours	Manuscript (MZ)	26.A
1989	*Corso di educazione musicale* distribution of teaching hours, 1 page	Manuscript (MZ)	26.A
1989	*Il topo dei fumetti*	Typescript with handwritten notes (MZ)	26.A
1989	*Corso Formazione musicale di base* 1st year 1988/89. Final report	Typescript (possibly attributed to MZ)	26.A
1989	Roland Luder, *Anstatt gerechnet und gelesen wird nun mehr gesungen und getanzt*, in «Stadt Bern», 21 February 1989	Magazine article	26.A
1989	«Guilde Suisse des Flutes de Bambou»	Magazine	26.A
1990	«Lettera», monthly magazine of Pro Civitate Christiana	Magazine	26.A
1990	*L'educazione musicale nella scuola elementare del CEIS*	Brochure (possibly attributed to MZ)	26.A
1990	*Corso - Concorso 1990 CEIS Educazione al suono e alla musica nella scuola elementare. Considerazioni di carattere generale e approfondimento di alcune indicazioni fornite dai nuovi programmi.* General considerations and in-depth analysis of some indications provided by the new programs	Typescript	26.A
1991	*Educazione musicale.* Materials regarding the *Progetto di Sperimentazione*	Typescript and manuscript	28

1991	1.Ricerca; 2. list of texts regarding music education and pedagogy; 3. Descrizione degli aspetti innovativi 4. three pages with the cost estimate of the material for the *Progetto di Sperimentazione*	1=Manuscript of MZ; 2, 3 = manuscripts; 4=typescripts	28
1991	*Presentazione* Introduction to a cassette-tape realized at the CEIS	Typescript	28
1991-92	*Progetto di Sperimentazione. Educazione musicale e disturbi del comportamento*, 1992/1993 - 1996/1996. Letters, project, report, minutes of the CEIS Board of Directors	Typescripts and manuscripts (project possibly attributed to MZ)	28
1991-92	*CEIS 91-92 Educazione Musicale* Original and three photocopies Calendar and groups	Manuscript	28
1994	*Bollettino 94/95*, Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero CEIS, Centro di Innovazione Documentazione Educativa e Formazione CIDEF, Centro di Documentazione "G. Iacobucci", Rimini	Magazine	28
1994	*Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero CEIS* Bulletin	Magazine	28
1994	*Alla ricerca di suoni fiabeschi* Refresher and music training course: dramatisation, singing and movement. Teacher: Marlies Maurer, CEIS Rimini, 5-7 September 1994	Typescript	26.A
undated	*Prescritture musicale* 4 handwritten sheets with examples of musical pre-writing.	Manuscript	26.A
1995 (1987)	*Campo musicale internazionale* 1987 International music camp, bamboo flute construction group, collaboration with A. Maria Wild	Captions (possibly attributed to MZ)	Archivio Fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario (1995)
1995	*Educazione musicale e canto* Caption for the section on music education and singing of the photographic archive 1946-1994.	Captions (possibly attributed to MZ)	Archivio Fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario (1995)
1995	*Attività motoria all'esterno* Caption for the section on outdoor motor activity of the photographic archive 1946-1994	Captions (possibly attributed to MZ)	Archivio Fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario (1995)
1995	*Attività motoria nell'aula* Caption for the section on motor activity in the classroom of the photographic archive 1946-1994	Captions (possibly attributed to MZ)	Archivio Fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario (1995)

1995	*La Ritmica* Caption for the section on rhythmics of the photographic archive 1946-1994	Captions (possibly attributed to MZ)	Archivio Fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario (1995)
1995	*Corso di costruzione dei flauti di bambù K IX n. 1-6* Caption for the section on bamboo flute-making course of the photographic archive 1946-1994	Captions (possibly attributed to MZ)	Archivio Fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario (1995)
undated	*Gruppo dei flauti di bambù* Brochure of the concert of Bamboo Flute Group, A.M. Wild	Brochure	26.A
undated	*La musicoterapia. Puntualizzazioni - Esperienze – Prospettive* By Costanzo Capirci	Typescript	26.B
undated	*Il metodo linguistico-matematico-musicale. Una nuova didattica per portatori di handicap* By Giordano Bianchi	Typescript	26.A
undated	*Rosa Fragrans*, 13th century, rondello, anonymous English	Musical score manuscript	26.B
undated	*Hymn to St. Magnus*, XII century	Musical score manuscript	26.B
undated	*La mia prima frottola*, by Antonello Marot, XIV century	Musical score manuscript	26.B
undated	*Monto a cavallo*	Musical score manuscript	26.B
undated	*Cantio dal Kancionál del 1420*	Musical score manuscript	26.B
undated	*Voi ch'amate lo criatore*, lauda XIII century	Musical score manuscript	26.B
undated	*Cantio dal Jistebnický Kancionál*	Musical score manuscript	26.B
undated	*Wirf den Ball*	Musical score manuscript	26.B
undated	*Weckruf (aus Alt Österreich)*, for three soprano flutes and guitar ad lib., arr. by Rudolf Schäfer	Printed musical score	26.B
undated	*Kleine Stücke Nr. 15-18* (Small pieces No. 15-18), for two soprano flutes and guitar, by Rudolf Schäfer	Printed musical score	26.B
undated	*Blumenlied*, for recorder and guitar, by Bela Bartok	Printed musical score	26.B

Appendix 2

Margherita Zoebeli, *Reflections on music education in primary school*. English translation of "Riflessioni sull'educazione musicale nella scuola elementare", 1988, ms. AMZ, enveloppe 26.A

Music is an essential component of man, and represents an already consolidated, although not formalised experience, for a six-year-old child. This experience begins before birth and evolves rapidly, determining, in each individual, the building of skills and competences which, upon entry into primary school, are already very notable. The role of the primary school consists, first of all, in offering the child a broader, more varied and more focused field of experience. First, there must be opportunities to produce music […] and to benefit from music communication. By understanding this use (listening), the child will tend to grasp and interpret the messages (meanings) of the communication. Reflection, understood as the analysis and in-depth study of the linguistic forms and structures of music (signifiers), will gradually intervene only in the second instance and will tend, by means of awareness of the methods which the producer adopts to make communication effective, to provide the subject of interpretative tools of this reality which make him/her progressively autonomous in his/her judgement.

Therefore, the methodology of this teaching will not deviate from that already identified for the other educational areas, from the complex and global experience, rich in concrete situations, to an increasingly detailed and abstract analysis of the forms and structures of communication for a progressive appropriation of the codes.

It is good that the child's experiences develop both through the use of voice and through the use of sound material of all kinds, including his/her own body.

A child must be helped to build his/her own musical identity by taking into account his/her deep needs to utilise the environment as an educational response to these needs.

The perceptual sphere must be considered not so much in terms of objectives, but as a constant of each experiential situation. The refinement of perceptive faculties is a consequence of the quality and quantity of experiences.

In summary, the following can be recognised as functions of the school:

a. broaden the child's experiences regarding music;
b. promote reflection regarding musical language, beginning from the meanings to approach the signifiers (raising awareness);

c. promote the acquisition of the interpretative tools of reality.

The methodology indicated assumes the complexity of reality as a starting point, taking into account, without being intimidated by it, that it is not possible to claim to control it totally from the beginning on a rational level.

The specific function of the primary school regarding a path seen in terms of continuity, nursery/ kindergarten, primary school, and middle school, is basically to encourage the child's growth in the transition from the global to the analytical, from the pre-disciplinary to the disciplinary.

However, music education can hardly take on the characteristics of a discipline and it is equally difficult to plan it rigidly in terms of objectives hierarchically placed in temporal sequences.

It is necessary to imagine a path not intended as a sum of experiences but as a spiral.

The identification of "nodes" as objectives to be kept in mind in programming in a flexible way responds to the need to make the teacher aware of the ability he/she activates in the child with his/her own proposal.

Area of education

Advanced technical skills are not particularly necessary for primary school teachers. However, it is important that they take advantage of the most valuable training opportunities.

Taking into account the initial gap and the need to define a curriculum for Music Education in compulsory school, the best experiences currently being carried out include these fundamental areas of work:

– Experimentation-research which is necessarily based on shared postulates and on provisional operational hypotheses and availability for continuous re-definition.
– Training which is implemented both in the field with the model of the co-presence of a generalist teacher and an expert (who has the role of arousing curiosity in the teacher by urging him/her to enhance his/her own skills and improve them), and in the training situations represented by courses which cannot be short term but provide for at least a two-year continuity, if not for a permanent education.
– These courses aim, first of all, to remove some of the teacher stereotypes regarding music, to develop the acquisition of some technical and grammatical elements of musical language through concrete experiences. In the training courses, the same methodology recognised as valid for children from the global complex to the analytical is adopted with

teachers. It is then up to the teacher to bring his/her own personal experience into the school activity with a specific group of children.

– Documentation. It is important that the teacher's work both in the operational-programmatic field and in that of ongoing training is supported by the possibility of accessing documentation in which everyone collaborates and produces at the end of a work experience. Annual seminars lasting a few days are useful for broadening cultural horizons.

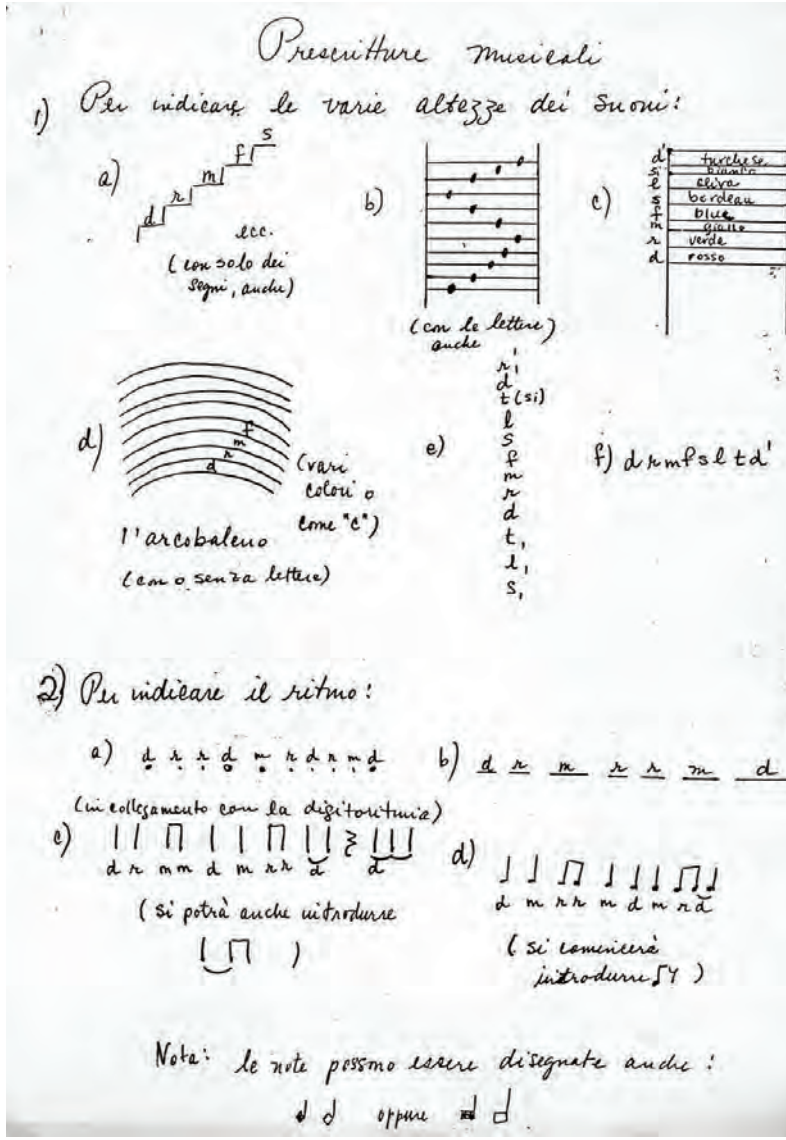
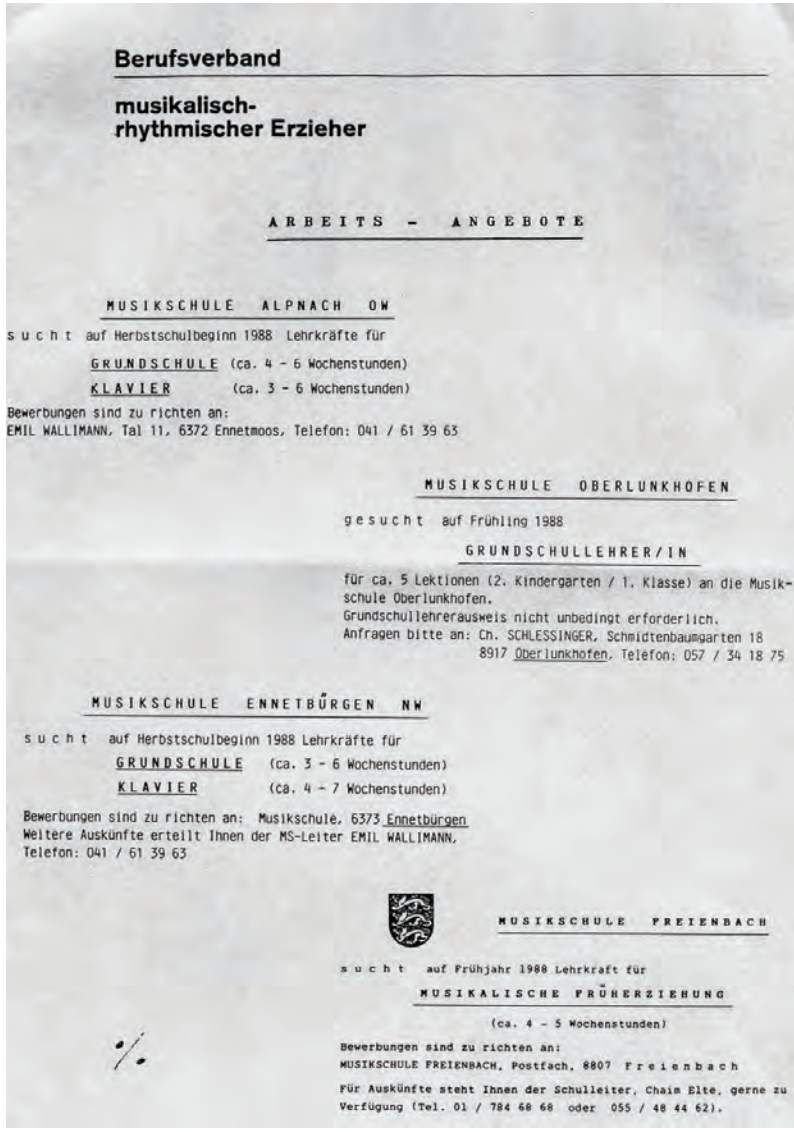


Fig. 1 – *Prescritture musicali* (musical pre-writing), handwritten music materials, presumably used in one of the seminars held at the CEIS (AMZ, envelope 26.A).



Berufsverband

musikalisch-rhythmischer Erzieher

ARBEITS - ANGEBOTE

MUSIKSCHULE ALPNACH OW

sucht auf Herbstschulbeginn 1988 Lehrkräfte für

GRUNDSCHULE (ca. 4 - 6 Wochenstunden)

KLAVIER (ca. 3 - 6 Wochenstunden)

Bewerbungen sind zu richten an:
EMIL WALLIMANN, Tal 11, 6372 Ennetmoos, Telefon: 041 / 61 39 63

MUSIKSCHULE OBERLUNKHOFEN

gesucht auf Frühling 1988

GRUNDSCHULLEHRER/IN

für ca. 5 Lektionen (2. Kindergarten / 1. Klasse) an die Musikschule Oberlunkhofen.
Grundschullehrerausweis nicht unbedingt erforderlich.
Anfragen bitte an: Ch. SCHLESSINGER, Schmidtenbaumgarten 18
8917 Oberlunkhofen, Telefon: 057 / 34 18 75

MUSIKSCHULE ENNETBÜRGEN NW

sucht auf Herbstschulbeginn 1988 Lehrkräfte für

GRUNDSCHULE (ca. 3 - 6 Wochenstunden)

KLAVIER (ca. 4 - 7 Wochenstunden)

Bewerbungen sind zu richten an: Musikschule, 6373 Ennetbürgen
Weitere Auskünfte erteilt Ihnen der MS-Leiter EMIL WALLIMANN,
Telefon: 041 / 61 39 63

MUSIKSCHULE FREIENBACH

sucht auf Frühjahr 1988 Lehrkraft für

MUSIKALISCHE FRÜHERZIEHUNG

(ca. 4 - 5 Wochenstunden)

Bewerbungen sind zu richten an:
MUSIKSCHULE FREIENBACH, Postfach, 8807 Freienbach

Für Auskünfte steht Ihnen der Schulleiter, Chaim Elte, gerne zu Verfügung (Tel. 01 / 784 68 68 oder 055 / 48 44 62).

Fig. 2 – Flyer of the *Berufsverband musikalisch-rhytmischer Erzieher* (Professional verband musical-rhythmic educator) for the Rhythmik/Improvisation seminars, Zurich Conservatory and Music school, 1988/1989 (AMZ, envelope 26).

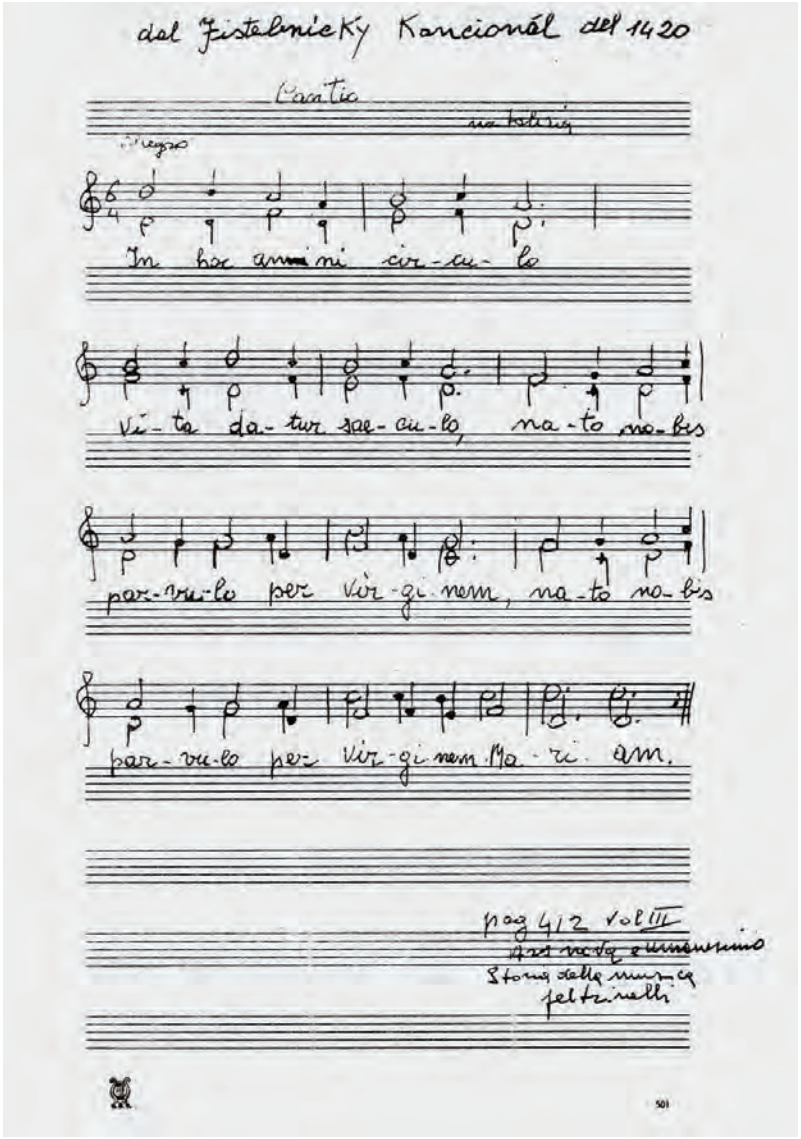
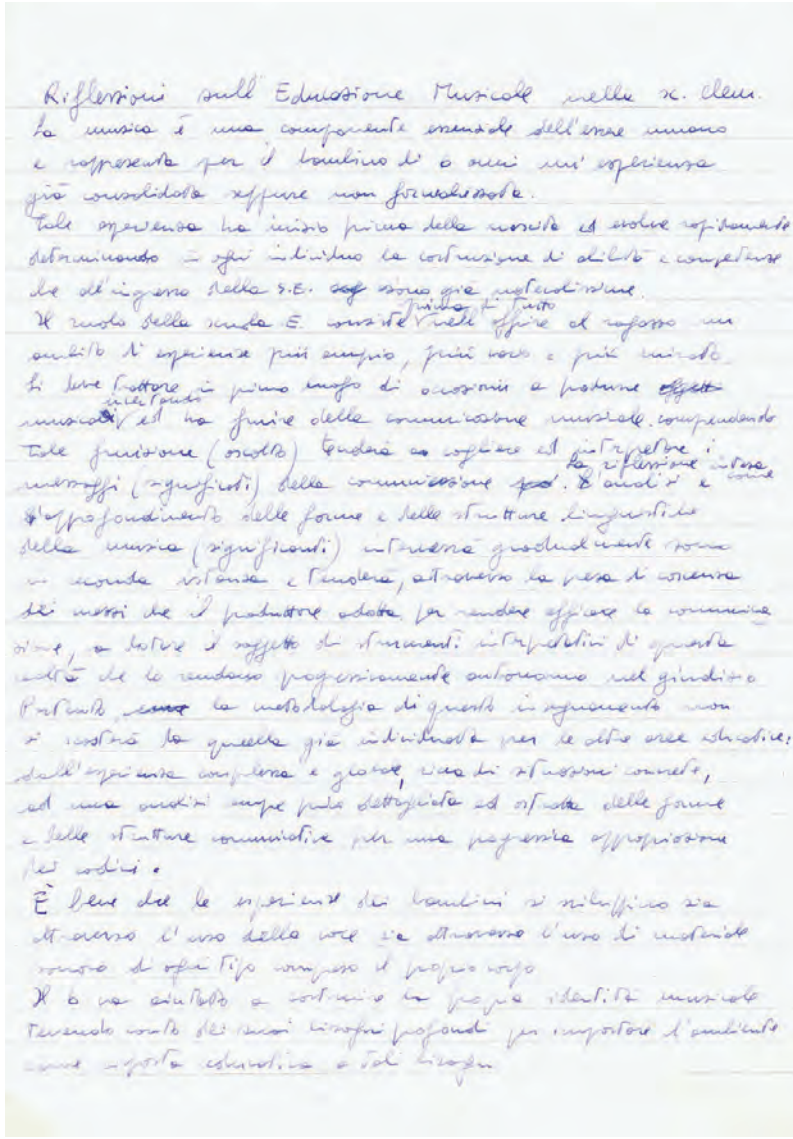


Fig. 3 – Musical score manuscript of *Cantio dal Jistebnický Kancionál* (AMZ, envelope 26.B).



4

Figures 4-7 – Margherita Zoebeli, *Riflessioni sull'educazione musicale nella scuola elementare* (Reflections on music education in primary school), 1988 (ms, AMZ, envelope 26.A).

L'ambito percettivo va considerato non tanto in termini di obiettivi ma come contenuto di ogni situazione esperienziale. L'affinamento delle facoltà percettive è conseguenza della pratica e della immersione nelle esperienze.

Riassumendo queste possono essere riconosciute come funzioni della musica

a) Ampliare le esperienze del bambino nel campo musicale

b) Favorire la riflessione relativa al linguaggio musicale partendo dai significati per accedere ai significanti (cognizione)

c) Favorire l'acquisizione di strumenti interpretativi del reale

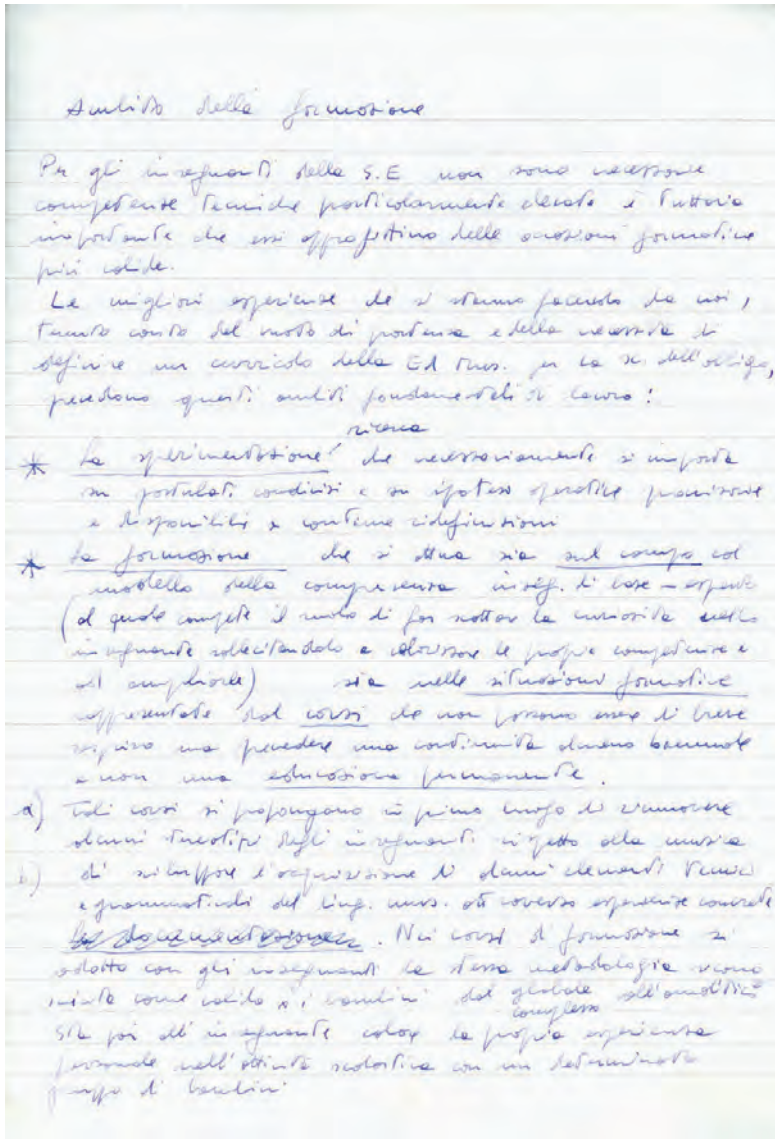
La metodologia indicata assume la complessità del reale come dato di partenza tenendo conto, anche formativamente, che non è possibile prendere in considerazione totalmente tutti i dati sul piano cognitivo.

La funzione specifica della S. E. in un percorso misto in particolare di continuità (scuola dell'Infanzia, Scuola Elementare, Scuola Media) è fondamentalmente quella di favorire la nascita del bambino nel passaggio dal globale all'analitico.

Tuttavia l'Ed. Mus. differentemente può assumere il compito di una disciplina ed è altrettanto difficile programmarla e predisporre in termini di obiettivi generalmente collocati in ambiti temporali.

Occorre immaginare un percorso non misto come accumulazione di esperienze ma come una spirale.

L'individuazione di "nodi" come obiettivi da tenere presenti nella programmazione in modo flessibile risponde all'esigenza di rendere l'insegnante consapevole della abilità da stabilire nel rapporto con la propria proposta



Ambito della formazione

Per gli insegnanti della S.E non sono necessarie competenze particolarmente elevate ma l'attività in particolare che essi affrontino delle occasioni formative più valide.

La migliori esperienze di cui siamo venuti a conoscenza, tenuto conto del vasto di portata e della necessità di definire un curricolo della Ed. Mus. in tutto dell'obbligo, pensiamo quali ambiti fondamentali di lavoro:

ricerca

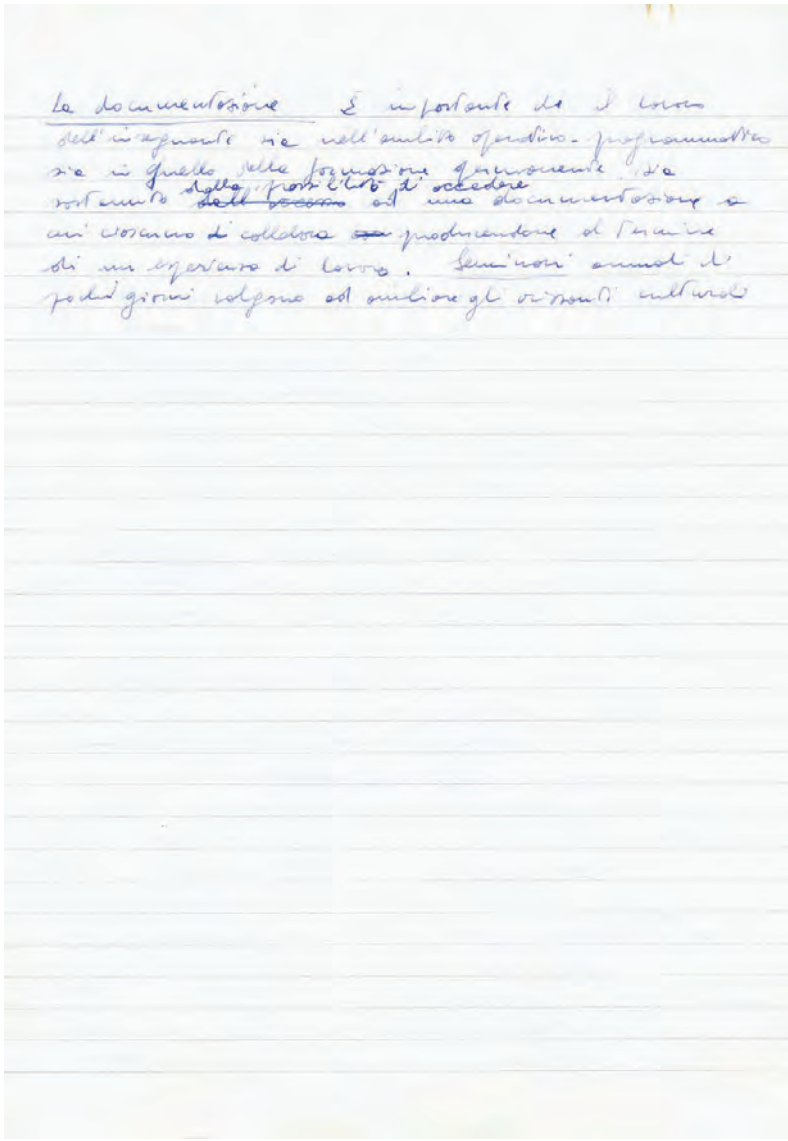
* la sperimentazione dei raccordi curriculari si imposta su particolari condizioni e su ipotesi operative provvisorie e disponibili a continue ridefinizioni

* la formazione che si attua sia sul campo col modello della competenza in ing. di base - esperto (il quale compito il ruolo di far scattare la curiosità nell'insegnante sollecitandolo a elaborare le proprie competenze e ad ampliarle) sia nelle situazioni formative appositamente dai corsi che non possono aver di breve respiro ma prevedere una continuità almeno biennale e non una sperimentazione permanente.

a) Tali corsi si propongono in primo luogo di rimuovere alcuni pregiudizi degli insegnanti in ordine alla musica

b) di sviluppare l'acquisizione di alcuni elementi tecnici e grammaticali del ling. mus. ed inoltre esperienze concrete [illegible]. Nei corsi di formazione si adotta con gli insegnanti la stessa metodologia usata come valido per i bambini dal globale all'analitico [illegible] per poi di insegnare colore la propria esperienza personale nell'attività ricreativa con un determinato gruppo di bambini

6


La documentazione è importante sia il lavoro
dell'insegnante sia nell'ambito specifico-programmatico
sia in quello della formazione generale, sia
sostanzia dalla possibilità di accedere ~~dell'esame~~ ad una documentazione e
ai risultati di collaborazione produttiva di tutte
gli operatori di lavoro. Seminari annuali di
studi giovani volgono ad analizzare gli strumenti culturali

Margherita Zoebeli's point of view. Images and accounts in the documents and pictures of the CEIS archive

Mara Sorrentino

> *To be understood, archives must be seen, touched, smelled, listened to, and in some cases, even tasted, because every type of dust, as anyone who has ever chewed it knows, has its own nuances of taste*[1].

Margherita Zoebeli's papers and the photographic archive of the Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre - CEIS) is kept at the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library - BGR) in Rimini, thanks to an agreement signed on 20 March 2015 between the Library, the Margherita Zoebeli Foundation and the Associazione Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero[2].

The documentation resources include the personal archives of the pedagogist Margherita Zoebeli, born in Zurich on 7 June 1912, and the photographic archives of the CEIS, which she founded in Rimini and directed until 1978 (photographs, test strips, negatives and slide films dating from 1946, the year the Centre was founded, until 1996, the year of Margherita's death). Part of the historical archive of the CEIS was included in Margherita's personal archive and part was destroyed by a flood, while the CEIS library is currently kept in its original location.

The collection also includes the papers collected by the Margherita Zoebeli Foundation, after the death of the Swiss educator[3]. The acquired photographic material has been digitised and catalogued in *Scoprirete*, the public online catalogue of the Universities of Romagna, in which the local libraries

[1] F. Valacchi, *Novecento e non più Novecento*, in L. Pezzica (ed.), *L'archivio liberato. Guida ai fondi storici del Novecento*, Milano, Bibliografica, 2020.

[2] *Convenzione per il deposito a tempo illimitato della Biblioteca CEIS, dell'Archivio fotografico CEIS, dell'Archivio Margherita Zoebeli presso la Biblioteca civica Gambalunga*, 20 March 2015, Municipality of Rimini, ref. n. 54250.

[3] The Foundation was established on Margherita Zoebeli's wish, by testamentary disposition on 16 November 1995 with the aim of promoting study and research in the field of pedagogy and didactics.

of Romagna and San Marino also participate[4]. These documentary resources – which are different from a book or a magazine and for this reason were previously classified as "secondary sources" – are proof of the value of cultural heritage for civilisation and offer those who consult the online catalogue a wide range of search results and heterogeneous information. In order to allow the two archives, the iconographic and the documentary one, to communicate when consulting the catalogue, a tree structure description has been created in *Scoprirete* that links the two archives to a single archive called the "CEIS Fund"[5].

The documentary archive consists of 46 envelopes containing various types of material (letters, minutes, notes, typewritten and handwritten reports by Margherita and her collaborators, diaries and personal documents, press cuttings, pamphlets and periodicals) and a suitcase containing the personal documents of Gabriella Seidenfeld Maier, Barbara's sister, and Margherita's right-hand woman. Of the six original series, already identified by the contemporary historian Carlo De Maria[6], *Scoprirete* offers a brief description of the files and envelopes.

The first series *Corrispondenza* (Correspondence), envelopes 1-5, collects the letters sent to Margherita, 628 documentary units, dated between 1940 and 1996. Among the senders are important pedagogists, such as Lamberto Borghi, Ernesto Codignola, Francesco De Bartolomeis, Rita Fasolo, intellectuals and writers such as Liliano Faenza and Gianni Rodari, and associations like as Centri di Esercitazione ai Metodi dell'Educazione Attiva (Active Education Methods Training Centres, CEMEA) and Fédération internationale des communautés d'enfants (International Federation of

[4] Online research tools are the catalogue *Scoprirete* (https://scoprirete.bibliotecheromagna.it) and the Library's web page dedicated to the CEIS Archive and to Margherita Zoebeli's personal archive (https://bibliotecagambalunga.it/archivio-fotografico/fondi-fotografici/archivio-fotografico-ceis).

[5] Both archives are accompanied by the original inventory of the CEIS photographic archive, *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario* (Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory). Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero, 1995 (typewritten cyclostyled version, 90 p.) and the inventory of the archive of Margherita Zoebeli's papers published in C. De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini*, Roma, Viella, 2015. Another valuable tool, although not complete, is the inventory *Documenti del CEIS*, handwritten by Margherita Zoebeli and probably by one of her collaborators, in four notebooks for the period between June 1945 and February 1950, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis. Quaderni di appunti sulla storia del CEIS. 1945-1950* (Documents and correspondence on CEIS, Notebooks on the history of CEIS, 1945-1950), AMZ, envelope 18.

[6] De Maria, *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero di Rimini*, cit., Appendix 2, pp. 193-225.

Children's Communities, FICE). Envelopes 6 and 7 contain Margherita's letters, 44 documentary units, handwritten or typewritten, dated between 1946 and 1993; these are supplemented by the documents attached to envelope 6, i.e. 284 letters sent to her brother Ernst, which he donated to the Foundation. Envelope 7 contains documents and letters from the time of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) exchanged with Raffaele Laporta, Aldo Pettini, Gastone Tassinari, but also documents relating to the award of an Honorary Degree in Education to Margherita by the University of Bologna (23 January 1989) and a Commendation for her work in the field of education by the then President of the Italian Republic Oscar Luigi Scalfaro (19 July 1993). Envelope 8 contains letters from former CEIS students and trainees, correspondence from Gabriella and Barbara Seidenfeld and correspondence between Elisabetta Dubach and Daniele Doglio. Envelope 9 contains the correspondence of Margherita with the CEIS children.

The second series *Scritti e appunti* (Writings and notes), envelopes 10-12, contains public speeches, preparatory notes for training courses for educators, press drafts, interviews and other speeches. The third series *Atti e carteggi relativi all'attività svolta con il SOS* (Writings and notes on the activities with SOS), envelope 13, documents Margherita's activities before her arrival in Rimini, documents and photographs on the Spanish Civil War and the political refugees in Barcelona. The fourth series *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), envelopes 14-19, contains the administrative documentation of CEIS between 1945 and 1996 (minutes of meetings, relations between the CEIS and the University of Bologna, bibliographical material for the study of the history of the CEIS). In particular, envelope 18, contains material relating to the SEPEG conference of 1947, and 1948, conferences that brought together pedagogists, educators, doctors and psychologists. The aim of these conferences was to present the most noteworthy foreign and Italian innovations in children medical-educational and psycho-psychiatrics, starting with the interdisciplinary study of the complex situation of children traumatised by war[7].

[7] The SEPEG conferences (*Semaines Internationales des études pour l'Enfance victime de la Guerre*), supported by the Swiss Donation Organisation, were a great success from the first meeting, held in Zurich from 10 to 22 September 1945, with the participation of scholars from 18 different countries. Among the Italian representatives was Ernesto Codignola, who had founded the "Scuola-Città Pestalozzi" in Florence at the end of 1944, an example of a "new school". From 8 to 13 April 1946, at the request of Antonio Greppi, a SEPEG was organised in Milan, in which many Italian speakers participated alongside a team of Swiss specialists. The third SEPEG conference (the first in Rimini) was held from 4 to 15 May 1947 with the help of the Centro Pedagogico in Milan, thanks to the delegate of the Swiss Donation Organisation in Italy, Ornella Baragiola. She invited

The fifth series *Carte diverse* (Miscellaneous Papers), envelopes 20-24, contains personal documents, diaries, notebooks and telephone directories. The sixth series, *Appendici all'archivio fotografico* (Appendices to the Photographic Archive), envelope 25, contains the photographic material on Margherita's youth experience with her brother Ernst, in the association "Falken Kinderfreunde", founded in 1929 as a result of their activity in the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation[8].

There are also six archive envelopes containing various materials: documents collected by the Foundation from 1998 onwards, correspondence with Virgilio Galassi, papers and documents from 1982 and 1983 on the project in Nicaragua, where Margherita went in her seventies to contribute to the professional training of special school teachers. The rich documentation of the archive is completed by a collection of articles and press cuttings, dating from 1946 to 1996, catalogued in *Scoprirete* and partly digitised[9].

The photographic archive of the CEIS contains over 16,000 images, divided into four archival series according to the type of medium. The first series *Negativi* (Negatives) includes 4,492 images on film, grouped in 177 thematic series, inventoried and arranged chronologically in two folders (years 1949-1966 and 1965-1992). The second series *Diapositive* (Transparencies) contains 3,374 images on film enclosed in plastic frames (years 1946-1995), grouped in 62 thematic series inventoried in 12 alphabetically arranged folders; each thematic group is preceded by a brief description, which was also included in the original typewritten inventory[10]. The third series *Fotografie* (Photographs) includes 5,540 photographic prints produced between 1946 and 1996. The photographs are stored in 10 ring binders (3,067 photographs), 12 non-edition albums (1,405 photographs) and 3 archival envelopes (1,068 loose photographs). The photographs in the 10

around 40 experts in the field of care and education to Rimini to discuss active schooling and cooperation between children and educators, a cooperation that was embodied in an exhibition organised during the conference. The second Rimini SEPEG was held from 3 to 13 May 1948 and saw the participation of 88 scholars who discussed the issue of difficult children *Résumé de l'activité des SEPEG en 1946* and *La settimana riminese delle SEPEG*, typewritten reports, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis. Documenti delle SEPEG* (Writings and notes on CEIS. Documents of SEPEGs, 1947-1948, AMZ, envelope 18.

[8] Album *Photos Falken Kinderfreunde Ivegung*, 1930-1934, 57 photographs, in AMZ, envelope 25, file 1.

[9] *Articles on CEIS, July 1946-July 1996* (in AMZ, 1st ring binder).

[10] *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario* (Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory), Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero, Rimini, 1995, Slides-Comments, pp. 15-55. The slides had a didactic purpose: they were used to explain the CEIS educational method in teacher training courses. Some slides from the courses on dyslexia and the history of CEIS were found in the original cassettes, ready for projection.

ring binders are grouped into 62 thematic series, inventoried and arranged in chronological order, often with the corresponding negative number, title and date, noted down by Margherita or her staff. Many of the photographs have traces of glue on the back, indications of measurements and handwritten annotations of a didactic nature, suggesting that they were probably taken to present the Centre's activities at conferences or lectures. The *Fotografie* (Photographs) series includes 12 non-editorial photo albums: the album entitled *Costruzione e primi anni di vita del Centro* (Construction of the centre and its early years) (169 photographs dating from 1946 to 1974); the album entitled *Le prime feste nel Centro* (The first events at the Centre) *1948-1951* (81 photographs), which actually contains photographs taken between 1951 and 1968; a green canvas album entitled *Foto varie del CEIS* (Miscellaneous photographs of the CEIS), *1946-1963* (115 photographs); 3 albums that make up the *Raccolta foto di Decio Camera* (Decio Camera's Photographic Collection), 3 folders with movable cardboard pages containing 88, 84 and 140 photographs respectively, dated between 1946 and 1963; the album entitled *Giardino d'Infanzia* (Kindergarten)*, 1949* by the photographer Ernst Koehli (146 photographs); the album entitled *Rimini* (divided into 2 ring binders containing 84 and 81 photographs respectively, copies of photographs from Ernst Koehli's album); the album entitled *Gomberto Bordoni* (26 photographs dated 1951); the album entitled *Centre social Rimini* (Social Centre Rimini)*, 1946*, with the title on the back *Foto Italia Rimini* (Photos Italia Rimini), 336 photographs dated between 1946 and 1951; the album entitled *Margherita Zoebeli* and *Giuseppe Gori* (29 photographs taken by Giorgio Villa in 1966); and an album dedicated to teacher Anna Arlotti (26 photographs dated 1961-1984). The 1,068 photographs found loose in cardboard and aluminium boxes have been placed in conservation envelopes numbered from envelope 001 to envelope 002; envelope 003 contains photographs by Werner Bischof, shown in an exhibition in Switzerland in 2015. The fourth series *Provini* (Test strips) collect 3,006 contact sheets dating from 1955 to 1986, grouped in 67 thematic series inventoried in 2 folders (years 1955-1959 and 1960-1986). About 786 test strips, divided into 14 photo shoots, dated from 1955 and 1967, come from the studio of the Bolognese photographer Decio Camera[11].

[11] Decio Camera was often present in the village because he was married to Franca Cenni, secretary of the CEIS and sister-in-law of the architect Carlo Doglio, Margherita's collaborator and coordinator of a project on summer schools in 1979 (R. Mazzanti, Qualche cosa di Carlo Doglio a Bologna dal 1970 al 1995, 26 November 2014, published in https://www.inchiestaonline.it/editoriali/raffaele-mazzanti-qualche-cosa-di-carlo-doglio-a-bologna-dal-1970-al-1995/, last accessed: 19 April 2024 and handwritten notes on a loose sheet in AMZ, non-inventoried envelope).

The reasons for documenting the history of the CEIS and its activities through the photographic lens, from the very beginning, are partly described in the introduction to the inventory of the photographic archive[12] and partly implicitly expressed by the "traces" that can be found on the pictures themselves. Many of the photographs documenting Rimini in the immediate post-war period and the early years of the CEIS bear the stamp of the SAH, the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation (SOS), which provided aid to war-torn countries from 1944 onwards. As early as 1944, SOS was already active in the countries hardest hit by the Second World War and wanted to give the Swiss people an account of the many humanitarian initiatives it had undertaken with the financial support of organisations and individuals. Pictures were needed to document the condition of the war-affected population and to accompany the regular reports sent to SOS so that it could study and plan interventions. The first photographs showed children playing in the rubble (Fig. 1). The problem of orphans arose immediately and the kindergarten was set up within the community centre, a reception centre for the population. Some pictures were sent to UNESCO headquarters in Paris on request, others were published in socialist newspapers such as the Zurich newspaper «Volksrecht» and the monthly bulletin «Not und Hilfe» of the *Oeuvre Suisse d'Entraide Ouvrière* (Swiss Workers' Mutual Aid Society - OSEO)[13]. Photojournalists and military correspondents were sent from Switzerland, such as Hans Staub and Hermann Freytag (photos from 1946), Werner Bischof (photos from 1947), Ernst Koehli (photos from 1949), Photopress Zurich[14] (photos from around 1946 to 1954).

Many Italian photographers were also present at CEIS, such as Tullio Farabola (photos from 1946), Angelo Moretti and Davide Minghini (photos from 1950 to 1980), Poggi Photoreporter and Decio Camera (photos from 1955 to 1967), Calogero Cascio (photos from 1966) and Marco Pesaresi (photos from the late 1980s). This rich photographic production was used to record the activities that took place inside and outside the barracks, and to plan future one, from manual work to parties, from vocational training courses to visits by educational experts. Finally, pictures were used for ex-

[12] *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario* (Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory), cit., p. 2.

[13] *Articles on CEIS, July 1946-July 1996,* cit.

[14] E. Descoeudres, *Au soleil de Rimini. La Centre pédagogique italo-suisse poursuit une bienfaisante et féconde activité*, in «Cooperation», n. 26 (1954). The article includes some pictures from the CEIS photo story by Photopress Zurich in which Jean Richard Samuel Werner, president of the "Pro Rimini" association, was also present (see also AMZ, CEI-0253, photo 025 to photo 069, photo series including the cover picture of this book).

hibition purposes: as early as 1947, a travelling exhibition entitled *Noi aiutiamo* (We help) was organised on behalf of SOS, with photographs by Werner Bischof[15]. Two important didactic exhibitions were held in Rimini, the first in 1957, in the Sala delle Colonne, during the pedagogical conference introduced by Lamberto Borghi, and the second in 1976, on the occasion of the celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the CEIS.

1. A flower in the devastated city

> *Rimini: a vast expanse of rubble, the skeletons of houses sadly raising the stumps of their crumbling walls to the sky, gigantic twisted and rusted iron pipes, dust, stones and mud. Everywhere, the desolation of the ruins: it seems almost like a dead city, pitifully trying to salvage some vestige of its past beauty*[16].

A typewritten report, found among the miscellaneous papers of the CEIS, describes the state of Rimini in the first months of 1946 as seen by Margherita and the members of the Swiss team sent by SOS to help the war-affected population[17] (Figs. 2-4). Between 1 November 1943 and 4 January 1945, the city had suffered 388 air raids and, at the end of the conflict, 30,000 of its 50,000 inhabitants were homeless: 90 per cent of the buildings had been damaged[18]. Families of ten to twelve people were forced to live without

[15] The travelling exhibition *So Helfen Wir* by Werner Bischof, together with other pictures of his taken in Greece, Poland, Hungary and Germany showed the life of the children at CEIS in the post-war years, see M. Castiglioni et al. (eds.), *Una scuola una città. Il centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1991, p. 47.

[16] M. Cammeo [Boschamm], *Impressioni sul Giardino di Infanzia Italo-Svizzero di Rimini* (Impressions on the Italian-Swiss Kindergarten of Rimini), typewritten report, dated around March 1946, when the first three wooden barracks were built, in *Miscellanea*. *Relazioni sul CEIS*, AMZ, envelope 30.

[17] *Ibidem*.

[18] In a report sent to Zurich, Margherita Zoebeli describes the suffering of the inhabitants of Rimini: «We met a population mostly dressed in khaki or grey-green clothes made from the fabric of military uniforms. The majority of the population lived in basements, in primitive shelters in the rubble, or crammed into the few buildings spared by the war. Children played in the rubble of destroyed houses, the poor collected bricks and young people danced the "boogie-woogie". The black market, prostitution and crime prevailed in a city that lacked the most basic things like clothes, food, building materials, etc.», see CEIS, *Al nostro villaggio*, 1995, p. 5, pamphlet in *Scritti e appunti. Pubblicazioni contenenti interviste, discorsi e scritti di Margherita Zoebeli* (Writings and notes.

water, light or gas in the only room of the house that had not been completely destroyed. The first wooden barracks from Switzerland, some of them already assembled, gave hope to the population, and workers were hard at work around them. As if behind a camera, the author of the report, Mariarosa Cammeo, whose surname is indecipherable, recounts a typical working day in the construction of the barracks using materials from Switzerland. There is no information about Mariarosa, who was probably not one of Margherita's first collaborators, eight in all, who belonged to the left wing of the the labour movement[19]. The members of the team are listed by Mariarosa herself: the workers Alberto Panizzi and Brenno Ludovici; Barbara Seidenfeld, who, together with Margherita, coordinated the work and solved the most difficult paperwork; the architect Felix Schwarz, who was in charge of studying the layout of the barracks; Emmy Mathys, who organised the work in the infirmary; Vrenj Thalmann, who delivered the long lists of needy people to the town hall; Gretel and Klara (Clara Weber), who took care of the kitchen, the shopping and the cleaning of the storehouse.

> It is a return to life that seems like the beginning of the end of a nightmare – writes Mariarosa – After dinner, there is no shortage of visitors. Boys, girls, laughter, stories, songs, more or less political discussions, projects. Suddenly the tiredness disappears as Nini, the baker, tells one of his amusing military anecdotes. Sometimes an interpreter is needed, because Romagnolo is a dialect that is very pleasant to listen to, but not very understandable […] That's enough boys, we have work to do in the morning. I closed my eyes and I could already see a group of laughing children playing and chasing each other along the shady and flowery paths of the kindergarten[20].

The village rising from the rubble seemed to them like «a flower in the devastated city»[21].

The story of Margherita and her arrival in Rimini is told by the many reports in her archive. In the years of the Great Depression, and in particular, of the great industrial crisis in the Swiss watchmaking industry (1930-1932), various workers' organisations began to help the children of the unemployed

Publications containing interviews, speeches and writings by Margherita Zoebeli), AMZ, envelope 12.

[19] Note dated 7 January 1946, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al CEIS* (Writings and notes on CEIS), Notebooks on the history of CEIS, 1st notebook 1946-1947, AMZ.

[20] A. Preziosi, *Un fiore nella città sventrata: il "Centro sociale" di Rimini. Nel villaggio del Soccorso svizzero sorto dalla solidarietà e dal lavoro degli operai, 160 bambini ritrovano la vita*, article in «Avanti», 19 August 1946, in *Articoli sul CEIS* (Articles on CEIS), *July 1946-July 1996*, AMZ, inv. n. ZOE 39.

[21] *Ibidem.*

and to set up schools for the vocational retraining of workers seeking new employment. With these aims in mind, the SOS (Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation) was founded in 1936. Its activities soon expanded to support the fight against Fascism and Nazism, and it created a network of contacts and aid for political refugees, Jews and non-Jews, and the families of those persecuted during the Spanish Civil War[22]. After the Second World War, SOS carried out solidarity actions in various European countries in favour of people affected by the war[23]. The organisation was coordinated by Regina Kägi-Fuchsmann, co-founder in 1944 of the *Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten* (Swiss Donation for the Victims of War), which brought together various human solidarity organisations, including SOS, Caritas and the Swiss Red Cross. The Swiss Donation Organisation, which also collected donations at national level, organised its activities through a fund[24]. This included the supply of furniture for the medical and surgical wards of the Rimini Hospital. In the area of Covignano, it was also proposed to build a hospital made up of wooden barracks, but fully equipped, but since there was opposition to this project, it was decided to build a "Community Centre"[25]. Thanks to the initial contribution of the Swiss Donation Organisation, the project of the Community Centre was launched in 1945[26]. The socialists Arturo Clari and

[22] The Socialist Party, the Swiss Trade Union Federation and several groups of socialist women (the *Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation and the Swiss Donation Organisation*), typewritten draft in *Scritti e appunti, Bozze di stampa* (Writings and notes, Proofs), are members of SOS, in AMZ, envelope 12.

[23] SOS's methods of intervention are described in a typewritten document dated 7 November 1944, in *Atti e carteggi relativi all'attività svolta con il SOS* (Writings and notes on SOS), years 1944-1948, AMZ, envelope 13.

[24] The Swiss and Italian radio station "La catena della Felicità" was also used to raise funds for the institutions that cared for children who were victims of the war (Zoebeli Margherita, typewritten letter to R. Hausmann, Rimini 14 March 1949, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), years 1949-1953, AMZ, envelope 14.

[25] The Schweizer Spende an die Kriegsgeschädigten (Swiss Donation for the Victims of War) could have sent 200 beds and a "barracks hospital" measuring 32x6.50 metres for maternity care. These requests were discussed at a meeting between the mayor, Arturo Clari, the representatives of the Swiss Donation Organisation, Dr Peneveyre and Dr Strojewki, the representative of the Istituti Ospedalieri e di Ricovero Fernando Cessaroli, the chief physicians Achille Sega and Luigi Silvestrini, and the sanitary officer Guido Nanni, who also asked for a 50-bed barrack to be used as an infectious disease ward (typewritten report dated 10 December 1945, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), years 1945-1948, AMZ, envelope 14 and *The history of the CEIS*, typewritten report delivered to Professor Matteini, in December 1973, in *Miscellanea* (Miscellaneous), AMZ, envelope 29.

[26] *Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation and Swiss Donation Organisation*, typewritten draft for publication, P. Meldini and A. Turchini (ed.), *Storia illustrata di Rimini e del*

Gomberto Bordoni, mayor and deputy mayor of Rimini respectively, approached Antonio Greppi – mayor of Milan, who had been in contact with the SOS for some time, in particular with Guglielmo Canescivini, a socialist deputy from Ticino – to obtain aid for the people of Rimini, who had been tragically affected by the numerous air raids. Aware of the tragic situation in the city, a meeting was organised in Rimini in June 1945 between the municipal authorities and an SOS delegation led by Gabriella Maier, the secretary of the Geneva Chamber of Labour and the editor of «Avanti». It was decided to build a kindergarten and organise a community centre for children and adults. To design and implement the project, SOS commissioned a team led by Margherita Zoebeli, a teacher from Zurich, who had already provided humanitarian aid for SOS in Spain (1937-1938), in Val d'Ossola (1944) and in Saint-Etienne (1945) (Figs. 5-6). In a letter dated 27 October 1945, Gomberto Bordoni formalised the invitation to Margherita to come to Rimini to organise the construction of the Centre, and asked the authorities to facilitate her arrival in Italy[27]. In the letter, Bordoni defines the city as "wretched" and emphasises the condition of the children who lacked clothes and bread at home[28]. Margherita arrived in Rimini on 17 December 1945, after an arduous journey by train and then by bus. It took her two days to reach Bologna; from there, she was accompanied by a manager of the Emilia area cooperatives, who drove her to Rimini, as she recounts in an interview with Raffaele Laporta[29]. In her personal luggage, besides food and clothes, there were about thirty books, ranging from children's stories to texts on musical education, in particular on the construction and use of the recorder, texts on

*Rimines*e, Città di San Marino, AIEP, 1987, in *Scritti e appunti. Bozze di stampa* (Writings and notes. Proofs), AMZ, envelope 12.

[27] G. Bordoni, typewritten letter to Margherita Zoebeli, Rimini, 27 October 1945, ref. n. 12592, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al CEIS* (Writings and notes on CEIS) *1945-1948*, AMZ, envelope 14.

[28] G. Bordoni, letter to Margherita Zoebeli cit. and technical report enclosed in Bordoni Gomberto, typewritten letter to Gabriella Maier, Rimini, 4 December 1945, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS) *1945-1948*, AMZ, envelope 14. The technical report shows that on the site of the former Castelfidardo barracks, which was partly covered by rubble, the entire gas system had been destroyed and there was no electricity. It was difficult to find materials to distribute light and water to the individual barracks. It was only two months later, on 1 February 1946, that the Municipal Council decided to allocate 2,980,000 lire for the renovation of the barracks school, for the fencing of the area, for water, sewerage and electric lighting services, and for gardening work, in CEIS notes in chronological order, envelope *Materiali sciolti* (Loose materials), AMZ, not-inventoried envelope.

[29] *Colloquio tra Margherita Zoebeli e Raffaele Laporta*, in Castiglioni et al. (eds.), *Una scuola una città*, cit., pp. 11-46.

learning manual skills, such as folding paper or making wooden toys, manuals on outdoor play, but also texts on psychoanalysis[30]. During the construction of the barracks, in the early winter months, Margherita was a guest of the Bordoni family, while the architect Felix Schwarz and Alberto Panizzi, who were part of the team, were guests of Father Giovanni Borghesi of the Church of Santa Rita[31].

The Community Centre project, which had already been developed in Switzerland by Schwarz and Margherita between the summer and December of 1945, was strongly influenced by socialist ideas. It envisaged a village of 13 barracks, with individual and collective indoor and outdoor spaces, to promote an anti-authoritarian and democratic educational environment. A telegram was sent to the Archaeological Heritage Office in Bologna, asking for permission to build the barracks on the land next to the remains of the Roman amphitheatre, in an area that had been completely destroyed by the war[32]. The city removed the rubble and provided the necessary connections for the "Keilverschluss"[33] to function, while SOS and the Swiss Donation Organisation provided the building materials. When the barracks arrived at by railway, they had to be guarded, otherwise everything would have disappeared. «Everyone needed everything!», said Schwarz in an interview in 2002[34]. On the morning of 6 January 1946, the material arrived at Rimini station in wagon n. 7471242, the first of thirty wagons that were to transport 2,753 quintals of essential goods and building materials from Switzerland between 6 January and 11 April 1946[35]. The goods were unloaded in the cloister of the church of Santa Rita.

[30] Luggage content list for Margherita Zoebeli, typewritten, Zurich, 12 December 1945, in AMZ, *Corrispondenza*. *Appendici* (Correspondence. Appendices), AMZ, envelope 7.

[31] Handwritten transcriptions of the interview with Schwarz by H. Dubach in Zurich on 19 March 2002, in *Cart diverse* (Various documents), AMZ, envelope 2, published in E. Dubach et al. (eds.), *Lo spazio che educa*, cit., pp. 29-48.

[32] CEIS notes in chronological order, handwritten, in AMZ, envelope *Materiali scioli* (Loose materials), non-inventoried envelope.

[33] The term, referring to military barracks, appears in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), Notebooks on the history of CEIS. 1945-1950, AMZ, envelope 18, 1st Notebook 1946-1947.

[34] Handwritten transcriptions of the interview with architect Felix Schwarz, cit.

[35] On 6 January, a meeting was held between the Rimini and the Zurich delegation, at which architect Schwarz presented the plan for barracks site (CEIS notes in chronological order, handwritten, in envelope *Materiali sciolti* (Loose materials), AMZ, non-inventoried envelope.

> But the nails were missing – Schwarz recalls – we asked the British, the occupying forces, and they treated us very badly… There was a huge German prison camp in Viserba, perhaps 50,000 prisoners. They were guarded by the British and the Poles. Of course there was also the black market in Rimini. Earlier we had tried to get nails on the black market, but it was not possible. The British treated us and behaved very badly. From time to time, we needed a motor vehicle, but it was hard to get one! The people of Rimini had very little say in such matters with the occupying forces. The Americans were in Cattolica […]. It was very difficult to get material from Switzerland. We had very few tools. There were no saws, no electric drills[36].

Despite the difficulties, the first barrack was set up on 28 January 1946. Schwarz writes:

> The large deserted plot of land given to us for construction, full of ruins and bomb holes, sown by tanks and with piles of unexploded shells, destroyed our illusion of finding a few trees and some greenery on the ground. The preparation work for the 13 barracks took two months, the water pipes were missing[37].

Talking about the inauguration of the village, on 1st May 1946, he continued:

> The bishop said that it was not the result of a Swiss donation, but of a donation from the Holy Spirit, and we were equally modest in saying that the Holy Spirit manifested itself very clearly in our tired legs[38].

In September of the same year, the barracks were painted and the roofs covered, thanks to a donation of 10,000 tiles from UNRRA[39]. The purpose of the newly built centre was to introduce the principles of democratic education in a kindergarten for children aged 3 to 6, in a country where the methods of the Italian physician and educator Maria Montessori were com-

[36] Handwritten transcriptions of the interview with architect Felix Schwarz, cit.

[37] F. Schwarz, *La solidarietà dei lavoratori con i lavoratori*, typewritten, 1947 (in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), 1945-1948, AMZ, envelope 14.

[38] *Ibidem*.

[39] United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), an international organisation set up on 9 November 1943, with headquarters in Washington, which aimed to provide economic and civil aid to countries severely damaged by the war.

pletely unknown. The centre also had a cultural purpose, which was achieved by opening a library (Figs. 7-8) and organising exhibitions and conferences[40].

The Community Centre initially distributed items and equipment donated by SOS and the Swiss Donation Organisation, mainly blankets, food, clothing, crockery, furniture, and provided public showers[41]. The public showers were open every Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, provided hot water at a cost of 40 lire and were open to workers and young students[42].

The plight of the families affected by the war in Rimini is documented in the reports written for SOS by the Swiss delegates, who, through surveys and questionnaires filled in after home visits, provided the names of those most in need. Among these reports is a moving description written in German by a Swiss SOS worker entitled *I primi due giorni a Rimini*[43]. The unsigned document is dated 9 March 1946, just over two months after Margherita's arrival in Rimini. It was Sunday morning, an important day, says the Swiss delegate, because that was when the barracks furniture arrived, in particular the beds that replaced the straw mattresses.

[40] The library was stocked with works on psychology and pedagogy that could also be consulted by external teachers (*Giardino d'infanzia italo-svizzero,* typewritten report, 1 March 1949, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), years 1949-1953, AMZ, envelope 14) and an alphabetical list of 260 books for children and adolescents by author, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), Documents on SEPEGs, 1947-1948, AMZ, envelope 18). On the updating of the CEIS library see Zoebeli Margherita, *Biblioteca, nuovi acquisti feb. 1972*, handwritten list, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), Bibliographical indications for the study of CEIS and various bibliographies, AMZ, envelope 19.

[41] The 6 military barracks alone cost 175,399 francs, a sum provided by the Swiss Donation Organisation: 73,000 francs for interior furnishings, beds, sinks, and kitchen; over 30,000 francs for non-perishable food (powdered milk, canned soup, chocolate), as well as cutlery, plates, glasses, baskets, staff salaries and insurance for six months, totalling 363,439 francs. A total of 470,000 Swiss francs was earmarked for the project (Cost estimates of the Swiss Donation Organisation, typewritten documents dated Berne, 20, 27-28-29 December 1945, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), years 1945-1948, AMZ, envelope 14.

[42] The showers had eight separate cabins and a communal shower. It was not possible to issue free vouchers for the less well-off, as the 40 lire were barely enough to cover the costs of coal, wood and the shower staff themselves (*Relazione sull'attività del Centro sociale italo-svizzero di Rimini durante l'inverno 1946-47*, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), years 1945-1948, AMZ envelope 14.

[43] *Die ersten zwei Tage in Rimini*, 9 March 1946, typewritten report by a member of the SOS team (in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), years 1945-1948, AMZ, envelope 14.

> Everyone – he says – was looking forward to the evening when we could sleep in real beds. He describes the scene he saw when he arrived in Rimini: I could not see a whole house around me. All I could see was rubble, ruins and debris. How terrible it must have been to be confronted with such devastation. I cannot imagine. How many people were left with nothing because of this terrible war, how many people lost their lives, how many children were orphaned![44].

The hard work of visiting the houses began, and that day he entered three of them. In the first, a small, well-dressed woman was willing to answer his questions. In the kitchen there was a small stove in one corner of the room; the only furniture was a bench, a broken chair and a table on which the family's belongings were piled up: a few cups, a few plates, a frying pan and some tins. Upstairs were two iron beds for the grandmother, the mother and the two children. The two children looked at him with hungry eyes, drinking a trickle of soup from a bowl that was now almost empty. «The woman – the SOS worker wrote – said to me, as if to apologise, it wasn't always like this! Poor woman, I like to think that you used to live differently!» In the second house lived a family of nine, six children, the youngest only three months old, the grandmother and the mother. Between them they had 2 cups, 3 plates and 3 spoons. «I no longer wondered how they did it because now I knew there were many like them», he said at the end of his sixth visit. In the third house, a young girl laid in bed, sick, probably with tuberculosis. There was great sadness on her face. Water was running down the walls of the room, pooling on the floor and seeping into a hole. «I have never seen such misery and I had to stop myself from crying». This is how the Swiss worker concluded his dramatic account. The written accounts are complemented by the photographs in the albums and binders of the CEIS archive, showing almost completely destroyed houses (Fig. 9); what was left inside could only be imagined without these reports[45].

[44] *Ibidem.*

[45] The reports or "direct enquiries" based on home visits were used to identify the most urgent cases to be assisted, taking into account economic, health and moral conditions. Some of these were published, such as the report published in the Bulletin «Not und Hilfe», written at the beginning of 1947 and entitled *Il servizio sociale. Dal Centro cerchiamo di alleviare la miseria riminese.* The story is in German, written by a Swiss team worker in the historic centre of Rimini. «The street was dark and wet. A light rain was falling. We cautiously made our way through potholes and puddles on our bicycles. Corso Augusto, Rimini's main street – probably named in memory of Caesar – was full of people. What are they all doing here at 2 p.m.? These people do not work here, they live here, they meet their friends, they argue, they sing, sometimes they quarrel: they are on the street almost all day. For most of them the house, the flat, is not a refuge. We en-

Following the home visits, requests for assistance were made for children from needy families or orphans. Requests for assistance could also be made by the elderly, by the Centre's staff and by the relief workers involved in the reconstruction of the village, by the railway workers, by widows and large families of laid-off railway workers, tuberculosis patients, the unemployed, and private, civil and religious institutions. Requests were made for food, furniture, clothes, linen, shoes, crockery, woollen blankets, and tools for bricklayers and metal workers. The applications were assessed by a special committee made up of the municipal school doctor, a social worker, the doctor of the care and welfare centre, by the tuberculosis outpatient clinic and the tuberculosis and social hygiene dispensary for tuberculosis represented by Dr Iorio, by members of the Liberation Committee, by the local welfare and care office, ECA, the Ente Comunale di Assistenza (Municipal Assistance Agency), by the Internal Railway Workshop Commission, by the Winter Aid Committee of the Municipality of Rimini, by the Rimini Student's Benevolent Fund for Large Families, by the provisional board of di-

tered a large, dark house on the main street. The cardboard boxes placed in front of the doors and the laundry laid out on the line showed that people live here. A draught came through the holes in the windows, it smelled damp – I was freezing. We climbed the broken and worn steps to the top floor. The ceiling above me was in pieces. The few remaining tiles could be seen through the thatch. The sack that replaced the curtain and window pane let in very little light. An old woman's voice came from the dim light. She pushed the curtain aside. The only piece of furniture in the middle of the room was an iron bed. There was a large hole in the ceiling. The bed was more or less intact. The woman slept on a dark mattress, with only a cotton blanket, in an unheated room, with a cold winter wind blowing through the glassless windows. How and what do these people live on? The woman was a floral decorator. She considers herself lucky to earn a little money from time to time. How grateful she was for the tins of millet and pea soup. She thanked me humbly and modestly. [...] In the house next door, two women were warming themselves by the flickering embers of the fire. They said: Seven people in the house and no one earns a penny. The son entered the room. He could be twenty years old. His mother took him in her arms and said, with tears in her eyes: "He was with the partisans, the Germans found out and wanted to take him away. Friends warned us so that we could escape in time. When we returned home, everything was destroyed and burned". I was quite heartbroken when I returned home, and sad when I walked through the gate of our centre, past the lecture hall and saw through the windows the many women who work with us, learning to make warm slippers and jumpers for their families. A cheerful song came from the children's home. There was life everywhere: with the carpenter in the workshop, with the washerwoman singing in the laundry, in the office where typewriters clattered and many people waited for information. The distribution centre is busy long before it opens. And then there is the kindergarten, our kindergarten, where I can work!», see *Rimini. Eine Schöpfung im Geiste Pestalozzis*, pp. 25-27, taken from «Not und Hilfe», n. 9-10, April-May. 1947, AMZ, envelope 19.

rectors of the Kindergarten, by the parish priests and the Swiss team itself. The families who had almost nothing, received a "furniture package", a single parcel containing two beds with mattresses, a cupboard, four stools, a table, two pots and pans, four plates and some cutlery[46]. Between May 1946 and May 1948, 1,912 families and 64 institutions received aid[47]. 954 parcels of clothing, 565 parcels of kitchen and home furnishings, 800 woollen blankets, 50 boxes of complete furniture to furnish as many rooms and kitchens, and a considerable amount of food, medicines and tonics were distributed. The emergency relief work continued in the winter of 1946, when a flood inundated the suburbs of the city and the coastal area along Via Tripoli. Rowing boats were used to deliver aid and provisions[48] (Fig. 10). The coordinated effort with the city and the local authorities was intensified by the organisation of women workshops at the centre.

These were courses in knitting and sewing, or in making clothes, slippers, belts, bags and toys, given by Swiss teachers and using materials provided by SOS and the Swiss Donation Organisation[49].

On 17 April 1946 the Municipality of Rimini approved the statute of the Giardino d'infanzia Italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten) named after Remo Bordoni – son of Gomberto Bordoni who died in the War of Liber-

[46] The brain behind the concept of the "room that fits in a big suitcase" was a Jew who had escaped from the Nazis, according to T. De Luigi, *Quando la generosità si veste di senso pratico*, in «Chiamami Città», 20 March-2 April 1995, in binder *Articoli sul CEIS* (Articles on CEIS), AMZ, July 1946-July 1996.

[47] *Iniziative assistenziali svolte dal Centro Assistenziale nel Giardino d'infanzia italo-svizzero di Rimini dal maggio 1946 al maggio 1948*, typewritten, in *Miscellanea* (Miscellaneous), AMZ, envelope 30.

[48] M. Zoebeli, *Il Centro educativo Italo-svizzero (CEIS) di Rimini*, typewritten draft, in *Scritti e appunti. Bozze di stampa* (Writings and notes. Proofs), AMZ, envelope 12. The situation is also described in a report: «The winter was hard for the people of Rimini and for our team. First, a sea storm caused flooding: for two days, the water rose a meter and a half into the houses. Soups had to be hastily prepared for the homeless and hungry. During the Christmas holidays, the centre also set up a soup kitchen run by a Swiss woman. The soup there is said to be particularly good. 150 people from Rimini are happy to be fed there every day. What was meant to be a temporary emergency measure has become a "winter aid" that would last for several months», see *Rimini. Eine Schöpfung im Geiste Pestalozzis*, p. 27, taken from «Not und Hilfe», n. 9-10, April-May 1947, in AMZ, envelope 19.

[49] Workshops were set up mainly for mothers of children enrolled in the kindergarten, but were also open to the women from the city. As well as providing useful everyday objects, the workshops aimed to create opportunities for group life and a climate of communication and cooperation; M. Zoebeli, *Il Centro educativo Italo-svizzero (CEIS) di Rimini*, typewritten draft, in *Scritti e appunti. Bozze di stampa* (Writings and notes. Proofs), AMZ, envelope 12.

ation – as a non-profit organisation; on 23 April the provisional Board of Directors was appointed[50]. The Asilo italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten), also built to replace the municipal Baldini kindergarten, which had been badly damaged by bombing, immediately took in 150 children in the kindergarten and about twenty orphans housed in the barracks called the "Children's Home"[51].The centre, which in 1956 took on the name of Centro Educativo Italo-Svizzero (CEIS), was a private institution with a public purpose and was closely linked to the municipal administration, as its Board of Directors was appointed by the municipality.

2. Between documents and images: an exemplary case of an active school

> *The implementation of an active school, i.e. one that generates spontaneous activity through the law of need, is possible regardless of ideology. The active school or what is called "The New School" is implemented by lay people, Catholics, Protestants, atheists*[52].

The area in which the consequences of the war's deprivations were immediately apparent was that of childhood. Malnutrition, lack of clothing and, above all, the absence of any form of education had made childhood one of the most poignant and urgent problems to be solved. After the first year of

[50] Extract from the register of resolutions of the Municipal Council, meetings of 17 and of 23 April 1946.

[51] A few years later, in 1949, the wooden barracks were still suitable for school use, while those of the orphanage, i.e. the Children's Home or Casina, were no longer suitable because of the windy and humid sea climate, the lack of space for the children, who had meanwhile grown up in rooms that were now too small, and the lack of space for workshops, manual work and toilets. Margherita Zoebeli wrote to Giuseppe Saragat, then Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, to ask for funds to build a brick orphanage, Zoebeli Margherita, typewritten letter to Giuseppe Saragat, Rimini, 23 March 1949, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and notes on CEIS), *1949-1953*, AMZ, envelope 14. The letter mentions the names of a number of benefactors, American ones such as the conductor Arturo Toscanini, the trade unionist Luigi Antonini and "Locale 89", and Italian ones such as Adriano Olivetti (Eng. C. Olivetti & c., typewritten letter to the Giardino d'Infanzia italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten)), Ivrea, 21 January 1949, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis - Writings and notes on CEIS*, years 1949-1953, in AMZ, envelope 14). The new brick-built Children's Home was inaugurated in May 1952.

[52] W. Tommolini, *Note sulla scuola attiva,* typewritten report presented at the XI SEPEG, 14 May 1947, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis - Writings and notes on CEIS*, Document on SEPEGs, 1947-1948, AMZ, envelope 18.

the kindergarten's existence, the need arose to create a primary school that would adopt the teaching methods of the kindergarten and provide educational continuity for the orphans who lived permanently at the centre and the outsiders who attended the kindergarten[53].

The album *Giardini d'Infanzia* by the Zurich photojournalist Ernst Koehli shows the outdoor and indoor environments of the classrooms in the early years of the kindergarten (Fig. 11). The external environment had a precise educational function.

> We like to say educational environment – writes Margherita – many trees were planted immediately after the construction of the barracks. The plants let the pupils experience the four seasons of the year. Not only that, but watching the buds, leaves and flowers burst and develop creates a sense of wonder in children and adults alike[54].

Observing nature, from the colours to the shapes of the plants, should stimulate curiosity and a desire to discover. At the same time, observation instilled in the children a sense of respect and love for nature. The classrooms were connected by paths: they were not meant to be isolated in space, but to communicate with the outside, with nature, where the children could play, run, jump, in organised or free activities, or they could carry out activities, such as gardening. The garden, rich in plants and different spaces, was a valuable resource for both organised and free motor activities, in all seasons, during or outside school hours. Equipment for outdoor games included a tower, a seesaw, a Swedish ladder, a merry-go-round, a net and a rope. Collective activities took place almost always in a circle: shaking hands in a circle meant creating a reassuring context, curbing the aggressiveness of some and overcoming the shyness of others.

The classrooms equipment included the doll's corner (surrounded by a plywood fence, with a doll, a cot, a rug, a stove, pots and pans), the fairy tale corner (with small container-benches, musical instruments and hoops), the books and drawing corner (with chairs, picture-book shelves, sheets of paper, pencils), the animals' corner (with an animal house made of wood, clay and fabric), the stall (with woven fabrics in small jars, coins, coloured

[53] In September 1947, with the authorisation of the Provincial Education Office in Forlì, the adjoining private primary school was opened. In 1952, the Board of Directors of the Giardino d'infanzia italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten) requested that it be officially recognised as an open-air primary school (Letter to the Honourable Minister of Education, Directorate General for Primary Schools, 17 October 1952).

[54] *Archivio fotografico 1946-1994. Inventario* (Photographic Archive 1946-1994. Inventory), cit., pp. 15-16.

paper, scales, weights), the teacher's corner (with a table, a chair, a cupboard or bookshelf), the painting and clay corner (with a large wash-basin and an easel for watercolours, glasses with brushes and chalks, aprons, small shelves for drying clay, and plasticine), the construction corner (with cubes, coloured bricks, Meccano, and coloured sticks), the work corner (with cardboard and wooden frames, raffia threads, wool, cloth, coloured paper, potato moulds, coloured beads, thread, matchboxes and wheelbarrows) and a cupboard with gardening tools[55]. The furniture had to be partly movable so that it could be used in different arrangements, for communal (storytelling or conversation) or free activities, both individual and group ones; the children had to be able to move the seats and tables themselves[56]. The kindergarten and the Children's Home looked just like a "dwarf house"[57]. The furniture arrangement also enabled the teacher to divide the children into small groups: in the same classroom, one child might be drawing, another playing with a doll, a third modelling with plasticine, another painting with watercolours, another building a house while other children were reading a book. After a discussion between the teacher and the pupils on a topic of common interest, the pupils were free to express themselves through manual work. The teacher stood among the pupils, observing them and helping them where necessary: the teacher's desk did not exist. The new arrangement of furniture and materials, the total absence of a desk and the spatial dislocation of the tables, caused a sense of confusion among the first CEIS teachers, as Anna Arlotti testifies in a report dated 22 May 1947, when she had just returned to teaching after the tragic experience of the war. On entering the classroom, she says she felt disoriented:

[55] *Attrezzatura delle aule* (Equipment of the classrooms), typewritten (no dat), in *Miscellanea* (Miscellaneous), AMZ, envelope 28.

[56] «The search for new pedagogical forms carried out by Margherita, together with the Pedagogical Centre of Milan, which was interested in the New School from the very beginning, was in full swing. The school banished all rigidity and brought about a radical change in the furnishings themselves, which contributed to the creation of a new environment. The abolition of the teacher's desk, replaced by small tables, was a major change. The possibility of self-education is taken into account and the pupil is encouraged to individualise school work and to carry out spontaneous research. The school is an open-air place and the child brings the school to life and life pours into the school with an inexhaustible source of investigation, observation, knowledge […]», see *Il giardino d'Infanzia Italo-Svizzero: storia e attività*, typewritten report by a teacher, 1950, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and Notes on CEIS), *1949-1953*, AMZ, envelope 14.

[57] M. Zoebeli, *Questioni tecniche concernenti la direzione delle case d'infanzia*, typewritten report for the 10th day of SEPEG, 13 May 1947, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis. Documentazione sulle SEPEG* (Writings and Notes on CEIS. Documents on SEPEGs), *1947-1948*, AMZ, envelope 18.

> The spacious, bright classroom was reassuring; it seemed like a charming house ready to welcome little guests, and the small tables, chairs and furniture were the most appropriate choice for such a graceful ensemble. But had anyone thought of the teacher? The table was attached to the wall, but it was in a corner and almost seemed to apologise for being there. The new surroundings, the new furniture, were undoubtedly the reason why I could not begin to work with the usual serenity. […] The headmistress, Miss Zoebeli, while leaving me free as far as teaching methods were concerned, kindly and patiently, pointed out to me that the new environment could bring about new things for the school. […] A new direction, a new school, that was the problem to be solved[58].

In an active school, children participate in the life of the community: not only the teacher, but also the cook, the caretaker, the gardener had to try to get close to the child. Work, such as clearing the tables in the refectory, was minutely divided into small tasks so that the child had a small part to play. Work, according to Margherita, was not to be seen as a productive activity but as a useful means for the child's development[59]. Modelling, cutting out, weaving, decorating stained glass, building the Christmas crib, preparing carnival masks were activities that were practised even in the kindergarten. In addition to manual skills, the child develops the ability to create, the joy of making an object[60]. Manual work, as Pierre Naville said in the first Rimini SEPEG in 1947, is not aimed at professional training, but at the development of sensory and intellectual activity[61].

[58] A. Arlotti, *Il lavoro e il gioco nella mia scuola*, typewritten report Rimini 22 May 1947, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and Notes on CEIS), *1945-1948*, AMZ, envelope 14).

[59] Zoebeli, *Questioni tecniche concernenti la direzione delle case d'infanzia*, cit.

[60] «Intellectual activities alternated with manual work, which was divided into groups according to the child's natural talents: drawing, carpentry, sewing, modelling, gardening. The time spent on manual work is a valuable element in the moral, social and aesthetic development of the pupil and an opportunity to get to know his/her personality». The handicrafts have been exhibited in exhibitions such as those held in Naples, Florence, Rimini, Zurich and Egypt. See *Il giardino d'Infanzia Italo-Svizzero: storia e attività*, typewritten report by a teacher, 1950, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and Notes on CEIS), *1949-1953*, AMZ, envelope 14.

[61] P. Naville, *Ruolo del lavoro manuale nell'educazione*, typewritten report for the 7th day of SEPEG, 10 May 1947, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis. Documentazione sulle SEPEG* (Writings and Notes on CEIS. Documents on SEPEGs), *1947-1948*, AMZ, envelope 18.

3. Behind the images: stories of people

> *Teachers and students should learn to get to know and love each other through the exchange of news, work and ideas, overcoming all geographical and political barriers, and open the doors of the school to every European and universal initiative that aims at fraternity, the rejection of all forms of violence, the material and moral advancement of peoples: in a word, everything that opens the door to peace*[62].

Flicking through the photo albums, the pictures follow one another chronologically, showing events, official ceremonies, everyday situations inside and outside the barracks, with well-known and lesser-known personalities. One of the lesser-known figures, but who appears in an image that symbolises the birth of the Centre, is the anarchist worker Brenno Ludovici, who is portrayed in a photograph from 1946 on the roof of a barracks under construction (fig. 12). Together with Alberto Panizzi, a worker of Italian origin from Zurich, he made a major contribution to SOS, as the photographs of him at work show. Although we have very little information about Brenno, we do know that in 1948 he left Rimini with his family and worked as a representative of the Swiss Donation Organisation at the Children's Village in Trogen, until he had enough experience to be appointed by Regina Kägi and Paul Wieser as director of the Casa di Solidarietà in Cavigliano, which he ran from 1950 to 1975[63].

Among the teachers who were active in the first months of the village, posing with the children, is Vrenj Thalmann (Fig. 13), from Switzerland, who together with Maria Teresa Ferri[64] was the first worker who was entrusted with the care of the orphans in the Children's Home – later called the Casina – from March 1946 to August 1947. Initially, Schwarz's plan did not include a barracks for the orphans; this was requested by the Rimini authorities after Margherita had already arrived in Rimini. The original plan was therefore modified: the cultural barrack was partly used as a warehouse,

[62] *Raccomandazione finale dei partecipanti. A tutti gli uomini della scuola d'Italia (su proposta del prof. Visalberghi)*, typewritten report of the 10th day of SEPEG, 13 May 1947, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis. Documentazione sulle SEPEG* (Writings and Notes on CEIS. Documents on SEPEGs), *1947-1948*, AMZ, envelope 18.

[63] H. Stettner, *Lettera commemorativa di Alberto Panizzi* (Commemorative typewritten letter from Alberto Panizzi), *Bellinzona, 16 March 1992*, in *Corrispondenza. Appendici* (Correspondence. Appendices), AMZ, envelope 8.

[64] There is an album with photographs from the early years of CEIS and children's drawings about Maria Teresa Ferri – a socialist and a nurse by profession, born on 24 December 1912 – together with a greetings card sent to her address in Budrio (BO), 21 December 1948, in AMZ, non-inventoried envelope.

and the storage barrack was set up as a home for orphans. The archive has preserved the typescript version of the speech that Vrenj gave on 9 May 1947 on the 6th day of SEPEG. In her speech, Vrenj talked about her experience as an educator, the difficulty of setting up a home for orphaned children between 3 and 6, and the need to furnish the barracks in such a way as to create a familiar environment with games and activities that would serve the purpose of holistic education of the child's personality[65].

The teacher Rösli Mandel (Fig. 14), in her early twenties, also spoke at the first SEPEG about her experience as a teacher at the kindergarten, about free play and the exercise of all seven senses, from hearing to sight and touch, which children develop through games played with their eyes closed and through music. Educators in Zurich, says Rösli in her presentation, study rhythm and music as well as psychology and science. Sound and musical rhythm become a means of expression for children as well as for adults[66]. In many of the photographs she poses with them, playing the flute, playing games, in the village or on the beach by the sea. Behind the lens is the Zurich photographer Werner Bischof, whom Rösli had met the previous year at the Asilo italo-svizzero (Italian-Swiss kindergarten) in Milan and whom she decided to accompany during the photo shoot. At the end of the project, Bischof went back to Zurich, but a year later he returned to Rimini unannounced to take his "Rosellina" with him, as Margherita wrote[67]. Rösli married Werner Bischof in 1949, the year the photographer joined Magnum Photos, the famous agency founded in New York by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, David Seymour and George Rodger.

Margherita's close collaborator and deputy director of the CEIS, with administrative and management duties, was Barbara Seidenfeld Stratiesky (Fig. 15), of Hungarian-Jewish origin and partner of Pietro Tresso, a well-known Trotskyist killed during WWII. After a long period of activism in the antifascist socialist militia, which had forced her into hiding as early as 1929 (her nom de guerre, according to archive documents, was "Debora"[68]), she

[65] V. Thalmann, *Esperienze nella Casa dei Bambini*, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis. Documentazione sulle SEPEG* (Writings and Notes on CEIS. Documents on SEPEGs), *1947-1948*, AMZ, envelope 18.

[66] In the report *Educazione Ritmica Musicale*, Rösli mentions the Swiss pedagogue Jacques-Dalcroze's method of combining music and movement, which are the basis of rhythm, for the harmonious development of the child's personality, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis. Documentazione sulle SEPEG* (Writings and Notes on CEIS. Documents on SEPEGs), *1947-1948*, AMZ, envelope 18.

[67] M. Zoebeli, *Werner Bischof al CEIS (1947)*, in Castiglioni et al., *Una scuola una città*, cit. p. 47.

[68] Documents of Debora-Barbara Seidenfeld, 1937-1969, in AMZ, envelope *Materiali sciolti* (Loose Materials), non-inventoried envelope.

arrived in Rimini with Margherita. In 1960 she joined her sister Gabriella, the former partner of the writer and journalist Ignazio Silone, in Rome, where she worked in the editorial office of «Il Mondo» and was able to continue her research into the place where her partner Pietro had been killed and buried. She returned to Rimini in 1966 and worked at the CEIS until 1978, the year of her death. The Civic Museum exhibits a portrait of Barbara painted by Giovanni Sesto Menghi in 1948, the year in which the painter collaborated with Margherita by setting up a painting studio for students[69].

In order to fully understand the educational method proposed at the CEIS, many public figures, teachers and pedagogues visited the Centre. Among them was Francesco De Bartolomeis, author of more than a hundred books on pedagogical research, including *Il bambino dai tre ai sei anni e la scuola materna* (*The child from three to six years and the nursery school*, 1966) and the later edition *Il bambino dai tre ai sei anni e la nuova scuola infantile* (*The three- to six-year-old child and the new school*, 1968)[70]. A student of Ernesto Codignola[71] in Florence, De Bartolomeis moved to Turin in 1956, where he taught at the Institute of Pedagogy of the Faculty of Education. In 1952 he spent a week at the CEIS, an experience he recounts in an article published on 31 May of that year in the journal «Scuola e città»[72].

[69] The painting, which hung for many years on the walls of the CEIS barracks, was donated in December 1994 by Margherita Zoebeli to Grazia de Paulis, a neighbour and friend first of Barbara and then of Margherita herself. De Paulis then donated the portrait to the Civic Museum of Rimini (Resolution n. 1388 of 15 October 2012) in order to give back to Rimini a painting that "documents the intertwining of three lives: that of Barbara, that of Margherita and that of the painter Menghi".

[70] F. De Bartolomeis, *Il bambino dai tre ai sei anni e la scuola materna*, Torino, Tirrenia, 1966; Id., *Il bambino dai tre ai sei anni e la nuova scuola infantile*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1968.

[71] Ernesto Codignola opened the 2nd SEPEG Conference, held in Rimini from 3 to 13 May 1948, with a speech entitled *Le SEPEG e le loro attività in Italia* (SEPEGS and their activities in Italy), in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis. Documentazione sulle SEPEG* (Writings and Notes on CEIS. Documents on SEPEGs), *1947-1948*, AMZ, envelope 18. In 1950, Codignola sent a letter to Margherita Zoebeli, enclosing the programme for the publication of a new journal he had founded, «Scuola e città», which in its first issues already included an article by Célestin Freinet on the kindergarten. The journal was published from 1950 to 2003 by the publishing house La Nuova Italia and has been available online since 2004.

[72] «I learnt a lot during my week's stay in the village. For example, I was able to get greater insight into the creative skills of the children in the kindergarten. I realised that children can already collaborate in the development of a project, so that individual activities are removed from the fragmentary or exclusive form of play. And this places the function of the kindergarten on a much higher intellectual and social level. A theme such as "the river" can hold the children's interest for quite a long time, with the result that creative abilities are set in motion within a framework of cooperation and a sense of con-

In 1952, together with Codignola and Célestin Freinet, he attended the national conference of the Cooperativa della Tipografia a Scuola (Typography at School Cooperative - CTS), held at the CEIS. On 16 April 1962, he was again at the CEIS, as can be seen from a series of photographs taken by the photographer Decio Camera of him with some of his students (Fig. 16). He was particularly interested in the activities of the kindergarten and primary school children, both inside and outside the classroom. An entire folder of photographic prints reproducing drawings and tempera paintings by children attending the kindergarten is dedicated to De Bartolomeis's research at the CEIS, published in the two editions of *Il bambino dai tre ai sei anni*[73]. The collaboration with Margherita was very close[74]: the photographic documentation is accompanied by a series of notes by Margherita on the subject of «Reality and invention in the child's experience». In these notes she emphasizes the importance of the environment and, therefore, of observing, exploring, analysing, and experiencing reality, in order to stimulate and motivate children to express themselves in original and inventive ways and to participate actively in village life[75]. De Bartolomeis returned to Rimini in 1976, for the celebration of the 30th anniversary of CEIS, which took place over two days, Friday 19 and Saturday 20 March. The documentary exhibition *CEIS. 30 anni di cooperazione socio-educativa* (CEIS. 30 years of socio-educational cooperation) was inaugurated in the Sala delle Colonne, while in the conference room of the Biblioteca civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Public Library, BGR) a discussion was held on the *Teoria e pratica sull'inserimento del bambino handicappato* (Theory and Practice of the In-

tinuity and progress of action is conveyed. This new perspective in children's education deserves careful experimental research […]», see F. De Bartolomeis, *Il "villaggio" di Rimini*, typewritten draft of the article published in the journal «Scuola e città» on 31 May 1952, in *Atti e carteggi relativi al Ceis* (Writings and Notes on CEIS), *1949-1953*, AMZ, envelope 14.

[73] Folder 10, photographs (inv. CEI 301).

[74] In a letter of 1957, De Bartolomeis thanked Margherita for sending him the original paintings and photographic material, which were useful in completing his work, De Bartolomeis Francesco, handwritten letter to Margherita Zoebeli, Turin, 10 Sep. 1957 and 14 Jul. 1960, in *Corrispondenza. Lettere a Margherita Zoebeli* (Correspondence. Letters to Margherita Zoebeli), AMZ, A-D, envelope 1.

[75] M. Zoebeli, *L'attività espressiva nella scuola materna*, in *Il bambino, la famiglia e la scuola* (Conferences held during the event "Febbraio pedagogico bolognese"), Bologna, Centro studi dell'Assessorato alla Pubblica Istruzione, 1963. In the kindergarten, Margherita explains, children use painting to express knowledge that they cannot yet put into words. The child's free painting is a language rich in the expression of knowledge and powers of observation; it is important to give the child frequent opportunities to paint. Painting can also be a useful tool for the teacher to get to know the child.

clusion of Children with Disabilities). De Bartolomeis took part in the round table, held in the Sala dell'Arengo, on *Individual and Collective Creativity,* together with pedagogists and sociologists such as Lamberto Borghi, Carlo Doglio, Nando Filograsso, Lucia Lumbelli and Gianni Pellicciari. In an article published on the occasion of the 30th anniversary Giorgio Pecorini wrote

> Whoever one day wants to write the history of the Italian schooling system and of the practical attempts made to renew its structures and methods and to transform it from an instrument of class selection into an instrument of civic promotion and the cultural growth of the people, will have to devote a chapter to the pedagogy and didactics of the barracks[76].

Since 1947, CEIS has trained trainees from the Swiss Donation Organisation and teachers from various Italian cities, who have attended theoretical and practical courses on active kindergarten methodology and have acquired techniques for creative activities. Rita Fasolo, founder of the first Italian delegation of the Centri di Esercitazione ai Metodi dell'Educazione Attiva (Active Education Methods Training Centres, CEMEA) in Florence, played an important role in the training activities at CEIS. Like De Bartolomeis, she was a member of the editorial staff of the journal «Scuola e città» and was a student and assistant of Ernesto Codignola. In 1954, a CEMEA course was organised at the CEIS on active school (Fig. 17), which was followed by a second course in 1955 and a third in 1956, on the problems of the active school, the last for Rita Fasolo, who died suddenly a few months later. In the 1960s the CEMEA courses were held annually at CEIS, some of them organised on behalf of the Municipality of Rimini. Topics included advanced training in manual work, after-school and recreational centres, and kindergartens. Gianni Rodari was a lecturer at the 1964 CEMEA course on children's literature[77].

Among the personalities who visited CEIS in the 1950s portrayed in the pictures is Giovanna Thompson (Fig. 18), the first coordinator sent to Italy by the "British Save the Children Fund". She was sent to Ortona, Abruzzo, where in 1947 she began to help orphans and children living in extreme poverty as a result of the war. With the help of other aid organisations already working in the area, including the "American Friends Service Committee", Giovanna quickly set up nutritional programmes for children and, using a

[76] G. Pecorini, *Pedagogia delle baracche: il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini compie trent'anni*, in «Paese sera», 23 March 1976, in *Raccoglitore articoli sul CEIS* (Binder Articles on CEIS), *July 1946-July 1996*, AMZ, inv. n. ZOE 109.

[77] The transcript of the recording of Rodari's speech at the CEMEA in 1964 is published in V. Roghi, *Lezioni di fantastica*, Roma-Bari, GLF editori Laterza, 2020.

Land Rover abandoned by the British army that had been refurbished, she also took aid and assistance to orphanages in the mountains. From England, Canada and the USA, medicines, clothes, toys, powdered milk and barrels of cod liver oil arrived at the Ortona headquarters. Giovanna, a woman of small stature and bright eyes, obtained a plot of land from the local authorities and, with funds from "Save the Children Canada", built a small building, to which a new prefabricated structure donated by the Swedish headquarters was added in 1954[78]. In the following decades, in cooperation with the Italian authorities, the kindergarten became one of the most important training centres for kindergarten teachers. From 9 August to 2 September 1951, Giovanna was a guest lecturer at the CEIS and one of the teachers of a course for the professional development of kindergarten teachers in southern Italy, where she engaged the students in discussions on child psychology in a friendly and dynamic way[79].

Since the first SEPEGs, CEIS has become a point of reference for teachers, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists and sociologists from Italy, Switzerland, France and America: from Pierre Bovet to Oscar Forel, from Wanda Tommolini-Novi to Aldo Visalberghi, from Lamberto Borghi to Raffaele Laporta, from Pierre Naville to Carleton Washburne. From the very beginning, Margherita had managed to create a dense network of national and international relationships, and she had arranged for the most important personalities to come to the village to observe the activities at first hand. To understand her educational method, one had to enter CEIS, as she explained to the photojournalist Calogero Cascio in an interview in 1966:

> You should stay, otherwise it will be difficult for you to write an article about the centre, you should stay for a while, you should see the children in the classrooms. Otherwise, it's difficult to understand[80].

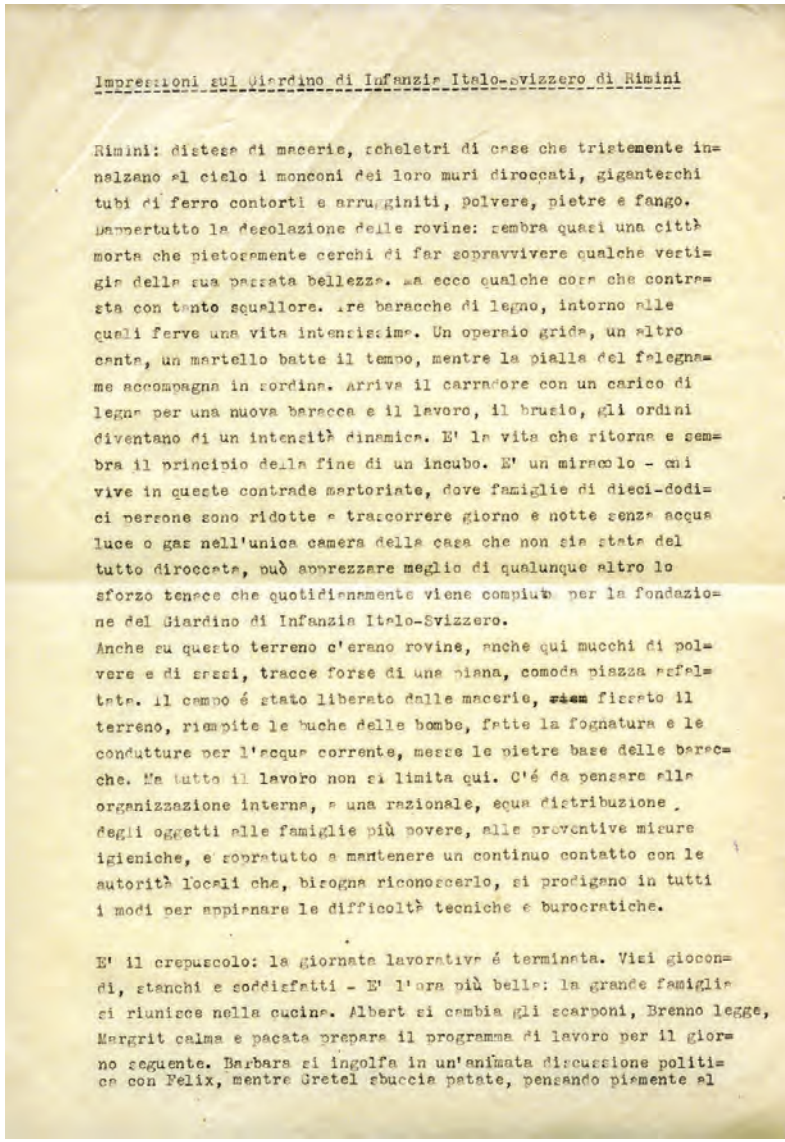
Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

[78] A. Di Luzio, *Ortona, guerra e dopoguerra*, Ortona, Soc. coop. Iniziativa Cristiana, 1998, p. 94.

[79] Typewritten report on the course held in Rimini, 15 November 1951, in *Miscellanea* (Miscellaneous), AMZ, envelope 27 and another copy in envelope 28.

[80] C. Cascio, *Il Centro italo-svizzero di Rimini*, in «Orizzonti», n. 42 (1966), in Binder Articles on CEIS, Jul. 1946-Jul. 1996, AMZ, inv. n. ZOE 84. The article is accompanied by photographs taken at CEIS by the famous photojournalist of which the archive holds reproductions on negatives (inv. CEI 134, Folder 02, negatives 66-78).

Fig. 1 – Rimini 1946, children play among the rubble (AMZ, CEI-0241_035).



Impressioni sul Giardino di Infanzia Italo-Svizzero di Rimini

Rimini: distese di macerie, scheletri di case che tristemente innalzano al cielo i monconi dei loro muri diroccati, giganteschi tubi di ferro contorti e arrugginiti, polvere, pietre e fango. Dappertutto la desolazione delle rovine: sembra quasi una città morta che pietosamente cerchi di far sopravvivere qualche vestigia della sua passata bellezza. Ma ecco qualche cosa che contrasta con tanto squallore. Are baracche di legno, intorno alle quali ferve una vita intensissima. Un operaio grida, un altro canta, un martello batte il tempo, mentre la pialla del falegname accompagna in sordina. Arriva il carradore con un carico di legna per una nuova baracca e il lavoro, il brusio, gli ordini diventano di un intensità dinamica. E' la vita che ritorna e sembra il principio della fine di un incubo. E' un miracolo - chi vive in queste contrade martoriate, dove famiglie di dieci-dodici persone sono ridotte a trascorrere giorno e notte senza acqua luce o gas nell'unica camera della casa che non sia stata del tutto diroccata, può apprezzare meglio di qualunque altro lo sforzo tenace che quotidianamente viene compiuto per la fondazione del Giardino di Infanzia Italo-Svizzero.
Anche su questo terreno c'erano rovine, anche qui mucchi di polvere e di sassi, tracce forse di una piana, comoda piazza spianata. Il campo é stato liberato dalle macerie, ~~stato~~ livellato il terreno, riempite le buche delle bombe, fatte la fognatura e le condutture per l'acqua corrente, messe le pietre base delle baracche. Ma tutto il lavoro non si limita qui. C'é da pensare alla organizzazione interna, a una razionale, equa distribuzione degli oggetti alle famiglie più povere, alle preventive misure igieniche, e sopratutto a mantenere un continuo contatto con le autorità locali che, bisogna riconoscerlo, si prodigano in tutti i modi per appianare le difficoltà tecniche e burocratiche.

E' il crepuscolo: la giornata lavorativa é terminata. Visi giocondi, stanchi e soddisfatti - E' l'ora più bella: la grande famiglia si riunisce nella cucina. Albert si cambia gli scarponi, Brenno legge, Margrit calma e pacata prepara il programma di lavoro per il giorno seguente. Barbara si ingolfa in un'animata discussione politica con Felix, mentre Gretel sbuccia patate, pensando piemente al

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Figs. 2-4 – Report by Mariarosa Cammeo [Boschamm], *Impressioni sul Giardino di Infanzia Italo-Svizzero di Rimini* (Impressions on the Italian-Swiss Kindergarten of Rimini), 1946 (AMZ, envelope 30).

povero stomaco languente dei suoi compagni. Vreni suona il flauto - canzoni svizzere e italiane accompagnate da Emmy che canticchia fra una sigaretta e l'altra, ragionando che la dura giornata di lavoro le ha fatto meritare almeno una serata danzante. Klara più saggiamente sogna a occhi aperti il suo accogliente letto.

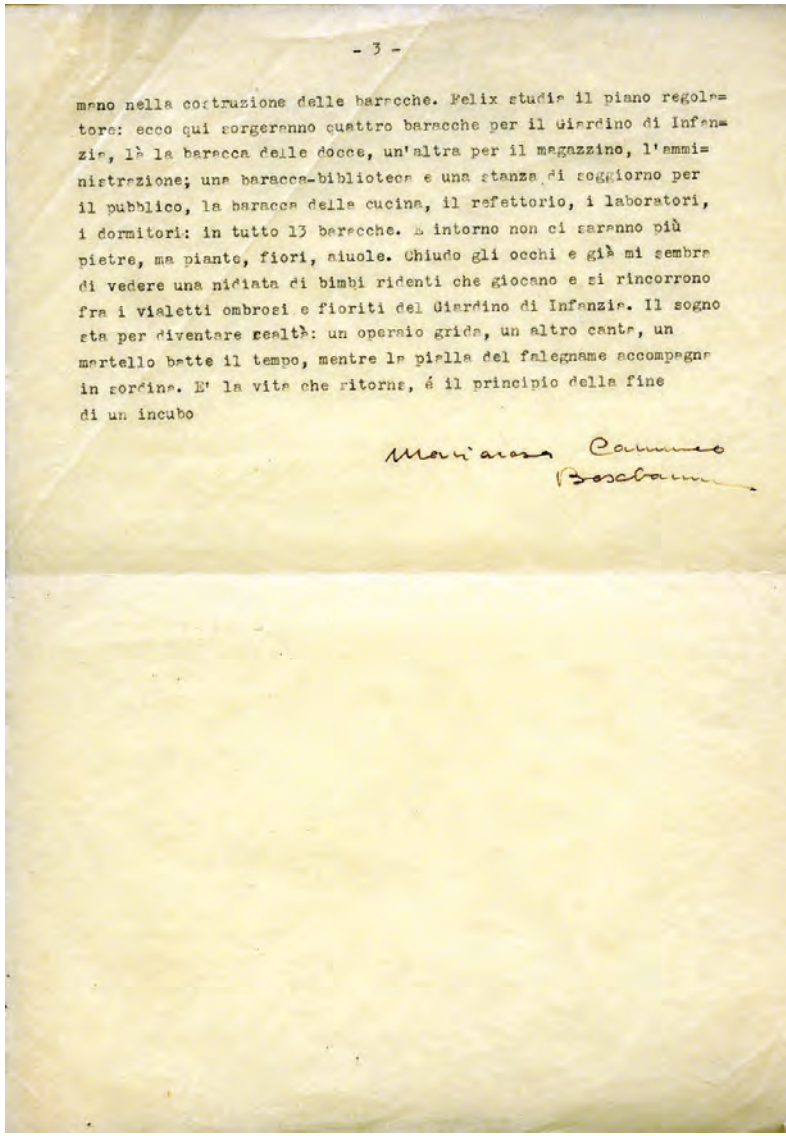
Dopo cena le visite non mancano - Ragazzi, ragazze, lazzi, stornelle canti, discussioni più o meno politiche, progetti. Di colpo la stanchezza se ne va via, perché Nini il fornaio racconta uno dei suoi divertenti aneddoti militari. Ogni tanto occorre l'interprete, perché il romagnolo é un dialetto molto piacevole per l'udito, ma non altrettanto comprensibile.

La lampada a carburo da una fiammata. Tutti guardano con apprensione. Ma sono piccoli inconvenienti e per consolarci si parla dell'ormai prossimo impianto elettrico e dei possibili miglioramenti che si potrebbero apportare ai lavori fatti durante la giornata.

Qualcuno propone di ballare - non c'é grammofono, ma le voci umane possono costituire un'ottima orchestra sincopata con un pò' di buona volontà. Ora basta, ragazzi - domattina ci aspetta ancora il lavoro! A nanna, ma prima di anda dormire, andimmo a vedere lo spettacolo di Rimini notturna. E' irreale: i fari violetti della polizia inglese illuminano sporadicamente le case. Non sono macerie, ma un mondo fatato. Strade nere, dappertutto ombre cupe ed ecco la luce del faro che trasforma in madreperla il campanile della chiesa e i tetti delle case e tutte le ombre danzano intorno una danza fantasmagorica. Là sullo sfondo il fumo di un treno - ma non é fumo - é della bambagia azzurra, rossa, viola che si disperde nell'aria in fiocchi leggeri.

La sirena che chiama al lavoro gli operai della città ridà vita anche alle baracche. Vreni si precipita in Comune per terminare le liste troppo numerose dei bisognosi. Klara molto energicamente ricomincia a schiodare casse, a smistare tra paglia e stoviglie, a riordinare il magazzino. Gretel va a fare la spesa in compagnia del suo enorme cesto. Emmy organizza il lavoro per la sua infermeria. Barbara si sommerge sotto mucchi di pratiche e problemi da risolvere, mentre Margrit organizza e dirige silenziosa e attiva il lavoro di tutti.

Albert e Brenno riprendono i loro grossi scarponi per dare una



- 3 -

mano nella costruzione delle baracche. Felix studia il piano regolatore: ecco qui sorgeranno quattro baracche per il Giardino di Infanzia, là la baracca delle docce, un'altra per il magazzino, l'amministrazione; una baracca-biblioteca e una stanza di soggiorno per il pubblico, la baracca della cucina, il refettorio, i laboratori, i dormitori: in tutto 13 baracche. E intorno non ci saranno più pietre, ma piante, fiori, aiuole. Chiudo gli occhi e già mi sembra di vedere una nidiata di bimbi ridenti che giocano e si rincorrono fra i vialetti ombrosi e fioriti del Giardino di Infanzia. Il sogno sta per diventare realtà: un operaio grida, un altro canta, un martello batte il tempo, mentre la pialla del falegname accompagna in sordina. E' la vita che ritorna, è il principio della fine di un incubo

Mariarosa Cammeo
Boschamm

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Figs. 5-6 – Margherita Zoebeli with a co-worker in front of an OSEO (Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation) truck, Saint-Étienne, about 1945 (AMZ, envelope 20) and portrait of Margherita Zoebeli, New York, 1965 (AMZ, ZOE- 0137).

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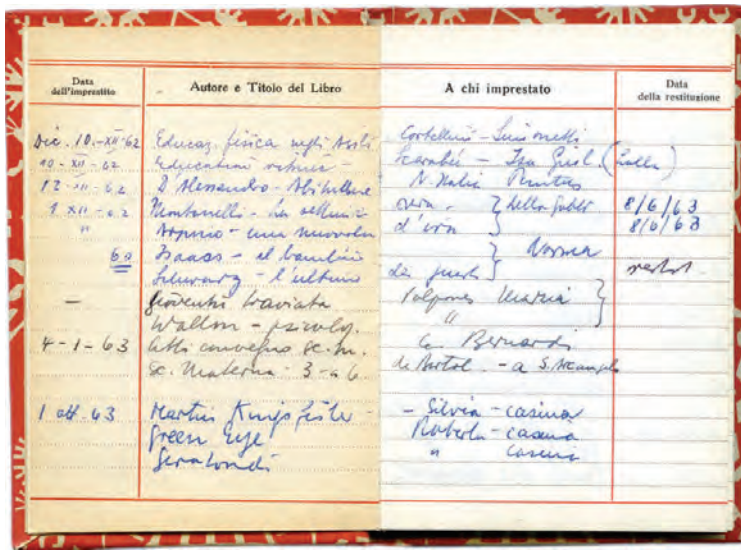

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12 - XII - 62	D'Alessandro - Abbellire	N. Nobili Pianta	
1 XII - 62	Rambaldi - La collina	Orsa - } Nella foltta	8/6/63
"	Appiano - Una nuvola	d'oro }	8/6/63
62	Baasch - Il bambino	} Verner	
	Schwarz - L'ultimo	da fare }	restituito
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	Green Inge	Roberta - casina	
	Scarabelli	" casina	

8

Figs. 7-8 – The CEIS library in 1951 (AMZ, CEI-0365_122) and small diary in which Margherita Zoebeli recorded borrowed books from 1962 to 1988 (AMZ, envelope 20).

Fig. 9 – Rimini 1946, collecting bricks from bomb-damaged houses (AMZ, CEI-0241_015).

Fig. 10 – Rimini, the flood in the winter of 1946 (AMZ, CEI-0364_183).

Fig. 11 – Inside of a kindergarten classroom, 1949 (Photo by Ernst Koehli, AMZ, CEI-0361_037).

Fig. 12 – Brenno Ludovici on the roof of a barrack under construction, 1946 (AMZ, CEI- 0364_080).

Fig. 13 – Vrenj Thalmann at the kindergarten, 1946 (AMZ, CEI-0364_228).

Fig. 14 – Rösli Mandel with kindergarten children, 1949 (Photo by Ernst Koehli, AMZ, CEI-0361_074).

Fig. 15 – Barbara Seidenfeld and Margherita Zoebeli at the CEIS, about 1949 (AMZ, CEI-0290_072).

Fig. 16 – Francesco De Bartolomeis at the CEIS with his students, 1962 (Photo by Decio Camera, AMZ, CEI-0084_052).

Fig. 17 – Rita Fasolo at the CEIS for the CEMEA course of 1955 (Photo by Decio Camera, AMZ, CEI-0055_004).

Fig. 18 – Giovanna Thompson visiting CEIS in 1951, together with Margherita Zoebeli and Barbara Seidenfeld, (AMZ, CEI-0250_007).

Lo spazio che vive, Teo De Luigi's documentary on the 75th anniversary of CEIS

Cristina Gambini

Lo spazio che vive (The Space that lives) was the last film of director Teo De Luigi and the one he always wanted to make. Written together with Serena Saporito and Edda Valentini, the documentary was produced between 2021 and 2022 by Gruppo Icaro (Rimini)[1], CEIS and the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation). Dedicated to the 75th anniversary of CEIS, it was premiered on 9 May 2022 at the Fulgor Cinema in Rimini. In the same year it won the SIFF – Switzerland International Film Festival – in the Best Documentary category and was selected for the Helsinki Education Film Festival International.

Teo De Luigi, who was born in Rimini but spent decades away from his hometown, dedicated his latest work to a place of love, passion, and knowledge that was perhaps distant in time but always present in him. CEIS was like a home for him, he returned there regularly and he knew Margherita Zoebeli personally[2]. It was a place he loved because it was full of life, constantly changing and always true to itself, capable of expressing the poetry of life and passing it on to children, in a corner of the garden or in the sound of a flute wafting along the paths. A work that is a tribute to his city and to CEIS, which he considered as valuable as the great monuments of Rimini,

[1] The Rimini network of advertising, institutional and editorial communication that brings together the major media in the area.

[2] For more information, see the monograph he edited with essays by Tonino Guerra, Oreste Delucca, Liliano Faenza, Flavio Nicolini, Marisa Scoccianti, Gastone Tassinari, Flavio Baroni, Giovanni Sapucci, Hannalore Rizza; the interview with Rosanna Pazzini and Andrea Canevaro; the recollections by Maria Corda Costa, Raffaele Laporta, Aldo Visalberghi; and, finally, a collection of photographs by Ernst Koehli, Werner Bischof, Decio Camera, Enrico De Luigi: T. De Luigi and S. Pivato (eds.), *Memoria come futuro. Cinquant'anni di vita del CEIS*, presentation by R.L. Montalcini, Rimini, Maggioli Editore, 1996.

a place of international value: an archaeological sign, a crossing of epochs, a social temple.

The documentary, an Italian-Swiss production, is the story, past and present, of one of Italy's most important educational experiences. It alternates interviews with pedagogues, educators, architects, former pupils, teachers and workers who knew and lived with Margherita Zoebeli, the founder, and images of everyday life in which the protagonists are the children and adults who work in the "village" every day.

In order to make the documentary, De Luigi spent a long time studying the unique combination of pedagogy and architecture at CEIS since its foundation. The documentary features numerous accounts and contributions on CEIS from architects, educators and personalities from the world of culture: Andrea Canevaro, the father of special education; Goffredo Fofi, essayist, film, theatre and literary critic, who worked in the educational and social field in the 1950s and 1960s; Michele Gulinucci, who curated a programme dedicated to CEIS for RAI[3]; Maristella Casciato, Pippo Ciorra and Andrea Ugolini, university lecturers who have spent years researching the history of architecture and its relationship with archaeology. The interviews conducted in Switzerland with Oliver Schwarz and Marco Bischof have the merit of recovering and updating memory. The former is the son of Felice Schwarz, the architect who came to Rimini with Margherita Zoebeli immediately after the war and designed the school with her, while the latter is the son of the great photographer Werner Bischof, who documented the early days of CEIS with his pictures.

The thesis of the documentary, also supported by several of the architects and architectural historians interviewed, is that the village itself is now a monument, and as such can only remain on its original site, where it can maintain its relationship with the archaeology that surrounds it and which it actually updates. A monument, CEIS, which is nevertheless alive, as the title of the film says, and which can and must be a national point of reference, not only for educational science.

Solidarietà (Solidarity), the film shot by Felice Schwarz in 1946 when he visited Rimini, was restored for the production of the film. It is a unique document of great historical and cultural value for the history of Rimini in the early post-war period. It also highlights the role played in the creation of CEIS by the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation (SOS), which sent material and human assistance in response to a heartfelt appeal by the then deputy mayor, Gomberto Bordoni. They sent to a city that had almost been razed to the ground the first barracks – which are still the heart of the daily life of hundreds of children – together with Margherita Zoebeli, a young educator

[3] RAI, Radio Televisione Italiana, Italian Radio and Television.

with considerable experience, and Felice Schwarz, the architect who designed the school with her. CEIS was built on the site of the Roman amphitheatre, in the area of the archaeological site that had not been excavated in the 1930s, in agreement with the authorities in charge at the time.

It is the beginning of a story that lives in the present and is projected into the future. The recovery of this film was made possible thanks to the support of the Margherita Zoebeli Foundation.

The documentary was produced with the support of the *Assemblea legislativa* (Legislative Assembly) of the Emilia-Romagna Region. Riviera Banca, among others, supported the project with an important contribution, together with local companies and bodies: Focchi, Nuova Ricerca, Gruppo Maggioli, Società Italiana Gas Liquidi SGR, and Fondazione Carim. It is worth mentioning the valuable collaboration with the Municipality, the Cineteca and Biblioteca Civica Gambalunga (Gambalunga Film and Public Library) in Rimini and the Fondazione Cineteca di Bologna (Bologna Film Library Foundation).

Lo spazio che vive is a documentary by Teo De Luigi, written by Teo De Luigi, Serena Saporito and Edda Valentini. Director of photography Michele Barone. Video operators: Marco Colonna, Enrico Guidi, Roberto Bianchi and Gianmarco Zannoni. Editing Diego Zicchetti. Original music by Massimiliano Rocchetta. Head of production and executive producer Cristina Gambini, production director Francesco Cavalli. A production of Gruppo Icaro, CEIS and Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation).

SYNOPSIS

Rimini 1946, the war had just ended and the city lied in ruins. The citizens lost no time, and young people were mobilised to clear the streets. The first municipal council was faced with a dramatic situation. The deputy mayor, Gomberto Bordoni, a member of the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (National Liberation Committee – CNL), had an idea to deal with the most urgent problem of the time: the mass of displaced people in a city that was one of the most heavily bombed in Italy. Bordoni activated the network of socialist contacts and a supportive response came from the Swiss Workers' Relief Organisation, which sent aid and workers to Rimini. Among them were the architect Felix Schwarz and Margherita Zoebeli, an educator and social worker who had already provided aid during the Spanish Civil War, when she rescued about a hundred children of anti-fascist parents and personally took them to France. Thirteen military barracks were built on the site of the amphitheatre, laid out like a village according to the new Swiss

architectural philosophy, to provide shelter for homeless children and families. The barracks were the core of what was to become an extraordinary educational project in which the innovative ideas of the great European pedagogues such as Freinet, Bovet, Pestalozzi and Montessori, Steiner and Adler met the needs of the nascent active school of De Bartolomei, Laporta, Borghi, Don Milani and Malaguzzi. All of them supported pedagogical models that facilitate the relationship between children and the environment and the liberation from pre-established schemes. After decades in which the Centro Educativo Italo Svizzero (Italian-Swiss Educational Centre) has lived through so many phases interwoven with the history of Italy, it is now preparing for perhaps its most difficult challenge: the possibility of being moved from its original location, where education, recent history and the ancient history of the city have coexisted for 75 years.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

The relationship with Margherita. Accounts by teachers and pupils

Edited by Maurizio Boarini

This appendix of accounts is intended to give a voice to teachers and educators who have dedicated a large part of their professional careers to CEIS and who, in some cases, are still working there. These are narratives of professional events that took place in the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decades of the new millennium, and are therefore characterised by the emotional register of the autobiographical narrative.

Through the lens of memory, these accounts are pieces that help us to reconstruct the value of an educational professionalism that Margherita Zoebeli interpreted in the name of constant renewal in the face of ever new and pressing challenges. The voices of teachers and pupils are presented in their original and direct style to give an account of the profound motivation, the personal emotional dimension and their professional achievements in education[1].

[1] For this reason, the colloquial style of the oral interviews was preserved, without any editorial intervention.

Lucia Biondelli

Former pupil at CEIS and English teacher since 1988

I am a former pupil, I enrolled at CEIS at the age of 4 and finished all my schooling there up to the fifth grade (I also appear in the film directed by Vladimir Cercof in 1972 and in its second edition in 1997). 25 years after the first film, Cercof returned to Rimini. He came with the working copy of his first documentary to meet all the students of 1972, who had by then grown up, to find out what the experience of the CEIS "active school" had meant for them.

What emerged from the interviews was that we were all still curious about a wide range of interests and passions… we were all people who continued to be "well-rounded". I remember, for example, that in the 1972 film the teacher Agostina Fabbri appeared in the science class where we discovered the trees, branches, fruits and leaves of the village; one of the children who appears in the documentary later became a university researcher on cancer cells. So many of us have continued to pursue a wide range of interests and passions outside our professions.

CEIS proves that there is another way to teach. There is no other school like this, where the interests of child are taken into account in their totality and globality, where children are also stimulated professionally, where they can meet people who are passionate about their work, be it cooking, gardening or carpentry, people who do other things in life but who have the same kind of passion; we try to cultivate this passion in the children when they draw, solve a problem or write a text. This is something I only discovered when I started secondary school, where there were more important and less important subjects, but not here at CEIS, they were all the same.

I returned to the village years later, although I always kept in touch with CEIS, because Margherita always kept in touch with everyone. Unfortunately, I missed the years when Gianfranco Iacobucci was director of CEIS, I was at university at the time… I followed a different career path, I did not specialise in education, I went to a scientific high school and then specialised in modern foreign languages. For a project with Nicaragua, Margherita was looking for a Spanish interpreter because there was this very interesting project that had been awarded as one of the most important international cooperation projects with Nicaragua, which was then ruled by the Sandinistas. The project involved a study visit by teachers and officials from the Nicaraguan school to Rimini to show them what we were doing with children with disabilities. The Municipality of Rimini, thanks to the

Councillor for Culture, Massimiliano Filippini, was very interested and involved and wanted to present the experience of the municipal schools in the area, from kindergarten to primary school, so I was asked to lead the groups and act as interpreter. I enjoyed this first experience very much because I was able to use my knowledge and language skills in a more open and less restricted environment, in something that stimulated me personally.

1. Introducing English in primary school

Margherita later had the idea (over 35 years ago) to introduce English into the primary school curriculum and she asked me to take charge of the project. I was very excited, being a teacher had always been one of my dreams since I was a child, so I said yes… but I didn't know where to start. I spent a whole year with her designing the course, a course that would not be a copy of what was done in secondary school… it was a "work in progress", an eight-year discussion that lasted until her last days, when Margherita, always very curious, would ask me how the teaching was going.

At that time, it was also important to learn from the experiences of those who had already introduced English, but many "doors were closed" and believe me, it was not easy. In the area, the Catholic schools run by the nuns had already started to teach English, but as I said, cooperation wasn't always good. On the other hand, we started a good collaboration with the San Pellegrino Institute in the Bergamo area, whose director followed and supported us for a while by coming to Rimini, and we in turn visited her.

Margherita's idea was to give the children another way to communicate.

Margherita Zoebeli listened a lot to us teachers and always asked us to look inside ourselves to find a solution that met the teaching needs of the moment. An example is the multiplication tables… they are the same all over the world, what makes the difference is how they are taught, and that is part of the didactics, and that is where we can introduce something new. We didn't know how foreign languages are learnt, nobody did, so we had to work with what we could control; our teaching had to be as varied and participative as possible for the students.

Margherita was always very attentive, curious, always asking me questions… she was very interested.

2. The first years of CEIS in Margherita's accounts

Over the years I have had the opportunity to talk to Margherita about many things, including the early years of CEIS. One of her first ideas, for

example, was to bring a group of teachers directly from Switzerland to Rimini, teachers who were already qualified to work with children with special needs. Then it was decided to bring someone just for the music classes, not because the Italians were not competent, but because the idea was to use music as a "language" to do "something else", like reading, understanding rhythms… which is what our music teacher Romeo Selvatici[2] still does today with all the children, with or without disabilities…

Margherita also helped me to understand how to work with adults. When I go on missions for EducAid[3], an NGO that deals specifically with education, disability and life projects, my mode of operation is not "this is how it's done", but rather an educational action that is built together with the adults we meet. It is a process that is constantly rethought, that takes into account the abilities of the adults, their limitations… so that no single adult will ever be better than a group working together, in collaboration… I firmly believe in this.

Going back to those early years of CEIS and Margherita's thoughts on what to do, I remember that Anna Arlotti, one of the first teachers, was chosen by the Provveditorato (Provincial Education authorities): since CEIS had then to be accredited as a school, it also had to have accredited teachers. I don't know if it was her or another one of the first teachers, but it seems that when she didn't see the desks in the kindergarten room, she started to cry and said: "I can't teach without them". They were all very young first-time teachers who accepted this "field training", which sometimes involved living in the village, partly because they had few resources and partly because the city was completely destroyed and returning home was very difficult, especially for those who were not from Rimini. Rosanna Pazzini, a former teacher, told me that she went home every 15 days, using the military vehicles that left the city. For the first teachers, the shifts were very intense and long, in the mornings they worked in the school, and in the afternoons, there were long meetings to analyse and discuss projects and activities, with a common principle, that of the "round table", where everyone could speak and everything was discussed together.

In the 1980s, Margherita was very concerned about the Ministry's plan to fund schools on a project-by-project basis. This meant that they would come up with good projects for that year and then have to come up with new projects every year to get new funding. Margherita said that if a project was

[2] Romeo Selvatici is one of the teachers interviewed.

[3] EducAid is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation, recognised by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, founded in March 2000 by CEIS and the cooperative "Cooperativa Il Millepiedi". It is based in the Village and operates in several countries where it establishes support relationships in the education sector.

well thought out and worked well, it could be continued and possibly improved.

3. Democracy and sharing of didactic materials

Margherita used to say that democracy cannot be taught, it has to be lived; you have to learn through experience that there are materials that are not really "mine or yours", but ours, and that if you don't treat them well, if you don't put them in the right box, you won't find them the next time, or they won't be available for the next class.

My English workshop has five classes, so that's how it works there… the children know that you have to store the different materials away properly, otherwise the next class won't have what they need.

4. Specially designed learning materials

There are more children in the classes now than in the beginning, when there was a single class of 25/27 children each year; now we have double classes, but it must be said that the children all feel part of a single class. Formally, each class is made up of two sections, A and B, 20 plus 20 children as well as children who often have severe disabilities.

In Italian public schools, with the Inclusion Act of 1978, all schools accept children with disabilities and the state pays the support teacher (who then supports the class and not the individual child), while the municipalities pay the educators. In CEIS, on the other hand, most of the costs are covered by the AUSL (the local health authority).

I think that the AUSL of Rimini has a budget equal to that of Bologna precisely because of CEIS, but it is true that we have children with such severe disabilities that the public schools would not be able to support them properly.

Well, I think it is extremely positive because the presence of children with disabilities helps children without disabilities to get to know them and in turn to broaden their view of the world and develop a flexible mind. You wouldn't believe the solutions that classmates come up with every day to include them, to have them with us, to calm them down so they don't shout too much. If the school is interesting, a child wants to participate. CEIS is an interesting school. I don't know how much these children's skills have improved, but I do know that their classmates have grown a lot on a human level. There was one girl, I remember her classmates reading her fairy tales at the beginning of second grade, when they were learning to read them-

selves, and they found that they calmed her with their shaky voices, they hummed songs to her and found out which ones she liked best and which ones she didn't, they invented games with their hands and fingers to stimulate her and to help her to move around… These are all experiences of great creativity that will always serve you well in life, and when you have to deal with other kinds of problems, you will have a huge range of possibilities to choose from.

5. Spaces

The spaces are now much more organised, for sure, with each class having spaces to look after, go to and play in every day. We have seen that this creates a sense of pace and also has an educational function. On Mondays the younger children go to a certain place and see it on their notice board in the classroom, which is useful not only for the autistic children to anticipate the organisation and not get anxious, but also for everyone else. Then there are the areas that need to be maintained, kept clean and personalised: we have seen that this creates a sense of pace, routine and has educational functions.

6. Changes

There have been changes, but they have all been very well thought out, like everything here in the village. I very much agree with Giovanni Sapucci, former director of CEIS, who says: «Freedom of teaching in Italy was enshrined in the law because we had twenty years of fascism, when the Ministry issued "papers" on everything, saying: this can be taught, that cannot be taught. Freedom of teaching was certainly important, but it was also misinterpreted. Freedom to teach means that I am free to teach as I wish, but I have a responsibility».

That has always been the case with CEIS. We have always been accountable for the choices we have made. In this sense, Giovanni Sapucci said that CEIS is a public school with a public function and is accountable to the public; I totally supported this rigorous approach that would later facilitate the educational future of children. We decided to follow the programmes, the indications, the INVALSI (National Institute for the Educational Evaluation of Instruction and Training) guidelines, the tests, whatever the Italian Ministry of Education decided, because that was the chosen approach even before it became compulsory.

This was the idea behind the decision, 15 years ago, to stop teaching cursive writing in first grade. There were parents who were very confused because they were making comparisons with other schools. The incredible effort required of a child in first grade is to master this "reading-writing tool", so it is not important what medium he or she uses, that will be done in second grade. When cursive becomes the handwriting of adults they want to learn it, and they have more time to learn it in a relaxed way: there is no need to kill the child's desire to begin to express his or her thoughts and see them written down on paper with a technical requirement.

Margherita knew Steiner very well, but we have only a little Steiner inspiration in the working groups. A school has to adapt to the country it is in and we choose to do things in a different way because everything in schooling is a choice. You can also teach reading and writing by beating children's hands with a stick; countless generations have learnt it by beating, corporal punishment, since the Middle Ages, so people have learnt to read and write by violent methods… We choose not to adopt them, we choose to do something else, we choose not to have the same textbooks for everyone, although we have a lot of books… Everything is a choice, everything can be changed, everything is debatable, because choices are debatable, and over the years we have tried to preserve our principles, our values.

It was very interesting to print a book with movable types, turning the letters around, it required a lot of manual skill and group work, but when we realised how much difficulty the children had with the manual activity, because they were not used to working with their hands, so that even turning the letters around was a lot of work, we concluded that it was more interesting to have the book written more quickly and we decided to use a computer. However, we didn't want to lose the manual dexterity that comes with the use of printing, so we still do weaving, clay work and working with different materials in the first grades, because it's very important.

7. Margherita

When I was a child, Margherita was a very important figure, and we were all a little in awe of her, because we understood the importance of this woman who had great organisational power. Professor Andrea Canevaro used to say: «Great educators are great organisers… They leave a model to follow», but it is not all due to their charismatic figure, that wouldn't be right.

At the beginning our relationship was one of great respect and consideration, then, as time went by, she started to tell me «call me by my name», which was a bit difficult. When we worked together all day, she really taught

me how to write for educational purposes, I was already writing well, I had had Noretta Forlani[4] as a teacher who had really taught me well, but I still had a certain tendency, typical of Italians, to be too rhetorical and pompous. She suggested that I should write down my experiences of teaching English, so that we could reflect on them and I would have a paper trail. She always made the Swiss trainees, trainees in general actually, write their experiences in their diaries and note down their observations. When she would say "I don't understand", I wanted to hide somewhere in shame, because if Margherita didn't understand, then it was my fault, in the sense that I was so ashamed to attribute to her a lack of understanding of what I had written, that it obviously meant that I had written it very badly.

She never "threw anyone overboard", she voiced her criticism in a way that helped you make corrections and improve.

Margherita knew very well that no one is born knowing how to do this job, even if you have studied a lot of books, because it is the most beautiful job in the world, because the people you work with are always changing, they are always younger, more imaginative, and no one is ever the same. That's why she would often tell me: «It's like a suitcase, you don't use all the clothes, make-up or accessories you carry with you, you take out what you need at that moment».

Another thing that helped me a lot was: «You can criticise even if you don't have a solution yet». Because it made me angry a few times that I was told: «You can't criticise if you don't have an alternative». Of course, if you have an alternative, you've already taken a step forward, but in certain educational matters, you also have to be able to say no, it's not working, this thing, it's really not right, it has to be changed, even if you personally don't know yet how, you have to say so because someone else might know what to do. That's what always fascinated me about Margherita, that she gave me the freedom to criticise even if I didn't immediately have a solution. When she came to Rimini she was 32 years old and she interacted with the men of power at the time, the mayor, the deputy mayor, on an equal footing, so hats off to her inner strength.

In the book *Paesaggio con figura*[5] Margherita says, I think «we had no money but we had the time and certainly a socialist, Adlerian idea». Frankly,

[4] Eleonora Forlani, teacher, editor of books on active school and director of book series, was the first vice-president of the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation).

[5] See the interview: M. Zoebeli, *Dialogo radiofonico di Michele Gulinucci. Radio Tre, 21 marzo 1993*, in Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (ed.), *Paesaggio con figura. Margherita Zoebeli e il Ceis. Documenti di un'utopia*, Rimini, Edizioni Chiamami Città, 1998 (Villa Verucchio, La Pieve Poligrafica, 2007, 2 ed).

I had not realised the importance of Adler until I read Otto Friedman's (1905-1978) book, *Introduction to Social Psychology* (1950)[6], in which he analyses Freud, Jung and Adler. Friedman points out how Adler lived with Freud and Jung, knew them well, had relationships with them, and yet managed to offer his own interpretation, his own idea of psychology, and he points out how Adler is much more concerned with the social than the other two, who have a more individual approach to psychology. Now I find Adler really interesting.

Margherita was a Swiss socialist with many anarchist friends, she was not an anarchist but she was fascinated by the best aspects of anarchy. I would like to see a historian or someone who would research the connection between CEIS and anarchism. We know that Margherita's experiences in Switzerland in the left-wing socialist movement were very important, it was there that she decided that her life should be spent in a non-self-referential way and so, not having the money, she decided to take the opportunities of her time and put herself on the line. She had in mind the example of the Olivetti summer camps, where in order to guarantee free meals for disadvantaged children, the fees of other well-off other children were increased.

Of course, she was perceived as the "director", but if you think about it, she always had many collaborators within CEIS and many contacts outside CEIS. The architecture of CEIS itself was the result of a collaboration with the architect Felix Schwarz, who was in contact with architects who had a certain approach to architecture. Margherita always tried to combine the different aspects, she would call the judge to help us build kites, so she also used these relationships and skills, she appreciated that a person is not fixed in his or her role, «I can certainly call a judge to talk about his role, his function, but if he has other personal experiences, like building kites, I let him express himself with kites too».

Gianfranco Iacobucci benefited from a period of official secondment from the state school and became director of CEIS. Margherita told me what she did to get him to work at CEIS: «I went to Rome the first time a non-Christian Democrat Minister of Education was elected, I think it was Minister Valitutti, it was very late in the 1980s anyway, and I sat in the vestibule for a whole day until I was received by the Minister, I explained the vision of CEIS and I got the secondment».

Margherita also had the humility to ask, to explain with dignity that she was not begging or asking for funds; it was not about money, but about having someone from the public school at CEIS because we were interested in collaborating with the public schools. Teachers or operators who went into

[6] O. Friedman, *Introduction to social psychology*, London, Sylvan Press, 1950 [it. trans., Gualtiero Sarfatti (ed.), *Psicologia sociale*, Firenze, Editrice Universitaria, 1951].

the public sector could always come back to CEIS to ask us how to deal with a particular child, to take courses or to produce teaching materials; we still have a relationship with colleagues who have gone to work in public schools.

CEIS does not want to be the only one, the repository of truth, in the sense of "we are the best", because that is not the case, we are not the only ones who are "good", but it is true that we work a lot together, because more heads are better than one. Here at CEIS we don't risk a "burnout" like many colleagues who say that they were so enthusiastic at the beginning and then it all faded away, here enthusiasm mostly remains, because we are exposed to new challenges and stimuli every day.

8. Maria Montessori and Margherita: Margherita was not interested in the celebration of her method

Montessori put a symbol, a copyright on her materials and methods, she made them very personal, as Freinet said at CEIS in 1952, "it's perfect, it's wonderful, but she put a pin on the wings of the butterfly… the butterfly is beautiful, but it's dead".

Margherita wasn't interested in that, so she didn't come up with a book of rules or materials, but she did give guidelines, because you can't work without a method. You cannot work without materials, like the coloured pebble, the stick, the leaves.

I think that is why she did not fall victim to personalism.

Then it is true that there has been a lack of interest on the part of philosophers, authorities, educators, scientists: no in-depth research projects have been carried out to grasp all the nuances of this whole experience.

9. Margherita knew how to capture the spirit of the times

She gave me, and I still have it, the book *How Children Fail*[7] by John Holt, which was a groundbreaking book because it was the first to look at children without disabilities who had everything they needed to do well at school, but instead failed. It's very interesting because Holt looks at all the characteristics, the expectations, the ways in which teachers encourage or discourage the development and creativity of each individual, by asking trick questions that confuse the child, or by not understanding that certain mistakes are precursors to understanding, so they write them off as incorrect or wrong, without understanding the reasoning behind them, which can ulti-

[7] John Holt, *How Children Fail*, New York, Pitman Publishing Company, 1964.

mately lead back to the right reasoning. She had the first edition of this book, which was not yet famous, then it became a cornerstone of pedagogy and she gave it to me in the 1980s, it was obviously already important, but she had read it in the first edition.

Margherita Zoebeli also knew how to capture the spirit of the times. In 1989, on the occasion of the bicentenary of the French Revolution, she sent me to France to some friends of hers to attend the General States of Languages, where the leading linguists were present and where I learnt that Copernicus and Galileo Galilei were linguists, and that nobody really knew how to learn languages, you have to try different methods.

At the time, Henry G. Widdowson (1935–), the father of the communicative method, was very well known in the field of language study; he believed it is possible to give meaningful answers, even if they are incorrect, also using other communicative and dynamic means.

So, I would say that the institutions and the academy have been guilty of being late in valorising Margherita, not as Margherita Zoebeli the person, but as someone who was able to connect the world and leave the doors open, so that we still feel that we are walking in her footsteps, even though we do very little of what she did or proposed to us then. We do different things, but with the same spirit that she had.

I think it is important to remember her, especially for those like me who knew her personally.

Agostina Fabbri

Teacher at CEIS since 1965, retired, she now runs the CEIS library

I arrived at CEIS in 1965, in October, at the age of 17. I had just finished high school; I would have been 18 in December. School had already started, because at that time the school year started on 1 October.

I started working there because a teacher who was in charge of the canteen had been called to work at the special school that was then run by the municipality of Rimini.

I started as an assistant teacher. I mostly worked with Anna Arlotti, who was already one of the oldest teachers at that time, in the second grade, which was in the Aula Bianca (White Classroom). In the morning, I assisted the teacher, then from 11.30 to 14.00 I was in charge of the group of children who ate at CEIS, because not everyone ate at school as they do now; at that time only those who lived very far away or who had special situations ate at school, otherwise the children left at 11.30 and returned to school at 14.00. We looked after these children during lunchtime and playtime, for a minimal amount of money; we had to gain experience, because it was important for a young woman just out of teacher training school to work with a more experienced teacher: we knew the theory, but we had no practical experience.

I remember that in my first year we had twelve children. These children ate lunch in the ground floor of the Casina where the Sezione Primavera (Spring Room) is now located (the first floor now houses the offices). There were three groups and you could enter the room through the steps in front of the kitchen entrance. Margherita was always very present, there was never a day when she didn't come to observe, in those days the children didn't want to eat many things and we had to insist that they eat them, we insisted a lot on tasting the food.

Living at CEIS, Margherita was always very present, you could meet her in every corner, even when we were in the Piazzetta, the small square… sometimes she would intervene to tell us something, sometimes she would pass by and just look, and then at a later time she would come back and tell us about some of the things she had observed. We grew up with this respect, with a reverent respect, I would say, for a person who in any case had a role, had authority, so it was a bit natural for us to feel that way; I mean, when you met her, apart from greetings and a brief exchange of advice, there was no time for conversation.

Even in the meetings that we young teachers attended, it was quite rare for us to speak; it was usually the older or more experienced teachers who

took the floor. Margherita would ask us to report on the activities we had carried out with the children, which of course had to be detailed and adapted to the group you were leading. These reports were submitted regularly on a foolscap. If there was no feedback, it meant that everything was fine; if not, there could be observations, even if they were indirect, because Margherita was always keen to do the best for everyone.

At that time the number of children was decreasing and for many years the school did not have double classes.

Then, when you were, let's say, "appointed" as a teacher or put in charge of a class, things changed a bit in the sense that Margherita was more present. For example, the first year I worked with a special class, I had the second and third grade, because that kind of organisation still existed; there weren't many children, but they were all very problematic, so it wasn't easy at all; she took this work of mine to heart, also because in the class group there were children who lived in Casina and Betulla; at that time Casina and Betulla had many children from all over Italy. Some came from Sicily, some from Sardinia, some from Lazio, some from Campania, in other words, the group of children was very diverse, because the social services did not yet exist. Then, over the years, the geographical area from which the children came was narrowed down so that only children from the same region or province were accepted.

Both the children from the Casina and those from Betulla went to school at CEIS.

Outside the centre they were not looked upon favourably because they were difficult (often orphaned or without a reference person).

I also have fond memories of their educators, because when we were in the square, they joined us with the children.

The educators in Betulla and Casina worked in shifts to look after these children 24 hours a day. A supervisor stayed at night, but many stayed in both Betulla and Casina, because not all of them lived near Rimini; there were those who came from Riccione, Santarcangelo, Ponte Verucchio or Novafeltria, even from much further away; I remember an educator who came from Fossombrone. These teachers stayed at CEIS and only went home when they had a day off.

1. The spaces

Over time the Village has changed… around the fountain, which was later rearranged, there was a fence, a detail that conveyed the idea of care and attention.

There was and still is a lot of greenery, because Margherita cared so much for the garden and its upkeep. You could often see her walking and talking with Giovannone, the gardener; she cared so much about the plants, always adding elements, things, if possible. Each space had its own peculiarities, for example the corner near the main entrance, between the Padiglione Amicizia (Friendship Pavilion) and the fountain itself, was filled with tulips in the spring, so there was a time when the flowerbed had many colours, it was beautiful in its own way. The garden has also changed: many trees have grown since then, there are some new games like the swings behind the dining room.

There were traditional games, like the Casina (Doll's house) and the Fungo (Mushroom) behind the Padiglione Blu (Blue pavilion); there were not all the things we have now… they were added and renovated over time; it was somehow necessary because the number of children increased: when the classes doubled, more space and equipment were needed. The Piazzetta, the small square, has always been a very pleasant place to meet…

There were also many trainees from Switzerland, with whom we were always in contact, because we tried to act as language mediators, and they in turn taught us a little German. Somehow it was an organisation that was all under "control", if you want to call it that, maybe that's not the best word, but certainly in Margherita's mind she was always present… for example, at Christmas, the children who lived in Betulla and Casina and who couldn't go home for various reasons, she somehow managed them, kept them, they ate together in the dining room, or she visited them and took an interest in them.

2. Before her came the dog…

A funny thing about Margherita was that her arrival was almost always anticipated by her dog. She loved animals very much and when you saw the dog you knew she was around or coming, so you prepared yourself, although not always, the dog would announce or anticipate her.

Margherita was good-natured, but she was very intimidating, especially for us younger teachers. She was very competent, she continued to study, she always had a lot of people around her, friends with whom she shared thoughts and ideas… we were always reluctant to say things that might make sense from our point of view, but not necessarily be shared.

We were all very close, there was a good atmosphere and friendship between us. Margherita also made you feel appreciated, she didn't tell you explicitly, directly, but she found a way to make you understand, for example by approving a poster that you had put up or a small research project that

might be interesting for the children; if she liked something and thought it was appropriate, she would give her opinion. She was very present and went around to observe things, activities and the atmosphere in the village… maybe she didn't come into the classrooms so much, but she was present for all the children.

I think I was very lucky, I was appointed to my first class in 1970, the first year I started in a special class, then in 1971 they divided the children of the first grade into two classes and they gave me one, so I had a first grade in the Aula Mosaico (Mosaic Room) where the Padiglione Blu (Blue Pavilion) is now. The classroom was divided in two, it was a small room with me on one side and the teacher Letizia Fantini on the other. We did everything together, we planned things to do, we did research to improve, and we absorbed the new ideas and experiences that we discovered during the training workshops, it was a very happy experience.

Margherita took part in the teachers' collectives, and it was usually she who chaired the meeting, raising and sharing problems so that the teachers could exchange ideas and opinions. Of course, the more experienced ones, like Lidia Biagini, would speak, but we young teachers would also speak when asked. In these meetings we all tried to reflect and grow professionally.

Margherita was also very demanding. I remember once, when I had my first class, I arrived at school in the morning and I couldn't find the notebooks on the shelf where we kept them, she had come to fetch them and she asked me if I could meet her at lunchtime (when you became a teacher you no longer ate with the children, they were supervised by those in charge of lunch, as I had done the year before). When I went to her office, I noticed that in some notebooks there was a green sheet of paper (we used cyclostyled copies at that time) with some notes, mainly on the subject of graphism… In the first grade we started off with the teaching script, and at the end of the year we taught cursive writing; we did a lot of exercises to loosen up the hand, and then with these exercises we also broke down the written words and letters: the loops, the connecting strokes, the straight and reversed strokes, the crooked strokes that finally led to the letter L… and it was then that difficulties arose, even though you had followed the instructions for this activity.

For a while Lidia Biagini was my reference when I had my own class; I had also referred to her the previous year when, from March, I took care of the children who, instead of leaving at 4 p.m., stayed until 6 p.m., in a sort of after-school programme. It was a mixed group, there could be one second grader, two third graders, one fourth grader and so on… the children also had special needs and had to be followed accordingly. They would have a snack and then I would help them with their homework until 6 p.m. when a

family member, mother, grandfather or uncle, would pick them up to go home.

The best part was when Margherita invited us to meet in the dining room and she made tea and offered us these wafer-like biscuits. It was a much less formal and more relaxed meeting.

If I could go back, I would do exactly what I did, not the individual actions or activities, but as a career choice in general. There are things that would have to be changed, because it's normal when you're experimenting, even when you're sure it's going to work, even when it seems obvious, it doesn't (and there's always room for doubt and improvement).

When you were assigned to a class, it was not as if you felt you had made it, absolutely not. You were on probation at CEIS for three years, so every year you were worried whether you were going to be confirmed or not; and then you worked in public schools for two years, which was called the "two-year probationary period". At the end of these two years, the head of education would come, he was at the Ferraris school in Via Gambalunga, and he would assess things, ask a few questions and then write down his judgement. So, before you could be appointed to a class and become a permanent member of staff, five years would pass, almost a whole school cycle. In my case, after spending a year in the special class, I was assigned to a class after four years. Now, of course, things have changed, it's a completely different organisation.

Margherita wanted us to be competent, to be able to work in a group, to always exchange ideas with the older teachers, like Anna Arlotti and Lidia Biagini. She never offered solutions, she put the problem on the table, she stimulated us to find an answer, a solution, an alternative way, she didn't replace us, she didn't say «this is the way to do it», even if for some things it was implicit, like cursive writing, there was no other way to teach it, there was not much you could do to teach it differently.

At CEIS there was a doctor, Dr Gobbi[8], and not far from the school was Dr Scoccianti[97] and her psycho-pedagogical medical centre where we would go to meetings (at which Margherita was always present) for the cases she was following. Sometimes these meetings became "multidisciplinary", open

[8] Ugo Gobbi (1921-2012), paediatrician, head physician at the Children's Hospital in Rimini (1952-1974) and later at the paediatrics department of Fano Hospital (1974-1986), follower of the anarchist movement. He worked as a doctor and paediatrician at CEIS from 1951 to 1974, always free of charge.

[9] Marisa Scoccianti, doctor in charge of the psycho-pedagogical medical centre set up at CEIS in 1953 to help children and adolescents with learning and/or adjustment difficulties. In 1959 the centre was brought under the control of the Municipality of Rimini.

to all the professionals who had a relationship with the child, and they were also held here at CEIS in the dining room.

3. Visitors

In the village we often had visitors, not a week went by without someone coming to see us, Margherita's friends, teachers or photographers to take pictures. She organised visits, sometimes received guests, but often she was not present. She organised the various conferences and study groups that made CEIS a lively and interesting place, full of ideas and innovation.

Carla Ferri

Primary school teacher since the 1965/66 school year, then religion teacher

I started working at CEIS after graduating in the summer of 1965.

I started in the special class; it was a very, very intense experience because there were all the children from the Betulla and Casina residences, all very, very problematic, very difficult to take care of.

They all had big, big problems… some were psychotic, some were hyperactive… many of them came from other regions, estranged from their families, with difficult experiences behind them. Although they were very intelligent, they expressed their discomfort with very disturbed behaviour.

It's an experience that really cuts your teeth… afterwards, when you have "normal" children, it's a piece of cake. When there were no more special classes, these children were placed in the normal classes with the support of two class teachers.

I started by taking over Gigliola Baistrocchi's maternity leave, then I joined Aurora Campana. In general, good relations were established with everyone.

1. Miss Margherita

Miss Margherita, as we called her, was very present, she loved animals and would walk around the village with her dog, observing the life at the village. She loved greenery and nature; she made sure that everything was tidy and well looked after. Often, together with the gardener of the time, Giovannone, she would discuss and consider how to embellish the village with new plants and flowers, never randomly, but pursuing a sense of harmony. She had a strong personality and all of us who were very young perceived her charisma, that of a person who had a clear idea of the school. She could also inspire a certain awe in some of us.

She was very interested in what was going on in the classes, and especially in the children staying at Betulla and Casina. It could happen that, after an inspection tour, she would call you to find out more and encourage the teachers themselves to think about a particular issue. Another important

person was Dr Marisa Scoccianti[10], who worked at the Medical Centre to follow up on all the children staying at the Betulla and Casina.

It took five years before you were assigned to a class, and during those years you learned the teaching skills you had not acquired at teacher training school. You started by assisting an experienced teacher and over time you gained experience…

My first real class was with Letizia Fantini in 1972.

In those early years we had some good experiences from a pedagogical point of view because, I don't remember the years, but we all went to Switzerland to visit schools and see how they integrated children with problems. We were guests of the friends of "Miss Margherita" and every day we went to a different centre… it was very interesting.

We were very young. There was a lot of excitement, Miss Margherita had the whole situation under control, she gave everyone food for thought and was always very present. There was a lot going on and we often stayed there until late in the evening, we had evening classes, handicraft workshops… for me it wasn't a problem to stay there, I lived right in front of CEIS, I just had to cross the street and I was there, but some of us had to stay overnight.

Margherita came to the classrooms, she observed a lot and was very uncompromising about some things, she checked the notebooks and when she saw something that could be improved, she called us aside and shared her observations and thoughts. Some of us were in awe and some even started to cry. Certainly, in the early years, Miss Margherita had to test the teachers. She was not so much present in the teachers' collective, but she was very present with the teachers in charge of the classes with "difficult" children, so that she could discuss with us the attitudes to be adopted, the things to be done… and give us advice.

I left CEIS early… CEIS was very demanding, you arrived in the morning and left at 7.30 p.m., and I wanted to do something else, to have my freedom, to dedicate myself to others, to volunteer, to pursue new projects.

[10] On Dr Marisa Scoccianti's work and on the psycho-pedagogical medical centre see: C. De Maria, *Introduzione. Per una biografia di Margherita Zoebeli*, in 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 May 2011*, Bologna, Clueb, 2012, pp. 32-33; and Appendix I in the following book: Id., *Lavoro di comunità e ricostruzione civile in Italia. Margherita Zoebeli e il Centro educativo italo-svizzero di Rimini*, Roma, Viella, 2015, pp. 178-189 (p. 182).

2. Religious education

After my retirement, the doors of CEIS opened again for me to teach religion. At that time, not all families chose to enrol their children in religious education (the school was organised differently); for those who did, they were taught by Don Meo, a priest sent by the diocese. Nevertheless, I was called by Guido Benzi from the diocesan catechetical office, now in Rome. Knowing me and my experience as a teacher, he asked me to personally take charge of religious education at CEIS, and so I accepted the challenge and the opportunity to return to the village, where I taught religion for three years. It makes me smile to think that they all started attending religious classes… I would say it went well.

The village has improved considerably over the years, some changes are more visible, such as the replacement of some of the classrooms, the "pavilions", as well as some old games that were showing signs of wear and tear, which have been replaced by more modern models, while others, less visible but useful, have remained, always functional for the life of the village. Last but not least, the garden is renewed from season to season.

CEIS was a very nice experience that demanded a lot from you but also gave you a lot in return. We started working there when we were very young and year by year we grew together. We all knew each other, the teachers, the caretakers, the cooks, the maintenance workers, the various trainees… A very nice and lasting relationship was created between all of us, which went far beyond the professional environment; we also got to know each other outside of work, sharing ideas and experiences. The relationships that have been formed and consolidated over time are all very nice and important, and we still keep in touch and meet up with many of them.

Another important thing is the bond with the parents and the children themselves, who are now men and women with families of their own. Even today, after so many years, we still meet and say hello… CEIS has given me so many insights and connections that still exist today… colleagues, friends from the village, former students who went to Betulla, pupils and the families themselves.

One thing I regret is that I did not follow Margherita very much in the last years of her life; she did not come to CEIS anymore, she stayed more at home; there were those who visited her, those who had a closer relationship with her, like Natalina Parma Feligioni[11] with whom she was on more familiar terms. Maybe she didn't get to know me fully… it happens.

[11] Natalina Parma Feligioni is among the teachers interviewed.

Natalina Parma Feligioni

Primary school teacher from October 1966 until September 2002

I had a career that was, let's say, very fast compared to many of my colleagues for whom it took several years to get a position in the school.

I introduced myself one day, I had heard about CEIS and when I arrived, I was greeted by Margherita with her very polite attitude: "Good morning, how can I help you…". I told her I wanted to have an experience there and she invited me to write a letter of application and bring it to her. I immediately went home to write it and took it to Margherita, who read it to me in that beautiful way she had when she was reading, speaking or coming to class… many times she didn't speak, she just nodded and you, who were there, wondered whether you had done well or not, and you wondered: "Did I do well? Did I do wrong?".

She read my application… and told me to come the next day at 9 a.m., because at that time the school was open from 9 to 11.30 a.m. and from 2 to 4 p.m.; the teachers did not look after the pupils during the lunch break. I arrived the next day and Margherita sent me to Anna Arlotti, "the very oldest" … meaning that she was the very first teacher at CEIS. Anna taught a first grade and it was wonderful. As a child I dreamed of two things when I grew up: either to be a nun or a teacher… I don't know why… so to find myself there as a teacher was wonderful… and I had this wonderful experience with Anna Arlotti. It was October 1963 and I was very young when I became an assistant teacher.

Anna always gave me lots of activities to do, and I did them with enthusiasm. I started to teach a small class of students with dysgraphia and dyslexia. Everything was done free of charge, but one day the treasurer asked to see me and told me that Anna wanted to deduct 9,000 lire a month from her salary to pay me for my work: "She wanted to pay me for something I had done with so much enthusiasm and with so many children".

At the end of my training, a teacher, Manuela Mondo, who was in charge of a first-grade class, was offered a permanent teaching post in Milan; then, one afternoon, Margherita asked to see me… At first, I was worried, I thought what on earth had I done, everything was going so well. When I arrived, she told me in her very polite and respectful way that Mondo was leaving her post and that she had thought of entrusting me with her first-grade class. At first, I was shocked…to be entrusted with a class…I had just finished a year of training with Anna Arlotti, I was tempted to say no out of surprise. The next day, at 9 a.m. I arrived at the Aula Fontana (Fountain

Room), having not slept that night as thrilled as I was. As soon as I closed the door, I looked at the children, who in turn looked at me as if to say: "We're here! What do you have to offer us?" and I thought about my experience up to that point, the experience I had gained at the teacher training school and with a year of voluntary work… which was really nothing… I remember looking at them, smiling and saying to myself: "Get to work Natalina, you have to start studying, but really study psychology, what teaching is…" and so it began.

I had a special relationship with Margherita from the very beginning, she liked me very much, she came to class, she watched and observed, sometimes she brought me bundles of newspapers or the cardboard she had found… so many things. It was then that I understood what she wanted. She left nothing to chance. What could you do with good cardboard? You could make cards, cut out letters from the newspapers we throw away, to use it for reading and writing activities… I later realised that these simple recycled materials were a stimulus for activities. As I said, there was this wonderful relationship with her. Then one day my husband, Franco Feligioni, came to the school. He had always been very helpful to Margherita. Franco worked as a butcher and one day he decided to give up his job to help the needy, and he did, helping Margherita with so many activities. It was he who dismantled the first barracks and moved them to "Montercole"[12] on the land donated to CEIS by the lawyer Veniero Accreman, and together with a group of students they cleared the land and prepared everything to build the barracks now called "Casa del Castagno" (Chestnut House). For a while he would get up at 4 a.m. and pick up Amedeo, the maintenance man, and go up to the mountain plot with him to set it up and get the job done. He was a real volcano, ready to bend over backwards to help Margherita and the village. On 6 May 1976 there was an earthquake in Friuli, and he and Margherita went to Gemona to build a school, and they did the same after the earthquake in Irpinia on 23 November 1980. I remember the times when we were all together, like after the Festa del Villaggio (Village Festival), when we would stop in the evening to eat together, someone would do the shopping, someone would cook, someone would set the table… like a big family… that's right… we were one big family. We also took care of some boys and girls, welcoming them into the family.

Then, on Saturdays and Sundays, Margherita and I would take my car and go to Reggio Emilia to give courses to teachers and kindergarten staff. She mainly taught painting and I taught rhythm, puppetry, the techniques we used for dyslexia, basically everything that was the CEIS experience.

[12] Monte Ercole, a place in the Municipality of Sant'Agata Feltria.

With Margherita and Franco, we used to go to Florence for the MCE[13] meetings and the CEMEA training courses, which were also held here in the Betulla, in the Village. In those days young people, students, could come and see, observe and learn, because it's something specific that you learn, you live the experience with the children in a constant exchange.

When I think of all the children and young people who want to be teachers, who study a lot… The book is an indispensable tool, but putting its content, or some aspects of it, into practice is the condition for a living relationship with children.

A few examples: sitting in the "circle" is not just a conversation, it has a much deeper value, as does the arrangement of the tables, many little experiences that help to create a bond, a sense of belonging, moving around the room, the relationship with the adult, respect for the classroom, for the garden and for each other.

1. Teachers' training

From the Swiss teachers we learnt a lot, for example from Anna Maria Wild we learnt everything about music, about rhythmics; how to move the body in space and learn the concepts of dysgraphia, the inside, the outside, the bottom, the top, on one side, on the other… all the movements; through these movements I taught maths.

With Margherita we visited different classrooms and I shared my experiences with the other teachers. We were a good group. Each of us then specialised in a particular area, for example Agostina[14] specialised in maths.

2. How the village has changed

Overall, the village is still beautiful, with the same spaces. Over the years some of the games and spaces have changed. I remember that next to the kindergarten a group of students who were guests at CEIS built a water trail and a hill with a tunnel; Margherita also took advantage of certain occasions and people who visited CEIS, for example for a training course, to have something made for the children in the village.

[13] Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Cooperative Education Association).
[14] Agostina Fabbri is among the teachers interviewed.

3. Teachers' collectives

With Margherita we had collective meetings in which many aspects were discussed in depth; then she would invite people to implement what had been proposed… and she herself would always say "… and now let's see what we can do in practice", not to run the risk of it remaining a dead letter, and then she would come to check that the proposed innovations had been introduced… but she would not come to say: "I'm coming to see if you've done it or not", no… It was to see if everything we had talked about together from a pedagogical point of view was being put into practice…

4. Margherita

Margherita was very kind, she could seem cold, not everyone had the chance to discover who she really was, there was a reverence for her, it was not easy to get in tune with her. Margherita had an attitude that could seem "cold" … "rigid" … but if you managed to get in tune with her, you discovered that she was a jewel of a person. When she invited you into the dining room, it was like meeting Queen Elizabeth. When we had meetings in the dining room, she would first have the cooks prepare a nice pot of tea and some biscuits for us teachers. It was very thoughtful of her (but it was the same in the classroom when she came to see us). She had this delicate touch, even when she was eating, which made some of us feel awkward and uncomfortable. In the classroom, Margherita never gave you the answer, she showed you the way, the right way, she offered elements so that you could find the answer by thinking on your own.

She was very attentive to the children in the boarding school[15], she was always interested in how the children were doing and understanding what was happening. Of course, she had to be strict because we were dealing with very complex and difficult situations, which put a strain on the daily work of teachers.

Over time, we gradually stopped taking children who came from too far away, because it was important for them to keep in touch with their families. We began to accept children who came from nearby areas, so that we could also work with their families. The younger ones were housed in the Casina, where the office and the Sezione Primavera (Spring Room) are now located, while the older ones were in Betulla. Later, the CdS (Centre for Socialisation) was set up in the Casina.

[15] Children housed at Betulla and Casina.

I would also like to mention Margherita's strong bond with Gianfranco Iacobucci, whom she held in high esteem. Gianfranco came to CEIS after working as an educator at a summer camp in Igea Marina.

If I could go back, I would do it all over again, CEIS demanded so much of me, but it also gave me so much, both humanly and professionally, in terms of relationships, friendships and an "extended" family… it brought me so much joy. I am still in touch with the children from that time, now adults with families of their own, who remember those moments. I still relive and repeat many of the experiences I had there and continue to invest in what I do.

Carla Semprini Cesari

Educator and teacher since 1966, she became a member of the Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli in 1996, of which she is now vice-president

My experience at CEIS was very formative and helped me later in my professional career with children and adults; a real treasure that still accompanies me today.

I joined CEIS in 1966, as soon as I had finished the teacher training college; I had an interview with Dr Scoccianti[16] and a week later I was already working. My first experience was as an educator. At that time, there were two places, the "Betulla" and the "Casina", which took in children from all over Italy on a residential basis.

I started in the Betulla, I don't remember how many children were in the house in total, but we followed groups of eight to nine children as they were organised into small groups and each educator was the contact person for a small group. There were times like lunch and dinner and during the evening games when we were all together and other times when we worked in smaller groups. As I said, these children came from all over Italy: from Liguria, Campania, Tuscany; I remember one child, E., who came from Sardinia and who, until a few years ago, still sent me his greetings. A very deep bond was created with the children; some of them, who had no parental reference and often lived too far away, enjoyed spending time with my family, who volunteered to host them, especially during Easter or Christmas holidays: like A., a child with whom a very good relationship was developed… but the same happened with other children as well.

From time to time, I meet some of these children who are now grown up; it is always exciting to stop by and say hello and remember the good times we shared with my family when we hosted them.

In the morning the children went to school at CEIS, some to kindergarten and some to primary school, and joined their classmates who did not sleep until 4 p.m. After school they went back to the Betulla or the Casina for a snack, did their homework and then played inside or outside. Activities included craft workshops and cooking.

[16] Marisa Scoccianti, doctor in charge of the psycho-pedagogical medical centre set up at CEIS in 1953 to help children and adolescents with learning and/or adjustment difficulties. In 1959 the centre was brought under the control of the Municipality of Rimini.

The children were given responsibility through some practical everyday activities such as taking care of their personal hygiene, making their beds, keeping the rooms tidy, setting and clearing the table.

The day ended when they went to bed; I remember greeting them one by one, giving them a hug, sharing a thought, a caress or a kiss. I happened to see a little girl, R., now a grown-up woman, who remembered with emotion that moment before she closed her eyes and fell asleep. This still moves me today, because it proves that these simple, genuine and spontaneous gestures have left their mark on these children with complicated family situations.

In the summer we took the children on holiday; we went to Shultz, Trogen, to different places. One year we went to Monte Colombo, near Rimini, to help them become more independent outside the centre. It was customary to organise a party at the end of each stay.

Working at Betulla was very interesting and stimulating; I was very young and the experience left its mark on me. I spent a lot of time at the centre and worked the night shift once a week. There was a need to take care of the children in so many other ways: organising their personal belongings, dressing them, taking care of their health, school issues, everything that the family could not guarantee.

I felt the need to get to know them better through the daily routines, the dialogue, the activities, the experiences, the various handicraft workshops in Betulla where they could express themselves peacefully, to make them feel at home in a warm, well-kept, safe environment where they could feel welcome, wanted and cared for.

Personally, I never felt tired and I was always highly motivated, so that the long hours, the commitment, the problems of management and the reality of such a composite group did not weigh so heavily.

The relationship between us staff, who were all young and eager to get involved, also helped to create a good atmosphere. We were always eager to discuss and exchange opinions in team meetings or with Dr Scoccianti and Margherita when we were taking stock or discussing what to do with a particular child or situation.

Margherita was always willing to listen. I felt that she was always very present… in my opinion, she gave me a great gift - that of always being curious about whom you meet.

The curiosity to find out who is standing in front of you and to emphasise the positive aspects, to promote self-esteem and to understand the needs of that person so that you can act accordingly.

Later, at some point (although I didn't really agree), I was assigned a class, so I left Betulla and started teaching. Each class had more than one teacher, I don't remember who I was with for the first few years… then I

worked for a long time in the classroom with teachers Rosanna Pazzini and Luciana Vari.

At the beginning of my teaching career, my experience was very limited, but I had a lot of support from my colleagues and from teacher Lidia Biagini, one of the "oldest" teachers in terms of experience; she was the teacher of the first primary class when CEIS opened its doors.

Over the years I have met many professors from the Universities of Florence and Bologna, such as Laporta, Codignola, Borghi, Tassinari, Bernardi, who have come to teach training courses… The Centri di Esercitazione ai Metodi dell'Educazione Attiva (Training Centers for Active Education Methods, CEMEA) and Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Cooperative Education Association, MCE) courses were also organised at CEIS, so there were many opportunities to train and specialise over the years.

As time went on, I began to specialise more and more in subjects related to learning difficulties, such as "dyslexia". I started with Lidia Biagini, who was interested in learning difficulties at that time and even earlier; I also followed other specialisation courses and went to Switzerland, where a psychologist had started to work on these very issues.

On a practical level, we then began to take in a small group of seven or eight children from local schools for a period of two to three months and then offer this experience to teachers who wanted to learn about these issues.

The work involved several steps: an initial observation to understand the characteristics and potential to be developed, and finally to understand the specific needs of the individual child.

The intervention took place mainly through play, using special and specific materials that we developed ourselves. Today, these are easily found on the Internet, but, as I said, they do not have the same value as those made specifically for the needs of a specific child, tailor-made to facilitate, support and improve (memory and visual attention) the abilities of dyslexic children.

It was important that each child was supervised by an adult who, after an initial period of observation and collective play as a prelude to the group activity, worked with them individually, using a range of tools and strategies and making the child aware of them.

In this way, the children discovered that school was not all study, difficulty and failure, but that it could also be fun and rewarding if approached with the right tools and strategies. The role of the adult was precisely to provide the child with the knowledge, strategies and tools to deal with their difficulties. At the end of each session, when the children returned home, the group met to analyse the work done, observe the results and evaluate how to proceed next time, refining and fine-tuning the intervention. It is a method that today we would call "work in progress"; in my opinion an effective

method (from practice to theory) that allowed us to gain important knowledge over time.

This experience continued for several years, with great interest also from the AUSL, the local health authority, especially from Enrico Savelli[17], who recognised the importance of the work we were doing. I continued to promote and organise this experience, giving courses even after I retired. This experience was consolidated over time by training teachers and operators working with children with learning difficulties. Together with the AUSL, CEIS set up a real service for children who were referred to us and who needed to be looked after by specially trained staff.

Over time, in addition to my daily work, I have always tried to educate myself, to train myself and to keep an open mind through courses, exchanges, contacts and in-depth studies, following those principles of "active education" that are at the heart of the CEIS experience…

This led me to carry out an important project with a child with serious difficulties; over many years (six years of primary school at CEIS, four years of secondary school and six years of high school) N. managed to achieve important results in terms of communication that were unthinkable at the beginning.

I believe that all this was possible because of my training and my inclination to search, to discover who we have in front of us, to make the most of their potential, to feel, as N. says, "a person" …

1. The relationship with Margherita

I never saw her as an "authoritarian" person, I always felt that she was very supportive, someone to reflect with and talk to; she did not give you the solution, but helped you to think about situations and find an answer for yourself. Over time, we became close, we became friends: we spent holidays together or I accompanied her on some of her trips.

It was she who chose me as a member of the Foundation[18], she was planning to create, feeling that I was an important piece in a select group of people who formed a "mosaic of abilities". It was a very gratifying and un-

[17] Enrico Savelli, Clinical Developmental psychologist. From 1981 to 1999 he worked at the AUSL (Local Health Authority) of Rimini. Since 2004 he has been co-director of the journal «Dislexia» (Erickson Editions). From 2005 to 2009 he was a member of the National Technical Committee of the Associazione Italiana Dislessia (Italian Dyslexia Association (AID)).

[18] Fondazione Margherita Zoebeli (Margherita Zoebeli Foundation), whose current president is Carla Semprini Cesari.

expected choice that added value to what I had been doing for so many years. I was very close to her when she was ill, which was a testament to the respect and friendship we had.

Above all, Margherita was the link to the universities, the important people in the world of education, research and training at national and international level. She suggested that we teachers attend training and refresher courses on important topics to improve our skills and then share what we had learned with the teaching team and implement it in our activities with the children.

A weekly meeting was held for each class. She did not take part in these, but she was almost always present at the meetings with Dr Scoccianti to discuss the cases of the children in her care; she was always available for discussion. The meetings with Gianfranco Iacobucci were particularly important: he was in charge of the technical-didactic issues, he was very competent and skilful; since he was also a teacher, he always suggested concrete and practical activities.

2. The role of Maria Montessori

Over the years there have been many discussions about the importance of the Montessori method. Margherita always said that we should not only refer to Montessori, but that we should also be open to the ideas of other pedagogists, so that we could take from each of them a hint, a suggestion for the work to be done; she said that we should be open to discussion and collective reflection in order to continually improve. As I said, it was in our interest to attend training courses to improve our skills.

3. The relationship with Switzerland

Many of Margherita's friends were from Switzerland, and we had the opportunity to attend special courses (and stay in their homes) on artistic and musical techniques, on the use of puppets, on rhythmics, on new research on learning difficulties; all of these were opportunities to train and broaden our experience, to improve our skills and then share them with everyone at the school.

There were many educators from Switzerland and elsewhere who came to CEIS for a residential training period during their studies; as I mentioned earlier, this was also an opportunity for us operators to exchange ideas and skills or to take the children from Betulla and Casina on holiday.

4. Spaces

In general, it seems to me that the village has remained the same. Over the years, some of the barracks have changed, such as the Padiglione Amicizia (Friendship Pavilion) and the Padiglione Blu (Blue Pavilion), as well as the kindergarten barracks, which are now painted white. In the past, there was also the "Bellavista" Pavilion, which housed a class, the workshops of the maintenance man (Amedeo) and the gardener (Giovannone), now replaced by Roberto[19].

The historic barracks, where the library, the music room and the dining room are now located, once housed the administrative offices, and has remained as it was in 1946. Some of the games have been moved, like the slide, or removed, like the merry-go-round pole between the Casina and the Padiglione Arancio (Orange Pavilion), while others have been updated and modernised, such as the Fortino (the Fort). New games have been added in places where there were none before, such as those in front of the Padiglione Amicizia (Friendship Pavilion) or the swings next to the library. Among the modified pavilions is the Baracca Alta (High Barracks), now more modern, with a beautiful gymnasium. Games such as il Ponte (the Bridge), il Fungo (the Mushroom) and the Casina delle bambole (Dolls' house) are still there. Of course, the access points to the classrooms and facilities now all have a ramp.

[19] Roberto Stocchi, current maintenance man and gardener at CEIS.

Romeo Selvatici

Music teacher since 1985

I started working at CEIS when I was still a minor, 17 and a half years old… I had just finished four years of secondary school to become a teacher, having started primary school a year before the normal age.

I ended up working there almost by chance… in 1984.

When I finished teaching, I had two years left to complete the music academy, as my conservatoire curriculum was six years. During these last two years I had a lot of free time in the mornings, so I applied to be a substitute teacher for solfeggio lessons… I spoke to Margherita, Gianfranco Iacobucci was still there, and they suggested that I do some voluntary work, so I started as a volunteer, in the meantime I could finish the conservatory.

Already in the second year, when the Swiss teachers who had taught music before me were leaving, they told Gianfranco (Iacobucci) that I would be the ideal candidate to replace one of them (there were 2-3 of them, alternating between classes). So, the following year, 1985-86, I began teaching music in two classes: the second grade with Rosanna Pazzini and Carla Semprini Cesari, where I worked with a Swiss girl for half the year, and the third grade with Lidia Biagini and Liviana Fabbri, where I did everything myself, but could always rely on the other two girls who taught the fourth and fifth classes for guidance. In my third year after graduating, Margherita hired me on an external collaboration contract to teach music to all classes from second to fifth grade, the first grade being outside the programme at the time. This continued for another four years until 1990. From 1991 the first grade was included in the project, so I took over all five classes of the primary school. Meanwhile, English was introduced; I had been teaching music for four years when English was introduced with Lucia Biondelli. The timetable was then organised so that the children in each class alternated between Music/English and English/Music lessons throughout the week.

In the end I can say that I was educated here…

I had come as a student, as a former student, I had only completed my high school teacher training and I had only heard about what was done in school, the rest I learnt on the field. It was very helpful for me to talk not only to the more experienced and longer-serving teachers at CEIS, but also to the trainees or volunteers who came from Switzerland for their semester training.

This exchange of ideas and experiences (as I think the young teachers and operators still do today) broadened my horizons a lot, it also made me

think about how to teach music, not only how to teach in general, but how to teach music specifically, to understand… because the way music was taught there was completely different from the way I had learnt it at the Conservatoire… I was an adolescent when I started studying music, I was in secondary school and I learned a very official nomenclature; instead, in those first years at the CEIS, I understood that to teach music you had to "enter the child's world", to make sure that the elements you were trying to get children to assimilate were transmitted in a way that was accessible to them, so that the notes became fairy tale characters, animal steps. … we didn't talk about the quarter note or the eight note… but we talked about the "frog's leap" … the "ant's run" … the half note was no longer the half note but the "elephant's long stride" … and then, above all, I understood that it wasn't important to know everything about musical grammar. The important thing was to help them acquire the essential elements and to work on them as playfully as possible, so that it would be spontaneous and natural to play with these elements… I left out of my programme most of what I thought needed to be taught, written down, transmitted at the beginning… and concentrated on the essentials, to build the foundations on which these children could then assimilate everything else as they grew up… that was my idea.

I came to CEIS with basically no experience, I had just played in an orchestra.

My experience was very technical, very much related to the musician's profession. But I also somehow fell in love with teaching music because it required me to experience music in all its aspects, not just the technical and instrumental ones, as a professional musician would do. A violinist who plays in an orchestra must know how to play his or her instrument very well, how to read the music of an opera at a glance and how to play it to the best of his or her ability. However, he or she may not know much about jazz, early music, Gregorian chant, the musical avant-garde, music related to theatre, cinema: he or she is simply asked to play. I have always found this approach too restrictive. Teaching music, on the other hand, gave me the opportunity to get to know those aspects of musical culture that I did not know, such as popular music, the music played by those who do research in the field, such as "L'Uva Grisa"[20]. You don't learn these things at the conservatoire.

[20] L'Uva Grisa (The Grey Grape) is an artistic, research and meeting experience centred on the traditional culture of Romagna. Its aim is to acquire critical knowledge and practice of ancient repertoires of music, song and dance; to promote the expressive forms of oral culture and the social relations linked to it. It was launched in 1981 in Bellaria Igea Marina (Rimini).

I have learnt that in order to build a relationship with the students, you have to find out what they are interested in, get their attention, try to interest them by exploring topics together. To get the pupils to work together, you need to know everything that might interest them, and you also have to be familiar with very different musical experiences. Working in class on the Festival[21] songs is certainly something current, something that interests and fascinates them, something that pleasantly stimulates them more than, say, Carlos Santana, even though they were more interested in him twenty years ago.

I have always liked to experience music in all its aspects and not just in relation to the technique of a particular instrument.

1. Margherita's role

Margherita was very important; apart from the fact that I met her when I arrived here, she also introduced me to the people in Switzerland who could help me with my teaching: Anna Maria Wild[22], the whole bamboo flute environment[23], even the flute courses held at CEIS through which I trained.

Margherita was also very important because the second year I was here, in November, Gianfranco started to get sick… At this stage she was my reference, trying to follow my activities as closely as possible. She was interested in what I was doing and talked to the Swiss girls and probably to the teachers themselves to see how she could help me. It wasn't easy for me to understand how to relate to the children … to be credible with the children… those first years were very difficult… I was very young… They saw the difference between me being 18 and my colleagues being 40, so someone was trying to take advantage of that. Fortunately, I was able to get help from my colleagues.

Then I saw that Margherita had faith in me, she was confident that I would be able to keep pursuing this profession.

The other teachers appreciated the fact that I was always calm, available… I didn't get angry straight away, especially on certain occasions when

[21] Festival di Sanremo, Italy's most popular music festival.

[22] Anna Maria Wild, music teacher, graduated in Switzerland from the state-recognised bamboo school and in rhythmics for special schools.

[23] An international movement, represented in Italy by the Associazione Italiana Flauti di Bambù (Italian Association of Bamboo Flutes), which promotes music learning through the construction of bamboo flutes and their use in ensemble music. The method used, inspired by the principles of active education, is particularly suitable for those who do not know music and stimulates listening and cooperation through playing together.

the children really put you to the test… In fact, what I did in certain situations was to immediately go and find someone to help me.

Margherita really wanted music to be taught at CEIS and, above all, she wanted musical education to be no longer fragmented, as it had been in the past, linked to the occasional presence of external teachers who would come and teach for a certain period of time… Her intention and desire was that everything should have its own clearly recognisable "consolidated structure" … that it should be a real path of knowledge and training for the children… The idea, which I shared, was that children from second to fifth grade would be able to improve their knowledge and skills over time, as they did for other subjects, with music being a full part of the curriculum and not merely linked to a specific, temporary or fortuitous situation.

The fact that I was a young music graduate and teacher made me, in Margherita's eyes, the right person for this project… and, frankly, it was interesting for me too. I realised that at CEIS I could implement interesting initiatives in a way that I might not have been able to in other schools. I realised that if I had taught in a secondary school, I would have been given a class of 25 to 30 children; even if the hours are doubled there, you can understand that it is difficult to work with so many children, older children, all together… You can work more on a theoretical level and less on a practical level… I was very interested in working with children on a practical level. As I played in an orchestra at the time, I had the idea of forming a small orchestra of pupils with their own instruments. In the end, I decided to stay at CEIS and specialise in didactics rather than instrumental technique.

For the whole primary cycle, I focus specifically on music.

Music cannot be seen only as a part of theatre, dance or a party… Music is a subject in its own right, like maths, which has its own technical development and which is good for children to know and master.

For me, helping them to know how to read notes, how to read music, when they leave school, is like saying "they are literate", they leave school with this added value; their reading is not only linguistic and verbal, but also melodic, musical, rhythmic… it is an additional skill.

I think music should be taught in schools, it should be part of the curriculum like all the other subjects, like maths, science, Italian. To hear a child play or sing in tune should be a normal thing… the child appreciates a concert, a performance more… Those who experience music as protagonists appreciate it more when they hear it. It is a culture that must be passed on, even if only in its embryonic stage, but it is important to do so.

It was also Margherita's idea that music should not be neglected, but should be an integral part of school education. It was a global idea that emerged at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, that

music should be included in all the disciplines that contribute to the education of the individual.

2. Spaces

Those of us who have lived in the Village every day for decades do not notice how spaces have changed over the years. In principle, not much has changed, but when you look at the details, some things have evolved, some have been added and some have been removed.

Because all the spaces are very functional for teaching, for the children's learning and experiences, we do not notice so much how they have changed, because we notice more whether things have worked or not; we notice whether an activity has worked, and if it has, we are interested to know whether it is because we have been able to adapt the spaces to the needs that have arisen.

Changes in space are functional changes. It makes no sense to say: «there was this game, this structure, which is no longer there»… because maybe the activities we were doing at that time have changed and that structure is no longer needed. Over time, the iron wallbars have been moved until they have been replaced by other structures that offer the same functionality in a different way, while wooden wallbars can be still found in the gym for the activities proposed and carried out there. Another example… the rope game, ropes have appeared and disappeared of over time… Some games have been replaced to make them safer and to comply with current regulations. The games, the places, are in turn physical landmarks that have entered the vocabulary of all of us who live in the Village, such as la Montagnola, (the Hill), il Fungo (the Mushroom), la Fontana (the Fountain), il Ponte (the Bridge), il Fortino (the Fort) or la Casina delle bambole (the Doll's house).

3. The children

When I started working here at CEIS in the 1980s I used to hear, «children nowadays are not what they used to be!», in the 1990s, «ah… children nowadays are not what they used to be!»; it was the same in the 2000s, the 2010s and, of course, today in the 2020s.

Children are just children!

In general, I find many similarities between the children of today and those of the past, and if we think about it, there have always been and will always be more challenging children with difficult characters, as well as children who respond positively to our proposals and objectives from the

start. Perhaps in the past there were many children with social problems, whereas today there are children with personal or relational problems, like autism. At the end of the day, it is not important to know the nature of this or that child's difficulties (of course it is necessary to understand them), but what you do with them at a practical level and what strategies you use. Sometimes practical approaches are more useful than knowing the problem, although information about the features, the causes, the origins of a particular disorder is still useful and necessary. You know that the child has a diagnosed problem, you know that he/she has an objective difficulty, you know that he/she has experienced a trauma or is still experiencing it, that there is something going on in the family, in his/her personal life… but in the end what matters is what you can do there and then concretely with specific daily educational actions. So not only you have to know, but you also have to understand and try out many activities and concrete solutions and then, with a little bit of luck, you find the one that works and from there you start a relational mechanism that takes you where you want to go with learning. It is not always easy.

In the 38 years I have been working here, I have met many children with disabilities. After 38 years I can say that each one is a case in itself. Children with Down syndrome may have similarities, but they are all different and react differently. It's a constant search for understanding, a constant search until you find the activity that works and allows you to work with them.

When it comes to integrating them into the classroom, it's not always easy to involve them in collective activities, but it's important to find the leverage points to build on, the right moments during the lesson that allow you to include them and, above all, to integrate them on a more equal footing. Finding ways to do this in specific moments… that's the goal. It's not always easy, but it has to be done.

Through music, which is a natural, innate, spontaneous thing for human beings, you can achieve integration through dancing or singing, perhaps playing different instruments such as the flute, the drum and the xylophone, with the emotional charge that this activity implies; all children can do this, each with his or her own possibilities, but in some way they all end up doing it.

Translated by Eleonora Bernardi

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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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