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## Intervista a Giacomina Castagnetti Ottobre 2019

How I lived is how almost all Italian women lived: however the moment that particularly interested women after twenty years of dictatorship was that women were considered nothing, in fact Mussolini said that women only had to have children and to be interested in anything else.

In fact my mother who was a widow with eight children had been awarded by Mussolini because she had six sons: my sister and I who were girls were not awarded in that parchment and this was the value of women for fascism.

But when the war broke out in 1940 and the men were all called back to the front to go to war, somewhat unleashed all over the world, both in Greece, in Russia, in France, a little everywhere, the women stayed at home and suddenly became breadwinners with the burden of feeding their children on their shoulders.

The peasant women had to sow and harvest because the regime required that the land be produced because the harvest had to be used for the front, it had to be used for the war, therefore women in 1940 in Italy were fully involved in the function and preparation of war.

This was the moment in which women had to turn all of their training upside down and invent a new life which was that of the burden of the family, the burden of carrying on the family itself; especially the women laborers who went to work occasionally in the fields called them back to work in the factory, so the housewife, the angel of the hearth created by Mussolini had become workers who produced weapons. So the Second World War was a very different war from all the others, it was a war that particularly involved more civilians, more women than the soldiers themselves at the front.

The period of the Resistance began after 8 September: I who had breathed an air of anti-fascism even in my family, because I grew up with the very contrast between what one experienced at school or around what I felt at home .

For example, Mussolini had involved everyone, even the children: in the school there were Mussolini's writings, for example "Believe, obey, fight", this was the creed of the boys and girls who attended the schools, for example the Little Italians , and this was the creed of the Young Balilla they said, believe, obey and fight.

Instead in my house... There at school I heard talk of the usefulness of war, of the conquest of the empire as a triumphal march, instead my brother said that for poor people war has never brought anything good; so for me, breathing this air meant having a profoundly contrasting formation within me because I didn't quite know whether I had to believe what I heard at school or what I felt at home.

But when my brother was arrested because he was an anti-fascist I began to understand and since then I've become an anti-fascist, that's what I can call myself: I was a child but I already felt like an anti-fascist and during the war I really hoped that the moment would come I could do something to end the war and to make people free.

On September 8, when the king declared that Italy would make an armistice with the British and the French, but he said "the war continues", at that moment it seemed to me that I already knew which side to take, and luckily at that moment the women who in the four years of war for the sufferings, for all that



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they had to undergo, for the change of their political, social life and so on, many of them agreed with me. At that moment I discovered that many women thought like me, and therefore it was easy for us when our boys escaped from the front and those who were still at home, there was a proclamation that they had to present themselves to participate in the Salò Republic, which was only a republic, a pied a terre for the Germans who in 24 hours from friends became enemies, from friends they had become invaders; therefore the women understood that they had to help these boys to prevent them from being deported to Germany, because Germany took these boys, took them to concentration camps to work in the factories.

Although women had always been distant from political life, and at that moment there was no one who politicized them: I was lucky because I already had ideas matured in my family, but the majority of women weren't politicized, however they figured out which side to be on and the Resistance began from there.

I personally was already in contact with Thisbe who was an anti-fascist, that is, I already had some friends even before 8 September who exchanged some ideas, who were against the war: for example when Mussolini called us to become the godmothers of the soldiers Italians at the front, i.e. godmothers meant they gave you a list of boys at the front, you chose a few names and started writing letters because it would have been a support, a way to make them feel closer to home, because many of these boys had illiterate mothers who could not even write because they could neither write nor read and therefore many went to the parish priest or to someone to have their children write letters.

The Fascists had devised this means of finding girls willing to begin a correspondence with boys at the front precisely to give them news of their home, give them news of their mother's health or whatever. We, a group of my friends, refused to do these things, not because of the boys but because it was an order from Mussolini, for us it was a way of disobedience to what Mussolini had prepared for war, and therefore for us it was already a small anti-fascist action so if we want to call it and in a group we refused to do this thing.

But we have to say something about the situation that had arisen on 8 September, namely that it was a very different situation from when the war had begun because on an international scale the retreat of the Germans into Russia had already begun, things were going badly in Africa and then many people had also changed their idea of when the war began, because unfortunately at the time very young people and many families truly believed that Mussolini's plan to wage war was truly an advantage for Italy. When on 8 September things started to go wrong, that Italy was divided in two, it was invaded by the Germans in the north, by the Americans in the south and the king had already fled, he had taken the liberty of giving up everything and going home, Mussolini was already practically engaged by the Germans, and we must bear in mind that the Resistance in Emilia was very different from the Resistance in other places in Italy, we must always underline this.

Precisely because we were 70 km from the Gothic Line and Hitler had given the order that the Germans must not retreat from there and therefore the situation had become very, very difficult for us women who were at home because we were the most in contact with the German soldiers who were at the front, because they took away all the stuff in our houses, they took away our grain, they took away everything from us because what was done in Emilia was meant to feed the front and the Gothic Line. So from this point I



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began to be in contact with my family we were at home five or six children and two sisters-in-law, the men were all away: two had already died, one in Greece and one in Russia, and the situation we had unfortunately it was also in other families, even in many families that once were fascists, especially women, because I believe that all women are always against war, this will against war is innate in women, it is easier than war is caused by a man rather than a woman, I want to clarify this.

So these families who had already had deaths, the Germans went to our homes to take away our food, the children were hungry and so on, so they changed their mind.

Like me, I already had ideas as I said before, but it was a jolt of women, a movement that was created within 24 hours or 50 hours, so for us to expand our ideas... Why for example this initiative I took it because I was an anti-fascist: to dress boys because it was the only way to escape the capture that would have taken them to Germany. As I thought so, other women that I didn't even know and that I didn't even know how they thought, they did it too just because they were women, this is the important fact that we must always underline.

This was a movement born spontaneously of women, not prepared, not of anti-fascist women and therefore I want to underline it because what I did was done by hundreds of women and it was possible to organize this work; afterwards we felt the need, me in particular, Tisbe and others to organize it because otherwise it would have been a job that was dispersed over time thus without having maximum effectiveness, because from there the formation of partisan squads began.

We had hidden these young people in the houses, in the attics, where it was possible because they were hunted down continuously, and there was a written proclamation from the Republic of Salò which said that anyone who didn't show up was shot on the spot, that is, when you were met there was no it was process, there was nothing. These young people were all sentenced to death if they didn't show up, so we tried to hide them, but you can hide them for ten days, five days, but they couldn't, so this is where the idea of the partisan squads came from, to escape to the mountains because this it happened everywhere in the plains, in the plains you couldn't hide them because there were continuous round-ups.

Here the first partisan teams left, but in the mountains they couldn't find a barracks that could host them, even in the mountains they only found families that could host the partisans. These boys went up, many unarmed, some had some weapons that those who had escaped from the front had brought back from the front, but the majority had nothing, they couldn't even have the uniform they had before.

This is where the Women's Defense Groups came in, the famous organization, because we started... We have to bear in mind that Rome had already been liberated, therefore some anti-fascist women who were outside the pocket that we were, had already begun to think of an organization, because we were inside the pocket of Emilia Romagna where the war was really still very strong but a part of Italy had already been liberated: so that's where the idea started that we accepted and welcomed because it helped us to organize the work that was no longer a spontaneous work of the women towards these boys but was instead an organized work that had to be invented.

In fact, depending on the needs of these partisan groups, because a leader had already been established, we were given orders, that is, either to transport weapons or especially to transport food because these boys were in the mountains but did not have a canteen that could accommodate them, c 'there were only



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women and families, so women needed to organize this work so that it was as effective as possible. Then there was the need to invent clandestinity: it meant finding the means to not get caught because the Germans didn't know you, but they were led by the fascists, so we had to fight both the fascists who knew us and the Germans.

So our work also had to be organized so as not to get caught because they didn't immediately notice the women who rode a bicycle with a bag and so on, but later both the Germans and the fascists weren't stupid they began to understand that these women that they saw circulating in the streets were perhaps more dangerous than the partisans themselves so we had to invent how to do it clandestinely, something that none of us had experience or something.

I want to clarify that at this point we declare that women were at least the first partisans of Emilia, in other areas I don't know how these organizations are formed, but the organization worked like this: I was in contact with the Tisbe of we have already talked about that she was responsible for the area, I had another area, I was responsible for this one, but our job... We had to know as few people as possible: we never had to ask for their names, what they were called, who they were because otherwise if we were arrested, what we didn't know we couldn't say. If, on the other hand, we knew many names, once under torture we could give names: so that apart from that group we knew, we did not know other names and the small group, there were ten of us in a group, these ten had three or four other names which they knew, and these three or four names they had three or four more and it became an army.

But everything was like this: the knowledge was interrupted...

What I can't explain well, which many fail to understand is this, that we weren't supposed to know women, not even the partisans: in fact, afterwards the famous figure of the relay was invented, legendary because everyone thinks that the partisans were all relays. No: every partisan group in the mountains knew just one woman, a relay and she had the task of going to a place, to a delivery address, taking orders and transporting them; the link between the plain and these partisan squads was only one person who knew, all the others didn't know where the partisans were, where they slept, etc.

Instead, we had the task, the mass, we women, was to collect the food, take it to a certain place, that each of us knew a place and was there.

I knew the name of a small group that had already been friends of mine: for example, those in that photo were relay racers but they lived near my house and I knew everything about them, but I didn't know the others.

The work was thus developed through word of mouth, to use the right word: each one had two or three friends and spoke to them because otherwise it would have been too great a risk, thinking about the organization that there can be in times of peace it is not possible to understand how ideas and orders were transmitted to each other in a clandestine period.

In fact the chain had to be broken, then two or three women... But it wasn't a prefabricated thing that one could say three is a group, four is a group, no, maybe one even knew ten women and worked like that; I maybe knew six or seven and worked with these but the word developed everywhere in one day.

When there were raids we set off by bicycle but not in groups, each on his own went to warn those families that he knew there were men in the house and that they had to escape and this often happened, sometimes



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even suddenly we might hear there were German patrols carrying out the roundups: at the time we knew what was happening and we went in a very few hours, because you have to think that there were no mobile phones, there was no radio, there was no means of information and we couldn't even write it in the newspaper. What was being done had to be transmitted clandestinely to those two or three people, and the other people, even if I met them, I didn't know they were partisans and I wasn't supposed to know it and I wasn't even supposed to know their name, and I wasn't even supposed to ask, precisely because we in the plains did not have battle names.

There were political commissars in the partisan squads who also had this task: they also talked about what they had to do in the partisan squads but not only in the moment, on the contrary we young people wanted to know what we could do later, because there was a situation that he already predicted that the war couldn't last very long so we were already preparing for what we wanted and what we wanted to happen after the war. In fact, in 1944 I took part in a political meeting let's call it, they were the first political words we heard, I didn't know how many there could be at that point there: we did it in the open countryside along a secondary road, because you must think that all our work, the work that all the partisans did, we put our families at risk, therefore the people at risk for our work multiplied enormously. We also tried to protect our families, where there were children, where there were mothers and fathers who were at home.

Among these families there were some who risked more like my family which was a fugitive house, it was called: the partisan groups, especially the gappists, we hosted the gappists because during the day they had to stay closed in the families, in home, and at night they went out and had very specific military objectives. When I moved, I had to take into account that my family had already been notified that it was a family of anti-fascists and therefore I had to be much more careful about moving like many other families, for example that there were relay races: very often families were targeted, in fact it is here that we have had so many women who were subsequently arrested, tortured and so on.

So all our action had to take these things into account and when they invited me to this meeting we tried to have it in the least visible place, a small road that goes from Masone and that perhaps someone knows, that goes from Masone to Gavassa: it's a road that still exists and I've traveled it many times after the war, and under a tree so as to make it appear that our meeting was a picnic for girls.

There were five of us: I didn't know the other girls, they didn't know me and there was this commissioner who arrived and I met him and I learned his name after the war because he became the mayor of Ciano d'Enza; for the rest I that gentleman there who later learned that his surname was Papazzi but I learned it after the war, for me he was an illustrious stranger and it had to be like this.

And it was the first time I heard of emancipation, of the right to vote for women, of dignity for women: in short, they were the basic words for having a democracy in Italy afterwards. So I heard about these things in 1944 when I had already been working underground for quite some time.

In 1944 we were still Women's Defense Groups because we were still in a zone of action and Women's Defense Groups were specifically created as an association to support and aid the partisans, however in liberated Italy towards Rome and down the 'Udi, the Union of Italian Women. They already had a program for the emancipation of women, and therefore here too there were already these contacts to understand a little what the political situation was and in particular the political and social situation of women.

This responsibility towards children was already maturing in women: for example, it had been three years since the responsibility for children was exclusively on women's shoulders.

Women had already started working in the factories during the war and therefore already felt the weight of the family and especially of the children: in my opinion the idea of kindergartens was born precisely from this need, from this situation.



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Immediately after the war, no one can imagine the disaster that is a society, that is a country after the war, a war like this, houses destroyed, hunger ... Women began to think about children during the war but particularly towards the end of the war, women in Reggio rose up even before the partisans.

With uncovered faces we went to open the doors of the consortia where there was wheat inside to be given to the children. The responsibility of women was already in place, that of giving help to our children, to our children, because the idea of making their children feel good is natural in women, there is no need to invent a thing.

So this we had done before the war even ended: the idea of feeding our children. That famous poster that everyone put out that says "Women rise up!" we rose up before the war ended, we faced the Germans and the fascists with uncovered faces to go and ask for food for our children.

Reggio Emilia was like many other cities but it was a city that perhaps had a different spirit than in many others, for example it was a city that the anti-fascist movement was quite strong: however there was already hunger and we know this, houses destroyed and we know it, completely different families because every family or almost all families had had deaths and so on...

There was really a strong poverty, the laborers, the peasants and therefore there was a need to rebuild everything; but among this disaster there was particularly the childhood that had suffered the war, because we emerged from the war with 40% illiteracy among boys and especially among women, and I remember the first meetings that were held mothers in difficulty because they could not speak Italian.

Illiterate women, good mothers who took care of their children in this way, but when they had children to send to school and so on, it was an enormous difficulty for them.

But what is more important is to say that these women who came out of the war were changed women, they were no longer the women of 1940: they were women who had acquired a certain mastery of themselves, women who wanted to do things, women who really showed all the will that a mother can have to create better conditions for her children. And this was all released, this enthusiasm was no longer just a partial enthusiasm, it had become a mass enthusiasm, otherwise we would not be able to explain how we managed to build a country in such a short time.

And then I say that Udi, the Unione Donne Italiane, which was the first unitary organization only for women, which in the difference between men and women in a society is confused but it takes the ability to understand the peculiarity that there is in a woman rather than in a man.

For example, motherhood already makes a lot of difference between a man and a woman, and the watchword that came out of the Udi that newborn babies are citizens: this explains everything, because it's not always easy to understand these things, even however, it took the institutions a long time to understand the Unione Donne Italiane, this large organization that had become a mass organization for me, it was the moment that Italian women understood and felt great support, a great movement that was on their side.

In fact, Udi has worked wonders.

So a very precise organization was born and trying to make it be born in all areas. Naturally, these meetings were called by these leaders who were perhaps the ones who had the time and also the ability to organize them and were very well attended because we must think that at that moment we meet a new woman: a woman who with the war, with work and so on his mentality had changed, he understood that he could do many things, which before he couldn't.

And at the same time there she also encountered the difficulties and the difference that existed between the already advanced way of thinking of women with the habits and the mentality of families.

The important political point for me is precisely this: there the old habits of hundreds and hundreds of years collided which considered the woman who only had to do the housework and so on, it collided with this new



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woman who, if you like, was however, at the beginning she had already understood that she had the right to be a citizen like everyone else, to have the same duties but also the same rights that all other male citizens had.

This was the crucial moment when we emerged from this war because a new person emerged, a new woman emerged who never wanted to go back, a woman who wanted to move forward and this is the importance of these meetings, which she discussed freely and was discussed not to make feminism but for how women could fit into society while maintaining the differentiations that nature has given us.

These contrasts came out particularly with families, with husbands, men who weren't used to seeing women go to meetings, they weren't used to going home with the paper, "Noi donne" which was a paper specifically dedicated to women women: I have lived through this period for this I want to underline it.

For example I went to meetings, maybe there were the men "Where's your wife?" "My wife has to make the soup, she has to look after the children" and therefore because the biggest battle we had to fight was not only for the change of existing laws.

In fact, Iotti in 1947 when she was part of the commission for the drafting of our Constitution, to obtain family law she had to fight a lot and she succeeded because behind Nilde Iotti there was a large movement of women in Italy who wanted This; but the hardest battles were those in the family that men weren't used to seeing women go to meetings and come and ask her problems.

And it is here that the idea of kindergartens was strongly born, we must say this: we had understood, I say we because I did the work of the Udi in the mountains, that if we did not free the women from these family commitments they would never be able to go to work, have a normal life like all citizens.

In fact there was a period of time when the birth of children had greatly decreased because women knew that with a child they were very close; and then the strength it gave us to have kindergartens like we have was also because then there were only parish kindergartens which weren't kindergartens, they were shelters.

These children were deposited there and that was it: the illiterate mothers, the mothers who had not been able to study and so on fought so that their children had the possibility of having a better education from childhood, even if they did not understand pedagogy or not but they understood the meaning.

In fact, when the industrialists tried to make kindergartens in the factory, we turned against them because they only became a deposit that the mothers deposited their children there in the morning and collected them in the evening when they went home; therefore we already saw the conception of the kindergarten as a school, a kindergarten and not a deposit for our children. Precisely because, for example, many mothers couldn't even help their children with their homework because there was a very low level of schooling, especially for women.

Why this? Let's say it! Because in families, if there were two souls to send someone to school, boys went to school, women did not go to school: because women's knowledge by marrying went outside the family, instead the man was a resource for the family itself, therefore the contrast in the family came from afar, it also came during and before the war for these objective reasons that existed in families.

Not that we were going against families: we wanted the same rights to exist within the family as there were outside.

The municipalities had no money: the need for kindergartens was strong, then we women were aware of a handicap that the rest of us had because we did not have an important level of schooling as men had, we were aware of this.

I was elected in a municipality, San Martino in Rio, immediately after the war: the first evening I went to the council meeting, nothing but today, a trauma precisely because I knew nothing about administrative law, I knew nothing about the municipality and so on, then I also had difficulty in dialogue, I also had difficulty in intervening.



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Our difficulty was also to establish ourselves in the right entities: apart from the fact that there was no common money so even if we had ideas it was difficult to put them into practice, but even when we were in the right place, for example they immediately gave me the 'department of childhood because it was an automatic thing and my work was particularly limited to signing vouchers to give milk to families who did not have enough money to give milk to their children.

I remember that my work was reduced to little more than this: however the desire to do was great, the need to have these kindergartens was so great that they were born even with only the idea of women at a certain point. So there was little money, you placed it where you could place it.

They raised the money by doing initiatives: by selling chickens, perhaps having a party, bringing little presents and then playing and the proceeds went towards the kindergarten, everything went towards the kindergarten.

There were Udi circles especially in the plains which were richer than here in the mountains, because here the kindergartens were born after a long time, they kept going month after month, they never knew if they would reach the end and the Municipality had no However, money had not yet entered into the conception that kindergartens were very important to give women the opportunity to go to work, as we said before.

In these asylums of the people there was naturally a management committee, especially women: but for example, the local authorities also lent a hand, both with management and then also with a little money; but it wasn't the kindergarten we know, it was a somewhat transitory kindergarten, in short, a kindergarten to make up for the parish one.

Because then, after the war, you know very well that parties were formed, therefore ideas took shape and also divisions in the municipal councils, in the local bodies: in all the bodies this division took shape to a certain extent and therefore there was a part that wanted to give the money to the asylum of the people (let's call it that because this is good for everyone) and there was instead a part that wanted to give the money to the parish asylum.

So this division created a lot of difficulty for both, and not always if there was a kindergarten there was also the conviction on the part of our municipal councils that it was necessary to build a new kindergarten.

It's not that we had any pedagogical ideas to be able to give advice on this, we just wanted women when they went to work to have their children in an environment where they learned something, who didn't just learn prayers and all these things: go down into all I am sorry for these details because it seems that I am anti-clerical but there was, for example, the desire that our boys, our children (because we go to kindergarten really young), had someone who looked after them well, who taught them I don't know how to sing, poems...

That is, an education that was almost a school, that they learned even a little when they could to write, to do ... I don't know what they teach us now, but then they took the example of the parish kindergarten, where there was a nun who she made them say prayers from morning to night, then they slept, then they always had to stay with their arms folded.

Now to think about it, they were really kindergartens that created farmed chicks: if we now think that Malaguzzi's kindergartens are based on the spontaneity of children, because they are precisely created on this principle, that every child has the right to do what comes in mind to do at that moment, and think of kindergartens who stayed there for eight hours and even more with folded arms or praying...

Now I understand the difference: then there was just, at least as far as I can tell because I don't mean that we came out with all clear ideas, and if they say that it's wrong because clear ideas come later with experience, then c 'it was only necessity and if we created the kindergarten by putting a teacher and not a nun, it seemed to us that it was already the best we could get.

But when we created those kindergartens, immediately the desire to make them afterwards we collided with





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the new laws, we collided with the security with all these things, that our kindergartens did not have all this so slowly, in addition to the economic means, some were even closed because there wasn't this security, if you know what I mean.

After the war the laws changed and so on so they didn't die just because there were no means, there were also other difficulties: the environment which wasn't all up to standard (now we use these words, then I don't even know if there was 'were the words to say let's do something in accordance with the law), then it was done very spontaneously with what was possible and therefore judging them becomes very difficult, but for us it already seemed like an innovation, it already seemed like something for the 'future, here.

Then after this speech he went on, as I wanted to say, that this great movement intersected: that these kindergartens were then born out of necessity so they did it with what they could, it's not that they had been well defined I don't know what the others said .

I say that they were born out of necessity especially in the plains when there were farmhands who all went to work, and who immediately after the war had formed cooperatives and went to work in the countryside and needed to deposit their children in a safe place.

Afterwards, luck in this political will came when Malaguzzi and this movement crossed paths, this will of women, because Malaguzzi couldn't have done what he did if there hadn't been Udi behind it and the women's movement.

Because the public administrations decided when this movement insisted a lot, so since they were interested in votes, they listened to women.

Malaguzzi only put his intellectual capacity into it, alone if he went to a municipal administration to say "I want to do a kindergarten" they said "Malaguzzi now you can do the kindergarten then on your own!"; this becomes very simple .

They made asylum because women asked for asylums and the asylums of the people were set up especially outside the city center because there were women who went to work in the countryside and needed asylum. Because the kindergartens of the people, what happened there was that they broke down the tank to have the money to make asylum: they sold the iron of a tank to have the money for asylum but they were all kindergartens out in the countryside particularly.

When they made the list for the municipal votes, the men basically said "we also need a woman", then afterwards the woman too was brought out.

Do you understand what I mean?

Afterwards I came to the mountains and worked throughout the Reggio mountains as a representative of the Udi and I walked on foot because in the middle of the mountain there were still no roads and no means of transport could reach us.

I went to all the hamlets of the mountain to talk about Udi: the first battle we fought in the mountains was that of the washhouses.

Why the washroom? Because the vast majority, except for two or three centers (Carpineti, Castelnovo Monti, the center of Busana where the water came down the slope and there was no need for anything) had no water at home and the women had to go do the laundry in the ditch.

For us, the washhouse, having the water brought near the town with the tub meant taking away from the women the trouble of going to the river to wash, carrying the laundry up on their shoulders and coming to hang it out; then for us it was also a moment of aggregation when the women went to get water from the source nearby the house, it meant meeting up and having a chat.

I speak that in half of the hamlets of the ridge there was no road: therefore there were no cars, there was little



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possibility of communication, there were people who to get to any office in Castelnovo spent hours and hours feet and I came up right there at that moment.

The other big activity we carried out, and also won, was to have the municipalities build the schools because there were very many hamlets that didn't have elementary schools: it meant that the kids continued not to go to school even after the war, I'm talking about 1950, they didn't go to school.

We had managed to have school in many villages that weren't in the centre, because the school was in the centre, but since there weren't any means of transport because there was no road, these children had invented the foot bus (which now in Reggio there is the piedibus, i.e. for the children to go to school on foot) even after the war they had invented the piedibus and they had to travel kilometers and go to school, therefore we had managed to obtain many elementary schools from the municipalities where it was possible .

It's just that over time they had become useless things because there weren't many children, there were mixed classes, maybe first graders who had to go to school with third or fourth graders; then came the roads, things changed and luckily schools were no longer needed.

Then also the water over time they built aqueducts and brought water to the houses but this happened a lot after the war. And once again the Udi had this sensitivity to create the most basic services that families could have in the mountains, and I am very proud that I lived through that period because it was one of the periods that saw my work truly come true .

In winter, the women all went to be servants (at the time they were called that) in the homes of the rich in Genoa and Milan because they were farmers but had little land so they didn't have enough wheat to feed the whole family.

At the time, the women and the men stayed at home in the winter and they went to serve in Genoa and Milan, but to get a little more money they didn't insure them: that is, they went there, took a small salary and came home, full stop.

What happened, when they were elderly they were not entitled to a pension: they had worked all their lives without a pension and I helped them, we sued many rich people to pay their contributions but this happened when I was already in the mountains, after the war.

In the mountains this was a very important job because the majority of women had no right to a pension because they had worked like this, with a small salary, a small pay.

This was my job to teach them how to recover contributions, because afterwards there was a law that allowed them to report these owners who hadn't paid their contributions and be able to recover them: it wasn't easy because maybe some owners were lost, not the 'We found more, but we still managed some and for me it was a very important job because for these elderly women up here in the mountains a little retirement was a very important thing.

(What years were they?): After 1950 because I came up in 1950.

(How many years did you do it?): Well you know it lasted a while then there were stricter laws and then even the women didn't go anymore, I'm talking about people who were already elderly who had been to work during the war either before or just after the war; but that they were also a little aware of the fact that if they didn't pay their contributions they'd give them some extra money, understood? Sometimes they too did it for convenience but it still happened after the war. But then there was already a law precisely which then obliged to pay the contributions for the old-age pension.

(When did you meet Loretta?): I met Loretta when she was in the API but I'm talking about when I was arrested in 1947 ... Well then I must have already met her in 1946-47; also the ion. Lusuardi a little later because she didn't immediately do the work of the Udi because she worked, she was an employee something like that.



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(Did you work together?): With Loretta yes because she too worked in the Udi and I was out, however it was always the Udi organization, it was the provincial organization that there was a group of women who worked at the center and some outside like me who was in Castelnovo, there was one in Guastalla, in the most important centers however we were all from the Udi committee.

But the first ones I ever met were Iotti and Zanti, just a few days after the Liberation in 1945: that Iotti was not the Iotti we met, she too came out of the Women's Defense Groups and I had Zanti already known because her father had been shot. She lived in Cavriago but we in the organization knew of these bad events that were happening and therefore I had already known Zanti before, during the war: partly due to the episode with her father, because she lived in Cavriago, I San Martino in Rio is not that we had... But immediately after the war, that everything was still in ruins we had a meeting and there were only a few of us but I remember that there were Iotti and Zanti who were there to make the meeting, those were the first acquaintances a little bit of the center.

Because we had demonstrated in front of Ruggerini which was an engine factory in Rubiera and the workers had gone on strike for a salary increase, it was immediately after the war I don't know if in 1947 or '48... '47 I think.

When the industrialists went on strike there were other workers who wanted to enter, the "scabs" they called them...

The worker who was in the factory went on strike then there were other people, it was the usual struggle between the poor, but those who had the job naturally didn't want to lose it and therefore we women were in front of the factory to prevent the scabs from going inside but they didn't arrest us there in front of the factory, they came to take us home.

Because then there was still a climate of this kind: the strike was legal but the industrialists would not have wanted it to exist. I was inside for forty days with a group of women from Rubiera and it was more or less in that period that I later met those other girls as well.