



Department of Political Sciences

Master's Degree in International Relations
Major in **Mediterranean Governance**

Chair of History of Italian Foreign Policy

Fausta Deshormes LaValle: an Italian official at
the European Commission and the start of a
policy for women.

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Academic Year 2022/2023

“È curioso a vedere che quasi tutti gli uomini che valgono molto hanno le maniere semplici, e che quasi sempre le maniere semplici sono prese per indizio di poco valore”

- Giacomo Leopardi.

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Introduction

The average academic curriculum in International Relation focuses on politics, economics, and international law. However, it does lack a base historical structure for the most part. Needless to say, the importance of studying history as a subject for it allows to move back and forth on the chronological line of politics, economics, and international law. The creation of international organizations derived from the needs due to historical events, the shape and changes in the economy and in politics often derive from historical events as well. The choice to focus on history came to me when I understood that I needed to deepen my knowledge of the subject in order to understand the basics of international relations. When I started attending Professor Varsori's class on History of Italian Foreign Policy I became immediately interested in the content of the lectures and it soon became clear which subject offered by my academic curriculum I would focus on for my thesis. Through the semester I discovered that there are many crucial personalities that made history but that are hardly ever acknowledged for what they have done, although they have often brought to progress and important change in history. It is on this principle that the following thesis is based. I know I wanted to make research on the topic of women integration and women's rights, but I did not want to give more credit to one of the famous feminists on which books and articles have already been written about. The smartest move was relying on the vast knowledge of Professor Antonio Varsori, who immediately understood the task and introduced me for the first time the personality of Fausta Deshormes LaValle. When I first started making research, I could not find much information about her. I knew that she had been an official working in the European institutions to foster women integration, but not much else was available at first glance. However, I promptly understood that I had found one of those "silent" personalities who have changed and shaped European institutions but without being granted much recognition. Before starting my research, I had

studied the history of the “founding fathers of Europe” but I had no idea that there were also some “funding mothers of Europe”. Fausta Deshormes was one of them. She was first put to work in the DGX but quickly put in charge of the information office dedicated solely to women’s issues. From that office in Brussels, she was able to spread her mission well over the Belgian elite made of European officials and clerks. Indeed, she created a true network of women, for women. She is responsible for the creation of *Femmes d’Europe*, the first official bulletin issued by the EU and dedicated to women. She was able to communicate with everybody. She spoke the language of the European Commission as well as the language of an ordinary women who had no idea about what was happening in Brussels and how that would impact her. Fausta dedicated her career and mission to creating bridges between women and the EU institution, and she managed to accomplish her goal skillfully. The first chapter of the following thesis is dedicated to the introduction to the life of Fausta Deshormes and her work and her activity towards women, specifically the first years working in the DGX at the service of the newly-created Information Femmes office. The second chapter is focused on the main “child” of Fausta’s work: the bulletin *Femmes d’Europe*. The aim of the chapter is to explain the importance of such bulletin, and it will be given the example of *Femmes d’Europe*’s fight for equal pay. The third chapter deals solely with the Lobby of Women, to which Fausta Deshormes contributed extensively. The fourth and last chapter is dedicated to the methodology that Fausta used throughout her career to accomplish her goals. In particular, the seminars and conventions that she participated in. Fausta Deshormes was known for being able to gather many people all in one place and make them listen to what she had to say. She did that with the first group of feminists who started the *Femmes pour l’Europe* movement, and she continued to do that until her retirement. As previously stated, the following thesis was not easy to research. The result was mainly possible thanks to the large number of primary sources that I had the opportunity to consult inside the Historical Archives of the EU in Florence, where there is a good section dedicated to the Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Some later research was also made on

secondary sources that I could find in the library in La Sapienza University and Luiss library. The result that emerges from the research was the great pleasure to write about a strong and very capable woman who earned the name of “mother of Europe”. It was an honor for me to make a clear portrait of who Fausta Deshormes LaValle was and why she has been so important for the favorable switch that the European institutions made towards women.

CHAPTER ONE

Activity Towards Women

Fausta Deshormes LaValle was born in Naples on the 20th of February 1927. She is known for being one of the first female European officials, but her contribute to the modern conception of European integration goes beyond her work as an official.

Her attitude towards fairness and justice started from a young age when she chose to study for a degree in Jurisprudence at the University of Rome, which later became “Sapienza” University. Her studies allowed her to hold strong and deep knowledge of national and international law, both of which were crucial in her later work. Fausta grew up in a family environment where freedom of information was crucial. On this behalf, she was always in contact with the press because both her parents Renato LaValle and Mercedes Trotta were journalists. The journalism profession had always stimulated Fausta from a young age, and following her parents’ steps she dedicated the debut of her post-university career to the journalism practice. Fausta stated herself that her parents were responsible for the values that she gained during her upbringing. Her father was a journalist, he was the correspondent from Italy for a Brazilian newspaper before the World War hit, during his work he was helped by his wife, Fausta’s mother, who had learned to use a typewriter in order to help her husband type the articles to send to Brazil. Mercedes Trotta planted the feminist seed in her daughter Fausta by bringing her up exactly like she did for her sons, she did not make any discrimination due to her gender. Therefore, growing up Fausta had never been treated differently from her brothers, and this affected her values and ideas which eventually brought to her active fight for women’s rights in the European institutions¹.

Fausta’s first job as a journalist started in 1946 when she was assigned the role of editor for “l’Universitario”, a student publication of the University of Rome, meanwhile she was also politically active as the head of the students’ organization of the same university. This proves

how she had always been active and always put herself in challenging positions. From 1946 until 1951 she collaborated with various publications in Italy including a monthly medical publication “Annali Ravasini” where she was in charge of the layout of the magazine, the diffusion and the advertisement section of the magazine¹.

In 1951 she takes her first proper political stance when she becomes the editor in chief of the “Ricerca”, an organ of the Federation of Italian Catholic University Students (FUCI), of which she was also a member of the directory assembly. She remained in the role until 1955, when her federalist political ideals started to be channeled towards the European realm. Between 1955 and 1958 her role was that of editor in chief of the “Giovane Europa”, Young Europe, an organ of the Italian Secretariat of the European Campaign of the Youth². Giovane Europa was an Italian bi-monthly magazine founded by Fausta Deshormes LaValle with the scope of allowing the Italian youth to learn and be updated about the construction of a union of European countries, as well as introducing them to the reality and culture of other countries in Europe. Fausta believed that it was crucial for the young generations to participate in the creation of a political and economic union and wanted to put the needs of young people at the centre of the discussion in the European integration process. She did that through her engagement in the field of education and equal rights for all, regardless of the gender or the social class. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the gap between the north and the south of Italy seemed to be impossible to fill. Such gap had its consequences in the economy but also in the field of social welfare and education. In fact, education was neglected in the south and this eventually brought to migration due to the lack of opportunities for young generations. Fausta believed that such issue had to be dealt with not only at national level, but also at international level and she meant to be a part of such resolution. Fausta’s years working for Giovane Europa were crucial not only for her career, since they

¹Historical Archives of the European Union (hereafter, HAEU), u, dossier FDLV-10, Fausta’s Curriculum Vitae.

² Pistone, S. (1996). *I Movimenti Per L’Unità Europea 1954-1969*, University of Pavia, pp. 337-347.

allowed her to practice as a journalist, but also for her personal life. In such context she had the chance to meet the Secretary General of the European Campaign of Youth, Philippe Deshormes, whom she later married. Philippe was always encouraging Fausta's ambitions in the fight for women integration within the European Institutions. Fausta was there for him until his death in 1993, and after his death she contributed to create the Philippe Deshormes Fund for the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU) in Florence. On the 19th of November 1996 Fausta signed a protocol with the HAEU which allowed to gather documents, letters and dossiers in order to store them in the Archive and keep track of the efforts that were behind Philippe's work until his retirement in 1987³.

In 1956 she enrolled in the "Albo professionale dei Giornalisti" and started to collaborate with some Italian daily newspapers such as "Il Popolo" and "La Discussione" which were respectively the official daily and weekly newspapers of the Italian Christian Democracy (D.C.). Her service in the European institutions begins in January 1961 when she is appointed as an official for the General Direction of the Press and Information. Her role was mainly focused on the Youth department of Education and University. When she first started working in such role, the Youth Department of Education and University had just been created and it had faced all the challenges that came with the definitions of the objectives of the department itself. Fausta was able to exploit her previous experiences in the FUCI and in the Giovane Europa to help have a clear view in the establishment, the programs, the methods and the partners of the newly-born Youth Department. Her take on the job made it possible to develop the teaching and research at university level of European integration, thus broadening the initiatives that that the department was starting⁴. Fausta Deshormes LaValle dedicated great effort into delivering the ideas on European integration in university studies. She created the European Centers to record and archive

³ Philippe Deshormes Fund, dossier PD-1, context.

⁴HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-10, Fausta's Curriculum Vitae.

documents in six countries' universities. She established a program of subvention for the publication of PhD thesis on European integration. Overall, she gained a successful position in European institutions and among international foundations. The work pursued by Fausta Deshormes LaValle quickly started to get international recognition and many players, especially members of different foundations in Europe, started to become sensitized to the fight for a fair European integration⁵. Fausta became the voice of a Europe-wide movement for women, and male actors did not hesitate to adapt to the route change⁶. Up to the early 1970s, the European institutions, as well as national institutions and foundations, were chaperoned mainly by men. Fausta Deshormes LaValle aimed at sorting out the problem under two main perspectives: integrating women's issues into the European institutions, but also making European politics understandable and accessible to women around Europe. In the first part of her career, up until 1975, Fausta focused more on the first issue and dedicated herself to the fight for fair opportunities, equal pay and university reforms. To better understand the character of Fausta Deshormes LaValle it is important to acknowledge that she did not regard her job as a mere "job" but as a proper mission to which she had dedicated her life and career. She strongly believed in the cause and managed to surround herself with other women who, like her, were keen on the subject but also had the capacities and instruments to actually make the change, such as Jacqueline Nonon and Ursula Hirschmann, wife of Altiero Spinelli.

Between 1973 and 1974 she exchanged some interesting correspondence with various personalities belonging to organizations and foundations that dealt with education and research. In April 1973 she was formally invited by the Giacomo Matteotti foundation to participate in a conference called "A better life in a better environment". One year later, in July 1974, Fausta Deshormes LaValle, already secretary of the Vice-President of the Commission Carlo-Scarascia

⁵ Paoli, S. *Il sogno di Erasmo: la questione educativa nel processo di integrazione europea*. Milano, Angeli. 2010.

⁶ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-51, contacts with the Italian organizations.

Mugnozza's cabinet⁷, organized on his behalf an international seminar based on some research made by the Giulio Pastore foundation on the status of education in the south of Italy, on which she had previous experience. Such initiative also included the participation of UNESCO representatives, European council members and the European Conference of Chancellors⁸. Fausta Deshormes and Carlo Scarascia-Mugnozza had a similar approach towards their job. They were born into a similar context since both of their families were Italian and catholic. They also shared the same political background. Fausta Deshormes started her career as a journalist for the Italian Christian Democracy, and Scarascia-Mugnozza was an active member of the same party, although his political stance was mainly relevant in the field of agricultural economy⁹. When Fausta debuted her pro-European position in the European institutions, Carlo Scarascia-Mugnozza accompanied her and guided her thanks to his experience as one of the first openly Europeists of the DC. On this matter, Scarascia-Mugnozza claimed his ideas on European integration in the early 1950s for the first time, while the DC party was struggling with the so-called 'crisis of centrism'¹⁰.

In December 1976 the secretariat work in the Cabinet of Carlo Scarascia-Mugnozza paid off when he notified the Director General of the Information Department, M. Ronan, of his decision to invest Fausta Deshormes LaValle with the charge of the Press and Information for Women Department. Such unit would be added to that of Education and University. The creation of the new department all dedicated to women marks a turning point in the work and career of Fausta Deshormes LaValle. It gave her a new purpose: that of sensitizing, informing and involving

⁷ Romeo, S. (2021) Europa 'potenza civile' e Mediterraneo. La politica comunitaria di Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza (1961-1977). *The Journal of European Economic History*. 50 (1), 324-329.

⁸ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-51, letter to the Giulio Pastore foundation.

⁹ Romeo, S. (2021) Europa 'potenza civile' e Mediterraneo. La politica comunitaria di Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza (1961-1977). *The Journal of European Economic History*. 50 (1), 324-329.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

women in the European integration. What Fausta had been doing in the field of education and youth had changed its target but the methods and toughness were still the same.

From her position in the Department for Women many important initiatives were born which put her in the group of the so-called “mothers of Europe”, women who helped give shape to the current European Union. The most important initiatives were the creation of “Femmes d’Europe”, a publication that served as an instrument aimed at involving and informing women of the political reality of Europe and creating a Europe-wide network of feminist groups and organizations. Fausta also created an *ad hoc* documentation on the community policies for women, of which the DGX was not previously provided with¹¹. Fausta Deshormes LaValle was also able to build an information bridge between the European institutions and women in Europe. In fact, she was active in the organizations of conferences and events in order to spread information and knowledge on women’s issues and have their voice heard at supranational level. Fausta pushed for the active participation of women in the political sphere and called for a proper “lobby of women in Europe”. Women who run for elections, who know their rights, who receive equal pay and who are taken just as seriously as men. In 1975 she becomes an active member of the feminist group “Femmes Pour L’Europe” funded by Ursula Hirschmann, which will result in a series of seminars to discuss women’s issues, each followed by a bulletin published by some of the main magazines aimed at women all over Europe. Unfortunately, after her retirement, “Femmes Pour L’Europe” and “Femmes d’Europe” were not destined to last¹². She continued to win awards and prizes for her work and her contribution in the European institutions. In 1984 she wins the “Prix Mimosa” which was awarded by the *Consulta Femminile* of Rome. In 1992 she is awarded with the trophy of the National Council of Italian Women and the “Europe et Liberté” prize. She regarded her awards as being beyond her understanding: “why are you

¹¹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-15, origins of the sector “Information Femmes”.

¹² HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-10, Fausta’s curriculum vitae.

awarding me? I didn't do anything special. I just did my job", Fausta stated¹³. She lived and worked in Brussels from after her marriage to Philippe Deshormes until her retirement. She died in Rome in February 2013. However, she did leave a heritage behind.

The political situation in Europe after the world war was that of creating an optimistic economic cooperation project between the countries, but the topic of rights, especially human rights, was not even brought to the table. France had pushed and insisted for the inclusion of article 119 of the Treaty of Rome; such article guaranteed to men and women equal pay for equal work, but it did not go further in the discussion, and it was obviously not intended to put an end to the discrimination of women in the distribution of salaries¹⁴. The reason why France was so keen on guaranteeing equal pay was not that of protecting women from discrimination, but to avoid a clash in the competitiveness of textile industries, which were predominantly the workplace of women rather than men. The creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952 guaranteed no places to women in the integration process. Indeed, there was only one woman who was sent by the Dutch government to sit in the newly created Assembly in Strasbourg¹⁵. When Ursula Hirschmann gathered women from all over Europe to Brussels in November 1957 there were only four women sitting in the Assembly in Strasbourg¹⁶. The situation at the apex had not changed much, but it was about to change. Fausta Deshormes LaValle was one of the eighty women who had arrived in Brussels to participate in the first meeting of the *Femmes pour L'Europe* foundation. Fausta emerged as a tireless woman, ready to fight for rights but in her own way. Indeed there had been some feminist movements that had taken the streets and started protests, but Fausta did not mean to do anything similar. She believed that the change had to be systemic and come from inside the system. Feminists were not supposed

¹³ Maria Pia Di Nonno, *La nuova Europa*, www.lanuovaeuropa.it/fausta-e-le-donne-deuropa (22/02/23).

¹⁴ Senato della Repubblica, *Donne che hanno fatto l'Europa*, www.senato.it (01/03/23).

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Enrico Serra. *Il rilancio dell'Europa e trattati di Roma: actes du Colloque de Rome*. Milano, Giuffrè. 1989.

to wreck the shell of the European institutions and penetrate from the inside, but they had to start the machine from within the institutions. Fausta dedicated her own life to this mission. Nonetheless, she was in a privileged position, she had received a solid education, she had a stable job from which she received a good salary, she was married to a famous and respected personality, Philippe Deshormes. This is why she felt she had to use such privilege to speak for those women who did not have it. She spent her career trying to communicate to those women, making the communication as easy and as affordable as possible to women around Europe. The Information Femmes office worked tirelessly to receive funds to finance initiatives for women and Fausta used her knowledge as a journalist to cultivate contacts and obtain such funds. Fausta and the other “femmes” played a crucial role in switching the dialectic from honoring the “founding fathers” of Europe, to acknowledging the “Mothers of Europe”.

Fausta fought until her last day to reshape and improve the European intuitions, many women owe her a lot. She received awards - such as the Premio Minerva - for her work as a European official. However, her path was not lacking challenges and difficulties that have accompanied her until her last days. At the end of her career in the European Press Office she was supposed to be recognized suitable for retirement, but she saw it denied by the European Commission¹⁷. She did not settle for such wrong and unfair decision. In 1979 the Court of Justice of Luxembourg declared Fausta Deshormed LaValle rightfully entitled to receive her pension from her work in the Press Office¹⁸. In an interview with the University of Louvain, Fausta stated that, although she knew that she was old enough for retirement, she was still not sure to win the cause¹⁹. For most of her career, Fausta’s office was placed in the DGX’s premises inside the Berlaymont in

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ Luxembourg Court of Justice, Section II, 17/78 Cause. Sent. 1 February 1979. Deshormes vs. European Commission.

¹⁹ Catholic University of Louvain. *Interview with Fausta Deshormes LaValle by Michel Dumoulin and Julie Cailleau in Brussels on the 2th February 2004.*

Brussels, which from its occupation in 1967, had portrayed the power of the European institutions. Therefore, Fausta and all the other European officials, had been working inside the building for years. However, everything changed in 1991 when an equipe of experts reported that the Berlaymont was not safe and therefore had to be either renovated or even razed to the ground and rebuilt altogether²⁰. The two safe hazards that promptly spread panic among the officials were the lack of a guaranteed safe way-out in case of fire, but mostly what worried the workers more was the presence of asbestos that had been used in the construction of the building²¹. Spending time breathing asbestos was linked to fatal diseases. After the complete evacuation of the building, the debate became centered around two options: rebuilt a different building or just removing the asbestos from the Berlaymont. The second choice won. However, most European officials, including Fausta Deshormes LaValle, would blame the Commission for allowing them to work years while inhaling asbestos. The Commission did not even plan to provide any compensation for the health damages, but it would pay the renovation costs while the Belgian government would absorb the costs of asbestos removal. The reason why it is important to draw attention to the Berlaymont issue is because during the last years of Fausta's life she fought tirelessly against a mesothelioma - a type of tumor - which was due to being exposed to asbestos for many years while she worked in Brussels²². The link between tumors and asbestos among former European officials was not immediate. In fact, it took some time to be officially acknowledged and Fausta certainly helped in reaching such goal. Fausta's fight to have her disease recognized as due to the years in Berlaymont was very public and characterized by the motto "briser le silence", as to remind to the people that her voice was being silenced but

²⁰ European Commission, Bussière, É., Ludlow, P., Romero, F., *et al.* (2019) *The European Commission 1986-2000* (hardcover edition) : history and memories of an institution. Publications Office of the European Union. pp. 119-121.

²¹ *Ibidem.*

²² Senato della Repubblica, *Donne che hanno fatto l'Europa*, www.senato.it (04/04/23).

unsuccessfully²³. Fausta never complained about her disease, she faced it with tenacity and “always with a smile”²⁴.

Information Femmes

At the beginning of the 1960s the European Institutions were finally starting to recognize the importance of using proper means of communication to be understandable by the European citizens. Up until that moment, the only way of knowing what was happening in the European Commission was to either ask a member of the Commission or read the local newspaper hoping that it would deal with foreign European policy and not just issues of national interests. Following this wave, in 1961 the European Commission established the Office for Press and Information of the Community, directed by Jacques-René Rabier²⁵. The Office was in charge of curating the inbound and outbound communication and press of the Commission, it had ad hoc personnel and was divided into different departments depending on the subject of interest. The most important department, for the later openness towards women and feminism, was the Department of Information for University, Youth and Adult Education. Head of the department was Jean-Charles Moreau, who had a friendly relationship with Fausta Deshormes LaValle; in fact, in 1961 Moreau called Fausta to be part of the newborn Press Office, thinking she would be perfect for the role thanks to her previous experience as a journalist and dealing with matters of education. At the time, the European officials did not put too much focus on European integration because they were too busy consolidating the acquit to “worry” about integration. On the other hand, Fausta strongly believed in the importance of European integration, and she was particularly keen on the integration of women. On this matter, she was the first European official

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ Fausta Deshormes LaValle's obituary. 5 February 2013.

²⁵ Federica Di Sarcina. *L'Europa delle Donne, la politica di pari opportunità nella storia dell'integrazione europea*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010.

to actively include feminist associations, youth association etc. in the European political matters. Fausta created an interchange of information with many organized groups within the European borders, which resulted in solid and reliable networks²⁶. In April 1968 Fausta gathered in Brussels the editors of the main women magazines in Europe to stress the fact that they could be doing a good job for women through their magazine, but they were certainly not doing their best job. According to Fausta, the best job would mean including a section of the magazine about European affairs, since women were part of those citizens whose lives would be impacted by the choices made in Brussels and Strasbourg, they were entitled to the knowledge of such choices. After that day, many of those women magazines started to include one or two columns on European integration, some others dedicated entire sections to the matter. The same effort that Fausta was putting in shaping the approach to information from outside the Commission she was also putting from inside of the Commission.

Before continuing with the work of Fausta in the Information Femmes office, it is important to remind that the 1970s were characterized by change and turbulence for the DGX. As a matter of fact, from the establishment of DG for Information, it changed many shapes and was repurposed many times. In 1973 the DGX's direction changed again and the main move that was made was that of decentralization²⁷. Indeed the DGX had offices all around Europe, so its network was not concentrated all in Brussels. For this reason, it would be more efficient to give more responsibility and stimulus to the offices abroad²⁸. Up until that moment, the patchwork of press and information offices (PIOs) was operative mainly in the north of Europe. In 1973 Commissioner Carlo Scarascia-Mugnozza suggests for the first time the proper decentralization

²⁶ Ivi, p. 159.

²⁷ European Commission, Dumoulin, M., Palmero, É., Dujardin, V., et al. (2014) *The European Commission 1973-86 : history and memories of an institution*. Publications Office. pp. 445-450.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

by providing the office of London and that of Rome with two ‘antennae’ for each office²⁹. The Council proved to be reluctant to provide proper means to make changes and for this reason the reforms in the DGX from 1973 until the end of the 1980s were never smooth and easy to make. Eventually, the DGX established information offices in community countries (Brussels, Bonn, Berlin, Copenhagen, Dublin, The Hague, London, Luxembourg, Paris and Rome), as well as in non-member countries (Washington, New York and Geneva)³⁰.

In 1974 the Vice-President of the Executive and First Commissioner for the Environment, Carlo Scarascia-Mugnozza, appointed Fausta Deshormes LaValle in charge of the office for environment protection. This would allow Fausta to cultivate a friendship with Scarascia-Mugnozza and exchange mutual ideas of fair and equal European integration. In fact, Scarascia-Mugnozza will always remain one of her main supporters in her fight for women’s rights. In 1976, supported by Scarascia-Mugnozza, Fausta organized a conference called “The Women and the European Community”³¹. The conference was aimed at assessing the result of a survey carried out by the Direction for Information (DGX) in 1975. From the results emerged “the need to establish a constant and continuous confrontation between the European institutions, women’s associations and female press”³².

Later in the year 1976 Carlo Scarascia-Mugnozza, started the first discussions in Brussels on the creation of an information service focused on women called “information femmes” and he gave the responsibility of organizing and supervising it to Fausta Deshormes LaValle, former secretary of his Cabinet and trusted friend³³. The role seemed perfect for Fausta, not only because

²⁹ European Commission, Dumoulin, M., Palmero, É., Dujardin, V., et al. (2014) *The European Commission 1973-86 : history and memories of an institution*. Publications Office. p. 447.

³⁰ European Commission, Dumoulin, M., Palmero, É., Dujardin, V., et al. (2014) *The European Commission 1973-86 : history and memories of an institution*. Publications Office. p. 484.

³¹ Ivi, p. 161.

³² The citation is taken from V. Squarzialupi, *Donne in Europa*. Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1979. cit., p. 170.

³³ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV-14, interview to Fausta Deshormes.

she had acquired enough experience as part of the Office for Press and Information of the Community, but also because she was a feminist herself and was already known in the European feminist organizations, she had already created a network to rely on but she meant to expand it even further.

During the 1980s the asset and organization chart of the European institutions was in need of a change, of a “modernization” process, and in such process, there was finally space for an open debate on women. The Italian member of the European Commission, Carlo Ripa Di Meana, stated that women represented half of the European population. Therefore, even if the discourse had to be based on mere numbers, the need for a designated sector for women in the European asset was inevitable³⁴. On this matter, the news started to circulate within the European institutions that a new service for the information of women was being discussed. Fausta Deshormes LaValle, who had been working in the field for years already, had created “Femmes d’Europe” and had held seminars all over Europe to promote European integration for women, found herself puzzled by the doubts that some members of the Commission had. She thought that the creation of a new “information femmes” was in reality nothing new, it had been existing since 1977, but if the organization chart was to change, then women had to be included in it³⁵.

In a letter sent to Carlo Ripa di Meana in 1987, Fausta tried to underline the importance of including the previous work of “Femmes d’Europe” and of the Department of Information for women into the new European realm. In the letter she uses convincing words to stress the fact that the DGX would definitely gain credibility in portraying itself as careful for women’s issues, it would make the DGX modern to the eyes of the public opinion. Fausta makes it a matter of “coherence of the policy of the Commission” and of “effectiveness”. She urges for the central

³⁴HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV-14, letter from Carlo Ripa di Meana to Madame Hedy d’Ancona.

³⁵HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV-14, letter from Fausta Deshormes to Carlo Ripa di Meana.

Offices of the European Commission not to underestimate the importance of the work of Information Femmes and Fausta's office. The personal request that she makes to Carlo Ripa Di Meana is that of allowing her to pursue her aims towards the participation and integration of women in the sphere of European policies at an ever-growing pace³⁶.

The work of Information Femmes was not limited towards approaching the European institutions to women, but it also worked the other way. It functioned as a proper bridge set up by the European Commission in 1977 in order to join women and European institutions, but such bridge had to be passable in both directions. The initiative of the creation of the working unit Information Femmes was born under the guide of the already-existing General Direction of Information, Communication and Culture, and it was strongly fostered by European Commissioners, officials, syndicalists etc.³⁷. The Information Femmes office was also in charge of making research on the difficulties that it was encountering in the delivery of its objectives. The difficulties were mainly due to low budget, which brought to the employment of a very small number of officials in the Office, this also made it difficult to communicate among different offices³⁸. Nonetheless, Fausta did not hesitate to establish some instruments to sustain the above-mentioned bridge within the Information Femmes office. The first instrument was the organization of some European seminars for so-called "women in charge", meaning female entrepreneurs, women elected in local offices, women in media etc. The second instrument set up by the Information Femmes office was the *Prix Niki*, which was inaugurated for the first time in 1988 with the purpose of awarding production media, such as film and television programs, about the condition of women. The Niki prize had a great success in the television broadcasts of different European countries. In 1988 the European Commission received 16 candidatures for

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier Dossier FDLV-64, Information Femmes.

³⁸ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV-14, project de budget 1992.

the Niki prize, while in 1990 the interest grew up to 33 candidatures³⁹. Fausta Deshormes LaValle has always tried to push the importance of awarding such prize in 1992, she even asked the BBC to broadcast the event in order to reach a wider number of spectators. A similar treatment was reserved for the third instrument, the *Prix Femmes d'Europe*, which quickly gained consent and successfully gathered a wide audience from different countries in Europe⁴⁰. By August 1989 the process of establishing a “lobby of women in Europe”, so passionately wanted by Fausta Deshormes LaValle, is finally concluded, and Information Femmes is at the center of the communication, press and organization of such lobby. The organization was able to group together the European institutions and the female associative movements of European countries. The apex was reached with the creation of a commission for the rights of women in 1979, which collaborated tightly with the Information Femmes office. Another important obstacle was met by Fausta when the General Director Franz Froschmaier tried to suppress the Information Femme services by stating that it was not a necessary instrument on behalf of the European institutions. He was not able to understand the importance of having a service directed to women specifically, he believed that the European Commission had to address men and women equally. Therefore, Information Femmes resulted as being discriminatory towards men⁴¹. Luckily, the danger of the suppression was overcome thanks to the network that Information Femmes had created. In fact, members of the European Parliament (EP) and members of the women associations in Europe started to send telegrams of complain to the Office of the head of Information, Carlo Ripa di Meana, who sided with Fausta and Information Femmes⁴².

Fausta did not hold any effective executive or legislative power within the European Commission, but her experience as a journalist during her youth, and her capacity of creating

³⁹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV-64, Information Femmes.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV-14, interview to Fausta Deshormes.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

networks and links between the people, allowed her to understand the potential of information. She knew that from her office she could change the sight that women had towards European integration and vice versa. Her role in the Information Femmes office was key to the creation of the Lobby of Women in Europe, and therefore, to the acknowledgment of women's needs and issues. During the 1970s the rights of women were a hot topic in international relations not only in the European Union but also in the United Nations. Indeed, the decade 1976-1985 was signaled as "*The Decade for Women: equality, development and peace*"⁴³. Following this path, Fausta understood that women were finally at the center of the discussion and that real legal instruments were being put into place for the integration of women into the European acquis. The discussion on women was spreading towards new topics such as employment, safety, universal suffrage and equal pay. Nonetheless, many female European citizens were not aware of the change because they were not involved in the political debates. This basis functioned as fuel for Fausta's commitment. During her time in Scarascia-Mugnozza's cabinet (1974-1976) she is busy dealing with different topics such as the environment and the relations with the EP, but this does not drive her away from keeping an eye on women. Scarascia-Mugnozza is aware of her interests and does not hesitate to involve her in the newly open discussion on women integration. In 1976 Fausta participated to a conference in Brussels about women in the European Community. It is at the end of such conference that the first feminist groups start to mobilise in order to foster the creation of *ad hoc* bodies within the European Community⁴⁴. It is then clear how Fausta Deshormes was there from the very beginning and contributed to shaping whatever came after.

As previously stated, Fausta Deshormes strongly believed in constituting an information office specifically destined to women, because she was aware that women needed to be sensitized

⁴³ Maria Pia Di Nonno, *Toponomastica femminile*, toponomasticafemminile.com, (22/02/2023).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

about the new European policy of equal opportunities that was emerging for it made women owner of a new set of rights⁴⁵. At that point, the decision was put in the hands of Fausta as head of the Information Femmes office, all she had to decide was how to achieve such awareness for women, how to reach women from different European countries without making discriminations based on language, social class or economic power. The aims also included the collaboration of women throughout the feminist groups and the exchange of information among them. Once again, Fausta was urged to create bridges and networks, this time not only between EU institutions and women, but also among women's organizations. The instrument that Fausta chose to use in order to achieve her goal was a new bulletin targeted to women: *Femmes d'Europe*.

Just to give an example of the impact that Information Femme was able to have on the political opinions of women in Europe, in June 1979 the European community was getting ready for the first universal suffrage to vote for the European Parliament. Fausta Deshormes LaValle felt like a mission to inform and fully prepare women for such vote. Therefore, Information Femmes and *Femmes d'Europe*, the two instruments in the hands of Fausta, dedicated great attention to make people understand the importance of voting, the importance for women to support other women. The attention was slowly switching towards human rights and women rights and women had to be at the center of the discussion for they were the only ones who truly understood the burden of social standards of not being treated and recognized equal to men. However, Fausta faced a challenge in delivering her objective. *Femmes d'Europe* and Information Femmes were known in the realm of organized feminist groups. This meant that the members of the groups could easily access the bulletins and read it. However, majority of women were not part of an organized group so they could not benefit from the information given in the bulletins. To solve this

⁴⁵ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV- 64. Information Femmes service: why information of women.

problem, Fausta established a direct collaboration with the most famous women magazines in each European country so that women could still access the information without being part of any organization ⁴⁶. This was probably the action that had the most impact on the elections⁴⁷. In fact, Fausta did not only call for women to vote, but she called for women to vote for other women and in fact the elections resulted in sixty-nine women being appointed in the Assembly in Strasbourg.

⁴⁶ Federica Di Sarcina. *L'Europa delle Donne, la politica di pari opportunità nella storia dell'integrazione europea*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010, p. 164.

⁴⁷ Daniele Pasquinucci & Luca Verzichelli, *Elezioni Europee e classe politica sovranazionale, 1979-2004*. Bologna, Il Mulino. 2004.

CHAPTER TWO

Femmes d'Europe

Femmes d'Europe is one of the main work tools that the DGX created to obtain the participation of women in the European integration process. After the congress in Brussels in 1976, 120 female officials requested the creation of a new apparatus for women, and *Femmes d'Europe* wanted to function as voice and ears of such apparatus. *Femmes d'Europe* started as nothing more than a bimonthly bulletin that was addressed to women, its purpose was that of updating them on the EU policies and changes. The first number was issued in spring 1977. By 1988 it was so successful that it was universally acknowledged as the “official journal” of women in Europe⁴⁸. The magazine had to contain specific information about the community policies that affected women, it followed the operations carried on by the EU institutions and it also illustrated the evolution of the discourse about equal opportunities for women in all member states of the Union. One last section, passionately wanted by Fausta herself, was that of reporting the activities that were being done by feminist groups in Europe and there were targeted at improving the condition of women in Europe⁴⁹. Sometimes the magazine was accompanied by a “supplement to *Femmes d'Europe*” regarding specific policies that concerned women. After 1988 the Information Femmes office started to include some additional dossier to be published siding the *Femmes d'Europe* bulletin, mainly *Cahiers de Femmes d'Europe* and *Lettre de Femmes d'Europe*⁵⁰. The additional dossier was a way of deepening the knowledge on just one topic and often focus on one member State only, focusing on how an issue affected women of a certain country, or reporting the results of opinion polls comparing the attitude of women to that

⁴⁸ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV-64, History of Information Femmes in the DGX.

⁴⁹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV-64, Information Femmes Service.

⁵⁰ ⁵⁰ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-40, Femmes d'Europe.

of men *vis-à-vis* common issues (employment, opportunities, cultural standards etc.)⁵¹. The magazine was free of charge and periodically sent to the headquarters of women's organizations, distributed among female officials in the Commission or sent to any woman (or even man) who requested it. *Femme d'Europe* functioned as a proper forum for the exchange of ideas among women in Europe, it also fostered the rise of proposals to the European Commission starting from the bottom layers of society⁵². The magazine was not a vessel of information, but it was a useful tool that needed the support of the Information Femmes office and the EC's Department of Information, Communication and Culture. Thanks to the collaboration of all actors involved, *Femmes d'Europe* was able to organize many events, seminars and conferences aimed at sensitizing the public opinion about the new role of women in the society⁵³.

The editorial staff of *Femmes d'Europe* started as a small group of people who had a tight budget but who strongly believed in the cause. The founder and editor in chief of the magazine was Fausta Deshormes LaValle, she had one secretary, Marilyn Pincott, one assistant, Hilde Albertini and one person in charge of the planning of the magazine, Richard Aplin⁵⁴. The team around Fausta oversaw finding the news to include in the magazine, edit the content and curate the layout within approximately sixty pages. What is important to note is that *Femmes d'Europe* did not publish mere opinion articles written by the members of the office, but it published news articles with no political opinion behind. The information provided by the magazine had to be neutral and non-political, although it would inevitably end up arousing some sort of political opinion in the reader⁵⁵. The main target of the magazine were European women, but Fausta Deshormes was aware that men had to play a role as well since they were the main actor in the

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-64, Le Service Information Femmes.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴⁵⁴ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-64, Service Information Femmes: why information of women.

⁵⁵ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-64, Memo on FdE.

political arena of European integration. On this behalf, in 1988 only twenty-three men had answered the surveys published in the bulletin. Therefore, only 3.1% of the readers of *Femmes d'Europe* were men⁵⁶. However, the female readers of the magazine were “active readers”, meaning that a high percentage (32.4%) of them would use the information received from *Femmes d'Europe* in conferences and an even higher percentage (45.7%) of female readers would use that information for further publications such as books and articles⁵⁷. This shows the reliability of *Femmes d'Europe* and the degree to which the publication was trusted by its audience and considered of high profile. It is believed that *Femmes d'Europe* was the key to encourage female participation in the 1978 elections for the European Parliament, when for the first time a woman became president of the EP, Simone Veil. After only one year of publications, the bulletin was already a powerful instrument in the hands of the DGX thanks to Fausta Deshormes and her diligence.

The issues that *Femmes d'Europe* addressed until its last day were many and touched upon different aspects of women's rights' violations.

The following section will focus on some of the main arguments brought up by *Femmes d'Europe* which are still nowadays of public interest, to show that although such topics were relevant in the 1970s and 1980s, they are still subject of discussion in the 2020s.

Femmes d'Europe: Fight for Equal Pay

An example could be the fight of *Femmes d'Europe* for equal pay, which is still today a hot topic of debate in the workers' unions. Women first started to call for equal pay after their

⁵⁶ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FDLV-40, Enquête sur une revue: Femmes d'Europe.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

employment in the World Wars, since they felt they had contributed, just as men, to the war. Although they were not employed in the battlefield, women were factory workers to produce weapons, they were majority of the medical staff in the battlefield and many were employed as nurses or caregivers to injured soldiers. Not only women were not waged as much as men, but their job carried a social stigma as well because women were seen as “earth angels” and depicting them as related to physical efforts in the factories was not well seen. It is important to stress the fact that after the war, the female workers returned to their social role of “earth angels”, they went back to be housewives and mothers and they were not rewarded for their efforts during the war. The only institutional openness towards the idea of equal pay was that included in the Treaty of Versailles on June 19th 1919, which stated that, in regards to the creation of the International Work Organization, the principle shall be that of “equal pay for a job of equal value”⁵⁸. However, such definition was limited and did not consider many factors. The term “job” was meant as the way a job was delivered. Therefore, two jobs to be of equal value had to be delivered in the same way, in the same workplace and produce the same amount of goods. Otherwise, they were considered two different jobs and, consequently, paid two different wages ⁵⁹. This system would inevitably exclude those jobs that were typically done by women which were also most of the jobs chosen by women. Therefore, women were the only ones not to benefit from the “equal pay for equal job” principle which was detrimental to them since it forced them to be paid less than men. After World War II, with the advent of feminist movements, women started to become more emancipated. With the creation of the United Nations the political arena worldwide started to put focus and effort on human rights, and women’s rights started to be considered human rights for the first time. The discussion started in many political forums all around Europe and Fausta Deshormes LaValle put great effort in making sure that female citizens were at the center

⁵⁸ Federica Di Sarcina. *L'Europa delle Donne, la politica di pari opportunità nella storia dell'integrazione europea*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010, p. 35.

⁵⁹ Ivi, p. 36.

of the political debate held in such forums⁶⁰. On this matter, *Femmes d'Europe* took a radical stance in the 1970s when some European countries included the topic of equal pay into their legislative bodies. An example of this is the Equal Pay Act in Great Britain, of which *Femmes d'Europe* followed the discussion, the ratification and eventually the call for a revision.

The Equal Pay Act came into force in Great Britain in 1975, although it was first approved by the Department of Employment in 1970. The motive for the creation of the act was the need to eliminate the discrimination between men and women, not only regarding their pay, but also other aspects of employment contracts such as holidays and sick leave entitlement⁶¹.

The meaning of equal treatment was not meant as identical treatment between the two genders, but it meant that “each term in a woman’s contract of employment must be not less favorable than the corresponding term in the man’s contract”⁶². The advent of such act started a discussion in the public opinion and EU institutions since many feminist groups, as well as women at the apex of international organizations, had called for the lawful regulation of equal pay and a fair definition of women’s work. *Femmes d'Europe* followed closely the discussion on equal pay, especially when the British feminist organizations, which were in contact with *Femmes d'Europe*, called for a revision of the Act in 1976. The Act was challenged again in November 1990 when the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) published a news release titled “Paradise for Lawyers- Hell for Women⁶³”. In the article, the EOC Senior Legal Adviser Alan Lakin sums up the proposal made by the EOC and aimed at strengthening the Acts that were already into place. The new objective of the Act was “to make the Equal Pay laws more accessible⁶⁴” and to redefine the role of the law in the fight against pay discrimination. The first

⁶⁰ Gisela Bock, *Le donne nella storia Europea: dal Medioevo ai nostri giorni*. Roma, editori Laterza, 2003.

⁶¹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FD-106. Equal pay.

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ Femmes d'Europe Fund, dossier FD-109, news release.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

point was mainly centered around the idea that the Equal Pay Act that was in power at the time was not effective in solving individual complaints because it was too generic and vague. The cases of pay discrimination had turned out to be very different from one another, and the characteristics would vary from case to case. For this reason, the EOC urged for a more specific and less vague Equal Pay Act, to cover as much cases as possible and to accommodate a fast resolution to each case. The second point simply referred to the possibility of giving the law a strategic role so that it could be easier to assess the cases of discrimination one by one. Thus, making the law an even easier instrument to use for the tackling of pay discrimination. The main recommendations made by EOC grouped together some strategies to improve the Equal Pay law, that included the convenience of having successful decisions applied automatically to all people carrying out the same kind of job ⁶⁵. The proposal also included the duty to notify any changes, meaning that in case an unequal pay is due to discrimination terms, the industrial tribunal shall be notified by the employer, within a specific period, that the terms have been modified or removed. This clause is followed by the direct notification of the EOC in case the employer does not remove the discrimination terms. In this case, the EOC holds decision power to take action against the employer through the carrying out of a Formal Investigation⁶⁶.

The position of *Femmes d'Europe* towards the proposals for a revision on the Equal Pay act has always been in accordance and support of the EOC, for the true meaning behind the proposals was that of favoring equality between men and women, and Fausta Deshormes LaValle was keen on boosting and fostering any change towards equality for women and their integration in a European system led by men, not only at supranational level but also at national level and this was the case for Great Britain. The *Femmes d'Europe* issue number 29 of January/February 1983 stated that married working women were held approximately 20% of their salary every month.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

Such procedure was done in order to gather more taxes in all of those families where there were two salaries. The comment on the matter made by *Femmes d'Europe* included the additional data stating that 98% of such taxpayer that were being held part of their salary were women, even though they hardly ever earned more than their husbands⁶⁷. An additional thought made by *Femmes d'Europe* in the same issue (No. 29) reports that at the beginning, in 1983, the percentage held from the salaries had increased but taxpayers had not been informed about it. The issue would inevitably be at the expenses of women only, since they would find themselves paying directly on their salaries the price of tax evasion, which would eventually discourage women from finding a job⁶⁸.

From the creation of *Femmes d'Europe*, Fausta included in the bulletin a vast discussion on the matter of discrimination in the distribution of salaries between men and women, but she also widened the topic to a more general approach to discrimination of women in the workplace. Starting from the assumption that women were often thought to have or lack certain characteristics useful to the workforce simply because of their gender, Fausta and *Femmes d'Europe* often reported in the magazine the events that were happening in Europe on the matter, the changes that were being taken, so that women were always informed of cases of discrimination in Europe and the fight against them. An example of this is the article published in the *Femmes d'Europe* issue No. 27 of September/October 1982⁶⁹. The article follows the trial of a young Welsh woman, Beatrice Horsey, who appealed to the tribunal of employment because her workplace (the municipality of Dyfed) refused to allow her to participate to a professional training course because it took for granted that she would leave her job as soon as her husband would be forced to change his workplace. The tribunal declared that Beatrice had the right to follow the course since “the place for a woman is not necessarily where her husband works, and

⁶⁷ Femmes D'Europe Fund, dossier FD-107, salaire féminin et fiscalité.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, dossier FD- 107, la place d'une femme.

it cannot be legally supposed that a woman will leave her job to join her husband”⁷⁰. *Femmes d’Europe* in its issue No. 27 made it possible for the news to circulate amongst other feminist groups in Europe, creating awareness on the matter and on the rights that women held in the field of employment. The reason why the case of Beatrice Horsey was so important is because it touched upon different aspects of the topic of women’s rights. On one hand, the case became of legal relevance. Therefore, *Femmes d’Europe* was able to portray the legal process of acknowledging women’s rights in the workplace, which at the time was not much dealt with in the local newspapers and magazines. But on the other hand, the case of Beatrice Horsey was also a matter of social stigma. Women were expected to behave in a certain way towards their job. It was taken for granted that a woman would just follow her husband without thinking twice. This fact was more of a social fact rather than legal. Women carried a social stigma of having to follow their husband in order to maintain the family “unified” and “keep it together”. If a woman was to do otherwise, she would be socially stigmatized as a bad woman, a bad wife and, even worse, a bad mother. In the eyes of the employer, women had a high degree of responsibility in their job and they were supposed to put most of their effort and time in the job, for which they were not even well-enough rewarded. However, society expected women to put just as much effort in their roles as wives and mothers. This put too much pressure on the role of women, while men were not expected to do the same by society. Fausta Deshormes LaValle strongly believed in the importance of the possibility for women to work but, at the same time, she did not want a “working woman” to be only a working woman. The European institution should not only protect the right of women to work but also use legal instruments to safeguard the freedom of women from social stigmas and gender roles.

Femmes d’Europe is the perfect example of how an efficient information network can really change things. The reason why *Femmes d’Europe* became so successful was because it served

⁷⁰ *Ibidem.*

its purpose in delivering information that was official coming from inside the European institutions, but it did so in a way that was easy to digest for the majority of the women in Europe. Not every woman was an expert on the European acquis but *Femmes d'Europe* adapted its language so that every woman could understand and follow the norms that were being built within the acquis and that would end up having direct consequences on women and, more generally, on womanhood as a whole. The availability of the European institution in fostering the integration of women was widely appreciated by Fausta Deshormes, but she believed that such a radical change could not only be made by men, women had to actively participate in the change for they were the only ones who knew the struggles related to gender inequality. The network that was created by *Femmes d'Europe* was efficient in filling the gap between women and Europe. However, in an interview⁷¹ Fausta stated that working for the bulletin had not always been easy. In fact, it was hard at the beginning before it became popular, and therefore easier to work for. The chapter has already dealt with the skepticism of some individuals in the making of *Femmes d'Europe*, but that was not the only problem that the bulletin faced. In this regards, Fausta declared that the hardest part at first was that of finding the information to share in the bulletin⁷². This was because, although in theory the process of women integration in the European institutions had already started, it took a while for the machine to start working properly. Therefore, it was difficult to find certain information on women affaires to disclose to the public. The Information Office did not receive all scripts, news and drafts on the subject and the members of the office of *Femmes d'Europe* were not always able to gather enough information. However, the bulletin grew in popularity quickly and the discourse of women's issues became central in public debate soon after. On this matter, the difficulty changed at the same pace as the situation in Europe. Fausta herself realized at some point that, with the spread

⁷¹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund, Dossier FDLV-14, interview to Fausta Deshormes.

⁷² *Ibidem*

of awareness and with the success of *Femmes d'Europe*, the issue had become the excessive amount of information that every day was received by the headquarter office of *Femmes d'Europe*⁷³. It was possible for the readers of *Femmes d'Europe* to send letters and telegrams to the office. This proved to be a double challenge for Fausta and for *Femmes d'Europe*, not only because it became difficult to select and choose which information were worth writing about, but also because the amount of people that worked in the office was still small and the budget funds that each year were allocated to the production and distribution of the bulletin was still unchanged from when it first started. The reduced budget also made it impossible to curate properly the appearance of the bulletin. For example, it was too expensive to print on glossy paper like the popular women's magazines, it was also too expensive to print in color. For such reason, *Femmes d'Europe* was only printed in black and white until its last number, regardless of the popularity. The description of the physical object of the bulletin makes it easy to understand that, visibly speaking, the bulletin could not be a marketing object. Women were used to the glossy and colorful pages of fashion magazines; they would never be attracted by a grey-looking magazine. For this reason, *Femmes d'Europe* can be praised even more for being able to become a point of reference for women in Europe regardless of the adversities such as low budget and a small number of employees.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

CHAPTER THREE

The Lobby of Women

The verb “to lobby” is often given a controversial nuance by public opinion, for it has gained a negative meaning in the debate regarding the damages of a capitalist society. However, in terms of economics, “lobbying” simply means that someone (or something) can influence someone else, usually someone with legislative power, into dealing with an issue. It is true that such influence is not always exercised for the better and that the final objective of lobbying for big corporations is often to improve their economic positions at the expenses of somebody else, usually smaller companies which find themselves not able to compete with the lobby. Capitalism has shown the advantages and disadvantages of lobbying. Nonetheless, lobbying is an activity that can be practiced in economics as well as in politics and sometimes it is inevitable. When it comes to politics, many groups have tried to influence the legislative power at European level. An example of this can be found in the group of feminist activism that started in the late 1960s. Women were finally getting together not just to protest their discontent, but they were organizing themselves as a political force, demanding for political change. However, in order to make real change it was not enough to protest because very few women had the actual knowledge or international law and, therefore, had the ability to turn a general demand made by ordinary women into a draft to be presented in front of a supranational legislative body. Fausta Deshormes was one of those few women. This idea is at the base of the European Women’s Lobby (EWL). The idea started in 1979, one year prior to the universal suffrage at the European Parliament, when Fausta Deshormes and Jacqueline Nonon started the debate for the creation of a proper European forum of women, where women could gather and discuss their position in the future

of European integration and make sure that they would be part of it⁷⁴. The initial idea does not start as a lobby. In fact, at the beginning it was only supposed to be a forum for discussion aimed at educating women all over Europe on matters of interest for them, there was no claim to influence the European Parliament or Commission. Soon after, with the election of Simone Veil, a feminist who had been part of the same network of women that Fausta helped to create, as first female president of the European Parliament from 1979 to 1982, Fausta's ideas found real support in the EP. This meant that the possibility to use women's groups to finally influence legislation was breaching. Fausta Deshormes did not hold back from searching through her pool of friends and acquaintances to reach her goal of creating what later became the "European Women's Lobby". The first step that led to the creation of the Lobby was taken by Fausta herself in 1982 when she organized a major conference taking place in Bonn on the 17th and 18th of May⁷⁵. At the time, there was still some reluctance towards the idea of creating a proper Lobby. Therefore, the chance of the Conference of Bonn was taken to set up the basis of an open dialogue among European citizens regarding the issues of women, as well as allowing members of national feminist groups to meet each other and create an even more sophisticated feminist network. Although the Conference of Bonn did not bring to the actual establishment of the Lobby, it is still considered to be the preliminary step that was taken before the creation of the European Network of Women (ENOW), strongly fostered by Jacqueline Nonon and officially financed by the European Commission⁷⁶. As it is obvious at this point, introducing an organization directly financed by the Commission would bring a new spotlight on the importance of the ENOW, which switched from being just a request of feminist groups, to being a real organization supervised by the European Commission. The scope of the ENOW was that of

⁷⁴ Claire Lafon. Le Lobby Européen des Femmes. *Encyclopédie d'Histoire Numérique de l'Europe*. www.ehne.fr. (11/04/2023).

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

empowering women especially in the economic field, where they were clearly excluded. The activity of lobbying was already starting to take shape. A step further towards the creation of the Lobby was taken in 1984 when a member of the ENOW, organized a series of conferences that started in Turin in 1984 and were concluded in London in 1987 with the aim of gathering as many feminist groups as possible⁷⁷. The outcome of the conferences saw the adoption of the resolutions that established officially the Lobby of Women on the 22nd of September 1990. The aim of the Lobby was not far from what Fausta had been preaching up until that point: creating a network of women, providing guidance and information for women on topics such as rights, economics and law, coordination among feminist groups for the matters of international relevance and reshape society to make it more accessible to women and structured around women's needs. What made the Lobby of Women so revolutionary and different from what had been done until 1990 was the hybrid nature of the employment within the Lobby. Indeed, the organization was formed of both qualified lobbyists who were mostly employees of the European institution, they were experts of lobbying and all legal and economic matters regarding the European acquis. This guaranteed to the Lobby a section of people who were close to Brussels and able to speak in the same terms as Eu institutions. On the other hand, the Lobby was also managed by a group of volunteers who were close to the feminist groups and had not enough knowledge of international law but for sure enough knowledge of women's issues⁷⁸. The double nature of the Lobby is what gave it official acknowledgement in the supranational arena, but at the same time made citizens, mostly women, at national level feel close to the Lobby. The Lobby was an autonomous organization representing the national associations of the twelve members of the European Commission. As previously stated, the activity of lobbying includes "pushing" one's interests into influencing someone's decision-making ability. The Lobby of Women's

⁷⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁸ *Ibidem.*

interests were intended to be pushed to influence the European Institutions rather than national institutions⁷⁹. The first objective of the lobbying activity was to guarantee the interests of women in the European Commission's Action Program for Equal Opportunity and push for the adoption of the pending directive proposals⁸⁰.

The Lobby of Women was organized according to a precise order and resembled any international organization. At the top of the pyramid there was the General Assembly, which was formed by the delegates from the member states, each member state was entitled to four delegates sitting in the General Assembly. The General Assembly elected the administrative committee of the Lobby, which was formed by twenty delegates, one per member state and eight from European Organizations⁸¹. Last was the Secretariat which was in charge of carrying out the day-to-day tasks. The decision-making process was based on a two-third majority voting and no possibility of proxy voting⁸². The idea of creating a Lobby for Women first emerged during a conference that was held in November 1987 in London. The conference gathered 120 participants from the twelve European countries. The first to speak was Margaret Joachim, the president of the Fawcett Society⁸³, who stated that the United Kingdom had benefitted from the acquisition of the European acquis, not only because it allowed the UK to keep up with a modern legislative body, but also because the ideas that were at the basis of the European project were already present in the British minds, therefore the transition into the EU was smooth⁸⁴. The Fawcett Society was a charity organization dealing with women's rights. The following speaker, Fausta Deshormes, who at the time was the Chief of Information Femmes, started her speech by paying homage to the history of the Fawcett Society and added that creating a forum to share

⁷⁹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. Creation du Lobby Européen des Femmes.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Structure of the European Women's Lobby.

⁸² HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. Working Rules, document nr. 6 bis.

⁸³ The Fawcett Society. *Equality, it's about time*. www.fawcettsociety.org.uk. (18/05/23).

⁸⁴ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. La Communauté Européenne en Mouvement.

common ideas was at the basis of the democratic process that would characterize the evolution of the European society. The main section of the Conference was dedicated to the discussion of some bullet point issues regarding the functioning and purpose of the Lobby. The first point to be discussed was that of the communication with the external bodies, mainly the European Parliament and Commission. On this matter, before posing requests to the outside institutions, the method to be followed was that of questioning the moves to make within the Lobby itself by starting debates and voting. Once a common view was reached, there would be a group of people in charge of “pushing” – therefore lobbying – the request to the European institutions. From the point of view of the European Parliament, Hedy d’Ancona – president of the Commission for Women’s rights in the European Parliament – reported the importance for the national and European deputies to be informed on the activities and were undertaken by the organizations, including the Lobby. The two main problems that worried the participants to the convention and that required the support of the European institutions were that of addressing the poverty that was affecting especially women due to the economic crisis, and the difficulty for women to conciliate private life and work life. These were the first two issues that the Lobby wanted to work on. Following that, many members of the Lobby recognize that the media was playing a detrimental role regarding women. The press and television were deemed as being unable to keep up with the modern role of women and kept depicting a very traditional portrayal of women, which would not help the spectators to get accustomed to the changes that society was facing, especially the change in gender roles⁸⁵. It is important to remember that all the requests that were made by the Lobby had to fit into the European legislation and had to be sorted out through such legislation. Stephen Grosz – a lawyer specialized in administrative and public law- started an interesting discussion regarding the inability of local tribunals to intake the European community law. Grosz’ viewpoint changed the direction of the debate because he

⁸⁵ *Ibidem.*

reported that, according to his experience, it was already difficult to convince women to report gender discrimination and to let them know that it was indeed their right to do so, but also oftentimes the discrimination happened right in the tribunals. The local tribunals were unfair during trials simply because they misused the European community law and struggled to adapt to it. The Lobby on such matters undertook the role of guaranteeing the implementation of the European norms through reporting the discrimination in tribunals and educating women on how to recognize such discrimination. However, what made the Lobby's work so efficient was the acknowledgement that every country had its own way of dealing with trials and reports, therefore the action had to be bespoke for each country. This was possible thanks to the network that the Lobby had with other local organizations in each country.

The European Women's Lobby still exists today and is still active in the fight for women's rights, especially towards reproductive rights and sexism. As previously stated, Fausta Deshormes has been crucial in the process of the creation of the Lobby for she was one of the first women in Europe to believe in such a project. She remained a member of the organization until 2013, year of her decease. Her activity allowed for the collaboration of *Information Femmes* and *Femmes d'Europe* with the Lobby. The Lobby became a further outlet for the spread of feminist publications but at the same time it functioned as a pool for women's issue, consequently representing an inspiration for the topics discussed in the *Femmes d'Europe* magazine. Eventually, Fausta was able to create a synergic free movement of information between the *Information Femmes* office, *Femmes d'Europe* and the Lobby of women. The European Women's Lobby is still today in 2023 an active body which acts on the same track as it did when Fausta was in charge. Its main purpose is to create awareness on specific issues that regard women, usually women who are victims of discrimination of some kind. However, its audience has changed. In fact, nowadays *Femmes d'Europe* does not exist anymore and therefore there is no network of outlets surrounding the Lobby. The Lobby is now simply aimed at

“working together for a feminist Europe”⁸⁶ by bringing the attention of the EU Institutions towards women’s issues, which, indeed, is not even far from what Fausta’s mission was all about. The organization of the Lobby was based on a defined bureaucratic asset. The Lobby had a collection of documents aimed at establishing the rules or functioning of the Lobby, the relationship between the different bodies and the relationship between the members of the Lobby. All the expenses were laid down and organized by the members who oversaw handling the yearly budget for the initiatives of the organization, the promotion of events and the external relations with other organizations.

⁸⁶*European Women’s Lobby* (no date). Available at: www.womenlobby.org. Accessed on the 11th of April 2023.

CHAPTER FOUR

1976 : “Les Femmes et la Communauté Européenne”

As stated previously in the introduction, Fausta Deshormes LaValle’s *modus operandi* was centered around the importance of creating a sense of community among women, which would inevitably lead to fostering reciprocal help. Taking action upon such principle, Fausta took part in many conferences and seminars throughout her career and even after her retirement. In 1976 she showed interest in the symposium that was held in Brussels on the 12th and 13th of March⁸⁷. The symposium was an attempt to gather different views on the issues of women in Europe and analyze the socio-economic and the socio-politics aspects. The main general issue that was debated was the working condition of women in Europe. It is clear from the interventions that were made during the event that in 1976 there was a strong feminist influence in the political debate among female officials. Such claim emerges from the accusing tone that some of the participants use to address the issue. The first intervention by Italian senator Tullia Caretoni Romagnoli⁸⁸ underlines how women were, once again, falling victims of choices that were made by men but would have direct impact on women⁸⁹. The following interventions all state that there was an employment crisis happening and that women were being relegated to the role of housewives without giving them an alternative to such role. A similar statement will later be made in *Femmes d’Europe* when dealing with equal pay. Women were “imposed” a role that they did not choose, and such problem was worsened by the fact that many women in Europe did not even know that they had an alternative. However, an additional important point was made during the symposium. In fact, the image of the traditional “housewife” was combined with that

⁸⁷ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-4. Les Femmes et la Communauté Européenne.

⁸⁸ Paola Stelliferi. *Tullia Romagnoli Caretoni nell’Italia repubblicana: una biografia politica*. Roma, Viella. 2022.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*.

of the traditional “working woman”. Although apparently the two roles seem in opposition, in reality what makes them similar is the term “traditional”. Indeed, according to the female members of the board of participants in the symposium, it was men who decided the definition of a housewife and of a working woman, and this put a limit to what could be considered as such. Because men were used to portray women always in the same kind of role - that of the housewife - when economic necessity made it necessary for women to work, men did not hesitate to simply add the role of working woman to that of housewife⁹⁰. This means that, once again, women were expected to work and be housewives at the same time. The housewife and the working woman are both discriminated in their own way. The housewife because she relied financially on the “good will” of her husband and is “employed” at home, which was not regarded as a proper job. While the working woman still must carry the burden of feeling guilty for not being able to dedicate to tasks such as raising children⁹¹. In the symposium it was also mentioned the issue of equal pay on which Fausta Deshormes had a strong opinion that will be later expressed in the dedicated numbers of *Femmes d'Europe* in the 1980s. On this matter, the interventions that were made during the symposium called for the need of an even more developed information network among women. The participants proceeded to demand to the European Commission an organ ad hoc to control the enforcement of women’s rights, with particular attention given to working women. An additional goal that was to be reached during the convention was that of asking to the participants to give some suggestion for resolutions regarding some specific problems that women were facing at the time. The first problem was that of the penalizations that women faced due to mostly prejudices. Also, the participants were asked to find a resolution to the issue of the high impact that marriage and motherhood had on the career of women, this point was also linked to the lack of professional qualifications which was the cause of the concentration of female

⁹⁰ *Ibidem.*

⁹¹ *Ibidem.*

workers in non-qualified functions⁹². The proposals that were made by the participants were characterized by a double nature: legal and cultural. The legal nature, as underlined by Tullia Caretoni Romagnoli, was linked to the need for a harmonization of the European legislations, which were expected to go beyond what was stated in the Treaty of Rome. Because every European country had its own legislation, it was difficult to keep a common standard of treatment for women if each country was free to decide how and if implement laws in favor of women. However, an important addition was made to the discussion. It was recognized that changing the laws would inevitably bring to an imposition upon the citizens rather than resulting in a change of mentality. In short, the feminists had to convince men to be on their side because they espoused the cause and understood the importance of gender equality and female integration, rather than just being legally obliged to do so. On this matter, the proposal was to preach for a change of mentality starting from the childhood: parents had to portray themselves as being members of a team with equal tasks, so that the children would be accustomed to such concept before reaching elementary school. Next step would be to detach from teaching gender norms to children in school. A change of rhetoric was also necessary when talking about maternity. In fact, maternity was seen as more of a handicap for working women for the role of mother would clash with the role of successful worker or businesswoman. According to the participants, men and women had to start shaping the mentality of the young generations around the idea that being a parent is a choice that a person makes, it is not imposed, no woman “must” become a mother. But in case a woman wanted to become one, society had to be ready to properly accompany her in her choice without preventing her from having a successful career.

The second part of the conference was dedicated to the debate over socio-political issues. The debate started with the intervention of the British Secretary of State, Dr. Summerskill ⁹³, who

⁹² HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-4. Les Femmes et la Communauté Européenne.

⁹³ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-4. List of Participants.

began the speech by stating that, as per year 1976, 33% of women were still convinced that politics was a job for men and would keep themselves away from political engagement⁹⁴. However, participating in the political power would mean participating in the highest level of decision-making, especially since political decisions did have a direct impact on women. The participants then made some proposals to foster female participation in politics, but also in the unions, banks, private and national administrations. Most of those roles were still undertaken mainly by men. Nonetheless, the transition had to be gradual and start from introducing female participation in the social and economic sector first and then politics would inevitably follow⁹⁵. It is important to remember that in 1976 the situation had improved from the previous decade, but the women who had a university-level education, those who had a role of responsibility in the workplace and those who were engaged politically were mainly the privileged women who belonged to an elite which represented the minority of the European population. Nevertheless, such elite was still only engaged at local or national level, while at the symposium it became clear that there was urge for female participation at European level⁹⁶. The work of Fausta Deshormes could be used as a perfect example of female engagement at European level, and certainly she contributed in facilitating communication between female citizens and European institutions. However, it was still not enough. A bigger effort was required. The question was promptly answered: to foster women participation at European level it was necessary to push female citizens to vote for a woman at the 1978 European Parliament (EP) elections, which were supposed to be held in 1977. The responsibility of such action was put mostly in the hands of the single member States. The German federal republic and the Netherlands had already put into place a committee to sensitize women to go vote for the 1978 elections. The board of participants at the symposium agreed that such methodology shall be followed by other member States as

⁹⁴ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-4. Les Femmes et la Communauté Européenne.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

well⁹⁷. In conclusion, the symposium was a success and the participants requested to the Commission a second session to be held in 1978. Fausta put herself in charge of organizing the second symposium through the collaboration among different bureau of the DGX all over Europe⁹⁸.

From the symposium in Brussels, the voice and ideas of the participants - including Fausta Deshormes - quickly spread to national media outlet. For what concerns Italy, the weekly magazine “Oggi” interviewed Fausta about what had been discussed in Brussels. The interview was reported in the 13th issue of the magazine, which was published on the 29th of March 1976. In the interview, Fausta is asked question regarding the condition of women and her idea about feminism. Fausta stated that she strongly believed in the feminist cause, but she did not agree with the methodology that feminists used at the time. During the interview, Fausta missed no chance to remind women to vote in the 1978 PE election: “Within two years women could become the protagonist of our society”⁹⁹. It is important to remember that the first number of *Femmes d’Europe* was published in 1977, just in time to play a crucial role in encouraging women to go vote at the PE elections.

1982: First European Conference of Female Associations.

The symposium of Female Associations was held in Bonn on the 18th of May 1982 and its focus was to assess *Femmes d’Europe* as a crucial instrument for information and cooperation among women. Fausta Deshormes introduced the topic and gave her contribution to the discussion. Her speech began with the reminder of how everything started when the European Commission felt the need to introduce a Directive for information. This smart move gave impetus to the free circulation of news, information, and knowledge. In Fausta’s words “information does

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁸ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-4. Letter to a colleague.

⁹⁹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-4. Oggi. Anno XXXII. N°13.

not have an end in itself, but it is the democratic instrument of a policy”¹⁰⁰. In 1982 most of women’s issues were acknowledged and there had already been a partial change in women’s conditions. Fausta eventually achieved her goal of helping information to circulate among female organizations as well as political parties, regional, national, and international administrations. *Femmes d’Europe* played a crucial role in ameliorating the spread but mostly quality of such information ¹⁰¹. The main assessment method to understand the increased quality of the information service provided by *Femmes d’Europe* could be the extent to which a topic was touched upon in the magazine. During the symposium, Fausta gave the example of the debate regarding the controversial pink quotas in the political parties. Many newspapers and magazines wrote opinion articles on the issue, but *Femmes d’Europe* was praised for being one of the very few to illustrate both sides of the debate. *Femmes d’Europe* gave space to those in favor and those against the quotas, so that the reader could have a holistic approach to the discussion¹⁰². Another clarification that Fausta made in occasion of the symposium in Bonn concerned the way in which the information provided by *Femmes d’Europe* had been used, or better, misused. In fact, the editorial office of *Femmes d’Europe* did not hold any copyright on the text contained in the bulletin, nor it required to be referenced and credited in case. Inevitably, this brought to other outlets “stealing” the articles from the magazine, sometimes even changing, and twisting some of the statements made by *Femmes d’Europe*. The reason why this was problematic to Fausta Deshromes is because she knew what was behind the bulletin. As previously stated, the equipe behind *Femmes d’Europe* was very small, as small was the budget dedicated to it. The office received information from twelve different countries in different languages and there was only one person in charge of receiving such information, picking the most relevant, translating it and then editing the articles, the whole process fell under Fausta’s supervision. Another important

¹⁰⁰ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-6. Colloque Européen des Associations Feminines.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*.

aspect that Fausta underlines in her speech at the beginning of the Bonn conference is the diversity of the information provided by the bulletin. The content did not only focus on women in politics or on women's rights, but it rather gave space to many other aspects that characterized the life of women such as motherhood, work, marriage, and art. At the end of the speech the participants questioned the next steps that the information office ought to take. To this question, Fausta replied that the main concern shall be that of concentrating on the change of mentality. One of the biggest achievements of *Femmes d'Europe* is that of being able to lay down the basis for a network and make sure that the ties that work within such network can work together synergically. This means that *Femmes d'Europe* uncovered some of the common concerns that women in Europe had and did it all at the same time. Common issues were raised in different countries at the same time. For example, the issue of single parents was raised in Germany and in the United Kingdom, or again the issue of the nationality of children was raised in Belgium as well as in Italy. This is proof of a strong networking power that *Femmes d'Europe* held¹⁰³.

She then proceeded to make two proposals. The first is to open women's debates to men, since women understood their rights and were more conscious about it, men shall do the same. The second, more concrete, proposal is that of establishing the role of the "manager of European information and relations" within every female organization. Such manager would oversee contacting other organizations and curate the relations with the other European Institutions.

1984: Second European Conference of Female Associations.

The second round of the European Conference of Female Associations took place in Turin on the 9th and 10th of March 1984. Fausta Deshormes was given an organizational role but also the task of introducing the conference and its purpose. She started by reminding what was decided

¹⁰³ *Ibidem.*

during the first conference in Bonn and how such decisions eventually brought to a successful outcome. One of the main achievements of the first session of the conference was that of pushing the ministers of some member states - Italy and Greece - to provide their governmental bodies with a specific commission aimed at dealing with female work and equal opportunities¹⁰⁴. According to Fausta in her speech, if such achievement was reached was probably because of the pressure that had been exercised by female associations. During her speech, Fausta referred to the crisis that had hit Europe under many aspects: social, economic etc. Especially the economic consequences of the crisis proved to be detrimental for women specifically since the unemployment that derived from the crisis hit women more than men. In addition, the reduction of public expenditure for social welfare had negative consequences on women's employment. Those, and many other issues, were meant to be dealt with in the conference of the United Nations dedicated to women in 1985. Finally, women were at the very center of the public debate not only at national and European level, but also at global level and the United Nations were an important forum for change¹⁰⁵. Before the second Conference of 1984, the European Commission had created an *ad hoc* office to help solve the problems of women in developing countries. This was a particularly important step because it meant that the networking of women was expanding beyond the European border and the EU Commission felt the need use its power to intervene.

During the first Conference it was discussed among the participants that the mentality of citizens had to change, and actions were taken to deliver the proposal. Fausta reported during the second Conference that there was an Action Plan aimed at reshaping the common mentality towards women. On this behalf, *Femmes d'Europe* took charge and launched an initiative to research and analyze the way women were portrayed by media (Television) in the European

¹⁰⁴ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-6. Second European Conference of Female Associations.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

countries. The project wanted to gather information on what kind of notions were given about women, how women were portrayed acting and behaving, since it was understood that media played an important role in shaping the common view on women. After the completion of the project, the aim was to reunite in Brussels the individuals that make decisions in the media, i.e. broadcast managers, national TV executives, sociologists, and politicians. The reason was to expose the results of the data analyzed in the project and make some suggestions. The choice made by the European Commission to dedicate part of its information activity to target women meant that women were becoming associated with a proper “information policy”¹⁰⁶ and used to allow women to participate in the civil, social, and political life of Europe. Once again, the Conference was successful. Fausta also underlined the importance for female associations to participate in such conferences because, depending on the location, it was possible to learn from other national associations and create even tighter links between associations. After all, every group from every country had its own way of approaching female issues, and this made every national female association different from another. The differences were mostly due to the culture of the country to which each association belonged and being in contact with other cultures and other “ways” of dealing with common issues was considered by Fausta Deshormes crucial to overcome discrimination and increase equal opportunities not only between men and women, but also among women from different backgrounds¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem.*

CHAPTER FIVE

Italian Press Review 1984.

1984 was an important year for women. Feminist associations were ever spreading and creating consciousness among the people. The feminist movement was starting to become controversial, as it was believed to be an extremism, but at the same time it had succeeded in partially reshaping society. Fausta Deshromes had stated that the methodology used by feminists was harsh¹⁰⁸. However, it was undeniable that such harsh methods had functioned as a rupture in society and gathered enough attention to make a change. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the fight of female press and organizations, including *Femmes d'Europe* and the Lobby of Women, was centered around the idea that although changes were being made in parliaments all over Europe, the media would not keep up with such change and this made the process more difficult. In addition, the legal framework of certain European countries was still developing towards equal opportunities and rights, and a defined answer was not yet given to the requests made by women. The political roles in governments were still covered by a majority of men, but the progress made towards women's rights had shaped the ideas of men as well. On this matter, around the year 1984 it was breaching in such governments the idea of creating legal instruments to emancipate women even more. The responsibility of portraying "the new modern woman" was given to the press and television, and according to different political streams followed by the press, the portray changed from newspaper to newspaper. However, on the 8th of March 1984 in occasion of the international woman's day, the most popular Italian newspaper agreed on some basic points: equal rights were universally acknowledged by men and women, but equality for women was not yet reached in many aspects. The first newspaper that spoke about the situation on the 8th of March was *Il Corriere della Sera*, which did not have a defined political alignment.

¹⁰⁸ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-4. Oggi: Interview to Fausta Deshromes.

Therefore, it was able to take a neutral stance in its articles. The second newspaper was *La Repubblica*, probably the most popular daily newspaper in Italy at the time. *La Repubblica*'s political alignment was bent towards the left. The third and fourth newspapers were the rightist *Il Giornno* and *Il Giornale*. The sixth newspaper was the impartial *Avvenire*, which focused on the relationship between men and women. Followed by *L'Unità*, and the *Avanti!* the newspaper endorsed by the Italian Socialist Party. The last newspaper to publish many articles in occasion of the international woman's day was *Il Popolo*, which was affiliated with the Italian Popular Party. Another topic that is common to some of the newspaper selected for the analysis is the process of approval to the law concerning sexual abuse on women, which was a hot topic in March 1984 since the "pentapartito" was dealing with the rejected proposal of the law in the Justice Commission. The rejection had caused discontent to feminist groups and female organizations which had taken the streets to protest. The protests for the law of sexual abuse were joined by the protests for the freedom of women regarding the role of workers. Therefore, it is important to understand that when the articles were written, the situation of Italian women was characterized by a high demand to have their voice heard, and the fora for such aim were on one hand the streets of the main Italian cities, but on the other hand in the same year the second European Conference of Female Organization which took place in Italy. The following analysis is aimed at comparing the way different newspapers depicted the changing role of women. Some of the newspapers shared a common view, while some others introduced completely new topics to the discussion. In any case, when analyzing the mission of Fausta Deshromes, it is crucial to take into consideration the role of the press for it was a focal point in the causes taken by the Lobby of Women and *Femmes d'Europe*. Fausta pursued her role in contrasting the image that was served up by the media and, instead, proposed a more modern version of the female image in *Femmes d'Europe* and made sure that the other magazines that were included into the FdE network would do the same.

The National Statistics Institute Survey (ISTAT)

Before proceeding with the sections on each newspaper, it is important to mention a Survey that ISTAT conducted in occasion of the international woman's day in 1984. Such survey functioned as factual base for many of the articles that were written in that period, and it gave numbers on which the new image of the "modern woman" was based on. It is known that information tends to be taken more seriously when there is numbers and percentages involved, especially if it is provided by ISTAT. For this reason, the survey was a turning point in the debate over the depiction of women by the press. The image that resulted from the survey saw women as being ever closer to men in statistics, especially in positive advancements such as education. Although majority of the population was educated, there was still a small percentage (2,2% of male population and 3,8% of female population) that was illiterate. However, the female percentage decreased since 1971 when the illiteracy rate of female population was 6,3%¹⁰⁹. Data on university graduates showed that every 100 male graduates there were 62 female graduates, but the number had doubled since 1974. However, the relationship between schooling and work was more complex. The data showed that women were still disadvantaged compared to men. In fact, 16.2% is the percentage of women that were looking for a job, against the 6.6% of men. What made this data so relevant was the reason behind the percentage. The survey assessed that majority of the working women were either unmarried, or widows or divorced. This is the point on which the feminist groups protested on the streets on the 8th of March 1984. On one side, employers discriminated married women because of the stigma that they would not be dedicated to the job because too busy being wives and mothers. But on the other side, also married women hardly ever took a full-time job that could potentially bring to a successful career because they would not shirk the role of housewives too. The work life was not the only data from the survey

¹⁰⁹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. La Stampa: si celebra la festa della donna anche l'Istat le fa il ritratto.

that was criticized by the female organizations. The second set of data was the one regarding the private life of women. In particular, the children. The statistics stated that during the economic *boom*, a woman birthed on average 2,7 children, while in 1984 that number decreased to 1,5. The reason behind the change, once again, was the difficulty for a woman to conciliate work life and private life, and this discouraged women from having more than one child. In addition, only 19% of women kept working until retirement because most of them quit their job after having their first child. The results from the ISTAT survey were cited in most of the articles on the newspapers of the 8th of March 1984. Some newspapers limited themselves to simply explain the data and comparing it to previous data, while some others gave space to opinion pieces on the data and interviews to political personalities.

Il Corriere della Sera.

The articles that were published by *Il Corriere della Sera* on the 8th of March 1984 were two. The first article was more specifically about the international women's day and the way the significance that was given to such celebration had changed in time. The article was written by Giulia Borgese and it begins with a direct reference to the letter that Nilde Iotti - president of the Italian Chamber of Deputies - wrote to the female staff of the Chamber. In this letter, Iotti invites the citizens to reflect on what is common to all women, regardless of the social or economic status, that is facing harsh situations, limitations, and difficulties. The struggle is shared but so is the fight for the cause. Iotti exhorts women not to get comfortable with the rights that had been reached so far. Instead, there were many additional fights that were yet to be won. Above all, the approval of the law about sexual abuse, which was legally a crime against shame and public moral and was about to be changed into an offence against the person. The laws in Italy that changed the judicial status of women were all pursued by women, fought for by women, drafted and voted under the influence of the feminist wave. However, by the early 80s it was the collaboration between men and women that was meant to make the biggest impact in terms of

progress in the body of laws in Italy and all over Europe. In her letter, Iotti writes about “political women”¹¹⁰, meaning women who actively participated in the political life of the country and were often affiliated to a political party. Those women had teamed up, even when that meant going against their party and shaking the hand of a member of the rival party, all because they had a common cause to fight for. A cause that was beyond political parties, beyond electoral programs and political ideologies. Such cause was the equality of men and women under every aspect of a citizen’s life: marriage, work, private life. From such project many initiatives rose that eventually brought to the divorce law, the legalization of abortion and the abolition of honor killing¹¹¹. On the 14th of December 1984 the Italian Ministry of Labour established the national committee for the equal opportunities for female and male workers. The committee was formed by the representatives of the five parties in power, the representatives of some of the major female organizations and some representatives of the labour unions. The purpose of the committee was to analyze and make research to guarantee the right functioning of the existing equal opportunity laws. Nevertheless, the journalist Giulia Borgese concludes the article by reminding to the readers that the real change was yet to come. Indeed, as the Lobby of Women will later agree in the 90s, the real factor that needed change was the mentality. A woman was now seen as a respected worker, but once she got back home, she was supposed to be “employed” in the housework without being recognized any salary, or even the deserved respect. Working women were then working two jobs, of which only one was considered as such. This point was barely touched upon by *Il Corriere della Sera*, but other newspapers, such as *Il Giorno* and *Il Giornale*, gave more space to the debate over the issue.

The second article was written by Viviana Kasam and it gave voice to Federica Olivares, who was the president of the female association “Donne in Carriera”. Olivares spoke about the new

¹¹⁰ Fausta Deshromes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *Il Corriere della Sera*: Come cambia la Festa della Donna.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*.

values that feminism was undertaking and why it did so. The notion that equality was a right was finally acknowledged, but Olivares demanded for “the real equality”¹¹² to be discussed and claimed by women. What was intended as real equality was in fact equality in the career, in the remuneration and in success. The point of view of Federica Olivares is truly interesting because she mentions that oftentimes women were the main enemy of other women. A woman who wanted a good and successful career was considered by other women less of a feminist because success in the career was an objective of men. Therefore, a woman who wanted success in her career wanted to simply imitate men. The new term that is introduced is “postfeminism”¹¹³, which is a feminism that does not condemn men for simply existing, does not take for granted that all men hate women and does not ostracize women for believe in values that were usually associated with men, such as career over family. Postfeminism is based on trust among the women. Having a successful career, specifying in a field and then being useful to help other women. The following step taken by postfeminism also gave a new role of power to women, who up until that moment were barely tolerated in such roles. The writer cited in the article, Anna Del Bo Boffino, stated that the opinion of women in power, for example in politics, was also laughed at or not taken seriously by men. However, such dynamic was inevitably destined to be abandoned because the level of female education in the 80s reached that of male education, which made women as qualified as men. The article’s last column gave space to Renata Livraghi, professor at the University of Parma, who stated that the problem of female education was solved in terms of percentages, but the reality was that women in upper education only chose certain faculties that allowed them to become nurses or teachers. This gave them a secure job, but it also created a gap in the distribution of apex roles between men and women. Surely, mostly men went into studying economics, law or politics and this meant that most executive officers, most

¹¹² Fausta Deshromes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. Il Corriere della Sera: La battaglia del postfemminismo.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*.

lawyers and magistrates were men. An interest point was made by Livraghi following a study that she conducted on young girls attending middle school: the girls were all aware of the necessity to become financially independent, but they did not relate the necessity to the desire of a satisfying career, but to the desire to have a stable marriage life¹¹⁴. On the results of the study, the article concludes that, although traditional feminists would not agree with the idea of seeing marriage as the arrival point of a woman's life, postfeminism is more inclusive towards women who work but also are keen on marriage life. The last part of the final column of the article touches upon the bill that was presented by the feminist group of the Socialist party which proposed the development of an economic policy targeting housewives that recognized their work as a proper job.

In conclusion, the vision of *Il Corriere della Sera* remained neutral for the most part. It gave space to people belonging to different political parties regardless of their affiliation. The two articles were a mix of news flash and apolitical postfeminist propaganda. In the articles participated several external personalities, mostly political exponents. Compared to the other articles that will be analyzed later in the chapter, *Il Corriere della Sera* provided an acceptable pool of information, in some cases general information, in some others more specific information. The neutrality of the newspaper was clearly maintained throughout the articles and the interviews. No political opinion on behalf of the editorial board is detectable except for the clear favourable position regarding the need to give a new meaning to the International Woman's Day and go beyond the idea of considering the day a mere celebration.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

La Repubblica.

“Lonely, brave and cultured, stronger than men, here is the woman in the 80s”¹¹⁵. This is the first line of the first article written by Laura Laurenzi in occasion of International Woman’s Day in 1984. The first line is deliberately provocative because the aim is to create a rupture with the stereotypical depiction of the average woman. What used to be a soft woman became brave and strong, what used to be a woman always surrounded by men and unable to be alone became lonely and even happy about it. The article was based on the results of the survey published by ISTAT. The depiction of the woman made by *La Repubblica* stated that although women were still interested in marriage, and they married young, they disdained religious weddings and started to prefer civil weddings. Probably because it felt like less of a binding decision. Consequently, most separations were filed by women in accordance with the partner, but when a common decision was not possible, it was the woman to file for separation. But when it came to divorce, the path towards it was long and bureaucratically complex. Only 60% of the legally separated couples ended up in divorce and most of the applications for divorce were filed by men, probably because they wanted to remarry - Laurenzi guessed. The article by Laura Laurenzi did not go much further than reporting the ISTAT data. The second article, on the other hand, held a more prominent elaboration of ideas and opinions. The article was written by Silvana Mazzocchi and it dealt with the delicate debate over the law on sexual abuse. On this regard, the situation about the law started as easy but became very complex. The law proposal was aimed at legally recognizing sexual abuse as an offence against the person rather than a crime against shame and public morals. The proposal was strongly wanted by feminist groups and female organizations. The *iter* began in 1982 when the proposal was drafted and received the first approval by the Commission, the following year it was debated in the Chamber of Deputies and the debate was accompanied by protests on the streets for the approval of the proposal. However,

¹¹⁵ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. La Repubblica di Laura Laurenzi.

on the 25th of January 1983 the so-called “Casini amendment” was approved, which allocated to sexual abuse the crime against shame and morals. The news is considered a defeat against woman and against the capability of the “pentapartito” to adapt to modern times and handle public demand. Women from all political and social background began to protest and strike, making it impossible for the government not to take action. The parliament had been deemed “chauvinist” and an enemy to women¹¹⁶. On the 14th of December 1984 the Commission of Justice voted against the motion to bring the law proposal back to the Chamber with immediate urgency. The “pentapartito” was split into making a shared decision and an ad hoc committee was established. By the 8th of March 1984 the process for the approval of the proposal had to restart all over again. The article by Mazzocchi underlines how women were disappointed in the decision and the government lost consensus especially among the women. *La Repubblica* also included in the 8th of March issue a list of events that were taking place throughout the peninsula of that day. Some smaller Italian cities were busy celebrating International Woman’s Day in a more traditional way by adorning the streets with flowers. However, most of the Italian cities organized gatherings in public squares to protest against the decision to stop the process of approval of the sexual abuse law¹¹⁷. In addition to the two articles, *La Repubblica* dedicated one column on the active defense of women towards human rights. Even though women were described as the victims of violation of human rights all over the world, they were also on the front line when it came to defending human rights. Women were not only the direct victims of such violation, but they were also close family members to persecuted politicians or public personalities¹¹⁸. Overall, compared to *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica* did not limit itself to simply reporting the facts, but added

¹¹⁶ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *La Repubblica*: violenza sessuale anno zero sinistre ancora sconfitte.

¹¹⁷ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *La Repubblica*: in piazza per la pace fra canti e spettacoli.

¹¹⁸ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *La Repubblica*: le più attive nella difesa dei diritti umani.

an underlying political view especially regarding the sexual abuse law. The articles could not be considered proper opinion pieces but the position of *La Repubblica* on the topic was clear. The fact that the editorial board decided to dedicate more than one article to the International Woman's Day meant that the members of the board were sensitive to the feminist cause.

Il Giorno.

Il Giorno dedicated three articles to the International Woman's Day. One of which, just like *La Repubblica*, was nothing more than a report of data deriving from the ISTAT survey results. The data was, of course, the same as *La Repubblica* and in fact there is an inevitable resemblance between the two articles. However, the second and third article provided an interesting view which is worth looking at. The second article was written by Marina Cosi and titled "The female virtues are shared more"¹¹⁹. The title anticipates the content of the article but also the position of Cosi, in fact the article is an opinion piece about the modern condition of women and the role that they held in society in 1984. The main topic on which the article was written is that of the "never-ending" work for women¹²⁰. As stated in the previous sections, the life of the average woman in the 80s was characterized by a never-ending loop in which she worked a 9 to 5 job for an employer and then continued to work at home, except for the latter was not paid and there was no real defined employer. At the same time, the male partner of that woman would work a 9 to 5 job too but had the opportunity to rest at home since no additional work was required from him. Such condition was possible only because the women would carry on her shoulders the weight of a double job. Marina Cosi underlined how difficult it was for women to even gain the possibility to work or to have control over their personal decisions regarding marriage, family and children. Nonetheless, no achievement was certain and definitive for women¹²¹. The image

¹¹⁹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. Il Giorno: le virtù femminili sono più condivise.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*.

of the working woman is juxtaposed to that of Sisyphus, who was stuck in a loop and destined to push aimlessly and helplessly a round stone up a hill perpetually. Overall, the description that Marina Cosi made of women was not so positive, the accent that was put on the victimization of women was stronger than the accent that was put on describing women as proudly fighting for their rights. In her article, Cosi introduced a new idea to the reader: a society led by women is not only more convenient to women, but also more convenient to men because women are more prone to peace and balance. Cosi stated that women prioritize culture over “brute force”¹²² and this made them more capable of leading society in her opinion. She also added that women have deeper roots than men in tolerance because they have the role of giving birth and raising new human beings. This opinion, although understandable in 1984 due to the ongoing dynamics of the Cold War, nowadays in the 2020s would be linked to a more conservative -and outdated- interpretation of feminism that sees women as being “softer” and more peaceful than men simply due to the natural tendencies that derive from motherhood. Therefore, Cosi’s opinion is in trend with the rightist tendencies of *Il Giorno*, but today in 2023 such an opinion would be considered controversial even for a rightist newspaper. The third article was interestingly written by a man, Gianfranco Morra. In this case as well, the article is an opinion piece, and the opinion of the journalist is most likely conservative. The main topic of the article is, once again, the double role of a working woman who works two jobs, one at work and one at home. However, the way the topic was addressed by Morra makes it different from all the other similar articles. This because the journalist does not complain about the fact that a woman must basically work two jobs, but he rather complains that because women must work a job outside of the house, they are discouraged from complying with their role in the house¹²³. The solution, Morra states, would be to guarantee either a salary to housewives, or better to foster the legal framework that would

¹²² *Ibidem*.

¹²³ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *Il Giorno*: giornata d’incontro anziché di sfida.

allow a woman to work outside of the house without having to neglect her family. “The true promotion of a woman shall be structured in a way that it would not cost her to abandon her family, towards which she plays an irreplaceable role as mother”¹²⁴ Morra states. At the end of the article the journalist makes a comparison between feminism and chauvinism: they are both put into the same category and described as two “pathological extremisms” to be avoided¹²⁵. He then proceeds to make a proposal to turn the International Woman’s Day into the International Family Day so that men and women can be given equal importance, and therefore equal treatment. The statements made by Gianfranco Morra were unusual even for the time and especially if compared to the articles issued by *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*. The article by *Il Giorno* had some clear religious influences, the concept of men and women being providentially equal is a typical Christian value and idea. Both the opinion pieces go beyond what was being said about International Woman’s Day by the other newspapers. The general idea of the leftist and neutral press, which was also in accordance with the feminist movement and female organizations, was that of fostering a change to International Woman’s Day from a mere celebration to a day of remembrance and progress. *Il Giorno* gave a completely different perspective and proposed to take women out of the spotlight for International Woman’s Day and rather tie it to the sole image of a woman as a mother and as an important member of the family. It is also important to notice that the newspaper previously analyzed in the chapter only allowed female journalists to write about female struggles for the number of the 8th of March, while *Il Giorno* gave space to a man to write an opinion piece about female struggles. The result differentiated *Il Giorno* from most of the Italian newspapers, except for the first article about the ISTAT survey, which was also reported by other tabloid.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*.

Il Giornale.

Il Giornale was another rightist newspaper which only dedicated one article to the International Woman's Day. Like *Il Giorno*, the article was written by a man: Antonio Tajani, who is currently the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Meloni government. However, unlike *Il Giorno*, the article was not an opinion piece. *Il Giornale's* article only referred to the ISTAT survey results, without the addition of political stances of view. The overall result is an article based on data that does not differ from all other articles written on the same data¹²⁶. In conclusion, although the newspaper was politically affiliated in the right-hand parties, in occasion of the 8th of March it did not expose itself with a political stance.

L'Avvenire.

The *L'Avvenire* published two articles on the 8th of March 1084 concerning the celebration of Woman's Day. The first article dealt with a more general overview over the struggles that characterized the fight for equality between men and women, the journalist - Emma Cavallaro - briefly described the origins of the celebration of Woman's Day and expressed her concern regarding the risk of turning the 8th of March into a day filled with protests, remembrance and promises of behalf of the government, but then all be forgotten the following day. *L'Avvenire* takes a stance in two directions: the first direction regards the clear acknowledgement that, although the fight for equal rights and abandonment of prejudices had been successful, there were still some achievements to reach to be fully satisfied. The second, and most important stance, was that of giving space to the Catholics of Italy. *L'Avvenire* was a newspaper of catholic inspiration and would often publish news and reports on the Vatican and on the Christian life. The point of view of the Catholics is an interesting addition to the press review because other

¹²⁶ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. Il Giornale: è colta, onesta, lavora, ama la casa ma dice spesso basta col matrimonio.

newspapers examined might have given a political opinion through their article, but only the *L'Avvenire* expressed the opinion of the Catholics, who had a big influence in the Italian society¹²⁷. Every year for the 8th of March the group of Christian women would choose a theme for the celebration and organized conventions and activities through local Christian groups all over the country. In 1984 the chosen theme was: “together we plan the future; Christian women for tomorrow’s society”. Therefore, the aim of the Christian proposal was to create a fairer society, not working against men but together with them. The article made it clear that what pushed Christian women to gather and work towards a common outcome was not only their faith but also the feeling of owing it to their predecessors in the fight. The second article was written by Lidia Cavestro. This one was less “general” and more specific on certain topics of the Christian female world. Cavestro gave also an underlying political opinion towards the pentapartito which was criticized in the article for not being able to address properly the issue of women working outside of the house. The same topic was touched upon by other newspapers as well, but the interesting and original characteristic of the *L'Avvenire* article is that the topic is approached from a Christian Catholic stance, and this makes it very different from the articles written by *Il Giornale* or *Il Corriere della Sera*. The article by Cavestro reported the proposals made by Christian Labour Movement (CLB). The early 80s were characterized by an afterthought regarding the relationship between women, family, and work. In fact, in during the 70s women’s protests were centered around the possibility for them to work and to earn under the same conditions and with the same rights as men, the protests in the 80s were more prone towards allowing women to work but also to care for their family without having to give up their career. The CLB’s aim was to make female work more “family friendly”¹²⁸. To make it happen, the CLB found a solution and the article by Lidia Cavestro functioned as a manifesto. The

¹²⁷ Fausta Deshormes LaValee Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *L'avvenire*: Uomo e donna, un mondo da costruire assieme.

¹²⁸ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *L'Avvenire*: Donna, famiglia, lavoro.

proposal came after the deliberation of the European Council in 1975, which called for all European countries to grant remuneration to “family work”, meaning the assistance of children, a handicapped family member or elderlies. Not every country in Europe managed to adapt to such request, Italy being one of them. In 1984 the CLB urged the government to do just that. The proposal by the CLB was also aimed at solving the problem of having too many employable citizens and too little jobs to employ them. According to Cavestro, paying women to stay at home and take care of their family would allow many female workers to give up their job and this would free up many jobs for employable workers¹²⁹. The opinion might seem controversial, but it is in accordance with Christian values and, therefore, understandable. Overall, the *L'Avvenire* did not remain impartial in their articles. However, the articles were not political articles like it happened for other newspapers analyzed previously. On the contrary, both articles were Christian Catholic and expressed the concerns and desires of a section of the Italian society which was religious but also interested and active in current societal struggles.

L'Unità

L'Unità dedicated two articles to the 8th of March and just like *Il Giornale*, the articles were based on statistics. However, *L'Unità* did not only look at the ISTAT data. Rather, it spread its view beyond the national borders and analyzed the situation of employment in Europe. According to the data provided in the first article written by the newspaper's correspondent from Brussels – Arturo Barioli – more than 50% of the female population aged between 15 and 64 was employed in either services or industry¹³⁰. In Italy, 60% of all female workers were employed in services and only 27% in industries. However, the service sector allowed for the proliferation of part-time contracts which often hid detrimental phenomena such as

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁰ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *L'Unità*: In Europa c'è più lavoro ma solo nei servizi.

underemployment, to which women were then more exposed. The Italian data was a bit worrying compared to that of other European countries. Denmark stood out since it was the only European country to have a high number of female workers even in the 70s when the rest of Europe was still adjusting to gender equality norms in the work field. Progression ended up touching all European countries but during the early 80s the progression rate started to slow down. In Great Britain the trend inverted and declined due to the policies implemented by Margaret Thatcher¹³¹. However, such phenomenon only happened in the UK. One data on which women still suffered a considerably disadvantaged position was that of the unemployment rate. The average percentage in the European Community was 15% for women and 10% for men. The situation was even worse for the citizens under 25 years of age in particularly in Italy, where 50% was unemployed. The second article did not differ from the one written by *Il Giornale*. In fact, it was based on the ISTAT data and aimed at a general depiction of the average Italian woman in the early 80s. It provided some percentages on work, personal choices, years of marriage¹³². The article did not include any assumption of opinion deriving from the newspaper's viewpoint and there is not a journalist credited for the article. This suggests that the article was probably an editorial piece.

Avanti!

Avanti probably represents the most politically influenced of the newspapers that were analyzed so far in the chapter. The articles published for the 8th of March by *Avanti* were many and, on many topics, but the common thread was the exposure of socialist ideas through the fight for equal rights. The *Avanti* did not criticize the government like other newspaper did, but it took the chance to advance some proposals to improve the situation of women in Italy. It is important

¹³¹ *Ibidem*.

¹³² HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. L'Unità: italiane 1984.

to keep in mind that *Avanti* was deeply rooted in the Italian Socialist Party. The Socialist Party was ruling in the “pentapartito” coalition, and the socialist press functioned as a megaphone for the socialist voice. In 1984 the hot topic for socialists was the law for sexual abuse which was strongly wanted by the socialists in the government. For the purpose of comparison, only two articles are analyzed in this chapter. The first article was written by Elena Marinucci on the socialist feminist movement. The article often mentioned the Socialist Party as main contributor not only to the emancipation of women in Italy but also for keeping the conversation going about women’s rights¹³³. Marinucci mentioned the accusations that were made by the secretary of the Communist Party, Enrico Berlinguer, who accused the Socialist-led government of pursuing “anti-women policies” during the work crisis. To the accusations, Marinucci quotes data by CENSIS and ISCOL which prove wrong the Communist assumption of a work crisis. In fact, from the data emerged that the number of employed women grew every year¹³⁴. The proposal that Marinucci made was that of reforming the welfare system in order to guarantee a fair work life to women, also to the women that chose not to work outside the house. The following article was clearly of political nature. Written by Gabriella Camozzi, the article addressed the way in which politics and unions have adapted to the new concept of women in society. The picture that politics made of women was not sufficient to explain the degree to which change was happening. Camozzi stated that women passed from being completely ignored to being “one half of a whole”¹³⁵. Although the new picture might seem favorable for women, the way it developed turned into the “one half” forced to resemble the other half. What looked like emancipation ended up being a trap for women. Politicians and governments did not grasp the notion that women and men are different in many aspects such as desires. Treating women as if they were men was not

¹³³ Fausta Deshromes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV- 24. *Avanti!*: Dal Movimento delle donne alle donne in movimento.

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁵ Fausta Deshromes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV- 24. *Avanti!*: Per una nuova emancipazione.

an achievement to celebrate, according to Camozzi. In response, the national and international fora where decisions are taken and laws are made, should have adapted a new set of norms and laws to the specific needs, desires, and requests of women, instead of just opening to women the existing norms and laws intended for men¹³⁶.

Il Popolo.

Il Popolo is one of those newspapers that dedicated wide attention to women on the 8th of March 1984. In total, the articles dedicated to women's issues were four, all of them were politically influenced but this comes with no surprise since the newspaper was openly affiliated with the Italian Popular Party. Out of the four articles was about the ISTAT survey result and therefore will not be thoroughly analyzed since the content did not differ from the other articles about the same topic. The first relevant article was written by Gabriella Ceccatelli. The purpose of the article is to underline the activities that the female movement of the Christian Democrats had organized to celebrate Woman's Day. The statement that Ceccatelli made concerned the lack of centrality that was given to women by the political parties, the unions, and the organizations. Considering the political and religious background of *Il Popolo*, great importance was given to criticizing the attitude towards women pursued by men in power. On this matter, the institutions failed at putting women first in the fields in which women shall be central such as family and procreation¹³⁷. At the same time, the article also criticized the modus operandi of the organized groups such as parties, in which female participation was lacking. The example given was that of the Communist Party, in which female members complained that there was a lack of female representation in the top roles in the organizations of the Party. Same dynamics happened for other Italian parties such as Social-democrats and Republicans. The second article, written by

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁷ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *Il Popolo: Una centralità politicosociale della donna*.

Clelia D’Inzillo, also added an interesting view of the topic of peace. The topic was also addressed by *Il Giorno* but the two articles were completely different. The article by *Il Popolo* dealt with the topic of peace under a Christian perspective, meaning that, although peace was a hot topic in 1984 due to the Cold War, *Il Popolo* did not mention the Cold War. Peace was indeed treated by D’Inzillo as a Christian value regardless of the Cold War. The article proceeded to give information about the events that were planned for the 8th of March and organized by Christian groups¹³⁸. Peace was at the center of the Christian campaign “together we project the future”, a commitment that included social and political debate on peaceful resolutions to different problems, including women’s issues. The article on the ISTAT survey, once again, did not add much to the discussion and provided the same information given by the other newspapers. The last article was an updated overview regarding the law on sexual abuse. The creation of an *ad hoc* committee was voted by majority in the parliament, the parties in favour were the Christian Democrats, the Socialists, the Social-Democrats, the Republicans, and the Social Movement. On the 8th of March, the committee had one month to come up with a new text for the law. The speculations at the time of the law proposal were mainly that some parties- *Il Popolo* pointed the finger towards the Communist party- were trying to find a pretext to exploit the situation to prove that the coalition government was not stale. However, the article was brief, and it did not provide any opinion, it just gave an update on the state of the art¹³⁹. Overall, *Il Popolo* gave enough space to Women’s Day, it was the newspaper with the highest number of articles dedicated to the topic. Although the newspaper was namely affiliated with the Christian Democrats, the underlying rhetoric was indeed Christian but from a mere religious standpoint rather than political.

¹³⁸ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *Il Popolo*: la pace, impegno che diventa oggi compito etico.

¹³⁹ HAEU, Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund. Dossier FDLV-24. *Il Popolo*: violenza sessuale, comitato ristretto per la nuova legge.

Conclusion.

Looking at the press is one of the smartest ways to assess the socio-political part of a country. From the press review emerged that most Italian newspapers were influenced by politics and their political opinion reflected in their articles. The newspaper which published more articles dedicated to Woman's Day was *Avanti!* with five articles in total, followed by *Il Popolo* with four articles. *Il Giornale* was the newspaper with the least number of articles, just one and very brief. However, *Il Giornale* was one of the few newspapers, together with *Il Giorno* and *L'Unità*, to have a man write the articles on Women's Day. In the case of *Il Giornale*, the choice is understandable since the only article published was a mere report of the ISTAT survey. On the contrary, *Il Giorno* entrusted the article to Arturo Barioli, who wrote an opinion piece in which he provided a strict point of view that was clearly influenced by religious values. For what concerns *L'Unità*, it was the only newspaper that provided a correspondent from Brussels and made an analysis on European data rather than national data. *Il Corriere della Sera* was the newspaper that published the most holistic articles since they analyzed the perspective of people from different political parties on the same matter. It was also the newspaper with the most external participants to the articles. *La Repubblica* provided the most extensive analysis of the ISTAT survey, while *Il Popolo* gave the most complete perspective on the sexual abuse law proposal. Lastly, *L'Avvenire* provided two articles, both deeply influenced by the religious background of the newspaper. As shown, it was not unusual for the press to be religiously or politically driven in Italy, and although the information was always the same, the perspective changed depending on the religious or political belonging of the newspaper. The job that Fausta Deshormes LaValle conducted in the DGX was that of shifting away from the concept of biased press. Instead, her information outlets, such as *Femmes d'Europe*, provided neutral information aimed at delivering some knowledge to the readers without influencing their political opinions. The goal of Fausta was not that of "convincing" women to believe in her same ideas. She only

wanted women to be informed because from information derived knowledge and therefore power to know their rights.

CHAPTER SIX

Interview to Agnès Deshormes.

While I was researching information on Fausta Deshormes LaValle in the European Historical Archives in Florence, I could not help but ask myself questions regarding the attitude that Fausta had towards the people around her. As stated multiple times in the previous chapters, the purpose of Fausta's work was to create links between organizations in order to build bridges between the citizens and the European Commission. Although the task seemed hard, she was able to accomplish it so efficiently that it almost looked like she did it effortlessly. This thought kept me thinking about what kind of woman she was in her personal life and how her attitude at work influenced her private life. I wanted to see if and how the people around her saw her. Not just her work colleagues, but her friends and family too. Thanks to the Internet I was able to get in touch with Fausta's daughter, Agnès. I proposed to her an interview to talk about her mother Fausta, which, I thought, would allow me to have an insight on Fausta's work as seen by someone close to her. Agnès Deshormes kindly accepted my invitation with enthusiasm. Some of the information that were provided in the previous chapter derive from my chat with Agnès. She simply sat down and talked about her mother, but this allowed me to create logical connections between the woman that I have been researching, and the way she was seen by her someone close to her. Therefore, Agnès' contribution was crucial to allow me to depict a more complete portray of Fausta, not only as a European official, but as a mother, as a woman and as a citizen of Europe. It derived that the ethic that characterized Fausta in her work also characterized her as a mother, as a wife and as a woman.

The interview with Agnès, which follows, was a great opportunity that enriched me and for which I am thankful. It left me even more keen on the work of Fausta Deshormes.

The Interview.

MCN: Maria Chiara Niglio.

AD: Agnès Deshormes.

MCN: I would suggest starting from an introduction to Fausta Deshormes. I have introduced her in my thesis regarding her work as a European official in Brussels. However, I ask you to introduce her in a different perspective.

AD: Well, first my mother was a very dynamic and energetic person who always had creative ideas in her mind. Second point, she knew the war since she was a teenager. Right before World War II started, but still during the fascist regime, in 1939, her father died. Her father was a journalist, and his death was a great loss to her. She wondered “how comes that life goes on around me after losing my father?”. When she started her career as a journalist she began in *Giovane Europa* and for her it was a political commitment, although she never explicitly said so. In reality, I believe it was. She strongly believed in the gathering of the first six European countries to create a community, she believed it was an important step to heal after the war and to keep peace. I believe that people who have known the war give a different meaning to the European Union because they know what the price of disunion is. She then decided to join the Commission. Nowadays being an official in the Commission is a banal job, anyone can join, but at the time for her it was very significative to be an official. She considered herself as an official of public service.

MCN: Do you think that her neutrality in dealing with women’s issues derives from this?

AD: She surely could not express her own opinion in her work. She could not be politically biased. But she did her job because she thought she could bring something to the Commission. She was a woman who was keen on creating links, she facilitated contacts between people, she

made them meet, she as passionate about what she called “hospitality”. She gathered women from feminist organizations and established contacts with Spanish and Portuguese women who had lived under a fascist regime and later joined the European Union. She wanted people to be active participants. To me, she was a visionary because she sensed something that for us today is taken for granted: networking through the internet. At the time the internet did not exist, of course, but *Femmes d’Europe* was a sort of internet because the scope was to connect national female organizations that otherwise would have never been able to connect with each other. Another important thing is that she believed that the personal side, even affective side, was important in the relations with the people she worked with because it made everything easier. So, she had a friendly approach with all the people she worked with. Many of the people that were part of her team ended up becoming true friends of hers. Also, she came from journalism, and she had a peculiar idea of it. In fact, she believed that journalism should provide to the readers objective information. There should be no comments or opinions added. At last, she was a mother and wife of a diplomat. Therefore, she had a busy life, she has a job that would often require to travel so she was not always home. She also had my father who was the director of an international organization and she used to go to social events with him. I really do not know how she managed to do it all. Even because she never complained, I have never heard her complain about something, not even when she got sick at the end of her life. She did it all with grace, as if it all came natural to her because she enjoyed everything that she did. Me and my brother have always had a working mother, she got back to work shortly after my brother was born. I was two years old at the time. When we got older, she would sometimes say that maybe she had worked too much during our childhood and did not spend enough time with us. But really, me and my brother never felt her missing, we became used to the dynamics. It was important to her to always spend the weekend together with the family and she valued it a lot. She also taught me and my brother to be autonomous and this mirrors her idea that women had to be autonomous and have sources of income without being dependent on somebody else. Here, this was my mother.

MCN: while you were talking about Fausta's view on neutrality in journalism, it came to my mind the "visible" neutrality of the physical copies of *Femmes d'Europe*. What I mean is that the bulletin was always printed in black and white, no colour, also no drawings or excessive decorations, the neutrality of the content was visible also by the aesthetic of the copies. This I found particularly interesting if compared to the newspaper articles that were published at the time, which on the contrary, were mostly biased.

AD: This is interesting. But I must be honest, I believe that part of the "raw" look of the bulletin was due to the lack of funds. My mother was always trying to get more money from the Commission, and she also had to fight to keep the Information Femmes office going with minimum budget. So, I agree with what you said, she always kept a neutral profile but in a way she was a revolutionary regardless of her non-political or religious position. The information that was published in the bulletin derived directly from the organizations that sent their reports to my mother's office. She did not use any source deriving from newspapers to build *Femme d'Europe* because, as you said, journalism was biased. However, her neutrality must be contextualized because after all her work had a political scope. When I say political I do not mean partisan, but I actually refer to the will to improve the participation of citizens in society. Fausta had two objectives, one was to foster the participation of citizens and connect the feminist organizations, the other was to facilitate the action by the Commission of considering women's issues. The network of women that she had created, together with the women in the European Parliament, were all allies to my mother's work. Her role was a bit subversive.

MCN: In the European Historical Archives in Florence there was a few letters exchanged by members of the European Parliament, some of which express disdain for the work of Information Femmes because targeting women was wrongly interpreted as leaving out men. Therefore, Fausta's commitment was seen as discriminating towards men. Were you aware of this? Do you remember Fausta's reaction to it?

AD: At the time I was not leaving in Belgium with her, I was in Cape Verde. At the time it was very expensive to make a phone call so I would rarely speak to my mother. However, I think she suffered because of it. But at the same time, she knew that for herself and for the people that worked for her in the Information Femmes office was important and people who thought the same were not of interest for her. She did not care about them; she would not even consider them. The people who benefited from the work of Information Femmes and *Femmes d'Europe* were grateful to my mother and she was aware of it. Even when she retired and moved back to Rome, she would still receive invitations to events and conventions until the day she died. I remember whenever I talked to her, she was always so happy and so surprised that people credited her, she was a modest person, she never bragged about her achievements. Many of the things that I have told you I know them because I have read them and then I made connections with memories and situations that I have lived, but she never came to brag about her actions. So, I think it must have been hard for her to see her service critiqued, but she knew that the people she cared about and for who she had respect all approved of her service. The people who suppressed her service were not of her interest at all. For sure suppressing the information office was a mistake by the Commission, I believe that even today the Commission lacks the capacity of making itself easily understandable by the citizens. However, it is also true that the suppression of her service came into being with the suppression of the whole DGX, it was certainly not a move against her specific role.

MCN: she did have some sort of “headwind” though, do you agree?

AD: she did. Did you know that she participated in a competition to have a promotion and she scored first place in the assessment, but the job was eventually given to the runner up because he was a man. This surely but her given her a lot of anger and made her feel misunderstood. She also had some troubled relations with the Commission sometimes, for example when she took

the Commission to trial for her health problems caused by asbestos in the Berlaymont. She won. Another characteristic that belonged to my mother is that she was very tenacious. If she felt like doing something she had to do it, there was no way for talking her out of it. When she decided to start a trial against the Commission she did not give up until she won.

MCN: Why do you think that today talking about “founding mothers of Europe” is so rare? We all know the story of the founding fathers of Europe. Any university student had studied the history of the European Union. Yet women are never accredited for making a change. Fausta herself is hardly ever nominated in history books. Why so?

AD: probably because it is the product of a patriarchal approach to history. Also because when we say founding fathers we refer to the men who signed the Treaty of Rome, but there are a lot of other people, other officials, men and women who worked behind the curtain to realize the European project. People like my mother are never mentioned because they were not as visible as the founding fathers. The question I ask myself is the opposite: why are we now talking about the “founding mothers”? Why now? I think because now there are some people who are starting to be interested in the topic. However, I cannot tell what started this interest towards my mother and other women like her, and I do not know why now. The people who are interested in such topic are a bit limited.

MCN: for sure most of the people who are interested in the topic are women.

AD: yes, but I mean the people who are keen on studying the founding fathers or mothers of Europe are those people who are passionate about European history or history of the European institutions. But they do not go beyond this. You see, my mother was very concerned with keeping her memory alive after her death. She did the same with my father after he died.

MCN: I have seen that there is a fund in the Archive in Florence dedicated to Philippe Deshormes and I know that it was curated by Fausta Deshromes LaValle.

AD: exactly, he was there at the beginning of the European history, in fact they met for this reason. He was the Secretary General of the European Youth Campaign, and she was editor in chief of *Giovane Europa*. So, when her Office was suppressed, she took with her all the documents and papers she had because she wanted them to become available to future generations.

MCN: it was pleasant to scout through the documents in the archive. The fund dedicated to Fausta Deshromes LaValle is very well done and well structured. However, there are a lot of documents, and it was impossible to check them all. It would be interesting to crosscheck Fausta's fund with Phillip's.

AD: this is a great idea; Fausta would have loved it. After her death, I was called by the European University Institute to participate in a convention in the memory of my mother. I did not want it to be a convention to glorify Fausta Deshormes, she wouldn't have liked it, but I wanted to open her knowledge to the future generations [...] there is a lot of unused information in the archive. The Director of the archive proposed to me to start a scholarship partnered by the EUI to foster students to research the archive thoroughly.

MCN: As you said, there is a lot of unused material that I believe could be interesting to make academic research. To go back to what we were saying about Fausta Deshormes, as I mentioned already, I have made a comparison in my thesis and I have compared the articles written by the most popular newspapers in 1984 to celebrate Women's Day. The same year, your mother organized and lead the convention of women's organization that was held in Turin. In the early

80s it was clear that the idea of the average woman was changing, and what emerged from my analysis of the press is that women were finally starting to take multiple roles, they were not only workers or only mothers and wives. Needless to say, that such change came after years of feminists fights. At the same time, Fausta had always been a woman playing multiple roles way before 1984, what can you tell me about it?

AD: you are correct, my mother played many roles. But you know, on this subject it is also important to mention that she defended the autonomy of women, the right and the possibility for women to access any kind of job. But she also believed that the choice was for women to make. They had to choose whether to work in the house or outside. She believed that housekeepers were workers and deserved to be paid. I do not know exactly which actions my mother took in regard to this specific topic, but I remember that there was some sort of “union” of European housekeepers and my mother fostered housekeepers to organize themselves and be active.

MCN: on this behalf, during the Turin convention in 1984 one of the main topics that was discussed was the stigma that weighted on housekeepers because they were often discriminated vis-à-vis women who worked outside the house. Fausta believed that all female occupations were equal, and that women could choose to remain at home or work outside and they should be respected for their choice. However, she also pushed the importance for women to make such choice autonomously without being influenced by their husbands or economic situations.

AD: you know, my mother was a working mother and wife, and she made it all seem easy probably because she took after her mother, who did the same before her. My grandfather died in 1939 and my grandmother found herself having to take care of the children alone. So my grandfather used to be a journalist of a Brazilian publication, he could not work for Italy because of fascism, he was antifascist. So after his death my grandmother continued to write for the

Brazilian newspaper and she would sign the articles with her husband's name. She then informed the editor that it was her who had written the articles, she said she needed a job to raise her children and so the editor hired her. So, she became a journalist. My mother looked up to her very much, and in fact she took the same path. Although times were hard and their family was poor, my grandmother managed to keep everything going for her family, my mother really admired her for this. This is probably why my mother Fausta always had a modern approach.

MCN: do you know if there were any fellow officials who proved to be more sensitive towards her actions?

AD: Yes, there was a man called Jacques- René Rabier, he was the inventor of Eurostat, but before that he was the director of the DGX. It is him who put my mother to work in the Commission for he had met her while she was working in *Giovane Europa*. He has always supported her from the beginning. So, I believe she really regretted him leaving the DGX to go work for Eurostat. I do not remember whether he left the DGX and started working on Eurostat before or after his retirement. He was one of the very few people with who she had a friendly relationship. Most of the people above her she could not stand. Rabier understood her and her potential, he saw her dealing with youth issues before addressing women and appreciated her way of working. There were also some women who oversaw other affairs in the European Institutions, I'm thinking about Jacqueline Nonon, I believe she was busy with social issues in the Commission.

Comments and conclusion.

It was an honor for me to speak to Agnès Deshormes. She had underlined that she was not sure she could help me much because she had never been in close contact with her mother's work. Nonetheless, her testimony was crucial, and it did give me food for thought. She mentioned some

people and some events that I had not come across in my research, so she gave me the input to deepen my research. Most of all, she gave me an exclusive insight on the “person behind the character”. I did expect Fausta Deshormes to be a tenacious and fearless woman, for it is easily understandable by her story and by reading the letters that she wrote during her time in the DGX. The letters are the only element in the archive that help in shaping Fausta’s attitude and temper. Most of the archival sources are either articles written about her or official material deriving from the conferences and events in which she participated. However, having her daughter telling the anecdotes made me feel very close to Fausta and gave me reason to confirm my expectations. The interview with Agnès came about very smoothly and I felt as if we were talking about a common friend. In addition, Agnès provided me with some documents that are not in the archive. In particular, she gifted me the obituary of Fausta Deshormes and the transcription of the interviews that she held for the University of Louvain in 2004 and 2011. The information found in the interviews was used throughout the previous chapters. However, the information provided by the obituary was not used because it addresses Fausta in her personal life, not her work life. The purpose of the main body of the thesis was to assess the work of Fausta Deshormes LaValle in an impartial way and relying on the archival sources. This final chapter, on the other side, takes advantages of the information given during the interview to enrich the depiction that was made of Fausta Deshormes as a woman, mother, and wife. The woman beyond the DGX. From her obituary she was highly valued by her family and friends. Eventually, the friendly approach that she had throughout her life with some of her colleagues accompanied her until her last days. Agnès mentioned in the interview one name: Jacques-René Rabier. In the obituary it is reported the speech that Rabier made in memory of Fausta Deshormes in the Chapel of Resurrection in Brussels the 4th of April 2013, after her death. In his speech he remembers Fausta when she was a young journalist working for *Giovane Europa*. At the time, Rabier already believed in the necessity to establish a communication medium targeting women, and the name of Fausta came about because Rabier’s colleague - Jean Moreau - mentioned her. Rabier and Fausta met in

Strasbourg in 1961 and Rabier understood immediately her passion and strong character. In the obituary Federica Di Sarcina refers to Fausta as “the woman of dialogue” because she was the one who was able to establish an efficient dialogue between the European institution, European citizens, and journalists. *Femmes d’Europe* is the testimony of such dialogue. Before dying, Fausta Deshormes told her story to Federica Di Sarcina and she explicitly told her children that Di Sarcina’s book “L’Europa delle donne” was to be considered the most reliable source, after the archive, for future researchers interested in Fausta’s life and work. Fausta’s obituary was sent to my home in Rome via postal service by Agnès Deshormes. Between the pages of the obituary Agnès left a note: “To Maria Chiara, a friend of Fausta”. Indeed, after spending months researching Fausta’s life, and after having the opportunity to speak to a witness of her life, I do consider myself a “friend of Fausta”. This last chapter of the thesis ends with the belief that Fausta Deshormes LaValle would appreciate this work and the research behind it.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis is to provide to the reader a holistic view over the character of Fausta Deshormes LaValle. She is often credited for her efforts in the making of a policy for women. She was present at the very beginning of the DGX and she played an important role in creating a network of women, as well as building bridges between the national female organizations and the European institutions, especially the Commission. She started her path as a journalist for *Giovane Europa* in 1955 and she never quit her quest for delivering effective and non-biased information. What changed was the target. She started off by addressing to young people, mainly students, and she ended up addressing to women. However, she believed that her work was more effective if enjoyed by everybody, not just women for the limitations of gender norms effected both genders. When she was put at the direction of the Information Femmes service, she understood that to efficiently inform women, the information had to be easily accessible. Therefore, it followed the creation and distribution of the bulletin *Femmes d'Europe*. The bulletin was sent to whoever requested it, but national female organizations were the main audience of *Femmes d'Europe*. The thesis did not only focus on Fausta Deshormes LaValle as an official but tried to dig deeper into her personality to understand her drive and ethic in her work. Indeed, also thanks to the interview with Agnès Deshormes, it appeared clear that Fausta was so enthusiastic and so passionate about her job that she would take on many responsibilities at the same time. She was working at the DGX, but meanwhile she was curating *Femmes d'Europe*, she was organizing conventions and events around Europe to discuss women's issues and actively find solutions. She functioned as the perfect example of the "modern woman" that was portrayed by the ISTAT survey and assessed in Chapter five. She was at the same time a loving wife, a mother who participated in the life of her children and she was also a working woman who often was travelling for working purposes. She grew up seeing her mother raising children alone and working successfully as a journalist. Therefore, she followed her mother's

steps in her studies to become a journalist. Her quest throughout her entire career was to always inform her audience of the truth. In the DGX she provided unbiased information to women to connect them with the work that the European Commission was doing. Fausta Deshormes LaValle was committed to many causes but some of the main ones were the fight for equal pay for men and women and the possibility to allow women to choose their career path freely, whether it be in the house or outside. During her work Fausta encountered many obstacles, some of which derived from being one of the very few women in her position. Her last fight was won against the European Commission to have her disease acknowledged as being caused by the asbestos in the Berlaymont. When she died in February 2013 she was satisfied with her life and had no regrets. Her daughter, Agnès Deshormes, whose words were reported in the last chapter of this thesis, stated that Fausta had the desire for her memories to be kept for the future generations. When Fausta Deshormes retired from her job, she collected all the documents that are currently kept in the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes also curated the fund dedicated to her husband Philippe Deshormes, for she knew that such material would be useful for future research. From the depiction that Agnès Deshormes makes, the reason behind Fausta's will to preserve files and documents in the archive was not that of self-celebratory pride. On the contrary, she was aware that her work could inspire future historical research. The work of Fausta Deshormes LaValle is currently analyzed and studied from a historical point of view and from a sociological point of view. She was subject of research for studies about the history of the European Commission, as well as for studies focused on the analysis of the policy of equal opportunity in which Fausta participated. The concept of "mothers of Europe" is slowly catching on but it is not universally acknowledged and studied in academia. The hope for the future is to spread the word of many men and women, including Fausta Deshormes La Valle, who played a role behind the scenes of the current shape of the European Union. In addition, a deeper dive into the archival material in the Fausta Deshormes LaValle Fund would certainly bring to the surface some interesting points for the study of

European feminism and feminist history. This thesis assessed Fausta Deshormes LaValle's work in favor of women in Europe, which was part of the process for the creation of new European policies targeting women. For historical and biographic purposes, the research was deepened into certain aspects of Fausta's work and life, such as her contribution to *Femmes d'Europe* and the Lobby of Women. Thanks to the interview with Agnès Deshormes, the reader was given an additional insight into Fausta's personal values and personality, which are two aspects that are often neglected in academic research.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Researching this thesis has been a new journey for me as I had never done something like this before. This endeavor would not have been possible without the help of Professor Antonio Varsori. His lectures on history of Italian foreign policy have changed my mind on the subject. I was never keen on history, I considered it to be static and boring. However, I immediately changed my mind as soon as I started following Professor Varsori's course at Luiss University. I knew I wanted him to be my supervisor. His guidance was crucial throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis. I would also like to express my biggest gratitude to Agnès Deshormes. Words cannot explain how much I enjoyed talking to her about her mother Fausta and how much that made me feel close to her. Her testimony enriched the content of my thesis like no other source. By the end of the interview, I felt like we had just spent an hour talking about a common friend. Agnès wrote me a note calling me a "friend of Fausta", and I really do feel that way. I could not have undertaken this journey without the help of the staff personnel at the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence. More specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Andrea Becherucci and Dr. Catherine Previti for the priceless advice on my research. Special thanks to Cristiano Zagari for giving me important hints on the life of Fausta. Thanks should also go to Mimmi Tirelli for being crucial in finding secondary sources for this thesis in the Sapienza University library. Lastly, I must thank my family. My mother Fiorella for raising me with tenacity to always reach my goals and never look back, thank you for teaching me the power of knowledge and the importance of culture and education. My father Nicola, for teaching me the sense of duty and for always helping me make important life choices. My brother Pierluigi for always being empathetic towards me. My boyfriend Cristian for the support and the patience during my years at university, thank you for never making me feel alone, and thank you for always finding me when I was lost. I also want to thank my younger self for taking care of me, I hope that you are proud because I am.

ABSTRACT

The thesis deals with Fausta Deshormes LaValle who was an Italian official at the European Commission. She was born in Naples in 1927 but she later moved to Rome. Her father was a journalist and her mother started practicing the same job after the death of Fausta's father. Fausta's life was strongly influenced by her upbringing. In fact, she ended up studying journalism in Rome and later she proceeded to become a journalist. She became editor of *Giovane Europa* and during that period she also met Philippe Deshormes, who later became her husband. She had always been passionate about the idea of creating a union of European countries. She had lived the experience of World War II and this made her very sensitive to the subject of "dis-union". Therefore, the importance of "uniting" was at the basis of Fausta's work. The thesis is divided into chapters. The first four chapters are more centered around the bibliographic assessment of the life and work of Fausta Deshormes LaValle. The sixth chapter is a press review regarding the main Italian newspapers in 1984, and the last chapter is an interview with Fausta's daughter Agnès Deshormes.

Fausta Deshormes LaValle officially entered the European institutions when she joined the DGX under the guidance of the commissioner Carlo Scarascia-Mugnozza who made her his cabinet secretary first, and then chaperoned her roles as the head of the Information Femmes office. Within her work for Information Femmes, Fausta started many initiatives. The most important one is the issue of *Femmes d'Europe*, the first European bulletin aimed at women and curated by a woman. *Femmes d'Europe* became very quickly the voice of the European institutions within the female organizations in the various European countries. The Magazine was available to anyone who requested it and it was printed in black and white. The content of the magazine was curated by a small group of officials, who, together with Fausta, gathered information, wrote the articles, and curated the layout of every issue. The team of *Femmes d'Europe* worked with a restricted budget but was able to provide reliable and unbiased

information of the steps that the EU institutions were taking to successfully accomplish the integration of women. The network of Femmes d'Europe went beyond the mere publication of the magazine. In fact, Fausta Deshormes LaValle was also responsible for the creation of the Lobby of Women, an organized group of European women who used their influence from inside the European institutions to have a say on the decisions that the Commission made. Femmes d'Europe also was responsible for updating women on the European response to their issues such as the issue of equal pay and the recognition of a salary for housewives. In 1979, Fausta's network was active in fostering women to vote for the elections of the first female president of the European Parliament: Simone Veil. In addition, Fausta was fighting for women, but she was also fighting her own fights. Femmes d'Europe did gain some enemies within the fellow European officials. The criticism was about Femmes d'Europe being targeted towards women and therefore discriminatory towards men. To such accusations, Fausta replied that Femmes d'Europe was not meant for women only. The information in it was unbiased and official, therefore it could be enjoyed by men too. Fausta believed that the only possible way to achieve an equal integration for women and men was to have men involved in women's causes. She aimed at creating a sense of partnership between men and women, rather than praising women and despising men. On this purpose, the social role of women in the 70s and 80s changed radically. Women went from being mothers, wives, and housewives to being acknowledged as working force. Many women in the 80s started to work outside the house. ISTAT published a survey in 1984 in the occasion of National Women's Day. The survey gave a statistical depiction of the "new woman": cultured, educated, and independent. On this matter, the vision of Fausta Deshormes did not limit at praising the "new woman", but she fostered women to make their life choices freely without being influence by their husbands or by the economic conditions. This meant that if a woman was willing to stay at home and she made her choice freely, then she should be respected and even granted a salary for taking care of the home and the children. From the interview with Agnès Deshormes it emerged that Fausta

gave great value to the family. Although her job often required for her to travel abroad and to be outside the house often, she still was very present for her children and for her husband, who understood her role and the responsibilities that came with it.

The 1984 survey was followed by a bit of controversy. From the press review reported in chapter five, it emerges how some newspapers were still posing some resistance to the new idea of the role of women in society. Especially the newspapers with religious affiliations. Also, some newspapers let a man write the article on the National Woman's Day, and the result was sometimes a limited view on the topic, simply because a man could not fully understand the struggles and the issues of women in society. The thesis accomplishment is to assess the life of Fausta Deshormes LaValle to better understand the processes that were behind the modern aspect of the European institutions. The goal was reached mainly through researching primary archival sources in the Historical Archives of the European Union.