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International Social Work Education

International Social Work Leader Review

Anna Maria Cavallone (1927–2020)

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Annamaria Cavallone had an important role in the consolidation of Italian social work, particularly as regards its international dimension. After taking a degree in Foreign Languages and Literature, she qualified as a social worker in 1952.

This was a foundational period for social work in Italy, a country that had made the transition from fascist dictatorship to democracy after the Second World War. Against this backdrop, the social work profession—though not yet legally recognized—made extensive efforts to ensure a high level of training. The schools founded with this objective included the *Scuola Pratica di Assistenza Sociale* in Milano—set up in secret during the German occupation and directed by Odile Vallin who graduated in 1943 at the *Ecole Pratique de Service Social* in Paris Montparnasse—it was one of Italy's first democratically oriented schools for social workers. It was here that Cavallone took her degree, defending a dissertation entitled *Il colloquio nello studio dei casi sociali*, and embarked at an early age on her teaching career.

During this period, the Italian social work profession was deeply committed to planning and implementing effective education programs and looked with keen interest at the theoretical developments issuing from the United States. Through the Administration for International Aid (AAI, in its Italian acronym)—a government agency established in 1945 to manage funds from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)—many social work programs were introduced in institutions of learning (Visalberghi, 1970). Here, mention should be made of the missions by American experts, such as Anne King's course on Case Work (1952–1954) and Dorothea Sullivan's course on Group Work (1956), as well as the publication of translated texts and articles for use in teaching.



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Cavallone became involved very early on in this international dimension, which over time was to be the leitmotif of her experience.

In August 1952, shortly after earning her degree, we find her among the participants at the third seminar on Case Work Training and Supervision in Keurusselkä, Finland, organized by the Social Affairs Division of the European Office of the United Nations with teaching by such eminent authorities as Katherine A. Kendall, Gordon Hamilton, and Eileen Younghusband. The event was intended for budding instructors in social work at the university level and to provide a more solid foundation for practitioners who were already working in the field. As Lidia Corgiat (1952–1953) notes in a report on this seminar, one of the major points emphasized by Kendall concerned the close relationship between training and professional practice, a relationship based on sharing experiences with an eye for mutual enrichment. Cavallone was to become one of the key figures in the spread of the case work method in Italy.

In 1955 her inclination to look beyond Italy's borders brought her to Columbia University where she earned a Master of Social Science degree. Remaining in the United States, she attended other courses where she was able to benefit from the teaching of Florence Hollis and Gordon Hamilton. Her international academic journey culminated in the mid-1960s, when she was awarded a Fulbright grant and returned to New York as a visiting scholar.

In 1967 she moved to Rome at the behest of AAI, where she was active in a program for extending and improving social workers' education, playing a fundamental role in planning, and conducting studies and occasions for exchanging views, in developing training facilities, and in collaborating in research on social work education. Attentive to the impact of the cultural, social, and political changes that swept the Western world in the wake of the 1968 student protest movement, Cavallone studied the service system's efforts to come closer to people's actual lives, and the new ways of expressing solidarity, as always exploring their implications for the social work profession.

After 30 years with AAI, she continued her career at the Ministry of the Interior, rising to the rank of vice prefect. Here she worked in the Studies and Documentation Office of the Ministry's school of administration, the *Scuola Superiore Amministrazione Interno* (SSAI), which she headed from 1986–1991. She also made significant contributions to the Studies, Research, Documentation, and



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Legislation Office of the Ministry's Central Directorate of Civil Services, which promotes and conducts extensive research on social work that appears in a large number of publications. These studies are invaluable in analyzing the relations between social and political changes, the needs of social work professionals and training requirements (La Rosa; Zurla, 1984; Costanzi, Sabatinelli, 1987).

Cavallone was deeply committed to working with several international associations: in particular, after attending the 1992 meeting of the International Association of Schools of Social Work in Washington, DC, she was elected to the group's Executive Committee.

She was also actively involved with the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW). As AAI's representative, she authored the European Regional Report in preparation for the XVIII International Conference held in San Juan, Puerto Rico from July 18–24, 1976, which focused on the role of social services in fighting unequal access to social opportunities. During 1984's XXII International Conference in Montreal, she was elected to the ICSW Executive Committee, and in 1987 she chaired the Program Committee for the XIV European Regional Conference in Rome.

From 1995–2004 she represented Italy in the [European Anti-Poverty Network](#) (EAPN), set up in 1990 as the continent's largest network of national, regional and local networks of organizations active in the fight against poverty and social.

She made a major contribution to the Italian Social Service Committee, or *CISS* in its Italian acronym—an ICSW member organization—acting from 1983 onward as its Vice President for International Relations. Since 1982, CISS has published *Sviluppo e Servizi Sociali*, a journal whose strong international focus is clear from the contents pages of the many issues presenting summaries and reports on the ICSW's International Conferences and European Regional Conferences, as well as exchanges and research visits among the member countries. As a member of the Editorial Committee, Cavallone enjoyed a longstanding and fruitful collaboration with the journal.

As a member of the Steering Committee of the Institute of Studies on Social Services (ISTISSS)—which publishes the journal *La Rivista di Servizio Sociale*—Cavallone was for many in charge of the journal's review of foreign literature and sat on its Scientific Committee from 1970 onward.



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These experiences instilled a firm conviction that professional practice must be guided by scientific rigor, hence her unflagging commitment to the process that led in 1987 to Italy's legal recognition of the social work profession, which mandated that practitioners must have university qualifications.

Even after her retirement in the early 1990s, Cavallone continued to participate actively in the world of Italian social work, open as always to international dialog as her publications from this decade testify.

In 2005, when the first edition of *Dizionario di Servizio Sociale* (Dictionary of Social Work, edited by Professor Maria Dal Pra Ponticelli) appeared in Italy, Annamaria Cavallone was asked to write the entry on International Associations, which was updated in the 2013 edition, edited by Professor Annamaria Campanini, who later became president of the International Association of Schools of Social Work in 2016.

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