

NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

Institutional News

The Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli

The Feltrinelli Foundation was established in 1949 by Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. The object was to promote the study of contemporary history, with particular attention to the history of ideas and social movements. The idea was to collect – in a systematic and consistent way – any kind of documentary materials, such as archives, books, pamphlets, periodicals, posters and photographic material.

The acquisition of these materials was not easy, due both to the transitional economic and political situation and to their dissemination throughout the world. In spite of this, however, the collection developed well. The library and archives which were created, started to attract the interest of researchers who could find there materials pertaining to the new themes in the history of socialist thought and the labour movement.

In connection with the growing interest in the study of and research into these themes, in 1952, the library started the publication of *Movimento Operaio*, a review whose object was to insulate this complex area of studies from the danger of polemic, hagiography, etc. and to give it the dignity of strictly historiographical research. This implied, of course, considerable work in the field of historical methodology, in order to attain a consistent vision not only of the history of socialism in all its ideological and economic aspects, but also of its relationship with history in general, of which it is an integral and inseparable part. A number of contributions by Italian historians of that period could then appear, discussing these problems, and bring into academic debate the experience of popular engagement.

In a little more than ten years, the Feltrinelli Foundation became a fundamental centre for the study and documentation of Italian economic, political and social history, and of the Italian and European labour movements. This is the reason for the creation, in 1960, of the *Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, which consists of several research groups (political, economic and social history, history of international socialism and of labour movements, history of anti-fascism and Resistance, economic and social research).

In 1974, the *Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli* became a Foundation. The statutes read: “The object of the Foundation is the promotion of the study – along academic and independent lines – of historical disciplines, politics, social and economic sciences, with particular attention to the history and development of socialism and labour movements, both national and international. The foundation promotes any activities and initiatives connected with its objects. In particular, the foundation’s activities include:

- (a) Expansion of the library – in its different sections – and of the archives.
- (b) Promotion of the publication of the catalogues of the library and of other

works, in accordance with the Foundation's activities.

- (c) Development of cultural exchanges in the field of history, and political, economic and social sciences, with national and international institutions (universities, foundations, associations, institutes, etc.)."

The Foundation's first president, Prof. Giuseppe Del Bo, deemed it useful and important to launch a new type of activity aimed at the integration and development of the collection of books and documents which was being constantly increased. The idea was to promote cycles of study and research seminars. Thus, the fundamental contribution of historiography could be seen in the context of developments within the social and political sciences and be measured against strict methodological criteria.

In the course of its existence, the Foundation has been extensively engaged in publishing. Since 1958, *Annali* have been regularly published: this scholarly review, well known all over the world, publishes the results of researchers, overseas as well as Italian, and often represents the fruit of many years of work.

In the last few years, the Foundation has promoted, organized and coordinated many seminars. Seminar activities have led to closer co-operation and contact between Italian and foreign researchers. These activities have been integrated into the courses intended for students and young researchers, and have found their natural outcome in the materials published in the Foundation series *Quaderni*.

Besides this activity, it is essential to mention other important initiatives, namely the national and international conferences, such as: the international conference on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Trockij's death; the conference on "Crisis, culture and innovation in the Western world" organized together with the United Nations University; the international conference "The XX Congress and its aftermaths"; the international colloquium "Strikes, social conflict and World War One"; the international colloquium "The myth of the Soviet Union in Western culture"; and the international colloquium "Liberté et citoyenneté sociale. Les deux '89: de la Révolution française à la Seconde Internationale".

The Foundation's holdings are rich, as researchers know very well. Some 600,000 volumes and 20,000 periodicals are currently held and the collection is growing. Given the size of the collection devoted to the labour movement and the history of economic, political and social ideas, it has been recently decided to expand the funds devoted to the study of Latin America and East European countries. The relevant archives of the Italian and international labour movements have been recently enhanced by funds to promote the study of the movement against Pinochet's dictatorship, of Solidarnosc in Poland and of dissent in East European countries. The Foundation has recently created a Centre on Democracy in China after Tien An Men, and intends to consolidate its holdings of books and documents relating to that country.

The library's archives are open to the public, subject to an introduction by a scholar known to the Foundation. It is possible to make photocopies (though not of all materials) and microfilms. The library is open from Tuesday to Friday, 9.00–12.45 and 14.00–17.45, Monday 14.00–17.45.

The Research Committee controls the research activity of the Foundation, according to a long-term programme. The members of the Committee are: Professors Gaetano Arfè, Maurice Aymard, Enzo Collotti, Franco Della Peruta, Furio Diaz,

Pierangelo Garegnani, Giuliano Procacci, Michele Salvati, Giulio Sapelli, Leo Valiani, and Salvatore Veca. In the future, particular attention will be given to: the democratic question in China and in East European countries; new capitalism, democracy and economic growth in Latin America.

The Feltrinelli Foundation works in co-operation with the world's most important research centres, both in the field of international seminars and in its publishing activities. The most recent example of this co-operation is the *Bibliography of the Communist International (1919–1979)*, edited by the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, Paris, the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, and the Fondazione Feltrinelli, Milan.

President of the Feltrinelli Foundation is Prof. Salvatore Veca. Prof. Giulio Sapelli is the Research Director. Dr. Francesca Gori is in charge of the coordination of research and publishing activities. Dr. David Bidussa is in charge of the library. The Foundation's activities are possible thanks to the financial support of the Italian state, public and private bodies, and – above all – thanks to the prestigious position held by the Foundation in Italy and abroad.

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Francesca Gori