

Beyond the Border: Russian and Soviet Collections in Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli

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The *Russian Section* of Fondazione Feltrinelli's library is without any doubt one of the most important among its collections and one of the richest throughout Italy.

Books and periodicals collections cover a wide chronological range and – although driven by the evolution of Russian political thought – are related to several topics that help to investigate and understand not only Russian history, but also the relationship between Russia and Europe thru the Modern and Contemporary Age.

The *Russian section* collects more than 14.000 books on General history of Russia, assembled in sub-sections marked by historical turning points (the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the birth and fall of the USSR, the Russian State after 1991), on Philosophical movements and trends in Russia (from 1900 to 1917 and during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods, up until today), on Russian literature, from its origins until the present, and on Russian economic history before and after 1917 Revolution.

The premises of the revolutionary Russia are documented in two classic Bervi-Flerovskij works: *Položenie rabočago klassa v' Rossii* (Working class condition in Russia), published in 1869, and *Azbuka social'nyh' nauk'* (Foundations of social sciences), issued between 1871 and 1894.

Many books deal with the Decembrist Uprising: among them authors like Herzen, Černiševskij, Tkačev, Lavrov, Plechanov and Lenin.

The October Revolution is documented by a great deal of Lenin and Stalin works, both in Russian and foreign languages. Documentary series are also available: the complete collection of *Leninski sbornik* (from 1924), edited by Kamenev, the *Archiv Marksa i Engelsa* (from 1924), edited by Rjazanov, and the historical review on the Russian labor movement *Krasnyj Archiv* (1922-1941).

Amongst the foreign periodicals of the Russian emigration the following may be noted: *Kolokol* (London, 1857-1867); *Poliarnaia Zvezda* (London-Geneva, 1858-1868);

Sovremennik (1836-1866); *Vpered* (Zurich-London, 1873-1877); *Vestnik Narodnoi Volii* (Geneva, 1883-1886); *Nakanune* (London, 1899-1901); *Rabochee Delo* (Geneva, 1899-1902). The principal periodicals held that deal with Russian social democracy are *Social-demokrat* (London-Geneva, 1890-1902); *Iskra* (Geneva, 1900-1905); *Zaria* (Stuttgart, 1901-1905); *Socialdemokrat* (Geneva, 1904-1906); *Vpered* (Geneva, 1905).

Concerning the socialist revolutionaries, the following collections may be mentioned: *Kommuna* (Paris, 1905); *Zemlia i Volia* (Paris, 1907-1912); *Russkii Zapiski* (St. Petersburg, 1914-1917); *Volia Naroda* (Petrograd, 1917); *Delo Naroda* (Petrograd, 1917).

Particularly well stocked is the section of periodicals relative to the post WWII period, amongst them: *Krokodil* (Moscow, 1949-1965); *Voprosy Ekonomiki* (Moscow, 1948-1992); *Pravda*, (Moscow, 1950-...); *Novy Mir* (Moscow, 1952-1965; 1987-...); *Istoriceskii Arkhiv* (Moscow, 1955-1962); *Voprosy istorii, Voprosy istorii KPSS* (Moscow, 1957-1991).

Furthermore, the library holds 346 opposition periodicals that appeared whilst Gorbačëv was Secretary of the CP, during the period known as Perestroika.

A wide collection of Soviet Posters is also available: more than 4000 items dating from the 1930s to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. The main corpus was issued by the Soviet Publishing House *Agit Plakat*, established in 1958, and features nearly 3800 posters of 7000 printed until 1991. An extraordinary collection shows the evolution of propaganda through the years, from post-Stalinism to the Gorbačëv period.

Other posters date back to the Thirties and sum up the effort of the Soviet State propaganda to build Socialism on the pillars of agriculture and industry pushing workers to five-year plans dense scheduling.

Ten thousand postcards from the Imperial era to the last years of the Soviet Union somewhat integrate the collection of posters: propaganda is subtler and, following a long-term tradition of spreading the knowledge of Russian paintings thru postcards, is an important source for art historians because many Soviet paintings are no more available.

All those sources will be conveyed in a project based on sharing the multiple faces of the collections preserved by the Fondazione. The first step is data entry of bibliographical information in order to allow information retrieval, which is very important for rare records. Secondly, digitisation of selected sources will enrich the Fondazione's Digital Library (books,

periodicals, posters) and help scholars to widen their researches discovering unknown paths, but also new directions of development with the help of specific tools like e-book reprints, educational kits, expositions, and dramatization based on the sources.