

## **The National Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Italy and the Historical Institutes of the Resistance and the Contemporary Period**

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"The National Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Italy ... proposes to ensure the most complete and ordered documentation of that movement from its antifascist origins to the Liberation and to promote historical study of it and knowledge of it in the context of a more general consideration of the history of fascism and of contemporary Italy." Article n. 1 of the Charter explicates the objectives pursued by the National Institute since its founding, and later adopted by all the historical Institutes of the Resistance established in the following years<sup>1</sup>. In the aftermath of the Liberation, those who had fought in the ranks of the partisans and, among them, the founders of the first Institutes were concerned that the papers of the Resistance not be lost. Their concern was to guarantee not only their collection but also their consultability, moving quickly to their archival cataloguing. In this sense, the Historic Institutes of the Resistance offered ample guarantees; and the authorization, issued by the Superior Council of the State Archives in July of 1948<sup>2</sup>, to detain the papers of the CLNs and of the other political and military groups opened the doors to a collecting and organizing project that would continue for some decades. The collection of the papers brought excellent results, evidenced by the fact that the documentation currently conserved in the archives of the Institutes covers with great breadth the story of the partisan war. Moreover, the concern for encouraging historical study, and not only of the clandestine period, entailed a constant effort to guarantee free access to the papers, looking after the reporting and publication of the source lists, their arrangement, and the publication of inventories and guides<sup>3</sup>.

Currently, the archival holdings of the network cover the temporal arc of the twentieth century and a vast range of interests. The original historical core of documentation consists of the archives produced by the Committees of National Liberation, by the political parties and movements, by the union movements, and by the partisan military formations in the three years stretching from 8 September 1943 to the proclamation of the Italian Republic in 1946. The diverse institutions of the liberation movement then added, to their own archives, various parts of the archives of the defunct administrations of the RSI and of German offices, as well as a significant quantity of papers produced by the Allied authorities, at least up to December of 1945<sup>4</sup>. This resulted in a considerable and unique set of rare documents, many of which are sole copies to have survived the events of the clandestine period. The collection is particularly impressive in Lombardy, Piedmont, and Emilia in the north; in Tuscany in the center; and in Campania in the South and represents a privileged source for research into national and international political history and for reconstructing the transition from war to peace in its social, political, and economic aspects.

Beside this collection have grown others, specific to the period between the two world wars, that comprise archives of the exponents of fascism, of antifascism, of culture, journalism and diplomacy, and the archives of organizations and associations of political, charitable, economic, and cultural character. To the coeval documentation was added a considerable amount of material created through the collection of oral histories and autobiographical writings by political and union militants and by common people on the experience of the war.

Beginning in the 1960s the territorial expansion of the network, which in many regions covered all the provinces, conferred on the National Institute and its associated institutes a function supplementary to that of the public archives in rescuing the heritage of individuals, associations, and political organizations. A first occasion was offered by the archive of the student movements and of the extra-parliamentary left that the Institutes of the network had gathered in a systematic way throughout the nation. This documentation which covered the chronological arc from 1960 to the 1990s and which was accompanied by large collections of flyers and grey material, represented at the time a significant part of the documentation of many Institutes (Asti, Belluno, Bergamo, Cagliari, Como, Cuneo, Imola, Insmli, Novara, Roma, Pavia, Piacenza, Napoli, Ravenna, Sesto S. Giovanni, Trento, Treviso). Then, from the end of the 1980s, the profound transformation of the national political system, along with the economic crises of various union organizations, and the dismantling of the country's industrial enterprises exposed enormous quantities of historically relevant documents to risk of dispersion, and the Institutes, though unequal in strength and structure, intervened in a rescue mission that is expected to continue even in the coming years.

A vast framework of documentation has emerged that includes -- taking the documentation of the political parties as an example -- the collection in the respective provincial Institutes of the archives of the Communist Party of Asti, Belluno, Borgosesia, Borgomanero, Como, Cosenza, Cuneo, Ferrara, Grosseto, Lucca, Mantua, Milan, Massa Carrara, Modena, Pavia, Pesaro, Piacenza, Rimini, Turin, Trento, Treviso, Udine, Venice; of the Communist Party of Italy of Udine; of the Communist Marxist-Leninist Party of Florence; of the Liberal Party of Turin and of Trentino (1920-1925), of the Christian Democracy of Mantua and of Pavia; of the Republican Party of Imola; of the Socialist Party of the Proletarian Unity of Udine and of Piacenza; of the Socialist Party of Ancona, Ascoli Piceno, Carpi, Cosenza, Cuneo, Modena, Pavia, Rimini, Trento e Udine; of the Social-Democratic Party of Cuneo, of the Unified Socialist Party of Florence; of the Proletarian Democracy of Cuneo, of Milan, of Sesto San Giovanni, and of Trento, of the Manifesto-PDUP of Novara, of the FGCI of Reggio Emilia and of Sesto San Giovanni, of the Movement of Proletarian Unity of Modena, of the papers of the anarchy movements of Ferrara and of Modena, and of the Italian Monarchic Union of Pesaro. A lesser number of deposits, but very relevant for their substance and importance is the documentation relative to the union organizations whose papers, from the post-war period through to the 1990s, are gathered in the Institutes of Ancona (Federterra), Asti (Cdl), Bologna (Confederterra), Ferrara (Cgil), Florence (Federterra reg.), Mantua (Cgil e Fiom),

Modena (Cgil), Novara (Cdl), Pavia (Cisl), Pesaro (Cgil Confederterra), Piacenza (Cdl), and Venice (Cdl e Filcea)<sup>5</sup>. Add to this the documentation of the cooperative movements with the Archives of the Cooperation of Como, of the Federcoop of Pistoia, of the Imolese Cooperative League of Imola, of *le buste sulla cooperazione* of Ferrara, of Mantova, and of Modena, the archives of cultural institutions, of associations of veterans, women, Catholics, and anti-militarists, etc. Finally, some Institutes have recently distinguished themselves by acquiring the documentation of defunct industrial enterprises -- among these the Institute of Sesto San Giovanni in which has been deposited the archives of Breda, Ercole Marelli, Riva e Calzoni, Bastogi, and Falck; the Institute of Naples for Italsider; and the Institute of Pavia which has acquired the archive of Necchi.

This brief and schematic classification of the documentation illustrates only a few of the themes and types of documents which can be consulted in the Historic Institutes of the Resistance, but does not account for the breadth of themes represented in the various documentary centers. In short, one can point out that among the various spheres of interest are also present the Catholic movement and its organizations (in particular FUCI, Catholic Action, and ACLI)<sup>6</sup>, the League of Conscientious Objectors, the documentation on the bombings of the 1970s and 1980s, on the anti-partisan persecution and the activity of the Committees of Democratic Solidarity, on the peasant movement, the occupation of the land and agrarian reform.

The charts that follow are intended to offer a useful instrument for familiarizing oneself with the archival heritage conserved by the various Institutes of the network<sup>7</sup>. The charts display in a concise form the principal resources of each Institute, indicating their chronological coverage, their substance, and any publications of the inventories. Some of the charts, those pertaining to the oldest Institutes with the largest collections, required a more analytical form that could better illustrate the possibilities offered to research and study by the documentation.

The description of the sources indicated in the charts is consultable in the Guide to the Archives of the Historical Institutes of the Resistance at the network's website ([www.italia-liberazione.it](http://www.italia-liberazione.it)) where the archival data bases are kept<sup>8</sup>.

#### Notes

1. The National Institute, founded in 1949, absorbed as associates the pre-existent Institutes of Turin and Genoa and then promoted the establishment of other Institutes around the country. Currently, the network of Historical Institutes of the Resistance consists of 65 regional or provincial Institutes. Refer to Gaetano Grassi, "L'Istituto nazionale per la storia del movimento di liberazione in Italia," in this same volume.
2. A broad survey of problems connected to the laws regarding the holding of the Resistance heritage was mapped out by Giovanni De Luna in the article, "Tre generazioni di storici. L'Istituto per la storia della Resistenza in Piemonte 1947-1987," in *Italia contemporanea*, September 1988, n. 172, pp. 53-77.
3. The journal of the National Institute, *Il Movimento di liberazione in Italia*, published, from the first issue in 1949, an archival review which defended the Institutes' acquisitions and offered a first inventory of the holdings. The following volumes have also been published: Gaetano Grassi (editor), *Guida sommaria agli archivi degli istituti di storia della Resistenza*, Milan, Insmli, 1974; Gaetano Grassi (editor), *Guida agli archivi della Resistenza*, Preface by Guido Quazza, Rome, Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Assets, Central Office for Archival Assets, Publication of the State Archives, Strumenti IC, Rome, 1983, pp. XV, 974; Paolo De Marco, Maria Teresa Di Paola, Francesca Ferratini Tosi et al. (editor), "Guida alle fonti anglo-americane 1940-1950," monographic issue of *Notizie e documenti*, n. 8, 1981, pp. 110; Anagrafe Archivi, *Notizie e documenti* n. 2, n. s., in *Italia contemporanea*, n. 170, pp. 53-71; Anagrafe Archivi, *Notizie e documenti* n. 6, n. s., in *Italia contemporanea*, n. 189, pp. 7-36. The database of paper and photographic archives of the Historical Institutes of the Resistance can be consulted on the web site [www.insmli.it](http://www.insmli.it).
4. Both the Anglo-American sources and those pertaining to the German administration were supplemented through successive research campaigns and acquisition of copies in Washington, London, Coblenza, and Friburgo.
5. On the union archives, refer to Claudio Dellavalle, "Gli archivi sindacali," in this same volume.
6. Extraordinary, compared to the rest of the documentation, is the acquisition of the heritage of the Cistercian Community of Tolentino (1800-1980; bb. 10) by the Institute of Macerata.
7. The Institutes are presented proceeding from north towards south and from west towards east. The National Institute precedes the others and the regional Institutes precede their respective provincial Institutes.
8. In 1997, work was begun to computerize the archival descriptions of the Institutes of the network. The program used for this computerization is CDS/ISIS, provided by UNESCO. "Guida" and "Foto" have been created for the paper and photographic archives, respectively.