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Foreword/Avant-Propos

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FOREWORD

The National Hellenic Research Foundation was founded in 1958 by royal decree (hence originally denominated the Royal Research Foundation) as a state-funded institution outside the narrow public sector, designed to carry out and to support basic research in the natural sciences and the humanities. Thus the “two cultures debate” was constitutionally established as the basic intellectual framework of the new foundation. The foundation was subsequently housed in an imposing building designed and constructed under the supervision of one of Greece’s most eminent architects, Constantinos Doxiadis, on land given by the crown in an area in central Athens where the royal stables used to stand in the past. A grant from the Ford Foundation allowed the construction of the building. In 1960 one of the co-founders of the new Research Foundation, C. Th. Dimaras, an eminent literary historian, established the “Centre for Neohellenic Research” as one of the Foundation’s constitutive institutes. Dimaras conceived the CNR as a research unit on Greek cultural history since 1453, focusing primarily on the systematic study of source material and primary evidence on intellectual and cultural trends, as against what he judged the rather rhetorical approach that had hitherto prevailed in the study of intellectual phenomena. On account of Dimaras’ own interest in the period of the Enlightenment, whose study he had pioneered in Greek historical and literary research, the Centre’s early projects focused mostly on this period. Within this general orientation important research projects were initiated focusing on the history of the book, the history of the press, forms of cultural exchanges between East and West, the history of Modern Greek philosophy and the comparative study of intercultural phenomena such as travel literature, translations and multilingualism.

In the 1980s, the Centre went through a phase of major expansion in its human resources and in the range of its research interests. In this new phase new research fields were added to the CNR’s activity: economic history, historical demography, history of ecclesiastical institutions, history of science. Still later more novel fields of research were added: business history, industrial archeology, historical cartography. These changes brought new members to the Centre and enriched the intellectual atmosphere and the exchange of ideas.

Work in the Centre is organized in a general infrastructure programme, comprising research projects focusing primarily on source material, and in specialized thematic programmes.

Since the 1960s, the Centre has been publishing a series of research publications and monographs, which comprises over eighty titles. In addition since 1982 it publishes the periodical research series *Τετράδια Εργασίας/ Cahiers de Recherche*, currently in its twenty eighth number. Five international history congresses since 1981 have produced imposing volumes and many other colloquia have been published in addition. A collection in the History of Ideas was inaugurated in 2001, featuring five titles to date. An annual *Newsletter* records the activity of the Institute and its members and provides a medium of communication with the scholarly community.

In December 2000, the CNR, officially renamed the Institute for Neohellenic Research since 1985, celebrated its fortieth anniversary. It was an occasion for paying tribute to its founder and to the group of pioneers who had worked with him in the initial phases of the Institute's operation, but also it was an occasion for self-reflection and self-appraisal. In thinking about the way forward it was felt that it was high time for a more active opening of the Institute to the international community of scholars. In discussions among the members of the Institute it was concluded that in order to fulfill its mission as a component of Greece's National Research Foundation the INR needed to make its research known to a broader academic public and to create a medium of communication and exchange of ideas with colleagues elsewhere in Europe and in the world. It was thus that the *Historical Review/La Revue Historique* came into being. Our intention is to provide by this means a medium of dialogue and reflection in the broad field of historical study in the human sciences, not necessarily confined to Modern Greek subjects. We trust that our colleagues in Greece, our Balkan and Mediterranean neighbours and scholars around the world will join us in this initiative of openness and collaboration and joint exploration in the world of ideas.

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