

TRIBUTE

Giorgio Freddi (1932-2024): The winemaker of Political Science in Italy

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Giorgio Freddi passed away on the 20th of May 2024. He was 92. Professor Emeritus of the University of Bologna, Giorgio Freddi played an essential and decisive role in institutionalising political science in Italy and making the University of Bologna an internationally recognised centre for empirical studies of politics, administration and public policy. He also played an important role in the institutionalisation of the ECPR.

Born in 1932, after graduating with honours in law in 1955 and obtaining a position as assistant professor of administrative law at the University of Bologna, he was awarded a Ford Foundation scholarship in 1959, which enabled him to obtain a master's degree and a PhD in political science at the prestigious Berkley campus of the University of California. This experience shaped his academic and professional life. On his return to Italy, developing empirical political research and creating institutions for this purpose became his main objective.

After working as a consultant for ENI and teaching in Trento, adjunct professor at the newly founded Faculty of Political Science in Bologna, he became a full professor in Bologna in 1972. Here he was first Director of the Istituto Politico-Amministrativo and then Director of the Department of Organisation and Political System (later the Department of Political Science), which under his leadership was to become the most important centre of political science in Italy.

A tireless institutional builder, Giorgio Freddi was President of the Italian Society of Political Science, the first Italian Chair of the European Consortium of Political Research (he held this position for two terms), founder of the *Rivista Italiana di Politiche Pubbliche*, and for many years a permanent lecturer at the National School of Public Administration. A pioneer in the internationalisation of universities, he has been a visiting professor at many prestigious universities, including UC-Berkeley, UC-Irvine, Uppsala, Oslo and Bergen.

He was equally dedicated to his students: he was not interested in their adherence to his ideas and scientific paradigms but in their passion, intelligence and critical spirit.

His research interests ranged from the comparison of bureaucratic systems to the study of the functioning of Justice, from the public administration to the study of



organisations and public policy - environment, higher education, health - and resulted in the publication of over 15 volumes and some 50 papers.

It is therefore necessary to highlight the role played by Giorgio Freddi in the development of Italian and Bolognese political science. Eight years younger than Giovanni Sartori, the father of Italian political science, he shared with Sartori the efforts necessary for the birth of this discipline. In the words of Giuseppe De Palma, his good friend and colleague, “if Giovanni Sartori, an intemperate preacher, was spreading the good news, Giorgio Freddi, as an industrious winemaker, was diligently pulling up the shoots”.

A firm believer in the virtues of a monodisciplinary department based on the American model, he had the satisfaction, however brief, of seeing the birth of the Department of Political Science, unique in the Italian academic landscape. And one cannot overlook the bitterness of the retired Freddi, when he realised how the Gelmini reform had thwarted his lifelong efforts.

Elegant, with refined tastes, a man of the world, a great conversationalist, affable, endowed with a great sense of humour and exquisite courtesy, ironic and self-mocking, with a lively intellect and curious nature, stimulated by an endless series of interests that went far beyond political science. Loyal, open and direct, if reserved, Giorgio Freddi was an intellectual even before he was a professor. And he was such a brilliant professor because he was such a brilliant intellectual, able to move easily on the most diverse subjects, with ease, balance and wit, aware, as it were, of the limits of the human condition, but always animated by an unshakeable faith in reason.