

CORRADO GINI AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME

Loredana Cerbara

Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies, Italian National Research Council (CNR)

Abstract. *Corrado Gini made significant contributions to statistics as a scientific discipline studied at the university as well as to public statistics as an activity of the State. He was very appreciated abroad, but in Italy his career and the public perception of it were affected by the two world wars and the two decades of Fascist government. Nevertheless, he created statistical schools, a Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences, while actively participating to many national and international meetings, committees and scientific societies.*

From a human point of view, Gini had a difficult personality and, for long time, opinions about him have been partly tainted by this trait. In this paper, light will be thrown not so much on Gini's biography, which is well known, but rather on the complex personality that can be grasped by reading the documents, both official and personal, preserved in the Historical Archive of the University of Rome.

Keywords: *Statistics, personality of Corrado Gini, Historical Archive*

1. INTRODUCTION

Corrado Gini may be studied from different perspectives: one may consider his work in public statistics, study his scientific work or analyse the work that a large number of scholars have dedicated to him. However, these options say little of Gini's life as a man or of his teaching activity. This paper is by no means intended to be a biography of this distinguished scientist. The main information sources of this work are the documents contained in a thick file on Corrado Gini kept at the Historical Archive of the Sapienza University of Rome. This file consists of two separate parts: the first relates to the period 1925-1944 and the second to 1946-1965¹. These documents cover 40 years of Corrado Gini's activity, with a break of about a year and a half, from 1944 to 1946, during which he was suspended from service as he was subjected to a purge trial. There are documents related to activities he carried out at this university, personal letters, a number of more or less detailed

¹ I wish to thank Ms Carla Onesti from the Historical Archive of the Sapienza University of Rome for her help in finding and making available the documents referred to in this paper.

résumés, some of which he wrote himself, telegrams of different kinds, records of meetings, etc. This paper concentrates on Gini's experience during the years he spent at the University of Rome. Previous activities carried out in other universities in which he taught will also be mentioned.

Gini sensed that science and the nation needed a systematic and organised use of statistics. He was the first president of the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) from 1926 to 1932 and the mark he left on the institute under his presidency has remained to this date. He was resourceful, had a multidisciplinary scientific background and had already acquired a great deal of experience by working side by side with high-ranking figures by the time of World War I and later as president of the national leading data-producing body. These qualities, combined with the awareness that the nation needed to train statistical experts, led him to set up a statistical school or institute in each university where he was called to teach. Then in Rome, after his experience at ISTAT, he managed to found a Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences. This was the first example of a faculty entirely devoted to the education of professional statisticians. In the first five decades of its life, under Gini's direction, this faculty developed in such a way to become a reference point both at a national and international level.

2. GINI'S MULTIDISCIPLINARY BACKGROUND

Since his enrolment at the University of Bologna, it was clear that his inclination was not confined to legal studies. In fact, as reported in one of his curriculum vitae, although he took courses in law, as he intended to obtain a law degree from the Faculty of Law, he also studied anthropology and biology at the Faculty of Science. After he graduated in 1905, he took the courses covering the first two years of mathematics (between 1905 and 1907).

The interests shown by Gini, which may be inferred by the disciplines he decided to follow in his university courses, reveal to what extent he had a statistical attitude in him, as all those disciplines are based on statistics.

After graduating in law, Gini was forensic medicine assistant, an area that he was able to command thanks to his legal studies and to the other disciplines he had delved into when he was a university student. In 1908, he obtained a *libera docenza* (qualification of university professor without tenure) in statistics. This confirmed that he had a true inclination for statistics, which could also be inferred by some works he presented on certain aspects of probability calculus and the variability of series and statistical seriation.

3. GINI'S ACTIVITY BEFORE HE WENT TO ROME

He made rapid progress in his university career and he was appointed to the Chair of Statistics (as a professor on an annual contract first and as a full professor later) in Cagliari until 1913. He then won the public competition for the Chair of Statistics at the University of Padua (Rigatti Luchini, 2015). There, he undertook the first of a long series of initiatives: he founded the School of Political and Social Sciences and the 'Cabinet of Statistics'. The former turned into the Faculty of Political Sciences in 1933 and the latter into the Statistical Institute, which Gini headed for a number of years. A particular period of the time he spent in Padua was that of World War I. He wrote about this in a long curriculum vitae: "*I was enrolled as a volunteer in the spring of 1915, after passing the exams to be a cavalry officer. I remained at the front until the end of 1915, when, suffering from otitis and unfit for the rigours of war, I was placed on leave as university professor. In the spring of 1916, I went to Switzerland at my own expense in order to collect statistical data that was not available in Italy. This data on enemy populations was intended for two confidential reports on the probable losses of the enemy armies, reports which I submitted to His Excellency the Minister of War. In July 1916, on my request I was recalled to service and assigned to the Ministry of War for the purpose of organising war statistics. In this capacity, I organised and was in charge of statistics on war losses at the General Directorate of Military Health, the Statistical and Economic Division of the Historiographical Office of Mobilisation, the Statistical Office for the post-war period at the Military Health Division ... Member of the Commission for post-war problems (1918-19). Entrusted with the organisation and in charge of (from 1916, the dismantling of) military statistics and later advisor (from the dismantling to the appointment as President of the Central Institute of Statistics)*".

Therefore, Vittorio Castellano was right when he said, "*During and after the first world war Gini became more and more involved in the social and economic problems of war and reconstruction, such as war losses, raw material supplies, national wealth and income, economic depression and inflation*" (Castellano, 1965).

During the period in which he was at the University of Padua, Gini founded the international statistical journal *Metron* (a quarterly journal in four languages with issues starting from 1920 and still published), which he would edit for a long time. Later, when he was already in Rome, he founded and edited the journal *INDICI del movimento economico italiano con alcuni confronti internazionali* (from 1926 to 1930, then called *Vita economica italiana: Indici del movimento economico Italiano* from 1931 to 1943) and later the Journal *Genus* (Prévost, 2015).

“As it is generally known, GENUS was the first international journal of demography. It was founded in 1934 by Corrado Gini and edited by him until his death” (Caselli, 2009).

4. GINI'S ACTIVITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME

His time in Rome began in 1925. In December 1925, he was called by the Faculty of Political Sciences to hold the Chair of Political Economy. In Rome, he also gave lectures on Political Economy, which were highly appreciated by the scientific community.

From the beginning of his career, the depth of his scientific and professional stature was recognised internationally. He was called from many parts of the world to give lectures and seminars for the benefit of the international scientific community. In fact, both his institutional and his scientific activities were carried out along different lines at the same time. For a decade, from 1925 to 1935, he taught in faculties at the Sapienza University of Rome. He was given a number of appointments both in the Faculty of Law and in the Faculty of Political Sciences. He taught statistics, sociology, biometry and statistics, and social statistics. He founded the School of Statistics and the Statistical Institute and at the same time he was at the head of ISTAT (Italian National Statistical Institute), maintaining close contacts with the Head of the Government, who had established a direct channel with the president of ISTAT. He attended the most important international meetings of scholars and organised conferences for the International Statistical Institute himself.

In 1927, he founded the School of Statistics in the Faculty of Political Sciences in order to help to respond to the need for professional statisticians, *“who could fulfil the tasks of collecting and processing data on demographic, economic and social phenomena in the statistical offices of public bodies”* (Ottaviani, 1989). Statistics finally had its specific place, after having been relegated to the Faculty of Law under the Gentile Law (Law of 30 September 1923)².

Furthermore, in 1931, he organised the International Congress for Studies on Population (Rome, 7–10 September 1931). It took three years for the publication of the twelve volumes of proceedings of the conference, which had a strong resonance especially for research studies on birth rate control.

² Actually, two years before, in 1925, another School of Statistical and Actuarial Sciences had been set up in the Faculty of Mathematics (more on this later). This school was intended to prepare actuaries; this is another important statistical sector that is closer to mathematical sciences.

Another sector in which Corrado Gini was an insightful pioneer was the exploitation of archival sources. In this regard, Italy has been a special case, with plenty of archives, especially ecclesiastical and very old ones, in many locations. He used archives containing the records of births, burials and marriages that the rules of the Council of Trent and of the period immediately after (around the end of the sixteenth century) had made mandatory. Gini entrusted another distinguished scholar, Karl Julius Beloch, with the task of guiding a survey of Italian archival sources dating before the unification of the country. Because he died prematurely, Beloch was able only to set the job up. The survey was then pursued by Gini himself and its findings were published in ten volumes between 1933 and 1941, *Fonti archivistiche per lo studio dei problemi della popolazione fino al 1848* (Archival sources for the study of population until 1848). This work was presented at the International Congress for Studies on Population (Rome, 7-10 September 1931).

Corrado Gini's activity as a university professor left an indelible mark on students and colleagues as well. Although he always enjoyed the esteem of his colleagues and students, there were ups and downs. During the down periods, some people, particularly some of his students, tried to cast him in an unfavourable light. This happened in a period in which Gini's popularity in institutional circles was beginning to weaken for a number of complex reasons (see Leti, 2015). This caused his removal from ISTAT, which he had contributed to make efficient and important at a national and international level. An anonymous letter of 22 October 1931, addressed to the Rector of the University of Rome (Figure 1), claimed that Gini failed law students, as he would always find their preparation poor. The students complained that they had no chance to pass their exams with Gini, as they had Professor Camboni's handouts for studying, but they had learned that Gini did not consider that material suitable. (Professor Camboni had been teaching statistics on annual contracts at the Faculty of Law for a long time and he continued to do so even after Gini founded and moved to the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences.) The clear lack of esteem that Professor Gini had for Professor Camboni had played a dirty trick on them and had even exposed them to Gini's anger, the letter read. The students also wrote, "*Is it fair... that candidates have to be punished for a grudge that exists between examiners?*".

! Illustrissimo Signor Rettore,

Un folto gruppo di studenti della facoltà di giurisprudenza si rivolge a Lei per ottenere dalla sua bontà e dalla sua squisita cortesia che sia posto termine ad uno stato di cose intollerabile: il prof. Gini, che conduce gli esami di Statistica, presso questa Università, ha riprovato una percentuale fortissima ed inusitata di candidati, tra cui qualche laureando, che avevano seguito il corso del prof. Camboni e questo per il motivo che le dispense del detto prof. Camboni non sono redatte in maniera soddisfacente. Si aggiunga che, come risulta da tanti fatti concomitanti, tra i due professori non esiste quella stima e quell'accordo reciproco che sarebbero desiderabili tra persone preposte ad un simile ufficio.

Ora si domanda: era o non autorizzato il prof. Camboni a tenere un corso di Statistica valido per gli studenti della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza? Perché si sono stampate e si sono diffuse delle dispense che, a giudizio sempre del prof. Gini, non sono adeguate all'insegnamento universitario, sorprendendo così la buona fede degli studenti? È giusto, infine, che i candidati debbano pagare il fio del malanimo esistente fra gli esaminatori?

Alla Sua innata giustizia ci rivolgiamo, Illustrissimo Signor Rettore, invocando un provvedimento che valga ad eliminare, nel prossimo secondo appello, i gravi inconvenienti sopra lamentati.

Con la massima osservanza.

Figure 1: Law students' anonymous letter, 22 October 1931

Another harsh anonymous letter was sent once again to the Rector by a group of students (we suppose about on the same period). *“Besides badly mistreating young people as if they were slaves from Central Africa, Professor Gini is failing them ... No one will ever enrol at statistics any more ... The Faculty of Law of the University of Rome will no longer include statistics ... Professor Gini, unlike many other professors, mistreats us, sends us away and then he fails us”* (Figure 2). It is clear that these students were just those who did not pass Gini’s exam and who only mustered up courage to attack the strict and uncompromising professor when he seemed less powerful.

The slander of the anonymous writers who ascribed the reason of their failure as students to the contrast between Gini and Camboni is refuted by two indisputable facts related to the relationship between the two professors. In fact, when Gini created the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences, he included Professor Camboni in the academic staff (Minutes of the meeting of 3 December 1936). Moreover, Professor Camboni did not seem to be part of the teaching staff in the School from which the Faculty was established (Minutes of 7 December 1935). It is therefore clear that Gini wanted to include Camboni in the academic staff of the faculty that was being set up. After a decade, on 13 December 1944, Luigi Camboni, a judge of the Court of Cassation, showed his gratitude to the dean under a purge trial by testifying that in 1940 Gini had been accused by the Fascist authorities of being against the foreign policy of the party.

Similar episodes occurred not only in relation with students: ISTAT’s employees had complaints against him as well. According to Giuseppe Leti, in February 1930, Mussolini received a report questioning the political faith of Gini, who was the President of ISTAT at that time (Leti 2015). That report claimed that, in Brazil, after surviving the shipwreck of the ocean liner SS Principessa Mafalda, Corrado Gini expressed himself in very negative tones against the Italian Navy and the Italian Government and, for that reason, Roman students wanted to stage protests against him on his return to Rome.

Here again, this report seems to be totally groundless, as it is hard to understand how students in Rome might have been familiar with Gini’s statements in a country that far away from Italy.

It is worth highlighting that in a reply to Federico Millosevich, the Rector of the University of Rome, who rejoiced at his having survived the shipwreck, Gini informed his superior that he had lost his luggage and scientific material, but that he wanted to keep his work schedule unchanged (Figure 3). This behaviour suggests his iron will not to let anything affect his work, but it was also seen as a sign of being too cold with respect to a dramatic event that had claimed hundreds of lives.


 Magnifico Rettore,

Nella facoltà di giurisprudenza sta avvenendo qualche cosa di fuori a lei sfuggente, dati le sue molte occupazioni. Il professore Gini oltre che trattar molto male i giovani, come se fossero gli schiavi del centro Africa, sta bocciando a più non posso. Tutto ciò imporrà che in avvenire nessuno più si iscriverà alla statistica e quelli che l'hanno studiata la sostituiranno. In tal modo la facoltà di legge dell'Università di Roma non avrà più statistica.

D'altra parte quale colpa abbiamo noi studenti di lei brioni e le dispiace le ha fatte il professore Gamboni? Egli trova che nulla è esatto di ciò che noi si dice e per colpa di chiunque, il professor Gamboni non difende nemmeno se stesso.

È necessario che ella nella sua equanimità e con la sua autorità intervenga per evitare l'imitabile massacro specie per una materia che non è nemmeno professionale. Il professore Gini, al contrario degli altri insegnanti, ci maltratta, ci caccia via e poi ci boccia. Tutti gli studenti hanno come il trattamento loro riservato e tutti sostituiranno la statistica che in questo anno non è decisa.

abbiamo spinta inferocita fuori della saggia come vengono trattati gli studenti da quell'incognito.
 Lei che è tanto buono deve tutelare gli studenti, i quali in altri tempi non sarebbero tollerati un trattamento simile.
 Gradisca i devoti omaggi da
 un gruppo di studenti
 in legge.

Figure 2: Anonymous letter of a group of law students



Figure 3: Gini's telegram, October 1927.

Gini went through a long period of disgrace, which began in 1931. In 1937, Genesis Eugenio Del Monte stated that he had been invited not to mention Professor Gini's studies on racial crossbreeding in his own writings on the same topic since Gini's work was not in line with the racial policy of the Government and he was for this reason disliked by some authorities (Cassata, 2004).

At a later stage, Gini recalled that in 1940 he had been subject to an investigation by the Fascist authorities, which had accused him of making statements against Italy's entry into the war.

A clue to Gini's weakening position for political reasons may be inferred from the fact that the university did not make any contribution to some missions he made abroad.

That the difficult period lasted a long time may also be deduced by his initial relationships with the Italian Statistical Society (SIS), which was set up in 1939 as a not-for-profit organisation with the aim, specified in the statutes, of promoting scientific activity for the development of statistics. Not only does Gini not appear among the founders, but also he declared himself against its foundation in a public and much heated debate on the pages of the journal *Barometro Economico Italiano*.

Gini was not even the first president of SIS. Some scholars have supposed that he might have behaved in this way to avoid being a hindrance to the birth of SIS. In fact, the president had to be appointed by the Ministry and, at that time, Gini had many enemies, not only among statisticians, but also among the exponents of the Fascist party. Therefore, Gaetano Pietra, a loyal follower of Gini, was appointed as President of SIS. Pietra only kept the presidency for an initial period and then let Gini have the honour of delivering the opening speech in Pisa, on 9 October 1939. Gini's speech dealt with the dangers of statistics and the points he touched upon made it such a fundamental contribution that it is still considered a mainstay of modern statistics. *“When Corrado Gini opened the first meeting of the newly founded Italian Statistical Society in 1939 with an address entitled “I pericoli della Statistica”, he not only sounded the alarm bell and put the world of statisticians on its guard against the logical weakness of certain procedures, but at the same time also laid the foundations for a systematic review of the principles of methodology. Common sense no less than the scholar's caution suggests that it is useless to try and transform statistical induction into deduction. With penetrating logic Gini proved on this occasion how important and unavoidable are prior probabilities in any judgement on the measures deriving from a sample; he restored to induction its essential character of a conclusion based upon an experience (the facts) and an independent and preliminary a priori assumption by which the facts can be interpreted. It does not matter that the a priori assumption itself has been shaped by experience and will be reshaped by the current and future experiences; in all cases the choice has to be made from a set of data with which it can have no deductive links”* (Castellano, 1965).

Pietra resigned and expressly indicated Gini as his successor. This allowed Gini to take up the presidency of SIS without needing a ministerial appointment. He kept the office until 1965 (see Leti, 1989a, b and 1993).

5. THE FOUNDATION OF THE FACULTY OF STATISTICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC AND ACTUARIAL SCIENCES

About ten years before the foundation of the Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences, two separate schools had been established: the School of Statistical and Actuarial Sciences and the School of Statistics. The School of Statistical and Actuarial Sciences was set up within the Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences by a royal decree of 1925 and it was led by Guido Castelnuovo (a distinguished mathematician who taught in Rome from 1891 to 1935, with the Institute of Mathematics of the Sapienza University still named after

him). This school was intended to prepare actuaries and to confer a degree in Statistical and Actuarial Sciences, according to Ottaviani (1987). The School of Statistics was set up in 1927 within the Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences on the initiative of Gini, as mentioned above. These two schools merged, on the initiative of Corrado Gini and Francesco Paolo Cantelli, with the contribution of some of the leading scholars of the time from both mathematical/statistical and legal disciplines. According to the minutes dated 7 December 1935, a meeting between representatives of the two schools was attended by the following professors: Franco Savorgnan (a demographer who taught at the Sapienza University from 1929 to 1949 and was President of ISTAT from 1932 to 1943), Francesco Paolo Cantelli (a mathematician and an actuary, who taught in Rome between 1931 and 1951), Guido Castelnuovo (mentioned above), Roberto Almagià (a geographer, who taught at the Sapienza University from 1915 to 1959 and was dean of the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences in 1945-1946) and Mario Saibante (who taught economic statistics at the Sapienza University from 1935 to 1958). On that occasion, the composition of the academic staff of the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences was decided. The Faculty was then formally established by Royal Decree No 466 of 13 February 1936, even though activities had already commenced in 1935. If a regular bureaucratic course had been followed, the academic activity should have started only after the official setting up of the Faculty. It may well be that this departure from the norm was a way to avoid hindrances that the governmental authorities may have introduced to make Gini's effort fail. In this way, the Ministry was forced to acknowledge a *fait accompli*. Corrado Gini was dean of the Faculty until 1954, with a break of about one and a half years because, as mentioned, he was subject to a purge process. During that time, he was temporarily replaced by jurist Giuseppe Vassalli and then by Roberto Almagià.

At its opening, the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences had four main areas of study: statistical methodology, demography, sociology and actuarial sciences. They were taught for a long time and characterised the studies in the faculty, even though the sociological strand was not very popular and was only strengthened later.

According to Marbach and Rizzi, "*the strong personality and the international prestige of the Founder confer an ambitious cultural role on the Faculty. ... This attracts the attention of South American countries to the Faculty*" (Marbach and Rizzi, 2011). We know instead that this capacity of attraction was due to Corrado Gini's international activity more than to the Faculty as a whole.

The Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences was a unique

example. The teaching was in fact organised as a two-year course leading to a diploma (allowing the diploma holders to sit for a state exam to be licensed as professional statisticians and to access public posts requiring statistical skills) and an additional two-year course leading to the actual degree. This system remained in place until 1961, when a Presidential Decree (No 101 of 20 January 1961, Amendments to the statutes of the University of Rome, Official Gazette, General Series No 69 of 18 March 1961), completely separated the degree course from the diploma. Some curricular continuity was however kept, enabling students with a diploma to obtain a degree in two years only. Later, reform of the university system established that degree courses had to be organised as two separate modules, a three-year degree (also known as ‘first-level degree’) and an additional two-year ‘specialistic degree’, as is the case in other countries in the world. This reform made the organisation of the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences the same as that of all the other faculties, thus eliminating a distinctive feature that, since its inception, made it more similar to the way academic studies are organised in international universities.

Initially, Gini was entrusted with the chair of methodological statistics. Later he was also assigned the teaching of biometrics, general sociology and colonial sociology. In 1939, he was appointed to the chair of statistics, a position that he held until his retirement as professor with tenure.

6. THE PURGE TRIAL

As already mentioned, there are no documents related to the period of his removal from service (1944-1946), except for the measures of suspension and readmission into service. The other documents are kept at the State Central Archives of the Italian Ministry of Public Education in the collection called ‘Purged University Professors’ (1944-1946) and are described in the work of Cassata (Cassata, 2004). In July 1944, Gini was indicted in connection with the purge process and was suspended from service. He was convicted in the first instance, despite his attempt to defend himself from each charge brought against him. Between February and August 1945, an appeal against the first-instance decision was completed. In December 1945, the case was dismissed.

In brief, there were two grounds of accusation. The first was that his scientific work had played an important role in justifying fascism. The second was related to his conduct while performing his office as president of ISTAT and as dean of the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences. His behaviour was judged to be very similar to that of the exponents of the Fascist Party: dictatorial and illiberal.

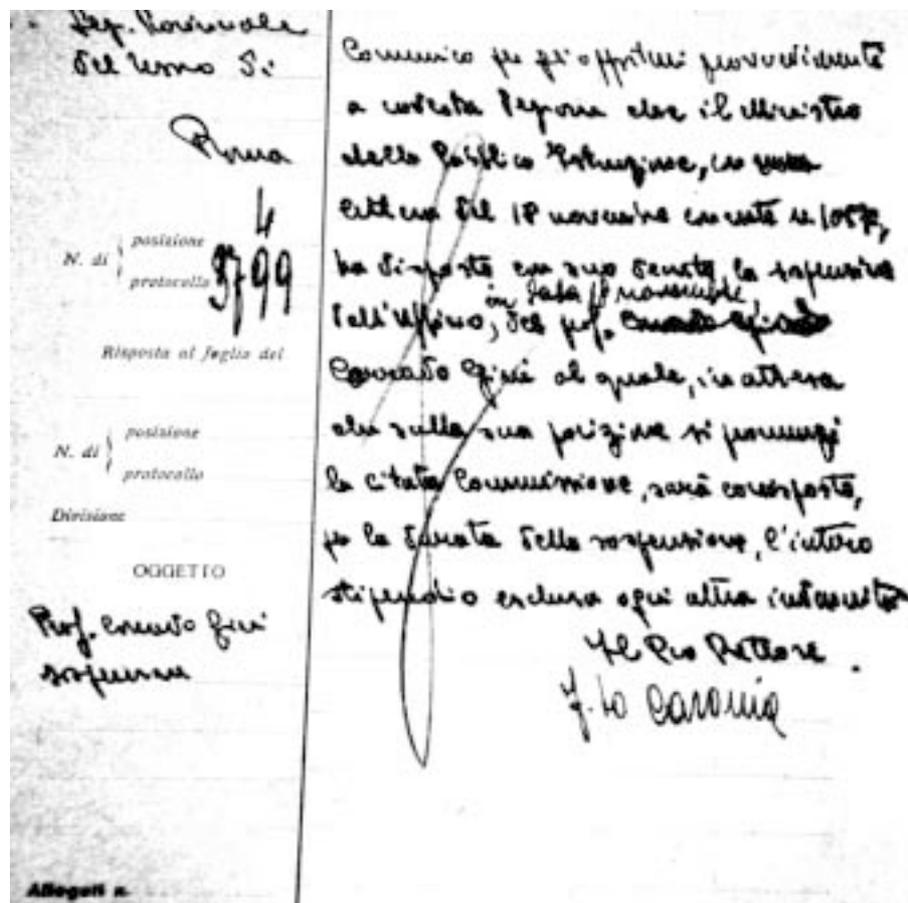


Figure 4: Communication of the Rector about the suspension from service.

Gini defended himself by claiming that he had a technical role that was not subjected to politics and that he was acting only according to scientific principles, with a sort of non-political approach. He also refuted all charges in connection with his behaviour when at ISTAT and at the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences. He justified each decision taken for each contested fact, logically and sensibly. Undoubtedly, his great international prestige worked in his favour, and so did the documented conflicts he had had with the Fascist authorities. Likewise, his detachment from the Fascist regime after Mussolini's fall and his participation in the activity of the rising Labour Democratic Party supported the dismissal of the case. Antigono Donati, a jurist, member of the Socialist Party and Vice-Secretary of the Labour Democratic Party wrote, "[...] Throughout the period of the Nazi-Fascist occupation, Professor Corrado Gini cooperated with the

underground resistance front, helping to save wanted people, writing articles and leaflets of anti-fascist propaganda and keeping close contacts with anti-fascist parties” (24 November 1944). It should not be forgotten, though, that Donati was also a professor of Insurance Law at the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences, from its foundation to 1980 and was Gini’s successor as dean of the same faculty from 1954 to 1972.

However, what worked to Gini’s advantage the most was his great ability to mobilise institutional and academic circles in his defence. More than 90 university professors, statisticians, demographers, economists and sociologists from four universities (Rome, Padua, Naples and Milan) took his side.

The best-known element in Gini’s defence concerned his intervention in favour of the Karaim population in Poland and Lithuania, which was considered to be of Jewish origin and as such was risking extermination. His 1936 studies on blood types proved that this population was of Finno-Hungarian and not Semitic origin and it was spared as a result. This particular example was brought by Gini to highlight that he had always asserted scientific arguments, even when they were against the Nazi ideology. To those who accused him of having done nothing in favour of the Jews, he replied that it would have been useless as well as extremely dangerous, whereas it was possible to save some ethnic minorities.

7. REINSTATEMENT AND RETURN TO WORK

In a letter dated 29 January 1946, the Ministry of Public Education informed Gini that he had been readmitted to service after having been suspended for eighteen months (Figure 5).

He was once more assigned some lecturing, and he gave lectures and attended conferences in Italy and abroad. At the 25th Session of the International Statistical Institute in Washington in 1947, he managed to have Italian adopted as a third working language alongside English and French, which is no longer the case today. A letter of the Ministry of Public Education of 26 November 1947 addressed to the Rector stressed that, “[...] *For future conferences, Italy will be granted the position it held before the war*”. This fact is certainly ascribable to the high level of respect enjoyed by the Italian school in the field of statistics, which at that time was experiencing one of its best periods to date.

Two years later, he also took office again as director of the Statistical Institute and, at the end of 1948, he was re-elected dean of the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences. In this short period, he received innumerable invitations as an honorary member of international associations for sociological, mathematical, and statistical studies.

Div. I° - Pos. 23
 1478
 Oggetto: Prof. Corrado Gini -

Respostal/1/1/1
 Due Due 30

X Si comunica che il Commissario per l'epurazione, con Ordinanza 17 dicembre 1945, ha disposto l'archiviazione della pratica relativa al Prof. Corrado Gini, Ordinario di Statistica presso codesta Università, atteso che la Commissione di I° grado propose una sanzione inferiore alla dispense, la quale è da considerarsi revocata ex lege (.art. 13. D.D.L. 9.11.1945, n.702).

Il Prof. Gini, con decreto in corso, viene pertanto riannesso in servizio e decorrere dal 18 novembre 1944 e da tale data gli competono tutti gli assegni inerenti al suo grado. X

30 GEN. 1949
 71.4 847.572
 Pers

IL MINISTRO
 Nobile

Figure 5: Ministerial letter on Gini's reinstatement after his purge trial

When he reached the age of 70, he had to retire and the faculty commissioned a Festschrift in his honour. An *ad hoc* committee was set up to organize the celebrations for Professor Gini, which were financed by sponsors not belonging to academia. The highest political and institutional authorities attended the ceremony, which took place at the Faculty of Law in May 1955 (Figure 6).



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI ROMA

GIOVEDÌ 5 MAGGIO 1955, ALLE ORE 11, NELL'AULA III DELLA FACOLTÀ DI GIURISPRUDENZA, AVRÀ LUOGO LA CERIMONIA DELLE ONORANZE CHE SARANNO RESE AL CHIARISSIMO PROF. **CORRADO GINI** IN OCCASIONE DEL SUO COLLOCAMENTO FUORI RUOLO.

LA S. V. È INVITATA AD ONORARE DELLA SUA PRESENZA LA SIGNIFICATIVA MANIFESTAZIONE, NEL CORSO DELLA QUALE VERRÀ OFFERTA AL PROF. **GINI** UNA MEDAGLIA COMMEMORATIVA.

ROMA, 26 APRILE 1955

IL COMITATO PROMOTORE
GIUSEPPE UGO PAPI
ANTIGONO DONATI
MARCELLO BOLDRINI

Figure 6: Invitation to the ceremony in honour of Corrado Gini on 5 May 1955

Two years later, he was awarded a First Class Gold Medal for meritorious members of Education, Culture and Arts. In May 1960, he was appointed Professor Emeritus.

8. CORRADO GINI'S SCIENTIFIC RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN INSTITUTIONS

The importance of Gini's activity in foreign institutions has already been stressed, as well as its impact in terms of making the Italian statistical school one of the most respected abroad. For this reason, part of this work is devoted to the aspects of his travels abroad, which can be found in the Archive.

Professor Gini often went abroad for considerable periods of time as part of his intense international scientific activity. For example, he spent almost a month in London, in June 1926, and in Rio de Janeiro, in October 1927. During his journey to Rio, on 25 October 1927, the shipwreck of the SS Principessa Mafalda took place, to which reference was made above. He also went to Cairo at the end of 1927 to represent Italy (together with Minister Stefano Benni and Senator Pietro Sitta) at the World Statistics Congress. The following year, he went to Geneva in his capacity as president of the Central Institute of Statistics for the Diplomatic Conference on Economic Statistics and then, in 1929, he went to Chicago for a short demography course, after he had been authorised by the Head of the Government and Minister

Franceschelli. In this case, his request to the Rector was a mere communication. The following year he travelled again to Minnesota (US), for a statistics course, and to Tokyo, for the customary World Statistics Congress.

The list of his travels does not end here: he also went to New York, to attend the Eugenics and Genetics Congress and then to Berlin, in 1932, and to Mexico City, where he started a long series of scientific collaborations that lasted until his death. In 1933, he was appointed president of the Italian Commission for Intellectual Cooperation, which he represented in Mexico in a meeting. Gini asked the Rector to prolong such a meeting in order to enter into exchange agreements between the two countries (Gini's letter to Rector Alfredo Rocco of 15 October 1933). Mexico, as other countries too, such as for instance Turkey, requested permission to send students to specialise in his School of Statistics and, in Gini's words, "... *it seems to me that this is a new proof of the high regard in which our School of Statistics is held abroad*". As for these requests, Gini also wrote, in the same letter, that at that time in Mexico "*the university is in the most severe turmoil, with ousted deans, students' strikes, death threats to the Rector, attacks on the university, injured people, etc. So, it is not the most appropriate time to enter into agreements (...)*".

His unceasing travels in 1934 continued to London, Ireland, Switzerland, and Poland. He spoke with great pride and satisfaction of some of those experiences, a sign that he had been welcomed with all the honours that he deserved and expected. In a letter addressed to the Rector on 22 May 1934, he wrote, "*Dear Rector, I fulfil my pleasant duty to report to you on the participation in the celebrations for the centenary of the foundation of the Royal Statistical Society in London, which took place last April, and at which I had the honour, on your behalf, to represent our University. ... I was pleased to notice that Rome ranked first in the list of Universities. ... I was assigned the chair of the first session on demographic and mathematical statistics. ... Once the scientific works were concluded, the members of the Institute were invited by the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland on a trip to Dublin, where they were welcomed gaily. They were received by the President of the Republic and taken on a tour of the city and its surroundings. At the official banquet offered by the inviting Society, I was entrusted with the task of speaking on behalf of the guests. I was very pleased to notice the great liking for Italy of the Irish circles. Yours sincerely (Corrado Gini)*".

It was not until 1936 that one finds, among the documents examined, the first refusal of one his applications to go on a mission abroad. The second refers to the following year, when he asked to go to Paris to attend the Congress "La Mère au Foyer", which he did anyway at his own expense together with Nora Federici. It may be just a coincidence, but two refusals in the same period would appear as

confirmation of Gini's diminished political clout at that time.

Moreover, the documents reveal that Gini went to Portugal in 1940, to Sweden in 1941, to Croatia and Berlin (for two conferences) in 1942, to Zagreb the same year and to Romania in 1943. Then, after a pause due to his suspension from service that lasted until 1946, he resumed relations with the major international institutions, both in Europe (Spain and Romania) and across the Atlantic in Mexico, the United States (as already mentioned, this trip was influential for the use of the Italian language at international congresses) and Peru. In 1951, he travelled to Istanbul, where the Italian school was so appreciated that the Turks applied for an Italian scholar to work at their university. In a letter to the Rector Giuseppe Cardinali on 7 April 1951, Corrado Gini confided his impressions on Turkish scholars. Gini said that it would be wise to accept their requests by sending Professor Vittorio Castellano to Istanbul, even if he thought the Turks were not well prepared, even though they were obliging and accommodating, two qualities that he greatly appreciated. Professor Castellano was a person Gini held in great esteem and who had been replacing him in his tasks in Rome while he was travelling abroad. The same year, Gini went to New Delhi for the World Statistics Conference and two years later to Frankfurt and Zurich to attend the Philosophy Congress. In a letter of 18 April 1953, the Minister refused reimbursement of the costs of the latter trip due to lack of funds.

During his life, Corrado Gini was awarded many prizes and acknowledgements, including many degrees *honoris causa*, of which only few traces are present in the file examined. In particular, mention is made of the Vittorio Emanuele Award for social and political sciences from the University of Bologna (1907), the *Premio Reale dei Lincei* for social sciences (1919), a *honoris causa* degree in sociology from the University of Geneva (1934), a *honoris causa* degree in economic sciences from the Università Cattolica del S. Cuore (1932), a *honoris causa* D.L. degree from Harvard University (1936) and another in social sciences from the University of Cordoba, Argentina (1963). Furthermore, as reported by Vittorio Castellano “[n]ew honours were to come. In 1933 Gini was elected vice-president of the International Sociological Institute, in 1934 president of the Italian Genetics and Eugenics Society, in 1935 president of the International Federation of Eugenics Societies in Latin-language Countries, in 1937 president of the Italian Sociological Society, and in 1941 president of the Italian Statistical Society; in 1957 he received the Gold Medal for outstanding service to the Italian School, and in 1962 he was elected a National Member of the Accademia dei Lincei. Gini was one of the most distinguished and also one of the most active members of the International Statistical Institute, of which he was an honorary member since 1939.” (Castellano, 1965)

9. REQUESTS FOR REIMBURSEMENTS MADE BY CORRADO GINI TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME

Anyone who has read Gini's biography or who knew him personally is aware of his countenance, his dominant and obtrusive personality (Giorgi, 2011). His strong character often caused him to have personal conflicts. In practice, only the authorities above him could oppose Gini, so that it is very rare to find traces of rejection of his requests, even when they were excessive. Reimbursement of most of the expenses incurred was generally granted to him and only rarely, when no other solution was feasible, was the reimbursement requested denied to him. Some traces documenting these reimbursements are contained in his personal file. The rare cases in which consent was denied correlate quite precisely with the periods in which Gini's political clout was weakened by events outside academia or simply for the fact that it was exaggerate or inappropriate.

For instance, some records document his request for reimbursement for the expenses incurred for his compulsory relocation from Padua to Rome. He submitted a detailed list of costs incurred, in which he claimed reimbursement of the global amount of ITL 8,627.20, including railway tickets for his family members and domestics (two maids), taxes paid and the costs of the transfer of furniture and books. The answer was equally meticulous: only very few expenditure items were accepted for reimbursement for a total amount of ITL 625, not only because of the presence of ineligible cost items, such as his domestics' travel costs, but also because they had to be accompanied by specific documents. Gini took care to submit such items soon after, thus receiving an additional sum of ITL 724, way below the sum he had initially requested. However, this included the sum for the transfer of his library, which he intended to donate to the university. The library remained at his home well beyond his death, despite his repeated requests for its transfer to the Sapienza premises, until the moment when most of it was incorporated into the then Statistical Institute of the Faculty of Statistical, Demographic and Actuarial Sciences.

Judging from the requests for the furnishings for the dean's office that he made to the various pro tempore rectors, it must be inferred that he wanted to surround himself with precious objects that could somehow demonstrate, even if indirectly, his authoritativeness, which was in any case universally acknowledged to him. For instance, in January 1928, he requested the purchase of some Persian carpets for his institute. The Rector used to meet his requests in every possible way, also because it was not easy to say no to him. However, on that occasion he was obliged to ask Gini if he could do without what he had requested, as it was deemed excessively frivolous and inappropriate. Moreover, that purchase would have required the

authorization of the university's Board of Directors, to which the expenditure had to be justified (Figure 7). The Rector appeared not to have understood the profound reason for this behaviour and deemed it superfluous to associate Gini's person with a study furnished in a way that was adequate for his reputation.

- Anno VI -

Confidensiale riservato

Caro Gini,

Non potresti rinunciare all'acquisto di tappeti persiani per il tuo Istituto?

La spesa mi pare eccessiva e fuori di luogo e, prima di autorizzarla, dovrei chiedere il parere del Consiglio d'Amministrazione.

Cordiali saluti,

1.^o F. MILLOCEVICH

Chiar.mo signor
prof. Corrado Gini,
Direttore dell'Istituto
di Politica e Statistica Economica
ROMA

Figure 7: Rector's letter to Gini, January 1928

10. CONCLUSIONS

On the day of his death, 13 March 1965, the Dean informed the Italian and foreign political and academic authorities of the sad event and notified them of the funeral service that would be held at San Saturnino parish church in Rome (Figure 8). A very large number of personalities and admirers attended the funeral service. Several tokens of recognition and condolence telegrams were received by the Sapienza University and the Gini family from ministers in office, rectors of national universities (Messina, Perugia, Turin, Florence, Venice, Bologna, Cagliari, Sassari, Palermo, Trieste, Pisa, Milan, Genoa, Perugia, Padua, Pavia, Bari, Catania, Ferrara, Camerino). Gini was celebrated in long articles published in Mexican and South American newspapers.

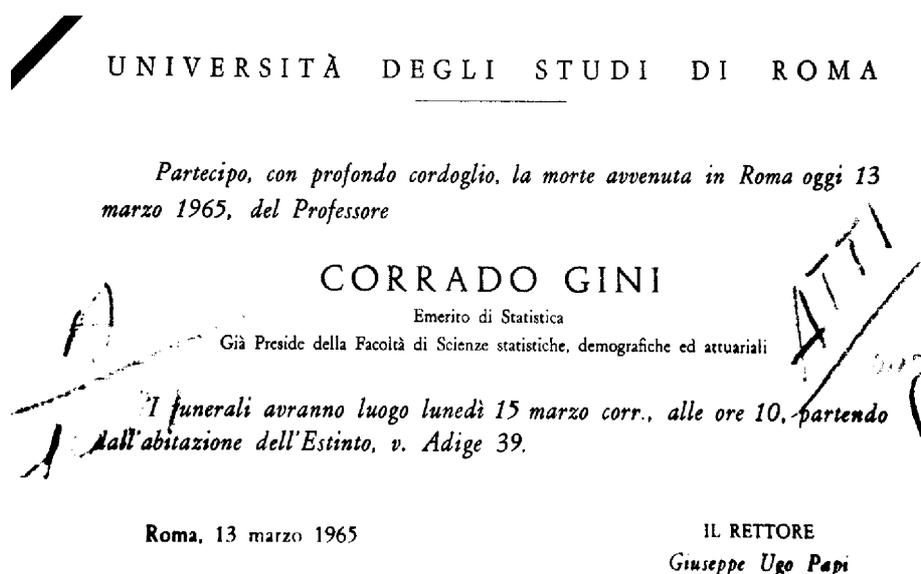


Figure 8: Invitation to the funeral service of Corrado Gini

Gini was a man of voracious intellectual curiosity. He was always eager to understand reality and was devoted to studying social and economic phenomena, for which he proposed methods of measurements that are still used internationally. Gini's personal character is universally thought to have been the factor which initially made him win the respect of an equally demanding Head of the Government, but it is also one of the elements that caused him very difficult times. In fact, whenever his authoritative nature was perceived to be declining (such as when the Head of the Government ousted him from ISTAT or during the purge process),

anyone who was in a position to complain about his activity found the courage to do so.

Scholars of all countries acknowledged his excellence and requested the opportunity to listen to him or to send scholars to train with him. At that time, the structure of Italian universities was not what it is today. Many universities had their roots in a remote past, which was the probable cause of their rigidity and their unwillingness to change. Gini knew how to find his place in this historical background and left indelible signs of his action. He anticipated the organization of a degree course with a structure similar to the one that, almost a century on, most Italian faculties have today. Moreover, ISTAT's organization, the reorganization of public statistics, which is in part still valid today, and his scientific work, which has made the Italian school competitive at international level and has given momentum to the methodological progress of statistics, are the pillars on which his work is based. Today, we can still appreciate Gini's heritage both in terms of the scientific content he proposed and of his vast work for institutional renovation.

REFERENCES

- Cassata, F. (2004). Cronaca di una epurazione mancata. *SIDeS, Popolazione e Storia*, 2/2004: 89-119.
- Caselli, G. (2009). Foreword, *GENUS LXV Commemorative issue* (No. 0), 1-2.
- Castellano, V. (1965). Corrado Gini: a memoir. In *Metron*, 24(1-4): 1-45.
- Del Panta, L. and Sonnino, E. (1994). Introduzione. In *Storia della popolazione d'Italia/Karl Julius Beloch*, Società Italiana di Demografia Storica (ed.), Florence: Le Lettere, 199. - XXXII.
- Fabbris, L. (2015). *Corrado Gini, una meteora statistica*. Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche, Università degli Studi di Padova, Cleup.
- Giorgi, G. M. (2011). Corrado Gini: the man and the scientist. In *Metron*, 69(1): 1-28.
- Leti, G. (1989a). Cinquanta anni di storia della SIS. In *Statistica e Società*, Conference Proceedings, Pisa, 9–10 October 1989.
- Leti, G. (1989b). Verso una Società nazionale di Statistica. In *Statistica e Società*, Conference Proceedings, Pisa, 9–10 October 1989.
- Leti, G. (1993). *Italian Statistical Society: A Short History*. Società Italiana di Statistica, Centro d'informazione e stampa universitari, Rome.
- Leti, G. (1996). L'Istat e il Consiglio superiore di Statistica dal 1926 al 1945. In *Annali di statistica*, X, 8, ISTAT, Rome.
- Leti, G. (2015). Il ricostruttore della Statistica Pubblica Italiana. In L. Fabbris, editor, *Corrado Gini, una meteora statistica*. Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche, Università degli Studi di Padova, Cleup: 81-125.
- Marbach, G. and Rizzi, A. (2011). *La Facoltà di Scienze Statistiche di Roma, Parabola di una eccellenza*. Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche, Sapienza, Università di Roma.

- Ottaviani, M.G. (1986). *Some Historical Notes on the Pre – 1939 Teaching of Statistics in Italian Universities and Institutes of Superior Studies*. Dipartimento di Statistica, Probabilità e Statistiche Applicate, Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Serie A – Ricerche, no. 7.
- Ottaviani, M.G. (1987). Note per una storia dell'insegnamento della statistica in Italia: La statistica nell'ordinamento didattico dell'istruzione superiore dalle origini al 1938. *Statistica*, XLVII, no. 4.
- Prévost, J.-G. (2015). La lunga Grande Guerra degli statistici italiani. In *Lettera Matematica Pristem*, 92: 70-80.
- Prévost, J.-G. (2009). *A Total Science. Statistics in Liberal and Fascist Italy*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montréal.
- Prévost, J. G. (2016). Statistics, expertise and politics: Corrado Gini and the course of Italian history. In *Metron*, 74(2): 145–165.
- Rigatti Luchini, S. (2015). Corrado Gini. Professore di Statistica in Padova 1913-1925. In L. Fabbris, editor, *Corrado Gini, una meteora statistica*. Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche, Università degli Studi di Padova, Cleup: 25-80.
- Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza" (1996). *I sessanta anni della Facoltà di Scienze statistiche*. Atti della manifestazione, 16 dicembre 1996, Aula Magna, Città universitaria, Roma.
- [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/corrado-gini_\(Il-Contributo-italiano-alla-storia-del-Pensiero:-Economia\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/corrado-gini_(Il-Contributo-italiano-alla-storia-del-Pensiero:-Economia)/). Last access: 12/05/2016.
- <http://corradowini.jimdo.com/> . Last access: 15/05/2016.
- <http://www.archiviola stampa.it/>. Last access: 20/06/2016.

