

## HOMMAGE TO FRANCESCO BERLINGIERI

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In recent correspondence with Francesco Berlingieri, I had reason to say that I envied his vitality and force – among many other things. He had then within a very short time compiled a comparative table of and written a commentary to the differences between the Hague, Hague-Visby, Hamburg and Rotterdam Rules, all of them international conventions relating to the carriage of goods by sea.

There are of course many that are both vital and forceful, but very few at the age of 87. However, the real reason for this book in his honour, is not only that Francesco relentlessly continues to do what he is been doing throughout his working life, but what he has actually done and achieved during that working life – so far, I have to add for obvious reasons.

I understand that there will be a colloquium in Genoa on 19 February 2010, the day before Francesco's 88th birthday, when this book will be presented to him. On that occasion, various friends of Francesco will speak about the main elements of his working life:

- the CMI,
- the legal profession,
- the journal *Il Diritto Marittimo*,
- the international activity
- the university; and
- the Italian navy.

I am happy to have encountered Francesco in relation to the first five of these elements, but not the last. As the current President of the CMI, it is natural for me to focus on the first.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Francesco and consider him a friend since we first met in Lisbon in 1985, during my first CMI Conference, Francesco then being the ever elegant, ever diplomatic, ever friendly, ever intelligent, ever knowledgeable, ever forceful, ever determined and ever charming President. He has

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since resigned as President, but has retained all his virtues and qualities, which is why he is an unusually admired and loved person.

Talking about elements or constituent parts, it is a fact that the Berlingieri family has been a girder of the CMI, not for decades but for more than a century. At the CMI Conference in Paris in 1900, three years after the creation of the CMI, Francesco Berlingieri, a young maritime lawyer from Genoa, was a member of the Italian delegation. At the Conference in Copenhagen in 1913, Francesco Berlingieri headed the Italian delegation, whereas Giorgio Berlingieri, a young maritime lawyer from Genoa, was a member. In 1959, at the Rijeka Conference, Giorgio Berlingieri was a member of the Italian delegation, as was Francesco Berlingieri, a young maritime lawyer from Genoa. In 1977 at the Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Francesco Berlingieri was the President of the CMI, serving from 1976 to 1991, and Giorgio Berlingieri, a young maritime lawyer from Genoa, a member of the Italian delegation.

The agile reader will have realised that the Berlingieris are not wasting names. Hence, among them, there are as far as the CMI is concerned two Francescos and two Giorgios. Among them again, “our” Francesco, as well as his father and grandfather have been Presidents of the Italian MLA and active within the CMI and Giorgio, a son of the present Francesco and the current president of the Italian MLA has recently been elected an Executive Councillor of the CMI. I note in passing that there was a famous cartographer by the name of Francesco Berlingieri in Florens already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. We can only guess what the name of his son was.

Since I have not met the first Francesco and the first Giorgio related to the CMI and do not know much of their work, I note that at least in a modern perspective, there is no doubt that the Francesco Berlingieri who is the “honouree” of the essays in this book, has been truly outstanding and of immeasurable value for the work of the CMI and the reputation of the CMI, whose President ad Honorem he is.

Unification of maritime law is the object of CMI. There are many ways in which the work and influence of an individual in that regard can be measured. One is to look at the international conventions to which he – you will have guessed that I am talking about Francesco Berlingieri – has made significant contributions. At the risk of missing some, the mere reading of the list of international maritime law conventions in the latest CMI Yearbook and recalling Francesco’s wide spread activities and fields of interest, suggests that at least 16 conventions have benefitted from significant contributions from him. A connoisseur would probably be able to trace his imprints in all of them. He would himself be the best connoisseur, but far too modest to tell us the true extent of his contributions.

In view of all this, I am very pleased indeed to congratulate Francesco to his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday and with this book, *Essays in Honour of Francesco Berlingieri*.