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ABSTRACT BOOK

a cura della Società Geologica Italiana



**Geology for a sustainable
management of our Planet**



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S11.

BACK TO THE FUTURE. History of geological studies and mapping as a key for sustainable development

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Tommaso Tittoni, a geologist to the Prime Ministership

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In the early stages of the Kingdom of Italy, geology was highly considered in the national culture; the economic development of the newborn State depended in fact mostly on the research of natural resources and on great engineering works, based on updated geological maps. At that time, geological knowledge was the prerogative both of mining engineers and naturalists, although with some conflicts between them. Consequently, eminent scientists and technicians filled relevant public positions between late 19th and early 20th century, because of their competence and authoritativeness. Among them, four Earth scientists or engineering geologists achieved (or barely touched) even the role of Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Italy. First, we must cite Luigi Federico Menabrea (1809-1896), hydraulic engineer, General of the Savoy Army and politician, Prime Minister between 1867 and 1869. The SGI founder Quintino Sella (1827-1884), Member of Parliament and thrice Minister of Finance, in 1881 was entrusted by the King with the formation of a new government, unfortunately without success. A third relevant personality was Ivanoe Bonomi (1873-1951), graduated in 1896 in Natural Sciences at the University of Parma, with a thesis in palaeontology, concerning the ichtiofauna of Mondaino, near Rimini (Baraldi, 2014); after a second graduation in law (1900), he early quitted the scientific activity and became lawyer, journalist and politician (thrice Prime Minister, but also Member of Parliament, Senator, Home Secretary, Minister of War and of Public Works, member of the Constituent Assembly, first President of the Senate of the Republic). This contribution focuses though on Tommaso Tittoni (1855-1931), which was Prime Minister in 1905 for only 13 days, until now the record of shortest period in charge (Tassani, 2019). Tittoni has been jurist, diplomat and politician (Member of Parliament, Senator and President of the Senate from 1919 to 1929, President of the Provincial Council of Rome). Beside his several political writings, he produced also a few geological papers and maps of the volcanic areas surrounding Rome. After his graduation in law, Tommaso became also student of Giuseppe Ponzi, the founder of the Roman geological school, at the Sapienza University; later he studied also in Oxford and Liege (Novarese, 1931). His father Vincenzo Tittoni, politician and member of the *Destra Storica*, introduced him to Sella, which became his mentor in geology. Therefore, Tittoni was among the founders of the Italian Geological Society in 1881, being appointed first Treasurer. Nowadays, the growing awareness about our changing Planet urgently requires a global revision of the relationship between humanity and Earth. In such a framework, the history of influence of geological culture on Italian society and politics could provide useful insights to find strategies for a sustainable future.

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