

A black and white portrait of Adriano Olivetti, a middle-aged man with receding hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and light-colored tie. He is holding a pair of glasses in his right hand. The background is a textured, slightly mottled grey.

ADRIANO OLIVETTI

A builder of the future

Texts by

Fabrizio Fazioli, Valerio Castronovo, Mauro Leo Baranzini, Davide Cadeddu, Laura Olivetti.

Introduction by Carlo De Benedetti.



Adriano Olivetti

by Carlo De Benedetti*

I never had the pleasure of meeting Adriano Olivetti, but when I became the major shareholder, Vice-President and Managing Director of Olivetti I could “feel” his influence in my office, in the factories and among the managers who had worked at Olivetti in his day and had thus known him.

Adriano was, in fact, more a presence than a mere memory. There is no denying the fact that he ran the company at a time when economic conditions in the West and Japan were easier than today. The post-war economic boom facilitated production and marketing of typewriters and electro-mechanical calculators. The outstanding inventiveness and know-how that became the trademark of the Ivrea-based company back then meant that Olivetti had virtually cornered the market, thanks in part to a lack of direct competition. Olivetti also enjoyed incredible profit margins for the electronics sector at the time: the “Divisumma” calculator, for example, had a gross profit margin of close to 50%.

Adriano’s greatest skill as a business magnate was to use these huge profits for international expansion, turning Olivetti into Italy’s only true multinational concern then, with production sites in Spain, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. Plus, Olivetti had highly efficient sales networks covering practically every area of the economic world: from Japan to the USA, from Singapore to Malaysia. This was made possible through the great care that Adriano Olivetti personally took in selecting and appointing his staff. So, not only did Adriano Olivetti create Italy’s first multinational, but he also helped spread the concept of the managerial culture to other major Italian enterprises, such as Fiat, IFI, Alitalia and many more besides.

He also had a deep-rooted belief in utopian socialism, which led him to encourage Italian architects to build pleasant, light “living spaces” for Olivetti workers. He was an enlightened “boss”, but also an exceptional man in terms of his “solitude” and his taste for all things great and beautiful.

Today we still remember him as such and rightly so.

**Cavaliere del Lavoro Ingegnere Carlo De Benedetti, Honorary President of CIR SpA (Compagnie Industriali Riunite) and President of Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso SpA.*

Page I:
Adriano Olivetti
(1901-1960).

Left:
Adriano Olivetti talking
with young workers
at the Ivrea factory,
late 1950s.
(Publifoto)



Adriano Olivetti and the “short century”

by Fabrizio Fazioli*



Left:
Adriano Olivetti in front of the ICO
building complex.

On this page:
The first extension to the original factory
building from 1895, the main production
hall known as “Vecchia ICO” (“Old ICO”).

At the time Adriano Olivetti was born, 1901, Europe was a dynamic, euphoric place: it was the *belle époque*, society and lifestyles were changing and there was an optimistic belief in progress. By the time he died, in 1960, Europe was on the brink of the greatest economic boom ever recorded in history, despite still being split in half by the Iron Curtain. During Adriano's lifetime Europe survived two devastating world wars, a great economic depression and several political upheavals: the Russian Revolution, Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy. We cannot, therefore, say that Adriano Olivetti lived in a particularly fortunate era. The great historian Eric J. Hobsbawm defined this violent, disturbing period in the history of humanity – from the outbreak of the First World War to the fall of the Berlin Wall – as the “short century”. A century of extraordinary scientific progress and total war, of economic crises and unprecedented prosperity, of social and cultural revolutions. A short century in terms of the dizzying speed at which events in history took place and lifestyles changed. Whether he liked it or not, Adriano Olivetti witnessed these changes and events and was a prominent figure in this troubled century, as short as his own life proved to be. His was a singular intellectual and entrepreneurial career covering many different areas of interest.

Intellectual, politician or businessman?

In 1908, when Camillo Olivetti – Adriano's father – set up the Olivetti factory in Ivrea, no one could foresee the tragic world events that would soon follow. The factory was a small brick building and employed just a

few workers. Adriano was just seven years old. From the biography of Adriano Olivetti written by the historian and journalist Valerio Ochetto (formerly responsible for checking historical facts for Italian state television – RAI) we learn that the young Adriano was more inclined to follow a political career, owing to the social and political tensions in Italy and the climate of hope and redemption after the horrors of the First World War. Indeed, he was somewhat detached during his university years, rarely attending the lectures on industrial chemistry at Turin's Politecnico. Nor was it certain that one day he would take over from his father in running the company. On the contrary, after a brief period working on the shop floor in 1914, Adriano said that he would never play an active role in the future of the factory. In the 1920s he frequented the political and intellectual circles of Turin. Together with his father, he actively contributed to the *L'Azione Riformista* (Reformist Action) weekly paper that Camillo had founded in 1919, as well as another Turin weekly, *Tempi Nuovi* (New Times), also founded by his father in 1922.

The years immediately after the First World War were not just full of dreams and study for Adriano: he wrote and planned for a future in political journalism, not industry. In addition to being harshly critical of society, like most young men, he also made a few proposals that were spot-on and definitely avant-garde. For instance, he envisaged the need for greater autonomy for Italian regions, based on the federal model: a kind of federalism that was clearly inspired by Carlo Cattaneo, who



Camillo Olivetti with the Olivetti team, 1908.

had developed this idea on the basis of the Swiss model (having lived in Switzerland from 1848 until his death in 1869). This was not, however, the Catholic form of federalism proposed by Vincenzo Gioberti, based on the hegemony of the Papal State, nor was it a kind of federalism arising out of a desire for secession, as is the case today in Italy. Like Carlo Cattaneo, Adriano Olivetti saw federalism as “a federation of people, not a central state where liberty cannot grow, still respecting and enjoying the benefits of a strong national unity”. Another recurring theme was state bureaucracy, which Adriano felt had to be “depoliticised” and entrusted to “valid and competent” individuals - early thoughts that he would later develop and promote in his plans for the reform of the State, i.e. his political movement and the *Comunità*¹ journal.



America yes, but not as a model

In the meantime, Adriano's initial rejection of the idea of entering his father's firm gradually became less adamant and his keenness for a career in journalism diminished, owing - as he himself would later admit - to his increasing aversion to Fascism. While still maintaining an active interest in intellectual pursuits and politics, Adriano started to study labour organisation and became more and more engrossed with the future of the Olivetti factory. These were his constant concerns from this point on, sometimes merging and converging, at other times totally separate or even in direct conflict.

Bruno Caizzi, Adriano's contemporary and an exile in Switzerland, tells us that Adriano suddenly realised the importance of the great possibilities open to him were he to take on a major role in the family business, without this necessarily meaning that he would have to abandon his ideals.

In 1925 Adriano left for the United States to study the way American industry was organised. This experience, as Beniamino de' Liguori Carino wrote in a long treatise on Adriano Olivetti's intellectual maturation, had a two-fold result:

On the one hand, Adriano became thoroughly familiar with work organisation methods. He visited the factories of some of the most important American companies... At the same time, the young Olivetti started to develop his ability to judge American society critically, where mass consumption and the capitalist system were rapidly evolving - something that was yet to be seen in Europe. It is not, therefore, unrealistic to say that he may well have recognised and foreseen the contradictions inherent in American society and the US economy. In a letter to his family, he wrote that "here the dollar is really God and the dollar has excessive power in all aspects of American life".

There is no doubt that upon his return to Italy, his intellectual baggage and practical experience were not the result of any passive, uncritical acceptance of the American dream, but rather a mix of technical, social and organisational ingredients that would later be turned into an approach to business that had little to do with the American model.

During these years, Adriano's opposition to Fascism grew and his political views tended towards Carlo Rosselli's liberal socialism. Little by little, he developed his vision based on the concept of the person, being inspired by the French philosopher Emmanuel Mounier. According to Mounier, it was absolutely necessary to go beyond utilitarian individualism: the individual should develop his potential within a system of solidarity, represented by the community in which he lives. This led to the idea of the community as a political, social and economic unit. A unit that should be

Adriano Olivetti posing for photographers, 1927.

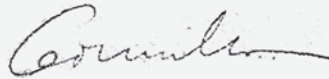
ING. CAMILLO OLIVETTI

MILANO - VIA DONIZETTI 33

Carissima Luigia.

È questa la prima lettera che io scrivo con la nuova macchina ed è con grande soddisfazione che io dedico a te queste poche righe che spero tu riceverai con piacere. La macchina non è ancora perfetta, ma credo che in poco tempo potrò renderla buona quanto le migliori macchine del genere.

Ricevi mille baci affettuosi da



Avrea li dodoci Agosto ~~1907~~ ~~1908~~ 1908



based on democratic participation at the ground-roots level, without any imposing arbitrary force applied by the State. On the contrary, this unit should be federal in nature and thus capable of respecting local conditions and communities.

Adriano gradually built up his vision of society, which today we would call “global”. This slowly influenced all aspects of the family business and the surrounding urban area and was at the root of his publishing project and even a political movement. In fact, upon returning from his voluntary exile in Switzerland, Adriano Olivetti wrote his *L'ordine politico della Comunità*² in 1945, a political manifesto setting out his ideas. In 1946 he founded the *Comunità* journal, quickly followed by the publishing house Edizioni di Comunità, which made a name for itself by publishing the works of previously unknown authors in Italy dealing with various fields of human science. Then, two years later in 1948, he founded his “Community Movement”³.

Adriano the publisher

If truth be told, it seems that everything that attracted Adriano Olivetti’s interest was still completely unheard of in Italy. On an intellectual level, as the sociologist Domenico De Masi points out, “he read and published works on sociology, social philosophy, ethics and aesthetics; on the practical

side of things, he promoted modern production, reformism, the participation of workers, urban planning, contemporary architecture and design”. In other words, he was in direct contradiction with the prevailing culture of the time. He broke new ground by spreading innovative ideas that were, however, viewed with suspicion and in stark contrast with the works published under the Fascist regime reflecting its twenty-year policy of suppressing progressive thinking.

Today it is far from easy to appreciate the cultural climate at the time. Adriano’s criticism of Italy’s cultural lethargy was not a mere protest. He wanted to introduce reforms and put rigorous scientific values into practice. The catalogues of the Olivetti Foundation show us that many famous (mostly foreign) writers had their works published by Adriano’s publishing house, Edizioni di Comunità. The authors published by Edizioni di Comunità wrote on a wide range of topics related to human sciences and included such figures as Jung, Piaget, Kierkegaard, Bergson, Claudel, the French school of sociologists (Gurvitch, Bettelheim and Mounier) and the Swiss authors Ramuz and Denis de Rougemont, among many others; Domenico De Masi quoting Simone Weil’s reflections on the life of a factory worker, Raymond Aron’s work on relations between the West and the USSR and Roethlisberger’s thoughts on group cohesion in factories; and classics by people such as Weber and Durkheim who “introduced bright new visions in the wasteland of Italian publishing”. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies was, according to De Masi, perhaps the most paradigmatic of all the books published by Adriano Olivetti’s

Left:
The first typewriter-written letter by Camillo Olivetti to his wife, Luigia.

Top:
Book cover of “L’ordine politico delle comunità” by Adriano Olivetti, 1945.

Right:
The symbol of Adriano Olivetti’s endeavours – the bell with the inscription “Humana Civilitas”.



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COMUNITÀ

GIORNALE MENSILE DI POLITICA E CULTURA

I. Silone: Il mondo che nasce; P. Battara: Democrazia e metodo; A. Olivetti: Idea di una comunità concreta; P. Bondy: I partiti cattolici in Europa; G. Fua: Dobbiamo dar retta agli economisti; E. Monferini: I presupposti teorici di un piano di protezione sociale; N. Chiarletta:

L'enigma moderno; C. Calcaprina: Urbanistica organica; L. Piccinato: Monte Faito; G. Debenedetti: L'avventura dell'uomo d'occidente; C. Brandi: Lorenzo da Viterbo; E. Peterson: Nomme hic est fabri filius?; G. Ferrero: I geni invisibili della città; Rassegna della Stampa estera.

MARZO 1946

1

DIREZIONE, REDAZIONE, AMMINISTRAZIONE: ROMA PIAZZA BARBERINI, 52, TELEFONO 44152 - C.C. POSTALE: EDIZIONI DI COMUNITÀ 1/10905

Aver fede

I morti per la libertà, tutti coloro che morirono perchè ebbero fede nell'uomo non devono essere traditi: un mondo nuovo deve sorgere dal loro sacrificio, perchè questo non sia stato invano.

Amendola, Gramsci, Don Minzoni, Matteotti, Rosselli, i milioni di morti.

La responsabilità dei vivi è non tradire. Non tradire significa coerenza, significa verità, significa, ora, il nostro sacrificio.

Per uscire dal caos, caos nelle coscienze, caos nell'ordinamento sociale, caos nei gruppi inorganizzabili, inercio infinito di forze che si elidono, bisogna veder nuovo e veder chiaro.

Veder nuovo significa vedere un mondo umano, veramente umano, un mondo fondato su leggi naturali, su leggi che siano eterne e siccome eterne diano vita e vigore ogni giorno all'azione, perchè l'azione non si torca su se stessa ma partecipi a una nuova società ove alberghi la quide e risplenda la bellezza.

Veder chiaro significa attraversare, come la luce al di là dello spettro, le correnti oscure di una situazione oscura, perchè dal disordine si possa creare l'ordine.

L'ordine, l'ordine nuovo sarà semplice come le leggi spirituali che lo domineranno. Nessuna cosa astrusa, nessun gioco di parole. L'ordine ha da penetrare nelle cose pubbliche, la società deve vivere libera la sua vita, per la necessità dell'uomo di correre alla sua fantasia e alla sua missione.

Lo Stato dovrà affondare le sue radici nelle verità parziali che i partiti, così come sono schierati, difendono separatamente. Affinchè ne nasca, non un compromesso, ma conciliazione e sintesi creativa, occorre che la difesa dei valori spirituali, la dinamica marxista e l'ansia di libertà trovino finalmente in un piano organico un'organica fusione.

Così, e così soltanto, i movimenti sociali di ogni tendenza, di ogni frazione, di ogni partito potranno, accomunati da una nuova meta, dar vita in modo autonomo e originale a una più alta e più libera civiltà per tutti gli italiani.

COMUNITÀ

IL MONDO CHE NASCE

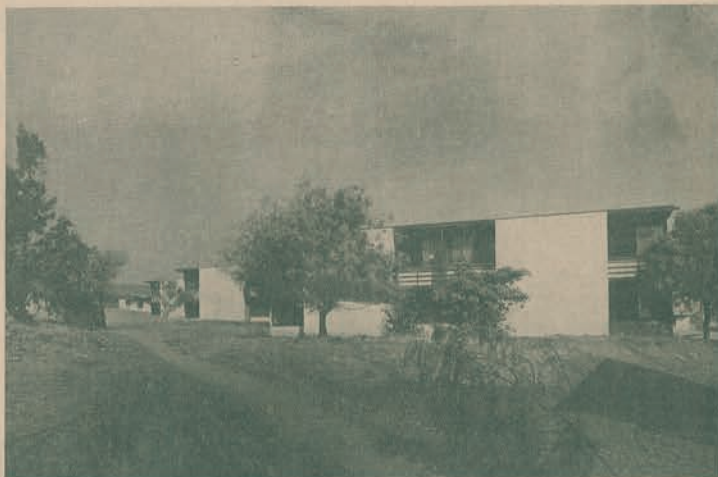
di Ignazio Silone

Il nostro paese si trova ora in una fase di transizione. Non vi è una sola questione sul tappeto, ma tutti i problemi della società e dello Stato. E su ognuno di essi sono forti contrasti. La loro soluzione, in un senso o nell'altro, non è prevedibile affidandosi a ragionamenti astratti: poiché non è affare di teoria ma di storia; non di destino ma di rapporti di forze. E pertanto chiunque voglia seguire la situazione italiana, o agire in essa, deve anzitutto identificare le forze conservatrici del pre-fascismo, e gli stessi mortiferi residui del fascismo, mascherati magari sotto altre forme, e distinguerli dalle forze, dalle tendenze, dalle idee della democrazia.

La teoria più reazionaria, in un paese e in una situazione come la nostra, è senza dubbio quella, comunque essa si denomini, che ha come risultato di indebolire nei cittadini il sentimento della propria responsabilità a beneficio di una qualsiasi concezione deterministica della storia. I fattori del rinnovamento democratico del paese, se pure discordi su molti punti, de-

vono almeno coincidere in questo: persuadere ogni cittadino che l'avvenire del paese non dipende dalle leggi storiche, ma da lui, dalla sua coscienza, dalla sua volontà, dal suo comportamento. Senza un forte e diffuso sentimento della propria responsabilità personale in tutti i fatti della vita collettiva è vano parlare di risanamento morale.

Sarebbe però errato supporre che a ciò si oppongono solo alcuni teoremi pseudo-scientifici tramandatici dal secolo scorso, poiché vi è tra noi un antico scetticismo sulla capacità degli italiani ad essere liberi cittadini, ed esso è un sentimento più tenace di qualunque formula intellettuale. A questo proposito non è fuor di luogo ricordare un aneddoto sul card. Gasparri che risale al 1923 e che ora è di attualità riferendosi appunto, in via d'ipotesi, alla situazione odierna. Subito dopo la marcia su Roma il cardinale, che era allora segretario di Stato, fu intervistato da un giornalista americano e richiesto della sua opinione sulla probabile durata del nuovo regime. « Può durare due mesi,



La nuova società non costruirà più immensi alveari alla periferia della città. La natura e il verde accompagneranno, come un tempo, la vita di ogni giorno. E il cinguettio del passero, non lo stridore del tram, varrà a fogliare il suono del mattino. Questa esemplare architettura nuova è costruita da HEUTRA in una città giardino americana: Channel Heights.

Edizioni di Comunità. “Here the warm, protective, full-blooded and comforting community – albeit also slow, bigoted, suspicious, oppressive and traditionalist – was contrasted with the cold, impersonal and alienating society, that was at the same time dynamic, technological, practical and innovative.” Edizioni di Comunità was, it could be said, an almost perfect synthesis of all these qualities, crowning Adriano’s dream (we might also say, utopia) of “reconciling community and society, making everyday life more dynamic and introducing a certain quality of affection in the workplace”.

Adriano Olivetti’s intellectual pursuits were nearly always dictated by necessity and by an urgent desire to transfer his ideas and social passion to the industrial project he was developing. However, he managed to keep this quite distinct from the Edizioni di Comunità project, even though they were at times interrelated and often overlapping. His publishing house was a chance for intellectual and professional development, which was just as important to him as the industrial world in Ivrea. Both offered opportunities to meet others and were a hotbed of ideas – places where people gained experience that could then be allowed to burgeon and grow elsewhere, in other professional areas.

Adriano later set up other publishing houses around Edizioni di Comunità, focussing on essays and often going beyond the two rigid and narrow-minded schools of thought resulting from the Cold War. He attempted to indicate a “third way” as a valid alternative to the opposing intellectual standpoints of the time, conditioned by the marked dichotomy between Catholic inter-classicism and Communist class struggle. Adriano Olivetti’s publishing concern gave great stimulus to a cultural revival in Italy in the 1950s. As de’ Liguori Carino comments in his treatise, “Edizioni di Comunità guaranteed the liveliest and greatest dissident thinkers of the time with space in which to investigate ideas, plus free, dynamic divulgence of these, at the same time attempting to give civil society and politics a new practical conscience and new techniques for the construction of an ordered society along the lines that

Adriano Olivetti set forth in his famous essay *Città dell’uomo* (City of Man)”.



A man who made the twentieth century

Just as it is hard for us to appreciate the intellectual climate arising from the cultural complexity of those years, so it is difficult to fully understand Adriano Olivetti’s own thoughts and reduce them to just a few principles. He saw things from a civil perspective, where culture impinges on simple economic mechanisms, a free culture which should have an economic and political function with the ultimate goal of creating a better society. There is no doubt that his innovative and at times disconcerting way of seeing things left its mark on a country faced with the challenge of rebuilding itself after the devastating joint effects of the Fascist regime and the Second World War. It is, however, difficult for us today to understand just how far-sighted Olivetti’s vision actually was, despite some few recognisable contradictions and hasty intellectual short-cuts he took along the way. Owing to Adriano Olivetti’s early death, his philosophy is seen today as a collection of often misunderstood ideals, not fully realised and thus unable to withstand the test of time.

It would, in any case, be a mistake to believe

Left:
Front page of the magazine “Comunità”, No.1, Vol. 1, 1946.

Top:
Adriano winning the “Compasso d’Oro” (Golden Compass) for the *Lettera 22* by Marcello Nizzoli, 1954.

Inauguration of the Olivetti factory in Pozzuoli (near Naples) on 23 April 1955.

that Adriano Olivetti's design was limited to just the microcosm of Ivrea and that his intellectual ambitions and politics arose from his views on industry alone. There was a great deal of interest among Italians in the question of the southern regions of Italy – the Mezzogiorno – in the 1950s, inspired by Carlo Levi's books and the social commitment of intellectuals such as Danilo Dolci. Adriano Olivetti, the pragmatist, translated this interest into important initiatives: extraordinary speeches concerning agrarian reform, the Cassa del Mezzogiorno⁴, the Matera town plan and the new Olivetti factory in Pozzuoli.

When Adriano inherited the family business in the 1940s, it employed just a few hundred workers. By the time Adriano passed away while travelling on a train to Lausanne in 1960, the Olivetti company had more than 45,000 employees, 27,000 of whom were based overseas. As de' Liguori Carino puts it in his *Adriano Olivetti e le Edizioni di Comunità (1946-1960)*, Olivetti's greatness was linked to a concept of business:



[...]as a synthesis of international culture, advanced technology, efficient organisation and participative cooperation, all at the service of the community. It is linked to the concept of man as a combination of producer, consumer and citizen. It is linked to the concept of the State as an integrated system of multiple communities... It is linked to the concept of aesthetics as an added value contributing to the perfection of the machinery... It is linked to the concept of culture, considered as the synthesis of science and technology, humanity and art.

I would like to close with another forceful point made by the sociologist Domenico De

Masi, who thoroughly agrees with Adriano's cultural and social aims. He believes that Adriano should be considered as one of the most influential figures of the twentieth century:

Far from [sharing] the feverish greed for accumulating wealth, the ignorant adventurism of gambling and speculation [...] that still infect so many businessmen today, we can say that Adriano Olivetti helped take business and management from the industrial age into the post-industrial age. Just as, in the same period, Freud and Jung took traditional psychology on to psychoanalysis, Picasso took the painting of Piero della Francesca on to cubism, Einstein took Newton's physics on to relativity, Stravinsky took Romantic music on to atonality and Joyce took the 19th century novel on to today's expansive form.

* **Fabrizio Fazioli**, Doctor of Economic and Social Sciences (University of Neuchâtel), journalist and author. Former editor in charge of the business section and "Micromacro" series for television of the Italian leg of Swiss public broadcasting, RSI. Currently lecturer in Economics and engaged in a variety of international projects.

View of the Olivetti Building in Pozzuoli, constructed in the early 1950s on a design by Luigi Cosenza.



¹ “Community”, a political journal published by Adriano from 1946 to 1960

² “The Political Order of Communities” (Nuove Edizioni Ivrea, 1945)

³ A political organisation promoting a federal union of local communities

⁴ A package of government measures to stimulate economic growth and development in the Mezzogiorno

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Adriano Olivetti, portrait of an enlightened businessman

by Valerio Castronovo*



Left:
Adriano Olivetti, 1959.

On this page:
Aerial view of the Olivetti
factory in Ivrea, 1960s.

Camillo Olivetti and his family, with Adriano Olivetti at the far right in the back row.

Many words have been used to describe Adriano Olivetti, but I feel that perhaps the most appropriate and congenial description of this atypical entrepreneur is that given by Ferruccio Parri, leader of the Italian Resistance and the first Prime Minister of democratic Italy: “positive utopian”. Indeed, the salient feature of Adriano’s work is his pragmatic utopianism. This was evident in his ability to combine culture and industry, but also in his desire to introduce corporate social responsibility to business. Adriano’s vision was a “factory with a human face”. In other words, a work community in step with the latest technology, but without machinery and mechanisms prevailing over the human factor; with profits for the company, but without the profit margin being the company’s only purpose and yardstick.

With a Waldesian mother and Jewish father, Adriano was influenced during his formative years by two different schools of thought, eventually leading him to attempt to conciliate humanism and industrialism. On the one hand, at an intellectual level, the Christian personalism of Maritain and Mounier and the ideals of social reformism. On the other, in his role as a modern businessman, the knowledge and experience he gained during his several visits to the United States, which gave him the opportunity to appreciate the practical results and the social problems arising from developments in Taylorism and Fordism. At the same time that the young Adriano was listed as a “subversive” in the Fascist police’s files, he had started to

draft a project for the organisation of the State along federalist lines. A modern society, according to Adriano, with industry, the workers and culture coming together to be part of an institutional order based on three principles: community, regionalism and federation.

Adriano developed this theory during his period of exile in Switzerland, having fled Italy in October 1943 after the establishment of the Salò Republic. He published his ideas in *L'ordine politico delle comunità*¹, but this was poorly received by many after the liberation of Italy, being considered the fruit of totally abstract conjecture. Nevertheless, one person, Luigi Einaudi, believed otherwise. Although he did not agree with everything Adriano said, he shared his vision of a form of self-governance inspired by the principles of political pluralism: the same principles that this future President of the Italian Republic believed were crucial if Italy was to avoid reproducing the oligarchic and bureaucratic structures of the old centralised State along with the risk of parties with a mass ideology and a corresponding machinery dominating the political scene. Adriano Olivetti’s hope in the immediate post-war years was, therefore, for a democratic system based on local autonomy and new forms of representation and self-governance, together with the creation of a “factory community on a human scale” that would be a hot-bed of cultural and social evolution and not just a production machine.

Of course, Adriano’s cultural background and intuitive, contagious and almost prophetic intelligence – one of his unmistakable qualities – helped him mature this ideology, but certain specific characteristics of his company and the area in which it was based were equally important. Indeed, the business he inherited upon his father’s death immediately after the war was still little more than a medium-sized factory, albeit with a great reputation. This and the local area – Canavese, forming the border of what was once the Duchy of Savoy – were conducive to Adriano’s intentions to create a business capable of combining innovative plans and open industrial relations, as well as his desire to



experiment with ground-roots democracy. This is what he called a “concrete community”, playing the leading role in a new form of social organisation on a local level. The influence of these two aspects – the intrinsic nature of a company whose potential success depended on creativity and technical excellence and the physiognomy of the Ivrea area, still mainly rural with small family-run farms and unaffected by urban development – is reflected in the business type and strategies of the Olivetti factory in the 1950s.

Increasing demand for new durable consumer goods was the main stimulus for the unprecedented output levels and cost-cutting at Olivetti, as well as at Fiat and other firms in the mechanical sector. It is a fact that in 1958 the number of typewriters sold was more than four and half times greater than at the start of the decade; sales of Olivetti portable typewriters had increased nine-fold, and sixty-six times as many calculators were being sold. The



success of the company was not just thanks to the Italians’ growing use of typewriters and mechanical calculators, but also to Olivetti’s expansion on the overseas markets.

However, Olivetti’s amazing success was also due to a series of factors and legacies deriving from Adriano’s particular business strategies and the economic and social scenario in the Canavese area.

Ever since its foundation in 1908 by Camillo Olivetti, the business had always favoured a particularly personalised management system (to the point that the founder and his son were also directly involved in training the factory foremen). The business had remained faithful to its original vocation, mainly focussing on perfecting its operating procedures and investing in R&D, experimentation and



efficient mechanised production lines. It was, after all, a firm of highly qualified and experienced professional technicians and engineers.

While certain attitudes and great expertise in engineering guaranteed Olivetti’s success in production, its original designs and graphics played an important role in making the Olivetti brand stand out on the market and easier to promote. Several clever architects were behind this combination of functionality and aesthetics (Belgioioso, Perasutti, Rogers, Carlo Scarpa, Nizzoli and many more besides). Their input also contributed to the setting up of branches in Italy and overseas, further strengthening the image and prestige of the Olivetti factory in Ivrea.

The other factor that helped make Olivetti so unique was the local area. At the time, the Canavese area was still unaffected by great migratory flows and a proliferation of industrial activities, making it perfect as a model for experimenting with a programme aimed at the expansion of a large company in harmony with the local peasant economy, with power remaining in the

Workers leaving the ICO Building, reading the first edition of the Olivetti factory newspaper, “Giornale di Fabbrica Olivetti”, 1949.

Poster calling for an election meeting of the works council.

View of the assembly department of the Olivetti factory in Pozzuoli, 1958. (Cartier-Bresson)

Right: Book cover of a volume by G. Friedmann, 1955.

hands of the small towns. In other words, Adriano believed that there was a need to set up a few agricultural processing plants in the valleys, rather than simply attracting workers off the fields and away from the valleys and into the cities in the search for better paid jobs. The very figure of the typical Olivetti worker gave strength to Adriano's Community Movement philosophy and the "*Autonomia aziendale*" firm-based trade union: the men had not completely abandoned their links with the countryside around Ivrea, as they still lived in their hometowns and their families continued to own and farm small lots of agricultural land. Both these initiatives were intended to free the working classes from psychological servitude and to avoid the risk of the workers' alienation on the



assembly lines and anonymity in the large factory.

Put briefly, Olivetti became a company famed for the high quality and excellent design of its products, while the local area was immune to the problems of industrial gigantism and excessive urban congestion. These were the bases that allowed Adriano Olivetti to create a pioneering industrial complex, with an avant-garde business culture and distinctly social policies.

Adriano's ideas and intuitions proved crucial. They were not based on positivism or the canons of idealism and Marxism, but rather on his own cultural development process, by studying the works of thinkers and intellectuals such as Schumpeter, Kelsen, Friedmann, Mounier, Simone Weil and Mumford. Thanks to his studies, Adriano was able not only to better understand the fundamental problems of capi-



talism and socialism, but also to fully understand the relevance for contemporary society of scientific knowledge, the transformation of work, law as a technique in social organisation, town planning as a means towards a better standard of living and environmental concerns.

Then again, Adriano Olivetti could depend upon a large staff of intellectuals/managers and consultants coming from various fields of social science and humanities, responsible for both the running of his business and the cultural relations inherent in his projects. All members of staff shared the same vision, free of any form of specialism. They included sociologists, economists, psychologists, politologists, architects and designers, but also writers and scholars. There is no need to list their names here; suffice to say, all (or nearly all) were what we could call "third force" in their orientation, i.e. lay left-wingers with a neo-enlightened education and a tendency to borrow the criteria and models of the progressive North European and American cultures.

What Adriano achieved during the 1950s was quite unique, an extraordinary entrepreneurial adventure for that time and one that acted as a model yet to be equalled. An achievement that not only brought brilliant economic results, but also had singular social objectives. It gave his managers the chance to extend their horizons and do new things, no longer limited to their own

areas of expertise. The factory workers received wages a third higher than those foreseen in the national contracts. Moreover, Adriano introduced a range of recognised social services to which all workers had access (housing, kindergartens, summer camps, transportation, professional schools and many forms of welfare). The company library contained books dealing with a wide range of subjects, even radical and unorthodox trends. Conferences were held every Monday in the cultural centres, open to blue- and white-collar workers alike. Speakers from all walks of life and of different viewpoints were invited – Marxists, Liberals, Catholics and so on – at a time when Italy was divided by fierce political and ideological debate.



These were among the innovative initiatives that Adriano Olivetti introduced in his factory, in line with his social beliefs. But he was also active and far-sighted in local politics. He had had direct experience of the Swiss model and this obviously influenced him. Indeed, Adriano believed in the idea of a federation of small or medium-sized communities, the primary cells of state organisation allowing for both direct relations between the elected and the electors and the development of special forms of self-governance.

He wanted to avoid at all costs the deprivation of authority for civil society by a bureaucratic State and the oligarchy of the main political parties.

Adriano tried to give his project real consistency at Ivrea and certain centres in the Canavese area administered by the Community Movement that he set up in

1950. At the same time he also arranged to decentralise some of the companies serving the Olivetti factory in the surrounding towns and founded an Institute (IRUR) to provide assistance in training for small firms and hi-tech agricultural cooperatives in the local countryside.

In fact the Canavese urban development plan he promoted in 1951, the cultural and educational work carried out by the Community Movement in several small towns and the IRUR investment plans for irrigation, tree planting and infrastructure and for “integrated development” of agricultural and industry all helped to landscape the local area and give a special feel to community life there. These initiatives also ensured a socially acceptable dimension to offset the dynamic development of the Olivetti factory, which became a major employer and industrial concern in the space of just a few years.

Naturally enough, Adriano’s social policies came up against a few problems and a certain amount of resistance: the general industrial establishment viewed his projects with aversion and scepticism; the main unions were either politically biased or short-sighted and thus considered Olivetti’s new industrial relations as a sort



Inauguration of the first construction phase of the housing development for employees of the Olivetti factory in Pozzuoli on 23 April 1955.

Right: Two employees choosing books in the Olivetti factory library, 1960s.

Roberto Olivetti visiting the headquarters of Olivetti Underwood in Toronto (Canada), 1969. (Tomiczek Len)



of modern patronising paternalism or even a form of mystification.

In practice, Adriano did not want to be called an enlightened “patron” by his admirers. Instead, he felt himself to be, and wanted to be, a “reformer”. To all intents and purposes, his practical initiatives (like his revolutionary visions) shared a common denominator: an inspiration arising from and based on a political-cultural project. This led him even to conceive the idea of converting his business into a foundation one day, based on a new form of ownership where all the components involved in production, culture and employment would be fairly represented.

Adriano was, therefore, a man who went against the grain. He has been variously called a dare-devil, a visionary and a man

lost in his dream of combining industrial progress and economic democracy, technological efficiency and social equality.

And yet Adriano managed to pull off a major deal in 1959, just a year before his premature death: the purchase of Underwood. Italian industry had never before been able to negotiate or even consider such an important international deal, i.e. a takeover bid for one of the great American “giants” – the very company that had introduced the first prototype for a typewriter in the late 1800s and which had monopolised one of the most exclusive fields in precision machinery for many decades, thanks to mass production of hundreds of thousands of typewriters each year. Underwood was on a par with Singer for sewing machines and Ford for the automobile. A masterstroke that neither

Camillo nor Adriano Olivetti (having been to Hartford several times to look and learn) would ever have imagined themselves capable of, even in their wildest dreams.

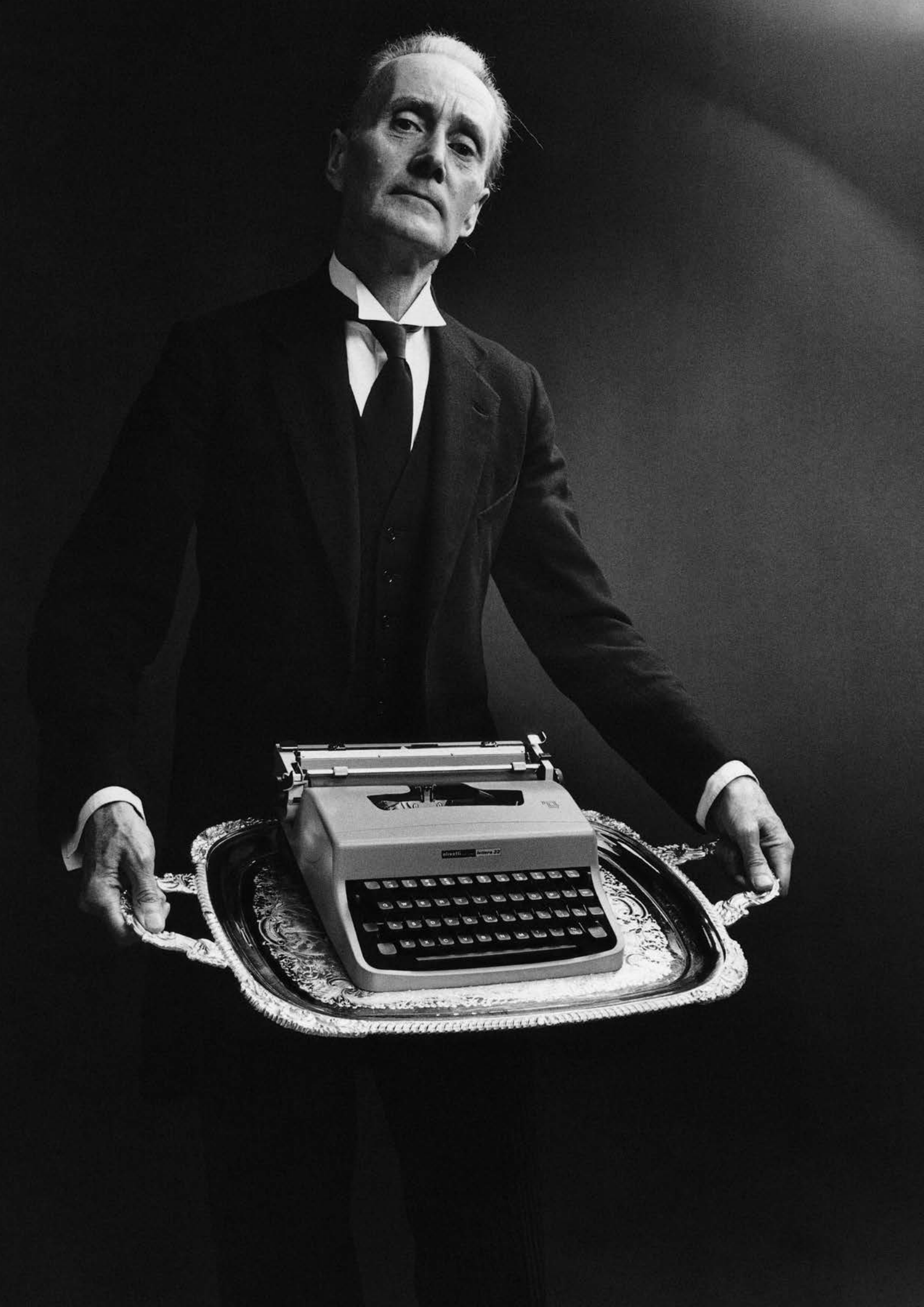
This was not Adriano's only great achievement in this respect. He also managed to compete directly with IBM (before the Japanese) in a strategic sector: electronics. Adriano and his son Roberto had in fact fully realised the potential in switching from transistors to integrated circuits and semiconductors. So much so that they had gained the support of Enrico Fermi and set up a team of scientists and experts in collaboration with the University of Pisa. In 1959 Olivetti produced the first series of the "Elea" mainframe computers. Unfortunately, after Adriano's death in February 1960, a group of financial advisors (including many major names in Italian industry and finance) appointed to reorganise Olivetti made a serious error of judgment when they wrote off computers as a futuristic dream or, at most, a mere toy. Thus it was that, a few years later, the Electronics Division at Olivetti was sold off to General Electric.



¹ "The Political Order of Communities"
(Nuove Edizioni Ivrea, 1945)

* **Valerio Castronovo**, *President of the Economic and Business Study Centre in Rome; historian of Italian economics and business*

Roberto Olivetti
accepting the honorary
doctorate degree
awarded by the Faculty
of Political Science
"C. Alfieri" posthu-
mously to Adriano
Olivetti (who had died
on 27 February that
year). May 1960,
Florence. (Photo Locchi
- Firenze)



Adriano Olivetti: a dream and reality

by Mauro Leo Baranzini and Fabrizio Fazioli*



Left:
Olivetti ad in the 1970s
(Sergio Libis).

On this page:
Adriano Olivetti in a crowd.

Economic sciences and business theory

Economic scholars always struggle when asked to provide an unbiased analysis of the behaviour of economic players. Back in the late 1700s Adam Smith of Scotland (1723-1790) described in great detail the advantages to be gained from a division of labour within the factory and the *invisible hand* of businessmen, in the supreme interest of both them and society as a whole. The Marginalists (1870-c.1936) concerned themselves with a combination of production factors, aimed at letting businesses minimise costs or maximise short-term profits. Alfred Marshall (1842-1924) of Cambridge University defined the conditions whereby a business, in conditions of perfect competition, can maximise its short-term super-profit. Nevertheless, Marshall only considered the manufacturing technology rather than corporate strategies. The end of the 1920s saw great developments in the theory of the firm, again in Cambridge (UK). Thanks first of all to the surprising analysis by Piero Sraffa (1898-1983), Richard Kahn (1905-1989) and Joan Robinson (1903-1983) who came up with models of imperfect markets, such as the monopoly, the oligopoly and monopolistic competition. These were important contributions, helping us to understand the mechanisms of the micro-economy and various types of market. But it was not until the years after the Second World War that modern *managerial theories* evolved.

The different business goals

A private firm's strategies and goals are determined by: (a) its legal standing (if owned directly by an individual or through a company); (b) the type of market on which it operates (perfect competition, monopolistic competition, monopoly, oligopoly); and (c) the power relations between groups with different interests (shareholders, managers, unions and creditors). It should be noted that the way medium and major enterprises are organised today differs from that of the classic *family-run* company in the past, both in terms of their size and organisation and their market share.

Super-profit maximisation

A firm's super-profit (or surplus profit) is equal to the difference between its earnings and total costs; in theory this can be maximised through costs (supply) and earnings (demand) functions. This hypothesis is based on:

1. the conviction that *super-profits* can be recorded in a precise way; this calls for proper knowledge of the value of total earnings and total costs over a long production period;
2. the concept of *holistic* business, with a unique inseparable decision-making unit acting according to the same criteria as the old entrepreneur/boss/manager.

The concept of *super-profit maximisation* dominated micro-economics analysis from 1870 to around 1950. New models were then formulated.

Baumol's theory of sales maximisation (or total revenue)

William Baumol proposed the first managerial theory as an alternative to super-profit maximisation, i.e. *sales revenue maximisation*, based on the following premises:

1. the separation of ownership of the firm from its effective day-to-day running is typical of a modern business; this gives the directors/managers a certain degree of freedom in the *management* of the firm, letting them aim for maximised sales rather than maximised super-profit;
2. the managers' remuneration, including bonuses and fringe benefits, are linked to the sales levels rather than profit levels;
3. financial institutes tend to attach more importance to the volume of sales or total earnings when asked to finance new investments;
4. in non-competitive markets a larger market share allows companies to: (a) control and discourage the entrance of

- new competitors; (b) control the existing competitors' activities, curbing any ambitions they may have to expand; (c) exercise greater power over prices; (d) exercise a certain amount of control over the suppliers of raw materials; (e) control distribution channels better;
5. personnel policies are more relaxed when sales are expanding, as this implies a fall in the fixed costs/total costs ratio;
 6. large sales, increasing over time, give the directors/managers a certain prestige, whereas large profits are mainly to the advantage of the shareholders/owners;
 7. the correlation between sales levels and the managers' remuneration is the result of (a) the need to offer competitive salaries to recruit lower or medium level managerial staff; (b) the managerial structure, which is simpler for small companies and more complex for larger ones; (c) the principle according to which greater levels of responsibility correspond to higher remuneration.

To sum up, Baumol believes that managers seek to maximise sales in order to increase their corporate status in running large companies, and their power is strictly linked to productivity factors, such as human capital, machinery, technology and financial capital. Their power is also connected to market share.

Robin Marris' model of growth rates in the managerial firm

The Cambridge economist Robin Marris holds that a firm tends to maximise the "long run growth rate", expressed by the rate of growth in demand for a firm's products and its share capital. By maximising both the rate of growth in demand and share capital, managers pursue a two-fold goal: to maximise their utility (or job security) and, at the same time, the expectations of the shareholders/owners. Here we should remember that the managerial models are based on clear separation of the ownership and the control of the firm. The

utility function of the managers concerns salaries, power, job security and corporate status; the shareholders/owners have a utility function that includes, first and foremost, the profits and the size of the capital.

According to Marris, the managerial class does not seek to maximise the absolute size of the firm, but rather its rate of growth. Koutsoyiannis points out that "managers prefer to be promoted within the same expanding organisation rather than have to move to a larger organisation where the atmosphere could be hostile for the new entrant". Managers therefore aim for *maximisation of the growth rate* of the firm rather than its size.

John Kenneth Galbraith's technostructure

John Kenneth Galbraith's *technostructure* theory is based on the conviction that large firms have the possibility of creating their own demand through advertising and R&D. Galbraith believes that the figure of the shareholder/owner is slipping into the background.



[...] the entrepreneur, as the directing force of the enterprise, [has been replaced] with management. This is a collective and imperfectly defined entity; in the large corporation it embraces chairman, president, those vice presidents with important staff or departmental responsibility, occupants of the major staff positions and, perhaps, division or department heads [...]. This latter group is very large; it extends from the most senior officials of the corporation to where it meets, at the outer perimeter, the white- and blue-collar workers whose function is to conform more or less mechanically to instruction or

Workers at the Olivetti factory in Pozzuoli, 1958. (Cartier-Bresson)



*routine. It embraces all who bring specialised knowledge, talent or experience to group decision-making. This, not the management, is the guiding intelligence - the brain - of the enterprise. There is no name for all who participate in group decision-making or the organisation which they form. I propose to call this organisation the **Technostructure**. (JKG)*

The private firm: maximum profit and social responsibility

The Olivetti company embodies many of the elements mentioned above and broke new ground in various ways. When we speak of a business with a strong sense of “social responsibility”, we imagine a third or fourth generation entrepreneur with enormous financial means, independent of his entrepreneurial qualities. In the case of Camillo (father) and Adriano (son) Olivetti, we have instead people with outstanding managerial and entrepreneurial skills. As Bruno Caizzi said (1962, page 233):

The Ivrea-based company's fortune was that a man of Adriano's fibre arrived, someone who had no need to be encouraged to take risks. Adriano could see the opportunities and was unparalleled in his ability to seize them. His disposition meant he firmly took the initiative and exploited his experience [...].

Behind this there was also a business plan of global impact, which in 1960, the year of Adriano Olivetti's premature death, took the number of employees to 16,000 in Italy, not counting the thousands overseas, and the 69% equity held in the American company Underwood (which had been the world leader for decades). Adriano Olivetti's managerial qualities were internationally recognised.

The Ivrea company had become a solid, well respected concern. Foreign experts stated that Olivetti was an excellent firm, with a boss full of ingenious ideas and an excellent workforce and technicians, which offered strong, elegant products, created effective advertising and had a tradition of upright commercial morality (CAIZZI, 1962, page 231).

Adriano Olivetti was very committed to “social responsibility”, completely breaking with the traditional theory of the firm:

The factories, administrative offices and research centres were conceived on a human scale “so that [the worker] could find in his everyday workplace a means for redemption and not an instrument of torment. That is why we wanted low windows, open courtyards and the trees in the garden to exclude all idea of constraint and a hostile enclosure” (CAIZZI, 1962, page 223).

The roots of Adriano Olivetti's concern may be found in this personal memory:

Way back in August 1914, when I was 13 years old, my father sent me to work in the factory. I quickly realised that I hated the boring repetitive work; a torture for the spirit that was imprisoned for endless hours and hours, in the dark and blackness of an old workshop. I did not enter the factory again for many years, determined that I would not make my living in my father's factory. I would go past the red brick factory walls, ashamed of my freedom as a student, with sympathy and concern for all those who tirelessly worked within, day after day (Adriano Olivetti, quoted by CAIZZI, 1962, page 132).

Adriano Olivetti would later replace the “old smoky workshop” with a well lit, reassuring environment for his workforce. He reduced their working hours and toil, guaranteed his workers – at all levels – the best welfare measures and the best lodgings possible. Shortly before he died, he told his workers:

Now that I too have worked with you for many years, I still cannot forget or accept the social differences, unless as a situation to be redeemed, a heavy responsibility full of duty. Sometimes, when I stop briefly and see the bright windows of those working a double shift at the automatic lathes, I want [...] to go and speak to them, thanking them as they work at those machines that I have known for so many years (ADRIANO OLIVETTI, quoted by CAIZZI, 1962, pages 133-4).

The priority he gave to employment over short-term profits can be seen in Adriano Olivetti's reaction to the mini-recession in 1952, when a slowdown in the global economy led to a sharp fall in sales of typewriters and calculators. According to the economic theory in vogue at the time, the Olivetti managers should have cut output and kept prices steady to minimise losses. Adriano Olivetti's reaction, however, was quite different: he immediately launched on a more dynamic and daring expansion strategy. Some 700 new salesmen were employed in Italy that year, prices were cut and many new branches opened. This policy proved to be a great success. His reaction antici-

pated, as it were, the managerial theories of the firm, of long run growth maximisation. The workforce often rewarded Olivetti for this policy in their favour. For instance, when the occupying Nazis decided to bomb the factory on several occasions during the Second World War, the workers removed some of the machinery, hiding the equipment in their own homes, to await better times. The machinery was returned to the factory immediately after the armistice so that production could start again.

Adriano Olivetti was also ahead of the times in his recruitment and training strategies. The assembly line still dominated the automobile industry until about 1970, using unskilled labour: absenteeism and demotivation were rife as a consequence. Olivetti, however, was already employing the very best of the technicians leaving the polytechnics, universities and technical schools in the 1950s.

The structural transformation of the company has seen a proportional rise [...] in the number of engineers and technicians with respect to general clerks, and in the number of skilled workers with respect to simple unskilled workers. The factory is employing a growing number of university and high school graduates and specialists, and it calls for workers with a certain degree of professional preparation from the country and, even at the lowest level of the pyramid, it requires better school education, and it works to promote this (CAIZZI, 1962, page 241).

Here too, Adriano Olivetti foresaw the introduction of the “Japanese model”, introduced in the 1970s, which replaced

View of the executive management building of the Olivetti factory in Pozzuoli, constructed in the early 1950s on a design by Luigi Cosenza.



Graduates of the two-year training programme for electricians, participating in a laboratory experiment.

The building housing the Olivetti research and development department in Ivrea, built in 1954/55 on a design by Eduardo Vittoria.



Ford's "assembly chain". Here it is a team of specialists that make the entire machine thanks to modern efficient machinery and robots: gone are those old repetitive jobs. Already in the 1950s Olivetti was investing the greater part of its profits in technologically advanced machinery and in research, recruiting the best physicists and researchers available. Increasing investment in physical capital is at the base of the Japanese model, which was recently adopt-

ed by the Fiat Italiana model plant at Melfi, which uses the same Japanese technique, with outsourcing of some of the just-on-time and on-line components purchased from external companies.

Adriano Olivetti's philosophy, as we will see below, was charged with ethical and human values and was totally different to the raider mentality that became fashionable in the last two decades of the twentieth century. "Make a fast buck" is the speculators' motto. The free market and unethical competitiveness (at any price) have become the norm in many sectors of the economy today. The problem lies in the fact that the free market scenario is "short sighted". The Lombard historian Raul Merzario, introducing Stefania Bianchi's book *Le terre dei Turconi* (The Land of the Turconi), discussed the notion of price in the 1700s and 1800s in upper Lombardy. Prices were, of course, linked to wheat and the business strategies of landowners, but the author "shows us that, with the figures in hand, prices for centuries during the Modern Age were determined not only by economic factors, but also – and even more so – by social values, such as class, power, the importance of personal consumption by the peasants, family relationships,

friendships, the distances between sellers and buyers and many other factors besides". These are the principles that characterised our society in the years leading up to the twentieth century. With a few significant exceptions, however, such as the Olivetti dynasty, for whom human beings came first, not the fast buck.

The spirit of the age

At this point it is worth looking at the social and historical context in which Adriano Olivetti's project grew and operated: it was a unique, glorious period of general economic boom, increased well-being and democratic aspirations of the people. Pressure for social change was, if truth be said, already felt after the First World War, but the recession in the 1930s and then the Second World War slowed things down. It was only in the 1950s that



it became urgent, when people generally felt prosperity to be their right and that even work could play a significant part in the process of redistributing wealth. There was even the belief that an effective economic democracy could finally follow universal suffrage in the democratic process, where the economy would be more participative and the social needs of the people would be taken into account. In other words, growth was the keyword and not just at Olivetti: production, productivity, employment, salaries, prices, consumption, savings, investments, public spending... in a general unique climate that was the post-war economic miracle. Adriano Olivetti's philosophy perfectly fits

Apprentice in the training centre for mechanics, 1962.

the strong positivistic trend of the age, but added a completely new dimension to this, deriving from his culture and the environments he frequented when still a young man. Some have called it a utopia, others a vision. Whatever term we may use, it provided the drive for a business project that went well beyond a merely economic result. During this period of great euphoria and common economic success, two different business models existed in Turin: the Agnelli model and the Olivetti model. Indeed, this gave rise to a certain amount of polemics. For example, Adriano Olivetti, called the *red entrepreneur*, never joined Confindustria, thus showing his disaffection for the business doctrine of the time.

At the age of twenty-five, Adriano went to the United States where he became fascinated by Fordism, at least initially. He actually managed to convince his father to reorganise the factory in a completely different manner, but at the same time he tried to go beyond the purely *Taylorian* management techniques, applying them in

a manner less degrading to the employees and rendering things more participative.

In her autobiography, *Lessico familiare*, Natalia Ginzburg frequently refers to Adriano Olivetti, who had married her sister Paola. In her warm, almost psychoanalytical portrait of Adriano, she describes him as being “affectionate, awkward and shy. He loved eating cakes...”. She also speaks kindly of him when she recalls how he helped her father to flee the Germans and again, when he “came to us, as we were fleeing that house, to get Turati, he was out of breath, frightened and yet happy, when he managed to save someone”. Adriano’s professional training was almost unique in Italy at the time. His parents came from a very learned background. His father Camillo, the founder of Olivetti, had taught at Stanford in California and was a non-practising Jew with socialist views. Adriano’s mother, the daughter of a Waldensian shepherd and a great preacher, also had a strong influence on his beliefs. These two backgrounds made for a very moral family and the ideal environment to



Camillo Olivetti (1868 – 1943) in the 1930s at an address of a staff assembly in the inner courtyard of the first factory building.

spur a young man to dedicate his life to the good of his fellow man.

Adriano's utopia

Positivism and the ideas of the Enlightenment left their mark on Adriano Olivetti's intellectual development and philosophy, as well as Fordism, socialism and many aspects of American life – all typical of the 1900s. His outlook changed towards the end of the Second World War, however. For Adriano, socialism and liberal thought were no longer enough. He started to develop his own original concept of business and soci-



ety, leading to the idea of the Community: a mixture of utopia and federalism, local autonomy and direct democracy (one result of Adriano's time in Switzerland during the war). The idea of Community would even become a political movement and a publishing project – the *Edizioni di Comunità*. The year he died, Adriano published his book *Città dell'uomo* (City of Man), containing a collection of his articles and speeches on the Community Movement, the world of industry, town planning and the local area, the problems of the Mezzogiorno (southern regions of Italy), and the vision of an integrated, participatory and responsible society. His actions were consistent with his thoughts. The factory in Ivrea was one and the same as the city, with a kind of reciprocal relationship with the local area. However, Adriano's Ivrea differed from the company town in Crespi d'Adda and the Falck steelworks in Sesto San Giovanni: there was none of the nineteenth-century paternalism that kept the workers' families tied to the factory, having them live in factory lodgings

and attend company schools. From the age of the typewriter (early 1900s) to that of calculators and personal computers, the structures and facilities provided for the families of Olivetti employees formed an authentic model of corporate welfare.

The Olivetti legend also evolved thanks to the presence of an unusual group of intellectuals, Adriano's close collaborators: town planners and designers, like Zevi and Sottsass, poets such as Giudici, writers like Volponi (can you imagine an author as the personnel manager of a factory today?), sociologists such as Ferrarotti and academics like Pampaloni. Luciano Gallino, a famous Italian industrial sociologist, also worked at Ivrea. In 2001 he wrote an invented interview with Adriano Olivetti: "I was there, I took part in creating the Community Movement conceived by Olivetti back in 1948. He loved the people, that's why Adriano combined Fordism and socialism". In 2005 Luciano Gallino published his *L'impresa irresponsabile* (The Irresponsible Firm), probably thinking of a firm the exact opposite to Olivetti:

A firm may be called irresponsible if it feels it has no duty, apart from its legal obligations, to answer to any public authority or public opinion concerning the economic, social or environmental consequences of its activities [...]. Working conditions, prices, transportation, the environment, leisure, food, the way a family is organised, the chance to build oneself a life: whether we like it or not, these all depend on the decisions of a firm's management, more than the decisions of state government [...]. Unfortunately, these social responsibilities of the firm are all too often subordinate to other priorities.

None of this could be seen in the responsible and innovative way that Adriano Olivetti viewed his business. In 1955, in a speech to the workers, he posed a few questions that, of course, were never answered, especially if we consider industry today:

Can industry set itself goals? Are these simply found in the profit indexes? Isn't there something more fascinating beyond the normal rhythm of business, maybe a destination or a vocation, in the life of a factory?

The American sociologist Lewis Mumford visiting the Olivetti factory in 1957.

This is what the philosopher Umberto Galimberti said in an interview on Swiss television in February 2010:

Olivetti would not survive today, indeed it has not survived. The reason for this is that if you focus on mankind, then invariably you are kept in check by those who focus on money. Olivetti had a dream, a very important utopia, and created a culture that had man and his realisation as the centre of output. Olivetti invited industry to look at society. I would have liked to point this fact out to Adriano Olivetti, and not because I find fault with his intentions, but simply because I see how society works today. It works exactly like a technostructure, with men inserted in the company to be parts of the machinery, not individuals with their own desires, aspirations and will. This is where Adriano Olivetti's utopia lies.

Man at the centre of the factory

Mankind. Not a part of a well-oiled corporate machine, something to tame and make productive, just another cog in the wheel, but an individual to be considered as such,



with his own thoughts, problems, expectations and dreams. Someone who should (and needs to) work, of course, but not in a factory-prison, but rather in a factory-community. With extraordinary results and cutting-edge technological solutions. Then again, the Italian dream – that of the Agnelli family – took the form of a brand-new car and the assembly line. Hard, much criticised, but stable. A little skill, lots of effort and, especially, no need to think: in perfect Henry Ford style.

A book was published in 2005, by which time Adriano Olivetti's dream had certainly died, with the revealing title of *Uomini e lavoro alla Olivetti* (Men and Work at Olivetti), edited by Francesco Novara, Renato Rozzi and Roberta Garruccio. It contains a series of testimonials by people from all walks of life: shop-floor workers, engineers, architects and consultants, who all played an important part in the Olivetti project, before and after Adriano. The intention of this book is to freeze human memory in time, to give it voice and to contribute in some way to cultivating what has now become the Olivetti legend. An instance of social memory. Scores of voices: we read the criticism – some garbed in tactful terms, others outright cruel – of Adriano Olivetti's successors, those who gradually dismantled this industrial jewel, bit by bit, and reduced it to a dream and utopia. This might sound a bit bizarre today, when everyone claims to be "Olivettian", though without really being it and without sharing the values Adriano Olivetti left us. One of the many voices stands out, found in the introduction to the book. It sounds much like an epitaph:

If in other factories the worker was just part of the general anonymous mass, at Olivetti he was a well-known distinct individual, with his own story to tell and his own working life.

The late Francesco Novara worked closely with Adriano and was head of the Industrial Psychology Centre at Olivetti from the 1950s until 1992. Editor of the book, he dedicates a sort of "day after" essay to the firm and its prime mover, concluding it with these words:

The old builders of the future in industry have now been replaced by share hunters, stock exchange speculators, monopoly grabbers, architects of cross-shareholding and corporate pyramids. These voices bear witness to the world of work – now humiliated – in today’s torn and disoriented society, the victim of the risks of a financialised economy. They recall the lasting value of the reasons for the company’s success: its responsibility and ability to introduce constant innovation. Innovation that was realistic and daring, rational and imaginative, aimed at the excellence of the products, the quality of life for workers and improvements in social life.

Are there any labels that haven’t been used to describe Adriano Olivetti these past fifty years since his death? *The red entrepreneur, pioneer of innovation, icon of a different capitalism, enlightened master* and many more besides – all references that Olivetti himself would probably have appreciated, references that clearly express the distance in time, typical for a person who died in the midst of intense activity, at the head of an industrial empire that employed tens of thousands. There is no doubt that there has never been another such figure in the history of industry and culture – at least in Italy – capable of creating such a legend as “Adriano and Olivetti”. The man and his values are still often referred to today, almost as a contrast to our modern controversial economy and industrial scene, so often indecipherable, confused and without direction.

Indro Montanelli once wrote in response to a reader who asked what exactly made Adriano Olivetti so unique:

[...] he wanted to invent a completely new model of business where capital and work were associated. This was the ideal, or mirage, behind the famous Olivetti Community. Perhaps its creator never realised just how this challenged the interests of both the employers and the unions, who survive thanks to the conflict of their interests. [...] Olivetti was perfectly aware of this contraposition, but was convinced he could overcome it. And this was his real Utopia.

Perhaps the portrait that Adriano would have liked the best is Natalia Ginzburg’s slightly nostalgic and enigmatic description of him in *Lessico famigliare*:

I met him in the street in Rome one day during the Nazi occupation. He was alone, wandering around, his eyes lost in his constant dreams, veiled as it were by blue mists. He was dressed like everyone else, but somehow seemed a beggar among the crowd and yet, at the same time, also a king. A king in exile, it seemed to me.

* **Mauro Leo Baranzini**, Full Professor, University of Lugano, and Member of the Lombard Institute of Science and Letters, Milan.

* **Fabrizio Fazioli**, Doctor of Economic and Social Sciences (University of Neuchâtel), journalist and author. Former editor in charge of the business section and “Micromacro” series for television of the Italian leg of Swiss public broadcasting, RSI. Currently lecturer in Economics and engaged in a variety of international projects.

Adriano Olivetti at an address in the "Salone dei 2000", a hall of the Ivrea factory works, 29 October 1948.



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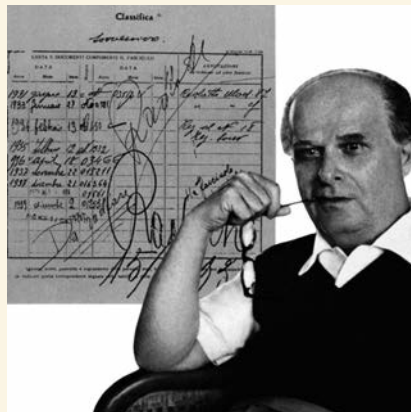
FRANCESCO NOVARA, Renato Rozzi and Roberta Garruccio (editors) *Uomini e lavoro alla Olivetti*, Mondadori, Milan, 2005.

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Community and cantons: the search for political freedom

by Davide Cadeddu*



Left:
Adriano Olivetti at his work desk,
1958.

On this page:
During the period of Fascism, Adriano
Olivetti was regarded as a "subversive".
(Picture from "Storia Illustrata",
A. Mondadori Editore)

In September 1945, Adriano Olivetti received the final proofs of his book *L'ordine politico delle Comunità* (The Political Order of Communities) from a printer in Samedan (Oberengadin). He had started working on this book in 1942 and finished it during his period of exile during the Second World War in Switzerland. Before publishing this work – which he intended to act as a guide for all his future endeavours – Adriano, the man of dialogue, had spoken with a great number of people. Traces of these dealings remain in his memoirs, his private correspondence and the documents that the Italian State Archive and archives in other countries now make available for public consultation. In fact, through his studies, observations and conversations Adriano sought to understand which institutional model would have best guaranteed freedom

Adriano was politically active in the period between the autumn of 1942 and February 1944, when he was forced to flee to Switzerland together with his secretary Wanda Soavi to escape capture by the Italian carabinieri and Military Information Service. In fact, after a daring escape from the Regina Coeli jail in Rome where they had been held for a few months, they were still being sought by the authorities in connection with an attempt to create a link between the Allies, the antifascists, the armed forces, the Vatican and the Italian Monarchy. Adriano became agent number 660 at the Office of Strategic Services in June 1943 (his name had been put forward by Egidio Reale among others). This made it easy for Olivetti – with the code name “Brown” – to gain the ear of the Special Operations Executive. However, despite



of thought in a State founded on a socialist economic system¹. Switzerland proved to be important for him. It was a place where he met people significant to him, and both the place and people served as a source of inspiration. In the past, he had been able to feel at home there. In the 1930s Adriano had often been in Geneva, a guest of the antifascist Guglielmo Ferrero, and he had probably also met Ignazio Silone in Zurich. While the former introduced him to the political philosophy of Umberto Campagnolo (who would later play an important role in setting up the factory library at Ing. C. Olivetti & C. and Adriano's publishing house Nuove Edizioni Ivrea, the forerunner of the more famous Edizioni di Comunità), the latter was almost certainly responsible for putting him in contact with the American secret service in January 1943.

being considered a valuable and dependable source of information, the Allies' strategic plans were not compatible with what Adriano proposed after crossing the border into Switzerland². “Bearing in mind the dominant British attitude and the lack of determination shown by the Italians”, we should remember that “from the middle of 1942 to the fall of Mussolini in July 1943 there were no real chances of reaching a separate peace between the Allied Powers and Italy”³.

During these months Adriano was not only busy in antifascist activities, but he also started to develop a plan for institutional and social reform focused on the local political body, which he called the “Community”. He proposed this to several Italians and foreigners⁴. Adriano managed to reach Switzerland via San Pietro, near Stabio, with the help of the Ospedale Italiano in

From left to right:

A. Olivetti,
Città dell'uomo,
1960.

Various authors,
Il Dio che è fallito,
1950.

A. Olivetti,
Fini e fine della politica,
1949.

Lugano. He then stayed mainly in Champfèr, a few kilometres from St. Moritz, in the Chesa Guardalej Hotel, until May 1945. This was where he matured his ideas, already set forth in his *Memorandum sullo Stato Federale delle Comunità in Italia* (Memorandum on the Federal State of Communities in Italy) in May 1943. Switzerland offered him the chance to reflect and to compare his ideas and opinions with those of many other Italian antifascists in exile in Switzerland. Adriano led a very quiet life in Champfèr. After obtaining permits from the Swiss authorities, he visited Zurich, Lugano, Basel, Berne, Lausanne and, especially, Geneva, meeting friends and new acquaintances. In Geneva he met several of his young collaborators at the Nuove Edizioni Ivrea publishing house: Luciano Foà, who would later help set up the Adelphi publishing house in

Switzerland was doubtlessly one of his main sources of inspiration, in addition to the United States and the United Kingdom. Concerning the function that the Community should have in Italy, he wrote that it represented a sort of “rationalisation of the Swiss canton” or, better, “its adaptation to Italian tradition”: once perfected, it would be capable of “tackling the complex tasks of modern society”. In fact, while the Swiss canton had “exclusively historical” origins that failed to take into account “the needs of the economy and not even a logical administrative division”, the Communities he proposed were conceived on a rational basis, taking into account both their history and geography and their economic and political facets. More specifically, the representation of interests and democratic representation could be combined by ensuring that the



the 1960s, and Giorgio Fuà, destined to become one of the greatest Italian economists in the second half of the twentieth century. His exile forced Adriano to compare his own convictions – and the convictions of many others – with those held by the federalists Ernesto Rossi, Egidio Reale, Luigi Einaudi and Altiero Spinelli, as well as the beliefs of socialists such as Ignazio Silone, Guglielmo Usellini, Alessandro Levi, Edgardo Lami Starnuti and Ugo Guido Mondolfo. His main goal was to create a kind of institutional system that embraced both federalism and socialism⁵.

The idea of Community – a kind of small province – was later explained by Olivetti in Italy by reflecting on the conditions found in the Canavese area and on other foreign political experiences. He mainly focused on federal states and those distinguished by local bodies with political autonomy.

economic district coincided with the administrative area and with that of the single-member constituency that would elect the president of the Community and thus the future Member of Parliament. The local “Community” body should have “the average size of a canton”, yet also and especially coinciding with the traditional Italian units such as the diocese, the constituency, the area or the district⁶. The vitality and efficiency exemplified by the Swiss cantons were a guarantee for the future of the Communities in Italy, which should be built upon “analogous administrative principles”⁷. The confederate Communities would then give rise to regions, established according to identical criteria: demographic size, history, geographical borders, local economic resources and administrative efficiency. These confederate regions would then form the federal Italian State⁸.

From left to right:

Schumpeter,
*Capitalismo,
socialismo e
democrazia*,
1955.

L. Mumford,
*La condizione
dell'uomo*,
1957.

Kierkegaard,
Scuola di cristianesimo,
1960.

Luigi Einaudi was contrary to the idea of a grand plan – whether political or economic – and saw Adriano’s Community as the most appropriate administrative solution for many of the problems in Italian politics at the time. Einaudi often freely and violently disagreed with Olivetti on certain issues, but thanks to his critical support Olivetti tempered some of the cooperative aspects of his original project, though it still represented a dynamic and intrinsically democratic form of corporatism. Both were convinced, however, that the pride in belonging to a political body based on local areas, or functioning on the basis of precise characteristics and within a restricted group of people, was certain to feed that sense of individual responsibility which had been weakened or destroyed by mass political parties and totalitarian regimes⁹.

their ideas became topical again, although they were ultimately ignored¹⁰.

In the winter of 1944/1945 Adriano wanted the Nuove Edizioni di Capolago publishing house (set up in 1936 by Gina Ferrero Lombroso, Egidio Reale and Ignazio Silone¹¹) to publish his final views in a *Memorandum sullo Stato Federale delle Comunità* (Memorandum on the Federal State of Communities) under a pseudonym. However this was not to be, as they could not agree on terms and Adriano kept making changes to his work. It would only later be published at the author’s own expense¹². From what we can deduce from his correspondence with Odoardo Masini, Guglielmo Usellini, Paola Carrara Lombroso and Egidio Reale, there must have been some disagreement between Adriano and the Ferrero brothers (he had promised them he would



In November 1944, Einaudi and Olivetti’s discussions seemed capable of becoming part of current political affairs in North Italy. At the same time that he wrote his famous open letter to all members of the National Liberation Committee (*Lettera aperta del Partito d’Azione a tutti i partiti aderenti al Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale*), Altiero Spinelli in Milan asked both of them – on behalf of the executive of the Partito d’Azione political party in the North of Italy – to provide a programme for the reconstruction of the Italian State. The programme should develop the autonomy theory put forward by Einaudi in his *Via il prefetto!* article, which referred to the idea of “Community”. Their individual replies were not acted upon, due to intervening developments in Italian politics, and it was only after the Second World War, during meetings of the Committee on the Constitution, that

buy out their publishing business in 1943).¹³ Perhaps it was for this reason that one of the very first books to be published by Edizioni di Comunità immediately after the war was Guglielmo Ferrero’s *Potere* (Power) with an introduction by Umberto Campagnolo.

Just as Adriano’s work seemed about to be published, Ernesto Rossi decided to express his reserves. Rather than returning the proofs to Adriano with his comments in the margin, he wrote him two letters that now provide us with a rare testimony of a man’s trust in and intellectual respect for another. In his usual frank manner, the economist criticises the work saying, among other things, that “the book is still too tiresome to read” and “only a very few people would actually plough through it, even if many might well say it is ‘interesting’, without ever having read it”. In other words, he foresees what would be confirmed by later events.

From left to right:

N. Berdiaev,
Spirito e libertà,
1947.

Barsotti,
La fuga immobile,
1957.

L. Beveridge,
L’azione volontaria,
1954.

Rossi also perceives an issue that would justify the label of “utopian” used to describe Adriano’s political philosophy from the post-war years to the present day: “What you write about Christian morals, i.e. that this should influence all the activities of the administrative organs, will be seen by the common reader as being too naive”. He adds that “our moral motives in taking action do not change, or change only a little, owing to the fact that the political administrative order has changed”. And he concludes by saying: “to state that the organisation of the Communities would be soulless without a full moral revolution where a spirit of charity pervades social justice seems to me to diminish the value of your proposals, as many people believe that such a revolution will never take place”¹⁴.

(now the SOS) in Lugano on several occasions from March 1944¹⁸ onwards, dealing especially with Ferdinando Santi and Guglielmo Canevascini¹⁹. In May 1944, he wrote in a letter to Santi that all his family, following an announced “worsening of racial laws”, quickly decided that they should cross the border to Switzerland, in particular, his sister Elena, wife of the recently expatriated Arrigo, and their children Vittorio, Luisa and Camillo²⁰.

Adriano managed to direct, at least partially, the antifascist resistance movement in the Ivrea factory from his place of exile in Champfèr. On several occasions he gave the Comitato Svizzero di Soccorso Operaio guarantees about the antifascist sentiments of the young men about to flee Italy in order to facilitate their welcome in Switzerland²¹. In exchange for the attention paid by the



However it was too late to alter the work. The *Memorandum sullo Stato Federale delle Comunità* was ready for publication, with the title *L'ordine politico delle Comunità* (The Political Order of Communities). It was, according to the author, “a personal work and not a political party’s creed”¹⁵. It was the pondered conclusion of a period spent in political exile¹⁶.

In actual fact, Adriano had been considered an “Arian” by the Fascist authorities. All the other members of his family were, on the other hand, held to be Jews by the Fascist regime, apart from his sister Elena and, of course, his mother¹⁷. For this reason, Adriano did all he could to make it possible for both his former wife Paola Levi and their children and his brother Massimo and his respective family to enter Switzerland. He even contacted the Comitato Svizzero di Soccorso Operaio

Comitato to him and his relatives, he sent it money to help finance its efforts in September of that year to bring relief (food and basic goods) to Italian children in the recently liberated areas of Italy, especially in the Val d’Ossola²². The sentiments of the managers of the Comitato Svizzero di Soccorso Operaio, even before this, can perhaps be best summed up in Ferdinando Santi’s words in a letter to Adriano in July 1944: “I wanted to beg you not to speak of any special courtesy paid to you and yours. In reality, what little we did was more than right and proper in view of your many welcome acts of charity. I personally have no especial merit in this; it was the Comitato that helped you, as it has many other less deserving people”²³.

After the publication of his *L’ordine politico delle Comunità*, Adriano felt that the time was right to dedicate his energies to politics

From left to right:
Kierkegaard,
Timore e tremore,
1948.
S. Weil,
La condizione operaia,
1952.
E. Mounier,
Rivoluzione personalista e comunitaria,
1949.

Portrait of Adriano Olivetti.

“of a direct nature”. He therefore confided in Guglielmo Usellini that “in the current political climate, in the imminent struggle”, the only “logical and coherent conclusion” was to ask to “join the socialist party, as this is the only one that, on account of the spiritual orientation of its best men and its practical attitude”, best coincided with his aspirations of “a spiritual and organisational renewal of the socialist movements”²⁴. One month after joining the European Federalist Movement, thanks to Ernesto Rossi’s intervention²⁵ and while still in Switzerland, Adriano also joined the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP), but his own political ideas, matured during the turmoil of war, would soon lead him to found and head an autonomous political party upon his return to Italy: the Community Movement²⁶. The social organisation that Adriano had studied and experienced for himself in Switzerland formed, for him, a practical example of many of his ideas for reform, which he strove to introduce in the 1950s. His sudden death is, therefore, as in any legend, something that may sum up the whole of his existence. Forever forward-looking and engaged in expressing his ideas and the search for paradigmatic experiences²⁷, Adriano Olivetti died in February 1960 on a train to Lausanne, in the land that had guaranteed him – as it has so many other great spirits – the opportunity of freedom of expression during those difficult war-torn years.



* **Davide Cadeddu**, *Researcher on the history of political doctrines at Milan University and director of the Société Européenne de Culture. Editor at ISAP (Institute of Public Administration Sciences) and co-ordinator for “Comprendre. Revue de politique de la culture”.*

¹ See D. CADEDDU, *Adriano Olivetti politico*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome, 2009.

² For details of Adriano’s intelligence activities, see D. CADEDDU, *Introduction*, in A. OLIVETTI, *Stato Federale delle Comunità. La riforma politica e sociale negli scritti inediti (1942-1945)*, critical edition by D. CADEDDU, FrancoAngeli, Milan, 2004; and M. BERETTINI, *La Gran Bretagna e l’antifascismo italiano. Diplomazia clandestina, Intelligence, Operazioni speciali (1940-1943)*, preface by M. de Leonardis, Le Lettere, Florence, 2010, pages 122-129.

³ E. AGA ROSSI, *Una nazione allo sbando. L’armistizio italiano del settembre 1943 e le sue conseguenze*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2003, pages 59-60.

⁴ See the views expressed in *La riforma politica e sociale di Adriano Olivetti (1942-1945)*, edited by D. CADEDDU, Fondazione Adriano Olivetti, Rome, 2005.

⁵ With regard to antifascist emigration, see A. GAROSCI, *Storia dei fuorusciti*, Laterza, Bari, 1953; E. SIGNORI, *La Svizzera e i fuorusciti italiani. Aspetti e problemi dell’emigrazione politica 1943-1945*, preface by G. Spadolini, FrancoAngeli, Milan, 1983; R. BROGGINI, *Terra d’asilo. I rifugiati italiani in Svizzera. 1943-1945*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1993; IDEM, *La frontiera della speranza. Gli ebrei dall’Italia verso la Svizzera 1943-1945*, Mondadori, Milan, 1998.

⁶ A. OLIVETTI, *L’ordine politico delle Comunità*, V, 3 (c).

⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 1.

⁸ See D. CADEDDU, *Il valore della politica in Adriano Olivetti*, Fondazione Adriano Olivetti, Rome, 2007, for details of Adriano’s political philosophy.

⁹ Cf. D. CADEDDU, *Del liberalismo di Luigi Einaudi. Tre esercizi di lettura*, Cuem, Milan, 2007, pages 65-94.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibidem*.

¹¹ See R. CASTAGNOLA ROSSINI, *Incontri di*

spiriti liberi. Amicizie, relazioni professionali e iniziative editoriali di Silone in Svizzera, Lacaïta, Manduria-Bari-Rome, 2004.

¹² Cf. the copy of Adriano's letter to Odoardo Masini, Champfèr dated 13 December 1944, in the Archivio del Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca e documentazione sulla storia del '900, Pavia University, the *Guglielmo Usellini* collection, Fal. G, doc. 111 (another copy is held in the Central State Archives in Rome, in the *Egidio Reale* collection, b. 4, dossier "118 Adriano Olivetti").

¹³ Cf. CASTAGNOLA ROSSINI, *Incontri di spiriti liberi*, cit., page 115, and Adriano's letter to Reale dated 16 February 1945, in the Central State Archives in Rome, in the *Egidio Reale* collection b. 4, dossier "118 Adriano Olivetti".

¹⁴ Letter from Rossi to Adriano, dated 31 March 1945, in the Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence, the *Ernesto Rossi* collection, vol. 22, dossier "Adriano Olivetti".

¹⁵ Letter from Adriano to Rossi, dated 9 April 1945, in the Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence, the *Ernesto Rossi* collection, vol. 22, dossier "Adriano Olivetti".

¹⁶ Cf. the "Questionnaire" of the Police Division of the Federal Department of Justice and Police, page 11, in the Swiss Federal Archives, Berne, *E 4264 1985/196*, vol. 1763, dossier "N 20629 Olivetti Adriano 11.4.01 Italian".

¹⁷ Cf. V. OCHETTO, *Adriano Olivetti*, Mondadori, Milan, 1985, page 103.

¹⁸ Cf. Adriano's letter to Santi dated 12 March 1944, in D. CADEDDU, *Adriano Olivetti e la Svizzera (January 1943 - September 1945)*, in *Spiriti liberi in Svizzera. La presenza di fuoriusciti italiani nella Confederazione negli anni del fascismo e del nazismo (1922-1945). Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Ascona, Centro Monte Verità, Milan University, 8-9 November 2004*, by R. Castagnola, F. Panzera and M. Spiga, Franco Cesati, Florence, 2006, page 227.

¹⁹ See N. VALSANGIACOMO COMOLLI, *Storia di un leader. Vita di Guglielmo Canevascini 1886-*

1965, Fondazione Pellegrini-Canevascini - Fondazione Miranda e Guglielmo Canevascini, s.l. [Lugano] 2001 for a general outline.

²⁰ Cf. Adriano's letter to Santi dated 25 May 1944, in CADEDDU, *Adriano Olivetti e la Svizzera*, cit., pages 231-232.

²¹ Cf. Adriano's letter to the Comitato Svizzero di Soccorso Operaio dated 22 April 1944, in CADEDDU, *Adriano Olivetti e la Svizzera*, cit., page 230.

²² Cf. the letters to Olivetti dated 26 September and 13 October [194]4, and Adriano's letter to the Comitato Svizzero di Soccorso Operaio dated 4 October 1944, in CADEDDU, *Adriano Olivetti e la Svizzera*, cit., pages 236-238.

²³ Letter from Santi to Adriano dated 1 July 1944, in CADEDDU, *Adriano Olivetti e la Svizzera*, cit., page 233.

²⁴ Adriano's letter to Usellini dated 23 March 1945, in the Archivio del Centro interdipartimentale di ricerca e documentazione sulla storia del '900, Pavia University, *Guglielmo Usellini* collection, Fal. B, dossier 1, doc. 4.

²⁵ Cf. Adriano's letter to Rossi dated 5 March 1945, in the Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence, *Ernesto Rossi* collection, vol. 22, dossier "Adriano Olivetti".

²⁶ See A. OLIVETTI, *Fini e fine della politica. Democracy without political parties. Con un discorso inedito*, introduction by D. Cadeddu, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2009.

²⁷ For a brief biography of Adriano Olivetti, see D. CADEDDU, "*Humana civilitas*". *Profilo intellettuale di Adriano Olivetti*, in G. SABELLI - D. CADEDDU, *Adriano Olivetti. Lo Spirito nell'impresa*, Il Margine, Trento, 2007.



A builder of the future

The Fondazione Adriano Olivetti

by Laura Olivetti*



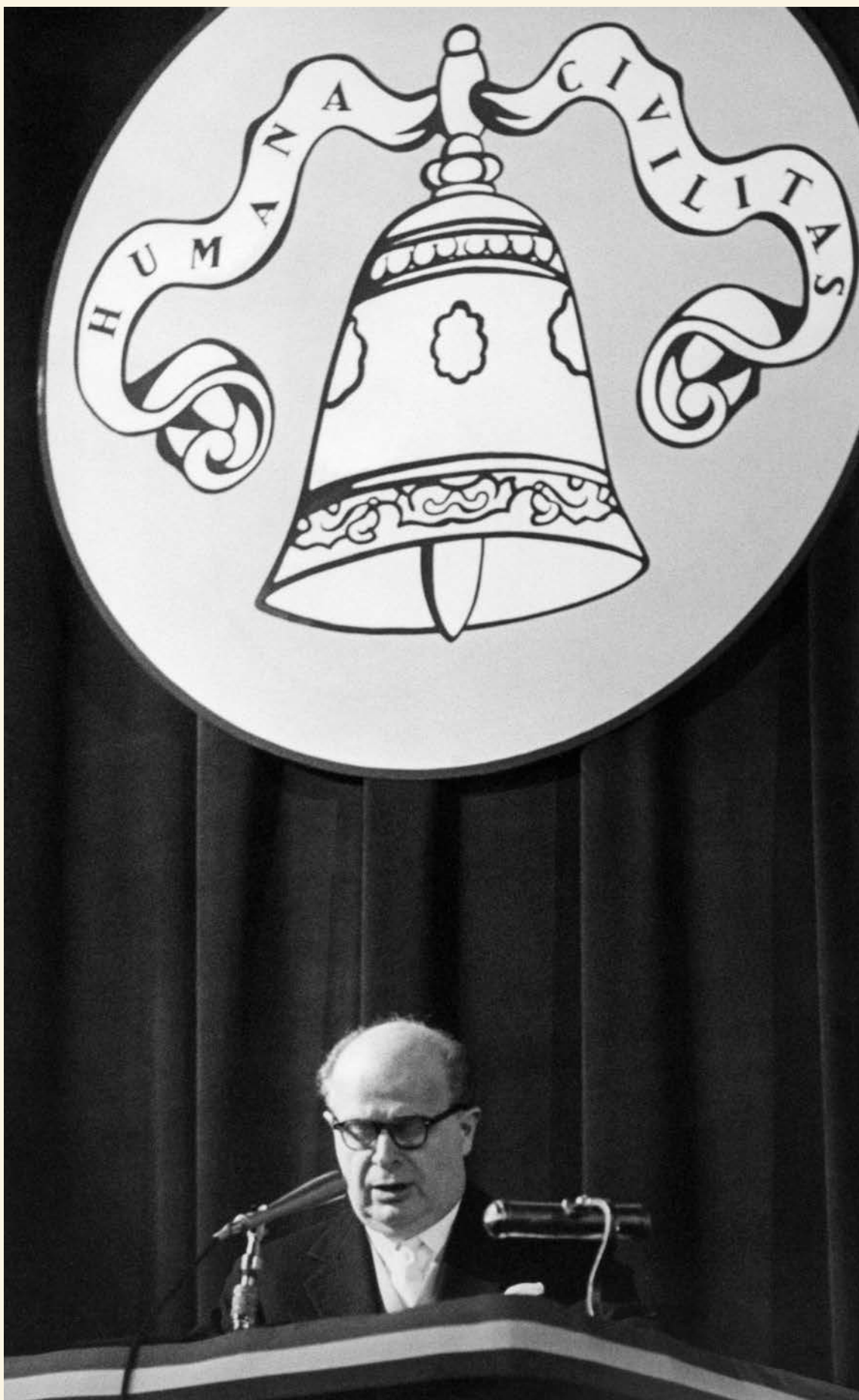
“Non solum in memoriam, sed in intentionem”.

Left:

Adriano Olivetti with his
daughter Laura, 1955.

On this page:

Interior of the head office of
the Fondazione Adriano Olivetti
in Rome.



The unexpected death of Adriano Olivetti in early 1960 left not only his family bereft of a dear person, but also an entire community and a complex cultural, social and political programme bereft of its driving force. Immediately after his death, his family, friends and closest colleagues decided to set up a foundation that would guarantee continuity for his envisaged reforms and the future of Adriano Olivetti's life work, albeit in a different manner.

Thus it was that the Fondazione Adriano Olivetti was set up in 1962 with the aim of keeping and defending his memory and of continuing and developing the civil, social and political commitment that distinguished his work, as well as promoting and encouraging studies aimed at a greater knowledge and understanding of the conditions for social progress, as we read in the first articles of the Foundation's statutes.

In line with this mandate, the Foundation is engaged in cultural and scientific research and promotion in four main areas of interest: institutions and society; economics and society; community and society; art, architecture and urban design.

Right from the very start, the Foundation has always directed its efforts to ensure that its complex cultural heritage of great civil and scientific value is used as a creative tool in interpreting the challenges facing modern society and not as a mere commemorative instrument.

The Foundation has tirelessly pursued this goal with all the rigour and reforming passion of the Olivetti experience, paying special attention to the most dynamic independent experiments in world culture today.

We have always preferred that Adriano Olivetti's activism should inspire initiatives capable of celebrating the man and his work, the most significant aspects of which are reformulated to suit the modern context. This best fits the reforming nature of the Community project. We are thus dedicated – whether by vocation or statutory mandate – to interpreting the memory of this man and his achievements within modern society in Italy and elsewhere, as we are convinced the world can still benefit from his culture, resources and capabilities today. As a result, the Foundation organises

and supports studies and research projects falling within its area of competence, encourages and coordinates conferences and workshops, organises and stages exhibitions in collaboration with other philanthropic institutions or with public and private bodies in Italy and overseas.

One of the main prerogatives of the Foundation is the promotion of academic and scientific research, especially studies dealing with Adriano Olivetti's entrepreneurial, cultural and political activities, as one would only expect. The seat in Rome and that in Ivrea (opened in 2008 and housed in Adriano Olivetti's last home) contain thousands of documents in a large archive (on paper and multimedia) and an extensive library with more than 10,000 volumes, both of which were declared to be of significant historical interest by the Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities (MiBAC). The archive is split into various collections and contains, among other things, the business and private correspondence of Camillo Olivetti and Adriano (extensive) and that of the other family members; the archive of the Community Movement and the Edizioni di Comunità (the political movement and publishing house founded by Adriano Olivetti in the years 1946 – 1947); the personal archives of Ludovico Quaroni and Georges Friedrich Friedmann; as well as the archive that bears witness to the Foundation's own activities over the past fifty years. The Rome seat contains the personal libraries of both Camillo and Adriano Olivetti, of great cultural importance in terms of both the quality of the publications and their wide-ranging scientific and cultural interest; the complete collection of the Edizioni di Comunità works and the "Comunità" review; the complete collection of all the Foundation's publications from 1962 to the present day and the *Quaderni della Fondazione* (Foundation Notebooks). The Foundation Library also contains copies of all the publications and academic works dealing with Adriano Olivetti and the history of the Olivetti firm, making this a unique study centre.

The Foundation has its own editorial staff that publishes – through Edizioni di

Left:

Adriano Olivetti at an election event at the Teatro Adriano in Rome on 27 March 1958 in the run-up to the parliamentary elections held in May 1958.

Adriano Olivetti reading, before a well-stocked bookcase at his home in the city section of Ivrea Villa Belliboschi. (Publifoto)

Comunità – its series called *Quaderni della Fondazione* (Foundation Notebooks) as well as other works in collaboration with other publishers. In 2008 the Foundation started the *Collana Intangibili* (Intangible Collection) project: a digital editorial project.

The Foundation was one of the first members of the European Foundation Center and over the course of its fifty-year history – making it one of the oldest institutes of its kind in Italy – it has promoted and worked on research projects and study campaigns in collaboration with other major European and American foundations. Always following the tradition of collaboration and identity that made Adriano Olivetti's life work such a symbol of authentic rigorous commitment to the promotion of philanthropy, not just in Italy, but also overseas.

* *Laura Olivetti, President of the Fondazione Adriano Olivetti*



Fondazione Adriano Olivetti
Via Giuseppe Zanardelli, 34 – 00186 Rome
Tel. +39 06 683 40 16
www.fondazioneadrianolivetti.it

Club Amici della Fondazione Adriano Olivetti
info@fondazioneadrianolivetti.it

Exterior view of the head office of the Fondazione Adriano Olivetti in Ivrea.



Photo sources and information on the quotations in the financial section and on the cover

The quotations accompanying the thematic pictures in this year's Annual Report were selected by Myriam Facchinetti. They were taken from ADRIANO OLIVETTI, *Città dell'Uomo*, Edizioni di Comunità 1960.

Associazione Archivio Storico Olivetti, Ivrea: all miniatures of the advertising posters with the quotations and thematic pictures on pages 4 - 5, 8, 13 and 14.

Giovanni Berengo Gardin: pages 20, 28 and 36.

Sources of photographs in cultural section

Fondazione Adriano Olivetti, Rome: pages IV, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XIV, XVI, XVIII, XXIII, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XL, XLII, XLIII, XLVII.

Associazione Archivio Storico Olivetti, Ivrea: pages I, II, V, XII, XIII, XV, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XLIV, XLVI.

Sergio Libis: page XXII.

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Notes

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Adriano Olivetti

DEVELOPMENT
Myriam Facchinetti

TEXT EDITING
Andrea Paganini
Lecturer, authors, director of "L'ora d'oro" publishers

GRAFIC DESIGN
Petra Häfliger
Lucasdesign, Giubiasco

TRANSLATION
Punto e Virgola
Zurich

On the reverse of cover:
Advertising poster for the M20
typewriter, designed in 1923 by
Pirovano.