

Chapter 20

Susanna Agnelli. Between Family Business and Politics



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Abstract Without being exhaustive, the present research aims to profile a multi-faceted protagonist of the Italian 20th century: Susanna Agnelli. She was born in 1922 in Turin—a city strongly tied to the Agnelli dynasty—, by Edoardo Agnelli and Virginia Bourbon del Monte. During her long life, thanks also to the intense relationship with her brother Gianni, she experienced the crucial phases of the consecration of FIAT and the period of changes occurred in the Italian socio-economic framework. However, linking Susanna Agnelli's name only to the dynamics of the family business would be restrictive: in fact, in addition to have been a fruitful and original writer—among her works we remember, for example, *Vesti vamo alla marinara* [*We Always Wore Sailor Suits*] and *Addio, addio mio ultimo amore* [*Farewell, Farewell My Last Love*]—, she was, between the 70s and the 90s, an important representative of the Italian Republican Party, among whose ranks she worked with various relevant positions as a deputy, MEP—the IRP was part of the Liberal and Democratic Group—and as a senator. Her political experience has been successful and complete as she passed, over the years, from the role of mayor of Monte Argentario—a small Tuscan town in the province of Grosseto—to that of Foreign Minister in the Dini government, between 1995 and 1996. She was the first woman to hold this prestigious office. The name of Susanna Agnelli is also linked to philanthropic activities—first of all the participation, at only 18 years old, as a Red Cross volunteer in the Second World War and the presidency of Telethon—that, firsthand, she carried on until her death, which took place in Rome in May 2009.

Keywords Susanna Agnelli • Women in family business • Women in politics
Agnelli dynasty • Italian Republican Party

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P. Paoloni and R. Lombardi (eds.), *Advances in Gender and Cultural Research in Business and Economics*, Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-00335-7_20

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20.1 The Family, Turin and FIAT

Far from being exhaustive, this paper—starting from her bonds with the family company passing through her political involvement culminating in her philanthropic activities—aims at profiling a complex multifaceted protagonist of the Italian 20th century: Susanna Agnelli. Despite the broad framework, this paper mainly focuses on Susanna Agnelli's political commitment and the International vocation of her activities. This topic has been barely examined thus revealing very interesting prospects not only with regard to the specific subject but also to the Contemporary History, the History of European Integration and the History of International Relations.

«Don't forget you are an Agnelli» (Agnelli 1975, p. 11) This short but incisive admonition of Miss Parker—the British governess—reminded the small children of the family about their roots and above all their social privilege. As a matter of fact, according to what Susanna Agnelli wrote in one of her most representative books—*Vestivamo alla marinara*¹ [*We Always Wore Sailor Suits*]²—«Some families hosted an English nanny. In our case Miss Parker did not want us to play with children whose parents were not received at our home»² (Agnelli 1975, p. 11). So, ever since childhood, the heirs to the well-known Piedmontese dynasty were taught to respect their prestigious family name.

Susanna was born on 24 April 1922 in Turin, «the factory of the future»³ (Navire 2009, p. 475) where Giovanni Agnelli—her grandfather, the “Senator”, deeply admired and respected by both Gramsci and Gobetti, whose lonely and sporadic visit «worried everyone»⁴ (Agnelli 1975, p. 24)—, was part of the group of the founding members of FIAT in 1899 (Castronovo 1973, 1977). Despite the elegant upbringing and her family's wealth, Susanna's youth was marked by two tragic events occurred in a time span of ten years: her father Edoardo died in an airplane accident in 1935 while her mother Virginia Bourbon del Monte perished in a car accident near Pisa in 1945. Apart from Susanna, their third born, the parents were survived by their six children: Clara, born in 1920; Giovanni, born in 1921; Maria Sole, born in 1925; Cristiana, born in 1927; Giorgio, born in 1929, and Umberto, born in 1934 (Casamassima 2003; Clark 2012).

She had a strong emotional bond and relationship with her brother Giovanni better known as Gianni and later on as *l'Avvocato*, *The Lawyer* (Ottone 2003; Agnelli 2004)—, who inherited the command of FIAT and raised it to become the most important company in Italy, and worldwide appreciated.

When Susanna Agnelli—“Sunì” as Enzo Biagi used to call her—was asked whether Giovanni was «[...] the boss because he was older than her or because he

¹This book by Susanna Agnelli won the prestigious literary prize “Premio Bancarella” in 1975.

²«Qualche famiglia aveva la signorina inglese. In questo caso Miss Parker non voleva che giocassimo con bambini i cui genitori non erano ricevuti a casa nostra».

³«La fabbrica del futuro».

⁴«Riempi[va] tutti di paura».

earned it [...]», she bluntly replied: «“First and foremost because my grandfather determined it. He was appointed Vice President of FIAT at the age of twenty-three and always declared that Gianni would be his successor. And I also believe he deserved it”»⁵ (Biagi 1988, p. 50). This brief comment demonstrates that the fact of discussing the relationship between Susanna and Gianni does not only involve the affective dynamics of enduring brotherly love but it is also connects to the inmost world of FIAT and its complex system.

In her aforementioned and very interesting family memoirs—some of which are very intense—*Vestivamo alla marinara* [*We Always Wore Sailor Suits*]—she intimately wrote about her life between 1922 and 1945, when she married Urbano Rattazzi—with whom she had six children, Ilaria, Samaritana, Cristiano, Delfina, Lupo and Priscilla. The end of the marriage in 1975 signalled for Susanna Agnelli the beginning of a new life as a politician. She combined her elegant upbringing and a forceful personality to become a vibrant force both in the Italian politics and International affairs. The last part of this paper will be dealing with her civic engagement, something she started at a very early age.⁶

After the Senator passed away, in December 1945, his huge inheritance was split; that «famous 100 percent of the IFI⁷ ordinary shares», as mentioned by Giuseppe Turani, out of which his niece obtained a share of «6.833 percent»⁸ (Turani 1985, p. 59)—and the command of the family—hence FIAT—substantially passed to her brothers Gianni and, to a lesser extent, Umberto. Despite her fate was already sealed by her family name, Susanna would never be the head of the family company because, as clearly emphasized by Giancarlo Galli in his work on the

⁵«[...] il capo perché [era] nato prima o perché lo merita[va] [...]», la stessa non esitò a rispondere nel modo più diretto possibile: «“Prima di tutto perché mio nonno ha deciso così, lo ha designato vicepresidente della Fiat quando aveva ventitré anni, e ha sempre detto che Gianni sarebbe stato il suo successore. Poi credo che lo meriti anche”».

⁶As far as Susanna Agnelli’s school and university education are concerned, reference should be made to her work *Vestivamo alla marinara* [*We Always Wore Sailor Suits*] (1975, p. 165), in which she talks about an «[...] application to the first year of medicine» [«[...] iscrizione al primo anno di medicina»], to *Atlante delle scrittrici piemontesi dell’Ottocento e del Novecento* [*Atlas of the Piedmontese Female Writers of the XIX and XX Century*] (Canni and Merlo 2007, p. 44) and to Agnelli’s official page on the Chamber of Deputies webpage where the words: «High School Graduation» [«Licenza Media Superiore»] are used. In 1984, she graduated *honoris causa* in law at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley in Massachusetts (USA). For further information and profiles see also INI (2000) and Miriam Mafai’s editorship (1993).

⁷«IFI (Istituto Finanziario Industriale). The Family’s Holding company that further to the acquisition of IFIL (Istituto Finanziario Italiano Laniero), has changed its name into EXOR, since March 2009» [«IFI (Istituto Finanziario Industriale). Holding finanziaria della famiglia Agnelli, che dal marzo 2009, a seguito dell’incorporazione di IFIL (Istituto Finanziario Italiano Laniero), ha assunto la denominazione di EXOR»] (Treccani. Dizionario di Economia e Finanza 2012).

⁸«Famoso 100 per cento delle azioni ordinarie IFI» da cui la nipote ricavò una quota pari al «6,833 per cento».

Agnellis, «[...] the women in the family encounter no difficulties since the unwritten rule is that they take care of “home and children”»⁹ (Galli 1997, p. 169).

Notwithstanding her connection with the industrial context, Susanna Agnelli's ambitions were affirmed in the literary sphere and above all in the political and social fields in which she managed to put into play her best human qualities, her sensitivity and her culture.

20.2 Political Experience

Susanna Agnelli's political activity spanned three decades of epochal changes—from the 70s to the 90s—which made her protagonist of complex times both at national and international levels.

Ms. Agnelli—even though not purely feminist—believed in women's opportunities and gender equality, in fact, as was the case of the company inheritance, being a woman made it difficult to overcome the paternalistic barriers even if she then fully succeeded in all activities to which she devoted herself.

In 1974 she was appointed mayor of Monte Argentario, a Tuscan district in the area of Grosseto, on behalf of the IRP¹⁰ (Italian Republican Party) of Ugo La Malfa (Telmon 1983; Soddu 2008). This was a beloved land since the time of family holidays and she passionately committed herself for ten years—until 1984—as its mayor first and later as its councilwoman. One of her successes achieved in those years and recalled in an interview with Alain Elkann:

I think the most important one was taking on unauthorised building and stopping the Monte Argentario area from being destroyed like so much of Italy's coastline. Those were important years of apprenticeship. It is there, for example, that I learned the burden and power of bureaucracy. Frankly, it's the same in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where it's not like the minister decides everything freely on her own (Elkann 2015).

Agnelli's decade as a mayor was intensely described in her book *Addio, addio mio ultimo amore* [*Farewell, Farewell My Last Love*] (Agnelli 1985) where she revealed emotions, sensations but also difficulties and battles.¹¹ A good example of this is to be found in the report of the session of her election, «[...] marked by an extraordinary noise», from which she came out «[...] late at night, Mayor and

⁹«[...] Per le donne [della famiglia] non esistono problemi, vigendo la regola che devono occuparsi di “casa e figli”».

¹⁰The first Italian Republican woman to be elected in Parliament was Mary Tibaldi Chiesa (Berardi 2012).

¹¹Two other books by Susanna Agnelli revealed episodes of her family life and cultural interests: *Ricordati Gualeguaychú* [*Remember Gualeguaychú*] (Agnelli 1982)—a work that Sergio Pautasso describes as an «original biography of Garibaldi» [«singolare biografia di Garibaldi»]—and *Questo libro è tuo* [*This Book is Yours*] (Agnelli 1993).

exhausted»¹² (Agnelli 1985, p. 15). Her experience serving as a local public administrator paved the way for her political career in both the Italian and the European Parliament.

Susanna Agnelli entered the Chamber of Deputies in 1976¹³ and was elected—for the first time—MP for Como. The reasons for this choice were mainly two: firstly the different perception emerging from the presence of a woman in the political competition; secondly the attempt to strengthen the IRP in the area of Turin—something already started in the early 70s (La Malfa and Soddu 2012).

Her first participation in the work of Palazzo Montecitorio (the Italian Chamber of Deputies) as secretary of the XIX Commission of Public Health,¹⁴ turned out to be intense from the very beginning due to the fact she confronted with issues that were deeply felt by the public debate and, at the same time, of pressing public concern in order to achieve a complete emancipation of the women. Further examples are to be found in the establishment of the National Health Service (Berlinguer 2011; Cosmacini 2016) and the proposal of *Regulations of the voluntary interruption of pregnancy* which Agnelli presented, as the first signatory, on 23 September 1976. Another important contribution on this subject was provided during the tragic circumstances of the Seveso¹⁵ disaster. On that occasion, in agreement with Emma Bonino of the Radical Party, she demanded the right to therapeutic abortion for those women of the contaminated zone. A position also shared by the Prime Minister Andreotti which, as a consequence, fueled a lot of controversy (Ziglioli 2010, pp. 49–50). In addition to her commitment to domestic policy, Susanna Agnelli experienced an international political career, above all a European one serving also in the European Parliament. As a matter of fact, before being elected to the European Parliament (Pasquinucci and Verzichelli 2004; Calandri et al. 2015), in 1979, she became a member of the Italian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe—from 6 October 1976 to 19 June 1979. The 1979 European Parliament elections in Italy were held a week after the national elections of the same year and, in both cases Agnelli was elected, thus confirming the choice made by her Party.

Without prejudice to her membership to the IRP, she joined the Liberal and Democratic Group at supranational stage and became member of the Committee on External Economic Relations thanks to her expertise.

In general terms, since the mid 70s, the International political panorama/scene became one of the main guiding principles of the MEP and future senator of

¹²«[...] segnata da una gazzarra incredibile», e dalla quale uscì «[...] a tardissima notte, Sindaco e distrutta».

¹³In Turin, Bruno Visentini was elected to the Senate for the IRP. The candidature was also originally proposed to Giovanni Agnelli who refused because of his brother Umberto's commitment to the CD (Christian Democratic Party) (Panizza 2012).

¹⁴She held the position from 27 July 1976 to 26 July 1978 and from 27 July 1978 to 19 June 1979.

¹⁵Susanna Agnelli was secretary, from 28 July 1977 to 20 September 1977, of the *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the leak of toxic substances occurred on 19 July 1976 in the plant ICMESA and on the potential risks to health and to the environment from industrial activities*.

Turin.¹⁶ In the session of the Chamber of Deputies of 19 September 1979, for instance, she discussed the problem of hunger in the world; her speech focused on social policies and supporting development policies and the desire to strengthen the EC institutions by involving Italy in the decision-making processes. On that occasion she called on

The MEPs and the Government to sponsor the increase in the income share assigned to the developing countries and foster those policies aimed at giving their goods easier access to the European markets. Also, we could promote a solution according to which the EC would be entrusted with the task of managing the additional resources for the development of the emerging countries. If we were to do that, we would contribute to the consolidation of the EC institutions and, at the same time, enhance their respect. To conclude, I should like to call on the Government to instruct the development cooperation department to allocate substantial funds to voluntary organizations operating in Third World countries, in social and healthcare sector. These bodies should as well grant the request that former drug addicts go to work in developing countries thus obtaining an occupational reintegration aided by humanitarian reasons.¹⁷ (Parliament Acts 1979, p. 1617)

She was appointed senator for the IRP both in 1983 and 1987. The key role of the relationship between the national and the international context not only was discussed in Parliament, but also became an institutional responsibility.

Susanna Agnelli was in fact named Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a post she held from 1983 to 1991—Craxi I, Craxi II, Goria I, De Mita I and Andreotti VI—, she became member of the Independent Commission on International Human Rights (AA.VV. 1985, 1987) and member of the World

¹⁶Given the impossibility of analyzing the work of all the Commissions she joined, it is reported—starting from 1979 and in addition to the Commissions already mentioned for the VII Legislature—a total list extracted from Susanna Agnelli's profiles on the websites of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. For the VIII Legislature of the Italian Republic (Chamber): Supervisory Commission on library; Supervisory Commission Documentation Services; XIV Commission (Public Health); Parliamentary commission for general guidance and supervision of radio and television services; Permanent subcommittee for access; III Commission (Foreign Affairs-Emigration); II Commission (Affairs of the council presidency-Internal Affairs and Worship-Public Organisation); VIII Commission (Education and Fine Arts).

For the IX Legislature of the Italian Republic (Senate): 4th Standing Committee (Defense); 12th Standing Committee (Public Health).

For the X Legislature of the Italian Republic (Senate): 3rd Standing Committee (Foreign Affairs, Emigration); 10th Standing Committee (Industry, Commerce, Tourism).

¹⁷«ai membri del Parlamento europeo ed al Governo a patrocinare in sede comunitaria l'aumento della quota di reddito trasferita ai paesi in corso di sviluppo e le politiche atte a consentire l'accesso delle nascenti produzioni industriali ai paesi della Comunità. Potremmo anche farci promotori di una soluzione secondo la quale alla Comunità sarebbe affidato il compito di amministrare i mezzi aggiuntivi destinati alla sollecitazione dello sviluppo dei paesi emergenti. Se così facessimo, concorreremo al consolidamento delle istituzioni comunitarie e, in pari tempo, accresceremo il rispetto da cui sono circondate. Per terminare, vorrei invitare il Governo a dare istruzioni al dipartimento per la cooperazione allo sviluppo affinché conceda fondi consistenti agli organismi volontari operanti nei paesi del terzo mondo, nel settore sanitario-sociale. Tali enti potrebbero anche accogliere le richieste di ex tossicodipendenti per recarsi a lavorare nei paesi in via di sviluppo, ottenendo così un reinserimento favorito proprio dalla motivazione umanitaria».

Commission on Environment and Development from which the well-known *Brundtland Report* originated (Greco and Pollio Salimbeni 2003; Borowy 2014; Sachs 2015).

The culmination of her political career was her independent appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs (Forcina et al. 2007). Susanna Agnelli served as Foreign Minister during the XII Legislature in the government of Lamberto Dini from January 1995 until May 1996. She became the first woman ever in Italy to hold this office. Having regard to the impossibility herein to deeply and fully analyse Agnelli's term of office, one aspect in particular will be taken into account, to properly include this research in the topic of the Workshop: her commitment to the status of women, taking into consideration the attendance of Minister Agnelli at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women, met in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995. It is worth emphasising that if already in 1988, during her opening speech at the Conference on *The role of women in the development of science and technology in the third world* and thereafter released in 1991, she pointed out

On one hand we observe an increased awareness of the need to improve the role of women in the development of society, therefore also of science and technology, on the other hand we still notice a gap between this commitments and reality [...] (Agnelli in Faruqi et al. 1991, p. 5);

in her speech of 5 September 1995 in the Chinese capital she clearly expressed the need to grant women a more active role in the political and institutional life within the international community:

Today, in Beijing, we represent societies of different traditions and cultures. Yet, the well being of our peoples is related to a certain degree to the role and status granted to women.

No matter how different our societies may be, women should never indulge in destructive or war-prone attitudes. War is death. And women are oriented to life. Motherhood, exclusive privilege and responsibility of women, bears witness to the fact.

When women have a say, they should always defend peace, also because they are among those who suffer most. The tragic events in Bosnia, a country close to mine, are a good case in point.

In the struggle to improve the condition of women therefore lies one of the greatest hopes for humanity. Only through a stronger presence of women in the political, economic and social decision-making processes can we hope that our peoples will finally undergo the necessary change of heart that can guarantee not only women, but the whole world, equality, development and peace. (Ministero degli affari esteri, Servizio storico e documentazione 1998, p. 480)

Along with these general statements and principles, Minister Agnelli explicitly highlighted, above all if looking back to post 1989 events, how highly topical are the issues centered on women's education, equal opportunities on the labour market and the full enjoyment of social support services which certainly called for careful attention. These declarations were followed by the commitment of the Italian government to support international cooperation on various fronts, all of which, in Agnelli's view, of equal and overriding importance for both the national and international agenda:

Each of the great social conferences that have been convened by the United Nations during this decade has served to reveal the crisis in the dominant development model.

From the outset, Italy has lent her strong, determined and concrete support to affirming the need to give priority to human development. Italian cooperation, which launched a series of systematic programs in the Nineties to foster the advancement of women, intends to concentrate on two specific objectives in the future.

The first objective is to encourage the incorporation of gender policies into cooperation activities promoted with public development aid. The second objective is to make a specific contribution to the issue of women in conflict situations and in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of civilian life in their country.

[...] The Programme of Action of the Beijing Conference must rightly highlight the role that women can and must play in conflict prevention and peace-keeping. Moreover, as a logical consequence of this, it must also sanction the repudiation of violence. For women suffer far too many terrifying, and often unrecorded, acts of violence in every region of the world.

Too many women are gravely stricken by armed conflicts and, as refugees and displaced persons, they have to endure the consequences of abuse, making their lives intolerable and no longer consonant with the dignity of the human person. (Ministero degli affari esteri, Servizio storico e documentazione 1998, pp. 481–482)

In addition to her deep commitment to Women's and Human Rights Susanna Agnelli fully supported peacekeeping initiatives above all in the Middle East. And, as Matteo Pizzigallo commented,

Dini entrusted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Susanna Agnelli who, since her debut, confirmed the will of the new Government to continue to support the Middle East peace process in terms of political, economic and humanitarian initiatives and took action “both in bilateral channels and in the European Union context”.¹⁸ (Pizzigallo 2011, p. 102)

As a former Minister, she was a member of the European Grand Jury, chaired by Jacques Delors, gathered to choose the official motto of the EU, which was selected out of about 2000 mottoes applied by students from the then 15 countries of the European Union. As we all know the official motto became: “United in diversity” (Curti Gialdino 2005; Somma 2017).

20.3 Philanthropic Commitment

Besides her intense involvement in politics, Susanna Agnelli also devoted much of her life to philanthropic activities.

¹⁸«Dini affidava il Ministero degli Esteri a Susanna Agnelli che, sin dal suo esordio, confermava la volontà del nuovo Governo a proseguire l'azione di sostegno, sul piano politico, economico ed umanitario, del processo di pace in Medio Oriente, attivandosi “sia nei canali bilaterali che nel contesto dell'Unione Europea”».

Since she was a young girl—not yet twenty-one—Susanna Agnelli had this very strong sense of commitment to social causes. As she recalled in her memoir *Vestivamo alla marinara* [*We Always Wore Sailor Suits*]:

To be able to take the nursing course at the Red Cross, I had to coerce my mother, so she would find a way for me to be accepted. Otherwise I should have waited to turn twenty-one, as required by the rule. At last, after endless discussions, under the skeptical gaze of the titled ladies of the Red Cross, I was accepted as a student.¹⁹ (Agnelli 1975, p. 89)

Her passion brought her to become a war nurse, a Red Cross volunteer on Italian hospital ships during the Second World War (Dupuis 1978, p. 132; Ceva 2005, p. 175; Novello and Zamboni 2010, p. 55); this was an experience that left such a deep mark on her that she devoted much of her life to charitable and humanitarian causes.

Thus one of the most important steps was she headed the Telethon Committee whose activity encouraged two of Susanna Agnelli's greatest concerns: on the one hand the social issue and on the other her attention to disease in both its human and scientific aspects. The first Telethon (Television Marathon), was inaugurated in the USA in 1966 by Jerry Lewis with the aim of raising funds for muscular dystrophy. This successful experience was first repeated in France and later in Italy.

In 1990 the AFM [French Association against dystrophies] granted the right to use the Telethon trademark in Italy to a promotion committee, chaired by Susanna Agnelli, under the auspices of the Italian Muscular Dystrophy Association (Unione Italiana Lotta alla Distrofia Muscolare—UILDM).

The first solidarity marathon presented and broadcasted on RAI TV channels achieved resounding success.²⁰ (Bebber and Bonicelli 2006, p. 84, n. 11)

We might say that Susanna Agnelli's philanthropic commitment also profited from her political experience. In fact, as declared on the official website, the Foundation Il Faro (The Lighthouse) was created

[...] in 1997 thanks to Susanna Agnelli's commitment and will. A decision pondered over time and linked to her experience as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Visiting countries where social unrest and lack of opportunities were an insurmountable obstacle for young people led her to the decision to intervene with practical support. To support those young boys and girls once they reached Italy, often on their own, fleeing war and poverty.

¹⁹«Avevo supplicato mia madre di usare tutta l'influenza che aveva in Croce Rossa perché mi fosse concesso di fare subito il corso di infermiera. Avrei dovuto, altrimenti, aspettare di avere ventun anni, come imponeva il regolamento. Finalmente, dopo eterne discussioni, sotto le occhiate di scettica disapprovazione delle signore titolate della Croce Rossa, fui accettata come allieva».

²⁰«L'AFM [Associazione francese contro le distrofie] ha concesso, nel 1990, la disponibilità del marchio Telethon per l'Italia a un comitato promotore, presieduto da Susanna Agnelli nato sotto l'egida della Unione Italiana Lotta alla Distrofia Muscolare (UILDM). La prima maratona di solidarietà della televisione italiana, condotta sulle reti RAI, ha riscosso anch'essa un grande successo di pubblico».

The meeting with don Luigi Di Liegro brought to light the idea of starting/creating a mentoring and training Centre where Italian and foreign youth could find accommodation and be given appropriate tools to start a new project of life thus learning a trade

Rome became its headquarter, the city where the Agnelli Family had supported a boarding school for professional nurses since 1958. So it was in the heart of Monteverde, in a big building owned by the Italian Red Cross, that the Foundation seen by Susanna Agnelli as “a beacon for the city and its boys and girls” started to live and operate.²¹ (Fondazione Il Faro 2018)

The activities of the Foundation Il Faro and the objectives underlying its initiatives recall topics that are still and currently of great interest, thus demonstrating a forward-looking practical sense and undeniable organisational skills.

The best and rather “light” example of her practical sense and her attitude to life is to be found in the advice column *Risposte private* [*Private Responses*] (Venturati 2002)—for the magazine «Oggi» from 1982 until her death in 2009 from complications after a broken hip. She was famous for her “telegraphic brevity” (Canni and Merlo 2007, p. 44—a short, direct, and witty way of answering questions which was the magazine’s highlight for so many admiring readers. In this regard, as expressed by Alessandro Giammei, Susanna Agnelli brought her small and significant space into people’s everyday life

[...] the way in which she organised and headed her various humanitarian and charitable initiatives: a mercy without compassion, a more competent rather than involving care. In short, a pity, both stoically pre-Christian and manfully feminine.²² (Giammei 2016, p. 65)

²¹«[...] nel 1997 grazie all’impegno e alla volontà di Susanna Agnelli. Una scelta maturata nel tempo e legata al periodo del suo mandato quale Ministro degli Esteri. Fu proprio visitando i paesi in cui il disagio sociale e la mancanza di opportunità costituivano per i giovani un ostacolo insormontabile, che la Signora decise di intervenire con un aiuto concreto. Per sostenere quegli stessi ragazzi una volta arrivati in Italia, dove giungevano spesso soli e in fuga da guerre e povertà. Dall’incontro con don Luigi Di Liegro nacque l’idea di creare un centro di orientamento e formazione, perché i giovani di tutte le nazionalità potessero trovare accoglienza e ricevere gli strumenti adeguati per impostare un nuovo progetto di vita. La scelta della sede ricadde su Roma, dove dal 1958 la Famiglia Agnelli aveva sostenuto una scuola convitto per infermiere professionali. Fu così che nel cuore di Monteverde, in un grande edificio di proprietà della Croce Rossa Italiana, iniziò a vivere e operare la Fondazione, che Susanna Agnelli pensò come “un faro per la città e i suoi ragazzi”».

²²«[...] al modo in cui ha organizzato e diretto le sue diverse iniziative umanitarie e caritatevoli: con una misericordia senza compatimento, una cura più competente che partecipata. Con una pietà, insomma, stoicamente precristiana e virilmente femminile».

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