

niversary of the Academy – of an outline of the history of Turin, aimed at a wider and above all an international audience. The occasion was at hand: the Winter Olympics of February 2006, which have mobilised so much energy and have prompted a renewal if not of the structure, at least of the face of the city, and for which a large influx of tourists is expected. The implementation of the project was entrusted to two foreign scholars who had long specialised in Piedmontese history, Geoffrey Symcox of UCLA and Anthony Cardoza of the University of Chicago, in the conviction that a view from afar would more easily grasp the main lines of the development of the city, even if this were at the cost of a few minor details. It again received the firm support of the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, and the active collaboration of the publisher Einaudi.

The situation of Turin is now very different from that in which the larger project was born twenty years ago. The last few years have seen the crisis of Fiat and its satellite industries, a crisis from which Fiat seems to be struggling to emerge. But, above all, Turin has ceased to be the industrial capital of the country, as it had become after the First World War, a status which had been strengthened in the Fascist period and in the post-war decades; and its capacity to attract workers has also waned. The urban population, which in 1945 was about 650,000, and which had almost doubled by the end of the seventies following the migratory flows from the south of Italy, has rapidly decreased, and has again sunk below a million. The factory – the big factory – is no longer the center of economic life, and continues to lay off managers and workers, both white collar and blue collar. The “monarchy” of the Agnelli family is a memory of the past, and the court which surrounded it has now been dispersed. In what was once the city of Gramsci and of the “workers’ councils”, and later of resistance to Fascism, the trade unions have been forced into rearguard battles, in a desperate attempt to defend surviving jobs. The process of integration of immigrants from Asia and Africa has encountered more failures than successes. Every day small businesses open, but just as frequently they close, unable to compete with the big distributors. In the national league tables for income and wealth (not to mention the European ones), Turin has continued to fall lower and lower. As in the years after the transfer of the capital of the kingdom to Florence and then Rome, Turin is seeking a new vocation; but above all it needs to escape from the isolation to which its geographical position seems to condemn it.