



Zagato set to unveil a stunning aluminium-bodied Diatto berlinetta, as the long-lost marque makes its renaissance at the Geneva Motor Show. Above: a sneak preview.

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During the first world war new models continued to be introduced (the 18HP, 20-25HP and 30-40HP) as well as chassis' for light commercial vehicles for the military. An expansion program led to the purchase of various companies in and around Turin whose experience, equipment and plans were all used by Diatto. A bodyshop was also founded for the internal production of the bodies. After a brief name change in 1918, in 1919 the company became 'Societa Anonima Automobili Diatto'.

Financial problems followed the war as the government failed to pay the huge war debt of ltl 6,000,000, but cars continued to be developed and produced. The Tipo 10 was a small car with a 1018cc four-cylinder engine, whilst the Tipo 30 was built under licence from Bugatti and included a four-valve-per-cylinder 1452cc four cylinder engine (later increased to 2-litres) with around 30bhp. Following liquidation in 1923 a new company was formed in 1924 with new investors. The Tipo 20 family (20, 20A and 20S) was released, and a Grand Prix car was developed using a supercharged 2-litre dohc eight cylinder powerplant. This car, was developed by Alfieri Maserati, who left Diatto in 1926 to successfully establish the Maserati car company together with his brother Ernesto in Bologna. The economic situation at the time was, however, not to be denied another victim and on the 30th June 1929 the last Diatto cars were produced. The company continued to produce some spare parts and components until 1955 when it was totally absorbed into "S.p.A. G. Veglio & C".

by James Granger, Diatto history courtesy of [CarsFromItaly](#)

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In 1915 Diatto began production of light trucks, converting its standard frames to military use. These trucks proved to be strong and reliable. During the same year, a new body shop was inaugurated in via Moretta, Turin, and two new factories were acquired from John Newton in Turin and from Scacchi in Chivasso. On 17 March 1916 Diatto bought the majority shareholding in the Société des Moteurs Gnome et Rhône, renamed Società Italiana Motori Gnome et Rhône, used to build famous 8-cylinder aircraft engines in cooperation with Bugatti, under the direct control of Diatto. A further two models were also produced, the 2,724 20/25 HP and the 3,969 cc 30/40 HP, both with 4-vertical cylinder engines.

In 1916 Enzo Ferrari and his brother Alfredo bought a red Diatto which he described in his memoirs: "Alfredo volunteered for the war; it was the time Red Cross volunteers were taken if they had some kind of vehicle. The red 4-cylinder Diatto Torpedo we had bought went with him, to transport the wounded from the front to hospitals". The war changed the working class. In July 1915 Critica Sociale (Social Criticism), the socialist magazine founded and directed by Filippo Turati, denounced the psychological damage of workmen producing entirely for destructive purposes for many years. "What will the consequences be," he wondered, "for the economy and finances after the War?" The War was gearing the mechanical engineering industry up to huge profits based on estimates for old, badly organized artillery workshops which had now been converted into standard production lines, with a fraction of the cost. Management chose this moment to challenge the proletarian movement. Fiat, one of the largest producers of war equipment, returned profits of 80% of turnover, leading to a sevenfold increase in share capital and a tenfold increase in the number of employees.



BY ZAGATO - OTTOVÙ PROJECT



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