Brunello Cucinelli, left, founder of the brand that bears his name, has restored his home village, Solomeo, Italy, and created a factory, below, and a school there.

## Prince of Solomeo

For Ralph Lauren, it was a wide necktie and an outsized vision that set in motion of the control of the control



ist, who has a penchant for citing Homer, Hadrian and Cicero. Lost, perhaps, amid all the joility was the story of how a single cashmere sweater was eventually transformed

at a population whose growth could hardly have been predicted when Mr. Cucinelli started out. Not only are there more billionaires now than at any time

in history, according to a 2018 Forbes ranking of those who have managed to summit capitalism's Everest, but they are richer than ever before, with an average wealth of \$41.billion. Almost from the start of his career, Mr. Cucinelli decided they would be his cliented.

"He became the uniform for the cool C.E.O.s of the world," said the designer Michael Bastian, who, as men's wear director of Bergold Goodman in the early years of the century, was instrumental in helping Mr. Cucinelli shape his overall vision and his retail offering. "That kind fluy" and the properties of the century, was instrumental vision and his retail offering. "That kind fluy" and the properties of the century, was instrumental two long of guy" — Barry Diller, David Geffen — guy's cool enough that they didn't have to wear a suit to work; 'he add offering a cool, however, Mr. Geffen, Mr. Diller and their fellow moguls have deep enough bockets that they are unifledy to experience the sticker shock that would afflict an ordinary mortal when faced with the price tag on, say, the reversible based with the price tag on, say, the reversible based with the price tag on, say, the reversible to circinal offered at Bergolof Goodman for \$3,993. "Brunello's always had everybody but the ultracool low-key C.E.O.s like steve Jobs," Wh. Bastian added in fact, Mr. Jobs's distinctive uniform of anonymous-looking cashmere moch furthenecks was quietly produced in balk, the Apple founder by Mr. Cucinelli — despite the latter's distaster for both that articular style of collar and his harberd of black.



not only is North America his largest market, it was retailers in the United States who first urged the designer to expand beyond sweaters into the eventually became known. Had Gene bronder appared offerings for which he eventually became known. Had Gene Pressman, the visionary merchant who once headed Barneys. New York, not bushed him to create a full collection, Mr. Cucinelli said, he might happily have rung changes on the same cashmere sweater for the rest of his life.

"It was the Americans that started asking for the total look," the designers and, referring to a style largely inspired by how he himself had dressed practically since, as a fashion-bestored teenager, he began house his totage in a style largely inspired by how he himself had dressed practically since, as a fashion-bestored teenager, he began house in the state of the structure of the state of the structure o

have lost their way, "His vision has al-ways been unwavering and unaplooget-ically for the moneyed," said Robert Burke of Robert Burke Associates, a New York luxury goods consultancy. "He is not going after the latest, great-est influencers and bloggers, and I don't think he has any particular high regard for an aspirational customer," Mr. Burke added, "He's definitely for the wheels-up crowd."