

House of Savoy moved their capital from their ancestral seat at Chambéry and established their court and government in Turin. The city's development was no longer primarily conditioned by its role as a vital node of communication. Turin's new role as the dynastic capital of the House of Savoy made it unequivocally the dominant city in Piedmont, and made it a magnet for immigrants. Its population and economy expanded; while the other Piedmontese cities stagnated or declined, it grew rapidly. Turin did not grow in a haphazard fashion, however. Its rulers took the lead in directing their new capital's expansion, so that by the eighteenth century the city had become a showplace of baroque urban planning, one of the finest in Europe. It has preserved this character down to the present day, despite sometimes misguided architectural interventions in the twentieth century, and the ravages of aerial bombardment in World War II. The straight streets, wide piazzas and elegant façades that form Turin's historic core date from this period, and are a testimony to the care that its successive rulers and their architects took to turn it into a dignified, elegant city, worthy of its new role as the capital of a growing dynastic state. Its orderly growth continued in the nineteenth century, as the House of Savoy assumed the lead in the movement to unify Italy, and when that goal was achieved, for a brief moment between 1861 and 1864, Turin became the first capital of their new Italian kingdom. But this glory was short-lived. To the intense displeasure of Turin's citizens, the national capital was soon moved, first to Florence, then to Rome, and Turin reluctantly reverted to its former role as a regional capital. By then, however, its development was taking a decisive new turn: it was fast becoming a center of the industrial revolution in Italy.

The coming of the industrial revolution opened what we might term the third phase in the city's historical development: its emergence as one of the pillars, along with Milan and Genoa, of northern Italy's "industrial triangle". Until the mid-nineteenth century the economy of Turin and Piedmont was predominantly agrarian. Industrial development was mainly limited to textile manufacturing, for although the region around Turin is relatively fertile and well-watered, it is not rich in mineral resources. Marble, slate and stone were readily available for building, but other minerals were lacking. Small quantities of iron, gold and other metals have been mined from time to time in the Alpine foothills, but mining has never been an intensive activity, and down to the present day the region's metallurgical industries have been forced to depend largely on imported raw materials. Sources of energy too were lacking, apart from water power and wood for fuel. There are no de-