

in the design, construction and beautification of their capital city. In accordance with an architectural master-plan that originated in the early seventeenth century, and was then elaborated and implemented in stages, they systematically extended the city beyond its cramped medieval core. Their architects adorned Turin with buildings whose refinement and occasional ebullience counterpointed the strict regularity of the gridiron plan. The cumulative result of these two centuries of effort by the Savoyard rulers and the architects who served them is the classic example of baroque town-planning that we admire today in Turin's historic center. Its rectilinear grid and the elegant façades are the conscious products of the architecture of absolutism, in dramatic contrast to the suburbs that spread out beyond the baroque center in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and which are the product of very different social and architectonic imperatives.

2. *The French Occupation, 1536-1563.*

A French army occupied Turin and western Piedmont at the beginning of April 1536, while a Spanish army advanced from Lombardy and occupied the eastern region. The Savoyard state seemed to be on the verge of dissolution; Duke Charles II held only a tiny enclave of territory around Vercelli. The civic leaders of Turin were left to negotiate on their own with the invaders. Eschewing heroics, they calculated that they would serve their city best by coming to terms with the invader, rather than by standing a siege and suffering the sack that would inevitably follow. Once they had struck their bargain to safeguard the city, the city fathers adapted quickly to the French occupation, and in time they even managed, with shrewd pragmatism, to turn the new situation to their advantage.

In this emergency, loyalty to the House of Savoy was trumped by a more pressing concern for public safety. The city fathers realized that resistance would be both futile and dangerous, for Turin was indefensible: the fortifications were dilapidated, and the French army was overwhelmingly strong. Their decision to surrender was based on loyalty to their city, their *patria*, and on their belief, grounded in a tradition stretching back to the communal era, that their first duty was to ensure the welfare of the citizens. For patriotic Italian historians in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries these were unpalatable facts. Turin's rapid surrender and complaisant accommodation with the occupier did not fit the grand narrative they were constructing, of an up-