

port for the princes she forced the syndics to kneel before her and seek forgiveness, which she grudgingly accorded.

In 1642 a settlement was patched up ending the civil war, and in 1648 Marie-Christine formally handed over power to her son Charles Emanuel II. He was fourteen years of age and thus technically able to govern in his own right, but she would remain the effective ruler of the state until her death in 1663. The expansion and rebuilding of Turin, halted by plague, economic depression and civil war, now slowly resumed. Duchess Marie-Christine, or *Madama Reale* as she was known in deference to her royal blood, directed the program of urban beautification. Her architect Amedeo di Castellamonte rebuilt the ducal palace, which had been badly damaged during the siege. It became the residence of her son, the young duke, who established his court there, while she moved her court to the old Castle, thereafter known as *Palazzo Madama* in her honor. Perhaps as a riposte to the rebuilding of the ducal palace, the city council in 1659 began to reconstruct its tumble-down medieval city hall in the new baroque style that was beginning to sweep the city. In 1669 Charles Emanuel II initiated the second extension of Turin, eastwards towards the river Po, but the city's expansion was held back by the famines that periodically struck it, straining its resources and overwhelming its rudimentary system of poor relief.

These famines followed a grimly familiar pattern. At midsummer, news of a bad harvest would drive up the price of grain in the city market, and trigger a rush to stockpile supplies. The bakers would raise the price of bread, which was the staple – or in some cases the only – food for most of the population. Prices would go on rising inexorably, reaching their highest point in the spring, just before the new harvest was gathered in. If, as sometimes happened, this harvest too proved meager, the outcome was doubly disastrous. The city's poor, always perilously close to the margin of subsistence, would find it impossible to feed their families. They would besiege the church doors in search of charity and beg for alms in the streets, joined by crowds of desperate peasants who flocked in from the countryside. The city fathers, the clergy, the *Compagnia di San Paolo* and other charitable brotherhoods, in consultation with the ducal authorities, strove as best as they could to feed the masses of starving people. The council decreed maximum prices for bread and grain, punished hoarding, and tried to import grain from abroad, but these measures produced little practical effect: prices still rose, hoarding still went on, people starved. The cost of importing grain and subsidizing the price of bread created a mountain of debt, so that Turin's financial position steadily deteriorated.