

stand a siege, but eventually the French army marched away. Again in 1693 and in 1696 the French army moved up as if to besiege Turin, but on each occasion the city was spared. Turin's citizens did not show great enthusiasm for the struggle. They evaded guard duty in the civic militia and protested when the duke demanded billets for his soldiers. Faced with constant demands for taxes, the city council resisted, protesting that the citizens were too poor to pay. These protestations were not unfounded; economic conditions worsened as the war dragged on, and a particularly severe famine struck the city in 1693-95. Nevertheless the Monte floated loans year after year, contributing significantly to the state's war finances. Finally in 1696, however, the latest bond-issue found no buyers. The economic situation had become desperate, money was short, and the state's credit was exhausted. Victor Amadeus was compelled to make peace.

The war with France resumed in 1703. The cause was the dispute over the Spanish Succession, which Louis XIV claimed for the Bourbon dynasty following the death of King Charles II of Spain in 1700. The threat that the union of the French and Spanish crowns posed to the European balance of power led to the formation of an alliance, led by England and the Dutch Republic, supporting the Habsburg claims to the Spanish empire. Victor Amadeus II joined this alliance in 1703. He was almost encircled: French troops had occupied the Spanish territory in the duchy of Milan, and pressed into Piedmont from there, while another French army invaded across the Alps. Victor Amadeus's situation was extremely precarious, for this time Louis XIV was determined to conquer his lands outright and annex them. One by one Victor Amadeus's fortresses fell, until by the summer of 1705 Turin was the only obstacle still standing in the way of the French conquest of Piedmont. It was Victor Amadeus's last redoubt, and he made every effort to defend it, conducting a census of the city's population to see how many mouths would have to be fed in the event of a siege, gathering provisions and ammunition, and strengthening the fortifications. In the late summer a French army began to besiege the city, digging trenches and setting up batteries, but sickness and the onset of bad weather forced the besiegers to withdraw early in the autumn.

Victor Amadeus had gained a respite, but his situation was desperate. His army was greatly outnumbered by the French, who now held most of Piedmont. Early in May 1706 Louis XIV concentrated a large army around Turin once again, determined to capture it at all costs. The events of the next few months were a climactic moment in the city's history. If Turin fell, the French would be able to occupy the rest of Victor