

This radical phase proved to be short lived, however. After the annexation of Piedmont to the French Republic in February 1799, the new provisional government in Turin had neither the time nor the opportunity to accomplish a great deal. From the outset, it was saddled with the financial burdens of the war, beset by internal divisions between moderates and radicals over reform and relations with the military authorities, and devoid of popular support outside the city. The brief republican experiment in Turin ended in May 1799 when a coalition of Austrian and Russian forces invaded Piedmont, defeated the French, and occupied the city.

A second and far more important phase of French dominance and authoritarian modernization began in the spring of the following year when Napoleon Bonaparte returned to Italy. After his troops defeated the Austrian army at the battle of Marengo, the French leader recaptured Turin in June 1800. A cloud of economic uncertainty and political instability continued to hang over the city for another two years until Napoleon arranged a general political settlement for the Italian peninsula in September 1802. Under the terms of that settlement, Piedmont was once again annexed and soon became a part of the French First Empire. As a consequence, the people of Turin now became subject to the Code Napoleon and French administrative and judicial systems.

2. *Napoleonic Turin.*

From the outset, the absorption of Piedmont into the French empire entailed a profound physical transformation of the old capital. One of Napoleon's first edicts called for the demolition of the city walls as well as most of the urban fortifications. While this edict had the strategic objective of dismantling military defensive structures, it also carried a powerful symbolic message that Turin was no longer the fortress-city of the Savoyard dynasty. At the same time, French authorities introduced a new concept of comprehensive urban planning that aimed to convert the former royal capital into an "open city", a rationally designed center of commerce and services. In the areas of the city affected by the demolition, Napoleon's planners envisioned the construction of new bridges, roads, and public squares that improved communications, enhanced French authority, and celebrated imperial power.

While their ambitious project produced little in the way of concrete results beyond the actual demolition of the fortified walls and the con-