

tria and ordered the army mutineers to return to their barracks. After Charles Felix proclaimed that he would not recognize any change “in the form of government”, the young prince fled the city, which fell under the control of the revolutionaries. The new government lasted only a week before its lack of popular support, its failure to win over influential moderate aristocrats like Balbo, and its abandonment by Charles Albert left it isolated and vulnerable to forces loyal to the monarchy. In early April royalist troops, supported by Austrian forces, defeated the Piedmontese rebels on the battlefield at Novara. The leaders of the insurrection fled into exile in Geneva and Austro-Savoyard forces re-entered Turin in the second week in April. The capital remained occupied for an additional two years by the Austrian army before it withdrew in 1823 at the request of Charles Felix.

The Piedmontese Revolution of 1821 ushered in another era of authoritarian reaction and repression in the Kingdom of Sardinia and its capital city, but one that was considerably harsher on paper than in practice. Before his re-entry into Turin in the fall of 1821, the new king ordered swift trials and punishments for the insurgents as well as a sweeping purge of the army and bureaucracy, according to the principle that all state employees “should not think even a little differently about the nature of the government, but should be entirely devoted to it”. Over 3,800 people were arrested, but more than half got off with light sentences. Military conspirators received the harshest punishments, with seventy-one of them given death sentences and many others condemned to long prison terms. In practice, only three men were executed, since most of the aristocratic rebel officers managed to escape into exile with the help of friends and relatives within the ruling circles. Unlike his brother, Charles Felix had little regard for Piedmont’s military elite and he did not hesitate to reduce the size of the army by eliminating the regiments most heavily involved in the insurrection. Those civilian officials who had openly participated in the rebellion were removed from their positions, but in most cases they wound up receiving only temporary suspensions or transfers to other posts. In the wake of these purges, Charles Felix decreed that all civil and military officials, titled nobility and clergy must take an oath of allegiance to the throne in a series of public ceremonies in Turin in March 1822. Likewise, the elements of the professional and commercial middle classes suspected of involvement in the insurrection were put under police surveillance; others were banished from the capital for a year or two. Throughout the capital city, the police tightened security in the wake of the failed revolution, carrying out frequent checks of pass-