

by launching the Società del Whist, an English-style gentlemen's club that provided a gathering place for all currents of respectable society in Turin. Significantly, the list of the Whist's founding members included not only influential aristocrats, but also distinguished middle-class professional men, wealthy bankers as well as a number of prominent magistrates and army officers.

The same hybrid elite also contributed to a more general reawakening of cultural, civic, and political life in Turin during the 1840s. In these years, new voluntary associations sponsored lively debates and discussions on such issues as urban planning, the provision of services to newly developed areas, and the problems of public health in the city. Despite the continued presence of the royal and religious censors, Turin still managed to become the home for a thriving press. By the late 1840s, more than fourteen daily and weekly periodicals were being published in the royal capital. While they avoided explicitly political issues to escape the wrath of the censors, these publications did discuss openly major social issues like pauperism, child labor, prisons, public assistance, and popular education. The same papers also gradually broadened their discussions to include the principal economic issues of the day, from free trade and the development of railroads to the introduction of new methods of production and communications.

In this fashion, Turin became a community of public-spirited men, who would go on to play leading roles in the movement for Italian unification, and acquired a public forum to exchange and debate new ideas and reform proposals. Local moderate aristocrats, in fact, became the most widely read and influential writers on the peninsula in these years. Between 1844 and 1847, for instance, Cesare Balbo's *Of the Hopes of Italy* and *Summary of the History of Italy*, Massimo d'Azeglio's *The Most Recent Events in Romagna* and *Proposal for a Program for Italian National Opinion*, and Ilarione Petitti's *Of Italian Railroads and Their Best Organization* all appeared in print. Such works helped to establish Piedmontese dominance over the moderate liberal movement for national unification and thereby linked increasingly the Kingdom of Sardinia to the cause of Italy even before 1848.

The Subalpine Agrarian Association, the foremost institutional expression of this new civic dynamism, emerged in the spring of 1842. The association officially aimed to promote improved methods of farming and stock-raising. At the same time, it pursued the broader social mission of encouraging practical collaboration between nobles and upper-middle classes. Its roster of members testified to its apparent success as a socially integrated body. Not only did it attract landowners and farm-