

shortage of popular housing, since the new residential areas were reserved for the propertied classes. As a consequence, the capital city had a population density three times that of the city of Florence. Overcrowding contributed to a situation that made the lives of the Turin's common folks short and hard in the late 1840s when the average life expectancy was still only thirty years. Their work-days lasted twelve to fourteen hours when they had jobs, their food remained insufficient and of poor quality, their standards of personal hygiene and public sanitation were dangerously low, and heavy wine drinking in the city's five hundred bars continued to be their principal form of relaxation. Not surprisingly, the same groups had the highest levels of infant abandonment, infant mortality, and illegitimacy (one in four births) in the kingdom and were the principal victims of the epidemics that continued to sweep the city with regularity during the reign of Charles Albert. Moreover, with one-third of the men and nearly half the women still illiterate, the laboring classes of Turin remained in the thrall of ancient prejudices and superstitions. To make matters worse, the difficult situation of the urban poor no doubt deteriorated even further with the sharp decline in economic conditions on the Italian peninsula and throughout much of Europe between 1845 and 1847. A series of harvest failures, which more than doubled the price of food staples, hammered the local economy and fueled popular discontent, setting the stage for the extraordinary wave of revolutions that swept the continent in 1848.

4. *Turin in 1848: A Moderate Preventive Revolution.*

The economic crisis of the late 1840s magnified social tensions and weakened support for the established order in Turin, much as in other cities across the European continent. By the fall of 1847, a tacit alliance of the reform-minded middle classes and the economically distressed popular classes began to take shape in the capital city. On October 1, 1847, a public gathering of 5,000 people near the Valentino to celebrate the king's birthday wound up chanting slogans attacking the Jesuits and calling for national unification and liberal reforms. The violent repression of the demonstration by the police served only to intensify tensions in Turin. In fact, the historic center of the royal capital became the scene of almost nightly protest marches in October and the following months that were distinguished from similar events in other Italian cities only by their orderly character. These demonstrations coincided with a renewal of demands from moderate reformers for greater self-government,