

demonstrations in a direction that promoted constitutional reform, but contained mass enthusiasm and avoided more radical initiatives. As a result, Turin stood out as the only major city on the Italian peninsula where violent uprisings did not occur in 1848. The moderates crowned their success with the first "national celebration" in late February, a carefully choreographed event of parades and masked balls, in which the populace played their assigned and largely passive roles.

The following month Turin's international profile rose dramatically when it became the command center for a war of national liberation and dynastic expansion against the Austrian Empire. In the wake of a popular uprising in Milan and the proclamation of a republic in Venice, Charles Albert declared war on Austria and entered Lombardy on March 23, 1848. This decision catapulted the Savoyard king to the head of an extraordinary, but fragile coalition of Italian rulers that included both Ferdinand II of Naples and Pope Pius IX as well as the Austrian emperor's cousin, Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Charles Albert's longstanding fear of popular revolution and his desire to enlarge his kingdom dictated his commitment to the national cause and his hesitation in exploiting his initial military advantages. The resulting delays in the Piedmontese army's advance into Lombardy enabled the Austrian commander, Count Radetzky, to carry out a strategic retreat, maintain his lines of communication with Vienna, and await the arrival of reinforcements. To make matters worse, the Savoyard ruler's ill-concealed policy of dynastic aggrandizement aroused the growing distrust of the other Italian rulers and thereby helped to shatter the initial wave of cooperation that had unified the various states on the peninsula. By mid-May, both the pope and the Neapolitan king had withdrawn their forces from the war, leaving the outcome of the military conflict almost exclusively in the hands of the Piedmontese forces.

While Charles Albert did succeed politically in merging the Lombard provinces into an expanded constitutional kingdom of northern Italy with its capital in Turin, he fared considerably worse on the military front. On July 24, 1848, Austrian forces administered a devastating defeat to the Piedmontese army at the battle of Custoza. The following month the armistice of Salasco compelled the House of Savoy to abandon Lombardy and Venetia. Nonetheless, the Savoyard ruler's dynastic ambitions led him to go to war with Austria again in mid-March 1849, this time in the hope of exploiting Vienna's heavy troop commitment in the struggle against the Hungarians. Once more the Austrian army demonstrated its overwhelming superiority. Less than two weeks after the war had resumed, Radetzky crushed the main body of