

as many bankruptcies than it had in the entire period from 1879 to 1886. The crisis also enveloped the city's stock exchange, where one official reported in early 1891 that "stocks, even the best, are steadily falling". These circumstances produced levels of social distress that had not been seen since the worst years of the Napoleonic era. In addition to massive unemployment, the 1890s witnessed the impoverishment of the middle classes, a dramatic increase in the numbers of vagrants wandering the city, the resurgence of crimes against property, and the revival of mass emigration.

4. *Reimagining Turin as the City that "Works and Thinks".*

Even in the midst of this period of economic crisis and social distress, an alliance of university and municipal leaders was already at work promoting an optimistic new vision of Turin as a great center of production, work, and science. Their vision found expression in the early 1880s in the publication of a volume of essays, entitled *Torino*, and in the national exposition of 1884, both of which touted the city's many material and intellectual resources. This largely cultural and ideological campaign, which preceded and anticipated Turin's industrial take-off after 1900, drew its main inspiration from the doctrines of positivism, the dominant philosophical school in late nineteenth-century Italy. Already the reigning intellectual orthodoxy of the French Second Empire in the middle of the century, positivism claimed to provide a new science of society based on positive facts and the scientific method. As such, it envisioned a world of material progress guided by science and technology, rather than religion or tradition. In the hands of its Turinese advocates, positivism held out the promise of harnessing the forces of science and technology on behalf of industry, wealth, and military power. The resulting material prosperity, they argued, would also provide political benefits by inoculating the masses against the germs of both violent revolution and clerical reaction and thus usher in a new era of social peace and inter-class harmony.

In the decades after 1880, the vision of a scientifically organized society appealed to a broad spectrum of political and social forces in the ex-capital. Moderate liberals, in the tradition of Cavour, readily identified with its notions of regulated social progress and institutional modernization, while the old democratic left, associated with the *Gazzetta del Popolo* and the Free Masons, enthusiastically embraced its secular ideal of science and progress as an antidote to the spiritual appeals of