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Summary Article: **Cavour, Camillo Benso conte di**

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(kämē'lō bān'sō kōn'tā dē kävōr'), 1810–61, Italian statesman, premier (1852–59, 1860–61) of the Kingdom of Sardinia. The active force behind King Victor Emmanuel II, he was responsible more than any other man for the unification of Italy under the house of Savoy (see Risorgimento). Of a noble Piedmontese family, he entered the army early but came under suspicion for his liberal ideas and was forced to resign in 1831. He then devoted himself to travel, agricultural experimentation, and the study of politics.

In 1847 he founded the liberal daily, *Il Risorgimento*, through which he successfully pressed King Charles Albert of Sardinia to grant a constitution to his people and to make war on Austria in 1848–49. A member of parliament briefly in 1848 and again in July of the following year, he became minister of agriculture and commerce (1850), finance minister (1851), and premier (1852). As premier, he aimed at making the kingdom of Sardinia the leading Italian state by introducing progressive internal reforms. Having reorganized the administration, the financial and legal system, industry, and the army, he won for Sardinia prestige and a place among the powers through participation in the Crimean War (1855).

Conscious of the failures of the 1848–49 revolution, Cavour probably did not believe that the creation of a unified Italy was feasible within his lifetime; until at least 1859 he strove rather for an aggrandized N Italian kingdom under the house of Savoy. To achieve this goal he wooed foreign support against Austrian domination. In 1858, by an agreement reached at Plombières, he won the backing of Emperor Napoleon III of France for a war against Austria, promising in exchange to cede Savoy and possibly Nice to France. Austria was maneuvered into declaring war (1859) and was forced to cede Lombardy. But Cavour resigned the premiership when France refused to continue fighting and signed the separate armistice of Villafranca di Verona with Austria.

Cavour returned to office in 1860. In that year Tuscany, Parma, Modena, and the Romagna voted for annexation to Sardinia, and Giuseppe Garibaldi overran the Two Sicilies. Cavour, taking advantage of the auspicious circumstances for Italian unification, sent Sardinian troops into the Papal States, which, with the exception of Latium and Rome, were soon annexed to Sardinia. By his superior statesmanship Cavour convinced Garibaldi to relinquish his authority in the south and avoided foreign intervention in favor of the dispossessed rulers and of the pope, whose interests he professed to be safeguarding. The annexation (1860) of the kingdom of the Two Sicilies was consummated with the abdication (1861) of Francis II. Cavour's labors were crowned two months before his death, when the kingdom of Italy was proclaimed under Victor Emmanuel II.

See biography by D. M. Smith (1985);
studies by D. M. Smith (1954 and 1971).

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