

# 1977: The Bologna uprising



A very brief outline of the seizure of Bologna by workers and students in 1977, and the run-up to it following the shooting of a demonstrator.

## **Autonomia!**

Italy 1977 saw a spontaneous and creative outbreaks of rebellion demonstrating that the potential for revolution still exists in the working class of the industrialised west - no matter what the lefty cynics say.

Tension built up throughout 1976 with the growth of autonomi (groups outside traditional left / Union formations) and the Circolo Del Proletariato Giovanile (Circles of Proletarian, or working class Youth), both strong in the slum areas of the great northern industrial cities.

They developed many confrontational tactics directly linked to working class needs.

The most successful was autoriduzione (self-reduction), where price rises in essential commodities were not paid, or communities decided a 'fair' price. Direct sabotage of capitalist property was also popular – blowing their cars up, beating up particularly authoritarian bosses, or refusing to let them enter the factories. These tactics grew in popularity, worrying both the leftists and the capitalists, as all relations of dominance were brought into question.

Things blew up in Bologna in early 1977, when Lama, the leader of the Stalinist CGIL Union went to the University to lecture members of the Circolo and Autonomi (who used it as a base) and students, arguing they should join the Communist Party. He was chased from the building, and only saved from serious harm by his security team and the cops he had brought with him. The University head called in cops to restore order, sparking off a fierce battle leading to the occupation of all the university facilities, which became the focus for workers and students meeting (as in [Paris 1968](#)).

This soon developed into larger public manifestations, culminating in the physical capture of Bologna for three days in March, following the shooting of a demonstrator. An eyewitness wrote that "Downtown, numerous shops and luxury restaurants were looted; side by side with young proletarians, old pensioners could be seen fleeing happily, pushing handcarts full of delicacies.

For once in these streets and squares people were communicating...over the next few days police found scores of guns and rifles hidden in improbable places, the fruit of an armoury raid."

Similar episodes occurred in Rome, Milan and Turin. Radio Alice was set up, and broadcast the movements of police and troops, which helped extend the occupation.

Eventually the movement was repressed, with all the political parties working hand in hand with the judiciary, but the lesson remains – anything is possible!

By the Anarchist Federation