

alworkers exploded into a series of violent and bloody clashes between police and demonstrators in Piazza Statuto that continued over two and a half days. Much to their chagrin, spokesmen for the Cgil and the Communist party discovered that they exercised little or no influence over the crowds of young rootless immigrant workers, who ignored their pleas for calm. An economic downturn in the middle of the decade temporarily dampened labor militancy by reducing employment opportunities and weakening the bargaining position of the unions. But with renewed industrial expansion in the winter of 1966-67, anger among the rank and file over increased mechanization, an accelerated pace of work on the assembly lines, and intensified managerial discipline, set the stage for another round of labor conflicts in the Piedmontese capital.

By the late 1960s, both international and local developments outside of the factories also began to have an impact on the attitudes and actions of the workers as well as on those of a younger generation of middle-class Italians. Much like their counterparts elsewhere in the western world, the young people of Turin experienced a revolution of rising expectations that altered their attitudes and behavior toward established authority, consumption, and sexuality. These cultural changes became intertwined with a new political radicalism that drew inspiration from such international developments as the Vietnam War, the Cultural Revolution in China, and the exploits of Che Guevara in Latin America. Emerging from the universities, this new radicalism was especially pronounced in Turin, home of Italy's first mass industrial revolution with its culture of technocracy, hierarchy and efficiency.

As a result of the educational reforms of the early 1960s, the University of Turin and other Italian universities faced an avalanche of new students. In a period of only six years, the number of students enrolled in the liberal arts, sciences, and education doubled locally, while the physical plant, faculty, curricula and teaching methods remained largely unchanged. By the second half of the decade, severe overcrowding, faculty neglect, and a host of other difficulties led to mounting discontent and frustration within the student body. The situation at the University of Turin first erupted into public view in February 1967, when radical students occupied the seat of the Liberal arts (Lettere) faculty in Palazzo Campana before they were evicted by the police called in by the rector. The student movement re-emerged with even greater force ten months later. In November, protesters first laid siege to the offices of the rector and then reoccupied Palazzo Campana, providing the model for a wave of similar occupations at other universities across the Italian peninsula in the following months.