

Twenty years of political violence in Italy: 1969-1988

Carlo Schaerf

We have collected all events of political violence in Italy over the twenty-year period 1969-1988. From the major tragedies like the terrorist attack in the station of Bologna to the smallest episodes reported in the national press. We have divided them into six series according to the most probable political affiliation of their perpetrators. The sixth series is for the events that could not find a plausible attribution. To each event we have attributed a weight according to its resulting damage to humans and properties, the organizational effort committed in its execution and the weapons used. In this way we have produced six time series that we have submitted to the standard statistical analysis used in econometrics and quantitative sociology to determine their auto-correlations, cross-correlations and Fourier spectra. For the same time period we have also collected six socio-economic indicators like: inflation, unemployment, real industrial salaries, hours of strike, etc. We have correlated the time series of these indicators with those of political violence to find out possible connections.

The results have indicated only some modest and easily understandable correlations and some curious phenomena but on the average the phenomenon of political violence shows no connection with the socio-economic situation of the country. In the language of this science the phenomenon appears as white noise or completely unstructured. We found some weak indication that after major episodes of violence the number of strikes decreases, a clear indication of concerned response of the trade unions and the "working class". We also found some tendency of the violent events to cluster in time showing a weak "epidemic effect". The curious results are the substantial decrease of political violence on Saturdays and Sundays and during the months of July, August and September: terrorists do not work on weekends and take long summer vacations.

Brief Biography

Carlo Schaerf is currently Professor of physics at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata." He has taught there since 1981. He previously taught at the University of Rome "La Sapienza," where he also directed the University's Institute of Physics (1975-1980). From 1978 to 1984 he was President of the National Commission for Nuclear Physics (I.N.F.N.). Schaerf then became President of the National Committee for the Physical Sciences at the Ministry of Public Education (1984-1987.) In 1966 Professor Carlo Schaerf founded (with Professor Edoardo Amaldi) the International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts (ISODARCO). Professor Schaerf became its Director in 1970 and Director and Chairman of the Board in 1991. He is editor of some twenty five books on disarmament and physics, as well as the author of approximately one hundred articles in international refereed scientific journals.