Why, After the G8 in Genoa, Carlo Giuliani, Diaz, and Bolzaneto, Has the Left Become the Right and Vice Versa?

The No-Global Dream Failed. The Solution? Anarchy, Which Doesn't Mean Chaos

Leonardo Caffo

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Twenty years ago, the G8 summit in Genoa marked a turning point, a wound that has never fully healed in Italy's collective memory. The violent clashes, the death of Carlo Giuliani, the brutality at the Diaz school, and the horrors of the Bolzaneto barracks are scars that still burn. Those days in July 2001 were supposed to be a moment of resistance, a global cry against the excesses of neoliberal globalization. Instead, they became a symbol of defeat—not just for the no-global movement but for an entire vision of the world. Since then, something has broken, and the political landscape has undergone a strange, almost surreal transformation: the left has become the right, and the right has become the left. How did this happen? And why does anarchy—often misunderstood as chaos—emerge as a possible response to this failure?

The Genoa G8: A Dream Betrayed

In 2001, Genoa was the epicenter of a global movement. The no-global movement wasn't just a protest against the G8; it was a heterogeneous coalition of activists, students, workers, and intellectuals united by the dream of a fairer world. They opposed the unchecked power of multinational corporations, environmental destruction, and the growing inequalities fueled by globalization. The streets of Genoa were filled with hope but also with anger. The response from the authorities was brutal: Carlo Giuliani, a 23-year-old protester, was killed by a carabiniere's bullet. The Diaz school, where activists were staying, was raided with unprecedented violence, leaving dozens injured. At the Bolzaneto barracks, detainees suffered torture and humiliation. These events weren't just episodes of repression; they were a deliberate message: dissent would not be tolerated.

The no-global movement, which had promised to change the world, crumbled under the weight of this repression. The dream of a global revolution against capitalism faded, and the movement fragmented. Some activists retreated into private life, others were co-opted by institutional politics, and many lost faith. But something else happened in the years that followed: the political categories of left and right began to blur, invert, and lose their meaning.

The Left Becomes the Right

The left, which in 2001 stood with the protesters, gradually transformed. Parties that once championed workers' rights and social justice began embracing the very neoliberal policies they had opposed. In Italy, the Democratic Party (PD) and its predecessors became advocates for austerity, privatization, and globalization—the same forces the no-global movement had fought against. The left adopted the language of the market, efficiency, and progress, aligning itself with the interests of global elites. The working class, once the backbone of leftist ideology, was abandoned in favor of a cosmopolitan, urban, and technocratic vision.

Meanwhile, the right began to occupy the spaces left vacant by the left. Populist and nationalist movements, from Lega to Fratelli d'Italia, started speaking to the disenfranchised: workers, the unemployed, and those left behind by globalization. They adopted a rhetoric of rebellion against elites, multinationals, and supranational institutions like the European Union—echoing the critiques of the no-global movement. This inversion is striking: the right took on the anti-system rhetoric that the left had abandoned, while the left became the defender of the status quo.

The Failure of the No-Global Dream

Why did the no-global movement fail? First, it lacked a unified strategy. The movement was a mosaic of ideologies—communists, anarchists, environmentalists, trade unionists—united by what they opposed but divided on what they wanted to build. Second, repression worked. The violence in Genoa, followed by years of legal persecution, intimidated many activists and discouraged mass mobilization. Third, globalization itself proved to be an unstoppable force. The promises of neoliberalism—prosperity, freedom, progress—were seductive, even if they often proved empty. The internet, once seen as a tool for grassroots organizing, became a vehicle for corporate control and surveillance.

The failure of the no-global movement left a void. The ideals of solidarity, environmental justice, and equality were absorbed into the mainstream, stripped of their radical edge. Greenwashing, corporate social responsibility, and inclusive capitalism became buzzwords, co-opting the movement's language without challenging the system's core. The dream of a different world was reduced to a marketing slogan.

Anarchy: Not Chaos, But Order Without Power

In this context of ideological confusion and political betrayal, anarchy emerges as a possible response. The term "anarchy" is often misunderstood, equated with chaos and disorder. But anarchy, in its philosophical sense, is the absence of hierarchical power, not the absence of order. It is a vision of society based on mutual aid, cooperation, and decentralized organization. Unlike the no-global movement, which was often reactive, anarchy proposes a constructive alternative: communities that self-organize without the need for oppressive institutions.

Anarchist thinkers like Peter Kropotkin and Murray Bookchin have long argued that human beings are capable of creating order through voluntary association, without the coercion of states or corporations. In a world where both left and right have failed to deliver justice, anarchy offers a radical rethinking of power. It rejects the false dichotomy of left versus right, proposing instead a system where individuals and communities have direct control over their lives.

Is Anarchy the Solution?

Anarchy is not a utopia. It requires effort, responsibility, and a cultural shift. The failures of Genoa teach us that resistance alone is not enough; there must be a vision for what comes next. Anarchist principles are already at work in small-scale experiments: cooperatives, community gardens, mutual aid networks, and decentralized technologies like blockchain. These are not perfect solutions, but they point to a path forward.

The legacy of Genoa is a warning: when power feels threatened, it responds with violence. But it is also a reminder that another world is possible—not through the failed promises of globalization or the co-opted rhetoric of political parties, but through the courage to imagine and build something new. Anarchy, far from being chaos, might just be the order we need.

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