Liza — Plataforma Anarquista de Madrid
Non-foundational anarchism, anarchism functional to capital
When the bourgeois seepage Fabbri spoke of bogs down revolutionary thought
3/12/2025

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phase in which the old dilemma "revolution or barbarism" regains all its force.

If, to win its own emancipation, the working class must tear down the resistances of capitalists and oppressors—a necessity as evident as it is inevitable—we will have no doubt about what to do, nor about which side of the trench to place ourselves on. That battle is already posed, and it demands responding forcefully to those who have become spokespeople for defeat within the libertarian movement and the revolutionary left. Ibáñez is today one of the most persistent of those spokespeople.

Miguel Brea, militant of Liza Madrid.

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literally stake their lives on it, those for whom resisting is not an aesthetic choice but a matter of survival?

The lack of solidarity that runs through this book shows that the politics of the privileged continues to measure the world exclusively by the yardstick of its interests, and it does so with full vitality. It has not lost its capacity to evade, deny, or minimize others' suffering.

While kids from the peripheral neighborhoods fill the walls with graffiti calling to believe again that we can win, that revolution is not only possible but necessary; while youth organize, study, build alliances, and confront the common sense that wants us disarmed in the face of this unbearable reality, Ibáñez decides that the most urgent task, his political task, is to proclaim that revolution is not only impossible, but also undesirable.

While workers go to prison for defending their labor rights, Ibáñez denies exploitation. While in every conflict there are spontaneous eruptions, massive popular assaults, he insists on reminding us that all the sacrifices, all the dedication, all the battles we fight are useless.

Here are the cavemen

The practice of revoking the "libertarian card" from whoever does not think like oneself is a classic in our movement. Ibáñez, at least, has the decency to publicly tear up his own credential as an anarchist—"foundational," in his vocabulary—while he labels organized, social, and revolutionary anarchism as authoritarian, retrograde, and caveman-like.

At this point in the article the answer is clear: social revolution is not only possible, but also desirable, because it constitutes the only way to confront a criminal system that is driving us toward generalized collapse. The contradictions of capitalism are not eased: they deepen, accelerate, and globalize. We are entering a historical

the conclusions drawn from decades of ghetto dynamics that have demonstrated not only their political insignificance but also their profoundly endogamic character, accessible only to those who enjoy greater privileges within the capitalist order itself.

Nevertheless, it is worth underscoring something often overlooked in these positions centered on the I as the only political subject. The degeneration of workerist autonomism into social autonomism, which inexorably led to strategies based on the pursuit of "personal autonomy," expresses a blatant disinterest in others' suffering, an absence of solidarity that is not an accident but a logical consequence of its approach. Far from constituting a challenge to the existing order, they reproduce and deepen the individualist logic that sustains capitalism and all forms of oppression. At best, they replace class solidarity with Christian empathy.

We could say, without exaggeration, that Ibáñez's proposal amounts to a functional anarchism: functional for exploiters and oppressors because it renounces building collective power. Functional for maintaining the status quo because it replaces mass politics with therapeutic politics, an identity refuge that alters nothing beyond the consciousness of the individual.

Amoralism is a luxury not everyone can afford

One might ask what the life is like of someone who shows not the slightest interest in changing things. But it is enough to ask that question to see that it is not sufficient. One might ask why someone can devote so much effort and constancy to preventing anything from changing, to trying to convince others that it is not worth changing anything. And even after answering those two questions, a third would remain to be resolved: what kind of morality sustains someone who defends such a proposal in the face of those who

In the spring of 2024, the publisher Gedisa released what, to this day, is the essay that most clearly defines Tomás Ibáñez's political positions: *Non-foundational Anarchism*. At the time, comrades from a well-known bookstore and publishing house in the autonomous milieu provided me with the book in advance, with the intention of promoting a debate with the author. That debate never took place, because Ibáñez refused to participate.

From the first pages I understood why it was considered pertinent that I join the controversy: few positions within the libertarian field are as far from mine as those defended in this work. I read it carefully, took notes, and organized my disagreements. Since that exchange of ideas ultimately did not occur, those notes remained filed away until recently.

I did not turn them into an article then, partly because the social and organized anarchism to which I belong had—and still has—more urgent tasks, and also because I did not wish to help spread, even critically, positions that I consider profoundly harmful to anarchism and the working class.

However, on October 8 of this year Ibáñez published a text in which he described the political tradition in which I situate myself as "caveman anarchisms, retrograde and authoritarian." Renouncing debate does not mean renouncing political struggle, and it is clear he has preferred to wage it by other means. Although that discussion does not seem likely to unfold on fraternal and honest ground, for my part I will try—at least—to raise the level: in the face of outbursts and disqualifications, to offer arguments.

A theory in midair

Nevertheless, before proceeding it is worth pointing out what I understand as an advance compared to earlier works in Ibáñez's output. It seems very positive to me that in this text Ibáñez sets out his positions directly, without hiding behind the fiction of an

alleged sector of the libertarian movement, and that he assumes his theses in his own voice and signature. It was disconcerting that in previous writings he resorted to a narrative device that passed off as chronicle the development of a hypothetical "post-anarchism" for which there are no indications outside the academic environment—as the bibliography shows well—or the author's own imagination.

That supposed post-anarchism does not show up in evictions, nor in neighborhood assemblies of self-organization; it has no presence in labor struggles, nor in the anti-racist or anti-repressive movement. Obviously, this observation cannot be taken as an anti-theoretical discourse, since from the sector of anarchism to which I belong we have defended the need for theoretical construction. What we want to point out is that, between the ideas defended in this essay and social and political reality, there is a gap so wide that any contact with practice is ruled out. From this separation between praxis and reflection arise the so out-of-date analyses on which his argumentation rests. It is a book that was born old, completely surpassed more than a decade ago. A natural product of political isolation.

If, as he recalls citing Proudhon, "the idea is born of action and must return to action," this book fulfills that principle in a peculiar way: the ideas it defends are born of the action of publishing papers in indexed journals and return in a text disconnected from any militant practice, except philosophizing and giving lectures without the possibility of reply.

A brief tour through the text

Before developing a debate we need to clarify the fundamental ideas elaborated by Ibáñez. The book begins by celebrating the plurality of libertarian understandings and strategies. However, the declared objective of the book is clear: to present a "new variant"

human development, both personal and collective: the conscious appropriation of our lives, our needs, and our future. It is the irruption of the working people into the government of what is held in common, and not an operation of vertical command.

If Ibáñez is not referring to this—if what he wants to emphasize is that every revolutionary process necessarily involves imposing a new social model on those who occupy privileged positions in this system of exploitation and structural violence—then, of course, he is right. Every revolution implies defeating the resistances of those who live off the suffering of the majority. There is no trick here: when an unjust order is overthrown, those on whom the alternative is "imposed" are precisely the direct perpetrators of misery and pain.

The maneuver consists in hiding this asymmetry, and it is a truly perverse maneuver. Ibáñez speaks of "imposition" in the abstract, without saying who exercises it, to whom it is directed, and what interests are at stake. By contrast, our idea of revolution is clear: it is not the homogenization of the world, nor the replacement of one elite by another, but the government of all by everyone. Against whom? Against those who seek to prevent it: the ruling classes and their accomplices, who will defend to the last minute a system that only works by reproducing the suffering of others.

The abandonment of mass politics in favor of personal politics

The proposal of non-foundational anarchism ends up being reduced, inevitably, to a repertoire of lifestyle practices, small gestures of resistance, and, at best, micro experiences of autonomy carefully self-limited so as to avoid—according to its own fear—falling into "spaces of reproduction of power." This debate is more than settled—once again it arrives very late. From the historic thrashing Bookchin inflicted on lifestyle anarchism, to

In this same logic, Ibáñez characterizes the three international waves of protests and insurrections of the last decade as local, disconnected, and sporadic phenomena. Our author is incapable of even glimpsing that capitalism is entering a phase of structural turbulence—may the truth not spoil a good analysis. The magnitude, persistence, and simultaneity of those struggles—from revolts against austerity to anti-racist, feminist, climate, and anti-oligarchic movements—are thus reduced to mere anecdote.

If the two central theses on which his argument rests—the end of class struggle and the impossibility of surpassing the current state of affairs—collapse so easily, one might think the problems would end here. But nothing could be further from the truth. We have the clear example of a militant who went from being defeated to being a defeatist, making his defeat his main political task. From depressed to depressor.

A parody of the revolution

Far from offering a critical and materialist reading of the history of revolutionary struggles led by the working class, Ibáñez opts to reproduce without examination the postmodern slogan of the end of grand narratives. From that premise, he assumes that any revolutionary project is, by nature, totalitarian, and that every attempt at radical transformation is doomed to degenerate into terror, bureaucracy, and the suppression of freedom. More than an analysis, his is a preventive renunciation of thinking revolution beyond the caricature that the dominant order and progressive intellectuals need in order to legitimize themselves.

However, for us—and for every emancipatory tradition that takes seriously the human capacity for self-government—revolution has nothing to do with that bogeyman built to deactivate it. The revolution we defend is not an exercise in remotely controlled social engineering, but the highest point of

of anarchism—"non-foundational" anarchism—and to defend its capacity to break with the "inertias" that, in his view, immobilize the rest of the currents, avoiding reproducing in libertarian practice the domination it fights.

To justify this, the author examines the "period of formation" of anarchism with the aim of locating the particularities that shaped it: modernity, the Enlightenment, and the labor movement. In that context, socialist formulations emerge that draw on Enlightenment values—freedom, equality, reason, progress, emancipation—and of which anarchism would be the most radical strand, oriented toward a revolutionary mass perspective.

Here Ibáñez thus begins to cement his thesis: anarchism would have assumed values that permeated it—"hypervaluation of reason," "totalizing" universalism, "humanism," "progress"—and that, according to him, contain an authoritarian tendency, besides being insufficient today. Non-foundational anarchism is defended as "an antidote against the traces that foundationalism has left in anarchisms."

But this antidote only became possible from the second half of the twentieth century. What happened in this period for a non-foundational anarchism to emerge? Ibáñez points to three things: the disappearance of the working class with post-Fordism; the financialization of the economy and welfare societies; the consolidation of an unsurpassable capitalist system against which no transformative action is possible; and a critique of revolutionary projects as totalitarian and criminal.

From here, Ibáñez announces the emergence of non-foundational anarchism, drawing on post-structuralism and the critique of Enlightenment values. From this he derives several tasks: critique of the subject that reduces politics to exercises of deconstruction; critique of Revolution for its totalizing character that ends up denying any center of power; and, as a conclusion, a strategy that makes a virtue of necessity: one can only resist.

In short, he proposes abandoning the strategic in favor of the tactical; replacing the revolutionary project with a "desire for revolution" associated with autonomist and lifestyle logics; and building "spaces without domination": the much-touted prefigurative politics and micropolitics centered on interpersonal relationships. This line claims that, given the impossibility and undesirability of transforming the world, it would suffice to transform ourselves individually.

Non-foundational anarchism is defined as an anarchism "without principles" or "purposes." Without objectives that orient action, the need for strategy also disappears.

Non-foundational anarchism positions itself as a theory of resistance that, without entering into an assessment of the possibility—or not—of a society devoid of power, nevertheless avoids constituting itself as a modality of power opposed to the prevailing power, promoting the condition of ungovernability and voluntary unservitude as its hallmarks.

After tracing its own genealogy that runs from Stirner to Landauer, via Nietzsche, and that lays bare the fascination of certain figures of Iberian anarchism with bourgeois individualist currents, the text ends up falling into a dead end: if on one page it maintains that we live under a "totalitarianism that shuts down (…) disobedience," two pages later it will be forced to affirm that this totalitarianism "has not colonized the entire space of life." When your own argument strips you of any reason to communicate with the outside, the Foucauldian aphorism that says that "all power generates forms of resistance" is the only thing that justifies your dedication to political theorization and that excessive eagerness for protagonism.

Let us now state his main theses: there is no longer exploitation and therefore the working class does not exist; capitalism is invincible and revolution is not possible; and even if it were, it would be undesirable for being a totalitarian project.

Swallowing (and spreading) the neoliberal fairy tale

Ibáñez accepts without reply the argument crafted in the think tanks of the most ruthless liberalism. The "end of history" would have arrived hand in hand with the disappearance of class struggle, a necessary consequence—he maintains—of the disappearance of the working class. Thus, without batting an eye and as a good child of his time—the time of defeat—he equates precarization, the consumer and welfare society, and the international reorganization of capitalism—which shifts production toward ever more exploited peripheries—with the pure and simple elimination of the working class.

We find no further foundation for his hypothesis that financialization implies overcoming an economy based on the exploitation of the working class. All the data indicate the opposite: never in history has there been a working class more numerous, more widespread across the planet, and more diverse than today. The disappearance of the working class proclaimed by Ibáñez seems to be inferred solely from his own lack of contact with it.

Few statements are more ethnocentric than the one that says: "what I cannot see from my window does not exist." But Ibáñez seems determined to outdo himself. Since the global crisis of 2008, marked by capitalism's explicit inability to recover even acceptable growth rates within its own logic—and worsened by the ongoing climate collapse and the energy crisis—even voices formerly enthusiastic about "eternal capitalism" now acknowledge the mistake of having considered it a system of infinite resilience, as well as the error of declaring class struggle dead. Our author, however, clings to that ship even as it sinks. As the saying goes: the fact that the boundary ends means nothing to someone determined to keep following it.