Platformism and Especifismo

Two Traditions for the Same Strategic Problem

Liza — Plataforma Anarquista

8/5/26

Contents

In contemporary debates within organized anarchism, two terms often appear that are sometimes presented as opposing currents: **platformism** and **especifismo**. However, a closer historical look shows that both arise from a shared concern: how to provide anarchism with political organization, strategic coherence, and a real insertion into the struggles of the exploited classes. Rather than two opposing worlds, they are two different responses — situated in different historical contexts — to the same problem.

The Platform and the Problem of Organization

The so-called **"Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists"** was drafted in 1926 by the **Dielo Truda** group, formed by Russian anarchist militants exiled after the defeat of the revolution and the consolidation of Bolshevik power following the Russian Revolution. The text sought to respond to a question that its authors considered central: why had anarchism been unable to intervene effectively in a revolutionary process of enormous magnitude?

The answer they proposed was not doctrinal but organizational. The Platform defended the construction of a **General Union of Anarchists** based on several clear principles: theoretical unity, tactical unity, collective responsibility, and federalism. For its authors, the main problem of anarchism in their time was not the lack of militants or ideas, but organizational and strategic dispersion.

The document immediately provoked intense debate within the international anarchist movement. Figures such as **Volin** and **Sébastien Faure** responded by proposing the so-called **anarchist synthesis**, which sought to bring together the different currents of anarchism — libertarian communists, anarcho-syndicalists, and individualists — within the same organization, without requiring a common political line.

The confrontation was sharp, and the attempt to create an international articulation around the Platform ultimately failed. But the debate left a lasting mark: it clearly established the problem of the specific anarchist political organization, a question that would reappear decades later in other contexts.

The Latin American Experience of Especifismo

Thirty years later, in a very different historical setting, the **Uruguayan Anarchist Federation — Federación Anarquista Uruguaya**, or **FAU** — emerged in Uruguay, founded in 1956. Although it did not arise with knowledge of the Platform experience, the FAU developed an organizational conception with significant points of contact: the need for a coherent anarchist political organization, with strategy and program, capable of intervening in an organized way within social movements.

Through its practice in the workers', student, and territorial movements, the FAU developed a strategic conception that would later become known as **especifismo**. This tradition later spread to other Latin American countries and had a decisive influence on the development of organized anarchism in Brazil.

Researchers such as **Felipe Corrêa**, linked to the **Institute for Anarchist Theory and History**, have pointed out that both platformism and especifismo can be understood within the same historical family of anarchism: the tradition that defends **organizational dualism** — that

is, the existence of a specific anarchist political organization that intervenes in social movements without replacing them.

In Brazil, this tradition crystallized in contemporary organizations such as the **Libertarian Socialism Organization — Organização Socialismo Libertário**, or **OSL** — which simultaneously claim the heritage of Latin American especifismo and classical platformism.

Two Experiences That Emerged Without Knowing Each Other

This historical trajectory allows us to understand something important: platformism and especifismo did not emerge as rival currents. They arose in different periods, on different continents, and in profoundly different social contexts. Their similarities have to do with the problem they sought to resolve — the need for political organization — while their differences largely respond to the historical conditions in which they developed.

The Platform was a reflection born from the failure of the European revolutionary process in the interwar period. Uruguayan especifismo was formed in the Latin American context of the second half of the twentieth century, marked by different social configurations, different traditions of struggle, and different political scenarios.

Understanding this is important in order to avoid a frequent error in the history of the left: turning strategies into universal recipes.

Our Use of the Term Platformism

In the case of **Liza**, the adoption of the term **platformism** partly responds to this concern. On the one hand, there was an intuition that it was necessary to recover the experience of the Dielo Truda group and its critique of anarchism's disorganization. On the other hand, it seemed problematic to simply adopt the term **"especifismo"** — born in Latin America and linked to a concrete tradition — and transfer it directly into the European context.

Over time, a deeper knowledge of the Latin American experience has reinforced that initial caution. The point is not to deny the affinities between both traditions, but to recognize that each of them responds to specific contexts.

Mechoso's Warning

At this point, a reflection by **Juan Carlos Mechoso**, a historic militant of the FAU, is especially relevant. In an interview, he noted that within the Latin American left there had often been attempts to transfer political models from other realities "in a more or less mechanical way," replacing concrete analysis with imported schemes.

The warning is simple but profound: there is nothing less strategic than copying strategies. Ideas can travel, but they only make sense when they are reinterpreted in relation to the concrete social and political conditions of each place.

The Problem of Popular Power in Europe

One of the clearest examples of these differences appears in the concept of **Popular Power**, which occupies a central place in much of Latin American especifismo.

In general terms, Popular Power refers to the construction of a social power alternative to that of capital and the state, based on the self-organization of exploited and oppressed sectors. In Latin America, this idea is often linked to the articulation of different social subjects: urban workers, peasants, informal workers, Indigenous communities, inhabitants of working-class neighborhoods, and other subaltern sectors.

Under those conditions, the concept can function as a strategic tool to orient processes of popular organization and build social blocs capable of contesting power.

But the European context is different. In much of Western Europe, the social transformations of the last century have produced a much greater homogenization of classes. The peasantry has practically disappeared as an autonomous political actor, Indigenous sectors do not exist as a social category, and broad layers of the population have been integrated for decades into the institutions of the welfare state.

In this scenario, the strategic problem is often another one: reminding the working class that it remains the working class, even when it perceives itself as middle class.

Social Fragmentation and Hegemony

To this we must add another important factor. In Europe, many contemporary interpretations of the concept of Popular Power have been influenced by autonomist currents or by certain readings of intersectionality applied to social movements. The result has often been a proliferation of sectoral struggles, fragmented by themes or identities, frequently multi-class in character and without a clear socialist horizon.

In this context, the concept of Popular Power risks functioning not as a tool for building revolutionary hegemony, but as a justification for heterogeneous and politically indeterminate social fronts.

When the question of class ceases to occupy the center of analysis, struggles tend to be limited to the program of the most integrated or privileged sectors within those movements.

It is worth noting that this question concerning the limits of Popular Power in Western contexts is currently an open debate within our tradition. Australian platformist comrades criticize the positions — or rather, the effects implied by those positions — of especifismo in the United States. We fully share their argument: the use of Popular Power in societies such as those of the West, far from allowing us to build a revolutionary subject, condemns us to multi-class fronts in which the program is closed off by the interests of the most privileged sectors. In this way, demands for the redistribution of the means of decision-making and production are displaced by demands for the recognition of difference within the margins of bourgeois society.

Recovering the Tradition of Struggle in Our Context

From this perspective, recovering the Platform can today have a specific meaning in Europe. It is not a matter of literally repeating a document written almost a century ago, but of recovering

a political tradition that placed three fundamental questions at the center: organization, strategy, and class struggle.

The critique that the militants of Dielo Truda directed at the anarchism of their time — its organizational dispersion, its lack of strategic coherence, and its difficulty in intervening in a sustained way in the class struggle — remains surprisingly relevant today.

Recovering this tradition also allows us to reframe the strategic problem in terms of **Class Power**: the construction of a revolutionary hegemony based on the self-organization of the working class and oriented toward an anti-capitalist and libertarian communist horizon.

Two Traditions, One Shared Intuition

Platformism and especifismo ultimately share a fundamental intuition: without specific political organization, no revolutionary strategy is possible.

The differences between both traditions have mainly to do with the contexts in which they developed and with the strategic tools each elaborated in order to intervene in them. Recognizing this should not be a cause for sterile polemic, but an opportunity to learn from both experiences.

After all, the strategic question remains the same one posed by the militants of Dielo Truda a century ago and later taken up by Latin American anarchists: how can we build, today, a revolutionary force capable of intervening in the real struggles of our class?

Political Secretariat of Liza

Liza — Plataforma Anarquista
Platformism and Especifismo
Two Traditions for the Same Strategic Problem
8/5/26

regeneracionlibertaria.org

theanarchistlibrary.org