

THE  
**Final  
Straw**  
A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW



The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

You can send us letters at:  
**The Final Straw Radio**  
PO Box 6004  
Asheville, NC 28816  
USA

Email us at:  
**thefinalstrawradio@riseup.net**  
or **thefinalstrawradio@protonmail.com**

To hear our past shows for free, visit:  
**<https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org>**

To support transcription and zine-making efforts which are funded by donations, visit:

**<https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/donate/>**

or via Patreon:

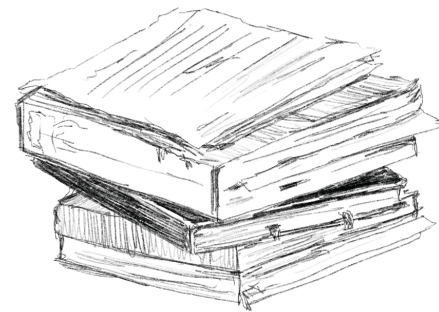
**<https://www.patreon.com/tfsr>**

or via LiberaPay, which does not take a cut of the payments:

**<https://liberapay.com/The-Final-Straw-Radio/>**

**ANARCHIST  
HISTORIAN  
BARRY  
PATEMAN**

the final straw radio,  
april 26, 2020





it the other way? But it's an important question. But this is a rambling of an old fucking man going on here.

**TFSR: And yet quite insightful. [laughs] I totally agree with you.**

**Last question, I guess. A lot of anarchists around the world, since 2012, at least, and more recently than that, have been taking a lot of inspiration from the anarchist-influenced organizing that's going on in northeastern Syria, in the place that's often called Rojava. Murray Bookchin had a lot to do with influencing the ideas there, which used to be a straightforward Marxist Leninist organization or influenced by PKK. But it seems to also have stepped away from that since the late '90s. And also presented a lot of really interesting community-based options around power-sharing across genders, and between ethnic and religious groups. I'm wondering if you know much about what's been going on. If you've been paying attention to it, and if you find it interesting.**

**Barry:** No, I know no more about it than normal Facebook feeds, but I do see it as a source of inspiration. I'm not that daft, I can see that. I can see that sharing of ideas and different roles in the community and the potential of the richness of that movement is to be preserved and treasured and saved. Because there are so many of them, let's be clear. They are actually not just reacting, they are creating wonderful things. And often we just react, but they've taken a step forward. And the destruction of anything like that, I know people already begin to be "it's not real anarchism", it's not. But it's a lot further on than we've ever gone, isn't it? And it's a rich, beautiful thing, and we need to preserve it and support it.

**TFSR: Absolutely.**

**Well, Barry, it's been a real pleasure to speak with you. Thank you so much for all your writing and for taking the time to do this.**

**Barry:** No problem at all, man. Thank you so much, good luck with your work, keep it going. And be safe. And good luck to all the listeners out there. Keep up the good work, despair, and sadness are so easy, find inspiration in the memories of strong people, you are not alone.

This week, we're sharing part of our April 26th, 2020 interview with Barry Pateman. Barry, born in the early 1950's, grew up in a working class coal mining town of Doncaster in the UK and became an anarchist in the 1960's in London. He is a long-standing member of the Kate Sharpley Library which covers histories of little-known anarchists and events in history. Barry has also contributed to and edited numerous books including *Chomsky on Anarchism*, a two book document collection with Candace Falk and many more titles, many on AK Press. We talk about anarchist history, community, repression, defeat, insularity, popular front with authoritarian Marxists, class analysis and how to beat back capitalism. Find Kate Sharpley Library at **KateSharpleyLibrary.Net**

Search for this interview title at **<https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/>** to find links to further resources on this topic, featured music, the audio version, and files for printing copies of this episode.

**TFSR: Would you mind introducing yourself to the audience?**

**Barry Pateman:** My name is Barry Pateman.

**TFSR: Would you mind telling us a little bit about where you grew up and when and what it was like growing up, what the political climate was like?**

**Barry:** Sure. I grew up in Doncaster, Yorkshire, in England. It was a very, very working-class community centered, essentially, on mines. But there were other industries, tractor making, nylon factories, all sorts of what you and I would call heavy industry.

I grew up around the coal mining areas. That was an interesting experience. Looking back now I realized that this is rather unique. It was an experience where I was actually able to meet and talk to some rather politically committed working-class men and women who had been militants for quite a long time. And they were militants of what you and I and everyone listening, I hope would recognize as the left. So there were Trotskyist groups in some coal mining villages, and Communist Party groups in other coal mining villages. In fact, the Communist Party had quite a presence in the National Union of Mineworkers.

There were all sorts of things you could do. You could go to a Marxist study class, or you could go to a Trotskyist study class if you wanted. Or if you were like me, you kept a vague distance between them but were always aware it was there. Of course, a lot of the people I knew had nothing to do with politics in that sense. So we went out to the bars and the clubs, listening to soul music, went to sport, went to rugby. But there was, in essence, a community feel. You knew basically most people by sight and by reputation if you didn't know them well. You didn't necessarily like them at times. But if there was a strike, say, in 1972, coal miners strike, or the 1984-85 strike, most of them were there with you.

My definition of community has always come from that experience. And it's not like what people in anarchist circles talk about community now, which, as far as I can see, is everybody thinking exactly the same. Even within a certain tendency of anarchism: this is our community, this is my community. And it's not really a community, it's just people who think as I do. My experience, my definition of a community is people who may think differently from you, but you have a shared opposition to what I could best describe as "them", those people who will try and control and regulate your life, will assess you as what you're worth in terms of your productivity and nothing else, and ignore in a sense that humanity lives inside you because there's no room for it.

As I said, it doesn't mean you particularly like everybody. That would be naive, we can't pretend that in an organization like this CNT in Spain with up to a million members, everybody loved each other or liked each other. There were severe differences, but there was a common belief that capitalism was a vicious, evil, manipulative system that took away your physical and emotional dignity. That was

of the work that anarchists had done to support them in their strike. They would behave bloody well and put hours and hours into the strike without telling people what to do, but just offering support and being there with them on the lines. So they came along and they wanted to join an anarchist group. And they had in their pockets open on page 3 of the Sun newspaper, and the Sun newspaper had in those days a picture of usually a woman showing her breasts. And it was like the page three pinup page, and they were reading the Sun, which was about as anathema to their struggle as any you could ever find. The Sun wouldn't want them to get involved in unions. That's by the by. What they wanted was to join, to be part of our movement. Now the question was if very few people they spoke to could help them with that. They couldn't, and they couldn't do it because how do you open a discussion with someone who reads a paper that is totally opposed to what you stand for? And there are pictures of naked women in to ogle? How can you do that? These guys wanted to be part of us because, for whatever reason, they felt we've done good stuff. Now, do we say, "No, we can't, you're just out of the door, we can't have you, you're gonna have to go away and learn to be a better human being or something before you can join anarchism"?

And the truth is we're not a cult, whereby only the best can join it. You can see that as a culture right through anarchist history. And that type of approach that you have to be thinking just like we do before you can become part of us, is both at times necessary if you're engaged in underground work, if you're engaged, like the FAI were, when you're engaged in the armed struggle movement. But if you're in a mass movement that's trying to grow and grow and grow, you have to think about things like that. It doesn't mean that you have to take them, doesn't mean at all that they should, but people are not going to think as we do. What we're going to do about that?

**TFSR: That's a question mark.**

**Barry:** Yeah. It's a question mark that we've had trouble with for years and years, and all anarchist movements have.

The point that we're facing is we believe anarchism is the richest possibility. It's a possibility for the majority of people in this world, or a lot of people in this world to find a richness and strength within them, to find that potential, that potential in them that is denied them by any other system. It could be a flowering of enormous richness for humanity in the world in the next thousands of years. So the question is how are we going to approach people who aren't like us and convince them that this idea, this possibility is one that they should join and be with? So that they can see that possibility and that they should be with us on that journey. And that's the biggest question that you see throughout anarchist history, as well as how to overcome capitalism. How does an anarchist movement grow? How does it grow to bring this about? Always been the question. If there's one thing that Bolshevism taught us don't do it that way. But that then opens up: How do we do

dent, people who left school when they were 15 [years old], people who feel slightly uneasy and in awe of the people around them, how you give them confidence, is really been very difficult for anarchists. We can go beyond that to all genders and cultures in anarchism. We found it very difficult. And that's still the case. And that the only group I know that attempted that – but that was a very monocultural one – was the CNT and you might question very much in the early days its attitude to *Mujeres Libres*. That perfect balance is something that we're still struggling for.

We're still trying to find those discussions where everyone is equal, which is why I stopped going to a lot of meetings because you tend to know a bit, you don't want to sit there and say, "We fucking said that years ago." Never happened. You let people carry on and learn themselves. But I can honestly say that I've struggled to think of any grouping that has been as fair, equal, and open as I would like in anarchism. But I don't think it's too late. We are all learning and we are trying better. But you can see that from the fact that groups around were often created by men, you will often find they're often created by rather articulate men, or they were created by articulate women in the case of *Freedom* in England. And people who weren't articulate were not there. And that seems to me a massive, massive challenge to us all as anarchists. And while I may be too old to actually accept that challenge. But I do want to urge it, if you look at anarchist history, you can see so clearly that anarchists eventually lose the ability to speak to people. Or it becomes almost like a fucking university classroom. That's the last thing we want, at this time. And you can see people, anarchists, Joe Lane, and others in England, and what I know most bristling at this, and often leaving, because of it.

**TFSR: I was really hoping that you had the answer.**

**Barry:** [laughs] Fuck me! I've been waiting for years.

**TFSR: I want my money back.**

**Barry:** There's gonna have to be such a culture change, in terms of who we are writing for and who we are talking to. At the moment anarchism has got itself in a certain position – which there may be really good social and economic reasons for it – where a lot of anarchists just talk to themselves. And we need – I said again and again in this discussion – to find the language to speak to people who think we're silly, or think we've got nothing to say to them, who literally do or say things that we find reprehensible, we need to engage a lot of those people in the conversation. If it fails, it fails, but we have to give it that conversation. If those people decide on anarchism as some richness for them, when they come into our movement, they are as important as the most articulate man or woman in that room. They are as important. And they have to be, in some way, made to be welcomed.

I told the story for a few years. After the miners' strike in '85, there were a couple of apprentices who came up to us, who'd been quite pleased and respectful

then and it's rather different now. Because I would not spend time chatting with old-time Communist Party members now. I've gone beyond that in my thinking about where I'd like to see anarchism be, but as a young boy and man growing up, some of those people influenced me tremendously in their dedication to studying. And they taught me that learning did not have to come from universities or schools certainly, it could come from within, you could teach each other and learn together.

So that's where I grew up. I took part in certain strikes, certain activities, and gradually, I moved almost – I want to say – organically, but that sounds really fucking pretentious. I just moved towards what you and I would recognize as anarchism I hope. I began to read papers like *Freedom*, which left me rather uneasy, and then later on, I read *Black Flag: The Bulletin of the Anarchist Black Cross*, and other reading material and gradually came towards anarchism. What I didn't know, in the other villages, there were other people were going on that journey. But I really didn't see much of them. Because our life in those days was quite constrained. And we never had the interweb to interact with. But, in a way, I was on my own. And then more people came on, we talked about things we were worried about the way that the Communist Party wanted to control the Miners' Union, we worried about their lack of action in living conditions... There were all sorts of things and that's where I moved to, and then I physically moved to London, and that probably was the biggest mistake in my life.

**TFSR: [laughs] You had these ideas of questioning the centralization of power by the Communist Party, and the Miners Union and attempting to control it. And you had all these examples of Marxist and Trotskyist study groups coming up around, and socialists and communists party operatives. It's easy to understand that there is something other than what we're seeing as an anti-capitalist alternative. But when did you first come into contact with anarchism or libertarian socialism?**

**Barry:** In terms of several people, when I got to London, for a while, I played that delicious game where "*I was the working-class man, I knew the truth about life. And you were all middle class, so to speak.*" That's when I first met them. I got papers from *Freedom*, and I'd read little bits by Alexander Berkman. But to be honest, I couldn't quite put them into the perspective of my life and the people around me. It was only when I was at a distance from it that I could see where Berkman's writing went. I have to say, and it's something I'll talk about later on...when I began to meet people associated with the anarchist milieu, most of them didn't read much. They had a class consciousness of who they were, men and women were part of a certain class. There was an orientation to other classes, usually antagonistic or cynical. It wasn't as though we actually went through those reading groups in anarchist circles that the Trots had done and the Communist Party. I suppose a few people may have done it, but for us – and it is a dangerous thing to say – it was almost an intuitive, instinctive thing, which then became cemented by what we read after.

So for me, reading came after my interest in anarchism, in a sense, the real reading. And in some cases, I still have trouble reading what is called the classics. Much of my sense of anarchism was the people I hung around with, the sense of who they were, the way we saw the world together, the way we saw groups at work or not at work, all that came really by conversation, chatting in the pubs, laughing, joking, going on demonstrations, certainly taking part in rent strikes, supporting tenants groups, supporting all sorts of activities. But it wasn't tremendously theory-driven. He was actually much more empathetic and emotionally driven I think. I would say, apropos of what I've been reading about anarchist history, I believe that was really common in England from the 1880s onwards.

**TFSR: You mentioned going into London, and I'm wondering what organizations and gatherings did you participate in? What did the scene look like?**

**Barry:** Obviously, I picked up anarchy in Finsbury Park, I picked up a copy of the Bulletin of the Anarchist Black Cross, before it became Black Flag. And I was amazed by it, the language, and its concerns with the people in prison who were anarchists. The language is one of what you might call contestation, taking on the state, taking on the whole idea of what anarchism had become and challenging it, and drawing on people like myself's experience. It really made sense to me reading it. And then Black Flag, it was Black Flag and the Bulletin of the Anarchist Black Cross that moved me very clearly towards anarchism.

Then there was Cienfuegos Anarchist Review. Later when Stuart moved to Sanday, that was a great educator for me. People like Paul Avrich wrote for it. From this little farmhouse on a little remote Scottish Island, these reviews would come out thicker and thicker full of historical detail and interesting ideas, providing an education for me. I was also involved with support for Spanish anarchist prisoners and, through that, the Anarchist Black Cross, and anarchist prisoners all over Europe, especially. And that was a really interesting experience, because although it was tough at times in England, you weren't gonna get shot, hopefully. It was a different world.

Especially we were drawn to the Spanish struggle. There were Spanish exiles in Paris, and there were Spanish exiles in England, some of whom had probably just given in from exhaustion. But they were there, some of them still. Talking and listening to them were great influences on one. You couldn't chat with these people without realizing that what they'd seen, however corny it sounds now when you say it, and almost perhaps unbelievable, they touched something that perhaps people listening to this may never touch in their life. They touched something wonderful as anarchists in Spain, which is why sometimes I get too obsessed with Spain because there's so much to think about there. And there is that wonder that you saw— We've talked about anarchism all the time. And we talk about this, we talk about mutual aid, and we talk about going and doing this and that, but there, they did something far richer, far more potent. And whether we think it is relevant now

any country, in any anarchist movement in the world, from the times it began, and they're still there now. And they're still questions and problems that we have to come and deal with and work with. And we haven't solved them, we haven't got an answer for them yet. We haven't got anything like it. And for some of us, it's still the burning question. Unless we can come to terms with a lot of these, then the chances of us really achieving anarchy in the next few years are going to be quite limited. One of the things I will finish off with it's great to talk to each other, as I say, go and talk to other people who think you're a bit daft.

**TFSR: On that last point that you were making, that's a very poignant thing to point out. And that's something that I also think about... There's an essay that was written in the '70s, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness". Actually, at first read, I was like, "Pah, whatever", but there's so much power that people wield without— In America, a class analysis is something that we've adapted and taken over from other countries where it's more clearly delineated historically, and you have this thing that you can point to. In America, there are so many parts of the mythology and the occasional case of rags-to-riches stories... But it's hard to point to the difficulty of how some people take power in collective situations, and how we allow that to happen, and also how that person takes advantage of that power that they have, and what's lost because that power is taken. Are there any instances that you can think of where groups have developed good mechanisms for checking that and being like, "You've been talking for a little bit". Historically human communities have used and continue to use shame as a way of knocking people down when they've garnered a lot of social capital or they have an advantage over other people because it's not about them as individuals in the community, their life is about them for sure, but it's about them within the collective and within the world that they exist in as a part of it, not above it.**

**Barry:** It's a common problem in anarchist groupings and anarchism anyway. If Rudolph Rocker said something, people would listen to him a lot more than if Billy Smith said something or Tom Brown did. Even if what Rudolph said may be silly, which I'm not saying it was, status is inferred on people in anarchism as any other movement, no matter how people will pretend it's not. It is. I grew up and I've listened to certain people and been impressed by them a bit more than other people. You would be a bit weird listening to say, Cipriano Mera, who had been in Spain, then been imprisoned and eventually got out, was living in poor conditions in France, but he was still an interesting, fascinating guy. Actually, he never really abused that.

But we have given status to people in our movement when we shouldn't have, men and women. How you pull that down, it's quite a tricky one. How you create a movement where people who are not articulate, people who are not confi-

the great mass of unemployed and poor in London, who anarchists had to get to. And he called it tickling the elephant. He said, “We haven’t even begun to tickle the elephant in the room, we haven’t done it.” Yet these people have, by far the mass of people in the poor working areas, or the poor working-class areas, or whatever you want to describe them. So, how we deal with those people, how we actually work and communicate with people in that position, out of their choice, sometimes not out, is a critical factor.

But one of the things is the role of class in the anarchist movement. And anarchism has been written about often by clever, middle-class people who have been to university or college or whatever and can write well. And you can see that even on Facebook, there’s a certain style of writing on Facebook. I can’t [do it]. People ask me a question, and it took me about five hours to write a reply to it. But other people can be plugging away because that’s what they do. They’re good, they’re clever, they can do that. One of the things we have to accept is that it’s nice they can do that. But there might be just as many riches and just as much potential and just little different views on life from people who aren’t that able, aren’t that good at writing or expressing themselves. No one told me that you have to be a fucking graduate to be an anarchist, or to be able to write well. I’d rather have an anarchist who had something in their chest, in the heart. And we have to be very careful that one of the things the Internet has done is privilege people even more. And that’s a danger for us.

We want to be all-embracing. Now, we don’t want clever buggers writing things very easily. It may be brilliant what they’re writing, but it’s exclusory as much as anything else is, it’s an exclusionary process. Because Facebook has no time for it. We’ve all had conversations with people who find it hard to express ideas. But when they do, you realize there’s a richness there that’s worth treasuring. Now, all of those things you can find in anarchist history. The study of anarchism, if we’re not careful, is going to be about those people who just wrote for anarchist newspapers in 1932, those people who could write, those people who are good editors, those people who could get an idea and play with it and run with it. But there were also, beyond them and around them, people who couldn’t write well, people who didn’t have that skill. But they were just as much an anarchist, and had just as much their own idea, and sometimes richer ideas in their own way than the people who were writing. We have to be careful about that. Because even in many of the newer movements, if you like, we’re privileging people who can write, people who can speak well. And that’s a real danger to me. If you look at anarchist history, one of the things that kick up is trying to go beyond that. So yeah, look, that article is really clever. It’s good, really interesting, and very powerful and very potent, and speaks. What about the people who can’t write that well? Are they just sitting there and going, “Oh, that’s a wonderful article”? No, sometimes they’ve got their own ideas, there are either reaction to the article or are slightly different. And they’re the people that we have to find now, as well as in history.

So all those things I’ve just outlined in that garbled way, you can find in

or not, it’s something that, when you’ve met people who’ve been involved in it, was truly quite potent and changed in a sense gave you your thinking, a greater depth, and a greater belief in the possibilities of anarchism, and also the need to challenge the government at every opportunity.

**TFSR: I don’t know how much you were into history when you were growing up and going to school. But was it meeting these folks that have been involved in a struggle, that was so active and potent some 30 years earlier that you started digging into history so deeply?**

**Barry:** It certainly was a spur. It would have been strange if it wasn’t. But it was also the ‘70s and ‘80s talking to people like Albert Meltzer, who it would be fair to say, though, he’d probably laughed at, has been a major influence in my life. Albert was a difficult man at times but I found him to be a man who carried a history with him, who had a certain sense of what anarchists should be doing. And he was certainly a great influence on me. And then, Spanish anarchists. People like Stuart Christie, who had been in prison in Spain for his attempt on Franco’s life, met anarchists there and came back with a fund of knowledge.

And remember, in 1968, with the Carrera Conference, which I was just slightly young enough not to become aware of, there was this sense of this great emergence of new anarchism, exciting anarchism that went through Europe especially. This is still very European, and certainly, in the 70s, it influenced quite a lot of people. And remember, there were still people like Cipriano Mera alive who’d been key in the Spanish Civil War, Antonio Téllez, with his histories of Sabaté, and others, and then the arrival of Miguel Garcia from prison, which the Black Cross managed, and his life and his writings began to affect quite a lot of us. Miguel is an unknown hero of the Spanish resistance. We became Sabaté people and all of this led me to read a writer called Mat Kavanagh, who had done an “Unknown Anarchists” for Freedom in the ‘30s. He was an old Irish anarchist revolutionary, and he made me think very clearly about anarchism, the history of anarchism. They all led me down a path that left me quite isolated for quite a long time.

**TFSR: How so?**

**Barry:** By isolated, I should say, I mean in terms of intellectual histories of anarchism, and what anarchism is and was. The Kate Sharpley Library, which we have now, is, in a sense, our collective works and it regularly worked with it... Albert had been a great influence on the Kate Sharpley Library and helped enormously with it, and was one of— If it wasn’t the original founder, he was the energy that was there in the ‘80s. And I realized that although I was interested in anarchist history, and I really was, what I thought was the anarchist history wasn’t the material that was being written about in anarchist histories. Even now I find myself trying to find it very difficult to locate what I think and what the people around me in the

Kate Sharpley Library think about anarchist history, to what even good comradesly scholars are writing about anarchist history. And it's a difficult one for me, but I was thinking the other day when you contacted me whether I wanted to talk about it because it may sound regretful but it's not. I'm rather happy that I am where I am in my thinking about anarchist history. But I'm aware that for comrades like myself, it's a lonely business.

**TFSR: What exactly is your vision of anarchists' history? And how does it differ from how other people-**

**Barry:** Yeah, I knew you gonna ask me.

**TFSR: You just lead into it.**

**Barry:** [laughs] It's really looking at my own trajectory. And looking at, say, the trajectory of other people I've read about and learned about over the years. I almost see anarchism history in two strands. There's obviously the intellectual history of anarchism. You can write saying it was in ancient Greece if you want, but there's Bakunin, Kropotkin, Louise Michelle, Goldman, and Bookchin. And you can read that anarchism, and say, "Well, that's interesting." I think that's fine. It's not for me. But if comrades are doing that, that's as good as anything, if you're clarifying what people meant and said, and why they said it at that particular time, that's good stuff.

**TFSR: That's like the canonical approach, right?**

**Barry:** Yes, it is. But for me, I'm not even totally convincing myself [that] lot of anarchists were bothered about that material. If you look say at Bakunin, in the 1880-the 1890s, probably *God and the State* was available, and probably nothing else to read in England. I rather think that anarchists almost did it themselves, the rough parameter which had been oozed into the movement by people who had read Kropotkin. But for most anarchists, it was one foot forward, one foot back. You learned it together, you learned what anarchism was together, and you realized that you had shared feelings about certain things, but you learned how to progress together. And at times, I remain convinced that some anarchists had never read a word of Kropotkin in their life in the 1890s. And so for me, those people were really interesting because in a way they were anarchism.

Anarchism isn't the works of Emma Goldman or Voltairine de Cleyre, however wonderfully at times they write. Anarchism is if their ideas are adopted or even ignored. Anarchism is the behavior of people, of anarchists. It's what they do. It's their life experiences. Now somewhere along the line, if they ever read anarchism, and that it made sense to them, what they've gone through in their life, the words they read made sense to them. But sometimes, I would argue, that reading

move away from traditional ideas of left thinking and go to people who are not necessarily political but are perhaps rich in emotion and possibility. But I don't think that whatever happens, we cannot bring anarchy around if that's what we really want. And if we don't want, you can go and fucking watch the TV or write brilliant witty pieces on Facebook. If we want to get rid of it and we want to bring anarchy about, we have to have a lot of people with us. We know that we're not Bolsheviks, we're not gonna have a dictatorship. And that's a challenge of creating that movement. It's through education and discussion under capitalism. You can see that right through history, also anarchist history? Can I say that the group that really got there, perhaps more effectively, than most was the CNT which is why it's always worth looking? There are a couple of other things, and then I'll let you readers go away and enjoy their life.

The question really is, and it's following on from that, to do with the organization: Are we able to create organizations that are flexible, fluid, nondogmatic enough to challenge capitalism, and to fight to be faithful to the complexities of anarchist practice and relationships? Can we do that? It's bloody hard! And I don't know if we can, but we may need to work with other anarchists and other people in those organizations. And how do we do it? There's been a great tradition of non-organizational anarchists who have added much to our movement, there's no question of that. But at the same time, how do we possibly create groups and organizations that can truly bring in thousands of people with us to break capitalism? And how can we make them honest and in conjunction with our beliefs?

My final question is a little bit trickier. All these things I'm working on. So if you think you've got the fucking answers, you're wrong. All I'm saying is you can look through anarchist history and see all of those points clear was daylight being discussed and practiced again and again and again. The other point I would say is that we do have to look at the role of class in anarchism. Now, you can argue all day long about the role of the working class, blah, blah, blah, and whether they're the agent that we should be worried about in terms of social change? Yes. I think, probably, if only because there are a lot of them. But we are also aware, aren't we, that many anarchists turn to what we would call the poor. The poor in anarchists' thinking was often different from the working class. The poor were often the lumpenproletariat, the people with no organization, unemployed and such. And actually, anarchists often make great strides in that group.

One of the most poignant documents I've ever read is *A Day Mournful and Overcast*, which was the memoir of an ex-prisoner who had been there, until the anarchists have gone in there, smashed down the jails, and brought him out, and he went to fight with the Iron Column. And here is this man, at last, finding the dignity in his life a prisoner ever had. He wasn't anarcho-syndicalist with any trade union, he was a prisoner. Now that the whole group is growing and growing in our culture, we do have to find ways of speaking to them and supporting them. And we may need to challenge our own thinking about that. But examples of people going into them is, throughout history, Frank Kitz in 1891 was talking about



**TFSR: So is there anything you can learn from anarchist history, apart from lives?**

**Barry:** Yeah, there is. I suppose we're one gets to a certain stage in one's thinking, and I'm there now. And there were certain and there are certain things that are irrelevant, and we have to accept that these are irrelevant to us. And sometimes we can read about what anarchists tried to deal with. Not at all to copy it, but to realize that it's a relevant thing that we haven't yet dealt with, and we haven't been able to solve, or we haven't been able to quite come to terms with.

And I suppose the first one, and it's in every piece of anarchist writing and anarchist action: "how do we get rid of capitalism?" If you'd said to me in 1968-69, that capitalism would still be functioning in 2020, I'd probably laughed at you. I thought that capitalism was on its way out yet, every time it managed to come back from whatever challenge and it proved to be sinuate, difficult, and elusive to pin down. It may be that the era that we're living in will change all of that. But I am slightly cynical because it's been thrown at us many times that it's on its last legs, and that little weaselly bastard keeps coming back.

So, for the anarchists in the Socialist League of England, the anarchists around Mother Earth, that was in America, the anarchists in Argentina, DiGiovani and others. How do you get rid of capitalism? How does it go? Because if you don't get rid of capitalism, anarchism will never live.

Alongside that, what does it mean to be an anarchist in a capitalist society? What does it mean? How far should you go in your accommodation with capitalism? These are real problems that anarchists have agonized over for 100 years. The American anarchist communist paper Free Society had hot discussions about this in the 1899-the 1900s. What do we do with capitalism in anarchy? How can we relate to it? Well, say, if you look at Bonnot Gang, Raymond Callemin (or "Raymond La Science" as he was called), those comrades felt very clearly that there was no accommodation to be had. Better to throw yourself against it and die, than try and compromise with it. You had to leave a completely separate life, but at the same time, become an illegalist to challenge its morality. There are all sorts of approaches you could have. But the truth is how do we, how do you and I function as anarchists in a capitalist world? And if you can't function properly, then what's the problem with capitalists? If you can go and live on a little fucking commune in some parts of America and not really get bothered by it? Capitalism is fine, right?

So that tension of being an anarchist under capitalism has permeated right through anarchist history. And it's a real challenge for us to deal with. So that is quite important. As I said earlier talking about Bloodstained, the next question, in terms of capitalism, is who do we work with to get rid of it? Who do we work with or do we feel we can trust and would share the ideas of a world afterward based on mutual aid and individual respect? Who do we feel we can work with to achieve that aim? And once it's gone, to work for this much better world? And that seems to be an enormously important question nowadays. And it may well be that we

took place quite a while after they called themselves anarchists. And I think anarchism is how men and women and children are related to each other in certain situations. And at times – and this is where I have to say I'm not too dramatic – I don't think Emma Goldman, Kropotkin, Murray Bookchin, John Zerzan mean a toss at all, that there is almost a study of anarchist theory, there's a study of anarchism. And sometimes the two are really diverging.

My final point about all that was that I suddenly began to realize that if you're going to write the history of anarchism, you weren't going to write bloody Demand the Impossible or whatever, about Peter Marshall or Woodcock or Ruth Kinna, you have to write about ordinary people's lives who call themselves anarchists. Because that was anarchism. One of the things we decided, it really was the influence of Albert, but welcomed, was that if you wanted to learn about the history of anarchism, you had to learn about the lives and the actions of people who didn't appear in the books, because they were the anarchists who made any ideas happen, whether they read them or not. Anarchists were people who made things happen, who did things, and if you didn't know about them, you didn't know about anarchism.

Certainly, sometimes the dialectic between the work, say, of Kropotkin, Bakunin, or George Barrett, and anarchist behavior in terms of people reading it, bringing their own ideas to it, changing it slightly, and doing it. That's there. We can't ignore that. But it needs to be stood at a lot more than there hasn't been. And secondly, there is a belief I have that anarchism is enriched, anarchists theory if you want is enriched by the behavior of people who may not have read it, but would call themselves anarchism. Anarchist theory is enriched by the nameless anarchists slaughtered in Franco's jails, and murdered in Uruguay. Anarchism is as much that as Kropotkin, or probably more than Kropotkin. And that's a hard thing for us all to deal with. Albert Meltzer tells the story in his autobiography, *I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels*. The person who influenced him the most was Billy Campbell who died in World War II. He was as anarchist as anybody was, but Billy Campbell, you and I would know nothing about Billy Campbell, unless Albert told us.

So my move toward anarchist history has gone off in a direction that other people haven't. There's also something else, which is an obsession about trying to get facts right as well and get rid of the myths in anarchism, which irritates me beyond belief, but that's by the by. So my overall trajectory is that by learning the lives of people and respecting those lives, even if we disagree with our anarchist interpretations, by learning about those lives, and what they went through, we learn about anarchism. We learned far more about anarchism doing that than by reading *Conquest of Bread*. Does that make sense?

**TFSR: Yeah, absolutely. I really appreciate that take. When I was coming up and studying I took a lot from Howard Zinn's approach and the approach, not just from a historical big lens view of how people lived in a society, but the idea of fully rejecting the "Big Man theory" of history and that we're**

**all pawns moved around by geniuses. What we're experiencing informs our choices and our relationships with each other. I fully agree. It also seems like quite a dilemma for someone who's about recording history, because those are exactly the people that are either buried under the leaves or never thought to write because there was so busy doing.**

**Barry:** Albert wrote regularly for *War Commentary* and *Freedom*. But a lot of people who knew didn't write a word, some of them couldn't, and some of them were near illiterates. And finding those people and writing about their lives is a great joy.

**TFSR: I talked two years ago to Donald Room when I was in the UK and it was an absolute pleasure. And when I was trying to put the show up on the internet and put out notes, there were a bunch of names that he mentioned: "this person who was speaking in the square and this person who was an agitator, his daughter went off to Australia, and he went to go join her, and he never met her again, we never knew what happened to her." Just the stories of people that, for me, I'm never going to know anything about a lot of the people that were mentioned, who were amazing inspirational speakers in Hyde Park. And it's such a pity to lose that, even though it's losing it to me, but so many other people felt the impact and influence, that living energy is anarchy, right?**

**Barry:** Yes, it is. And that anarchy is almost impossible sometimes to write about because that anarchy as well can lead to conflict and tension. But the influence of those people at certain times has never really been assessed and looked at. And that's a great loss. It does something to anarchism, it weakens anarchist history tremendously.

**TFSR: As long as we're also recognizing that it's a living thing that we're engaging in, that it's still alive, it'd be lovely to have that. It'd be lovely to have a conversation with all the great anarchists throughout history, who were never written about.**

**Barry:** Yeah, it wouldn't be it would also probably be very infuriating and irritating. But of course, it's a living entity, but the question really is what is our relationship, now, with our past as anarchists? Look, I'm not talking here about working-class communities, communities of color, or whatever, I'm talking about anarchism. So that's for another discussion. But what is our relationship as anarchists to the anarchist past? And I'm not sure, there are all sorts of problems with that. Every generation thinks they are new, "they're alive. That past is past. What we're facing now is so new and different and challenging." It's just basically rather than "Yeah, Berkman was okay. Yeah, it's interesting to read a little bit about the Spanish women in the Sierras in the guerrilla war against Franco, but really, it's not

majority is a tricky, gnarly question. And one that goes back to how we talk to people, how we talk to people beyond the mere "this is an emergency." How do we talk to people beyond that? And those questions I'm not qualified to answer, but I worry about every fucking morning I wake up.

**TFSR: Yeah, this is the world that we have to share with them. Or we have to find some balance and way to come to a mutual agreement to find something better than this because this is literally killing us.**

**Barry:** It is, and it will eventually. Even if this pandemic flies by, and we are finding in November or something that we're all wandering around, eyes wide open, lost, the economy will be in crisis. And it will be a great opportunity to present people with the potential of something far more humane, far more civilized, and far better for mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Whether we as anarchists have got the skill and the abilities to do that is another matter.

**TFSR: The alternative that a lot of people are fearing is that this will be an opportunity for increased ethno-nationalism, stronger borders, somehow more intense capitalism, and the normalization of people basically living under military rule.**

**Barry:** Yes, that's a great fear. And it's always there. It's always there, not just in pandemics, but it's always there, in terms of social turmoil, social strife. And one of the things – I keep coming back to this point because it drives me rather crazy – is that we can't be self-righteous about our beliefs. We can't say that "We've the answers. And if you don't agree totally with it, you are fucking stupid." You either want to be able to explain the possibilities that are there that will oppose a militarized state. You want to explain the possibility to say, "Look, we can all care for each other." What we can't do is dress up as fucking old punks, and think that unless people are like me, they're not really part of our movement. We have to accept the fact that when anarchism has been strong, is that grandmothers, granddads, and two-year-olds, who were all sympathetic to anarchism, even the two-year-olds were in the household when they went to the socials. If you look at the socials in Spain, it was multi-age, it was multi-group, there'd be people were eighty, and people who were four there. Your grandma went, your granddad went, they are as rich and as full of potential as anyone. We have to get to be able to take our attention away from talking to each other and to talk to people out there in that scary world beyond the computer screen. And maybe this awful pandemic, and I don't want to even say it's given us a chance to do that because it's almost as disparaging of the people whose lives are lost and the misery and sadness in families. But it might encourage us to talk to people more, it might. And if that's the case, that will be a great step forward. Not to talk to each other, but to talk to people out there. That's all I can think about really at the moment.

**you've seen that inspire you, or any lessons that you think that we might think about through this very, very harrowing time?**

**Barry:** Well, if one is to believe Facebook and I hope one's right here, there are lots of anarchists and sympathizers going out there, and people who are anarchists created mutual aid groups who are trying to help people and to support people at this time. And that is exemplary. And if nothing else, people begin to see who you are and what you believe. And this is what you're doing. I can't urge people to keep doing that, to help people to care for people around you. It's especially difficult because when I grew up, as I said if you knew a lot of people in your area, it wasn't hard to do that. It is now. Many of us don't speak to our next-door neighbors or the person down the corridor in our block. So if nothing else, it's opening up and breaking down a few barriers.

I would like to see this as a time that will lead to some type of radical, permanent, real societal change. But what that change will be is going to be a really tricky question. Because, to some degree, we are living in unreal times, although the Spanish flu in 1918 and the reactions of anarchists to that might be interesting ones to look at. The solution that capitalism has is just we lock you away in your house and good luck to you then, and we'll come back in four weeks, and everything will be better. And we're going to give some money to businesses. I see some in France say "don't pay rent", in New Zealand, the same – "don't pay your mortgage", don't worry about that.

And I want to come back to this because this is what I've been looking at now for the last three years, which is the question surely that anarchists have asked since anarchists were alive ever: How do you get rid of capitalism? How do you finish off? Will it be a pandemic? Will it be its own destruction? Will it be some great bank fall all over us? I mean, how do we get rid of capitalism? And at the moment, we're expecting a virus to do it for us. But the question is: what will we put in its place, should that ever happen? And in what ways are you and I and all of our comrades not damaged by capitalism still, how do we stop and avoid the damage that capitalism has done to us as people? Because let's be clear, there's not one fucking anarchist in this world who in some way has not been damaged by that malignant system, a really brutal and hard system? So they are big questions to ask, but if there are opportunities that one has to take them, one has to take them based on mutual aid, mutual care, and help.

It may be an exciting time because one of the other things that I worry about a lot and think about a lot is that we will need a lot of people to support us, help us, and work with us. We will need those people. We don't want to form a fucking little elitist Bolshevik government, we will need the mass of people to be with us. What are you going to do if, not start shooting them? I don't care that, as long as there is a majority of people who feel that the ideas are being put forward of getting rid of capitalism and producing something far more humane in its way, if this is the majority of people, and that is a wonderful thing. How we get that ma-

applicable anymore." And that's a tension that's always going to be there for the anarchist historian because I don't want to be totally irrelevant. I'm happy to be 80% irrelevant, but when I'm 100% irrelevant, it makes me sulk.

**TFSR: So you had mentioned coming up on and being really influenced by the *Anarchist Black Cross Bulletin*, and then the presence of Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer. I was reading through this essay that you wrote for *Bloodstained: One Hundred Years of Leninist Counterrevolution*. It's entitled "Cries In The Wilderness"...**

**Barry:** You bring up stuff, don't you... Go on...

**TFSR: It wasn't published that long ago. But for me, reading that was really inspirational because I know bits about the history of the Anarchist Black Cross, and I engage with an Anarchist Black Cross chapter and with other groups that do that work. And that not only is that work, something that ties us to our history, knowing about people that have struggled or continue to be repressed. But getting the chat with you about this and your essay in there about Alexander Berkman and other anarchists' engagement with aid to incarcerated anarchists and Social Revolutionaries and others under the Bolshevik regime is fascinating to see a bit of that heritage, those of us that do prisoner support is a part of and exist with it.**

**Barry:** Yes. It's, a fantastic period to study. There are obviously some implications. That said, you saw the tension I posed between some of the New York anarchists and Berkman. And the New York anarchists say, "Look, we should just be supporting our comrades, not other people." And Berkman was very adamant, in terms of the Bolshevik slaughter, "we will support people who are also suffering under that."

Now, Berkman, when he was imprisoned himself, wrote in prison *Memiors of an Anarchist*, it's a marvelous book. It's very profound and if you want to be an anarchist, just read that, because there's so much in that book, there's so much that we would feel uneasy with now. Berkman had sympathy for all victims of capitalism. As far as Berkman was concerned, for instance, capitalism was a malignant, brutal force and to put people in prison for any crime they have done was the height of barbarity, cruelty, and pointlessness. That meant he had sympathy for crimes that you and I and our comrades now would blanch at. Many people in those prisons had murdered, had attacked women. Those people were as worthy of sympathy as he was because they were victims of the brutality of capitalism. You probably don't know that when he left that prison, the whole gallery stood up and clapped him as he walked out, all the prisoners in the prison, because of who he was and how he supported and helped them and was kind to them. But that might cause problems, if we look at that now, in our thinking and how we see things. But Berkman was adamant that capitalism was a malignant force, he also quickly went

on to believe that Bolshevism was equally as malevolent, and state socialism was as malevolent. And therefore, you would support people who normally you wouldn't cross the fucking street to say hello to because they too, were being tortured and brutalized and hurt in Russian prisons. And therefore, to say, "Well, we should only worry about those people we know, or believe to be similar to us," was not acceptable.

When the Anarchist Black Cross restarted, at first, it was a bit like the New York anarchists, we've got a lot of comrades in prison, and it's out there. And it was meant to help Spanish anarchists. And then it just took off. And it became a strange effect: you find yourself supporting Marxist armed struggle people, because they had taken on capitalism, and we're suffering mightily in capitalist prison. You couldn't quite abandon them, because everyone else had, a lot of other people had, but the Anarchist Black Cross didn't. That said, you went down some strange pathways, which I wish we hadn't gone down. The last time I was at the Kate Sharpley late Christmas, there was a folder, a couple of letters from the Manson women, to the Black Cross asking for help.

**TFSR: That's complicated.**

**Barry:** What do you think they're gonna do about that?

The point is that you will support people who are victims of capitalism. But if you do that, you then perhaps have to consider it's not just the political people who are victims of capitalism who you are supporting as the Black Cross. There are social prisoners right through America, and social prisoners who've done crimes that you and I might be horrified by, but in their own way of victims of capitalism. That is a great moral massive dilemma that Berkman tried to deal with as steadily and conscientiously as he could. And believe me, the work Berkman did was fucking holy work supporting the Russian prisoners, the anarchists in prison, the Social Revolutionaries. A desk full of bits of scraps of paper, news coming four-six months after that happened, and that great dedication. I'm telling you, that's one of the most heroic things that man did. Never mind, you want to see him as a person who [tried to] kill Frick. He's sat at that desk and was helped by lots of people in Germany and elsewhere, and they sat down and they tried to get publicity and support for people who were going through hell, a hell that we couldn't believe. It was a wonderful, wonderful piece of selflessness which I don't know if it was recognized enough.

So, Berkman was a great man, but some of his views would worry about that. It doesn't mean that he was wrong or right. But sometimes our culture changes, and anarchists in history maybe don't, but what we can't do, and what we should never fucking do, is to treat those fucking anarchists in history as little pieces or chess pawns to support our arguments now. We can't fillet in Emma Goldman's life and say, "Well, she said this one, so that means we're right if I say that, and I put that fucking quote in." We can't say, "Here are our worries of today, this is what

know, I do sense that we do not yet, or we haven't yet developed the ability to talk to people who are not anarchists. We haven't found the language to do that. Whilst in history, they had. It seems to be one of the biggest questions that we're facing now. How do we talk about our ideas to those people who we fucking stupid, or who have got no interest in politics whatsoever, as 90% of the world hasn't? They're not really totally interested in us. How do we talk to them?

Now, we've always said that you learn through struggle. Well, sometimes you do, and you'll learn not to do that fucking thing again. When you look at people like Vanzetti, Frank Kitz – these are just names I'm giving you now – they could communicate with people who are poor or mocked politics and had no time whatsoever for any political strand, but they could talk to them, they had that language. I'm not sure we've got it anymore. And until we find that language, we could always end up just being anonymous on Facebook with each other or with each other in real life.

We have to face that we have to talk to people who have got attitudes that were not easy with. Don't we all realize that's how anarchism grew by entering into those discussions? But that's another point. I'm not sure I can answer that question clearly. Because if I could, I'd be happy as Larry. All I would finish with this, Albert Meltzer and others of his age group would always say, "Well, I never gave up. I never gave up." And often it was sheer bloody-minded mental strength and a desire to get rid of capitalism that kept him going.

**TFSR: That reminds me of a Chumbawamba song.**

**Barry:** Well, that's where they got the title from.

**TFSR: I believe it.**

**You've touched on something right there, and I don't know if this is me being Pollyannaish, or whatever. But as we're talking right now, we are amid a global pandemic. And we're also on the slow precipice of ecological collapse. And I wonder if maybe I watched too many Hollywood movies, but I wonder if this is not the opportunity, in some ways, that we can take. There's been a lot of chatter about communities coming together and forming, talking about rent strikes because whole portions of the economy, whole apartment buildings, whole cities are going to be unable to pay mortgages and rent. People have to scramble, people hoarded food or even just bought up supplies if they could, but tons of people in our communities don't. And healthcare and environment are two things that both, in some ways, cross class divisions and community divisions. But they're so all-encompassing. Another way of putting it is not just like everyone has a concern with it, but literally, everyone's concern needs to be our concern if we're going to survive.**

**I wonder if there are any examples of community organizing that**

**Barry:** I want to give you some really clever answers that would make it all clear and straightforward. But I don't know if I can and if it sounds wobbly it's simply because of what I'm thinking about now all the time, as you get older, I'm sure not quite your age, but you begin to think more and more about those sorts of questions.

Sometimes one stays an anarchist out of sheer bloody-mindedness. But I have to say that learning about people who I never knew about, seeing them, and learning about their lives and their feelings and their emotions, it's certainly given me inspiration. Okay, it gives me inspiration. And sometimes, I'm afraid, it gives me more inspiration than perhaps some of the stuff we're doing now anarchists. That is not meant to demean anarchists. But I actually think that at times, we're very much an online movement. I really can't be bothered by that. I'll come back to that later, if I may.

In terms of communities in defeat, I don't know. 30 years ago, it was a big argument that if you take part in this strike, if you take part in this tenants' movement, if you take part in this rent strike, and you lose, you've learned a lot. And you will use that knowledge to inform the next struggle you're in. I'm not sure that's true anymore. I think the experience of defeat for people who are not anarchists, and people who are already totally committed, the experience of defeat in some cases can be devastating. I'm not sure we've ever learned that. Sometimes, as you see the communities broken up around you, those communities that gave you some support and strength, however awkward and messy, when you see that, I'm not convinced that you learn anything from defeat. And if you want it to be quite cynical, there's a lot of defeat in our movement and a lot of defeat in the political struggle around this. Marvelous things are going on in some communities of care and loving and trying to support each other. But in some communities that have taken on the state and have been knocked about a bit, what we're learning from that, I'm not sure.

So what do I say? I say that we're not apparatchiks, part of the problem is that we're not located in communities. We're not located amongst people who think totally differently from us. And if we don't like them. We make our anarchist ideals the most important thing in the world. And if people don't agree with those ideas, or don't understand those ideals, we're in trouble. Because they just say, "Okay, and yes, there'll be a strike, and we'll support them, we'll print all their papers, we'll print this, we'll print that." But when the strike goes away, if we're not living in that community, we move on to our next thing, don't we? "What's next then? Well, miners, I'll print workers, I know this community," they just keep moving around like fucking blowflies. And it's not helping anybody. I don't think you can just invent organic communities again. And I'm not sure I've got the skills to say, "We haven't got those mining communities. We haven't got those agricultural communities. We haven't got those fishing communities anymore, they are all fucking gone."

So I've not got the skill to realize what community we have now. But I do

we're challenging. Let me go find a quote and see what Berkman said. Let me go and see and find a quote Johann Most said, let me go find a quote Galliani said, and I can use that as an argument." Those people are actually worth more than that, they're worth far more than that, that fucking awful ahistorical approach. And yes, they'd have awkward, horrible ideas at times, because they were a product of their time as anyone was. But they rose above it as well as they could. And you have to see those people as people, not as just intellectual ciphers to let you win a fucking argument on Facebook. They're people who lived lives, that were contradictory, awkward, were difficult. But we have to respect their life. Because if we can't respect anarchists' life and their complexities, what are we doing? It's just like the Stalinist approach to history. I'm gonna ignore that because I don't like it. It doesn't fit my Ph.D. thesis? Oh, fuck off!

**TFSR: Jumping topics a little bit. You mentioned in the introduction to that article that you've seen a lot of people and all of us have seen a lot of very young people that have been embracing authoritarian communism, or some version or some patina of it. Why do you think that is?**

**Barry:** Because... I got to be quite careful. First of all, there are always going to be revisionists of history, they're always going to look at history and try and suggest that there's something that we've missed there that we could use. And therefore they want to look at Maoism. They want to look at Trotskyism and they want to find things. Secondly, there is a distinct historical tradition they can feel part of. And thirdly, it's actually quite easy. Because although you're grappling with these ideas, there are people around you giving you the answers. And that you can use the writings of Trotsky, you can use the writings of people who followed on, Shachtman and other people, you can follow those people. And you can get the answers that you want or refine their arguments to fit now. And you really, really feel part of something and you feel part of a movement and you don't feel alone. That's ever so important for a lot of people. And my final cynical thing would be that it's often an intellectual exercise. It's often something that you can do and make sense of. When I was growing up, things like Marxism, Trotskyism, anarchism even, you join those movements, because you felt that they explained the world, that you all the answers to the fucking world's problems were in those movements, if you looked at them carefully enough, if you looked at the writings. Be it religion, be it famine, be it relationships with each other, you look there to find the answers. And it gave you the answers. People feel a need to do that and find that even now.

**TFSR: Do you think that there's a point of intercession that anarchists can make in that seeking of— There's obviously huge differences between someone who's into Enver Hoxha or whatever because they read the Wikipedia page and found a bunch of translated articles. But if there's a commonality of leftism between the folks who are intellectually into Mao or Stalin or**

**whatever and people that come from an anarchist tradition, is there actually enough of a foundation, enough dirt to plant roots into and engage with or should we at least try to say it's okay? Are there grounds for communication do you think?**

**Barry:** Well, I don't think AK called that book *Bloodstained* for nothing. If you look at our movement, you look at anarchist history, as many anarchists have been slaughtered by communists, Trotskyists, if you want, but communists certainly, as have been slaughtered by fascists and capitalists. We have to accept that, you'd be would be naive not to. We can't count the dead in Russia, can't count the dead in Bulgaria, or elsewhere. They have blood on their hands, our blood on their hands. And never mind the whole viciousness in Spain and the killing of so many richly possible. I'm not sure we can just ignore that.

One of the things I've been thinking about lately is what are their common threads in anarchist history that we can look at? I'm not doing the historical approach to say that's important now. I'm trying to look, do I see themes right through it? And one of the things that we have is who do we work with to get rid of capitalism? I'll talk about that in a little while, but who do we work with? I'm old now. But I don't think I can think of many times when communists haven't betrayed anarchists. I really don't. And it may well be that these new youth who are moving into communist ideas and whatever are nice, interested people. But suddenly, if a revolution situation came around, I wouldn't want to be anywhere near them. Because, I think, in their ideologies, there is an authoritarianism that I haven't seen yet dismissed. I've seen a lot of interesting ideas and discussions. But I haven't seen that dismissed. It may well be the next generation of anarchists is really less cynical and misanthropic than I am, but those bastards have got a lot of blood on their hands. And I am not yet got to the stage where I can just forget that. It may be that your generation and the people around you can and that may be a good thing. Who knows? But all I would say is watch them.

**TF SR: Yeah, if nothing else, there's a lot of recent history of entryism, or at least in the last 20 years, of movements and organizations that share space between authoritarian Marxists and anyone else, honestly. Bad habits.**

**So I'd like to talk a little more about Kate Sharpley Library. Can you talk about that project, and how it came about? What it does?**

**Barry:** We have a web page, first of all, [katesharpleylibrary.net](http://katesharpleylibrary.net)

It began as an idea of a few people, just to collect material. And then Albert introduced the name Kate Sharpley because Kate Sharpley was a young woman who no one really knew anything about. Albert met her when she was an older woman. And she had thrown a medal back at a relative of the royal family. When a member of your family was killed in World War I, you were presented with a medal. You were said he died for the king and country and it's quite a lot of households in

England that have them. And it was some relative of the royal family who presented her with a medal because her brother or someone had been killed. And she just picked it up and threw it back at him, "I don't want your stinking medal." And she was branded as a traitor and called a prostitute at times. And it seemed to Albert that was a good name for this library. Because what he wanted this library to do and other people around wanted it to do was not just to have the memories of all the big names, the letters of Kropotkin, and a few original letters, but we wanted to try and remember and learn about all the people were not the names of anarchism, who had struggled and suffered often emotionally and physically for that belief and were unrecorded anywhere.

It gradually took off and I started to work with it in the early 90s. So it's nearly 30 years I've grappled with it. And our aim is still that. We produce a bulletin probably every quarter, we publish pamphlets where we sometimes go down obscure alleyways for hours, days, and months and find nothing, and other times we do. But our aim is simply just to record the history of those people who have been forgotten.

That leads us to some areas of tension. Some anarchists won't forget this that and the other, and we don't forget anything. We try to bring ideas and people back to life. And we're not bringing them back to life, so we can "learn from them". We're bringing them back to life to say, "These people had our ideas, or most of our ideas. They had most of our beliefs, and they were fucking slaughtered for it. Or they went into despair and walked away from the movement because they couldn't stand it anymore, or they went to drink, or they just left the bloody country. But we want to recognize them for what they did." End of the story. We want to recognize them for what they suffered, end of the story. And we want to say that they're not forgotten, no matter what else happens, they're not forgotten. There's one little part of the world where they are alive still. Because if you don't do that as an anarchist, what are you talking about anarchism therefore?

If you can't remember all of your comrades who went through shit, despair, ecstasy, and happiness, if you can't remember all those people below those feelings, what a dry, boring movement you've got. One that's not based on any type of reality.

**TF SR: I have experienced this over the 40-something years that I've been alive. It strikes me, and this is a conversation that I have a lot with comrades that are younger than me of just how much it seems that people leave the movement, and people walk away from anarchism, and we lose our comrades, and we lose these connections. And I know that capitalism is a hell of a fucking system to live under and survive and keep ourselves sane, let alone struggle on top of working all the time to be able to make ends meet. But do you have any observations about what things have helped you to stay committed to being an anarchist or ways that communities can hold together better to support people through those hard times?**