

## Klose, Helmut (1904-1987)



A short biography of Helmut Klose, German anarchist and hobo who fought in the Spanish civil war.

Helmut Klose was born in Jankemühle (Brandenburg, Germany) on August 4th 1904 the second of six children born to Fernardine Klose and her husband Bernhard, a miller.

He was a tailor by profession. At the age of eighteen, he went on the tramp, going from place to place taking jobs in mining and road construction. He joined the anarcho-syndicalist Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands (FAUD, Free German Workers' Union).

From 1925 onwards he began writing short stories that appeared in various Social Democrat newspapers. He continued his life as a hobo, making long journeys in Norway and Yugoslavia. In 1927 Gregor Gog (1891-1945) the 'Vagabond King' founded a tramps' organisation Der Bruderschaft der Vagabunden (The Vagabond Brotherhood) and Helmut joined this. Gog wrote for libertarian journals like Anarchist, Der Syndikalist and Besinnung und Aufbruch (Reflection and Renewal). He and his wife Anni Geiger-Gog were close to the FAUD and advocated work with their organisation. In 1929 an International Conference of Vagabonds was organised between 21st-23rd May in Stuttgart and Helmut Klose attended this. The same year he acted in the film Vagabund directed by Fritz Weiss, with Gog as an advisor. It premiered on December 11th of that year in Vienna.

In 1930 he forsook the road and took work as a freelance writer in Berlin.

With the Nazi ascent to power Helmut felt under threat. Thousands of vagabonds were rounded up by the police, SA and SS throughout Germany, and the FAUD was itself repressed. He left Germany for Austria, and then went to Yugoslavia where he worked as a tour guide in Sarajevo.

He was expelled from Yugoslavia in February 1937 for possession of Spanish anarchist literature. He moved to Spain where between March and June 1937 he was a member of the

Supervisory Frontiers Body of the Sébastian Faure Century named after the French anarchist, (but not to be confused with the group of the same name, mostly consisting of French volunteers, in the Durruti Column), also known as the Battalion of the Coast on the border between France and Spain at Port Bou. This was a militia group answering to the CNT-FAI and included fellow German anarchists Albert Kille, Herbert and Helmut Aul, Fritz Koehn, Heinz Petry, Philippe Urban and Richard Winkler. Helmut joined the Deutsche Anarchosyndikalisten (DAS) the German anarchist group operating in Catalonia.

He also took part in the work of the agricultural collective of San Andres. He was engaged in helping organise a collective of tailors when he was arrested by the Stalinists on July 2nd 1937, on the trumped up charges of having disarmed Republican officers on the border. Until December 1938 he was in various prisons- the Modelo, the prison ship Argentina, and the Segorbe prison in Valencia. During his detention on the Argentina, Francoist planes bombed the harbour at Barcelona where it was moored. He managed to smuggle out several letters denouncing conditions in the prisons which were published in the libertarian press.

After his release he was assigned to a punishment battalion until the end of the war. He was released completely broken in health. He was the last German anarchist to be freed. With the Retirada and the flight of many over the border into France, Helmut was interned in the camp at Gurs. Here he participated in the committee set up by anarchists to counter the Stalinist control of the majority of prisoners.

In September 1939, through the mediation of a British artist, Hedda Carrington, he was allowed to settle in Cambridge. When World War II broke out, as a German citizen, he was interned on the Isle of Man and then, until the end of 1941 in Canada. In the internment camp he became friends with the German zoologist Hans Werner Lissmann. He appears to have worked on a farm in Cambridgeshire after this and married a Land Girl, Rita. They had their first son in 1944, Radovan Robert Garcia Klose, going on to have three more sons. Because of impoverished conditions the Klooses lived in a bell tent on Raines Fruit Farm at Madingley during the harsh winter of 1947. After that he got a job as an assistant in the laboratory of the Lissmann Institute, Cambridge, specializing in animal behaviour.

In 1947-19488 Klose conducted a correspondence with George Orwell whilst he was at the Cranham sanatorium. He sent him apples from the farm and later visited him at the sanatorium. Orwell provided a list of important books in English to an anarchist friend of Klose, who was attempting to set up a publishing business in Düsseldorf.

Helmut's son, known as Rado or Bob, attended the same school as Syd Barrett and Roger Waters, who were to become members of Pink Floyd. Dave Gilmour, another member of Pink Floyd, was to recall: 'My Dad worked with Helmut Klose and Rado was a friend from birth... Helmut was employed at the Downing Street Laboratories after the war as a general assistant, helping my father who ran a research lab there as well as lecturing in zoology. I can remember having outdoor lunches with the whole Klose family on the terrace of our house in Cambridge, which we left when I was about seven, i.e. 1953. Rado's real full name is Radovan - we always called him Rado. He taught me a fair bit of guitar when I was young. He was a bit good. My brother Peter lived with the Klooses for a year when my Dad did a sabbatical in the USA in 1961 and their house, a tiny, very rustic cottage in Haslingfield was my/our second home'" (from A Very Irregular Head by Rob Chapman).

Helmut Klose died in 1987 at Haslingfield.

Nick Heath

Sources:

Entry on Klose at : <http://militants-anarchistes.info/spip.php?article2932>  
And  
<http://anarcoefemerides.balearweb.net/page/12>