

“The Archic” (A Fairy Tale)

Once upon a time, in a kingdom situated between two seas, the people kept a certain great monster, called an archic. This archic was a most ferocious beast with great iron claws and a mouth large enough to swallow a dozen men at a gulp. The people held this frightful monster in great esteem, altho it was a great burden to them, for it had to be fed constantly upon the fat of the land, and demanded human flesh and blood, as well as the choice fruits of the soil, and was always hungry.

This savage beast had to be securely chained, and a vast number of men, called archons, or officers of the archic, were required to feed and care for the monster. Every once in a while the archic would break his chain and do no end of mischief among the people; and at all times he had to have human blood to satisfy his appetite.

Altho the people feared the archic greatly, they agreed that he was a necessary evil, and very useful to keep other evil-doers quiet, for when a man did anything not approved by the people, they gave him to the archic. It thus happened that, if a man was very wealthy, he could appease the appetite of the beast with such things as it liked to feed upon, and thus escape himself; but when a poor man, who had not the means to appease the monster’s appetite, fell into its clutches he was apt to fare rather badly.

But the people, tho they agreed that the archic was a useful and necessary evil, were not satisfied with the manner in which it was kept, and they were continually devising new methods of feeding it, and of utilizing its usefulness.

Some wanted to curtail its activity as much as possible, while others wished to lengthen its chain, and give it more scope and power. But there were a few individuals who said that the monster ought to be killed. These persons were called Anarchists; and the vast majority of the people regarded them as wicked. And especially the archons, or keepers of the archic, who said that the Anarchists should be given to the archic as a sacrifice to law and order.

But the Anarchists continued to reason with the people, and at last so many of them were convinced, that they begun to ignore the archic, and refused to contribute to its support. The result was that the archic, deprived of its daily supply of food, sickened and died; and when it was no more, the people discovered that it

had been a great curse, , an unmixed evil that was not in the least necessary to their happiness, but on the contrary, had made life miserable for all the people without their knowing the cause. And there was great rejoicing, and everybody declared that they had always been Anarchists to the third and forth generation of ancestors.

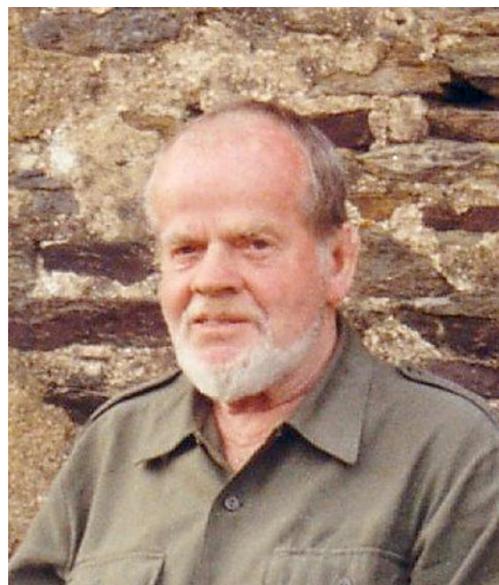
Ross Winn, Mt. Juliet, Tennessee

from *Winn’s Firebrand*, vol.2 #1 January, 1903.

Alan Barlow, 22 March 1928 – 31 December 2004.

Alan Barlow, lifetime cyclist and long-term anarcho-syndicalist died quietly at his home in Liverpool on New Year’s Eve. Born into a large West Kirby family, Alan enjoyed his childhood years and developed an early interest in wildlife during long country walks. However, the necessities of life were never available in abundance and one of his childhood memories was of regularly helping his granddad to hawk fresh Hoylake fish from a barrow to the good burghers of Wirral. Alan left school at the age of 14 and did what work he could get until called up for National Service in 1946 when he worked as a store-man in the Army Ordnance Corps. Upon release from the army, Alan took work as a builder’s labourer and drain-layer, occupations that he would follow for the rest of his working life.

(continued on page 5)



Inside: more Anarchist biography

Ross Winn in the Anarchist Universe

I happen to be afflicted with anarchist history. Wherever I go, whomever I speak to, I gravitate into a conversation about some dead anarchist that I recently discovered. I've been reaching these dead people out for over ten years now, and so my mind is densely populated with radical personalities of another age.

Some people ask me how the family life of this obscure anarchist, or the day-job of that, both of whose names never appear even in the indexes of published anarchist histories, mean anything at all to me. A few of the many reasons come quickly to mind.

When we meet some regular person, who holds mainstream opinions about politics and social affairs, they will have no trouble giving a list of ten or twenty reasons why they believe there should be a government, or why some people should be left to play on vast private properties while others die on the sidewalk. The arguments might be drawn from many sources, but very often an anecdote will emerge from the life-story of some dead president, from the battle memoir of some famous general. The impressive presentation will derive from events and stories that took place long before the birth of the person arguing for government and the rule of law. Too often the anarchist is left without enough examples to offer in return. However, this is not because examples of heroic anarchists and a world of true stories from anarchist lives do not exist.

I happen to believe that there are no ghosts who wander the Earth, nor any parallel world where dead people hang around forever, spending their afterlife but never writing any new books. The fact remains that the dead exist, and play a prominent role within the psychology of the living. They no longer exist, but we constantly think about them.

One obstacle standing in the way of cultivating a broader anarchist historical base is in academia. For every professional historian of the movement who are genuine investigators scouring the earth for primary sources and previously unexamined anarchist lives, there are another ten who are busy writing the 40th re-hash of Emma Goldman's memoirs. I have focused mainly on anarchist events at Philadelphia, and so I make a point of reading new essays on that city's shining star, Voltairine de Cleyre. Even the better of these essays in recent years lack evidence of much new research, nor, in most cases, a re-examination of the same documents that informed Paul Avrich's 1978 biography. I've looked at her life to the point where I can tell which archives the writer has or has not personally visited. It is for this reason that I am more than delighted by the new investigations of the Southern anarchist Ross Winn by Sean and Ally.

I find that the best way to look into anarchist history is in one's home town. This is where to find the sources

that are available only if the researcher comes in person. It is the place where we're most likely to locate the living descendants of the dead comrades we have fallen in love with. The historical volumes we find in the stacks at the university library should provide only the starting-place for the research we do. Otherwise, we can only hope to make a few fresh comments on what's already there. This is the task of many university professors now writing about anarchism: to write very impressive term papers.

We shade-tree historians*, who do this only for the love of our subject, and who almost never get paid even a little for our historical research, must look into entirely new topics in order to have the motivation needed to keep us on the job long enough to get results. We are possessed by the hunt. We check and re-check the mailbox for copies of a death record or a century-old university alumnus file. We look forward to our next ten-hour session in the newspaper room of a library, searching through roll after roll of microfilm for a few column-inches about the comrades who walked the same street as we do now; who fought against earlier forms of the same regional injustices as we face today. We look for the anarchist soul-mates who spoke our language, and with the same accent.

I met Shaun and Ally in a bowling alley full of anarchists. They were from Nashville, so I told them what I could about Ross Winn. I only had some of his articles, his obituary, and some letters pertaining to his death. I told them that there would certainly be more to find, and that he was well worth the research, if someone took the time to find it. Had they been from Northern California, I'd have told them the Viroqua Daniels story. Had they been from Cincinnati, it would have been David Edelstadt; from Denver, Giuseppe Alia; from Western Pennsylvania, Louis Goaziou; from St. Louis, John Beverly Robinson. It's fairly endless. Had they been from Chicago or New York, it might have been like at a football match, with remarks like "our dead anarchists were just as cool as yours, you know!" One can get the impression from what's already been written that the whole U.S. movement lived and died in those two cities, but of course it didn't.

Shaun and Ally did what I always hope that my listeners will do, but almost never do. They caught the fever. They went to the library, found a few tidbits, and went away psyched, and thirsty for more. Now, after much time-consuming, original field research, they have found Ross Winn's grave site, his family tree, his photograph, and a few of his living descendants. They continue the search and will gather more. Before now, Winn was a name familiar only to those who had read quite a few texts on anarchism in North America in his time, but little more than a name. Now the man has a face, a family, a personality, and the testimony of his lifelong sacrifice and dedication to the cause.

ROSS WINN

Now, the memory of Ross Winn and his long, painful struggle will be ready in the minds of southern anarchists. When the legitimacy of the idea is ridiculed, Ross is there to lend a hand, almost as though he were personally present as a ghost, chiming in with his old-time wisdom, when an anarchist in Tennessee is explaining to their neighbor how things can be done with no Company town, no Church, and no Government. Ross is alive again in our hearts, and so we are stronger.

Read on, anarchist. Be infected with this delicious sickness. Take it home and spread it to all the other anarchists in your neighborhood. I look forward to seeing you sometime, on the library steps or in a quiet cemetery. Let's have a picnic and swap stories of our wonderful dead.

Robert Helms

*shade-tree historians: It's an expression I picked up in the mountains, where some friends live, in Virginia. They say "shade tree mechanics" which is a guy who just has a sense of how the car works, and he hangs a hoist from the tree branch to pull out the motor. I've used it for quite a while, without really thinking about it. I guess the American ear catches it as "one of those southern expressions".

This is the introduction to a zine called *Ross Winn: Digging up a Tennessee Anarchist*. The story on the front comes from there, too. Copies are available (three dollars) from: rosswinn@riseup.net see also: www.thefirebrand.org/winn

Wanted

We need a German translator (German to English). Any volunteers?

Credit

This issue produced by the Kate Sharpley Library collective, January 2005

KSL, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX

KSL, PMB 820, 2425 Channing Way, Berkeley CA 94704, USA

www.katesharpleylibrary.net

Thanks for comrades who sent letters, orders, donations etc. Feedback welcome.

Balkans

Comrades wishing to assist with either a, producing a bibliography of Balkan anarchism (Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Macedonia, Serbia, ex-/Yugoslavia) or b, sending reading matter to an Albanian infoshop write to:

RLP(A) c/o Postfach 256, CH-4142 Muenchenstein, Switzerland

REVIEW: A Summer In the Park by Tony Allen

This is a cracking and highly entertaining read by the guy who apparently coined the term 'alternative comedy' and who describes himself as "an anarchist troublemaker dedicated to decoding the Zeitgeist". Covering the summer of 2000 spent as a speaker and heckler at Hyde Park's Speakers' Corner, Allen's journal offers many valuable insights into the often perilous craft of the public speaker and street entertainer.

The eclectic and very personal topics that are covered over the course of these regular Sunday slots include, amongst many others; drugs, paedophilia, religion, cyberspace, the (anti) work ethic and the myriad advantages of living in a free anarchist society. A committed anarchist for over thirty years, Allen's humorous routines and rants are all delivered from a well-informed libertarian perspective as we follow him expounding his own personalised version of a "larky plan of action for a non-violent grassroots (and flowering tops) anarchist revolution". Sounds good to me!

For anyone brave enough to actually stand upon a milk-crate and hold forth to a crowd of perfect strangers, the crucial skill is of course the ability to hold the collective attention and convince them of the merits of your particular argument. Allen is quite honest about his many failures on this score, but showing us the hit-and-miss nature of public speaking only adds to the overall interest of the book.

Allen is never over-earnest or deliberately obscure, unlike many other advocates of anarchism, and his sly wit and sheer performance ability mean that he is more than able to argue the anarchist position on a range of contemporary issues whilst still getting in the gags and keeping the crowd laughing all the way home, or to the next speaker. Many readers may well groan as he fields such questions as "Who will clean the sewers in an anarchist society?" or "What is the significance of the black flag?", but considering the level of popular misunderstanding about the nature of anarchist philosophy, this back-to-basics stuff is probably essential in such a forum. It's great fun to follow the line of Allen's arguments and his one-man mission to "comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable".

As somebody who rarely gets down to London and who has never been to Speakers' Corner, I found the descriptions of its many colourful characters very interesting. One thing for sure – the next time I'm down there (probably for the anarchist bookfair!) I'll be heading for Hyde Park to see this important arena for free speech and debate for myself.

As one would expect, the place is also clearly full of religious zealots, fundamentalists (of various persuasions) and tired old (continues page 5)

Victor Garcia Obituary

“GERMINAL” IS DEAD

I write under the oppressive emotion of having lost two people whose roots go deep into my life, creating a vacuum that it is going to be hard for me to get over. Barely a month after the death of my spouse, I am now reeling from the news that our Germinal has succumbed in the unequal fight against an illness that gobbled up his life, casting shadows and fears upon the hopes of relations, friends and comrades.

Having just reached his seventies, when age requires time and respite if it is to afford order and perspective to a life, an output as intense as his, adversity has now robbed us of his inspiring example and comradeship. Germinal was one of those serious, punctilious men who seem hard to approach but who hold out the guarantee of selfless, constant and boundless friendship.

The magnitude of the news is worthy of adjustments to the pagination of this issue which was ready to go to press and a more comprehensive review of his CV and contributions from those conversant with his capabilities and career will have to wait until a later edition.

Tomás Germinal Gracia Ibars (Mequinenza 24 August 1919 – Montpellier 10 May 1991), better known as *Victor Garcia*, the nom de plume that has all but supplanted his real name, along with other aliases scattered through press articles, pamphlets, collective works – [*Germen, Julián Fuentes, G.G. Ibars, Quipo Amauta* ... to cite only a few of these aliases] began to contribute to the libertarian press at the age of 17; in exile in France he founded and ran *El Rebelde* and *Crisol*; and hundreds of his articles appear on the pages of publications around the globe such as *Ruta, Solidaridad Obrera, CNT, Cenit, Tierra y Libertad, Le Monde Libertaire, Volonta, Umanita Nova, Il Libertario, La Protesta, Castilla Libre, Historia Libertaria, Umbral, Espana Libre, Senstatano, Regeneración, Cultura Proletaria, Polémica*, etc. *Ruta*, the Libertarian Youth mouthpiece published in Caracas at his own expense, its every edition offering a monograph dealing with matters of doctrine, history and biography from the labour and libertarian medium, over a decade up until March 1980, No 40 being the latest edition of which we have any reports, deserves a separate mention. He first mooted and participated into the translation into Spanish of Sébastien Faure’s *Anarchist Encyclopedia*, writing the foreword to its first volume and slipping in new entries and definitions that have updated and enriched it, even though only two volumes made it into print, the project having ground to a halt following the deaths of the comrades belonging to the Publishing Team, rendering the endeavour and coordination required in order to bring this commendable undertaking to full term hard to replace.

19 July 1936 found him possessed of a revolutionary consciousness and irresistible dynamism that took him away from the Manufacturers’ Union and the Libertarian Youth and into the Los Aguiluchos as a volunteer and on to the Aragon front where he took part in the attacks on El Cementerio and El Carrasacal in Huesca. When the columns were ordered to submit to militarisation, he invoked his minority and quit the front, joining the Las Garrigas farming collective, whilst simultaneously setting up libertarian youth groups in the local villages. It was not long before he was seconded to help out on the Libertarian Youth Regional Committee; he was an active contributor but his unease in the wake of the military disaster of the Ebro brought him back to the battle-front where he served with the 26th (formerly Durruti Column) Division and he was wounded in the Segre sector and evacuated to France with other wounded while a convalescent. Like many he got to see the insides of a number of concentration camps – Argelés, Barcarés, Bram and Le Vernet d’Ariege, from where he was transferred to Dachau; but with the aid of some other detainees he managed to prise loose the floorboards of the cattle-truck transporting him and escaped before reaching the German border. His escape coincided with the Allied landings in Normandy and he recalled to Paris in August 1944. He served on the very first Libertarian Youth National Committee and wrote for *Ruta*, of which he was made administrator. In 1946 he attended a gathering of the Anarchist Youth International (of which he was secretary) in Italy. It was not long before he was smuggling himself back into Spain and he took part in the underground struggle against the Franco regime and was detained in the Modelo Prison, managed to emerge with a conditional discharge on the strength of phoney identity papers before returning to France in 1948. From there he moved to Venezuela which he used as a trampoline for his great globe-trotting adventure in 1953. For several years he criss-crossed the Americas from end to end, visiting a number of European countries and visiting several Arab nations and Far Eastern nations like India, China and Japan, seeking out and mixing with libertarians there, talking with people, drinking in their worries and aspirations, visiting libraries, consulting archive and document collections, and this built up a priceless fund of information and contacts that sustained and enriched his important creative efforts. As part of his protracted pilgrimage, it was only in 1976 that he was able to return freely to Spain.

A self-taught writer, his fund of knowledge, remarkably methodical approach and capacity for work made his collaboration a guarantee of intellectual rigour and closely-examined truthfulness. Few things escaped his lust for knowledge and inquiring mind. His

Victor Garcia Obituary

correspondence – he was a punctilious letter-writer – is filled with ideas, advice and observations. This hastily penned sketch is not the place for us to dwell upon this aspect of his output, even though I cannot help citing his opinions and recommendations with regard to this magazine; “Sure a lot of careful thought must go in to how to bring out a publication, unless one wants to see it fall apart ... Monographic studies strike deep into the minds of the reader-subscriber ... The title of a publication should be suggestive of the contents within: *Polémica* is a fine choice ... In life one must equip oneself with a good all-purpose philosophy and I believe that you have displayed understanding and tolerance ... You are quite right to encourage Pepet to carry on contributing to *Polémica* ... I shall mention my problems quickly, lest I dwell upon them ... On 21 January, I passed out at work; after some first aid, they took me to the Hospital, where I spent nearly a month undergoing therapy and convalescing. Maya keeps a close eye on me although I would like to believe that what happened to me was a warning rather than a death sentence ... Now I go to the office two days a week, and I take work home lest I stay too late, for the fracture to my fibula held me back for a couple of months ... I defer to the wisdom of the Chinese; they completed the ‘Year of the Tiger’ on 28 January and it was a year of mishaps, during which they urge one not to travel, get married, have children, engage in business ... Then comes the ‘Year of the Rabbit’, a year of blessings ... But I will have to proceed with caution, even so. I follow a tasteless diet, no salt, no sugar, no fats of fried food and everything is rationed out, measured and weighed. I have lost ten kilos and have to hold on to the trees when the wind picks up ...”

The sinister wind of this strange May, with its snow, frost and rain, has broken through the tortured defences of a man of integrity whose greatness and capabilities will live forever in the hearts and minds of those who were and will always remain his comrades and friends.

To Marisol, Maya, Grecia, Amado, Teresina and other family members, all of us here at *Polémica* offer our sincere condolences. And to Gracieta, Sara, Jesús and all the comrades and friends who fell over one another to attend to him, our fraternal thanks.

M.S.

Friends drawn from far-flung places in France and Spain paraded through the ‘Villa Canaima’ Library in La Plaine des Astres where his body was taken. The burial in Montady cemetery on the morning of Saturday 11 May drew many comrades and delegations, as well as telegrams from bodies and friends testifying to their regrets.

Polémica No 45, April-May 1991, pp. 28-29

Wot no pamphlet?

No pamphlet published with this issue, sorry. The break is not because we’ve run out of texts (as if!), but to give the book trade a chance to catch up: hopefully we’ll be able to announce titles in advance, so that they’re not launched on an unsuspecting world. This will be essential when we do books.

So, our next pamphlet will be:

Alan O’Toole

With The Poor People Of The Earth : A Biography Of Doctor John Creaghe of Sheffield & Buenos Aires 1-873605-78-1 £3 (projected)

John (Juan) Creaghe (1841-1920) turned his back on the chance of a prosperous medical career to live among the workers. He spent an extraordinary lifetime struggling for anarchism: fighting bailiffs and establishing the scurrilous *Sheffield Anarchist*, working in Argentina on *La Protesta*, (for years the main voice of the labour movement), and supporting the Mexican anarchist Magon brothers at the time of the Mexican revolution. Alan O’Toole’s biography rescues the story of this inspiring figure, assessing his worldwide agitation, showing his interactions with figures like William Morris and Edward Carpenter, and illuminating a large slice of Anarchism’s “heroic years”.

Other publishing/ distribution news: Maximoff’s *The Guillotine at Work* is now out of print. If any comrades have any boxes left in their attics, please let us know.

A Summer In the Park (*continued from page 3*) advocates from the authoritarian left. Although Allen is dismissive of the points of view that they express, he refrains from merely sneering at these misguided souls and is more often indulgent and affectionate towards these eccentrics and minor-league demagogues.

As many people may have noticed, there have recently been a number of very welcome and long-awaited changes for the better within Freedom Press and the editorial team on *Freedom* newspaper. No longer subject to the personal tyranny of the late Vernon Richards, the past year or so has seen a marked shift towards a more combative and class-struggle based perspective. Although not directly connected with class-struggle anarchism as such, it is certainly hoped that *A Summer In The Park* will form part of a new dynamic and diverse publishing programme from the folks at Freedom Press. I would highly recommend this to all KSL bulletin readers.

A Summer In The Park costs £8.50 and is published by Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX www.freedompress.org.uk

Alan Barlow

In Memory of Alan Barlow (*continued from front*)



During the 1950s Alan, in line with good, working-class practice, became auto-didactic.

Through his wide reading he developed a keen interest in and a comprehensive knowledge of the history of modern times. He read the biography of many a 19 and 20th century

politician and political agitator and soon found his sympathy to lie with, as he later said in a statement to the police, 'the so-called revolutionaries and... the causes which they had fought for,' matters which, so far as Alan could see at the time, remained largely unresolved.

By the early 1960s, Alan had embraced anarcho-syndicalism, not in the quasi-fascist misappropriation of the term used by Sorel to encourage irrational acts of violence but as a transfer of the means of production and distribution from the capitalist class to local unions of workers. However, as he later said himself, with the militant materialist consumerism of the 1960s in mind, he was more concerned with 'the organisation of the working person in order to improve their own life and conditions' not only through increased spending power and leisure time but in who benefited from that additional income and how that extra leisure time could be spent.

One of the causes in which Alan was active during the later years of the '60s was the plight of homeless people in cities where many houses stood empty. Thus it was while living in London's Fairfield Gardens that Alan's sympathy with the struggle of the Spanish trades unions against the crushing weight of Franco's fascist regime grew into direct action. In 1969 Alan was sentenced to two years imprisonment for his part in the bombing of Spanish banks in London, actions that were carried out when the banks were closed and the streets empty and for which, ironically, the British government felt it necessary to apologise to the violently, and often terminally, repressive Spanish dictator. He was then and remained very grateful to all those anarchists and left-wing radicals in Manchester,

Liverpool, London and elsewhere who supported him with their letters and good wishes during the time he spent as a guest of the queen on remand in Brixton gaol and later in Wormwood Scrubs. Against the ravages of time and his own itinerant nature, Alan managed to keep most of those letters, amongst which is a series of finely illustrated missives from anarchist cartoonist Arthur Moyses - and his dog.

Having 'paid his debt to society,' Alan moved back to live in Liverpool and thence to Manchester as an active member of the SWF and became, as a member of the Construction Allied Trades and Technicians union, shop-steward at Manchester's Direct Works Department. During this period he was also involved in editing and producing 'Direct Action.' After an accident restricted his ability to work, Alan could not range so far a-field and spent much time in the Pennine hills around east Manchester and much money buying large numbers of second hand books, all of which he read and most of which he then redistributed. Later, as his general good health began further to wane, his friends in Liverpool persuaded him to move to that city where he spent his final years buying shirts; picking political or philosophical arguments in pubs; and generally punching above his weight.

Both before and after his penal hiatus, Alan was a keen walker and cyclist travelling all over Britain and in many of the countries of Western Europe. Indeed it is said of him that he knew something of every town in this land and, thanks to his prodigious memory, could tell you a tale about most of the pubs in each of them. In his seventh decade, Alan used his passion for cycling as a means of punishing those who loved him best by forcing them to spend long hours in the baking heat searching the highways and byways of Northern France looking out for the soles of his boots or for a slowly circling cycle-wheel sticking out of whatever ditch he had fallen into: either pissed; or overcome by heat stroke; or both. He also had the annoying habit of cleaning Teflon® pans with metal scourers: still, no-one's perfect.

By a fellow traveller.