Interview with Marcel van der Linden

Archive Koos Vorrink

Lectures on Funeral Culture by Wim Cappers and Guus Sluiter
Introduction

I will start this selection of important news from the past six months with updates about the collections. Rather than the usual paper archives, the following project is likely to become increasingly commonplace. Andreas Admasie, Stefano Bellucci, and Marien van der Heijden travelled to the Bahir Dar Textile Factory in Ethiopia to start up a digitization project. The factory, which opened in 1961, has a virtually complete archive of staff records. In the late 1960s 1,900 workers were employed there, compared with 1,300 today. Clearly, such an archive contains a wealth of in-depth information about labour, and about how labour is organized. Especially for studying labour in Africa, where sources are scarce, this digitization project is truly unique.

On 17 April 2015 PhD candidate at the iish and Utrecht University Pim de Zwart defended his PhD thesis *Globalization and the Colonial Origins of the Great Divergence* about worldwide trade and its effects on the global distribution of income in the early modern period. Using data from VOC archives for his study, he compares the effects of acts by the VOC in four regions: the Bengals, Ceylon, Java, and the Cape Colony. Pim was awarded his PhD cum laude!

On 10 April at the iish, during a symposium dedicated to Jacques Giele, his papers were officially entrusted to the Institute, and the book *Hoe zag Nederland eruit in 1850?* (a collection of his articles) was presented for the first time. For a detailed report about this day, see issue 32 of *Onvoltooid Verleden*. Please note the contribution from Henk Wals, in which he relates a section of iish history from 1982 exceptionally clearly and openly.

Three new members will be joining our staff scholars: Bas van Leeuwen, Matthias van Rossum, and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva. Bas has been awarded 1.4 million euros from the European Research Council (ERC) toward his research project *The Historical Dynamics of Industrialization in Northwestern Europe and China* (1800-2010). Spanning 5 years, the ERC project will be conducted under the aegis of Bas by a research team comprising two PhD candidates, a post doc, and a research assistant. At present the dynamics at the IISH are no cause for complaint at all.

Huub Sanders

About the Friends

Members of the Friends of the IISH pay annual dues of 100 or 500 euros or join with a lifetime donation of 1,500 euros or more. In return, members are invited to semi-annual sessions featuring presentations of IISH acquisitions and guest speakers. These guest speakers deliver lectures on their field of research, which need not be related to the IISH collection. The presentation and lecture are followed by a reception. The board may consult the Friends about allocation of the revenues from the dues and delivers an annual financial report in conjunction with the IISH administration.

As a token of appreciation for their great contribution to the Friends, Jaap Kloosterman and Jan Lucassen were appointed as honorary members in 2014.

The IISH was founded by master collector N.W. Posthumus (1880-1960) in the 1930s. For the past two decades, two of the institutions established by this ‘history entrepreneur’ have operated from the same premises: the Netherlands Economic History Archive founded in 1914 and the International Institute of Social History, which is now 80 years old. Both institutes continue to collect, although the ‘subsidiary’ IISH has grown considerably larger than its ‘parent’ NEHA. Additional information about the Institute may be found in *Jaap Kloosterman and Jan Lucassen, Rebels with a Cause: Five Centuries of Social History Collected by the IISH* (Amsterdam 2010). For all information concerning the Friends, see http://socialhistory.org/en/friends

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Going Global

An Interview with Marcel van der Linden

In September 2014 Marcel van der Linden stepped down as director of Research and transitioned to fascinating new projects, giving us two excellent reasons to interview him.

Very few readers do not know Marcel. Very briefly, he joined the iish as an advisor to the Review in 1983. In 1987 he became head of the Publications Department. In 1989 Marcel took his PhD for his work Western Marxism and the Soviet Union. From 2001 to 2014 he served as director of Research. Since 1997 he has also been a professor at the University of Amsterdam on the History of Social Movements. His most significant contribution to research at the iish is best summarized as his development of the research programme on Global Labour History. The iish staff page features his many publications, offices, memberships, and awards.

One new membership listed there is of the scientific council of the International Panel on Social Progress (http://www.ip-socialprogress.org/ipsp.pdf). This is among the new projects that Marcel has taken on, which will be elaborated below. This panel aims to have eminent scholars in social sciences write a report in the coming period about the most important current global social problems. Marcel explains that the panel has been initiated independently of any political affiliation, but that the researchers qualify as ‘socially committed.’ The panel ‘will discuss desirable reforms and structural changes and examine their feasibility,’ according to the site. In response to my comment that this sounds very challenging and may, like the Climate Panel, be encumbered by political complications, Marcel replies that ‘of course the follow-up to the conclusions in the report will be political. But the messages delivered in the report will not be ideologically based. The quality of arguments is what should matter’. Social sciences and consequently social history as well derive from the commitment of those who practise them, i.e. from the Social Issue. Marcel is working closely with Jan Breman on this, and the Social Issue is of course considered in a ‘global’ context. They are trying to write a history of the ‘informalization’ of work. ‘Whereas our generation could expect permanent jobs with established rights, this has become progressively less the case,’ argues Marcel. ‘These fixed labour relations seem to have been exceptional, both geographically, and over time. Precarious work appears to have been the norm in the world and in the global history of capitalism’. This research reflects a pronounced social-scientific perspective. Marcel believes that as a historical institution, the iish should align more with current events. He also welcomes the importance of ‘valorization’ in academic policy, ‘even though nobody understands exactly what that is’. Marcel’s involvement dates all the way back to his activities in the Fourth International. That has inspired his interest in the history of the labour movement. He is no longer a traditional Marxist. He believes, for example, that ‘culture’ has been decisive at many points in the development of societies. Nor has history followed an automatic progression. ‘There are only well-formulated hypotheses’.

Marcel has made intensive use of the iish library collections in his work. The periodicals have been especially helpful. As for the archives, he considers the ICFTU one to be the most important. He also sees a role for the iish in helping to preserve sources about work in the Third World (such sources are already scarce). ‘The Toco operation (the plan of the previous iish administration to rescue archives in danger by operating six regional offices. HSa) proved overly ambitious: the resources of the iish were insufficient. Still, we can certainly offer useful practical advice to archives in our field in the “global South”’.

His third project, in addition to the Panel and the history of informalization, is the plan to write a book about the history of the ‘original accumulation’. The cinematic working title is Blood and Dirt. Marcel aims to explore how over the past six or seven hundred years producers have become separated from their means of production, and how ‘dispossession’ has been ongoing through the present. Capitalism has turned everything into merchandise. Based on this rationale, a colony such as Barbados is an interesting example of the earliest fully capitalist society! As early as 1650, virtually all labour was merchandised as slave labour, all the land belonged to the plantation owners, and virtually all food had to be imported, as did machines, clothes, and all conceivable commodities. In return, a single product was exported for the world market: sugar. One interesting new detail from this history is that modern management techniques, such as synchronization of work procedures, were initially devised to encourage slaves on plantations to be more productive.

One of his greatest achievements, according to Marcel, has been setting up a global network of labour historians. This is a major step in developing the social history scholarship, in which the iish has of course figured prominently, with Marcel as one of the pioneers. (HSa)
golden years was the partner of the widow of Rost van Tonningen, also known as ‘the black widow.’ Joop Zwart had saved Koos Vorrink’s life in Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Irene Vorrink, carrying another man’s child, married Joop Zwart to avert disgracing her father and the movement by having a child out of wedlock. This is the story behind the surname of Koos Zwart, known for the market reports about suggested retail prices for hashish and marihuana he delivered on the VARA-broadcast television programme In De Rooie Haan. Koos Vorrink and Joop Zwart maintained a complex relationship, in which gratitude and blackmail may have carried equal weight. During the years following the Liberation, Zwart figured very prominently. Working for the Red Cross in Berlin, he helped the Dutch government, i.e. Minister of Finance Lieftinck, unload of his Reichsmarks by exchanging them in the Soviet Zone.

In 2014 the iish obtained the archive of Koos Vorrink and his daughter Irene. The impetus for this transfer was obvious. Herman Hugenholtz, the last spouse of Irene Vorrink, passed away, and his home in Amsterdam had to be emptied. As a result, the archives of the Vorrinks and of Hugenholtz ended were entrusted to the iish.

The archive of Koos Vorrink is vast but incomplete. The contents present are what matters. They are roughly as follows.

There are many letters from Vorrink to his wife Irene Vorrink-Bergmeijer. In early February 1934 he wrote her: ‘Day after day I am on the go. Tomorrow I will start six weeks at the Paasheuvel camps, with at least 15 lectures in between and countless conferences.’ In this letter, Vorrink also names a great many families in Germany, of which the fathers are in prison, and the children are going hungry, and to which the Dutch social democrats are offering assistance and support.

A nice file from 1947 is about the Labour Party and the independence of Indonesia. Vorrink wrote regularly to former Prime Minister and fellow party member Willem Schermerhorn, who was staying in Batavia. Schermerhorn was in charge there of the commission general negotiating a truce with the Indonesian insurgents. The file includes typed chapters from Schermerhorn’s diary.

In 1949 Alfred Mozer sent Vorrink a letter in red type calling his attention to foreign countries closer to home, also known as Europe.

There is also an interesting letter from the Utrecht historian Pieter Geyl, who on 5 May 1951 addressed ‘Esteemed Vorrink’ about the Dutch-Belgian contacts. Geyl’s letter is about the Flemish Socialist congress to be held in Mechelen.
in May that year. He considers whether a PVDA [Dutch Labour Party] representative should perhaps attend as well. Vorrink gets straight to the point in his reply to Geyl dated 8 May, suggesting that fellow party member Den Uyl, the director of the Wiardi Beckman Stichting, go to Mechelen to strengthen the Flemish-Dutch ties on 17 May.

A great many documents are of a more personal nature, including school report cards, references, sketch books, and a diplomatic passport filled with Czechoslovakian stamps from the period before the communists seized power in early 1948.

Immediately after these archives arrived at the iish, efforts were made to enable their arrangement. Funds have now been raised to this end. Arranging the archives of Koos and Irene Vorrink is expected to be completed in the course of 2015. After that, it will become clear whether this archive contains material for new footnotes to existing historiography or perhaps even more.

For the papers of Koos Vorrink see: http://hdl.handle.net/10622/arch04322 and for those of Irene Vorrink see: http://hdl.handle.net/10622/arch04323 (BHi)

The Kautskys and the tragedy of the twentieth century

The iish has various archives concerning the Kautskys. The first is that of Karl Kautsky (1854-1938), a writer and theoretician on the labour movement and Marxism. His wife Luise Kautsky-Ronsperger (1864-1944) figures prominently here as well. There is also the archive of their son Benedikt Kautsky (1894-1960).

Much has been written about Karl, Luise, and Benedikt Kautsky and their relatives. Still, modest accruals to this archive continue to arrive and reveal details about various members of this family that suffered so deeply during the Second World War and the preceding years.

In December 2014 the iish received 3 letters and 3 photographs. One letter is from Luise Kautsky and is dated 19 August 1941. At the time she lived at 154 Zuider Amstellaan, later renamed Rooseveltlaan, in Amsterdam. The three photographs of the very elderly Luise Kautsky were taken around her eightieth birthday on 11 August 1944. The other two letters are from and to Heinz Umrath and are dated shortly after the Liberation. Umrath, who was born in Berlin in 1905, attended university in Vienna and later in Berlin. He was a true trade unionist, comfortable in Germany and Austria alike, and was a friend of the Kautskys. He wrote to Benedikt’s older brother Felix Kautsky (1891-1953), on 16 June 1945, and Kautsky replied to Umrath from Los Angeles on 29 July 1945.

In this letter Umrath describes the circumstances of Luise Kautsky in Amsterdam during the ominous years before she was deported to Auschwitz. She enjoyed a reasonably time in the home of Eva and Ernst Grünschach, the children of close friends of hers. The first blow in her own small circle was on 20 June 1943, when Eva and Ernst were arrested and sent to the camp at Westerbork. Luise Kautsky, protected by her mixed marriage, stayed with friends at several addresses during the months that followed. On 11 August 1944 she celebrated her eightieth birthday in Amsterdam, welcoming many resistance activists, who presented her with gifts of flowers and fruit.

The second blow followed soon afterwards. The net was drawn tighter around Luise Kautsky, as all protection for those in mixed marriages – Karl Kautsky was not Jewish – had been discontinued. Luise Kautsky was arrested by the Grüne Polizei and sent to Westerbork. From Westerbork she went via Theresienstadt to Auschwitz. She perished there on 8 December 1944, the end of a very tumultuous life.

This modest recent acquisition recalls an accrual that has yet to be arranged. Received in 2007, it derives from the estate of Edith Fresco-Kautsky (1925-2006), the daughter of Benedikt Kautsky and Gerda Kautsky-Brünn (1895-1964), and comprises hundreds of letters that Benedikt (‘Bendel’) and Gerda wrote to one other in the years 1922-1937 and 1946-1959. Benedikt was arrested in May 1938 and was subsequently interned at Dachau, Buchenwald, Auschwitz, and then again in Buchenwald. This accrual also contains a file of letters and other documents from 1945. Most letters are addressed to Karl Jr. (‘Karli,’ 1892-1978), Benedikt’s older brother. Some letters mention the as yet
unknown fate of Benedikt and his mother Luise. Others are about the final months of Luise. The letters in which Karl Jr. is congratulated on Benedikt’s survival are the most numerous.

The letter from Oda Lerdal-Olberg (1872-1955) to ‘Mein lieber Karli,’ dated 2 March 1945, aptly captures all the uncertainties in 1945 regarding the fate of prisoners and deportees. In her letter the German-Italian journalist, residing in Florida at the time, speculated about the fate of Benedikt Kautsky, as well as that of his mother Luise Kautsky. Surely, Auschwitz must be in Russian hands, she wrote. The Russians did indeed enter Auschwitz in late January 1945. But in early March little was known about who had survived, and who had perished. News of Benedikt’s survival arrived only in April.

The accrual received in 2007 includes new materials, but some documents were previously known and had been published. This holds true \textit{inter alia} for the impressive report dated 13 October 1945 about Luise Kautsky’s internment at Auschwitz, written by Lucie Adelsberger (1895-1971), who had been deported to Auschwitz because of her Jewish heritage and worked as a physician and nurse in the camp. This typed report includes the similarly type text ‘Das Maerchen,’ bearing a handwritten address to Dr Kautsky and his wife and signed by Adelsberger. In this ‘Fairy tale,’ Adelsberger describes her amazement that despite Auschwitz many have regained their faith in a humane and good world. The report by Lucie Adelsberger entitled ‘Die letzten Wochen Luise Kautskys’ is included in the pamphlet \textit{Luise Kautsky zum Gedenken} (1945).

Arrangement of this addition to the personal papers of Benedikt Kautsky has now been completed. See: http://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH00710 (BHi)

BBKA – Arbeiders in de Beeldende Kunst

The archive of the Bond van Arbeiders in de Beeldende Kunst (BBKA) [Union of visual arts workers] was entrusted to the institute by its former secretary Otto Hamers in 2014. You will not find any art in the archive, not even a doodle in the margin. Still, the collection has been nicely stored, arranged, and documented. Even though it concerns a tiny union, it clearly conveys the daily goings on within a trade union.

The leaders of this tiny trade union were the artists Bob Bonies and Otto Hamers, serving as chairman and secretary virtually throughout its existence. They also shared their artistic inspiration, i.e. the tradition of Constructivism. To Bonies, art mattered for everybody and should figure in society as well.

Bonies and Hamers were among the founders of BBKA on 28 March 1973. Bonies was already a trade union activist within the Bond van Beeldende Kunstenares [Union of visual artists] (this archive is also at the iish) but left out of discontent about \textit{inter alia} the government regulations on visual arts. He was perfectly happy for artists to be paid as workers but objected to this art subsequently being placed in storage and having no role in society. Nor did he believe that art could be ‘free,’ because that would benefit only the bourgeoisie in our unequal society.

The objectives of the BBKA were to establish a socialist society through visual art, to promote class struggle, and to run campaigns. A leaflet from the early days describes the advantages of being a member of the working class and the importance of socializing art. The leaflet concludes with the teachings of Mao Zedong.

This nice, complete archive covers virtually all board meetings, member meetings, annual meetings, and lists of members. These documents
make the course of the union easy to track. The early years involved fighting for influence and recognition and participating in all kinds of commissions. These efforts were fairly successful, including on the Art Council of the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten. This increased the influence of the Union beyond what its membership size would suggest.

Membership was only around thirty. From the second half of the 1980s, its influence declined, as did its membership, declining to sixteen in 1990. The Union had progressively greater difficulty getting members involved, and there were complaints about the turnout and dues payments. Despite being one of the few organizations that did not raise dues for 25 years (NLG 100), getting members to pay them was a challenge. A chart in the archive reveals that in 1981 only 5 of the 30 members still paid dues.

Not having had a meeting in several years, the BBKA disbanded on 13 May 2000. The report from the last meeting states that no debate was necessary, only a vote. Six members were in favour, and one abstained. Merging with another group was apparently not an option. (EdR)

Another Man from Marburg: Frank Deppe

Frank Deppe embarked on his career as a student at age twenty at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt am Main in 1961. His instructors there at the Institut für Sozialforschung included famous scholars such as Horkheimer and Adorno. Visiting professor Herbert Marcuse opened new horizons for Deppe during his student years in Frankfurt. In 1964 he transferred to Marburg. Initially, his main intention was to continue his studies under the tutelage of the sociologist Heinz Maus. In 1964 Frank Deppe joined the SDS (Sozialistische Deutsche Studenten- bund) and served on its national board until 1967. While active in the SDS, he encountered Wolfgang Abendroth. In 1965 Deppe started as an assistant at Abendroth’s Institut für Politikwissenschaft. Whereas in Frankfurt, the critique was largely ideological, the focus on political action persisted in Marburg, notwithstanding the pronounced Marxist values propagated there.

During these years Rudi Dutschke, also a board member of the SDS, regularly visited Marburg to discuss political problems, such as a campaign against the war in Vietnam or the Notstandsgesetz. In 1968 Deppe took his PhD for his study of the 19th-century early French socialist Blanqui. Abendroth deeply influenced Frank Deppe and others of his generation. Manifesting consistently as a Marxist, Abendroth operated to the left of the SPD and served as a professor, and in 1967 Deppe founded the Sozialistische Zentrum, hoping to combine several small leftist factions. In 1969 he co-founded the Sozialistische Büro (Offenbach), an organization of the German New Left. In the 1970s activists within this group included Oskar Negt. The Sozialistische Büro published the journals Express – Zeitung für sozialistische Betriebs- und Gewerkschaftsarbeit and Links. The Sozialistische Büro ran several successful campaigns, which elicited a wide response extending beyond the immediate circle of this New Left organization. The solidarity congress “For example Angela Davis,” held in June 1972 in Frankfurt, exemplified this involvement, drawing 10,000 participants. They included big names, such as Herbert Marcuse, Wolfgang Abendroth, and Ernest Mandel. In the 1970s and 80s Deppe teamed up with the Institut für Marxistische Studien und Forschungen (IMSf, Frankfurt). In 1972 he was appointed professor of Political Science in Marburg, where he remained until 2006. The student movement in Marburg strongly advocated this early appointment. As a professor, he addressed issues relating to the history of twentieth-century political ideas and matters concerning changing labour relations in the EU. Throughout his career, Deppe was intensely involved with the trade union movement. He delivered countless lectures and speeches to trade unions and served on the scientific advisory board of the Institut.
für Marxistische Studien und Forschungen in Marburg from 1983 to 1989. Deppe is a member of ‘Die Linke.’ From 2012 he served on the board of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Two of his many international contacts included the Fondazione Lelio and Lisl Basso-Issoco in Rome and the iish – well-known to the iish – in Linz. He helped publish the journals Sozialismus and Z. Marxistische Erneuerung.

The archive comprises 30 binders of correspondence, with a broad range of German scholars and leftist and trade-union activists. It clearly conveys the ‘DKP union forging,’ as Marburg was known by the right wing. Combined with the papers of Abendroth, Dähne, and Steinhaus, there is now a fine cluster for research on the leftist faction of the left in Germany from the 1960s. (HSa)

CBS collections transferred to the iish
In the spring of 2014 Sarah Carmichael, a PhD candidate of Jan Luiten van Zanden, heard that the CBS intended to get rid of nearly all censuses, except for those of the Netherlands and its colonies. The reason was that part of the archive in the brand-new building at the edge of The Hague had to be rebuilt into a lounge area for journalists and visitors. Hundreds of metres of Demographic and Occupational censuses from all over the world, dating back as far as the mid-19th century, would have to go.

This impressive collection was acquired through exchanges. Every ten years the Netherlands sent a set of its own statistics to other countries and received censuses from all continents in return. Although most of these series are also available in their countries of origin, few institutes have such a large collection of systematic global data on the premises. Although the term ‘census’ may sound less than exciting, the importance of the seemingly dull columns of figures about the population is difficult to overstate. First, they provide insight into the social and economic developments of countries in the 20th century. Additionally, these censuses convey the political and social preoccupations prevailing at the time among potentates with what they regarded as real or potential problems. Or, as the well-known English statistician James Phillips Kay (1804-1877) formulated so eloquently in 1832 in The moral and physical condition of the working classes: employed in the cotton manufacture in Manchester (quoted by Friedrich Engels in his work Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844): ‘national statistics are like the central nervous system of humanity, identifying pain enables the body to take corrective action immediately against the damage’. Kay used this metaphor to highlight the importance of censuses in drafting policy. He deeply regretted that the English state insufficiently acknowledged the importance of this type of information and believed that the censuses of 1801, 1821 and 1831 were far too limited in their scope. The 1841 census was a major improvement in this respect.

Thanks in part to the encouraging remarks from Kay and others, the seemingly deadly dull and densely printed thin pages of the sections from British India, China, Belgium, Russia, Bolivia, or Burundi contain abundant data about ethnicity, religion, class, family relations, land ownership, consumption, and production, to name but a few topics. The data are by no means neutral and in some cases have had sweeping consequences. This is exemplified by the 1934/35 censuses from Rwanda and Burundi, which were conquered by Belgian-Congolese troops in 1916 and were part of German East Africa from 1885 to 1916. Belgian missionaries soon held that the cattle-farming Tutsis seemed more civilized and European (as they were descended from Ethiopians, who were of European extraction) than the...
far more numerous Hutus. Although the ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Hutu’ distinction had thus far been subordinate to multi-ethnic tribal connections, and no clear distinguishing criteria existed between the two, the ethnic divisions soon rigidified, when the Belgian colonial authorities systematically started to favour the Tutsis, for example in education. This policy was codified in the 1934/35 census, and the seemingly neutral and innocent tables bearing the headings ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ (in addition to ‘Twa’ and ‘Naturalisé’ adjacent to them) became a social reality. This became all the more true, when this classification started to be indicated on identity cards, where ethnicity (‘Ubwoko’) appeared as the most important category (see the image below).

Before the Belgian colonial authorities imposed their racially inspired grid on Rwandese and Burundian societies, ethnicity had been fluid and did not matter in all contexts. When Hutus became wealthy, for example, they almost automatically became ‘Tutsis’ and vice versa, so that these designations served in most cases as indicators of social status. Because of the racial and essentialist vision of the colonial regime, however, these labels acquired an inalterable ‘master status’ within a few decades (see: E.C. Hughes, ‘Dilemmas and contradictions of status’, American Journal of Sociology 50 (March 1945): 353-359). And in 1994 that distinction ultimately triggered a genocide of unprecedented scope, in which nearly one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered by their neighbours within a few months (see: L.A. Fujii, Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda. Ithaca, 2009). This is but one of many examples of how statistics both reflect and perpetuate existing inequalities, whether they concern ‘Kulaks,’ Indian castes, or South African ‘coloured’ people.

In addition to social categories, the censuses and comments indicated comprise an unfathomable quantity of data about work, labour relations, and economic trends, production, consumption, land use, factories, machines, and the like. These sources are immensely important for the envisaged Global Labour History research programme. In September 2014 the Collection and Research departments made very encouraging progress, by together selecting about 200 metres of material, which has since been transferred to Cruquiusweg, where it may be examined by researchers. This single acquisition is an exceptionally rich and valuable global collection for the institute, comprising rare gems, such as the 1926 Census of the Soviet Union and Indian censuses from the second half of the 19e century. (Leo Lucassen)

Peter Petroff, a Russian revolutionary who made his way to Great Britain

In 2014 the iish received the typescript ‘In and out of the swamp’ from Kevin Morgan, an expert on British communism. Petroff wrote this unpublished autobiography of about 1,100 pages in English during his second period in exile in Great Britain in the mid-1930s. Who was this virtually unknown Petroff? Very little information is available about his childhood. Peter Petroff (not his real name) was born in 1884 as the fifth and youngest son to the Jewish Bechevsky family. At fourteen the boy went off in search of his fortune, travelling by train to the port city of Odessa in 1898. There he was taken in by a family that would be pivotal in the subsequent course of his life. He learned about Russian literature there and, perhaps still more importantly, became acquainted with the people organizing the workers in Odessa and believed to be active in the Bolshevik movement in the Ukraine.

In effect he ended up in surroundings similar to those of the Bund, aimed at improving education for Jews. Inspired mainly by the publications of Nikolai Shelgunov (1824-1891) about the working class in England and France, Petroff decided to devote the rest of his life to establishing socialism. Petroff took part in the Russian Revolution in 1905. He wound up spending five months in prison in Odessa for this activity, after he was sentenced by Stolypin’s court martials. Following his release, he travelled via Kiev and Vienna to Lausanne in Switzerland, joining many other Russian émigrés there. He soon continued on via Paris to London. In this city he frequented an East End club where Rudolf Rocker, the publisher of the Yiddisher Arbeiterfreind, set the scene. Petroff attended the congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in London in May 1907. George Plechanov, Paul Axelrod, Lenin, and Trotsky were among those present for the party, as were Peter Kropotkin and Rosa Luxemburg.

After this congress Petroff settled in the East End, took a job at a carpentry factory, and decided to learn English quickly. Some time later he moved from London to Glasgow. The world was now in a state of turmoil, not only because of the First World War but also because of the October Revolution.

Ted Crawford, another historiographer of British communists, describes how Petroff and his German wife Irma were interned and then deported to Russia in early 1918, together with Georgy Cicherin (later minister of Foreign Affairs in the Soviet Union) in exchange for the release of a few British diplomats. Petroff obtained some laissez-passers and went to Norway. From there he travelled via Sweden (where he encountered Angelica Balabanoff) to Petrograd. Here he met...

http://www.preventgenocide.org/edu/pastgenocides/rwanda/indangamunutu.htm
with Lenin and Trotsky and looked forward ‘to participate in the rebuilding of the life of the victorious people.’

Petroff carried out various missions. In 1918 he was in Berlin to prepare the ratification of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. In the early 1920s the Petroffs were instructed by the Central Committee to go to Siberia. Petroff sensed this as a type of exile but felt an obligation to go. After six months, the Petroffs returned. Petroff reported about the smouldering discontent among the rural population in Siberia, which eventually culminated in an uprising that was violently repressed.

Back in Moscow, intellectuals suffered ever fiercer persecution. Petroff ran into problems with e.g. Karl Radek.

Tired of the revolutionary turmoil, Petroff and his wife wanted to leave for Germany. Their friend Vyacheslav Molotov thought they stood little chance of being granted visas but agreed to put in a good word for them. Ultimately, the two obtained both Russian exit and German entry visas. Petroff and Irma were basically dispatched to Berlin. In the section about leaving Russia, Petroff reflected: ‘The train moved on – the frontier lay behind us. With tears in her eyes Irma waved towards the Russian plains. “Matushka Rossia, when shall we see you again?” “When Liberty returns!” I said in a steady voice.’

At first in Berlin they were among communists and stayed in touch with the Soviet Embassy in the German capital.

In 1925 Petroff and his wife were warned that they were in danger. They resigned. Petroff experienced this letter of resignation to their superiors in Moscow as: ‘A burden was taken off our soul. We felt again free human beings.’

The autobiography does not reflect how they left Berlin and travelled to Great Britain. In his biographical sketch of Petroff, Crawford writes that the Petroffs struggled as journalists in Germany. After Hitler seized power in 1933, the Petroffs were forced to leave. They returned to Great Britain, where they became permanent residents in 1936. Petroff published his writings about the Russian economy and Nazism in Germany in trade union periodicals. He died on 12 June 1947.

Arrangement of this autobiography of Peter Petroff has now been completed. See: http://hdl.handle.net/10622/arch04330 (BH)

Propagating Cooperativism: Mondragón

The subject of cooperatives quickly brings to mind the name Mondragón. This small town in Spanish Basque Country, where the workers co-own many of the factories, qualifies as one of the successes of the cooperative movement.

The iish received a collection of books, journals, and slides about Mondragón from Henk Thomas. Another collection of his discussed here previously (On the Waterfront 29 2015) is the one about the experiments in Auroville (India), where an experiment took place involving work without wages or property.

Thomas conducted research about Mondragón for the Institute of Social Studies and wrote the book Mondragon: An Economic Analysis. This economic analysis of the cooperatives reveals that they were successful and deserved their reputation.

This reputation also comes to light in the many (positive) publications that are already part of the iish collection. The exception is the book The myth of Mondragón, of which the author argues that the cooperative structure does not eliminate the drawbacks of the industry for the shop floor. Control and ownership of equipment by workers does not make working at a conveyor belt interesting. The author argues that the system derives mainly from political ideology.

This impression is not reflected in the collection of Henk Thomas. It comprises other publications by Thomas, as well as books and journals from Mondragón. Following his research, Thomas published widely about Mondragón in various Dutch and foreign journals and delivered lectures. The journals gathered from Mondragón include Caja Laboral Popular, tu Lankide, and annual reports.

The widespread interest in cooperatives and Mondragón in the 1980s is most likely related to the economic decline in that period. The cooperative factories in Mondragón were well equipped to weather the recession. They did not go bankrupt. Nor did the recession lead to massive unemployment. The situation has been no different during the economic recession of recent years.

Mondragón was not only studied, but the
knowledge obtained about it was also disseminated. The collection includes a fine slide presentation, done by Thomas and the ISS and perhaps best described as a valorization of the study. The slide series was intended to present the story of Mondragon all over the country. According to the instructions included, such a presentation was expected to be very compelling: “The intention is to turn the public into an active audience and to inspire controversial – and in part emotional – reactions. If this happens, the screening may be followed by debate.”

For those interested in the collection, it is open to the public. (EdR)

Isaac Deutscher (1907-1967)

Deutscher grew up in a village near Cracow, which at the time was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father owned a printing works and was an enlightened Germanophile. Deutscher was raised in a Hassidic Jewish milieu. Still, Isaac attended both a Jewish and a Polish-Catholic school. The collapse of the dual monarchy and the two other empires in close proximity to Cracow in 1918 and the advance of the Bolsheviks in Poland in 1920 left a deep impression on young Isaac. He excelled at school and was an extramural student at the University of Cracow. He was virtually fluent in Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish, German, French, and Latin. Even before he moved to Warsaw in 1925, he had stopped observing Jewish religious traditions and lived as an atheist. In Warsaw he studied philosophy and economics and became a Marxist. In 1926 he joined the Komunistyczna Partia Polski (KPP), the illegal Polish communist party. Deutscher earned his living as a corrector of the Polish-language Jewish journal Nasz Przegląd. Sometimes he published literary critiques here, although he wrote more frequently for the many underground publications of the Party. He served in the Polish army in 1928/29 and was a communist agitator there as well. In 1931 the Polish Party paid his way to Moscow, where at age 24 he was offered a position as a university professor. In this period he became increasingly involved in Trotskyist circles. After publishing two articles critiquing Stalin, he was expelled from the Party in 1932. Deutscher then became prominent in the Union of Communist Internationalists of
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The study of the Deutschers. London, summer of 2014

Poland, an organization associated with Trotsky’s International Left opposition. From 1935 to 1937, he supported ‘entrism’ and joined the Polish Socialist Party. In 1938 he declined to support the establishment of the Fourth International. This led to an opposing vote from the Polish group at the congress in Périgny. Deutscher then left the Polish Trotskyists but did not join their opponents. Instead, he became an independent Marxist intellectual. Still wanted by the police, in April 1939 he accepted the offer from Nasz Przeglad to work as a correspondent in London. On 1 September 1939 his situation changed drastically. Overnight he became stateless, unemployed, and penniless. His command of English was also far from adequate. In London he contacted the Revolutionary Workers’ League and wrote for their periodical Workers’ Fight. He soon joined Sikorski’s army in English exile, although he aroused suspicion there. He ended up at the Polish Ministry of Information in London. Deutscher advanced rapidly and soon became a correspondent for the Economist and the Observer. He followed the Allied armed forces in 1944/45 as they advanced in Europe. After the fighting ended, he settled in London permanently.

Around this time he met Tamara Frimer. They married in 1947. The couple had a son: Martin, who died in 2014. At this occasion the heirs contacted us. Deutscher’s papers had been entrusted to the Repository of the Stichting iisg. Deutscher was a highly prolific author, not only on scholarly themes. He wrote radio and television documentaries as well and delivered countless speeches and interviews and remained deeply committed throughout his life. He participated, for example, in the famous Vietnam mass teach-ins in Washington DC and Berkeley in 1965 and, last but by no means least, was a prominent member of Bertrand Russell’s International War Crimes Tribunal. (HAs)

Building bridges for a strident trade union

The new collection of the Kloofdichters [bridge builders] is difficult to visualize extensively. Our report should feature sound bytes, as this is a digital collection of interviews. At present six mp3 files of circa 200 MB are stored. In addition to the interviews, which are still taking place, we will be receiving two hard drives containing e-mails and a disc with documents.

The collection has the lovely poetic title Kloofdichters, named after a group of Abvakabo members hoping to steer the union down a different, more activist course in 2010. The bridge to be built was to connect members with shop stewards and the union with society. Often better educated, the shop stewards were said to identify more with other shop stewards than with their own constituents. In addition, the members tended to be regarded as clients and should have had more input in policy.

The actions of the Kloofdichters crystallized at the important congress on 19 May 2010, where some Kloofdichters were ultimately elected as well. This interesting conflict involves more than the rift within the Abvakabo. Known as an excessively market and management-oriented mindset, this is a general problem that impacts not only trade unions but surfaces in housing associations and care facilities as well.

Internationally, this conflict touches on the ideas of Andy Stern, for example, who attended this congress as well. His works include the book A Country That Works (also in the iisg collection). Stern very successfully made the services union more active thanks to the ‘organizing’ method of investing in activating members.

Jan Willem Stutje and Rob Lubbersen have interviewed several key operators in recent months. The first ones have been with bridge builders Ger Geldhof, Lieuwé de Vries, and Lot van Baaren. In monthly sessions they tell their story from ca. 2007 until the merge of the Abvakabo in 2014. Of course their story is not the only history of the union in these years. Other key operators will be requested to add to this fine source.

The interviewees kindly granted permission for a brief excerpt to be played for the Friends at the previous gathering. The excerpt was a few minutes from the interview on 15 January 2015. In this section Bob Geldhof reflected on the congress in 2010, when it was a close race to see whether the Kloofdichters would obtain a say. He relates inter alia how tensions ran high and mentions the curious disappearance of over an hour of the congress report, when the audio tapes were changed.

The interview files are stored in the digital repository of the iisg. This repository now contains 84 terabytes (84,000 gigabytes) of digital material, and this will increase rapidly in the years ahead. Two copies of the repository content are stored at other sites as a precaution. (EdR)
Innovation of information

The Cremation Movement and Its Propaganda

Lecture by Wim Cappers on 22 January 2015

Open houses are popular events among under-takers. The second Cemetery Week started on May 2015. Now that people increasingly opt to be cremated or to be laid to rest in natural burial grounds, conventional cemeteries have fallen on hard times. The Week will highlight cemeteries as sites of commemoration. This year some cemeteries have also started to offer visitors the option of descending steps into a pit dug for a grave. If there is space for three coffins, you will be in a pit that is 2.75 metres deep.

The open grave is designed to compete with the furnace rooms at crematoriums that the public has been able to view on selected days for quite a while. Although loved ones are allowed to attend the insertion of the coffin, this rarely happens. At open house days the furnace therefore draws many viewers: only one coffin can be incinerated at a time in space.

When Christianity was being introduced in the Low Countries, Charlemagne prohibited cremation in 788 as a heathen ritual. To reinstate the option of cremation in the nineteenth century, the cremation movement focused not only on amending the law and on building a crematorium but especially on disseminating propaganda.

Propaganda picture 1928 from ‘de Facultatieve Groep’
This contribution reviews the arguments, differences in tone, and various propaganda styles.

Publications about hygiene
In 1869 the Funeral Act took effect: the Dutch were henceforth required to bury their dead. For hygienic reasons, such cemeteries were to be located outside city limits.

Five years later, in 1874, cremation resurfaced, after having been prohibited for a millennium. Advocates argued that cremation was even more sanitary than burial outside the city limits. Buried corpses took ten years to skeletize following interment. The invention of the cremation furnace enabled human remains to be incinerated in just over an hour. Cemeteries also occupied considerable valuable space on arable land. Six gentlemen from The Hague therefore established the Vereeniging voor Lijkverbranding [association for cremation]. They were liberal and Reformed Christians in their outlook and religious affiliation. Three were freemasons, two were physicians.

Objections from pious Christians were soon forthcoming. Abraham Kuyper, the initiator of the Protestant social column, explained his objections in a series of articles in his newspaper De Standaard. The Holy Bible referred only to burials. Jesus Christ had been laid to rest in a grave following his crucifixion. Moreover, cremation was at odds with faith in resurrection of body and soul after death.

Criticism resounded from the circles of cremation advocates as well. Pieter Harting, a professor of natural history in Utrecht, warned that cremation would prevent ammonia from being recycled naturally. Ammonia is necessary to bond nitrogen. He urged that four or five large cemeteries be opened on the heath to spare arable land. The deceased could be transported by train to their final resting place. Since the hygiene argument was instigating controversy, advocates emphasized the beauty of cremation from 1878 onward.

In 1885 during the trial of the Leiden poisoner Goeie Mie question arose as to whether cremation could obscure murder. She had poisoned patients with arsenic and after their deaths collected the benefits from life insurance policies she had purchased in advance. The required post mortem by medical examiners had not revealed the unnatural death. Only exhuming and examining their remains had proved the murders by poisoning.

Making the protest concrete
Since the verbal polemic seemed ineffectual, and no legislative amendment appeared to be forthcoming, the cremation association decided to build a crematorium in 1889. The members hoped this would serve as propaganda for cremation.

Several of the municipal authorities they asked, however, lacked the courage to allow a crematorium on their land. After all, the Funeral Act stipulated that the deceased had to be buried. In Hilversum the locals protested vehemently, when the cremation association tried to build a crematorium next to a sanatorium there.

To make clearer that the advocates did not intend to make cremation compulsory, the members renamed their association the Vereniging voor Facultatieve Lijkverbranding [association for optional cremation] in 1903.

In 1906 the private cemetery Westerveld at Driehuis leased a tract of land to build a crematorium. This was intended to generate income for the cemetery, which was struggling financially. The crematorium was completed in 1913, and the first cremation took place there a year later. The authorities had the incident reported. In 1915 the Dutch Supreme Court ruled that the Funeral Act did not explicitly prohibit cremation. Moreover, the legislature had not assigned responsibility for funerals to a specific party. This left the authorities no choice but to tolerate cremation.

Modern-day images
With this major propaganda victory and the prospect of legalization, the nature of the propaganda changed. At the start of the twentieth century, the liberal Jewish physician Philip van Lissa, secretary to the association, already presented glass slides at lectures. In the decades that followed visuals figured ever more prominently. From 1928 to 1930, the Amsterdam chapter of the Vereniging voor Facultatieve Lijkverbranding published six prints, contrasting burial with cremation. Before a cremation, loved ones could pay their final respects in the seclusion and shelter of the auditorium. At funerals family members were not among each other at the grave and often had to brave inclement weather. While the urns containing the ashes were neatly stored in a compact columbarium, a corpse would occupy space in an expansive cemetery for a decade. Cremation advocates argued moreover that decomposition of the remains dishonoured the deceased. The subsequent removal of skeletons was
The Arbeiders Vereeniging voor Lijkverbranding [workers’ association for cremation], founded in 1919 to make cremation affordable for workers, had a motion picture produced in 1935 depicting cremation as the modern-day funeral arrangement.

From 1954, when the second crematorium was built at Dieren, these costs diminished. The 1955 Disposal of the Dead Act legalized freedom of choice. Once Protestant and Catholic congregations waived their objections to cremation around 1960, the propaganda achieved a final and irreversible victory. There are now dozens of crematoriums in the Netherlands. Sixty percent of the deceased has opted to be cremated. Thanks in part to the propaganda, cremation has been the most important innovation in undertaking in the twentieth century.


Death masks, memory, and propaganda

Lecture by Guus Sluiter, director of Nederlands Uitvaart Museum
Tot Zover, 22 January 2015

In the late Middle Ages ambitious rulers and ecclesiastical figureheads had their portraits disseminated throughout their realm. In addition to serving the purpose of self-promotion, it legitimized their rule. A mould of their lifeless face demonstrated that their power (i.e. the power of their dynasty) persisted even after they had passed away. From the seventeenth century, as the bourgeoisie grew wealthier and more self-aware, death masks started to be made of [the faces of] scientists, artists, and writers. More than with painted portraits, these masks help them live on after their death. The death mask of Isaac Newton (1643-1727) is a well-known example.

In the eighteenth century interest in death masks was immense, and many people collected them. Aficionados tried to gather the largest possible collection of ‘celebrities,’ and, especially in countries such as England and France, special galleries opened featuring masks of people who had been famous during their lifetime and executed criminals.

The Netherlands has only a modest tradition of death masks. The earliest known commission was to produce the death mask of poet and historian Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831). Intended for his loved ones, the mask also served as a model.
for the statue sculpted of him. In the catalogue *Naar het lijk* (1998) Bert Sliggers found another 27 death masks that remain in the Netherlands. This modest number includes moulds of celebrities such as kings William II and III, Ary Scheffer, Abraham Kuyper, Willem Elsschot, and Carel Willink. Museum Tot Zover has several old and modern-day masks in its collection as well.

Understandably, the three masks at the iish are from known socialists or communists. Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864) was an influential German socialist theorist and politician. He died in the tradition of German Romanticism: in a duel over a woman. Always ready for battle, Lassalle challenged her father – who opposed the marriage – to engage in a duel. The cunning father arranged a younger stand-in, who mortally wounded Lassalle.

The iish holds two copies of the death mask of Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881). This radical French communist was involved in various coup attempts. In 1839 he was sentenced to death, but his sentence was soon commuted to life in prison. In 1844 Blanqui was released due to poor health but nevertheless lived until 1881, when he died of a stroke. In the tumultuous years in between, he was involved in all kinds of revolts, regularly wound up in prison, and was elected to parliament in 1879.

The most exceptional mask is that of the Dutch socialist Herman Bernard Wiardi Beckman (1904-1945), who worked for the underground newspaper *Het Parool* during the Nazi occupation. The Dutch government in exile envisaged him as one of the leaders in the Netherlands after the war, but he was caught and sent to Dachau, where he spoke extensively with kindred spirits about the structure of post-war Netherlands. After he died of typhus, his cohorts wanted to have a death mask made of his face. It is tempting to associate this with the masks of previous rulers, symbols that continued post-mortem.

The plaster for the mould of Wiardi Beckman’s face was bartered in exchange for cigarettes, and the ‘Pole who worked in the morgue’ made the mask. It was concealed from the Germans and after some meanderings – at a certain point it was ‘haphazardly suspended from a string at the offices of the labour party – ended up in the board room of the Wiardi Beckman Foundation, which later donated it to the iish. The death mask of Wiardi Beckman thus evolved from a propaganda icon to a very special memory of this great socialist.

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