



internationaal instituut
voor sociale geschiedenis



On the Waterfront

newsletter of the friends of the IISH 2017 no. 33

The quest for
**Hammer and
Sickle**

Thailand:
activism and
T-shirts

**Spanish
Civil War:**
80 years later

Introduction

Cover photo:
Photo from
the CNT Col-
lection.
See page 14.

In the previous issue we mentioned that 2016 has been dedicated to forging the alliance with the ING Huygens and the Meertens Institute within the KNAW Humanities Cluster. The objectives are to encourage humanities research and to set up a digital infrastructure that is equipped to cover new questions and methods in the disciplines in this field. The joint operations desk is now based in downtown Amsterdam. Some staff have left the Cruquiusweg as a consequence. Both those who left and those who remained faced an adjustment. Still, the jubilation at the internal launch of the Cluster in the 'Waalse Kerk' on 12 October 2016 is very promising.

As was announced in the previous issue, the collection developers at the IISH have gone digital with a vengeance as well. Using the abbreviation ADA (Acquisition Digital Archives), collectors in Amsterdam have begun approaching the large archive builders who entrusted their archives to the IISH systematically to streamline the transition from storing paper to digital archives. Some organizations are more easily convinced than others. The importance of this step is broadly acknowledged, as evidenced by the fact that several organizations have already transferred many Terabytes of archives.

The agreement that the IISH reached with Pictright in June 2016 is a major milestone and has restored the images in the catalogue. This marks the end of the most unfortunate situation, where our laborious and costly work on the image collections was not available to the public.

On 1 October 2016 Joost Jonker joined the Research Department as senior researcher. Joost has been a professor of corporate history at the University of Amsterdam since 2012, thanks to an endowed chair sponsored by the NEHA. He and Oscar Gelderblom are conducting the NWO project inclusive finance about financing small and medium-sized companies.

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 more than 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>*

Colophon



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Advertising communism

An educated guess concerning the story behind Raden Darsono's batik

On the Waterfront no. 27 (2014) reported about a special object from the estate of the Indonesian communist Raden Darsono Notosurdirdjo (1897-1976). His Dutch son Alam Darsono gave the Institute a batik cloth (66 x 64 cm) featuring a hammer and sickle against a background of a rising sun, surrounded by the slogan: 'Proletarians aller landen verenigt U!' the Dutch translation of 'Proletarians of the world, unite!' No information is available about the maker or origin of the cloth. While the author of the article submits that the batik is 'undoubtedly from the Netherlands Indies' and is 'obviously associated with the PKI,' even he ultimately laments: 'the story behind this cloth, however, is anybody's guess.' This sounds like a challenge.



The illustration to the article caught my attention, because I seem to have held it frequently over the years. A far smaller version, not on textile but on cheap paper and not in such bright colours but plain black and white. The hammer and sickle are nonetheless unmistakably the same, depicted against the same background and surrounded by the same battle cry, with the words arranged in the same order. Even the 'handwriting' of the print and the not-quite identical height-to-width ratio seem to correspond. Darsono's batik must be an enlarged copy of a graphic vignette that was first printed on Wednesday 14 February 1920. On this historic date the readers of *De Tribune*, the Communist Party daily in the Netherlands, first encountered the hammer and sickle as a logo, albeit on the back page and as part of an advertising campaign.

In the Netherlands the hammer and sickle was introduced by the owner of a small business. In 1916 the Amsterdam publisher and bookseller J.J. Bos (1876-1948) joined the small Marxist party,



Raden Darsono Notosurdirdjo in 1929

The original cloth IISG BG L4/586

which two years later adopted the designation communist. As the son of a socialist who sold newspapers on the street and ran a bookshop, he was raised with the book trade and socialism alike. In 1920 he published all leaflets of the CPN [Communist Party of the Netherlands]. His company J.J. Bos & Co ran weekly advertisements in *De Tribune* of the new titles by Lenin, Trotsky, and other party members. From January 1920 these advertisements consistently featured the new corporate logo with the hammer and sickle depicted crossing one another.

It was some time before the publisher's vignette appeared on the cover of Bos's own publications, in addition to the advertisements, finally starting in March 1920 with Anatoly Lunacharsky's *The Cultural Task of the Struggling Proletariat*, followed within a year and a half by several leaflets by authors from the Dutch and international communist movement.

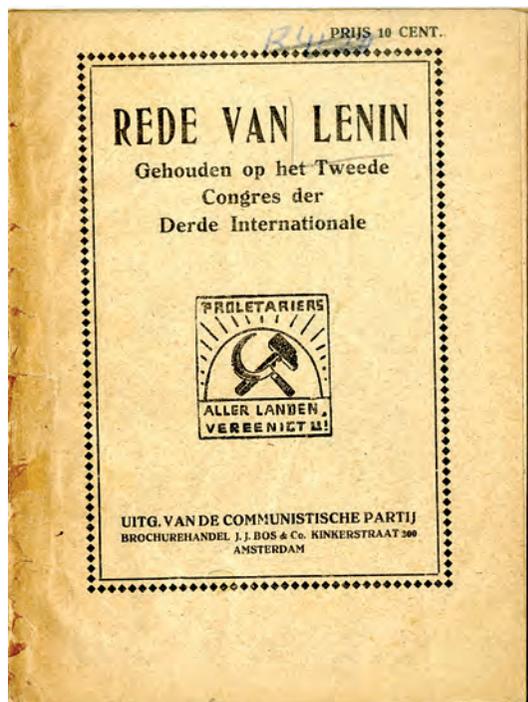
The design featured on the covers in at least three formats, ranging from 31 x 29 mm to 42.5 x 40 mm. but was not applied very consistently. Even after March 1920, the titles that Bos published often lacked the hammer and sickle on the cover. This decision may have served to extend the appeal of those publications beyond fellow party members, or it may have been the practical consequence of frequent changes in the printer that Bos's publishing company used, so that the plate was not always available on time.

No archive remains from the Bos publishing company. Most likely, though, the designer was in fact the famous artist Peter Alma (1886-1969).

Advertisement De Tribune, 14-01-1920



Cover of Lenin leaflet, (Amsterdam 1920)



Logo [proletarians]



'De Fleet psalm' [book inscription]



'Colin's dream of hell' [autographed by P. Alma]

In 1923 Alma published the booklet *Colijn-iade* featuring eight satirical woodcuts against Minister Colijn and his Fleet Act. While the prints are virtually devoid of text, comparison with the handwriting of the J.J. Bos & Co. logo is possible in two places. The first and last letters in the word 'proletarians' in the logo appear to be virtually identical in the booklet: the 'p' in an autograph and the 's' in the inscription *psalmboek* (Book of Psalms).

Assuming that Alma drew the logo, the question remains as to who enlarged the design and reproduced it in batik, as well as where and when that happened. The two are not entirely identical: the letters painted in wax are less angular, the larger size of the batik allowed for a diacritical mark in 'proletariërs,' and the number of sun rays decreased from 17 to 14.

The report of a May Day celebration in Amsterdam in 1921 describes a festive hall decorated with flags and banners, one of which is a 'red cloth featuring the Soviet logo of the crossed hammer and sickle and the old battle cry of Marx: *Proletarians from all countries, unite!*' If this is the cloth of Darsono – and it certainly appears to be, although the red must have faded into brown since then, unless the reporter was colour blind – Darsono may have obtained it exactly six months later.

In November 1921 he addressed the CPN congress on behalf of the PKI. The action by the 'brown brother' in Groningen caused quite a stir,

which escalated when he was briefly arrested. Was this batik a gift to Darsono? The Communist Youth League representative who spoke immediately before Darsono was Brecht Takes (1897-1984), who happened to have met her husband-to-be Peter Alma the previous summer.

The actual batik does not answer any of these questions. It has visibly been folded for a long time, but did it in fact journey inside Darsono's luggage from Groningen back to Berlin, from Java to Moscow (1926), back to Berlin (1929), and then on to Amsterdam (1933)? Darsono probably did leave the batik with his son in Amsterdam, when he departed permanently for Indonesia in 1950. After all, this son entrusted the cloth to the IISH collection, along with the letters his father wrote from Semarang.

Darsono's son died in 2004. He published two moving literary memoirs of his own childhood and his absent father, in which the batik is not mentioned. As he was blind, however, he is unlikely to have identified with visual symbols. At his birth in 1928 in Moscow, he was named Alam. That this Arabic name means 'flag' or 'symbol' and is an anagram of Alma must be coincidental.

Dennis Bos

Historian at the University of Leiden. He is presently working on a double biography of K.A. Bos and J.J. Bos, socialist publishers and booksellers in Amsterdam 1880-1948.

Thirty-third Friends' Day, 30 June 2016

Presentation of the Acquisitions

Fietje Kwaak, the woman who outsmarted the Nazis

In early 2016 the IISH received the archive (0.87 m.) from Bertus Mulder on his research about the life of Fietje Kwaak (<http://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCHo4388>).

In 2015 Mulder published *De nazi's te slim af zijn. Sophie Louisa Kwaak en het kapitaal van de Frankfurter Schule*.

Sophie Kwaak came from a Protestant family in the village of Oosterland on Schouwen-Duiveland. In 1916 she enrolled at the state teacher's training school in Apeldoorn. She left before completing the programme and went to work in Rotterdam as a steno typist at a trading office.

In 1933 she took an important decision, switching jobs and accepting a position as executive secretary at the Rotterdamsche Belegging- en Beheermaatschappij N.V. Robema, which was run by the German-Jewish Arthur Erich Nadel and managed the capital of the German-Jewish Weil family. In 1932 this family, having amassed a fortune in the grain trade, transferred its capital to the Netherlands. The Institut für Sozialforschung they had financed, also known as the Frankfurter Schule, was also relocated from Germany to Geneva, ultimately moving via Paris to the United

States. The leaders of the Institute, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse, left Germany as well. After 1935, Nadel took care to ensure that the capital he managed was no longer identifiably linked with the Weil family. Redacted entries in the financial records made the accounts impossible to trace.

In February 1939 Nadel left for the United States, leaving Fietje Kwaak in charge as acting director. When Rotterdam was bombed, and the city was ablaze, the building was destroyed. But Fietje salvaged much of the contents and used the ensuing chaos to obfuscate incriminating material.

Fietje, who was in close contact with Nadel, used delaying tactics and kept the remaining capital away from the Nazis. In 1948 Robema was wound up. Until 1964 Nadel and Fietje Kwaak were in charge of this project. After the liberation Kwaak became an executive secretary at the

Left:
Arthur Erich
Nadel 1935

Right:
Fietje in
Oranjepark,
Apeldoorn



auditors' firm Price Waterhouse in The Hague. She passed away in Rotterdam on 5 October 1990.

What is in the personal papers of Fietje Kwaak? Or, more specifically, in the archive of Bertus Mulder, who conducted research on Fietje? It contains original papers from Fietje Kwaak. Mulder received a suitcase holding files and binders from her family, relating mainly to the correspondence between Arthur Nadel and Fietje Kwaak. Personal correspondence of Fietje remains too, as well as original financial records from the N.V. Robema.

In addition, the research archive that Mulder kept includes many photocopies. Mulder described the life of Fietje but also devoted a lot of attention to ties that Nadel maintained with the leaders of the Frankfurter Schule, especially with those with the German-Jewish sociologist and philosopher Max Horkheimer. Horkheimer left Germany soon after the *Machtsübernahme* and quickly departed from Europe as well. Nadel stayed in the Netherlands from 1932, moving overseas only in 1939. The two corresponded with each other in the period 1932-1939. Mulder's research archive also contains documents relating to a book he wrote earlier, *Andries Sternheim. Een Nederlands vakbondsman in de Frankfurter Schule* (see *On the Waterfront* no. 28 (2014), pp. 13-14. (BHi)

The Marcus Bakker Papers, his life outside politics

Marcus Bakker (1923-2009) is known mainly as the political representative of the Communistische Partij van Nederland (CPN) in the Dutch parliament. He became a communist in the Second World War and was subsequently the executive editor of the communist daily *De Waarheid* and from 1956 served as an MP for the CPN. In 2015 a biography by Leo Molenaar was published: *Nooit op de knieën*, describing his life at great length. In this project Molenaar relied heavily on the CPN archive at the IISH, which relates in part to Bakker. He also examined Bakker's personal papers, still held by his family. That section was transferred to the IISH last year, upon the death of his wife Els Ezerman (1924-2016).

This recent addition sheds more light on Bakker as a person. At 14 (1937), Bakker joined

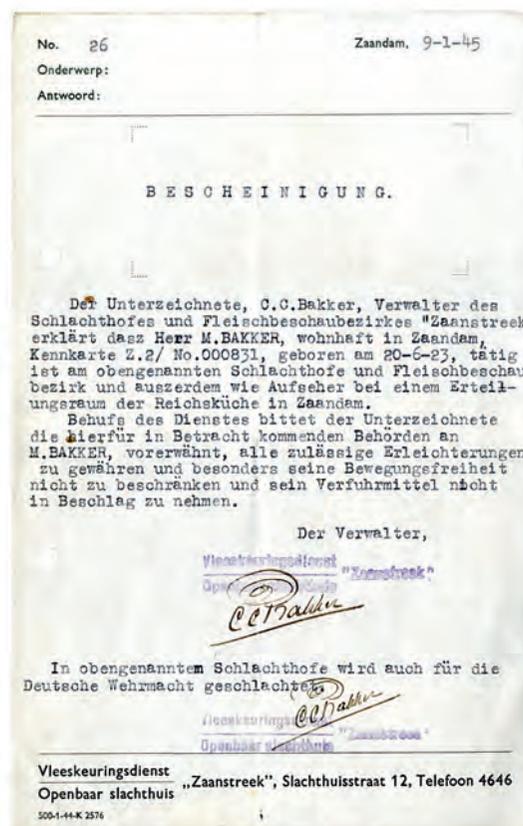
the Nederlandsche Bond voor Abtinent Studeerenden [Dutch league of abstinent students] (NBAS), the free youth movement of the blue knot. Until the Bond was disbanded in 1941, and even afterwards, he zealously participated in the Bond activities: camping trips, folk dancing and cycling excursions. His was above all a creative, playing guitar and acting, in addition to writing texts. A photo album and report from a cycling excursion convey idyllic impressions, with hardly a trace of the war. On these excursions he also met his future wife.

At some point in 1943 he is believed to have made the transition to communism. A pile of periodicals remains from his period in the Dutch resistance: countless illegal papers, such as *De Waarheid*, *Trouw*, *Het Parool* and *Vrij Nederland*. The family had moved to the slaughterhouse in Zaandam, where his father was the manager. This provided him with space and alibis for his illegal activities in the underground resistance. One nice note is from his father to the Nazi forces of occupation, explaining that Marcus absolutely needed to be about in the evening for his duties for the slaughterhouse and politely reminding them that they also supplied the *Wehrmacht* and urging them not to confiscate his bicycle for this reason.

After the war, marrying Els brought him very special in-laws. She was a granddaughter of 'Uncle' Jan van Zutphen, the man behind the Zonnestraal sanatorium and the Diamond workers' union. This gave Marcus another grandpa. Both sides deeply respected each other, although they did not always agree. In letters from 1949 and 1950, 'ome Jan' mentions respectfully that he prefers his old ideal of the broken rifle and

Letter from his father during the war.

Cycling excursion with the NBAS, 1941. Bakker is 2nd from left





refuses to get caught up in the arms race of the Soviet Union.

Finally, a few documents among his papers concern the death of his father in December 1962. They are notes for his eulogy at the funeral, in which he mentions that his father encouraged him to become a communist (ideally after the war). His tremendous appreciation for his father resounds in the speech. He also conveys a political message. Since the war those two elements were inextricably linked in Bakker's life. While these personal papers have yet to be arranged, the family archive of Marcus and Els beautifully complements the political section in the CPN archive. (EDr)

Collection of Thai Protest T-shirts

Accusations of *Lèse Majesté* remain regular news items in Thailand. These incidents are especially striking, when they concern the dog of the king or the crown prince, but by now dozens of people have been incarcerated on this ground, many of them critics of the government.

According to Article 112 of the Thai Criminal Code, *Lèse Majesté* of the king, queen, or crown prince may be cause for up to 15 years imprisonment. Thai law is not intrinsically different from that of Western monarchies in this respect. In Europe, however, *Lèse Majesté* is increasingly less frequently penalized, and freedom of expression carries more weight.

Thai law does not stipulate who or what lies within the scope of the article, which is often enlarged. The rising political polarization of Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts from 2006 makes this one of the most explosive acts. The victims have included many supporters of the Red Shirts

movement, who have traditionally lacked the support of the monarchy and the armed forces. A great many people threatened by Art. 112 – activists and intellectuals alike – went into exile to escape persecution. Even critical historians were silenced, because they questioned the actions of long-deceased predecessors of the king.

The IISH has been documenting social movements in Thailand for some time, including protests by the Red Shirts movement, whose members support Thaksin, coming mainly from North and Northeast Thailand. In addition to small archives, photographs, and a huge documentation collection, nearly 200 T-shirts have been gathered from the period 2005-2015.

T-shirts are popular tools of activists in Thailand, as is clear from the designations of the red and yellow political movements. Large quantities are sold during demonstrations, and they are inexpensive, easy to disseminate, and easy to use and to conceal.

As stated, the protest against Article 112 has featured prominently in politics, especially in the period 2010-2012. Under the current military junta, however, protest has become all but impossible. Criticizing Article 112 is a relatively safe form of protest and calls attention to abuse of the article and the rise in prosecutions.

Some T-shirts are more subtle forms of protest: 'We are all prIIZoners' (referring to 112) and the slogan "'lèse" is more.' Other T-shirts call for the liberation of Somyot Prueksakasemsuk, the former publisher of the *Voice of Thaksin*, who received an 11-year sentence based on Art. 112 for his unfavourable depiction of a figure very similar to the king.

A small share of the shirts directly targets veneration of the monarchy, although in veiled terms. The T-shirts criticize the terms 'love, loyalty, and gratitude,' which discerning readers will all associate with veneration of the king.

Preserving this material in the IISH for historical and other research is important, although publicizing the results of such studies will remain risky for the foreseeable future. (EDr)

Thai redshirts

The death of King Bhumibol, also known as Rama IX, on 13 October 2016 brought Thailand back into the headlines. The Thai people became submerged in massive mourning. In this setting, it rapidly became clear, whether spontaneously or induced, that even the slightest suspicion

Note from Jan van Zutphen to Marcus Bakker, 1948

Protest T-shirts against article 112, Thailand 2010-2015





Left:
Gathering on 19 April 2011 at the Ratchaprasong junction, Bangkok, video still

Right:
Meeting 10 June 2012 with hostess Suda Rangkuapan and guest speaker Somsak Jeamteerasakul, video still

of views critical of the king could spell trouble for Thai subjects. The article on *Lèse Majesté* (the infamous article 112) has curtailed activism in Thailand for quite a while. More on that subject appears in the previous contribution in this issue. This one is about the photograph and slide collection that Eef Vermeij gathered in Thailand. The collection highlights a commemorative gathering on 19 April 2011 at the Ratchaprasong junction, organized by the Red Sunday group. The leader of the Red Sunday group is Sombat Boonngam-anong.

The previous year the Redshirts had occupied this junction for weeks. On 19 May 2010 military troops, under the command of current strong man Prayuth, violently cleared the junction. Estimates have placed the death toll at 85. Prayuth, chairman of the junta named National Council for Peace and Order, seized power in 2014, after years of mounting tensions between the Red and the Yellow shirts.

The photographs were taken by Panya Surakumjonrot, who has been appearing at all Red Shirts gatherings for years and takes photographs and records videos there. When he was summoned to talk with the military authorities, he took the precaution of entrusting a copy of all his material (comprising many Tbs) to the IISH for safekeeping.

The full name of this collection is Panya Surakumjonrot. Panya was born in Bangkok on 1 January 1957. After he graduated high school, he held many different jobs, such as taxi and tuk-tuk driver, and he ran his own restaurant and a factory producing polymers. He began recording political events and public seminars after the coup in 2006, by helping do the audio streaming of the anti-coup stage at Sanam Luang (the area near the Royal Palace in Bangkok) for the Thai Voice website. Later on (from 2007), after he attended a seminar in Thammasat University, he started to do his own recordings, carrying his equipment with him. The video recordings that form his collection are as complete as possible a compilation of the events from 2007 to April 2015, mostly in Bangkok.

At the Friends Afternoon excerpts were played from videos by Panya. Some have been broadcast via Red Shirt TV.

The still depicted is from a video of a gathering



on 10 June 2012 with hostess Suda Rangkuapan and guest speaker Somsak Jeamteerasakul, a history professor at Thammasat University. Both are now in exile.

Somsak was accused of *Lèse Majesté*, because he expressed criticism of the princess (who is not officially covered by Article 112). But then again, in Thailand you risk this accusation even with respect to kings who have been dead and buried for a century. (Hsa)

Active forever: Dirk Veenstra 1906-1987

Dirk Veenstra was one of those typical Dutch activists involved in a range of activist clubs and other organizations, from the Bellamy movement to the Baptist Church, with the CPN as the most stable element. Many of the forebears of Veenstra are equally fascinating. His father Dirk Veenstra (1877-1963) advanced to grand master of the Freemasons, his maternal Aunt Betsy subscribed to the journals of the *Vrije Gedachte* [Freethinkers]. Mother Clara Risouw was a very independent woman in her day.

Dirk was born in Medemblik. His parents, as part of the well-off middle class, were able to retire in the 1930s. Dirk regularly went on holiday with his parents and brother; they were members of the *Nederlandse Reisvereniging* [travel association]. Nice albums among his personal papers reflect his trips, for example to Germany and France. Dirk settled in Amsterdam, where at age 13 he stood with his father in the crowds along the road at the funeral procession of Domela Nieuwenhuis. He became active in the *Nieuw Malthusiaanse Bond*, which his parents had joined as well, and participated in the movement of Esperantists. He met the schoolteacher Marietje Jurriaans there, who became his wife. She was an avid travel companion and introduced Dirk to Dutch communism. Dirk remained active as an Esperantist into the Second World War. Before the war he sold *de Tribune* and took a job within the movement. Although he wanted to join the fighting in Spain, the party kept him in the Netherlands to organize solidarity with the Spanish Republic. In the Second World War the party once again preferred to have him in the illegal underground rather than in the armed resistance. Dirk became adept at illegal distribu-



Mandate CPN 1946.
From archives Ger Harmsen, no.352

tion of ration coupons, thanks in part to his job at the distribution office! He was betrayed and had to go into hiding but survived. With his second wife Henny Keuter, he started a large family: between 1951 and 1962 the couple had six more children. In early 1950s Amsterdam Dirk was often seen distributing propaganda materials on trams and in bus shelters, subsequently making the rounds to collect donations. Gradually, these activities made way for writing. He regularly submitted letters to newspapers such as *Trouw*, cycling over there to deliver them in person. In the 1960s he extended his horizons to the Third World. Opposition to the Vietnam War became very important, as did the anti-atomic weapons movement. Eventually, he fell out with the CPN and, like his friend A.J. Koejemans (known as 'Koej' to his friends) had before him, joined the Doopsgezinde [Baptist] Church. The transition from there to the IKV was very understandable. Within the Doopsgezinde Kerk he organized *Kerst kom erin* Christmas celebrations in the church on the Singel in Amsterdam.

Understandably, such a devoted political activist encountered new problems within the



church. A year before his death, he was saddened to have to give up the Wereldwinkel. Via the IKV he was active in the Amsterdam 21 November Komitee, an organization founded in 1981 against

Dirk's family ±1910

Picking blackberries, Dirk, Crailoo 1933



Fourth Dutch Esperantocongress, Arnhem, 21-22 September 1929

Jan Vrijman with Ally Derks, founder of IDFA (International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam). December 1988. Photo: John Melskens

the nuclear arms race. On 20 January 1987, on his way to a Komitee meeting, he died unexpectedly. The papers of Dirk Veenstra contain a wealth of personal materials about himself and his family. In addition to the albums mentioned above, there are old family photographs. Other documents relate to Dirk's grandfather Jan Veenstra (ca. 1853 –). They also reveal his involvement in at least 40 idealistic organizations, defining the post-Second World War Netherlands. One nice detail is the visit that Ger Harmsen paid Dirk Veenstra in the 1950s to gather CPN materials, which had previously reached the IISH via the personal papers of Ger Harmsen. (HSA, based on information from the son of Dirk Veenstra, Dirk Veenstra)

Jan Vrijman, journalist, cinematographer, and above all born and bred in Amsterdam

In the spring of 2016 the Press Museum acquired the personal papers of Jan Vrijman (1.87 m.). The Press Museum archives are arranged and managed by the IISH. (<http://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH04387>).

Vrijman, whose original name was Jan Hulsebos, was a journalist, cinematographer, and columnist. Throughout his life he resided in Amsterdam, from his birth in the Jordaan in 1925, until he died in this city in 1997.

Vrijman achieved his breakthrough with his documentary *Dag Koninginnedag*, which he did for the VPRO in 1957. It was in part about the mutiny on the HNLMS De Zeven Provinciën in 1933 and even featured former mutineers. Addressing this topic, especially from that perspective, was very



much taboo at the time. Vrijman was banned from television work for two years. In 1961 Vrijman became more widely known through his documentary *De werkelijkheid van Karel Appel* [The reality of Karel Appel], for which he received a Golden Bear at the Berlin film festival. In 1965 Vrijman did a series on the topic 'at the bottom of heaven,' starring the well-known evangelist Johan Maasbach. The VARA, which had commissioned the production, refused to broadcast the series. Instead, it drew crowds at the cinema. At screenings the VARA's lack of courage to broadcast it was emphasized.

Vrijman always instigated controversy. He never went about his business quietly. Later on, Vrijman became known for the daily column he contributed to *Het Parool* as 'Journaille', from 1985 until shortly before his death in May 1997.

The personal papers of Jan Vrijman consist mainly of correspondence in chronological order. In the 1950s Vrijman wrote for various periodicals. Understandably, he was approached by authors and artists hoping for a favourable review.

Editorial Board Podium 1963. W.F. Hermans, Remco Campert, Miss World (Corine Rottschäfer), Gust Gils, Jan Vrijman. Photo Wim van der Linden/MAI





The author and sculptor Armando, still young at the time, sent him a note dated 10 March 1956, in which he deplores the critique. First it was Karel Appel's turn, now it was his. Their art was depicted as a kiddie project. In his note, he invites Vrijman to respond and to come view the work of Armando at a gallery.

The principles of Vrijman are a topic in correspondence with fellow film maker Johan van der Keuken. In 1977 Vrijman received a commission from Philips and got a letter from his friend the cinematographer Johan van der Keuken. Van der Keuken wrote: 'I am so critical of your Philips exercise that I am loathe to request your services.' Vrijman lashed out on 1 February 1977: 'Your unexpected postcard this morning hurt me deeply.' This first exchange of fire led to a correspondence. Van der Keuken asserted on 16 February 1977: 'You are the type of person who is forgiven for cutting corners, as that is your nature, and sometimes you present it as a "mind set." With a power centre such as Philips, I find cutting corners very risky, as in this case it matters more that countless Africans, South Americans, and any number of others are offended, as well as how deeply they are offended, than whether we get the recognition and comfort due to us.' Van der Keuken always took a principle and a global view and drew the line here. Vrijman replied on 11 March 1977 in a lengthy diatribe, stating his mistrust of all ideologies and stereotypes from left to right. This mistrust, held Vrijman, derived from his employment at *De Waarheid* shortly after the liberation.

Armando, Lubberhuizen, and Van der Keuken: the long list of correspondents reveals that Vrijman was part of Amsterdam cultural circles in the postwar decades. It also shows how Vrijman combined the roles of artist (film maker, author) and journalist.

Nicole Holt, who was married to Vrijman, described her husband as follows in a letter to Eugène de By dated 26 September 1997: 'Jan was indivisible; a loner. He could not tolerate people above, alongside, or beneath him. He did try. In both business and personal life, Jan tried to form partnerships, but most were doomed, because he was deeply entrenched in his lonely but absolute supremacy. One of his notorious statements was: "I am first, followed by a long void, then there I am again, and only then comes the rest."' Sometimes a single sentence says it all. (BHi)



Wim de Wit, an inspired but somewhat naive engineer in Siberia

In the spring of 2016 the IISH received a nice addition of 0.25 m. to the personal papers of Wim de Wit (<http://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARChO2939>) from his family. De Wit belonged to the group of Dutch architects and engineers whose ideals led them to settle in the fledgling Soviet Union during the Interbellum.

Born in Enkhuizen in 1897, Willem Frederik de Wit attended a commercial secondary school and then enrolled at Delft Institute of Technology. After completing his studies, he had few employment prospects in the Netherlands, since he had been raised in a Baptist home and was therefore a conscientious objector. In the summer of 1920 Wim found a job at the Technische Hochschule in the German city of Aachen. In Germany this period was marked by political and the economic turmoil. But Wim and his wife Augusta, both teetotalers and vegetarians, went backpacking every weekend, bringing along drums for botany specimens. They also frequented Cologne, where they made friends with the artist Gerd Arntz and his wife Agnes. In 1925 they moved from Aachen to Berlin. Wim held various jobs there but had difficulty with the workplace hierarchy.

The Soviet Union presented a new challenge. In May 1928 the couple picked up their visas

Left: Admission to the congress of the CPN, January 1946

Right: Provisional proof of membership CPN, 1945



Passport of Augusta de Wit 1933

Augusta de Wit, Moscow 1933



Wim de Wit, Moscow 1933



Wim de Wit, meeting with colleagues, Moscow 1936



and set off on the great adventure. Wim found a job that paid well, and they were assigned a nice home. They managed to enjoy life in addition to all the hard work. The couple went on many outings around Moscow and vacationed in the Caucasus and on the Crimean. At the end of June 1933 they left Moscow by car and drove via the Baltic states, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria to Italy and then later via France to the Netherlands. In 1934 and 1935 they also went on extended holidays in France and Spain, where they met their German friends.

Their vacation in 1935 was to be their last. As an omen, their best friends, Gerd Arntz and his wife Agnes, who had moved to Moscow filled with idealism in 1931, felt increasingly trapped. They left the Soviet Union around New Year 1935. In the progressively grim ambience, social-realist art prevailed over avant-garde and modernism, and foreigners aroused more and more suspicion.

In May 1936 Wim and Augusta travelled to the Netherlands to celebrate the golden wedding anniversary of her parents in Delft. Meanwhile, foreigners in Moscow were deeply concerned at the arrest of Zenzl Mühsam, whose late husband Erich Mühsam was murdered at the concentration camp Oranienburg. Wim and Augusta were friends with her and tried to help her.

Still, they returned to Moscow in October 1936. In early November in the middle of the night NKVD agents entered their home, turned things upside down in their search, and ordered Wim to come with them. We know this in part from the notes Augusta took in her diary. That night Wim de Wit disappeared and was never seen again.

The life of Wim de Wit and especially his arrest and everything that followed have been

described in detail by the journalist Hans Olink in his book *Een Siberische tragedie* (2007), based on Russian documents that became accessible over half a century later.

After Wim was arrested, no information about his fate was released. Much later on, it became clear that De Wit was sentenced to five years of forced labour in May 1937. In September Wim arrived in Kolyma in Northeast Siberia in good health, he wrote Augusta. So some letters were exchanged. Soon afterwards Augusta left the Soviet Union permanently. The Kolyma region, later described by Varlam Shalamov, who spent twenty years there, was symbolic of the hardships of the Gulag. Letters sent from Kolyma reached Enkhuizen, and Wim received letters from Augusta as well. In Kolyma, however, Wim stood trial again for sedition and conspiracy. In September 1938 Augusta had three letters returned to her, marked '*retour décédé*' [return [addressee] deceased]. It later became clear that in this second trial De Wit had been sentenced to death on 1 March 1938 and was then executed. In 1959 he was rehabilitated. Augusta was not notified about his death sentence, his execution, or his rehabilitation. Wim de Wit met a tragic end, and the long life of Augusta, who survived her husband by nearly 40 years, was no less tragic.

The addition to the personal papers is filled with family correspondence between the Soviet Union and those back home in the Netherlands. Wim and Augusta de Wit kept meticulous diaries and travel accounts. Other items include driving licences, passports, and other identity documents. Both photo albums from the journeys of the two travel aficionados in the Soviet Union and across Europe are lovely. Some correspondence also remains from soon after Wim's arrest, e.g. letters from J.W. (Willem) Albarda, the NRC journalist Marcus van Blankenstein, and Willem Schermerhorn, who later served as prime minister. (BHi)

Lectures

The Friends afternoon was dedicated to the Spanish Civil War, following the launch of the website about those who fought in Spain: <https://Spanjestridders.nl>. Yvonne Scholten talked about it, while Eric de Ruijter presented the website. He explained that on the one hand the responses show that it meets a need among the families of those who fought in Spain, some of whom had virtually no information. On the other hand, as the database becomes more complete, it will offer more opportunities for additional research, for example on contacts and networks. Almudena Rubio Pérez talked about the CNT photo collection, and Rudolf de Jong described support from Dutch anarchists for the Spanish cause. At the end of the afternoon, Frank de Jong screened a brief interview with Arthur Lehning recorded in 1982. This interview is part of the archive from the film *De Toekomst van '36* (1983), which was entrusted to the IISH in 2015. The archive contains the audio tapes and the films featuring interviews with CNT members Andrés Capdevilla, Francisco and Felix Carrasquer, José Costa, Lola Iturbe, Arthur Lehning, Antonio Paricio, Joaquín Paricio, Antonio Perez-Lazaro, Pérez-Baró, Pura Villanueva, and Ricardo Gombau. Willem Thijssen, who directed the film, introduced the excerpt. All interviews may be heard and viewed from the end of 2016 via the IISH catalogue.

Website for those who fought in Spain

Lecture by Yvonne Scholten

The idea for this site arose about three years ago. While doing research in New York, I discovered the archive and website of Americans who fought in Spain (<http://www.alba-valb.org/>). I realized it would be nice to have one in the Netherlands as well. That was how it began – and this is the provisional result: seven hundred names of people who are highly likely to have been in Spain. Nelleke Pollen merits special mention for tracing the genealogies of about 500 of those who went to Spain, as does my husband Wessel van der Hammen, who entered all data in gigantic Excel sheets.

Distortion is one of the problems: a lot of the material is from police and court records. Clearly, those who went to Spain often withheld the truth during police interrogations. Upon returning to the Netherlands, they were stripped of their citizenship. Investigation enabled the Dutch intelligence services to compile a list of ‘subversives’ over the course of 1939, including those who fought in Spain. Unfortunately, that list fell into the hands of the Nazi forces of occupation, with disastrous consequences: a great many of those who fought in Spain wound up in Nazi concentration camps, in some cases because they operated in the resistance, in other cases they were taken hostage, because they appeared on that list. Many families of those who fought in Spain gave shelter to German refugees and heard eyewitness accounts of what was happening in Germany, which may have influenced their decision to join the fight in Spain. As Nico Hartzuiker explains: ‘We were all poor, so a

refugee would sleep at one place, have breakfast at another, and take lunch at someone else’s house.’ Hartzuiker also mentions that it was the first time he crossed the border. Hartzuiker: ‘I lapsed into a trance. Leaving home was difficult, because despite the poverty, you could always enjoy small comforts, like a cup of coffee. Then Paris, the capital of the world and, finally, in mid-winter, the Pyrenees. From where we got out, we walked through the night along narrow mountain paths, crossing into Spain.’

Virtually everybody went to Albacete, where they started basic training and then went to the front. Some youths arrived by sea - via Marseille, and a few boats were torpedoed; Dutch were among the casualties. Most had no military training at all and certainly no combat experience. Cor Dekker described the incredibly naïve outlook among those who went to the front: ‘the five of us have a cannon and cheerfully sang “long may they live” to the front, without a clue of the hell we were about to enter.’ Few eyewitness accounts of the front are available. This was obviously due to military censorship and to the reluctance of the youths to worry their families back home. The unbelievable toll, however, is clear. The diary that Marinus Onderwater kept in Spain was found: we have posted its entire contents on the site.

What moved those people to go fight in an unknown country? I found a lovely description in Jef Last’s booklet *Over de Hollanders in Spanje*: ‘They came, because the blood of the old Sea Beggars still flowed through their veins, because aversion to inquisition, tyranny, and injustice is the best heritage of our people.’

His nationalist tenor resounds in this magnificent description. Many of the letters we found capture the motivation very directly and simply: the farmer’s son Arned Haak writes: ‘talking

should not be the main part but doing, what I did was merely my duty, simply the duty of workers.’ He also apologizes to his mother for sneaking out: but of course, he explains, had he told her, she would certainly have tried to stop him. He was in his early twenties when he left, and he was killed in Spain. All kinds of material has surfaced. We were not aware, for example, that among them was an Indonesian-Chinese student who later worked for Mao. There are compelling letters from parents searching for their sons into the 1950s – hoping they might still be wandering around the mountains of Spain, and that they will eventually return. One of those who fought in Spain named his two sons Voluntario and Passaremos. There are tales of heroism and accounts of disillusionment and pain. A great many Jewish nurses and medics were in Spain. Cor Dekker (deceased in 1942 in Neuengamme), who went singing to the front, deserted in the end – he felt that after a year he was entitled to some leave and was angry that he was not granted any. I will conclude with his message:

‘They should put themselves in my place. They should imagine spending thirteen months in constant mortal terror, sweeping up their comrades with shovels and brooms, going hungry for days on end or eating rotten food, seeing piles of decomposing corpses of men, women and children, only to be dismissed like beggars, if they asked for anything. (...) They have no right to judge me. I have risked my life for my ideals, I have carried arms for thirteen months in the struggle against fascism.’

Photos from the CNT Collection

The Betrayed Revolution

Exhibit of the CNT Photo Collection at the IISG, July-2016

Just before the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the CNT-FAI anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists smuggled their archives out of Spain to protect their heritage from Francoist extermination. In Oxford, where Amsterdam’s IISH had opened a branch as a refuge from the imminent Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, the crates remained throughout the turbulent years of the Second World War.

The crates of anarchist materials were shipped to the IISH in Amsterdam in 1947 and were eventually opened in the 1970s. In addition to the papers were thousands of negatives and photographs taken during the Civil War.

The images mainly depict the revolutionary experience that took shape especially in Barcelona and the Aragón villages, from the beginning of this war until May 1937; the crucial moment of the counter-revolution essentially staged by the Republican Government and the communists on orders from Stalin.

The activities of the CNT-FAI, FIJL and SIA are well represented in the collection. In addition, the photos convey the dedication and enthusiasm of the true protagonists of those days: the women and men caught up in the struggle against fascism and the frenetic and creative activity of the working class in the attempt to build a new society. Confiscation and collectivization of means of production by organized industrial





workers and transport and commercial workers in Barcelona; the collectivized land in Aragón villages; the New School based in the libertarian ideas of Ferrer I Guardia; the destruction of Catholicism are just a few examples.

The photographers, themselves active in the fighting and aware of the value of images as references, captured what they found to be iconic of the revolution. All these photos, many featured in the newspapers *Solidaridad Obrera* and *Tierra y Libertad* during the war, have an added value. They have captions added on the reverse, reflecting the zeal and optimism of those who sensed the end of the bourgeois regime, heralding the onset of the Social Revolution.

Almudena Rubio Pérez,
Art Historian

Anarchist support for Spain

Lecture by Rudolf de Jong

Although Piet Laros, who is the best known among those who fought in Spain, once told me that he was inspired to become a socialist by the speeches by the anarchists Anton Constandse and Albert de Jong (my father), Dutch anarchists were few and far between among those who went to Spain. This was because their Spanish kindred spirits had plenty of people but no weapons. Support from the Dutch anarchists consisted mainly of material aid and of raising awareness about the social revolution.

There were two additional factors. The movement was small and shrinking and was divided as to whether to defend the revolution through armed combat.

Diversity is characteristic of anarchism. For example, the IAMV (Internationale Antimilitaristische Vereniging) issued the periodical *De Wapens Neder* [Lay down the arms], and the NSV (Nederlandsch Syndicalistisch Vakverbond) published *De Syndicalist*. Other periodicals included *De Vrije Socialist*, *De Arbeider*, and the journal *Bevrijding*. During the Interbellum questions about the use of armed combat were much discussed.

Violence was generally eschewed in struggle for the revolutionary cause, especially after more strident papers – Constandse's *Alarm* and *De Moker* – had run their course. The NSV took the view that the revolutionary cause should



be purely an economic struggle and defended this view in vain within the anarcho-syndicalist international, the IAA (Internationale Arbeiders Associatie) with which it was affiliated, and in which the Spanish CNT (Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo) was the largest section.

In large parts of Spain, upon the suppression of the rebellion by the generals, a social revolution of the people ensued that derived largely from the anarchist legacy of the CNT but immediately faced the violence of the reactionary insurgents. The CNT decided to team up and even to form a government with all anti-fascist parties, despite their opposition to the revolution. Warfare was to become a weapon against the revolution. In anarchist circles this policy of teaming up continued to be hotly debated.

In the Netherlands fierce polemics arose about the use of violence. *De Syndicalist* advocated solidarity with the Spanish revolution and argued that in the IAA the sections determined their



Rudolf de Jong.
Photo Jacques van Gerwen

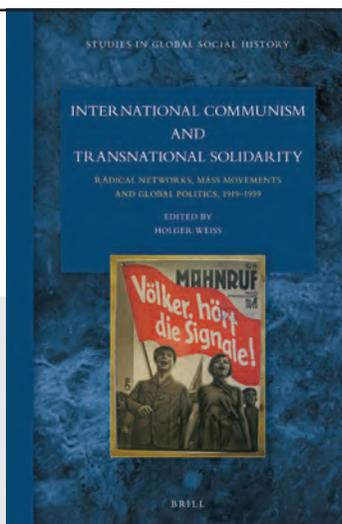
own tactic. *De Wapens Neder* and *Bevrijding* eschewed armed combat; sometimes even rejecting any support. As a consequence, material assistance to Spain (money, food, and clothing) was arranged largely via the NSV with about 1,500 members, half of them unemployed. The form of this support – initially in conjunction with organizations around Henk Sneevliet – was the same as that of other relief organizations: gathering and sending money, food, clothes (sometimes even handmade knitwear) that have been valued at nine or ten guilders from each member.

The most important support may well have been the information about the social revolution, which was buried, also or especially by socialists and communists. Even before the Civil War, *De Syndicalist* had featured extensive coverage of Spain. From the moment it broke out in 1936, we find weekly reports about Spain and the collectivization measures. In 1937 the journal ran a series of 16 articles by Albert de Jong, who travelled to Spain in February and toured collectivized companies. Extra copies were printed of two Spain issues (7,000 and 200 exp.). The NSV published a brochure (5,000 copies) and four manifests (total circulation 49,000) and convened several meetings. Anarchist publications about Spain were issued besides those from the NSV.

As the Civil War dragged on, criticism about the CNT policy ‘first the war, then the revolution,’ became perceptible in *De Syndicalist*, even from the IAA, without affecting the solidarity with the CNT. In 1939, after the fall of the Republic, Albert de Jong wrote a deeply critical reflection in a series of articles. Two other leading anarchists, Anto Constandse and Arthur Lehning, visited Spain and the collectivized companies. Constandse reported at length in his periodical *De Dageraad*. He had also experienced the armed struggle in May 1937 in Barcelona, which marked the beginning of the end of the revolution. Spain marked a turning point in his anarchist views. While he had previously rejected syndicalism and organization, he now embraced both and established the *Federatie van Anarchisten in Nederland (FAN)*, which worked closely with the NSV. After Munich 1938, however, he grew disillusioned about prospects for the anarchist movement.

Arthur Lehning, who worked at the IAA secretariat in Spain for two years, was there to acquire items for the IISH in October 1936. He was filled with idealism about the people’s revolution but was deeply critical of the CNT. Remarkably, he never joined anarchist and historical debates about Spain, which continue to this day.

The heated debate about violence in the Netherlands never led to personal animosity.



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