On the Waterfront

newsletter of the friends of the IISH 2019 no. 37

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Photos on African social and economic conditions

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Introduction

The definitive assessment by the evaluation committee announced in the previous issue has arrived and is good news: Our scholarship has been rated as ‘excellent’ and the work on the collections as ‘very good.’ The committee has recommended that we make better use of opportunities for public outreach and achieving social impact. The iish greatly looks forward to following this advice!

On 25 September Marcel van der Linden had his farewell celebration at the iish at a lively gathering. In his concluding remarks Marcel mentioned important courses for future research. One topic that interested him was ‘un- and underemployment.’ That afternoon he was presented with a Festschrift edited by Ulbe Bosma and Karin Hofmeester. The volume is available to the public in open access at: https://brill.com/view/title/39412.

On 11 October Peyman Jafari took his PhD in Leiden University for the thesis Oil, Labour and Revolution in Iran. This marked the fourth PhD completed in this series, supervised by iish friend Touraj Atabaki. An impressive achievement, especially by Peyman and also by Touraj.

Sadly, iish-friend Bert Altena has passed away. From his years as a student through after his retirement, he was an omnipresent and appealing personality in and around the iish. A brief obituary appears at: https://socialhistory.org/nl/news/memoriam-bert-altena.

Good news for collections included the allocation of € 101,328 by Metamorfoze toward digitizing a collection of archives from Dutch alternative movements in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, such as temperance advocates, anti-militarists and neo-Malthusians. Equally encouraging was the news that Groen Links will be entrusting its archive from the period 2000-2012 and is making available € 40,737 toward compiling an inventory.

Finally, the iish paid tribute to the History Month with the Festival of the Uprising. On Saturday 13 October many participated in a varied programme at our Cruquiusweg premises. It was an impressive public outreach, as we will see more often.

Huub Sanders

About the Friends

Members of the Friends of the iish pay annual dues of 25, 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 Friends coordinator 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

international institute of social history

Cover photo: Pieter Boersma, Deep-freeze factory in Tsumeb, Namibia. 1997

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Veterans of the campaign against the Vietnam War

From 22 to 24 May 2018 the University of Notre Dame in Indiana in the United States hosted the conference Voices of Conscience: Antwwar Opposition in the Military. The conference was an encounter of academics (many of them young) with veterans, in the twofold sense of the campaign against the Vietnam War. Some contributions were about the war in Iraq, but the difference between the wars in Vietnam and in Iraq is that the one in Vietnam was fought by military conscripts and the one in Iraq by enlisted servicemen. At the height of the Vietnam War, the U.S. had over half a million troops deployed there. A ‘tour of duty’ in Vietnam lasted roughly one year, comprising about six months in active combat. Maintaining this presence of the armed forces therefore required a great many people.

In 1968 the Americans were taken completely by surprise by the Tet offensive. On 30 January of that year Vietcong and North-Vietnamese forces attacked the Americans at many places in South Vietnam. All previous optimistic reports that the United States was winning the war turned out to be untrue. Despite the severe losses on the side of the attackers, the Vietnamese freedom fighters scored the political victory. American public opinion turned against the war. These events and the entire practice of warfare demoralized the American soldiers. One of the topics discussed at the conference concerned the effect of the protests on opportunities for U.S. military deployment. While this effect was generally acknowledged, it was difficult to disassociate from the prevailing demoralization arising from this unpopular war. For example, in 1970 the military had 65,000 AWOLs (Absent Without Official Leave). Some historians argue that at this point the U.S. military was no longer able to perform combat operations! AWOLs and conscientious objectors could get help in various places. Just outside many bases were coffee houses, where GIs came for information and support with their problems and could discuss their doubts about whether the war was right. They went to the G.I. Counselling Center in Berlin for help avoiding prosecution by the U.S. Max Watts and Dave Harris organized information and safe routes from Berlin, via Amsterdam, to France for these young men who were no longer willing or able to participate in the war frenzy. In Berlin a vast collection of material came about against the war in Vietnam, highlighted by the anti-war newspapers issued by GIs, in active service at the time, in their barracks, military bases, and ‘coffee houses.’ In 2010 this collection arrived in Amsterdam (also on this collection, see On the Waterfront 2011, no. 22, and 2014, no. 28).

The conference was held in the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, of which the director is the former anti-war activist David Cortright. An exhibition was featured there about the anti-war movement in general and included copies of many IISH documents. The exhibition, compiled by Ron Carver from the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington D.C., had already been on display in Vietnam at the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City. The director of this museum, Ms. Tran Xuan Thao, delivered a lecture at the opening session at Notre Dame.

One of the pivotal operators was James Lewes, who worked tirelessly to digitize the GI papers in the Brünn-Harris-Watts collection at the IISH. This wonderful collection has now been made available online via the Wisconsin Historical Society, see: http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15932coll8. The position of the IISH merits careful reflection. The collection from this movement of U.S. servicemen aligns with the best tradition of international anti-militarism collected and preserved by a German, an American, and an Israeli activist outside the United States and has a permanent place in Amsterdam: the originals of 90% of the pages displayed by Wisconsin and 60% of the titles presented there are at Cruquiusweg.

Racial and war-related issues were explored extensively at the conference. Black soldiers often suffered the most, and questions were raised as to whether the anti-war movement gave sufficient consideration to their plight.

Personally, I was enthralled to speak with people, some of whose stories I had learned during my experiences with anti-war activism in secondary school. Though only two or three years older than me, these people had a completely different life course because of the war in Vietnam. I knew the story of the gigantic ban-the-bomb symbol that GIs made from old wood from ammunition crates and placed on a South Vietnamese beach along the route of incoming B 52s. At this confer-
ence I met one of the makers, Harry Haines, in person. Another hero was Susan Schnall, who served as a medic in the military and in 1968 flew in a sports plane past five military bases in the San Francisco Bay area to drop 20,000 anti-war leaflets. She was also one of the first in the military to demonstrate against the war in uniform. On 22 May 2018 she donated the cap from that uniform to Tran Xuan Thao for the museum in Ho Chi Minh City.

The conference was a wonderful tribute to the current relevance of the IISH collection in the present, challenging era.

Huub Sanders

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**Thirty-seventh Friends Day, 28 June 2018**

**Presentation of the acquisitions**

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**The papers of Doğan Özgüden, a stateless journalist**

Turkish social history from the 1970s and 80s is an important focus in the IISH collections. Many of these collections revolve around the three coups, which took place in 1960, 1971, and 1980. Those periods were very difficult indeed for trade unions and leftist movements. This emerges from the story of Doğan Özgüden, who was active in Turkey as a leftist journalist in 1971 and subsequently continued the struggle as a political refugee.

Özgüden was born in 1936 as the son of a railway worker and was raised in various cities in Turkey. His photo albums contain many snapshots of excursions with family and friends. He started working as a journalist while still in his 20s, landing his first job in Izmir in 1952. This was an important step as he met his wife İnci Tuğsavul there as well. The story of his life, and consequently the story of his collection, is also the story of Tuğsavul. They took all important decisions together.

The first coup in May 1960 targeted mainly the political and economic unrest, rather than the leftist movements. The left-wing parties supported the nationalist, secular course. Photos in the collection reveal that Özgüden interacted with many national and international politicians via his work. He shook hands with General Cemal Gürsel, who became the head of state following the coup.

In the 1960s Özgüden also forged ahead in his political career. He joined the Workers Party of Turkey (TİP), formed in 1961 and the first socialist party in the Turkish parliament. After serving for a while as executive editor of the leftist newspaper Akşam, he founded his own publish-
Parts two and three are about two different gentlemen, who were both named U Maung.

The first U Maung nicknamed ‘the brigadier,’ was born in 1920, he died in 2009. This man was an army brigadier, diplomat, and writer. He participated in the anti-British resistance and in the revolt against the Japanese in 1945. After the war he pursued a military career from 1945 to 1961 and supported the aforementioned Ne Win in his coup in the early 1960s. As a diplomat he was posted in Israel, Yugoslavia, Indonesia, and Australia. After he retired, he wrote two books about the Burmese nationalist movements in the periods 1920-1940 and 1940-1948.

The Patricia Herbert Collection on Burma

In the spring of 2018 the IISH acquired a substantial collection of material on Burma.

These Burmese documents are from Patricia Herbert, who was born in London in 1943. Herbert attended the School of Oriental and African Studies, lived in Burma in the early 1970s and was a curator of the Southeast Asia Collections at the British Library for many years.

Herbert liaised with people from Burma, arranged their papers, and regarded this as her personal archive.

Fortunately quite a few documents in the collection are in English, and the material in other languages comes with brief notes in English, enabling a general description.

The Herbert collection comprises three parts. The first consists of correspondence with various Burmese individuals, including U Ne Win (1910/11-2002), prime minister of Burma from 1958 to 1960 and president from 1962 to 1981.
Maung? In addition to his correspondence with Patricia Herbert, the material consists mainly of typescripts concerning Buddhism, his conversion to Christianity, his period as a student, as well as the years under Japanese occupation.

The second U Maung is known as the man who was president for just one month. Born in 1925 and deceased in 1994, he attended university in Rangoon and took his PhD in the Netherlands at the University of Utrecht. In 1969 his book *Burma and General Ne Win* was published. In 1988 he was one of the key figures in the demonstrations for more democracy. On 19 August 1988 the Public Assembly of Burma elected him chairman of the Burmese Socialist Program Party and in the same process president of the country. The demonstrations against the government, however, continued, and on 18 September 1988 the army intervened, and the military ousted U Maung from the presidency. Disillusioned and suffering from diabetes, he left politics. After his death, his memoirs about the uprising in 1988 were published.

The personal papers of the second Maung contain correspondence from Patricia Herbert with U Maung, as well as with his widow following his death, e.g. about his memoirs. U Maung provided Patricia with practical advice as well. Patricia Herbert was working on a book about Buddha and asked him where and how to meditate. Maung replied that meditating could easily be done outside Burma, for example ‘in your office’ or ‘in the car at the traffic lights,’ and expressed great praise for her book. There are also typescripts by Maung in the archive, e.g. about Ne Win and the uprising of 1988. In addition, the collection contains materials about the Pro Democracy Movement run by Suu Kyi in 1988. (BH)`

For the collection, see: http://hdl.handle.net/10622/arch94567

The Pieter Boersma Photo Collection on Southern and Eastern Africa

See photographs on the right (page 7). Dutch photographer Pieter Boersma was born in Amsterdam 7 March 1945; as a photographer he was closely involved with various campaigns, events and conferences in relation to Amsterdam, particularly the Nieuwmarkt neighbourhood, as well as Southern Africa and the UN Habitat Conference in Vancouver, Canada in 1976; he also photographed many jazz musicians and performances.

From 1988 to 2009 Pieter Boersma participated as photographer in a large number of conferences and election monitoring missions of the Association of West-European Parliamentarians for Action against Apartheid (AWEPAA, later AWEP) throughout Southern, Central, and Eastern Africa. These photographs were part of a much larger collection of photographs by Pieter Boersma at the AWEPAA-office in Amsterdam until the end of 2017, when that office was closed and all the photographs were transferred to the IISH. Consequently, these photographs were divided into a Southern and Eastern Africa collection; other photographs by Pieter Boersma of AWEPAA conferences and other activities were processed as an annex to the AWEPAA archives at the IISH.

These 753 photographs of political events and social-economic conditions in a number of countries in Southern and Eastern Africa were taken by Pieter Boersma in the course of his work for AWEPAA between 1992 and 2005; topics include AWEP election observation missions in South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, and Tanzania, AWEP fact finding missions on living conditions and health (especially HIV/AIDS) among refugees and people in general in these countries, as well as in Rwanda and Kenya, and economic activities, small business, labour, and working conditions in mainly South Africa, Tanzania, and Namibia. Eighty-nine of these photographs have been scanned and made visible in our online catalogue. (Kier Schuringa)

Clothing repair workshop in a township of Cape Town, South Africa. 1996.

Shoe factory in Morogoro, Tanzania. 1996.


Train with illegal Mozambican workers to be deported from South Africa. 1997.


One of the many efforts at cultural and social innovation in the Netherlands soon after the Second World War was the journal *De Nieuwe Stem*. *Maandblad voor Cultuur en Politiek*. It was after a fashion the successor to *De Stem*, a journal edited by Dirk Coster and published from 1921 to 1941, when it was discontinued due to paper shortages. *De Stem* propagated a vague humanism, as well as vitalistic features. Although Dirk Coster opposed fascism, he joined the “Kultuurkamer” during the occupation. This was probably why the publisher, J.L. van Tricht at Van Loghum Slaterus, declined to launch a successor under the direction of Coster during the war. Nico Donkersloot did transition from the old to the new journal, writing under the pseudonym Anthonie Donker. During the occupation, Donkersloot and Jan Romein met in Laren, as Donkersloot later described, to assemble a journal that would breathe ‘the spirit of recovery and innovation; of material and cultural reconstruction, and of a renewed democracy.’ Romein’s friend H.J. Pos joined the editorial board soon afterwards. *Vox Humana* was briefly considered as a name for the journal, but *De Nieuwe Stem* [The new voice] became the definitive choice. In 1947 Jef Suys and Victor van Vriesland joined the editorial board and were followed by Wim Wertheim, who used his influence to ensure that Indonesia was covered in the journal. As a result, the young author Pramoedya Ananta Toer was able to publish an extended story in the eighth volume (1953) of *De Nieuwe Stem*.

Like many other postwar initiatives the journal ran aground because of the persistence of old relationships, and *De Nieuwe Stem* was unable to keep its promise. It was caught up in the deep polarization that resulted from the onset of the Cold War. The communists decried the periodical as reactionary, while anti-communists saw it as a nest of fellow travellers. That the journal never acquired a strong following was due in part to its rather old-fashioned, elitist, Eurocentrist and pessimist view of culture. It opposed the Americanization of culture, especially as depicted in motion pictures and it saw superficiality everywhere. Understandably, the journal hardly appealed to the younger generations, about which the editorial board did complain. The journal had about 700 subscribers – not enough to be managed cost-effectively. The authorities pitched in with grants from 1952. In 1964, for example, the journal received Fl 6,000 in government funding. Even Jan Romein helped his ‘beloved child in need,’ personally covering deficits.

Subsequent transitions on the editorial board brought in additional well-known IISH staff besides Romein. Frits de Jong Edz., who headed the Dutch section of the IISH from 1947 to 1957 and served as director from 1966, joined the editorial board, as did board member Theo van Tijn. The last secretary to the editorial board was Tristan Haan, who in 1966 became the head of the French section at the IISH. The journal archive includes correspondence from 1965 and 1966 with Haan about his possible appointment. After
the journal was discontinued, Tristan Haan took in the archive and preserved it well, transferring it to the iish in 2018. The archive is a typical of archives from editorial boards, containing a wealth of correspondence between the board members and the authors. It is a centrepiece within a certain cultural, social, and political network in the Netherlands between 1945 and 1967. The journal also figured prominently in a dispute in Dutch literary circles that simmered with varying intensity long after it was ignited. In 1953 De Nieuwe Stem wanted to feature a commemorative issue about H. Roland Holst and asked Garmt Stuiveling to write a contribution. Stuiveling, a poet, man of letters and a professor in Amsterdam from 1950, had also co-authored Historische schets van de Nederlandse letterkunde voor schoolgebruik en hoofd-aktestudie with C. de Vooys. This book, reprinted many times, was the bane of existence for several generations of secondary school students. The request to Stuiveling came with criticism regarding his role in the 17th edition of De Schets from 1942, in which Stuiveling (who was responsible for literature from the 20th century) identified various authors as Jewish, although this had not been the practice in the last pre-war edition. He did so, for example, with Van Vriesland. The conflict was investigated by a ‘special council’ that apportioned the blame among all parties: the conduct of Stuiveling had been reprehensible, Van Vriesland should not have disclosed his personal correspondence to others (especially not to A.C. Bakels, a journalist for the Dutch daily De Telegraaf), and De Nieuwe Stem had judged too hastily. In 1957 Bakels lashed out again at Stuiveling, this time in an article that appeared in De Telegraaf. From that point onward, regardless of whether it was appropriate, at every official occasion in which he was involved, the 17th edition and alleged unpatriotic conduct was mentioned. Even in 1988, Adriaan Venema repeated the accusation. The case is enlightening for research on the mechanisms of coming to terms after a universally contaminating war. The archive of De Nieuwe Stem is a valuable source of information on the matter. (HSA)

Clara Wichmann, figurehead and proclaimed icon
In 2017 the iish received a significant addition to the personal papers of Clara Meijer-Wichmann (http://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH00892). Clara Gertrud Wichmann (1885-1922) is known as a scholar of law, an anarchist, and a feminist, but also for dying shortly giving birth to her first daughter in February 1922. She has been acclaimed since then as an icon of feminism, an advocate of women’s suffrage, a scholar with a doctorate in law who worked for the department of Criminological Statistics at the Central Bureau of Statistics and elaborated unique views on guilt and punishment, and as the eponym of streets, institutes, and medals.
An addition was also received to the personal papers (http://hdl.handle.net/10622/arch00891) of Clara’s husband, the conscientious objector, dentist, and peace activist Jo Meijer (1895-1969).

The Institute received these additions from Catelene Passchier, the granddaughter of Clara. Hetty Passchier-Meijer (1922-2012), the daughter of Clara and the mother of Catelene, took good care of the legacy of her parents for decades.

The documents that the Institute received last year may be the most personal among the items from Clara Wichmann. This is in part why her family kept them for so long.

Clara had German parents and grew up in a German-speaking home. Her family lived in Hamburg. A few years before she was born, her father moved his family to the Netherlands to take a position as professor of mineralogy and geology in Utrecht. The family always spent summer holidays with relatives in Hamburg. Clara was born during one of those summer holidays. As a law student, Clara attended lectures by Bolland, where she learned about the work of Hegel.

The oldest documents include a diary that Clara kept in German from 1898 to 1906. Clara starts her diary with an account of an excursion with her mother to Amsterdam, where they planned to visit the Rijksmuseum and the restaurant at the Krasnapolsky. She was also taught English as a girl. On Christmas Eve 1901 Clara was given the booklet *Dreams* by Olive Schreiner. In 1904 Clara spent a few months in England. In her letters to her parents, she mainly describes excursions to London, where the bright red buses appeared everywhere.

In 1921 Clara was pregnant. Determined to prepare, she purchased baby items. At the new co-operative weaving works ‘De Ploeg’ in Best, Noord-Brabant, Clara ordered 41 ells of reform fabric no. 10, 80 cm. wide and enough for 36 diapers.

The ‘Laundry booklet’ that Clara kept from July 1920 to December 1921 in The Hague reveals her administrative skills. For example, under ‘bed linens,’ she consistently distinguished regular from ‘reform’.

The items acquired also comprise personal letters from Clara to her girlfriend Cor de Wilt-Schnitzler, member of the main administration of the Onafhankelijke Revolutionair-Socialistische Vrouwenbond [Independent revolutionary-socialist women’s league] and active in the Internationale Anti-Militaristische Vereeniging (IAMV).

As she approached her delivery date, Clara wrote her friend about the book by Dr C.N. van
clothes, and vegetarianism, and she added her legal perspective.

In the course of her PhD research, she elaborated her views on crime, penalties, and punishment. In 1919 Clara teamed up with others to found the “Comité van Actie tegen de bestaande opvattingen omtrent Misdaad en Straf” [Action committee against current views on crime and punishment] (CMS), which consisted mainly of pacifists and anti-militarists.

In addition to her husband Jo Meijer, Clara associated with her only brother, Erich Wichman (1890-1929), who was both reviled and renowned. Erich was an artist, writer, bohemian, and alcoholic and dabbled in fascism. Some of the documents in the addition to the personal papers of Jo Meijer concern Erich, such as a letter from July 1916 from the Koninklijke Utrechtse Fabriek van Zilverwerken C.J. Begeer to Wichman, offering him a job in the enamel works. Working for a boss and with co-workers turned out not to suit Wichman. A letter from the Utrecht teacher of Latin and Ancient Greek and future fascist Marius Brinkgreve to Clara reveals that by March 1917 Erich no longer worked for Begeer. Although these details are minor, both letters enable a more specific biography of Erich Wichman. (BHi)

Poster stamps: ‘confetti of commerce’

Poster stamp is the English word for ‘sluitzegel.’ And that description fits the bill. Poster stamps have both the features of a large poster and those of an oversize postage stamp with a serrated edge and often an adhesive rear. Poster stamps have been nicknamed ‘confetti of commerce,’ reflecting their main purpose: advertising and promoting a new product or an event.

The rise of poster stamps coincided with the heyday of posters and great poster designers, such as the Czech Alphonse Mucha and Toulouse Lautrec from France at the start of the 20th century. The oldest poster stamps date back to announcements of exhibitions (especially world fairs) and trade fairs. The first poster stamps that were printed in large numbers and served commercial purposes appeared in Germany around 1907. Initially, they were used mainly by manufacturers of food products that wanted to catch the eye of the general public through poster stamps on letters, bills, and packaging materials. Later they were introduced by large and small entrepreneurs alike in all kinds of economic sectors. The new advertising medium soon spread from Germany to Austria, Italy, France, England, and also to the Netherlands.

Mostly offered free of charge, poster stamps soon became collectibles. In the 1910s there was even a true poster stamp craze. Small children crowded shops with poster stamps, hoping to convince their parents to purchase sweets, shoe polish, and shaving cream. The poster stamp craze was comparable to present-day campaigns of flips, Pokémon, stamps, and football pictures.

The immense popularity of poster stamps arose mainly from their clear, colourful visuals with nice graphic designs intended to convey an image or message to viewers. The clear, bright
colours contrast sharply with the dull printed black-and-white advertisements that prevailed until the end of the nineteenth century. New printing technology was conducive to new, colourful visuals. Image, company name, and wording were contained within a small surface. Poster stamps attributed their popularity and success in part to the fact that they could be produced in vast quantities at a minimal cost and were easily distributed via wholesalers and retailers free of charge. As collectibles, they also promoted customer loyalty. New series appeared with some regularity and were eagerly awaited.

As a new advertising medium, poster stamps offered new, innovative, and creative opportunities. These miniatures featured remarkably refreshing and bold colour combinations, typography, and layout. Poster stamps embodied the craftsmanship of a great many unknown designers. Unimpeded by market research about the psychological effect of advertising, they used an original, direct creative approach, often with a touch of humour. Children and animals figured prominently in the designs, appealing to the emotions of the potential consumers.

Most poster stamps were intended as free advertising. Charities and institutions dedicated to good causes soon started using poster stamps in fundraising campaigns, selling them to support such causes. Cases in point include the Troelstra Oord and Herwonnen Levenskracht. Poster stamps were also used to support campaigns, such as: the daily Het Volk of 9 December 1915 reported that the chapter in The Hague of the Algemene Bond van Nederlands Post-, Telegraaf- en Telefoonpersoneel [General union of Dutch postal, telegraph, and telephone workers] had designed a poster stamp to promote Sunday as a rest day, reading “Support postal workers in their effort to rest on Sunday,” as well as the caption along the edge “Do not put items in the post on Saturday afternoon” and “Do not have items delivered on Sunday.”

Poster stamps were also used for disseminating information, as the poster stamps from the Nederlands Instituut voor Arbeidsomstandigheden (NIA) confirm. The archive contains documents with detailed information about designs, circulation, and customers.

The demise of the poster stamp resulted from the rise of popular magazines that increasingly became fixtures in living rooms from the 1930s. These weeklies circulated widely and offered opportunities for placing large advertisements comprising visuals and more textual information. After 1945 poster stamps gradually disappeared, although they have not vanished entirely. Especially organizations dedicated to good causes, such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, used them until recently. General interest in poster stamps has grown considerably, because of their intrinsic historical merits, as well as their artistic value. NEHA Collection Sluitzegels https://search.socialhistory.org/Record/coll00314.

(Jacques van Gerwen)
In 1936 the workers occupied the factories. Gerard van den Berg, a council communist. He was already pushed back the revolution. One evening I noticed the passing convoy of police vans of the crs (Compagnies Républicaines de Sureté). I headed over there. The smell of tear gas lingered, burned-out cars were being towed and the street had been restored. But there was also a small group of demonstrators, with, I believe, the slogan ‘where are our comrades who disappeared?’ I later read that 367 were injured and 460 arrested, and that 188 cars were damaged.

Visiting friends, who until the fighting had stopped, sat glued to radio Luxemburg, I discovered how strong the emotions were. And also how important this radio station independent of the established order of the Fifth Republic dated back to 1958, ‘ten years are enough.’ Police were nowhere in sight, nor were cars or busses.

Roel Jansen has used as the title of his dissertation a statement by one of the inhabitants of a slum in Bogota: ‘The city is not ours.’ In Paris: the city was no longer theirs, where ‘theirs’ denoted the established order of the Fifth Republic.

The demonstration did not have a force to keep order, the order created itself. But from the last stop I had gone to my hotel and then back out into the street again. The procession was still marching. Members of the cgt, the communist trade union confederation, passed by, cordoned off by their own order force, hand in hand, workers in chains! The scene was symbolic of the attitude of the cgt in the May revolution.

Days later, after a night filled with violence, when the crs returned, I was walking with Gerard van den Berg, a council communist. He said: ‘In 1936 the workers occupied the factories to keep out scabs. Now their objective is to block the students and their revolution.’

In the days following May thirteenth the revolution spread. The Sorbonne, the faculty buildings, and even offices were occupied, action committees formed, meetings convened, demonstrations held. I marched in the protest demonstration bearing the slogan ‘Nous sommes tous des Juifs Allemands’ [we are all German Jews], after driving force Daniel Cohn-Bendit was denied entry in France.

I helped by collecting: appeals (initially written with felt-tip pens), stencils, posters, and new periodicals and recorded the many absurdist slogans that appeared on walls. I discovered the Beaux Arts, where the posters were produced, with increasing professionalism.

One afternoon I was helping on the clean-up crew for Censier – one of the most important university extensions – and collected material that would otherwise have disappeared into trash bags. I attended a few meetings of faculties and groups, as well as discussions at the Sorbonne.

There was no overarching organization: the revolution was organized from below. Impressions of the May revolution are – quickly and often wrongly – defined by the posters in the courtyard of the Sorbonne, where all kinds of political organizations were free to set up stands with reading material and photos of their heroes: Mao, Lenin, Trotsky, Che, and Marx. The actual revolution happened inside the buildings, at the discussions and decision-making by the students about their own situation.

The revolution led neighbourhood committees to form. Most of those in arts and culture supported the students, as well as the occupations, strikes, and lists of demands. Public services joined the action as well. More specifically: they ground to a halt because of the strikes. Public transport and even bank employees did so. This course of action was counter-productive.

I visited a historian, a friend of the iish. He explained to me that strikes by public transport and banks impacted the general population and might turn public opinion against the students. Nor was any petrol available, probably by design of the established order. His words soon proved to be prophetic.

Outside Paris the revolution had strong support, especially in Nantes. There was no general uprising against the existing structures. In Paris it mainly comprised action committees. Coordination efforts were half-hearted.

The revolution was non-violent. The repression was a different matter, although nobody was killed. In the evening and at night the crs gradually pushed back the revolution. One evening I noticed the passing convoy of police vans of the riot squad, a force of absolute supremacy.

The students defended themselves as best they could from behind hastily erected barricades.
with rocks and other projectiles within easy reach. I passed one of those rocks. As the calls of cas-sas grew closer and louder, those passing rocks dispersed, as I did with them.

I understood the cause was lost. I stayed in Paris until the end of May, when together with some others I got one of the few cabs still on the road to take us to Belgium.

In 1969 the material I had gathered enabled us to assemble a nice albeit already historical exhibition under the auspices of the iisg, with a catalogue of enduring value.

In a lecture I once described May 1968 as a great but limited revolution. Great because the students, unlike the trade unions of the workers, questioned the entire social order. Limited, because outside arts and culture and parts of the public sector, the students barely resonated.

1968: ‘You say you want a revolution’
Lecture by Roel Janssen

In 1968 I was twenty years old and in my second year as a sociology student at Leiden University. In early May we read in the newspapers about the student uprising in progress there. On a whim, I left for Paris with two student friends. We were curious and happened to have an old car, a grey Peugeot 203.

Our experience in Paris in those May days of 1968 immersed us – and our generation – in a different world. A world of uprisings, barricades, and liberation. This was what mattered in the late 1960s.

In those days news was not disseminated as quickly as it is today. Newspapers appeared once a day, and telex machines were in use. Live television was only just beginning. Television news broadcast black-and-white footage. Motion pictures were recorded on celluloid, film tins were transported by the TV crews by car to the Netherlands or were sent via the KLM to Schiphol Airport, arriving days later at the studios in Hilversum.

There was no social media, online and internet did not exist, and there were no mobile connections. This was the era of stencils, pamphlets, mural newspapers, telex transmissions, and – crucially – transistor radios. In Paris, Mexico, and Chicago radio reporters from independent stations reported live from the barricades on the fighting between demonstrators and riot police. In Vietnam cameramen accompanied the American troops. They filmed the riots in the black ghettos of cities in the United States following the news that Martin Luther King, Jr. had been assassinated, and they recorded the protest by black sprinters at the Mexico Olympics. Their reports were, as they say, the first rough sketch of history.

The sixties

The events of 1968 were not isolated incidents but figured in the dynamics of the sixties. The postwar generation was discarding the conventions of family, church, and bourgeois life. Baby boomers challenged the authority of the government, parents, teachers and professors, preachers and pastors, basically, the established order. This has been described as “civilian decolonization.”

In the Third World, countries achieved liberation from their colonial oppressors. Liberation, revolution, solidarity, as exemplified by the Cuban revolution, ‘Che’ Guevara (who was murdered in Bolivia in October 1967), and the Vietnamese guerrillas who fought the Americans.

In the late 1960s a wide variety of social movements accelerated. In that brief period of excitement, 1968 marked the climax in a maelstrom of events.

Young people rebelled everywhere – in Latin America and in the United States, in Eastern and Western Europe, and certainly in the Netherlands, with 1968 as a milestone in the twentieth century, as were 1917, 1945, and 1989.

What factors drove that simultaneity? What were the sources of inspiration? I will mention four very briefly.

1. Prosperity. After the Second World War the u.s. economy entered a period of continuous growth. Following the austerity of the reconstruction, Western Europe experienced spectacular growth in prosperity in the 1960s. Disposable incomes rose by seventy percent, there was full employment, and the number of workers in industry and mining reached an all-time high. The rise of consumer society brought: washing machines, televisions, record players, a first car parked outside. Provos resisted symbols of mass consumption. Youth was discovered as the market for music and fashion.

2. The generation gap. In countries in the West roughly a third of the population was under 21. University enrolment tripled in the 1960s. Baby boomers grew up and claimed their place in society. They resisted the bourgeois lifestyle of the 1950s and the ‘war generation.’ Youth against the rest: the social generation gap was deeply conflicted.

3. Counterculture. Oral contraceptives were introduced a few years earlier and paved the way for contraception outside marriage. In one sense, the ‘baby boom’ meant a general increase in fertility, but for a large part of the nation it also meant a new kind of consciousness towards sexuality. In the same way, the drug culture and the sexual revolution were only the outward manifestation of a cultural revolution. The year 1968 marked the peak of the seemingly无
toward the sexual revolution. Hippies held love-ins, the summer of 1967 was proclaimed in San Francisco as the summer of love. In Amsterdam the Vondel Park was thick with hash fumes, and the first Dam Square sleepers made their way to the national monument on the Dam. LSD and soft drugs became the new hype. Drugs were mind-enhancing and spiritually liberating. It was the Age of Aquarius. The Beatles went to India to indulge in transcendental meditation. They issued the White Album, featuring their song You Say You Want a Revolution.

4. Violence. In 1968 the death toll of Americans in Vietnam peaked, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. were assassinated, violent riots broke out in black sections of American cities, and there was a bloodbath on the eve of the Mexico Olympic Games. On top of all this were the 3,082 traffic fatalities in the Netherlands, famine in Biafra, and the mass murders during the Cultural Revolution in China. Unrest had been simmering for some time in Berlin and in Amsterdam. Then came 1968. The established order was overwhelmed by youth protests that spread throughout the world like a tsunami. Optimism, gaiety, freedom prevailed. Anything was possible, tomorrow would be better, they needed only to take to the streets, call out slogans, wave colourful flags – and society would change. Utopias were no longer illusions but augured a new world within reach.

As Jim Morrison of The Doors sang: ‘We want the world and we want it now.’

Paris
Calm persisted in one country: France. In his New Year address in 1968, President De Gaulle stated that France was a beacon of tranquillity in a turbulent world. ‘France is bored,’ reported Le Monde ironically in a main commentary that was often quoted afterwards.

Then the unrest spread to France. More accurately: hormones acted up.

On the new campus in Nanterre, a suburb of Paris, male students were not allowed to enter student housing for women. One morning in February during a raid by the police, 132 male students were arrested for spending the night in the women’s dormitories. Students protested. ‘No sexual ghettos!’

What followed was a spectacular example of how short-sighted decisions by the authorities can instigate a mass movement.

In early May a few hundred students in Paris protested the closing of the Nanterre campus. The riot squad suppressed the gathering and evacuated the Sorbonne. The next week one hundred thousand students staged a demonstration, put up barricades in the streets of the Quartier Latin, and occupied the Sorbonne.

The communists – a large party in France – had dismissed the student movement up to that point, deriding the students as brats of the elite with delusions that they could teach the working class how to run a revolution. Faced with the mass protests, they had a dramatic change of heart and decided for once to team up with the students to organize a demonstration against the government and the capitalist patrons. The communist trade union CGT decreed a general strike.

The unimaginable happened. All of France ground to a halt. The government of President De Gaulle was destabilized. For an entire month, France was in the throes of revolution.

In France history is never far away. The course of events brings to mind memories of the revolutions of 1789, 1830, 1848, and 1871. The May revolution in France was the utopia of the students versus the class struggle of the workers. ‘Imagination in power’ and ‘I come on the paving stones’ versus the struggle for better wages. Anarchist romanticism versus rigid communist party discipline.

After a month the trade unions sold out for spectacular wage increases. Encouraged by Moscow, the French communists betrayed the student uprising. And once President De Gaulle had secured support from the military, he restored his authority.

Other countries also experienced turbulence and major events in 1968. Czechoslovakia under the leadership of Alexander Dubček experimented with ‘socialism with a human face.’ ‘Prague spring’ chronicles imminent tragedy. It was clear from the outset that the Soviet Union – especially Poland and German Democratic Republic – would not tolerate liberalizations and reforms in ‘fraternal country’ Czechoslovakia.

During the night of 20 to 21 August armies from the Warsaw Pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia, which was ultimately occupied by 600,000 troops – more than the u.s. had deployed in Vietnam.

Dubček was captured, transferred to Moscow, forced to sign the capitulation of his country – the Moscow Protocol – and was subsequently compelled to carry out the ‘normalization.’ Once he had completed that in the opinion of the Russian leaders, he was removed from office and exiled to Slovakia, where he was forced to work as a forester.
In Vietnam there were half a million U.S. troops fighting in 1968.

The government in Washington and the generals in Vietnam insisted that the war was going well.

Then in the second week of January 1968 in the Tet offensive, the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong took the U.S. troops by surprise. Scenes were broadcast daily on American television news. Viewers soon understood that the enemy was far from defeated.

Protests against the war in Vietnam defined the demonstrations that August in Chicago, where the Democratic convention was held to appoint the candidate for the U.S. presidential elections of November 1968. Peace candidate Eugene McCarthy faced off against Vice President Hubert Humphrey. In the preceding months Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy had been assassinated.

The protests spiralled out of control in Chicago. The demonstrators claimed to be the winners, but the silent majority of Americans opposed them, hippies and yuppies, peace activists, and black adherents to the Black Panther movement.

During that hot summer protests were also staged in Mexico City. Students demonstrated against oppression and social injustice. In October the Olympic Games started in Mexico, the first time the Olympics were held in what was known as a Third World country. President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz wanted the public unrest to be subdued.

On 2 October security forces fired at a peaceful demonstration on the Plaza de Tlatelolco. The death toll in this bloodbath was twenty-five, according to the government. But the figure is unconfirmed to this day. Some have mentioned one thousand casualties, and I have even read that two thousand lives were lost.

The Olympic Committee allowed the Games to proceed. The Dutch Olympic team won three gold medals!

Even then, a riot erupted. When the winners of the medal for the 200 metre sprint were being awarded their medals, black American sprinters Tommy Smith and John Carlos (gold and bronze medals, respectively) – each wore a black glove and showed their fist as a symbolic tribute to Black Power. They were expelled from the U.S. Olympic team and sent home.

And how did the Netherlands fare during the revolutionary year of 1968?

Amsterdam was at the vanguard in the 1960s. Anti-smoking campaigner Robert Jasper Grootveld started his happenings at the venue Het Lieverdje in Amsterdam in 1964, the Provos were founded in 1965, and photos of smoke bombs on Raadhuisstraat at ‘the [royal] wedding’ made world news in 1966. In 1968 several events occurred as well. No student protests – they happened the next year – but the pop centres Paradise and Fantasio opened; those present at the concerts were free to smoke joints there. Chick and Candy introduced the sexual revolution in magazines at petrol stations and tobacconists.

Amsterdam was proclaimed the ‘magiecentrum’ of free sex, drugs, and rock ‘n roll.