



internationaal instituut
voor sociale geschiedenis



On the Waterfront

newsletter of the friends of the IISH 2025 no. 49

90 years
of IISH

Projekt Artur
videos

KMAN
archive

Spanish Civil War
photos

PAPA
photo archive

Introduction

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The past year has seen the institute celebrate its ninetieth birthday in various ways. The celebrations for this anniversary kicked off with the Friends' Meeting on 26 June 2025. Although usually not considered a particularly significant anniversary milestone, Leo Lucassen's speech at the dinner for the IISH Foundation's Supervisory Board and other stakeholders on 21 October 2025 made it clear that current events in the Netherlands and around the world provide ample reason to draw parallels with the situation in and outside the Netherlands in 1935: 'The current situation in which trade union members, environmental activists, women's rights advocates, fighters against discrimination and racism, and democratic politicians around the world are fighting against the depletion of natural resources, man-made climate change, social and gender inequality, rising racism and fascism, and the oppression of political opponents on all continents, unfortunately bears an alarming resemblance to that of ninety years ago.' This demonstrates that the IISH's work of collecting, documenting, making accessible and studying organisations and individuals who oppose oppression, injustice, and inequality is just as relevant today as it was when the institute was founded.

The kick-off on Friends Day on 26 June consisted of a presentation by Huub Sanders, former coordinator of the Friends and author of the history of the institute from its foundation until 1989, *Het virus der betrokkenheid* (The Virus of Engagement). As the summary of his presentation shows, he continued this history up to the present day, using the same triangular model of internal and external forces influencing the development of the IISH to outline the general trends of engagement and rescuing endangered materials.

Both trends are clearly visible in the presentation of collections and new acquisitions, including presentations of Almudena Rubio on the CNT photo archive; Bence Meijer on a collection of video footage from a 1987 film project about radical left-wing movements in West-Germany;

Hawra Nissi on the archive of the Committee of Moroccan Workers in the Netherlands (Komitee Marokkaanse Arbeiders in Nederland; KMAN); and Lino Hellings on the Participating Artists' Press Agency (PAPA).

With these presentations, the issue aptly reflects ninety years of the IISH's history.

Aad Blok

About the Friends

Members of the Friends of the IISH pay annual dues of 10 (for students), 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.

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, 2016). For all information concerning the Friends, see <http://iisg.amsterdam/en/friends>

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ISSN 15742156

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Printed by: Wilco, Amersfoort
Website: <https://iisg.amsterdam/en/friends>
Financial administration: Rina Sonneveld

Administrative and secretarial support:
Jacqueline Rutte
We wish to thank: Huub Sanders,
Almudena Rubio, Bence Meijer, Hawra Nissi,
Lino Hellings
Friends coordinators: Aad Blok and Astrid
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On the Waterfront is supported by Koninklijke
Brill NV

Forty-fifth Friends' Day

26 June 2025

IISH: ninety years of seeking balance in a world in motion – presentation by Huub Sanders

At this 90th anniversary of the IISH, I will briefly outline what in my view have been the general trends in the history of the institute since its foundation in 1935. I will do this based on my PhD thesis *Het virus der betrokkenheid* (2019), which covers the history of the IISH from 1935 to 1989. I will then describe the next 36 years, drawing more on my own observations than on actual research.

The first general trend from those ninety years of history may be conveyed by the term engagement. Such engagement was manifestly present with founder Nicolaas Posthumus and with Nehemia de Lieme, director of the bank-insurance company De Centrale and financier of the institute. While, by the 1930s, Posthumus had become a respected professor, he had been involved in the radical wing of social democracy as a student around the turn of the century. In 1938, at the moment the labour movement of Central Europe was destroyed, De Lieme expressed hope '[that] someday the IISH [might] become the centre where the labour movement could overcome this destruction'.

The second general trend is the rescue function the institute has always had for labour movement archives in jeopardy; Posthumus first mentioned this role at the official opening of the institute in 1937.

In my book I examine three perspectives: institutional history, substantive and academic development in social history, and, finally, the biographical history of the people who designed the institute. I base this on a triad of forces, each influencing the IISH to varying degrees between 1935 and 2025: broader social developments, the emergence of social history as an academic discipline, and the national infrastructure of scholarship and collections.

1935-1940

The strongest social force in the first stage, between 1935 and 1940, was, of course, Hitler's seizure of power. In Germany and most of Europe, the labour movement was almost entirely neutralized. Left-wing individuals and organisations fled with their archives and libraries. From 1933 onwards, Posthumus witnessed the arrival of German socialists in Amsterdam and sought to provide a safe haven for their collections. Director De Lieme of De Centrale (an insurance company that served the labour movement and set aside part of its earnings toward non-commercial causes within the movement) was intrigued by Posthumus's idea and arranged financial support.



Posthumus designed the institute according to the example of the Marx-Engels Institute (MEI) in Moscow, as an archive of and for the labour movement, organized in geographically structured 'cabinets,' in which scholarship and collecting converged. Like the MEI, the IISH focused explicitly on labour movement history, with almost all of its collection development dedicated to this field. However, the scope of the collection profile was subject to debate from the outset. At the first Foundation board meeting, on 23 December 1935, for example, collecting about the 'black race' was considered. Although discussion also arose as to what 'social history' entailed as an academic discipline, the elaboration in practice reveals that labour movement history was the primary idea. The research was focused mainly on generating large source publications.

All these activities were supported by a relatively small group of people whose specific talents and positions have guided the development of the IISH. While there are of course many more, in addition to Posthumus and De Lieme, Annie Adama van Scheltema is certainly noteworthy. She contributed greatly to the success of the institute. Her job title ('librarian') obscured her zealous work with archives, while her role was more akin to that of deputy director. She fearlessly travelled all over Europe to keep collections out of Nazi hands. One of her most significant achievements was persuading Max Nettlau to transfer his impressive collection of anarchist material to the IISH.

Then there was Arthur Lehning, who was responsible for the anarchist collections. Thanks to his contacts in Spain, Lehning was among the driving forces behind the transfer of the

Huub Sanders at his presentation during the last Friends' meeting.

Nicolaas Posthumus. IISH collection, call number IISG BG A11/266.



Nehemia de Lieme. IISH collection, call number IISG BG A8/867.



Annie Adama-van Scheltema, c. 1935. Photograph: Ruth Höhndorf. IISH collection, call number IISG BG A59/711.



CNT-FAI archives to the IISH. Boris Nikolaevsky received them at the Paris branch of the institute, of which he had become director in 1936. Nikolaevsky was likely the most important figure for the collections of the prewar IISH. He was pivotal in the complicated interplay through which the institute ultimately acquired the Marx-Engels archive. In a 320-page special published in the *Beiträge zur Marx-Engels-Forschung*, his at times rather questionable role in that game was addressed as recently as 2021.

1940-1945

During the second stage, World War II, the strongest social force impacting the institute was quite simply the German forces of occupation. Upon their arrival in May 1940, the Germans immediately took over the institute and continued it for a while. Meanwhile, different Nazi organizations struggled behind the scenes to confiscate the collection built over the course of five years to serve their own purposes. In 1943, the majority of the IISH collections started to be shipped to Eastern Europe.



The first IISH building, from 1937 to 1967, on Keizersgracht 264. IISH collection, call number IISG BG A53/732.

Fortunately, following the Munich accords in September 1938, the board and the administration had already understood that the Netherlands would not remain safe. A branch had therefore been set up in Oxford, to which several important collections had already been transferred prior to May 1940. These included the Marx-Engels archives and the crates holding the CNT-FAI archives (also see Almudena Rubio's article elsewhere in this issue). As little remained of the IISH institution apart from an isolated branch in Oxford, hardly any substantive work or scholarship was possible. Still, a small group in Amsterdam remained dedicated to the cause and stayed in touch. Annie Scheltema was the central figure here, while Arthur Lehning did his best to run the Oxford branch.

1945-1979

After the war, De Centrale withdrew almost entirely as a source of funding. This initially made the securing funds and stability the main focus during the postwar period. Gradually, government influence became more prominent. While the IISH was initially assigned to the University of Amsterdam (UvA) administration, it was transferred to the KNAW [Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences] in 1979. From 1965, the *Zeitgeist* effect started to manifest: the UvA demanded various democratization measures. This was difficult for the IISH. It had no students and was in fact still quite an authoritarian and patriarchal institute, where staff members were deeply committed to political principles and wanted to discuss and share decision-making on all matters. The institute's organization in cabinets, as Götz Langkau described in an interview in 2023, made for a 'feudal structure [with staff who ran] their small realms in sovereign seclusion'.

Little substantive or scholarly innovation came about during this period. Source publications remained the most important activity of the cabinet staff, while the return of several of the looted collections was nothing short of a miracle. During this period, the archives of the IISH expanded enormously, especially with collections from established Dutch labour movement institutions, such as the nvv [Dutch Confederation of Trade Unions] and the PvdA [labour party].

Many staff members who had helped design the IISH from the outset, including Posthumus, Annie Scheltema, and Arthur Lehning, left at this stage. From 1953, Adolf Rüter, who before the war had run the cabinet for the Netherlands, was the director. Although he was widely feared and was rather authoritarian and cynical, he gradually got the IISH back on track. Following his untimely death in 1965, he was succeeded by Frits de Jong Edz. As a professor at the seventh UvA faculty (social sciences), De Jong Edz. was almost entirely occupied with the democratization issues within the university. He turned out to be a weak director who was frequently absent. The increasing pressure resulting from expanding collections and growing interest in them, as well as external and internal demands for a more democratic administration, made managing the IISH virtually impossible. In 1977, a serious rift ensued, when the staff members – many of them highly individualist and politically knowledgeable – expressed their lack of confidence in the director. De Jong Edz. took the most honourable decision and resigned. He was succeeded by Rein van der Leeuw. Not a very firm manager, Van der Leeuw would agree with everybody, thereby causing misunderstandings that did not benefit internal cohesion. Iconic figures from this period included the erudite Fritjof Tichelmann, who was in charge of the Asian collections; Götz Langkau, a great connoisseur of the history of the German and European labour movement; Mies Campfens and Anneke Welcker, who together had near-exhaustive knowledge about the Dutch labour movement; Rudolf de Jong, an anarchist and specialist on anarchism with an in-depth understanding of the Spanish issues relating to the CNT-FAI archives, and, finally, Leo van Rossum, an expert on Eastern Europe and the collections originating from there.

1979-1989

In the period 1979-1989, substantive development and the infrastructure of scholarship and collections were the most important forces driving the institute. When, after years of urging, no improvement plan was forthcoming, the boards of the KNAW and the Stichting IISG decided to reorganize, discontinuing the cabinet structure and setting up an academic research department and a collections department. At the end of this period, in May 1989, the institute was also finally granted adequate accommodations on Cruquiusweg.

This ushered in a period of major expansion for the collections, during which horizons increasingly extended beyond Europe. Good repositories had been established for labour movement archives nearly everywhere in Europe, while the global importance of this continent was declining. The first non-European collection to be set up was a large Turkish one, while material was also being collected in China during the student uprising in Beijing in 1989.

Active collecting continued closer to home as well: the ID Archiv came from Berlin to Amsterdam, as did the CSD collection, accompanied by Tjebbe van Tijen from the UvA. In addition,



Arthur Lehning. IISH collection, call number IISG BG A8/290.

closely related institutions such as the NEHA and the Press Museum were now accommodated at the IISH premises on Cruquiusweg.

Many of these organizational and substantive changes were instigated by Eric Fischer, who had been appointed director in 1984 to design the reorganization. Directly involved in all major acquisitions from this period, he was often an initiating force, as in the case of the Turkish collection. Fischer brought his former co-worker Jan Lucassen from Utrecht to set up the new research department. In 1985, Marcel van der Linden became the executive editor of the *Inter-*

The cataloguing department of the IISH on Keizersgracht. Photograph: Bert Sprenkeling. IISH collection, call number IISG BG B35/95.



national Review of Social History; combining that position with academic research, together with Lucassen he played a crucial part in developing the IISH research department.

1989-2008

The first years of the period 1989-2008 were marked by the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. In the 1990s, for the IISH, the dominance of neoliberalism meant that the natural frame of reference that the organized labour movement had been under the reality of socialism ceased to exist.

In 1993, Fischer was succeeded by veteran Jaap Kloosterman, who was to become the longest serving director to date. Until his retirement in 2008, Kloosterman figured prominently in another major development of this period: the breakthrough of automation, internet, and digitization. Among the first people in the Netherlands to embrace the opportunities that the internet offered to a collecting institute such as the IISH, he initiated projects such as the digitization and cataloguing of all the IISH's material. The IISH catalogue went online relatively quickly, and, for a long time, the IISH website was one of the best and most frequently visited sites of any historical institution in our country.

At the same time as the first separate academic research department was established within the IISH, 'labour movement history' as an academic discipline entered a period of crisis, which was exacerbated by the rise of postmodernism. While, in retrospect, the department was not heavily impacted by this crisis, the broader academic setting clearly differed from that of the 1970s, when social history had been far more popular.

The fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had major ramifications, with archives and research fields that had long remained closed suddenly becoming accessible.

This was a significant development for the collections department. The restitution of archives that had disappeared during World War II resumed, and several valuable collections returned to Amsterdam following lengthy negotiations. In addition, a few collections that had been divided between the MEI and the IISH before the war were now reunited on microfilm.

Moreover, it became possible to actively collect new material in Eastern Europe and Russia. For example, Memorial files are now available on microfilm in Amsterdam, which has proven especially useful considering the repression under Putin. For several years, the IISH also played a key role in safeguarding the infrastructure of collections in Russia, where institutions previously responsible for storing labour movement archives fell out of favour after 1991. The IISH spearheaded the fundraising effort to support various Moscow institutions that were on the verge of collapse.

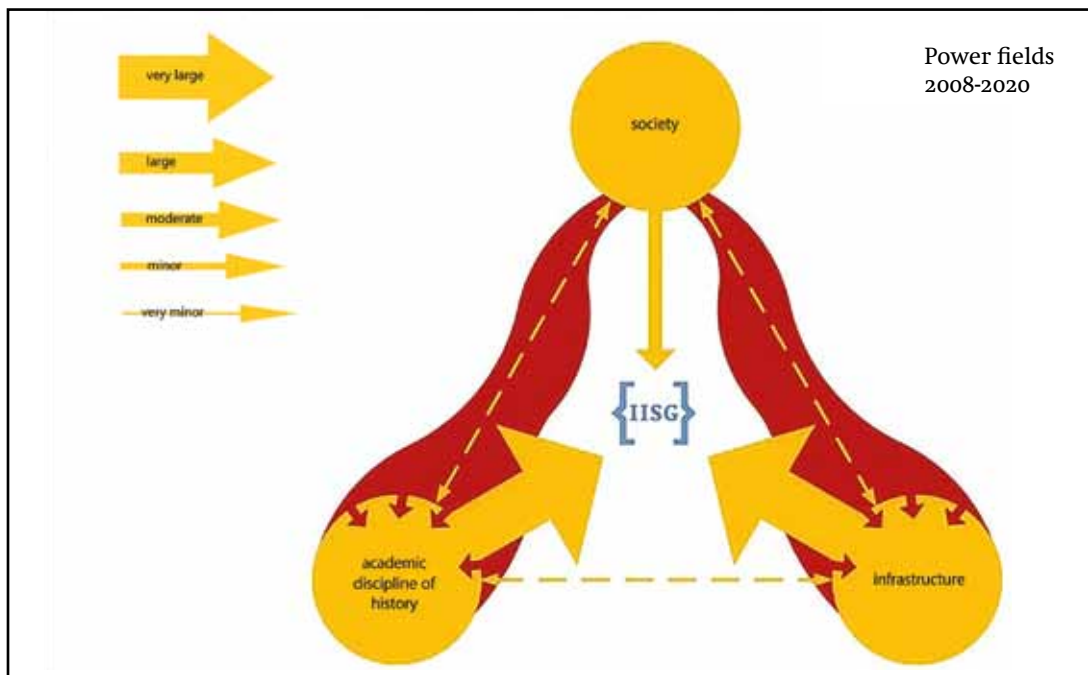
Fischer and Kloosterman figured prominently in this effort as well: Fischer was already on site in Moscow in 1991, when the White House there was still burning, and Kloosterman opened an office in the same city, where Irina Novichenko took charge. Expanding the focus to include non-European regions, from 1995 onwards, Touraj Atabaki and others brought in collections from Central Asia, while Willem van Schendel started collecting in Asia in 1996. Also in 1996, the IISH organized the first biannual European Social Science History Conference, which soon became an unprecedented success.

2008-2020

The institute directors during the 2008-2020 period were Eric-Jan Zürcher (2008-2012) and Henk Wals (2012-2020). During this time, the IISH became increasingly dependent on the academic bureaucracy of the KNAW. At the same time, ongoing neoliberal policies made for rising

IISH staff at a demonstration against Bestek '81 and the government's plans regarding wages and social security, 19 June 1979. IISH collection, call number IISG BG A22/310.





A triangle of forces. (With thanks to Hans Drieman.)

pressure on the trade union movement, once a natural ally of the institute, due to the decline in membership. In 2017, a project was launched to take an inventory of material remaining in the RNV offices, and sections of these vast archives began to be digitized.

Zürcher continued the policy of shifting the focus of collection development towards non-European areas. He also aimed to combine scholarly research with collection development once again, under different *area specialists*. From Amsterdam, they would then train staff in the region, so that the material acquired there could be catalogued, inventoried, and digitized on site. Although this plan was never actually implemented, Stefano Bellucci, for example, was able to set up successful collection digitization projects in Africa as a result.

During the period that Zürcher was director, worsening problems, in part financial, led to his replacement in 2012 by Henk Wals under pressure from the KNAW. Breaking with the policy described above, Wals conducted a thorough reorganization of the IISH, including over ten forced redundancies in 2014, primarily within the collection processing department. It was expected that the accrual of paper collections would decline while the number of digital collections was likely to rise. This rigorous intervention made for financial recovery and restored the trust of the KNAW, but collection processing was severely affected, thereby also eroding the institute's capacity for collection development. Due to the small scale of the automation department, efforts to expand the scale of digital projects and infrastructure were unable to move forward. In the ensuing quest to address this, an alliance was formed with other humanities institutions within the KNAW, the KNAW Humanities Cluster (HuC). Admittedly, this alliance has weakened the position of the IISH as an institution and made it's operational setting more difficult to navigate and above all more bureaucratic.

2020-

This brings us very close to the current state of affairs. The digital world has clearly entered a new stage, in which social media dominates. The consequences that this will have for an institution such as the IISH remain unclear. In addition to social media appearing to have particularly disruptive potential for society, the question as to how these platforms will influence the concrete collection of sources for future historical research remains difficult to answer, given the enormous quantity of data, their ephemeral state, and the rapid succession of technological changes. The development of AI may be helpful, but at the same time makes for still greater uncertainty about the future of collecting.

It is clear, however, that involvement in academic research has increased significantly at the institute. Research on slavery is an especially important development. Such research, conducted within an established institution for academic heritage and research, embedded in a bureaucratic national research umbrella organization, is imbued with social engagement. Such engagement is partly the result of the pressure on society from second- and third-generation migrants, which contributes to a shifting perspective in academic research.

In conclusion, the concept of engagement has remained central throughout the IISH's ninety-year history: the first generations of staff saw their task as providing direct support to the labour movement. While the traditional labour movement no longer exists, many other movements now aim to achieve emancipation. The IISH continues to serve those movements, as a secure repository for their analogue and digital documents. The work of all IISH staff throughout the institute's history qualifies as support for these movements, and as a contribution to enhancing knowledge about people and society.

The CNT Food Supply Committee in action. Barcelona, 1936. The photo is by Margaret Michaelis. IISH collection, CNT archive.



Presentation of acquisitions and special finds

Images for the future: The anarchist photograph archive of the Spanish Civil War

When civil war broke out in Spain in 1936, following the swift defeat of Franco's troops in Barcelona, the city's working class, organized by the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), initiated unprecedented social transformation. Workers promoted collectivization of production and transport means, as well as implementation of an egalitarian society based on libertarian culture and education. That social

revolution, which germinated in Barcelona, also carried over to some towns grouped under the Council of Aragon, as well as to various parts of Valencia and the Levante, where similar experiments were conducted with social and economic organization.

The CNT took control of the city of Barcelona and its propaganda, leading to the Propaganda Commissariat of the Generalitat de Catalunya to be established in October 1936. Within the first few weeks, a Foreign Propaganda Office was

opened with the aim of disseminating information internationally. A Graphics Section, which focused on producing and archiving photographs, was formed at the same time.

By August 1936, the CNT had set to work

and published an open call in its main press organ the newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera* asking photographers to submit photographs taken during those days. 'This is of interest to everyone, as we are compiling a photograph archive of the entire revolutionary movement.' In 1937, they professionalized and monetized image production by setting up the Spanish Photo Agency (Photo SPA).

The anarchists aimed to publicize their struggle against fascism and, simultaneously, to showcase the progress and achievements of the social revolution to neighbouring countries. To this end, the CNT launched an intensive information

Militiaman of the Ascaso Division, Huesca front, March-April 1937. Photograph taken by Kati Horna. IISH collection, CNT archive.



Inset: The same militiaman appears in the CNT's 1937 photobook *¿ESPAÑA?*. IISH collection, CNT archive.



and propaganda campaign based on photography, as well as on printed bulletins, radio broadcasts, and newspapers in different languages.

From the start of the Civil War, foreign and Spanish photographers are known to have documented the conflict with their small-format cameras, giving rise to modern photojournalism. Photography was an essential weapon, capable of conveying what was happening at the war front and behind the lines immediately. Magazines and newspapers, following the model of contemporary European illustrated magazines, featured compelling images of the conflict in their reports. Photography was also a fundamental tool for the CNT. Images were a quick, direct, and universal means of communication, accessible even to the working class and peasantry, who were still largely illiterate and deprived of the privilege of reading.



Cover of *19 de Julio 1936 España*. Barcelona: Oficina de Propaganda CNT-FAI, 1936. The photograph used is by Margaret Michaelis. IISH collection, CNT archive.

From the very first weeks, the CNT benefitted from collaborative efforts on the part of photographers such as Antoni Campañá, who took the now renowned photograph of the young militiaman Anita Garbín on a barricade in Barcelona in 1936. In 2024, the documentary *Anita, la miliciana tenía nom* [Anita, the militiaman had a name] appeared about her, with the IISH participating as custodian of the CNT photo archive. In addition to working with Spanish photographers, the CNT brought to its offices two foreign photographers who were well known within the contemporary transnational anarchist network: the Austrian Margaret Michaelis in 1936, and, in 1937-1938 the Hungarian Kati Horna. Both women were Jewish, had fled Nazi Berlin, and had prior training in photography. The perspectives of Michaelis and Horna were fundamental



in shaping anarchist visual imagery during the Civil War.

The photograph archive of the CNT was built as the conflict progressed, with the aim of supplying graphic material to like-minded anarchist groups and their publications. The newspapers *Solidaridad Obrera* and *Tierra y Libertad*, the graphic magazine *Umbral* – for which Kati Horna worked as a photographer and editor – and even the *periódicos murales* (wall newspapers) hung on the most distant fronts all featured photographs depicting news during the conflict. At the same time, photography would replace words in photobooks, especially those published by the CNT during the war (*19 de Julio* and *ESPAÑA?*).

It was probably at the end of 1937 when the CNT organized the archive systematically, providing it with a summary and an inventory. This catalogue classified the images chronologically by date of production but did not list the photographers. In any case, the war ended tragically, forcing the images into exile.

In January 1939, when fascist troops were entering Barcelona, the photograph archive and much of the other material belonging to the CNT and the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), generated in the so-called CNT House, were packed in wooden boxes and, after a long journey, finally

Pancho Villa (Damián) in charge of the Pancho Villa Centuria of the Ascaso Division, Huesca front. Photo by Kati Horna, 1937. IISH collection, CNT archive.

Almudena with her display of photos during the Friends' Day.



arrived at the IISH in 1947. In the 1980s, this material was organized, resulting in the CNT and FAI Archives. The photographs were digitized and made available to the public. The vicissitudes of war, however, had stripped these images of their original context and, with that, of their archival value, leaving them misplaced in exile for decades.

Only in 2016 did the research begin that has enabled us to make sense of these images in the archive and create the historical narrative. Today, around 5,590 negatives, 2,288 photographs, and 259 glass plates have been catalogued at the IISH. This legacy is complemented by the 1,800 photographs that constitute the historical collection of the Anselmo Lorenzo Foundation (FAL) in Madrid.

The value and importance of this material derive from at least three aspects. The first is this unique photograph archive: the visual account of the war is enriched by the narrative of the social revolution, offering us a broader view of the conflict. Second, identifying the work of Margaret Michaelis and Kati Horna reflects a foreign perspective and a gendered view of the war. This requires us to reposition these two photographers within the context of photography and anarchism. Lastly, this photograph archive, part of the CNT-FAI archive, conveys the relationship between Spanish anarchism and the history of the IISH. This transnational connection becomes evident in the series of photographs taken by Michaelis on her trip to Valencia with Emma Goldman and Arthur Lehning in the autumn of 1936. Moreover, Lehning (the Dutch anarcho-syndicalist and co-founder of the IISH) was also responsible for sending the CNT-FAI archives to the institute. This initiative makes the IISH a point of reference for Spanish militants and defines the large Spanish collection preserved here today.

In conclusion, I will mention the exhibition *The Amsterdam boxes: Margaret Michaelis and Kati Horna in the Civil War*, which toured three Spanish cities as part of the PhotoEspaña festival. For the

Some of the videotapes containing Projekt Artur material.



first time, this exhibition featured the history of the CNT-FAI archive alongside images by these two photographers not previously exhibited and now attributed and presented in the context of the war. The exhibition met with very positive reviews and received international press coverage. It instigated heated debates at the Madrid venue in 2022, revived memories in Huesca that same year, and challenged the more conservative views in Valladolid in 2023.

As the CNT intended, the photograph archive therefore not only served as testimony of the war but has also projected itself as a memory for the future.

Almudena Rubio

Projekt Artur and the RAF archives at the IISH

As an archivist of audiovisual materials at the IISH, the extensive film collections being digitized and made accessible in the context of a broader IISH project is my main focus this year.

Stored in a long row of cabinets along the outer walls of the archive storage area on the fourth floor are thousands of videotapes. In this enormous collection, I encountered *Projekt Artur*, a special film project from 1987, consisting of a series of U-Matic tapes and a paper archive. *Projekt Artur*, conducted by Didi Danquart and Mike Schlömer (young filmmakers from the Medienwerkstatt Freiburg) portrays radical leftist armed movements in postwar West Germany and Berlin.

The video material includes a series of interviews from 1987, combined with footage of demonstrations and actions from the 1970s. The film explores from within the use of violence in left-wing circles in postwar Germany by seeking the story behind these movements and the motivation underlying their actions. Both individual and collective reflections about the internal reality of the radical activists are documented.

In the late 1960s, in addition to criticism of capitalism and consumer society, students in particular became increasingly discontented that many of those who were in charge during the Nazi era continued to 'oversee' the foundations of the (West-) German society. The capitalist order had to be overthrown, and various groups regarded underground and armed resistance as a means toward this end.

Some of those interviewed in *Projekt Artur* were affiliated with the 2. Juni Bewegung, the Rote Armee Fraktion, and Rote Zora. There is a long interview with Herbert Kröcher, alias Knofo, who founded the 2. Juni Bewegung in the early 1970s. This movement, named for the day in 1967 that the police killed demonstrator Benno Ohnesorg during a demonstration against the Shah of Iran, had a strong anarchist bent.

Another interview is with Brigitte Asdonk, one of the initial RAF members. The Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) was founded in 1970 by Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader, who were later joined by Ulrike Meinhof. The group regarded itself as part of a larger anti-imperialist movement following

up on anticolonial and liberation movements in the Third World and student revolts of the 1960s.

Rote Zora, part of what were known as the *Revolutionäre Zellen* and active from 1974 to 1995, was a West-German radical leftist and feminist guerrilla movement. The group launched several bombings and set fires targeting ideological enemies, including individuals and organizations accused of sexism, exploitation of women, genetic manipulation, enforcing a patriarchal society, nuclear energy, or opposing abortion.

Artur?

Projekt Artur derives its name from a poster of a small boy on the street wearing a cap, sort of an urchin. The text reads: *You ask me, what should I do? And I say: Live wild and dangerous, Artur.* The origin of the text remains a mystery. According to some, this sentence comes from correspondence between Austrian writer Arthur Schnitzler and French poet Arthur Rimbaud, but no concrete evidence is available. The poster with the little boy is mainly associated with the Hamburg graphic artist Artur Dieckhoff, who designed it in the 1980s and featured it throughout the city. At the time, the image also appeared on the walls of several activist residential groups and squatted homes, disseminated as a postcard via radical leftist bookshops. Text and image thus took on a life of their own in countercultural circles. Didi Danquart saw the poster in Hamburg during preparations for the motion picture, which gave rise to the title: *Projekt Arthur - Die Gewaltfrage* 1968.

RAF archives at the IISH

In addition to Projekt Artur, the IISH holds other material relating to the cinema project theme. The IISH has one of the largest archives concerning the Rote Armee Fraktion. How did this archive end up here, and what do we know about its origins?

The RAF archive was built and arranged in 1993 by Ronald Augustin, a Dutchman and the only foreign member of the RAF. As an activist youth, Augustin, after meandering throughout Europe, encountered RAF members in West Berlin; in 1971 he joined them. From 1973 to 1980, he served a prison sentence because of his RAF membership and for threatening a customs officer and forging documents.

In the early 1990s, Augustin collected RAF-related material in his own circle, supplementing it with material from other archives. The German ID-Archiv, for example, contained the largest collection at the time on radical leftist printed matter from Germany and the other German-speaking areas. Set up in the early 1970s, the entire archive was transferred in the summer of 1988 from Frankfurt to the IISH, along with the two staff members Axel Diederich and Waldemar Schindowksi.

The RAF archive at the IISH comprises a vast number of publications, interviews, communiqués, and other public statements from the group. It also contains documents from internal discussions, letters, press releases, pamphlets, and brochures reflecting the strategic consid-



The poster by Artur Dieckhoff.

erations and struggle of the group within and outside prison. That the archive was entrusted to the IISH in 1993 was not a coincidence. The theme remained sensitive in Germany, and it was feared that the material might be confiscated or destroyed. A safe haven was sought, but institutions in the country of origin preferred to avoid problems. The IISH has traditionally specialized in classical socialism and communism but understandably held many important anarchist archives as well. As a radical-Marxist group, the Rote Armee Fraktion was a good match for the collection because of the historical importance of its archive as research material relating



Bence gives his presentation on the Artur collection during the last Friends' Day.

to political ideologies and radicalism within the broad context of social history.

Over time, much of the RAF archive has been digitized. A website (<https://socialhistoryportal.org/raf/>) documenting and describing additional material has been made as well. One such addition is the *Stammheim book collection*. Stammheim was the maximum-security prison near Stuttgart where Rote Armee Fraktion figureheads were incarcerated in the late 1970s and died under obscure circumstances. In the cells at Stammheim, RAF members had books, phonograph records, a radio, and other items they were permitted subject to prison regulations. The books reached the IISH under the listing ‘Stammheim book collection’ via the ID-Archiv. Some even contain handwritten notes by RAF members.

Finally, the IISH collections also hold several individual archives comprising RAF-related material. The Anneliese Baader Papers, for example, which were donated in 2008, include correspondence between Andreas Baader and his mother Anneliese Baader, and the RAF in the Netherlands Archive documents RAF activities in the Netherlands. Many collections feature examples of solidarity with the RAF, such as posters in the Staatsarchief, the most extensive archive of the Dutch squatters’ movement.

Together, all these archives convey a broad impression of the Rote Armee Fraktion. Especially in combination, they offer a lot to research and explore. Thanks in part to the discovery of Arthur, the time has come for a fresh look at these archives.

Bence Meijer

KMAN: a multifaceted fighter that connected histories

If we were to describe the Komitee Marokkaanse Arbeiders in Nederland (KMAN) [Committee of Moroccan workers in the Netherlands] as a person, it would be ‘a multifaceted fighter’. Because this fighter fought on multiple fronts, the archive of the Committee served to connect various histories: those of Moroccan, Dutch, and European migration, labour, emancipation, and democratization.

Pamphlet about the 1975 hunger strike, in Dutch and Arabic. IISH Collection, KMAN archive.



Inspired by a similar labour movement in France, KMAN was formed in 1976.¹ The archive contains little written documentation about its formation and first congress. As we will see later, this omission was due mainly to security regulations.

One of the first and most significant actions of KMAN may have been the hunger strike by 182 undocumented workers who occupied Amsterdam’s Mozes en Aäronkerk in November 1975. While a new law was adopted to legalize illegal residence by foreign guest workers, obtaining a residence permit proved virtually impossible for a group of Moroccans. So they went on a hunger strike and, after three years of battling deportation through a significant solidarity movement involving the church and socialist communities, eventually obtained their permits.

KMAN is frequently described as an association that fought for the rights of Moroccan workers in the Netherlands and represented them. This description, while accurate, does not fully capture the range of fronts where the Committee was active. The Committee also spoke up for the Moroccan people’s movement and political prisoners in Morocco. Such activity was particularly significant during pivotal periods in Moroccan history, such as the uprisings in 1981 and 1984. Additionally, KMAN vehemently objected to the actions of the Amicales, Moroccan organizations involved in monitoring the Moroccan diaspora (particularly in the Netherlands and France). According to KMAN, the Amicales served as the long arm of the Moroccan regime in the Netherlands, despite their claim to support the rights of Moroccan workers. Physical confrontations occasionally broke out between KMAN and the Amicales. Especially the statements and announcements by KMAN in the 70s and 80s highlight the conflict between the two.

Criticism of the Moroccan regime also affected everyday affairs and important functions of the KMAN. For example, many members used aliases or first names only when participating in Committee actions, fearing persecution when travelling to Morocco or interacting with the Moroccan embassy and consulate in the Netherlands. This also impacted how various significant events were documented. Due to safety concerns among members, for example, some congresses were not very well documented, especially if they included discussions about sensitive issues such as Western Sahara, according to former KMAN Vice President Abdou Menebhi.

KMAN’s criticism of the Moroccan king sometimes led their policies to change overnight. For example, KMAN generally opposed Dutch integration policies, sometimes even arguing that they were assimilation attempts. During the 1990 Dutch parliamentary elections, however, KMAN changed its position on integration after King Hassan II discouraged the Moroccan community in the Netherlands from participating in the elections. Suddenly, KMAN began advocating for

1 Ewoud Butter, “Het KMAN”, *Marokkaan in Mokum*, n.d., accessed 2 November 2025, <https://marokkaaninmokum.nl/het-kman/>.

more Moroccans to vote in the Dutch elections.

Because of their vocal criticism of the Moroccan regime (especially of King Hassan II), KMAN board members were able to return to Morocco only in 1994, when His Majesty granted amnesty to political prisoners and activists who opposed his policies.

KMAN focused on the Moroccan community in Europe as a whole, not solely on the Moroccan community in the Netherlands. They were instrumental in establishing CADIME, the *Coördinatie van Democratische Verenigingen van Marokkaanse Immigranten in Europa* [Coordination of Democratic Associations of Moroccan Immigration in Europe]. As its name implies, this association included a number of Moroccan workers' organisations that supported collective rights of the Moroccan people. Additionally, it made an effort to unite Moroccan communities throughout Europe by organising the well-known Moussem festival. The Moussem, literally 'season', was inspired by traditional celebrations that took place throughout Morocco during the harvest season. Moussem served as a platform to unite diverse communities throughout the country and showcase Moroccan culture. Through the umbrella organization CADIME, KMAN addressed migration at a European scale and worked to connect various Moroccan communities in Europe. Furthermore, it led the European Migrant Forum, working with other migrant organizations to advocate for migrants across Europe.

In the 1990s, KMAN policies changed noticeably. Prior to this period, a sizable portion of this community was labelled 'guest workers' believed to be here 'temporarily'. As the community established roots in the Netherlands, its needs changed, and KMAN modified its response accordingly. While workers' rights had been the primary focus in the 1970s and 1980s, in the 1990s this focus shifted to topics such as partnership, integration, and citizenship, as well as to internal problems such as drug trafficking. On the one hand, KMAN responded internally by launching drug-prevention initiatives such as the Arrazi project, while externally battling media and politicians who vilified the entire community.

Over the years, the disposition of the KMAN toward the Dutch government changed as well. Although it continued to criticize the Dutch government to some extent, KMAN also became more willing to work with it. KMAN believed, for example, that greater development in countries of origin would lead migration to Europe to decline. Consequently, it teamed up with the Dutch government on a joint project to promote development in Morocco as a strategy to prevent migration. In 1996, the conference on 'Migration and Development' in Tanger, Morocco, gave rise to the Euro-Mediterraan Centrum voor Migratie en Ontwikkeling (EMCEMO) [Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Migration and Development].

Although KMAN remained dedicated to defending the rights of Moroccans and other migrants, it constantly faced internal problems brought on by unequal power relations among its members. Some (former) members have voiced their opin-



Moussem poster. IISH Collection, KMAN archive.

ions about such issues, thereby publicizing the internal debate outside the Committee. Although attempts were made to reorganize the Committee, most of its operations had ceased by 1998, according to the archive data. Despite resigning because of the controversies, Abdou Menebhi remained in charge of EMCEMO, which is generally regarded as the successor of KMAN.

The KMAN archive was donated to the IISH in 2002, followed by a small addition in 2008. Only in 2017, however, was an initial inventory conducted. In 2024, the decision was taken to enhance the organization and description of the archive (including generating descriptions in Arabic) to prepare the archive for digitization. My role is to implement these improvements and to prepare the archive for the digitization process. In addition to aligning with the main themes of the IISH, such as labour, migration, and emancipation, the KMAN archive is also of particular importance because it addresses the history of underrepresented groups in Dutch society, such as the Moroccan community. Working to diversify the world of archives helps close the power gap between various groups in society. While current archive systems are not conducive to genuine and profound diversification, attempts to this end remain necessary.

Hawra Nissi

PAPA International Photo Collection

On 26 June 2025 Lino Hellings presented the PAPA International Photo Collection to the IISH Friends. This archive consists of 1,168 photos taken between 2008 and 2016 on photo walks with local correspondents in different countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Palestine, the United States, and the Netherlands.

Artist and sociologist Lino Hellings is the originator and artistic leader of PAPA, the Participating Artists' Press Agency. The photo press agency, founded in 2008, brings 'news' about things we deal with all over the world. 'How people fall in love, get the giggles, lie awake at night, teach themselves new things, find a source of income, find happiness.' This type of news is there for

'Tactics of life' serves as an organizing principle for the photographs.



the taking, believes Lino. You find it by simply heading out with your camera. For her photo press agency, she taught local correspondents in various countries to seek according to the PAPA method: while on a walk, take photographs of whatever catches your eye, without any preconceived plan. Together, the photographs reveal patterns and form a story.

Origin of PAPA

One recurring theme in Lino's work is how to transcend the Western way of thinking in terms of contrasts to consider the world without bias and formulate new and better questions. The idea for a photo press agency operating according to this open mindset originated back in 2006. Lino envisaged an international network of correspondents that would work together, each one remaining in his or her own country.

To find out whether her way of thinking would take root in other parts of the world, she joined the Drik photo press agency in Dhaka, Bangla-



Car for sale. 'The local custom here is to place a keg (a small barrel of about 30 gallons) on a vehicle to show that it is for sale. Such a keg would have "For Sale" written on it in bold type to inform passersby that the owner intends to sell. What interested me was that the practice is by now so accepted (unofficially) that the containers (like the one on this photo) no longer bear the inscriptions.' Published on 9 September 2009 by Toye Gbade. Filed under Lagos Lab, Lagos, Nigeria.



The errorist cake. At the right is Masud Chowdhury. Photo: Lino Hellings, 2008.

desh, as a trainee. Aiming to check whether the people there would understand the PAPA concept, she devised a new human right: the right to make mistakes, which she named 'errorism'. She then reported daily on the misunderstandings she encountered at Drik and in her interactions with the public on her website, errorist.net.

The strategy of errorism as a conversation starter was successful. The ultimate evidence consisted of a cake, delivered at Lino's boarding house by two complete strangers. One of the two, Masud Chowdhury, is a lecturer on Media and Communication at the Independent University of Dhaka, where he teaches his students to make blogs. During his tedious quest for interesting examples online, he typed the word 'error' out of frustration, thus stumbling onto Lino's website errorist.net (which is unfortunately no longer online). He also read that she was in



Wildwalk Ramallah: part of the RIWAQ team that participated in PAPA Lab Ramallah, April 2014. Photo: Lino Hellings.

Dhaka, around the corner from him. He decided to pay her a visit with his neighbour and brought a cake.

Now that she had determined that the concept worked, Lino was ready to continue. She adopted a new name (PAPA) and started the photo blog papaplatform.com. To elaborate the press agency, bottom-up with photographers and artists on site, she decided to travel to the ‘New York’ of every continent. Her first stop was Lagos, Nigeria. Together with local correspondents (traced via photographer Kadir van Lohuizen), she went on several photo walks according to the PAPA method: capture ‘everything that catches your eye’. Everyday scenes with a story, as on the photo ‘Car for sale’.

This formula was applied in each subsequent



Photo from Wildwalk Ramallah: ‘As Palestinians suffer restrictions to their freedom of movement, whether abroad or even between Palestinian cities, towns, and villages, a model of an airplane is the closest thing to the dream of Ramallah Airways.’ Photo: Aya Tahhan, Architect RIWAQ, 13 April 2014.

city: in the week following the walk, each participating correspondent uploads two of their photographs taken en route to papaplatform.com every day for five days. In doing so, the creator considers what caught their attention, and then convey these thoughts in a title and a brief descriptive text. By uploading photographs together daily, participants watch their own work grow among that of others. Similarities and differences emerge in a continuous visual dialogue. After five days, the group reconvenes to present their individual stories to each other and discuss them. Finally, the ‘Tactics of Life’ of the area where they walked are recorded.

In addition to appearing on the platform, the photo series are presented in several other ways. In the cities where the pictures were taken, exhibits were organized, from Bishkek, Sao Paulo,

Rotterdam, and Amsterdam to Lagos and Ramallah. In Amsterdam the PAPA photographs are published by neighbourhood as a newspaper. And, in 2012, a photo book was issued: *The making of PAPA*.

The ‘Mobiel Nigeria’ spread in *De Volkskrant*, 7 March 2014.

Acquisition of the PAPA archive by the IISH

In March 2014, the *Volkskrant* daily published a spread with the PAPA report ‘Mobiel Nigeria’. IISH collection development staff member Frank de Jong noticed the spread and saw similarities between PAPA and the photo archive of Ewald van Vugt (entrusted to the IISH in 2009), comprising street photographs taken in places such as India and Indonesia. De Jong contacted Hellings and asked whether she would be willing to come discuss options for storage, access, and use of the PAPA image archive and the potential role of the IISH in this process. The international nature of the archive and the themes the institute values matched Lino’s intentions with PAPA, and they soon reached an agreement. PAPA came to the IISH.



Lino Hellings and her assistant Francis Nagy hand over the International PAPA archive to Frank de Jong, 16 April 2019. Photographer unknown.

Arranging the transfer of the PAPA archive took time. In addition to an agreement between Hellings and the IISH, rights needed to be agreed with 64 photographers in eight countries. The biggest project of all was adding metadata to the nearly 1,200 photographs in the archive, including the title and accompanying text. And an Excel sheet reflecting all data needed to be compiled for each photo. Altogether, this took six months of intensive work, which was accomplished thanks to help from Hellings's assistant Francis Nagy. On 16 April 2019 the time had finally come: Lino and Francis officially transferred the PAPA archive to the institute.

PAPA has made Lino's dream come true, as she says. An instrument through which, together, you convey an impression of the world, each of you from your own perspective. Photographs from different corners of the world, by pho-

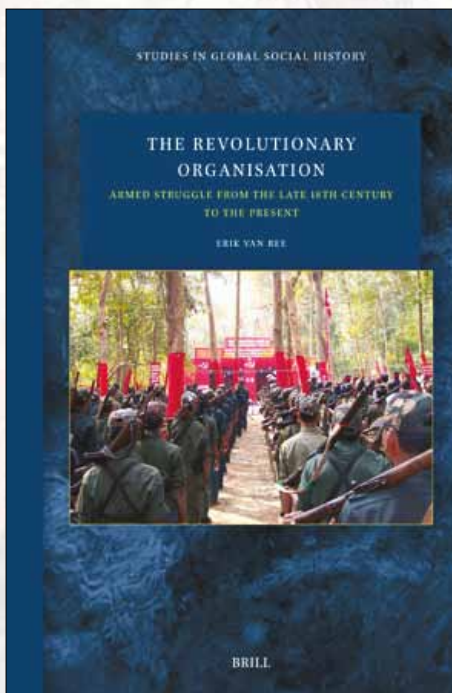
tographers who often have entirely different backgrounds and experience, connect with each other.

At the request of Lino Hellings, the growing PAPA archive of Amsterdam (2018-2024) was added to the International PAPA archive. This also brought 342 digital photographs to the institute, taken on photo walks in different neighbourhoods in Amsterdam West. New neighbourhoods continue to be added, of which the digital photographs are continuously inserted in the collection.

From 27 May through 27 October 2025, the Amsterdam PAPA photo archive was exhibited on the walls of the IISH. The photographs may be viewed digitally in the IISH catalogue: PAPA International Photo Collection, ARCHO4734.

Links: www.papaplatform.com; <https://amsterdam.papaphotowalks.org>

MJS



September 2025 | Hardback (xiv, 415 pp.) | ISBN 9789004737211 | Price € 159 / US\$ 173 | E-ISBN 9789004737235 | E-Price € 159 / US\$ 173 | Studies in Global Social History, 57

The Revolutionary Organisation

Armed Struggle from the Late 18th Century to the Present

Erik van Ree, University of Amsterdam

This is the first comprehensive study of the phenomenon of the armed-struggle revolutionary organisation. *The Revolutionary Organisation* covers the period from the late 18th century to the present, is global in scope, and discusses organisations inspired by all main ideological traditions: communist, anti-colonialist, nationalist, democratic, Islamist, fascist, and white supremacist. The condition of life-and-death struggle with the state imposes similar patterns of operation upon these organisations, irrespective of their ideological inclinations.

This work interprets armed-struggle revolutionary organisations as hybrids of three orientations: an apparatus of professional revolutionaries; an emotional community sustained by ideology, battle comradeship, and ritual; and an instrument of physical force nurturing an heroic organisational ethos.

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