

Working for Labour



Three quarters of a century of collecting at the IISH

Why is the manuscript of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, the *chef d'oeuvre* of one of the most widely known Germans ever, located in Amsterdam? The short answer is that it is there thanks to the establishment of the International Institute of Social History, now seventy-five years ago. A somewhat longer answer appears on the following pages, which aim to explain the background to and reasons for the origin of the IISH, and how the Institute has progressed into one of the world's largest and most renowned repositories concerning social and economic history.

The establishment of the Institute was a nice example of a chance encounter between a sewing machine and an umbrella on the dissecting table.¹ The timing was very fortunate because of a combination of circumstances that might just as easily not have materialized. In 1935 the gloomy political situation in Europe offered good prospects for building a collection. In the Netherlands a select few were eager to act out of scholarly as well as out of political concerns. And this small group was equipped with the knowledge and skills enabling execution (and in some cases invention) of the new project.

The political situation is well-known. In 1935 half of all European countries had a government that might at best be described as 'authoritarian.' In the Soviet Union, Italy, and Germany, the regimes in control were unprecedented. One of the consequences was that the archives and libraries of people and their associations inevitably became ideologically stereotyped. Whatever was blacklisted, was increasingly in danger of being destroyed – the documents and the people alike. There were excellent reasons to intervene.

During the preceding century, in many parts of Europe and outside, institutions were set up to preserve and disclose economic and social legacy. One of the main impetuses behind this pursuit was the rise of the 'social question' and the different movements dedicated to resolving it, which in the process inevitably generated a wealth of documents. Several constantly changing considerations arose for preserving them, as manifested in the divergent organizational formats devised over time. This history, which provided a basis for the founders of the IISH, will be reviewed briefly below. Afterwards, the founders and their respective backgrounds will be addressed.

¹ After Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869), VI, 1.

Hunters and Gatherers



The idea of documenting labour is as old as the reassessment of manual labour performed in early modern Europe. Back in 1620, Francis Bacon advocated a natural history of trades in *Novum Organum*. Soon afterwards, Samuel Hartlib and the Royal Society brought forth a first draft on the subject, and a later account appears in the renowned *Encyclopédie*, which was aptly subtitled *dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*.² Only in the nineteenth century, however, did what we now refer to as sources on social and economic history start to be gathered systematically. The growing awareness of a new era caused by the French Revolution, the historical interest that prevailed in the era of Romanticism, gradual democratization, the rapid proliferation of associations, the invention of inexpensive paper, lithography, and photography, the rise of the social sciences – all these and other factors instigated an increase in both the production of documents and the need to preserve them. At first, this material was collected mainly by individuals and targeted several facets: everyday life, the history and consequences of industrialization, the rise of the labour movement, the ideas of reformers. This is an area that has never been explored systematically, nor are we going to remedy this here. Yet it pays briefly to look at this colourful world of collectors.

The first ‘folklorists,’ such as the Grimm brothers in Germany, Frédéric Mistral in France, Artur Hazelius in Norway, and Joost Hiddes Halbertsma in Friesland, built collections of regional and local folkloric dress, tools, and archaeological objects, which acquired a special significance thanks to the ‘uniqueness’ of some particularly remarkable sites that came to symbolize a national past, as did the Volendam fishermen in the Netherlands. Provincial, national, and World Fairs featured not only the latest inventions and machines but also a Hindeloopen interior.³

There was yet another way in which such exhibitions expressed a growing interest in the life of ordinary men and women. In 1851 at the *Great Exhibition of All Works of Industry of All Nations* in the Crystal Palace, in addition to the very latest technical gadgets, specimens of fine craftsmanship were featured, both from medieval Europe (‘Gothic’) and from contemporary British India (‘colonial Gothic,’ in the words of Tim Barringer). Artists such as John Ruskin, Ford Madox Brown (who produced the majestic painting *Work*, 1859-1865), John Lockwood Kipling (the father of Rudyard), William Morris, as well as many others outside England, used these contrasts to convey their fear of the disadvantages of progress: alienation of modern mankind in general and industrial workers in particular appeared virtually inevitable. Institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London that derived from the Great Exhibition, the museums and library of Henry Chapman Mercer founded in Doylestown, Pennsylvania in 1897, and many ‘outdoor’ museums are a lasting tribute to the efforts to reverse this trend.⁴

The fascination with economic growth led others to explore its origins. Karl Marx and many others believed that these lay in the era of the great European voyages of discovery, also known as the period of ‘merchant capitalism.’ The main areas of interest in this field were the history of accounting, the stock exchange and securities trading, insurance, economic policy, technology, and the relatively recent corporate industry. Even though these subjects were far less appealing than the history of everyday life and were harder to depict than folkloric dress or the goldsmith’s craft, major collections were formed here. One of the most noteworthy collectors was undoubtedly Herbert Somerton Foxwell (1849-1936), a friend of

² Houghton 1941; Ochs 1985; Sewell 1980.

³ De Jong 2001. The special folkloric dress and interiors of the Frisian port city – whose local seamen in fact set sail from Amsterdam – were so popular that in 1877 they were given a special display at a large exhibition in Leeuwarden, as they were the following year as well at the Paris World Fair. At the end of the nineteenth century, Hindeloopen rooms figured in the permanent exhibition of museums in Berlin (inspired by Rudolf Virchow), Nuremberg and Dusseldorf.

⁴ Barringer 2005; Walker 2006.

Old Frish Room,
1650-1750.

Chambre de Hindeloopen,
1650-1750.

Wereld-Tentoonstelling 1895
AMSTERDAM.

Op de Oud-Hollandsche Markt,
is eene volledige en echte

Hindelooper-Kamer,

uit het tijdperk van 1650 tot 1750.

De aandacht van Stad- en Landgenooten wordt hierop gevestigd, en men **verzuime niet deze tentoongestelde HINDELOOPER-KAMER te gaan zien, die hoogst merkwaardig en eenig is, zij bevat een schat van oude Chineesche en Japansche Schotels en Borden; Hindelooper Klapmutsen en Kraaikoppen, op zich zelve reeds rariteiten.**

Het Ameublement is volledig en geheel echt, de Beschuttingen zijn van gebeiteld eikenhout, eveneens een groote gebeeldhouwde eikenhouten kast, een Ladetafel, Klaptafels, Kastjes, Stoelen, Wieg, Stoven, Slede, Hangklok, Vuurhaard; alles is compleet aanwezig.

Hindelooper-Kamers zijn te Hindeloopen niet meer te zien. Het is weer een gedeelte uit de geschiedenis van ons volk dat verdwijnt, waarvan men betreuren zal geen goede herinnering te hebben bewaard.

Zulk eene herinnering is deze nu tentoongestelde Kamer, en daarom wordt onze Stad- en Landgenooten aanbevolen, deze gelegenheid niet voorbij te laten gaan, maar een druk bezoek te gaan brengen aan de Hindelooper-Kamer.

Zimmer aus Hindeloopen,
1650-1750.

Entrée 10 Cent.

◀
A Hindeloopen room
at the World Fair
in Amsterdam in 1895.

the economist Stanley Jevons and his successor as professor in London. Foxwell was a fanatic and lived very frugally to indulge in purchasing books. In spite of this, he was so deeply in debt by 1901 that he had to sell his library to the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, which in turn donated it to the University of London. But Foxwell used part of the proceeds from the sale to start a new book collection, which later ended up at the Harvard Business School and became known as the Kress Library, after Claude Washington Kress, who funded the acquisition. What Foxwell accomplished can be gathered from the fact that, together, the Goldsmiths and Kress libraries are the world's largest collection on economic history.⁵ In 1911-1914 in Kiel the economic-historian Bernhard Harms (1876-1939) founded the Institut für Weltwirtschaft und Seeverkehr, known primarily for the *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv* published there.⁶ The impressive libraries of the German scholar Otto von Gierke, the historian of association law, and the Austrian economist Carl Menger were transferred to Japan after the First World War, where they are now among the treasures of the Center for Historical Social Science Literature at Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo.⁷ Already in 1875, shortly after the start of the Meiji period, this institution had started to gather works on history and the social sciences. The library of Joseph Schumpeter, the author of *History of Economic Analysis* (1954), which remains an important reference work to this day, was entrusted to Hitotsubashi University as well. In Belgium the collector Jos Velle merits mention. Most of his collection ended up in Amsterdam, as will be described in more detail later on.

The many problems brought on by industrialization were another incentive toward building collections. This is exemplified by Thomas Twining (1806-1895), a scion from the well-known family of tea merchants, who made many efforts to enhance quality of life among workers and their families. He believed that the new workers often lacked essential knowledge, which he called *bionomy* or the 'science of everyday life,' and attempted to improve vocational instruction, as well as safety and hygiene. His attempts included opening the Twickenham Economic Museum at his estate near London in 1860, which in addition to models and useful products to promote a better and healthier lifestyle and residential habits comprised a library.⁸ In imitation, projects to improve factory working conditions in several places in Europe gave rise to exemplary museum institutions. In 1890 in Vienna, for example, the Gewerbehygienisches Museum was founded, an initiative of Franz Migerka, Austria's first central factory inspector. Next came the establishment of the Museum van Voorwerpen ter Voorkoming van Ongelukken en Ziekten in Fabrieken en Werkplaatsen [Museum of Objects to Prevent Accidents and Diseases at Factories and Workplaces] – later the Safety Museum – in Amsterdam in 1893. This was where Herman Heijenbrock, who painted scenes of Dutch industry, entrusted materials from his museum of labour foundation in 1923.⁹

Similar considerations led the Musée Social to open in Paris in 1894. In addition to pedagogical and humanitarian motives this museum also arose from the widespread regret that the great industrial exhibitions that had been so numerous in the nineteenth century were all dismantled after a while. In Paris, the World Fair of 1889 – the one with the Eiffel Tower – had instigated demand for a more permanent display, which was initiated thanks to the money of Count Aldebert de Chambrun (1821-1899), inherited in 1891 from his rich wife, Marie-Jeanne Godard-Desmarest. The museum, presently the oldest existing institution to maintain a collection on social movements, served as a model for other projects as well.¹⁰ The social-democrat Reverend Paul Pflüger (1865-1947), who in 1900 visited both the new World Fair and the Musée Social in Paris, derived inspiration there for the Zentralstelle für soziale Literatur in der Schweiz, now the Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv, which opened in

⁵ Rogers 1986.

⁶ Harms was dismissed by the Nazis in 1933, for being 'sympathetic to the republic,' cf. Craver 1986, 217. The following is based in part on Kloosterman 2009.

⁷ The equally impressive library of Carl's brother Anton Menger ended up at the Viennese Arbeiterkammer; see Oberkofler 2009.

⁸ Pearce 1988. The museum burned down in 1871.

⁹ Honig 1998. This museum, which opened in Amsterdam on the Rozengracht in 1929, became part of Nint, which was in turn absorbed by Nemo. The library of the Veiligheidsmuseum [Safety Museum] was transferred to the IISH.

¹⁰ Chambelland 1998; Horne 2002. According to its rules, the museum was dedicated to "making available to the public, through information and advice, standard documents, plans, statutes, etc. Of social institutions and organizations dedicated to and resulting in improvements in the material and moral circumstances of workers" (while at the same time "abstaining from all political and religious debates").

¹¹ Häusler 2006; cf. also Katscher 1904.

Zurich in 1906.¹¹ In 1899 in the Netherlands the Centraal Bureau voor Sociale Adviezen [Central Bureau for Social Advice] was established, with the radical-liberal professor of economics and statistics M.W.F. Treub (1858-1931), the author of a critique about Karl Marx's philosophical-economic system (*Het wijsgeerig-economisch stelsel van Karl Marx*), as its first director. The aim of the bureau was to assist workers and entrepreneurs alike in setting up organizations. A library was started as well, and from 1901 efforts were made to gather documentation on and about the actual labour organizations. The 'documents commission' dedicated to this effort comprised representatives from various political movements, with the notable exception of Catholics.¹²

The organized labour movement became interested in its own history relatively early on. In 1878 August Bebel urged that an archive and library be set up for the Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands.¹³ Under Bismarck, this desire took a while to fulfil and was at first realized only in exile in Switzerland and England, but in 1899 the library finally opened to the public in Berlin. The overwhelming popularity – shortly after the turn of the century, the annual number of visitors already exceeded one hundred thousand – was a major source of inspiration. In 1902 Stockholm's Workers' Library began to collect archives as well, and four years later, it was officially transformed into the archive and library institution of the Swedish socialist party and trade union movement.¹⁴ The Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek was emulated throughout Scandinavia. Similar institutions were soon established in Oslo, Copenhagen and Helsinki, although the Fins kept the party separate from the trade union movement.

Individual socialists set up several thriving documentation centres as well. In England the Fabian Society, with Sidney and Beatrice Webb at the vanguard, founded the London School of Economics in 1895. The archives and books collected there now constitute the British Library of Political and Economic Science.¹⁵ In 1906 the socialists of the Rand School for Social Science in New York started what later became known as the Tamiment Library, now part of New York University. In addition, wonderful private book collections dedicated to socialist ideas became available to a broader public. One well-known example is the library of H.P.G. Quack (1834-1917), author of *De Socialisten*. In 1912 his library was entrusted to the University of Amsterdam, which thus had the good fortune to acquire a first edition of the *Communistisch Manifest*. The same happened to the library of the social democrat P.A. Pijnappel (1875-1935), who owned 70,000 works and hired a personal librarian to manage them. Other well-known cases include the collections of Jules Perrier (1837-1904), now at the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire of Geneva, and Max Nettelau (1865-1944), now at the IISH. The Catalan liberal republican Rossend Arús (1845-1891) left his books to 'the people of Barcelona,' who have been able to read them at Biblioteca Pública Arús since 1895. Large economic-historical collections sprang from still other considerations. In 1906 the Chambers of Commerce in the Rhineland and Westphalia jointly established the Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv in Cologne, where historical business archives were placed. In 1910 in Basle, the Schweizerisches Wirtschaftsarchiv was established for the same purpose. Initially accommodated at the local Staatsarchiv, it later became an independent entity and is now located at the University of Basle. This resulted in yet another model that would serve as an example in the Netherlands.

In late July 1914, between Sarajevo and the 'Guns of August', Henri (1873-1935) and Louise (1869-1931) Leblanc in Paris decided to document the upcoming war, anticipating that it would last three weeks. Three years later, a French journalist described what he found in their home on the avenue Malakoff: "Posters, magazine articles, calendars, paintings, books, cards, newspapers, periodicals, dishes, rosettes, medals, prints, toys, fashion plates, military insignia, photographs of prison camps, manufactured objects, fabrics, handkerchiefs featuring insignia or emblems, office paraphernalia, rosettes, dressmakers' dummies, drawn

¹² The documentation and archive of the CBSA are now at the IISH.

¹³ Zimmermann 2008.

¹⁴ Grass 2002.

¹⁵ Dahrendorf 1995.

and sculpted caricatures, decorations, models of weapons, actual weapons, diaries, maps, stamps, every conceivable idea about the war, the entire life of war, everything about life on the inside during the war, it is all there. And this with respect to each of the belligerent countries, not just France, but also Great Britain, Germany, Italy, the United States.”¹⁶ At the time, in August 1917, the couple had just entrusted the collection to the French state, which named it the Bibliothèque-Musée de la Guerre. Later what had by then become known as the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine was transferred via the castle at Vincennes to the University of Nanterre (Paris X).¹⁷

The BDIC is one of three great documentation centres established as a consequence of the First World War. The second one, which covers a very similar scope (and like the BDIC almost automatically comprised both the war and the political and social history of its causes and consequences in the very broadest sense), is the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. This was established in 1919 as the Hoover War Collection at Stanford University, Herbert Hoover’s alma mater. The future president donated all documents he had acquired in the different offices in which he served during the war, including that of head of the American Relief Administration in Russia. He also donated money and helped raise funds throughout his life. These acts helped the Hoover expand into a leading archive, very well-endowed with materials on Russia and the Soviet Union and with a magnificent library that has been integrated in the Stanford University Library.

The third centre resulted from a product of the war, the Russian Revolution. In 1919 work began on the creation of a Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, whose official opening was in 1921. Although this was formally a party and therefore a semi-governmental institution, the plan and its execution were largely the work of one man, David Ryazanov, whose objective was to publish scholarly editions of the collected works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.¹⁸ To this end, with some assistance from the new communist parties in the West, as many relevant historical documents as possible were gathered. Ryazanov perceived the field very broadly as encompassing everything that had elicited the virtually infinite interest of Marx and Engels. Within a few years, a wonderful collection had come about, comprising important archival items from the West-European labour movement, in addition to a vast library. The joint efforts with the Institut für Sozialforschung in Frankfurt am Main were also very important. Established in 1924, this institution mediated between the Russian communists and the German social-democrats (who after all held Marx’s papers) until 1928.¹⁹

Unfortunately, Ryazanov was an all too natural victim of Stalin’s purges. He was arrested in 1931 and executed by a firing squad in 1938. His institute was merged with the Lenin Institute established in 1924, which had already merged with the Institute for Party History. Rather than publishing the works of Marx and Engels, the focus shifted to retaining ‘control’ over publishing the ‘classics’, who after all had not always adhered to Bolshevik doctrine and had written much that was undesirable.

A Dutch Institution



In this dynamic world filled with new ideas about social planning, emerging political parties and trade unions, and the resulting libraries, exhibitions, and journals, the founder and first director of the IISH Nicolaas Willem Posthumus (1880-1960) was raised.²⁰ Whether he started with bird skulls, coins, or stamps remains unclear – since his personal papers are not

¹⁶ Toudouze 1917; cf. Hüs 1997.

¹⁷ The visual materials, separated as the Musée d’Histoire Contemporaine, are kept at the Hôtel des Invalides.

¹⁸ Vollgraf 1997; Hecker 2000; Vollgraf 2001; Rokitjanskij 2009; Mosolov 2010. (For the transliteration of Russian names, we follow the international scholarly system in bibliographical references; in the text, we follow the system that most newspapers use.)

¹⁹ On the IFS and the resulting Frankfurter Schule, see Jay 1973; Migdal 1981; Wiggershaus 1988.

²⁰ The most extensive biography is by Noordegraaf 1991.

available, we know virtually nothing about Posthumus's private life – but in 1935 he was unquestionably the right man in the right place, thanks to his great renown as a scholar, his international contacts, his track record as a collector, and his knowledge of Marxist ideology. Later he formulated his motto as “Work hard; be open to new things”.²¹

Posthumus grew up in intellectually invigorating surroundings. His father was the great pioneer of geography instruction in the Netherlands.²² As a student at the *gymnasium* (a pre-university secondary school) in Amsterdam, young Nien must have discovered socialism. He expanded this initial encounter considerably, when he enrolled in 1898 at the faculty of law at the municipal university in his native city, where he attended lectures by Treub and others. He joined the student debating society Clio and made friends with future celebrities, such as the art historian H.E. van Gelder, the poet C.S. Adama van Scheltema, the librarian H.E. Greve, the journalist H.P.L. Wiessing, the classicist H. Bolkestein, the physician J.J. van Loghem, the criminologist W.A. Bongers, the neurologist K.H. Bouman, the scholar of law Jb. Willeumier and the mathematician L.E.J. Brouwer.²³ On the editorial board of *Propria Cures*, he met the future communist leader David Wijnkoop.²⁴ As an editor, he wrote about the student persecutions in Russia, and in a review of the inaugural lecture by Professor G.W. Kernkamp, Posthumus as a young student in 1901 made note of the “growing influence of the discipline of socialist history”: “Historical materialism lures practitioners of history progressively toward social and societal fields, driving them in that direction [...] as a sign of the rising influence of this life doctrine.”²⁵ Little wonder that in his academic masterpiece, Posthumus described the rise of Leiden's wool fabrics industry, the most important one of the Dutch Republic, which had in turn been described by Marx as the cradle of merchant capitalism.²⁶

During his university years he participated in socialist demonstrations as well. In September 1900 he convinced Pieter Jelles Troelstra to address the impoverished shoemakers in the Langstraat region. The social-democratic leader had just been released from prison, but rather than the sympathetic welcome he received elsewhere in the country, he was mocked in the cottage industries of North Brabant. According to Henri Wiessing, they were chased away by a mob throwing stones, incited by a chaplain.²⁷ Wiessing has described Posthumus as a “fervent Marxist” during those years and regrets that he did not remain so, attributing this change in mindset to his auspicious academic career. This assessment is not truly fair to Posthumus, who was not exclusively a scholar. In Rotterdam he started the association ‘De Arend,’ which got local young workers involved in pleasant and useful pursuits, thereby keeping them out of harm's way. From 1927 to 1932, as a board member of Amsterdam's Burgerlijke Instelling van Maatschappelijke Steun [Civil Institution for Social Assistance], he urged that a branch of the Volksuniversiteit [Open University] be opened. In 1938, at an evening debate organized by female students, he opposed the Catholic politician Romme's plans to curtail employment of married women.

Posthumus achieved his greatest renown, however, for his activity as a historian and collector of historical source materials. One source of inspiration in this respect may have been his maternal uncle Jan Willem IJzerman (1851–1932).²⁸ IJzerman's career in the Netherlands East Indies included building railways, exploiting mines, and drilling for oil, although he may also be considered one of the founding fathers of archaeology on Java, where he dug up the foot of the Boroboedoer. His nephew may have been similarly inspired by his leading role in the Koninklijk Aardrijkskundig Genootschap [Royal Geographic Society] (he equipped a lot of voyages of discovery), the Linschoten Vereniging, the Koninklijk Instituut voor Technisch Hooger Onderwijs in Nederlands-Indië [Royal Polytechnic Institute in the Netherlands Indies], and the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde [Royal Institute for Linguistics, Geography and Ethnology].

²¹ NEHA questionnaire, 24 September 1950; we are indebted to Alex Geelhoed.

²² On Nicolaas Wilhelmus Posthumus (1838–1885), a self-made man and also a great organizer, see Zuidema 1912.

²³ The student debating society Clio laid the foundations from 1883 for the Collectie Universiteitsgeschiedenis, (university history collection), which is now part of the Special Collections at the University of Amsterdam.

²⁴ Jansma 1961, 127–128.

²⁵ Jansen & Zappey 1981, 29–30.

²⁶ Lourens & Lucassen 1992.

²⁷ Noordegraaf 2009, 98; Hagen 2010 does not mention this episode, but see *ibid.*, 307–331 about the period. One year later, Troelstra obtained a seat in parliament at the expense of Posthumus's uncle, the liberal Jan Willem IJzerman (Hagen 2010, 347–348). In late 1900 and early 1901 Posthumus tried on behalf of the Socialist Reading Society to invite the great theoretician Karl Kautsky to give a series of lectures at Dutch universities (IISH, Karl Kautsky Papers, D xviii 657–662); Kautsky did in fact come in April 1902 and spoke, according to the reports in *Het Volk*, at different venues on subjects such as ‘Reform and transition’ and ‘After the transition.’

²⁸ Jansma 1961, 128–129; Veenendaal 2008.



▲
Nicolaas Willem Posthumus
(1880-1960).

Posthumus first started collecting in the years 1908–1912 as an instructor of commercial law and economics at the Openbare Handelsschool [state school of commerce] in Amsterdam, which was run by another uncle, J. IJzerman. Barely finished writing his PhD thesis (which Posthumus defended on 9 July 1908), he became involved that April in an initiative of the Algemeen Nederlandsch Werkliedenverbond [General Dutch Workers' League] to organize a survey, an exhibition, an exhibition catalogue, and a congress about cottage industry.²⁹ The second opportunity arose shortly before Posthumus was appointed in 1913 as the first professor of economic history in the Netherlands at the Nederlandsche Handelshogeschool [Dutch Polytechnic of Commerce] established that very year in Rotterdam (presently the Erasmus University).³⁰ The plan was to set up a 'Balans archive' or an 'Archive on business economics and commercial technology.' H.G.A. Elink Schuurman was presumably involved in this effort, an Amsterdam accountant who since 1908 had taken a strong interest in the economic-history archives recently established in Cologne, Saarbrücken, Leipzig, and Basle. Posthumus opted to form an association, and on Monday 14 July 1913 the current initiatives were combined, after which on 2 April 1914 in The Hague, with government support and assistance from various government archives, the Netherlands Economic-History Archive association was founded. Within the first year, Posthumus, as the secretary-director, had made an arrangement with the Central Bureau for Social Advice in Amsterdam on collecting trade union archives – as this would pertain to the duties of the NEHA as well. The unions were therefore represented by Henri Polak on the advisory board, of which Amsterdam's alderman Floor Wibaut was already a member; Edo Fimmen of the Internationaal Verbond van Vakverenigingen [International Confederation of Trade Unions] later joined as well.³¹ The NEHA also included other aspects of social history within its scope, such as the acquisition of the collection of Albertus Theodorus Hartkamp (1848–1924), the founding father of the Netherlands Press Museum.³²

Posthumus was exceptionally successful in his new office, which he combined with his position as a professor – in Rotterdam until 1922 and then in Amsterdam until 1949. Many archives were obtained, especially those of firms from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Soon, however, the director strayed from the courses charted. In the First World War, for example, he teamed up with the Royal Library in The Hague to gather all documentation concerning those difficult years, which of course brings to mind initiatives such as those of the BDIC and the Hoover Institution.³³ In 1926 Antwerp's archivist Jean Denucé begged Posthumus to rescue the Velle collection, which the plummeting Belgian franc prevented him from doing.³⁴ Jozef Antoon Lodewijk Velle (1866–1925) had gathered everything he could find on the history of accounting, commercial arithmetic, and commercial and entrepreneurial practices, and quite a lot appears to have been available in the old trading city of Antwerp; his collection of international price gazettes was indeed unique. Virtually overnight, Posthumus raised 8,000 guilders, nearly as much as he had spent on all acquisitions in the first decade of the NEHA. The most important consequence was that the NEHA from that point onward acquired an international scope, which was further enhanced by the Bruyard collection purchased in Frankfurt in 1928–1932.³⁵

The second, indirect consequence of the Velle acquisition was that Posthumus expanded his international scholarly network considerably.³⁶ The price gazettes he obtained provided him with new opportunities to explore the history of prices in the Netherlands, for goods and shares alike, as well as the history of exchange rates. He zealously sought hitherto unknown editions – originals whenever possible, although he had copies made as well, a costly and cumbersome undertaking in those days. Before the Second World War, the collection had become the largest, most varied, and oldest in the world on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: 13,000 price gazettes and thousands of auction lists.

²⁹ Noordegraaf 2009, 86; Van Gerwen & Lucassen 1989, 117. The catalogue was published for the exhibition in 1909; in 1912 Posthumus' adaptation of the survey results appeared regarding the shoemaking cottage industry in the Langstraat. Much later, Max Nettlau wrote about him: "He was neither a traditionally-minded, routine-loving librarian for whom books and their users are fundamentally only annoying, nor a doctrinarian or a fanatic with an interest in just a single tendency, nor even a teacher with merely practical aims – but someone who knows what it means to do scholarly historical work and who understands the importance of the pluriformity of the basic materials, which are so rarely found together, and rarely in as many forms as happened to be my case." (Hunink 1979, 335).

³⁰ The following is based on the different contributions in Fischer *et al* 1989.

³¹ In 1915 Posthumus also invited his uncle Jan Willem IJzerman to join the NEHA advisory board.

³² Lucassen 1990; see also Lucassen 1989.

³³ Seegers 1989, 68–69.

³⁴ The following is based on Lucassen & De Peuter 1989, 98–102.

³⁵ Bos *et al* 1996. In the eighteenth century father Pierre and son Charles Jean-Baptiste Bruyard held important offices with powerful French economic policy institutions.

³⁶ Boorsma & Van Genabeek 1991.

Consequently, Posthumus joined the International Scientific Committee on Price History in 1931. At the initiative of the director of the London School of Economics, William Henry Beveridge (1879-1863), and Edwin F. Gay and with financial assistance from the Rockefeller Foundation, the committee organized its first conferences in Paris in 1929 and in London in 1930. Aside from the two initiators, the most important participants were the Frenchman Henri Hauser, assisted by François Simiand, the German Moritz Elsas, and the Austrian Alfred Pribram, assisted by Karl Helleiner – all internationally renowned economic and social historians. In addition to gaining access to the Valhalla of his trade – to which he contributed his two volumes *Nederlandsche prijsgeschiedenis*, which were published in English as well – Posthumus was confronted with the harsh political reality. In 1933 Elsas fled from Frankfurt to London, later followed by Pribram, while Helleiner went to Canada.³⁷ Little wonder that in May 1933 none other than Beveridge became the founder of the Academic Assistance Council, dedicated to helping Jewish and other academic refugees fleeing the Nazi regime – an idea he had conceived on a research visit to Vienna in 1933.³⁸

Despite his international and political experiences, nothing indicates that Posthumus was considering establishing a new institute at this point; on the contrary, he continued to view the NEHA as the designated venue for the new task that was materializing, rescuing endangered archives. In the spring of 1934 the NEHA provided a safe haven to Otto Neurath and Gerd Arntz, who had been forced to flee both Moscow and Vienna with their idealistic projects to enlighten workers about complex economic issues through visual statistics.³⁹ A few months earlier, Hans Stein (1894-1941), who had worked for the Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv in Cologne and had been a correspondent of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, had already escaped to The Hague.⁴⁰ At the NEHA he collected statistical materials for Neurath and Arntz. In the meantime, the NEHA had arranged a separate library at the premises made available by the City of Amsterdam at 218-220 Herengracht, the Economic-History Library, where Annie Adama van Scheltema-Kleefstra (1884-1977) became the first librarian. She was the widow of the poet Carel Steven Adama van Scheltema (1877-1924), who was a friend of Posthumus while the two were students. She and her husband had travelled extensively and spoke many languages.

A European Institute



On 1 January 1932 Annie Scheltema was entrusted with the mission of setting up the social-historical department, at which she excelled, thanks to her extensive contacts with social democrats in the Netherlands and abroad. Being the archivist of the Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiders Partij at the same time was obviously conducive to her success as well. In 1934 she met Friedrich Adler, the secretary of the Labour and Socialist International, as well as the Russian Menshevik Boris Nikolaevsky (1887-1966). In 1932, even before Hitler's *Machtergreifung*, Nikolaevsky had been pivotal in arranging a safe haven for the archives of Marx, Engels, and their German fellow party members in Copenhagen and Paris.⁴¹ He had also been a correspondent of the Marx-Engels Institute for a long time, even after he had to flee to Germany for political reasons in 1924. Ryazanov's demise, however, had severed these ties, leading to important consequences after 1933, when the new Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute tried to obtain the papers of Marx and Engels from the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands in exile; the SPD now looked for an alternative to Moscow. In Paris

³⁷ Cole & Crandall 1964; Craver 1986, 218.

³⁸ The physicist Ernest Rutherford (later the 'father of the atomic bomb') served as chairman; many Nobel laureates supported Beveridge, and Einstein delivered an important speech generating extensive publicity at Albert Hall in October 1933. The AAC, renamed the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning in 1936, has operated since 1997 as the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics.

³⁹ Van Gerwen & Lucassen 1989, 129-132; Mertens 2007.

⁴⁰ On Stein, see Hecker 1993-1994; Schumacher 1994.

⁴¹ On Nikolaevsky, see Rabinowitch & Rabinowitch 1972; on the vicissitudes of the papers of Marx and Engels, see Mayer 1967.

Nikolaevsky also put Scheltema in touch with Franz Kursky, who was looking for a safe haven for the archives of the Allgemeyner Yidisher Arbeterbund in Lite, Polyn un Rusland, known as the Bund for short.⁴²

Scheltema had little difficulty getting Posthumus to share her enthusiasm for all this beautiful material, but raising the funds required remained a problem. The Netherlands was in the depths of the Great Depression. Government grants to the NEHA and contributions from members were dwindling, and staff members were forced to take salary cuts. The administration of the NEHA was unable to support Posthumus beyond the scope of economic history in the Netherlands and the Dutch colonies as determined in the statutes in 1914. The solution arrived from an unexpected source, a man and an institution previously unknown to Posthumus and his librarian. One of Scheltema's socialist acquaintances, J.F. Ankersmit, executive editor of *Het Volk*, had advised her to contact Nehemia de Lieme (1882-1940), the director of the Centrale Arbeiders- Verzekeerings- en Depositobank, also known as the 'Centrale'. The Centrale had been established in 1904 by social-democratic circles that had set out to 'modernize' the labour movements after the lost railway strikes of 1903. Contrary to past practices, operating profits were no longer distributed among the insured but were allocated in part toward causes benefiting the labour movement.⁴³ De Lieme proved willing to include securing archives among these causes. The first talks took place on 3 October 1934. De Lieme was a Zionist since 1907 (he was a friend of Louis Brandeis) and readily agreed to purchase the archives of the Bund for 8,000 guilders.⁴⁴ He also indicated that the Centrale could do more and invited Posthumus to submit a request.

One year later, on 25 November 1935, the Centrale and the NEHA had established a new institute together. It was located at 264 Keizersgracht, in premises provided by the City of Amsterdam and remodelled with 45,000 guilders from the Centrale.⁴⁵ This had been the outcome of negotiations. Posthumus operated from the NEHA perspective, but De Lieme, not wanting to have to be accountable to its highest authority (the general assembly of members), insisted on setting up a new organization. In return for the large sums the Centrale was willing to provide, he demanded considerable input. The name was discussed at length as well. De Lieme hoped to name it after Quack, but the international mission of the new institution prevailed. It would be the International Institute of Social History.⁴⁶ The original IISH organization was clearly inspired by the Marx-Engels Institute. Like in Moscow, its basic structure consisted of several geographically determined 'cabinets,' which acquired this name because the documents were in fact systematically arranged in the rooms of the cabinet heads. The first heads were A.J.C. Rüter (the 'Dutch-English' department), Hans Stein (Germany), Arthur Müller Lehning (France), and Boris Sapir (Russia).⁴⁷ In this subdivision, the geographic structure was almost automatically complemented by a more thematic aspect: the German cabinet, for example, under the aegis of a communist, also dealt with the history of Marxism, the French one, which was run by an anarcho-syndicalist, addressed anarchism and subjects such as the history of utopias. Like the Marx-Engels Institute the IISH soon set up a network of foreign 'correspondents,' comprising leading specialists such as Gustav Mayer (1871-1948) and Boris Souvarine (1895-1984), biographers of Engels and Stalin, respectively. A branch was opened in Paris immediately (at 7 rue Michelet, "very conveniently situated near the Luxembourg"), where Nikolaevskij was put in charge. This branch was to house "exclusively those collections of which the owners object to their removal from France."⁴⁸

The explicit intent was to salvage everything possible from the legacy of the European labour movement, which was suffering oppression in more and more places. In order to put Posthumus's undertaking in perspective, it should be realized that the archival landscape was subject to profound change in the interwar years. The Soviet Union had strongly politicized

⁴² Seegers 1989, 77-79; Adama van Scheltema-Kleefstra 1978, 141-148.

⁴³ Van Gerwen 1993. The Centrale ultimately merged with SNS Reaal.

⁴⁴ Eventually only a small part of the collection reached Amsterdam; most of it is now at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.

⁴⁵ This was the first of four locations in Amsterdam: in 1969 the IISH relocated to 262-266 Herengracht, in 1981 to 51 Kabelweg, and in 1989 to 31 Cruquiusweg.

⁴⁶ Adama van Scheltema-Kleefstra 1978; Hunink 1986; Van Gerwen 1993. The Dutch initiative was emulated in 1937, with the establishment in Belgium of the Nationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, with financial assistance from the Prévoyance Sociale. This institution was closed by the Nazis in 1940.

⁴⁷ On Rüter, who would serve as the second director of the IISH from 1953 to 1965, see Locher 1967; on Müller Lehning (later Lehning), see Altena 2002; on Sapir, see Corrsin *et al* 1997.

⁴⁸ *Jaarverslag* 1936, 23.



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Dinner at the Victoria Hotel in Amsterdam, offered by the Centrale on March 18, 1937. Present are members of the board of the Institute and the supervisory board of the Centrale as well as the librarian and senior staff of IISH. Seated from left to right: A. Müller-Lehning, G.J. Stoop, A. Harms, B. Sapir, C.M. Simonsz, G.W. Melchers, N.W. Posthumus, H. Brugmans, I.B. Cohen, A.J.C. Rüter, J. Oudegeest, H. Stein. Standing from left to right: Annie Scheltema, B. Nikolaevskij, P.J. van Winter, H. Bolkestein, H.B. Wiardi Beckman, N. de Lieme, Jane de longh.

the archives, on which Lenin himself had issued a decree shortly after the October Revolution; and Nazi Germany had followed suit. This development was hardly perceived by contemporaries, however. In France, for instance, it became clear in 1940 that neither the government nor individuals had considered the possibility that archives could become involved in an ideological struggle fought besides the actual war. If any preventive measures had been taken at all, these now look utterly naive with hindsight.⁴⁹ If one recalls in addition that it was still quite unusual at the time for private persons to deposit their papers at an archival institution,⁵⁰ the creation of the IISH was no foregone conclusion.

In retrospect, the IISH emerged from the run-up to the Second World War. It was symbolic that in early 1939 the archive of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement was removed in the nick of time from Franco-occupied Catalonia. Earlier on, the historical archive of German social democracy had been rescued together with the papers of Marx and Engels as well as part of the records of the First International. The papers of Bakunin, part of the enormous anarchist collection of Max Nettlau, were extricated from Vienna after the Anschluss. The Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries, persecuted after having obtained an absolute majority at the elections for the Russian Constituent Assembly in 1917, sent its records to the Institute from its exile in Prague. Russian Populists and Mensheviks, German anarchists and council communists, Austrian socialists and many others found a safe haven for their archives in Amsterdam. Until 1940, the Centrale remained the most important source of financing. In addition to being able to rescue endangered archives and libraries, the Institute had the means to make large antiquarian purchases, soon bringing about a well-equipped research centre.⁵¹ Yet little research was conducted there: following the Munich Agreement in September 1938, war was considered so imminent that as many sensitive archives as possible were shipped to Great Britain, and the legacy of Marx and Engels, for example, survived the war in Oxford.⁵² Part of the material in the Paris branch was transferred to a cottage rented in Amboise near Tours, nearly 200 km southwest of Paris.

This role in rescue operations obviously complicated acquisitions by the Institute in the pre-war years. Annie Scheltema made several adventurous journeys to transfer valuable but sensitive materials from Germany, Austria, and the Balkans to Amsterdam. The danger came not only from right-wing but also from leftist sources, as became apparent when on 6 November 1936 some of the papers of Lev Trotski, entrusted by his son Lev Sedov to the Paris branch, were stolen by Soviet agents. Stalin's secret service knew about this storage site thanks to Mark Zborowski, a Polish communist who had infiltrated Trotskyist circles. Later, after emigrating to the United States, where he became a well-known anthropologist, he was suspected of espionage by the FBI and was questioned by a Senate committee, where he denied any responsibility for the break-in at Rue Michelet. It does in fact appear to have been a different Soviet network, operating under the aegis of Jakov Serebrjanskij, that stole Trotski's documents and subsequently smuggled them out of France.⁵³

The publicity about the theft was also noticed by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, editors of the famous *Annales* journal, who made mention of the Institute in March 1937.⁵⁴ Their tone was reserved, and they focused mainly on the difference in the approach to social history, describing the one in Amsterdam as "more restrictive" and "slightly inclined toward anecdote." The French seem to have tried to ignore the political nature of the foundation and the activities of the IISH and may even have been somewhat disapproving, implicitly highlighting one of the most remarkable aspects of the Institute in the process. There can be little doubt that in the debate between a "structural" or an "event-oriented" approach to history Posthumus tended to side with the *Annales*; but he understood at the same time that the sources that all historians needed were in serious danger, and why urgent action to protect them was essential.

⁴⁹ Coeuré 2007.

⁵⁰ To illustrate the point, see the history of Nettlau's collection (Hunink 1979) or of the papers of Mikhail Bakunin (Kloosterman 2007).

⁵¹ One such acquisition consisted of approximately 11,000 titles on British social-economic history, gathered by Leon Kashnor, one of the first antiquarians who formed collections to sell as a unit; see Sanders 1988. Another 'Kashnor collection' (to which some material intended for Amsterdam seems to have lost its way) was bought by the National Library of Australia in 1951; cf Rickard 1998.

⁵² Hunink 1986, 119-128. The IISH initially rented a house in Harrogate, but in late 1939, thanks to support from Beveridge and G.D.H. Cole, a branch was opened in Oxford, where Lehning served as director.

⁵³ For correspondence between Trotski and Sedov, see Schrader 1995. On Zborowski's role, see Costello & Carev 1993; Volkogonov 1996; Sudoplatov & Sudoplatov 1995; Haynes & Klehr 1999; Andrew & Mitrokhin 1999 (here on Serebrjanskij). It has never become entirely clear what was stolen and where it is now kept.

⁵⁴ Reprinted in Hunink 1986, 294-295.

The Nazi invasion of the Netherlands soon made the political nature of the collection abundantly clear. Within a few weeks of the Dutch surrender, the new authorities visited the Institute; in early June 1940 Annie Scheltema was first interrogated by the SS. Although she had unquestionably been involved in rescuing socialist archives from Germany and Austria, she was not arrested. Still, her confiscated papers enabled the Nazis to seize the collection of the French branch within three days after the occupation (Paris fell on 14 June). The activities at the Amsterdam outfit, as described by one of the staff members, now consisted of ‘shredding, destroying correspondence, and the like,’ especially from leftist Germans who had not yet escaped their native country. On 15 July Posthumus was interrogated, after which the Sicherheitsdienst ordered that the IISH be closed. No more incriminating correspondence was found, however, and although the SD was convinced “that [Posthumus] saw it as his mission to carry on the Marxist research by Marxists that had become impossible in Germany,” proving that he had been politically active was impossible. He successfully maintained his façade as a scholar whose activities were motivated exclusively by scholarly interests.⁵⁵

The Nazis estimated that the collection would fill 1,200 crates and concluded “that the Institute had succeeded in becoming a central repository for the entire leftist movement within the astonishingly short period of four years, thanks to its excellent connections with all Marxist and anarchist adversary groups,” and “that only the invasion of Holland had stopped the rise of a forceful, worldwide organization.” The next question was what to do with the material.⁵⁶ The three candidates for managing it were: the Sicherheitsdienst under Reinhard Heydrich, who had in fact already seized the premises; the Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg, author of *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*; and Robert Ley, the head of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront, the Nazi trade union confederation. In January 1941 Rosenberg appeared to have prevailed over the other two: his staff started cataloguing the collections and preparing them for shipment to Germany for use in a Hohe Schule der NSDAP under development, where examining the ideology of Nazi adversaries would pertain to the scope.⁵⁷ According to his colleagues, however, Rosenberg was acting too fast. Heydrich felt this way, as did Ley, who was expected to provide the German workers with the appropriate spiritual leadership and thus believed he had a legitimate claim to the leftist European legacy. Reports went back and forth, and figureheads such as Arthur Seyss-Inquart and Martin Bormann became involved in the dispute over competence. On 1 March 1942 none other than Hitler stated explicitly that Rosenberg would be the one to gather material in Europe “to promote the spiritual struggle” against the enemy. Due to these internal disagreements, shipments of the most important IISH material began only in August 1943 – very late indeed, given that the tide had turned in the war. As a result, they were found in several different places after the Nazi surrender: in addition to 1,083 dispatched previously from Amsterdam to Berlin and Frankfurt, 776 more crates surfaced in Carinthia, 271 in Ratibor (Racibórz, Silesia), as well as on several inland barges in North Germany. Thanks primarily to the Offenbach Archival Depot set up by the U.S. armed forces near Frankfurt am Main, this material was returned to Amsterdam. Several collections, however, were long regarded as missing. Only in 1991 did it become known that some had been confiscated by Soviet intelligence services immediately after the war. These documents were stored together with thousands of archive files from all over Europe in the strictly secret Special Archive, built by German prisoners of war in Moscow after the war. Many of the items placed there were later distributed among agencies such as the Central Party Archive and the Central State Archive of the October Revolution. Some have been returned since then, although others have not.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Adama van Scheltema-Kleefstra 1978; Hunink 1986. Posthumus was left alone and even managed to find alternative employment for many of the staff members who were dismissed. In March 1942, however, he was dismissed at the same time as eight other teachers at the University of Amsterdam from his position as professor and director of the NEHA, after an NSB student dormitory was bombed on the Weteringschans. Posthumus and four colleagues had previously resigned from the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (to which he had been elected in 1929) in October 1941, when the Nazis ordered that Jewish members be excluded.

⁵⁶ The following is based on Hunink 1986 and Roth 1989, who together published a total of 29 Nazi documents about the IISH.

⁵⁷ The IISH premises on the Keizersgracht were used by Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg as a central collection point for materials seized in the Netherlands.

⁵⁸ Cf. Grimsted 2001; Grimsted *et al* 2007. What happened in France is well documented in Coeuré 2007; Poulain 2008. The IISH documents that ended up in CPA and CGAOR have not been returned.

An International Operation

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In the post-war period, major reconstruction was inevitable at the Institute. The Keizersgracht premises had been completely emptied, and it would be years before most of the collections that had been dispersed returned and became accessible to users again. The Annual Report on 1950 stated that visitors to the reading room “see little difference from the past arrangement,” yet they will certainly have noticed that the archive inventories and catalogues of books and serials that – to the extent they had existed previously – had been lost during the war still needed a lot of sorting.⁵⁹ And an archive as important for the Netherlands as that of the SDAP was returned by the Polish government only in 1956.

Acquiring materials from abroad became more difficult after 1945. In the annual reports, this is attributed to the rise in competition. During the post-war years, interest in labour history did in fact grow considerably, especially in countries such as Italy, where the large leftist movement tried to make up for decades of lost opportunities. In 1949 in Milan the Biblioteca – soon renamed the Istituto – Giangiacomo Feltrinelli opened, financed by the corporate fortune that its young eponym had inherited. The institution became very active in collecting and expanded rapidly. Nor was its focus primarily domestic, as would hold true for many subsequent counterparts in Europe: the orientation was international from the outset. This outlook was compatible with the founder, who in 1954 opened a publishing company that issued the first editions of both *Doctor Zhivago* and the diary of Che Guevara. Equally remarkably, Feltrinelli was financially well endowed, an essential element completely absent from historical interest in most places in Europe for many years.⁶⁰

Interest in the labour movement was revived thanks not only to the reappearance of the leftist parties and trade unions in European politics but also to the Cold War and the resulting need for information about the Soviet Union and Marxism. This meant that the IISH now also faced ‘competition’ from the United States in its collection-building efforts – first of all from Nikolaevskij, who had arrived in New York in late 1940 and continued his activities from there. He had become convinced that due to the Soviet threat, archives were no longer safe in Continental Europe, and he tried to convince the Institute administration to send the collections overseas. He sold a portion of the material he had managed to take with him from Europe to the Indiana University Library in 1955 and the bulk of it to the Hoover Institution in 1963, where he continued to work until his death.⁶¹ Other institutions in the United States also started building massive documentation collections about Russia and the Soviet Union. The Bakhmeteff Archive, for example, founded at Columbia University in 1951, became very well-known as one of the largest repositories for the papers of Russian *émigrés*.⁶²

Still, the IISH also derived certain benefits from this course of events: the archival records salvaged before the war covered a large area that now exuded a broad appeal. In addition to the papers of Marx and many Marxist theoreticians, the Institute contained a wealth of material about pre-revolutionary movements and post-revolutionary opponents of communism in Russia. In the 1950s this enabled the Institute to obtain considerable financing from foreign funds toward providing access to and publishing major sections of its collection. The Ford Foundation was the main source, but the Rockefeller Foundation

⁵⁹ Proper access to the book collection, largely attributable to Maria Hunink (1924-1988), librarian from 1956 to 1973, was accomplished only with the publication of the printed *Alfabetische catalogus van de boeken en brochures van het IISG* (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1970-1979, 17 vols).

⁶⁰ Feltrinelli 1999; Grandi 2000.

⁶¹ Bourguina & Jakobson 1989.

⁶² Including those of Boris Sapir, cf Corrsin et al 1997.



and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft contributed as well. This coincided with a revival of interest on the other side of the Iron Curtain, which was manifested in the then popular practice of espionage. Only later on did it become known that in the early 1950s Bert Andréas, a German communist and Marx connoisseur and frequently present at the Institute in those days, had reported about the staff members and their activities to Feltrinelli, who was considering purchasing the papers of Marx and Engels from the IISH. The information was then communicated from Milan to Moscow and was deemed of sufficient interest there to be brought to the attention of Nikita Khrushchev himself.⁶³

In the meantime, the IISH had attempted to resume its pre-war acquisitions efforts. Once again, many acquisitions were mediated by Annie Scheltema, who left the Institute at the end of 1953. From 1952 the new board member Julius Braunthal (1891-1972) served the IISH in his capacity as secretary to the Socialist International. The results remained fairly modest, however, until the rise of what were known as ‘new social movements’ expanded the classical scope. The Institute acknowledged the importance of these groups early on – undoubtedly in part because many were not actually new and in some cases followed traditions associated with the labour movement, as was true for the peace movement. Moreover, the IISH had maintained a life-long co-operation with an early collecting point of social movement archives, the Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging [International Archive of the Women’s Movement], which had been founded two weeks after the Institute by a group including Willemijn van der Goot (1897-1984), the second wife of Posthumus.⁶⁴

Because many new social movement initiatives were local, some lasting only briefly, they needed to be documented differently from more conventional types of organizations. By working closely with members of the actual movements, the IISH gathered large collections, such as that of the Centre for Social Documentation, set up by Tjebbe van Tijen, and the so-called State Archive (about the Dutch squatters’ movement), as well as the ID Archiv der Alternativpresse from Frankfurt am Main. The Institute also became the repository of the archives of Amnesty International and Greenpeace International.

The institutional landscape changed again as well.⁶⁵ In the late 1960s, following extended economic growth in Europe – and boosted by the events of 1968 – one collecting institute after another materialized, from the revived Archiv der sozialen Demokratie in Bonn (1969, part of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung) and the Modern Records Centre in Coventry (1973) to many smaller archives that thrived in Italy and France, as well as in Greece, Portugal, and Spain, following the fall of the dictators there. In late 1970 several of these institutions teamed up in the International Association of Labour History Institutions, which now comprises around a hundred members. In 1980 the Archive and Museum of the Socialist Labour Movement was established in Ghent. The series concluded with the National Museum of Labour History, which opened in Manchester in 1990, and the Greek ASKI (Contemporary Social History Archive), which opened in Athens in 1992.

By then the political earthquake had taken place that led to the demise of the Soviet Union. In Moscow the brainchild of Rjazanov had disintegrated; the museological collection, which had literally ended up on the street, and the vast library were salvaged with great difficulty. Throughout the former East Block, the archives of the communist parties (where material from different organizations often ended up) were nationalized, perpetuating an interesting distinction from the West, where the labour movement had consistently withheld its

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In 1951-2 Adolf Rüter (1907-1965) succeeded Posthumus as director of the Institute, a function he fulfilled until his death. On this photograph, Rüter is meeting professor E.A. Stepanova, director of Moscow’s Institute of Marxism-Leninism, the former Marx Engels Institute, during a reception on the occasion of the IISH’s 25th anniversary in 1960.

⁶³ Mosolov 2010, 568-571. On Andréas, see Grandjonc 1987.

⁶⁴ Mevis 1999; Withuis 1991; de Haan & Mevis 2008. The IAV, which cohabited with the IISG for much of its existence, later merged with other organizations to become the Internationaal Informatiecentrum en Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging, rebaptized Aletta in 2009.

⁶⁵ The following is based on Kloosterman 2009.

legacy from the state. In Eastern Europe the absence of private collecting institutions, which maintain different relationships of trust with archive donors, is sometimes deplored.⁶⁶

The IISH inferred from this course of events that collecting materials within Europe – with the obvious exception of the Netherlands – could gradually be left to fellow institutions. This happened at a time when the Institute was experiencing major changes. Following years of steady increases in staff and an explosive rise in users under Frits de Jong Edz (1919–1989) and Rein van der Leeuw, who served as directors in 1966–1977 and 1978–1985, respectively, the organization underwent its first fundamental adaptation since it was established. Under Eric Fischer, who was in charge from 1984 until 1993, the ‘cabinets’ were discontinued and replaced by functional departments, dedicated to one or a few duties. Office and library automation were introduced, and in 1989 the Institute relocated to Amsterdam’s renovated Eastern Harbour area, where for the first time the stacks had decent climate control. More importantly in this context, in addition to the IISH, the new premises accommodated the NEHA and the Netherlands Press Museum. This made the documentation centre along the Cruquiusweg one of the largest in the Netherlands, combining a medium-sized archival repository, a library like that of a university, and an image and sound collection of museum-sized proportions.⁶⁷

This coincided in the 1990s with the establishment of a research department that charted its own course. Rather than the source publications for which the Institute had become renowned, more analytical social-history research and later more economic-history research was forthcoming. This research revolved around the history of labour and labour relations and explored alternatives to the classical model that focused almost exclusively on the ‘modern’ industrial worker (the ‘male breadwinner’) in the ‘global North.’ The quest covered three separate tracks. In terms of content, industrial workers were joined by artisans, farm workers, domestic servants, seamen, enlisted servicemen, and many other members, male and female, of the working population. Chronologically, the previous watershed of the Industrial Revolution was abandoned: henceforth research would address labour in any period throughout history, although the early sixteenth century or late Middle Ages were generally as far back as these studies went. And geographically, the abandonment of the Industrial Revolution also brought the ‘global South’ into view – not as following a Western model but as a series of areas that each experienced a unique development just as important to the theory as that of Western Europe and North America.⁶⁸

This reorientation, which gave rise to research programmes on ‘global labour history’ and ‘global economic history,’ also brought forth an entirely new collection field, which was called ‘meta-sources.’ This involves standardizing and combining data that are dispersed throughout many archival repositories into large data files, making very valuable raw materials available for research. One such example is the Historical Sample of the Netherlands, where many tens of thousands of Dutch people born between 1812 and 1922 are represented, and which has already generated a few hundred publications. Another example consists of the ‘global hubs’ that the IISH maintains, such as on historical wages and prices: researchers from all over the world input data series for common consumption – from Babylonian grain prices from the fourth century BC to Milanese wages during the nineteenth century.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ In the West, the documentation centres of the labour movement have been integrated fairly extensively in institutionalized academia – which is obviously related to the institutionalization of the labour movement itself. In Italy and later also in Flanders, legislation provided incentives to participate in the legacy structure of the government. In the United Kingdom, Germany, and Switzerland, the trade unions, which were long responsible for their own archives and libraries, have entrusted their holdings to institutions that work directly or indirectly with university libraries and government archives in national information systems. Everywhere, centres engaging in research as well have become affiliated with universities or research academies: in 1979 the IISH similarly became an institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, although the collections have remained the property or under the aegis of the original independent Stichting IISG. Thanks to these and similar developments, financial responsibility for the Western institutions was ultimately transferred largely to the government as well, on the one hand often making for more professional operations, but on the other hand reducing their independence in some cases.

⁶⁷ Interest in visual material has increased continuously since then; cf. among many other examples Altena 2003; Coppens 1982; Jost & Wachter 2008. On the IISH visual collections, see Sanders 2005; Landsberger & Van der Heijden 2009.

⁶⁸ Lucassen 2006.

⁶⁹ On the HSN, see www.iisg.nl/hsn; on historical wages and prices, see www.iisg.nl/hpw.

This new research was very compatible with the new course pursued in collection development policy. Able to pass on some of the responsibility in Europe, the IISH was free to channel more of its energies toward areas elsewhere, in greater need of assistance in preserving social-historical legacy. In 1987 the rapidly expanding Turkish department was started; in 1989 staff members gathered valuable documentation about the Chinese student movement. While these efforts were largely rescue operations, in the 1990s the Institute increasingly allocated permanent resources toward Asia. In addition to the establishment of a network of correspondents, this led a regional desk to be opened in Bangkok in 2003. As Moscow has ceased to be a 'natural' repository, communist archives from Turkey, Iran, Egypt, and Sudan have also been transferred to Amsterdam. Moreover, after 1991 the Institute did a number of microfilm projects in Russia that complemented 'classical' West-European collections on the one hand, and on the other included 'new' Russian material such as the files of and on victims of the Gulag system gathered by the human rights organizations Memorial and Vozvrashtsenie (Return).⁷⁰ And in 1994, in co-operation with Antenna, the first digital collection was built, comprising the millions of messages in the 3,000 or so news groups of the global Association for Progressive Communications.⁷¹

In this way, the Institute has been living like it was born, in close relationship with contemporary social history. Inevitably, it has always to a certain extent been a part of the field that it has tried to document – at the same time independent and participant, engaged and neutral. As a result, its collection, apart from its intrinsic value as a mine of sources, is also a mirror that reflects generations of collectors and those they collected, as well as the history of collection development itself.

⁷⁰ Much used by Nanci Adler in her books *The Great Return* (1999) and *The Gulag Survivor* (2002).

⁷¹ See www.iisg.nl/occasio.



Annie Adama van Scheltema-Kleefstra
(1884-1977), ca. 1935.



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