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Interview with Jacques van Gerwen

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On the Waterfront

newsletter of the friends of the IISH 2022 no. 42



internationaal instituut
voor sociale geschiedenis

Interview
**Jacques van
Gerwen**

Kiek Halewijn
and other
acquisitions

Get to Work
History Month
at the IISH

Introduction

Cover photo:
Kiek
Halewijn's
depiction of
the Shanghai
incident. See
page 12.

The continued covid-19 pandemic and concomitant lockdown measures have made it impossible to convene any Friends' meetings for the second year in a row now. Unfortunately, the pandemic has also forced us to break with our long-standing tradition of publishing two issues per year of *On the Waterfront*. Like everybody else, we hope that the latest lockdown and temporary closing of the Institute in December will have been the last time this was necessary, and that we will be able to organize a Friends' meeting as soon as possible, including a presentation of interesting new acquisitions. Although all work at the Institute, as in the rest of society, has obviously been affected by the pandemic, our colleagues of the Collection Department have been impacted especially hard, because much of their work, such as selecting and inventorying incoming new materials, can be done only at the Cruquiusweg premises. We are therefore especially grateful that we can nonetheless present a new selection of interesting acquisitions, with some remarkable stories.

One of the most important events for history aficionados in the Netherlands, the *Maand van de Geschiedenis* (History Month) took place this fall, despite the pandemic. This was particularly fortuitous for the IISH, because this year's theme was tailor-made for our Institute: 'Get to work!' The history of work is a central theme in our collections and research, and the Institute was therefore logically the theme partner of the History Month's organizers. Thanks to our new communications officer Rose Spijkerman and others, a series of successful events was organized, including an 8-hour festival, debates on topical issues around work and the labour market, and the presentation of the monumental book on the global history of work from prehistory to the present, written by the Friends' co-founder Jan Lucassen. Reports on all events are featured in this issue.

The Institute is known as an organization where staff tend to stay on longer than at the average workplace in the Netherlands. As a result, several colleagues have retired in recent years. We open this issue with an interview with Jacques van Gerwen, who retired in January of this year, the last of the original NEHA staff to leave the Institute.

Aad Blok

About the Friends

*Members of the Friends of the IISH pay annual dues of 25, 100 or 500 euros or join with a lifetime donation of 1,500 euros or more. In return, members are invited to semi-annual sessions featuring presentations of IISH acquisitions and guest speakers. These guest speakers deliver lectures on their field of research, which need not be related to the IISH collection. The presentation and lecture are followed by a reception. The Friends coordinator may consult the Friends about allocation of the revenues from the dues and delivers an annual financial report in conjunction with the IISH administration. As a token of appreciation for their great contribution to the Friends, Jaap Kloosterman and Jan Lucassen were appointed as honorary members in 2014. The IISH was founded by master collector N.W. Posthumus (1880-1960) in the 1930s. For the past two decades, two of the institutions established by this 'history entrepreneur' have operated from the same premises: the Netherlands Economic History Archive founded in 1914 and the International Institute of Social History, which is now more than 80 years old. Both institutes continue to collect, although the 'subsidiary' IISH has grown considerably larger than its 'parent' NEHA. Additional information about the Institute may be found in Jaap Kloosterman and Jan Lucassen, *Rebels with a Cause: Five Centuries of Social History Collected by the IISH* (Amsterdam 2010). For all information concerning the Friends, see <http://socialhistory.org/en/friends>*

Colophon



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Interview with Jacques van Gerwen

Jacques van Gerwen (1956) studied social-economic history at Utrecht University and took his PhD in 1993 for *De Centrale centraal. Geschiedenis van de Centrale Arbeiders-Verzekerings- en Deposito-bank, opgericht in 1904 tot aan de fusie in de Reaal Groep in 1990* (IISH/NEHA, 1993), a history of the insurance company that made the establishment of the IISH possible. In 1985 he became a curator at the Netherlands Economic History Archive (NEHA). Co-operation between the NEHA and the IISH was facilitated by the fact that, as in Post-humus' time, from 1985 onwards both institutes were headed by the same director, Eric Fischer. Jacques was one of the NEHA staff of eleven who, in 1989 moved with the NEHA from its original location at 218-220 Herengracht to premises shared with the IISH at Cruquiusweg. Upon his retirement, he is the last of the original NEHA staff to leave the Cruquiusweg. This occasion is a good opportunity for an interview, to reflect on the past and to look ahead to the future of the NEHA and the IISH/NEHA economic history collections and research.

What type of place was the NEHA when you started working there in August 1985, and what was it like to move, in 1989, from the historical premises on Herengracht, as part of a relatively small staff within the NEHA, to the eastern harbour area?

In the mid-1980s hardly anybody called it the NEHA. It was referred to as the EHB, the Economic-History Library. These two distinguished canal mansions on Herengracht 218 and 220 had been purchased by the City of Amsterdam in the 1930s for the EHB to use as a library. Decorated with marble, brassware, and customized wooden cupboards, they were a modestly sized and pleasant setting. The small staff took morning coffee, lunch, and afternoon tea together with guests, a ritual that I still recall from my student days. The two buildings were packed from top to bottom with the illustrious collections, accruing from 1914. Whenever I worked there past 6 o'clock, I would hear from the squeaks and cracks how the construction groaned under the weight of the huge quantity of paper materials stored there.

When we moved to the smart new premises in Amsterdam East in 1989, the contrast could not

The NEHA staff after the move to Cruquiusweg, posing as a soccer team of eleven, with Eric Fischer as Louis van Gaal. Jacques van Gerwen is standing far left on the front row.



The EHB Reading Room at Herengracht 218-220.



have been greater: modern, spacious, and with much better reading room facilities and significantly superior professional collection preservation, especially for the more fragile historical items in the collection. The new building and the many new co-workers were very refreshing and inspiring for the NEHA staff, who had their own niche in the building, comprising two rooms, within walking distance of Eric Fischer's office. This enabled us to work together closely in every sense.

What do you see as the greatest benefits of merging the NEHA with the IISH, and what was lost in the process? Under his directorship, Eric Fischer shifted the emphasis more from the EHB to the NEHA as an economic-history archive and research institute. The move also instigated serious efforts to improve access to the vast special collections (manuscripts and archival items). Jan Lucassen and his students had an especially important role in this project. We resumed work on company archives (active and passive registration of company archives culminating in the BARN series), company history research was started on commission (a previously unfulfilled wish), the budget for purchasing antiquarian books and archival items was increased considerably, and a great many publishing activities were launched. The new workplace in Amsterdam East was perfect for these dynamics.

Eric Fischer, by merging the collections of the NEHA and the IISH, in a historic restorative move reunited what N.W. Posthumus had been forced to separate in the 1930s due to specific circumstances. At the time of the move, he challenged and encouraged NEHA staff by telling them that some operations were far more efficient at the IISH, while I would hear the reverse from IISH co-workers about the NEHA. Both collections have a

unique and immense intrinsic value but together are worth far more than their constituent parts. Particularly in Dutch research tradition, social and economic history are inextricably linked. The collections at Cruquiusweg epitomize this bond. Being on the same premises makes the collections unique, both in the Netherlands and in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

In 2005, in a very important step, all NEHA operations were formally incorporated within the IISH, and the economic history objectives of the NEHA are now also enshrined in the IISH Statutes. Incidentally, this organizational structure does make the NEHA brand name far more difficult to highlight.

The Herengracht premises were a fantastic location, a veritable *lieu de mémoire*, where the historical collections were symbiotic with the ambiance of the two seventeenth-century canal mansions. The scent of nostalgia – floor wax, brass polish, and the wet mop across the marble hall – faded, but was replaced by so much more in the end.

How do you envisage the role and future of the NEHA in economic-history heritage and economic historiography?

While it may sound presumptuous, in my view the NEHA should ideally be the beginning and end of all economic-history research. The beginning in the sense that we have many highly diverse sources, especially for an initial general orientation of the research to be conducted. Often we can provide researchers with convenient time-saving tips and tricks, share our substantive knowledge, and refer them to our vast network. As an endpoint, we aim to provide opportunities to include or present final results of research (print, digital, datasets, book and journal publications). The NEHA wants to provide an infrastructure for economic-history research of the broad-

est possible scope. The extent to which and the way in which the NEHA collections are used may vary with trends and transitions in economic-history research, but their value remains fixed. In addition to offering a great diversity of sources for economic-history research, the NEHA/IISH is known for conducting independent economic-history research.

In my early years as curator at the NEHA, I was charged with setting up projects intended to culminate in lists of sources (of e.g. banks, insurance companies, and economic organizations, such as the chambers of commerce). I soon became involved in company history research on commission, in part by conducting my own research, in part by supervising research by others. My many additional duties included over 25 years as a member of the editorial board of successive NEHA journals/yearbooks and various offices on the board (e.g. at the *Stichting Bedrijfs-geschiedenis*).

When I joined the NEHA, it was dedicated mainly to (collective) heritage. By redeveloping its own research activities from the 1980s onwards, the NEHA quickly gained a solid reputation for company history research on commission, which in turn generated new commissions. From the late 1990s, the focus shifted towards thematic research, as exemplified by *Zoeken naar Zekerheid. Geschiedenis van risicobeleving en risicobestrijding in de afgelopen 500 jaar* and the *BINT* project (Dutch corporate industry in the twentieth century). Both were special alliances with a great many colleagues from all over the Netherlands. Together with Ferry de Goey, who unfortunately died too young, I wrote about variations in entrepreneurship in the Netherlands, in part for *BINT*.

Economic-history research is now an integral presence in the IISH Research Department. The established NEHA tradition of economic-history research comprising a social component is clearly discernible there. The recent research projects on the history of slavery are cases in point. And of course it is no coincidence that, since 1994, NEHA has had an endowed professor whose teaching assignment is 'company history, including the social aspects'. The IISH is also actively involved in what one might call more 'hard-core' economic research, as exemplified by projects under the aegis of Bas van Leeuwen.

Can you list the top three NEHA acquisitions you were involved in?

I spent the last five or six years as a curator again, officially as senior collection development staff. Having a research background indisputably adds value in acquiring material and making it accessible. My top three would be:

1. Historical Funds Archive of the Amsterdam Exchange and the price gazettes collection: a very important collection in both size and content (circa 400 linear metres); an infinite source of financial-economic data from the mid-19th century until 2000. This was the largest acquisition in the history of the NEHA. Acquired on standing loan, it nicely complements other large data collections we hold here, such as the Angus Maddison collection and a vast CBS collection of

demographic and company censuses from all over the world.

2. Purchases and donations of all kinds of documents (archival items, photographs and the like) that concern the colonial history of the Netherlands, including the history of slavery: for example the archival material of the *Plantage Rust en Werk* in Suriname, credit slips to compensate slave owners in connection with the abolition of slavery, various negotiated loans, and the document collection from the trading company *Oei Tjong Ham Concern*. In this way, privately owned documents are made universally accessible to the public.

3. Aside from acquisition, ensuring access to the material acquired is at least as important. Presently, in particular the documents and photographs concerning our colonial history merit special consideration through inclusive descriptions, so that they may be made available to the broadest possible public all over the world. Digitizing these sources is important as well. A wealth of material has already been digitized, and more is in the pipeline. Thanks in part to the *Metamorfoze* project, old gems in the NEHA collection can now also be made universally available online through digitization, such as the price gazettes from all over the world from the final quarter of the sixteenth century, prospectuses, and bills of lading.

Collections and research both stand to gain a lot from digitization, but at the same time my advice would be: don't neglect the paper heritage, the main focus of the NEHA collections so far.

What will you miss most after you leave, or are you perhaps not really leaving altogether?

Until ten years ago, I devoted most of my time to conducting research, writing, and publishing (end product); in the past decade I was mainly collecting. I will certainly miss the satisfaction of material being featured in the catalogue and seeing colleagues use it both within and outside the Institute, in the Netherlands and abroad. And of course I will miss interacting with colleagues. I am well aware that, for 36 years, I have enjoyed a highly privileged workplace with a great many nice colleagues, both at the Institute and outside. I have received a great deal but have also been able to give a lot.

In conversations with Jan and Leo, for example, both sides have expressed the desire to maintain some form of affiliation with the institute in the future. The position of fellow is well suited for that. I will be grateful to make use of this opportunity to conduct research related to the NEHA collection in the future.

Aad Blok

Presentation of Acquisitions

A World Exhibition in San Francisco During the First World War

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition was a World's Fair held in San Francisco from 20 February to 4 December 1915. The occasion was the recent opening of the Panama Canal in 1914. The Exhibition was also a perfect opportunity to showcase the city's recovery following the major earthquake of 1906. The exhibition ground along the coast is now known as the Marina District.

The exhibition was intended to highlight modern America and the modern world. American Ford cars gleamed alongside perhaps still more elegant Italian Bugattis. Steamships and steam engines were presented with pride, novelties abounded. Alexander Graham Bell displayed his transatlantic phone connection, and Maria Montessori taught in a replica of the *Casa dei bambini*, her innovative school in Rome.

In 2021, the Netherlands Economic-History Archive (NEHA) purchased an album with 'Ned.-Ind. Commissie voor de Internationale Tentoonstelling te San Francisco 1915' printed in gold type on the front cover. This photo album includes 45 gelatine silver prints (each measuring 17 × 23 cm), featuring 's Lands Plantentuin in Weltevreden near Batavia, railways and modern track viaducts, and a workplace of the StaatsSpoor (state railway) in Bandung. Also included are coffee, kina, hemp, and rubber plantations and the factories that process these products. In the album there is an advertising logo of bookshop Visser & Co in Batavia. It was probably produced in a

small print run.

The album was intended to make the Dutch East Indies appealing: economic opportunities, a favourable investment climate, and social and political stability. Considered from the American West Coast, the Netherlands East Indies was just across the ocean. And from this Californian perspective, the Netherlands was at the other end of the world. Although the Netherlands, being neutral, was not involved in the First World War, economic transactions were disrupted all over the world, which causes one to wonder: how did our country manage to participate in this exhibition in remote San Francisco?

The Dutch envoy in Washington, J. Loudon, devised ideas for the Dutch submission, together with the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in San Francisco. From the outset, the plan was focused on agriculture, industry, and trade in the Netherlands, while the colonies were also to be well represented. A Central Commission residing under the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade was formed, alongside commissions for the Netherlands East Indies, Curacao, and Suriname, which operated under the aegis of the Ministry of Colonies. Much of the work on site was performed by H.A. van Coenen Torchiana, chairman of the Holland American Chamber of Commerce for the Pacific Coast States in San Francisco.

Given the limited time available, a closed competition was launched for designing the Dutch pavilion. A design was all that was needed, as, in

Album page 18, with the caption 'Railroad at Gombong'.



Album page
33, with the
caption 'Ro-
busta coffee'.



view of the great distance, its execution would be entrusted to American architects. Out of nine entries, the choice fell on the design by architect Willem Kromhout Czn. (1864-1940), now known mainly for the American Hotel on Amsterdam's Leidseplein (1899-1902).¹ Kromhout was experienced, as he had also designed the Dutch pavilion at the World's Fair in Brussels in 1910, which had been critiqued for its Old-Dutch style. In San Francisco it was to be different. Here, the brief had been to design a pavilion representing contemporary Dutch architecture. Kromhout designed a pavilion with a striking tower, topped with a large dome. The lower sections of the building were decorated with cupolas as well, attesting to Kromhout's penchant for Oriental architecture. The four sides of the tower featured frames resembling Dutch step gables. The effect of the ascending lines of these gables was highlighted by a great many tall flagpoles. The pavilion drew considerable criticism. H.W. van Asch van Wijk, as the only member of the Central Commission present in San Francisco, argued that although the building was impressive, it was 'loud' and 'flashy' and in this respect compared unfavourably to the elegant, peaceful, and distinguished buildings in close proximity. The flagpoles revealed a yearning for advertising. The circumstances of the closed competition, Kromhout's selection, and the coverage of the pavilion have been described at length by Marie-Therèse van Thoor in her book *Het gebouw van Nederland. Nederlandse paviljoens op de wereldtentoonstellingen 1910-1958*.² That Van Thoor expresses such inter-

est in the San Francisco World's Fair is all the more remarkable, because this particular exhibition is not mentioned at all in Marieke Bloembergen's study *De koloniale vertoning. Nederland en Indië op de wereldtentoonstellingen (1880-1931)*.³

In 1921, Frank Morton Todd published *The Story of the Exposition*, an expansive five-volume work. Chapter 52 in volume 3 is entirely about 'The Empire of the Netherlands'.⁴ The pavilion was described here as 'Byzantine, or even Romanesque in spirit, although it was very original in detail'. And equally favourably: 'It was not Holland of the past that was exhibited here, but a great modern commercial and industrial empire, throbbing with energy.' Todd emphasized the role of Mr E. de Kruyff who, as a member of the Commission for the East Indies, had managed to organize 'a magnificent exhibit of the East Indian colonies' in the largest hall of the pavilion, a fairly high area that was almost all white and decorated with woodcarvings and plants. Dioramas by visual artist Carel Lodewijk Dake Jr. (1886-1946) featured sugar, rubber, and tobacco cultivation on Central Java and the rice fields and coffee plantations in the Preanger on West Java. The main attraction in the hall was 'a sort of kiosk, or pagoda, hung with specimens of batik work carved with the motifs of Javanese native

Nederlandse paviljoens op de wereldtentoonstellingen 1910-1958. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1998.

³ Marieke Bloembergen, *De koloniale vertoning. Nederland en Indië op de wereldtentoonstellingen (1880-1931)*. Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek [2002].

⁴ Frank Morton Todd, *The Story of the Exposition. Being the Official History of the International Celebration held at San Francisco in 1915 to commemorate the Discovery of the Pacific Ocean and the Construction of the Panama Canal*. Five Volumes. New York / London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921.

¹ Ida Jager, *Willem Kromhout Czn*. Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 1992.

² Marie-Therèse van Thoor, *Het gebouw van Nederland*.

art, and with a wonderful example of Javanese copper work in the form of a flying figure, hanging from the little tower'. In addition, routes of ocean steamers were depicted, there were light-house models, and a replica of 'the Government Vaccine Laboratory at Batavia, which offers every person in the island [Java] security against small-pox'. In *The Making of a Periphery: How Island South-east Asia Became a Mass Exporter of Labor* (New York: Cornell UP, 2019), IISH researcher Ulbe Bosma recently described the demographic effects of this Dutch vaccination campaign in the Dutch East Indies.

Bouwe Hijma

Plaster bust by Émile Derré

Early this year, the plaster bust of a woman was donated to the IISH collection by Rudolf de Jong, who worked at the IISH from 1987 to 1994 as an expert on anarchism and the Iberian world. De Jong received the bust in the 1960s from Boris Souvarine, who worked at the Paris branch of the Institute before the Second World War.

Initially, there was some confusion regarding the identity of the woman portrayed. On the rear of the plaster bust "Emma Goldman" is written in pencil although the bust looks nothing like her. The sculpted portrait does, however, bear a striking resemblance to another anarchist: Louise Michel (1830-1905) (see image page 9).

Kees Rodenburg, who succeeded De Jong, inquired with the French specialist Claude Rézat about Louise Michel's life and work. Rézat confirmed that the bust was indeed a likeness of Michel. She believes that Emma Goldman's name may appear on it because it was intended for Goldman or was in her possession. This is conceivable, since Goldman lived on the French Riviera for a while.

In addition to Goldman's name, the back of the bust's base contains several other words (not properly legible), the year '1909', and the sculptor's name, 'Derré'. This would be the French artist Émile Derré (Paris 1867 - Nice 1938). Little has been published about him. One of the few publications that addresses the sculpted busts of Louise Michel by Derré is an essay published in 2019 by Claude Rézat, "Art vaincra ! Louise Michel l'artiste en révolution et le dégoût du politique".

The work by this sculptor reveals that he moved within and was acquainted with Parisian anarchist circles: many of his sculptures have a political connotation. In addition to sculptures of Louise Michel, for example, he portrayed Charles Fourier (1772-1832), Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881), and Elisée Reclus (1830-1905).

Near Paris, in the Parc de la Planchette at Levallois-Perret, is a group of bronzes that Emile Derré made in 1905. Beside Louise Michel, who appears here in a full-figure depiction, stands a young girl with Michel's arm draped protectively around her. This may refer to Michel's teaching days. A photo of this sculpture clearly reveals that the plaster bust recently donated closely resembles Michel as represented in this bronze (image on page 9).

Reports from the French anarchist newspaper *Les Temps nouveaux* reveal that the editors asked Derré for permission to make plaster casts of the bronze bust of Michel. Below the reports are the initials Am. D., most likely from the French journalist and politician Amédée Dunois. Readers could register to purchase them, as well as for plaster busts of Elisée Reclus.

Les Temps nouveaux (28 July 1906, p. 7): 'Notre excellent camarade, le sculpteur Emile Derré, en qui le souci de l'art le plus noble s'allie intimement aux aspirations révolutionnaires, nous a fait don, pour le bureau des T.N. (Temps nouveaux), de deux de ses dernières œuvres: le buste de Louise Michel et celui d'Elisée Reclus. Ce sont deux morceaux d'une exécution magistrale et qui font gloire à l'ouvrier. Derré a su restituer à celle que le peuple appelle la bonne Louise

The plaster bust in the garden of Rudolf de Jong, 2021. Photograph by Kees Rodenburg.



son expression de tendresse et de miséricorde infinies, plus qu'humaines, c'est bien ainsi que nous l'avons connue, portant en avant la tête comme si elle se fût penchée sur l'immense

Emma Goldman's name written in pencil on the rear of the bust of Louise Michel (IISH BG K 22/676).





misère du monde.’ [Our excellent comrade, the sculptor Emile Derré, whose concern for the noblest art closely matches revolutionary aspirations, has given us for the TN office two of his latest works: the bust of Louise Michel and that of Elisée Reclus. These two pieces feature masterful craftsmanship that glorifies the worker. Derré has managed to restore to what the people call the good Louise her expression of infinite tenderness and mercy, superhuman; this is how we have known her, carrying her head forward, as if inclined over the immense misery of the world.]

A brief message in *Les Temps nouveaux* (4 August 1906) indicated that at least 20 copies would be cast of each bust. This would ensure a return for the maker of the plaster casts. The busts were priced at five francs each: four francs to cover the cost of making a cast ‘[...] et 1 franc le bénéfice du sculpteur, que Derré, un bon camarade, nous a déclaré abandonner à la propagande’ [and 1 franc as profit for the sculptor, which Derré, as a good comrade, told us would go toward propaganda].

Derré produced several sculpted images of Louise Michel. He portrayed her, together with the busts of Blanqui and Reclus, on a capital of the column ‘Le Chapiteau des Baisers’. This column was originally in the Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris and, following its restoration, has been in the city of Roubaix since 1997. The four sides of the capital symbolize motherhood, love, comfort, and death. The final theme is depicted by Michel and Blanqui. Louise Michel appears cradling the deceased Blanqui in her arms and kissing him intensely. On the other side of the column she is kissing Elisée Reclus.

On Louise Michel’s grave, in Levallois-Perret, is a bronze bust of her by Derré. The bust rests on a

base shaped like a stack of books. This undoubtedly refers to the many books and writings that Michel left.

Harriet Stroomberg (with thanks to Kees Rodenburg)

Design by Fré Cohen for an AJC Christmas camp in 1924

The Arbeiders Jeugd Centrale [workers’ youth centre] (AJC), founded on 18 March 1918, was a youth organization of both the NVV and the SDAP dedicated to bringing together and educating working-class youth with a view to edifying them while preparing them to join the struggle for socialism.

The AJC aimed to realize the socialist cultural ideal within its own ranks in a unique AJC style. This meant abstaining from tobacco and alcohol and a distinctive way of dressing, celebrating, and engaging in leisure pursuits. Activities included hiking and camping, as well as singing, folk dancing, music, and mystery plays. All of this has been described in detail in the study by Jan Meilof, *Een wereld licht en vrij. Het culturele werk van de AJC 1918-1959*.⁵

The AJC had chapters and districts. Youth members joined a chapter that organized activities almost every week. From the start, celebrating Labour Day on 1 May was important, while 1922 marked the start of a tradition of Pentecostal festivals, as the annual high point of the socialist youth movement, especially before 1940. While these festivals had little to do with the Christian holiday, such days were bank holidays, and lovely spring weather was very likely.

How was Christmas celebrated within the AJC? We know more thanks to a recent acquisition. The AJC collection present at the IISH has been enhanced by a scene depicted by the Amsterdam graphic designer Fré Cohen (1903-1943), painted in gouache on cardboard (possibly intended for a calendar block), captioned ‘Paasheuvel Christmas camp 1924’. The scene features a youth playing a flute under a tree on a green elevation (possibly De Paasheuvel).

The label ‘Christmas camp 1924’ raises questions about how the socialist AJC related to Christmas. Socialists do not identify closely with the Christian holiday of Christmas, and this was still more the case among the many Jewish AJC members. The article ‘Het Kerstfeest’, published in *Het Jonge Volk* of 26 December 1924, makes clear how the AJC tried to relate to Christmas celebrations. Jan Derksen outlines the Winterfest or Yuletide, in which the events and changes in nature were celebrated with large bonfires, firs and pines, holly branches with berries and mistletoe on old oak trees, in keeping with Germanic and Gaul traditions.

Unfortunately, a report is missing for the Christmas camp at the end of 1924. This was indeed held, as is clear from the section *Afdelings-nieuws* [Chapter news] in *Het Jonge Volk* for the Amsterdam chapter: ‘36 members of our chapter

Picture postcard, Salon of 1906, Louise Michel by Émile Derré, (IISH BG A15/663).

⁵ Jan Meilof. *Een wereld licht en vrij. Het culturele werk van de AJC 1918-1959*. Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 2000.



Fré Cohen, gouache of Paasheuvel Christmas camp AJC 1924 (IISH BG B35/847).

Cohen's admission ticket design for the Rode Valken Christmas gathering, 1930.

have registered to attend the Christmas camp.' What happened at those camps? The report about the six Paasheuvel week camps in the summer of 1924 offers a good impression. Hikes during the day and at night, storytelling at an open fire, frequent visits to the library, cooking and cleaning in turns. And, of course, speakers: 'every week Koos [Vorrink, the AJC chairman] spent at least one evening with us and addressed those present, e.g. about the murder of Jean Jaurès and commemoration of the outbreak of the war' (the First World War, as the Second still seemed very distant at that point). The phrase 'Nearly every day fellow party members came to see us, prominent ones and others from the movement...' reveals that these camps were incubators for substantive and organizational talent for the social-democratic movement.

Fré Cohen was born into an Amsterdam working-class family of Jewish origin. Her parents, Levie Cohen and Esther Sarlie, were both diamond workers. Fré Cohen enjoyed drawing and painting from early childhood. Educated at the Grafische School in Amsterdam, she became a leading designer and was associated with the socialist movement. From 1927 to 1929 she attended classes at the Amsterdamsche Kunstnijverheidsschool. Her initially ornate style, which reflected a sense of symmetry, evolved into one that was more defined, in which she used photomontages. Cohen designed a lot of printed matter for the AJC and for the socialist press and the trade unions from around 1922 until the start of the German occupation. She was also commissioned extensively by the City of Amsterdam. From September 1929 until February 1932, she worked for the Stadsdrukkerij Amsterdam.

The relatively early colourful plate for the Christmas camp in December 1924 highlights her talent. The admission ticket of Jacques Arons (1915-1944) for the Rode Valken Christmas gathering on 25 December 1930 in Amsterdam also depicted here exemplifies Fré Cohen's more defined style.

Various publications and exhibitions have paid tribute to Fré Cohen over the years. From 2 November 2021 through 4 September 2022 the Museum Het Schip in the Spaarndammer neighbourhood, an example of the finest in social-democratic public housing, is hosting an exhibition about the life and work of Fré Cohen. See:



Fré Cohen, Christmas card 'In de mensen een welbehagen ...', 1933 (IISH BG B35/890).

<https://www.hetschip.nl/bezoekers/activiteiten/expositie-fre-cohen>. *Fré Cohen: vorm en idealen van de Amsterdamse School*, the publication accompanying this exhibition, includes a full-page depiction of a Christmas card that Fré Cohen designed in 1933. The different elements in this design attest to widespread acceptance of the Christmas spirit, including beyond specifically Christian circles.

Bouwe Hijma and Harriet Stroomberg





Mimi Ponstijn, Jan Ponstijn, Henriette Ponstijn van Hilten and Kiek Halewijn, a friend of the family. They are standing by the sundial made by Jan Ponstijn after the example of an old sundial in the garden of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Photograph by Jan Petrus Ponstijn. Regionaal Archief Alkmaar, RAA-PON-0205.

Kiek Halewijn

Little is known about the artist Kiek Halewijn, who died young. What do we know? Louis Ernest (Kiek) Halewijn was born in Bandung on Java on 8 January 1910. His parents were Ernest Halewijn, a plantation administrator, and Jeanette Gunst. When he arrived in the Netherlands is unknown. The militia register at the Stadsarchief Amsterdam reveals that, in 1929, he attended the *Kunstnijverheidsschool* [applied arts school] in Amsterdam. In those days he lived on Wouwermanstraat, boarding with the artist Jan Ponstijn and his wife Henriette Ponstijn-van Hilten. After moving to Bergen (province of North Holland) in the 1930s, Ponstijn and his wife remained friends with Halewijn. The Alkmaar regional archive collection includes several photos depicting Halewijn while visiting the Ponstijns. In the 1930s, Halewijn settled in Bussum, but he lived in Amsterdam again from 1936 until his death in 1948.

In Amsterdam he attended the *Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten* [national academy of visual arts], where his instructors included Johannes Jurres. Halewijn painted and drew landscapes, cityscapes, figures, portraits, and still-life paintings. He is known to have designed two *ex libris* for E. Grendel and the Gunst family, respectively (Museum Meermanno). A portrait of Johanna Maria Bake, which he painted in 1935, is part of a private collection, as are several watercolours and drawings. A portrait sketch of the artist Mommie Schwarz from 1941 is in the collection of the Jewish Historical Museum. In her publication *Else Berg en Mommie Schwarz. Kunstenaarspaar in Amsterdam 1910-1942*, Linda

Horn describes Halewijn and Schwarz as friends. Schwarz taught Halewijn drawing for a while, and the artists enjoyed fishing trips together. Horn wrote: 'Schwarz appears to have been a father figure for Halewijn; he taught him and did his best to get his drawings published.' His efforts were successful, as is mentioned in a surviving letter from Halewijn in which he writes to Schwarz that in 1939 a drawing of his appeared in the *Handelsblad* and thanks him for his help making this happen.⁶

Halewijn was a member of the artist associations 'Arti et Amicitiae' and 'De Onafhankelijkken' in Amsterdam. He is listed in the catalogues of *De Onafhankelijkken* at the Stedelijk Museum exhibitions from 1937 to 1941. The Stadsarchief Amsterdam contains two drawings in the collection: a coloured one from 1941 (*Afgesloten IJ. Met kop van de Oostelijke Handelskade*) and a charcoal drawing from 1946, (*Centraal Station, Stationsplein. Interieur met 1e perron*). In 1939/1940, during the mobilization, Halewijn was conscripted, stationed in Megen, near Nijmegen, where he produced drawings as well.⁷

The archives at Stadsarchief Amsterdam reveal that Kiek Halewijn married Anthonetta Machteltje (Netty) Riel (Leiden 1907-Amsterdam 1983) in Amsterdam on 2 June 1938. At the time

⁶ Peter de Ruiter and Linda Horn, *Else Berg en Mommie Schwarz. Kunstenaarspaar in Amsterdam 1910-1942*. Wezep: Uitgeverij De Kunst, 2012, pp. 47 and 62. The letter has been entrusted to Stichting Behoud Kunstverzameling Henk van Gisteren.

⁷ See for information on an exhibition of these drawings in Megen, "Tentoonstelling Kiek Halewijn 1989": Brabants Historisch Informatie Centrum (bhic), access number 7527, inv.no. 1097.



Standing back left: Friedel Baruch; seated in front of him, second and third from left Frans and Tony Berlin, Mommie Schwartz (only face visible); seated in center Netty and Kiek Halewijn; woman with wine bottle to her mouth Mimi Ponslijn; seated to her right Theun de Vries; left, squatting, Jo Voskuil. Other people are unknown. The party took place around 1936/1937 at the home of Kiek Halewijn, presumably at his studio on Prinseneiland. Photographer unknown. Private collection Jet Baruch.

she worked as a sous chef at De Bijenkorf. The couple lived in Amsterdam at 124 Prins Hendrikade upstairs and kept company with progressive and anti-fascist artists. Privately owned photos from the 1930s show Halewijn at the opening of an exhibition of works by Jan Ponslijn and Fred Carasso at Galerie Robert on Keizersgracht and, at home or in his studio, celebrating together with friends and acquaintances, including Jo Voskuil, Mommie Schwarz, and Theun de Vries. Halewijn is believed to have had studios at 42 Sarphatipark and on Prinseneiland.⁸

The photographer Cas Oorthuys took portrait pictures of Halewijn and his wife, among them a close-up of Kiek with closed eyes. The photo is part of the Stedelijk Museum collection. A

⁸ De Ruiter and Horn, p. 59, Note 9 and comment from Jet Baruch.

contact album sheet at the Fotomuseum features a portrait photo of Netty Halewijn-Riel, taken around 1938. Information from Jet Baruch, who donated the drawing described here, and a granddaughter of Jan Ponslijn, indicates that Cas Oorthuys not only photographed the Halewijns but was friends with them as well. Oorthuys and Halewijn were friends since the early 1930s, when Cas Oorthuys lived on Prinseneiland and had a studio there. He and the artist Jo Voskuil started 'ov-20' (Oorthuys-Voskuil and the street address number) there, an agency for designs and advertising. Halewijn frequently visited them.⁹

The sudden death of Kiek Halewijn at age 38 on 16 February 1948, as a result of a heart attack, was noted only in the newspaper *De Waarheid*, which wrote: 'He [...] became renowned for his magnificent Indonesian and Dutch landscape scenes. He was among the first who refused to join the *Kultuurkamer*. Halewijn, who was never spoken of at great length, is nonetheless one of the most important of our young painters.' At the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam several of his works were featured as a tribute in the spring of 1949. Halewijn is buried at the Oude Begraafplaats in Naarden.

Harriet Stroomberg (with thanks to Jet Baruch)

⁹ Kind message from Sybrand Hekking.

The Shanghai incident as depicted by Kiek Halewijn

In the Halewijn drawing depicted here, a few things are remarkable. First, this drawing is exceptional among Halewijn's overall output. In no other drawing by Halewijn is war known to be the main subject.¹⁰ This might seem odd for an artist who interacted with progressive circles, where war was definitely an important topic of discussion and propaganda in those days.

Second, the topic depicted here can be only the Shanghai incident. The term incident is rather euphemistic for what was in fact a full-blown war, albeit very localized. Although the developments in Shanghai received extensive coverage in the mainstream and leftist press in the Netherlands in 1932, very few illustrations of the conflict surface in searches of the National Library's Delpher database. This raises the question of what Halewijn used as his example or source of inspiration. Only if he had access to visual depictions, could he have known some of the details, such as the specific shape of the aircraft wings. The question is particularly compelling because Halewijn's drawing dates back to a very early stage in the conflict, leaving him little time to find visual information on it. The drawing is dated 1 February 1932, while the incident started on 28 January, only three days earlier. Did Halewijn have access to foreign media, in which he might have found illustrations? American newsreels reported on the battle, but whether those were available in the Netherlands remains unclear.¹¹

Those familiar with the former Shanghai skyline may recognize the buildings in the background, flying English and Japanese flags, as free interpretations of the so-called Bund, a boulevard with numerous European-style buildings along the Huangpu River, part of this International Settlement and home to many international (including Japanese and English) trading companies. In what was known as the Shanghai International Settlement, fourteen countries that had treaties with China would have had interests. The citizens of those countries would have been housed there, including the Dutch.¹²

¹⁰ There is an exhibition catalogue: *Kiek Halewijn: impressies van een dienstplichtig militair tijdens de mobilisatie van 1939/40 te Megen-Brandenburg en omgeving*. Megen: Gemeente Megen, 1989.

¹¹ An American film newsreel is available at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/24672> (*Japanese Bombs Create Havoc in Shanghai*, National Archives). Remarkably, the commentator here states "Shanghai's gallant defenders said: They shall not pass" (1.35 min.). These words became known only later in Spanish as ¡No Pasarán!, uttered by Dolores Ibárruri Gómez in a radio speech during the Battle for Madrid in the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

¹² Dutch communists protested in front of the Japanese Embassy in The Hague and smashed five windows (*De Banier*, 10/3/1932, p. 2). Later in the conflict this even led to parliamentary debate and statements in the Netherlands about deploying a naval vessel to rescue Dutch citizens. (*Twentsch Dagblad Tubantia en Enschedesche Courant*, 23/2/1932, p. 3; *Eindhovens Dagblad*, 27/2/1932, p. 1, and *Vredesstrijd*, 4/6 (1932), p. 43).

The French had their own Concession. One odd flag stands out from the others: the flag of the United States of America, posted on what looks like an oil drilling facility. Clearly, Great Britain, France, and the United States were the major powers in the imperialist policies vis-à-vis China. The officer and gunner at the left would have been Japanese troops (recognizable from the rather flat model helmet), as well as the soldier in green on the right. At the left, behind the British-made Maxim machine-gun (Vickers) is a Chinese soldier with another one at the right, and the middle ground is filled with Chinese victims of the violence. In the centrepiece is a woman in blue, her arms raised to the sky in a



classic, very dramatic pose, with her baby lying dead at her knees. The sky is filled with what look like Nakajima A1N planes from the Japanese Imperial Navy, an important detail in this respect (see reference 5) and adding depth to the drawing. Is the US dollar sign in the middle intended to highlight the imperialist nature of the conflict? The white dove with an olive branch in its beak has come too early. Only after nearly five more weeks was a peace treaty signed. The box of Dewar's (a well-known whisky blend) is an odd detail in the left foreground. This generally remarkable drawing was most likely produced by Halewijn to be printed in a paper. To date, however, there are no signs as to whether or where it was published.

Kiek Halewijn's depiction of the Shanghai incident.

Mimi Ponsstijn, Kiek Halewijn, Henriette Ponsstijn-van Hilten en Jan Ponsstijn in the workshop of Jan Ponsstijn, ca. 1927. Regionaal Archief, RAA-PON-0213



What was the Shanghai incident?¹³ On 18 January 1932, after Japan obtained control over Manchuria in September 1931, five Japanese Buddhist monks (incited by Japanese intelligence services) shouted anti-Chinese slogans, and were beaten near Shanghai's Sanyou Factory by agitated Chinese civilians. One monk died of injuries sustained here. Over the next few hours, a Japanese mob set the factory ablaze. Two Chinese were killed in the inferno. This caused a surge of anti-Japanese and anti-imperialist protests in the city and its concessions. The Japanese decreed an ultimatum to the Shanghai Municipal Council, demanding public condemnation and monetary compensation for any Japanese property damaged in the monk incident, and active steps from the Chinese government to suppress further anti-Japanese protests in the city. At midnight on 27 January – before the ultimatum expired – Japanese carrier aircraft from the *Notoro* bombed the Chapei sector in Shanghai in the first major aircraft carrier action in East Asia.¹⁴ In the afternoon of January 28, the Shanghai Municipal Council consented to the demands. Japanese Special Naval Landing Force troops attacked targets around the city. Surprisingly, the 19th Route Army put up fierce resistance, forcing the Japanese Army to become involved and spreading the war to much of Chinese-controlled Shanghai. The United States, the United Kingdom, and France (all having troops stationed in Shanghai), attempted to negotiate a ceasefire, but Japan refused and continued to mobilize troops in the region. The Japanese issued another

ultimatum, demanding that the Chinese armed forces retreat 20 km from the border of the Shanghai concessions. This demand was promptly rejected. By mid-February, the Japanese were still unable to take the city. Japanese troops were then increased to nearly 90,000, supported by 80 warships and 300 aircraft. On 14 February, Chiang Kai-shek sent the 5th Army into Shanghai.

On 20 February, Japanese bombings were increased, setting commercial and residential districts of the city on fire. Without the necessary support, Chinese defensive positions deteriorated rapidly, with defence forces dwindling to fewer than 50,000 (compared with 100,000 Japanese troops). By late February the Chinese were no longer capable of withstanding Japanese attacks. On 3 March, the 19th Route Army and the 5th Army retreated from Shanghai, marking the official end of the battle. On 4 March, the League of Nations adopted a resolution demanding a ceasefire, and on 6 March, the Chinese unilaterally agreed to stop fighting, although the Japanese rejected the ceasefire. On 14 March, representatives from the League of Nations arrived at Shanghai to broker a settlement with the Japanese. On 5 May, China and Japan signed the Shanghai Ceasefire Agreement, which made Shanghai a demilitarized zone and prohibited China from garrisoning troops in areas surrounding Shanghai, while allowing the presence of a few Japanese units in the city. What became known as the January 28 incident or Shanghai incident in fact marked the start of an all-out war.

One of the few original Dutch books from this period in Shanghai in 1932 is *China in den Storm* by Kwee Kek Beng, published by Paul Brand in 1938 (pp. 149-160). The author mistakenly dates the killing of a number of left-wing writers by the Chinese Nationalist Government in 1932, while that incident actually happened in 1931. Kwee Kek Beng was a Chinese-Indonesian journalist, working for *Sin Po* in Batavia (Jakarta).

Eef Vermeij (with input from Harriet Stroomberg)

¹³ This article is heavily revised and slightly altered from the Wikipedia entry on this subject: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_28_incident. A complete account of the war appears in: Donald A. Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire: The Shanghai War of 1932*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

¹⁴ It is generally thought that the Imperial Navy envied the Army after the successful campaign in Manchuria and did not want to risk having to return to Japan without taking action.

Get to work: History Month at the IISH

by Rose Spijkerman

This past October marked the tenth edition of History Month, in which various cultural institutions in the Netherlands organize all kinds of activities that fit the adage ‘discover yesterday, understand today’. The theme for 2021 was ‘Get to work’, and if the IISH knows about anything, it is certainly work. Accordingly, we were theme partner of the Month this year and organized both a festival and the book presentation of the Dutch edition of Jan Lucassen’s global history of work, *The Story of Work: A New History of Human-*

kind/ De wereld aan het werk. Van de prehistorie tot nu, as well as several debate evenings at our Institute about current issues relating to work and labour relations. In addition, our staff member Gijs Kessler engaged James Kennedy in a discussion at the Public Library in Amsterdam about the Dutch work ethic. The IISH was also represented at the concluding History Night at the Rijksmuseum. The two towers of the museum highlighted labour migrants and the Historisch Beeldarchief Migranten, a special collection in our archive.

8:UREN:FESTIVAL

Inspired by the nineteenth-century battle cry ‘eight hours for work, eight hours for leisure, eight hours for rest’, the eight-hour festival organized at the IISH on 2 October revolved around work (speakers), leisure (music, bar, food, workshops, guided tours), and rest (cinema). Despite the downpour that afternoon, the event was pleasantly busy throughout the day. ‘Leisure’ consisted of music by Port of Call, Katia, and The Bucket Boyz. DJ Avalon wrapped up the night, which ended in a wild dance party. Because of Covid-19, this was the first opportunity for many to listen and dance to live music in a long time. There was also plenty of delicious food and refreshing beverages, there was a lino cutting workshop, and guided tours of the archives were available throughout the day. Het Fort van Sjakoo sold books, and there were expositions by artist Richard Kofi (who provided a commentary

of his art as well) and the NEMO Science Museum. Those in need of ‘rest’ could watch movies from the IISH collection. The ‘work’ was done by ten speakers, each one delivering a 15-minute narrative. While they described all possible forms of work, unnoticed occupations and the struggle for emancipation of often unheeded people were pivotal. These reference points may generally be classified according to three related themes.

Unknown stories and unseen occupations figured in the narrative of writer Angelo Schenkers, the opening speaker for the morning sessions. His book *Voor altijd op de vlucht/Een Amsterdams familieverhaal* is about his ancestors: his great-grandfather was a navy, and his family was desperately poor and had little social standing in the early twentieth century. His son, Schenkers’ grandfather, wanted a different way of life and together with his wife opened an automatic vend-



Chanel Matil Lodik talked about the workshop on diversity and inclusion on the job market that she held in 2021.

Photos pp. 15-20 by Rose Spijkerman and Rosa Kösters.

Left:
Rolf Schrama
recounting
his experi-
ences with
workplace
prejudice.



Right:
Winnie-Chel-
sea Young
gave a talk
about Afro-
tiek Black
Beauty.



ing machine service on Damrak in Amsterdam: 'De automatiek van Riek'. Trade unionist and politician Ron Meyer described the current circumstances of the type of jobs that Schenkers wrote about in their historical context, based on his book *De onmisbaren: een ode aan mijn sociale klasse*. In this work Meyer writes about his own family from Limburg, as well as about the millions of cleaners, parcel deliverers, and those working in sanitation, distribution services, and healthcare, who are often invisible but are nonetheless indispensable. Historian Wim Manuhutu spoke about another group that has long suffered both social and economic exclusion: the Moluccan community in the Netherlands. Over ninety percent of the men had served in the Koninklijk Nederlandsch Indisch Leger [Royal Netherlands Indies Army], but upon arriving in the Netherlands received an honourable discharge and had to seek alternative

**The Bucket
Boyz in full
swing.**



employment. Other work that was often unappreciated and lapsed into oblivion was addressed in the narrative of historian Eva Vriend. In her book *De Helpende Hand. De verborgen geschiedenis van de gezinszorg in Nederland*, she explores the years after the Second World War. Thousands of young women and girls were recruited as family caregivers to support those in need, thereby playing a major role in families' lives.

This topic related to the following theme: women and work. Kitty Jong, FNV deputy chair, discussed sexual harassment at the workplace. FNV research indicates that nearly half of all employees – the majority female – has experienced some kind of sexual harassment. Less than half the victims report such incidents. Jong advocated harsher measures and a lower threshold for processing complaints. Journalist and programme maker Liesbeth Staats tried to answer this question with respect to part-time work, in a documentary as well as in a book, *Waarom vrouwen minder werken dan mannen (en dat ook jouw probleem is)*. Idealized role patterns and the wage gap are among the causes and drive Dutch women into difficult situations, especially following a divorce. Historian Madeleijn van den Nieuwenhuizen connected from New York to talk about her oral history project on the qualification 'legally incompetent'. Until 1956, married women were legally 'incompetent' and as a consequence could not, for example, open a bank account and could enter employment agreements only with official permission from their husband. Even after this system was abolished, imbalances persisted, such as the 'honourable discharge' that women received when they married. Working with volunteers, Van den Nieuwenhuizen gathers as many first-hand experiences as possible.

The final comprehensive theme at the festival



Dan Afrifa delivering his column *Why work, if you can study?*

was diversity and inclusion at the workplace. Paralympic sailing participant and diversity officer Rolf Schrama spoke about his own past, in which his stature of 1.25 metres has forced him to cope both with the prejudices of others and his own expectations. Following his career as a top athlete, he went to work in Amsterdam's business district, where he advocates more opportunities for those facing occupational challenges. Winnie-Chelsea Young described the choices and attribution of meaning by Black women about their hair at the workplace – revealing that certain experiences make many women feel compelled to adapt to white standards. Her research led

her toward Afrotiek Black Beauty. Run by two sisters, it is the first Black hair & beauty salon in the Netherlands (and in Europe!) since it opened in 1971. She managed to speak with a great many women who fondly recalled the salon that catered to their hair. Finally, writer, speaker, and diversity expert Chanel Matil Lodik delivered a brief workshop on diversity and inclusion on the job market in 2021 and then described how organizations and companies can ensure a more diverse workforce.

Concluding the 'working day,' historian, writer, and IISH staff member Dan Afrifa delivered the following column:

Why work, if you can study?

'Why do you encourage this?' my father complained.
'Everybody his age is doing it,' my mother replied.
'But what will ... people think?'

This parental talk was not about sex, not about alcohol and drugs, and ... not about other ungodly teen pursuits. My father meant that 'people' might think we were poor. They might think that he was not pulling his weight as head of the household, and that his fifteen-year old son was forced to take a summer job. My mother did not share this concern, and in their discussion, her opinion prevailed.

I will always remember my first day stocking shelves at the Albert Heijn supermarket. Customers approached me with questions about sanitary napkins, although I knew about menstrual periods only from biology textbooks. My father's objections are also indelibly embedded in my memory. He insisted that I should not care more about my

payslips than about my schoolbooks. My father, who worked double shifts, putting on the uniform of one cleaning company in the morning and changing into that of the other one in the evening, who did not believe that being sick justified staying home, thought that resting was a waste of his holiday time and preferred to work straight through, so that he could send more holiday pay to Ghana. This man, whom I never saw without rings under his eyes, did not want me to work.

A few summer holidays later, I started at the University of Amsterdam as a student of political science. I had difficulties adjusting to this new setting. At each minor setback, I felt as if I was being blown away from the university. I soldiered on until after the Christmas break, when during a lecture class my phone rang, and I walked out of class to answer it.

'We need somebody now,' my shift leader at Al-

bert Heijn pleaded. ‘How soon can you get here?’ Hmm. Should I return to the classroom and continue as seed in infertile ground or drift away to where they paid me for my time?

It took me a few weeks to confess that soon after this phone call, I had dropped out of college. I needed some time to figure out how I could avoid seeming like a son who cared more about his pay slips than about his textbooks. In vain, and only a week after I told him, my father spoke to me again.

‘That small change being dangled in front of you now is making you forget about the future. What you make at Albert Heijn now cannot compare to what a university degree will bring you.’

After the summer I tried to resume my studies without any luck, and I made another attempt the next academic year. Three times turned out to be the charm, and in 2019 I completed my bachelor’s degree in history without delay. ‘Why go to work, if you can study?’ my father asked at that point. But my mind was made up: I had done what was expected of me, and a master’s degree was truly beyond reason. I wanted to keep on writing and to work a bit, until I could make ends meet from writing alone. That was how I ended up working on

call here at the IISH.

Once, after I had spent the day working in the stacks, my father approached me and asked: ‘How much do they pay you there anyway?’ I told him my hourly wage, and he replied: ‘That’s what cleaners make.’

The next year I started working as a trainee editor at Folia, the University of Amsterdam weekly. I then continued as a freelance writer and did better than I expected. Last spring I presented my father with the election issue of *De Groene Amsterdammer*, opened at the page where my name appeared at the top of my article. He was quiet, perhaps silent from pride. When I told him how many euros I was paid for the 3,000 words, he asked when my next article would appear. Last summer I published in *De Groene Amsterdammer* again and wrote columns for *Het Parool*. All the same, I enrolled in a history master’s programme in September. I put writing aside for a year to explore my textbooks. Of course it was nice to get paid and prove my father wrong at the same time, but coming up with and pitching and writing articles was getting perilously close to working. And why work, when you can study?

Book presentation:

The Story of Work: A New History of Humankind by Jan Lucassen

Jan Lucassen,
proudly showing
his twins.



On Wednesday 6 October, in recognition of History Month, the IISH organized the presentation of *De wereld aan het werk. Van de prehistorie tot nu*, the Dutch edition, published by WBooks, of Jan Lucassen’s magnum opus *The Story of Work: A New History of Humankind*, published by Yale University Press in late July and immediately receiving a great many glowing reviews in various British and American newspapers. Because the book matched the theme of this History Month perfectly, the author, together with publisher Marti Huetink of WBooks, spared no effort in getting the Dutch translation ready in time, supported by partial funding from the Friends of the IISH. At the presentation a panel of experts reacted, based on their different areas of expertise to this ambitious world history of work and labour relations and the importance of such a broad historical work for current issues concerning work and labour relations. In addition to Ineke Sluiter, president of the KNAW and Professor of Greek Language and Culture at Leiden University, Eric Vanhaute, Professor of Economic History and World History at Ghent University, Janneke Plantenga, Professor of Economics of Public Welfare at Utrecht University, Paul de Beer, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Amsterdam, and Agnes Jongerius, Member of the European Parliament and the EP Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, participated in the panel via an online video connection.

Debate nights

The three debate nights organized during History Month dealt with various current issues relating to work and labour relations.

14 October Coerced labour

The first night was about labour exploitation. Over the course of the evening, different organizations, journalists, and world improvers spoke, featuring Wyger Wentholt from Schone Kleren Campagne/Clean Clothing Campaign, research journalist Jeroen van Bergeijk, who went undercover at companies such as Bol.com and Uber, Anna Ensing from FairWork, and Jack Apostol from Filipino Migrants in Solidarity (FILMIS)/Migrant Domestic Workers Union (MDWU). IISH staff member Matthias van Rossum provided historical context for the evening. In which sectors are labour exploitation, coercion, and modern slavery present, why do these practices persist, and how can exploitation be resolved? The stories from different perspectives made clear that labour exploitation comes in many varieties, and that opinions vary as to what 'exploitation' entails. All speakers did agree that policy and inspection often entail amazing shortcomings, whether these deficiencies concern fair wages in the garment industry, distribution centres such as Bol.com et al., or the vulnerability of labour migrants and (undocumented) domestic workers.



21 October Rolling up the shirtsleeves: How do I improve my work?

On the second night, campaigning for better work and working conditions was discussed. The speakers present had taken action in recent years against inadequate wages, extreme flexibilization in employment contracts and excessive work pressure. Eveline van Rijswijk chaired the discussion about the topic in three rounds. The first was about the role of the trade unions, with Bas



van Weegberg (FNV Executive Committee) and Khadija Tahiri (Chair of the Cleaning Parliament) speaking about the declining interest in joining the trade union, as well as about the huge victories that especially Tahiri and her group of activists accomplished for the cleaning industry. In the second round, grassroots movements described how they would like to operate differently from the traditional trade unions. Daan Dorr, a bicycle courier, talked about the campaign he started against the abysmal working conditions for couriers at Deliveroo. Marja du Bois spoke on behalf of Solidariteitsnetwerk Vloerwerk and told listeners how Vloerwerk campaigns, and what she views as the benefits and drawbacks of a grassroots organization. The final round was about creative campaigning, such as for a higher minimum wage by Anna Galenkamp (organizer of Voor 14) or reduced work pressure and fewer flex contracts at the university by Sai Englert (Casual Leiden). IISH staff member Rosa Kösters entertained the audience from an easy chair by sharing humorous historical context and examples which, understandably, abound in our archives. The night concluded with music and book sales by the Vrije Bond.

28 October Let's talk about the wage gap again – because we must

In the last debate night, the theme addressed had been discussed many times in the past but unfortunately remains unresolved. Women in the Netherlands do far fewer hours of paid work than men: 27 versus 37 hours a week and are often paid less as well. As a result, over the course of their working lives they earn 300,000 euros less on average. The reasons, such as discrimination, legislation, financial underappreciation of 'women's occupations', and part-time work, were covered, in addition to a great many more themes, under the aegis of Karen de Jager with a panel comprising Emma Lok (Director of Strategy and Communications at Women Inc.), Hedy d'Ancona (former PvdA [labour party] politician, co-founder of the feminist action group Man-Vrouw Maatschappij in 1968), Sophie van Gool (economist and founder of Salaristijger, author of *Waarom vrouwen minder verdienen*), Mara Yerkes (Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences at Utrecht University), and the

Matthias van Rossum (far right) provided historical context during the debate night on coerced labour, also with (left to right) Jeroen van Bergeijk, Jack Apostol, Anna Ensing, and Wyger Wentholt.

From left to right: Rosa Kösters, Eveline van Rijswijk, Bas van Weegberg, and Khadija Tahiri during the debate night on how to campaign for better work and working conditions.

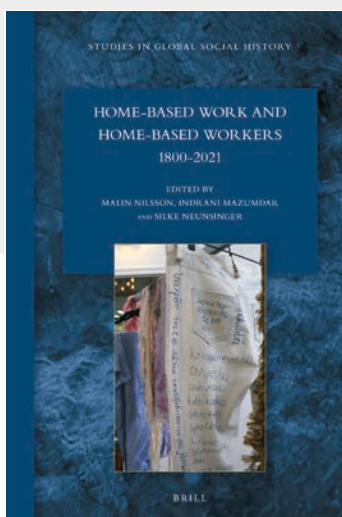
Photos pp. 15-20 by Rose Spijkerman and Rosa Kösters.

Karen de Jager (middle) discussed the wage gap with panel members (left to right) Sophie van Gool, Hedy d'Ancona, Emma Lok, Mara Yerkes, Jildau Piena, and Lodewijk Asscher.



couple Jildau Piena (Director of HR, Nederlandse Bank) and Lodewijk Asscher (former Minister of Social Affairs, consultant). Why was work worthwhile for them, had they missed certain opportunities? The wage gap, facts and figures,

the role of politics, and 'the question of blame' for the unequal distribution of work between men and women were all covered. Despite frequent criticism of the current system, the evening ended on an optimistic note.



Home-Based Work and Home-Based Workers (1800-2021)

Editors: **Malin Nilsson**, Lund University, **Indrani Mazumdar**, Center for Women's Development Studies Delhi, and **Silke Neunsinger**, Swedish Labour Movement Archives and Library

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the home as a workplace became a widely discussed topic. However, for almost 300 million workers around the world, paid work from home was not news. *Home-Based Work and Home-Based Workers (1800-2021)* includes contributions from scholars, activists and artists addressing the past and present conditions of home-based work. They discuss the institutional and legal histories of regulations for these workers, their modes of organization and resistance, as well as providing new insights on contemporary home-based work in both traditional and developing sectors.

Contributors are: Jane Barrett, Janine Berg, Eloisa Betti, Chris Bonner, Eileen Boris, Patricia Coñoman Carrilo, Janhavi Dave, Saniye Dedeoğlu, Laura K Ekholm, Jenna Harvey, Frida Hållander, K. Kalpana, Srabani Maitra, Indrani Mazumdar, Gabriela Mitidieri, Silke Neunsinger, Malin Nilsson, Narumol Nirathron, Åsa Norman, Leda Papastefanaki, Archana Prasad, Maria Tamboukou, Nina Trige Andersen, and Marlese von Broembsen.



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