Charisma and emergent social movements

6 & 7 November 2008

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The Institute of Biography of the University of Groningen and the International Institute for Social History are currently organising an international conference about the role of charisma in the rise of the so-called key figures in emergent social movements. What insights do the comparison of social movements and their leaders from the nineteenth century with those of the twentieth century, and those from Europe with those from other continents, have to offer? Why was there a rapid Veralltäglichung (routinisation) with respect to Lech Walesa, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva and the Dutch social democratic leader Pieter Jelles Troelstra (1860-1930), while this was apparently not the case or only occurred more slowly as far as Patrice Lumumba, Hugo Chávez, Mao Zedong and Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, the radical patriarch of Dutch socialism, are concerned?

The organisers believe that such a conference will meet a real demand. There has been a consistent lack of historical and trans-cultural theory on charismatic leadership in the discourse that surrounds the development of social movements. While it is true to say that we have Weber’s approach at our disposal, just like those of Robert Michels and later research into social movements, it is dominated by a political scientific and sociological perspective. The conference aims to put Weber’s theory of charisma to the test; historically and trans-culturally.
Program 6 November

Moderator: Gerrit Voerman
Chairman Documentation Centre Dutch Political Parties

10.30 Coffee and registration
11.00 Word of welcome by Jan Willem Stutje
11.15 Juan Avilés
*Pasionaria*
Recited by Kees Rodenburg
11.45 Michael Krätke
*Ferdinand Lassalle - A Knight of Labour in Shining Armour*
Comments: Carl Levy

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Doeko Bosscher
*Barack Obama*

14.00 Henk te Velde
*Charismatic Leaders, Political Religion and Social Movements at the End of the 19th Century*
Comments: Jan Willem Stutje

14.45 Roel Meijer
*Osama bin Laden, Charismatic Leadership and the global media*

15.15 Short break

15.45 Leonard Ornstein
*Het Charisma van Sarah Palin en Barack Obama*

16.15 Jan Willem Stutje
*Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. Leadership between unbridled revolt and disciplined protest*
Comments: Homme Wedman (lecturer University of Groningen)

17.00 Conclusions by Marc Reynebeau

17.30 Drinks
**Pasionaria**
*Juan Avilés*

This paper explains why Dolores Ibárruri (1895-1989), also known as Pasionaria, General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), can be considered a charismatic leader. The framework of the analysis is the concept of charisma as initially proposed by Max Weber and later refined by authors like Martin Spencer and Liah Greenfeld. It emphasises the circumstances in which the charismatic leadership of Pasionaria emerged, namely the revolutionary situation of Spain and the tendency of Communists to promote emblematic leaders. It also points at the specific qualities of Pasionaria which prepared her for that role: her revolutionary ardour, her loyalty to the Party, her oratorical gifts and her capacity to incarnate the suffering of the Spanish people, especially of the women, that matched the view of the Spanish war in the Communist propaganda, the view of a country which was a victim of Fascism.

**Ferdinand Lassalle**
*A Knight of Labour in Shining Armour*
*Michael Krätke*

Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864) was one of the most colourful personalities of his time. As leader of a socialist and working class party, Lassalle was quite a remarkable phenomenon. He was a public personality – and a dandy, an aristocrat and adventurer as well as a scholar and writer. Last not least, he was excellent at public relations and he had the gift of public speech and a great talent for putting everything he wanted on a stage. Pathos, romance, style, mystery, personal merit - all came together. That German working men accepted him as their leader and followed him can only be explained by his personal charisma. Lassalle, as every charismatic leader, was careful to build his personal legend. He had countless affairs, and he lost his life in a duel fought about another love affair. His tragic end just added romance and legend, enhancing his charisma which outlived him by many decades.
Charismatic Leaders, Political Religion and Social Movements at the End of the 19th Century
Henk te Velde

Max Weber borrowed the word and the concept of charisma from religious studies. This is no coincidence. Descriptions of charismatic leadership virtually always use religious words to characterize the experience of the adherents or the alleged qualities of the leader. The ‘political religion’ involved in this type of transforming and highly ambiguous leadership has often been associated with totalitarianism, the opposite of democracy. On the other hand, the period of democratization of European politics of the late 19th century was full of charismatic leaders who were also great emancipators. At the same time the charismatic figures often inspired new organizations, but often abhorred organizations themselves. I will analyse the ambiguous attitude of 19th century charismatic leadership towards democracy and organization and its discomforting message for the relationship between democracy and ‘normal’ politics.

Patrice Lumumba, rebellious and obstinate
Jean Omasombo

Lumumba (1925-1961) is often likened to Gandhi or Martin Luther King, due to his respect for the principle of non-violence and his ultimate fate, but the Congolese hero’s political career is quite different. Of the 35 years that he lived, nearly 20 years were in rural surroundings, 20 cumulative months in prison and two years on the active political scene. Lumumba’s uniqueness lies in the fact that he educated himself: he was educated neither by family nor school nor religion. He had finesse and made an impression on his social environment, especially to the surprise of the Belgian colonial powers, who did not expect it. Lumumba identified with the masses and became a symbol of their power; he troubled Belgium, which was not prepared for the proclamation of independence, even a few months before the event. Lumumba stepped into the limelight and replaced the baffled colonial authorities.
Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. Leadership between unbridled revolt and disciplined protest
Jan Willem Stutje

Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846-1919) was one of the founding fathers of Dutch Socialism. He was a former vicar, typified by Marx in a rather patronizing manner as ‘das holländische Pfäfflein’. Nevertheless few figures in the labour movement have appealed to people’s imagination as much as Domela Nieuwenhuis. He was probably the most charismatic leader the Dutch working class had ever known. What was the character of his charisma? Where did it come from and under which conditions did it flourish? But also: Was there, as Weber put it, a ‘Veralltäglichung des Charisma’? If so: when and why did his charismatic appeal start to trivialize? These questions will be discussed in Stutje’s contribution.

Apocalyptic Culture and the Emergence of Charismatic Agency in Persinate World
Touraj Atabaki

In the Iranian and Central Asian culture, the birth of a charismatic political agency has often been associated with a messianic assignment, the emergence of a ‘Saviour-Messiah’ from the days when the motherland was suffering from the diseases of disorder and mismanagement. The apocalyptic paradigm and the Zoroastrian belief in the advent of the saviour Saushyans, or the essential Islamic Shiite passion for Imam Zaman, the Lord of Age, or later the messianic spirit of Bab and its yearning for restoring justice and equality; all contributed to crafting such a criteria and the functions of agency.
Mao Zedong and the Question of Charisma
Arif Dirlik

I would like to look into not only Mao (1893-1976) as charismatic leader but also what Mao’s career may reveal about the issue of charisma. My inquiry will have three dimensions: Theoretical: What is the relationship between charisma (understood as having both rational and affective dimensions) and the persuasiveness of a revolutionary leader. What are the public and the private dimensions of charisma, since a leader need not be equally persuasive at both levels. And what is the relationship between the leader and the led, since charisma may depend as much on the receiver as on the transmitter. This also introduces a historical dimension, of the contingency of charisma on historical circumstances.

An unlikely charismatic leader. D.F. Malan in a Weberian light
Lindie Korf

D.F. Malan’s (1874-1959) public persona was one of austerity. Historians have made numerous comments about his unimpressive appearance and his humourless facade. That such a man was able to defeat the legendary General Jan Smuts in South Africa’s 1948 election, which has become one of the greatest turning points in South Africa’s history, left the international community gasping in shock and disbelief. Explanations of the 1948 election have ranged from an upwelling of white paranoia and racism to disenchantment with war measures which were still in place, to Smuts’ preoccupation with international affairs instead of local problems. However, a Weberian analysis of D.F. Malan’s person and his leadership of the Afrikaner Nationalist movement shed a new and plausible light on the event that heralded the age of apartheid.
Errico Malatesta
Carl Levy

Errico Malatesta (1853-1932) was the most prominent leader of Italian anarchism between the First International and the Fascist regime. He spent most of his adult life in exile, but arrived in Italy at times of great tension. He became the image of the revolutionary left and helped mobilise anarchists and others. Malatesta is a curious example of a revolutionary hero who displayed many of the attributes of the charismatic leader: his oratorical style was conversational and he shunned the adulation of his followers or the press. Yet he created charismatic situations which helped the anarchist movement exert greater influence both in the Settimana Rossa of 1914 or the Biennio Rosso (1919-1920) than actual numbers would suggest. This paper will examine the paradox of the Malatesta’s persona with the legend created by the Left and the press, and the contextual relationship between mass movements and the man himself.

Hugo Chávez
Christoph Twickel

Hugo Chávez (1954-) made his first public appearance via television in 1992: as the captured leader of a failed military uprising he gave a one-minute speech, that immediately made him a hero in the poor ‘barrios’ of Venezuela. Today president Chávez hosts his own weekly TV-program “Aló Presidente” lasting up to seven hours, a very particular mixture of political declaration and infotainment. The presentation on the leader of the so called ‘Bolivarian Revolution’ tries to capture his mass appeal along three charismatic strategies. First the aura of availability, picturing him as the warrantor of all civil and political needs. Second the aura of anti-elitism, displaying him as the people’s partner in the fight against burocratism, oligarchism and foreign imperialism. Third the aura of impatience, presenting Chávez as the main accelerator of the ‘revolutionary process’ in Venezuela.
Osama bin Laden, Charismatic Leadership and the Global Media
Roel Meijer

The charisma of Osama bin Laden (1957-) is partly based on his personal history as a son of a multi-millionaire who rejected his background and became a pious individual who devoted his life to the cause of Islam and the struggle against the West. The other explanation for his charisma is that this image has become manipulated on the one hand by himself and the group around him and on the other hand by the Western and Arab media, which has turned him into a myth and a fantasy, functioning as an exaggerated threat to the West and an icon of resistance against the West for the Muslim masses. Perhaps because of his inaccessibility this quality of Bin Laden is more prominent than in other historical leaders. The presentation will analyse the manner in which his charismatic leadership has been created by analysing the images of Bin Laden in the media, the content of his speeches and the way he manipulates Islam in a revolt of the “humiliated” against Western domination.

Gandhi
Dilip Simeon

In August 1947, the month of India’s partition, the British officer Viceroy Mountbatten paid tribute to Gandhi (1869-1948) for being ‘the One Man Boundary Force’. At the same time, the Muslim League office in Delhi expressed its ‘deep sense of appreciation’ for restoring the peace in Calcutta. These instances of Gandhi’s charisma render it, in my opinion, unique. They fuse magical, religious and prophetic dimensions in a new kind of politics. That he could articulate virtues that many of his countrymen believed to be effeminate and yet command tremendous stature among the most ‘virile’ of communities, such as the Pathans and Sikhs, should make us wonder. What kind of power and force was it that could make strong men weep in his presence? What was it about his character that has affected people across the generations and across continents?
Program 7 November

Moderator: Dirk Jan Wolffram
*Prof. in History of Governance and Politics, University of Groningen*

10.00  Coffee and registration

10.30  Word of welcome by Jan Willem Stutje

10.45  **Arif Dirlik**  
*Mao Zedong and the Question of Charisma*  
Comments: Dilip Simeon

11.30  **Lindie Korf**  
*An unlikely charismatic leader. D.F. Malan in a Weberian light*  
Comments: Christoph Twickel

12.15  Lunch

13.45  **Carl Levy**  
*Errico Malatesta*  
Comments: Michael Krätke

14.30  **Christoph Twickel**  
*Hugo Chávez*  
Comments: Lindie Korf

15.15  Short break

15.30  **Dilip Simeon**  
*Gandhi*  
Comments: Arif Dirlik

16.15  **Touraj Atabaki**  
*Apocalyptic Culture and the Emergence of Charismatic Agency in Persinate World*  
Comments: Henk te Velde

17.00  **Conclusions by Marc Reynebeau**
Juan Avilés is professor of Contemporary History at the Spanish National Distance Learning University (UNED) in Madrid. His research is centred in the political history and the foreign relations of Spain during the 20th century, especially on the parties and movements of the left and violent conflict. In his main books he has studied the British and French policy towards the Spanish Civil War, the impact of the Russian Revolution in Spain (La fe que vino de Rusia: la revolución bolchevique y los españoles, 1999), the Spanish Communist leader Dolores Ibárruri (Pasionaria: la mujer y el mito, 2005), the Anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer (Francisco Ferrer y Guardia: pedagogo, anarquista y mártir, 2006) and the Left Republicans in the Second Spanish Republic (La izquierda burguesa y la tragedia de la II República, 2006). He currently leads a research group on the impact of terrorism on Spanish history from the Anarchists to the Yihadists.

Touraj Atabaki is Professor of Social History of the Middle East and Central Asia at the School of Middle East Studies of the Leiden University and Senior Research Fellow at the International Institute of Social History. Atabaki studied theoretical physics (BSc, MSc) and history at the National University of Iran and University of London. His areas of specialization encompass Social History of the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Modernity, Migration, Nationalism, Labour and Subaltern Studies and post-Colonial Historiography.
Arif Dirlik is Professor of Chinese Studies, Centre for East Asian Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong; Honorary Director, the CUHK-Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Asia-Pacific Centre for Chinese Studies; Concurrent Professor, Centre for the Study of Marxist Social Theory, Nanjing University; and Distinguished Visiting Professor, the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, University of British Columbia. His most recent book-length works include *Global Modernity: Modernity in the Age of Global Capitalism* (2007).

Lindie Korf graduated with an MA in Historical Studies from the University of Johannesburg in 2005, with a dissertation entitled *D.F. Malan: an intellectual biography, 1874-1915*. She is currently enrolled for a PhD degree in History at the University of Stellenbosch, with a thesis entitled *D.F. Malan: a political biography*. Since January 2008 she has been a visiting post-graduate student at the Institute of Biography, University of Groningen.

Michael R. Krätke studied economics, political science and sociology in Berlin and Paris. He became Professor of Sociology at the Free University Berlin and Professor of Political Science at the University of Bielefeld, Visiting Professor at various universities in Europe and North America (Paris, New York, Lyon, Copenhagen, Kassel, Hanover, Montpellier, San Diego). Currently he is Professor of Political Economy, University of Amsterdam. His most recent book-length works include *Die größte Krise der kapitalistischen Weltwirtschaft*, Hamburg 2007 and *Neun Fragen zum Kapitalismus*, Berlin 2007.
Jean Omasombo Tshonda, Doctor of Political Sciences of the Free University of Brussels (1987), is a researcher at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (Belgium), director of the Center for Political Studies (CEP) and professor at the University of Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo). His research focuses on political developments in Central Africa (specifically the DR Congo). He is the author of various works including two books on the biography of Patrice Lumumba.

Carl Levy is a Reader in European Politics at Goldsmiths College, University of London and former Head of Department of Politics. He is the author of six singled authored and edited works. He has written extensively on the history of ideas, comparative labour and social history, comparative politics, the government and politics of the European Union and anarchism, with a specialism in Italian history and politics. He is currently writing a biography of Errico Malatesta, entitled *The Rooted Cosmopolitan: The Life and Times of Errico Malatesta*.

Roel Meijer teaches history of the Middle East at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. He wrote a PhD on the relationship between liberal and Left-wing intellectuals and the Nasserist regime. During the past five years he has been doing research on the Islamic movements in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Since January 2008 he is a postdoc researcher working on the Salafi movement with a grant from NWO.

Jean Omasombo Tshonda, Doctor of Political Sciences of the Free University of Brussels (1987), is a researcher at the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (Belgium), director of the Center for Political Studies (CEP) and professor at the University of Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo). His research focuses on political developments in Central Africa (specifically the DR Congo). He is the author of various works including two books on the biography of Patrice Lumumba.
Dilip Simeon graduated in History from Delhi University in 1969. From 1970 till 1972 he joined the Naxalite (Maoist) movement. In 1974 he joined the History Department of Delhi University. His dissertation on the labour movement of Bihar was published in 1995. From 1984 he participated in a campaign for communal harmony and justice for the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh carnage through the Sampradayikta Virodhi Andolan (Movement Against Communalism) of which he was one of the founding members. Dilip has been a visiting scholar at the universities of Surat, Sussex, Chicago, Leiden and the Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton. From 1998 till 2003 he worked as senior research fellow on conflict issues with Oxfam (India) Trust in Delhi. He is now chairperson of the Aman Trust. He is also currently a Senior Research Fellow at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

Jan Willem Stutje is a post doc fellow at the Institute of Biography of the University of Groningen. He is the author of a biography of Paul de Groot, for decades the uncrowned king of Dutch Stalinism (De man die de weg wees. Leven en werk van Paul de Groot 1899-1986, Amsterdam 2000). In 2007 he published Ernest Mandel, Rebel tussen droom en daad. 1923-1995. The English and German translation of the biography of this Belgian Marxist and radical politician will be released in the winter of 2008. Currently Stutje is working on a book about the life and work of Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, an early Dutch socialist and anarchist from the 1890’s on.
**Christoph Twickel**, graduate in German Literature, Spanish literature and philosophy, lives and works in Hamburg, Germany as a freelance journalist and author. He writes for German newspapers and magazines such as *Die Tageszeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Spex*, *Stern* etc. He has traveled Latin America since 1988. He hosts a radio program which specializes in Latin American Music on the northern German public broadcasting NDR and at www.byte.fm. In 2006 he published *Hugo Chavez: Eine Biographie* (2006), the first biography of the current Venezuelan president in German.

**Henk te Velde** is professor of Dutch history at Leiden University. Until 2002 he was professor of the history of political culture at the University of Groningen where he also graduated and subsequently wrote his PhD about liberalism and nationalism in fin-de-siècle Netherlands, published in 1992. He specializes in the history of political culture of the Netherlands in European comparative perspective and wrote among other things a book on the history of Dutch political leadership (2002). This includes a chapter on charismatic leadership in the late nineteenth century. He is now writing a book on the history of European parliamentary culture in the 19th century.

**Marc Reynebeau** is a Flemish journalist, historian and columnist. In 1977 he graduated in History at the University of Gent. For a long time he wrote for the magazine *Knack* and now he is editor of the Belgian newspaper *De Standaard*. Besides columns, he also writes books and essays.
HOW TO REGISTER

You can register by sending an e-mail to i.l.hengeveld@rug.nl and transferring the registration fee, indicating the day(s) on which you are coming.

The cost of participation:
€30,- (two days),
students €15,- (two days),
or €20,- per day.

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