Charismatic Leadership and Social Movements
The Revolutionary Power of Ordinary Men and Women

Edited by Jan Willem Stutje

This is an interesting and stimulating collection...which, taken together, cover both conceptual/theoretical and empirical aspects of the role and features of charisma in general, and charisma in social movements in particular. The range of case studies is impressive.

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Much of the writing on charisma focuses on specific traits associated with exceptional leaders, a practice that has broadened the concept of charisma to such an extent that it loses its distinctiveness—and therefore its utility. More particularly, the concept’s relevance to the study of social movements has not moved beyond generalizations. The contributors to this volume renew the debate on charismatic leadership from a historical perspective and seek to illuminate the concept’s relevance to the study of social movements. The case studies here include such leaders as Mahatma Gandhi; the architect of apartheid, Daniel F. Malan; the heroine of the Spanish Civil War, Dolores Ibarruri (la pasionaria); and Mao Zedong. These charismatic leaders were not just professional politicians or administrators, but sustained a strong symbiotic relationship with their followers, one that stimulated devotion to the leader and created a real group identity.

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