

Leo van Rossum (1938–1999)

On 15 June 1999 our colleague and friend Leo van Rossum died of the consequences of a heart attack. Leo had – often unbeknownst to readers – played a major role in the development of the *International Review of Social History*. As a member of the Editorial Board for over three decades (from 1964 to 1995), he enhanced the journal's quality immeasurably through his stimulating suggestions and meticulous critiques of texts.

As a staff member of Amsterdam's International Institute of Social History (which issues the *Review*), Leo van Rossum ran the east-European activities for many years. He collected archives, arranged scholarly publications and advised countless researchers who approached him. His impressive command of languages (in addition to Dutch, French, German, English, and Spanish, he knew Russian, Polish, Serbo-Croat, Czech, Romanian, and Bulgarian), his vast knowledge of east-European social history, and his considerable charm repeatedly left a deep impression.

The rescue of east-European archives may have been Leo's greatest achievement. Over time he preserved many documents that might otherwise have been lost, especially of left-wing opposition movements and persons. After the changes of 1989–1990 Leo was deeply involved in the fate of archives in danger of being neglected.¹

Convinced that in the long run a good source publication is of greater value than a historical essay, Leo van Rossum devoted many years to publishing annotated versions of important documents. The major edition of Karl Kautsky's correspondence with social democrats in south-east Europe was a highlight in his oeuvre.² Following this source publication came the detailed critique of the work of other historians.³ Gradually, however, Leo

1. See his report *The Former Communist Party Archives in Eastern Europe: A Provisional Assessment* (Amsterdam, 1997).

2. *Karl Kautsky und die Sozialdemokratie Südosteuropas*; ed. with Georges Haupt and Janos Jemnitz (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 1986), 649 pp. Smaller source publications include: "Proclamations of the Machno Movement, 1920", *International Review of Social History* [hereafter *IRSH*], 13 (1968), pp. 246–268; or "Ein unveröffentlichter Brief Trockij's von Anfang 1916", *IRSH*, 14 (1969), pp. 251–266.

3. For example, "A propos d'une biographie de Parvus", *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 8 (1967), pp. 244–263; "A. Antonov-Ovseenko's Book on Stalin: Is It Reliable? A Note", *Soviet Studies*, 36 (1984), pp. 445–447; "Western Studies of Soviet Labour During the Thirties", *IRSH*, 35 (1990), pp. 433–453.

was drawn to analytical historiography; he was especially interested in the agrarian activities of social-democratic movements.⁴

In addition to having a critical mind, being a collector and a source of inspiration, Leo van Rossum was an open and concerned colleague who continually diverted us with his surprising humour. We deeply regret losing him.

Marcel van der Linden

4. See his introductory essay in *Karl Kautsky und die Sozialdemokratie Südosteuropas*, pp. 13–58; or his “De russische boer in sociaaldemocratisch perspectief: bondgenoot of struikelblok (1883–1918)”, in: A.P. van Goudoever (ed.), *Oost-Europa in het verleden: Liber amicorum Z.R. Dittrich* (Groningen, 1987), pp. 77–97; “The Second International and Social Democratic Activity among the Agrarian Population, 1889–1914: An Exploration”, *Socialismo Storia*, 3 (1991), pp. 648–666; “Karl Kautskys Wirkung auf die Parteien der II Internationale: Südosteuropa”, in: Jürgen Rojahn, Till Schelz-Brandenburg and Hans-Josef Steinberg (eds), *Marxismus und Demokratie: Karl Kautskys Bedeutung in der sozialistischen Arbeiterbewegung* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 1991), pp. 296–304.