

Last, Joseph C. E. (1898–1972), Dutch writer. Jef Last has a lasting fame as the main socialist writer in Dutch. His own great times were the 1930s, when he joined André GIDE on his voyage to the Soviet Union and fought as an officer for the Spanish Republic against Franco. Not only an activist and a soldier, he was a prolific writer of novels, poetry and essays. He published about 60 books of his own and 20 translations from French, English, Russian, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese. In 1923 he married Ida ter Haar and had three daughters. Notwithstanding his same-sex interests, the marriage continued until Last's death.

Last's life was more colourful than his literary career. He became a socialist when he saw the poverty of the English lower classes. Leaving his safe place as a student of Chinese in Leyden, he became a sailor and worked in factories in the United States. In 1929 he left the socialists for the

Revolutionary Socialist Party and from 1933 until 1938 he was a communist. In the spring of 1936 Gide asked Last to help him as a translator on his voyage to the Soviet Union. Last had lived for nine months in Moscow as a liaison officer between the Dutch and Russian Communist Parties and spoke Russian. The trip made Last critical of Communism, but according to him Gide went too far in his reproaches and thus supported the rising fascist powers in Europe. To combat fascism, he himself went to Spain and fought in the Spanish Army in 1936–1937, refusing to join the Communist International Brigades. After he left the party, Last was attacked fiercely by the Communists, who used the gay angle to discredit both him and Gide. In World War II, he participated in the leftist resistance. After the war, he took part from the beginning in the homophile movement COC. In the 1960s he was a candidate for the Amsterdam city council for 'provo', the libertarian-anarchist movement of the sexual revolution.

His best books have a gay content, especially *Zuiderzee* (1934) and *Huis zonder venster* (*House Without Windows*, 1935). The first novel describes the decline of a fishing village after a dam has closed it off from the sea. The two main characters, two young masculine fishermen, have a homoerotic relationship that remains unfulfilled and ends tragically. The second novel, set in Morocco, has a fine portrait of a decadent homosexual whose life of Arab pleasures ends fatally in murder. In these novels, Last explores opposite gay stereotypes, but both have the same dramatic finale fitting the times. After the war, Last travelled much in the Far East. He regularly contributed to the gay press and in 1966 published his memoirs, *Mijn vriend André Gide*, as a tribute to his great libertarian example.

Niko van de Pavert, *Jef Last, tussen de partij en zichzelf*, Nijmegen, 1982.

Gert Hekma