

# The Reluctant Internationalists

## Autumn Term Newsletter 2014



## Welcome to the first issue of our newsletter

Jessica Reinisch

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Arthur Salter – an internationalist if ever there was one – wrote in 1933 that inventions such as trains, planes, telegrams, telephones and the radio had all made a new kind of internationalism possible. Just think of what he would have said about electronic newsletters!

Welcome to the first Newsletter of the *Reluctant Internationalists* group at Birkbeck College, University of London. We are a team of researchers trying to understand what it meant to think and act 'internationally' in twentieth century Europe. One of the first lessons we learnt is that when an inevitably international group sets out to work on internationalism this presents a great set of logistical challenges – involving a lot of emails, plane and train trips, visas, relocations of scholars and their families, conversations on Skype, and archive trips to far-away destinations, with sources in a multitude of languages. Another lesson was that it will be a challenge to keep track of the many interesting and relevant research projects and initiatives currently happening across the globe.

That's why we'd like to stay in touch with you. In our termly Newsletters we'll tell you about some of the things we've been working on and thinking about. In future editions we'll also include news about other relevant projects. Do send your news, such as announcements of events, publications and websites, to [reluctant.internationalists@gmail.com](mailto:reluctant.internationalists@gmail.com), and we'll do our best to include them.



London  
June 19-20, 2014

# Agents of Internationalism

## First Internationalism

### Workshop at Birkbeck

The first in a series of events organised under the umbrella of the *Reluctant Internationalists* project at Birkbeck, **David Bryan** discusses some of the workshop's findings.

The workshop aimed to highlight the complex and multi-faceted history of internationalism, with a particular focus on Europe and the role of health and medicine. Each of the seven panels examined one group with international connections (relief workers, women, children, refugees, collaborators, soldiers, and 'experts') and identified continuities and disjunctures in the appeal and application of different internationalist programmes and agendas.

Concerns by nations and national authorities emerged as persistent features of 20<sup>th</sup> century histories of internationalisms. Peter Gatrell (Manchester) argued that the international refugee relief system was unavoidably moulded by national concerns. Alex Watson (Goldsmiths) showed that Habsburg officers aspired to be "anational" and to develop the linguistic and cultural knowledge necessary to diffuse tensions stemming from the empire's nationalities question.

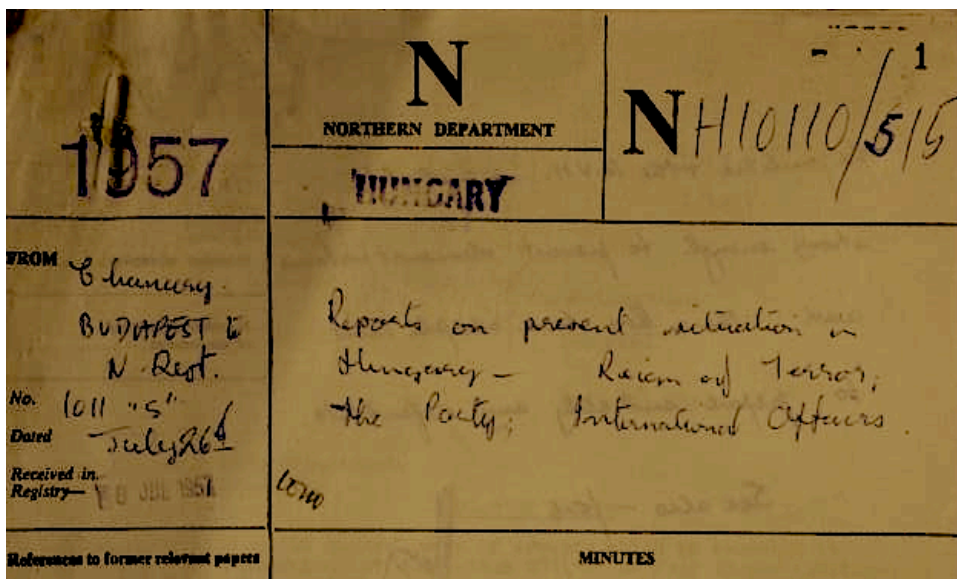
Many scholars contested traditional narratives of the history of internationalism. Isabella Löhr (Basel) and Joelle Droux (Geneva) challenged conventional periodizations of the appeal of internationalism.

Celia Donert (Liverpool) raised questions about the role of competing universalisms. Nick Baron (Nottingham) pointed to the centrality of maps to the development of different versions of internationalism. Erez Manela (Harvard) identified distinct, overlapping internationalist spaces.

This workshop highlighted challenges involved in capturing the diversity and complexity of internationalisms. Ambiguities around definitions of different versions of internationalism remain, in addition to which questions concerning the role of national concerns, periodization, and the integration of 'alternative' models of internationalism continue to pose a challenge. *Agents of Internationalism* aimed to bring together scholars working on different elements of the history of internationalism in all its complexity and with all its tensions and contradictions, so as to understand more fully how actors thought and acted on an international scale in twentieth century Europe and beyond.

**A special issue of *Contemporary European History* based on the workshop will be published in 2016.**

**A full workshop report will appear in *History Workshop Journal*.**



# Publications and Awards

The Reluctant  
Internationalists

**Jessica Reinisch**, edited, with Matthew Frank, a special issue of *The Journal of Contemporary History*, "[Refugees and the Nation-State in Europe, 1919-59](#)," (v. 49, no. 3, July 2014), which examines how refugees and refugee crises were defined and managed by European nation-states in the forty years after the First World War.

**Ana Antic** published two articles: "[Heroes and Hysterics: 'Partisan Hysteria' and Communist State-building in Yugoslavia after 1945](#)," in *Social History of Medicine* (v. 27, no. 3, August 2014), and, earlier this year, "[Therapeutic Fascism: 'Re-educating' Communists in Serbia, 1942-1944](#)," in *History of Psychiatry* (v. 25, no. 1, March 2014). Both articles are part of her larger research project on the development of psychiatry and psychiatric culture under the conditions of Nazi occupation in Eastern Europe and in its immediate aftermath.

**Dora Vargha** published an article in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, "[Between East and West: Polio Vaccination across the Iron Curtain in Cold War Hungary](#)" (v. 88, no. 2, Summer 2014), which is part of her larger book project, *Iron Curtain/Iron Lungs: Governing Polio in the Cold War*.

**Dora Vargha** was awarded the [2014 Young Scholar Book Award](#) by the International Committee for the History of Technology for her dissertation, *Iron Curtain, Iron Lungs: Governing Polio in Cold War Hungary*, completed at Rutgers University in 2013.

Refugees, hysterics  
and vaccinators  
among recent  
articles published by  
research group  
members

## Elidor Mehilli

Assistant Professor, Hunter College

The "Reluctant Internationalists" project is about the history of international collaboration—experts, policy-makers, doctors, planners, and diplomats—and the intended and unintended consequences of these exchanges in the twentieth century. Reflecting this theme, the project itself is international in conception: fellows come from across the Atlantic, as do occasional visiting scholars. This is a major strength.

One important contribution of the project, to my mind, is the emphasis on Europe's place in the story of internationalism. Histories of internationalist movements and the global Cold War have often intentionally looked beyond the European continent to highlight the role of non-European actors. Such efforts can be valuable. But they ignore the fact that there have been historically neglected and abused peripheries *within* Europe. This is a good opportunity to assess these internal divisions within a supposedly integrating continent and "periphery-periphery" relations in the world more broadly.

A highlight of the project, this past summer, was the conference "Agents of Internationalism," which brought together scholars working on population transfers, relief workers, child-welfare programs, and transnational approaches to disease—among other topics. During my residency in London

(June—July 2014), I worked on a book on socialist globalization—the state-directed but also informal circulation of practices and planners—through the angle of Albania under Yugoslav, Soviet, Eastern bloc, and Chinese patronage. After the Second World War, tiny Albania came to embody the ethos of socialist internationalism, as Soviet advisers, East German engineers, and Czechoslovak technicians descended on the country to lift it up from poverty and deliver on the promise of a workers' state (which governed an overwhelmingly rural populace). But by the early 1960s socialist internationalism seemed broken. China and the Soviet Union quarrelled, Albania and North Korea sought to go their own way, and Third World countries desperately tried to negotiate space for themselves. My book, then, is a study of local and global socialist commonalities that take shape *despite* political allegiances. During my residency, I was fortunate to present a chapter of my manuscript to the project participants and receive a good deal of valuable feedback. Informal chats were as productive. London, needless to say, offers fantastic resources. My only disappointment was the fact that England, my lifelong favorite national soccer team, was kicked out early from the World Cup in Brazil. To share the pain in the pub was, at least, of some consolation.

## Casey Hurrell

PhD Candidate, Queen's University

From January to May 2014, I had the opportunity to participate in the Reluctant Internationalists Research Group as a visiting researcher. I'm completing a doctoral degree in the History of Medicine, and my research focuses on the efforts and involvement of Canadian and British physicians in international institutions, scientific networks, and health policy-making during the

early Cold War. My meetings with Dr Reinisch and the project group were invaluable. Although I had a fairly good sense of what I was trying to accomplish with my thesis, every conversation that we had allowed me to clarify my thinking and to approach the questions at the heart of my inquiry in entirely new ways. I participated in the group's informal seminars that intended to draw together our diverse areas of specialization in the service of having a larger conversation about the aims and mandate of the project. We advised each other about our ongoing research processes - I found it cathartic and encouraging. These sessions also provided us with the opportunity to exchange pieces of writing and to receive feedback from the rest of the group. In my case, this led to intensive revisions of my fourth chapter, which examines physician responses to atomic energy between Hiroshima and the Cuban Missile Crisis. The perspectives of my new colleagues were extremely helpful, and greatly improved both the structure and content of the chapter as a whole. I was also able to develop case studies on international cancer control and global health work in the service of peace - two centrepieces of other chapters in my thesis. Ultimately, my time in London and my involvement with the Reluctant Internationalists research group was indispensable to my research process and development as an academic. Being part of such a vibrant group of like-minded scholars was extremely intellectually invigorating, and I look forward to reading the work that will come out of their research.

Elidor Mehilli  
Casey Hurrell  
Visiting Fellows 2014



## The Reluctant Internationalists will host two workshops this academic year.

Please see our Blog for CFPs and more details.

### Landscapes of Health: The Black Sea in the Socialist World

February 6-7, 2015

Workshop convener:  
Johanna Conterio

The idea of the socialist Black Sea was closely linked to ideas of health and welfare during times of peace. The Black Sea littoral became a favoured health retreat of the political elite and soon became a setting for high politics and diplomatic negotiations. With the Yalta conference, the place of the Black Sea as a site of East-West diplomacy was formalized. But the Black Sea also became a place of less formal international exchange. From international children's camps to delegation visits, at the Black Sea people from the socialist world introduced visitors from all over the world to the socialist way of life, in a Cold War contest fought over standards of living.

Some of the themes explored by this workshop include: The divided sea in the Cold War; international law; mobility, migration and tourism; commodities;

environmental health. Papers relating to all countries of the Eastern Bloc and the USSR, and which emphasize transnational and international components, are welcome. Workshop papers will be pre-circulated.

### Homecomings: Resistance and World War II

April 24-25, 2015

Workshop convener:  
Ana Antic

In the year which marks the seventieth anniversary of the end of WW2, this conference aims to explore one of this war's most important and lasting legacies - the narrative of anti-fascist resistance. We will analyse the complex relationship between resistance groups and postwar states at the very end of the war and in the immediate aftermath of 1945, and examine both the creation of the narrative/memory of the resistance and everyday experiences of resistance soldiers. This clash between postwar state-led appropriation of

the resistance, and expectations and demands of former fighters forms the core focus of the conference. The meeting will offer innovative insights into this theme, exploring in particular the contradictions, conflicts and difficulties of WW2 resistance across Europe, in a comprehensive transnational perspective and cutting across the traditional Cold War divide. It will look at the multi-layered history of the resistance and resisters from below at the very moment at which the grand myth of anti-fascist resistance was being created across Europe.

Among central issues addressed at this workshop will be: Hope and disappointment as a pan-European experience; Re-inventing resistance; Fighting in vain: Clashes with post-war states; Defining war trauma; Veterans and post-war medical and social politics; International links between veterans in the Cold War; World War II resisters in colonial warfare.

## Upcoming Workshops





Join our project team  
in London for the  
Summer Term in 2015

## Call for Applications: Visiting Fellowship, Summer Term 2015

Each summer term we invite a Visiting Research Fellow to join the project team. Fellowships are open to academic researchers working on any aspect of the history of internationalism or international organisations in the twentieth century. The Fellow will be entitled to £1,300 per month for a maximum of three months. The Fellow will collaborate with the Reluctant Internationalists team by taking part in our reading

group and project meetings, and by helping us to organise a seminar, lecture or other public or outreach event. The Fellow will be a member of the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology for the duration of their stay, and will have access to Birkbeck's and the University of London's facilities, including use of an office in Birkbeck's Russell Square site. Successful applicants can take up their posts any time between April and July 2015. Application deadline: **1 December 2014**. [See our website for details.](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reliantinternationalists/)

## Recent and Upcoming Talks

**Dora Vargha** presented her work at the **London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine** on **October 16, 2014** with the title "When Polio Became Global: A Pre-History to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative"

**Jessica Reinisch** gave a talk at the **Modern German History Research Seminar, Oxford University** on **10 November, 2014** titled "Occupied: Writing the History of Germany after the Second World War"

**Johanna Conterio** will present a paper titled "The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of Sea Bathing at the Black Sea in Transnational Perspective, 1920s-1930s," at the **National Convention of the ASEES, San Antonio, USA**, on **November 22, 2014**.

**Ana Antic** will give a public lecture 'Parenting the nation: Child psychiatry, 'therapeutic violence' and political re-education in WWII and Cold War Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe.' from **16:30-18:00 on December 9, 2014** at the **Centre for Medical Humanities, Oxford Brookes**

**Dora Vargha** will give a lecture at **Budapest Science MeetUp** on **December 11, 2014 at 19:00**

**Jessica Reinisch** and **Dora Vargha** will present their research in Paris at the workshop of **Labex TEPSIS** titled Medicine and Public Health in the USSR and the Eastern Bloc 1945-1991 on **January 23-24, 2015**.

## The Reluctant Internationalists

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