The Reluctant Internationalists
Summer Term Newsletter 2015

Jessica Reinisch, Introduction

As the academic year draws to a close and we are waving goodbye to our summer fellows, it's a good time to reflect on another bustling term. The Reluctant Internationalist group was delighted to welcome four visiting fellows, Jessica Pearson-Patel, Brigid O'Keeffe, Friederike Kind-Kovacs and Francesca Piana, each of whom enriched and expanded our discussions in a number of extremely fruitful ways. We debated a diverse array of subjects, including Esperanto as a unique vehicle for transnational and international exchange; child mortality as a significant arena of political intervention; international responses to the control of prisoners of war; colonial health interventions in the disintegrating European empires in Africa. Together, they helped us to contextualise our case studies and to think broadly about shared narratives and overarching trajectories of internationalism. Our discussions also continued under the umbrella of two conferences. Homecomings presented a much-neglected European perspective on veterans' and resistance soldiers' fraught and contentious adjustments to peacetime after the end of the Second World War. We also collaborated with the DFG-funded network ‘Social Welfare and Health Care in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe’ on a joint conference about the particularities of Eastern European social and health politics.

For many of us living in Europe in 2015, our day-to-day experiences of ‘internationalism’ are dominated by the reality of the European Union, the Euro and the Schengen Agreement on one hand, and by the differences between different European regions on the other. Yet we are also witnessing that the apparent pillars of the European and world order have come under intense scrutiny and threat. At the time of writing, a Greek departure from the Eurozone has once again been narrowly postponed, but at enormous political costs. The summer news has also been dominated by boat- and lorry-loads of migrants attempting to storm ‘fortress Europe’, and the prospect of millions of refugees fleeing civil war in Syria seeking asylum in the European Union. At the very least, recent events leave us in no doubt about the urgent need to reflect on the history of internationalist and nationalist projects, in Europe and beyond. On one feature our research has been crystal clear: far from being a panacea, internationalism in its many guises was always used to exclude as well as to include, to divide as well as to unify.

In the media

David Bryan and Dora Vargha published a joint piece on the historical background and international politics of the diphtheria case in Spain in El País and The Conversation.

Jessica Reinisch will appear on the BBC Radio 4 programme 'Random Edition: VJ Day Special' (to be aired on 15 August 2015), discussing the meeting of the UN Preparatory Commission in London in 1945.

Jessica Reinisch is an expert historian in a new series of the genealogy programme Who Do You Think You Are? on BBC1. In an episode to be aired in September, the actress Jane Seymour (born Joyce Frankenberg) finds out about her family fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War.

Publications and Awards

Jessica Reinisch's The Perils of Peace has been published as an Open Access monograph. You can download the full pdf for free from the OUP catalogue here: http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199607977.do

Dora Vargha has been selected to be a 2015–2016 Research Fellow at the Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine, for her project “Road to Eradication: Global Polio Vaccine Testing in the Cold War.”
Esperanto and the international brotherhood of mutual understanding, Brigid O’Keeffe, Brooklyn College

The understudied history of Esperanto, and of the diverse array of adherents and political entrepreneurs whom Esperanto inspired in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is where my research interests coincide with those of the Reluctant Internationalists project. In June 2015, I joined the Reluctant Internationalists Project Team in London for a month of scholarly collaboration and conversation. My month as a Visiting Fellow at Birkbeck College also enabled me to conduct essential primary source research at the British Library and Cambridge University Library for my current book-length research project, tentatively titled Speaking Transnationally: Esperanto, Citizen Diplomacy, and Internationalism in Russia, 1887-1939. Read more here.

Thinking about Health and Welfare in (Eastern) Europe and Beyond: thoughts on a joint network meeting, Friederike Kind-Kovács, Regensburg University

My incentive for proposing a joint network meeting between the research network “Health and Social Welfare in Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the Long 20th Century” coordinated at Regensburg University and Birkbeck’s “Reluctant Internationalist” project was to bring together two diverse groups of young and international scholars that are dealing in their research with questions of public health, social welfare, humanitarianism and internationalism. The researchers of both networks investigate practices and discourses of public health and social welfare, focusing on historical continuities, discontinuities and processes of transnational transfers. The geographical focus stretches from Eastern and Southeastern Europe to Western Europe and beyond, and embraces research on Bosnia-Herzegovina, Soviet Russia, Armenia, Spain, Germany, the GDR, Serbia, Belarus, Hungary, Poland, Kosovo, Russia to Czechoslovakia, Romania and Greece. Read more here.

Internationalism and Refugees, Francesca Plana, Swiss National Science Foundation

During her stay, she will be visiting the collections at American Philosophical Society, the University of Pennsylvania and Yale University.

Recent and upcoming talks

3 July: Dora Vargha gave a talk titled “Eastern Europe’s role in global polio eradication” at El Reto de la Erradicación de las Enfermedades Infecciosas: Virus y Poliomielitis. Jornadas de Investigación del Grupo de Investigación de la UCLM “Salud, Historia Y Sociedad (Salhisoc)”, Ciudad Real, Spain.


7 July: Johanna Contrero participated in “From the PhD to Postdoctoral Research: Q&A,” at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, London.

8-10 July: David Bryan gave a talk titled “Fighting for Europe: European Narratives and Spanish Experiences in the Blue Division”, International Conference of Europeanists, Paris.

16 July: Francesca Plana will participate at the workshop “Languages of the Global: Women and International Political Thought” at the German Historical Institute, London.

15-17 July: David Bryan will present “Axis Internationalism: Spanish health experts and Nazi Germany”, 5th Meeting of Young Researchers in Contemporary History, Barcelona.

17 September: Dora Vargha will give a talk on Cold War conspiracies and suspicions in polio prevention at the CRASH conference Suspect Science: Climate Change,
Among the many research interests that I share with “The Reluctant Internationalists” is the understanding of internationalism as a varied and multifaceted phenomenon. This is one of the many ways in which my research on the history of international responses to the needs of prisoners of war and refugees in the 1920s connects with the interesting discussions that I have had over the past three months at Birkbeck College. Coming from the history of Western liberal internationalism and, in particular, the history of the international organisations such as the League of Nations, I enjoyed learning about the history of other internationalist projects, such communism, socialism, or Catholic internationalism. Despite the singularity of each historical process, there are commonalities in the creation and development of structures as well as in the centrality of expert knowledge in international networks. Read more here.

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**Forthcoming Events**

### Women and International Political Thought

The Reluctant Internationalist project is a co-sponsor of “Languages of the Global: Women and International Political Thought”. This workshop is organised by Valeska Huber, Tamson Pietsch and Katharina Rietzler and will take place on 16 July 2016 at the German Historical Institute London. The workshop will explore the contributions of women to international organisations and networks, including the language and concepts used by women to contribute to the theorising of the international arena. This workshop received a CHASE network grant to build synergies between scholars at Birkbeck, SOAS and the University of Sussex working on the history of internationalism and international thought in the long twentieth century.

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**Teaching and Research**

The following courses will be taught by project members at Birkbeck in the coming academic year:

- **Earth, Wind, Fire and Water: An Introduction to Environmental History**
  - BA Group 2 option, taught by Johanna Conterio in Autumn 2015

- **Health and Conflict: a History of Global Public Health**
  - MA option, taught by Dora Varga in Autumn 2015

- **Mass Violence and the Re-Making of Europe**
  - BA Group 2 Course taught by Ana Antic in Autumn 2015 and Spring 2016
Conference conveners: Joanna Bourke, Louise Hide and Ana Antic
This two-day interdisciplinary conference will explore the shifting political, socio-economic, cultural and medical influences that have formed and perpetuated cultures of harm from the eighteenth century to the present day. We are particularly interested in the production of harmful practices - physical, sexual and psychological violence directed by one person or group against another - in therapeutic and caring environments, worldwide. These might include hospitals and infamaries, psychiatric facilities, religious institutions, care homes, children's homes and educational establishments, as well as infirmaries and medical spaces in prisons and correctional institutions, military barracks, camps and workhouses. Find the CFP [here](#).

Conference: After the End of Disease
26-27 May 2016, London
Conference convener: Dora Varga
What happens after the end of a disease is more often than not left to epilogues, or addressed only in relation to a new, emerging disease on the cusp of crisis. Yet, diseases are often imprinted on the bodies of survivors, societies and cultures. Epidemics may change economic structures, social interaction, shape practices of international intervention and attitudes towards healthcare. In some cases, the proclaimed end of a disease leaves individuals or whole societies and states without resources previously guaranteed by the perceived epidemic threat. In others, the action of looking back after the end creates space for making moral judgements on individuals, societies, governments and international organizations. This conference brings together historians of medicine and global public health, anthropologists, sociologists and literary scholars with policy makers to think past the conventional narrative curve of epidemics and disease in general. The overall aim of the event is to initiate a fruitful discussion on how various academic analyses and perceptions of what happens after the end of disease can inform current global health policies of eradication and epidemic management, and in turn, how the experiences of practitioners in global public health may provide insight and further the understanding of the historical trajectories and ethnographic, literary and sociological studies of ending diseases.

Workshop: Communist Internationalism
Winter, 2016
Workshop convener: The Reluctant Internationalists
The aim of this workshop is to explore alternative internationalisms to the liberal model by focussing on communist internationalism and analysing how the inclusion of its history complicates the overall history of internationalism in the twentieth century.

Conference: Languages of Internationalism
May, 2017
Conference convener: Brigid O'Keeffe and The Reluctant Internationalists
The conference will bring together scholars whose work examines how language has enabled and/or frustrated human efforts to communicate and collaborate on an international basis.
Conference themes include, but will not be limited to: International Language Construction, Deployment, and Improvisations; Communicating Expertise; Science, Technology, and Knowledge Transmission; Empire and Language: Imperial Imagination, Administration, Encounters, and Entanglements; Language in Global Diplomacy and Cross-Cultural Exchange; Global Media, Language, and Idea Transmission; and Language, Education, and the State.