The Reluctant Internationalists
Autumn Term Newsletter 2015

As another busy term draws to a close, the Reluctant Internationalist project has reached its half-way point. This term we continued to work on our special issue of Contemporary European History to get it ready for publication in the new year; prepared for our upcoming workshops and conferences (see more on ‘Debating the Cold War’ and ‘After the End of Disease’ below); worked on book manuscripts and articles; set out on archive trips; presented our work at conferences and seminars; and taught.

In September we launched a new blog series on the theme of ‘Europe in Crisis’. In this series we want to think about the role and relevance of history (particularly the history of internationalism) for understanding current developments. Most of the contributions to date have focused on the ongoing refugee and migrant movements into Europe, but several have also begun to explore other (often related) facets of current discussions about ‘Europe’ and its future. You can find a list of this term’s essays below.

We hope to continue this series into 2016 as a space for a historical perspective on some of the big social, political and economic problems currently facing the continent. Migration and population movements will likely continue to be among them, as will be debates about national sovereignty, regional inequalities and the idea of development, the notion of ‘burden-sharing’, regional and international collaboration, and European ‘values’ and ‘civilisation’, and the extent of Europe and Europeanness itself. If you have any suggestions for new posts, please email them to us at reluctant.internationalists@gmail.com

Media, Public Engagement and Outreach

Jessica Reinsch was a panellist on BBC Radio Four VJ Day Anniversary Special, in which she discussed the meeting of the United Nations Preparatory Commission in London in 1945 (14 August). Listen to the fascinating 28 minute segment here.

Jessica Reinsch also appeared as an expert historian on BBC1’s ‘Who Do You Think You Are’ with Jane Seymour (20 August). View the trailer here.

Dora Vargha published Cold War Conspiracies and Suspect Polio Prevention, a guest feature in the series Imagining Conspiracies: Science Under Suspicion, edited by Alfred Moore on OpenDemocracy.net (16 September).

Jessica Reinsch participated in a Roundtable Meeting at the Overseas Development Institute on the policy responses to the refugee/migrant crisis on Lesvos and the wider European Refugee Crisis (10 December).

Teaching the history of internationalism in schools

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In the summer of 2015, the Reluctant Internationalist group's David Bryan teamed up with the educational charity The Brilliant Club and Woodlands School in Basildon to design and run a course on the history of internationalism for a group of twelve GCSE pupils. In September the pupils, who are just beginning year 10, attended a graduation ceremony at King’s College London after completing a course of university-style tutorials and producing a final assignment aimed at A-level standards.

The Brilliant Club places doctoral and postdoctoral researchers in non-selective state schools to deliver university-style tutorials based on their own research. The organisation aims to help pupils develop the knowledge, skills and ambition to secure places at top universities. Their focus is on those groups most underrepresented at such institutions, particularly pupils with no family history of higher education and those eligible for free school meals.

Read more here.

Blog series: Europe in Crisis

Since September we have published weekly posts which place current developments and debates in a historical context. Here is a run-down of the term’s posts:

- We launched the series with Jessica Reinisch’s essay, ‘History matters... but which one? Every refugee crisis has a context’ (co-published with History & Policy), which examined the uses and abuses of ‘historical precedents’ in media coverage of the refugee/migrants crisis.
- Next, amid further clashes between migrants and the French and British police in Calais, Jessica Reinisch considered the waxing and waning of interest in a long-standing camp for migrants at the edge of the Schengen area in ‘On news and non-news: Calais migrants, once again’.
- As the trouble spots moved into Hungary, two blog posts focused on Hungarian developments. The first, ‘Budapest’s...
**Eastern Train Station: From the Past to Today's (Child) Refugee Crisis** by Friederike Kind-Kovacs, examined the place of children in the current and previous population movements into and out of Hungary. The second, ‘Mnemonic Battles on 23 October’ by Dora Vargha, placed contemporary Hungarian proclamations about Europe and migrants in the context of long-standing battles over historical traditions and memories as fought out in Hungarian politics – just in time for the latest round of commemorations of the 1956 Revolution on 23 October.

- Eldor Mehilli then reminded us that Albanians, too, had long been the subject of debates about migrants and refugees. In 'Europe's 'fake' refugees' he reflected on Europe’s recent history of distinguishing between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ refugees.

- Amid growing public outrage with Eastern European anti-immigration, Ana Antic identified striking connections with Eastern and Western approaches to ‘Europe’ and the treatment of newcomers in ‘At the Gates of Europe: The Eastern European Refugee Crisis’.

- In ‘Lessons from Europe’s Refugee Pasts’, Pamela Ballinger contemplated historians’ responsibilities for providing advice for the present and identified three specific lessons from past refugee crisis for current consumption.

- In the wake of the 13 November attacks in Paris, Darcie Fontaine’s post, ‘Temporary Migrants or Permanent Immigrants: France’s long migrant crisis’, reflected on the place of non-white, non-Christian minorities in France and France’s vision of itself.

- In ‘Crisis, What Crisis? The EU in Historical Perspective’, Kiran Klaus Patel then zoomed out to the wider European context, and challenged the idea that the EU is on the brink of collapse.

- As the UN Security Council Resolution for military action in Syria was being debated in the British House of Commons, David Bryan listened closely to Hilary Benn’s use of ‘internationalism’ in his argument for foreign intervention, in ‘History, ‘internationalism’ and the British debate on Syria’.

- In ‘One of Us? Dealing with Difference Among People on the Move‘, Jim Bjork brought our attention back to recent developments in central Europe. The far-right Law and Justice Party triumphed at the recent parliamentary elections in Poland this autumn, but Bjork identified different, parallel readings of Poland’s recent past of multiculturalism and integrating foreign newcomers.

- In ‘The Paris Climate Agreement and the Year 1965: How Much Can We Achieve in 50 Years (Or Less)?’ Hiroki Shin wrote about climate, energy, and time and the rough road ahead of us as a global community if we are to reach the common goal embraced in the agreement.

- In ‘The Dangers of Sympathy’, Becky Taylor ponders the British approach to Hungarian refugees who settled in (and sought to continue migrating through) Britain following the 1956 uprising. She questions the central role of charity and public sympathy, as opposed to rights, in justifying the support of refugees.

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**Recent and upcoming talks**

September 17th - **Dora Vargha** gave a talk titled “The Russians love their children too? Cold War conspiracies and suspicions in polio prevention” at Suspect Science: Climate Change, Epidemics, and Questions of Conspiracy, CRASSH, Cambridge University.

October 15th - **Dora Vargha** gave a talk on “Polio in Time of Revolution” at The History of Health and Disease in Central and Eastern Europe since 1945, Warsaw.

November 3rd - **Dora Vargha** gave a talk on “After the end of polio: looking past the epidemic narrative” at the History and Philosophy of Science Department seminar at Cambridge University.

19th November - **Jessica Reinisch** gave a presentation at the Wellcome Trust’s Humanities and Social Science Pre-Application Workshop.


26th November - **Johanna**
Forthcoming Conferences and Workshops with the Reluctant Internationalists

Conference: Deating the Cold War
5th February 2016, Birkbeck College

This one-day conference aims to re-examine some of the fundamental tenets underlying analysis of the Cold War world, particularly the claim that East and West were fundamentally incomparable. The five panels will discuss the global study of the Cold War, the role of ideology in the conflict, the welfare state on both sides of the Iron Curtain, Cold War science, and contemporary research and teaching into the period.

Full details of the panels and attendees can be found here. Attendance is free, but places are limited. Please contact j.conterio@bbk.ac.uk to reserve a place.

Conference: Cultures of Harm in Institutions of Care: Historical & Contemporary Perspectives
15-16 April 2016, Birkbeck College
Conveners: Ana Antic, Joanna Bourke and Louise Hide

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 infirmaries, 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. The full CfP is available here.

Conference: After the End of Disease
26-27 May 2016, London
Convener: Dora Vargha

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


1st December - Ana Antic gave a talk titled "Southeastern Europe in the 1940s: Reading psychiatric case files as a historical source," at UCL SSEES.

Where you'll see us next term:

9th February - Dora Vargha will give a talk titled "Ending polio in Hungary: a global affair," at University of York.

10th February - Jessica Reinisch will give a talk titled "How not to write the history of refugees", at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine lunchtime seminar.

12th February - Dora Vargha will give a talk titled "Local and global consequences of Hungarian disease elimination in the Cold War," Oxford Hungarian Society, Oxford University.

March - Jessica Reinisch will give a talk titled "Auntie UNRRA to the rescue", at Communicating International Organisations, European University Institute, Florence.

April - Jessica Reinisch will give a talk at the third meeting of the network on International Health Organisations: People, politics and practices in historical perspective in Shanghai.

April - Jessica Reinisch will give a talk at a conference entitled Futures Past: Experts, Development and Sustainability at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Potsdam.

April - Johanna Conterio will present a paper, "Soviet Opposition to the Dutch Quinine Monopoly at the League of Nations" at the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies annual conference, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge.
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. Further information is available here.

Workshop: (Re)thinking Armenia and the Armenians in the long 20th century
May 2016, Birkbeck
Convener: Francesca Piana

The experience of genocide and its denial have profoundly shaped histories of Armenia and the Armenians in the long 20th century. This has frequently led to a narrowly national or provincial approach, which has divorced the history of Armenia and the Armenians from broader historiographies and contexts. Recent contributions to the field of Armenian history have gone some way to challenge and complement this approach. This conference builds on these recent developments. The purpose of this workshop is to put Armenian history into dialogue with international, global, and world history, treating the history of Armenia and the Armenians as a vantage point from which to re-examine key debates on peace, security and stability, humanitarianism, reconstruction, and sovereignty. The conference aims to put into dialogue territories which are addressed separately in the existing historiography: historical Armenia and Armenian vilayets in the Ottoman Empire, the places where the Armenian diaspora was dispersed, and the cities in which deliberations and decisions which shaped the fate of Armenia and the Armenians were taken, such as Istanbul, Moscow, London, Geneva, Paris, and Washington.

Conference: Crossing borders: The Spanish Civil War and transnational mobilisation
30 June-1 July 2016, Birkbeck College
Conveners: The Reluctant Internationalists in collaboration with the Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish Studies at the LSE, and the Universities of Queen Mary, Oxford and Kent.

Marking 80 years since the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, this two-day conference will explore the origins and experiences of transnational mobilisation during the conflict and the immediate post-war period. It will bring together researchers working on military, medical, humanitarian and cultural aspects of mobilisation both inside and outside Spain. The Spanish Civil War mobilised large sections of civilian populations, including political and humanitarian organisations. The war gave rise to a wide range of
transnational collaborations, in some cases building on existing networks but in others serving as a springboard for new initiatives. Much of the existing historiography has explored the diplomatic dimension of the conflict and international military intervention on both sides. This conference aims to offer new perspectives by focusing on informal networks, border crossings, transmissions of ideas and cultural responses to these forms of mobilisation within Spain. Further information available here.

Further ahead

The Reluctant Internationalists group is also planning a series of conferences and workshops in the coming academic year, including

- International Outsiders (October 2016), to be convened with Susan Gross Solomon
- Socialist Internationalism (December 2016)
- Languages of Internationalism (May 2017), to be convened with Brigid O’Keeffe

Further information about these conferences will be provided on our website as it becomes available.

Conference Report

'Thinking about Health and Welfare in (Eastern) Europe and Beyond', Birkbeck College, 1-3 July 2015

Report by Tamara Scheer (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Social Science History/Institute for East European History/University of Vienna)

Co-organised by the German Research Foundation Network 'Social Welfare and Health Care in Eastern and Southeastern Europe during the Long 20th Century' (Regensburg University, Germany) and the Reluctant Internationalists project.

Our joint network meeting aimed to discuss the current research of our members, with a special emphasis on sources related to health and welfare. Although the geographical focus was on Eastern, South Eastern and Central Europe, most of the 19 papers drew attention to global transfers and networks by discussing a period stretching from the 19th century up to recent contemporary history. The workshop included two key notes, one by Paul Lerner on "War Trauma and the Historiography of Psychiatry", the other by Marius Turda on "Health and Social Welfare in Southeastern-and Eastern Europe: A Troubled Relationship". Read more here.