The Reluctant Internationalists
Summer Term Newsletter 2016

We were just putting the final touches on this newsletter when the British referendum results sent the country into a tailspin. At the time of writing, political and economic turmoil reigns and the international ramifications are only just emerging. Whatever the next steps and long-term consequences, the referendum results have confirmed to us that understanding the motives for engaging and disengaging with the international sphere is perhaps the primary problem of our time. Internationalism is under attack, precisely as the functional elements of it (which all of our case studies have identified) are disappearing from view. At the same time, popular demands for a retreat from internationalism have failed to come to terms with a world where every nation is enmeshed in international agreements and treaties, and where people, goods and ideas cross borders more easily than ever. For all the talk of national sovereignty in the run-up to the vote, we can’t help but notice that perhaps the biggest immediate loser of the outcome is the British state and its major political institutions and parties. What profitable times to be a historian of internationalism! But what dismal times to be a citizen.

Our events schedule this term could barely keep up with current events. Dora Vargha’s conference on After the End of Disease revolved around topical questions – just days after more cases of Ebola were confirmed in Liberia – of how epidemics are managed and what happens to patients, medical practitioners, and national and international institutions in their wake. Francesca Piana and Jo Laycock’s conference on Armenia and Armenians took place a day after the German Parliament agreed, for the first time, that the Armenian experience during the First World War amounted to a ‘genocide’. Next, in the midst of a British referendum campaign that de-centred and challenged all forms of authority and expertise, we convened an impromptu workshop on Technical Experts and Expertise. Finally, this week David Brydan’s conference on Crossing Borders: The Spanish Civil War and Transnational Mobilisation commemorates the civil war’s 80th anniversary. Throughout the term, our conversations were immeasurably enriched by the presence of our two visiting fellows, Professor Holly Case and Dr Heidi Tworek.

We’re about to enter the final year of The Reluctant Internationalists project and have organised a packed schedule of

What we did this term


Jessica Reinisch.
events. There will also be some changes in the Birkbeck-based composition of our group. In the autumn, Ana Antic and Dora Vargha will move to the University of Exeter to take up Lectureships in Twentieth-Century International History and Medical Humanities respectively. Francesca Piana, who has joined us as a visiting fellow for the past 15 months, will move to Binghamton University to take up a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Women's and Gender History (congratulations Ana, Dora and Francesca!). They will all continue to work on The Reluctant Internationalists project. We are also delighted to welcome Jane Mumby as a new Birkbeck PhD student, who will work on her project on “The quiet death of the League of Nations”. Our new Centre for the Study of Internationalism, which Holly Case helped us to launch earlier this term, will begin its activities and, looking at the world today, won’t run out of material to study in a hurry.

This term we launched our new Centre for the Study of Internationalism at Birkbeck with a lecture by our visiting fellow, Professor Holly Case. A podcast of the lecture and discussion will be available on our website soon.

The Centre for the Study of Internationalism gives a presence to a significant field of research at Birkbeck: internationalism in its various guises, in the past and present. The Centre provides an intellectual home for researchers at all stages in their careers who are interested in the social, cultural, political, economic, intellectual and legal fabric of our world of nation-states and international or global institutions. It unites scholars from different academic fields and departments, including political, legal and social sciences, economics, languages, philosophy, history and other disciplines. The Centre will organise reading groups, seminars and workshops, and host an annual lecture and visiting fellow. We’ll post more details on our blog in the autumn.

Publications

For previous newsletters, see here.

Ana Antic, Therapeutic Fascism: Experiencing the Violence of the Nazi New Order (Oxford University Press, November 2016) – Fraenkel Prize winner 2016

During World War Two, death and violence permeated all aspects of the everyday lives of ordinary people in Eastern Europe. Throughout the region, the realities of mass murder and incarceration meant that people learnt to live with daily public hangings of civilian hostages and stumbled on corpses of their neighbors. Entire populations were drawn into fierce and uncompromising political and ideological conflicts, and many ended up being more than mere victims or observers: they


David Brydan, “The danger of political connections for a technical institution: Franco’s Spain and the battle for universal membership during the birth of the WHO,” International Health Organizations (IHOs): People, politics and practices in historical perspective, Shanghai, April 2016.


Jessica Reinsch,
Therapeutic Fascism tells a story of the tremendous impact of such pervasive and multi-layered political violence, and looks at ordinary citizens' attempts to negotiate these extraordinary wartime political pressures. It examines Yugoslav psychiatric documents as unique windows into this harrowing history, and provides an original perspective on the effects of wartime violence and occupation through the history of psychiatry, mental illness, and personal experience. Using previously unexplored resources, such as patients' case files, state and institutional archives, and the professional medical literature of the time, this volume explores the socio-cultural history of wartime through the eyes of (mainly lower-class) psychiatric patients. Ana Antic examines how the experiences of observing, suffering, and committing political violence affected the understanding of human psychology, pathology, and normality in wartime and post-war Balkans and Europe.

Other Publications


Ana Antic, "Therapeutic violence: Psychoanalysis and the re-education of political prisoners in Cold War Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe", in Daniel Pick and Matt flyche, eds, Psychoanalysis in the Age of Totalitarianism, Routledge, May 2016.


Special Issue

Our special issue of Contemporary European History on 'Agents of Internationalism' was published in May. We also helped to build a virtual special issue on the same theme, which includes 10 articles on the theme of internationalism and transnationalism from the Contemporary European History archive. The 'agents of internationalism' in this collection include international bankers and economists, municipal reformers, members of the Soviet commentator on film screening of "In the Shadow of Ebola" (dirs. Sarita Siegel and Gregg Mitman, 2014). After the End of Disease, interdisciplinary conference, London, 25 May 2016.


Jessica Reinish, speaker on the panel "Lessons from History" at the University of East Anglia/ Pears Institute for the Study of Anti-Semitism conference on Placeless People: What Can History Tell Us About Today's Refugee Crises?, 20 June 2016.


Where you’ll see us next

Dora Vargha, “Polio eradication as a socialist product,” at CRASSH conference on Techniques, Technologies and Materialities of Epidemic Control, Cambridge, UK, 17-18
these two collections should prompt us to think about the variety of internationalisms at play and in direct contact and competition with each other during Europe’s twentieth century. The history of twentieth century Europe, as these articles show, was a history shaped by overlapping and competing international collaborations and radical re-imaginations of the world map.

New Series on Somatosphere

The After the End of Disease conference (see more below) has been accompanied by a series curated by Dora Varga on Somatosphere, where the conversation continues throughout the summer. Somatosphere is a collaborative website covering the intersections of medical anthropology, science and technology studies, cultural psychiatry, psychology and bioethics. The series launched on May 17 with an introductory post by Dora, followed by posts by anthropologists, sociologists and historians working on epidemics, global health and disease narratives published every Wednesday. You can follow the discussion here.

Grants and Awards

September 2016.

Jessica Reinisch, speaker at the second workshop of the AHRC-funded research network, The Practice of International History, on “Transnational Approaches to the History of International Relations,” 22 September 2016.


Jessica Reinisch, “The ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’: the political geography of donating and receiving countries”, at the Reluctant Internationalist workshop on Outsiders: A Working Symposium, 27/28 October 2016.

Dora Varga, “Eastern Europe and communism in global polio eradication” at the History of Science Society’s (HSS) annual meeting, Atlanta, GA, 3-5 November 2016.


Jessica Reinisch, Modern European History seminar,
The Cold War in the Classroom: 2017 Programme

The Teacher Fellowship Programme for 2017 is a fully-funded course which will focus on the history and historiography of the Cold War.

How global was the Cold War? What role did Europe and countries like Britain play in the Cold War? Which parts of the globe were untouched by the Cold War? To what extent did ideology define the conflict? How was the Cold War experienced in East and West, and how did life on both sides of the Iron Curtain compare? Why do some Cold War assumptions still shape our world in the twenty-first century?

Participants will explore the scope of the field and a range of new and old historical sources, and develop ways to use them in the classroom.

What’s involved?
The course structure is split into three stages, all of which are compulsory:
1. A two-day residential in London in January 2017, covering academic and teaching issues.
2. An 8-10 week online course, requiring three to four hours’ reading and discussion per week.
3. The creation of a resource to be published on the IHA website for use by other teachers.

Who is eligible?
The programme is open to all secondary history teachers with a minimum of three to four years’ teaching experience. Further information about eligibility criteria will be available on the IHA website.

You must be able to attend a two-day residential in early January in central London (accommodation and travel will be funded).

How do I apply?

Easy! Just tell us the following in no more than 800 words:
• Why you want to join the programme
• What you and your school hope to gain from your involvement
• How this will fit with your curriculum requirements and what age range you would be considering when teaching this period

Please include within this an indication of the areas of history you have concentrating on in your personal and professional study.

A reasonable background and working knowledge of twentieth century history would be beneficial. More importantly, you need to demonstrate a commitment to study and enthusiasm for your history teaching.

Then, additionally, in no more than 800 words, outline a series of lessons or teaching activities you are particularly proud of, reflecting upon how and why this has been a success. If you are unsure about the kind of things you might choose, the 2015 Cold War Teachers Conference in London “From Triumphant Show articles for inspiration.

Application forms and further information about the programme will be available to download from the IHA website. Please send completed applications, along with supporting documents, to our Education Officer, Rohinie Channer, by Monday 7 November 2016.

By email:
rohinie.channer@history.org.uk

By post:
The Historical Association, 116 Karrington Park Road, London N11 4NH.

Please mark the envelope clearly with 2017 Teacher Fellowship.

*Copyright in any material you produce during the programme will be assigned to the Historical Association.

Cold War in the Classroom: Wellcome Public Engagement grant

The Reluctant Internationalists research group is delighted to have been awarded a Wellcome Trust Public Engagement grant to help improve how history is being taught at British schools. Together with the Historical Association we are launching a Teacher Fellowship Programme for 2017 on “The Cold War in the Classroom”. The programme is open to secondary school history teachers with a minimum of three to four years’ teaching experience. For more details see here.

David Brydan has been awarded an Eric Hobsbawm Scholarship (Birkbeck) and a Royal Historical Society Conference Organisation Grant.

Dora Vargha has been awarded the 2016 J. Worth Estes Prize of the American Association for the History of Medicine for her article, “Between East and West: Polio Vaccination Across the Iron Curtain in Cold War Hungary,” Bulletin of the History of Medicine, Vol. 88, No. 2 (Summer 2014): 319-43, for the best published article in the history of pharmacology.

Francesca Piana has been awarded a postdoctoral fellowship in women’s and gender history in the department of history of SUNY Binghamton, and a “return phase” to the University of Zurich within the framework of her current Advanced Postdoc. Mobility fellowship of the Swiss National Science Foundation.
Our Events This Term

After the End of Disease (25-27 May 2016): Conference Report

Held at the Royal Society of Medicine over two days, *After the End of Disease* brought together historians of medicine and global public health, anthropologists and sociologists with policy makers to think past the conventional narrative curve of epidemics and disease in general. The overall aim of the event was 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, and sociological studies of ending diseases.

The conference opened with a public event at the Wellcome Collection’s Reading Room: a screening of the director’s cut of *In the Shadow of Ebola*, a film by Gregg Mitman (U of Wisconsin) and Sarita Siegel (Alchemy Films). The film was followed by a roundtable discussion with the participation of the filmmakers Patricia Kingori (Oxford), Jessica Reinisch (Birkbeck) and Karen Wells (Birkbeck).

The panels, conversations and debates showed the manifold ways in which rethinking the epidemic narrative can contribute both to academic scholarship and to global health. Combining approaches from anthropology, sociology, philosophy, history and visual culture, the discussions marked the beginning of a meaningful, interdisciplinary collaboration that will surely continue in the future. A full conference report is here.

Aid to Armenia. Armenia and Armenians in International History

The workshop “Aid to Armenia. Armenia and Armenians in International History” took place on the 3rd of June at Birkbeck College, University of London. The workshop was timely: the day before, on the 2nd of June, the German Parliament had employed the word genocide to describe the violence, massacres, death marches, rapes, forced conversions, abductions, and collective expropriations that the Ottoman Armenian population experienced during WWI and the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire. To this day, despite recognition of the Armenian genocide by multiple actors over the last few
months and years, the Turkish government embraces a position of persistent denial. A full workshop report is now on our blog.

**Crossing Borders: The Spanish Civil War and Transnational Mobilisation (30 June-1 July 2016)**

The forthcoming conference, *Crossing Borders: The Spanish Civil War and Transnational Mobilisation*, will take place at Birkbeck on 30th June and 1st July. Organised in collaboration with colleagues from Birkbeck, Queen Mary’s, the University of Kent and the LSE’s Cañada Blanch Centre, the conference will explore the origins and experiences of transnational mobilisation during the conflict and the immediate post-war period. Details about the conference and the programme are available on the conference website.

The conference will be accompanied by a public lecture from Professor Helen Graham (Royal Holloway), entitled Transnational Lives: Spain and Europe’s Wars of Social Change. The lecture will take place at 5.30pm on Thursday 30th June at the Institute of Historical Research. Tickets for the lecture are free, and are available here.

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**Upcoming Events of the Reluctant Internationalists**

**Outsiders: A Working Symposium (27-28 October 2016)**

Histories of the development of international public health in the 20th century tend to be celebrations of achievements – whether the enrolling of an ever-widening number of nations in programs to improve health and prevent disease, the adoption of shared standards and measurements to track health status, or the circulation of health researchers and statesmen across national frontiers. Justified though it often was, the repeated sounding of trumpets may have relegated to the background “outsiders” in the international health arena. What impact, we wonder, would factoring in “outsiders” make to the way we write the history of international public health? What can close study of “outsiders” tell us about the international system of public health – its rules (written and unwritten), its reach, and its commitment to inclusiveness. To address these questions, we welcome case studies of outliers that engage and challenge some core conceptual notions of the international system, such as those of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’; the relations between donor and recipient nations; the impact on the international public health system of authoritarian political regimes; and the contribution of public health to state building in newly-consolidating regimes and inter-state networks.

This symposium will take place on 27-28 October 2016. You can reserve your place by emailing
reluctant.internationalists@gmail.com.

PROGRAMME
Panel 1: Giving and Taking
Jessica Reinisch, The ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’: the political geography of UNRRA’s donating and receiving countries
Lion Murard, Ironies of Technical Assistance: Greece, Eastern Europe and Health Internationalism in the interwar period
Davide Rodogno, Fellows and Fellowships in public health

Panel 2: Neither Centre nor Periphery: Soviet Russia in the interwar years
Susan Gross Solomon, Making the case: the USSR in Geneva and New York
Johanna Conterio, Socialist Design around the Black Sea
Sarah Marks, Czechoslovakia as insider and outsider in early Cold War era

Panel 3: Public Health in ‘Outsider’ States
David Bryan, Franco Spain as insider and outsider
Paul Weindling, Germany as an outsider in international health under Nazism
Maria Zarifi, Public health and the construction of Greece

Panel 4: Inclusion and Exclusion in International Health Networks
Jessica Pearson-Patel, Colonial Politics of Global Public Health
Dora Vargha, Insiders and outsiders in the WHO
Ana Antic, Communist medicine and psychiatry and its links to the global South

Final Roundtable: Internationalism and Public Health
What difference does adding outsiders make to the way we write the history of public health? How does it change the writing of international history?
Patricia Clavin, Peter Jackson, Paul Weindling, Patrick Zylberman

CfP: Languages of Internationalism (25-26 May 2017)
Together with Brigid O’Keeffe (Brooklyn College, CUNY) we’ve started to plan our final conference, Languages of Internationalism, which will take place on 25-26 May 2017. Please send us your abstracts by 1 September 2016.

The goal of the conference is to shed light on the centrality of language to people’s past pursuit and experience of internationalism. Historians must better understand the linguistic realities that their subjects confronted in their various global networks and endeavours. For any agents of internationalism, language presented a wide variety of challenges and opportunities. It imposed obstacles and provided avenues to mutual understanding and collaboration among diverse peoples. The relative successes and failures of past internationalist projects in large measure owed to participants’ ability to effectively communicate across not just linguistic, but also political, cultural, economic, and professional boundaries. This fundamental and literal question of (mis)communication has dramatically shaped the lives of peoples variously confronting the global realities or pretensions of their milieus. More details on our blog.