As both human rights and globalization have emerged as dynamic fields of historical and socio-logical research, the “socialist world” is relegated to a supporting role in the triumph of Western capitalism and liberal democracy. The aim of this conference is to question established narratives that have ignored or downplayed the role of socialist ideas, practice, and experts—be they state officials, loyal intellectuals or dissident activists—in the development of international human rights ideas, discourses, and systems in the post-war era. With a geographic scope that covers the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc, Yugoslavia and China, we hope to show that the socialist world did not just react passively to Western human rights politics, but was a vital participant in the production of global human rights with legacies that continued past the revolutions of 1989. By examining the socialist contribution to the evolution of human rights, we hope to contribute to revising standard narratives of globalization that focus exclusively on the perceived winners of these processes.

Organizers
German Historical Institute Warsaw
Exeter University’s Research Project “1989 after 1989: Rethinking the Fall of State Socialism in Global Perspective”, funded by the Leverhulme Trust
Georg-August University of Göttingen

Conceptualization
Robert Brier (London School of Economics),
Hella Dietz (University of Göttingen),
James Mark (University of Exeter),
Ned Richardson-Little (University of Exeter)

Conference Language
English
Thursday, 3 March 2016

14:00-14:30 Ruth LEISEROWITZ (German Historical Institute Warsaw)
Welcoming Address

Hella DIETZ (Georg-August University of Göttingen)
Ned RICHARDSON-LITTLE (University of Exeter)
Robert BRIER (London School of Economics)

15:30-16:00 Coffee break

16:00-18:00 Panel 1: Defining Human Rights Internationally
Steven JENSEN (Danish Institute for Human Rights)
Defining the Social in the Global: Social Rights, UN Diplomacy and the Emergence of International Non-Discrimination Norms and Politics, 1950-1960
Alexander OSIPOV (European Centre for Minority Issues)
The Soviet Union’s Involvement in the Establishment of the European Minority Rights Regime
Discussant: Arnd BAUERKÄMPFER (Free University Berlin)

19:00 Conference Dinner

Friday, 4 March 2016

09:00-11:00 Panel 2: State-Socialist Conceptions of Rights and Human Rights
Jennifer ALTEHENGGER (King’s College London)
Rights, Not Human Rights: Communist China’s National Constitution Discussion, 1954
Michal KOPÍČEK (Central European University, Budapest/Institute for Contemporary History, Prague)
Socialist Conceptions of Human Rights and its Dissident Critique

16:00-16:30 Coffee Break

16:30-18:00 Panel 5: Transnational Movements and Flows
Christie MIEDEMA (University of Amsterdam)
Negotiating Space for International Human Rights Activism: Amnesty International in Eastern Europe before 1989

Saturday, 5 March 2016

9:00-11:00 Panel 6: Dissent and Human Rights
Simone BELLEZZA (University of Eastern Piedmont)
The Right to Be Different: Ukrainian Dissent and the Struggle Against a Global Consumerist Cultural Standardization
Hermann AUßIER (University of Turku)
Between Loyalty and Dissent: Revisiting the History of Human Rights in China Through the Discourse of Chinese Intellectuals and Dissidents
Zsófia LÖRÁND (European University Institute, Florence)
Discussant: Celia DONERT (University of Liverpool)

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-13:00 Concluding Panel:
The Place of State Socialist Societies in the Global History of Human Rights
Paul BETTS (Oxford University)
James MARK (University of Exeter)
Celia DONERT (University of Liverpool)