

# **State Socialism, Legal Experts and the Genesis of International Criminal and Humanitarian Law after 1945**

**Humboldt University of Berlin**

**November 24-26, 2016**

In the history of international law, the socialist bloc has been generally relegated to the role of roadblock to the fulfillment of the ideals of Western liberalism. Scholars of international criminal law (ICL) and international humanitarian law (IHL) have often dismissed the contributions of socialist legal initiatives as little more than Cold War propaganda and thus irrelevant to understanding the historical evolution of judicial norms and the modern international system. The establishment of different international tribunals since the collapse of the Soviet Union has only reinforced the notion that the socialist world was little more than an impediment to progress. Nevertheless, the American-led global war on terror has done much to call into question Western commitment to the laws of war.

This conference seeks to explore the role of state-socialist intellectuals, experts and governments in shaping the evolution of ICL and IHL since the end of the Second World War. Actors from Eastern Europe, the USSR, and East Asian and African socialist states actively participated in international debates regarding international legal norms, the meaning of state sovereignty, and in the negotiation of all major ICL and IHL conventions after 1945. In various cases the socialist bloc was often more enthusiastic, and timely, in supporting and ratifying international legal agreements than Western governments, even if these initiatives were inseparable from political agendas. Although they systematically opposed the creation of international tribunals, experts from socialist countries led the way in many areas, such as the codification of crimes against peace and Apartheid or the elimination of statutory limitations for major ICL offences. The socialist world participated also in debates over the international legal status of drug conflicts and revolutionary groups funded by narcotics trafficking. Deliberations on the criminalization of terrorism and the regulation of armed conflicts were closely linked to the politics of “wars of liberation” by socialist forces in Africa, South-East Asia, and Latin America. Socialist legal experts were active participants in transnational epistemic communities and engaged in broader global projects, initiatives, and mobilizations across the Cold War divide.

We encourage proposals on the following topics, and from scholars working on socialist regimes, experts and movements across the world. You are welcome to submit proposals on other themes related to this topic.

- The contributions of the socialist countries and experts to debates on the general principles of ICL and IHL (the relationship between municipal and international law; the sources of ICL; the relationship between state sovereignty, ICL and IHL etc.).

- Socialist challenges to western liberal humanitarian doctrines and conventions (i.e. Peace proposals as alternative to new Geneva conventions, rejection of equality of nations before the law in cases of aggressive war, etc.)
- The role of socialist elites, legal experts, and courts in the development of specific fields of international crimes such as war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, and to acts of transnational criminality, such as terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, the arms trade, smuggling of nuclear materials, and trafficking in persons and slavery. The evolution of ICL and IHL discourse, ideas, and initiatives in state-socialist countries.
- The role of the Red Cross and other humanitarian NGOs in the socialist world (i.e. North Vietnamese rejection of ICRC protection for US POWs, the creation of local Red Cross organizations in the Eastern Bloc, etc.)
- Assessments of the continuing legacies and contributions of state socialist traditions of engagement with ICL and IHL on justice processes after 1989/91.

Abstracts of 300-500 words, together with an accompanying short CV should be submitted to Natalie Taylor ([N.H.Taylor@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:N.H.Taylor@exeter.ac.uk)) by 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016. The selected participants will be notified by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016. They are then expected to submit their papers by 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

Further information will be provided on the [1989 after 1989 website](#).

## Funding Opportunities

Funding opportunities for travel and accommodation are available, but we ask that potential contributors also explore funding opportunities at their home institutions.

The conference is organized by the University of Exeter, the Leipzig Centre for the History and Culture of East-Central Europe (GWZO), and the Humboldt University of Berlin.

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