

Reconstruction of the Immediate Aftermath of War: A Comparative Study of Europe, 1945-50

Eric Hobsbawm †

2003 Balzan Prize for European History since 1900

Balzan GPC Adviser: Keith Thomas

Project Directors: David Feldman, Mark Mazower

Researchers: Jessica Reinisch, Elizabeth White (postdoctoral fellows)

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Period: 2004-2007

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Eric Hobsbawm was President of Birkbeck College at the University of London and Emeritus Professor in its Department of History. His Balzan research project was established there and was directed by David Feldman (Birkbeck College) and Mark Mazower (Columbia University). It comprised a programme of research projects undertaken by two postdoctoral fellows, Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White, as well as four workshops and a conference.

Researcher Jessica Reinisch worked on *The Reconstruction of the Public Health System in Germany up to 1949*. Securing public health was a key component in reconstruction, and the issue of public health had generally received only superficial treatment in the literature on German reconstruction up to that point. Reinisch pursued a comparative analysis of reconstruction in the different German occupation zones, and her research contributed to our understanding of post-war reconstruction in a comparative perspective. Researcher Elizabeth White's *The Return of Soviet Citizens Evacuated to the Urals, Central Asia or Siberia* looks both at the experience of return and at the attempts of the soviet state to administer and control the re-evacuation and to use it as a form of social engineering. Whereas evacuation was a major theme in Soviet historiography, little work had been done on the return process. At the same time, the particular history of return in the Soviet Union presents one instance of a theme that the reconstruction project explores comparatively in a variety of national

contexts. Over the course of the programme, four workshops were held at Birkbeck College: Comparing Europe's Post-war Reconstructions, October 2005; Relief and Rehabilitation in the Immediate Aftermath of War, June 2006; Displacement and Replacement in the Aftermath of War, 1944-1948, September 2006; Planning, Production and Reconstruction in Post-war Europe, June 2007. A conference, Post-War Reconstruction in Europe, also took place in June 2008. These were attended by an international array of scholars from all over Europe and from the United States.

Publications

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- Reinisch, J., ed. *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 43. No. 3 (July 2008). Special issue.
- Reinisch, J. *The Perils of Peace – Public Health Crisis in Occupied Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
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- White, E. "After the War was Over: The Civilian Return to Leningrad." *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 59, No. 7 (2007): 1145-61.
- White, E. and J. Reinisch, eds. *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Post-War Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Zaidi, W. "Planning, Production and Reconstruction in Post-War Europe, Fourth Balzan Workshop, Birkbeck College, London, 26 June 2007." *History Workshop Journal* 65 (2008): 279-284.