

Professor Geoffrey Roberts

School of History, University College Cork, Ireland

Final Report

**The Struggle for Peace and Identity Formation in the Communist Bloc during the Early
Cold War**

My research topic is the history of the communist-led peace movement from the 1940s to the 1960s. My interests centre on the leadership of the World Peace Council and their role as a transnational lobby group that through its influence in Moscow helped determine the character of the early cold war. But I am also interested in the impact of the peace movement on the domestic identities of communist bloc states. Throughout the cold war the struggle for peace was the major propaganda theme of the communist bloc. In all the socialist countries there were officially organised mass peace movements. In the Soviet case the domestic peace campaign was instrumental in shaping the USSR's self-identity as a peace-loving state.

Having done quite a lot of research on this topic in the Russian archives¹ I wanted to expand my knowledge by working on the archives of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in the Vera & Donald Blinken Open Society Archive in Budapest. During my month's stay in Budapest I worked on the following RFE/RL archive series:

- Information Items
- Background Reports
- Situation Reports
- Soviet Red Archives
- Western Press Archives

The RFE/RL Information Items, Background Reports and Situation Reports have been digitised and I was able to identify relevant documents through keyword searches. The material culled from these sources (about 60 pdfs) covers Western as well as Central and Eastern Europe. Using the original microfilm I also reviewed the total coverage of the largest

set of these sources – the Information Items, which consists mainly of reports from informants from within the communist bloc or from refugees and émigrés. This review showed that the peace movement was not a major topic of interest for RFE/RL researchers in the 1950s. Highly sceptical of the authenticity of the peace campaign, they were more interested in reports on economic matters, military affairs and political resistance to communism.

The Soviet Red Archives and the Western Press Archives are boxes of thematically compiled press and journal cuttings put together by the RFE/RL researchers. The Red Archives boxes contain cuttings (in Russian) from Soviet publications. The Press Archives boxes mostly contain cuttings from American, British, French, and German newspapers, magazines and journals together with original, and sometimes unpublished, press agency reports. I inspected 28 boxes (c.100 individual files) and selected and took more than 3000 digital images, which I will be happy to share via the Parallel Archive.

The OSA has an excellent, multilingual collection of books on the history of the communist bloc and I made good use of this resource, too.

My research in the OSA confirmed the importance of the peace campaign to identity formation in the communist bloc. It also opened up for me some new avenues of research, for example, the role of the priests for peace movement in several countries and the impact of the Sino-Soviet split on the peace movement.

The research that I conducted at the OSA will be incorporated into my forthcoming monograph on the peace movement and the support of the International Visegrad Fund will be duly and gratefully acknowledged.

Geoffrey Roberts

1 July 2016

ⁱ G. Roberts, "Averting Armageddon: The Communist Peace Movement, 1948-1956" in S.A. Smith (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism* (OUP 2014)