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Beyond the “Development” Paradigm: State Socialist Women’s Activism, Transnationalism, and the “Long Sixties”

Magdalena Grabowska

Introduction

In 2010, historian Francisca de Haan called for acknowledging the role of post–Second World War Eastern European women’s activism in shaping so-called second wave feminism. She pointed to the need for recognizing various, diverse, and complex—but largely forgotten—contributions of state socialist women activists to shaping women’s agendas locally and internationally before the revolutionary decade of the 1960s.¹ Existing historical narratives about transnational feminism still overlook the role of women from the Eastern Bloc in forming international women’s activism after 1945. They build on stereotypes of state socialism that survived the fall of the Berlin Wall—ones that represent women as passive victims of authoritarian regimes—and emphasize the leading role of women from the West and their postcolonial counterparts as forces behind the formation of a transnational women’s movement.

In this chapter I follow de Haan’s call for recognizing various forms of women’s activism under state socialism. I argue that acknowledging socialist states as sites for the development of supranational women’s movement agendas before the 1960s, particularly after the Second World War, can expand dominant understandings of the relationship between global politics and concepts of modernity and social progress that have been conceived of and transformed within European “gender equality” narratives. My goal is to recast state-socialist women’s activism as part of the genealogy of women’s movements globally by taking a closer look at women’s international activism post-1945. In particular, I examine the transformation of the work of Polish women within the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF), a socialist-feminist organization that was created in 1945 in Paris at the International Congress of Women. During the 1960s, women’s activists’ political focus underwent a paradigm shift from “peace activism” to the “development” framework of international organizations. I wish to trace this transformation by examining the changing face of Polish women’s activism after the Second World

War, particularly the erasure of Polish women's original thought and engagement with the international women's movement. I will argue that the eradication was particularly prominent during the UN-sponsored Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 when Eastern European women activists coined the term "non-region" to indicate the exclusion of Eastern Europe from the space of the international women's movement following the division of the world into First, Second (Soviet Union and East European countries), and Third World categories of the Cold War era.² Conceptually, I utilize the idea of the "long sixties"³ to argue that revolutionary changes that took place during the 1960s and 1970s were rooted in the 1940s. Methodologically, I approach the question of the agency of women under state socialism as rooted in a political, institutional, and cultural context within which postwar Eastern European socialist activists worked on behalf of women's equality, both nationally and internationally.

In formulating my argument I rely mostly on primary sources: fieldwork and archival documents. This chapter is part of a larger project based on semi-structured interviews with women who were active in communist parties and women's groups during the 1970s and 1980s in Poland and Georgia and archival sources, particularly the documents of the Women's Department of the Polish United Workers Party collected by the Archive of New Records in Warsaw, and the Women's International Democratic Federation documents available at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. In addition I use the material collected for my PhD dissertation, "Between East and West: The formation of Polish feminist identities," for which I interviewed thirty Polish women activists.⁴ I hope that my revised analysis of primary sources⁵ will destabilize and challenge the predominant representation of state-socialist women activists in secondary sources as passive witnesses unable "to organize and defend their collective interest."⁶

Many of the materials I use do not contradict the common understanding that Soviet-style women's emancipation was imposed in Poland "from above" in 1945. And yet, these sources illustrate that the project of state-socialist women's emancipation varied across time and depended on the changing political climate and the women who were involved in the workings of the state apparatus. They confirm that developments toward the advancement of women's rights after the Second World War in socialist states and in a larger transnational context cannot be represented as disconnected. State policies toward equality and women's activism under state socialism in Poland did not exist as an entity shaped solely by the Soviet Union without contact with the outside world. Polish members of women's organizations traveled internationally to Women's Congresses where, particularly during the immediate postwar period, they spoke about issues important for women globally. They shaped international organizations' agendas to include equal pay and the need to facilitate a work-family balance, two important goals of Western feminism that developed later, in the 1960s and 1970s. Research for this essay confirms arguments of recently published work that suggest that the socialist state accommodated some diversity and agency in terms of issues activists emphasized locally (nationally) and transnationally and the tools they employed to achieve goals of women's equality.⁷ My research also supports an argument that second wave feminism did not emerge exclusively in the West. Rather, it

was shaped by and contributed to ongoing transnational women's activism that crossed the boundaries created by the Cold War.

The framework of the "long sixties" provides a conceptual tool to re-periodize and redefine the second wave of feminism—most often narrated as originating in the United States and Western Europe during the 1960s—as a longer movement that emerged from the postwar struggles of women around the world. As approached from a broader historical and geopolitical perspective, second wave feminism, particularly at the international level, could be reconceptualized as connected to the history of post-Second World War activism by women in Eastern Europe. Within this framework, the struggles of activists involved in international women's movements before the 1960s can be seen as a basis for the transnational women's movement more commonly identified as coming together in the 1960s and later.

Fighting for progress and against "reactionary forces" after the Second World War

Debates about international women's movements during the postwar period have often underestimated international women's antiwar (peace) activism. Furthermore, the work of state-socialist activism has gone unrecognized as being essential to the international antiwar movement. Not only was state-socialist activism a leading force behind the foundation of the Women's International Democratic Federation in 1945,⁸ it also consistently foregrounded women's equality through institutional tools (constitutional changes, health and social provisions) and laid the foundations for future international emancipation discourses, including that of the European Union's "gender mainstreaming," that focused on the economic equality of women and men, the labor market, and the balancing of work and life activities. In these processes, individual women and women's groups—political women's departments and state funded "women's" organizations—were not only reacting within the frame provided but also were actively shaping and reshaping it.

The WIDF played a crucial role in shaping the agenda of the international women's movement during the first two postwar decades. The organization's founders, socialist activists Eugenie Cotton and Marie-Claude Vaillant-Courturier, defined WIDF's mission as focusing on four major concerns: antifascism, international peace, child welfare, and the status of women. One of the early documents penned by the Federation defines the rights of women in a number of life areas:

AS MOTHERS: the rights to have children in a world free from fear, misery and war, the provision by every government of good social services and adequate housing. As WORKERS: the right to work in all industries and professions and to receive equal pay for equal work, the same opportunities of vocational training and advancement as men, an end to the exploitation of women as cheap labor and the improvement of working conditions. As CITIZENS: equality with men before the law and full democratic freedom of expression, the possibility to vote and to

be members of communities, justice and national and international administrative bodies.

Between 1945 and 1969 WIDF organized six international World Congresses of Women.⁹ The principal activities of these gatherings included the presentation of reports as well as speeches by national delegates and the networking among delegates from around the world. Women from Eastern Europe, including Poland, participated in all six Congresses, although, as we shall see below, the role of the delegates from Soviet Bloc countries later declined.

In the late 1940s, WIDF managed to bring together a number of women activists representing different states and affiliations: Soviet communist Nina Popova; and continental antifascist activists such as Elizabeth Acland Allen and French scientist Irene Joliot-Curie. Joliot-Curie was the daughter of Polish-born Maria Skłodowska-Curie (and like her mother, a Nobel Prize winner) and did not shy away from expressing her support for WIDF as an organization uniting women from various geographical backgrounds. In the preface to the Federation's first report, Joliot-Curie stated:

It is absolutely clear that all the peoples who suffered directly from air-raids and occupation want peace, and we are sure that the people of the United States or other countries far from the theater of war also desire peace. The Women's International Democratic Federation, which unites numerous women's organizations from all countries, is one of the essential elements in this crusade for peace.¹⁰

The Congress of American Women, a member organization of WIDF, was founded in New York City in 1946 and featured some prominent female activists, including Elinor S. Gime, a New York-based activist and a supporter of universal child care and of the doctrine of "positive peace," an idea popular among American socialists in the 1930s and 1940s. Supporters of the positive peace doctrine argued that phenomena such as European colonization and Jim Crow laws in the United States were instances of institutional racism and international imperialism that had the same origins as institutional violence against women and discrimination against women. The American Congress of Women was a strong opponent of racism, and included among its leaders African American women such as educator Charlotte Hawkins Brown.¹¹

In the context of the Cold War, WIDF, which brought together women committed to socialism,¹² anti-imperialism, and antifascism, not surprisingly sided with the Soviet Bloc. Where women's political rights were concerned, the Federation strongly supported the idea that women's emancipation was fully possible only under socialism, and pointed to the ways in which civil rights were subject to violation in the United States and in Western Europe. During the early decades of WIDF activities, socialist states were represented, and they did so as beacons of women's equality, particularly when compared to the West. "The Report on the Defense of Economic and Political Rights of Women," presented by American delegate Helen Phillips in 1948 at the Second WIDF Congress in Budapest, reads:

History shows that equality for women is inseparable from the victory and development of democracy. Now we can say that in the number of Eastern European countries where there now exist democratic regimes, the new Constitutions proclaim the equality of women in political, economic and cultural life. The achievements of the governments of those countries, as regarding schooling, professional training, medical care, child protection and maternity care, give women a chance to exercise their rights.¹³

In Federation documents, which the Western and Eastern European delegates cocreated, the Soviet Union was represented as an unquestioned leader of women's equality in the world. The 1948 WIDF report claimed that the Soviet Union had reached the stage of complete equality in women's rights, equating equality with the fact that women constituted one-third of the deputies in the Supreme Soviets of the Soviet Republic. "This number is greater than the total number of women members in Parliaments in the [rest of the] entire world," the report concluded.¹⁴

Compared to the Soviet Union, the delegates to the WIDF meeting viewed the state of women's political rights in Western countries as leaving much to be desired.¹⁵ US delegates to WIDF, that is, members of the Congress of American Women (CAW), shared the Federation's commitment to socialism. In 1948 Muriel Draper, an American writer and a delegate to the WIDF Congress in Budapest, presented examples of the US government silencing Americans who expressed leftist political sympathies, including activists like herself:

The Congress of American Women (that held its first meeting on March 8th, 1946) is on the subversive list, put there by the authority of our Attorney General, Tom Clark. This means that we are under strict vigilance both as to telephone calls, the post and all our literature, and may any moment be called before a Court of Investigation. Some of our members are losing their jobs in their professions, are being brought before investigation committees, threatened with imprisonment and deportation and in general, subjected to terrorism. This takes place against the background of anti-Communist hysteria and hostility to the Soviet Union initiated by reactionary elements in our government, with help of monopoly press, radio, film and other means of propaganda. The American Negro people in particular are being subject to violence and terror ... The work of the Congress of American Women and the whole progressive moment is to expose the methods to the American people, and urge them to uphold our true tradition of love of freedom, peace and abundant life for all—and to fight for it.¹⁶

The US House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) denounced the WIDF as a tool of the Soviet Union. This led the CAW to disaffiliate from the WIDF in 1949 and to disband in 1950.

Assessing the situation regarding political and economic rights of women under capitalism and socialism was a crucial preoccupation of WIDF. While the report prepared for the Budapest Congress claimed "the economic inequality of women, the inequality of their wages" was the most flagrant social injustice; the authors noted that

"in most of the capitalist countries women do not enjoy economic rights equal to those of men."¹⁷ In 1948 Western nations' achievements in the area of economic rights for women lagged when compared to the representatives of the Soviet Bloc. In 1948 only seven out of forty-eight states in the United States featured provisions that guaranteed equal wages for women and men. In Britain, the wages of women employed in industry were 50 to 55 percent lower than those of men. In light of these conditions, the WIDF portrayed socialist states as ahead of Western countries in the area of economic equality. The 1948 report stated that:

In the new (socialist M.G.) democracies women's economic equality is assured by law. The state takes steps to protect women workers and to provide maternity benefits. The law guarantees equal pay for equal work, paid maternity leave and financial assistance to nursing mothers, childbirth premiums, interruption of work to permit the nursing of infants, pensions to widows and orphans, free medical care, a vast network of consultation centers for children, nurseries and kindergarten.¹⁸

Particular socialist states' paths to women's equality were documented in the early WIDF reports. In the case of the Eastern European states such as Poland that suffered great material and demographic losses as a result of the Second World War, the goal of equality for women in the workplace was represented as intersecting with the need to repopulate the nation. New policies regarding women's work and maternity were presented as fulfilling the two goals of Poland's "new democracy": that is, adding extra sets of hands to rebuild the country and rebuilding the population. During the postwar period, socialist states claimed to occupy leading positions in these areas, at least on paper, when compared to Western and Northern European states. The report for the Third World Congress of Women held in Copenhagen in 1953 criticized Scandinavian countries where, it asserted, there were no laws providing maternity leave or special consideration for nursing mothers.¹⁹ In comparison, the World Congress of Women report noted that socialist countries, including Poland, were leading the way in the area of rights for working mothers:

Matrimony and family are protected by the People's Republic of Poland. Families with many children are specially [*sic*] cared for. Illegitimacy does not lessen the child's rights. Since 1950 Poland has a new law that provides for complete equality of man and woman in the family. Parents jointly exercise their lawful rights over the children and jointly decide the future of their children. Thus all former disseminations regarding the positions of women in the family and society are abolished. There are now 136000 students compared to 48000 in 1938. 40% of the total are women.²⁰

Within the context of Cold War discourse, socialist states, particularly those that experienced the hardships of the Second World War, became poster children for socialist women's equality at the WIDF forums. Public support expressed at the international level by activists from the states that had become socialist after the Second World War helped to legitimize the claim about Soviet supremacy in the area

of women's rights. Polish delegates present at WIDF congresses emphasized their dedication to the idea that the elimination of the reactionary forces of imperialism, capitalism, and religious fundamentalism—active both locally and globally—was crucial to achieving progress in women's rights. Izolda Kowalska, a prewar communist activist and representative of the League of Polish Women, declared during the Second World Congress of Women in 1948: "We promise you to tighten our ranks of Polish women around our Federation even more to fight actively with it against the menace of imperialist war, against the forces of international reaction, against the forces of imperialism."²¹

In the case of Poland, the level of women's equality was measured by comparison with the prewar period, and it was presented in the context of the effects of the Second World War on the nation's material and human resources and the successful prevention of potential new armed conflicts that could arise from the "reactionary forces" of capitalism and imperialism. Polish delegates to WIDF, such as prewar socialist activist Eugenia Pragierowa, demonstrated full support for the new developments in their country:

Before the war, [a] female teacher or public employee lost her position on marriage, a woman with children found all doors closed, and [a] pregnant woman who had to earn her own living was in a helpless situation. At present my country does everything that is necessary for women to be able to unite their professional work with the main duty of a mother, the education of children. Women workers in Poland receive 12 weeks paid leave at the time of childbirth. In her sixth month of pregnancy a woman has to be transferred to easier work without reduction of wages. For feeding the baby she has half an hour off twice daily. The woman enjoys special facilities and priority rights in concluding or ending working agreements. All aid in connection with pregnancy and confinement is given to women gratis, including the baby's layette.²²

For local activists, the WIDF forum became a way of featuring the distinct experiences and histories of Polish women, as distinguished from those of women of other countries, including Eastern Bloc countries. The Federation provided a space for sharing their specific needs and achievements. Polish representatives at the Congress emphasized that the country suffered particularly from the effects of the Second World War, a position that legitimized their strong opposition to any new military conflicts. A report from the Polish delegation at the First WIDF World Congress of Women in Moscow in 1945 reads:

The mass deportations for compulsory work in Germany, the conditions of life which were difficult to support and the death camps of Auschwitz, Maidanek and Treblinka decreased the number of school children to a terrifying extent. Before the war, there were 5 million, now there are only three and a half million. The weight of newborn children has decreased by 30%. Lack of milk results in rickets and other infant diseases. In certain regions infant mortality reaches 40 or

50 percent. The physical development of children is retarded by three or four years. Tuberculosis, which in 1939 reached 2%, was 25% and even 35% in 1945. More than a million children must be fed, clothed and shod. The war has left 400,000 orphans and almost a million children who have lost one parent.²³

In the narratives of Polish representatives at the WIDF, fighting "reactionary forces" was an important task. In WIDF rhetoric, reactionary forces represented imperialism; in Polish rhetoric, they were often conceptualized as representing the Catholic Church and a Polish government in exile that challenged the legitimacy of socialism. As many of the Polish delegates were themselves devoted prewar communists or socialists, the fight for women's rights was also a part of the larger struggle against imperialism. Thus, WIDF fit their political beliefs that had been shaped by personal wartime experiences. During the first WIDF Congresses, Polish representatives drew a connection between the devastating experiences of the war and the rise of new imperialist and militaristic forces after the war. Edwarda Orłowska—head of the Women's Department of the Polish Workers' Party (PWP) and a prewar member of the Association for Communist Youth beginning in 1920 who had been jailed for her involvement in the Communist Party of West Belarus in 1934—argued in 1948:

I speak here in the name of women of one of the countries most devastated by Hitler's fascism. We still mourn and weep for 6 million Polish men, women and children killed during the war. One must see the ruins of our capital, Warsaw, in order to understand the full meaning of the word "war," "war" the word so lightly played about with by those who know how to profit from it, how to turn blood into gold. It is not astonishing that Polish women are fighting with all their strength to safeguard peace and freedom. It is not astonishing either that we should be fearful of the attempt to rebuild German imperialism and of Anglo-American imperialist intrigue, which contrary to all international agreements, is making the Ruhr into a new base for aggression against the countries whose sole desire is peace.²⁴

Locally, for Polish communist and socialist women's activists, the period from 1945 to 1953 was a time of intense and diverse developments in the area of women's rights. They combined various strategies to implement women's equality, including politicization of women's issues, consciousness raising, institutionalization, and work toward fighting patriarchal cultures. Engaging with international organizations, both as venues for the promotion of women's equality in the workplace and as institutions that could help legitimize new policies in a variety of different countries, was an important element of this activism. In postwar Poland, attracting women to communism and encouraging them both to enter the workforce and to reproduce became the first and most profound tasks of the Polish Socialist Party (PSP) and the Polish Workers' Party (PWP) Women's Departments.²⁵ Attaching these efforts to international institutions and movements was one of the elements of building the new communist regime's legitimacy. During the late 1940s the activities of communist women's activists in Poland generally fit the overall representation of the "new democracies" (postwar communist countries)

as progressing in the area of women's equality and endorsing world peace that was promoted at the international level through organizations such as the Women's International Democratic Federation. At the local/national level, Polish communist and socialist activists' membership and visibility in WIDF provided them with solid arguments to justify actions taken in the name of women's equality.

The commitment of the Polish Workers' Party Women's Department (WD), founded in 1946 and led by experienced prewar communists—"true believers" such as Edwarda Orlowska—was to emancipation, which was understood as part of the Communist project rather than as a feminist project. The activist goals of the WD were to build a communist women's movement at the local level that intersected with the mission of WIDF and mobilize the masses of women on the ground, in local villages and working communities; to establish institutional mechanisms for the promotion of women in workplaces and in local power structures; and to fight the social and cultural attitudes concerning women's roles represented by the patriarchal structure of the Communist Party and by the traditional views of the Catholic Church.

In 1946 one of the members of the WD argued, "We must organize a mass, democratic, cross-party women's movement—take into our influence half a million women—this is a matter of honor of the PWP [Polish Workers' Party] women."²⁶ For her and her colleagues, achieving the mass involvement of women in the new regime required both creating a strong institutional base for carrying out tasks related to women's equality at the local level and working toward the mass membership of women in the Social and Civil League of Women, one of two women's organizations—Circles of Rural Women was the other one²⁷—that existed legally under socialism. The Social and Civil League of Women (hereafter League of Women) claimed continuity with the prewar organization of the same name that was founded in 1913. In 1945 the League was established as an autonomous organization that retained close, personal ties with the exiting political parties, the Polish Socialist Party and the Polish Workers' Party. The founding committee consisted of three representatives of the Workers' Party, two representatives of the Socialist Party, one representative of the People's Party, and one representative of the Social Democratic Party. The newly established Polish Workers' Party Women's Department believed that tapping into existing organizational resources on the ground could help build an institutional base for a women's movement:

Our goal is to wrest women from the influence of [reactionary forces], to create the women's organization—powerful. The women's party apparatus has to be strong. Women's departments in the provinces should consist of 5 to 7 women representing the League of Women, Trade Unions, and Rural Self-Help. We should expand the county women's departments; wherever we have strong cadres [party operatives], we can build units with the full-time employees.²⁸

Women's Departments in the Polish Workers' Party carried out positive actions to facilitate women's participation in the workforce while working against conservative forces represented by the patriarchal culture inherited from the prewar period and embodied by the Catholic Church. To promote women's workforce participation, they demanded provisions for working mothers: maternity leave, child care institutions

including factory day care facilities and seasonal child care in countryside areas, the liberalization of divorce and parental law, health care for pregnant women and infants, and nursing breaks and breast milk banks. Some of the postwar state policies that were introduced included an increase in the number of beds for expectant mothers from 6,645 in 1945 to 9,977 in 1948 and the funding of 4,300 preschools, of which 400 were to be attached to factories, providing care for 250,000 children. The changes that aimed at improving the work and life conditions of working mothers were inspired by activists working at the national level. They copied some of the reforms introduced by the Soviet Union, which were implemented by the state from above. Many of these state reforms resonated with activists on the ground, however. Wiesława (to preserve anonymity, interviewees' first names and initials were changed), who started her career as a factory worker and ended up as director of the factory, said of her 1950s experience as a working mother: "We had only 3 months of maternity leave, and after these 3 months a woman was back at work. I'm such a mother who went back to work after 3 months. But I had a daycare behind the wall of the shop floor. Day and night."²⁹

Recruiting women to the party proved to be a daunting task, as activists faced patriarchal bias in their own party and struggled against an even more pervasive system of cultural domination represented by the Catholic Church. The work of postwar activists against "reactionary forces" was twofold: it focused on the regressive attitudes within the Communist Party—which could prevent the mass mobilization of women within the communist frame—and that of the strong position of the Catholic Church in society. In the mid-1940s, the idea of women's equality was still foreign to many Polish communists despite official policy: many local party leaders protested against the existence of "women's instructors" (paid representatives of Women's Departments in the field). At a 1946 Women's Department meeting Orłowska reported, "Regional committees do not appreciate women's work. In Lubelskie voivodeship, the country secretary, comrade Tomaszewski, forced the women's instructor to replace his stenotypist, who was on holiday, for months. In Kieleckie, the party secretary does not invite women's instructors to party meetings."³⁰ While the successes of the instructions about "women's work" issued by the Central Committee of the PWP proved to be limited—they were generally ignored by the local secretaries—Women's Department members discussed a number of alternatives, including on-the-ground strategies to fight their male comrades' bias. One of these involved the communists' wives. At another 1946 meeting of the WD, one of its members stated, "we have to organize meetings with our comrades' wives—without their husbands' knowledge ... Let them get involved." She added, "Get their families and friends involved."³¹

The Catholic Church made up another locus of resistance to the idea of women's equality. During the postwar period in Poland, the official line of the party was not to fight the Church openly. Although the socialist state positioned itself as secular and supportive of emancipation from traditional family structures, it hesitated to implement radical emancipation provisions that would go against the Church. The new regime was aware that the Church, which throughout the war and postwar periods (particularly during the Holocaust and the resettlement of nonethnic Poles) had become increasingly dominant in Poland, could not be ignored as an important political force. In return, Church authorities supported many of the new regime's

policies; in particular, they expressed their approval of the Stalinist-style antiabortion law because they claimed abortion "prevented the health of citizens."³²

The Women's Department officially followed the strategy of maintaining a silent truce between the state and the Church. During its meeting in July 1946, the regional WD representative argued: "The [reactionary forces are] spreading propaganda that that PWP is fighting religion ... We have to say that we do not fight religion."³³ Yet, in the privacy of party meetings the Church was represented as a reactionary force that kept women from the party and needed to be monitored. "We have to gain control over particular institutions ... The merciful ladies attached to the Church ... have large sums of money at their disposal, and we do not know how they spend it, none of our people are there ... We need to put our people in, so there are no mistakes," argued one of the members during the WD meeting in May 1946.³⁴ Simultaneously, "on the ground" the fighting between the WD members and the Catholic priests was, at times, severe. At the WD meeting in June 1946, the representative from Białystok reported:

Our comrade Roszkowska disseminated 100 membership League declarations in Bielski county. When the priest found out about it, he announced from the pulpit that the League is a Komsomol.³⁵ Women returned the declarations to comrade Roszkowska when she returned the next Sunday. Comrade Roszkowska was then attacked by a group of men and kidnapped into the forest.

In comparison to the strong emphasis on politicizing the issue of women's equality made by the WD of the Polish Workers' Party, the WD of the Polish Socialist Party focused on convincing women to join the League of Women and focused on securing equality in the workplace. The PSP WD had been established before the Second World War, and it featured committed socialists including Eugenia Pragierowa, a historian and member of the Association of Workers' Universities, and Zofia Wasilkowska, the first female minister in Poland (Wasilkowska led the Ministry of Justice during 1956–57). Their work, nationally and transnationally, focused mostly on issues related to women's work and fit the international WIDF agenda that represented socialist states as leaders in introducing women's equality in the economic sphere.

At the local level, PSP women often argued against unification of the efforts for women's equality under the banner of communism, which the Polish Workers' Party's WD supported. Rather, the PSP's WD stressed the desirability of greater diversity within the socialist women's movement, including the relative autonomy of the League of Women from the Communist Party. Their efforts to forward women's equality in law and the workplace were completed when the principle of women's equality was written into the Polish Constitution. Pragierowa, who, as a head of the Department of Care in the Ministry of Labor and Social Care between 1919 and 1925, had been involved in issues of economic equality since before the Second World War, reported in 1953:

The Polish People's Republic is a country where the full and real equality of rights of women is now a fact ... These principles were laid down with the emphasis of our new constitution on July 23, 1952 ... The principle of equal pay for equal

work is rigorously carried out and has become an iron law in the daily life of our country.³⁶

Globally, as active participants of WIDF, Polish socialist women led efforts to incorporate issues such as equal pay for equal work into the agendas of international institutions. As vice-president to the Women's International Democratic Federation, Pragierowa summarized these efforts during the 1953 Congress of WIDF as follows:

I shall speak here of one of the most important questions for working women—their wages. This question symbolizes the basis of the independence of women ... In recent times this problem has been three times the object of deliberation on an international level, precisely in connection with its importance to the conditions of women's lives. The World Federation of Trade Unions has placed before the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations organization a memorandum concerning the recognition by the UN of the principle of "Equal Pay for Equal Work" as a regulation to be applied in its fullest sense. After having discussed this question vigorously, the Council has declared that this question comes under the jurisdiction of the International Labor Organization, to which it was transmitted. But at the International Labor Organization, after long discussion, the question was withdrawn from the agenda ... The discussion ... shows that the just and equitable principle of "Equal Pay for Equal Work" today encounters strong resistance from representatives of the capitalist classes ... In the very near future the question of equal pay for equal work will again be the object of discussion at the Conference of the International Labor Organization. The representatives of the New Democracies will take a positive attitude on this question as they have done up to now, an attitude in favor of working women's interests.³⁷

The work of the Polish communist and socialist women activists between 1945 and 1953 was inspired by their international contacts at the WIDF Congresses, and conversely, their locally gained expertise shaped the politics of women's movements internationally. Lobbying for economic equality at the level of the United Nations, the International Labor Organization, and the World Federation of Trade Unions, socialist women's activists, including Polish women, helped to set priorities and create paths for future generations of women's activists. At home, the active engagements with international public figures, including members of WIDF such as Irene Joliot-Curie, served as a tool to legitimize the women-centered policies of the new communist regimes. Tying the work of local organizations to WIDF helped to represent women's equality in the newly communist countries as a part of international activism. The reports on the proceedings of the WIDF became an important aspect of pro-communist propaganda beginning in 1946, with the aim of portraying the new regimes' agendas as being in line with international trends. The draft of the speech to be delivered to Polish women on March 8, 1950, which had been proposed by activists in the Polish Workers' Party WD, is a good example of the linkage of the new Polish women's movement and transnational women's rights activism:

After the end of the Second World War, which broke the power of Hitler's Germany, on the wave of revolutionary ideas and growing sympathy of the working masses of the world for the Soviet Union—the unquestioned winner of the war in 1945—the Women's International Democratic Federation was created in Paris, during the Congress of Women, by 40 states. The Women's International Democratic Federation proposed the following goals for the women's movement: to fight for lasting peace, to fight against the remnants of fascisms in the world, and to fight for the equality of women and men and childcare. Around these goals the Federation mobilized 80 million women from 56 countries. In 4 years it became, next to the World Federation of Trade Unions and the International Youth Organization, the most powerful force for world peace. Already in 1945 when the League of Women was created—which now consists of 1.5 million women—the organization called for its access to the Federation ... The League of Women works on consciousness raising and on increasing the level of education and culture among the masses of women. It helps women to acquire working skills which will allow them to advance socially, and it cares about helping women and their children ... The League is an active participant in all Federation (WIDF) works.³⁸

The international "long sixties" and the decline of Polish women's activism

The decades that followed the 1950s mark the decline in the importance of socialist states within the international women's movement. While state socialism continued to be cited in many international documents in the 1960s and 1970s, including WIDF and UN reports, as the only system within which true equality could be achieved (see UN reports from Mexico, Cairo, Nairobi), changes in the structure of the Communist Bloc and in the language of international forums led to the declining importance of socialist states in international feminism. An examination of WIDF documents from the Federation Congresses illustrates the erosion of the heterogeneous voices of Eastern European activists. This transformation was accompanied by the shift at the global level from a focus on "peace" to a focus on "development," as well as a backlash against women's rights, which led to the transformation of equality policies at the local level.

From the 1960s onward the Soviet Union and some chosen loyal satellite states (including Bulgaria) became major representatives of the whole Eastern European Bloc to the WIDF, leaving no room for the representation of complex trajectories of women's experiences of equality in various countries from the 1950s to 1970s. (For example, we have seen that Polish women stressed their suffering and loss in the Second World War as characteristic of their national experience that affected the kinds of women's policies necessary in the postwar years.) A unified perspective of the state of women's rights in the region was articulated by the USSR delegates, such as Valentina Tereshkova, Soviet cosmonaut and a member of the Supreme Soviet. During the Helsinki World Congress of Women in June of 1969, delegate Tereshkova laid out a new political geography for the women's movement in a report titled "Women at Work." The document reads:

Characteristic of our time is the existence of a world of socialist, capitalist and developing countries, with differing social systems. An objective analysis of the position of women cannot be made without taking this fact into consideration, without showing their role in labor, or determining the problems related to women.³⁹

Within a world divided into three parts—the capitalist countries, the socialist countries, and the developing nonaligned postcolonial countries—the socialist states were still, in Tereshkova's words, in a leading position in comparison to the West in regard to women's emancipation:

In socialist countries, where exploitation of man by man has been done with, the woman receives equal rights with the men and the opportunity to take an active part in all walks of life. The state policy is directed towards guaranteeing full equality for women in the society, towards creating conditions which help them combine outside work with running the home and bringing up the children ... In the countries of the capitalist world, where the economic reins are in the hands of the monopolies, the employers, as well as the state as a whole, do not take responsibility ... for them. For this [reason], conflicts and contradictions arise connected with women's participation in social production.⁴⁰

In the new narrative, presented in Tereshkova's paper, "development" replaced "peace" as a central principle of the international women's movement. This approach would later be at the center of the International Women's Year and UN Conference agendas that inspired contemporary gender equality politics, including that of "gender mainstreaming" in the European Union. This new development paradigm led to the end of the earlier prominence of the Eastern European countries such as Poland whose wartime suffering had served as a justification for the feminist focus on peace efforts. Compared to the capitalist Western world, women's equality under socialism was now presented as a path that women's emancipation in postcolonial states should follow, not as an example of a route to peace:

The peoples of countries which have recently been liberated from the colonial yoke are waging a constant struggle against the evil heritage of colonialism. It became a task of importance in the developing countries that have won political independence to draw women into public work, to solve the complicated questions of their vocational training, to improve their living and working conditions. In those countries where colonialism still holds sway, women are subjected to particularly cruel exploitation and racial oppression, and are in the most grave position.⁴¹

While Polish women continued to participate in events, including WIDF and United Nations Conferences, their involvement consisted rather of representing the nationally and internationally created idea about progress in the area of women's equality, instead of shaping it. The fact that the agenda was set from above limited the scope of women's

involvement to certain areas and specific exchanges with women representatives from other countries. Halina, a former head of a women's organization and a member of the Women's Council in the 1960s and 1970s, described her work at the international level: "There was the Decade of Women, then conferences in Denmark and Nairobi that I went to. I must say that Poland had a very good standing in these organizations (the WIDF and the UN), for a number of things including research, knowledge, for lobbying the government, in terms of maternity leave and part time employment, and so on." Halina was, however, aware of the divisions created by the Iron Curtain: "There were not many tensions between the women representatives themselves. Maybe there were conflicts between the governments, but not between the women (from the East and from the West)."⁴²

The decline of the diversity of socialist women's activism internationally, and its ultimate demise during the 1960s and 1970s, correlated with transformations of women's activism at the local level. In countries such as Poland, the late 1950s marked the evolution of the state's commitment to women's equality, from building strong political support for socialism among women to practical activism that focused on alleviating the double burden of work and home life. In 1948, Women's Departments of PWP and PSP merged to form a single unit, as the Polish United Workers' Party was established, only to be dissolved in 1953. During the period from 1953 to 1956, following the death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, a new way of approaching the issue of women's rights emerged. The "Polish road to socialism" combined socialist ideas of women's equality with prewar traditional attitudes toward the role of women. Locally in Poland, the 1960s marked a process of depoliticization and repression against female activists who had initiated taking a stand against the authorities in the late 1950s. Units from the League of Polish Women were banned from the workplace after 1966, but the process of depoliticization of the organization can even be traced further, back to 1953 and the period of "thaw" that followed Stalin's death. As it happened, the thaw had some ambivalent consequences for women; many 1950s developments were positive while others were not. In her book, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland*, Małgorzata Fidelis examines the ambiguous effects of the "thaw" on women's agency. She argues that in the 1950s "women did not have to work as much as in the early postwar era. The space for claims for respect of workers' rights had opened and they could voice their opinions on various topics, including discrimination in the workplace. Some women, who wished to, could stop working and devote themselves to the household."⁴³

Important legal and institutional transformations marked the political shift of the 1950s during the post-Stalinist "thaw," and the new abortion law that was introduced in 1956 was one of them. While in the mid-1950s the Polish state was no longer interested in maximum demographic growth (as it had been immediately after the war), improving the living conditions of "already living" children became the main focus. The new law allowed abortions for social reasons, and was thus aimed at limiting the number of births among women who already had children. Access to abortions required a doctor's permission, however, and Polish women had to wait until the 1960s for a further liberalization of the law and the chance of making an independent decision regarding an unwanted pregnancy.

Changes introduced after 1953 were also aimed at reconstituting the prewar gender contract, in particular, sealing the existing gender division of labor based on the unpaid family work of women and putting new constraints on women and their activism.⁴⁴ The "humane socialism" proposed by the government leader and PWP head Władysław Gomułka after 1956 aimed to build a new order using old forces; the socialist state was seen as being rooted in concepts of tradition and family, to which the figure of "Mother Poland" remained crucial. The new emphasis on motherhood as a crucial women's role is noticeable in the ways in which Polish representatives spoke at the Fourth Congress on "The Defense of Life" in Vienna held from June 1 to 3, 1958. ("Defense of Life" was the name of the congress and it focused on peace. It did not have the antiabortion connotation this phrase has in the United States.) Wanda Piemczna declared:

We Polish women, who suffered particularly through the war, want to continue to work in peace as we have done in the past 13 years ... In our country there is no one family which was not directly affected by the horrors of the war. We lost 6 million people and that means that in our country there is no woman who has not lost either her husband, son, brother or daughter. I personally lost my husband, my only son and one of my daughters, and I myself made that terrible acquaintance with concentration camps ... As a mother, and grandmother, as a Pole, as a Catholic, as Deputy of the Polish Provincial Parliament, I am conscious of what the Rapacki Plan⁴⁵ [Poland's proposal for a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe] which is quoted so often in the whole world means.⁴⁶

New institutions were established to help women facilitate the "double shift" of work both inside and outside the home. They focused on practical rather than political activism. The Committee for Household Economics, founded in 1957 and structurally tied to the League of Women, combined the goal of supporting women's emancipation with maintaining traditional gender roles by teaching women how to become rational and effective "working housewives." According to Basia Nowak, a historian who researched post-1945 women's activism in Poland, women's organizations performed several important functions during the immediate postwar time period, including teaching skills that helped women to become good working housewives, providing legal advice and psychological support, and creating "women only" spaces for relaxation and entertainment.⁴⁷ While in the 1950s women's organizations focused on fighting illiteracy and facilitating legal changes in the areas of child care and divorce, creating domestic skills courses became the main area of their "practical activism" during the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁸

The Committee for Household Economics was an organization—quite elaborate, almost Byzantine in structure—that combined the promotion of women's economic emancipation with maintaining traditional gender roles. Anna, who worked at the Committee for thirty years, describes its work:

We had administrative training and economic departments. We conducted research on the organization of the household: furnishing, budgeting, and economics in general. We also did research on household supplies: washing machines,

kitchen robots and refrigerators . . . and we had scientific literature, from Germany and France . . . The training department organized workshops where we taught women how to use these appliances. We organized annual workshops for trainers who then worked with the local League of Polish Women units.⁴⁹

Like many other women, the courses organized by the Committee through the League chapters helped Barbara acquire a variety of household skills that she otherwise would not have learned at home. She remembers: "I was really bad at household work, I left home at age 15 and my mom hadn't taught me anything. But there were fully equipped facilities there [in the League's offices] and they taught us how to cook, and all kinds of other things."⁵⁰ In 1968 the number of leaders of the League was slashed as a result of the anti-Semitic stance adopted by the Polish United Workers' Party. Jewish leaders and the wives of Jewish communists, who had played active roles in the Party, found themselves removed from the national organizations. This further depoliticized the work of the League. In the 1960s and 1970s the Committee for Household Economics continued to focus on educating women about traditional gender roles that were to be combined with new roles in the labor market in order to carry out the Party's orders among women and to ease the "double burden."

As the character of female-centered policies changed, so did the profile of the activists, not to mention their relationship with the Party. The passionate commitment of the first generation to communism had eroded as a result of the cleansings within the Party and activists' personal transformation away from communism,⁵¹ and was replaced by the more practical, technocratic attitude of the next generation. The activists that succeeded the first generation lacked the previous generation's passionate commitment to communism and followed different life trajectories: ones that featured Party membership as a rational and practical choice. Halina, born into a small town, middle-class family, a former member of the Council of Polish Women (founded in 1966), and a former director of the Committee for Household Economics, argued: "I was apolitical, but I wanted to be active, so I was . . . During the time I was active, all of this seemed rational."⁵² Institutional circumstances created by the previous generation attracted various other groups of women too, including working-class women and the wives of male party members. Barbara, a paint factory worker, recalls: "I joined the League, I think, maybe on Women's Day. I went to the celebration as a young woman and met ladies from the workplace unit of the League."⁵³ Janina, an accountant and a former head of the local branch of the League of Women, confesses: "I became a member in 1956, partially because my husband was in the Party, but also because I wanted to participate in meetings; I wanted to know what was happening here, I wanted to get involved with the workplace and town politics."⁵⁴

Polish women's activism in the "long sixties" can be characterized by the search for a new paradigm that could follow the strong political and ideological commitments of the first generation activists at the local and global level. The new identities emerging in the mid-1950s onward were marked by personal, national, and global transformations that contributed to the ultimate invisibility of the Polish activists in the international women's movement of the 1970s. At the personal level, the continuity was broken between the first generation of prewar communist and socialist activism and the more

pragmatic approach that emerged in the 1950s and the 1960s. The new attitude was shaped by the transformations at the national level and the turn to nationalism and traditionalism that took place in the 1950s following Stalin's death. At the level of the international women's movement, activism that focused on peace building, to which many postwar Polish activists were devoted, was replaced by an approach that centered on development and on the dialogue between the West and the Global South. This transformation accompanied the marginalization of WIDF within the UN Decade for Women and the declining of the presence of the Eastern European countries within the UN Conferences on Women that concluded with the Beijing Conference in 1995.⁵⁵

A tale of "Non-Region": Eastern European women's activism and the United Nations world conferences on women

Within the grand historical narrative of transnational feminism, which focuses on the period from 1975 to 1995, a period that included four World Conferences on Women sponsored by the United Nations, the activism of women who represented the Women's International Democratic Federation and the Eastern Bloc is conspicuously absent. Scholars of state socialism are now arguing that this exclusion is an aftermath of the persistence of the Cold War divides that dominated the politics and historiography of transnational feminism. Among them, Francisca de Haan demonstrates that even though WIDF took an active part in drafting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and preparation for the International Women's Year, it was marginalized during the Mexico City Conference in 1975 due to the Cold War dynamics. (WIDF organized a separate International Women's Congress in Berlin in 1975.) She argues, furthermore, that the decline of WIDF's impact on the women's international movement has roots in the general dismissal of communism as a site where authentic progress in the area of women's rights could emerge and of historiography's focus on Western feminism as a site of struggles for gender equality.⁵⁶ But the Cold War divisions remained in the center of identity narratives of the post-state socialist women activist as well, prohibiting the inclusion of state socialism as an important part of genealogical narratives of the region's feminisms. While most of the works on post-state socialism still operate within the convergence framework that renders the Eastern European women's movement as "catching up" with their Western counterparts, they perceive the era of state socialism as a gap in the history of feminism.⁵⁷

The concept of "Non-Region" coined during the Beijing conference was symptomatic of the ambivalent status of women from Eastern Europe and their invisibility within existing conceptualizations of feminism and transnationalism. The "Statement from a Non-Region," a joint document published by representatives of the post-socialist states reads:

Our group of countries is a Non-Region because there is no recognizable political or geographic definition for the region composed of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. We are bound by the common

problems associated with the transition to democracy. In this difficult and uneven transition, the most serious problem is the consistent and drastic decline in the status of women. The Governments have failed to incorporate the needs and interests of women in their reforms. For example, women face problems with unemployment, trafficking in women and increased violence. Many women have been forced from their home as refugees from war ... This transition has also created many new opportunities for women. Notably, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, we, as independent NGOs from this region, are able to speak for ourselves.⁵⁸

Within the document, women from Eastern Europe defined themselves through their common experience of oppressive state-socialist regimes and often through failed or unfinished transformations of those regimes. Activists from the post-state socialist states argued that changes brought about by the 1989 transformations had not been entirely satisfying for women, and they found it inappropriate to talk about progress in relation to the gender systems that had been a result of what was often described as bloodless revolutions. At the same time, these activists were eager to cut the ties between themselves and the women who worked on behalf of women's rights before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. As such, they claimed to be newcomers to transnational women's activism, ones that were not easily classified as representing "developed" or "developing" countries. In the eyes of some of the activists involved in establishing the new identity of women's movements in post-socialist states, the "Non-Region" of Eastern Europe had "missed the boat" in regard to transnational activism, spanning from the 1970s through the 1980s. This period included the first UN-sponsored World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975 and culminated with the third UN-sponsored World Conference on Women in 1985 in Nairobi, which featured a dialogue between the "Global South" and "Global North" as one of its central conversations. In an interview I conducted anonymously in 2006, a Polish activist and head of the regional women's coalition on reproductive rights argued:

When it came to the women from the developing countries, they started much earlier, about 20 years earlier. International feminism has been visible since Nairobi in 1985, and it was well established (in Beijing) ... When it came to our region, we were generally "late" and there was no interest in our region, there was no responsibility, no feeling that they owed us something in the global sense ... Moreover while everything was already defined in the south-north paradigm it was extremely hard for the transitioning countries to enter this paradigm.⁵⁹

Since the 1970s, transnational feminist debates were structured around and in relation to the problematic category of the "West." The so called "Second World"—that is, the Soviet Union and the socialist industrialized states of Eastern Europe—remained largely absent from the transnational feminism that emerged as critical of US-centric, second wave-based, feminism and of the homogenizing notion of the "other women" of the Third World or the Global South. In addition, constructions of post-socialism represented Eastern European societies as uniformly onboard with processes of

Westernization and excluded the Eastern European space from the geography of critique of the West and the First World.⁶⁰ In these conceptualizations, generalizations about the relationship between "center" and "periphery" and Eastern European marginality in dominant "Western" historical narratives still masked particularities in favor of universal categories and the binary representation of transnational feminist politics. Stereotypical images of Eastern Europe that represented the region as failing to enter the process of modernization, or as delayed in the process of modernization in comparison to the West, also completely neglected the period of state socialism as a time when a mode of women's activism alternative to Western second wave feminism was developed.

Finally, although delegates from socialist countries were present at the UN Conferences on Women, there was little or no connection between the Polish feminist organizations that emerged after 1989 and women who represented the socialist states in international organizations and at the UN forums before 1989. This was partially due to the idea, dominant during the transformation of the 1990s, that women involved with the socialist state did not represent authentic grassroots women's voices and that their activism was to a large extent designed by the Soviet Union and imposed from above. To that, one can add the generally hesitant attitude toward the socialist past represented in this quote by a Polish feminist and the scholar who began her activism as a part of the Solidarity movement (the interview was conducted anonymously):

When I hear "socialism" I'm all turned off, I just don't like socialism. I like the welfare state and I like social policy but socialism repulses me ... I was brought up by the opposition movement and in the axiom that the free market guarantees freedom of speech ... So on one hand I repel socialism, on the other I know that socialism emancipated women.⁶¹

As a result, the state-socialist project regarding "women's equality" that emerged from the work of nineteenth-century Eastern and Western feminists and was practiced by activists such as Alexandra Kollontai in the 1920s in the Soviet Union remains unexamined as a source of resistance that developed in both postcolonial contexts and in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In most of the existing literature, the formation of transnational feminism is linked to the process of the institutionalization of women's activism and the ongoing dialogue between women from the West (the Global North) and women from postcolonial countries (the Global South).

Conclusion

In studies of social movements, the framework of the "long sixties" helps to overcome oversimplifying interpretations of twentieth-century history in the United States and elsewhere. It illuminates that transformations and revolutionary events that took place in the 1960 and 1970s United States have to be seen in the broader historical perspective from the Second World War to the 1980s.⁶² Studies on state socialisms expand this approach by pointing to the importance of the spatial dimension of the

"Global Sixties" which destabilizes the perception of the Cold War period as a time when tightly sealed political boundaries separated the East and West.⁶³ Seen from the perspective of the "long sixties," women's activism pre- and post-Beijing can be conceptualized as a phase in a longer movement that spanned from the late 1940s and early 1950s through the 1990s. A closer examination of the immediate post-Second World War period, when international women's movements originated in relation to state-socialist women's emancipation, reveals the development of an international women's movement during the "long sixties." This long historical view supports the argument that the second wave feminist movement that emerged in the 1960s in the United States and in Western Europe was shaped by international struggles for peace and development among women in Eastern Europe.

Such an analysis of the history of second wave international women's movement goes hand in hand with the emerging interest in women's activism under state socialism. Some authors argue that women's involvement in the emancipatory policies of the socialist state make a case for reactive agency, one that can be characterized as acting upon someone else's will.⁶⁴ Such an approach agrees with the existing accounts of life under state socialism that are mostly narrated in language that represents women as passive witnesses to the workings of the system, caught up between the authoritarian socialist state, the "double burden" of professional work and household responsibilities, and a lack of sincere political representation.⁶⁵ Other analyses that connect state-socialist emancipatory projects with women's participation demonstrate that various forms of women's agency were also possible within the socialist state.⁶⁶ Fundamental to these conceptualizations is the pursuit of the notion of agency "as the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act," the argument that conceptions of agency and practices of women's movements vary from context to context, as do their interpretations.⁶⁷ They also point to the fact that every agency is to a certain extent limited, and the representation of agency as based solely on "free will" favors the Western tradition of a political philosophy that centers on rationality and autonomy. Finally, these new accounts remind us that women's agency under state socialism cannot be treated as homogenous, either in terms of time, and/or space.

The case of the transformation of postwar women's activism in Poland, locally and globally, which was the focus of this essay, concurs with such presuppositions. In Poland, paradoxically, while the 1989 transformations served as an opening process for new female activism, they also strengthened the process of marginalizing Eastern Europe within the realm of the transnational. The convergence approach undertaken by many women's organizations from the region, and the breaking of the genealogy between the socialist past and the post-transformational mobilizations, led to the perception of the Eastern European women's movement as being delayed in the process of women's emancipation when compared to the West. Without a doubt, from the point of view of women's activism in Poland, several historical periods marked the transformation of the agendas, goals, and possibilities for acting within local and global structures of power. For instance, the 1950s ideas of "sending women back into the home" that occurred in Eastern Europe corresponded to global transformations and a backlash against women's rights in the United States and Western Europe during the same period. The ideologies that were projected, that is, a re-traditionalization

of women's roles, varied depending on the geographical location, but they carried a similar message to women. The year 1968 initiated a lasting process of political transformation that came to an end in 1989. In Eastern Europe these transformations were focused on a political battle for democracy and rarely contained a gender- or sex-equality component. Simultaneously, there was a trend toward depoliticizing state-funded women's organizations and reshaping their focus and methods. Internationally, these processes were accompanied by the shifting agenda of global women's movements and organizations, and a move away from the focus on "peace" to one focused on "development." Taken together, these processes led to the marginalization of the diverse state socialist women's activism from international women's movements, and eventually to their absence from conversations about transnational feminist theory and practice.

In the introduction to their 1994 anthology *Scattered Hegemonies*, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan articulated the need for the visibility and connectivity of feminisms from various locations based on a careful delineation of the "map of debates around cultural production and reception of the diverse feminisms around the globe." In the context of current debates about the place and the status of state-socialist women's activism in the genealogies of the women's movement locally and transnationally, strengthening transhistorical connections and solidarities through learning about the experiences of women from various locations and time periods—without naturalizing the mainstream narratives that represent socialism as universally "bad" for women—emerges as a crucial task for feminist scholarship in the region and beyond. Recovering the impact that women from socialist states, including Poland, had on shaping an agenda for the Women's International Democratic Federation, an organization that laid the priorities of the international women's movements for decades to come, including the fight for peace, development, and economic equality, can surely contribute to reestablishing Eastern Europe as an important site of the formulation of transnational feminist theory and practice. Reconceptualizing state-socialist women's activism as representing not only a commitment to communism, but also as proto-feminism, can help assess its contribution to advance women's status globally. Finally, rethinking the significance of the Cold War activism for transnational feminisms can also contribute to the demolition of the lasting stereotypes of Eastern European women's movements that survived the fall of the Iron Curtain and continue to shape our narratives of the history of women's movements.

Notes

- 1 Francisca de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in the Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)," *Women's History Review* (September 2010): 547–73.
- 2 "The Statement from a Non-Region. Countries in Transition in ECE Region East-East European Caucus" (statement presented at Plenary Session of the IV World Conference on Women, September 13, 1995, Beijing, by Wanda Nowicka).

- 3 See, for example, Arthur Marwick, "The Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties: Voices of Reaction, Protest, and Permeation," *The International History Review* 27, 4 (2005): 780–806.
- 4 Magdalena Grabowska, "Between East and West. The Formation of Polish Women's Movement Identity," PhD diss. Rutgers University, 2009, <https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/26287/>, accessed February 18, 2016.
- 5 The research with members of the communist parties and women's organizations before 1989 in Poland and Georgia was conducted between 2010 and 2013, during which I was a Marie Curie Re-Integration fellow at Warsaw University (grant number 256475). The fieldwork was conducted with the support of the Polish National Science Center (*Okruchy Wolności: Aktywna podmiotowość kobiet w socjalistycznej Polsce i Gruzji* 6731/B/H03/2011/40). This cross-national study of the state-socialist women activists in Georgia and Poland applied interdisciplinary research methods. Data collection involved conducting approximately seventy individual interviews, including tape-recordings of those interviews. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with women involved in the policy-making within the socialist state and those affiliated with the state-sponsored women's organizations. The fieldwork was conducted in several locations, including Tbilisi and Gori in Georgia and Warsaw and Łódź in Poland. The "snowball" method was used to recruit women for the interviews. Methodologically, this research utilized the narrative interview, which deploys a flexible topic guide or questionnaire and is organized in thematic fields.
- 6 Sławomira Walczewska, "Liga Kobiet: Jedyna organizacja kobieca w PRL," *Pełnym Głosem* 1 (1993): 4–8.
- 7 See for example, Kristen Ghodsee, "Rethinking State Socialist Mass Women's Organizations: The Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement and the United Nations Decade for Women, 1975–1985," *Journal of Women's History* 24, 4 (Winter 2012): 49–73. Francisca de Haan, ed., "Gendering the Cold War in the Region. An Email Conversation between Małgorzata (Gosia) Fidelis, Renata Jambrešić Kirin, Jill Massino, and Libora Oates-Indruchova," *Aspasia* 8 (2014): 162–90.
- 8 For an overview of the work of WIDF, see Francisca de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in the Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organizations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)," *Women's History Review* (2010): 547–73.
- 9 First WIDF Congress of Women in Paris in 1945, second in Budapest in 1948, third in Copenhagen in 1953, fourth in Vienna in 1958, fifth in Moscow in 1963, and last in Helsinki in 1969.
- 10 Irene Joliot-Curie, "Preface," *Second Women's International Congress. Account of the Work of the Congress Which Took Place in Budapest (Hungary) from the 1st to the 6th of December 1948* (Paris: Women's International Democratic Federation, 1948), ii.
- 11 Jacqueline Castledine, *Cold War Progressives: Women's Interracial Organizing for Peace and Freedom* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 16; Kate Wiegman, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
- 12 Francisca de Haan, "The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda, and Contributions, 1945–1991," Central European University, http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/the_womens_international_democratic_federation_widf_history_main_agenda_and_contributions_19451991, accessed February 18, 2016.

- 13 *Second Women's International Congress. Account of the Work of the Congress Which Took Place in Budapest (Hungary) from the 1st to the 6th of December 1948* (Women International Democratic Federation, 1948), 282.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 283.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 283–4, *The Second Women's International Congress. Account of the work of the Congress* noted, for instance, that in England where the legal status of women was, in 1948, one of complete equality with men, women could not, in fact, hold the same positions as men in political life and were not able to actually enjoy the rights granted them by the Constitution. The situation painted by the WIDF report was no better in the Scandinavian countries: in 1945 the Norwegian Parliament featured just 7 women, or 5 percent of the total membership of the chamber.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 144.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 285.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 286.
- 19 *World Congress of Women. Reports, Speeches (Extracts.) Documents* (Women's International Democratic Federation, Berlin 1953), 229.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 239.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 68–9.
- 22 *Second Women's International Congress. Account of the work of the Congress*, 230.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 382.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 196.
- 25 The Polish Workers' Party Women's department was established in 1946, while the Polish Socialist Party Women's Department continued the work by the similar unit within the prewar PSP. The two Women's Departments merged in 1948 to become the Women's Department of the Polish United Workers' Party, under the leadership of Orłowska (Pragierowa remained on the board of the Department). The Department was closed in 1952 upon the claim that women's equality was achieved in Poland.
- 26 Protocol of the Meeting of the Warsaw's Active, May 27, 1946, Archive of New Records, Warsaw, K/1/P.-46, 12.
- 27 Circles of Rural Women was the local organization first funded in 1877, with the aim of self-help and education of rural women.
- 28 The leadership of the League was initially independent; however, in 1951 Irena Sztachelska was replaced by the Workers' Party representative, Alicja Musiałowa. Until 1966 the League also had workplace units that were abolished presumably as a reaction to the League's resistance to the layoff of large numbers of women in 1958. This resulted in a significant drop in the League's membership from two million to 70,000.
- 29 Wiesława, interview by author, November 13, 2012. All quotations come from interviews with women—members of the communist parties and women's organizations before 1989 in Poland and Georgia—that I conducted between 2010 and 2014. All translations into English are mine.
- 30 Polish Workers' Party, Women's Department meeting notes, May 27, 1946, Archive of New Records, Warsaw, 26.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 32 Małgorzata Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 33 Protocol of the Meeting of the Regional Representatives of Women's Departments, October 10, 1946, Archive of New Records, Warsaw, K/1/P.-46, 5–6.
- 34 Protocol of the Meeting of the Regional Representatives of Women's Departments, June 4, 1946, Archive of New Records, Warsaw, K/1/P.-46, 4.

- 35 The Komsomol was a communist youth organization (ages fourteen to twenty-five) founded in 1918. The name of the organization is an acronym of the words *Kommunisticheskii soiuz molodezhi* (Communist Youth Association).
- 36 *World Congress of Women. Reports, Speeches (Extracts.) Documents* (Women's International Democratic Federation, Berlin, 1953), 229.
- 37 *Second Women's International Congress. Account of the work of the Congress which took place in Budapest (Hungary) from the 1st to the 6th of December 1948*, 297.
- 38 Materials for the speech at the 8th of March celebration, 1950, Polish United Worker's Party Archives 237/XV/38.
- 39 Valentina Tereshkova-Nikolayeva V., *Report Women at Work*, World Congress of Women, Helsinki, June 14–17, 1969.
- 40 Ibid., 4.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 K. Halina interview by author, October 1, 2011.
- 43 Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization*, 170.
- 44 Ibid., 172.
- 45 On February 14, 1958, the Polish government sent a memorandum to the representatives in Warsaw of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and the USSR, as well as to the Swedish representative, for forwarding to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) regarding its proposal for the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe. Because NATO did not accept this proposal, it was not implemented.
- 46 Fourth Congress of the Womens International Democratic Federation, Vienna, June 1–3, 1958, Conference on "Defense of Life" (Paris: Women International Democratic Federation), 71.
- 47 Basia Nowak, "'Where Do You Think I Learned How to Style My Own Hair?' Gender and Everyday Lives of Women Activists in Poland's League of Women," in *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. Shana Penn and Jill Massino (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 45–58.
- 48 Ibid., 47.
- 49 S. Anna interview by author, September 14, 2011.
- 50 K. Barbara interview by author, November 11, 2012.
- 51 For instance, Zofia Wasilkowska was in her later life an active member of the opposition movement.
- 52 K. Barbara interview by author.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 L. Janina interview by author, November 13, 2012.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 De Haan, interview by author, November 13, 2012.
- 57 See for example, Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life After Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Barbara Einhorn and Charlotte Sever, "Gender and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5 (July 2003), 163–90; Peggy Watson, "(Anti)feminism after Communism," in *Who's Afraid of Feminism? Seeing through the Backlash*, ed. Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchel (New York: The New Press, 1993), 144–62.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Quotation from an interview with the head of the Polish women's organization conducted on June 3, 2006, during fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation entitled

"Between East and West. Polish Feminism between East and West. The Formation of the Polish Women's Movement Identity." All the quotations in this chapter are anonymous.

- 60 See for example, Małgorzata Fuszara, "New Gender Relationships in Poland in 1990s," in *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*, ed. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 259; Tamar Sebadashvili, *Gender and Democratization: The Case of Georgia 1991–2006* (Tbilisi: Boll Foundation, 2007).
- 61 Quotation from an anonymous interview with a feminist writer and activist conducted on August 5, 2006, during fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation.
- 62 See for instance, Dan Berger, ed., *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).
- 63 Małgorzata Fidelis, "The Other Marxists: Making Sense of International Student Revolts in Poland in the Global Sixties," in *Fear and Fascination: War, Enemies, and the Other in the Soviet Bloc through the 1950s*, ed. Jophn Connelly, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 62 (2013): 425–9.
- 64 Nanette Funk, "A Very Tangled Knot: Official State Socialist Women's Organizations, Women's Agency and Feminism in Eastern European State Socialism," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 21, 4 (November 2014): 344–60 (first published June 30, 2014); Kristen Ghodsee, "Untangling the Knot: A Response to Nanette Funk," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 22, 2 (2015): 248–52 (first published online March 6, 2015, contribution to the Open Forum).
- 65 Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life After Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Peggy Watson, "Rethinking Transition: Globalism, Gender and Class," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 2, 2 (Summer 2000): 185; Barbara Einhorn and Charlotte Sever, "Gender and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5 (July 2003): 163.
- 66 Magdalena Grabowska, "Bringing Second World In: Conservative Revolution(s), Socialist Legacies and Transnational Silences in the Trajectories of Polish Feminism," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 37, 2 (2012): 385–411.
- 67 Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women," *American Ethnologist* 17, 1 (1990): 41–55; Sherry B. Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, 1 (1995): 173–93.