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# RETHINKING STATE SOCIALIST MASS WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

*The Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement and the United Nations Decade for Women, 1975–1985*<sup>1</sup>

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*During the UN Decade for Women, representatives of the world's governments came together for the first time to discuss the issues of equality, development, and peace in official intergovernmental forums, opening up an unexpected new front in the ongoing Cold War. While western women were concerned with legal and economic equality, socialist women in the Eastern Bloc argued that women's equality with men was useless in a world full of racism, violence, underdevelopment, colonialism, and war. Over the course of the decade, women from the developing world came to embrace the idea that feminist struggles could not be separated from the underlying political and economic conditions in which women lived, aligning themselves more closely with the socialist world. Through a case study of the Bulgarian Women's Movement, this article presents the UN Decade from the socialist women's point of view, and argues that their contributions to the early international women's movement should no longer be ignored.*

## **Introduction**

In Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), and Nairobi (1985), representatives of the world's governments came together for the first time to discuss women and the issues of equality, development, and peace in official United Nations (UN) intergovernmental forums, opening up an unexpected new front in the ongoing Cold War. While legal and economic equality with men was the primary concern of western women, women from the socialist countries proposed that the equality between men and women would be useless in a world full of greater injustices such as racism, colonialism, underdevelopment, and war. Navigating between these two opposing points of view were women from the "G-77" (or Group of 77 developing countries, many of them newly independent), who now held a majority of seats in the UN General Assembly.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the Decade, women from the G-77 increasingly rose up to challenge the western countries, calling for a controversial New International Economic Order (NIEO) that would end imperialism and radically redistribute the world's wealth.<sup>3</sup>

By 1985, many women from the developing world embraced the idea that feminist struggles could not be separated from the underlying political and economic conditions in which women lived. They believed that issues such as national independence and economic development were intricately linked to women's emancipation, a position that had been tirelessly promoted by women from the "Second World" countries through ongoing international advocacy efforts since 1945.<sup>4</sup>

In the subsequent historiography of the International Women's Decade, scholars have usually ignored the important role played by women from the socialist countries.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, one important 2004 volume of autobiographical essays written by twenty-seven women involved in the UN Decade for Women did not include even one entry from a woman in the former Eastern Bloc.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, within the English-language scholarship on the UN Decade, the arguments and opinions of socialist women, as well as the continuing struggles for real sex equality in the Eastern Bloc, have been downplayed or discredited because of their political commitments to various forms of Marxism-Leninism. Rather than considering the ways in which state socialist women's organizations may have worked within the existing structures of power to promote a pro-woman agenda, western scholars often tend to uncritically see these organizations as only capable of taking direction from the top, with Maxine Molyneux claiming that "all [communist] political institutions are designed primarily to execute party policy and to mobilize their particular constituencies for the fulfillment of state goals."<sup>7</sup>

In 2010, the historian Augusta Dimou showed how German history textbooks written after 1989 obscured the European roots and international appeal of socialism, and ignored "the massive impact of leftist intellectual influences on the articulation of the liberation movements in the third world, in spite of the fact that decolonization is a standard topic in history textbooks on the twentieth century."<sup>8</sup> The selective memory of the women's Decade, similarly, reflects the lingering effects of Cold War biases against socialist women's organizations.<sup>9</sup> This article is an attempt to see the UN Decade from the perspective of women in the Eastern Bloc. Communist women believed themselves to be active participants in the early development of the international women's movement, by challenging mainstream American feminism and often providing inspiration to progressive women in the developing world.

This article is a case study of the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM) and its international activities between 1968 and 1990, particularly the important role it played in forging ideological bonds between Eastern Bloc and G-77 women. I rely on a combination of archival research with the records of the Women's International Democratic Federa-

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tion (WIDF) and the CBWM and ethnographic interviews with key women involved in the CBWM between 1968 and 1990 (all of whom were between the ages of seventy and ninety-years-old at the time).<sup>10</sup> In 2010–2011, I conducted successive open-ended interviews with six Bulgarian women, five of whom had attended at least one of the UN conferences for women, either as a member of the official delegation or as an attendee at the tribune or NGO Forum. Finally, I conducted telephone interviews with two American feminists, Irene Tinker and Arvonne Fraser, who attended all three conferences, with Fraser being a member of the official U.S. delegation in Mexico City and Copenhagen.

In the course of this research, I also was given access to the personal archives and papers of Dr. Elena Lagadinova, who served as the president of the CBWM between 1968 and 1990, as well as those of Ani Durcheva, a member of the CBWM who was sent to work at the head office of the WIDF from 1982 to 1990. Both women allowed me to copy their private documents and photos, materials that were not available through official archival collections. Finally, I have drawn on scholarly and journalistic accounts of socialist women's activities during the UN Decade for Women. Using this diversity of archival research, open-ended interviewing, and discourse analysis, this brief article focuses primarily on the international activities of the CBWM. My hope is to demonstrate how active the CBWM was between 1975 and 1985 in order to chip away at the lingering effects of Cold War politics on the feminist history of the International Decade for Women without reducing the importance of the Cold War as the historical framework within which these interactions occurred.

### **The WIDF and the CBWM: A Brief History**

Demands for an International Women's Year in 1975 originated from the pressures of the women's movement in the United States and, to some degree, the United Kingdom and West Germany.... At the moment [1982] the focus of power in the [international] women's movement seems to be in the United States. Basic economic resources are centered there, with all that follows those, and it is probably possible for U.S. women to dominate the movement to make their goals predominant.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the eagerness of some western scholars to attribute the origins of International Women's Year (IWY) to the United States, UN records clearly show that it was Eastern Bloc women, working with the WIDF (which had consultative status with the Economic and Social Council) that pressed for the IWY.<sup>12</sup> The WIDF was founded after World War II and brought together

women from both sides of the soon-to-be Iron Curtain in a joint cause: an end to war and aggression.<sup>13</sup> Its official membership made it the largest international women's organization in the post-war era.<sup>14</sup> Between 1945 and 1969, the WIDF held six World Congresses of Women across both Eastern and Western Europe, and these international meetings were instrumental in creating a strong global network of women fighting not only for sex equality, but also for peace and development. These regular congresses built solidarity among progressive women, and forged early links between women in the Eastern Bloc and those in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The WIDF promoted the idea that women's rights could not be disassociated from other larger, political goals. This was a message that resonated in many different social and economic contexts, particularly during the 1960s as women in colonized countries became active in movements for national independence. For instance, Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti, an early Nigerian anti-colonial anti-imperial feminist, became an early vice-president of the WIDF.<sup>15</sup>

In Bulgaria, women had been active in the partisan resistance against their king who was allied with Nazi Germany in World War II. Two key figures in this early period were Tsola Dragoicheva and Rada Todorova, who were both present for the founding of the WIDF in Paris in 1945. Dragoicheva became Chairperson of the Bulgarian Women's Committee and went on to become a long-standing member of the Bulgarian Politburo. Todorova was given the responsibility of leading the Bulgarian Popular Women's Union (BPWU), and was eventually made a vice president of the WIDF.<sup>16</sup> Between 1946 and 1950, the BPWU busied itself with the task of eradicating illiteracy among women and increasing their access to education and employment. By 1950, however, Bulgaria's Stalinist clone, Valko Chervenkov, decided that Bulgarian women did not need a separate women's organization.

By the late 1960s, several factors made it necessary to reinvigorate a Bulgarian mass women's organization.<sup>17</sup> Foremost was a precipitous demographic decline. With women now enjoying equal access to educational opportunities and full time employment, birth rates were plummeting and further economic development was dependent on a continued expansion of the labor force. Bulgarian women also faced a new double burden of trying to combine formal employment with family life. Finally, inspired by trends in Czechoslovakia, it is possible that Bulgaria's Communist leader, Todor Zhivkov, may have been trying out some subtle internal reforms by creating new popular organizations that would be more representative of, and responsive to, socialist citizens' needs.<sup>18</sup> In 1968, Zhivkov appointed Dr. Elena Lagadinova, another hero of the anti-Nazi resistance and a genetic engineer at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, to be the new president of the CBWM.

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Despite the appointment (rather than the election) of Lagadinova as its new president, the newly constituted CBWM was structured in a way that theoretically maximized the representation of women from around the country. As a constituent member of the Fatherland Front, the CBWM soon became one of the largest and most influential organizations in Bulgaria. It also enjoyed relative autonomy from the government because of its independent finances.<sup>19</sup> Rather than relying on monies from the central state budget or the Fatherland Front to fund its activities, the CBWM had a dedicated revenue stream from the sale of its magazine, *Zhenata Dnes* (*The Woman Today*). Started in 1945, this magazine was one of the monthly magazines with the highest circulation rates in Bulgaria.<sup>20</sup> Although *Zhenata Dnes* was always subject to censorship, its progressive editor, Sonya Bakish, often managed to include articles that addressed the continuing problems of women in Bulgaria. These articles gently criticized government policies and often started with a quote from Lenin about how the best way to celebrate a revolution was to turn attention to the problems that the revolution had not yet solved. *Zhenata Dnes* was thus able to address controversial issues such as sexual politics and the double burden, topics rarely discussed elsewhere in the state controlled press, making the magazine even more popular with Bulgarian women. The subscription rate was inexpensive, but the sheer number of subscribers guaranteed that the CBWM had an ample budget to pursue its own agenda.

The CBWM's attempts at internal democracy, its recognition that socialism had not yet solved all of women's problems, and its independent finances made the Committee relatively unique among the Eastern European women's organizations. In the mid-1970s, the American political scientist, Barbara Wolfe Jancar, traveled throughout Eastern Europe to assess the various women's organizations and their effectiveness in addressing women's problems. Although she argued that many women's organizations fit the prevailing western stereotype, she made an exception for the Bulgarians:

Only in Bulgaria did I feel that the members of the Women's Committee saw themselves as having any real initiative. There the executive directly told me that the committee was empowered to make recommendations for legislation to the leadership. In addition, if the committee finds that the law has not been properly upheld in terms of promotion, pay, or giving women leave for childbirth, the committee is authorized to take the delinquent enterprise to court. As far as I know, this power of enforcement is unique to the Bulgarian Women's Committee. Finally, the Bulgarian Women's Committee believes it has developed a good international image. Its president, Elena Lagadinova, has represented the women's organizations of all the East European countries,

excluding Yugoslavia, at Comecon meetings, and has been the champion of a proposal to coordinate efforts to solve women's problems in these countries.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, the CBWM was particularly successful in pestering the Politburo to address women's problems. Perhaps the best example of their ingenuity in dealing with the male-dominated political elite was their willingness to conduct national sociological survey research to gather the empirical evidence necessary to convince Bulgaria's leaders of the double burden that women endured and how it was contributing to the falling birthrate. By collecting time budgets from Bulgarian women as early as 1968, the CBWM was able to demonstrate that women were still overwhelmingly responsible for child care and housework despite working the same number of hours as their husbands outside of the home. This research provided the scientific data that formed the basis of CBWM's advocacy efforts, and despite the immense costs to the national budget, the Committee convinced the Communist leadership to radically expand maternity leaves for all Bulgarian women (including those in agriculture) and to dramatically increase the availability of crèches (day cares) and kindergartens throughout the country.<sup>22</sup>

Another domestic success for the Committee was its insistence that abortion should remain legal and freely available for most women despite the collapsing birth rate. Following the Romanian Communist government to the north, the Bulgarian leadership toyed with the idea of outlawing abortion. It was only the resistance of the CBWM that prevented a total ban. Abortion, instead, was only restricted for married women with two or less children in their care. It remained safe, legal, and easily available for all single and divorced women as well as for women caring for two or more children (even if those children were not biologically her own). The CBWM argued that women should not be forced to have children that they did not want. Although they had to compromise with the Communist leadership on this issue and were unsuccessful on other issues (such as the institution of pre-nuptial contracts), they were relatively adept at navigating the constraints imposed on them by the centralized state authority.

There are other fascinating examples of the CBWM's domestic activities, but the 10,000-word article format does not provide ample space for detailed discussion.<sup>23</sup> What is most important for this article is that by 1973 the CBWM had advocated for policies and expanded programs that allowed Bulgarian women to better combine work and family life not only compared to the western world at the time, but even compared to other "brother" socialist countries.<sup>24</sup> The domestic struggles of the CBWM placed the Bulgarians in a leadership position among the Eastern Bloc countries

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with regards to women's issues, a position they would fully embrace during the UN Decade for Women.

### **Preparing for International Women's Year (IWY)**

Between 1968 and 1972 the CBWM sent and received a wide variety of delegations from socialist-oriented countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia (even a visit by the recently freed American, Angela Davis).<sup>25</sup> It was the CBWM's decision to host the WIDF Council Meeting in Sofia from April 30 to May 5, 1972, however, which launched Elena Lagadinova and the CBWM as key figures in the global socialist women's movement. Having already made some impressive strides at home, Lagadinova turned her attention to the international sphere with the goal of sharing Bulgarian successes with other progressive women's movements affiliated with the WIDF.<sup>26</sup> Representatives of women's organizations from around the world came to Varna (a city on the Black Sea) after the UN General Assembly had already voted to mark IWY.<sup>27</sup> It was in Bulgaria that the WIDF delegates began to lay plans for the years leading up to 1975.

In a special decision, Decree No. 1 of January 3, 1975, the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria formed a National Initiative Committee (NIC) for IWY and approved a wide variety of measures to promote the domestic experiences of Bulgarian women as an international model, particularly for women in the developing world.<sup>28</sup> The president of the NIC, Zhivko Zhivkov, was a member of the Politburo and the Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Zhivko Zhivkov, and Elena Lagadinova was appointed as one of three vice presidents. The Decision called on all unions, professional associations, ministries, and mass organizations to support the efforts of the CBWM during the IWY, particularly in its preparations for the UN meeting in Mexico City and the WIDF's Seventh World Congress of Women to be held in East Berlin in October. A massive foreign public relations campaign was planned to tout the achievements of Bulgarian women and the superiority of the socialist system in dealing with women's issues. A special pool of funds was also created to support the sending and receiving of delegations related to IWY. In 2010, the ninety-year-old Krastina Tchomakova, a long-standing secretary of the CBWM, explained to me, "We [the CBWM] were very lucky for this International Women's Year. Before that, we did our work alone. But afterwards, they [the Politburo] supported our work in a new way."<sup>29</sup>

The first bold move of the NIC was to invite Helvi Sipilä, the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, to Bulgaria so that she could witness the country's achievements for women first hand. She was the highest-ranking woman in the UN at the time, and

the Secretary-General of IWY. According to a CBWM report on its international "propaganda activities," the committee was extremely pleased that Mrs. Sipilä accepted their invitation.<sup>30</sup> The Finnish lawyer, apparently, was considered hostile to the socialist cause, and the fact that she came to Bulgaria twice during IWY was considered a public relations coup. It was apparently her first official visit to a socialist country and one of "her first direct encounters with the socialist system."<sup>31</sup> The internal report stated that Sipilä was subsequently heard making reference to Bulgaria's progressive maternity leave policies in India and "several African countries."<sup>32</sup> If nothing else, Sipilä certainly learned that the Bulgarians were taking IWY very seriously, and that its socialist government was publically committed to improving the situation of women.

As preparations for IWY proceeded apace, the CBWM also sent a delegation to the Afro-Asian Symposium on Social Development of Women in Alexandria, Egypt on March 8–10, 1975.<sup>33</sup> This was a conference organized by the socialist-leaning Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), and brought together the heads of women's movements and organizations across the Asian and African continents. Almost all the Eastern Bloc countries sent delegations to share their experiences and promote socialism as the ideal economic system to achieve development and national independence for women and men in Africa and Asia.<sup>34</sup> Occurring as it did just months before the Mexico City conference, it is important to note that the socialist countries emphasized that women's issues must be linked to the larger political issues of the day, encouraged the African and Asian delegates to embrace a language of global solidarity, and supported their demands for a New International Economic Order.<sup>35</sup>

Two months later, the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers held its world Congress in Varna, Bulgaria from May 12 to 17 under the theme: "Women in 1975 and their equality—balance and prospects."<sup>36</sup> The conference brought together women from twenty-four countries in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, including Helvi Sipilä. For other women from the West, the conference in Bulgaria was also their first visit to a socialist country. In her memoirs, the Italian lawyer, Teresa Assensio Brugiatelli, recalls being impressed by the Bulgarian women, particularly Svetla Daskalova, the Bulgarian Minister of Justice (who would be a member of the official delegation in Mexico City).<sup>37</sup> According to Brugiatelli, the Bulgarians took every occasion to promote the gains that women had made under socialism in their country and to talk about the importance of supporting women in their dual roles as both mothers and workers. And at least in terms of legal equalities, the Bulgarians had much to boast about, particularly compared to southern European countries like Italy.

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By 1975, a variety of Bulgarian laws guaranteed equality between men and women in all spheres of life, and the 1971 Zhivkov Constitution was one of the most progressive socialist constitutions regarding women's rights, elevating maternity leave to a constitutional principle. Working women were guaranteed a fully paid pregnancy leave of 120 days before and after the birth of the first child (150 for the second and 180 for the third) in addition to an extra six months of leave paid at the national minimum wage (seven months for the second child and eight months for the third). Women were also allowed to take unpaid leave until their child reached the age of three, when a kindergarten would be made available. All of the time taken off from one's job was counted toward labor service (with regard to pensions), and an enterprise was obliged to hold a woman's position until her return.<sup>38</sup>

In the run up to the UN conference the Bulgarians launched a massive public relations campaign to popularize these new maternity supports. According to CBWM records, the committee had overseen the production of 560,000 copies of ten different brochures in French, English, Spanish, Russian, and German as well as an additional 200,000 copies of an Arabic brochure on "Women in Contemporary Bulgaria."<sup>39</sup> These materials had been sent to libraries, diplomatic missions, and women's organizations around the globe and were widely distributed in Mexico City as an example for other nations. Although there were still problems in Bulgaria—the double burden, the growing feminization of certain professions, and the continuing lack of women in high political positions—the CBWM embraced these problems rather than trying to cover them up. Lagadinova believed that social change would take time, but it was her sincere personal conviction that the socialist state in Bulgaria was doing more than most countries to improve women's lives. It was with these convictions and the recently passed maternity leave policies in place that the Bulgarian delegation would arrive for the UN conference in Mexico City.

### **Mexico City, Sofia, and East Berlin**

Although men headed most of the official delegations to the first international women's conference (including the U.S. delegation), it was Elena Lagadinova who led the Bulgarian delegation, flanked by two other powerful women: Svetla Daskalova (Minister of Justice) and Lyudmila Zhivkova (Minister of Culture). Valentina Tereshkova, a cosmonaut and the first woman in space, led the Soviet delegation. Tereshkova was an impressive figurehead, but she was far more interested in socialist internationalism and women's roles in guaranteeing world peace than in practical, day-to-day, domestic women's issues although she recognized that the CBWM had won important concessions from the Bulgarian Politburo.<sup>40</sup>

Tereshkova and Lagadinova would become close personal friends, and the former may have personally preferred to let the Bulgarians take the lead on international women's issues, particularly with regard to the developing world. Bulgaria was a small, but loyal, satellite country, where socialism had transformed a relatively backward subsistence agricultural economy into a modern nation-state in the span of a few short decades (Bulgaria had almost no large industries before the communist period). It provided a good role model for newly independent nations choosing sides during the Cold War.

For the women in the CBWM, the most important lesson of IWY was the realization that Bulgaria could become a world leader in terms of women's issues. Maria Dinkova, a CBWM member of the official delegation, was appointed to the working committee drafting the World Plan of Action. In 2011, she claimed that Bulgaria's experience with the fight for maternity leaves had an important influence on the official conference document, because "at that time, Bulgaria was far ahead of most nations concerning women's legal equality and state support for women as both mothers and workers."<sup>41</sup> In a 2005 interview, Arvonne Fraser, a member of the official U.S. delegation to Mexico City, recalled, "Nobody would have admitted it, and it definitely would not be said by anybody from the U.S. delegation, but it certainly did seem that women had at least more legal equality in the socialist bloc."<sup>42</sup>

While much has been written about Mexico City, it was not the only significant international event of the IWY. After Mexico City, the Bulgarian delegation returned home with a renewed sense of the important work that they were doing for women in their own country, as well as their significance as an international example of the superiority of the socialist system. Almost without missing a beat, the CBWM dove into the preparations for an international women's seminar to be held in Sofia from September 3–6.<sup>43</sup> The CBWM had planned to hold the seminar before Mexico City in order to build solidarity between socialist-leaning countries in preparation for the UN conference.<sup>44</sup> But it was postponed and the name of the seminar was changed from "Woman and Socialism" to "The Woman in Contemporary Society." The CBWM also invited a much broader spectrum of countries to attend than originally planned. The foreign delegations included women from: Afghanistan, Algeria, Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Cyprus, Vietnam, Egypt, Ethiopia, FR Germany, Finland, GDR, Greece, Hungary, India, Iran, Italy, North Korea, Lebanon, Mongolia, Morocco, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, USSR, and Yugoslavia, as well as a special delegation from the WIDF.<sup>45</sup> Hoping to build on the momentum of Mexico City, the Bulgarians promoted this meeting as a precursor to the World Congress of Women to be held just one month later.

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According to Elena Lagadinova, the WIDF's thirtieth anniversary congress in East Berlin was the most important event of IWY, and by far the most inspiring.<sup>46</sup> For five days from October 20–24, over 2,000 men and women from 141 countries descended on East Berlin for the World Congress, which had been planned by the WIDF with the support of the UN.<sup>47</sup> Helvi Sipilä was in attendance, and in his official greetings to the conference delegates, UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim openly thanked the WIDF for first suggesting the idea to celebrate IWY.<sup>48</sup> According to the WIDF there were men and women from twenty-nine European, thirty-three Asian, and forty-three African nations, as well as thirty-three countries from the Americas and Australia and New Zealand.

The work of the congress was divided among nine special committees, with prominent world leaders heading each committee.<sup>49</sup> One of the most important committees of the conference was the seventh Committee, convened to discuss the subject of "Women and the Struggle for National Independence and World Solidarity." The Committee was chaired by the Vice President of AAPSO, and dealt with some of the most troubling political issues of the day, particularly the right of newly independent colonies to choose their own path to economic development without western interference. In the final report of the seventh Committee, Dr. Aziz Sherif concluded, "I would like to stress that the discussion of the issues of national liberation clearly revealed the firm quest of the peoples for freedom and peace. It also underlined the very important role played by the democratic women's movement in the world in this sphere. The work of the [seventh] Committee enhanced the conviction in the necessity of closing ranks and strengthening the alliance with the socialist countries and the progressive forces."<sup>50</sup>

Although statements such as these were always informed by the realities of superpower rivalry, they did reflect a growing solidarity between socialist and developing nations, particularly in the wake of American interventions in Vietnam and Chile and its continued support of the apartheid regime in South Africa. In my conversations with the Bulgarian women who attended the World Congress, it was there that they claim to have realized the need for greater connections between the socialist and developing countries in order to resist what they perceived of as American warmongering and imperialism. In 2011, Elena Lagadinova recalled: "[In Berlin] we were all different colors, and spoke so many different languages, from so many countries, but we could come together and find solidarity in our common hatred of war, colonialism, and racism. Of course we all had our political opinions, but we were all women facing the same problems that women faced all over the world."<sup>51</sup>

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## The Lead up to Copenhagen

The CBWM's efforts to address women's issues were undoubtedly part of a larger Cold War campaign to promote the superiority of the socialist system to leaders in the newly independent countries, but it is important to recognize that they were also focused on improving the material conditions of women's lives. In 1976, the CBWM (with the support of the WIDF and UNESCO) held an international conference in Sofia on "Women in Agriculture" that brought together twenty-eight national women's organizations from around the world, as well as representatives of AAPSO, the Pan-African Women's Organization, the World Federation of Trade Unions, and the International Cooperative Alliance. Designed to appeal to agricultural economies in the developing world, half of the seminar was dedicated to meetings in Sofia and the other half consisted of educational excursions to cooperative farms across the country.

Moreover, between 1977 and 1978, the CBWM had what it called "experience exchanges" with women's organizations in all of the socialist countries as well as with Tanzania, France, Syria, Iraq, Greece, Congo, and Turkey. They sent delegations to "expand contacts" with women in Portugal, Spain, and Algeria.<sup>52</sup> In early 1977, the CBWM also went to a WIDF regional seminar in Conakry, Guinea, which was attended by governmental and nongovernmental representatives of thirty-two states in Africa and the Middle East, as well as guest delegations from ten socialist countries. In Conakry, the socialist countries emphasized the importance of peace, development, and national independence for African states emerging from colonial oppression.<sup>53</sup> The year 1978 also saw the establishment of a WIDF regional training center in Havana, Cuba.<sup>54</sup> The idea to create a UN institute that would train women leaders had been conceived of in Mexico City, but the Havana Center predated the opening of the official UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) by five years.

All of this activity by the socialist women did not go unnoticed by the American government, which had long considered women's movements in the developing world as "communist fronts."<sup>55</sup> In 1973, the Percy Amendment to the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act established the Women in Development (WID) program at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). WID's aim was to organize development initiatives for women within a capitalist framework. The official incorporation of women into U.S. bilateral aid programs was met with suspicion by the socialist countries and undoubtedly seen as competition for the "hearts and minds" of the world's women. For instance, once it became known that INSTRAW was to be located in the Dominican Republic (a close U.S. ally),

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the leadership of the WIDF began to consider the possibility of establishing a second training center in Sofia, a center that would train women from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. In an internal memo discussing these plans, Elena Lagadinova explained to the Politburo that:

Without a doubt, the Western countries will try to use it [IN-STRAW] as a means of actively influencing the women from these [developing] countries. To steer them away from the path of finding a radical solution to the pressing social issues related to the status of women in society, and from the path leading to the fight for economic and political rights, such as freedom, national independence, and peace... [W]e believe that the creation of a center for training and preparation of women leaders in a socialist country is a very opportune and useful idea. Bulgaria serving as the host would also provide women leaders from both continents [Africa and Asia] a thorough acquaintance with the theory of scientific communism and the rich experience of the socialist countries, and foremost of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, in the resolution of equality and status issues faced by women. Together with the practical introduction to the advantages of real socialism for the development of women, it [the center] could be an active form of permanent socialist influence on the attitudes of the participants in the courses; in this way, the socialist ideals will gain the support of large parts of the populations of countries both with a socialist and an independent orientation in Asia and Africa.<sup>56</sup>

This quote nicely demonstrates the tone used by the CBWM in its communications with the male-dominated Politburo, using the rhetoric of the Cold War to convince male elites to support women's activism. In its efforts to gain permission for the center, Lagadinova also insisted to the Politburo that all costs for the courses held in Bulgaria would be borne by the CBWM and the WIDF. With Soviet support (i.e., Tereshkova) and an independent budget, the CBWM was in a strong position to promote their own agenda. The CBWM did get permission to host yearly courses, the first of which would be a forty-day training course for representatives from African and Asian women's organizations in 1980. Preparations for this first course were well under way in 1979 just as the world's women were also gearing up for the second World Conference on Women.

## Copenhagen

Much ink has been spilt on the political animosities and conflicts at the Copenhagen conference, but the key point for the present article is that the U.S. delegation (together with Canada, Israel, and Australia) was

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forced to vote against all 287-paragraphs of the official conference document, the Programme of Action.<sup>57</sup> Socialist bloc machinations resulted in the last minute addition of "Palestinian women" to the conference agenda and the ultimate insertion of the word "Zionism" into a paragraph that equated it with "racial discrimination." Simultaneously, two resolutions passed by the U.S. House of Representatives after the U.S. delegates were already in Copenhagen forbade them from approving any document that included the word "Zionism."<sup>58</sup> Whereas political issues (such as Middle East peace) had been dealt with in a separate conference document in Mexico City (The Declaration of Mexico), the Copenhagen organizers insisted that everything be included in the Programme of Action. Practically, this meant that a vote against the use of the word "Zionism" was also a vote against all of the other paragraphs of the Programme, including those advocating for basic legal rights for women.<sup>59</sup> In the U.S. delegation report back to the House of Representatives, staffers claimed that the situation which led to the U.S. vote against the Programme "reflected the intense conflict between the Group of 77 and the Soviet-Arab bloc on the one hand and the Western nations on the other."<sup>60</sup>

Using this alliance with the G-77, the socialist countries were also able to influence the writing of the "historical perspective" section of the Programme. The official document of the Second World Conference of Women asserts that: "In the countries with centrally planned economies a further advancement of women took place in various fields. Women in those countries actively participated in social and economic development and in all other fields of public life of their countries, including in the active struggle for peace, disarmament, détente, and international co-operation. A high level of employment, health, education and political participation of women was achieved in countries with centrally planned economies, in which national mechanisms are already in existence with adequate financial allocations and sufficient skilled personnel."<sup>61</sup> It was a political triumph for the Eastern Bloc delegations to include this language in a document endorsed by ninety-four countries and subsequently passed by the General Assembly. Although there were certainly still problems for women living in centrally planned economies (not the least of which were chronic shortages, police surveillance, and limited political freedoms), at least some parts of this paragraph were true. In Bulgaria, there *were* skilled women with ample resources working at the national level to promote women's issues, peace, and international cooperation.

Yet statements such as these continued to be met with skepticism from the West. Cold War politics and the western prioritization of human rights made it difficult to accept that some Eastern Bloc countries were truly committed to improving the material conditions of women's lives. The

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stereotype that socialist women in the official delegations were mere dupes of male, communist politicians back home, without any real independence, was a pervasive one. Yet it is ironic that this critique better exemplified the situation of the women in the American delegation in Copenhagen. Against their desire to support women's rights, they were compelled to vote against the Programme of Action for purely political reasons at the behest of men in the House of Representatives and the Senate. While it is true that the socialist women at the conference openly embraced Communist ideologies, many of them (specifically the members of the CBWM) were also strident advocates for sex equality. Just as western women were constrained by the foreign policy choices of male politicians back home, so too were socialist women always required to work within the constraints of Cold War geopolitical rhetoric. It is no surprise, therefore, that ideological commitments and constraints influenced both "First World" and "Second World" programs to influence women's movements in the "Third World."

### **The WIDF and CBWM Courses in Bulgaria**

In September 1980, less than two months after the Copenhagen meeting, the CBWM hosted the first "School for Knowledge, Friendship and Solidarity" in Sofia. This was a joint effort between the WIDF and the CBWM, with both organizations fully funding the travel, accommodation, and entertainment expenses for twenty-one women from Africa and Asia for a forty-day stay in Bulgaria. Inspired by the courses being taught for Latin American women at the WIDF's Havana Center, the CBWM helped to organize the curriculum for the roughly six-week course, which included lectures, seminars, and travel around Bulgaria.<sup>62</sup> All of the lectures were simultaneously translated into English, French, Arabic, and Portuguese to representatives from women's organizations from India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, Botswana, Zambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, the South African Republic, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde.

This was not a light-hearted sisterly exchange, however, but a serious "boot camp" for women's activists. The national women's organizations affiliated with the WIDF in each of the sending countries were responsible for choosing their most committed activists to attend the course, with the idea that they would return to their home countries and share their knowledge with other women. The course was envisioned as an exercise in "training the trainers," long before this term became popular with western aid agencies and NGOs. For the first month of their stay, the participants had five hours of lectures for twenty days, in addition to individually tailored one-on-one

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workshops. The WIDF and the CBWM teachers shared practical advice on how to prepare reports, write speeches, talk to the media, issue press releases, and organize conventions on women's issues.

In a memorandum sent to the Central Committee, the CBWM outlined their proposed syllabus. This incorporated several lectures on the "Tasks of the WIDF," including "the fight for political, judicial and socio-economic rights of women (the role of women as working citizens and mothers)" and "the fight for long-lasting peace, national independence, democracy, and social progress."<sup>63</sup> Another unit focused on the status of women living under socialism, and three thematic groups were proposed: one, women and the labor force, two, women and society, and three, woman and the family. The three themes were all to be discussed with reference to the experiences of Bulgarian women since 1945.

In addition to the lectures focused on touting the accomplishments of "really existing" socialism, much time was also spent on the political, socio-economic, and cultural issues of the respective G-77 countries. The organizers constructed detailed assessments of the situation of women in each of the countries and the specific political, socio-economic, and cultural problems that they faced. Each of the delegates was able to discuss the methods necessary not only to form active feminist organizations, but also to seek collaboration with different mass organizations in the pursuit of dealing satisfactorily with women's issues. In other words, the cadres from Africa and Asia were not only encouraged to be feminists and to create women's organizations, but they were also being trained to form strategic alliances with other organizations that could be instrumental in promoting the cause of women's equality within a more equitable society for all.

Perhaps even more important were the detailed lectures on the structure and history of the UN and its specialized branches dealing with the problems of women and children. The cadres from Asia and Africa were familiarized with the fundamentally democratic nature of the General Assembly and how developing countries could band together and out-vote the developed countries of the West.<sup>64</sup> From the proposed lesson plans, it is clear that several days were spent teaching women about how the UN worked and how it could give voice to small, newly independent countries. These included lessons in UN parliamentary procedure, learning the basics of UN resolutions and amendment procedures, as well as the art of informal caucusing.<sup>65</sup> Interspersed with the twenty days of lectures were weekend excursions to a variety of sites around the country, including attendance at sessions of the World Assembly of Nations for Peace congress happening in Sofia at the same time. There was also one full week of travel planned around Bulgaria to witness the "wonders" of the socialist system.

It is essential to remember that the 1970s had been successful for the

command economic system in Bulgaria; the seaside was studded with brand new, state-of-the-art hotels and the cities were growing at a breakneck pace.<sup>66</sup> Although Bulgaria did not have the variety of consumer goods available in the developed western countries, it did have an impressive plethora of schools, universities, hospitals, cooperatives, and cultural centers that would be the envy of many women from the developing world. While there is no doubt that the Bulgarians and the WIDF wanted to support the G-77 countries already allied with the socialist bloc, the inclusion of delegates from western-leaning countries like Kenya suggests that the Bulgarians and the WIDF were casting a broader net, hoping to build alliances and networks that extended beyond the established socialist spheres of influence. In a speech to the course participants, Elena Lagadinova explained: "We consider this course an expression of our solidarity with your fights for national independence, female equality and social progress. But dear friends, let me also express my gratitude to you, the representatives of our fraternal organizations from Asia and Africa, for accepting our invitation and leaving behind your work, home, and your loved ones—perhaps young children as well—to come here (despite the long distance) and to learn in the name of the cause: to be even more useful to your people and your organizations."<sup>67</sup>

In 1982, the CBWM organized another training course for women from Africa and Asia, which followed the model of the 1980 course. In 1984 and 1985, the CWBM organized a School of Peace and an International Peace Workshop, which brought together leaders of left-leaning women's organizations and movements, including delegates from the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe. All of these courses, as well as the constant sending and receiving of delegations, brought hundreds of women leaders from both the developed and developing worlds to Bulgaria so they could see for themselves what life was like in a socialist country. These activities helped to dispel stereotypes and built a network of progressive women with a common language about the importance of linking women's issues with the greater political and economic questions of the day, a language that was often deployed against the United States. These connections would become invaluable as the world's women prepared for the last conference of the UN Decade for women in Nairobi in 1985.

## **Nairobi**

Geopolitical tensions had grown in the ten years since Mexico City, with Reagan and Thatcher now in office and the Soviets occupying Afghanistan. The U.S. government was anxious to avoid a repeat of the situation at the Copenhagen conference, and it was more actively involved in

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preparations for Nairobi. The Reagan administration had appointed the President's daughter and the conservative politician Alan Keyes to head up the U.S. delegation to Nairobi, displacing the more liberal women who had represented the United States in Mexico City and Copenhagen. The Americans also pressed some advantages in Nairobi that they did not have at previous conferences. Since Kenya was an ally of the United States, the latter assisted with the costs and logistical arrangements of hosting the conference.<sup>68</sup> The American government was determined not to have to vote against the official conference document, the Forward-Looking Strategies (FLS), and exerted heavy pressure on the Kenyans to make sure that the FLS was adopted by a consensus and without a separate document like the Declaration of Mexico. One of the key ways that the Nairobi FLS was different from the 1975 Plan of Action or the 1980 Programme of Action was that the FLS was to be voted upon paragraph by paragraph. Individual governments could have their reservations to certain paragraphs noted as part of the official document.

It was, unsurprisingly, the United States delegation that made use of this new provision more than any other nation. Sixteen advanced capitalist countries joined the United States in submitting reservations to paragraph 35 because it referred to the Declaration of Mexico. The U.S. delegation by itself, however, asked that its reservations be recorded with regard to eleven different paragraphs in the FLS, disagreeing with issues ranging from Palestinian women's rights and economic sanctions on the South African apartheid regime, to the concept of equal pay for work of equal value.<sup>69</sup> The Bulgarians, the Soviet Union, and their socialist allies did not submit reservations to any paragraphs in the Forward-Looking Strategies.

In her report back to the Bulgarian government after Nairobi, Elena Lagadinova wrote that the women from the G-77 countries were the most politically active delegates at the conference and were the major contributors to the writing of the Forward-Looking Strategies.<sup>70</sup> The CBWM noted with pride that the G-77 women supported all of the positions promoted by the socialist countries, although she claimed that the G-77 had focused on "their own political and socio-economic problems, like the question of peace, apartheid, Palestine, the New International Economic Order, and others."<sup>71</sup> That the G-77 countries were in ideological sync with the socialist countries was considered a political success partially of the CBWM's making. When the Eastern Bloc countries were asked by the conference Secretariat to provide a General Rapporteur, they unanimously selected Lagadinova in recognition of the many friends and allies that the CBWM had among the women in Nairobi, particularly among the African delegates, many of whom had probably visited Bulgaria at the invitation of the CBWM. In 1985, it was a Bulgarian that helped to shape and deliver the final report summarizing

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the proceedings of the last world conference of the UN Decade for Women to the international media.<sup>72</sup> Twenty-five years after the event, Lagadinova still remembers being elected General Rapporteur as one of the finest moments of her twenty-two years as head of the CBWM.<sup>73</sup>

Following on the successes of Nairobi, the CBWM continued to strengthen its position as the leader of socialist women's organizations, and increased its ties with women in western and developing countries. In recognition of her important role in Nairobi, Lagadinova was also appointed to the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW to serve a three-year term from 1988 until June 1991.<sup>74</sup> In preparation for a renewed international program of advocacy, the CBWM hosted the 1988 WIDF council meeting in Sofia and organized its fourth national conference to elect new regional committee members and to issue a new set of guiding principles. On September 12–15, 1989, representatives of the WIDF executive council convened once more in Sofia to plan their international activities for the coming decade.

Less than a month later, on November 10, 1989, however, an internal putsch ousted Todor Zhivkov and Bulgaria's long and painful transition to democracy and free markets began. In early 1990, after calling for an external audit of the CBWM's finances, Elena Lagadinova abruptly retired. At the time, the CBWM had an enormous budget, which was duly turned over to the newly renamed Bulgarian Socialist Party. The CBWM headquarters on 82 Patriarch Eftimi Boulevard was restituted to private owners. The information archive of the Committee, which had filled the entire top floor of their building, was pillaged and scattered, with only some of the documents being sent to the national archives. By the 1995 World Conference in Beijing, the CBWM ceased to exist and most of the socialist women's organizations had been dissolved. Eastern European women in Beijing complained that their voices had been marginalized after 1989 and they had become a "non-region."<sup>75</sup> In 1996, *Zhenata Dnes* was privatized, and became another glossy, women's magazine paid for by advertisements for beauty creams that cost about half of the average monthly wage. The heyday of socialist women's international activities was over. Their contributions to the formation of the international women's movement during the UN Decade for women would soon be consigned to the dustbin of "herstory."<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion

The historiography of socialist women's movements continues to be shaped by the legacies of the Cold War, not only by women in the West, but by Eastern European scholars who desire to have their work published in Western journals. But as this very brief survey of the CBWM's international activities has shown, socialist women's organizations were important ac-

tors during the UN Decade for Women, even if just as a foil for western feminists and as an inspiration for women from the developing world. Socialist women, furthermore, saw themselves as advocating for women's rights within a broader program of social change, and saw the three UN conferences on women as important forums where they could build strategic alliances and promote their worldview. They were active and committed participants at these meetings, yet the stories of their participation in this historic decade are largely lost to us today.

Although there was an immediate rush by western scholars into the former socialist archives of the secret police and into the records of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in order to prove the many evil deeds of the communist governments, there has been little interest in examining the documentary record of the achievements of "really existing" socialism, particularly with regards to women's issues. Part of the problem is that the legacies of the Cold War still make it difficult for scholars, both East and West, to argue that there were *any* positive aspects of the socialist era. In light of the growing nostalgia for socialism across Eastern Europe, however, perhaps now is the time to explore the possibility that socialist governments were actually committed to the abstract goals of equality, even if they often failed to live up to those goals in practice.<sup>77</sup> Organizations like the CBWM, more importantly, may have truly attempted to create a better world for women, and worked hard to forge the networks and alliances that would help promote their cause. If, in the end, the entire socialist dream fell to pieces, modern feminists should at least acknowledge that these state socialist women's organizations were instrumental in shaping the discourses and practices of the postwar international women's movement.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>See the *Journal of Women's History* website feature "Beyond the Printed Page" at [www.journalofwomenshistory.org](http://www.journalofwomenshistory.org) under "Features" for Ghodsee's accompanying essay "Subtle Censorships: Notes on Studying Bulgarian Women's Lives Under Communism" and discussions among middle-aged Bulgarian women scholars about how to write "objectively" their own histories under communism.

<sup>2</sup>The G-77 was established in 1964 to coordinate policy making at the UN.

<sup>3</sup>Irene Tinker, "Reflections on Forum '85 in Nairobi, Kenya: Voices from the Women's Studies Community. *Signs* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1986): 586–589, and Irene Tinker and Jane Jacqueline, "UN Decade for Women: Its Impact and Legacy," *World Development* 15, no. 3 (1987): 419–427.

<sup>4</sup>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* 19, No. 4 (2010): 547–573, 548, and Iliana Marcheva, "Zhenskoto Dvizhenie v Bulgaria I negovata sadba prez perioda septemvri 1944 g.—juni 945 g." *Minalo*, 1 (1995): 63–73.

<sup>5</sup>de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms," 547–573, 548. See also: Raluca Maria Popa, "Translating Equality between Women and Men across Cold War Divides: Women Activists from Hungary and Romania and the Creation of International Women's Year" in *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, eds. Shana Penn and Jill Massino (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

<sup>6</sup>Arvonne Fraser and Irene Tinker, eds., *Developing Power: How Women Transformed International Development* (New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2004).

<sup>7</sup>For instance, Jean Robinson, "Women's State and the Need for Civil Society: the Liga Kobiet in Poland," in *Comparative State Feminism*, eds. Dorothy Stetson McBride and Amy Mazur (London: Sage, 1995), 205; Maxine Molyneux, "Socialist Societies Old and New: Progress Toward Women's Emancipation?" *Feminist Review*, no. 8 (Summer 1981): 1–34, 28.

<sup>8</sup>Augusta Dimou, "Changing Certainties?: Socialism in German History Textbooks," in *Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation*, ed. Maria Todorova (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2010), 299.

<sup>9</sup>De Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms," 548. One exception is Robin Morgan's edited volume, *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1996).

<sup>10</sup>I used the CBWM archive (collection 417) in the Central State Archives in Sofia, Bulgaria, the periodicals collection at the Bulgarian National Library, and the WIDF archives in the Sofia Smith Collection at Smith College. For archival sources from the Central State Archive, I use the standard form of Bulgarian citation, e.g. *Tsentrallen Darzhaven Arhiv* (TsDA), F-417, O-5, E-96, L-9~22 where F = *fond* (the archival collection), O = *opis* (a sub-unit within the main collection), E = *edinitsa* (an individual folder) and L = *list* (the page numbers). Several documents also come from the personal archive of Elena Lagadinova, which I refer to by their title and date followed by the abbreviation "PAoEL." All translations from the Bulgarian are my own or that of my research assistant, Miroslava Nikolova.

<sup>11</sup>Carolyn M. Stephenson, "Feminism, Pacifism, Nationalism, and the United Nations Decade for Women," *Women's Studies International Forum* 5, no. 3/4 (1982): 287–300, 287, 298.

<sup>12</sup>Martha Alter Chen, "Engendering World Conferences: The International Women's Movement and the United States." *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1995): 477–493, 478.

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<sup>13</sup>de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms," 549–550.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 548.

<sup>15</sup>Cheryl Johnson-Odim, "'For their freedoms': The anti-imperialist and international feminist activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria." *Women's Studies International Forum* 32, no. 1, (January-February 2009):51–59.

<sup>16</sup>Maria Dinkova, *The Social Progress of the Bulgarian Woman* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1972), 60–61.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 60–61.

<sup>18</sup>Personal communication (Hereafter, PC) with Maria Dinkova in July 2011 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

<sup>19</sup>Ulf Brunnbauer, "Making Bulgarians Socialist: The Fatherland Front in Communist Bulgaria, 1944–1989," *East European Politics & Societies* 22 no. 1 (Winter 2008): 44–79, 44.

<sup>20</sup>PC with Maria Dinkova in June 2011 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

<sup>21</sup>Barbara Wolfe Jancar, *Women Under Communism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 107. See also: "Madame Elena Lagadinova," in Fredda Brilliant, *Women in Power*, (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1987), 74–88, 77.

<sup>22</sup>PC with: 1) Elena Lagadinova in July 2010 and February 2011 in Sofia; 2) Krastina Tchomakova in Gabarevo in August 2010; 3) Maria Dinkova in February 2011 in Sofia; 4) with Ivanka Meneva in March 2011 in Sofia; and 5) Anni Durcheva in March 2011 in Sofia, Bulgaria. Also see: Maria Dinkova, "Strasti po Velikata Zhenska Revolyutsiya." *Vezni* no. 5 (2003): 23–37, 27–30; Maria Dinkova, "Strasti po Velikata Zhenska Revolyutsiya." *Vezni* no. 6–7 (2003): 23–46, 24–25; and Maria Dinkova, "Strasti po Velikata Zhenska Revolyutsiya." *Vezni* no. 6 (2008): 33–62.

<sup>23</sup>This article is part of a much larger book project on the history of the CBWM, which will examine both its domestic and international impacts between 1968 and 1990.

<sup>24</sup>For example see: Maria Dinkova, "Strasti po Velikata Zhenska Revolyutsiya." 2003, 2008.

<sup>25</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-5, E-96, L-1-27; "Angela Davis in the GDR," Radio Free Europe Research: Communist Area, GDR Foreign Relations, 16 September 1972, available online at: <http://www.osaarchivum.org/files/holdings/300/8/3/text/99-1-164.shtml> (accessed July 25, 2012).

<sup>26</sup>Savina Sharkova. "The Socialist Woman Between The Public and The Private (1967–1973): Visions, Contradictions and Political Actions during Socialism in Bulgaria," *Annuaire De L'universite De Sofia "St. Kliment Ochridski," Faculte De Philosophie Livre Sociologie*, Tome 103: 61–80.

<sup>27</sup>Natsionalen Initsiativen Komitet za Mezhdunarodna Godina na Zhenata, *Otchetan Doklad* (Sofia: February 1976), 40.

<sup>28</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-5, E-230, L- 65~69.

<sup>29</sup>PC with Krastina Tchomakova in August 2010 in Gabarevo, Bulgaria.

<sup>30</sup>Natsionalen Initsiativen Komitet, *Otcheten Doklad*, 1976, 41. (PAoEL).

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, 41.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, 41.

<sup>33</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-5, A-136, L-1~122.

<sup>34</sup>Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, Documents of the Afro-Asian Symposium on Social Development of Women, Alexandria, 8–10 March, 1975: [published on the occasion of] the International Women's Year 1975. Cairo: Permanent Secretariat of Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation, 1975, 1–10.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>"Lawyers from Three Continents meet in Varna," *Women of the Whole World*, no. 4 (1975) 49.

<sup>37</sup>Teresa Assensio Brugiattelli, "Memorie Di Congressi E Viaggi All'estero (1964–2002)" available online at: <http://www.fifcj-ifwlc.net/en/wp-content/.../memorie-e-viaggi-a-ll-estero.pdf> (accessed July 25, 2012), 62–71.

<sup>38</sup>Milanka Vidova, Nevyana Abadjieva, and Roumyana Gancheva, *100 Questions and Answers Concerning Bulgarian Women* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1983).

<sup>39</sup>TsDa, F-417, O-5, E-251, L-11~13.

<sup>40</sup>For a comparative look at women in socialist countries, see: Sharon Lee Wolchik, *Politics, Ideology and Equality: The Status of Women in Eastern Europe* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1978).

<sup>41</sup>PC with Maria Dinkova, February 2011 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

<sup>42</sup>PC with Arvonne Fraser on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

<sup>43</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-5, E-129, L-1.

<sup>44</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-5, E-129, L-2.

<sup>45</sup>Natsionalen Initsiativen Komitet za Mezhdunarodna Godina na Zhenata, *Otcheten Doklad* (Sofia: February 1976), 39. PAoEL.

<sup>46</sup>PC with Elena Lagadinova in Sofia, Bulgaria on August 12, 2010 and TsDA, F-417, O-5, E-303, L-1~3.

<sup>47</sup>Wanda Tycner, "Days of Historic Importance," *Women of the Whole World*, no. 1, 1976, 18, 6–11.

<sup>48</sup>"Greetings: Dr. Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations," *Women of the Whole World*, no. 1 (1976), 18.

<sup>49</sup>"The Commissions," *Women of the Whole World*, no. 1,(1976): 26–32.

<sup>50</sup>The Permanent Secretariat of AAPSO [Aziz Sherif and Osman Benani], *International Women's Year, Report on the 7<sup>th</sup> Committee of the World Congress for International Women's Year, Berlin, G.D.R. 20–24 October 1975* (Cairo: Afro-Asian Publications, May 1976), 20.

<sup>51</sup>PC with Elena Lagdinova in July 2010 in Sofia.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 49–57 (PAoEL).

<sup>53</sup>International Seminar in Conakry Documentation, Supplement to *Women of the Whole World*, no. 3 (1977): 1–22.

<sup>54</sup>"Regional Centre Opens in Havana," *Women of the Whole World* no. 1 (1978): 36–37; "First Course in the WIDF Regional Center," *Women of the Whole World* 2, (1978): 12–15.

<sup>55</sup>Kristen Ghodsee, "And if the Shoe Doesn't Fit? (Wear it Anyway?): Economic Transformation and Western Paradigms of 'Women in Development' in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 31 no. 3 and 4 (Fall and Winter 2003): 19–37.

<sup>56</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-6, E-280, L-1~3.

<sup>57</sup>Irene Tinker "International Notes: A Feminist View of Copenhagen," *Signs* 6, no. 3 (Spring 1981): 531–537, and various responses to Tinker in "Letters/Comments" *Signs* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1981): 771–790 and "International Notes" *Signs*. 7, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 714–716.

<sup>58</sup>(U.S. House of Representatives, 1980d: 52–53).

<sup>59</sup>Judith Zinsser-Lippmann, "The Third Week in July" *Women's Studies International Forum* 6, no. 5 (1983): 547–557, 552.

<sup>60</sup>Margaret Galey, Margaret Goodman, and Janean Mann, U.N. World Conference of the U.N. Decade for Women, Copenhagen, Denmark, July 14–30, 1980. Report of the congressional staff advisers to the U.S. Delegation submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives. Washington: U.S.G.P.O., December 1980, 10.

<sup>61</sup>United Nations, 1980a: 9.

<sup>62</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-6, E-280, L-4~10.

<sup>63</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-6, E-280, L-1~2.

<sup>64</sup>PC with Elena Lagadinova in July 2011 in Sofia.

<sup>65</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-6, E-280, L-4~9.

<sup>66</sup>See, for instance, Kristen Ghodsee, *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism and Postsocialism on the Black Sea*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

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<sup>67</sup>Ani Durcheva, "Skola za Znanie, za Priyatelstvo i Solidarnost!" in Komitet na Dvizhenieto na Balgarskite Zheni, *Byuletin* 1–2, Sofia: Komitet na Dvizhenieto na Balgarskite Zheni, 1981: 31–38, 33.

<sup>68</sup>Janice Wetzel, "On the Road to Beijing: The Evolution of the International Women's Movement." *Affilia* 11 no. 2 (July 1996): 221–232.

<sup>69</sup>Margaret Galey and Bernadette Paolo, U.N. Conference to Review and Appraise the U.N. Decade for Women, July 15–26, 1985, Report of the Congressional Staff Advisors to the Nairobi Conference to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington DC: GPO, January 1986, 10–11.

<sup>70</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-6, E-306, L-36.

<sup>71</sup>TsDA, F-417, O-6, E-306, L-36.

<sup>72</sup>Jean Lipman-Blumen, *Connective Leadership: Managing in a Changing World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 299.

<sup>73</sup>PC with Elena Lagadinova in August 2010 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

<sup>74</sup>United Nations, *Yearbook of United Nations*, Issue 1, volume 45, 1062.

<sup>75</sup>See: "Statement from Non-region," <http://www.astra.org.pl/?statement-from-the-non-region,137> (accessed January 10, 2012).

<sup>76</sup>Kristen Ghodsee, "Revisiting the International Decade for Women: Brief Reflections on Competing Definitions of Feminism and Cold War Politics from the American Perspective," *Women's Studies International Forum* 33 (2010): 3–12.

<sup>77</sup>See, for instance, Maria Todorova (ed.), *Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation*, (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2010) and Kristen Ghodsee, *Lost in Translation: Ethnographies of Everyday Life After Communism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

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