

choice of words on some occasions and he cites some egregious examples of verbal insults that could make Donald Trump blush. But he also cites union leaders who praised Meany's tenacity and personal modesty. He stresses that American union leaders were vehemently opposed to European colonialism and they supported rapid decolonisation in Africa and Asia. Carew describes the tireless fieldwork of Irving Brown and the stratagems of Jay Lovestone, but he invites readers to draw conclusions. He does not engage in speculative "what ifs", or the style of fantasies now known as "alt.history".

The geographical field of action for much of this book is in Europe, particularly Germany, France, and Italy. Other countries also figure, notably Greece, Finland, Japan, Turkey, and Britain. The Americans focused on Europe because it was the heartland of the East–West conflict, bordering on most of the Soviet bloc countries. Post-war reconstruction in Europe, assisted through the Marshall Plan, was pivotal for evolving economic relationships and labour policies, eventually leading to the creation of new institutions for European cooperation, in parallel with the earlier NATO military alliance. But the Cold War was not limited to Europe. The East–West conflict and the development of democratic (and non-democratic) institutions were part of the post-war history of other regions. Carew deals with those places as secondary matters, visibly less important to his central story. Perhaps other historians will study labour movements in other parts of the world during the Cold War, digging deeply into archival sources as Carew has done?

And this leads to my final observation: will there now be a companion study on labour history during the final decades of the Cold War? Many new forces were emerging in those years, such as the burgeoning pressures of globalization, freer international trade, growing integration in Western Europe, sustained liberalizing movements in Eastern Europe, and polarizing political leaders in some countries. The stark outlines of the early Cold War were becoming fuzzy, but profound differences continued within and between national labour movements and their international organizations. A history of more recent years would be a gateway to our own times; it needs a detailed treatment of the calibre that Carew has brought to the period 1945 to 1970.

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GHODSEE, KRISTEN. *Second World, Second Sex. Socialist Women's Activism and Global Solidarity during the Cold War*. Duke University Press, Durham (NC) 2018. xviii, 306 pp. Ill. \$99.95. (Paper: \$26.95.)

Second World, Second Sex is Kristen Ghodsee's first foray into tricontinental ethnographic and archival research. The author is a key scholarly advocate of a reassessment of women's organizing in the state socialist "bloc" (including their activities in international organizations) and, more broadly, of women's experiences of empowerment and agency in Eastern Europe during state socialism. A skillful public communicator ("Why women had better sex under socialism" – the title of an opinion piece she wrote for *The*

*New York Times*¹), Ghodsee was remonstrated by liberal scholars for what were considered to be her overly positive assessments of organizations formerly considered “ideological conveyor belts” for communist parties in actually existing socialisms. In 2014, Ghodsee and many others (including myself) were labelled “feminist revisionist scholars” by philosopher Nanette Funk.² The ensuing exchanges between Funk and Ghodsee are considered a key recent debate in the historiography of state socialist regimes.³ Frighteningly, after the publishing online of the above *The New York Times* op-ed, Ghodsee was subjected to a deluge of conservative media criticism and received death threats.⁴

Judging by previous reactions, her 2018 volume may spark further defensive entrenchments of anti-communist myths in gender studies scholarship and in the US public sphere. But it will also contribute to reassessments of such myths. In the book, Ghodsee brings neglected recollections of Second World and Third World activists to the forefront. She also aims to argue that Cold War networks forged between women from state socialist Eastern Europe and socialist-leaning, non-aligned women from the Global South catalyzed the expansion of women’s rights worldwide. The book appeared at a moment of revived interest in global history and decolonial perspectives and of resurgent interest in socialist policy solutions, particularly in the US context. Nevertheless, despite its worthy intervention in the public debate, the book shines only a dim historical light on the topic announced in the subtitle, “socialist women’s activism and global solidarity during the Cold War”.

The two-part volume focuses on the experiences of select international women activists from two state-backed women’s organizations: the Committee of Bulgarian Women / Committee of the Bulgarian Women’s Movement (CBW/CBWM) and the Women’s League of the United National Independence Party of Zambia (UNIP-WL). In parallel, Ghodsee discusses the participation of CBWM- and UNIP-tied activists as well as of centrist women’s activists from the US in the four global conferences that marked the UN Decade for Women (1975–1985). The author uncovers the latter groups’ efforts to lobby the American political establishment to take up women’s issues as policy matters, by presenting these policies as “responsible feminism” convergent with anti-communist foreign and domestic politics. The book relies on archival material, but especially on interviews Ghodsee conducted with key actors from Bulgaria, Zambia, and the US, women who were involved in organizing the UN Decade or who worked for women-friendly policies in those states.

Chapters in Part One of the book implicitly compare women’s organizing within state structures in Bulgaria, the US, and Zambia, especially after the end of World War II. The

1. Kirsten R. Ghodsee, “Opinion | Why Women Had Better Sex Under Socialism”, *The New York Times*, 12 August 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/opinion/why-women-had-better-sex-under-socialism.html>; last accessed 3 May 2021.

2. 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 (2014), pp. 344–360.

3. Kristen Ghodsee, “Untangling the Knot: A Response to Nanette Funk”, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 22:2 (2015), pp. 248–252; Nanette Funk, “(K)not so: A Response to Kristen Ghodsee”, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 22:3 (2015), pp. 350–355.

4. Kristen Ghodsee and Maria Bucur, “Socialism and the Future of Gender Justice: A Dialogue about Feminism in the Marketplace of Ideas”, Public Seminar, 14 February 2019. Available at: <http://publicseminar.org.dream.website/2019/02/socialism-and-the-future-of-gender-justice/>; last accessed 3 May 2021.

first two chapters discuss the history and particularities of socialist and state socialist women's organizing, with a focus on the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (CBWM) and the experiences of three of its leading activists. Chapter Three looks at several moderate American women and their organizations lobbying Congress and the Nixon White House for accessible childcare in the US and women-focused foreign aid, while Chapters Four and Five deal with the life histories and activism of several Zambian women connected to Kenneth Kaunda's National Independence Party. Together, the chapters suggest that, contrary to the conclusions of a Western-feminist biased historiography, the CBWM activists achieved comparatively more and had more institutional power than the politically well-connected but less efficacious American women activists the author chose to focus on. Ghodsee argues that American preoccupation with Second World women's rapid progress in the 1960s made the US government pay more attention to women's demands domestically. Meanwhile, Zambian politicians and women's activists welcomed international cooperation with Second World and First World women but had to navigate what Ghodsee terms the "sandwiched between superpowers" (p. 121) position of postcolonial Zambia.

Throughout Part One, the extent of the CBWM's claimed innovativeness and its political and practical influence domestically (p. 21) are difficult to assess because the author does not provide sufficient evidence about the policymaking process in Bulgaria or systematically consider contemporaneous developments in other socialist countries. Also, Ghodsee mentions Zambian women's international organizing independently of the priorities of and funding from US or Second World women's organizations.

Part Two focuses on the transnational interaction between Bulgarian, Zambian, and American women's activists during the four World Conferences on Women marking the UN Decade for Women. The short Chapters Six to Nine show that the diplomatic priorities of the two superpowers as well as different understandings of women's emancipation created significant tensions before and during the first three World Conferences between women's activists from the First World, on one side, and women's activists from the Second World and their Third World/Global South allies, on the other. Chapters Ten and Eleven spotlight cooperation between Bulgarian women's activists and activists from African countries, including the "School for Knowledge, Friendship and Solidarity" training organized in 1980 in Sofia. The last chapter of the book discusses the 1985 Nairobi World Conference. Here, Ghodsee concludes that indigenous African feminist theorizing and policy success achieved in Zambia and elsewhere were catalyzed by the World Conferences but actually made possible especially by trainings about and cooperation with state socialist women's organizations (p. 220).

In Part Two, Ghodsee privileges the interpretation of the Bulgarian organizers of the 1975–1985 conferences and seems to carry into her analysis the meanings these activists ascribed to "global solidarity". For instance, in the Mexico City conference, Bulgarian delegates mobilized Zambians and others to the aid of the Soviet delegation, helping to remove from draft documents Chinese-proposed wording condemning "superpower hegemonism". Ghodsee interprets this "fascinating story" (p. 151) close to how Bulgarian activist Lagadinova viewed it: as a triumph for the CBWM abroad and a key example of the power of Eastern European–Global South women – seemingly no longer "sandwiched between superpowers" – standing together.

The volume's conclusion restates the urgent need to preserve the memories of socialist activists. The author shows, convincingly, that during the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, American liberal ideas on women's emancipation dominated the

conference's main document, the Beijing Platform for Action. This was because, in the absence of Eastern Bloc influence and funding for left-wing women's organizations, socialist-inflected versions of women's emancipation (anti-imperialist and focused on redistribution) could be sidelined.

Ghodsee makes her argument skillfully and with clarity. But her handling of empirical material is unsettling. For the Bulgarian and Zambian side of the story, Ghodsee underscores the incompleteness of her sources, owing to their being "scattered across three continents" (p. 16). In reading, I wondered why – at least for the Bulgarian case – the documents were considered so scattered? The CBWM's considerable archives are held in the Bulgarian National Archives. As in other state socialist countries, these documents were carefully inventoried and preserved. In general, the author allows material obtained from interviews to drive the book's narrative and argument, with archival material playing a largely supportive role, and the available archival material far from fully exploited.

It might seem unjust to hold this book to the norms of gender history scholarship when the author might have been aiming to write a more activist and interdisciplinary book than has become typical for the field. In the Introduction, Ghodsee positions her volume as a recuperation of activists' erased stories, arguing that such stories "can help us rethink the possible role of state actors in challenging millennia of entrenched sexism and discrimination" (p. 5). Most importantly, the author contends that recovery of the "herstories" of state-socialist women's activists (p. 221) and recognition of the political contributions of left-leaning international activists are necessary to rescue contemporary, global, but especially American, feminism from serving as a handmaiden of neoliberalism – political theorist Nancy Fraser's verdict (p. 27). From the beginning, Ghodsee chooses to give her volume only a weak footing in historical scholarship or historiographical debates (beyond the ones on women's agency in state socialist countries), especially regarding the Eastern European and African contexts. For instance, Ghodsee mentions contributions from the recently burgeoning literature on the Non-Aligned Movement in the endnotes but does not engage with the findings of such studies.

Yet, as book reviews published so far show, and as Ghodsee's highly visible interventions in historiographical debates suggest, her writing is received as gender history scholarship, and assimilated to a new kind of historiography of the global women's movement, attentive to the left side of this movement and the weight of decolonization and postcolonial antiracist struggles. Certainly, this is an impressively ambitious book with an undeniably original topic and a bold argument. Its global and transnational scope can indeed inspire future scholarship. By pursuing an implicit comparison but also laying some groundwork for an entangled history of Cold War women's organizing in the US, Eastern Europe, and the Global South, Ghodsee creates an accessible revision of post-socialist tropes influenced by transitology on the history of communist women's organizations and (less pronounced) the notion of autonomy from the state in the history of the organized women's movements. The volume can serve as good polemical companion to narrower but more carefully researched pieces.

However, proving that American women's organizations were less autonomous than commonly argued in the social science literature on women's movements after World War II, and that Eastern European women's organizations were more autonomous than assumed by the literature produced in the US academic space, marks only the beginning of a revision. It corrects a stereotype but does not shift the basic terms of the debate set up by the literature that Ghodsee aims to contradict, terms most visible in Nanette Funk's article of a few years ago. If one argument is that women's organizations, in Bulgaria, Zambia, and the US, were all embedded in the state and in the contexts in which they operated, should their effects and

policies not be discussed as fully embedded in the bureaucratic settings and constraints in which they functioned? Should interviewees' narratives not be interpreted with due reference to archival research, rather than the other way around? And should one not avoid women's history in the Second and the Third Worlds once again (!) serving as a foil to debates in American feminism first and as a worthy historical research topic in itself only second?

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TAMALE, SYLVIA. *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*. Daraja Press, Ottawa 2020. xv, 411 pp. Ill. Cad. \$40.00. (E-book: Cad. \$10.00)

Decolonization and Afro-Feminism by Sylvia Tamale is a comprehensive intervention that bridges decolonial analysis with intersectionality from an African standpoint. It therefore has the potential to satisfy scholars, students, policymakers, and actors of civil society who are in search of critical approaches from an African standpoint for an African context in particular, and a decentred worldview in general. The author's main argument is a call for a thorough understanding of how the histories of colonization, globalization, and neoliberalism have operated, and continue to operate, as mechanisms of othering, exploitation, and dehumanization of the people and heritage of Africa. Tamale stresses the necessity of undergoing a historically based decolonial approach in order to unpack the issues at stake when it comes to social and environmental justice in Africa. Furthermore, the author insists that any decolonial approach should be combined with an Afro-feminist analysis. By focusing on decolonization, the emphasis is placed on the need to deconstruct epistemologically and practically the ideas, systems, and practices that have been historically imposed since the European penetration in Africa in the fifteenth century. In line with scholarship on decoloniality arguing that these historical events have resulted in a coloniality of power, Tamale demonstrates how this colonial mindset remains pregnant in contemporary African settings, whether perpetrated through external instances or through internalized colonization by Africans, and people of African heritage themselves. If decoloniality is the way to deconstruct the mechanism of oppression, Tamale not only argues for an intersectional approach to processes of global capital, othering, and discrimination, but also calls for an Afro-feminist praxis that is built transnationally and collectively, and that considers how the lived experiences of inter alia gender, race, class, disability, religious, sexuality, and age discrimination can effectively be challenged.

Among the examples the author uses in her argument is the mediatized case of South African athlete Caster Semenya, which is detailed in Chapter Four of the book. Through a comparative analysis of the discourses and data produced by global athletic organizations and international and local media around and about Semenya and Michael Phelps, Tamale convincingly shows not only how the case of Caster Semenya speaks about injustice in