Since the second half of the 1980s, feminist scholars have revised the dominant narrative about "second-wave feminism" in a number of ways. They have shown that the idea of a lull in feminist activism between 1918–20, when suffrage was achieved in many Western countries, and the 1960s is questionable. Moreover, the movement did not just consist of white, middle-class women (whom Betty Friedan’s famous 1963 Feminine Mystique targeted and mobilized), neither was it focused only on challenging inequalities between women and men. Nonetheless, it has proven difficult to displace the hegemonic narrative, which also sees feminism as quintessentially Western. In that narrative, other parts of the world, whether former socialist states or so-called Third World countries, supposedly were behind regarding women’s rights and followed the Western lead. This idea of Western leadership in feminism took on a new life after 1989/1991, when feminists from the U.S. and Western Europe flocked to Russia and other former socialist countries to “bring” feminism there or to help build up an “autonomous” women’s movement.¹

In recent years, historians have complicated and internationalized the history of women’s movements and feminisms. They also continue to challenge the “wave metaphor,” with Nancy Hewitt’s 2010 No Permanent Waves and Barbara Molony and Jennifer Nelson’s 2017 Women’s Activism and “Second Wave” Feminism as good examples.² Yet there is little global women’s movement historiography for the 1945–70 period; the historian Bonnie Smith is unusual in having conceptualized a “global women’s movement since 1945.”³ Even more undeveloped is what I would call left-feminist global history, including the crucial role of organized left-feminist women in the 1960s, which I focus on below.

In her article on the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN-CSW), Laura Reanda noted that, in the early 1960s, it was “the Eastern European members [of the UN-CSW who] argued for a Declaration” on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.⁴ Their initiative resulted in the 1967 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which from 1972 was developed into the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), “the centerpiece of the international women’s rights discourse.”⁵ However, neither Reanda nor others have explored who were involved in initiating CEDAW and its follow-up or why they did so, let alone how including the socialist or left-feminist women’s initiatives alters the story of “1960s feminism.”⁶
I will address these questions below, and place this episode in the broader context of the Cold War competition between the U.S and the Soviet Union over women’s status and rights. My research shows that it was organized left-feminist women, and in particular women from socialist countries, who made some of the most fundamental contributions to enhancing women’s status worldwide. They could do so because they had the combined/intertwined political and material support of the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF), functioning as a transnational advocacy network, and of their governments, while at the same time they did not hesitate to take initiative themselves. My analysis also demonstrates that to better understand 1960s feminism, we need a global and long-term perspective that goes back to the 1940s and 1950s and extends into the 1970s. My findings have implications for our understanding of the history of global feminism and of the Cold War.

To set the stage, I briefly introduce the WIDF, the global left-feminist women’s organization through which most of the women involved in the story below were connected. To show the continuity in the WIDF’s work and argue that at least a basic notion of what became the 1967 UN DEDAW emerged in the 1950s, I describe the 1953 Copenhagen Conference of the WIDF, which produced a “Declaration of Women’s Rights.” I move on to the WIDF’s 1963 Moscow World Congress of Women, and place it and Soviet support for “women’s rights and struggles in the international domain” in their broader national and international historical context. The 1963 Congress significantly boosted the global struggle for women’s rights, and may have provided the key impetus and networking for the subsequent DEDAW initiative. At the moment there are no documents available to definitely establish this link, but chronology and other elements all suggest it. Then I discuss the various steps from the DEDAW initiative to the 1975 UN-proclaimed International Women’s Year (IYW) and CEDAW in 1979. The impact of IYW on the women’s movement worldwide cannot be overestimated, and CEDAW is widely recognized as the most important UN women’s document. Lastly, I explore the impact of socialist and left-feminist women’s international activities in their home countries.

A global women’s movement from 1945 onward

The WIDF and its early world congresses of women

The first idea for what became the WIDF seems to have emerged in the fall of 1944 with the French left-feminist and anti-fascist scientist Eugénie Coton (1881–1967), who became the organization’s influential founding president—a position she retained until her death in 1967. The WIDF, like the other two “general” international women’s organizations of the time, the International Council of Women (ICW, established in 1888) and the International Alliance of Women (IAW, established in 1904), was an international umbrella organization that united women’s organizations from different countries focusing on enhancing women’s rights. But the WIDF distinguished itself by having an anti-fascist and socialist worldview. Historian Erik McDuffie has described the WIDF as “a Popular Front women’s rights group that understood women’s issues as central to the international Left’s agenda.” The WIDF had broader goals than the mainstream women’s organizations; formally these were the defense of peace, and the struggle for women’s rights and children’s well-being, but anti-colonialism and anti-racism became increasingly important goals as well. It was a mass, rather than an elite women’s organization. For all these reasons, it had a more global appeal.

Women’s organizations from forty countries and all continents participated in the WIDF 1945 founding congress in Paris, and the number of WIDF member organizations continued to grow.
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over time.15 The WIDF, like its sister organizations, strongly believed in the importance of the United Nations for enhancing women's rights on the global stage, and Australian left-feminist Jessie Street, who had been one of the few women delegates at the UN founding conference, spoke along these lines at the WIDF constitutive congress.16 In 1947, the ICW, the IAW, and the WIDF, along with eight other international women's organizations, received “consultative status B” with the UN Economic and Social Council, including the CSW, which allowed them to send their representatives to the meetings and to have access to reports and documents. With the Commission’s approval, they could also address the sessions. The WIDF was established at a time of early-postwar optimism, when many people admired the Soviet Union and its citizens for their crucial role in defeating Nazi Germany, and assumed that the three great Allied powers, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, would continue their wartime cooperation. But this was not to be. As the Cold War heated up from 1946, the WIDF became a major actor in as well as target of the conflict’s politics. It lost its consultative status at the UN between 1954 and 1967, but remained actively involved, as we will see below.17

After its inspiring founding congress in Paris late 1945, the second WIDF-convened World Congress of Women took place in December 1948 in Budapest, where strong Cold War tensions in Europe to some extent overshadowed the struggle for women’s rights.18 However, by the third WIDF-convened World Congress of Women in Copenhagen in June 1953, the WIDF was again able to focus on its core mission of fighting for women’s rights and enhancing their status, which, to be clear, was always understood in relation to the broader issues of peace and social justice—which is why I refer to the WIDF worldview as “left-feminist.”19

By all accounts, the 1953 Copenhagen Congress was very successful. There were 613 delegates and more than 1,300 guests from 67 countries. The delegates adopted a “Declaration on the Rights of Women” that comprised women’s right to work, equal pay, the right of peasant women to own and use land, the right to a full education and to social insurance, political rights, and equal rights with men in relation to property, marriage, and children.20 Congress participants promised to take the Declaration back home to enhance the struggle for women’s rights in their own context, and accounts show that they managed to do so, for example in Indonesia and Latin America. There, the 1953 Conference and Declaration resulted in the “First Conference of Latin American Women,” held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, August 27–31, 1954, which in turn strengthened women’s struggles and cooperation across the continent.21

The 1963 WIDF Moscow Congress and its broader Cold War context

The WIDF continued to hold regular world congresses, the fifth of which took place in Moscow in mid-1963, a moment when the leaders of the two superpowers, John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, focused on peace or peaceful coexistence and the question of which system was better for women was squarely on the table.22 The WIDF-convened June 1963 World Congress of Women was attended by 1,543 women from 113 countries. If there was one domain in which the Soviet Union could impress the world, and hence could peacefully compete with the U.S., it was that of women’s status and rights. Historian Melanie Ilić writes that “by 1963, Soviet women, in comparison with many other women in the world, had every reason to boast about their recent achievements that were both clearly set down on paper and relatively advanced in reality,” an assessment others share.23 The U.S. had less to show either nationally or in the international domain of women’s rights. In the Red Scare of the 1940s and 1950s, support for gender, labor, or racial equality was equated with communism and rejected on that ground. Although “around 1960 the media began to pay attention to the discontents of middle-class American women,”24 the dominant discourse, including law, policies, and public opinion, still strongly supported the notion
that (white) women’s natural place was in the home and that women who aspired to more than serving their husband and taking care of their home and children were maladjusted. Behind the scenes, elite women were lobbying for legal changes, the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1961, and Friedan’s epochal Feminine Mystique came out in 1963, but significant improvements in women’s legal status had to wait until the early 1970s.25

The message the Soviet Union sent to the world was quite different. It facilitated a big and successful congress in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses (see Figure 17.1 for the Congress’s emblem),26 conveying a powerful message about the socialist superpower’s support for women’s rights, not just nationally but also internationally. The women at the Moscow Congress discussed the main WIDF themes of peace, national independence, women’s rights, and the happiness of children.27 Moreover, due to some inspired planning, the World Congress of Women (June 24–29) took place just a few days after Valentina Tereshkova’s flight (June 16–19) as the world’s first woman cosmonaut, and the Soviet press clearly connected the two events.28 Tereshkova’s spectacular success—important for both the gender competition and the “space race” between the two superpowers that had started when the Soviet Union in October 1957 launched the first satellite—made headlines worldwide.29 WIDF President Eugénie Cotton officially invited Tereshkova to the World Congress, where the participants received her as a true heroine. Tereshkova, from a working-class background and regarded as the living embodiment of Soviet support for women’s equality with men, became a key figure in the progressive international women’s movement. In subsequent years, she traveled widely and met with numerous women and women’s groups around the world, as the WIDF magazine Women of

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**Figure 17.1** Cover of the Congress Report of Moscow, June 1963, World Congress of Women, convened by the Women’s International Democratic Federation, with the Congress emblem of a black, a yellow, and a white woman together under one “roof” or head cover with the text “World Congress of Women” in seven languages (from top to bottom: French, English, Spanish, German, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic), International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam)
the Whole World amply reported on. In 1968, Tereshkova succeeded Nina Popova as Soviet Women’s Committee (SWC)\textsuperscript{30} president and as WIDF vice-president, and in both roles, she was very visible.\textsuperscript{31}

The impact of the 1963 World Congress was further enhanced by Soviet leader Khrushchev’s presence at the Congress, and by his address to the Congress (not delivered in person) in which he expressed pride in the achievements of women in the Soviet Union and strong support for women’s emancipation. He may have been sensitized to the woman question by his wife, Nina Petrovna Khrushcheva, who in the early 1920s had been a local head of the Zhenotdel, the Women’s Department of the Central Committee Secretariat, established by Alexandra Kollontai and Inessa Armand, and who was a welcome guest at the 1963 Congress (see Figure 17.2).\textsuperscript{32} The 1963 World Congress of Women was an unsurpassed feat of public diplomacy in a sensitive area of Cold War competition and deserves much more attention from historians.\textsuperscript{33}

Activities in the UN: 1963–early 1970s

Besides promoting the socialist way of life and support for women’s rights, the 1963 Moscow Congress may have served as a catalyst for the process that led to the 1967 United Nations DEDAW. The UN-CSW started to work on a draft declaration at the request of the General Assembly (GA), which adopted a resolution to that effect on December 5, 1963.\textsuperscript{34} That resolution had first been adopted by the GA’s Third Committee on November 6, on the basis of a proposal by twenty-two countries. Although many assume Western countries led the way in terms of women’s rights, it was eighteen Third World countries, three socialist countries (Czechoslovakia, Mongolia, and Poland), and neutral Austria that submitted this resolution.\textsuperscript{35} At the next session of the CSW in 1965, three socialist countries took up the GA request to start working on a draft Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women—Poland, Hungary, and the USSR—and Poland tabled the first draft.\textsuperscript{36} Key women involved in 1963, 1965, and 1967, when the UN-CSW finalized the proposal and the GA adopted the Declaration, and beyond, were Helena Lešlerová (Czechoslovakia), Zofia Dembińska (Poland),
Hanna Bokor (later Bokor-Szegő, Hungary), and Zoya Mironova and Tatiana Nikolaeva (USSR). Who were they, and how were they connected?

Helena Leflerová (1921–79) was born in the Czech village of Lidice, one of two villages the Nazis razed in June 1942 as a reprisal for the murder of top Nazi Reinhard Heydrich. All men and boys age sixteen and over were shot, and the women and children were deported to concentration camps. Leflerová ended up in Ravensbrück, the concentration camp primarily for women political prisoners, and after the war returned to Lidice. She became actively involved in communist politics on the municipal level, worked as editor of the main communist daily, Rudé Právo, and from 1958 was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. In the 1960s she was chair of the Czechoslovak Women’s Committee. In 1967, she was elected chairperson of the newly established Czechoslovak Women’s Union, but that lasted only a year.37 Leflerová participated in the 1963 Moscow World Congress of Women, where she was elected as one of the WIDF’s vice-presidents. She was also a member of the UN-CSW from 1958 to 1963, serving as its first vice-chair in 1962, and of the Czechoslovak delegation to the 1963 GA, which adopted the resolution requesting the Commission on the Status of Women to start working on a draft declaration.38

Zofia Dembińska (1905–89) was part of the prewar radical left in Vilnius and studied Polish philology. After the war she was the right hand of the founder of the Czytelnik publishing house, which published the country’s first postwar leftist magazine, Odrodzenie (Revival), and the first women’s magazine, Przyjaźń (Girlfriend, 1948). Przyjaźń served as a trait-d’union between the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) and ordinary Polish women, who wrote numerous letters to the journal.39 From 1949, Dembińska was a board member of the newly established League of Women in Poland, a member organization of the WIDF.40 She was deputy minister of education from 1951 to 1960, and in Poland is mostly known for her work in education and for the rights of children. As an alternate delegate, Dembińska was a member of the Polish delegation to the 1963 GA. She was also an exceptionally long-term member of the UN-CSW, beginning in 1951, and then without interruption from 1954 to 1968, when Poland’s CSW tenure ended. Dembińska held the offices of second vice-chair, vice-chair, and chair. In 1968, she attended her fifteenth session, making her the second longest-serving CSW member, after the French Marie-Hélène Lefauchoux (1904–64). It was a highly experienced Dembińska who, in 1965, was “the main initiator” and author of the draft DEDAW.41 Already in 1968, she proposed to develop the Declaration into a (legally binding) convention, but did not press for it.42

Dr. J. (Hanna) Bokor (1925–2006) played a very important role in the whole history, and in addition to Zofia Dembińska may have done most of the basic work. Bokor worked at the Hungarian Institute for Political Science and Jurisprudence and was a member of the International Federation of Women Lawyers. At the 1963 WIDF Moscow Congress, she chaired the Commission for the Rights of Women in Society and in the Family. The WIDF journal Women of the Whole World of November 1963 published an interview with Bokor, entitled “Women as Competent Representatives of Their Own Interests.” Here she explained that she had been chosen to chair the Commission for the Rights of Women in Society and in the Family at the Moscow Congress because of a sixty-page essay she had published about “all the most important international documents adopted by UNO, UNESCO and the ILO in the interest of women and children.”43 The essay was subtitled “A Contribution by the National Council of Hungarian Women for the World Congress of Women 1963.” Bokor represented Hungary during nine years in the UN-CSW: 1965, 1966 (rapporteur), 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1974 (vice-chair), and 1976.

Zoya V. Mironova (1912–91) was an official of the SWC, the state-supported women’s organization in the Soviet Union and a founding member organization of the WIDF.44 From 1956
to 1966, Mironova was Soviet vice-representative at the UN in Geneva, and in 1966 she was appointed Soviet ambassador to Geneva, making her the second Soviet woman ambassador, after Alexandra Kollontai.\(^4\) She was also the Soviet representative in the UN-CSW in 1962, 1963, and 1965. In 1965, she supported Dembinska’s proposal, stating that “the proclamation by the United Nations of a declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women would be an important contribution to the campaign for equal rights for women” and that “her delegation was indeed anxious to participate in [its drafting].”\(^4\)

Tatiana N. Nikolaeva (1919–?) was Mironova’s successor in the UN-CSW, where she represented the Soviet Union from 1967 until 1991. From 1992 to 1994, she represented the Russian Federation in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.\(^4\) In 1972, Nikolaeva, “a dynamic woman leader” according to her Philippine CSW colleague Leticia Ramos Shahini, proposed to the CSW to start preparing a draft convention on the Elimination of Discrimination of Women.\(^4\) Ramos Shahani remarks that “Western countries, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, were lukewarm” about the idea of a convention, and indeed, the U.S. representative commented that “the drafting of new international instruments should be avoided.”\(^4\) (In 2018, the USA is one of only seven countries in the world that have not ratified CEDAW.\(^5\)) The Commission decided to seek comments by governments first, and to establish a working group to start preparing a draft convention.\(^5\) In 1974, Nikolaeva submitted a draft convention text, as did Ramos Shahani, which were combined into a “common draft.” With some added proposals, “the Working Group used these texts as basic documents” for the preparation of the CEDAW text.\(^5\) It is clear, therefore, that Nikolaeva played a leading role in initiating and preparing CEDAW.

The 1972 UN-CSW session took another consequential decision as well. The WIDF at its bureau meeting in November 1971 decided to propose to the UN-CSW session that an IWY be proclaimed. The Romanian representative Florica Andrei officially submitted the proposal, which acquired the support of seven other non-governmental organizations and which Egypt, Finland, France, Hungary, the Philippines, and Tunisia, after some discussion, cosponsored.\(^5\) IWY “proved to be a watershed in the history of women around the world.”\(^5\)

**Back home**

Socialist and left-feminist women and their press almost by definition praised the Soviet Union and other socialist countries for their achievements in terms of women’s rights and living conditions, certainly when they spoke or published in the international domain, and as we have seen this was a dominant message at the 1963 Moscow Congress. Nonetheless, that is not the whole story. In 1930, Joseph Stalin abolished the Zhenotdel and declared the woman question “solved,” though policies to improve women’s position were continued.\(^5\) His successor Khrushchev not only proudly proclaimed communist support for women’s rights and supported that struggle in the international domain, but also recognized shortcomings in the actual situation of women in the Soviet Union and to some extent addressed them. Khrushchev acknowledged that women, while having equal rights, were underrepresented in leading political and economic positions; he revived the zhensovet (women’s councils), and it was under his regime that Zoya Mironova was appointed; also, in the early 1960s, in scholar Mary Buckley’s words, “the hardships of [women’s] double burden were implicitly defined as problems.”\(^5\)

It was under Leonid Brezhnev, who succeeded Khrushchev in 1964, that the woman question was officially reopened in the second half of the 1960s, which led to “intense, broad discussion” and many publications by sociologists and other scientists on the problems women were facing in their daily lives.\(^5\) As Maggie McAndrew first suggested in 1985, and Alexandra Talaver
recently elaborated, working women themselves were active participants in this public debate, especially through their large-scale letter writing to the journal Rabotnitsa (Working woman), which in the 1970s had a run of 13 million copies and received 500 to 700 letters from its readers per day. These women obviously knew the shortcomings first-hand and turned to the Rabotnitsa editors to have issues publicized and addressed. Talaver describes Rabotnitsa as taking “part in the complex process of shaping Soviet gender politics [from the] bottom up.”

The Soviet women’s press, then, reported on both the country’s successes in terms of women’s rights and on the unresolved problems for women. This also applies to the international left-feminist press. The WIDF 1963 Congress Report included Italian Ana Matera’s speech about “The Struggle for Women’s Rights in Society and the Family,” in which she stated:

In the socialist countries the high status of women is commonly recognised. This does not mean that there are no women’s problems. New conditions have brought new problems, such as the full extension of their capacities and possibilities as well as the strengthening of their self-confidence. It is also necessary to further improve their professional qualifications and to accelerate the process of liberating women from excessive domestic burdens.

Hanna Bokor, who chaired the Commission for the Rights of Women in Society and in the Family at the Moscow Congress, conveyed the same message of achievements and still-existing problems for women in socialist countries in her interview with Women of the Whole World in November 1963. Raluca Popa has examined how IYW was received by the governments and press in Hungary and Romania. In the Soviet Union, Rabotnitsa reported not only about this milestone for women, but also about an “all-Soviet-Union review (somot) of women’s working [and] living conditions and leisure facilities” that had been initiated in response to IYW. Socialist or left-feminist women’s initiatives on behalf of women in the international domain not only led to improvements for women worldwide, but also opened up an ideological space to discuss the situation of women in socialist states and encouraged its leadership to review the situation.

Conclusion

Betty Friedan’s 1963 best seller The Feminine Mystique influenced millions of women’s lives, both in the U.S. and internationally, and is an enduring symbol of 1960s feminism. But just as the movement Friedan’s book helped stir up had longer roots and was far more diverse than the popular image allows, so the story of 1960s feminism at the international level is more complex as well.

As we have seen, some of the most fundamental and long-lasting changes for women across the globe were initiated by socialist or left-feminist women at the transnational level, and their work in the 1960s, in turn, had longer roots. The WIDF at its 1953 World Congress of Women adopted a Declaration of Women’s Rights that inspired women and women’s organizations in different parts of the world, and that the WIDF itself at one point referred to as a predecessor to DEDAW. The Polish Zofia Dembińska drafted the 1967 DEDAW, and the Hungarian Hanna Bokor’s work on women’s rights in the WIDF and the UN significantly contributed to what became DEDAW and CEDAW. At its November 1971 bureau meeting, the WIDF decided to propose to the UN to hold an IYW, a proposal then officially submitted by the Romanian representative. The Soviet CSW representative Tatiana Nikolaeva in 1972 submitted the first resolution to the CSW to develop a convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (what became CEDAW), and in 1974 submitted the first draft convention text.
Even though we need more research to develop and further substantiate these findings, they already have important implications. It was not the West that “led” in terms of women’s rights. The largely optimistic and forward-looking “Socialist Sixties,” the title of a recent book, were also socialist women’s 1960s. That book is one of many recent studies about the circulation of ideas (and people and items) across the so-called Cold War divide, which clearly happened here as well, and in multidirectional ways. Socialist and left-feminist women’s international meetings and their initiatives at the UN had an impact not just in the international domain and in countries with other political systems (from “the East” to the rest), but in socialist countries as well (from the international domain to the East), by helping women to publicly discuss their problems and by encouraging governments to address women’s issues, as happened in Hungary around 1970 and in the Soviet Union in 1975 (at least in part due to Cold War considerations).

The socialist women’s contributions discussed here are largely unknown in former socialist countries, because of the often weak state of women’s history (though, notably, not in Poland), and a strong anti-communist discourse. In “the West,” it is the myth-making power of the media and ongoing Cold War assumptions in the media and among scholars about communists’ lack of genuine interest in women’s rights, and communist women’s lack of political agency that have made socialist women’s activism and contributions all but invisible. But socialist and left-feminist women’s leading roles should not surprise us: women’s liberation, after all, was a key tenet of socialism and remained at the core of Soviet ideology. Moreover, these women knew each other within their own national context (e.g., the prominent Soviet women mentioned above), and had the unique opportunity to regularly meet in and work through the WIDF, in addition to being able to benefit from state support for their work on behalf of women. Nonetheless, it would be incorrect to give socialist or left-feminist women all the credit; while they played key roles at every moment in the process leading up to CEDAW, these advances for women were possible because women in the UN-CSW, from countries around the world and with different economic and political systems, were willing and able to agree on these measures, despite their different views on such important issues as the role of the state and protective legislation for women. Indeed, a number of CSW members commented on what Jeanne Martin Cisse, UN-CSW representative of both Guinea and the Congress of African Women, in 1966 referred to as a “good spirit of cooperation,” which she called “a hopeful sign.”

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Notes


9 In some ways, the story goes back even further, because many of the women involved, from both capitalist and socialist countries, were active socialists or left feminists already in the 1930s, just as the WIDF has its roots in that decade.


11 The main WIDF archives have been lost or were relocated to unknown places after 1990; see Franciska de Haan, “The International Feminist Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda and Contributions, 1945–1991,” in *Women and Social Movements International—1840 to Present* (hereafter, WASI) online archive, eds. T. Dublin and K. Kish Sklar, accessed through https://library.ceu.edu. While I have used a number of UN documents, it would be highly useful to do further research in Russian, Czech, Polish, and Hungarian archives.

12 “General” in the sense that they focused on women’s rights and status in a general sense and did not formally represent a specific group, organized by “race,” religion, class, or region, though in the case of the ICW and the IAW white, elite, Western women dominated.


15 For a basic history, see De Haan, “Women’s International Democratic Federation.”


19 My use of the term “feminist” is similar to that of Sperling, Ferree, and Risman, who “define feminist action as that in which the participants explicitly place value on challenging gender hierarchy and changing women’s social status, whether they adopt or reject the feminist label” (“Constructing Global Feminism,” 1158). See also Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 50, and McDuffie, Sojourning for Freedom. 5. For a definition of left feminism, see Ellen C. DuBois, “Eleanor Flexner and the History of American Feminism,” Gender & History 3.1 (1991): 81–90, esp. 84 and 85.


24 Daniel Horowitz, Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism, Culture, Politics, and the Cold War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 203.


26 World Congress of Women, Moscow, June 1963: Convened by the Women’s International Democratic Federation (Berlin: WIDF, 1963) (hereafter, WIDF 1963 Congress Report), accessed through WASH.


28 The brilliant planning may have been due to Nina V. Popova, Soviet Women’s Committee (SWC) president and member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, among other high positions she held. For the Soviet press, see Kadnikova, “Women’s International Democratic Federation World Congress of Women,” 54–55.


30 Soviet Women’s Committee (Soviet Women’s Committee, 1987). 7. The SWC, originally named the Soviet Women’s Anti-Fascist Committee, was the state-supported women’s organization in the Soviet Union from 1941 to 1990. The best account of it so far is Knopova-Ziferblat, “The Soviet Union and the International Domain of Women’s Rights and Struggles.”
Most biographies of Tereshkova either do not mention this or underestimate its significance.


38 For the UN delegations, see The Yearbook of the United Nations, available at https://unyearbook.un.org. For membership and other data about the UN-CSW, see its session reports, available in the WADI online archive.


41 Bruce, “Work of the United Nations,” 386, refers to Dembińska as “the main initiator.” See also UN-CSW, Summary Record 18th session, UN document E/CN.6/SR.417, 11. For the DEDAW text, see www.un-documents.net/a22r2263.htm.


43 Women of the Whole World, 1963, no. 11.


46 UN-CSW, Summary Record 18th session, UN document E/CN.6/SR. 416, p. 11.


49 Ramos Shahani, “UN, Women, and Development,” 31; E/CN.6/SR.571–598, for the U.S. perspective, 157 (the quote) and 163.

50 See also Lisa Baldez, Defying Convention. U.S. Resistance to the U.N. Treaty on Women’s Rights (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), which is interesting on the U.S. instrumentalization of women’s rights in the UN but problematic in how it diminishes the role of the WIDF and of the USSR. Moreover, Baldez’s own text does not substantiate her claim that the United States “took the lead . . . on the drafting of CEDAW” (63) or that there was a U.S. “initiative . . . to draft CEDAW” (98).
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56 Buckley, Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union, 140–46, 146.
57 Ibid., 161.
65 Gorsuch and Koenker, The Socialist Sixties.