4 International welfare feminism

CSW navigating cold war tensions 1949

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Introduction

Early Cold War frictions after the end of the Second World War influenced the possibilities for advancement of an international human rights framework in the United Nations. The joint-effort in 1949 of the only two women delegates to the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), Eleanor Roosevelt (US) and Hansa Mehta (India), to draft an international convention on human rights that would connect political and civil rights with economic, social and cultural rights was hampered and its adoption prolonged due to Cold War rivalry. The reductionist narrative of an incompatibility of USSR communist and US capitalist ideological systems that shaped the first and second generation of human rights in the United Nations has, however, neglected to place in the foreground of such narratives the women diplomats who argued for women's economic and social rights based on other concerns than could be reduced into early East-West tensions. What is needed is a concept on international feminist efforts in the history of International Relations (IR) that sought to advance welfare rights in a patriarchal and colonial world order. Disagreements on the scope of human rights—of whether they would apply to women and people living under colonial rule—were also felt in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). How were efforts in the CSW to advance equal pay for women coloured by political and ideological strains in 1949—the sequent year when the UDHR had been adopted?

Based on United Nations meeting protocols from the third session of the CSW in 1949, the alliances and conflicts *within* the CSW sketched in this chapter contribute to unearthing the role of non-Western women in advancing welfare rights in the early Cold War years. Earlier studies on the feminist internationalization of economic and social rights have included women representatives in the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), and the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF);¹ however, these international organizations sent representatives to the meetings of the CSW in 1949. The debates within this all-female UN commission at its outset are thus of great interest.

By introducing the concept of “international welfare feminism,” the post-war frictions within the UN with regard to international law-making on human rights in 1949 are contextualized in this chapter as international women alliances on welfare rights that disrupted patriarchal and colonial interests relative to women's labour. Before turning to the debates within the CSW on the notion of equal pay

in 1949, I will consider the resistance that Latin American women delegates in the UN faced when trying to advance equal pay in the male-dominated ILO as well as the opposition by American women's organizations to the creation of an all-female commission in the ILO. I then expand upon the initial marginalization in the UN of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and their appeal to become a division within the UN Secretariat before examining how equal pay was being debated within the CSW, pointing to the ways in which Western women delegates seemed to undermine the competence of the CSW from within by wanting to refer the debate on equal pay back to the ILO. Finally, I explore how matters like "equal pay" were discussed within the CSW by Western women delegates who had historically sought to advance women's rights but now seemingly retreated on the issue of gender equality in 1949. I conclude by arguing that "international welfare feminism" can be used to initiate further critical debates into hitherto overlooked women's history of the UN regarding struggles against colonialism, patriarchal structures, and capitalist exploitation of women's labour.

"International welfare feminism" – a hidden historical narrative in the UN?

The history of women in the UN has primarily centred on the role of Western female delegates and has largely assumed a shared feminist interest amongst women delegates.² This oversight has allowed for the contestations regarding different understandings of women's rights amongst female delegates—women who did not share ideological, political, and cultural interests and ideas—to be left unproblematicized.³

Peter Waterman⁴ has addressed the lack of focus on women's movements with internationalism in historical and contemporary feminist studies and has argued that studies either fail to problematize the relationship amongst women globally or assume a shared outlook and commonly agreed-upon approach to women's rights issues.⁵ In earlier work,⁶ I have focused on particular value conflicts within the CSW from 1945 during the drafting of the UN Charter to 1948 and the drafting of the UDHR. I have thus questioned the simplified view of North-South relations amongst the women representatives in the UN by describing the conflicts as well as the alliances across these divisions. Female delegates in the CSW took different positions on women's rights during the drafting of the UDHR in 1946–48 along class and ethnic lines, as well as along ideological lines of the various women and national independence movements they belonged to, which predicted their stances on the economic and political rights of women.

In this chapter, I explore what I conceptualize as "international welfare feminism" during the Cold War years as a critical counternarrative of feminist socialist struggles for women's rights within the CSW in 1949. The post-war period has been portrayed as the "doldrum years" in American feminism,⁷ and the narrative of welfare internationalism has been dominated by the conformity, conservatism, and antifeminism of Stalinism and McCarthyism.⁸ Pieper Mooney calls for a more nuanced 'understanding of the gendered politics of the Cold War'⁹ and historian Francisca de Haan notes that assumption that women's organizations

such as the WIDF and the WFTU's striving for international welfarism were Communist has invited scepticism from Western historians that these organizations were therefore not deemed feminist.¹⁰ "International welfare feminism" is thus defined in contrast to "red feminism"¹¹ and "communist internationalism and feminism"¹² by not resting on the presumption that the women delegates to the UN who advanced women's economic and social rights by arguing for the need to create welfare institutions for day-care, preschool, and social security services necessarily adhered to a particular political perspective, nor had been acting representatives of Soviet countries. "International welfare feminism" in the early Cold War years has been mired in dichotomies that have obscured the links between welfarism and feminism on the one hand and internationalism and feminism on the other. Feminism was under Stalinism seen as a "bourgeois term that obscured the capitalist oppression of women."¹³ Thus, initiatives for women's rights such as rights connected to the woman worker, including equal pay, when labelled communist in the Cold War years, were then not labelled as feminist initiatives. The perception that women could promote feminist internationalism and not merely reflect their own national interests has especially in research on UN diplomacy in the late 1940s been overlooked. "International welfare feminism" is developed to question the presumed incompatibility between advancing socialist feminist issues in the international arena during the postwar period. Southern women delegates in the UN advancing women's economic rights could represent other interests than East-West ideologies.

Feminist agency seems furthermore to have been characterized as Western in historical narratives. For example, US delegate to the CSW, Dorothy Kenyon (1888–1972)—a lawyer, socialist, and journalist labelled by Joseph McCarthy as communist affiliated—has been understood to have advanced women's economic rights through her long-term commitment to these issues in the League of Nations and the UN.¹⁴ Her role in 1949 in the CSW was, however, complex in the debates on equal pay for women.

In the course of my earlier work on the UN Charter and the UDHR, I found that other prominent US and UK female figures (including the first female US delegates to the UN, Virginia Gildersleeve and Eleanor Roosevelt) have been given kudos for advancing women's rights within the UN when several proposals were suggested initially by women delegates from India, Brazil, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic.¹⁵ Similar conclusions have been drawn by Skard, Marino, Dietrichson and Sator, Burke, and Rathore in this volume. It has been assumed that *Western* feminist welfarism was internationalized through the UN and the role of American women unionists' work in the ILO has been broadly acknowledged. However, the Southern feminists who also pushed for economic and social rights—in the Indian National Trade Union Congress and elsewhere—have been overshadowed in historical studies. A woman representative from the above-mentioned congress, Indira W. Bose, would declare in the 1950 ILO Conference that "Some of the representatives of so-called progressive governments, including my own, have thought it fit to oppose a Convention for men and women getting equal remuneration for work of equal value."¹⁶ The wording opposed by the ILO members in that upcoming convention was itself a step back from what

Indian and Latin American women delegates to the CSW had proposed in 1949—namely an international convention covering equal pay for women.

Equal pay for women and the need for a separate female division within the ILO

The ILO meetings were comprised of internal debates containing different understandings of equality for women at the adoption of the Philadelphia Declaration on women's rights 1944.¹⁷ American women unionists had argued for a 'same but different' approach on women's labour which aimed at advancing protective legislation for women workers rather than the equal opportunities that Latin American Bertha Lutz was proposing 1944 in Philadelphia.¹⁸

Bertha Lutz (Brazil) felt that the stipulations for protection reduced the advancement of equal pay and equal opportunities. The ILO had formulated "equal remuneration" for (male) workers and "rate for the work" which had been the labour unions' definition of fair salaries. The use of cheap female labour was increasingly perceived as a threat to earlier labour standards. Instead of taking on equal pay for women, trade unions did not actively encourage employers to employ women workers. It was instead held that male workers' salaries should be decent and allow for the economic maintenance of a whole family.

'Equal remuneration for work of equal value' stood as a founding principle of the ILO. (...) 'remuneration without discrimination' reflected a dominant trade union position that sought to maintain men's wages and discourage employer use of cheaper female labour. In contrast, feminists cast equal pay as essential to women's rights.¹⁹

Bertha Lutz wanted to establish a sub-commission with only women in the ILO in order to ensure a language in its resolutions that reflected women's shared global struggle for gender equality.²⁰ Her suggestion was poorly received in the organization.

Resistance from US women's organisations of all-female UN body

Though they failed to create an all-female sub-commission within the ILO in 1944 to advance equal pay for women worldwide, Latin American women delegates including Bertha Lutz (Brazil); Minerva Bernardino (the Dominican Republic); and Amalia Castillo de Ledón (Mexico) sought at the United Nations Conference on International Organization (UNCIO) 1945 in overturning US and UK women's resistance to an all-women commission in the UN under ECOSOC, in addition to the CHR. The ILO had not been officially invited to participate at the conference in San Francisco but only "allowed to send an unofficial five-person delegation" for "informal consultation."²¹ There was no woman on the delegation.

With a commission dedicated to women's rights within the UN, there was a renewed hope amongst Latin American women delegates of ensuring that gender

equality became an inseparable part of an international framework of human rights. Historian Helen Laville has shown how US women's organizations opposed the idea of a separate commission for women.

Members of the Women's Bureau coalition present at San Francisco immediately saw the proposal to establish a CSW as a threat to protective legislation, fearing the activism of such a commission in the hands of equalitarian feminists.²²

The resistance reflected domestic battles in the US regarding the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution to which there were opponents stating that gender equality would lead to women losing the legislative protections related to work, bearing children, and economic privileges for women choosing domesticity.²³ The stance reflected a liberal political context in which government spending on welfare was seen as socialist and without the necessary welfare institutions fundamental for women to combine work and child care, furthering formal "equality" risked leading to discriminatory legislation in public arenas when 'equal' was interpreted as being treated on the same terms 'as men' without the necessary conditions in place for women to combine work with family.

American feminist groups failed to prevent the establishment of the CSW and instead focused their efforts on lobbying for representatives appointed who were against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the commission.²⁴

The coalition group Committee on Women in World Affairs (...) lobbied the State Department for the appointment of Kenyon to the commission. Kenyon was a long-time opponent of the ERA and had served as a representative on the League of Nation's Committee of Experts.²⁵

The national political landscape in the US at the time seemed here to have haltered international feminist alliances through the CSW, as women representing other countries in the commission saw these debates on the risks with formal equality as US specific and were not as convinced of the supposed threat of socialism through the advancement of welfare institutions for women's economic and social rights.²⁶ Due to the conflict over the Equal Rights Amendment and early Cold War frictions between the opposing ideologies of capitalism and communism, women's equality turned out to be a sensitive topic for the US women representatives to the UN.

[A]s the Cold War made women's rights an important battlefield in the early years of the CSW, Kenyon and her allies came to support international legislation on women's rights, less out of support for women in other nations, but out of a keen awareness of the need for the United States to sponsor women's rights as a national imperative.²⁷

The establishment of a separate CSW was faced with opposition, not only from American and British women delegates but from within the Secretariat itself.

Underlying these reservations appears to have been other concerns: that a special woman's commission might empower women in unexpected ways, and perhaps even challenge the mainstream approach to violations of human rights.²⁸

The CSW was devoted to the idea of convening in locations outside Europe and the US as a way to connect and assist national women's organisations and consequently held its third session in Beirut, Lebanon. The Commission had been invited there by Kenan Malik, chair of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), who had played a vital role in the process of advancing the UDHR from the debates within the Council to the General Assembly vote in 1948.²⁹ Minerva Bernardino (the Dominican Republic) was chair of the CSW in 1949 who had lobbied for its establishment and been an unrelenting advocate for gender equality in the UN.³⁰ India was represented in the CSW by Lakshmi Menon³¹ and the USSR by Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova. Lakshmi Menon had been one of the most outspoken critics of colonialism when debating human rights as she represented India in the Third Committee of the General Assembly. Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova had been a representative of the Soviet Union to the CSW and had participated in meetings of the CHR during the drafting of the UDHR. Mary Sutherland represented the UK and Dorothy Kenyon represented the US in the CSW.

The third session of the CSW was also open for the international women's organizations with consultative status, including the WFTU, represented by Marie Couette, and the WIDF, represented by Emelie Fares Ibrahim.

Specific conflicts concerned how different conceptions of equal pay for women were to be classified and whether the Commission could advance women's economic condition relative to other international bodies like the ILO and even the World Health Organization (WHO) but also whether the commission would gain more impact if turned into a division of the UN Secretariat. The low number of women appointed to higher positions in the Secretariat was of concern to the members of the CSW in 1949.³² Bodil Begtrup (Denmark) and Minerva Bernardino (the Dominican Republic) had in 1948 discussed the possibility of transforming the CSW into a division in the Secretariat, and they shared the impression that the Secretary General was positively minded towards this. This suggestion was taken up for debate in the CSW at its third session in Beirut 1949. Minerva Bernardino believed that "such a measure would extend the Commission's possibilities of action."³³ Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova "recalled that ECOSOC had not approved the suggested change in the structure of the Secretariat."³⁴ Moreover, a division within the Secretariat would require a larger budget set aside for women's rights measures, which the Member States might not be willing to support. Mary Sutherland (UK) did not back the idea as she thought "the creation of a new division in the Secretariat would be badly received in certain quarters" since the "utility of the Commission itself was sometimes questioned."³⁵ Amalia Castillo de Ledón (Mexico) "warmly supported the Danish proposal" since the many resolutions of the Commission "had shown the necessity of having a large number of experts"³⁶ to facilitate the drafting of conventions proposed to strengthen the

economic and legal status of women. The representatives of Greece and China also supported the proposal for transforming the Commission into a division in the Secretariat and to “insist on this request, in spite of the fact that it had not yet met with the approval of ECOSOC.”³⁷ This suggestion did, however, not receive support within the UN,³⁸ which may have led to the marginalization of women’s rights issues in the organization during the 1950s.

Reverting the notion of “equal pay” for women

The UK and US women delegates to the CSW during its third session in Beirut wanted to remove “equal pay” in a draft resolution on the rights for women workers by claiming it was a communist idea proposed by the WFTU. In doing so, they overlooked the fact that the CSW had advanced this idea on gender equality from its creation in 1946.³⁹ Mary Sutherland (UK) commented on WFTU’s wording and expressed concern over “the term ‘equal pay for equal work’, for which ‘rate-for-the-job’ was a more easily understood clause.”⁴⁰ Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova (USSR) responded that:

In asking for the rejection of what she had termed ‘an out-of-date’ principle – equality with men who were raising a family – Mary Sutherland was going backward instead of forward and leading women to poverty. Many British women who had lost their husbands and fathers during the war were now heads of families, and should be considered as bread-winners.⁴¹

Marie Couette (WFTU) said that “the WFTU desired the Commission to re-affirm the principle of equal pay for equal work; and, secondly the procedure adopted by the ILO showed that it did not attach sufficient importance to this question.”⁴²

The Chinese representative Cecelia Sieu-Ling Zung tried to find a middle ground between these East-West conflicts over the issue of equal pay and agreed to withdraw her original text in favour of a UK amendment. Lakshmi Menon (India), however, was well aware of the consequences of this compromise:

Lakshmi Menon (India) wondered whether the Representative of China had fully realized the implications of the United Kingdom amendment, since her original text had requested the Economic and Social Council to make recommendations to the Member States, which implied direct incentive to implement the principle of equal pay. The United Kingdom amendment, on the other hand, directed the whole of the question back to the International Labour Organization for an enquiry, which would take considerable time; in the meantime the Member States would not be obliged to take any action. That was a regressive step and she preferred the original Chinese text.⁴³

The Chinese representative said she nonetheless accepted the UK amendment to the original proposal, which then lost its stronger support for equal pay. Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova (USSR) supported the statement by India. A compromise

was met in which the UK amendment was placed as a second paragraph to the Chinese proposal, which was adopted.

These internal debates meant for US delegate Dorothy Kenyon that it was better to let the ILO study the issue of equal pay for women.

Dorothy Kenyon (US) said the whole discussion (...) illustrated her view that it was premature to make recommendations concerning matters which obviously required lengthy study. The question of what was favourable or unfavourable to women was an extremely debatable point, and it was precisely on such points that the help of the International Labour Organization was required.⁴⁴

Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova (USSR) “was opposed to any reference to study by the ILO.”⁴⁵ The USSR had re-entered as members to the ILO in 1945. At the 1947 ILO Conference in which social policy in nonmetropolitan territories was discussed, it had been an Indian worker, Sharita Mukherjee, who had insisted “on the inclusion of the word ‘sex’ in the definition of discrimination” related to work.⁴⁶

The CSW had, in the words of its former chair Bodil Begtrup (Denmark), been granted its status as full commission since the ECOSOC had realized that experts on human rights were not necessarily experts on the rights of women.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the idea of “expert-status” was continuously placed outside the mandate or scope of the commission in the arguments laid out by American and British female delegates in the CSW in 1949 when the notion of equal pay was debated—they felt the discussion should be held in the ILO instead. But it would be thanks to the CSW that ILO finally included in its resolutions a mention of the equal rights of women after 30 years of advancing the rights of the male worker. The CSW had in 1948 “adopted a resolution calling for action by the ILO with respect to equal pay for equal work.”⁴⁸

Another division within the CSW was concerned with whether women’s economic rights should be advanced through development agencies and whether other agencies should be advised to raise the standard of living through charity projects by Western NGOs. The representative of the WIDF, Emelie Fares Ibrahim, expressed surprise during the third session in 1949 that “relations with WHO had found a place on the agenda.”⁴⁹ She argued that:

In considering the protection of the health of populations, the first concern of the Commission should be measures for raising the standard of living and not questions such as the functions of specialized agencies, distribution of food through the Red Cross, the granting of scholarships, etc.⁵⁰

This concern, raised already in 1949 by the WIDF, finds a contemporary critical analogue in colonial discourse analyses that question whether colonial development-projects, rationales, and structures can by any meaningful sense lead to change as they sustain inequality? As Emilie Fares Ibrahim formulated this concern:

[T]he Commission should give more careful study to the underlying conditions responsible for the state of health of the peoples before considering the function of WHO. The trouble must be attacked from the roots.⁵¹

This position questioned the patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist structures within which women, people living under colonial rule, and the working class suffered from economic exploitation. It was a controversial issue to bring up in the UN as the colonial powers were willing to debate the rights of women workers in Member States but not its overseas territories. Both France and the UK would later refrain from voting for the Convention on the Political Rights of Women because of the explicit mention of Non-Self Governing Territories.⁵² When Emilie Fares Ibrahim drew attention at the third session to “the situation of women in Iran”⁵³—members of the Iranian branch of the WIDF had been arrested and the branch dissolved—Lakshmi Menon (India) called it “a propaganda speech in which [Emilie Fares Ibrahim] had violently attacked a State Member of the United Nations.”⁵⁴ The UK, Syria, Australia, and US made similar comments during the meeting.⁵⁵ At the following session of the CSW in New York, the WIDF was not granted visas to attend the session by the US government.

Equal pay for women—a question for the Commission on the Status of Women?

Dorothy Kenyon (US) and Mary Sutherland (UK) wanted the CSW to refer the 1949 draft on equal pay for equal work back to the ILO. This suggestion was met with criticism by Lakshmi Menon (India) and Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova (USSR) who indicated that the ILO had consistently prolonged the process by placing the issue of women’s equal pay last on their conference agendas, and consequently running out of time before discussing the issue until a later meeting. This way the issue of equal pay travelled from meeting to meeting without receiving due consideration.

In the early post-WWII years, the ILO focused on items that appeared genderless, like ‘free association’ and collective bargaining, which disproportionately benefited male workers, who were more likely to be in unionized occupations.⁵⁶

International bodies and organizations that were all-male or predominantly male seemed to have been advancing (intentionally or unintentionally) the ideas and interests of its member base. An all-female commission in the UN would at least deal exclusively with women’s rights. In 1949 Soviet and US women delegates seemed to increasingly use the CSW as a battleground for Cold War politics. When the Soviet delegate Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova relied on reports and information on the status of women around the world provided by the WFTU and the WIDF, these international feminist organizations were seen as part of a Soviet lobby. Both organizations held consultative status in the CSW while WIDF lost this status when listed as a communist enemy of the US. However, it was not only

the US who felt threatened in their domestic affairs by the Soviet and supposedly communist-led international organizations.

What may initially have united the Soviet and Indian representatives in the CSW was the understanding that women's rights could not be secured without equal pay for working women, nor with a continued economic exploitation of women's labour. The divide between the Soviet and Indian female representatives grew in 1949 as the newly independent India felt that Soviet delegates used the UN as a forum to criticize other nations. The representative of India, Lakshmi Menon, also raised her concerns that WFTU was used as a lobby by the Soviets.⁵⁷ Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova (USSR) insisted in the CSW's third session that "The majority of international workers' organizations, of which WFTU was an outstanding example, had supported the principle [of equal pay]"⁵⁸ while the employer's organizations had opposed this principle. Her remark was followed by an observation by Lakshmi Menon (India) who maintained that:

WFTU had many times distorted the facts in order to suggest that perfection only existed in the Soviet Union and that elsewhere all was confusion and misery. Lakshmi Menon had no doubt that the data brought forward by WFTU came from unofficial sources or from an organization working to overthrow the Indian government.⁵⁹

When the US was criticized later in the meeting by Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova (USSR) for women's salaries only amounting to half of those of men workers Dorothy Kenyon (US) retorted by asking "whether the women in the Soviet slave labour camps received equal pay for equal work?"⁶⁰ Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova (USSR) had argued that gender equality was pivotal for human rights in the years following the Second World War, as British women had been laid off and thus discriminated against in their right to work. Mary Sutherland (UK) in rebutting this criticism from the Soviet Union countered that:

In citing the fact that a million women had left factories in the UK since the end of the war, Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova had said that that had been caused by discrimination. The truth was quite otherwise. The UK, which did not maintain a large army on war footing, had enabled three million demobilized men to take up their places in industry by freeing a large number of women who devoted themselves to their households.⁶¹

This statement was a stance shared by both US and UK women representatives in the CSW in 1949, coloured of course by their commitment to national sentiments at the time; that women's freedom of choice included freely choosing domesticity. Dorothy Kenyon had, in a speech to Women's City Club of New York, argued that the right to work attained by women in the Soviet Union was nothing more than slavery.⁶² Despite having made such anti-communist remarks, Dorothy Kenyon was later accused by McCarthy of being affiliated with communist organizations. Labelling women's international engagement in women's right to work as communist seems to have led to the silencing of international welfare

feminism backed by Nordic, Latin American, and South Asian women delegates on women's economic and social rights in the late 1940s. A year later in 1950, Senator Margaret Chase Smith would hold the "Declaration of Conscience" speech expounding that people who exercised the freedom of speech—including the right to criticize, hold unpopular beliefs, protest, and think independently—risked being unfairly labelled as communists in America.

International welfare feminism and its relevance today

International welfare feminism—the advancement of women's rights with the understanding that women's equality and political freedom is linked with and dependent upon their economic liberation from unpaid or forced labour under capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal power structures—was advanced not only by Western women active in the international labour movement and Soviet women delegates in the UN in 1949 but also by Indian, Brazilian, Mexican, and Iranian women delegates through the CSW. The greatest divide regarding women's equal pay seemed to be between the US and UK women delegates on the one hand—whose governments re-employed millions of male workers after the Second World War—and Soviet and Indian women delegates on the other, the latter argued that women had become sole breadwinners in families and who also saw the economic upliftment of women living under colonial rule as vital for the advancement of gender equality. The French female delegates who had proposed non-discrimination based on sex in the UDHR abandoned their support for non-discrimination when it would mean the inclusion of people in the French territories.

Women's double role of unpaid domestic worker and also exploited underpaid and under-represented worker in international labour organizations became apparent in the post war years. Women were not yet organized in labour unions and their interests were not being advanced by male-dominated organizations. The employer organizations on the other hand seem to have avoided the issue of women's equal salaries as this would have meant higher costs, especially from providing social benefits for women workers with children. International welfare feminism would require recognition by private and state actors of the need for child welfare and social benefits for women workers to obtain and sustain paid work. It must also incorporate the understanding that women's unpaid labour in the home folded into full-time salaries of men with families.

Samuel Moyn⁶³ has claimed that human rights history starts in the 1970s when the utopian politics of communism and decolonization collapsed but he has, as Margarite Poulos⁶⁴ rightly argues, overlooked women's history. I agree here with Poulos that what is needed in order to understand the history of human rights through the UN are new looks at women's perspectives and histories.

Seen within this framework the long traditions of internationalism, as well as the challenging shift to gender analysis in human-rights definitions and instruments at the UN, the claim of UN irrelevance to the 'true' story of human rights appears thin at best.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, “women’s perspectives and histories” are complex and the role of prominent feminists who advocated international welfare feminism from a third perspective of democratic socialism against colonialism in the Cold War years have been overlooked. Sondra Herman and Doris Linder have noted how Scandinavian women diplomats like Alva Myrdal—a Swedish socialist appointed the highest position as director of the social division within the UNESCO Secretariat—treated the UN as a platform to internationalize welfare feminism.⁶⁶ “She saw a worldwide, welfare-state feminism with women’s efforts supported by community structures.”⁶⁷

As Wendy Pojman notes, the end of the Second World War did not mark an end or beginning of women’s internationalism, but rather a turn in which national and international collaboration across divides was highly politicized and limited the international dimension of feminist alliances.⁶⁸ Colonial and patriarchal domination may have silenced historical narratives of southern women’s resistance and struggles, which does not preclude their existence. Further research is needed into the international welfare feminism of the south advanced in the late 1940s through progressive feminist movements in African states that were still under colonial rule in order to challenge a dominant Western feminist perspective—as keeping with earlier findings sketched in this volume.

Notes

- 1 Francisca de Haan, “Continuing Cold War Paradigms in 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): 547–73; Margarite Poulos, “Transnational Militancy in Cold-War Europe: Gender, Human Rights, and the WIDF during the Greek Civil War,” *European Review of History* 24, no. 1 (2017): 17–35; Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney, “Fighting Fascism and Forging New Political Activism: The Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in the Cold War,” in *De-Centering Cold War History: Local and Global Change*, ed. Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza (Routledge, 2012), 52–72; Melanie Ilic, “Soviet Women, Cultural Exchange and the Women’s International Democratic Federation,” in *Reassessing Cold War Europe*, ed. Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy (Routledge, 2010), 157–74; Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker, and Susan Zimmermann, eds., *Women’s ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present* (Leiden & Boston: BRILL, 2008); Eileen Boris, *Making the Woman Worker: Precarious Labour and the Fight for Global Standards, 1919–2019* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Dorothy Sue Cobble, “International Women’s Trade Unionism and Education,” *International Labour and Working-Class History*, no. 90 (2016): 153–63.
- 2 See other chapters in this volume problematizing this idea.
- 3 See other chapters in this volume addressing this earlier gap.
- 4 Peter Waterman, “Hidden from Herstory: Women, Feminism and New Global Solidarity,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 44 (October 30, 1993): WS83–100.
- 5 Waterman, WS-83.
- 6 Rebecca Adami, “On Subalternity and Representation: Female and Post Colonial Subjects Claiming Universal Human Rights in 1948,” *Journal of Research on Women and Gender* 6 (2015): 56–66; Rebecca Adami, “Counter Narratives as Political Contestation: Universality, Particularity and Uniqueness,” *The Equal Rights Review*

- 15 (2015): 13–24; Rebecca Adami, *Women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York & London: Routledge, 2019).
- 7 Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- 8 Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 10.
- 9 Pieper Mooney, "Fighting Fascism and Forging New Political Activism: The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in the Cold War," 66.
- 10 de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)."
- 11 Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation*.
- 12 Celia Donert, "From Communist Internationalism to Human Rights: Gender, Violence and International Law in the Women's International Democratic Federation Mission to North Korea, 1951," *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 2 (2016): 313–33.
- 13 Donert, 333.
- 14 Jaci Eisenberg, "The Status of Women: A Bridge from the League of Nations to the United Nations," *JIOS* 4, no. 2 (2013): 8–24.
- 15 See for example the inclusion of gender equality in the Charter and the UDHR, equal rights in marriage and to equal pay in the UDHR, Adami, *Women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.
- 16 Carol Riegelman Lubin and Anne Winslow, *Social Justice for Women: The International Labour Organization and Women* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 95.
- 17 Riegelman Lubin and Winslow, *Social Justice for Women: The International Labour Organization and Women*.
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- 29 Adami, *Women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 66.
- 30 See introduction note, Chs. 1, 2, and 3 in this volume.
- 31 For more context on Menon, see Rathore 'Excavating Hidden Histories', this volume, Ch. 3.
- 32 E/CN.6/SR 41, Commission on the Status of Women, Third Session, Summary record of the 41st meeting, Beirut, Lebanon 22 March 1949, p. 2.

- 33 E/CN.6/SR 55, Commission on the Status of Women, Third Session, Summary record of the 55th meeting, Beirut, Lebanon 1 April 1949, p. 2.
- 34 E/CN.6/SR 55, Commission on the Status of Women, Third Session, Summary record of the 55th meeting, Beirut, Lebanon 1 April 1949, p. 3.
- 35 E/CN.6/SR 55, Commission on the Status of Women, Third Session, Summary record of the 55th meeting, Beirut, Lebanon 1 April 1949, p. 3.
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- 38 As of today, 2020, there is no division within the Secretariat dealing specifically with the rights of women. UN Women is a body with limited budget and its work is remote from the UN Secretariat.
- 39 Adami, *Women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 74–85.
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- 42 E/CN.6/SR.50, Commission on the Status of Women, Third Session, Summary record of the 50th meeting, Beirut, Lebanon, 28 March 1949, p. 10.
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- 44 E/CN.6/SR.52, Commission on the Status of Women, Third Session, Summary record of the 52nd meeting, Beirut, Lebanon, 29 March 1949, p. 6.
- 45 E/CN.6/SR.52, Commission on the Status of Women, Third Session, Summary record of the 52nd meeting, Beirut, Lebanon, 29 March 1949, p. 7.
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