

Agnieszka Mrozik

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8438-9652>

Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Sciences

**“AN UNEXPECTEDLY TRANSGRESSIVE
SUBJECT OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY HISTORY”*:
HOW TO WRITE (AND WHY TO READ)
ABOUT COMMUNIST WOMEN TODAY?**

Review article of: Kristen R. Ghodsee, *Red Valkyries: Feminist Lessons from Five Revolutionary Women* (London: Verso, 2022), 224 pp.; *The Palgrave Handbook of Communist Women Activists around the World*, ed. and introduction by Francisca de Haan (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, an imprint of Springer, 2023), 701 pp.

Abstract

This review article discusses two newly-released publications on communist women activists: Kristen Ghodsee's *Red Valkyries: Feminist Lessons from Five Revolutionary Women* and *The Palgrave Handbook of Communist Women Activists around the World*, edited by Francisca de Haan. It focuses on questions of narrative and the persuasive function of the reviewed works, asking how and for whom one should write about communist women today. It brings to light methodological challenges, as well as those related to access to sources on communist women. It also reflects on the place that publications which tell stories of communist women who challenged gender, class, and racial inequalities in the past occupy in the perception of contemporary readers, so often confronted in these times with experiences of inequality and violence.

Keywords: communist women activists, left feminists, thought collective, radical imagination, state feminism, biographical approach

* Victor Strazzeri, 'Beyond the Double Blind Spot: Relocating Communist Women as Transgressive Subjects in Contemporary Historiography', *Gender & History* (online first edn: 1 Dec. 2022), 3, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12675> [Accessed: 30 Oct. 2023].

“Real biographies of Communists will never be written”, noted Czesław Miłosz, the Polish Nobel Prize winner in literature, in his autobiography *A Year of the Hunter*.¹ He wrote these words with Jerzy Borejsza in mind: a Polish pre- and post-Second World War communist cultural activist and politician, founder of the “Czytelnik” Publishing Cooperative, and organiser of the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace in Wrocław in 1948.² This remark by Miłosz, however, seems particularly pertinent when we think of communist women, many of whom are not widely known, remembered, or understood unless through the prism of popular, often anti-communist and/or anti-feminist clichés. In the case of many communist women – politicians, social activists, cultural practitioners – it is not recognised, for example, that they were deeply involved in the project of women’s emancipation and that they considered it an important part of the modernisation of the world.

Red Valkyries: Feminist Lessons from Five Revolutionary Women and *The Palgrave Handbook of Communist Women Activists around the World* are two recent attempts to recount the lives and achievements of women activists, politicians, and intellectuals who, in the twentieth century (and some as early as the nineteenth century), advocated for women’s rights as part of the communist left in different regions of the world.

The first of the two publications, released by Verso in the summer of 2022, is a collection of essays on five revolutionary women – Russian-Soviets Alexandra Kollontai, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and Inessa Armand, Ukrainian-Soviet Lyudmila Pavlichenko, and Bulgarian Elena Lagadinova – who dedicated their political (and military, in the case of Pavlichenko) careers to the struggle for gender equality, while themselves being discriminated as women, including within the Communist Party to which they tied their lives. Kristen Ghodsee, professor of Russian and East European studies at the University of Pennsylvania, not only tells the story of the lives and activities of her protagonists but also highlights the factors (such as personal aptitude or operational tactics) that influenced their achievements in the struggle for women’s rights. Written in a lively manner, *Red Valkyries* is aimed

¹ Czesław Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, transl. Madeline G. Levine (New York, 1994), 130.

² See Eryk Krasucki, *Międzynarodowy komunista. Jerzy Borejsza: biografia polityczna* (Warszawa, 2009).

primarily at those for whom reading about historical figures is merely an introduction to their own political activism in the here and now.

The second title, published by Palgrave Macmillan in early 2023, is a comprehensive, multi-author volume on twenty-five communist women activists, politicians, and thinkers from all continents, edited and introduced by Francisca de Haan, professor emerita of gender studies and history and a long-time employee of Central European University, first in Budapest and then in Vienna. This is a much more traditional work in terms of narrative approach: a scholarly publication that aims to provide and organise knowledge about more or less recognised communist women committed to the struggle for women's rights; among them German Clara Zetkin, Cuban Vilma Espín, Australian Freda Brown, and Argentinian Fanny Edelman. One of the protagonists of this volume is also the Pole Edwarda Orłowska, chairwoman of the Women's Division of the Polish Workers' Party and then of the Polish United Workers' Party from 1946 to 1953. This does not mean, however, that no personal reflections or views are expressed in *The Palgrave Handbook of Communist Women Activists around the World*. There are, and they are expressed explicitly by the authors of the individual chapters, renowned experts on the subject.

The authors of the two reviewed publications follow two strategies.

First, they draw out from silence – itself an old feminist gesture – the communist women activists who fought for women's and workers' rights, but also against racism and antisemitism and, eventually, against the rising fascism. What is immediately striking is the multiplicity of activities the protagonists of the volume engaged in and the diversity of struggles they waged in various fields, including within the Communist Party. As the stories of their lives show, their demand for equal rights for men and women in every sphere of life was not always understood in Party circles among their male comrades. This struggle for women's rights could not be separated from other struggles.

Approached with seriousness and respect – and not in the patronising manner so often encountered in stories about women who are active agents of history – the protagonists of the reviewed publications are portrayed as flesh-and-blood people in whose lives the political and the personal were constantly intersecting. Following Ludwik Fleck, Polish-Jewish and Israeli biologist and philosopher, I would say that they constituted a kind of “thought collective”, that is, a formation forged in a specific social and cultural context, united by a common

diagnosis of a problem (of social inequality and exploitation, especially of women) and a vision of its solution (a radical remodelling of the society).³ To cite scholars of social movements Max Haiven and Alex Khasnabish, they were characterised by a “radical imagination”, that is,

the ability to imagine the world, life, and social institutions not as they are but as they might otherwise be. It is the courage and the intelligence to recognize that the world can and should be changed. But the radical imagination is not just about dreaming of different futures. It’s about bringing those possible futures “back” to work on the present, to inspire action and new forms of solidarity today.⁴

These two concepts – “radical imagination” and “thought collective” – make it possible (in a more precise manner than the seemingly obvious category of “generation”, so problematic for the humanities and social sciences⁵) to grasp the distinctiveness and commonality, and at the same time the diversity, of women who shared similar agendas while operating in different contexts and representing different professional, social, and political backgrounds. Both volumes draw a rich, multifaceted, and complex picture of the lives and endeavours of communist women operating in many different corners of the globe without creating a homogenising story of the community they built.

At this point, a clarification is in order. Because of the methods of action adopted by these women, but also because of the way communist women activists defined women’s rights, I believe it is justified to refer to them, as does American historian Ellen C. DuBois, as “left feminists”, even if they themselves would find this term problematic due to their critical attitude to feminism as a “bourgeois movement”. In a 1991 article, DuBois explains:

By “left feminist”, I mean a perspective which fuses a recognition of the systematic oppression of women with an appreciation of other structures

³ Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, transl. from the German 1935 edition by Frederick Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn, ed. by Thaddeus J. Trenn and Robert K. Merton, foreword by Thomas S. Kuhn (Chicago–London, 1979).

⁴ Max Haiven and Alex Khasnabish, *The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity* (London, 2014), 10–11.

⁵ On the problematic nature of using the category of “generation” in research on communism, see, for example, Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mrozik (eds), *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond* (London–New York, 2020).

of power underlying American society (what we now most often call “the intersections of race, class and gender”). Therefore, by left feminism, I also mean an understanding that the attainment of genuine equality for women – all women – requires a radical challenge to American society, the mobilization of masses of people, and fundamental social change.⁶

Quoted in both reviewed publications, the political statements of communist women, as well as their personal accounts, reveal that, in their view, truly effective emancipation measures had to be implemented systemically, with the involvement of the state.⁷ At the same time, they believed that women were discriminated against not only based on gender but also based on other factors, such as race and social class. They concluded that a truly effective struggle for women’s rights needed to address the multiple dimensions of women’s oppression. Recalling Angela Davis’ visit to Bulgaria in 1972 and her meeting with Elena Lagadinova, chairwoman of the Bulgarian Women’s Committee, Kristen Ghodsee explains:

Rather than being intersectional, women like Angela Davis or Elena Lagadinova were *confluent* in their politics. Instead of focusing on the fixed points where different social identities or movements meet (that is their intersections), socialist women often viewed categories like race, class, and gender as distinct rivers flowing into each other from different tributaries, rivers which can mix and grow larger and more powerful.⁸

⁶ Ellen C. DuBois, ‘Eleanor Flexner and the History of American Feminism’, *Gender & History*, 1 (1991), 84.

⁷ Chinese historian Wang Zheng has called this type of activity “state feminism”: *ead.*, “‘State Feminism’? Gender and Socialist State Formation in Maoist China”, *Feminist Studies*, 3 (2005), 519–51.

⁸ Ghodsee, *Red Valkyries*, 16–17. In a similar vein, Francisca de Haan highlights the sensitivity of communist women activists to the many factors of discrimination against women and their commitment to opposing them all, citing Carole Boyce Davies, biographer of journalist and activist of Trinidadian origin Claudia Jones, one of the leaders of the Communist Party USA: “Following Lenin’s argument in 1920, as related by Clara Zetkin in *Lenin and the Woman Question*, one of the American editions of her 1925 booklet, that the communist movement immediately needed to start organizing women, Claudia Jones (whose papers include a heavily annotated copy of Zetkin’s publication), suggested ‘that black working class women had to be at the vanguard of these struggles and would therefore argue for a parallel gender, race and class advancement’. It is worth noting that Carole Boyce Davies here used the word ‘parallel’ rather than intersectional, but generally scholars

What I find particularly valuable is that both reviewed publications, especially the Palgrave volume, reveal the inter- and transnational history of twentieth-century communist women. They give an insight into the multiplicity of links between the protagonists: political, but also personal. These links formed a kind of network that spanned the whole world. We can see how this network was built, but also how difficult it was to build, how it sometimes ripped, requiring interventions to patch the holes that inevitably appeared in this sprawling structure that was the communist movement and left feminism at the same time. This transnational aspect is extremely important because it enables us to move beyond a kind of “methodological nationalism” in our approach to communist women, which, according to memory scholars Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, fosters “the production of new narratives in the interstices between nation-states and in the transnational arena, [...] gradually giving rise to new modes of remembrance that are not just historicist but also forward-looking”.⁹ Both volumes, but especially the one released by Palgrave, enable us to look at communist women from a broader perspective that transcends nation-states so that the project in which they were involved emerges as a meaningful alternative to capitalism and not, as argued today, a marginal initiative doomed to failure from the start.

The second strategy deployed by the authors of both works is meta-level reflection, showing how left feminists participated and continue to participate in public debate, primarily at the level of nation-states. An analysis of mythologising practices – the emergence and persistence of the myths of individual communist women – is accompanied by analyses of their demonising representations in culture, including the gendered roles and characteristics attributed to them, such as “caring/deviant mothers”, “good/bad wives”, “seductive lovers”, and “helping hands” of men more important than themselves.¹⁰

increasingly use the term intersectional for the work of Jones and Black women activists and thinkers like her”. Francisca de Haan, ‘Introduction: Toward a Global History of Communist Women’, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Communist Women Activists around the World*, 7–8.

⁹ Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, ‘Introduction’, in *ead.*, *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin, 2014), 1–25, here 21.

¹⁰ On demonising representations of communist women in Polish culture, see, for example, Agnieszka Mrozik, ‘Beasts, Demons, and Cold Bitches: Memories of Communist Women in Contemporary Poland’, *Baltic Worlds*, 4 (2017), 54–7.

What deserves special appreciation are the attempts by authors of both publications to bring out the voices of their protagonists: speeches, articles, letters, and memoirs. Thus, communist women – their lives and activities, evolving over time and space – emerge from these works as agents of history, also acting through words, through their texts: sometimes extremely difficult to access, as the authors of the chapters in the Palgrave volume, in particular, highlight. They point out that the history of communist women is also the history of knowledge about them: a history of incomplete archives, scattered sources, omissions and silences in their own texts, but also in those by their biographers. At times, the Palgrave authors have to navigate through a wealth of information, having to deal with a peculiar abundance, a multiplicity of sources – journalistic, literary, auto/biographical, film – while at other times, they struggle with a lack of material. However, both publications reveal the importance not only of the archives themselves, but also of the attitude toward them: curiosity, but also suspicion of material found in the archives is a constant guide for those who write about communist women. Yet, it is the passion of the authors, their desire to tell the stories of communist women and draw them out from silence, that is undoubtedly what primarily captures the attention of the reader.

It is worth mentioning at this point that until recently, communist women were rarely discussed in publications on the history of leftist movements and parties on the one hand, and the history of women's and feminist movements on the other. According to Francisca de Haan, the editor of the Palgrave volume, the marginalisation of women in the historiography of communism is part of a long tradition of practising historiography which is “male-centred” and “gender-blind” while erasing communist women from the historiography of women's and feminist movements is nothing but “a continuation of Cold War paradigms”.¹¹ Within these paradigms, efforts to emancipate women

¹¹ 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*, 4 (2010), 547–73. See also Anna Krylova, ‘Legacies of the Cold War and the Future of Gender in Feminist Histories of Socialism’, in Katalin Fábán, Janet Elise Johnson and Mara Lazda (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Gender in Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia* (London, 2021), 41–51.

in socialist states after the Second World War are characterised as “apparent”, and the role of those who advocated these efforts – feminist communists – is questioned.¹² Meanwhile, as de Haan and Kristen Ghodsee note, citing Maria Bucur’s *The Century of Women*, the twentieth century brought radical changes to the lives of women around the world in terms of their education, professional advancement, and roles in the family and society, and these changes would not have been accomplished without the contribution of communist and socialist female politicians, intellectuals, and activists.¹³ That this contribution to post-war modernisation is increasingly recognised is evident in recent research on the activities of left feminists in nation-states and internationally, as exemplified by the two reviewed publications.

This new wave of research adopts a revisionist approach that involves not only the acknowledgement of communist women’s engagement in processes of women’s emancipation but, more importantly, a reconsideration of concepts of agency, subjectivity, activism, and emancipation itself. Such an approach also provides an impetus for a rethinking of post-war modernities, which were forged in different corners of the world through various processes, disputes, and struggles. Socialism and those who identified with it were one of the main driving wheels of twentieth-century history, and many of their projects, visions, and ideas remain in the realm of as yet unrealised possibilities and potentials, setting what American political scientist Jodi Dean calls the “communist horizon”.¹⁴

But this new wave of research is also being driven by the biographical approach, the usefulness of which is being rediscovered by contemporary scholars.¹⁵ This approach helps, first of all, to better understand

¹² For discussions on “communist feminism”, see, e.g., ‘Forum: Is “Communist Feminism” a *Contradictio in Terminus*?’ *Aspasia*, 1 (2007), 197–246; ‘Forum: Gendering the Cold War in the Region’, ed. Francisca de Haan, *Aspasia*, 8 (2014), 162–90; ‘Forum: Ten Years After: Communism and Feminism Revisited’, ed. Francisca de Haan, *Aspasia*, 10 (2016), 102–62.

¹³ Maria Bucur-Deckard, *The Century of Women: How Women Have Transformed the World since 1900* (Lanham, 2018). See also Donna Harsch, ‘Communism and Women’, in Stephen A. Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism* (Oxford–New York, 2013), 488–504.

¹⁴ Jodi Dean, *The Communist Horizon* (London, 2012).

¹⁵ See, for example, Italian historian and gender scholar Chiara Bonfiglioli’s project ‘WO-NAM: Women and Non-Alignment in the Cold War Era: Biographical

that historical processes do not proceed anonymously, as there are always concrete people behind them. It also highlights that women's organisations – national and international alike – are not impersonal formations: it is actual women who create them and act in them. Second, it helps to realise that the communist women's movement was not limited to the few Soviet women mentioned in almost every study. Communist women's rights advocates were active in many countries, as is increasingly evident thanks to studies that reveal the global nature of this movement. Third and finally, biographism helps trace the trajectories of women involved in designing and implementing emancipation initiatives and to better understand their choices and motives. Especially in countries with a difficult, turbulent history, such as Poland, the political choices and life paths of many people, including communist women, were not one-dimensional.

However, to return to the reviewed publications, their authors, and not just their protagonists, also deserve a few words of commentary. It is clear from their biographical notes, but above all from their works, that they are not only experts on the subject and specialists in the field but also often passionate educators and even activists who combine in various ways academic work with other forms of engagement in public life. Their publications demonstrate not only scholarly competence but also the aforementioned commitment and passion in their approach to the protagonists of their works. These can be seen above all in the way they narrate the life stories of communist women without aiming, to paraphrase Joan Wallach Scott, "to add [communist] women to an existing body of stories, [but] to change the way these stories would be told". To paraphrase Scott even further, "it's new stories that [the authors] yearn to tell, new memories that [they] seek to reveal. [Their] passion for [communist] women's history [proves to be] a desire to know and think what had hitherto been unthinkable. Passion, after all, thrives on the pursuit of the not-yet-known".¹⁶ According to Scott, the key to a feminist shift in storytelling is interdisciplinarity, which is strongly evident in the volumes discussed here. Indeed, I would argue that a history of communist women who crossed all possible boundaries

and Intersectional Perspectives', funded in 2023 by the European Research Council; cf. Katarzyna Sierakowska's review article in this issue of the *Acta Poloniae Historica*.

¹⁶ Joan Wallach Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Durham, 2011), 24 and 40.

in their lives and activities would be difficult, if not impossible, to articulate within just one discipline, as indicated by my study on the Polish communist Wanda Wasilewska and Victor Strazzeri's work on Italian communist women.¹⁷ For, according to Strazzeri, it is not a matter of simply placing communist women within existing research merely to plug a gap. It is necessary to change the entire topography of the field, which will only be possible if we transcend the rigid boundaries of research conducted within one discipline or the other. The tools of many different disciplines – anthropology, literary studies, cultural studies, political studies, gender and women's studies, and, of course, historiography – are necessary to tell this complex, multifaceted story of communist women, but also the story of their mythologisation and, on other occasions, their demonisation. Only when those tools are applied will we be able to grasp communist women – that “unexpectedly transgressive subject of twentieth-century history” – with its complicated trajectories.¹⁸ I believe that today, when our research (especially in Poland) is once again strictly contained within disciplinary boundaries, writing about communist women provides an (if not the) opportunity to transgress these boundaries.

Finally, it is worth reflecting on what the two publications under review are or could become for their readers. As intended by their authors, these volumes serve not only as a source of knowledge, but also a kind of link to the protagonists of a history that Francis Fukuyama claimed had ended,¹⁹ as well as to other scholars, activists, or simply people who share a certain vision of the world and a belief in acting (or at least a desire to act) to achieve it. Books such as these foster a kind of reading collective: a virtual and sometimes quite real transnational community of scholars and practitioners who, through reading, overcome isolation and helplessness in their everyday lives. When I was working on a book about Polish communist women, post-Second World War left feminists,²⁰ their memoirs made me realise how many of them came to the communist movement precisely through

¹⁷ See Agnieszka Mrozik, 'Crossing Boundaries: The Case of Wanda Wasilewska and Polish Communism', *Aspasia*, 11 (2017), 19–53; Strazzeri, 'Beyond the Double Blind Spot'.

¹⁸ Strazzeri, 'Beyond the Double Blind Spot', 16.

¹⁹ Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *National Interest*, 16 (1989), 3–18.

²⁰ See Agnieszka Mrozik, *Architektki PRL-u. Komunistki, literatura i emancypacja kobiet w powojennej Polsce* (Warszawa, 2022).

books – works by Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, August Bebel, Clara Zetkin, and many others, which proved to offer a platform for meeting other comrades, a tool for building consensus on goals and strategies for the common struggle. It seems that this kind of connection is still relevant, or at least that is how I understand the persuasive function of the publications in question. Stories of other people's lives and activities still have the power to thrill, to inspire, to awaken dreams of a better world, and the desire to make these dreams a reality – no longer on one's own, but collectively.

The Palgrave volume, as its title suggests, is a kind of a handbook. It teaches that emancipation and equality are not given once and for all, and that the struggle to preserve them is unending. As de Haan puts it:

Today, anti-communism is driving new far-right, even fascist, movements and parties that want to restore the traditional role of women in the family and society – to restore everything the protagonists of this book opposed and fought against. In the end, this is why it is so important to remind us of the biographies of communist women: not to nostalgically reflect on the past, but to see that the struggle they devoted their lives to is not over. It just entered a new stage.²¹

Red Valkyries, with its telling subtitle *Feminist Lessons from Five Revolutionary Women*, follows the handbook format as well. Drawing on the life experiences of her protagonists, Ghodsee shares with her readers practical advice on how to effectively act, both as a feminist and as a leftist. Unusually personal, and even sentimental, Verso's publication is both militant and mobilising. Its first and last pages read like a political-activist manual designed to help those exhausted by the daily struggle for a better world:

[...] each of the women profiled in these pages, in their own way, fought like superhuman warriors to support causes that defined the twentieth century. [...] To face the many challenges of the twenty-first century, we need a broader vision of emancipation that targets the forces that produce and exacerbate inequality at all levels of society. The *Red Valkyries* can help show us the way.²²

²¹ De Haan, 'Introduction', 19.

²² Ghodsee, *Red Valkyries*, 17.

Both works remind the readers that this struggle is hardly over and, indeed, that it can never be over, even if it brings more failures than successes. The lives and activities of their protagonists show that it is necessary to have patience because change is a long process spread over many years, and no lost battle is a final defeat. Rosa Luxemburg, incidentally the protagonist of neither the Palgrave volume nor of *Red Valkyries*, wrote about this in her last article:

The whole road of socialism – so far as revolutionary struggles are concerned – is paved with nothing but thunderous defeats. Yet, at the same time, history marches inexorably, step by step, toward final victory! Where would we be today without those “defeats”, from which we draw historical experience, understanding, power and idealism? Today, as we advance into the final battle of the proletarian class war, we stand on the foundation of those very defeats; and we cannot do without any of them, because each one contributes to our strength and understanding.²³

Processes that were left unfinished or even ended in failure in the past can and should be continued in the future. This is the main conclusion that can be drawn from reading both books.

Finally, the two volumes encourage further work on the topic and the increased collaboration, including among scholars: after all, so often do we learn the stories of our protagonists thanks to other scholars working on similar topics in other parts of the world. For example, Francisca de Haan’s studies on the history of the Women’s International Democratic Federation and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women,²⁴ allowed me to identify Polish post-war communists committed to women’s activism – Zofia Dembińska and Fryderyka Kalinowska – who were either completely absent from research in Poland, or mentioned in other contexts, such as activism for the sake of children, rather than women. The reviewed volumes reveal how many women in the ranks of the communist left acted for

²³ Rosa Luxemburg, ‘Order Prevails in Berlin’ (1919), in Helen C. Scott and Paul Le Blanc (eds), *Socialism or Barbarism: The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg* (London, 2010), 261–8, here 267.

²⁴ See Francisca de Haan, ‘The Global Left-Feminist 1960s: From Copenhagen to Moscow and New York’, in Chen Jian, Martin Klimke, Masha Kirasirova et al. (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building* (London–New York, 2018), 230–42.

women and how many gaps exist in our knowledge about them. The biographies of twenty-nine communist women in total – Alexandra Kollontai’s story is covered in both publications and, notably, Kristen Ghodsee has co-authored a chapter on her in the Palgrave volume – provide an excellent starting point for these additions, or rather, the beginning of an entirely new story, which “is not only interesting from a historical point of view, [but] it empowers us to better act upon the world as it currently exists”.²⁵

Acknowledgement: This review article draws on my talk delivered at a panel and book launch celebrating the retirement of Professor Francisca de Haan and recognising her scholarly achievements, held at the Central European University in Vienna on 1 April 2023. My contribution to that event was later printed in the journal *Aspasia*, in the opening section titled ‘A Tribute to Francisca de Haan’. See Agnieszka Mrozik, ‘Long march toward final victory: How and why to write about communist women today?’, *Aspasia*, 17 (2023), 22–26.

proofreading Antoni Górny

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Artwińska Anna and Agnieszka Mrozik (eds), *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond* (London–New York, 2020).
- Bucur-Deckard Maria, *The Century of Women: How Women Have Transformed the World since 1900* (Lanham, 2018).
- DuBois Ellen C., ‘Eleanor Flexner and the History of American Feminism’, *Gender & History*, 1 (1991), 81–90.
- Haan Francisca de, ‘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*, 4 (2010), 547–73.
- Haan Francisca de, ‘The Global Left-Feminist 1960s: From Copenhagen to Moscow and New York’, in Chen Jian, Martin Klimke, Masha Kirasirova *et al.* (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building* (London–New York, 2018).

²⁵ Vincent Bevins, interviewed by Loren Balhorn, ‘The Cold War Was Never about Democracy’, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 27 March 2023, <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/50192?fbclid=IwAR3qK7cR9fes-b3c7xpIbnO15zm5OVQkikfHaV8uVy3gxbsOK4EBhNHEde> [Accessed: 30 March 2023].

- Haiven Max and Alex Khasnabish, *The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity* (London, 2014).
- Harsch Donna, 'Communism and Women', in Stephen A. Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism* (Oxford–New York, 2013).
- Krylova Anna, 'Legacies of the Cold War and the Future of Gender in Feminist Histories of Socialism', in Katalin Fábán, Janet Elise Johnson and Mara Lazda (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Gender in Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia* (London, 2021), 41–51.
- Mrozik Agnieszka, 'Crossing Boundaries: The Case of Wanda Wasilewska and Polish Communism', *Aspasia*, 11 (2017), 19–53.
- Mrozik Agnieszka, *Architektki PRL-u. Komunistki, literatura i emancypacja kobiet w powojennej Polsce* (Warszawa, 2022).
- Scott Joan Wallach, *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Durham, 2011).
- Strazzeri Victor, 'Beyond the Double Blind Spot: Relocating Communist Women as Transgressive Subjects in Contemporary Historiography', *Gender & History*, 3 (2022), 1–20.

Agnieszka Mrozik – gender, generations, communism in Central and Eastern Europe; critical analysis of public discourse (including media and popular culture); women's history and feminist movement in Central and Eastern Europe; assistant professor at the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences. E-mail: agnieszka.mrozik@ibl.waw.pl