

tive impact on society and politics. “The move to a market economy had erased socialism’s shortages,” she writes, “but it had not necessarily brought happiness” (183). The current rise of right-wing populism and anti-gender movements in the region is grounded, to a large extent, in the neoliberal shift, which provided a fertile ground for populist leaders to claim to represent “the moral voice of the people, who they see as oppressed by self-serving elites” (201). My only critique of these masterfully written chapters on the post-1989 era is that the agency of social actors is less pronounced here than in the chapters that focus on the communist era. Feinberg concentrates on the populist political leaders in Hungary and Poland, who have dismantled democratic institutions and undermined basic human rights. She could have included more discussion of the bottom-up responses and contestation that developed against those policies, such as the women’s protests in Poland. Like communists before them, authoritarian populists are not all-powerful. The process of negotiation, resistance, and accommodation is still an important part of the Eastern European social and political landscape.

Communism in Eastern Europe humanizes the experience of communism. Rather than serving fixed answers and models, it encourages the reader to engage with the tensions and ambiguities embedded in both the communist and postcommunist eras. It is a superb and much-needed book that sets a new standard for writing synthetic accounts of Eastern European history.



Fabio Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European: Voluntary Associations, Gender, and Islam in Post-Ottoman Bosnia and Yugoslavia (1878–1941)*, Budapest: CEU Press, 2021, 420 pp., €88.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-963-386-369-5.

Book review by **Stefano Petrunaro**
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This book is a study of the Muslim voluntary associations in post-Ottoman Bosnia and Yugoslavia, with a focus on their gender dimension. At the same time, Fabio Giomi’s work is much more than this, because it intertwines the Muslim associational landscape with non-Muslim associations, voluntary associations with the political scene, and Bosnian reality with the two postimperial contexts in which it belonged—that is, post-Habsburg and post-Ottoman—as well as with the Yugoslav environment. The volume thus reconstructs a relevant chapter of the cultural, social, and political history of Yugoslavia and the Balkans.

This work has the charm of a mosaic, of tiles collected with passion, and not simply from major libraries or national archives, but also from minor places, private institutions, and sources placed at the author’s disposal by individuals. Its approach recalls

anthropological fieldwork, relying on the establishment of solid personal networks, built through time, and indebted to the trust gained from the interlocutors.

The analysis keeps the big historical and historiographical issues together, as well as the individual historical personalities—men and most of all women—whose memory had almost been lost, and which Fabio Giomi has recovered, shining upon it the light it deserves. The analysis, thus, is full of portraits of Bosnian Muslim women: poets, teachers, singers, activists, of noble and less noble origins. They are the women with whom this book intended to deal, and who actually occupy its virtual space. It is a gesture that is at the same time methodological and cultural-political: to leave the center of the stage to historiographically silent actors in order to contrast a stereotypical vision of an extreme subalternity. The book gives back agency to those who actually already had it, acknowledging that they actively contributed, sometimes even in unexpected and creative ways, to redefining the image and social role of women in Bosnian Muslim society.

The author offers detailed insights into the—sometimes ephemeral—lives of a wide range of Muslim philanthropic and cultural associations, at the same time providing the reader with useful tools for gaining an overview of the Muslim associational landscape, identifying the main political orientations and the different discourses and practices developed by the activists' groups. The book demonstrates that voluntary associations were the arena in which the challenges posed by modernity were elaborated and domesticated, ascribing a clear centrality to the social role of women. The investigation strives to consider not only how the men debated such issues, and how they shaped associational life, but also how women actively contributed to it. World War I represents a watershed from this perspective: Muslim women began to participate directly in associational experiences, challenging the rules of sexual and confessional segregation. The late Habsburg years had already initiated relevant changes in Bosnian Muslim society, promoting female education, and progressive Bosnian men and a minority of women actively supported such politics. But after 1918 educated Muslim women who had already published in the pages of the associational press began to visibly enter the public space and to establish and participate in voluntary associations.

Giomi presents fascinating discussions about the debates emerging around gender issues and social norms. The sophisticated scrutiny of the sources reveals all the complexity that these issues could acquire in daily life, and thanks to the excellent visual sources that the author has collected and deciphered, the study shows both changing gender norms, especially in the urban context, and the ability of women to circumvent, overcome, and very creatively adapt those norms.

The book reveals how the Muslim associational world was divided not only along national lines—Serbian, Croatian, or Yugoslav, depending on the period and the sensibilities—but also in terms of class. Class distinctions characterized the internal life of the organizations, as well as the relationships of the philanthropic associations, managed by members of the Muslim middle class, toward poor Muslim women. Furthermore, alongside more progressive groups, (neo)traditionalist ones also emerged, shaping a vivid rivalry among Muslim associations and producing deeply different interpretations of (European) Bosnian Muslim religious identity and the role women should embody.

Considering all the variegated forms of female commitment in the voluntary associations, the book successfully challenges the Orientalist stereotype of silent and repressed Muslim women, instead describing how they began to study and to teach, to sew and to work, to write and to speak, even to dance and to sing in public and in mixed male-female settings.

It is important that the author refuses to limit himself to the description of what is evidently true: that this was a deeply limited female emancipation, often led by men who did not foresee full political rights for women or contest the ideology of separate spheres. The conclusion is nonetheless that it would be inopportune to reduce women's experiences to mere and updated variants of traditional patriarchy. Apart from the explicitly traditionalist associations, all the progressive ones, beyond their political differences, provided Bosnian Muslim women with spaces, virtual and physical, for testing, experiencing, and adapting new forms of sociability, of artistic expression, of education, of mobility, of intellectual autonomy. In other words, the voluntary associations already represented tools of female empowerment before the next, socialist chapter of Yugoslav history.



Yulia Gradskova, *The Women's International Democratic Federation, the Global South and the Cold War: Defending the Rights of Women of the "Whole World"?* London: Routledge, 2020, 222 pp. £29.59 (e-book), ISBN: 9781003050032.

Book review by **Alexandra Talaver**
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Yulia Gradskova's book contributes to the growing field of scholarship on the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF),¹ and beyond—to the transnational women's movement as a whole. The WIDF was established in 1945 and was active in many transnational campaigns for peace and women's rights. However, until recently it was almost completely forgotten by historians. Francisca de Haan, who has rediscovered the organization, explains the situation by noting that Western historiography tends to reproduce "Cold War" clichés and has dismissed the WIDF as a communist and not a feminist organization.² Gradskova suggests complicating the question by asking why, then, the WIDF is not remembered in former socialist European countries either. Thus, she attempts to look for other reasons for the WIDF's erasure from historiography besides ideological ones, and she pays particular attention to the inner workings and the development of the organization.

In the first chapter, Gradskova sets the agenda of her study. The book moves in many different directions, but one of the main questions is how the WIDF discourse on women's rights was shaped by Cold War divisions, and what the role was of the