Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

East European Studies

WOMEN IN EAST EUROPEAN POLITICS

Edited by
Nida Gelazis

WOMEN IN EAST EUROPEAN POLITICS

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Edited by Nida Gelazis

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East European Studies Program

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The East European Studies Program presents:
WOMEN IN EAST EUROPEAN POLITICS

Co-sponsored by the Kennan Institute, the Watson Institute of Brown University and George Washington University

April 23, 2004
9:00 am – 5:00 pm
5th Floor Conference Room
This conference aims at exploring the experiences and the political goals of women elected to parliament in the postcommunist countries of East Central Europe and Russia. The conference will assess the impact women are having on the key processes of democracy promotion and nation-building in the region. In this process, conference participants will examine how women elected to political positions define the key issues of the day, how they relate them to their overall political goals, and how they deal with the conflicts and compromises this entails. The conference will examine the position of the major political parties on women's representation and on policy issues affecting women and their role in the political, social, cultural aspects of democracy-building and civil society. The conference will focus on the comparative experiences of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and eastern Germany as well as Russia and include elected women parliamentarians and key experts from these countries as well as academic experts on the region.

9:00 Registration and Coffee
9:15 Opening Remarks: Martin Sletzinger, Director EES and
Marilyn Rueschemeyer, RISD/Brown University

First Panel: **Slovenia**
9:30 Milica G. Antic, University of Ljubljana
9:50 Majda Sirca, Liberal Democracy Party MP from Slovenia
10:05 Discussion

10:30 Keynote Speaker: Rep. Louise M. Slaughter, D-NY, Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues
10:50 Discussion
11:10 Break

Second Panel: **Poland and the Czech Republic**
11:30 Renata Siemienska, Warsaw University
11:50 Sharon Wolchik, George Washington University
11:10 Anna Curdova, Czech Social Democratic Party MP from the Czech Republic
11:25 Discussion
12:00 Lunch

Third Panel: **Russia**
1:30 Carol Nechemias, Pennsylvania State University
1:50 Linda Cook, Brown University
2:10 Irina Khakamada, Former MP of the Russian Duma, 2004 Presidential candidate
2:25 Discussion
3:00 Break

Fourth Panel: **Eastern Germany**
3:15 Marilyn Rueschemeyer, RISD/Brown University
3:35 Constanze Krehl, German representative to the European Parliament
4:50 Discussion
4:30 Summary and Introduction of Saturday Session, **Sharon Wolchik**
5:00 End of First Conference Day

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INTRODUCTION

This conference aimed at exploring the experiences and the political goals of women elected to parliament in the postcommunist countries of East Central Europe and Russia. Since 1989, the political scene in Eastern Europe and Russia has changed swiftly. In many countries, women participated in the drive to transform the communist system through demonstrations, civil activism and roundtables. Yet, in the immediate transition period, civic participation of the population in general has declined and the social and political participation of women seems to have declined more than that of men. This difference is attributed in part to the fact that women have been more burdened by the complex adjustments to the social and economic transformations of their societies. In the last few years, however, women with good qualifications and professional experience are slowly gaining political power and influence in several countries.

The conference assessed the impact women are having on the key processes of democracy promotion and nation-building in Eastern Europe and Russia. In this process, conference participants examined how women elected to political positions define the key issues of the day, how they relate them to their overall political goals, and how they deal with the conflicts and compromises this entails. Participants examined the position of the major political parties on women's representation and on policy issues affecting women and their role in the political, social, cultural aspects of democracy-building and civil society. The conference focused on the comparative experiences of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Eastern Germany as well as Russia and include elected women parliamentarians from each of these countries as well as US-based experts on the region. A contribution on Bulgaria was added after the conference because it fit well into this project's framework and offered another illustrative example of the various factors that impact women's participation in postcommunist parliaments.

There is no doubt that women play important roles in the politics and societies of postcommunist Europe. But given the social and political flux of the transition period, it is important to assess how women have

managed to adapt to the changing rules of the political and economic game. Looking at the flat numbers of women in parliaments before and after communism show a universal fall in women's representation, which elicits a series of complex questions about what this means, both in terms of causes of low representation and the effect it will have on women's issues. Perhaps the most interesting outcome of this study is that the data collected shows that raw numbers say very little about the probability that pro-women legislation will be adopted by Parliament. That is to say, more women do not automatically lead to increased protections for women's interests. Women have diverse interests, and this diversity is reflected in their political activity.

Another theory that was raised regarding the link between the number of women and women-friendly legislation was that representative numbers need to reach a certain critical mass before their positive impact on legislation can be seen. Research into political party governance and electoral rules reveal policies and methods that discriminate against women and keep their representation low in parliaments. Even when women manage to enter parliaments, deep-seeded notions of the differences between men and women seem to keep women MPs from taking on powerful leadership positions in their party blocs and in parliamentary committees. This shows that even in countries that are now EU members, there is still a ways to go in terms of sharing 'western' values of equality and participation. For those countries already in the EU, international leverage to induce change is all the more limited.

The conference was made possible by a federal grant awarded by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars to the East European Studies program and the Kennan Institute. Additional funding and support was granted by the Watson Institute of Brown University and the George Washington University. The topic and conference framework were conceived by Marilyn Rueschemeyer and Sharon Wolchik. In addition to thanking all of the conference participants and contributors to this volume, special thanks goes to EES project assistant Katy Bondy for her administrative help.

CHAPTER ONE

East German Women in the Unified German Parliament

Marilyn Rueschemeyer,[1] ***Professor of Sociology, Rhode Island School of Design and Visiting Professor of International Studies, Watson Institute, Brown University***

The postcommunist transformation that took place in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) was differently structured than the changes that took place in the other countries in this study. In several East European countries, relations with the West were shaping many of the political responses and initiatives that developed even before the end of the communist period. The GDR, however, was completely incorporated into the Federal Republic of Germany, adopting its Constitution and all its economic, political and social institutions. Its unions were incorporated into to the West German Union structure and its parties were incorporated into the West German party system. But the unification process led to a number of tensions and very difficult problems in the former GDR. These tensions affected the experiences and self-perceptions of the women represented in the Bundestag.

This paper will begin with a brief overview of the position of women in the former GDR and then sketch the role of women in the early years of the transformation. It will then turn to its main theme, the experiences and the political goals of East German women who became members of the *Bundestag* (the lower house of the German Parliament), based on interviews conducted with them.[2]

Women in the GDR

The history of the East European countries has given a special shape to developments after 1989, to the situation and problems of women as well as to the emerging democratic politics and the new role of women in

politics. It is especially important to note that the education that women received during the communist period, their participation and position in the labor force, and their status varied throughout the region.

By the time the communist regime in the GDR ended, nearly 90 percent of all East German women eligible for employment were participating in the labor force or studying. Women contributed to 40 percent of the family income. Seventy percent of all women had completed an apprenticeship or advanced vocational training, and women 40 years or younger had achieved the same educational level as men. Women represented about half of all students in higher education. Women also had, even with the limited political autonomy of social and political institutions, considerable participatory experience at the workplace, in unions, especially in union work collectives, and in their neighborhoods.[3] Approximately one-third of the deputies in the *Volkskammer* (the National Assembly of the GDR) were women.

Policies affecting the participation of women in the labor force and in the public sphere were more conservative in West Germany. Labor force participation of women increased there too but, with 60 percent in 1990, it was much lower than in the GDR.[4] In both Germanies, the share of women in the highest executive positions remained low, less than 4 percent. The percentage of women in middle management was higher in East Germany, but was still less than the proportion of their male colleagues—only about one-third of these positions were filled by women.

Social welfare benefits supporting men and women in the workforce were, not surprisingly, stronger in East Germany and the issues revolving around the differences are still salient. In the GDR, day-care for children was comprehensive. Working parents were guaranteed 40 days annually of paid leave to care for sick children, and one-year leave was available to new parents at 75 to 90 percent of net pay and with the guarantee of returning to the job at the same level.[5] By the mid-1980s, women in West Germany had 14 weeks of maternity leave, nearly full compensation and one year of "educational" leave with a low stipend. In West Germany, only 3 percent of children under the age of three were in public day-care centers, in contrast to about 85 percent in East Germany. Before unification, a mother in West Germany could take five paid days a year to care for a sick child.[6]

Developments after 1989: the early unification years

After 1989, many women in East Germany had an interest in politics and were prepared to enter political life, yet they did so only in limited numbers. In the election to the Volkskammer of then still separate East Germany in March 1990, more than 20 percent of the newly-elected representatives were women. A number of women had been involved in initiating projects and groups, such as the independent women's movement, citizen movements and participating in the formation of new political parties. Indeed, several of the women presently in the Bundestag had been active in new organizations and political parties during the transition years.

Yet the participation of women was far from equal to that of men. Women were under-represented among elected officials and women's issues were not particularly salient. This was due in part to declining health care, education and child-care benefits, which are crucial to the economic and political participation of women. The uncertainty of conditions affected policy decisions but so did the existing power relations at the time. Determining the most important issues during the transition was part of the political game and reflected existing economic and political inclinations.[7] In this process, focusing on how the transition affected women did not seem viable politically.

Nevertheless, women did seem to be at a particular disadvantage during the period of transition. Unemployment in East Germany rose dramatically after unification, and women—especially women of a certain age and in particular occupational categories—were especially affected. In 1992, the second year of unification, the unemployment rate came close to 40 percent, if one includes the "hidden unemployed" of short-term employment, people in retraining programs and those in early retirement. At the end of June 1992, 63.6 percent of the unemployed in East Germany were women. In addition to worries about work, women's greater responsibilities in caring for children and for negotiating the new education, health and insurance systems, left very little time and energy for social and political engagement.

Getting elected to the Bundestag[8]

In 2003, 198 members of the Bundestag (33 percent) were women.[9] Thirty-five of these women were representatives from the former GDR.[10]

About 60 percent of all women in the Bundestag were elected as part of a party list, which is substantially higher than the overall proportion of 50 percent. This is in line with what has been observed frequently—that women have a better chance to be nominated from party lists than to be elected directly.[11] This tendency is reinforced by quotas for women: with the exception of the Free Democratic Party and the Bavarian wing of the Christian Democrats, all parties had quota goals for their party lists, which ranged from one-third in the Christian Democratic Party (CDP) to 40 percent in the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP) and 50 percent in the Green Party (GP) and the Reformed Communist Party (RCP). In the former GDR, however, the proportion of women elected directly or via party lists was nearly reversed: 20 of 35, or 57 percent, were elected directly and only 43 percent as part of a list. This may be due to the fact that the RCP did not gain the five percent of the vote it needed to be proportionally represented in parliament through its list. Two women were directly elected and now sit in the Bundestag.

It was an important development at the time of unification to move towards a quota system for women in parties and in parliaments in West Germany. In the political discussion in postcommunist societies, quota systems were often dismissed because under communism they brought in women who were not really qualified. Since the West German GP and the SDP had previously initiated a quota system, the RCP, the Alliance 90/GP and the eastern SDP offered similar opportunities. The effects in the last two federal elections were especially impressive. A number of the women parliamentarians I interviewed mentioned that they, too, had been against the quota system, believing it unnecessary and maintaining that women could fulfill their goals without help. But they are now convinced that without it, far fewer women would be sitting in the Bundestag.

Beginnings of political involvement and party support

It is difficult to generalize about the women deputies from eastern Germany, since they have very different backgrounds, and they emphasized these differences. As mentioned above, women in the former GDR had been active in local and regional organizations, unions, professional groups and in the East German Parliament, even if the power or autonomy to create or to amend policies was limited. Most women had participated in the official youth group and the official union

organizations but, given that participation was basically mandatory, their involvement ranged from enthusiastic to passive and critical. There were a few MPs who were active in official GDR organizations, but most highlighted their lack of participation in the communist regime, which had the effect of making them more acceptable as candidates.

In the 1980s, people in the GDR gathered in a variety of ways and acted within official organizations to help transform, open, improve and, for a number, radically change the society. Many of the women in the Volkskammer were involved in these activities, hopeful that they could begin a modest transformation. A number of women were elected to the first freely-elected Volkskammer. With unification and political organization taking on the structures of West Germany, it became clear to many activists that the most sensible way to realize political goals was to take part in political parties. With the help of active members of the major western political parties, a number of East German women began their political careers by becoming involved in the formation of these parties in the east. Some of the women politicians I spoke with said they were encouraged by their parties to become active in unions, professional associations and churches.

During the later years of the GDR, churches hosted a number of alternative groups, concerned with peace or the environment for example, and were active bases for dissent. These 'counter-regime' religious identities were not only mentioned in my interviews with Bundestag MPs, but in official printed summaries of the education, career and social involvement of the women in Parliament. The new eastern Social Democratic Party has been described with some exaggeration as the party of religious ministers. Among the women politicians with whom I spoke were two who had studied theology and one became a Protestant minister before entering politics. Several women mentioned their Protestant backgrounds. Some of these women belonged to the CDP. Others identified themselves as religious Catholics. Some of them joined the CDP; others became members of the Social Democratic Party. In largely secular eastern Germany, only one woman MP mentioned in her background statement that she was an atheist.

Because of the high labor force participation of women in the GDR, the professional backgrounds of women were helpful to the parties in defining the expertise of potential candidates. Moreover, their work experience

created connections between the candidates and the communities in which they lived and worked. The professional backgrounds of nearly all the women in Parliament were extensive and included a number of women fields usually thought of as 'male,' such as engineering.

Entering parliamentary work

Most newcomers to any parliament enter with excitement and some sense of trepidation. That was true as well of the women deputies I interviewed. Most were uncertain of how Parliament functioned. Even those that had enough knowledge and experience were sensitive to their position as former citizens of the GDR. Perhaps for this reason, MPs from eastern Germany meet at regular intervals, usually once a month. Although they belong to different parties, they have had somewhat more cooperative relations with other parties on the local and regional level than their western colleagues.

It seems that even with occasionally strong differences of opinion, the long discussions and debates within the parties and in parliament as well as among individual representatives are having a significant effect on the GDR representatives. The complexity of the issues they are dealing with, the necessity of negotiation, and the accumulated experience with politics on all levels have given most of the representatives much more confidence than they had when they first began their work in the Bundestag. A few also noted that their colleagues from the West are listening to their experiences as well.

The solidarity that existed among the eastern representatives clearly persists in the 2002 Bundestag. Although one or two representatives observed that this is weakening, others stressed that the differences between western and eastern representatives and their parties. One male MP, who moved to the East for his work and was then elected there, thought that the representatives of the East were more like colleagues than those of the West: "We 'easterners' disagree, we discuss intensely, but we are more harmonious with each other than the western representatives." Several of the women representatives agree with this assessment.

The eastern German women also commented on the different manner of talking of "typically male" representatives from the West: "They speak a great deal, often embellishing without end. Not one western male would give up the opportunity to speak, even if the hour were very late."

"We are used to speaking simply and to say what we want to say, and then finish. We are not used to this kind of debate." Western parties are still seen as parties of the west. According to one representative, the differences between east and west are less extreme in the Social Democratic Party than among the Greens. "But the Greens changed some in the last few years and now relate more to reality." According to another, "the Greens sit, embroider and utter intellectual sentences."

One of the eastern male representatives did disagree with women colleagues who spoke about more harmonious relations among representatives: "In the parliament, there is only competition even if people want harmony. How do you think anyone gets elected? They compete with each other for candidacy or in the elections. That doesn't change after entering parliament; any discussion of a great community is nonsense."

The party system in Germany tightly controls its members. Moreover, in Parliament, the official party caucus heavily influences the work of the Bundestag and the level of participation of MPs. In order to form an official party caucus in the Bundestag, a party needs to have won least 5 percent of the seats in Parliament (this means at least 31 deputies). There were four official parties after the 2002 elections that met this requirement and formed a caucus: the Social Democratic Party with 251 representatives; the Union party (combined CDU/CSU) with 248 representatives; the Alliance 90/Green party with 55 (in the coalition government with the Social Democratic Party,) and the FDP with 47 representatives. Directly elected members without a party caucus are not given the same facilities as other members, and they are not entitled to voting membership in committees.[12]

There are of course discussions, debates and working groups that address specific issues. But once a common position is reached unity is expected. Sometimes, that can be difficult for those involved. There may be strong divisions within the party, a more leftist oriented wing against a conservative wing, dissent from younger members who are organized, and differences between east and west. When there is disagreement, members may be engaged in talks with party officials, "experts, with more experience," according to a few of the women I interviewed, who try to convince them of the rationale behind the decision of the party and emphasize that the majority of the party members expressed a strong preference for a particular course of action. When the entire parliament

gathers to vote, there is strong pressure on party members to vote with the party. Only on rare occasions, for instance in the vote on stem cell research or the earlier vote on abortion, are MPs free vote according to their conscience.

Issues of particular import to women MPs from eastern Germany

The issues that were most important to the women representatives related to the major difficulties in the East, especially the problem of unemployment. In eastern Germany, the unemployment rate fluctuates between 17 and 18 percent; overall in Germany, it is about 10 percent. Other issues concern the further reduction of job security and the problems of pensions for certain segments of the population; women, for example, earned lower pensions when they had to retire at 55 after unification or became unemployed and after a few years gave up the search or had to work part-time. The situation was improved for mothers not working outside the house or working part-time by raising their pension claims for those years to the average pension claim.

Another critical issue is how to make work and family concerns more compatible. The government here responds to demands to improve social conditions for dual-career families. This is also mandated by the European Union's policies on Gender Mainstreaming: "Gender Mainstreaming has become part of the German vocabulary. It represents the more comprehensive European equivalent to America's "equal opportunity." Some women politicians complain that the national implementations still leave much to be desired.

There is concern with the low birth rate in Germany. Forty percent of women with higher education do not have children. One policy, enacted earlier, provides for a monthly payment for each child as well as a year's leave from work with a modest stipend, social security payments, and a guarantee of being able to return. There is flexibility; the leave may be shared by both parents, and it is possible to work part-time for up to three years. The employer cannot turn the request for work part-time down without explanation, but women may not be hired in the first place because of this provision.[13]

For eastern representatives, it is of crucial importance to maintain some of the supports easterners had come to take for granted. This

includes child-care that allows men and women, as well as single parents, to take part in the labor force. Federal law has provided funds for all-day child-care in schools, but the Christian Democratic Party has sought to limit its implementation in the states, which are responsible for education.

Interestingly, during the early transition period, women activists from the west came to the east to explain the philosophy and workings of the different political parties. One of the MPs remembered that they cautioned the eastern politicians to make certain that the child-care facilities were not taken away. "We paid 30 east German marks a month for food; otherwise we paid nothing. Our system of child-care is much better than in the west." Cornelia Behm, an Alliance 90/Green representative, maintained that the child-care legislation was still inadequate. "Payment now is according to salary so that if you are working there is no problem. But non-working women should also have access to childcare because without it, it is very difficult to look for work."[14]

Several MPs spoke about the continuing differences in income between east and west. Although that is not an issue for all people in eastern Germany with work and security, it is for some professionals such as doctors who are moving to the west after their training, leaving communities without adequate medical care.[15] Several of the women I spoke with feared that many young people would move away and yearned for better prospects for them.

Some of the issues that disturb representatives relate to the policies of their own party. The one eastern woman representative from the Free Democratic Party (FDP), who also serves as secretary general of the party and is vice president of the national organization of FDP women, has to deal with the fact that the party has no women's quota and insufficient active participation of women. Only 23 percent of the party members are women, down 3 percent since 1996.[16] The FDP stands against encouraging part-time work through legislation, expecting negative consequences for women between 25 and 35 due to a fear of hiring women in the child bearing years; and the party is uneasy about payments for women bringing up children because of the expense.

Even within the SDP, with its quota and policies supportive of women, there are differences about what should be legislated. "We have pushed for the balance of men and women in public service organizations and in that sense, the SDP regulations are good. But the party is divided about the

private economy. One side maintains the party should insist on having women in leadership positions; the other side maintains that should be voluntary."[17] More generally, some expressed disappointment about the difficulties in implementing legislation that has already been passed.

The representatives elected to the Bundestag in 2002 faced major new legislation on the government's proposed social reforms. These measures seek to cope with a long-lasting recession and a looming crisis of the welfare state primarily due to rising pension and health care costs. This involved extended negotiations with the unions, protests from various segments of the population and differences within the ruling coalition. Several representatives claimed that since the reform advocacy began, large numbers of members have left the SDP and the party is expected to lose in a series of future state elections.

In general, women MPs from eastern Germany seem overburdened with the complex legislative agenda. Many strained to carefully read the literature on each proposal, to engage in ongoing party and parliamentary debates and, ultimately, to act responsibly towards their own constituencies and to the nation. A few examples of the reforms initiated by the governing coalition will illustrate the issues.

The governing coalition initiated reforms to unemployment benefits, which have been reduced to 12 months and subsequent unemployment aid given after (paid for) unemployment insurance runs out has been merged with welfare benefits. These measures have been complemented by a reorganization of the Labor Office. Renamed the Federal Job Agency, its responsibility is to manage unemployment benefits and to find placements for those without work. Finally, restrictions for laying-off workers were eased for smaller companies. Cuts in benefits for those who refuse jobs or training are reinforcing the substantial restructuring and development of job centers.

Though most of the Social Democrats and Greens in Parliament supported the measures, several of the eastern representatives were very hesitant to adopt them. As a measure to fight youth unemployment, left-oriented groups from the east as well as the west successfully pushed for a law requiring companies with more than 10 employees to have at least one apprentice place for every 15 workers. Companies falling below the minimum will pay a levy into a training fund, while companies above the minimum will receive payouts from the fund.

Other changes were initiated to preserve Germany's social pension system in the face of an aging population, such as raising the retirement age and reducing benefits. There have also been reforms in health care, which would force patients to pay more for treatment (co-pay for doctor visits and prescriptions) and reduce public health insurance coverage for such services as dentures and health spa visits. An important change is the proposed elimination of the government's "sick pay." The previous policy had been that after one week of illness, Germany's public health funds cover wages for up to six weeks. Under the new law, people will be required to take out separate policies for illness-related wage losses. At the same time, monthly payments for the national healthcare system will be reduced from 14.3 percent of an employee's income to 13.6 percent next year and 12.15 percent by 2006. This change aims to reduce non-wage labor costs and thus encourage hiring.

In order to stimulate economic growth, an already legislated tax reform has been pushed ahead one year to 2004. On average, the income tax will be cut by approximately 10 percent. While in the short run this means shrinking federal revenues, it is hoped that the tax cut will stimulate economic growth and with that revenues.

These social reforms provoked different reactions from the eastern women SPD MPs I interviewed. A few complained about the lack of solidarity: "When the situation is bad, you just cannot cut social supports. In 1997, the property tax was taken away. Now, they are advocating continuing the tax break. Or when the enterprises introduce technology and the workers are let go, I understand it…but where is the solidarity?" The more left-wing members of the SPD criticized what they consider the neo-liberal bias of the reforms. At the same time, there is a broad consensus that reforms are urgently needed both to cope with the recession and persistent high unemployment and with the financial burden an aging population brings in the long run. Torn between a need for cut backs and a concern for maintaining strong social protection, many are unclear about which policies are promising or plainly necessary and how best to distribute the burdens.

In the most recent discussions on social reforms initiated by the governing coalition, a number of members of the SDP were opposed to certain of the proposed changes. Yet fearing the resignation of the Chancellor and the fall of the government (which had a very narrow

majority in Parliament) they supported most of them. One eastern representative commented: "if we discuss cuts, the easterners are angry. But most recognize that the state finances are not in good shape."

Involvement with women's organizations

The involvement of women representatives with women's groups varied enormously. Some participated in the party's women's organization with great enthusiasm; others expressed a lack of interest and even disdain. When women's groups were active in the community or state where they were elected, representatives remained in close contact with them. A few of the representatives believed that women's groups lost influence. "Women came into leadership positions in other ways and also had disagreements among themselves." "I will never forget that at the Party meetings the Women's Council (Frauenrat) had a table. A woman in men's pants attacked me after I explained why I accepted second place on a party list. She doesn't know how different we are."[18]

There are inter-party women's initiatives in some other parliaments and community councils, such as the Berlin Parliament where the Social Democratic Party is in coalition with the Reformed Communist Party.[19] In the national parliament, women from the east and west and from various parties worked together for abortion rights. Individual (rather than party) voting was encouraged in the Bundestag votes on abortion. Nearly all women from the east interviewed supported women's choice. This reflects in part the public policy that was established before unification as well as the fact that Catholics constitute only a small minority in eastern Germany.

A few of the representatives are very impressed and involved with rural women's initiatives in their constituencies. "These women live in the countryside and did agricultural work, as the men did. But the technology has become so advanced that many of these jobs are lost. The women have succeeded in developing new projects, such as traditional crafts which they themselves sell on the market."

Overall, it seems that the representatives I interviewed have enduring links with the women's organizations of their particular parties. Especially when they see these organizations as actively representing the interests of eastern women, they are likely to maintain strong contact with them. Yet, because so much of what is discussed in parliament affects both women

and men, the representatives have to do all they can to keep up with complex legislation, the workings of the party, and their constituencies.

Conclusion

Superficially, one might conclude that "women's issues" were of little importance to the women MPs from eastern Germany. They see themselves primarily as competent and successful politicians, and they are faced with urgent, complex and challenging problems which they struggle to address. They do not see themselves as special pleaders for women's interests. However, embedded in their struggle to find and implement policies dealing with the overall situation there is indeed a strong concern for women's interests as well. Since these stand out among the central problems faced especially by the eastern part of Germany, they often do not separate male from female politicians. Furthermore, the majority of women politicians belong to left and left of center parties that are fundamentally sympathetic to the economic and political interests of women.

The women representatives from eastern Germany faced great difficulties. Their constituency is often in trouble; the unemployment rate in some areas is extraordinarily high. Secondly, there are tensions within the party; these were especially intense in the Social Democratic Party due to the harsh social reform initiatives. Thirdly, values that were internalized in the former GDR continue to appeal, even with knowledge of the miserable aspects of the regime and their opposition to these, and even with their understanding of the difficulties in contemporary Germany.

There is commitment to older professional goals, and women who have worked outside the home all their lives talk and care about these. There is some pride and a feeling of being different from the western Germans, taking for granted that the supports they had were crucial for what they attained even if equality was not fully established between men and women. At the same time, some of the representatives, especially newcomers to the Bundestag, note their lack of expertise and experience, and mention tensions and difficulties of keeping up with all the proposed legislation.

While east-west differences are noted, it seems that the intense discussion in parliament, in the party, and in informal discussion, results in both eastern and western representatives listening seriously to each other. Perhaps more now than in the early unification years, the eastern representatives believe that much of what they say is taken seriously and

even appreciated. But given the change that several perceive in the atmosphere, expertise, party position, and being able to make your case are increasingly important for affecting parliament decisions. Nevertheless, the women I spoke with feel pride in the privilege of working in parliament and in their ability to develop new ways of thinking about what they are doing.

Notes

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2. The interviews lasted about an hour to an hour and a half, sometimes longer depending on the frequency of parliament meetings and votes. I spoke with 20 of the 35 east German women MPs: 13 members of the Social Democratic Party, the larger party in the ruling coalition , 2 members of the Green Party (the junior coalition partner), 2 members of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU/CSU), 1 member of the Free Democratic Party, a professional staff member of the Free Democratic Party, and the 2 directly elected members of the of the Reform Communist Party (Party of Democratic Socialism, PDS). I also interviewed a west German Green (male) who moved to eastern Germany several years ago and was elected to the Bundestag there, a western, female member of the SDP, a western male MPs from the SDP with a strong union background, a male and 2 female members of the CDU/CSU from western Germany, and an eastern German male SDP representative. The latter 5 were included because they were members of the Parliament Committee on Family, Seniors, Women, and Youth. I also had the opportunity to interview the former Speaker of the Bundestag from 1988–1998: Dr. Rita Suessmuth , a west German and CDU member had previously served as Minister for Youth, Family, and Health from 1985–1986 and Minister for Youth, Family, Women and Health from 1986–1988 in the Kohl administration. Finally, there were a number of informal talks with men and women who were part of the last two previous governments.

3. Marilyn Rueschemeyer, "The Work Collective: Response and Adaptation in the Structure of Work in the German Democratic Republic," *Dialectical Anthropology* (1982):155–163 and "Integrating Work and Personal Life: An Analysis of Three Work Collectives in the GDR," *GDR Monitor* (1983):27–47.
4. See Sabine Schenk, "Employment Opportunities and Labour Market Exclusion: Towards a New Pattern of Gender Stratification?" In Eva Kolinsky and Hildegard Maria Nickel*, Reinventing Gender: Women in Eastern Germany since Unification* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), 55.
5. Marilyn Rueschemeyer*, Professional Work and Marriage: An East-West Comparison* (St.Antony's,Oxford/London:Macmillan and New York: St.Martin's, 1981), 112–169.
6. Marilyn Rueschemeyer, "Women in the Politics of Eastern Germany," In Marilyn Rueschemeyer, ed., *Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe* (London and Armonk, New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1998), 92.
7. Rueschemeyer*, Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, 89–115 and "Women in Politics in Post-communist East Germany,"in Kolinsky and Nickel, ed.., *Reinventing Gender*, 231–249.
8. In Germany, each citizen has two votes. With the first, the voter selects from a slate of individual candidates in a single electoral district. The candidate who receives the most votes is elected. With the second vote, the voter chooses among lists of candidates determined by the political parties of the state. The distribution of seats is determined by the proportion of second votes a party receives, provided that this proportion is higher than 5 percent. The party's directly elected candidates are offset against this proportion. This electoral system, then, joins the direct election if candidates in constituencies with proportional representation; the 5 percent threshold prevents the proliferation of very small parties. Proportional representation tends to favor women's representation; see Richard Matland and Kathleen Montgomery, eds. *Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe*. Oxford University Press 2003.
9. In the Upper House, the Bundesrat, women represented approximately a quarter of the 69 members. Since the members of the Bundesrat represent state governments and follow their instructions, this study focused only on the Lower House.
10. The population of eastern Germany is about 20 percent of the total population of the Federal Republic of Germany.
11. See Richard Matland and Kathleen a. Montgomery, eds., *Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe*, op.cit.
12. There was a protest when the two women from the Reformed Communist Party received neither at table nor a telephone in the parliament.
13. Interview with Anton Schaaf, a member of the SPD and on the Parliament Committee for Families, Seniors, Women, and Youth, Fall 2003.

14. Interview with Dr. Christine Lucyga, Fall 2003.
15. Interview with Dr. Marlies Volkmer, Fall 2003.
16. Interviews with Representative Cornelia Pieper and Daniela Zehentner, a lawyer and member of Pieper's professional staff, Fall 2003.
17. Interview with Christel Riemann-Hanewinckel, Fall 2003
18. The Green Party, with a 50 quota for its electoral lists is supposed to have a woman as its first candidate.
19. Interview with Dr. Gesine Loetzsch, Fall 2003. Loetzsch notes that the Interparty Initiative, which included a program on breast cancer detection and prevention, was also successful in an argument against the men in their support for a candidate receiving an important prize. The Initiative meets every eight weeks; she attends twice a year.

CHAPTER TWO

Women in the Slovene Parliament: Working towards Critical Mass[1]

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Slovene women were active participants in many of the most important events of Slovene history. But their role was always undervalued and quickly forgotten. After the goal had been achieved, they would be pushed back where they belonged—to the private sphere of the home and family. Women were therefore only rarely visible as political actors and, thus, the political tradition in Slovenia cannot be regarded as favorable to women's political participation.

Women in Slovenia received full voting rights only after WWII in the 1946 Constitution. Women were visibly active in the Communist Party and some of its supporting organizations, but their influence was highly marginalized. The only women's organization that existed at the time, the Anti-Fascist Women's Front, was dissolved. Under communism, women's issues were seen as part of the class struggle, which would be resolved by the activity of the communist state and its agencies—not requiring any particular engagement by women. Thus, some Slovene feminist writers have identified this period as state feminism,[2] or feminism imposed from above.

During this period, the state initiated major changes in the position of women in society. Women were given equal access to education and employment with equal pay, and discrimination on the basis of sex was prohibited. Moreover, paid maternity leave for employed women was introduced and there was a legal right to abortion. As Marilyn Rueschemeyer notes, "during the communist period the more skilled a woman was or the more involved she became in her profession, the more she identified with the place were she worked, the more interested she was in keeping her job and the more reluctant she was to become a full-

time homemaker."[3] These women were also more interested in public life and politics.

Women active in the Communist Party worked to fulfill its goals, but generally did not pursue goals concerning women as a separate social group. There were some strong party politicians whose task it was to work with and for women, and who ultimately did a lot for them. But women held no special status as a political group prior to the 1980s. This suggests that women's participation in politics did not correspond with the level of their participation in the national economy, which was nearly equal between women and men. The reason for this disparity was in part the widespread conviction that women's emancipation follows from economic emancipation and, partly due to the unfavorable influence of tradition in private life.[4] Despite the fact that the Communist Party declared women and men equal and enforced equality through quotas for women, workers and youth, women did not reach a critical mass in the various political bodies under socialism. In the Communist Party, women made up only 30 percent of all members in 1977.[5] Similarly, women in the Socio-Political Chamber of the Slovene Assembly exceeded one-fourth of the total only in the 1970s.[6] The second half of 1980s were called "the most beautiful years of our lives" because the League of Communists had relinquished power bit by bit and the leaders of the party allowed many different political actors, including women's groups, to be active publicly.[7] Talks and negotiations with the opposition started in spring 1989 and, on September 27, 1989, constitutional amendments were adopted in Yugoslavia initiating the transition from a socialist to a market economy and from a one-party system to political pluralism, as well as more autonomy for the republic-level governments.[8] The political elite accepted the new rules of the game and was therefore included in the process of democratic transition.[9]

In the Slovene transition from state socialism, national consolidation was the main goal in the country. Therefore, it was not women's issues but issues linked to the survival of the endangered Slovene nation, the creation of a market economy and forging closer ties to the European Union that came to the forefront.[10] At that time, the new political organizations and parties in Slovenia did not think of women as political agents. Women were perceived as a relatively significant part of the electorate whose support had to be enlisted at certain moments,

particularly during elections. Conservative attitudes towards gender roles were dominant, most visibly in the fact that maternity and family were stressed as values that should take precedence over women's public roles.

With the exception of the former Alliance of Socialist Youth (ASY), which demanded the creation of a Women's Ministry,[11] party programs did not devote much attention to women's issues. Feminist circles have often posed the question of whether a democracy that disregards the political equality of women is a democracy in the true sense of the word. Some refer to such a democracy as an "unfinished democracy," while more radical feminists use the term "male democracy."[12]

Table 1. Women MPs by party

Party	1992		1996		2000	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
LDS	2	9.1	1	4.0	5	14.7
SCD	2	13.2	1	10.0	-	-
ULSD	2	14.2	0	0	3	27.2
SNP	2	16.6	1	25.0	1	25.0
SPP	2	20.0	1	10.0	-	-
SDP	0	0	1	6.2	0	0
DP	1	16.6	-	-	-	-
GS	0	0	-	-	-	-
DPP	-	-	1	20.0	0	0
NS	-	-	-	-	2	25.0
Other	1		1		1	
Total	12	13.3	7*	7.8	12	13.3

* After the formation of the new government in the Summer 2000, the number increased to 11.

Note:
LDS Liberal Democracy of Slovenia
SCD Slovene Christian Democrats
ULSD United List of Social Democrats
SNP Slovene National Party
SPP Slovene People's Party
SDP Social Democratic Party
DP Democratic Party
GS Greens of Slovenia
DPP Democratic Party of Pensioners
NS New Slovenia

Women, parties and elections

The first multi-party elections in Slovenia demonstrated how times had changed. The electorate gave a majority of the vote to the anti-Communist Democratic Opposition of Slovenia (the DEMOS Coalition), but the individual party with the best result was the reformed communist United List of Social Democrats (ULSD). Similarly, the first presidential elections resulted in former communist leader Milan Kučan receiving more votes than the DEMOS candidate and prominent dissident, Jože Pučnik. Although new parties began to emerge in the late 1980s, the Slovene party system is still unstable. Various parties have merged, dissolved, changed names and reformed. Only the strongest one, Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), remains constant—after each election it has served as the base upon which to form the broad coalition government with the parties from the left and right of the center.

But female representation in Parliament since the late 1980s has diminished. They were also shunned from ministerial positions and pushed out of party leadership positions. Gender did not appear on the political agenda and was not a part of political discourse. Data from the National Assembly show consistent female under-representation. There are several reasons for the dramatic drop in women's representation after 1990, including the large number of parties, an unstable party system and poorly defined ideological orientations, an electoral system that did not favor women candidates, the lack of support from an organized women's movement and general instability in the political realm.

As the table above illustrates, women's representation in the National Assembly was lowest after the 1996 elections. Although it increased 5 percentage points after the last elections, the number of women MPs remains very low. After the last elections, the strongest party also had the strongest women's presence in Parliament, and the majority of female MPs come from the left-wing parties. Female representation in Slovenia, then, depends mostly on the parties of the left, since the two parties (LDS and ULSD) have formal and informal quotas for women in internal party bodies and national elections.

In addition to party gatekeepers, the electoral system is often mentioned as a factor that inhibits women's representation. Slovenia's electoral system is a variant of a proportional representation system.[13] The country is divided into eight constituencies. Each constituency is further

divided into 11 voting units. For each full electoral quota the party receives one seat from that constituency. Seats remaining when all full quota seats have been awarded are distributed in a second tier, using the d'Hondt method. Two seats are reserved for the Hungarian and Italian minorities and are allocated according to a majoritarian first-past-the-post system. In addition, since the 2000 election, there is a 4 percent electoral threshold. From the perspective of women's electoral chances, there is an important element of the Slovene PR system that forces Slovene political parties to behave as parties do in majoritarian systems. In each electoral constituency, the parties submit 11 candidates, but they are not presented as a list as is the case in most PR systems. Rather, the constituencies are divided into 11 voting units. Voters do not see the entire party list, but rather choose a party through the choice of a single candidate put forth by the party in their voting unit. The votes given to candidates in individual voting units are aggregated to determine how many seats the list/party is entitled to receive in the given constituency. This practice was designed with the aim of limiting 'partitocracy' and assuring an MP-voter linkage, but it has been responsible for some strange electoral results.

In this context, party gatekeepers must choose one candidate for each of the 88 electoral units. This requirement fundamentally alters and undermines the practice of ticket-balancing in a PR system. If the party chooses a woman, she will be the party's only candidate in that voting unit, rather than part of a party list. This, combined with the fact that women in politics are generally unpopular in Slovenia, makes party gatekeepers hesitant to nominate women. Nevertheless, overall we can clearly draw the conclusion that parties serve as gatekeepers to parliamentary office and that parties more decisively influence women's representation in institutional politics than the electoral system itself (Jalušič and Antić, 2001).

The environment for women in Parliament

The bicameral Slovene Parliament consists of the lower house, the National Assembly (NA), and the upper house, the National Council (NC). The NC represents social, economic and local interests and has 40 representatives. The NA consists of 90 deputies, selected from among the citizens of Slovenia who are not, according to the Constitution, to be bound by any instructions. The way in which the NA works has changed

considerably from the beginning of the 1990s. Parliamentary work is in the process of normalization, with fewer irregular sessions, fewer committees and commissions, more experienced MPs, and committees and commissions that have become more important.

From the gender perspective, both negative and positive changes can be observed. On the negative side, there is no longer a special commission for gender equality as there was in the previous two terms. This committee was incorporated into the larger Committee for Home Affairs, which also means that female MPs lost an important channel for their legislative work and the realization of their goals. One of the positive changes is the growing awareness of gender issues in the National Assembly in general. There is more awareness on the importance of language, for example, and more and more male MPs use gender-sensitive language. An Equal Opportunity Law was accepted in 2001 without much difficulty, and the proposal for change in a constitutional article to provide a legal basis for positive discrimination laws in the field of politics and especially in elections was supported by a two-thirds majority of the MPs.

Social background of women deputies

Women parliamentarians in Slovenia are on average older than their male colleagues: their average age is 54 years while the average of their male colleagues is 52. The formal qualifications of women MPs are generally higher than those of male MPs as well. For example, at the beginning of the 1996–2000 period, all women in Parliament had at least a university education, five women had university degrees, one had a master's degree, and one had a doctoral degree. There were 26 male MPs with less than a university education, but there were more male MPs with masters or doctoral degrees. The greatest number of male and female MPs studied in the fields of the humanities, social sciences and economics. As a rule, women MPs come from the capitol or larger urban centers rather than from smaller towns or rural environments.

Female MPs are mostly newcomers: 75 percent of female MPs are in the National Assembly for the first time, while only one-fourth of male MPs are newcomers. One-third of male MPs have been in Parliament since 1990. The rest are serving either their second or third terms. As such, male MPs are more experienced in politics than their female colleagues, and they are also more familiar with the parliamentary environment.

The scope of women's activities in Parliament

Data on the numbers of male and female politicians occupying leading positions in the National Assembly confirms the thesis that politics is still a man's domain, and seems to prove the rule that the bigger the concentration of the political power, the smaller the number of women involved in politics. No woman has ever held the position of President of the National Assembly. The highest position achieved by a woman MP was that of a vice-chair; during the last two parliamentary terms, this position was twice occupied by women MPs from the ruling coalition. A similar situation is echoed in parliamentary groups: no woman MP has ever been the leader of a parliamentary group.[14] In the current term there are no women MPs among the 20 chairs of the 11 parliamentary commissions and 9 committees.[15] Thus, in spite of greater representation (from 7.8 percent in 1991 to 13.3 percent in 2000), women MPs did not advance to leading positions within the National Assembly's working bodies. This situation can be attributed in part to the fact that the number of commissions and committees was reduced, which increased the competition for these positions. Another reason is that MPs with longer parliamentary experience are in better positions when candidates for important positions are chosen. Women cannot take advantage of this opportunity since only one woman MP has been in Parliament for more than one term. Women are found only in the committees' vice-chair positions.

In the current term, there have been several changes in women MPs' roles in committees and commissions. Since the number of committees and commissions has been reduced, there are fewer women MPs in committees. Most women MPs have chosen to work in two committees dealing with traditionally gender sensitive areas: the Committee for Health, Labor, Family, Social Policy and the Disabled, and the Committee for Culture, Education, Youth, Science and Sports. Since the Commission for Gender Equality was abolished and its issues have been relegated to the Committee for Home Affairs, it is understandable that women MPs are concentrated in the Committee for Home Affairs as well. The share of women in the Committee for Home Affairs, the Committee for Health, Labor, Family, Social Policy and the Disabled, and the Committee for Culture, Education, Youth, Science and Sport oscillates between 27.2 and 38.8 percent, which means that if they acted

as a group, they would have considerable power. However, it remains to be seen whether this expectation will be fulfilled by the end of the current parliamentary term.

The Standing Orders of the National Assembly state that bills may be proposed by the government, parliamentarians, voters (provided that they collect 5,000 signatures of support) and the National Council. A bill goes through three readings in the National Assembly and it can be withdrawn by the initiator after the first or the second reading.

During the transition period in the 1990s, many laws had to be amended, adjusted or introduced. Most bills were proposed by groups of MPs, and the bills that were most successful were those proposed by mixed male-female groups. In the last two terms only one bill was proposed individually by a woman MP in each term. There were no bills proposed by women-only groups. Generally, women MPs voted for the bills that received support from their parliamentary groups. Thus, in performing their legislative work, women MPs tend to team with their party colleagues more than with women from other political parties. We could interpret this tendency negatively to mean that women deputies do not feel any special commitment to deal with issues that affect women primarily. Or we could see it in a more positive or pragmatic light: women deputies may believe that proposals put forward exclusively by women would not receive sufficient support from their male colleagues in Parliament. Another interpretation would be that the low number of women in Parliament represents an obstacle for cross-party links. My findings suggest that parliamentary groups work in a fairly harmonized way and that there is a high level of party discipline. The analysis of women's legislative work also showed that they approached this task with due responsibility and deliberation, and that they seek support either from their party colleagues or like-minded MPs. As members of mixed female-male groups, women MPs were most frequently involved in proposals pertaining to home affairs, education and sports, health care and environmental protection—that is, fields that tend to be gender sensitive.

Checking the executive branch through inquiries is an important method by which MPs exercise control over the government. The policy priorities of female MPs are clearly visible in this area. In the previous parliamentary term, women MPs' priorities were labor, family and social

matters, agriculture, forestry and food, environment and spatial planning and health care. In the current term, they have been more concentrated on education, science and sports. We can therefore conclude that women continued to launch inquiries to the ministries dealing with areas that are within their primary political and professional competence. Male MPs also did this and mainly addressed the areas of the economy, finance, transport and communications, and foreign affairs in their inquiries.

Differences between men and women MPs

We conducted face-to-face interviews with all 12 female MPs who serve in the current NA and a corresponding number of male MPs from the same parliamentary groups (24 interviews in total). Social characteristics (age, education, profession) of male and female MPs were similar to those of the whole NA.

Female MPs indicated that they most frequently discussed issues pertaining to labor, the family, and social matters in Parliament, as well as health care issues. They least frequently discussed defense and international relations. When MPs were asked about their legislative priorities and reports of their successes in Parliament, we found a clear-cut difference between male and female MPs. Female MPs primarily list laws and issues connected with questions on gender equality (the law on equal opportunity, the constitutional amendment for equal gender representation, greater gender sensitivity in the use of language), among their successes, while the men's answers were more diverse. Male and female deputies thus have different policy priorities while women MPs pay more attention to gender issues.

The most important commitment of all parliamentarians regardless of their gender is to their party. Women MPs are also very committed to their occupation or profession, and they often refer to their original occupations, such as the fact that they are doctors or lawyers, when they speak in Parliament. Ethnic identity (Italian or Hungarian) is very important as well, because there is only one MP for each minority.

We were also interested in differences among MPs belonging to different parties. To evaluate these differences we asked MPs about their opinions about women in politics. There is a high degree of consensus among Slovene MPs (almost 90 percent), that there should be more women in politics and, more importantly, female MPs are unanimous in

thinking that this is a problem. The differences between deputies from different political parties come to the surface when the question turns to the methods, tools and actors needed to solve this problem, and whether special measures (including quotas) are needed. These differences appear among women as well: two-thirds of women deputies (primarily from the left-wing parties) would support special measures, and one-third (mostly from the right-wing parties) would not. Overall, only 60 percent of males would support these initiatives. But even left-wing MPs are not unanimous: those opposed to special measures to ensure greater participation of women in politics can be found among both genders on both sides of the ideological spectrum. These differences are greatest among the MPs of the parties on the far right.

Cross-party connections and discussions between women deputies were affected by their small number in Parliament. The fact that women have not reached a critical mass in Parliament affects the chances for success of joint action on legislative work concerning women's issues. In the last two parliaments, women were underrepresented not only in parliamentary groups (one woman per parliamentary group), but in the National Assembly as a whole (7 and 12 respectively). In the current Assembly, the number of women deputies rose slightly, but they worked jointly only within the LDS parliamentary group, in which there were five women. The overall impression is still that of an atomized group: women work primarily within parties and because there is generally only one woman in any party bloc and therefore have little opportunity to work with other women. Thus, our study did not find cross-party connections between women. Instead, allegiance to the party, its ideology and politics is an important factor (at times a constraint) in the work of women deputies and it has an impact on their preferences and the decisions they make. Women parliamentarians have not yet formed a group, at least not officially, and only half of them support women's networking within Parliament.

Women MPs do little networking outside of Parliament, since the number of women's organizations and associations is low. Only half of the female MPs are members of a women's organization. Those that are members are most often from left-wing parties, who see themselves as members of their parties' women's groups or wider coalitions (for example, the cross-party Coalition for Equal Representation of Women

in Public Life). These groups serve primarily as discussion or consultation groups rather than as lobby organizations.

We found no significant difference between male and female self–proclaimed party obedience. The majority of deputies, regardless of gender, think that they are as obedient as the average MP. Women deputies see themselves as "more disciplined" or disciplined to "the same degree" as their male colleagues. There is no significant gender difference in regard to the fields in which MPs vote differently from their parties: they generally depart from the party in the fields in which they are experts, either from their previous political or professional experience, or from their current political engagement. In line with their responses, we found that women MPs did indeed vote in a more disciplined way than their male colleagues and were highly loyal to their parties. When asked about voting differently than their party, only one female MP declared that she "often" voted differently from her party group.

The exceptions to this pattern were the voting practices of the five women deputies from LDS who formed a bloc that often votes together. They harmonized their positions and operated as a bloc within their party group on the issues they consider to be important, including women's issues. On the whole, women MPs do not act this way, but rather follow their party's ideology, priorities and guidelines, and it has become clear that women's issues are not high on the list of priorities.

When asked what inspired them to pursue political careers, the majority of women MPs responded that they were influenced by their partners or husbands (representing the private realm), while male MPs were most often invited by their party leaders (representing the public realm). There were exceptions to this public/private difference, however. For instance, some women were supported by public women's groups, while some men cited the support of their wives or mothers in helping to choose their careers.

In general, it is far more likely for women MPs to begin their careers at the local level and advancing to the national level step by step, and that they have to work hard to be recognized as trustworthy. Male MPs tend to develop their political careers more quickly than their female colleagues. The average period between the onset of one's political career and entrance into Parliament is 5.2 years for a male MP and twice that (i.e., 9.75 years) for a female MP.

Conclusion

Researchers have concluded that specific legislative decisions were made only when women reached a critical mass in legislatures.[16] The fact that women representatives in the Slovene National Assembly have not reached a critical mass has affected the degree of difference that could otherwise characterize their legislative work, links between women representatives and their joint activity. Women deputies still give the overall impression of being atomized individuals inside their parties and in Parliament. Thus, our study did not find cross-party connections among women MPs. Allegiance to the party is an important factor—and at times a constraining one—in the work of women deputies, and it has an impact on their preferences and eventual decisions. Only half of women MPs support creating a women's network within Parliament, which further impedes progress in this sphere. However, women MPs networks outside Parliament with women's organizations and associations can be an important factor, though this networking is done primarily by MPs from left wing parties.

From our research, we can conclude that women's inability to introduce essential changes in parliamentary work is attributable not only to their general underrepresentation and modest representation in leadership positions within Parliament, but also to the fact that they are mostly newcomers to Parliament, though not completely without political experience. It is frequently expected in public and among feminists that women in legislature will pursue different priorities than men. If we take as evidence the types of commissions and committees in which women MPs participate (education, health care, culture), the types of inquiries they pose (education, health care, labor, family, social policy) and the types of bills they propose (education, health care, labor, family, social issues, environment, home affairs), we can conclude that women do have different priorities and that their legislative work concentrates on the areas that significantly affect women. It is also significant that the current Parliament passed several bills that will very likely affect the quality of women's lives, among these the Employment Act, the Parenthood and Family Earnings Act, the Marriage and Family Relations Act, the Health Care and Health Insurance Act, and the Equal Opportunities Act. It would therefore be wrong to claim that the changes we have witnessed—despite the fact that they are modest—are negligible,

since even the minimal increase in the percentage of women in Parliament produced greater awareness about the significance of gender equality and the importance of women's equal representation in politics.

Notes

1. This is a part of a larger project Women in Parliaments in CEE Countries: Slovenia and Hungary compared, carried under Peace Institute Ljubljana and sponsored by East – East Program, Open Society Institute.
2. Vlasta Jalušič, "Socially Adapted, Politically Marginalized: Women in Post-Socialist Slovenia". In: Sabrina P. Ramet *ed., Women, Society and Politics in Yugoslavia.*, (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 51–66.
3. Marilyn Rueschemeyer, Introduction, in *Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, Revised and Expanded Edition, ed. by Marilyn Rueschemeyer, (Armonk, New York, London, 1989), 6.
4. See Vida Tomšič, *Zenska, delo, druzina, druzba* (Women, work, family, society), (Ljubljana: Komunist, 1978). See also Tanja Rener, "U veljavljanje z ensk v delegatskem s istemu" in *Zenske in diskriminacija,* Maca Johan, ed. (Ljubljana: Delavska Enotnost, 1986) pp. 114–129.
5. Maca Jogan, *Ženske in diskriminacija (Women and discrimination)*, (Ljubljana, Delavska enotnost, 1986), 31.
6. In 1974 women made up 26 percent; in 1978, 28 percent; in 1982, 26 percent; and in 1986, 24 percent (Jogan, 1986).
7. Milica Antić and Eva D. Bahovec, "Femnizem, liberalizem, demokracija" In: *Meje demokracije (Limits of Democracy*), (Ljubljana, Liberalna akademija, 1995) 171.
8. Bozo Repe, "Femnizem, liberalizem, demokracija" in France M. Dolinar, ed *Razvoj slovenske drzavnost*, (Ljubljana: Arhiv Republike Slovenije, 2001), 160–161.
9. Danica Fink-Hafner and Miro Haček, *Demokratični prehodi I, (* Ljubljana: Fakulteta za dru?ene vede, 2000) 294.
10. See also Milica G. Antic "Democracy between Tyranny and Liberty: The Situation of Women in the Post-Socialist Nation State" in *Feminist Review* 39 (1991): 149–155.
11. The goal was not met immediately, but after the 1992 elections, the Parliamentary Commission for Women's Politics was established and soon after the Governmental Office for Women's Politics was created as well.
12. The concept of "unfinished democracy" may be found in the works of Scandinavian feminist authors (see e.g., *Unfinished Democracy,* Haavio-Mannila, et al, 1985). The term "male democracy" is also quite widespread and debated by many women authors from the so-called socialist camp (see the proceedings Gender Politics and Postcommunism, eds., A. Funk and M. Mueller, (New York: Routledge, 1993).

13. This system was the result of compromise and negotiation among transitional actors. During the negotiations between the ruling government in 1990 and the newly-established parties, the former supported a majoritarian system. The latter favored some form of PR (see also France Grad, *Elections and electoral systems,* Ljubljana: Inštitut za javno upravo, 1997, 174). As a result of the impasse, the 1990 elections were held with three different systems for three chambers. In the aftermath, most of the numerous small parties preferred a clear PR system; while others favored some sort of mixed system that would preserve elements of direct MP-voter linkage and overcome perceived weaknesses of PR. Because the final rules required a special 2/3 majority, the electoral system that emerged was a complex version of PR with elements of majoritiarianism mixed in.
14. The alternate chairing of the national minority parliamentary group by two minority representatives is not comparable with other parliamentary groups.
15. The Standing Commissions and Committees mostly cover the areas of ministerial activities, which can differ from one parliamentary term to the next. The number of committees decreased from 12 to 9, and the number of commissions from 14 to 11. After the last elections, the Commission for Equal Opportunity Policy ceased to exist when several commissions were merged.
16. Sandra Grey, Does Size Matter? Critical Mass and New Zealand's Women MPs. *Parliamentary Affairs* 55/1 (2002): 19–29.

CHAPTER THREE

Women in the Russian Duma, 1993–2004

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This paper focuses on women deputies in Russia's State *Duma* (Parliament)—their pathways to power and experiences as professional legislators. Among the countries under review in this study, the Russian Federation has elected the lowest percentage of women deputies. With the introduction of competitive elections during *perestroika*, the percentage of women in the national assembly of the USSR fell dramatically and, in the newly-independent Russian Federation, the share of seats held by women dropped over the course of three elections from 13.5 percent in 1993, to 10.2 percent in 1995 and then to 7.5 percent in 1999. The most recent December 2003 parliamentary elections reversed that trend, as women slightly increased their share of seats to 9.8 percent. Nevertheless, by international standards, Russian women did not fare well: the downward spiral that marked the 1990s ran counter to developments in Western Europe and in several other former Communist states, where women registered gains in national parliaments. Russia also falls short of the average figure of women holding 14 percent of seats in national legislatures worldwide as of January 1, 2002.

The dearth of women in the State Duma serves as a telling reminder that women remain sealed off from 'big politics.' What, then, are the obstacles to women's access to the State Duma? What are the characteristics of those women who do secure election as deputies? Are there particular recruitment patterns that these women followed? And does women's presence make a difference? Have women deputies sought to define, articulate, and defend women's interests? Have they worked within their parties or across party lines to advance policy goals related to those interests? We will examine these issues of representation by exploring the experiences of Russian women parliamentarians in the hallways of power.

Why so few women deputies? obstacles and challenges

Researchers point to a number of barriers to women's access to high-level legislative seats. Indeed, there is a substantial literature documenting obstacles to women's election to national legislatures, and this essay directs attention in a selective fashion toward those factors highlighted either by women parliamentarians themselves or by scholars particularly concerned with women's political opportunities in postcommunist countries. Major factors include gender ideologies and the communist legacy, women's presence in recruitment or eligibility pools and aspects of the political system, such as the type of electoral system, incumbency rates and the role of political parties as gatekeepers in the nomination process.

Recent cross-national research on women in national legislatures suggests that national 'climates' or gender ideologies—widespread attitudes about the proper roles of men and women—strongly predict the degree of success women have in securing parliamentary seats. For the political arena, cultural traditions that associate masculinity with leadership and public roles loom especially large, as do general impressions of women in politics and the way women are perceived as candidates and leaders. The 1995 World Values Survey tapped attitudes in 46 countries about whether men are better than women in politics, education and the labor force. A key research finding provides insight into the puzzling decline in women's representation in postcommunist states: Russia and the postcommunist states of Eastern Europe "tended to have a more negative gender ideology" than other countries.[1]

How ironic that a country that had long preached the emancipation of women is now less hospitable to women in politics than many other regions of the world. Yet there are elements of Russian gender ideology, inherited from the Soviet era, that militate against women's access to the State Duma and limit their roles within it. In particular, there is the matter of how distinctive patterns in the lives of men and women are understood. In Russia, biology (rather than socialization) is widely embraced as the central explanation for differences in 'feminine' and 'masculine' personality traits, interests and careers. In other words, women's absence from political office can be dismissed as natural, due to immutable and eternal causes. Because of this attitude, there is no injustice—unfair societal discrimination—to redress. In addition, the 'biology is destiny' approach shapes perceptions of women's capabilities in the political sphere, tying the

female sex to motherhood and to images of women as selfless advocates for children, the elderly and social policy in general.

The communist legacy reflected those stereotypes about women by ghettoizing them in secondary political roles in the fields of education, health care, youth, children, pensions, culture and propaganda. The record with respect to women legislators eroded respect for them through the forcible inclusion of large numbers of females in largely symbolic positions. As deputies in the USSR Supreme Soviet, women were stereotyped as powerless political figures chosen by powerful male politicians. Women served because of quotas, and this legacy—the strong association between gender quotas and the communist past—greatly complicates efforts to present numerical goals or quotas as progressive measures designed to enhance democratic representation. There is strong opposition to numerical guarantees and to descriptive representation.[2]

In the postcommunist setting, a central issue involves whether women are present in recruitment pools, whether they have the proper credentials or background for a career in 'big politics.' In terms of social capital, Russian women are well educated and highly active in the labor force, factors strongly related to political activism in cross-national research. Yet Russian women are largely absent from the two streams of elite recruitment that were especially important in the 1990s. These pathways include the former *nomenklatura* (elite soviet bureaucrats)—who adapted to new circumstances and filled various high status positions—and the smaller infusion of new people who entered politics by climbing the ladder of success in elections or from professional careers. With respect to the nomenklatura, women were largely confined to second-tier positions in the trade unions, *Komsomol* (the Communist youth organization) and to posts connected with ideology and social welfare. Regarding the new business elite, whether drawn from the old regime or through channels outside the state, women rarely appear in this important pipeline to 'big politics.'[3]

As in most political systems, the political arena involves a hierarchy where electoral politicians often serve at a lower level in the political system before launching a bid for a seat in the national legislature. In Russia, there are not large numbers of women knocking at the door. An examination of the key level of regional legislatures shows that women held only 9 percent of the seats in Russia's 89 federal units in 1997.[4] Women also filled few executive positions at the regional level, occupying

only seven of 322 policy and leadership posts.[5] These are major pools of potential State Duma candidates in which women are poorly represented.

In post-Soviet Russia, women have found a new niche that, like the Komsomol and trade unions of old, forms a secondary tier in the political realm. This is the world of NGO's and civil society, dominated by women but marginalized from political influence. Thus, the recruitment pool of 'eligible' women candidates is rather limited, despite women's impressive educational and work force credentials.

Turning to political factors, scholarly literature argues that a proportional representation (PR) rather than a single-mandate district (SMD) electoral system promotes the election of women to legislatures. The conventional wisdom dictates that a PR system provides incentives for parties to balance tickets by gender and for women to form their own parties. In the Russian electoral system, half of the 450 Duma deputes have been selected by each method.[6] The Russian case, however, does not exhibit a clear pattern: 43 percent of the women deputies were elected through the SMD route in 1993; 67 percent in 1995; 58 percent in 1999; and 48 percent in 2003 (See Table 1). The formation of the Women of Russia (WR) in 1993 largely accounts for the strong showing of women on the party list ballot for that election, but we can safely say that women in Russia have a better chance at being elected through SMD rather than from party lists. The presence of many weak, unstable parties and the absence of a distinguishable women's voting bloc in the electorate after the 1995 defeat of WR, undercut party leaders' incentives to recruit women candidates.[7] The party system remains heavily focused on the top-down strategies of ambitious politicians rather than the bottom-up processes of social mobilization, a condition facilitated by the absence of women's activism as well as the apathy and disillusionment of the public at large.

If party leaders decided to seek out women candidates, the potential for rapid change in the gender composition of the State Duma does exist. This is due to the fact that, unlike many political systems, the Russian Parliament exhibits high turnover rates. For example, as a result of the December 2003 elections, 45 percent of the women and 50 percent of men elected as deputies were newcomers. For women, the challenge of building linkages between the party system and civil society offers considerable opportunities. The construction of strong, politicized women's organizations as a key element in Russia's party system could leverage a larger role for women's

Table 1. Women in the Russian Dumas

		1st Duma 1993–1995	2nd Duma 1995–1999	3rd Duma 1999–2003	4th Duma 1999–2003
Women in Duma:	**No.**	60	46	34	44
	%	13.5	10.2	7.5	9.8
Elected:	**SMD**	26	31	20	21
	PL	34	15	14	23
Party or block affiliation		WR: 21 CPRF: 3 Yabloko 2 Rus Choice 2 DPR 1 LDP 5 ISMD 26	CPRF 17 Yabloko 6 OHR 5 LDP 1 WR 3 Other 4 Independent: 10	CPRF 11 Unity 7 FAR 7 URF 4 Yabloko 2 Independent 3	UR 24 CPRF 6 LDPR 2 Rodina 4 Yabloko 1 Independent 5 Other 2

Abbreviations used: CPRF: Communist Party of the Russian Federation
DPR: Democratic Party of Russia
FAR: Fatherland -All Russia
LDP: Liberal-Democratic Party
OHR: Our Home is Russia
URF: Union of Right Forces
WR: Women of Russia

voices in the future. At present, however, there are ideological and political/structural barriers to women's access to the State Duma. Yet interviews with women deputies who have overcome those obstacles promise insight into how women forge careers as national legislators.

Pathways to power: women in the State Duma

This exploration of women's pathways to public office draws on interviews conducted during spring 2004 with 19 of the 44 women serving in the State Duma. These women include 12 of the 24 women elected from Unified Russia (UR), two of the five women independents, one of the four women from Rodina, both of the female Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) deputies, and two of the six Communist Party (CPRF) women. In addition, four interviews were conducted with WR deputies who held office from 1993 to 1995.

In terms of formal credentials, the 19 women deputies interviewed are strikingly well educated. Eight of the 19 women have defended dissertations at the graduate level and many worked at universities or at research institutes. Their specializations emphasize areas useful for a

legislative career—economics, finance, agriculture, labor and social relations. The women deputies also include a pediatrician, a lawyer, a businesswoman, several teachers, engineers and a choreographer/dancer.

Most women deputies (13 of 19) honed their leadership and organizational skills within the Komsomol, trade unions and/or the Communist Party. They became well known within their communities and developed professional ties, key assets for future electoral politicians. The women generally served in lower level positions within Komsomol or trade unions, while party activity was less typical and often occurred at the local level. These women often note that they are active by nature and relish helping others through *obshchestvennaia rabota* (public work).

While communist-era mass organizations represent the preponderant pathway to a political career for the current crop of women deputies, there are other, more distinctly post-Soviet pathways. Two women entered the political arena by forming new social organizations: one put together a regional ecological movement; another played an instrumental role in creating the Union of Associations of Farmers. Yet another route involved building regional party structures. One woman (who also served in a regional legislature) worked for Our Home is Russia and then UR. Both of the LDPR women deputies had significant experience constructing their party at the local and regional levels and also had employment experience as assistants to State Duma members. They reported that these opportunities boosted their political expertise and placed them in networks that led to the State Duma.

Many of the women deputies served in subnational posts prior to becoming State Duma deputies. Ten of the 19 women interviewed held regional level legislative or executive positions prior to their election to the State Duma. They typically specialized in areas such as social welfare and education, thus perpetuating stereotypes about women's sphere within the political realm.

What led these women to embark on political careers? Most of the women regard their political careers as accidents, as matters of chance or fate rather than as the culmination of life-long personal ambitions. They state that the decision to run was made by others: that "the republic governor made the suggestion—it was not my initiative;" that "I did not consciously want to run but my leadership role with professional unions thrust me into a close connection with Fatherland-All Russia"; that "the

party included me on the party list—I didn't make this decision;" that "Boldyrev invited me," etc. Several women credited their success to gender balancing employed by powerful governors—one woman remarked that she fulfilled two needs as both a female and a member of the titular nationality of her republic. Only a minority of the women report that they themselves set the goal of entering the State Duma.

Overwhelmingly, the women did not consider it important that they were female candidates. They felt that gender does not play a role in running for public office. Far from their relying on a strong women's movement or women's organizations as part of their electoral coalition, a common refrain among the interviewed deputies involved comments about the weakness of women's organizations or the lack of solidarity among women. There were numerous comments about how women envy other women and therefore will not vote for them. In a few cases, however, women parliamentarians proudly noted that they belonged to a women's organization or even headed one, though that seemed to involve women's groups formed as an auxiliary to further the aims of particular political parties. It is striking, however, that a woman deputy from a republic that did have a strong women's movement—Udmurt—could in contrast to other women deputies clearly articulate the importance of increasing women's representation to a minimum of 30 percent as well as other gender issues.

Contemporary women deputies owe their positions largely to the goodwill of powerful governors and party leaders—to men who operate in an environment where they are unconcerned with pressure from women's organizations or from a public eager to see more women in positions of influence. These men do have some motivation for recruiting women given the electorate's concern with social policy and the traditional view of women as defenders of children and the elderly. Yet these circumstances contrast sharply with the experiences and outlooks of WR deputies who served in the State Duma from 1993 to 1995. Those women were recruited by WR leaders—most notably, Ekaterina Lakhova—not only to advance social welfare policies but also to give women an independent voice in high-level politics.

Representation of women's interests

Comparative studies have shown that women in politics give particular priority to social policy issues, and that they can band together across

party lines to promote shared interests and goals.[8] Recent studies of Western welfare states suggest that politically-organized women sometimes succeed in preserving and expanding women-friendly policies even during periods of retrenchment. Russian women were beneficiaries of the socialist welfare state, particularly of its employment, maternity and family policies, and they both inherited and built organizations with these political agendas. But have women deputies in the Duma banded together to defend a set of interests specific to the concerns of women? How have they dealt with the competing demands of women-friendly policies and party loyalty?

To address these questions we asked women deputies whether there was a distinct set of women's issues—"specific women's problems"—that demand resolution, or only general socio-economic problems resulting from the transition. The answers showed a striking change across the Dumas. Deputies from the first and second Dumas, from WR and the CPRF, shared the view that women did have specific interests, particularly relating to employment discrimination and (though mentioned less frequently) reproductive rights, which needed to be defended. According to one clear statement of this view from a leader of WR, "Women are concentrated in low-prestige and low-paid jobs, their career opportunities are limited, it is very difficult to overcome prejudices...resumed economic growth can do little to resolve this problem."[9] Such views might have been expected from WR deputies, but it is surprising that they were also held by CPRF deputies. According to one CPRF deputy, "Yes, definitely there are women's problems. Economic growth has had a very important impact, but there are also traditional factors...based on the privilege of men."[10]

By contrast, deputies from UR, which dominated the 1999 Duma and commands a large majority in the current Duma, answered with remarkable consensus that problems affecting women were part of broader socio-economic problems, and need not or should not be addressed separately. Three responded typically, "There are no problems specific to women...I wouldn't single out women...problems are common to society as a whole; we must cope with material conditions."[11]

Women across the three Dumas did identify a common set of problems faced by women, including poverty, child care, health care, low wages in the budget sector (i.e., health, education and culture), and others. But

they defined those problems, and by implication their commitments and roles, differently. Women in the later Dumas lacked any conceptual or programmatic basis to commit themselves to defense of a pro-women agenda. Though a number of the deputies expressed interest in social issues relevant to women, they did not see politics, or their own roles as legislators, in gendered terms.

The interviews also showed a steadily diminishing level of cooperation among the women deputies across party lines and of collective efforts to advance policy goals related to women's interests. The WR fraction in the 1993 Duma did not attempt to coordinate formally with women in other parties, but its leaders reported a high degree of informal cooperation and support for their initiatives by women deputies. According to one respondent there was "a sort of informal club headed by Alevtina Fedulova where the majority of women met once in a while...Laws concerning women were supported by practically all women in the Duma irrespective of their party affiliation."[12]

Tangible results from cooperation among women in Parliament can be seen most clearly from WR's successful promotion of legislation on child benefits and defense of women's employment rights, as well as measures to protect threatened federal guarantees to public education, gaining support from most legislative parties.[13] Thus, though small in number, WR succeeded in rallying women and a critical mass of other deputies around a pro-women legislative agenda. The party attained such a degree of influence because it had a very focused legislative agenda, articulated women's concerns in a clear and compelling manner, and gave singular priority to that agenda. Indeed, WR compromised with the Yeltsin administration on many other issues, a strategy that eventually cost the party support from other centrist and left legislative parties. Moreover, many of the measures it succeeded in passing were in the end very inadequately funded.

In the 1995 Duma cooperation among women deputies was more limited, and party discipline became more important in determining their voting behavior. According to a deputy from WR, "In the [post-1993] Dumas, attempts were made to form an inter-factional women's group, but they failed. There were informal contacts to support particular decisions which are of concern to women."[14] This view is buttressed by an analysis of role-call voting by Iulia Shevchenko, which confirmed that

women banded together to vote on a limited set of domestic women's issues, dealing with children and family matters, but divided by party on a broader set of welfare-related bills.[15] The articulation of a specific pro-women agenda became more muted in the 1995 Duma. To a large extent the Communist-oriented (left) parties that dominated Parliament took over defense of women's issues, submerging them within a broader collectivist and nationalist agenda that pressed for restoration of statist Communist-era social policies.[16] These parties supported traditional socialist welfare protections for women and families, but they did not privilege women's issues, and women's representation among left deputies declined considerably in the 1999 election.

Both survey results and voting evidence show a further marked decline of cooperation between women deputies in the UR-dominated 1999 Duma. A majority of interviewees reported no coordination, or sporadic and generally unsuccessful attempts by groups of women to influence major issues, such as the budget. Women deputies from the dominant, pro-government UR reported strong pressures to support their party's programs. When asked what she would do if faced with a conflict between a pro-women position and her party, one deputy replied that she could defend the pro-women position in the party fraction and "declare that I will vote differently, but the fraction must allow it. There is party discipline. I joined a party."[17] Shevchenko's vote analysis confirms this picture, showing that women deputies in the 1999 Duma did not vote together on issues affecting women. She concludes, "Women do not make a difference in the 1999 Duma. Strong party discipline minimizes the level of female deputies' commitment to the representation of women's interests...the crucial role in determining legislators' position...is played by the government linkage."[18] Remarks from two Communist women, reflecting their experience over three Dumas, vividly expresses the changes: "In the second [1995] Duma we joined and had very interesting relations with women of other factions...now the Duma is full of Bears [a name for Unity, the dominant party that formed UR]...it may be useful to cooperate [in the 2003 Duma] but it will be just formal, because every women will vote for the policies of her fraction. Unity [among women] is absolutely impossible."[19]

Women's interests were weakly articulated and defended in the legislative process during the 1999 Duma, which coincided with a period

of rapid economic recovery that provided a greater potential to address many social issues. The Duma passed a broad reform program that reduced the government's obligations in most areas of social welfare. It included two important changes that are detrimental to the interests of women: a revision of the Labor Code that reduces maternity and other employment protections for women and a revision of the pension system that reduces its redistributive features and will likely disadvantage women (who typically earn less and work fewer years) in the longer term. Welfare spending increased modestly, but programs of particular significance to women, such as child benefits and public sector salaries, remained radically under-funded.

Women deputies' assessments of their past influence and future prospects were quite divergent. Those who had served in the earlier Dumas generally saw the steady decline in women's influence that is reflected in the paper's analysis. Women in UR, especially the newly-elected, saw their potential for influence in more positive terms. An impressive number of deputies, including some who explicitly rejected gender politics, mentioned the leadership role of Yaketerina Lakhova and her efforts to articulate a women's platform within UR. A former leader of WR who has established her authority on women's issues while party-jumping, Lakhova is seen as a potential uniting force for women. However, both ideological and institutional contexts—a deputy corps that has weak commitment to women's issues, and a disciplined party—seem likely to militate against such unity.

Conclusion

The Russian case shows an overall decrease in the numbers of women Duma deputies and a deterioration in the representation of women's interests over the past decade. Despite women's impressive educational and career credentials, there are significant barriers to women running for public office in terms of widespread negative attitudes towards women in politics and the absence of strong women's organizations or movement. Since the 1995 electoral defeat of WR, women's pathways to the State Duma frequently involve recruitment by regional political machines—being part of a governor's team—or recruitment by party leaders. These safe and reliable women downplay the significance of gender differences and gender issues in society. There has been a radical decline in the

number of women deputies who are committed to the defense of interests particular to women, indeed the near-absence of women in the currently predominant party (UR) who even recognize such interests. How can we explain this outcome?

The decline in representation of women's interests is part of the broader decline in representation of societal interests within the Russian legislature and the political system. The earlier stages of the Russian transition produced programmatic political parties—WR, CPRF and others—that had substantial connections to Russian society, and saw themselves as at least somewhat accountable to their constituencies.[20] Those parties have now been replaced, or their influence effaced, by UR, a non-programmatic 'party of power' that is weakly rooted in society and accountable mainly to the executive.[21] This movement of the political system toward 'managed democracy' is mirrored in the interview and voting results, which show the detachment of UR women deputies from role as representatives of women's interests, the decline in women's cooperation across party lines, and the growing loyalty of women deputies to an executive-dominated party.

Endnotes

1. Pamela Paxton and Kunovich, "Women's Political Representation: The Importance of Ideology," *Social Forces*, 82 (1) (2003): 87–114.
2. See N.A. Shvedova, *Prosto o slozhnom: Gendernoe prosveshchenie* (Moscow; Antikva, 2002), pp. 26–35.
3. Among the women interviewed, only two mentioned money as a major barrier to running for public office. One noted that she could only stand for office via the party list, that she could not have run from a single mandate district due to a lack of adequate financial resources. Another women, also elected through the party list, noted that she had won election to her regional legislature despite being a doctor—part of the state budgetary sphere where salaries are low. She implies that she spent less than was the norm for campaign financing and was the only woman in the regional legislature. Women's exclusion from the world of big business and their predominance in low paid work in education and health care forms an economic barrier to running for high level office.
4. *Zhenshchiny u muzhchiny Rossii 97* (Women and Men of Russia, 1997) (Moscow: Goskomstat Rossii, 1997), 85.
5. Elena V. Kochkina, "Women in Russian Government Bodies," *Russian Politics and Law* 38 (No. 3) (2000), 74.

6. This electoral system appears, however, about to undergo substantial change. In the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Beslan in September 2004, President Vladimir Putin sent a bill to parliament calling for the elimination of the single member district races; all State Duma deputies would then be elected from the party list ballot.
7. For a discussion of the import of electoral systems and of Women of Russia, see John Ishiyama, "Women's Parties in Postcommunist Politics," *East European Politics and Societies* 17:2 (2003): 266–304; Carol Nechemias, "Women and Politics in Post-Soviet Russia: Where Are the Women?" *Demokratizatsiya* 8:2 (spring, 2000): 199–218; Wilma Rule and Nadezhda Shvedova, "Women in Russia's First Multiparty Election," in Wilma Rule and Norma C. Noonan, eds., *Russian Women in Politics and Society* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996): 40–62.
8. The comparative literature also presents arguments that women as a constituency group are more important to women legislators than to men, that they sponsor more legislation dealing with women's concerns, and that legislatures with higher percentages of women pass more bills relevant to women's issues; for references, see Iulia Shevchenko, "Who Cares About Women's Problems? Female Legislators in the 1995 and 1999 Russian State Dumas," *Europe-Asia Studies* (54:8 (2002): 1201–1222.
9. Interview # 21.
10. Interview # 3.
11. Quotes are from interviews No. 1, 17, 18; one UR deputy articulated the view, also present within the broader women's movement, that state-mandated employment protections actually contributed to discrimination and hurt women in the labor market. See Suzanne LaFont, "One step forward, two steps back: women in postcommunist states," *Communist and Postcommunist Studies* 34 (2001): 203–220.
12. Interview # 25.
13. Deputaty fraktsii "Zhenshchiny Rossii" v Gos. Dumy pervovo sozyva," at: http:women.centro.ru./ustav.htm; Beth Richardson, "Gender-Based Behavior Among Women in the Russian Duma, 1994–1995," (M.A. Thesis, Carleton Univ., 1997).
14. Interview # 22. Evidence from the interviews is weaker for this Duma because of their smaller numbers.
15. *Shevchenko, (2003)*
16. Linda J. Cook, "Globalization and the Politics of Welfare State Reform in Russia," in Miguel Glatzer and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Politics Matters: Globalization and Social Welfare Policy in Cross-Regional Comparisons* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, forthcoming 2004)
17. Interview #4.

18. Shevchenko (2003); quote is from p. 1216. Shevchenko does find that gender plays a role in voting on issues such as environmental, which do not tap into the left-right partisan dimension.
19. Interviews #3 and #6.
20. WR's 1993 campaign, for example, "relied heavily on grassroots organization and mobilization of women's groups at the local level, which gave the /party/ a solid political base; Ishiyama, 2003: 287.
21. Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy: The Russian Elections of 1999 and 2000*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2003)

Interviews

All interviews were conducted in Moscow. Numbers 1–8 were in February, 2004; 9–26 in March, 2004.
Interview # 1, member of UR, elected to second term in 2003
Interview # 2, member of UR, elected to second term in 2003
Interview # 3, member of CPRF, elected to third term in 2003
Interview # 4, member of UR, elected to second term in 2003
Interview # 5, member of UR, elected to second term in 2003
Interview # 6, member of CPRF, elected to fourth term in 2003
Interview # 7, member or UR, elected to second term in 2003
Interview # 8, independent, elected to fourth term in 2003
Interview # 9, member of Rodina, elected to first term in 2003
Interview # 10, member of LDPR, elected to first term in 2003
Interview # 11, member of UR, elected to first term in 2003
Interview # 12, independent, elected to third term in 2003
Interview # 13, member of UR, elected to first term in 2003
Interview # 14, member of UR, elected to first term in 2003
Interview # 15, member of LDPR, elected to first term in 2003
Interview # 16, member of UR, elected to first term in 2003
Interview # 17, member of UR, elected to first term in 2003
Interview # 18, member of UR, elected to first term in 2003
Interview # 19, member of UR, elected to first term in 2003

Interviews 21–26, members of Women of Russia, elected to first Duma

CHAPTER FOUR

Women and Women's Issues in the Polish Parliament: Progress or Regress?

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Fifteen years have passed since the postcommunist political and economic transformation began in Poland. As with every aspect of society, the transition has affected the role of women in politics. With 15 years, several elections and four successive post-communist parliaments to analyze, patterns have emerged on how women enter and operate within the political sphere, and the outcomes of their efforts can be measured. A perfunctory glance at the data shows that women's representation in Parliament has steadily increased over the last decade, although it is still far from the high levels that had been in place under the authoritarian system. The underrepresentation of women in the 1990s and the pattern of their selection were very much like those in other countries of the region.[1] The 2001 elections brought a significant increase in the number of women in Parliament. Nevertheless, the elections did not bring much positive change in the ways women's issues are discussed in Parliament. In fact, the atmosphere surrounding women's issues has become more traditional.

This chapter analyzes the role of women in the Polish Parliament and the way in which women's issues have been discussed since 1989. My analysis is based on post-election studies, analysis of documents,[2] qualitative and quantitative studies on the functioning of the Parliament in 1992–1993,[3] 2000[4] and 2004, with special focus on the most recently elected assembly. Research conducted between January and March 2004 incorporated the opinions of 13 female parliamentarians—members of the *Sejm* (Lower Chamber of Parliament)—and three male parliamentarians representing various political parties represented in the Lower Chamber. The majority of the women interviewed are active

Table 1. Women among Deputies to the Sejm (Lower Chamber of the Parliament) of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd term (mandates)*

Name of Party or Electoral Coalition	1991				1993				1997			
	Total*	% in total	Women	% in party	Total*	% in total	Women	% in party	Total*	% in total	Women	% in party
Total	460		42	9.13	460		60	13.0	460		60	13.0
Democratic Left Alliance (DLA)	60	13.0	9	15	171	37.2	28	16.4	164	35.6	31	18.9
Polish Peasant Party (PPP)	50	11.0	1		132	28.7	8	6.1	27	5.9	-	
Freedom Union (FU)									60	13.0	9	15
Democratic Union (DU) 1	62	13.8	12	28.5	74	16.1	16	21.6				
Confederation of Independent Poland (CIP) 2	51	11.1	5	10.8	22	4.8	1	4.6				
Labor Union (LU)51	4	0.9	-		41	8.9	7	17.1				
Non-party Block in Support of Reforms (NBSR) 2					16	3.5	-	-				
Social and Cultural Society of the German Minority in Silesia	7	1.5			4	0.9	-	-	2	.4		
Social and Cultural Society of Germans in the Katowice Region					1	.2	-	-	2	.4	-	-
Electoral Catholic Action (ECA) 2	50	10.9	6							.		
Civic Center Alliance (CCA) 2	44	9.6	1							.		
Liberal-Democratic Congress (LDC) 1	37	8.0	-							.		
Polish Peasant Party - Popular Agreement (PPP-PA) 2	28	6.1	1								.	
Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (MRP)									6	.		
Electoral Action "Solidarity" (EAS)									201	43.7.	20	10
Solidarity 2	27	5.9	3	11.1								
Polish Party of Beer-Lovers 2	16	3.4	-									
Party of Christian Democrats (PCD) 2	4	.9	1									
Polish Western Union	4	.9	2									
For Wielkopolska Region and Poland	1	.	1									
Women's Alliance Against Life Difficulties	1	.	1									

*Only those parties with the highest number of seats and/or those that have women among their deputies are listed above. Twenty-nine parties or groups of various types have representatives in the Sejm. Source: Announcement of the State Election Commission, October 31,1991, published in *Rzeczpospolita,* November 4,1991.

** Data of the State Election Commission.

1 the parties of the 1997 Sejm which were in Freedom Union;

2 the parties of the 1997 Sejm which were in the Electoral Action "Solidarity"

Table 2. Women among Candidates and Deputies to the Sejm (Lower Chamber of the Parliament), 2001

Name of Party or Electoral Coalition	Candidates**			Elected***			
	Number of districts in which women were on the lists of	% women in total number of candidates	% women on 1–3 positions on the lists of candidates	Total	% Total	Women	% Women
Total		23.2		460		93	20.2
Democratic Left Alliance (DLA)*	**41**	**36.3**	**18.7**	**200**	**43.6**	**50**	**25.0**
Polish Peasant Party (PPP)	41	14.6	6.5	42	9.1	0	0.0
Labor Union (LU)*	**41**	**36.3**	**18.7**	**16**	**3.4**	**5**	**31.3**
Civic Platform (CP)	41	16.8	15.4	65	14.1	13	20.0
Self Defense of Polish Republic (SD)	39	20.3	13.0	53	11.5	9	17.0
Law and Justice (L and J)	40	17.9	12.2	44	9.6	6	13.6
League of Polish Families (LPF)	41	24.7	25	38	8.3	10	26.3
Social and Cultural Society of the German Minority in Silesia			16.7	2	0.4	-	-

*DLA and LU (in bold) ran in an electoral coalition.
** Author's calculations
***Source: www.ipu.org.

Orientation of the political parties: DLA and LU -left, CP - center right, SD - populist, L&J, LPF- right, PPP - left.

parliamentarians who hold a seat in a parliamentary committee. The men interviewed are heads or outspoken members of their parliamentary clubs. The aim was to gather statements that would reflect the variety of opinions and points of view in the Sejm with regard to the role of women in the Parliament and important problems of women in Poland.[5] Given the wide range of views in the country, I also focus on perceptions of women's issues in Polish society today.

Women in Parliament

The number of women elected to the Sejm in the elections of 1991, 1993 and 1997 was, respectively, 9 percent, 13 percent and 13 percent. Women

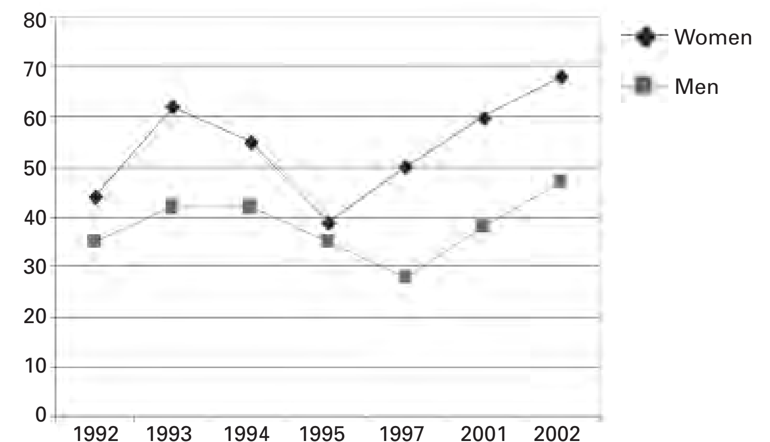
constituted 8 percent, 13 percent and 12 percent of members of the Senate (the upper chamber of Parliament). These figures are dramatically lower than they were during the communist period, when more than 20 percent of the 1985 National Assembly members were women. Despite the high representation of women in the Assembly, women were 'tokens' and had much less influence than their numbers might suggest. Moreover, women in the Assembly did not represent the overall interests of women because under a communist system Parliament performed a decorative function and was a rubber stamp for the decisions made by the bodies of the Communist Party.

Mechanisms for increasing women's representation in the 2001 Parliament

After the 1997 elections, the representation of women in Parliament seemed to have leveled off (see table 1) and left-wing parties were more likely to include women on their candidate lists than other parties. These patterns were consistent with election results observed in other post-communist countries as well (fewer women in their parliaments in comparison with the communist period) and in most West European democratic countries (with the exception of Scandinavian countries).[6]

The 2001 parliamentary elections were a turning point for women in Parliament, due in part to the implementation of the new electoral law. The new law reduced the number of voting districts, which created larger

Figure 1. Percentage of women and men who did not agree with the statement "men are better suited to politics than women."



constituencies. This gave an advantage to larger parties, which needed to fill their party lists with more candidates and were therefore inclined to add more women to them. As a result of these changes, substantially more women were elected to both the Sejm and the Senate. The number of women in the Sejm increased to 20 percent and in the Senate it rose to 23 percent. Despite the increase in representation only two women were appointed to high-ranking government positions: the Minister of Justice and the Minister of National Education and Sports. Another positive change was that 61.3 percent of women elected in 2001 were new to politics. By contrast, the 1997 elections resulted in 44.1 percent of women compared to 52.4 percent of men were elected for the first time.

The number of women elected depended upon the number of women listed as candidates on party lists and their positions on those lists. Some women were given high positions by party gatekeepers, who listed them in the top three slots, thereby greatly increasing their chances (see table 2). This, along with the change in attitude of the general population, increased women's presence in politics in several districts.

Women's higher level of representation in 2001 also reflected changes in attitudes towards women in politics. In 2001, 60 percent of women (compared with 50 percent in 1997), and 40 percent of men (compared with 28 percent in 1997), did not agree with the opinion that "men are better suited to politics that women."[7] In 2001, 46 percent of men compared to 31 percent of women voted exclusively for men, but 39 percent of men and 55 percent of women voted for both.

The women's lobby also exerted more influence on political parties and on public opinion as a whole. Fifty organizations joined the Pre-Electoral Coalition of Women (PECW), an open, non-partisan agreement between women's organizations and groups created a few months before the elections. The PECW, as well as other women's groups and feminist organizations, stood somewhere between the center and the left wing and were supported by the Women's Parliamentary Group (WPG). Women MPs organized a campaign called "Women Run, Women Vote" to convince people to vote for women. The participating women belonged to all parliamentary parties.

Another factor that influenced the elections was the adoption of gender quotas by several parties. The coalition of the Democratic Left Alliance (DLA)-Labor Union (LU) as well as the liberal-center Freedom Union

Table 3. Composition of election committees in the parliamentary election in 2001

	Total	Women
Democratic Left Alliance - Labor Union	84	16
Election Action Solidarity*	41	0
Freedom Union*	13	2
Self Defense of Polish Republic	10	2
Law and Justice	21	0
Polish Peasant Party	16	0
Civic Platform	46	7
Alternative Social Movement*	4	0
League of Polish Families	10	0

* The parties did not receive enough votes to seat deputies in the Sejm.
Source:Author's calculations based on Slodkowska 2002

(FU), accepted the rule that neither of the sexes should be represented by less than 30 percent of all candidates, and lists presented for individual constituencies should comply with this condition. Moreover, even right-wing parties, such as the League of Polish Families (LPF), were influenced by these changes. The LPF placed a substantial number of women on its party lists for the Sejm. These changes took place despite the fact that women were rarely members of election committees (see table 3). The selection of candidates was thus still made by men.

Change in the electoral preferences of the society also contributed to the increase in women deputies. In the election of 2001, the coalition DLA-LU obtained the highest number of votes, which represents a shift from right to left. This shift was important for women, because for a long time this coalition has been willing to take women's issues into consideration in its political plans and reforms. As a result, the number of women listed as candidates was much greater than before.

Women's issues during the 2001 electoral campaign

The problem of the equal status of women and men, women's political participation and other women's issues were rarely included in party programs for the 2001 electoral campaign.[8] Only the DLA-LU coalition and FU mentioned the need for changing the situation of women in their party programs. The DLA-LU program stressed the importance of establishing a firm legal basis for the equal treatment of men and women

by preparing legal provisions requiring equal treatment in the workplace, instituting sanctions for gender-related discrimination, granting both parents equal rights with regard to childcare and guaranteeing women options for planned parenthood.[9]

The FU's party program advocated passing an act guaranteeing the equal status of women and men and establishing a Commission on the Equal Status of Women and Men in the Sejm, which would be responsible for eliminating gender-related discrimination from all Polish legislation.[10] FU was also concerned about the fact that women are forced to retire at age 60 compared to 65 for men. The party program stated that it "is particularly important for those women who are part of the new pension system, for whom taking away every year of work and every zloty means a lower pension."[11] The FU was less precise about the abortion issue, stating that "it is not an issue to which any party directives or programs apply. This issue is to be resolved according to one's own conscience…FU, on the other hand, supports the idea of using national health care funds to refund contraceptive purchases."[12]

Other parties either avoided women's issues altogether or presented them in such a way as to make it easier for women to perform their traditional roles. The Civic Platform (CP), for instance, proposed improving the situation of single mothers with handicapped children, while the Alternative Social Movement (ASM) advocated state "remuneration for housework performed by one of the parents, at a level that would be enough not to force the mother to work outside the home, which is harmful for family life and especially for the education of children."[13]

Who are the female members of the 2001 Sejm?

The basic characteristics of the elected deputies in 2001 did not change substantially compared to those elected in previous elections, despite their larger numbers in the Sejm. Moreover, this is true despite the greater variation in the age, education, professions and class background of deputies.

The average age of women in the Sejm is slightly higher than that of their male colleagues, but age varies more by party. Members of the DLA parliamentary club, for instance, tend to be older—half of all men and women are between 50 and 59 years of age—while in the Civic Platform

or Self-Defense clubs, half of both men and women are between 40 and 49 years of age. In LPF, women are clearly older than men. Women deputies are slightly less likely to be married, and they tend to have fewer children than men. In the current Sejm, 27 percent of women and 15 percent of men have no children. At present, 70 percent women and 92 percent men are married. These figures have been relatively consistent since 1989.

In terms of education, women and men are about equal, as 83 percent of women and 80 percent of men have a university education, and 12 percent women and 14 percent men have secondary vocational education. The educational levels of members of Self Defense are substantially lower than those of parliamentarians representing other clubs. Female and male parliamentarians differ substantially with regard to their professional background. Most female members of the Lower Chamber are graduates of the humanities (21 of 93) and medicine (10). Men are usually graduates of the faculties of law and administration, humanities, economics and technical studies.

As a general rule, parties and social organizations still tend to nominate and elect women from "female" professions. The most frequently named professions among women were teaching and research (one-third of all women deputies), which is consistent with the pre-1989 period. A relatively large group of women parliamentarians previously held high positions in the state administration or were trade union leaders. This traditionalism is reflected in their work in parliamentary committees that reflect these values and interests, but are often not the most influential. Throughout the transition period, women have been greatly underrepresented in key parliamentary posts.

Research conducted in 2004 and earlier studies[14] shows that the female members of the Sejm have better educated parents than men, that they were often involved in social or political work (in the Polish United Workers' Party or in the political opposition during the previous regime), although usually at lower levels. They also often have earlier experiences in public work (e.g., as leaders of student councils, members of youth choirs, or as local government council members), which shows an early interest in civic life and demonstrates that, despite their assertions that they entered politics "accidentally,"[15] women in Parliament have demonstrated leadership abilities.

Women in the Sejm emphasized the role their husbands and children have played in their careers, through their acceptance and support of their political ambitions. Many women deputies claim that it was their husband's idea that they run for elected office. Some women also mentioned that strong support from a political party made the decision to become a candidate easier. In some cases, initial party support was exposed as a merely cosmetic attempt by parties to include more women on their party lists: once these women candidates gained popularity, their names were pushed lower on the lists in order to allow party favorites to win elections.

Activity of women MPs in the 2001 Sejm

An MP's participation in a parliamentary commission depends upon the outcome of post-election negotiations between parliamentary clubs. As had been the case previously, after the 2001 election few women occupy the position of chairperson or deputy chairperson of a commission. Currently, only three women serve as commission chairs. A DLA parliamentarian is the chair of the Commission for Social Policy and Family Affairs; a LU parliamentarian chairs the Commission of Healthcare; and a parliamentarian from Self Defense is the chair of the Commission for National and Ethnic Minorities. In addition, 15 women serve as deputy chairs on various commissions. Not even one woman is a chairperson of a parliamentary club. In the Senate, in which 23 of the 100 senators are women, two are chairwomen, and four are deputy chairs of Senate commissions.

Membership in a given party and parliamentary club determines the frames of activity for both men and women who are low-ranking parliamentarians. Leaders of clubs are in a different situation, and are able to enforce their opinions, sometimes very strictly, and do not tolerate any deviations or individual initiatives. Nevertheless, when speaking about women's roles in Parliament, both male and female parliamentarians often refer to culturally-determined images of women which diminish women's input into the work of Parliament. Their reliance on stereotypes shows that political elites act in a space limited by these stereotypes and which reinforces them. The construction of a public sphere in which the relationship between men and women is based on the submission of the latter, which is typical for the private sphere as Bourdieu states, limits the

role of women even though they are legally equal. This assessment was reflected by the deputies' responses to my questions during interviews conducted over the last few years.

During one interview, a male DLA deputy stated that "a woman's role is the same as that of men, which means that [all members of Parliament have the responsibility] to create good legislation and control the government....Women are sometimes more intelligent...If a woman is pretty, if she is sexually attractive, she is perceived as someone who arouses the interest of men because the Parliament is a combination of barracks and a dorm. It is a bit like a dorm. The Parliament is not only a place of work, but a place where we sleep, eat, live, so if a woman is attractive, then men are interested and vice versa, if a man is attractive, so are women. Perhaps... they are less ambitious and softer."

Women deputies have rather different views. As a woman LPF deputy noted, "In my opinion, women in Parliament are doing a very good job, they are hard-working, responsible, punctual, which is very important." When asked how men perceive women in Parliament, she continued, "I think that the ambition of men does not really allow them to accept women occupying high positions and offices." Another female deputy from the PPP noted that men think that women in Parliament are, "very different, ...sometimes only a decoration."

The Women's Parliamentary Group and its initiatives

Almost immediately after 1989, there was an initiative to create a women's bloc by women from the parliamentary club of the DLA and the DU, consisting of former activists of the political opposition before 1989. The result of their efforts was the Women's Parliamentary Group (WPG), established in 1991, which continues to exist today. Although it began as an interparty group, it later became a body consisting almost exclusively of members of ADL and LU, as deputies of center and right-wing parties became less eager to join. In the 2001–2005 term, 55 of 93 women deputies in the Sejm and 17 of 23 women in the Senate belong to the WPG.

According to its declaration, the WPG's main goal is to put forward legislative initiatives intended to protect the interests of women and children. One such initiative was a proposal in the early 1990s to allow single parents to calculate their income together with one of their child's,

as married couples do, in order to qualify for tax deductions. This act was meant to protect single parents, most of whom are women. In 1993, the WPG was involved in amending the family and guardian's code to accelerate the adoption process by withdrawing parental rights in certain situations. It has opposed the implementation of separation (sanctioning living apart but without a divorce which would allow for a new marriage), instead favoring a simplified divorce procedure by returning the right to grant divorces to regional courts.

The WPG has been actively involved in the liberalization of the abortion law. After 1956, Poland had a liberal abortion act that permitted abortions in certain situations. After a long struggle in Parliament in the early 1990s, a much more restrictive law was passed in 1993. The debates continued due to the actions undertaken by newly created women's organizations—some working for, others against the liberal law. The law was liberalized in 1996, only to be reversed again in 1997. The more restrictive law remains in effect today.

The DLA-LU coalition government is unwilling to change the law, as it does not want to provoke a conflict with the Catholic Church. The support of the Church was needed to assure the Polish public that joining the European Union (EU) is in the interest of Poland and that the national culture, religion and economic situation would not be threatened as a result accession. Church support was very important to help mobilize society to vote to join the EU in the spring 2004 referendum. Change in the restrictive abortion law was not necessary in order to join the EU, because decisions in this area are left to individual states and their parliaments. Nevertheless, some women's groups in Poland are trying to get the EU to side with their cause in liberalizing the abortion law, but to date they have not been able to pressure the European Parliament to discuss the issue again.

The WPG also sought to pass a law concerning the equal status of men and women. This initiative was unsuccessfully submitted several times in the 1990s and more recently as well. The group also attempted to pass legislation to allow homosexuals to legalize their relationships so that they can inherit property. These laws have not passed to date. The WPG has also attempted to integrate the work of various women's organizations across the country and coordinate its work with researchers and journalists concerned with the women's issues.

Opinions about the WPG vary. The DLA and LU generally believe that it plays an important role by proposing legal solutions consistent with the interests of women. However, not all female parliamentarians are members of the WPG, and even some DLA-LU MPs have not joined the bloc. Some female MPs from other parties believe that the WPG is absolutely useless and that the creation of an institutionalized platform for cooperation between women representing different parties is inconsistent with their individuality. Moreover, since the WPG is largely an DLA-LU initiative, members of other parties are reluctant to join because they do not wish to cooperate with the coalition. There are also arguments based on principle, rather than politics, such as "there is no point to create a 'ghetto for women'," "there are no common interests of women as such, since, in fact, different groups of women have different interests," or "it is not justifiable to talk about specific interests of women, we should talk about interests and problems of people, and these are not gender-specific, they are the same for men and women." The arguments for and against the existence of the WPG have remained the same since the early 1990s.

Issues on which women in the Sejm focus

Membership in specific parties determines the activities of parliamentarians. Nevertheless, personal preference also plays a role in determining the issues with which they become involved as well as their beliefs regarding tolerance within their party clubs. The justification for their involvement with certain issues often has religious, ideological, pragmatic or even personal roots.

Right-wing parties, such as LPF and Law and Justice, are concerned with family-related problems and the protection of the fetus. One female LPF deputy summed it up by declaring that she is in opposition to "all deviations, which are coming into force and being enforced in the society as a norm,....homosexual relationships,...euthanasia." She also stressed that for her party, all issues that are not in the scope of the Charter of the Rights of the Family issued by the Pope are unacceptable.

The Center Party (CP) emphasizes the variety of interests of its female members. A woman parliamentarian from the CP noted that "female parliamentarians deal with such issues as public finances...healthcare issues...agricultural matters...the act on cosmetics." She believed that many matters, including the equal status of men and

women and rights of homosexuals, should not be the focus of attention of the Sejm right now.

Women from the left-wing parties sometimes stress the lack of focus on gender issues. As a woman deputy from LU noted, "I do not divide people into men and women.....all issues that need to be discussed are discussed." A response from a male deputy from the leftist DLA party reflects the attachment of women from his party to the issues which traditionally are related to leftist programs: "If we look at our party, perhaps they are more sensitive to social issues and poverty, injustice etc., more sensitive...than men."

From interviews I conducted it seems clear that the interests of female parliamentarians are very diverse, and some women demonstrate strong emotional engagement in the issues mentioned. They deal with finances, agriculture, education, healthcare, tourism and the harmonization of Polish and EU law. These interests seem determined mostly by the professional backgrounds and experiences of a parliamentarian, but are also influenced by assignment to the particular commissions as decided by leaders of parliamentary clubs. The female parliamentarians interviewed did not complain about being offered positions in commissions that dealt with areas in which they were not interested or about being kept out of certain commissions. It is also interesting that some of the female parliamentarians learned only after being elected to Parliament about issues such as the unequal status of women and men, domestic violence and the glass ceiling. In fact, one female parliamentarian explained that her lack of sensativity to women's problems is due to her work experience. As a teacher, she always worked with women and was therefore unable to notice the difference in treatment between women and men. We may conclude that this type of experience makes it difficult for women to deal competently with a broader range of matters and enforces a point of view determined by the experience gathered in the "ghetto of women."

Representation of interests of specific groups

Often the group with which female parliamentarians identify the most is the professional group to which they belong. However, the source of identification varies greatly. Some parliamentarians identify with particular social groups or religious groups, but usually do not identify

themselves with women as such. As a women deputy from a right-wing party noted: "I don't see a woman as being isolated from her environment, to me, a woman achieves her objectives in the family...and she should be prepared to live in a family. I do not see, like feminists do, a special world only for women. This idea is foreign to me, as I said I live in a family...to realize one's goals as a mother, a wife, is probably the most beautiful thing a woman can do in her life.

When asked whom she represents, a female CP deputy stated: "I feel that I am a representative of inhabitants of Warsaw, of skiers... I could say, skiers of all countries unite! It is a specific group, like sailors. I do not feel I am a representative of business or any profession, or any lobby of that kind, although I read all letters that I get from various associations, companies in various matters."

The view that there are no universal women's issues is shared by some female parliamentarians from other parties, which differ very much from each other with regard to ideology. As a result it is difficult for women deputies to cooperate. Women deputies cite party discipline, differences in political orientation and even personal animosity as reasons for this lack of cooperation. Moreover, this behavior is not specific to women.

Attitudes towards the European Union

The attitudes towards the EU and are very diverse in Parliament. The right-wing LPF and populist Self Defense (SD) were clearly against Poland's accession, since they view the EU as a threat to the Catholic religion and its value system based upon the traditional role of the family. For example, one female MP from LPF stated that "I am interested in the issues of the family; in this regard, I saw no promotion [of it in the EU] and can only regret that." Moreover, they believe that EU accession will result in the deterioration of living conditions and the loss of Polish sovereignty.

Parties that call themselves left-wing, such as DLA and LU, argue that the EU will bring long-term economic benefits, as well as increase Poland's geopolitical position. They counter the cultural objections to EU membership by citing the EU's tolerance for cultural pluralism, which protects the national culture but also allows for participation in European culture with all its diversity. They also support the EU's policies on equality for women. A female LU MP said, "I think that…the issues of

equality for all and everything in the EU is treated more seriously than in Poland, and therefore, women's issues are also given more attention." However, the deputies of the Polish Peasant Party (PPP) do not like the idea of Poland's accession to the EU, fearing that traditional Polish agriculture, based on small farms, will not be able to adjust to the new conditions and many farmers will be left with no resources.

In terms of women's issues, the centrists are rather positive about the effects of EU enlargement. A female member of the Polish People's Bloc said: "I think that, with regard to our accession as such, things will change for the better, the provisions of the EU will force Polish politicians, for instance, to allow women to participate more in political life…I think that, as for the matter of equality, things look much better [in the EU] than in our country, and as for this aspect of our accession, I think it will be better for women. I also think it will be better for our country."

Conclusion

In recent years, there have been no debates in Poland on whether women should participate in public life—it has simply become the norm. As noted, the number of women in the Parliament has increased over time. However, the Polish case clearly shows that the increase in the number of women in Parliament in itself is not automatically decisive in increasing the voice of women or improving the methods for dealing with problems that are important to women. In the 2001 Sejm women's issues were not discussed frequently and were not often the subject of legislative initiatives. Initiatives that were put forward dealing with women's issues were seldom successful.

This situation was caused by both internal and external conditions. Internally, the post-communist government, which aimed to lead Poland into the EU, needed the support of the Catholic Church to achieve this goal. Therefore, the government avoided dealing with problems that would not be accepted by the Church, which has been influential in Polish politics for a long time and was particularly successful in mobilizing rural voters to participate in the referendum on EU accession.

An increase in the representation of the right-wing, populist and centrist parties in the Sejm, which strongly opposed liberalization of the abortion law, also made it difficult to pass the act on equal status of women and men. It is necessary to remember that even within the ruling coalition, there was no unanimity on this issue.

Is the increase of the number of women in the Sejm a sign of success, even though their views range from radical right-wing and clerical to radical left-wing? I believe that the answer is definitely yes. Research on attitudes towards the presence of women in public life from 1992 (when Hanna Suchocka was the Prime Minister) to 2002 (after the increase of number of women in the 2001 Parliament), shows that the presence of women in politics leads to greater acceptance of women as actors of public life.[16]

Most parliamentarians are aware of the fact that Poland's accession to the EU will change the situation and perceptions of the role of women. Although legal harmonization lies in the hands of individual member states, the frequency of economic, political cultural contacts will accelerate the changes with regard to the position and rights of women in society. But reactions to this change will differ. Some parliamentarians see it as a reason to be happy while others believe that it is a cause for concern.

Notes

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2. Renata Siemieńska, *Kobiety: nowe wyzwania. Starcie przeszlośoci z teraźniejszością*.(Women: New Challenges. Clash of the Past and the Present). (Warszawa: Instytut Socjologii- Uniwersytet Warszawski, 1996); Renata Siemienska, Women's Political Participation in Central and Eastern Europe: A Cross-cultural Perspective, in Barbara Wejnert, Metta Spencer with Slobodan Drakulic,: *Women in Post-communism* in series:Research on Russia and Eastern Europe , vol.2 .(Greenwich-London: JAI Inc. Press, 1996),. 63–92.; Renata Siemienska, Consequences of Economic and Political Changes for Women in Poland". In: Jane S. Jaquette and Sharon L. Wolchik (eds.), *Women and Democracy. Latin America and Eastern Europe*.(Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 125–152; Renata Siemienska, *Nie mogą, nie chcą czy nie potrafią? O postawach i uczestnictwie politycznym kobiet w Polsce* (They Have No Opportunities, They Do Not Want, They Are Unable, Do They? About

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4. Danuta Suska - Kobiety w parlamencie (Women in parliament) (in print)
5. The questions asked during the interviews covered the problems respondents have been asked about in earlier studies. However, these cannot be directly compared with the results of the earlier studies in 2001 as the study conducted in 2004 was of a qualitative character while those conducted in 2001 were quantitative.
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8. Inka Slodkowska, *Wybory 2001. Partie i ich programy* (Elections 2001. Parties and their programs (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2002)
9. S_odkowska, Wybory 2001, 25
10. S_odkowska , Wybory 2001, 74
11. S_odkowska, Wybory 2001, 64
12. S_odkowska, Wybory 2001, 69
13. S_odkowska, Wybory 2001, 193
14. Renata Siemie_ska, "Elites and Women in Democratising Post-Communist Societies". *International Review of Sociology.* Vol.9/2.(1999) 197–219.
15. Some female members of the Lower Chamber declare that the beginning of their careers in politics were accidental, and that they began to be politically active in order to solve a specific problem, and that only later did they find that they were interested in this kind of work.
16. Siemienska, *Kobiety: nowe wyzwania*.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Return of the King: Women in the Bulgarian Parliament 2001–2005

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Introduction[1]

On June 17, 2001, Bulgaria became the first nation in more than 150 years to democratically elect a former monarch to become its political leader.[2] That same year, women were given more than 26 percent of the seats in National Assembly,[3] and Bulgaria became the former socialist country with the highest percentage of women parliamentarians in Central and Eastern Europe. This high percentage of women in the National Assembly was almost exclusively due to the electoral success of the National Movement Simeon II (NMS), the political movement led by Bulgaria's once-exiled king, Simeon Saxecoburggotski, who included women on his electoral lists, though he did not run on a pro-women or pro-feminist platform. When Saxecoburggotski's government started its mandate, more than 40 percent of its Members of Parliament (MPs) were women.

Research for this paper is based on fieldwork in Bulgaria in 2001, 2003 and 2004, and on formal interviews with 11 of the 66 women in Parliament in summer 2004. I interviewed two women from the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), three women who came into Parliament as part of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and six women who became MPs with the NMS. I also spoke with the directors and employees of the Women's Alliance for Development, the Bulgaria Gender Research Foundation, the Local Government Initiative and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria—four organizations that were involved in advocacy efforts for increasing the political participation of women or lobbying the parliament on women's issues.

A brief history of women in the Bulgarian Parliament

Bulgarian women were politically enfranchised when the country became a people's republic after World War II. The equality of men and women as workers and comrades was one of the core ideological goals of the Bulgarian communists. They encouraged women's political participation by instituting a quota system that guaranteed women a certain number of seats in the National Assembly. Although the percentage of women varied from assembly to assembly, after the mid-1970, women's participation in parliament regularly hovered around 20 percent.[4] Table One demonstrates the participation of women in the Bulgarian National assembly from 1976 to 2001.

After the unexpected resignation of Todor Zhivkovv in 1989, the Bulgarian Communist Party renamed itself the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and won the first democratic elections in 1990. But Bulgarian politics during the 1990s were characterized by both political and economic chaos. This period witnessed the ravages of banking collapses, hyperinflation, the rise of organized crime, and a dramatic decline in the standard of living of ordinary Bulgarians. There was a rapid succession of governments. None of these governments completed their whole four-year mandates as power shifted back and forth between socialist and "democratic" (right wing) control of Parliament. During this period of electoral flip-flopping between the two major political coalitions in Bulgaria, the country briefly had a female prime minister, Reneta Indjova, in 1994. Other than this one high-profile and temporary

Table 1. Women in the Bulgarian parliament 1976–2005

Years	Number of MPs	Number of Women MPs	Percentage
1976–1981	400	78	19.5
1981–1986	400	87	21.7
1986–1990	400	84	21.0
1990–1991	400	34	8.5
1991–1994	240	34	14.1
1995–1997	240	31	12.9
1997–2001	240	27	11.2
2001–2005	240	61	26.0

Source: Daskalova and Filipova (2004)

appointment of a female politician, women's participation in parliament was relatively low compared to the communist era.[6]

Low representation of women occurred in spite of the fact that the electoral system set up by Bulgaria's postcommunist Constitution seemed favorable to women candidates. Women have a greater chance of being elected when they occupy fixed places on party lists than they do when they run as individuals.[7] After 1991, MPs were elected in multimember constituencies using a system of proportional representation, in which citizens vote for party lists rather than individual candidates. Additionally, Bulgaria employs a closed-list system in which the placement of the names on the list is fixed.

The electoral law changes also included the removal of the communist era system of quotas. These quotas were viewed by most Bulgarians as an "undemocratic" legacy of communism, and only the BSP retained a quota system at the party-level. But even BSP quotas were largely ineffective. The party routinely put the women that made up its 30 percent quota at the bottom of its electoral lists in constituencies where the BSP was not likely to garner many votes.

In 1996, the BSP was the ruling party when the country's economy collapsed. The massive demonstrations that followed the collapse left the BSP government only two choices: to clear the streets with blood or to resign and hold new elections. The BSP chose the latter, and a UDF government swept into power. Prime Minister Ivan Kostov's UDF

Table 2. Women in the Bulgarian National Assembly by party, group or coalition in 1997 and 2001

	1997–2001		1997–2001	
	Total Seats	Percent Women	Total Seats	Percent Women
Bulgarian Socialist Party	58	10.3	48	10.4
Union of Democratic Forces	137	11.7	51	17.6
Movement for Rights and Freedom	19	5.3	21	9.5
Bulgarian Business Bloc	15	0.0	-	-
Euroleft	14	14.4	-	-
National Movement Semeon II	-	-	120	40.0

* Many of the political parties formed coalitions with smaller parties not listed here.
Source: www.parliament.bg and Kostandinova 2004.

government was the first Bulgarian government to fulfill its entire four-year mandate. Its close cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and the implementation of a currency board brought back both political and economic stability to the country in the late 1990s. Kostov appointed a woman, Nadezhda Milailova, to be his Minister of Foreign Affairs. There were two other women in cabinet-level appointments and there were many women appointed at the deputy ministerial level. But once again, there were very few women who held elected positions in Parliament. From 1997 to 2001, only 11.7 percent of the MPs were women.

Despite the many successes of the UDF government, corruption scandals and growing poverty throughout Bulgaria as stabilization and structural adjustment policies were implemented during Kostov's administration meant that a massive protest vote against the UDF was looming in the next parliamentary elections. By all accounts, at the beginning of 2001, it looked as if the BSP was again poised to take power in Bulgaria as the pendulum swung once more to the left of established national two-party system. But the unexpected entry of Bulgaria's former King into the political arena in April 2001 would dramatically change the accepted status quo, in particular with regard to women's presence in Parliament.

Simeon Saxecoburggotski and the creation of the NMS

Simeon II is the grandson of Tsar Ferdinand Saxe Coburg von Gotha, a German prince who was Bulgaria's second King after its liberation from the Ottoman Empire.[8] Simeon's father was Boris 3, a much-loved monarch in Bulgaria who is best remembered internationally for his role in saving Bulgaria's Jewish population from the death camps despite his political alliance with the Nazis in World War II. Although he was never officially crowned, Simeon succeeded his father after Boris III's suspicious death in 1943.[9] Simeon II was only six years old. A regency was formed, and for a brief time after the war Bulgaria was a communist monarchy.[10] But as the communists consolidated power in the country, they staged a referendum and the monarchy was officially abolished in 1946.

Simeon II fled Bulgaria and eventually settled in Spain where he lived as an exiled monarch for over four decades until his re-entry into the Bulgarian political scene. When communism collapsed in 1989, the

possibility of Simeon's return loomed large in the minds of the country's politicians. Although Bulgaria's new constitution unequivocally declared the nation a Republic, a special provision was included in the document to prevent Saxecoburggotski's return to power through democratic means. This provision required that anyone who wanted to run for the office of President had to have been a resident of the country for at least five years prior to the election.[11] This was specifically passed to prevent the presidential candidacy of Simeon II in 1991.[12] When Saxecoberggotski declared his intention to run for the presidency ten years later in 2001, he challenged the provision but the Bulgarian Supreme Court upheld it. Saxecoburggotski was not allowed to run.

Barred from the presidency, Saxecoburggotski instead formed his political "movement" in April 2001. Because of the rules governing the registration of political parties, Simeon II was unable to register his own party in time for the upcoming election. His "movement" was instead registered with two little known political parties: the Oborishte National Revival Party and the Bulgarian Women's Party. With the elections scheduled for June 2001, Saxecoburggotski and his political allies had less than two months to fill the NMS's lists with the names of would-be MPs in all of Bulgaria's voting districts.[13]

Filling the NMS's lists in such a short period of time was a challenging task. Before 2001, most people with professional experience in government were already aligned with one of the established political parties—either the socialists or the "democratic forces." Although Saxecoburggotski managed to convince a few BSP and UDF politicians and bureaucrats to join his movement, for the most part he had to look elsewhere to find people to run on an NMS ticket. But time was running out.

Through a wide network of personal connections, Saxecoburggotski, his family and his associates began calling their friends, their families and their associates. At first, they focused on well-known and respected Bulgarian professionals who had not previously been involved in politics directly: business people, lawyers, academics, doctors, journalists, etc. Young Bulgarian professionals who had emigrated to the United States and Western Europe during the 1990s were also invited to join the lists. But many in these populations had pre-existing political allegiances, and so the NMS began to widen the net to seemingly include almost anyone who would agree to run.

Politically inclined Bulgarians may have also been reluctant to join the NMS because the movement had no political platform. Saxecoburggotski's campaign slogan consisted of two simple words: "Trust me." He never clearly stated what his stance was on any of the issues. It was also unclear who would become the Prime Minister should the Movement win, or who would be appointed to the Cabinet. The entire campaign was based on the enigma of the former King, the disgust that most Bulgarians felt toward the two established political parties and the widespread perception that the other parties were irredeemably corrupt.

The haphazard process through which Simeon II put together his political lists was a constant theme that I heard in my interviews with MPs of the other parliamentary groups. In one telling example, a university student had been working in a local political office of the UDF. One day, she apparently received a call from someone working with the NMS and was asked if she would like to run for the National Assembly. The student agreed, and was subsequently asked if she knew of anyone else who might be interested in being on Saxecoburggotski's lists. The student then proceeded to approach five of her professors at the university. Two of her professors said "yes" and, after the 2001 election, the university student and her two professors became MPs.[14]

As the example demonstrates, many of the people on the NMS lists lacked prior political experience, a complaint that was repeated by almost all veteran MPs I interviewed. One opposition MP from BSP told me that in the beginning of the 39th National Assembly, the lack of parliamentary experience by the NMS delegates hindered legislative debate since few understood the proper procedures. "They are learning," she said, "but Parliament is not supposed to be a school." The haste of the process also makes it difficult to ascertain the motives behind having so many women on the lists.

There were many explanations given for the increased number of women. The official position of the NMS was that Saxecoburggotski deliberately placed women on his lists because he believed that women were capable and deserved their fair share of political power. In a May 2004 article on women in Bulgarian politics in the national newspaper *Sega* (Now), a pro-NMS journalist argued that "the Tsar"[15] promised to put women in office and had kept his promises.[16] The Prime Minister's supporters also reference the appointment of a woman, Lydia Shouleva,

to be his Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy, one of the most powerful positions in the government. They explain away the general lack of political experience of many NMS MPs by saying that the Prime Minister wanted to bring new faces into the parliament, to counter the corruption and favoritism that was rampant in previous National Assemblies. Certainly from their placement on the electoral lists, it could be interpreted that Saxecoburggotski wanted to deliberately increase the percentage of women. Slightly more than 48 percent of the NMS candidates in the first position on their party list were women in the 2001 elections. Of the total NMS candidates that were number two on their lists, 38.7 percent were women, and number three spots were filled with 54.8 percent women.[17]

MPs in the opposition, however, did not agree with the NMS's spin on the reasons for its inclusion of women in its movement. Several of the women MPs I interviewed partially agreed that Saxecoburggotski had intentionally sought out women as candidates, but said that he was unable to find enough who were politically qualified. They thought that he filled the rest of the lists with inexperienced women because he just needed names. Another opposition MP claimed that Saxecoburggotski would have preferred male politicians, but there were not enough men who were interested in running on his ticket. Yet another believed that he deliberately chose inexperienced women because they were willing to follow his lead without knowing what his political platform was, and that they would be more docile once elected. This MP felt that Saxecoburggotski wanted discipline in his party, and believed that women would give him less trouble than men. Whatever the actual reasons, the NMS government did bring into office the largest percentage of women since the end of communism, and the evidence suggests that this was at least partially intentional. But it was the "quality" of women he chose that had many women MPs in the opposition and women's advocates frustrated.

Educational and professional background of women MPs

In general, the educational level for all of the members of the 39th National Assembly was quite impressive, with 98 percent of the MPs having a university degree or higher. Of the women in the 2001–2005

Parliament, 23 percent of them were lawyers and 18 percent were engineers.[18] There were several medical doctors and university professors, but there were also many women who entered politics from non-traditional backgrounds, particularly those from NMS. Of the women I interviewed in the opposition parties, three were attorneys, one was an economist, and one was an English and Russian philologist. Within the NMS, I interviewed one banker, one economics professor, one Bulgarian philologist, one lawyer, one secretary, and one journalist with a previous career as a fashion model.

The other important difference between the opposition and the NMS MPs was their political experience. All of the women in UDF and BSP had served in previous parliaments, whereas only one of the NMS MPs I interviewed had been active in politics before 2001. Indeed, the five youngest female members of the 39th Parliament were NMS MPs. The youngest, Ralitza Againe, was only 25 years old in 2001 when she became an MP off of Saxecoburggotski's lists. NMS Member of Parliament Siyka Dimovska was 26. Adrianna Brancheva, Nina Chilova and Silvia Neicheva were all born in 1972, and were either 29 or 30 years old in 2001 when they entered the National Assembly as NMS MPs. Although they all had university degrees, they had very little professional, let alone political, experience.

The most notorious member of Saxecoburggotski's government was Juliana Doncheva, the former model who continued to grace the cover of

Table 3. Gender Composition of parliamentary Committess (as of 15 September 2004)

Committee Name	Total Members	Total Women	Percent Women
Labor and Social Policy	22	17	31.8
Education and Science	23	10	43.5
Health Care	25	4	16.0
Children, Youth and Sports Affairs	19	9	47.4
Economic Policy	26	6	23.1 -
Budget and Finance	26	9	34.6
Foreign Policy, Defense & Security	28	9	32.1
Legal Affairs	24	7	29.2

Source: Website of the Bulgarian National Assembly at www.parliament.bg

magazines while she was a sitting MP. Her physical beauty and personal style made her very popular with the press and, partly because of her presence, the Bulgarian public became increasingly interested in what women in Parliament were wearing. The two BSP MPs that I interviewed both felt that the NMS women had lowered Bulgarians' respect for women in politics. One said, "People should care about what politicians think and how they vote, not about what they wear. I want to be judged on how good a politician I am, not on how long my legs are or how big is my bust." The other BSP MP, a veteran of two previous parliaments, called the 39th National Assembly the "party parliament" and said that many of the women MPs were there for purely "social reasons." She said, "This may be the most incompetent parliament in Bulgaria's recent history, but it is certainly the most beautiful."

Women in politics and support for women's issues

One argument for increasing the number of women in Parliament is that women politicians will take special care to look after the interests of other women. There were two key questions that guided my interviews. First, did the MPs in the 39th National Assembly feel that having more women in Parliament affected the legislative agenda and/or the floor debates regarding "social issues?" Second, did women politicians ever cross party lines to vote together on issues of particular concern to women?

I started by looking at the composition of parliamentary committees that would deal with bills on social issues and compared the gender composition of these committees with the gender composition of the more "serious" economic, legal and national security committees. The composition of these committees is extremely important because all of the major work on proposed bills is first done in committee before it goes before the entire Parliament. Of the 22 parliamentary committees existing in September 2004, I chose to look at the gender composition of eight of them, the four most prominent committees (economic policy, budget and finance legal affairs and foreign policy, defense and security) and four committees dealing with social issues (labor and social policy, health care, education and science and children, youth and sports affairs). Table Three shows the results of these comparisons.

Since 27.5 percent of the members of the National Assembly were women, women would make up roughly the same percentage of all of the

committees if they were distributed proportionally among them.[19] In fact, what I found was that women MPs were overrepresented on the Education and Science and the Children, Youth and Sports Affairs committees. Women MPs were underrepresented on the Health Care and the Economic Policy committees, but were quite proportionately represented on all other committees, including the important Budget and Finance and Foreign Policy committees. Women MPs were certainly not taking over the membership on the "social issue" committees, but they were slightly better represented on those committees, indicating that at least some female MPs gravitated toward or were steered to these committees by their party leadership.

In general, I found that the women I interviewed believed that women of all political parties cared more about "social issues" than men. One senior MP told me, "I'm not talking about feminism here, but there is more attention to social issues when there are more women in Parliament. We are more compassionate." This matched a popular perception of women in politics among the Bulgarian public. According to a February 2003 national representative survey, 57.2 percent of those surveyed agreed that women in politics are more responsive to the problems of ordinary people.[20] The MPs, however, were very careful to distinguish "social issues" from "women's issues." It was emphasized to me on several occasions that there were no purely women's issues, "only budget issues." The more esoteric category of "gender issues" was even less appealing to women MPs than "women's issues," and most actively distanced themselves from anything having to do with the imported Anglo-American word and concept of "gender." The director of a women's NGO in Sofia complained to me: "In the last Parliament there were only 10 percent women, but most of them were gender aware. In this Parliament there are 27 percent women and almost none of them are gender aware."

Bulgarian politicians, like Bulgarian women, are very suspicious of Western "feminist" ideas and do not generally believe that women's issues can be separated from men's issues.[21] They recognize that both men and women have been negatively affected by the transition from communism, and that the lives of men and women are intricately intertwined. There are no "women's issues" that do not also affect men in some way, especially if those "women's issues" require a part of Bulgaria's scarce fiscal

resources. For example, maternity leave and child allowances were two fiercely contested political issues because of the costs associated with them, even though they directly affected women. Women MPs consistently corrected me when I referred to them as women's issues. The expense to both state and private employers associated with the Bulgarian tradition of offering extended maternity leave could not be ignored in the political debates surrounding them and women of different political parties had very different views on whether longer maternity leaves helped or hurt women in the work force. UDF MPs felt that requiring maternity leave gives employers incentives to discriminate against women, while BSP MPs felt that they are necessary to help women combine their work and family life, particularly in light of Bulgaria's declining birth rate.

The only issues that were considered purely "women's issues" were those of domestic violence and sexual harassment because both issues were "imported" from the West,[22] and neither had direct budgetary implications. On all other issues, the traditional parties had strict political stances from which the party members were not allowed to deviate: BSP was in favor of longer maternity leave, while UDF was against them; BSP was in favor of child allowances, while UDF was against them, etc. The apparent exception to this was the NMS, which had no clear political position on many issues. One opposition MP claimed that: "The NMS women have more freedom to pursue women's issues because they have a very loose party platform." So even though the women I interviewed said they cared more about social issues, they did not necessarily care about them in the same way. Instead, their parties often strictly determined the way they voted on social issues.

If women in the Bulgarian Parliament really cared more about legislation dealing with "social issues," then perhaps women MPs were crossing party lines to vote together on bills that dealt specifically with those issues. In asking about specific pieces of proposed legislation and the debates surrounding them, I also found that Bulgarian women MPs rarely worked together when their parties disagreed. Women MPs from the opposition parliamentary groups were quick to agree that women did not cross party lines to vote for social issues. One opposition MP stated that there were no natural allegiances among women. She said, "Men and women of the same political party have more in common with each than women in opposing parties do." An NMS MP, however, thought

that female politicians from different political parties were much more "civilized" with each other than men from different parties were. The same MP argued that the strong presence of women in the National Assembly actually made debates less hostile and more collegial—she felt that female MPs diffused intraparliamentary conflicts. She did agree, however, that Bulgarian women in Parliament would never vote for a bill that their own party leadership opposed just because women in another party were supporting it. "I was elected as a member of my party, not because I am a woman."

Countless examples were given in my interviews that confirmed this finding. There were numerous instances of how women from different political parties failed to cooperate on specific pieces of legislation that could benefit women. One BSP MP told me about a bill that would have required political quotas for women in all elected offices, which was introduced in the 38th National Assembly. The bill was co-sponsored by four women from the ruling UDF. When the time came to vote, however, the four UDF co-sponsors left the hall and did not cast votes. Their party was firmly against quotas. The BSP women I interviewed believed that the UDF women had intentionally left the room so that they would not have to go on record as having voted against their own initiative. Ultimately, the bill failed to pass by seven votes.

Examples from the 39th National Assembly showed similar divides between women of different political parties. In one such example, the UDF had proposed legislation that would have reduced the tax burden on certain populations of women and increased divorcees' access to child support. NMS, with all its female MPs, rejected the bill. UDF MPs claimed that it was voted down because NMS would not vote for a law proposed by the opposition. An NMS MP claimed that the bill was rejected because it was seen to be a "tax cut" in disguise. In another case, a UDF MP had proposed a law establishing a national hotline for child victims of sexual assault, which would require 850,000 leva[23] from the national budget. The MP strongly lobbied all of the other women in Parliament to back the bill. Nevertheless, the bill was not approved. While the UDF sponsor blamed partisan politics, NMS MPs claimed that the hotline was too expensive and of dubious value. In another incident, UDF had proposed a law on "Equal Opportunities" that would legally enshrine the equality of the sexes and guarantee equal opportunities for

men and women in the economy and polity. Women in the NMS majority largely voted against this legislation, claiming that they believed that men and women were already equal in Bulgaria and it was unnecessary to legislate on the issue.

Alternatively, several pieces of social legislation put forward by NMS had much more success than other bills since NMS has an almost absolute majority in Parliament, and because the costs of its proposed laws were low. NMS proposed a more general "anti-discrimination" law that prohibited employers from discriminating on the basis of sex, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, etc. Beyond the low government salaries the nine anti-discrimination commissioners, the law cost very little to taxpayers, and the punitive fines that it could levy on employers and educational institutions found guilty of discrimination could actually make money for the national budget. This law was passed with a majority of women in parliament voting in favor. MPs of all parties had also stood united behind a relatively budget-neutral amendment to the Law on the Protection of the Child.

In fact, there seemed to be a strong correlation between the budgetary impact of a proposed law and the divisions between women in different parties—the more money a law required the less likely women of different parties were able to stand behind it. Alternatively, if the legislation had little or no budgetary impact, women MPs felt they could cross party lines to support it, but only if men from their parties did the same. I was very fortunate to be conducting my interviews during the time when Parliament was voting on the first reading[24] of a proposed law on domestic violence. The draft law had been written by a Bulgarian women's NGO in Sofia and NMS MP Marina Dikova had spearheaded the initiative. When I interviewed her, she explained that she had worked very closely with the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation to write the law, and felt that the legislation was an excellent example of how the high percentage of women in Parliament was translating into more attention to women's issues. Every woman in Parliament supported the first reading, as did most of the men. While there were some dissenters, the budget-neutral impact of the law took it out of the fiercely contested realm of party politics. But when budget issues were involved, women were more loyal to their parties than they were to each other, and this ultimately undermined the formation of any sort of women's lobby in Parliament.

Conclusion

The increased number of women in the 39th National Assembly was not the result of a sudden surge in popular support for women politicians, nor was it because of a reinstitution of electoral quotas. The dramatic increase in women's presence as MPs was rather the result of an historical anomaly. The unexpected return of Bulgaria's ex-king, the speed with which he registered his party and the overwhelming electoral support he received were primarily responsible for the high percentage of women in Bulgaria's Parliament. And although they make up more than a quarter of all MPs, I found no evidence that their presence had directly translated into more support for women's/social issues or precipitated the formation of a woman's lobby within the parliament. It was clear that women are just as divided by political ideology as men, and that the increased number of women in Parliament did not lead to the legislative implementation of a "feminist" agenda, however broadly defined. This is not to say that a continued presence of women in the Bulgarian Parliament will not eventually result in more attention to "women's issues," but only that this was not the case for the women in the 39th National Assembly.

Notes

1. I would like to thank the National Council of Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER) and Bowdoin College for their generous support of this research. I would also like to thank Ms. Anelia Atanasova at the Local Government Initiative for her assistance in organizing many of the interviews.
2. Louis Napoleon was the last case in post-revolutionary France.
3. Bulgaria has a unicameral legislature called the Narodno Sobranie (National Assembly).
4. Dobrinka Kostova, "Similar or Different? Women in Postcommunist Bulgaria" in Marilyn Rueschemeyer, ed., Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).
5. Bulgaria's communist leader for over 35 years.
6. Krassimira Daskalova and Pavlina Filipova, "Citizenship and women's political participation in Bulgaria," published online by Social Rights Bulgaria on March 2, 2004, http://www.socialrights.org/spip/article494.htmland 2003; Tatiana Kostandinova "Women's Legislative Representation in Post-Communist Bulgaria," in Richard Matland and Kathleen Montgomery, eds., Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 304-320.

7. Irene Tinker, "Quotas for Women in Elected Legislatures: Do They Really Empower Women?" Women's Studies International Forum, vol. 27, No. 5, 2004, 531–546; Ricahrd Matland and Kathleen Montgomery, Women's Access to Political Power.
8. R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
9. Many people believe that Hitler poisoned Boris 3 for his refusal to turn Bulgaria's Jewish population over to the Germans.
10. M. Lalkov, A History of Bulgaria: An Outline. (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 1998).
11. Constitution of The Republic of Bulgaria, Promulgated in State Gazette 56/13, July 1991, amended in State Gazette 85/26, September 2003. Available online at: www.parliament.bg
12. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria.
13. Each voting district consists of 10,000 voters.
14. Personal Communication with Eliana Maseva, in Sofia July 2004.
15. The journalist refers to Simeon Saxecoburgotski as "Tsarya" literally "the King."
16. Nevena Petrova "Bulgarskata Politika Ima Problem, Xhenite sa Malko," (Bulgarian Politics Has a Problem, Women are few), Sega, (18 May 2004), available online at www.segabg.com/18052004/p0050003.asp.
17. Kostandinova, Women's Legislative Representation, 313
18. Data adapted from the official website of the Bulgarian parliament at www.parliament.bg.
19. The chairperson of each committee is from the ruling parliamentary group with one deputy chairperson from each other parliamentary group. The representation of different parliamentary groups in the committees must be proportionate to the representation of each group in the National Assembly.
20. National Center for the Survey of Public Opinion, "Public Opinion about Women in Politics," from the website of the Women's Alliance for Development at www.womenbg.org.
21. Kristen Ghodsee, "Feminism-by-Design: Emerging Capitalisms, Cultural Feminism and Women's Nongovernmental Organizations in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Spring 2004 (Vol. 29, No. 3).
22. Although domestic violence certainly existed under common it was considered a private matter between families, and not something the state should be involved in. The concept of sexual harassment also did not really exist in Bulgaria until after 1989, despite the widespread practice of it.
23. The Bulgarian currency is the Lev. "Leva" is the Bulgarian plural of Lev.
24. Bulgarian bills are voted upon in two readings. A bill becomes law if it receives the required votes at the second reading.

CHAPTER SIX

Women in Parliament in the Czech Republic

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After the end of communism in what was then Czechoslovakia, expectations about the impact this change of regime would have on women's status and opportunities were mixed. On the one hand, some expected that the end of the communist party's monopoly of power and the repluralization of politics that rapidly ensued would provide new opportunities for women to articulate political views, band together with others to form new political parties and non-governmental organizations, run for office and pressure political leaders to take action on issues of interest to them. On the other hand, the new opportunities to be active in the economic sector, coupled with the decrease in public spending, price liberalization and the end of government subsidies for many previous low-cost services, together with the newly competitive nature of politics and the freedom not to be involved, were seen as factors that might well create barriers for women interested in becoming political leaders. The end of real, if unofficial quotas, that had maintained a certain level of women's representation in the effective as well as symbolic elites during the communist era also was seen as something that would be likely to lead to a decrease in women's representation in political leadership. In fact, as the pages to follow reveal, the picture is more complicated than either of these sets of expectations imply. As more optimistic observers expected, the change in political regime did indeed open new opportunities for women. Nevertheless, there are still very real obstacles for women in terms of reaching positions of leadership and using those positions to make a difference in women's lives once they achieve them.

Women Leaders: Numbers

In the Czechoslovakia and after 1993 the Czech Republic, as elsewhere in the post-communist world, the number of women decreased in the early elections after the fall of communism. Women's representation among the national parliamentary elite fell from 16 percent to 23 percent during the communist era to 10.7 percent after the June 1990 parliamentary elections. In June 1992, there were 26 women deputies (8.7 percent of the total), in the Federal Assembly and 22 (10.7 percent), in the Czech National Council.[1] Women comprised 15 percent of legislators (30) in the Parliament in June 1996. There are 34 women in the current Parliament where they comprise 17 percent of total deputies in the lower chamber and 10 women in the Senate, where they account for 12.4 percent of all senators.

As in the communist era when women in both the symbolic governmental elite and the effective Communist Party elite had higher levels of turnover and lower tenure in office than their male counterparts,[2] there is a high degree of turnover of women deputies. Approximately one-half of the women in Parliament at present, for example, were newly elected in 2002. Four were elected for the first time in 1998 and were thus serving their second terms; five were first elected in 1966. Only four women had served longer. Of these, two were first elected in 1990, and one in 1992. One, a member of the Christian Democratic Union-Peoples' Party (CDU-PP), was first elected to Parliament under the communists in 1986. Women parliamentarians' average tenure is 5.4 years.

Women in Parliament

Social backgrounds

Although the number of women in legislative office decreased in the first decade after the end of communism, this decrease in and of itself cannot be equated with a decline in women's role in political leadership. First, the nature of the positions themselves have changed. After 1989, legislators were not merely members of a body that was largely a rubber stamp for decisions taken by the party but members of the country's effective elite. The women elected to Parliament after 1989 also differ from their predecessors in many important ways.

One of the most important of these was in the area of education. All of the women deputies and senators in the Czech Parliament for whom

information was available in 1997 had higher educations. Many had advanced degrees: five had medical degrees, seven had law degrees and four had PhDs.[3] Educational levels appear to be similarly high among women deputies elected in 2002: six women deputies have law degrees, one has a medical degree, five have engineering or scientific degrees and six have other advanced degrees.[4] Twenty-five of the 33 current women deputies (75.8 percent) have university degrees compared to 85.6 percent (143 of 167) of male deputies.[5] There are important differences in the educational levels of both men and women deputies from different political parties. All of the women deputies of the PP and 90 percent of those from the Social Democratic Party (SDP) have university degrees, as do 75 percent of women members of the Civic Democratic Party (CDP). Two-thirds of the Communist Party's (CP) women deputies and 75.8 percent (25 of 33) of the male deputies affiliated with that party have university degrees.

Women elected to Parliament after 1989 also differ from their communist predecessors in another important way. Rather than comprising a disproportionately high number of those who were workers or agricultural workers compared to their male counterparts, who were overwhelmingly drawn from the state and party apparatus,[6] women leaders elected after 1989 have had occupations far more similar to those of their male counterparts. In the early years after 1989 in particular, these occupations differed in important ways from those typically found in the legislatures of more established democracies. Thus, in 1990, women parliamentarians included several writers, numerous doctors, an economist and several other academics—occupations not often found in the legislatures of more established democracies in Europe and the US. On the other hand, the career paths and occupations of their male counterparts also were not standard-issue parliamentary backgrounds. Male deputies in that year included creative artists, writers, engineers, doctors, state officials and former dissidents.[7]

What is important here is less the fact that men's and women's occupations differ than the fact that, although different in many cases from those found in more established legislatures, women's backgrounds provided them with skills and experiences that were as relevant (or lacking in relevance) to the process of governing in a democratic state as those of the men elected to Parliament at that time. Coupled with their educational levels, women in the Czech Parliament are thus

currently in a better position than their predecessors to have an influence on policy-making.

As the result of these trends, women parliamentarians have had skills and tools for wielding influence that were much closer to those of their male counterparts than did women during the communist era. They also have come from professional backgrounds that, although they reflected the large degree of occupational segregation by gender in the labor force, also resemble those of their male counterparts more closely.

Age differences among men and women parliamentarians are relatively small. The average age of women deputies elected in 2002 was 47. The oldest two women were 58 and the youngest was 23. Gender-related age differences varied to some degree by party and were greatest among deputies affiliated with the right of center Freedom Party-Democratic Union (FP-DU) where there was an approximately 14-year difference in the average age of women deputies and all deputies. Differences are significantly lower among deputies from other parties.

Party affiliations

As is the case for most legislators in the Czech Republic, most women deputies and Senators are members of political parties who are elected to Parliament as part of a party list. In the Parliament elected in 2002, women deputies were fairly evenly distributed among the SDP (eight women), the CP (seven women), and the Civic Democratic Party (CDP) (six women). One woman, who has been in Parliament since 1986, was elected on the slate of the CDU-PP. Taken together, there are considerably more women deputies in left of center than in right of center parties at present. This tendency for women to be better represented among deputies of left of center parties is similar in many other post-communist states and may reflect the fact that these parties were not as affected by the backlash against the whole idea of women's equality that occurred soon after the end of communism.[8] It also reflects the fact that the SDP has a 25 percent quota for women candidates, although the party did not field that many candidates in 2002.

However, in the Czech Republic, there has been a fair degree of fluctuation in this respect. In 1990, women accounted for 21.9 percent of deputies of the CP, compared to 14 percent of all deputies to the Czech National Council. Although this tendency continued in Slovakia after the

break-up of the joint state, most women deputies elected in the Czech Republic in 1992 ran on the lists of the CDP. In 1996, women constituted the highest proportion of deputies in the extreme right-wing Republican Party (five of nine, or 55.5 percent) and the CP (five of 18, or 22.7 percent). The largest number of women deputies were found in the SDP, although they accounted for a somewhat smaller portion of all deputies among the SDP, 11 of 61 or 18 percent.[9]

Women's proportion of candidates for the lower house of Parliament increased from 20.2 percent to 26.l percent between the l996 and 2002 elections. However, the proportion of women candidates who were elected decreased from 72 percent in 1996 to 65 percent in 2002.[10] In recent elections, women have formed the highest proportion of candidates of those parties that have not received enough votes to gain seats in Parliament. In the 2002 elections, there were more women candidates in non-parliamentary parties in nine of the 14 voting districts.[11]

Committees, activities and cabinet positions

Women deputies currently sit on a broad range of committees, from those dealing with foreign affairs and defense to those responsible for social policy and health care. They also serve as chair or vice chair of a variety of committees, including the Mandates and Immunity Committee, the Constitutional and Legal Committee, and the Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport. However, the largest number of women deputies are found on the Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. Four of the women deputies also serve on the Standing Commission on the Family and Equal Opportunity. It is also important to note that most committees have from three to five vice-chairs.

Compared to their percentage of all members, women deputies elected in 2002 are less likely to be members of the most prestigious committees, including the Budget Committee and the Committee for the Economy (on which there are no women) as well as those that deal with defense and security, European affairs, foreign affairs, and foreign policy.[12] Both men and women deputies see those committees on which men predominate as most prestigious. Women deputies are more likely to see all committees, aside from those that deal with education, youth, culture and sports and the Mandate and Immunity Committee, are as significant as their male counterparts.[13] In 1995 and 1997, the Budget

Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee, and the Committee for Science and Education passed the highest number of resolutions. There was little difference in the frequency of meetings between committees with varying proportions of women deputies during this period.[14]

Since 1990, women have held 10 positions as ministers in the Czech government. Women have headed the ministries of Commerce, Trade and Tourism, Justice (two women), Health (twice), Transportation and Education, Youth and Sport. There were two women ministers in the Czech government formed after the 2002 elections. Petra Buzkova, a lawyer who is a member of the SDP is Minister of Education, Youth and Sport and formerly served as the Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies. Marie Souckova served as Minister of Health until her resignation in the spring of 2004. Both Buzkova and Souckova have also served as vice-chairs of the Czech SDP. Thirty-one women have served as Deputy Ministers since 1990.

Impact of women's representation on policy and factors that limit women deputies' influence

As the above analysis indicates, the number of women among parliamentarians in the Czech Republic has increased. Although they are still less often found in positions of leadership within the body or elevated to positions as ministers, women leaders have the educational and occupational backgrounds needed to participate in policy-making effectively. A preliminary examination of the voting records and speeches in Parliament of women deputies indicates that many women are making good use of their opportunity to question government ministers, submit legislative proposals and participate in debate within the chamber on significant issues of national import.

Some women deputies are also developing links to women's groups and advocates for women outside of the Parliament. A recent example of this cooperation occurred in the area of legislation about domestic violence. In this instance, a coalition of women's groups and interested women parliamentarians worked together to increase public awareness of this problem and affect public policies that deal with it.[15]

However, there are also limits to the influence women deputies can exert at present, particularly with regard to serving as advocates for women. The first of these reflects the fact that, although their level of

representation in the national legislative elite is equivalent to or better than that of women in many EU and other developed countries, numbers do count. At 17 percent of the total number of deputies in the lower house, women can hardly be said to constitute the 'critical mass' that seems to be needed to allow members of minorities or other disadvantaged groups to feel free to air issues of particular concern to them or have the ability to get controversial items onto the legislative agenda.[16] The fact that most bills the legislature considers are introduced by the government rather than by individual deputies further limits the influence of women parliamentarians.[17]

The party recruitment system is another barrier to greater influence on the part of women in Parliament. An electoral system that relies on party lists could theoretically be more favorable to higher levels of women's representation, as parties could, by placing women high on their lists where they are sure to be seated in Parliament if the party receives votes, ensure that women are well-represented in Parliament.[18] The ability of party leaders to manipulate the slate of candidates is one reason why some in the Czech Republic and elsewhere in the region have once again called for the use of quotas to ensure women adequate representation in political leadership. At the same time, the party recruitment system, by placing control of political recruitment in the hands of the party leadership, means that women, as well as men, who run for office are dependent on the party for support (as well as for information and resources while in office), for reelection. Coupled with the tradition of strong party discipline in the Czech Republic that dates back to the interwar period, the position of the party as the electorate of first resort can limit women's ability to focus attention on issues of particular interest to women, particularly if the parties on which they are dependent have well-defined stands on these issues. It can also limit women deputies' ability to cooperate across party lines.

The Standing Committee on the Family and Equal Opportunity, to which several women deputies belong at the moment, offers a mechanism for overcoming the divisions among women deputies that result from their integration into the apparatuses of their own parties. Working with non-governmental organizations and experts on women's issues from the universities and the Academy of Sciences, the Committee has the potential to raise issues of particular concern to women. It can also serve

as a forum for women deputies to air their views independently of their parties, particularly on issues of special salience to women.

Political attitudes are a final barrier to greater influence by women parliamentarians. At the mass level, women's ability to be influential leaders is limited by lingering perceptions and beliefs that politics is still not quite an appropriate arena of activity for women. The image of the old communist party woman functionary seems to be fading, particularly among younger groups of voters, but there are still those in Czech society who see politics as too dirty for women, not of critical importance for women, or somehow the proper domain of men. Most men and women also feel that men have greater opportunities to succeed in politics than women.[19] These attitudes, of course, are less important for the day-to-day work of women parliamentarians once they achieve office than they are in depressing the total number of women in office. But even in Parliament, they are reflected to some extent in the areas in the low representation of women deputies in the committees perceived to matter most and women deputies' limited representation in parliamentary leadership and cabinet positions.

Women parliamentarians' activities are also influenced by popular attitudes concerning gender roles and women's equality. As Havelkova notes, popular attitudes toward gender equality are complex and difficult to take at face value.[20] Nonetheless, it is significant that most women still see politics as an aberrant activity for women, and few want to run for public office. Women as well as men are less likely to support women who run for office, and there is little popular support for viewing women's issues apart from those of society as a whole.[21] In these circumstances, there is little popular pressure for women deputies to present themselves or act primarily as champions of women's interests.

Elite political culture also limits the extent to which women can advance in leadership positions or become active advocates for women in the policy-initiating and policy-making arenas. Surveys of women political leaders conducted in the mid-1990s found that many were reluctant to see or portray themselves as advocates for women. As is the case with many of their male counterparts, these women preferred to see themselves as advocates for all citizens, not just one group of citizens. They also did not feel that their positions were secure enough to take on the parties' bureaucracies on these issues.[22]

A final barrier to greater advocacy by women MPs for women's issues arises from the limited contact political leaders who obtain their positions through partisan channels have with leaders of non-governmental organizations. The limited ties between NGOs focusing on women's issues and political leaders in part reflect the third sector's general distrust of politics. Political leaders in turn, sometimes feel that the NGO sector, which does not have the responsibility to govern, can distort public debate and take too strong an advocacy position. This mutual distrust and the perceptions that the two areas have very different missions have kept women leaders and NGOs working on women's issues apart until fairly recently. In the case noted above focused on domestic violence, a coalition of women politicians and activists from a variety of women's groups worked together to raise awareness of the issue and encourage political leaders to formulate and enact legislation making domestic violence in the home a criminal act and extending the protections of the state to victims of domestic abuse.[23]

The Czech Republic's accession to the EU has also influenced women deputies' roles in Parliament. As part of the accession process, Parliament adopted laws that prohibited discrimination based on sex as part of the Labor Code and Act on Employment. It also included a provision prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace in the Labor Code in January 2001. However, very few cases have been brought to the courts on the basis of these measures.[24] The need to adapt Czech law to EU norms prior to accession triggered another round of intense discussion of family roles and responsibilities, and the public impact of sexual orientation. It also focused attention on the extent to which women legislators can or should pay special attention to their common interests as women and roles as women's advocates and highlighted the question of how women leaders can balance these concerns and their broader roles as citizens' representatives and members of political parties.

Conclusion

The role of women deputies in the Czech Parliament is quite different than that of their predecessors in the communist era. Not only is the role of the legislature itself markedly different in the current political system, but the kinds of women who become members of the legislature is also very different. Equal to their male counterparts in education and

professional accomplishment for the most part, women deputies have the skills and experiences needed to act as forceful and effective legislators. The numbers of women in the legislature have also increased since the first free elections of 1990, particularly in the lower house, where women's representation among all deputies has increased from 22 to 33 (11 to 16.5 percent). Women's representation among senators has remained at the same somewhat lower level since 1998 when the upper house was established (nine or 10 women: 11 or 12 percent).

At present, there is little evidence that the increase in the number of women leaders has resulted in increased advocacy for women's interests in the legislature. Most women deputies see themselves as representatives of all citizens rather than primarily women. Party based recruitment systems and the strength of party discipline within the legislatures inhibit cooperation of women across party lines, and the lack of a mobilized women's movement and limited contacts between women leaders and women's NGOs mean that women deputies are not subjected to much pressure to act as women's advocates.

At the same time, there are signs that these patterns may change somewhat in the future. Certain women deputies clearly perceive the problems women face in operating as effective leaders within Parliament, while others express an interest in finding ways for women to cooperate across party lines on issues of special concern to women. Women's groups outside Parliament are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of working with and putting pressure on legislators, including women deputies, and, with accession to the EU, those in and out of Parliament who want to push for more concerted action on issues that affect women in particular, have access to an outside agency with a stated commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and ensuring gender equality. The impact of this factor, which was clearly evident in the adoption of a number of legal measures guaranteeing women's equality in the pre-accession period, in ensuring actual enforcement of regulations on the books or in supporting new legislation now that the Czech Republic is a member of the EU remains to be seen. However, at least it provides women's advocates in and outside of government with a set of mechanisms for drawing greater attention to issues that affect women.

Notes

1. Sharon L. Wolchik, "Gender and the Politics of Transition in the Czech Republic and Slovakia," In Jane S. Jaquette and Sharon L. Wolchik, eds., *Women and Democracy: Latin American and Central and Eastern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 168.
2. Sharon Wolchik, "The Status of Women in a Socialist Order: Czechoslovakia, 1948–1978," *Slavic Review* 38 (December 1979).
3. Wolchik, "Gender and the Politics of Transition," 169.
4. For more information, see www.psdp.cz/cgi-bin/eng/sqw/detail.sqw.
5. Petra Rakusanova, "Zeny na kandidatkach vybranych politickych stran a srovnani se zahranicim," In Lukas Linek et al., eds, *Volby do poslanecke snemovny 2002* (Prague: Sociologicky ustav akademie ved Ceske republiky, 2003), Table 5.
6. Wolchik, "The Status of Women" and Sharon Wolchik, "Women and the Politics of Transition in the Czech and Slovak Republics," In Marilyn Rueschemeyer, ed., *Women in the Politics of Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995) 3–27.
7. For more information, see www.volby.cz.
8. See Jane S. Jaquette and Sharon L. Wolchik, eds., *Women and Democracy: Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Sharon Wolchik, "Women and the Politics of Transition in the Czech and Slovak Republics," In Marilyn Rueschemeyer, ed., *Women in the Politics of Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995) 3–27 and Steven Saxonberg, "Women in East European Parliaments," *Journal of Democracy* 11 (April 2000): 145–158.
9. Wolchik, "Gender and the Politics of Transition" 169.
10. Rakusanova, "Zeny na kandidatkach," Table 6.
11. Rakusanova, "Zeny na kandidatkach," 38.
12. Rakusanova, "Zeny na kandidatkach," Table 7.
13. Rakusanova, "Zeny na kandidatkach," Table 8.
14. See Zdenka Mansfeldova et al, "Committees of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic," In David M. Olson and William E. Crowther, eds., *Committees in Post-Communist Democratic Parliaments: Comparative Institutionalization* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002), 69–92.
15. From interview with Petra Hejnova, "Vize projektu novych cest intervence v problematice domaciho nasili." Conducted at Informace pro Konference, Prague, Czech Republic, 26 November, 2001).
16. (see Carroll, 1978; Michele L. Swers, *The Difference Women Make* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
17. For further discussion of the role of the government and individual legislators, see Jana Reschova and Jindriska Syllova, "The Legislature of the Czech Republic," In David M. Olson and Philip Norton, eds., *The New Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 82-107.

18. Richard Matland and Kathleen Montgomery, eds., *Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
19. Centrum pro vyzkum verejneho mineni, Sociologicky ustave AV CR, "Diskriminace v zamestnani a role prace, partnerskych vztahu a spoleconsekho vyziti v celkove spokojenosti se zivotem," 14 May 2003 and Centrum pro vyzkum verejneho mineni, Sociologicky ustav AV CR "Srovnani postaveni muzu a zen na trhu prace," 14 May 2003.
20. Hana Havelkova, "Abstract Citizenship? Women and Power in the Czech Republic," In Barbara Hobson, ed., *Gender and Citizenship in Transition* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
21. (Cermakova, get citation; See also Wolchik, "Women and the Politics of Transition," 3–27 and Sharon L. Wolchik, "Women and the Politics of Transition in the Czech and Slovak Republics," In Marilyn Rueschemeyer, ed., *Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998) 116-141.
22. Sharon L. Wolchik, "Gender Differences Among Political and Economic Elites in the Czech Republic." (Paper presented at the Conference on Determinants of Women's Representation in Parliament in Central and Eastern Europe, Bergen, Norway, 28–29 May, 1999.)
23. See "Vize pojektu novych cest intervence v problematice domaciho nasili," interviews with Petra Hejnova, Prague Gender Studies Center, Prague, May 2001; Washington, D.C. May 2002.
24. For further discussion of the impact of the EU on Czech legislation affecting women, see Open Society Institute, "Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Equal Opportunities for Women and Men" (Budapest: Open Society Institute, 2002) 144–146 and Lean Seppanen Anderson "Regulating Women and the Family: Czech Policy Making Since 1989." (Paper presented at the 34th National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 21–24 November, 2002).

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