

Sent via email, September 3, 2022

The first or foundational meeting of the Commission of Women in the History of STM took place at the 16th International Congress for the History of Science, in Bucharest, the capital of the then so-called Popular Republic of Romania, in the summer of 1981. Together with Joy Harvey, I was the only doctoral student among this Commission's founding members. My already then intensely international life both facilitated my presence at this Congress, and limited my direct involvement in it, so my recollections are mainly those of a junior, peripathetic, observer.

Indeed, even finding my registration tag proved to be a challenge: after failing to find it under either Canada-- the country of my academic enrollment at the Universite de Montreal; or Israel - the country of my citizenship and passport; I was finally able to find my registration tag under USA - the country of my residence, as the spouse of a US born fellow student whom I met at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, which hosted me as a Penn-Israel Exchange student. The far sighted History of Science Society included me in a special travel grant program for scholars who did not qualify for its main group travel grant provided by the NSF for USA citizens and those enrolled at universities in the USA.

The circumstances of creating the Commission on Women in HSTM are interesting for several reasons. First, 1981 was still part of the Cold War geopolitical era. Therefore, the Congress was one of very few opportunities for historians of science to meet colleagues from Eastern Europe & the then Soviet Union. For women scholars such opportunities were even more rare. Surprisingly, the host country made the most out of the women in science theme by nominating Elena Ceausescu, wife and partner of the country's then leader Nicolae Ceausescu, as the Congress' patron. She gave the opening speech, highlighting her own background in chemical engineering, and the prominence of women engineers in Eastern Europe, a fact which contrasted with the paucity of women in science and engineering in western countries.

Despite this symbolic coup, the then new idea that gender and women in science are key topics in the history of science was not widely spread. In formerly communist countries, and to some extent in western countries with intellectual elites influenced by Marxism, class was still seen as the only analytically relevant form of oppression and inequality. This meant that the early work on women in science, perhaps inevitably, reflected a national, and possibly nationalistic, tone; the mostly male establishment was more tolerant of contributions glorifying one's national science, even if the science in question was done by a woman. This accounts for a preponderance of national

biographical studies with no awareness of research on women scientists from other countries, let alone engagement in the more challenging comparative research.

Yet another temporal dimension pertaining to the state of scholarship on women in science as the rationale for creating the Commission, revolved around the paucity of literature on women and gender in science by 1981. The Commission founding members from USA, which sent a relatively large delegation, included some who pioneered essays on women weavers in 18th Century France; (Daryl Hafter of Michigan State University, a future President of the Society for the History of Technology who also published on the early years of the Commission in *Technology & Culture*) on women in 19th and 20th Century American science; (Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, then of Syracuse University, and Margaret Walsh Rossiter, then marginally attached to UC-Berkeley but with her would-be seminal book *Women Scientists, in America, 1880-1940* in press, appearing in 1982 with three relatively understated reviews in *ISIS*) on women scientists in 19th Century USA and France; Joy Harvey, doctoral student at Harvard; and on women scientists in 20th Century UK (Pnina G. Abir-Am, doctoral student at Universite de Montreal). Commission founding members from Europe included Danielle Jacquart, a medievalist from France; Birgitte Hoppe, a historian of biochemistry from Germany, Joan Mason, a historian of women in the Royal Society from UK, among others. From the Eastern bloc, I recall Eva Vamos, from the National Museum of Science & Technology in Budapest, and Olga Lejneva from the Soviet Union. The Congress in general and the Commission in particular provided an opportunity to become acquainted with research on women in science outside USA, as well as with scholars from other countries, thus facilitating our project on the first collection of essays on women in science, *Uneasy Careers and Intimate Lives, Women in Science, 1789-1979*, which includes women as topics and as authors from half a dozen countries. (Pnina G. Abir-Am & Dorinda Outram, Editors, Rutgers University Press, Karen M. Reeds Acquisition Editor, 1987, 1989)

Two remarkable participants at this Congress were Joseph Needham and his research partner Lu Gwei-Djen, both circa 80 year old. I knew both from my 1980 and 1981 dissertation research in Cambridge, UK, especially Needham who served as a key informant. I still regret failing to accompany them on their bold trip to famous monasteries in Northern Romania, as well as to the Moldavian capital of Yassi. At a reception at the Italian Embassy we were told that an epidemic of malaria persisted in the countryside, but was being denied by the government. So when most Congress participants, including my Boston based spouse, went to see the great attraction of the Dracula castle on the one touristic day, I spent that day at the remarkable Jewish cemetery, among long deceased ancestors.

Altogether, the 1981 Congress and the creation of the Commission were a major landmark for the history of women in science. Unlike more senior colleagues such as Daryl, Sally, Margaret, Joan, among others, who attended previous such Congresses, this was my first time at a History of Science Congress, so the experience was crucial not only in facilitating the first collection of essays on women in science as a distinctly international project; but also in realizing that the international arena can be a source of power for women scholars, who despite the progress of the 1980s, were to remain long marginalized in their respective national and institutional contexts. This may well have been the key role of the Commission in the years to come.

I also attended the Congresses and their attached Commission meetings in 1985; (UC-Berkeley, USA), 1993 (Zaragoza, Spain) 1997, (Liege, Belgium) 2009; (Budapest, Hungary) as well as the beautifully organized interim meetings for which the following Commission members served as local organizers: 1999 in Cambridge/UK by Joan Mason; 2007 in Syros by Maria Rentetzi; 2011 in Paris by Anne-Sophie Godfroy; 2015 in Prague by Milada Sekirkova and Sona Strabanova; and 2019 in Tel Aviv by Nurit Kirsh. These were all great occasions to renew friendships though in my opinion the full weight of the Commission in global policy for history of science and allied fields remains underutilized.

For example, there was no position taken in the debate on the under-representation of women in science in 2005-2006, and very little on the backlash known as bitchification in the 1990s, The decline in valuing scholarship on women in the aftermath of 9/11 (of which the current situation of women's education, or lack of it, in Afghanistan is a stark reminder) suggests that despite progress in addressing the key issues of racial and sexual diversity, much remains to be done on the front of gender bias and yes, gender parity.

In this connection, I hope that the Commission will support my initiative to lobby the Nobel committee for recognizing the women who discovered RNA splicing; (most of you would have received the link to my papers on this subject) The 1993 Nobel was shared by two men who played a secondary role, but were sponsored by powerful mentors, something women rarely possess. The gender and race bias at the time, (some of the pertinent women were of East and South Asian descent) together with the primacy of maintaining the balance of power between male rival scientist leaders, precipitated a lasting injustice which hopefully we can start fixing now (see my PPT presentation at ESHS-2022).

May I conclude with a few words on my own involvement with scholarship on women in science, and hence with the Commission. I became interested in the topic of women in

science following a seminar run by Ruth Hubbard - the biologist and feminist activist who was among the pioneering authors on gender bias in science, which took place in 1979.

My presentation at the Congress, based on my then recently completed draft of my Ph.D. dissertation (defended in 1984 and published in miniature form -70pp - in the London-based History of Science as "The Biotheoretical Gathering...and the Origins of Molecular Biology in UK") revolved around a group of scientists, both men and women, which focused on redefining the boundaries between the physico-chemical and the life sciences, and also created an early form of gender parity in the 1930s. This group of a dozen scientists included three women scientists, or "my three Dorothys: Wrinch, Moyle-Needham, and Crowfoot-Hodgkin". Still limited to their role as group members, my research on them provided the justification for my participation in the creation of the Commission on Women in 1981. A bit later, in 1988, my study of Dorothy Wrinch won the first HSS prize for "outstanding research essay" on women in science, thus becoming a landmark in the recognition of this topic as legitimate history of science material, as well as a parallel recognition of women historians of science as recipients of prizes for excellence in research. Since that time about 35 women authors were so honored, half for essays and half for books. We should thank Sally for this initiative and hope other history of science organizations will follow suit.

It is perhaps not surprising that my quest for a good case study of gender parity in history of science circa 1981 still remains unachieved four decades later when justice for women discoverers remains to be restored by both scholarly and policy means.

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