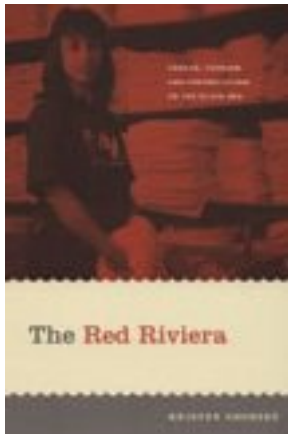


# The Red Riviera



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This compelling ethnography of women working in Bulgaria's popular sea and ski resorts challenges the idea that women have consistently fared worse than men in Eastern Europe's transition from socialism to a market economy. For decades western European tourists have flocked to Bulgaria's beautiful beaches and mountains; tourism is today one of the few successful - and expanding - sectors of the country's economy. Even at the highest levels of management, employment in the tourism industry has long been dominated by women. Kristen Ghodsee explains why this is and how women working in the industry have successfully negotiated their way through Bulgaria's capitalist transformation while the fortunes of most of the population have plummeted. She highlights how, prior to 1989, the communist planners sought to create full employment for all at the same time that they steered women into the service sector. The women given jobs in tourism obtained higher educations, foreign language skills, and experiences working with Westerners, all of which positioned them to take advantage of the institutional changes eventually brought about by privatization. Interspersed throughout "The Red Riviera" are vivid examinations of the lives of Bulgarian women, including a waitress, a tour operator, a chef, a maid, a receptionist, and a travel agent. Through these women's stories, Ghodsee describes

their employment prior to 1989 and after. She considers the post-socialist forces that have shaped the tourist industry over the past fifteen years: the emergence of a new democratic state, the small but increasing interest of foreign investors and trans-national corporations, and the proliferation of NGOs. Ghodsee suggests that many of the NGOs, by insisting that Bulgarian women are necessarily disenfranchised, ignore their significant professional successes.

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