

TEXTS AND CONTEXTS
FROM THE
HISTORY
OF
FEMINISM
AND
WOMEN'S RIGHTS

EAST CENTRAL EUROPE,
SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Edited by

Zsófia Lóránd

Adela Hîncu · Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc · Katarzyna Stańczak-Wislicz

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*This book is dedicated to our daughters,
Lisa, Zoja, and Pola,
with gratitude to Maera, our companion.*

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Introduction

The goal of this book is to give a taste of what women in and from East Central Europe thought about politics amidst the stormy changes that characterized the twentieth century. The broad geographical and chronological reach is all the more necessary to counter the ways in which East Central Europe as a region and especially East Central European women as thinkers and intellectuals are underrepresented both in European and in global canons of political thought and intellectual history. This is both the reason for and the consequence of East Central (or Eastern) Europe being seen as intellectually and politically inferior to the West. Presenting the former as an underperforming epigon of the latter supposedly justifies the region's irrelevance on the global scene. In István Bibó's words from 1946, this region—"the area east of France, between the Rhine and Russia"—is commonly seen as one that "suffers from an original backwardness."¹ The main reasons, in Bibó's argument, were the region's alleged inherent inability to achieve "a Western-type democratic development,"² and the area's alleged character as a "hotbed of various befuddled, foggy, and deceptive political philosophies."³ For a region with such apparent heavy baggage to have vivid traditions of women's rights movements and feminist thought was unimaginable. This assumption became a self-fulfilling one, discouraging the search for such women who made and continue to make meaningful contributions to any collections of feminist thought. Such an assumption thus reinforces the preexisting belief in the "original backwardness" of East Central Europe. However, this region not only saw the emergence of philosophers such as Ágnes Heller and Angela Vode, writers such as Wisława Szymborska and Dubravka Ugrešić, but also harbors a wide range of innovative reflections on nationalism, socialism, and liberalism as they appeared in the region. Growing

1 István Bibó, "Miseries of East European Small States," in *The Art of Peacemaking: Political Essays by István Bibó*, ed. Iván Zoltán Dénes, trans. Péter Pásztor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 147.

2 Sentence missing from the English language publication. See, in Hungarian, István Bibó, "A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága" [Miseries of East European Small States], in *Válogatott tanulmányok* [Selected Essays], vol. 2, 1945–1949 (Budapest: Magvető, 1986), 212.

3 Bibó, "Miseries," 147.

interest in the work of such canonical thinkers as Clara Zetkin, Aleksandra Kollontai, and Rosa Luxemburg (whose thought focused less on women, but whose life and contribution to socialist thought merits the attention of feminist scholarship) marks only the beginning of thorough research into the rich intellectual life of women thinkers from East Central Europe. This volume contributes significantly to such an effort.

Women's movements and feminist thought were shaped by the specific history of the region; global women's and feminist movements were specific experiences for women in the region for the same reason. We chose to call the region "between the Rhine and Russia" East Central Europe. By this, we aimed to encompass state socialist countries on the European continent. We intended to counterbalance the epistemological marginalization of the other countries in this book. The collection thus includes texts from Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (Czechia and Slovakia), Estonia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia (including sources from today's Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia), and Ukraine.⁴ In these varying national and political contexts, women had a lot to say about the state, society, politics, and about work, the home, their bodies, and love. In the course of the twentieth century, state socialism brought a crucial turning point in the long and complicated history of women, feminism, and socialism, as women's legal status and economic rights improved to a large extent in a system which was almost exclusively led by men, and which allowed only for limited forms and modes of criticism.⁵

In this volume, we collected texts where women (and sometimes men) envisioned, demanded, and reflected on changes in the way society and politics work,

4 For lack of capacity, this volume does not include Russia and the Republic of Moldova, nor does it cover state socialist countries outside of Europe. References to the context of the Soviet Union can be found in the texts which introduce the sources from Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. We hope this volume would inspire further comparative work towards a fuller picture of women's rights and feminist intellectual thought under socialism.

5 Edited volumes with a general focus on telling the history of women's movements, gender history as social and political history, and the stories of women's lives across the region in the twentieth century, to mention but a few: Edith Saurer, Margareth Lanzinger, and Elisabeth Frysak, eds., *Women's Movements: Networks and Debates in Post-Communist Countries in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Köln: Böhlau, 2006); Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries* (Budapest - New York: CEU Press, 2006); Johanna Gehmacher and Natascha Vittorelli, eds., *Wie Frauenbewegung geschrieben wird: Historiographie, Dokumentation, Stellungnahmen, Bibliographien* [How to Write Women's Movements: Historiography, Positions, Bibliographies] (Vienna: Löcker, 2009); Katalin Fábán, Janet Elise Johnson, and Mara Lazda, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Gender in Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia* (London: Routledge, 2021); Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mrozik, eds., *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2021); Celia Donert and Christine Moll-Murata, eds., "Women's International Solidarity and Global Socialism. Special Issue 30," *International Review of Social History* 67, S30 (2022); Selin Çağatay, Alexandra Ghiț, Olga Gnydiuk, Veronika Helfert, Ivelina Masheva, Zhanna Popova, Jelena Tesija, Eszter Varsa, and Susan Zimmermann, eds., *Through the Prism of Gender and Work: Women's Labour Struggles in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond, 19th and 20th Centuries* (Boston: Brill, 2023). Many more important monographs and edited volumes are to be found in the "Selected bibliography and further reading" section after each entry in this volume.

and especially on how women are imagined, raised, treated, and the ways women dream, act, and think. What sets the temporal limits are the hopes and anxieties of women's and feminist movements first as they gravitate towards socialism, and then as they move away from it. While our focus is on the socialist period, this story can hardly be understood without acknowledging the predecessors who made important contributions to the relationship between feminism and socialism, conceived either as complementary or competing ideologies. For this reason, we included a small selection of texts from the first half of the century. The era cannot be confined between set dates on the other end of the period either. There were important texts which grew out of discussions and brainstorming in the 1980s. Even though they could only be published in the early 1990s, they were part of the intellectual era of the late 1980s. We also treat the war on the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s as part of the transition era, thus a few important texts from that time are included here. Moreover, we selected texts from the late 1990s and even the early 2000s from Belarus, where the transformation to democracy and a market economy is still perceived as unfinished, and an extremely centralized system of government threatens freedom of expression even today.⁶ This way, the present volume spans far beyond the 44 years between 1945 and 1989, and is closer to representing almost an entire century.

Carrying the legacy of multinational empires, women's rights in the region have historically been only partly confined to linguistic and ethnic borders and traditions. Whereas the national framework often carried more progress than a multi-ethnic one within the imperial framework, women's rights and feminist activists and thinkers were part of international organizing from early on, developing ideas under multiple influences. Women in East Central Europe had been at the forefront of not only struggles for the vote, but labor organizing and protests as well. Budapest hosted the 7th Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance in 1913, and groups from Bohemia and Serbia joined the organization a few years later. Countries such as independent Poland in 1918 and Masaryk's Czechoslovakia in 1920 ensured women's active and passive suffrage and codified the equality of men and women in their constitutions. 1945 was a turning point in most countries with regards to social and economic rights, including the right to divorce, equality in family law, health care, and paid maternity leave. These generalized claims of course already carry the danger of essentializing the region. Post-Second World War legislation in each of the contexts in this volume did begin to follow Soviet patterns after shorter or longer periods of postwar reconstruction and transition. Nevertheless, these developments also responded to local struggles and demands, as the entries in this volume show.

6 Alaksandr Ławhiniec and Alaksandr Papko, "Unfinished Business: Challenges for Belarus on Its Way to Democracy," *European View* 9, no. 2 (2010): 129–30.

Crucially, several women across the region put forward compelling arguments about the importance of feminism in their own contexts. Moreover, women in East Central Europe have historically been embedded in transnational and global political networks and intellectual exchanges, discussing, inspiring, and being inspired by women from India to France, from the United States to Kenya. Social and gender historians have done pathbreaking work to recover many of these struggles and encounters.⁷ This volume's aim is to showcase women's inventive contributions to political thought.

After 1989, many feminists asked a series of common questions: What would feminism mean in the region? Does one need feminism? Why do we not have feminism in Poland, Hungary, Romania (or any other country),⁸ and are we really lacking in this? To what extent did the legacy of the local women's and national movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provide fertile ground for new discussions inspired by the development of gender studies and the latest in feminist thought? What does this have to do with the recent socialist past? These questions marked the discussions of feminism in East Central Europe not only in local political discourses, but in historiography too. We have selected several texts from the debates around feminism after 1989 by Jiřina Šmejkalová, Pavla Horská and Jaroslava Pešková, Barbara Limanowska, Jana Juráňová, Mihaela Miroiu, and Laura Grünberg, among others, that have not been available in English earlier and which represent these debates.⁹ However, the rest of the volume aims to show that these questions have a much longer history. The growth of scholarly works on the history of feminism and women's movements in the region reveals more and more of the complexity of local traditions.¹⁰

7 See especially: Celia Donert, "From Communist Internationalism to Human Rights: Gender, Violence and International Law in the WIDF Mission to North Korea, 1951," *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 2 (2016): 313–33; Celia Donert, "Whose Utopia? Gender, Ideology and Human Rights at the 1975 World Congress of Women in East Berlin," in *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*, eds. Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 68–87. Also: Jadwiga Pieper Mooney, "Fighting Fascism and Forging New Political Activism: The Women's International Democratic Federation in the Cold War," in *De-Centering Cold War History: Local and Global Change*, eds. Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza (London: Routledge, 2013), 52–73; Kristen Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex: Socialist Women's Activism and Global Solidarity during the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019). About women's issues shared and discussed on a global scale, see Lucy Delap, *Feminisms: A Global History* (London: Pelican, 2020).

8 For example: Judit Acsády, "'Kellett-e nekünk feminizmus?' 'Nyugati' gondolatok hazai fogadtatása a rendszerváltás után" ["Did We Need Feminism?" The Domestic Reception of "Western" Thought after the Regime Change], *2000* 13, no. 9 (2001): 12–23; Jiřina Šiklová, "Feminism and the Roots of Apathy in the Czech Republic," *Social Research* 64, no. 2 (1997): 258–80; Judit Kádár, "Miért nincs, ha van" [Why Isn't It There If It Is], *Beszélő* 8, no. 11 (2003), online edition, <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/miert-nincs-ha-van>.

9 See the discussion between Slavenka Drakulić and Nanette Funk as a paradigmatic case in: Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, eds., *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

10 An incomplete list from a range of languages: Magdalena Grabowska, *Zerwana genealogia. Działalność społeczna i polityczna kobiet po 1945 roku a współczesny polski ruch kobiecy* [Broken Genealogy. The Social and Political Activity of Women after 1945 and the Contemporary Polish Women's Movement] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2018); Renata Jambrešić Kirin, *Dom i svijet: o ženskoj kulturi pamćenja* [Home and the World: On Women's Cultural Memory] (Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije, 2008); Luciana

In short, convictions about the absence of feminism in the region are a central question of the historiography, and thus cannot be omitted, but the ambition of this volume is to de-center the debate, by showing that the premise itself is problematic. As this volume testifies, there is in fact a distinct intellectual current of feminist thought that cannot be reduced to “foreign import,” an accusation made across the twentieth century, irrespective of where the accuser stood on the political spectrum.

The appearance of feminism in East Central Europe was often marked by what the authors of *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* (hereafter, *HMPT*)—Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Monika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček, with Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčič for the second volume—described as the “the ‘eternal debate’ between local cultures and imported ideas” that had been reflected in the political languages of modernity in the region since the Enlightenment.¹¹ We treat these debates with analytical distance. Similar to the project that culminated in *HMTP*, in this volume we found it crucial to avoid repeating this duality of ideological positions. Doing so would harmfully limit our understanding of the region’s rich intellectual traditions. To this end, for our own selection and analysis, we rely on the use of both the concepts of feminism and of women’s rights to describe our authors and sources.

For this volume, we asked our contributors to suggest texts in which the authors recognize the systemic oppression of women and demand or suggest ways to dismantle this oppression. We asked them to do so without being limited by the expectation that the authors and texts would self-identify as “feminist”—historically, a rather delimited yet politically powerful term to denote critiques and critics of patriarchy. This way, socialist women throughout the twentieth century—from Mariska Gárdos to Ecaterina Arbore, Halina Krahelska to Vida Tomšič—found their places next to

M. Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare în România comunistă, 1944–1989* [Gender and Representation in Communist Romania, 1944–1989] (Iași: Polirom, 2015); Agnieszka Mrozek, *Architektki PRL-u: Komunistki, literatura i emancypacja kobiet w powojennej Polsce* [The Architects of the Polish People’s Republic: Communist Women, Literature, and Women’s Emancipation in Postwar Poland] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2023); Ivana Pantelić, *Partizanke kao građanke. Društvena emancipacija partizanki u Srbiji, 1945–1953* [Partisan Women as Citizens: The Social Emancipation of Partisan Women in Serbia, 1945–1953] (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju; Evoluta, 2011); Lydia Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi* [Horses, Women, Wars], posthumous edition, ed. Dunja Rihtman Augustin (Zagreb: Ženska infoteka, 1996); Sławomira Walczewska, ed., *Feministki własnym głosem o sobie* [Feminists in Their Own Voices about Themselves] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo eFka: 2005); Susan Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?: Frauenbewegungen und Frauenbestrebungen im Ungarn der Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918* [The Better Half?: Women’s Movements and Women’s Aspirations in Hungary during the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848–1918] (Vienna: Promedia, 1999).

- 11 Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónica Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, vol. 1, *Negotiating Modernity in the “Long Nineteenth Century”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.

The second volume: Balázs Trencsényi, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčič, Maria Falina, Mónica Baár, and Maciej Janowski, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, vol. 2, *Negotiating Modernity in the “Short Twentieth Century” and Beyond*, Part 1, 1918–1968, and Part 2, 1968–2018 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

advocates of women's political rights, such as Johanna Päts, and feminist theorists such as Nada Ler-Sofronić and Hana Havelková. While all of our authors would share the “minimal consensus” that “women are unfairly disadvantaged by comparison with men,”¹² the readers of this volume will also easily see the often diametrically opposing takes (often between feminists and socialists) on the reasons for such disadvantage, as well as on how it can and should be eliminated. In order to be able to present and analyze these positions, we needed a scale broader than what is consensually presented as varieties of feminisms, including texts and authors advocating for women's rights from different angles, here primarily as socialists. Thus, we acknowledge the ways in which women's rights were envisioned by socialist women in a different framework, without applying a label to them that these women themselves would probably fiercely reject.

How Should You Read and Use This Book?

This book is addressed to a wide readership. It is our hope that it will nurture and inspire more research into the history of feminist thought and women's rights discourses in East Central Europe as well as in the countries that this volume could not cover. We hope that this volume will provide a comparative framework that can function not just geographically, but especially thematically. This book showcases the use of less traditional types of sources for the history of political and social thought, and invites the further exploration of such sources with the conviction that methodological creativity can render visible a wealth of ideas so far obscured or excluded from existing intellectual histories because of their form.

Moreover, the volume invites scholars of many disciplines to integrate into their work the fascinating ideas of the many women who reflected on their own condition over the decades after the Second World War and who fought for change. For those teaching, this book has been specifically conceived to offer accessible entry points for working with primary sources at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Students now have the biographical as well as contextual backgrounds to discuss a wealth of ideas stemming from the region through texts otherwise unavailable in English. There is opportunity for hermeneutic, comparative, and analytical work for training in historical as much as gender studies, for the political scientist as well as the literature or arts student.

Finally, this volume is a resource meant to continue the region's feminist struggles, which still grapple with so many of the inequalities, obstacles, and dilemmas illustrated by these texts. The lives and ideas of those before them, we hope,

12 Susan James, “Feminisms,” in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 493.

will be both grounding and inspiring, inviting solidarity across borders, reminding us to celebrate the many achievements of women, and providing strength for future struggles.

Methodology, or the Story of This Book and Those Who Helped Make It Happen

The need to take women's political thought in East Central Europe seriously and share it with an international audience—including the countries in East Central Europe itself—led to the first meetings about what later became this volume. In 2015, Zsófia Lóránd, with the generous help from the Past Inc., Center for Historical Research at the Central European University, invited scholars from all over the region to think about what should make its way into this reader and how. From its conception, the idea of the volume was supported by Balázs Trencsényi, and deeply inspired by the school of intellectual history he and his colleagues working on an ERC-funded project in the 2010s—Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, Maciej Janowski, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčić, among others—have been building for more than a decade. Their work led to a multi-volume primary source collection,¹³ as well as the *HMPT*, a multi-authored monograph about political thought in the region. Through these efforts, they created a methodology of discovering regional commonalities and differences through structured conversations. Inspired by their work, what the reader eventually finds in this volume was shaped by input from almost a hundred scholars of the region, all acknowledged either as authors of the introductory texts or in the acknowledgement below.

The contents of this volume came together through five in-person meetings in four countries, around twenty workshops online, and hundreds of e-mails and individual conversations. To select the 107 texts and 23 artworks (photos, graphics, film stills) by 110 authors, we relied on the expertise of around 80 scholars and 33 translators. During the first sessions, we focused on envisioning what the book should include and asked the invited experts to give a long list of suggested texts, including as many as 15–20 from each country. This was followed by a serious game of selecting, matching, and fitting texts together. The volume editors made a shortlist of the suggestions, balancing topics, languages, and national contexts. Each source needed an author

13 Volumes in the series *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945): Texts and Commentaries*: vol. 1, *Late Enlightenment: Emergence of the Modern “National Idea”*, eds. Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček (New York–Budapest: CEU Press, 2006); vol. 2, *National Romanticism: The Formation of National Movements*, eds. Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček (New York–Budapest: CEU Press, 2007); vol. 3/1, *Modernism: The Creation of Nation-States*, eds. Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górny and Vangelis Kechriotis (New York–Budapest: CEU Press, 2010); vol. 3/2, *Modernism: Representations of National Culture*, eds. Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górny, and Vangelis Kechriotis (New York–Budapest: CEU Press, 2010); vol. 4, *Anti-Modernism: Radical Revisions of Collective Identity*, eds. Diana Mishkova, Marius Turda, and Balázs Trencsényi (New York–Budapest: CEU Press, 2014).

to write an introduction, consisting of a biography and a note on contextualization (including a bibliography), and, very importantly, a translator. The four volume editors coordinated the work in a way that, for each country, there was a principal editor in charge of all of the country contributions (each of us was in charge of our own field of research and additionally chose the other countries based on preference); each text had a first and second editor from among the four editors; and each unit also had one main editor overseeing the final edits. Authors and editors discussed the translations with the translators, looking for the best expressions to transmit the wit, the depth, the local flavor, but also the refinement and complexity of the women whose work was translated. In this sense, this volume is also a contribution to the long, complicated, and crucial history of feminist translations.¹⁴

The selection principles bore in mind the diverse traditions of women's rights and feminism in the region, with the utmost intention not to exclude important authors by a delimiting framework. Nor did we give up on the hope of a volume with coherence and cohesion either. All the texts suggested were to be original in their local context, and representative of local debates and discourses. Another important selection criterion was that the text was previously not translated into English, or, if it was, that it was not widely accessible (such as Agnieszka Graff's text). We made a few exceptions from this rule, for example in order to include the most important source from a gendered approach in Marxist revisionism: Ágnes Heller and Mihály Vajda's "Family Structure and Communism." However, in other cases, we chose texts by otherwise internationally well-known authors that have not been available in English.

We are aware that we risk leaving important texts out of the conversation. However, our ambition was to ensure that these more widely available texts were featured in the bibliographies and contextualizations in each chapter, opening a dialogue. Such was the case of Nobel Prize–holder Svetlana Alexievich (Švīatlana Aleksijevič) as well as, for example, of Ana Blandiana, Slavenka Drakulić, and Hana Havelková. The latter rule meant that we have not added the writings of such important authors as Dubravka Ugrešić or Maria Janion, nor the founders of gender studies in Poland, such as Renata Siemieńska, nor many of the important feminist anti-war activists in the

14 We would like to credit some of the recent theoretical and empirical reflections emerging from the field of feminist translation studies: Olga Castro and Emek Ergun, eds., *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Kathy Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels across Borders* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Francine Descarries, "Language Is Not Neutral: The Construction of Knowledge in the Social Sciences and Humanities," *Signs* 39, no. 3 (2014): 564–69; Luise von Flotow and Joan W. Scott, "Gender Studies and Translation Studies: 'Entre braguette'—Connecting the Transdisciplines," in *Border Crossings: Translation Studies and Other Disciplines*, eds. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2016), 349–73; Luise von Flotow and Farzaneh Farahzad, eds., *Translating Women: Different Voices and New Horizons* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

former Yugoslavia,¹⁵ nor some of the early historiography which set the stage for feminist scholarship in the 1990s. Anti-war texts from the former Yugoslavia were among the most important ones about war rape and violence, and one of the first novels in the region revealing the details of the horrors of war rape during the Second World War, Alaine Polcz's *One Woman in the War*, has also been published in English.¹⁶ We also chose to deviate from our chronological framework when it would have meant the exclusion of voices, such as Nicoleta Bițu's contribution about the Romani women's movement in Romania.

The texts selected for this volume are representative of certain debates and discussions of their time, but as editors of the volume we were also aware that there is no set canon of feminist and women's rights-focused political thought in most East Central European contexts. Moreover, we wanted to ensure that while we introduce the most important thinkers, we also have voices of women from the margins of the local mainstream discussions, such as Romani women or rural women, whose voices were less heard even within the women workers' associations (of which we include the example of the Tukums district women's activists in Latvia). We have thus included women who may be unknown even to most in their own country, alongside well-known feminist intellectuals such as Agnieszka Graff or early twentieth-century feminist icon Rosika Schwimmer. Frequently, women who contributed to women's self-understanding and the self-appreciation of women are well-known in other capacities, but are not considered relevant for political thought, such as Romani singer Esma Redžepova from Macedonia/former Yugoslavia. As for topics, we treated the concept of the political broadly, in the spirit of the personal as political, and the personal being always already entangled with debates about time, work, the body, and sexuality. We also took into consideration that women, even more frequently than men, have had to turn to alternative genres when expressing political thought: not only unpublished correspondence (for example Razija Handžić's letter and Ina Jun-Broda's poetry), articles in women's and cultural magazines (such as those of Sonia Bakish, Maria Dinkova's work of popularizing sociological research in the main Bulgarian women's magazine *Zhenata dnes*, or Ecaterina Oproiu's powerful journalistic reflections and reportages on women's condition in the press), but also in

15 To mention a few of these: Vesna Kesić, "Muslim Women, Croatian Women, Serbian Women, Albanian Women," in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, eds. Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 311–22; Vesna Kesić, "A Response to Catharine MacKinnon's Article 'Turning Rape Into Pornography: Postmodern Genocide,'" *Hastings Women's Law Journal* 5, no. 2 (1994): 276–77; Lepa Mladjenovic and Donna M. Hughes, "Feminist Resistance to War and Violence in Serbia," in *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance*, eds. Marguerite R. Waller and Jennifer Rycenga (New York: Garland Publications, 2000), 247–74; *Women Recollecting Memories: The Center for Woman War Victims Ten Years Later* (Zagreb: Center for Women War Victims, 2003), <https://mail.women-war-memory.org/index.php/en/zbornik>.

16 Alaine Polcz, *One Woman in the War: Hungary 1944–1945*, trans. Albert Tezla (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2022).

independent magazines (such as Veronika Cherkasova's "The Country Just Across the Way" in *Salidarnasc*), and also zines and lesbian magazines (*The Violet Pulse* and *Fury the First* in Poland, as well as Suzana Tratnik's and Nataša Sukič's articles in *Revolver*). Similar sources are oral history interviews, conducted for a Western readership before 1989, such as the one with Júlia Szilágyi, or for a special purpose, such as the interview with Svetlana Alexievich (Światłana Aleksijevič), published in a thematic journal issue aimed at supporting the newly established Center for Gender Studies in Minsk, Belarus. Moreover, it was essential to include visual art (for example by Sanja Iveković and Maria Pinińska-Bereś) and literary works (both poetry, as in the case of a poem from the *Ilegalja* movement by Dije Neziri Lohaj, Ana Blandiana's poem about abortion, the works of Larysa Hienijuš, Lina Kostenko, Vizma Belševica, or Anna Świrszczyńska, among others; and prose, such as Regīna Ezera's novels), as well as movies (see Cristiana Nicolae's portrayal of the lives of women in Romania).

As Berenice Carroll pointed out, literature,

[p]oetry and drama have often been vehicles of political expression, particularly under repressive regimes. Works in these forms by male writers have often been recognized as "political theory," as in the case of Greek tragedy, the dialogues of Plato, and epic poetry by John Milton and Dante Alighieri. In such works, theory may be implicit rather than explicit, and the problems of interpretation and assessment are multiplied. But if we are not to accept an exclusionary double standard, we must search a wide range of materials for the political philosophy of women who were excluded from the recognized channels of theoretical discourse.¹⁷

Our selection of art and literary works is far from being comprehensive. Many more of these works could have been added, and our collection was guided by the coherence of the units of the book. For those interested in the history of art and gender in the region, there is excellent scholarship for further reading, which our book aims to highlight and integrate into the history of political thought.¹⁸

This book goes beyond national contexts, in spite of limitations given the country-focused selection process. This process was also transnational inasmuch as

17 Berenice A. Carroll, "Introduction," in *Women's Political and Social Thought: An Anthology*, eds. Berenice A. Carroll and Hilda L. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), xix.

18 Bojana Pejić, *Gender Check: A Reader; Art and Theory in Eastern Europe* (Köln: Walther König, 2010); Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, trans. Anna Brzyski (London: Reaktion Books, 2009); IRWIN, ed. *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe* (London: Afterall Book, 2006); Beáta Hock, *Gendered Artistic Positions and Social Voices: Politics, Cinema, and the Visual Arts in State-Socialist and Post-Socialist Hungary* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2013); Edit András, ed., *Transitland: Video Art from Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Ludwig Museum, 2009); Ewa Mazierska and Elżbieta Ostrowska, *Women in Polish Cinema* (New York: Berghahn, 2006); Jasmina Tumbas, *"I Am Yugoslovenka!": Feminist Performance Politics during and after Yugoslav Socialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022).

the discussions about the local canons and non-canons of the individual contexts informed and inspired the selection from other countries. Putting the texts thematically into dialogue with each other pushes the boundaries of national epistemologies, whilst the context that facilitates the understanding of the sources themselves is mostly a national one.

While this book, being the most comprehensive one at the moment in English, carries the responsibility of unavoidably representing a canon, we would like it to be an offer, a starting point, and an invitation. Through this collection, our hope and aim is to introduce a multiplicity of feminist and women's rights political languages and concepts, which then will generate discussions and interpretations beyond those we offer in this book. To this end, we also asked our experts to provide a list of further literature for the interested reader and in the strong hope that this book will lead to more research and more knowledge of women's and feminist political thought in East Central Europe.

The Trajectory of This Book

The book is organized into fourteen thematic units, in which the texts follow each other chronologically. The aim of **Chapter 1, "Legacy of the Pre-1945 Period,"** is to commemorate at least some of the women who paved the way for the feminism–socialism synergies and debates after the Second World War. In Ecaterina Arbore's lecture from 1911, she discussed the exploitation of women's labor historically and from a global perspective, and saw the struggles for economic and for political and legal rights as intertwined. A feminist thinker of the Lithuanian National Awakening, Žemaitė, was equally fierce as an advocate of workers' rights and women's rights which were traditionally considered "liberal." Moreover, she was one of the early thinkers who connected violence against women as constitutive to women's oppression. Rosika Schwimmer, the founder of the first suffrage-focused feminist organization in Hungary, was also sensitive to women's economic and labor issues, but as the source here demonstrates, she was also fiercely opposed to the politics of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. At the time, women's socio-economic rights were just as much center stage as their sexual liberation, and were strongly embedded in one's self-identification as a feminist and/or socialist. Mariska Gárdos's excerpts reflect not only on these issues, but also that of prostitution. The text by Polish feminist and activist for sexual and moral change, Irena Krzywicka, is one that treats abortion as crucial for women's broader rights, while her fellow Pole, the writer and activist Halina Krahelska, argued for the extension of abortion rights in order to protect working-class and rural women from back-alley abortions. Angela Vode was one of the first authors writing about the detrimental consequences of fascism for women and envisioned a refined combination of feminism and socialism. In two countries rather distant from one another, Estonia and Albania, Johanna Päts and Shaqe Marie

Çoba both argued for women's emancipation as part of post-imperial national awakenings, enabled by education, active and passive suffrage, and equal rights in general.

Chapter 2, "Women and War," encompasses texts, primarily about the First World War, the Second World War, and the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. This selection became dominated by texts from the former Yugoslavia, where feminists in the 1930s revised their politics for peace (the text by the Editorial Board of the journal *Žena danas*), followed by partisan women's reflections, which are represented here by two very different types of testimony: the reports about women in the People's Liberation Struggle by Maca Gržetić and the poetry of former partisan nurse and literary translator Ina Jun-Broda, sister of the well-known anthropologist Vera Stein Erlich, whose influential work about Yugoslav rural life was first published in English.¹⁹ Women who were killed during the Second World War are commemorated in the Romanian text as well, which portrays anti-fascist communist fighter Olga Bancic, executed by the Nazis in 1944. In her poetry, Lina Kostenko articulated an anti-war, pacifist position at odds with the Soviet discourse that glorified past sacrifice and victories in war. For the history of anti-war activism in Serbia and former Yugoslavia, we chose a text by Staša Zajović, and we made sure that the publications widely accessible in English are mentioned in this chapter.

"Ideologies of Women's Emancipation" were discussed and hotly debated in the new political era after 1945, and the debates continued well into the 1980s, as the texts in **Chapter 3** show. The social democrat Anna Kéthly and the feminist lawyer Milada Horáková published on "Women in Politics" in the same year in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. On the (forced) emancipation of Muslim women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we selected two texts from the 1940s, by Dušanka Kovačević and Razija Handžić, whilst the early phase of socialist emancipation is discussed in the Polish and in the East German context by Edwarda Orłowska and Martha Arendsee. Decades later, Aina Jurciņa and Drita Bakija Gunga asked about the limits and obstacles to the socialist emancipation of women. Based on her critical reading of classical anthropological and philosophical texts, as well as new feminist criticism, Nada Ler-Sofronić investigated the possibilities of a feminist re-conceptualization of Marxism in 1986.

Women's emancipation was a key theme in **women's internationalism** and exchange with the Global South as well. These texts are brought together in **Chapter 4**. The first experiences in the WIDF (Women's International Democratic Federation), as shown in the recollections by the women from the German Democratic Women's League (Frieda Radel, Maria Rentmeister, and Emma Sachse) at the Stockholm Executive Meeting of the WIDF in 1947, were just as formative as the initiatives

¹⁹ Vera Stein Erlich's seminal work about the transformation of Yugoslav family structures was published first in English, and later in Croatian. Vera Stein Erlich, *Family in Transition: A Study of 300 Yugoslav Villages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); and *Jugoslavenska porodica u transformaciji: studija o tri stotine sela* (Zagreb: Liber, 1971). The English edition is available electronically.

undertaken by semi-formal groups of women activists, such as the Tukums District Women Activists (Latvia), ranging from writing letters and proclamations to discussing family problems and organizing culinary exhibitions. Mitra Mitrović's text reflects on women's struggles for their rights globally and in a historical perspective. From Rózsa Ignác's travelogues, we selected excerpts about her encounters with women in East Africa. Esma Redžepova was a Romani musician whose art travelled the world and spoke to women across continents. Women in high leadership positions, such as Elena Lagadinova and Vida Tomšič, were active in not only the WIDF, but also the UN Decade for Women. They became increasingly aware of the intersection between gender, race, and class, and the shared experiences of women in the so-called Second and Third Worlds. Marija Gimbutas is a special case of internationalism, as she lived outside of Lithuania, mostly in the United States, for the entire Soviet period. Gimbutas also made her work known in Lithuania through visits to the country, notably lecturing on prehistorical matriarchal culture, which inspired second wave feminists at the time, in the early 1980s.

Chapter 5, "Politicizing Motherhood (and Fatherhood)," brings together visual art from Ukraine by the well-known dissident Alla Hors'ka and the painter and graphic artist Serhii Hryhoriev, whose works depicted everyday family life in Soviet Ukraine, the work of the Romanian film-maker Cristiana Nicolae, an interview with the Transylvanian Jewish literary scholar Júlia Szilágyi, and social scientists from Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Bulgaria through the writings of Maria Skokowska-Rudolfowa, Zlata Grebo, and Maria Dinkova and Chavdar Kjuranov.

Women's caring responsibilities are discussed further in **Chapter 6, "Time Budgets and Double Burden."** This unit collects reflections on the multiple tasks and roles women balanced in socialist East Central Europe by Mileva Filipović (Yugoslavia/Montenegro), the Central Council of Trade Unions in Poland, which ran a publishing house and during the 1960s published several books that addressed the "women issue"; prominent journalists Sonia Bakish (Bulgaria) and Ecaterina Oproiu (Romania); and two sources from Latvia by the outstanding writers Vizma Belševica and Regīna Ezera. More than other themes in this volume, these issues were also prominent in official documents (such as the "Decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party for Improving the Role of the Woman in the Building of Developed Socialist Society" in the previous unit) and in texts by high-ranking party members, such as Leokadija Diržinskaitė-Piliušenko (Lithuania).

The limits of the success of women's emancipation were tested and most severely criticized in the discussions about **"Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence" in Chapter 7.** Yugoslav Marxist feminist philosopher Blaženka Despot in Croatia, feminist activist and translator Mojca Dobnikar in Slovenia, and grass-roots women activists in the GDR (the Weimar Frauentestube) spelled out the systemic nature of violence against women that was also addressed by Andra Neiburga,

who in her short story “Climber” from 1988 depicted domestic violence and alcoholism as immanent elements of life on a collective farm (*kolkhoz*). This chapter entails a surprisingly small number of entries, which is to a large extent due to the topic gaining prominence in the 1990s and mostly through activist and policy-oriented texts.²⁰ Women’s organizations after the early-to-mid-1990s published an immense amount of information leaflets, training materials, and policy recommendations which would deserve their own collection, but which stretched beyond the framework of this book focused on the socialist period.

Women’s role in politics is present in multiple chapters across the book, but the ways women’s political participation changed their role in society is discussed in the sources in **Chapter 8, “Women in Politics.”** Women, such as Johanna Päts, Anna Kéthly, Milada Horáková, addressed issues of women’s political participation in the new socialist states as early as 1945. Women who over time became ardent (Júlia Rajk) or inner (Latinka Perović) critics of the socialist regimes saw the early post war years as an entry point for a broad strata of women into politics. At a distance of more than two decades, Tsola Dragoicheva in Bulgaria and Olivia Clătici in Romania similarly pointed to the impressive achievements of socialist policies towards women, while Clătici also spelled out some of their drawbacks, especially in terms of providing the necessary infrastructure and accommodations for working mothers. In an interview, Macedonian historian Vera Veskovik-Vangeli reflected on women’s role in politics throughout history. With the crisis of socialist modernity, women became increasingly dissatisfied with ineffective equality policies. Delegates gathered at the officially sanctioned Women’s Forum (Poland) in 1981 took advantage of the internal crisis in the communist party, and argued that democratization could not be achieved without full gender equality. Ina Merkel’s seminal text from 1989 in the GDR was already written in the spirit of a new era and expressed a radical claim for women’s participation in the process of political transformation.

Women during socialism were more than aware that the female body is politicized and sexualized. **Chapter 9** is dedicated to **“Reproductive Rights and Demography,”** with a heavy focus on abortion in texts from Poland by Maria Jaszczukowa, Hungary by Zsuzsa Körösi, Romania by Ana Blandiana, and Yugoslavia/Slovenia by Vlasta Jalušič. Aimée Beekmann’s novel *Freedom to Choose* triggered public debates in Estonia about women’s right to decide on the terms under which they become mothers. The topics of women’s birth conditions and their right to make decisions were

20 For activism for the elimination of violence against women in East Central Europe, see Andrea Krizsán and Conny Roggeband, eds., *The Gender Politics of Domestic Violence: Feminists Engaging the State in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2018); Katalin Fábíán, ed., *Domestic Violence in Postcommunist States: Local Activism, National Policies, and Global Forces* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Zsófia Lóránd, “Violence against Women, Feminism in Yugoslavia and 1968,” in *Women, Global Protest Movements and Political Agency: Rethinking the Legacy of 1968*, eds. Sarah Colvin and Katharina Karcher (London–New York: Routledge, 2018), 84–97.

already present in the 1980s in the region: Jasenka Kodrnja's essay about her experience of birth was published in Yugoslavia in the popular Zagreb-based magazine *Start* in 1981, shortly before home-birth activist and obstetrician-gynecologist Ágnes Geréb's efforts to allow fathers into the birthing room in Hungary. Kodrnja's essay and Geréb's activism were widely discussed in informal circles, between friends, families, colleagues, and the scarcity of the documentation of these discussions shows the extent to which these women targeted taboos in their work.

Chapter 10 and **Chapter 11** continue the reflections on the female experience of "**Health and the Body**" and "**Sexuality**." Artistic expression allowed for reconceptualization and the problematization of women's bodies, as shown by the sources by Katalin Ladik, Maria Pinińska-Bereś, Anna Świrszczyńska, and Sanja Iveković in Chapter 10. This chapter also contains one of the first feminist texts on women's mental health and patriarchal oppression within psychiatric practices, written by Lepa Mladenović and Biljana Branković in Yugoslavia/Serbia. The complex issues of women's sexuality are discussed in the critique of the bourgeois family by philosophers Ágnes Heller and Mihály Vajda, in sexological articles by Todor Bostandziev and Radu Dumitriu (two of the very few male authors in this collection—not by chance, as they represented a field of expertise that was highly masculinized), and in Slavenka Drakulić's and Vesna Kesić's feminist critiques of the limits of the newly reinvented sexual revolution.

One of the greatest challenges of this volume was to find written sources from lesbian women's lives and experiences. The sources in Chapter 11 bring together three substantially different modalities in which women experienced life as lesbians during socialism. Erzsébet Galgóczi was an award-winning writer, publishing an explicitly lesbian novel already in 1980 and reflecting on her peasant origin and being a woman writer in the excerpts here. Suzana Tratnik and Nataša Sukić were among the founders of the lesbian movement (strongly connected to the feminist one) in Slovenia/former Yugoslavia, working towards a new language on lesbianity. They showed the process of raising lesbians' visibility in public, while the lesbian funzine *Violet Pulse* and non-regular magazine *Fury the First* in Poland presented the voice of non-heterosexual women fighting for their place not only in the public sphere, but also within the LGBTQ+ community.

"**Debating 'Western' Feminisms**" shaped feminist and women's rights discourses in East Central Europe from the at least the 1970s onwards. As texts in **Chapter 12** show, in the 1970s it was not only feminists in Yugoslavia such as Nadežda Čaćinović, Rada Iveković, and Žarana Papić, but also philosopher Stana Buzatu in Romania who reflected on feminism and incorporated feminist theory into their work. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* was one of the texts widely discussed, though this was not always straightforward: although it was not available in translation in many of the socialist countries, it could be read in French, or, as in the case of Latvia, brought into

public debate via authors living outside the country, such as writer and literary scholar Agate Nesaule, who raised issues regarding gender inequality on her first visit back to Latvia decades after moving to the United States. The sources by Barbara Limanowska and Agnieszka Graff in Poland, and by Jiřina Šmejkalová, Pavla Horská, and Jaroslava Peřková in Czechoslovakia bring together parallel debates about the reception and integration of feminism locally in the years immediately after 1989.

Chapter 13 focuses on women in dissident movements, which often prioritized human rights and liberalism—such as the ones in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland—and considered specific minority rights (hence also women’s rights) of secondary importance in relation to universal human rights. In other contexts, for example in Ukraine, women had trouble finding their place and their agency in movements without a gender agenda and which prioritized national liberation over the rights of the individual, as presented in the sources by Nadiia Svitlichna and Vira Lisova. The chapter also collects texts about women’s experiences of persecution, such as Dije Neziri Lohaj’s poem “Innocence” (Yugoslavia/Kosovo), and letters, poems, and memoirs by Larysa Hienijuš (Belarus). Other topics in this section include the limitations of women’s roles in emigrant dissident movements, as shown by Ivonka Survilla (Belarus), and women’s responses to neoliberalism, populism, authoritarianism, and the anti-feminist backlash in the period of post-socialist transformation, discussed by Jana Juráňová (Slovakia) and Veronika Cherkasova (Belarus).

The last chapter, **Chapter 14**, collects sources about women and their experience with the “**Transitions**” around and during 1989. The emerging civil rights movements for Roma rights created a segment within the public sphere where Romani women, alongside *gadja* feminists, slowly but surely gained a voice. Dunja Blažević reflects on her feminist work within the young art and cultural scene in Yugoslavia, while Ágnes Daróczi’s early article discusses the need for space (and a journal) for Romani culture within socialist Hungary. Teuta Arifi, in her essay “Police and Cooking Recipes,” emphasizes the need to end the marginalization of Albanian women within the Yugoslav feminist movement. The memoir collection edited by Irene Dölling, with Adelheid Kuhlmeier-Oehlert and Gabriela Seibt, presents a selection of women from all walks of life in the former GDR processing German reunification and its ramifications. Hana Havelková addresses the liberal traditions of the democratic dissidents in Czechoslovakia (and the entire Central Europe) by focusing on the liberal history of the woman question in the Czech lands. The Women’s Party, led by Kazimiera Prunskienė, and its program from 1996 in Lithuania, are a reminder of a forgotten part of Lithuanian feminist history, an initiative that, despite its nationalist rhetoric, advocated both individual independence in a free-market economy and social programs to support women and families. The pioneering text by Romani feminist Nicoleta Bițu on the situation of Romani women in Europe, originally a 1999 report to the Council of Europe, offered an overview of the problems

faced by Romani women that international organizations overlooked. These included sensitive topics which she approached from a feminist perspective within the Roma civic movement after 1989, even in the face of criticism from some leaders of the Roma community in Romania.

For the translations, we had the double ambition to preserve local linguistic specificities, while creating texts that are understandable and pleasant to read. While English is a language of transmission here, we wanted to preserve some of the rich flavors of the languages of East Central Europe. Since this is a historical source collection, the translations aimed to stay close to the language of the time, but not at the expense of readability. The translations were also supposed to preserve the terminology of the context and the era. For example, in the case of what in English is most commonly termed “the woman question,” we decided to use a variety of forms, depending on how the local languages referred to them: we translated *kwestia kobieca* from Polish as “the women’s issue” and the prevailing *condiția femeii* from Romanian as “woman’s condition,” while we translated *nőkérdés* (Hungarian) and *žensko pitanje* (Serbo-Croatian / Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian) as the “woman question.” The other highly relevant case for this reader is the term “gender,” which in East Central Europe entered the discussions at different times in different contexts. Our goal was to only use the term “gender” in the translations if it was used in the original. In some languages, there was an equivalent, or at least similar pair of words as sex and gender in English. Those instances made the translation of the local language into English smoother, such as (*s*)*pol* and *rod* in Serbo-Croatian or Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian. In these cases, our translators translated the source language terminology back to English. However, in some languages, such as in Hungarian and Polish, where there has not been a consensus on what expression to use for “gender,” we relied on interpretation to decide on the translation. Every time the translations of the sex–gender differentiation deviates from the original text, we strove to add a footnote. For the transliteration from Cyrillic, we took both the English conventions and the political and cultural situation in the source country into account. Therefore, for Belarusian, we use both the more well-known English transliteration and add the Belarusian Latin alphabet or Łacinka.

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In organizing, facilitating, and generally supporting this project, together with Balázs Trencsényi, Mónika Nagy stood behind it for many, many years as the coordinator of Past Inc., Center for Historical Research at CEU. Organizing our follow-up meetings, Pavel Kolař offered his support as professor at the Department of History at the EUI in Florence at the time. For the meeting at the EUI, Ognjen Aleksić from the Max Weber Programme took care of the group most wonderfully, while at the Imre Kertész Kolleg we were warmly hosted by Joachim von Puttkamer, Michal Kopeček, Daniela Gruber, and Diana Joseph. The early support from colleagues and institutions meant not only that we had the material means to meet and talk, but also confirmed that the idea of this book is valuable and will be worth the investment of all the work that came along later. Moreover, all of our hosts gave us precious intellectual feedback that contributed to the merits of this volume in its final form. During the early meetings, the concept of the book was also substantially shaped by conversations with Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, Jasmina Lukić, and Alexandra Ghiț, who were part of the first important brainstorming sessions. Celia Donert at the University of Cambridge not only hosted Zsófia Lóránd's MSCA project which enabled the work on this book, but offered her intellectual input, inspiration, and constructive criticism as well.

Our editor at CEU Press, Linda Kunos, stood behind this book for almost the entire ten years while it was in the making, and put up with the messiness of the complicated editing process sensitively and with a deep understanding of what this book is about. Cody James Inglis took onto himself the copyediting of a book based on more than a dozen languages and ensured the editorial team's intentions of balancing

the originality of East Central European languages with the final English texts being engaging and flowing. Emmie Singleton at the finance office of the Faculty of History of the University of Cambridge was relentless in sorting out the nitty-gritty finances of translations and travels. Liana Popa at the University of Vienna put a lot of her effort into tidying up, proofreading, and organizing the manuscript in the last, critical stages. Johanna Gehmacher, Rosamund Johnston, Nova Robinson, Piotr Wciślik, and Agata Zysiak commented on this introduction, for which they only deserve gratitude and praise, while everything one may criticize about the book is on us, the editors.

The splendid cover image is the work of Pola Wiślicz. Thank you, Pola, for visualizing the beauty and the complexity of our project so well! One of the figures on the cover is inspired by Adela Hîncu's grandma, who stands here in recognition of the dignified lives of hard work of so many of our grandmothers.

Our editorial team would not have come together without the mediation of friends and colleagues. Adela Hîncu and Zsófia Lóránd have a friendship that leads back to their early days at the Central European University. Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, thanks to the great intuition of Piotr Wciślik, was there since the first meeting. They both joined as country experts and then editors of this volume, taking over more country contexts. Similarly to them, Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc joined the volume a bit later as a contributor for Slovenian sources, but soon enough the rest of the team realized that we needed her expertise and experience. Probably none of us knew what we were getting ourselves into in the first place, nor the immense workload which this volume dropped on our heads and shoulders, nor the amazing intellectual adventure it became.

Last, but not least, we would like to acknowledge here the enormous efforts of our authors and translators, who in the past ten years stood by us, despite their own happy, sad, and extremely difficult personal situations over these years. We hope that we could be as supportive as is possible from editors hundreds of kilometers away from our authors and each other. We witnessed with admiration and empathy the heroic struggles not only with academic precarity, but also the care for and loss of loved ones, severe health issues, and physical, emotional, and material hardships on a broad scale. Working with all of our contributors brought much happy news along too: we were grateful to learn about the joyful events of babies born, books published, well-deserved permanent positions found. Thank you all for these ten years!

Zsófia Lóránd, with Adela Hîncu and Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz

1

The Legacy of the Pre-1945 Period

Ecaterina Arbore

The Working Woman in the Struggle towards Emancipation

AUTHOR Ecaterina Arbore

TITLE *Femeia muncitoare în lupta spre emancipare. Conferință ținută la Brăila în ziua de 28 martie 1911, organizată de sindicatul muncitorilor din port* [The Working Woman in the Struggle towards Emancipation: Conference Held in the Port of Braila on March 28, 1911, organized by the Dock Workers' Union]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Bucharest: Cercul de Editură Socialistă, 1911.

LANGUAGE Romanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR¹

Ecaterina Arbore-Ralli (1873, Switzerland–1937, USSR) was a physician and socialist women's labor activist in Romania and the Soviet Union. Arbore was born into a family of radical intellectuals and artists with ties to Russian nihilists, Western European socialists, and anarchists.² In 1896, she graduated from medical school in Bucharest, then specialized in puericulture (preventative pediatrics) in France between 1896 and 1899. As a physician employed by the Bucharest municipality (1899–1905), she advocated for improved living conditions for fostered children and the women caring for them. A gifted writer on social issues, Arbore wrote on working and living conditions in Bucharest neighborhoods and in rural areas, and on the heavy toll of malnutrition and infectious diseases on lower-class people in Romania. Arbore's political writings were meant to educate non-intellectuals as well as build support for her key stances among party members. Like other socialist women intellectuals in Romania from the period, including Sofia Nădejde (1856–1946) and Tatiana Grigorovici (1877–1952), Arbore embraced short, popular textual genres, such as magazine articles or brochures.

With significant archival materials about Arbore or her ego documents not yet analyzable, Arbore's international networks are difficult to reconstruct. Through her father and her own travels, in her youth she was linked to political networks that tied radicals

¹ Research for this contribution was funded through the ERC Advanced Grant-funded project ZARAH: Women's Labor Activism in Eastern Europe and Transnationally, from the Age of Empires to the Late 20th Century (Grant agreement No.833691 - ZARAH). I would like to thank Prof. Susan Zimmermann and the editors for their comments on the first version. Dr. Zhanna Popova kindly assisted in locating records about Arbore in RGASPI catalogs, and in finding and translating the titles of Russian-language publications by Arbore. Dr. Ivelina Masheva drew my attention to *Die Kommunistische Fraueninternationale* and its interesting contents.

² Cotoi, *Inventing the Social in Romania*, xii. Zamfir Arbore, *În exil*.

in the Russian Empire to those in the Swiss republic, social democrats in Habsburg Austria to those in the Kingdom of Bulgaria.³ Later, in the 1910s, Arbore was in contact with the Bulgarian Social Democratic Labor Party, particularly with the “narrow,” the faction supporting revolution rather than reform.⁴ In the 1920s until her death, Arbore was a member of the global network of the Communist International (Comintern), and linked to women from the Communist Women’s Movement.⁵

Between 1893 and 1918, Arbore was active in the socialist movement in Romania. In the 1910s, when the socialist movement was flourishing in the country, she was a member of the Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Romania (1912–1918). During this period, she led the socialist “Feminine Circle” in Bucharest (1913–1918).⁶ Arbore was a supporter of women’s claims and involvement in the socialist party, arguing that women ought to have party work that went beyond “handing out little ribbons and selling tickets for celebrations.”⁷

In the 1910s, Arbore’s stances as a socialist activist were influenced by developments in women’s and labor politics around the world, especially in Central Europe and Russia. Thus, when Arbore insisted that women should be more visible in the Social Democratic Party in Romania, similar pressure was put on socialist parties across Europe.⁸ Arbore’s line of arguing concerning working women and their place in socialist politics tracks closely with the approach to the issue developed by German socialist Clara Zetkin.⁹ In 1911, when Arbore lectured on women’s exploitation in both factories and home industries, the issue of sweated labor in home-based work

3 Pollex, *Netzwerke und Freundschaft*; Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*; Cotoi, *Inventing the Social in Romania*.

4 For a quick explanation of “narrow” and “broad” factions within Bulgarian social democracy before the First World War, see Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*, 18.

5 On the transnational networks of the Cominternists, see Brigitte Studer, *Reisende der Weltrevolution: Eine Globalgeschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale* [Travelers of the World Revolution: A Global History of the Communist International] (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2020); Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, trans. Dafydd Rees Roberts (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). On the Communist Women’s Movement, see Daria Dyakonova, “‘Through the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in All Countries, Onward to the Complete Emancipation of Women!’: The Transnational Networks of the Communist Women’s Movement in the Early 1920s,” *Journal of Women’s History* 35, no. 1 (2023): 11–33.

6 Other key organizers of the Feminine Circle were Jana Brănișteanu, Ana Comănescu, and Maria Popescu. Ioniță, *Ecaterina Arbore*; Tudoran, “Din lupta socialistă pentru afirmarea femeii.”

7 Quoted in Ioniță, *Ecaterina Arbore*, 53.

8 The German SPD began following a policy of mandatorily including at least one woman in each local committee of the party in 1910. In the period when Arbore was most active in socialist politics in Romania, between 1905 and 1918, the number of women in the German SPD increased four-fold, from 4,000 to 174,000, with numbers almost doubling between 1907 and 1909. This trend was matched in several other socialist parties in Europe. During this period, the international socialist women’s movement was energized by Zetkin and the German socialist stance on women’s emancipation Zetkin had shaped. In 1907, Zetkin initiated an International Conference of Socialist Women. It would meet irregularly until 1915. Daniel Gaido and Cintia Frencia, “‘A Clean Break’: Clara Zetkin, the Socialist Women’s Movement, and Feminism,” *International Critical Thought* 8, no. 2 (2018): 12–18.

9 Zetkin’s *Die Arbeiterinnen- und Frauenfrage der Gegenwart* (1889) appeared in Sofia Nădejde’s Romanian translation already in 1891. Clara Zetkin, *Chestia lucrătoarelor și a femeilor de acum. Trad. din nemțește*

was of great international interest.¹⁰ The question of the effects of women's paid employment outside the home, present in the 1911 lecture, had been hotly debated in male-dominated trade unionism in various European countries since the 1890s.¹¹ Finally, Arbore had detailed knowledge of women's organizing in the Russian Empire, in Finland, and beyond Europe. This global outlook on the woman question would become even more pronounced in the 1920s—as testified by her publications from the decade.

After the beginning of the First World War, Arbore was active in the local and transnational antiwar movement. In 1914, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Party, she co-signed a position statement against what the committee defined as a struggle between empires, and for Romania's neutrality in the conflict.¹² This position placed Arbore and her co-signers on the left flank of European socialism already before the 1915 Zimmerwald Conference, where the division between revolutionary and reformist socialists on the question of militarism came to a head. Like other socialists in the Balkans, in 1915 Arbore supported the idea of the creation of a socialist Balkan Federation as a way to bring lasting peace in the region.¹³

In September 1915, in a public meeting against the war, Arbore spoke about “the action of socialist women abroad who struggle with all their might for the conclusion of peace.”¹⁴ She most likely meant the radically antiwar Bern Manifesto adopted in March 1915 by the International Socialist Women's Conference, spearheaded by Zetkin, calling for peace without annexations.¹⁵ Arbore's and other Romanian Social Democrats' antiwar activities were popularized in 1916 among the many readers of the SPD women's biweekly *Die Gleichheit*, in an article on “Romanian socialists' actions for peace.”¹⁶

de S. Nădejde [The Question of Women Workers and of Present-Day Women. Translated from the German by S. Nădejde] (Bucharest: Lupta, 1891).

- 10 Marilyn J. Boxer, “Protective Legislation and Home Industry: The Marginalization of Women Workers in Late Nineteenth–Early Twentieth-Century France,” *Journal of Social History* 20, no. 1 (1986): 49–50.
- 11 For 1890s discussions on the effects of women's presence in the labor market in France, see Sandra Salin, *Women and Trade Unions in France: The Tobacco and Hat Industries, 1890–1914* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), 92–100. Notably, Zetkin's influential 1889 Paris speech, “For the Liberation of Women,” defended women's employment outside the home, given the existing historical-material circumstances. For a transcript of the speech and its thoughtful contextualization, see Dalia Nassar and Kristin Gjesdal, eds., *Women Philosophers in the Long Nineteenth Century: The German Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 154–66.
- 12 Ioniță, *Ecaterina Arbore*, 45.
- 13 L. S. Stavrianos, “The Balkan Federation Movement: A Neglected Aspect,” *The American Historical Review* 48, no. 1 (1942): 34.
- 14 “Întrunirea socialiștilor” [The Meeting of the Socialists], *Viitorul*, no. 2735, 22 September 1915, 2.
- 15 In 1915, Clara Zetkin led the adoption of the radically antiwar Bern Manifesto, one that vexed both Lenin and the German SPD leadership. The Manifesto backed the Rosa Luxemburg–led, left minority, antiwar position in the Second International. In 1917, because of her antimilitarism, Zetkin was removed from the executive committee of the SPD and from her position as editor of the women's biweekly *Die Gleichheit*, which she had founded. Gaido and Frencia, “A Clean Break,” 17–18; Zimmermann, *Grenz-Überschreitungen*, 173–83.
- 16 “Friedensaktionen der rumanischen Sozialdemokratie,” *Die Gleichheit* 26, no. 24 (August 18, 1916): 178–79. The article reported information published in the main SPD newspaper, *Vorwärts*.

After 1918, like other Romanian socialists with revolutionary leanings, Arbore became a political refugee in the Soviet Union. She returned to Romania as a communist activist in 1924 but was expelled by the government after only a few months—a legally unjustifiable decision which generated public outcry in the country.¹⁷ Between 1925 and 1929, she held various functions in the Soviet sanitary system, possibly working in the Caucasus. In the first half of the 1920s, she contributed articles to the journal *Kommunistische Frauen Internationale*, edited by Clara Zetkin. She was a member in the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI), representing an envisioned Communist Balkan Federation. In the period 1931–1935, Arbore worked as a university instructor and translator in Moscow.¹⁸ Like many other non-Russian ECCI members, she was arrested in the “Great Terror” autumn of 1937 in Moscow.¹⁹ She died before the end of that year, in detention. Arbore was rehabilitated by the Socialist Republic of Romania in April 1968. After her political rehabilitation, biographical articles and volumes transformed Ecaterina Arbore into a key figure of an emerging pantheon of Romanian militant socialists.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Copii găsiți și orfani din capitală* [Foundlings and Orphaned Children in the Capital City] (Bucharest: Tip. Universitară “A. G. Brătănescu,” 1905); *Înfluența industriilor asupra sănătății lucrătorilor* [The Influence of Industries on the Health of the Workers] (Bucharest: Editura Revistei “Viitorul Social,” 1907); *Femeile în revoluțiunea din Rusia* [Women in the Revolution in Russia] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului de Arte Grafice “Minerva,” 1908); *Întinderea tuberculozei în București în anii 1902–1912* [The Spread of Tuberculosis in Bucharest in the Years 1902–1912] (Bucharest: Minerva, 1913); “Martirii care au luptat și au murit pentru Comuna din Paris” [The Martyrs Who Fought and Died for the Paris Commune], in *Comuna din Paris* [The Paris Commune] (Bucharest: Cercul de Editură Socialistă, 1913); *Cincizeci de zile între holerici* [Fifty Days among the Sick with Cholera] (Bucharest: Tipografia Poporul, 1914); *Mat’ i ditya v Sovetskoy Rossii* [Mother and Child in Soviet Russia] (Moscow, 1920); with B. Casparova, “Der Erste Kongress der schaffenden Frauen in den transkaukasischen Sowjetrepubliken” [The First Congress of Working Women in the Transcaucasian Soviet Republics], *Die Kommunistische Fraueninternationale*, no. 7–8 (1922): 632–37; “Die Arbeitende Frau in der Revolutionären Arbeiter- und Bauernbewegung des Ostens” [The Working Woman in the Revolutionary Workers’ and Peasants’ Movement of the East], *Die Kommunistische Fraueninternationale* 5, no. 2 (1925): 18–23; *Zhenskiy trud na Vostoke* [Women’s Labor in the East] (Moscow: Voprosy truda, 1926).

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17 D. Ch., “Expulzarea d-rei Arbore înaintea Camerei” [The Expulsion of Mrs. Arbore before the Chamber of Deputies], *Adevărul*, no. 12386, 17 June 1924.

18 The Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) holds several files in connection to Arbore’s activity as a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, as a university instructor, as well as mid-1920s correspondence with Clara Zetkin (two letters). Although declassified, they could not be consulted for this contribution.

19 Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, 134.

CONTEXT

In 1968, during the April Plenary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, around twenty communist militants who had been killed in the late 1930s in the USSR were formally rehabilitated. Ecaterina Arbore was one of two women rehabilitated.²⁰ Through the rehabilitation of these socialists, Party Chairman Nicolae Ceaușescu wanted to consolidate his power and make a break with the legacy of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, his predecessor who had died in 1965.²¹ Already in 1966, historians had been asked in the 9th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party to “strictly observe the historical truth.”²² Less than five months after the April 1968 Plenary, in a public speech on August 21, 1968, Ceaușescu condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the other five members of the Warsaw Pact. Apparent support for the Prague Spring and the Romanian leader’s insistence on independence from Moscow (a policy stance since the Gheorghiu-Dej era, in fact), bolstered Ceaușescu’s popularity domestically and his clout in the West. Socially, in Romania, the late 1960s and early 1970s were perceived as a “period of cultural openness and consumer liberalization.”²³

In the aftermath of the April Plenary, and in this new institutional and societal context, historian Elisabeta Ioniță began researching Ecaterina Arbore.²⁴ In fact, research and writing on Ecaterina Arbore ushered a period of renewed interest and funding for activist women’s history.²⁵ Ioniță interviewed Arbore’s descendants, collecting documents and objects that had belonged to the activist. A first article on Arbore was published in 1969 by Ioniță in the broad-circulation women’s magazine *Femeia* (The Woman),²⁶ followed in 1973 by a well-researched biographical volume by the same author, at the prestigious publishing house Editura Politică.²⁷ Ioniță’s

20 For Romanian communists purged in the USSR, and a focus on Elena Filipovici, the other woman activist rehabilitated in 1968, see Diac, “Comuniști din România în arhiva Cominternului,” parts I and II.

21 Fischer, “Idol or Leader?,” 121.

22 The 9th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in 1966 laid out what the flagship historical journal of the time considered to be a “veritable program for the activity of historians,” focused on “the stringent requirement to strictly observe the historical truth.” The Congress, the Plenary, and various speeches by the Party Chairman encouraged research into the lives of militants who had been unjustly condemned while Gheorghiu-Dej was in power or had been killed in Stalin’s purge of Moscow-based former Cominternists. “Un act de înalt umanism” [An Act of Great Humanism], *Anale de Istorie*, no. 2–3 (1968): 18–19.

23 Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 323.

24 Ioniță was a historian who had joined the Museum for the History of the Communist Party in 1963 and otherwise had ties to communist activism since her childhood in the interwar period. Ștefan Ștefănescu and Adolf Armbruster, *Enciclopedia istoriografiei românești* [Encyclopedia of Romanian Historiography] (Bucharest: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1978), 181.

25 For much of the 1960s, the histories of women’s lives and their militancy were marginal to historical production, partly as a politicized reaction to a first period of flourishing of the field between 1945 and 1953. Ghiț, “Professionals’ and Amateurs’ Pasts.”

26 Ioniță, “Amintiri despre Ecaterina Arbore.”

27 Ioniță, *Ecaterina Arbore*.

work and subsequent landmark women's history volumes mention Arbore's activity as a pioneering socialist woman and dedicated social medic.

The 1911 lecture excerpted here supports a somewhat different understanding of Arbore's stances, compared to the 1970s take on her politics. The lecture reveals Arbore to be, in part, as state socialist historians in Romania saw her: a Marxist intellectual engaged in educating and persuading rank-and-file members of the labor movement and in shaping the stances of the Social Democratic Party in Romania. At the same time, the lecture reveals Arbore to be a critic of exploitative labor arrangements within factories but also in home industry, and a strong supporter of working women's struggles worldwide. And it reveals Arbore's internationalism and tendency to think in global terms. These latter aspects were barely mentioned in 1970s research about her.

The lecture was published as a 31-page brochure-sized booklet by the Socialist Publishing Circle, shortly after Arbore delivered it on March 28, 1911, likely to a mostly male audience of members of the Brăila Dock Workers' Trade Union (Sindicatul Muncitorilor din Port). The paragraphs selected here represent about one third of the first edition's length. The selection captures the philosophical and historical arguments and comparisons Arbore marshaled to discuss women's work and the struggle for women's rights. A second edition appeared in 1912. The introduction was changed to appeal to women workers more directly, encouraging them to organize. The term "emancipation" (*emancipare*) was replaced with "liberation" (*desrobire*) in the title of the publication.

The main theoretical (or philosophical) argument Arbore made in the lecture was that women's exploitation as workers was determined by the "inexorable laws" of capitalist development. Politically, this implied that solutions such as the removal of women from industrial establishments or from working outside the home, in general, were retrograde and practically misguided. Arbore made this point in the context of a new, growing trend of women's employment in industrial establishments in the Kingdom of Romania.

In effect, in 1911, Arbore was defending women's work in industry outside the home, combatting the idea that such work was an immoral local trend and contributing to a gendered critique of cottage industries. Her argument that women's work was part of a large historical development, that it underpinned women's demands for rights, and that women ought to struggle for their rights within supportive socialist movements strongly echoes Zetkin's stances.

Using historical examples and contemporary information about the exploitation of women workers in cottage and home industries, Arbore combatted the notion that such industries could constitute alternatives to the exploitation of women workers in factories. To support her claim, Arbore discussed the case of exploited Saxon cottage weavers in the medieval period as well as the unfavorable time:pay ratio for

home-based crafts done by women, as revealed by a 1909 handcraft exhibition in Geneva.²⁸

In the 1911 edition, implicit and explicit comparisons between various countries where women had played significant roles as workers, and especially as political actors, were used to build an argument about the entangled development of socialist and women's activism. Arbore claimed that socialism (*socializmul*) and the struggle for women's emancipation—the “fight for what goes under the name of feminism [*femenismul*]”—were mutually strengthening struggles with entangled histories, of equal significance in a historical dialectic progress. Notably, when discussing global developments Arbore referred to East and West, and to “North and South,” but also to more or less “civilized” (meaning politically developed and industrialized) countries, with Romania among the “less civilized.”

When Ioniță published her preliminary research on Arbore in *Femeia* in 1969, the article on the opposite page praised the state-encouraged revival of home-based industry and traditional crafts, the very industries and crafts the social doctor and socialist theorist had criticized sixty years before.²⁹ In fact, as part of a process of “socialist flexibilization,”³⁰ in the late 1960s piece-rate contracts for home-based work, clearly conceived with women workers in mind, were reintroduced in Romanian labor law.³¹ In the early 1970s, Arbore's intellectual contributions were mentioned by historians, but neither Arbore's contributions to the development of local socialist thinking nor her internationalism were fully explored. Arbore's criticism of home industry did not have an echo in Romania's policy-making circles in the 1970s.

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28 For the latter example, she referred to information gleaned from a 1909 handicraft exhibition in Geneva, where note cards displayed next to embroidery, lace, or artificial flowers indicated the price of the item and the number of hours required to execute it.

29 Ileana Alexeni and Stan Udrea, “Reactualizarea unei tradiții: Industria casnică” [Reactualization of a Tradition: Home Industry], *Femeia*, 22, no. 10 (1969): 6.

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Alexandra Ghiț

Ecaterina Arbore

The Working Woman in the Struggle towards Emancipation

Conference Held in the Port of Brăila on March 28, 1911,

Organized by the Dock Workers' Union

We will soon celebrate half a century since two great movements, two immense struggles have started pushing humanity in its entirety toward changing present-day social forms in all countries of Europe, in America, Australia, and New Zealand. A fierce struggle is ongoing to realize new ideas, for progress. New horizons open for the human mind. The purpose of these movements across humanity is to forge a more just and happier life than the one today, and the one before, for all people.

These two large movements, these struggles of ideas spread ever wider to all countries, they win ever more proselytes, and break through all the obstacles that their enemies build in their paths; and while they have yet to attain full victory, in many parts of the world they are on the way to winning, and, without a doubt, will eventually prevail the way Christianity did two thousand years ago. They will prevail precisely because they bring justice and happiness for all.

These two movements that cause unrest across humanity today are, on the one hand, the struggle of the proletariat, the working class's struggle for liberation, for *socialism*, and, on the other hand, women's fight for their own rights.

Both of these struggles have begun around the same time, half a century ago, when women from various countries woke up and saw they were treated unjustly, deprived of any rights, and at the same time the workers understood that they were being exploited by capitalists.

These movements, class struggle and the struggle for women's emancipation, both arose from the same inexorable historical causes, namely the *economic*.

[...]

The patriarchal family, as described, and which existed for our ancestors, is no more and can no longer be. Life today no longer resembles life in the old days, when the woman would be at home growing her own vegetables, kneading and baking her own bread, weaving the cloth for her entire family's clothes, and tending to her children. Today, when life has become much more complex and expensive, when a person's needs are much more numerous and varied, the wheat is more likely to be sown by some people and eaten by others, the bread is baked by bakeries, the clothes are woven by factories, and even if we would like to go back to life as it used to be and as described in such detail in fairy tales written in books, it would be in vain. Today, in order for them to escape death in misery, women must work outside their homes, in factories, workshops, or offices, but if

their work is equal to that of male workers, if they earn their own living, then it is only fair that women should be asking for the same rights that men are asking for.
[...]

In civilized countries, especially more democratic ones, women have won many rights, just like workers have won more rights.

Women's emancipation, breaking their economic, legal, and political chains, went hand in hand with the progress of socialism, the rise of the Socialist Party, and on the other hand, socialism rose faster in those countries where more women embraced the socialist cause.

How did they fight? For what purpose? And what did women achieve in different countries, particularly women workers?

It has been already over forty years since women of all social classes have begun to act, write, unite, and fight to obtain *rights*. The rights that they asked for, and still do, belong in two categories: (1) the right to economic emancipation, meaning women's right to work outside of the home, in factories, or workshops, in various industries; (2) the right to embrace a liberal profession, to become teachers or doctors, and to receive equal pay for equal work, equal to the men's pay.

For equal work, equal pay.

At the same time, working women began to ask for political and legal rights equal to those of men, too—to be treated equally before the law, to be *citizens* on an equal footing with men, to have the right *to vote*, to elect their representatives to Parliament, and to be elected.

What could have caused this? What drive pushed them then and continues to push women across countries to ask for their rights, to act, to fight for what goes under the name of *feminism*?

It was a long time ago that women stayed at home and could produce cheaply everything necessary for living.

It has been already over a century since countries in Western Europe, England, and France began to develop heavy industry, establishing factories that could employ thousands of workers and, with the introduction of machines, sought to hire women, especially for the weaving of all types of textiles. Women would learn the craft faster and (unfortunately) accept smaller pay than men. But however small their pay at the factory, it was still more than what they would have earned staying at home.

[...]

Home industry, women's work at home, is still said to be the only type of work suited for women, enabling them to take care of their *home* and families at the same time. This is what all opponents of the feminist movement all over the world say, failing to take into account historical evolution and social progress; those who hold power in their hands seek to spread and encourage home industry.

In our country, and even in Russia, charitable societies and women's societies sought and still seek to spread and organize increasingly home industry. But in Russia it has been years since even the women who wished to do good understood that they only encouraged the exploitation of women workers.

Today, just like in the past, *home industry* remains the worst-paid and least hygienic work, and in all countries this type of work leads to the cruelest exploitation of women workers.

[...]

This is the same everywhere; the price paid for whatever is produced in the home is smaller, and the worker who produces in her own home lives in more miserable conditions than factory workers.

In Russia, home industry is paid even lower than in the West. Despite the state's encouragement and philanthropic societies' efforts to spread the manufacturing of carpets, national-motif embroidering, cloth, etc., among Russian peasant women, because the women earned too little, they abandoned this work in favor of agricultural work or factory work.

The same has been happening in our country over the past ten years or so; women who used to work at home until around ten years ago, and earned so little despite the activity of philanthropic societies, after the opening of weaving, textile factories, have gone to work there, pushed by the inexorable law of economic need, the same everywhere.

Since manufacturing products at home, namely home industry, was found to be the most exploitative of women and men workers, as it is not subject to any control and usually highly unhygienic, in all those more civilized countries, where women earned more rights, they asked that manufacturing products at home, namely home industry, be banished. Socialist parties included the banishment of home industry in their programs too.

[...]

Women in countries more advanced on the ladder of civilization than Romania have already begun to organize half a century ago and first struggled only for *economic emancipation*, for the right to work, to earn their own living in an honest and dignified way, to be paid for their work enough to afford living costs and not have to depend on the charity of others.

The first women's organizations were philanthropic societies and aid societies that failed however to improve the lives of women, and often degenerated into a new type of workers' exploitation.

Only in those countries where women and men workers organized together into a Socialist Party could they obtain the creation of laws which would protect women's labor and achieve a betterment of women's lives.

[...]

If we look at the movement for women's economic and political emancipation in different countries, we find that while it has made great headway in the past years, the movement has gained more ground where there is a stronger socialist movement, which is only natural.

The full emancipation of women depends on the triumph of socialism, just as the socialist cause cannot advance without women's participation. And just as the duty of women workers is to fight for socialism, so too is the duty of socialist parties everywhere to fight for the rights of women.

The struggle for women's emancipation is only beginning in our country, but natural social evolution pushes us on the same path that other countries have taken before us. And here just as everywhere, despite all the obstacles put in the way, both the feminist and the socialist movements will go forward, ever forward!

Translated by Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

Žemaitė

To the Enemies of Women's Equality

AUTHOR Žemaitė (Julija Beniuševičiūtė-Žymantienė)

TITLE “Moterų teisių sulyginimo priešams” [To the Enemies of Women's Equality]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Žibutė* [Violet], June 13, 1912.

LANGUAGE Lithuanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Žemaitė (Julija Beniuševičiūtė-Žymantienė, 1845–1921) was a writer, activist, and social critic.

Žemaitė came from a landless boyar family but received a better education than most girls of her time. The family spoke Polish,¹ and it was her father who concerned himself with his daughter's education. Žemaitė's aunt arranged for her to be schooled along with her own children. Eventually, however, Žemaitė's marriage to a man of a lower class sentenced her to the difficult life of an ordinary peasant for many years.

Povilas Višinskis, a student of Šiauliai Gymnasium and Saint Petersburg State University and major driver of the Lithuanian National Awakening, had a decisive influence on Žemaitė's formation as a writer, encouraging her to publish her work. In 1894, Žemaitė's first short story, “Rudens vakaras” (Autumn Evening), appeared in print. Žemaitė later became a regular contributor to Lithuanian journals and magazines, and through Višinskis's connections became acquainted with the Lithuanian boyar women authors Gabrielė Petkevičaitė (pseudonym Bitė, the Bee) and Marija Pečkauskaitė (pseudonym Šatrijos Ragana, the Witch of Šatrija), as well as other members of the intelligentsia of the National Awakening. Her friendship with Petkevičaitė motivated the two women's creative collaboration under the pseudonym Dvi Moteri (Two Women); using this *nom de plume*, the two authors wrote dramas, such as *Litvomanai* (The Litvomans, 1905). In all, Žemaitė wrote 150 short stories, novels, essays, and a dozen plays, many of which were written during the final five years of the nineteenth century.

Žemaitė's work centers on the lives of people in the rural areas of Lithuania and the patriarchal gender roles that contributed to discrimination and violence in the family. She was a harsh critic of traditional marriage as a contract between two families and

¹ After the creation of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795), Polish became the first language of Lithuanian magnates and was also adopted by the Lithuanian nobility, while the Lithuanian language was spoken primarily in the countryside. Lithuanian was brought to usage during the national patriotic movement in the nineteenth century, and after Lithuanian independence in 1918.

of the role of men as unquestioned authority figures in the family. She had personally experienced many aspects of the rural family life that she wrote about.

Through the mentorship and encouragement of Višinskis, Žemaitė also became engaged, especially after her husband's death in 1900, in a meaningful life of social activism, as part of the newly blossoming Lithuanian social project of the National Awakening.² She became one of the most active founders of and participants in the women's movement in Lithuania. In 1907, she took part in the inaugural Lithuanian Women's Congress in Kaunas, where she gave an impassioned speech about the oppression of rural Lithuanian women, criticizing the patriarchal foundations of the traditional Lithuanian family. She also participated in the inaugural Russian Women's Congress in Saint Petersburg in 1908.

Žemaitė was a regular contributor to Lithuanian journals and magazines and worked at several editorial offices. After relocating to the capital Vilnius, she was the editor of the liberal newspaper *Lietuvos žinios* (Lithuanian News), the official organ of the Democratic Party in Lithuania (1913–1915). When the First World War began, Žemaitė worked for charity organizations providing relief to war refugees in Russia, and in 1916, she embarked for the United States to contribute to the war cause. There, she visited Lithuanian émigré colonies and collected donations for the victims of the war.

Žemaitė was an active member of democratic and socialist causes. In 1917, she became a member of the People's Socialist Union of Lithuania. She gained fame as a powerful and influential orator. Žemaitė returned to Lithuania in 1921, dying later that year. Toward the end of her life, she began writing her autobiography, but it was never completed. It was published in its unfinished form, well after the author's death, in 1946.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Pragerti balakonai* [He Lost His Shirt to Drink] (1897); *Marti* [The Daughter-in-Law] (1899); *Topylis* (1899); *Valsčiaus sūdas* [District Court] (1900); *Petras Kurmelis* (1901); *Kunigo naudą velniai gaudo* [Scavengers at the Priest's Funeral] (1903); *Prie dvaro* [At the Manor House] (1903); *Trys mylimos* [Three Lovers] (1907); *Kelionė į Šidlavą* [Journey to Šidlava] (1907); *Šv. Jurgio aukos* [Sacrifices to St. Jurgis] (1908); *Dvejų laidotuvių, dveji palaikai* [Two Funerals, Two Inheritances] (1910); *Neturėjo geros motinos* [Without a Good Mother] (1913); *Velnio vestuvės, velnio ir laidotuvių* [The Devil Weds, the Devil Dies] (1914); *Marriage for Love: A Nineteenth-Century Lithuanian Woman's Fight for Justice*, translated by Violeta Kelertas and Maryte Racys (Los Angeles: Birchwood Press, 2020).

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2 The Lithuanian National Awakening (Lietuvių tautinis atgimimas) is a period at the end of the 19th–beginning of the 20th centuries of intense investment in the creation of modern Lithuanian culture and nationhood, culminating with the independence of Lithuania in 1918.

CONTEXT

Feminism seeks to abolish violence and discrimination based on gender. Over one hundred years ago, the activists of the Lithuanian National Awakening, men and women alike, declared this very same goal. It is no accident that in her article "To the Enemies of Women's Equality" (1912), Žemaitė tied discrimination and violence against women to patriarchal cultural norms and stereotypes. In this text, she argued that Western liberal feminism could transform gender stereotypes in Lithuanian village life. She saw this transformation as a historically mandatory condition for the modernization of traditional Lithuanian society.

At the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries, the Lithuanian national intelligentsia spoke against the stereotype of the farming family as a worthy ideal. In its place, activists of the National Awakening proposed a new national family model, based on different motivations for creating a family and on different moral values for interpersonal relations within the family. Representatives of every ideological position at the time—liberals, social democrats, even Catholic priests—criticized the traditional patriarchal family and supported the idea of women as independent individuals. Most had returned from periods of study at Russian universities and were quite familiar with modern Western European liberal democratic principles. It is notable that the Lithuanian Women's Congress in Kaunas in 1907 initiated the first Lithuanian newspaper for women, *Lietuvaite* (Lithuanian Woman), established in 1910 by the Catholic priest and professor Povilas Januševičius, who had studied at the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy. The beliefs of the activists of the National Awakening affected not only the changing attitudes towards women among the Lithuanian political and professional-artistic elite, but also the formation of new modern ideals in Lithuanian society overall. Indeed, the intelligentsia can be credited for generating new attitudes towards love, marriage, and relationships between women and men, as well as new ideas about child-rearing at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

By the late nineteenth century, Western suffragist and feminist ideas were met without resistance in Lithuania, and found a favorable place in the project for the creation of a modern society. Activists of the National Awakening recognized that women were not treated as independent historical subjects in traditional Lithuanian culture; they demanded that the social vision for the future incorporate women's rights and gender equality. In other words, the participants of the National Awakening treated patriarchal society as a space in which discriminatory gender stereotypes were formed and maintained, and they proposed or even demanded that these be broken up in order to create an egalitarian society. A woman worthy of the attention of a National Awakening activist had to be an equal partner, collaborator, and friend.

Nonetheless, the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century principles of liberal feminism espoused by the activists of the National Awakening were not incorporated into the politics of the independent Lithuanian Republic of the interwar period. The realization of modern family and interpersonal relations, which the criticism of traditional values had promised, took several more decades to materialize, and, indeed, the liberal feminist foundations laid down during the National Awakening faced a conservative backlash in interwar Lithuania, finding support only among a small niche of individuals, mostly artists and intellectuals. As the ideological left and right solidified and split, women were allied with different political groups. Liberal feminism as a counterweight to patriarchal gender relations no longer held strategic cultural importance. In interwar Lithuania, the liberal gender equality project lost political support, giving way to a romanticized stereotype of the patriarchal woman as a mother. After the Second World War, neo-traditional gender stereotypes entered occupied Lithuania under the guise of Soviet “gender equality.” During the Soviet period, Žemaitė joined the national literary pantheon. Her novelettes, essays, and stories were included in the Soviet high school curriculum, and her plays were performed on stage. However, the Soviet regime never uncovered nor mentioned that Žemaitė was a fierce advocate for the liberal rights of women and against inequality between men and women from all walks of life. Instead, the Soviet regime positioned Žemaitė exclusively in terms of workers’ voices, including those of women workers. Her works were introduced as a form of Marxist feminism combating women’s exploitation and the individual ownership of private property under capitalism.

After the collapse of the USSR and the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence in the 1990s, various feminist perspectives and activist groups emerged. Today, the strongest of these are the left and liberal feminist leanings, both unreservedly recognizing the historical, systemic inequality between men and women. The two define the causes and reasons for women’s discrimination differently. Left-leaning feminism considers women’s discrimination as the result of class, while Western liberal feminism sees gender inequality as lying in patriarchal cultural norms. This ideological divide affects the two sides’ proposed means and methods for abolishing discrimination.

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Dalia Leinarte

* * *

Žemaitė

To the Enemies of Women's Equality

I had the opportunity to read three letters written to the editorial offices of *Lietuvos ūkininkas*.³ The first written by one E. L., the second by a J. U., the third by an E. J. U. Over thirty more came from young readers from the Kartėna parish in the district of Telšiai. The first three letters are more or less identical in content: they criticize the newspaper for publishing *Žibutė*,⁴ threatening to stop reading and supporting the highly regarded newspaper altogether.

The first author calls *Žibutė* the propagandistic arm of the editorial board. He accuses it of harnessing women's deceptions, obsessions, and fictions, leading to a breakdown of society. Not wishing to pontificate, he says bluntly, “Not only are women's rights unnecessary, they are impossible.” He demands that *Žibutė* be closed down, otherwise he will bid farewell to *Lietuvos ūkininkas*.

The second letter similarly provides *Lietuvos ūkininkas* with harsh words, arguing that by publishing *Žibutė*, *Lietuvos ūkininkas* is squandering its moral standing and risks losing the majority of its readers' support. The author berates the newspaper for “associating itself with the fancies and empty chatter of women-tramps all over Lithuania.” He proposes that the paper at least provide women with trousers. “We do not recognize any rights for women. We object vehemently and plead with *Lietuvos ūkininkas* to stop humoring women's whimsies and desires,” he writes.

The author seems to believe that until women wear trousers, they will not gain any rights or be able to fulfill their desires.

3 Editor's note: *Lietuvos ūkininkas* [The Lithuanian Farmer] was a weekly Lithuanian-language newspaper published between 1905–1940.

4 Editor's note: *Žibutė* was a women's magazine published as a supplement to *Lietuvos ūkininkas*.

The third letter, written by a young man from Kartėna, reads brilliantly. Obviously, it was composed by a very clever mind. The author is surprised that a bunch of gals are using *Žibutė* in an attempt to gain rights equal to men. He praises the wise words of the journal *Lietuvaitė* [The Lithuanian Woman] in its critique of *Žibutė*: “Women’s thoughts may be prolific, but they lack substance, like a light that lacks warmth.” He continues to say that if women involve themselves in politics, they will cook up such a stew that everyone will soon be sick to their stomachs. He further criticizes *Vakarų vėjas* [The Western Wind] for daring to disseminate ideas about women’s rights and for trusting the pointless *Marytė*.⁵ He asserts that bridegrooms must continue to demand dowries because marriage without wealth brings a heavy burden. He writes: “Of course, women may learn to make use of things that don’t belong to them.” And he states that “most gals are mediocre.” As an example, he discusses the girls of Kartėna: “Oh, how they disgust me! As they say, floozies, harlots, every last one of them. They squandered their maidenheads long ago. Drunkards, murderers, how many children have they murdered?”

Regarding the men, he writes, “I can assure you that the intelligent guys outnumber the gals in the Kartėna parish.” He continues, catching himself, making sure to praise his own female hands, “at get-togethers or parties, they are amongst their inferiors. Our women do not desire, nor will they ever desire, equal rights. They are happy with their situation and will never disagree with men out of malice.” He concludes his missive, promising never to read *Žibutė*. How lovely!

I do agree with the young men from Kartėna when they say that women involved in politics would cook up a fantastic stew.

Truly [with women involved in politics] there would no longer be so many drop-outs from school. With more children in school, our young men would become more compassionate. At the very least, they would understand the rights women are seeking for themselves. They would stop using such pejoratives to describe women; they would stop denigrating them.

I also think the fellows of Kartėna are correct regarding dowries. Dowries, money—of course they’re necessary, but then, how do you get rid of that pesky bride? Why marry at all? Why take such a burden on your shoulders? If only someone would offer your goat a tidy sum of money. How wonderful that would be! You could marry the goat and immediately take it to the slaughterhouse—and that’s that. No more burden. You get her money, and as a bonus, you can sell her hide for pub money. You noticed that gals are good at using things that don’t belong to

5 Dalia Leinarte: Special acknowledgements go to Dr. Ramunė Bleizgienė for pointing out that the nickname *Vakarų vėjas* was given to the Lithuanian writer Martinijonas Rutkus (born about 1889). According to Bleizgienė, the nickname *Marytė* may have been given to the Lithuanian–American patriot Adomas Jonas Viznis (1879–1953).

them? Look at yourselves, my friends, just take a look. It's the pot calling the kettle black. You complain that girls are lusher, but tell me, who do you see at the pub more often? Girls or guys? And even if one of the gals happens to go out to the pub when asked out, just exactly who's paying? You see the motes in their eyes, but not the beams in your own. Regarding their lost maidenheads, may I ask where do those maidenheads go? Who takes them? And those children they're murdering, where do they come from? I wonder: after you cross yourself, please tell me, guys, who exactly is it that's coming around sniffing at the girls' maidenheads? Who's making those kids that they then murder? On whose account are these girls sinking into immorality?

As I pen these thoughts, I hear a girl's voice: What's the point of writing these words? They only fall on deaf ears.

But I think: maybe at least one word will sink in. Maybe these fellows will feel embarrassed, at least one of them will blush, recognizing that by shamelessly blaming others for his own faults he is betraying his own female friends and mistreating all girls. My friends, in your letters, you all make the point that you are much more intelligent than the girls. But you don't understand that by smearing girls, hurling accusations at them, you persecute the entire gender of women, i.e., you defame your own mothers, sisters, wives, your own children's mothers. In a word, you are denigrating, riding roughshod over half of humanity. And he who denigrates his own deserves to be denigrated himself. You need to be enlightened! That's what you need, because as you are blind, you don't know what you're doing.

And now my response to the girls of Kartëna. Are you actually grateful to the fellows of Kartëna for denigrating you, for destroying your honor, for backstabbing and badmouthing you? Ultimately, when they praise you, they vilify you even more. What I mean is that, after all, they called you obedient, saying you never complain. Yes! They vilify and defame you! It's painful to hear these words. But even if we don't believe their gossip, let's shout in one voice: come to your senses, wake up, women of Kartëna. Recognize these "friends" for what they are...

Respond publicly to *Žibutë*. Protest against the injustice and abuse inflicted upon you by your boyfriends. As they complain about you, they are actually admitting to their own immoralities, yet they still seek to put all the blame on your shoulders. We know they're wrong, but now it's your turn to speak out. Say something. At least one word. We're waiting!

Translated by Jura Avizienis

Rosika Schwimmer

The Grievances of Feminism under the Proletarian Dictatorship

AUTHOR Rosika/Rózsa Bédy-Schwimmer

TITLE “A feminizmus sérelmei a proletárdiktatúra alatt” [The Grievances of Feminism under the Proletarian Dictatorship]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED The first part of the text is an excerpt, published in the journal *A Nő. Feminista Folyóirat* [The Woman: Feminist Journal] 6, no. 4 (December 1919): 2–3. The second part is an unpublished handwritten manuscript, where Schwimmer continued her thoughts from the first part. Source: New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, Series II, Box 469, Folder 4.

LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Róza/Rózsa/Rosika Schwimmer/Bédy-Schwimmer (1877, Budapest–1948, New York) was a women’s rights and peace movement activist, and editor and author of the first Hungarian feminist journal, *A Nő és a Társadalom* (Woman and Society, 1907–1913, Budapest). She was born into a middle-class Jewish family as the oldest of three children. After the father’s bankruptcy, the family had to leave the capital city. Schwimmer grew up in parts of Transylvania, in Temesvár/Timișoara, and in Szabadka/Subotica, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the time. Finally, she moved back to Budapest in the middle of the 1890s and lived there until 1920. She attended primary school in Budapest and Transylvania. For a while, she was educated in a convent school that she later criticized harshly, and graduated from a public school for girls. She also enrolled in a special school for commerce. She became proficient in several languages aside from Hungarian: German, English, and French, and she was able to communicate in Dutch, Italian, Swedish, and Norwegian. In Budapest, she worked as a governess and later as a female clerk, meaning she became well aware of the troubles of working women. Although at the beginning of the 1900s she was not sure of her sexual orientation, she married Béla Bédy in 1911. The couple divorced in 1913.

When Schwimmer started her career as a journalist and activist at the beginning of the 1900s, she was inspired by her maternal uncle, Leopold Katscher (1853–1939), a journalist/writer and peace activist. He supported her first steps financially as well.

After having become a leading member of the National Association of Female Clerks (Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete, NOE, 1896–1919, Budapest), Schwimmer became intensively embedded in the Hungarian and international women’s movements. With her closest colleague and life-long friend Vilma Glücklich

(1872–1927), the first woman who graduated from a Hungarian university, they established the Feminists' Association (Feministák Egyesülete, FE, 1904–1942; 1946–1949, Budapest) that immediately became the auxiliary organization of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA, 1904–, Berlin; since 1926, the International Alliance of Women). While Glücklich remained the president of the FE until her death, Schwimmer was elected to be the leader of its Political Committee (Politikai Bizottság) until her emigration to Austria in 1920. She was also responsible for the international contacts of the organization, from which the FE profited even after she had left Hungary.

The FE developed to be the first progressive, left-wing, and suffragist feminist organization in Hungary, which campaigned not only for female suffrage but for women's rights in every aspect of social, economic, and political life. Its membership and board were recruited partly from the members of NOE. Based on the minutes of its board meetings, the number of FE members between 1906–1918 grew from 319 to 5312. This number probably did not exceed 500 during the interwar period and right after the Second World War. Furthermore, the association was banned in 1942 for four years. The majority of its members, who were not exclusively women, came from (upper-)middle-class families, sometimes with Jewish backgrounds. A few university students, aristocrats, as well as working-class women and agricultural laborers can be found on the membership lists, but their dominance must not be overestimated, especially after 1918.

As a result of her journalistic activity and lecture tours around Europe and the United States, Schwimmer managed to establish a wide network of contacts: she corresponded and worked together with widely known women's rights and peace activists, politicians, church leaders, intellectuals, and artists. These contacts mattered a lot when she was elected to be press secretary of the IWSA in 1913 (she filled the position between January and August 1914), during her peace negotiations in the years of the First World War, and during her short diplomatic service in Switzerland at the turn of 1918/1919.

A few months after the fall of the Socialist Federative Republic of Councils in Hungary, a short-lived communist government, on August 1, 1919, she decided to leave the country in January 1920. After having lived in Austria for more than a year, she managed to settle in the United States with the help of her colleague and later patron, Lola Maverick Lloyd (1875–1944). Her demand for US citizenship was rejected, which meant that she lived there as a stateless person until her death. She continued her journalistic activity and held several lectures on women's rights and world peace. She remained a widely published author: she wrote on marriage and world government, and also a children's book. In 1937, she received the World Peace Prize, and in 1948, the year of her death, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · articles in the journals *A Nő és a Társadalom* and *A Nő. Feminista Folyóirat*; ed., *Vélemények a nők választójogáról* [Opinions on Women's Suffrage] (Budapest: Feministák Egyesülete, 1906); ed., *A magyar nőmozgalom régi dokumentumai* [Documents of the History of the Hungarian Women's Movement], Az Igazság Könyvtára [The Library of Truth] (Zombor: Bittermann Nyomda, 1907); as Rosika Schwimmer, *Tisza Tales*, illustrated by Willy Pogány (New York: Doubleday-Doran, 1928) · MOST IMPORTANT TRANSLATION · Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *A nő gazdasági helyzete: tanulmány a férfi és nő közötti gazdasági viszonyról, mint a társadalmi evolúció tényezőjéről* [Women and Economics – A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution] (Budapest: Politzer, 1906).

Dóra Fedeles-Czeferner

CONTEXT

From its establishment in 1904 until 1918, the Feminists' Association (Feministák Egyesülete, FE) gained significant influence not only on the scene of the Hungarian women's movement, but also at the transnational level, where it developed along the lines of Western women's movements. Schwimmer also became member of the National Council (Nemzeti Tanács) of Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955), leader of the short-lived first Hungarian People's Republic between November 1918–March 1919. By the time the Hungarian Soviet Republic (or Republic of Councils, Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság) came to power on March 21, 1919, under the leadership of Béla Kun (1886–1938), Schwimmer had just returned to Hungary after an unsuccessful diplomatic mission abroad.

The relatively stable situation of the FE and the progressive feminist movement as a whole changed fundamentally after the proclamation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Neither this, nor the domestic politics of the Horthy Era did any favors for the feminists: it led to the emergence of a whole new women's movement through revisionist propaganda, the appreciation of religious, nationalist ideas, the glorification of women's (traditional) roles within the family, and the demonization of feminists. At the heart of this was the National Association of Hungarian Women (Magyar Asszonyok Nemzeti Szövetsége), founded by the writer and activist Cécile Tormay (1875–1937) in January 1919, which managed to reach about half a million women on the eve of the Second World War.

However, this did not automatically mean the end of the feminist movement. The NOE was utterly unable to adapt its objectives to the challenges of the new, transitional period. A certain part of the membership of the association, which was dissolved in the summer of 1919, joined the Communist Party, while others joined the FE. The FE, although unable to regain its former positions within the frames of the “new women's movement” of the Horthy Era, succeeded in redefining itself and its

goals in the early 1920s. So, while it operated within a narrower framework than before, it could function until its ban in 1942, and then between 1946 and 1949.

Within the board of the FE, generational gaps, as well as the immigration and deaths of its leaders, caused serious problems. Amidst the chaos of Béla Kun's Communist "red terror" and the ensuing anti-Semitic "white terror" at the beginning of the Horthy Era, Schwimmer managed to escape to Vienna in January 1920. While Schwimmer then lived in emigration until the end of her life, she was keenly interested in the Hungarian domestic political situation and the events of the Hungarian and European women's movements between the two world wars as well as during the 1940s, and she did not cut ties with her former colleagues in the Hungarian and international women's movements.

The two excerpts published below are the first two parts of an article series written by Schwimmer for the official organ of the FE, *A Nő. Feminista Folyóirat* (The Woman: Feminist Journal, 1914–1928) before she had left Hungary. It clarifies several aspects of the ambiguous relationship between the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the progressive feminist movement. Besides this, it can be interpreted as an indirect explanation of why Schwimmer was compelled to emigrate. Only the first part of the article series was actually published, in December 1919; the second part is preserved among Schwimmer's unpublished draft manuscripts and speeches, held in the Rosika Schwimmer Papers at the New York Public Library. The second part is handwritten, and at some points hard to read, as Schwimmer always used pencils and poor-quality paper to compose her articles. *A Nő* was not published between January and June 1920, when the second part of the article would have probably come out, and the July issue focused not on the Soviet Republic but on the Eighth Congress of the IWSA in Geneva.

This source text reflects on many of the issues that were discussed and debated between the FE and the socialist women in the Association of Hungarian Female Workers (Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület, MME, 1903–1915) and in the broader workers' movement. The MME was led by Mariska Gárdos (1885–1973), with whom Schwimmer had a long and complicated relationship, one marked by camaraderie as much as by conflict and competition. Although Schwimmer actively participated in the establishment of the MME, and Gárdos also followed the activity of the FE, conflicts were unavoidable between the two organizations. Not only their aims, but also the means to achieve their objectives were entirely different. This resulted in the fact that the two associations mutually insulted each other in every possible way, e.g., in their official organs or during their public agitations. While the liberal and radical feminism of the *fin-de-siècle* is often accused of having a sole focus on the vote on the one hand, and being oblivious to the social and economic issues of working class and minority women on the other hand, this source shows how misleading this image is. It also highlights some of the most contentious points between the feminists and the socialists of the time in Hungary. Most importantly, this source also reveals some

the of issues that were on the agenda of Schwimmer and the FE and which ranged from women's employment and women's equal wages, through education and the protection of mothers and children, to the promotion of women's organizing, the fight against prostitution and "sex-trafficking," as well as for sex education in schools.

In the text, Schwimmer discusses not only indirect insults, but also direct attacks which were committed by the Soviet Republic and its leaders against feminist ideology in general and particularly against the FE. Since Béla Kun considered feminism to be "the vestige of bourgeois ideology," the dictatorship mobilized all possible means against organized feminism. Aside from prohibiting their board meetings, which were held secretly, the regime also banned the publication of *A Nő* between March and August 1919.

Schwimmer emphasizes in the source text that the dictatorship had the features of a medieval state: it was anti-democratic, anti-pacifist, and anti-feminist. Women who did not join trade unions (like Schwimmer herself) lost their right to vote, while female suffrage had been introduced by the Károlyi government. Furthermore, the 133-day-long communist regime, in Schwimmer's view, created legislation that would have continued the exploitation of working women, against which the FE (together with other women's organizations and trade unions) had fought since 1904. Their most essential aims were equal wages for male and female laborers and the introduction of a complex system for healthcare and the support of working mothers, which were not at all realized. Towards the end of the text, Schwimmer touches upon the situation of married women and the problems related to the regulation of prostitution.

The second (handwritten) part of the article focuses almost exclusively on the negative discrimination of working women. Besides her arguments, Schwimmer lists exact statistical data which showed that, in spite of the principle of "equal pay for equal work" held by the communist regime, women earned considerably lower wages than men. This is the most detailed and most elaborate part of the article. It is followed by a short reflection on marriage, prostitution, and the centralized household (*Zentralhaushaltung*), and after this, the text suddenly ends, although Schwimmer indicates that she would continue the article. However, no evidence of this was found among the manuscripts and drafts in the Rosika Schwimmer Papers—yet.

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Dóra Fedeles-Czeferner

* * *

Rosika Schwimmer

The Grievances of Feminism under the Proletarian Dictatorship

The proletarian dictatorship falling upon us could not have affected anyone more than those who work on human progress. The dictatorship exterminated people, destroyed economic assets, and killed ideas. The extermination of people and the destruction of property hurt us all equally, causing us all terrible mental and physical suffering. Indignation, fear, care, and concern tore at the nerves of every sane and sensitive person. But we feminists and other workers of progress experienced a special kind of suffering: our ideas were also hurt, and our ideals trampled in the mud. "Feminism is the vestige of bourgeois ideology," declared the Hungarian pope of Bolshevism, Béla Kun, against our demand that women not be deprived of their independent bread-earning. And Péter Ágoston mocked the "sentimental pacifism of feminism" when he sought peace for Soviet Hungary in the fight against the Entente, which had brought the Romanians to our necks.

One of the most terrible facts of Bolshevism is that by dressing the crimes of the darkest eras in the slogans of the ideal aspirations of human happiness, it created the Middle Ages and blocked the way of progress with its crimes.

[...]

Gatherings and associations were not allowed, and our journal was banned. [...] Without the journal, and not trusting the post office, we could barely keep in touch with the members of the Alliance,¹ and many of them did not even know that we were able to protect our Alliance from the worst, its dissolution, and that we reorganized our office, of which Eugénia Meller, Mrs. Miskolczy, became the temporary, and Melanie Vámbéry the permanent secretary.

During this terrible period of inactivity, we listed the acts and provisions of the dictatorship that are particularly objectionable from a feminist point of view.

Our opposition was built on two powerful, unshakable principles: the moral law of respect for human life and belief in the power of democracy to bring happiness to people. The incitement that was roaring at us from the walls, Death threatening us a thousand times in shameful drawings and words, conscription into the Red Army, the spiritual and aesthetic horrors of death-inciting posters saying “For your wives and children!” kept feminism—which places the sanctity of human life above all else—away from Bolshevism with the dimensions of Chimborazo and the oceans. Those of us who confront the voluntary destruction of human life with the instinct of the primal mother, whether it is caused by the murderous and predatory gluttony of some individuals, or whether it is covered by the slogan of the interests of a class, nation, or sect: we were shaken to the core by seeing executions ordered in the name of justice, the place and time of which were sometimes even advertised in the newspapers as some kind of spectacle that would make up for the missing bread. The horrible rampages of the terrorist groups, the “public executions,” the armed attacks launched against neighboring states filled all feminists with rebellious indignation. If they had satisfied all feminist demands, wishes and longings, we still would have had to stand against them for one thing: their disregard for human life.

There is also an irreconcilable opposition between Bolshevism and feminism on the issue of democracy. The proletarian dictatorship is a double denial of democracy. It means the rule of a class. Both the rule of the most populous as well as that of the narrowest class over the rest is against the principle of democracy. And dictatorship is anti-democratic, whether it is practiced by a sex, a class, a denomination, a race, nationality, or nation. Feminism, fighting for equality of rights for the numerically larger half of humanity, opposes those who exclude their fellow human beings from enjoying full human rights through the rule, especially the dictatorship, of a class. By exercising its dictatorship with the means of terror and armed violence, Bolshevism made feminism its implacable enemy.

1 Editor's note: Feminists' Association (Feministák Egyesülete) was renamed around 1918 as the Inter-Party Alliance of Feminists (Feministák Pártközi Szövetsége), sometimes also referred to as the Inter-Party Committee of Feminists (Feministák Pártközi Bizottsága).

The innumerable objections raised against the dictatorship of the proletariat from a feminist point of view are woven into the fabric of these fundamental oppositions. Against the moral, legal, economic, and social demands of feminism, they naturally showed the lack of understanding typical of the medieval man.

At the outbreak of the dictatorship, there were some who believed that, for the sake of appearances, women's equality would at least be declared.

Women's right to vote was revoked, that is, taken away from those who—like the writer of these lines—were not members of a trade union. And some of the trade union members were terrorized on the election premises. Because we cannot just say that they were forced to “choose.” Who had a chance to “choose?” Has there been anyone who has been able to find out, on what basis and by whom, the list of “candidates” was compiled? We heard about a well-known woman writer who expected to get into a soviet and who was not nominated “because she dresses in too bourgeois a way.” Among the many hundreds of members of the intoxicatingly complicated main and sub-soviets, there were barely a dozen women. We were happy with this ratio, because this meant less direct responsibility fell on women, of whom proportionally fewer fell into the madness of the proletarian dictatorship anyway.

When we collected feminist documents and tried to obtain a list of the higher positions held by women, several of our colleagues could not obtain a statement even at the cost of long, persistent work. We established that one woman was head of department at the People's Committee for Internal Affairs, Public Education, and Public Provisioning. Finally, they inquired about the matter at the Communist Party's department for women:

“Which higher positions are filled by women?”

After much thought and discussion with several members of the secretariat:

“We really do not know. One thing is certain: there is no woman in a position that entitles her to use a car or automobile.”

This was, it seems, the surest measure of the importance of the service.

Part 2 [manuscript, in pencil]

In terms of the application and evaluation of women's work, we encounter classic anti-feminism. [...] Women were paid less than men for equal work. For example, the National Economic Council determined the daily wages of agricultural workers for the period from June 15 to September 15, 1919, as follows: in Budapest and in the municipalities integrated with Budapest, the daily wage (a) for men is 40 koronas, (b) for women is 30 koronas, (c) 25 koronas for boys and girls aged 16–18, (d) 16 koronas for boys and girls aged 14–16, (e) 12 koronas for boys and girls younger than 14 years. [Additional national and auxiliary wages at similar

rates.] [I]n industrial occupations where unequal wages for equal work could not be established due to the organized resistance of the workers, communist anti-feminism helped itself by placing women in a lower wage category. *Nőmunkás*² wrote the following in an article about this at the time: complaints are received every day that male comrades, workers, and officials [...] wherever possible, place women in a lower wage category than men doing the same work.

And this is where most mistakes happen. The comrades were able to get used to the fact that the proletariat was in power, they were able to get used to the fact that wages increased in all professions, they were able to get used to the fact that the revolutionary transformation that we have recently witnessed and participated in is manifested in all the structures of society, but they cannot get used to one thing: the fact that women are completely equal to men, with equal rights as workers of society. This idea is so radical that, with a few exceptions, it does not even enter the heads of most revolutionaries. In theory, sometimes; although our experience in this area is not too good either.

[...]

In this case, we cannot entrust the representation of our interests even to the most reliable male comrade, because no matter how much it is in the interest of the male worker that women's work should not be cheaper, male workers have never risen to the level of directly fighting for the theoretical recognition and practical realization of the full equal rights of women. They also made a difference in aid to the unemployed at the expense of women, probably thinking that under the dictatorship men and women lived equally on pearl barley and gourds, because nothing else was available, but an unemployed man needs cigarettes. The unemployed man therefore received more unemployment benefits.

Anti-feminism was also a pillar of the dictatorship in its marriage policy. The People's Commissar of Social Production Jenő Varga excluded married women from productive work. According to his anti-feminist argument: "the earnings of a married woman are an increase in income that must be classified as harmful from the point of view of communist ideology."

This ancient attitude also caused astonishment, for in Hungary the right of a married woman to be a breadwinner was recognized even by the state as an employer, at a time when there were still struggles about this problem on the part of feminists in culturally much more advanced states. So women employed at post or telegraph offices, or in other public services, as well as teachers, could always enjoy the human right to marriage. Turning against the law, Béla Kun claimed that "the lower work performance of the communist state imperatively demands the

2 Editor's note: *Nőmunkás* (The Woman Worker) was the journal of the socialist women's movement, first published in 1905. Mariska Gárdos and Anna Kéthly were among its editors.

willingness of married women to resign. And not only married women, but women in general cannot claim a share of production as long as there are still unemployed men in the country.” To the women protesting against this approach, Béla Kun curtly retorted: “All contrary feminist ideologies are bourgeois stunts.” Even the stiffest anti-feminism of the militarist Prussian *Junker* could not treat women in a more reactionary way than Béla Kun and his company.

Translated by Beáta Sándor

Mariska Gárdos

On Sexuality, Prostitution, and Feminism

AUTHOR Mariska Gárdos

TITLE Selected chapters on sexuality and prostitution from *Az igazság: az élet* [Justice Is Life]; chapter “A Feministák Egyesülete” [The Hungarian Feminists’ Association] from *A nő a történelem sodrában* [The Woman in the Backwash of History]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Az igazság: az élet* [Justice Is Life] (Kolozsvár: Újhelyi M. és Tsa. Nyomda, 1906), 43–46, 51–52. *A nő a történelem sodrában* [The Woman in the Backwash of History] (Budapest: Világosság Nyomda, 1939–1940); the excerpt translated here is from an edition published two years later: *A nő a történelem sodrában* [The Woman in the Backwash of History] (Budapest: Arany J. Nyomda, 1942), 137–39.

LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR¹

Mariska (Mária) Gárdos (née Mariska Grünfeld, 1885, Nagyberény–1973, Budapest) was born as the daughter of a poor (probably Jewish) worker, Mór Grünfeld, and Janka Müller, a mother who raised four children and buried another eight in their infant age. The family moved to Budapest when Mariska was a little girl, and through her father and older brother she was soon introduced to the workers’ movement. She joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt, MSzDP) at the age of 15, as part of the family tradition, and very soon started giving public speeches herself with great success.

Gárdos was one of the founders of the social democratic women’s movement. A founding member of the Union of Trade Employees (Kereskedelmi Alkalmazottak Szakegylete), she became increasingly aware that women deserved their own representation. Together with Rózsa Schwimmer, she founded the National Association of Woman Workers in Hungary (Magyarországi Munkásnők Országos Egyesülete, MME) in 1904. Gárdos also spearheaded women’s representation within the social democratic movement, and in 1909 became the secretary of the Bureau for Organizing Women (Országos Nőszervező Bizottság) of the MSzDP. She worked as an editor and journalist for the MSzDP’s journal, *Nőmunkás* (Woman Worker), which had a section specifically dedicated to women domestic servants. She was a prolific writer, who also published novels and short stories with the aim of offering aesthetically high-quality literature with the right kind of political message for working

¹ The biography and contextualization to the Mariska Gárdos source was part of the research funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement MSCA-IF-EF-ST 841489 hosted by the University of Cambridge.

class women. She dedicated herself to the education of workers and university students about Marxism, socialist thought, and the history of the workers' movement.

Gárdos taught herself to read French and German and became familiar not only with the thought of Bebel, Marx, and Engels, but also with literature from Balzac to Goethe. Her formal education was limited to secondary school in a *polgári iskola*² and a course which provided basic skills for office clerks.³ Later in her life, she worked for important newspapers such as *Népszava* (The Word of the People) and travelled widely. She spent several months in Paris in the early 1900s as a reporter for *Népszava* and her articles were also published in translation in Austria, Germany, France, and the United States.

The poet Endre Ady (1877–1919) and the social democrat Ervin Szabó (1877–1918) admired her rhetorical skills, her political enthusiasm, and how well-read she was. She corresponded with Clara Zetkin (1857–1933) and the leader of the Austrian women worker's movement, Adelheid Popp (1869–1939). Forced to emigrate after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (Republic of Councils, *Tanácsköztársaság*) on August 1, 1919, she spent time in Prague, where she was in close contact with the leader of the First Hungarian Republic, Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955) and his wife, Katinka Andrassy (1892–1985), “the red countess.”⁴ Most of her exiled years she spent in Vienna, where she worked with the *Világosság* (Brightness) circle, i.e., the group of intellectuals around the left-leaning social democratic journal with the same title. In her memoirs, she offers fascinating insights about “Red Vienna” of the time, whilst also being critical of Austrian social democrats.

Gárdos was married twice. Her first husband was journalist Ernő Bresztovszky, with whom she had a daughter, Márta, who died when she was 9 months old. Her second husband was a fellow journalist, György Pintér. Their daughter, Marianne Pintér, lived a long life and was even involved in cataloging her mother's estate at the Institute of Party History, today's Institute of Political History. The marriage was loving and, importantly for Gárdos, intellectually and politically inspiring. However, Pintér returned from the front after the First World War almost completely disabled, which made their life very difficult. Gárdos worked as a journalist and was unstoppable in the communist movement, giving talks, teaching, and organizing, which, as she confessed, often came at the expense of taking care of her family.

Gárdos had to overcome another terrible personal loss: her most beloved younger sister, Friderika, was executed under false accusations of spying whilst in exile in the

2 Secondary education for children aged 10 to 14 or 16 which existed between 1868 and 1948.

3 For Gárdos's biography, I rely on her two-volume memoir, *Szállj, gondolat* [Thoughts on Wings] (1961) and *Kukoricán térdelve* [Kneeling on Dry Corn] (1964); on Gárdos's personal fond at the Archives of the Institute of Political History (PIL 940. f.) and the Hungarian National Archives (MNL M-KS-288-40-531); and on secondary literature: Zimmermann, “Hogyan lettek feministák?”; Csunderlik, “Gárdos Mariska.”

4 About her, see Szapor, *Hungarian Women's Activism in the Wake of the First World War*.

Soviet Union.⁵ The sudden and violent loss of her sister shattered Gárdos's world, but the support she received from her comrades whilst in Vienna helped her remain faithful to her political ideals. Her sacrifices for the movement entailed incarceration. Upon returning to Hungary, both she and her daughter were imprisoned at different times for their political activities. Marianne, arrested and taken to a concentration camp at the end of the Second World War, returned severely ill, and her recovery took years. Gárdos continued her illegal work despite all repercussions. After the Second World War, she joined the Communist Party in Soviet-occupied Hungary and was among the founders of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Women (Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége, MNDSz), which later became the Hungarian member organization of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). She was founding editor of the women's magazine published by MNDSz, which first appeared as *Asszonyok* (Women) and later as *Nők Lapja* (Women's Journal).⁶

Due to the abrupt deterioration of her eyesight, Gárdos withdrew from active political work after 1949. Losing the ability to read and write was terrible for a woman for whom knowledge and education was a means of liberation. Yet, she kept on attending political rallies and gave speeches, and she remained an icon for the MNDSz. She lived through the Rákosi—i.e., the Stalinist—era, as well as a long period in the succeeding Kádár regime, which included the communist defeat of the 1956 revolution and the period of societal and political reconciliation following the amnesties in 1963. Her memoirs, which she wrote during this time, end in 1955. Gárdos was one of the very few interwar women's rights activists who remained a respected figure of the state socialist regime until its demise in 1989.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Az igazság: az élet* [Justice Is Life] (Kolozsvár: Újhelyi M. és Tsa. Nyomda, 1906); *Kilenc hónap* [Nine Months] (1919); two novels in the series *Nőmunkás Regények* [Nőmunkás Novels]: *A jó Lujza* [The Good Louise] (Budapest: Világosság Nyomda, 1936) and *Trier legszebb lánya: Marx Károlyné, Westphalen Jenny* [Trier's Most Beautiful Girl: Mrs. Karl Marx, Jenny Westphalen] (Budapest: Világosság Nyomda, 1936); *A nő a történelem sodrában* [The Woman in the Backwash of History] (Budapest: Világosság Nyomda, 1939–1940); *Szállj gondolat...* [Take Flight, My Thoughts...] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1961); *Kukoricán térdepelve* [Kneeling on Dry Corn] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1964).

Zsófia Lóránd

5 The basics of this complicated story are well covered in Petrák, *Emberi sorsok a XX. században*, 163–67.

6 Lóránd, "International Solidarity as the Cornerstone of the Hungarian Post-War Socialist Women's Rights Agenda in Women's Magazines."

CONTEXT

Gárdos's long life meant that she lived in a country that changed borders, names, and political regimes many times. Her politics tied her closely to the Social Democratic Party, as well as the communist movement, within which she attempted to negotiate women's rights throughout her career. She would never have called herself a feminist, but as the excerpts published here also show, she shared most of the ideas and principles of her feminist frenemies, which often put her at odds both with the MSzDP and the communists.

The MSzDP was a registered party as early as 1890, and in government multiple times after 1918, following trends of the region of Central Europe at the time. The Bolshevik Revolution put many leftists at the crossroads of radicalism and social democracy, and in the wake of the First World War, the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, the MSzDP's compromise with the Christian-National government of the Horthy regime (the Bethlen–Peyer Pact in 1921), and the repressive Horthy regime contributed to the radicalization of many activists.⁷ Gárdos remained faithful to the MSzDP and stayed a member even after the foundation of the Hungarian Party of Communists (Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, KMP) in 1918. At the same time, she wholeheartedly stood behind the creation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

The history of the women workers' movement is just as entangled with the history of the unions as Gárdos's own biography. The union movement and the official foundation of the Council of Unions (Szakszervezeti Tanács) in 1898, as well as the foundation of the National Association of Female Clerks (Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete, NOE, 1896–1919) were both crucial steps towards what later became the MME.⁸ With the foundation of the MSzDP, for the first time, a political party put women's rights on its agenda. Between 1898 and 1903, a whole range of informal workers' educational circles, "free associations," and informal discussion groups (called "table companies," *asztaltársaság*) were created. Gárdos was one of the founders of the informal predecessor of the MME, the *Budapesti Nők Asztaltársasága* (Table Company of Women in Budapest), where once a week they read and interpreted scholarly texts with a political agenda. For the foundation of the MME, the socialist women received support from NOE, especially Rózsa Schwimmer (1877–1948) and Janka Gergely (1881–1954).⁹

When talking about the time of the establishment of the MME, both Gárdos and Magda Aranyossi (1896–1977), one of the later founders of the MNDSz,¹⁰ empha-

7 Trencsényi et. al., "The Many Faces of Leftism," in Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, 105–141.

8 Regarding the Council, see Ágostonné, *A magyar szocialista nőmozgalom*, 5. For the NOE, see the Rózsa Schwimmer entry in this book.

9 Aranyossi, *Lázadó asszonyok*, 50.

10 During the state socialist period, Aranyossi was a historian and writer working at the Institute of Party History and on the history of women's movements.

sized camaraderie over political differences. They also noted that after the Hungarian Soviet Republic, several women from the traditionally suffragist-feminist NOE and FE joined the communist women.¹¹ There were just as many clashes between the leftist MME and the Women's Bureau of the MSzDP as there were with the feminists. The former were mostly due to the MSzDP's betrayal when it came to women's suffrage. The party did not even follow the directives of the Socialist International, which after 1912 more consistently stood for women's suffrage thanks to the work of Clara Zetkin and her circle.¹² After a trip to the United States in 1912, Gárdos found herself marginalized both in the editorial work of *Nőmunkás* and in the Bureau for Organizing Women. These had been taken over by members who thought women's organizations should follow the guidance of the male party leadership, even if that meant sidelining women's issues, such as the matter of suffrage. Gárdos and her comrades, however, insisted on a strong and independent women's movement.

The sources published in this volume represent two important aspects of Gárdos's life and work. One is her understanding of sexuality from the perspective of class struggle, the other is her strive to simultaneously honor and challenge feminism. The texts were published more than thirty years apart, but are connected by the entanglements of these two themes. Her two early texts in this volume about prostitution and sexuality were published in *Justice Is Life*, a book addressed to her beloved sister Friderika, 12 years her younger. The book is a modern, feminist *paraenesis*, likely incomprehensible for the then eleven-year-old girl but also intended for its imagined (or implied) readers: young women of the time in general.

Justice Is Life is a highly critical account of the lies told to young girls about their lives and society in general, concluding that lies become laws and rules which keep capitalism and patriarchy intact. These lies include instructions to conform to the gendered norms of the age, and sexual prudery. Gárdos, on the contrary, demands to break the silence about women's sexual desires and the lies that these desires are immoral. She urges Friderika, her implied reader—and through her figure, all her readers—to embrace and enjoy their sexuality. At the same time, she emphasizes that women's economic independence cannot be separated from their sexual freedom. For this, she uses the argument that private ownership is at the core of women's oppression, leading to the deprivation of women from ownership, thus turning them into objects of ownership. Gárdos also discusses issues such as violence against women, rape, and prostitution. She pays extensive attention to how class turns women with property against poor women. In all her accounts, rape and sexual harassment are perpetrated by the rich, and never by working class men. This is what distances

11 Aranyossi, *Lázadó asszonyok*; Gárdos, *Kukoricán térdepelve*, 53–54.

12 Evans, "Theory and Practice in German Social Democracy" and "German Social Democracy and Women's Suffrage"; Aranyossi, *Lázadó asszonyok*, 81.

her approach to sexuality from the women in the Hungarian Feminists' Association (Feministák Egyesülete, FE), who considered the strong division between women's sexuality and biological reproduction on the one hand, and women's sexuality and economic dependence on the other.¹³ They argued that without economic freedom (the right to work, property, and education), women's sexual freedom would not be possible, and they spoke about men in general, not just men with property.

The third text published here is the story of the FE from Gárdos' book on the history of the women workers' movement, *The Woman in the Backwash of History* (1941). "Due to the narrow framework and possibilities of their work," as Gárdos's diplomatic introduction put it, the previously published general histories of the workers' movement in Hungary by Mihály Révész (1884–1977) and Manó Buchinger (1875–1953) "could not focus on the women's movement."¹⁴ Gárdos rather took up the task herself, and explicitly followed the methodology of Bebel and Marx by examining human history from ancient times through the lens of economic development. She commemorated the women thinkers of the workers' movement, starting with Flora Tristan. She also meticulously added names from the international women workers' movement as well as from Hungary. This was not an easy task for one of the first historians of the Hungarian women workers' movement, as Gárdos herself was very much the agent who helped make the movement happen from the early 1900s on. Her effort is clear though: women need to enter the registry of history, their efforts need to be commemorated, be they Mary Wollstonecraft or all the signatories of what Gárdos describes as the first document of women workers' organizing in Hungary, a letter in 1878 to a lawyer asking to represent their demands at a country-wide workers' congress to be held in the capital.¹⁵ An interesting detail is that the introduction to the book's second edition (1942) was written by Anna Kéthly, whom Gárdos often accused of not being sufficiently dedicated to the workers' cause and choosing a bourgeois lifestyle. As Kéthly's biography in this volume shows, she was no less devoted to social democracy, women's rights, and social justice than Gárdos, including her fierce resistance to the anti-Jewish laws and deportation of Jews during the Second World War.

Gárdos incorporates the story of the FE into her narrative, acknowledging the ways in which what she calls "bourgeois" feminism supported the cause of women workers.

13 Zimmermann, "A magyar nőmozgalom és a 'szexuális kérdés' a XX. század elején," 49.

14 The books she refers to: Mihály Révész, *A mi történetünk. 1. A magyarországi munkásmozgalom fejlődése a szociáldemokrata párt megalakulásáig, 1890-ig* [Our Story 1: The Development of the Hungarian Workers' Movement until the Foundation of the Social Democratic Party] (Budapest: Esztergályos János, 1933); *A mi történetünk. 2. Huszonöt esztendő a szociáldemokrata párt megalakulásától a háború kitöréséig, 1890–1914* [Our Story 2: 25 Years, from the Foundation of the Social Democratic Party till the Break-out of the War, 1890–1914] (Budapest: Esztergályos János, 1936); Mihály Révész and Manó Buchinger, *Fél évszázad. A szociáldemokrata mozgalom ötven esztendeje Magyarországon, 1890 decemberétől napjainkig* [Half a Century: 50 Years from the History of the Social Democratic Movement in Hungary, from December 1890 till Today] (Budapest: MSZDP, 1941).

15 Gárdos, *A nő a történelem sodrában*, 97–98.

She also reiterates the main causes of the clash between socialist women and the FE, including their class alliances. Gárdos and her group felt that they could not trust the FE after its decision in 1912 to accept new legislation which expanded suffrage to women, but with limitations based on education and property criteria.¹⁶ Moreover, Gárdos extensively talks about the attacks of the feminist journal *A Nő* against the social democrats and the MME, whilst she remains silent about the fact that articles of a similar fashion appeared in *Nőmunkás*. Nevertheless, she strikes a fascinating balance between explaining her understanding of the FE–MME conflicts and commemorating the achievements of feminist women for women’s rights, such as Rózsa Schwimmer and Vilma Glücklich, or the last generation of the FE leadership.

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Zsófia Lóránd

* * *

Mariska Gárdos Justice Is Life

*On sexuality*¹⁷

Suicide, murder, and prostitution are siblings, and most often go hand in hand. They seldom appear separately. They are twins. I don't even have to say it, you'll easily guess: these twins come from the same womb—that of poverty. Children born out of wedlock come from poverty. This is fully understandable. Poor women and men lack the instruments that would be necessary to legitimize their relationship. (We know about the economic difficulties that impede those who want to get married in the required format.)

But let's leave it at that for the moment. We shall now talk about the women who give birth to a bastard as a result of being *seduced*. Seduction! Pious women, flirting daughters, and philistine fathers will be mad at me for talking about "such

17 Editor's note: These subtitles, "On sexuality" and "On prostitution" are editorial addenda. In the original book, Gárdos only used numbers for the subchapters from which these excerpts are drawn.

things" to you, a child. But let them be mad. The truth of my morality will not be damaged because of what they think and how they react, my strength will not wither. I think it is best if you know about everything. You should not be unprepared for any hidden attack. You should be armored, and insight and knowledge should be your weaponry. How many women could be saved from being seduced and falling for it if real consciousness could take root everywhere... But they still tell lies. Well, I'm not with them.

Seduction is a momentary reality of life. A piece of our wonderfully imperfect human life. A reassuring phenomenon promising so much, seething inducement, nursing us with sweet intoxication. It has a color and a smell. And everyone craves it, and everyone believes they can resist it. And, finally, everyone yields to it. I dare say, loudly and openly, that everyone can be seduced. Young girls living with their family, mothers who have or do not have children, honorable women—everyone. Only opportunity is needed—just as it is with theft: opportunity makes a thief.

Ladies and merry girls who clamp their dresses in the street, so that no turds or filthy people might touch or get too close to them, who loudly brag about their virtues and morality, should stop being so hypocritical. Firstly, because if they state the truth, this is not their merit. It is only due to their class privilege, for which they did not have to strive and sweat—that is, they got it illegitimately. They should descend to the constant night of factories, printing-houses, and mines, flounder through the whirls of poverty and starvation like the girls and women of the poor, and if they get out clean and victorious from the mud of life, the real hell, then hats off to them! But when they are always well-fed, relaxed, shining, and satisfied, they should not make a show of phony crystals. And most of all, they should not be lying. Their virtue and purity are lies, vailing truth. Oh, if only once, for just twenty-four hours, we could have the eyes of a witch, and have the power to see through windows and damask curtains! To inspect the acts of "blushing, innocent" girls, as well as stern and religious women, propagators and respected presidents of committees defending morals! If we could snatch off the rags of lies! What a Babelian disarray we would have! How the vision of society would change! We would then have the scary truth to use as a knout, to beat naked morals—their morals—until they bleed. What a sad revenge this would be.

But, my little sister, let us stay as we are now, and let us talk silently about seduction, that is, about one of its everyday phenomena. The seduction of girls by men most often happens between employers and workers, that is, between those who have bread and those who do not. You know, my little sister, I am sure you know that women work just as well as men. I will not talk now about its correctness and necessity, as that is a different subject matter. The fact is that women and girls without bread work together with their male mates to earn their everyday black bread. Those who own their bread, the employers, demand their workforce from male

workers—but also something else from women workers: their love, or as they say, their womanly virtue. And they do also seduce whomever they like from their female workers. And here comes the weight of the circumstances. Women workers almost always have to yield their bodies to their employers, beside their labor, otherwise they lose the small amount of bread they earn. Only those can declaim about resistance, protecting one's virtue, when an employer says a woman worker can choose between giving in or quitting, only those who have never been workers, and hungry, those who have never felt the tormenting fear of uncertainty, being unemployed.

Hunger hurts, my little sister. And if someone has little siblings like you waiting for her at home, or perhaps a sick mother, or a father incapable of working, she cannot defer the answer for long. She has to choose bread, even at the cost of giving away her body. Those who do this, those who make the biggest sacrifice for the ones they love, are not “dishonorable,” but much more honorable than the dainty young ladies who simply enjoy the pleasant life they usurp from someone else, or the overzealous virtuous women whose husband might be one of the seducers.

Of course, the employer boots out the seduced girl, be it a worker or a housemaid, etc., as soon as they lose interest in them or they get pregnant, no matter what they had promised earlier. These are the virtues of bread owners, lawmakers, and moralists.

On prostitution

[...] Daytime is completely different from nighttime. Daytime belongs to the land of fagging, the land of labor, the grim fight for food, inhabited by the crowing and squawks of hungry shadows with clashing jaws, where people, even siblings, stomp on one another. The world of the night is different. As lamps are switched on, new, peculiar blood surges begin to throb in the veins of life. They are hot and beautiful. They inhabit all spaces. The soil of the night begins to tremble from secrets and surmises, boulevards are crowded by colors, variegation, and smells, human materials tremble from silly, hot, and springlike raptures; desires come up, sensations are thirstier, and sins subside. But this is all exuberant and sensual decor. The real darkness and sin of the night, the thousand times more corrosive spot than the fight for food during the daytime, only becomes visible when the pale, anemic inhabitants of the night come out—when flowers are trampled on, when lilies die, when morals are buried.

The inhabitants of the night, the dead of the daytime: the prostitutes. “Prostitutes are women who feed upon selling their body.” However, people's opinions diverge at this point. Most people say that only those are prostitutes who sell themselves to different people each day, while a few of us emphasize that all women are prostitutes who sell themselves, be it for one hour or a lifetime—selling

and buying can happen both without any witness or with marriage lines and official sigils proving it.

Little sister, most marriages today are not based on love or on the sacred aim of reproduction, but on rigid business-like interests, both regarded and treated as such. Parents raise their daughters to force them to marry the first man. No one cares that they do not like one another, and do not feel an inclination towards each other; what counts is having a good “parthie” [sic]. The girls who marry in order to have someone pay for their living, care for them, pay their dressmakers’ bills—sell their bodies just as the girls in the streets do. The mothers who pander such marriages must be regarded as bawds, just like the women whose actions and practices are punished by law.

The woman who is refused to use her labor and who sells her body in order to alleviate the extreme misery of her loved ones is more decent than the ones who do the same for convenience, for always having soft and white bread, out of lacking any ambition, and under the cover of “morality” and legality. Mating without love is prostitution.

The Hungarian Feminists’ Association

The Association was founded in 1904 by Vilma Glücklich and Rózsa Schwimmer. The thought of the need for another women’s organization had emerged in the National Association of Female Clerks: an organization that intended to represent not only the economic but the social and political interests of women. Soon the “Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage” (Férfiliga a nők választójoga érdekében) was founded, too, which supported mainly political advocacy. One of the principles of the Feminists’ Association was that it would fight for its aims together with men, and thus both its management and different specialized committees included male experts. The Association fought against prostitution, for the interests of women who gave birth, as well as children born out of wedlock, for co-education, for women’s freedom to study and work, and for the principle of equal work for equal pay. The feminists propagated their ideas in lectures and assemblies; through their connections, they managed to invite many lecturers from abroad, too. They got better and better press coverage: feminist articles and news items were published in major newspapers, and they had their own magazine, too, edited by Rózsa Schwimmer. It was first called *Woman and Society* (*A Nő és a Társadalom*), and later became *Woman* (*A Nő*).

Even though the Association suffered seemingly irreplaceable losses with Vilma Glücklich’s death and Rózsa Schwimmer’s emigration, as well as the death and emigration of other valuable members, its work continued after the World

War and the revolutions, too. The organization delegated representatives to congresses organized abroad, and actively participated in the work of the Women's International League for Peace and the Open Door International, representing Hungary in these international organizations. After the war, the Association took part in the organization of a "Summer School" organized by the Women's International League for Peace in Lepence, Hungary. The present conditions have forced the Association into complete inactivity.¹⁸

The Feminists' Association planned to celebrate the 150-year anniversary of the Hungarian women's movement (calculated from 1790, when the "Humble request of Hungarian noble mothers" to the National Assembly in Bratislava was written) between October 1939 and July 1940, involving the whole of Hungarian women's society.

The main purpose of the Feminists' Association was to guarantee women's suffrage. Its first executive was Vilma Glücklich, while the Suffrage Committee was headed by Rózsa Schwimmer. After Vilma Glücklich's death, a committee of three managed the organization: Mrs. Oszkár Szirmay, Mrs. Meller née Eugénia Miskolczy, and Melanie Vámbéry.¹⁹

The Feminists' Association criticized the social democratic women's movement multiple times for regarding class relations as more important than sex relations. The position of organized women workers on suffrage was always a clearly and fully socialist position: they demanded universal suffrage without sex difference, but were not willing to accept the dispossession of workers for ladies' suffrage. Because the starting point of the question was this: feminists did not care about class struggle, they were only fighting for the liberation of their sex, while for the social democratic women workers it was and remains indifferent whether the suffrage based on census (that is, assets, or level of education) was extended to upper class women or not. This is the reason behind and the explanation of frictions. The feminists, when agitating, wanted to make women workers believe that they were fighting for every woman's suffrage without class difference; however, their negotiations with and petitions to bourgeois parties and the government proved that they would have been content with a suffrage based on census—that is, bourgeois women's right to vote.

18 Editor's note: The Horthy regime severely limited possibilities for civil organization and banned the FE in 1942.

19 Editor's note: Mrs. Oszkár Szirmay (Szirmay Oszkárné) (1886–1959), Mrs. Meller (Mellerné) Eugénia Miskolczy (1862–1945?), and Melanie Vámbéry (1880?–1944). Eugénia Miskolczy was arrested by the Arrow Cross in 1944 and there is very little information about her destiny. See Andrea Pető, "Egy elmeséltetlen történet a Feministák Egyesületéről" [An Untold Story about the Feminists' Association], in *Feminista almanach*, ed. Mónika Török (Budapest: MINők Egyesülete and Nőtárs Alapítvány, 2005), 210–220. Most likely she was murdered in prison. Melanie Vámbéry was taken to and killed in Auschwitz.

They also communicated about these political conflicts in the feminist magazine *Woman and Society*, as well as the general assemblies of the Feminists' Association. For example, as they wrote in 1909, "Alajos Kovács, Mariska Gárdos, dr. Ármin Ladányi, and Károly Weisz, members of the Social Democratic Party, raged against the work of the feminists in the most relentless way..." And in 1910: "At the (feminist) assembly held in January to argue for the suffrage of women workers, Aladár Reich and Mariska Gárdos, members of the Social Democratic Party, declared that they placed economic organization before suffrage..." What they really meant was that bourgeois women should not worry about the suffrage of women workers. Indeed, there were active feminists who took part in exploiting women workers and employees in their (or their husbands') factories, offices, or shops—the same women employees and workers they tried to defend from political oppression at their assemblies... Social democratic women always recognized that there were many valuable women workers taking part in the Hungarian feminist movement, too, who certainly thought seriously about women's equality both in economic and political terms. However, the Feminists' Association did not only consist of such women on the one hand; on the other hand, these working and thinking women should have definitely known that there's no interclass bargain unless at the expense of the interests of workers, and thus all efforts to reach an equilibrium could not be but a dog's breakfast. Thus, they should have operated not in the Feminists' Association but in the Social Democratic Party.

This is how the theoretical dispute between the feminists and social democratic women evolved, and further developments have verified that the latter group was right. We can impartially state that both the National Association of Female Clerks and the Feminists' Association did valuable and courageous work, playing a crucial role in their own fields to make public opinion more progressive. They were real pioneers! Their only fault or delusion was that they believed that it was possible to create a political agreement between women of different classes without economic foundations. This mistaken take-off could have led to theoretical confusion among women workers, and it was the discernment and vigilance of the leaders of the social democratic women's movement that prevented this.

Translated by Beáta Sándor

Shaqe Marie Çoba

On Feminism

AUTHOR Shaqe Marie Çoba

TITLE “Feminizmi” [On Feminism]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Grueja Shqyptare* [The Albanian Woman], no. 7 (May 7, 1921): 49–51.

LANGUAGE Albanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The article “On Feminism” was submitted anonymously. The signature at the end of the article, “*Nji grue Shkodrane*,” is translatable as “a woman from Shkodra.” It is unclear whether the signature was meant to be a stand-in for an imagined collective (Albanian) womanhood or whether the anonymous author sought to protect their own identity. While both are possible, it is more likely that the authorship should be broadly understood as a woman’s voice, meant to connect to an imagined, larger community of Albanian women. Whatever the author’s reason to stay anonymous was, one cannot ultimately underestimate its intent to reach a broader audience. What better way to achieve this than in the voice of one woman speaking to all of her kind? Beyond these deliberate stylistic choices, however, the text is connected to a publication run by a known woman editor, and the text itself references the editor’s nephew, the writer Filip Shiroka (1859–1935). Given these strong clues, and the already known leading role that she played in the local women’s movement, it is reasonable to attribute this foundational feminist text to the editor, **Shaqe Marie Çoba** (née Shiroka; 1875, Shkodra–1954, Shkodra).

The editor of *Grueja Shqyptare* (The Albanian Woman), was born in the present-day northern Albanian city of Shkodra, then part of the Ottoman Empire. Sources about her early life are scant. But what is known is that she was born into one well-known family of writers, the Shirokas, and that she married into another well-known family, the Çobas. Shaqe studied German, Italian, and Serbo-Croatian in a convent in Zagreb and afterward undertook university studies in Venice. While secondary sources do not tell us much about what she studied in Venice, the experiences of higher education coupled with life abroad undoubtedly made her much more accomplished than her average women peers. After she completed her studies, Shaqe returned to Shkodra and married into the wealthy Çoba family. She also devoted much of her life to women’s activism as the young Albanian nation took off.

The Çobas were a large and well-known family of merchants, Catholic clerics, and lawyers. Çoba’s husband, Ndoc, whom she met and courted during her time in Venice, was also active in Shkodra’s political life. Thus, Shaqe’s elite background, education,

and comfortable social standing facilitated her contacts with the city's elites. This understandably also made it easier for her to launch a career in activism, just as other Albanian women were doing in other parts of the country that declared independence in 1912. During the later phases of the First World War, she and a number of (presumably) upper-class women activists organized the women's society *Grueja Shqyptare* (Albanian Woman), raising funds for the Albanian National Army and helping in the war relief effort.

After the war, *Grueja Shqyptare* began to publish a magazine with the same title with the support of the Shkodran Franciscan press, which printed it free of charge for some time. Sources mention that the Catholic Çoba worked alongside a cohort of multi-faith colleagues including Paulina Leka, Habibe Bekteshi, and Albina Ashiku. While they and a number of likely unnamed and yet-unidentified others contributed to the society, Çoba is the only author whose name appears in the magazine. She and her family continued to be visible in Shkodra's political and intellectual life throughout the 1920s and 1930s, a time when associational life in Albania came under increasing forms of official scrutiny and state control.

While women like Çoba actively campaigned for nationalized education and women's participation in public (that is, national) life, they could not have anticipated the persecution they would endure ahead. The Albanian government censured activism during the interwar period, conditioning what public actors—men and women—could say, gradually bringing the nascent educational and women's movements under state oversight. This aspect of control over speech and activism intensified tremendously during the communist regime. For the Çoba family, communist rule, unfortunately, meant silence, persecution, and imprisonment. Shaqe Çoba was, perhaps, spared the worst of what would come for her family, when she passed away in 1954 of natural causes.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · Editor of *Grueja Shqyptare* (1920–1921).

Nevila Pabumi

CONTEXT

The article "On Feminism" appeared in the seventh issue of *Grueja Shqyptare*, a magazine for Albanian women which circulated for ten months between November 1920 and July 1921 in the northern city of Shkodra. *Grueja Shqyptare* was the very first women's magazine in postwar Albania, and the first of several similarly titled publications in three of the country's major cities: Tirana, Korça, and Vlora. Barely out of the ravages of the First World War, Albania was a young nation trying to consolidate the institutions and the resources necessary to undertake the daunting task of state-building.

Seemingly insurmountable challenges notwithstanding, the necessary enthusiasm and patriotism for nation- and state-building were in plentitude from both men and women. *Grueja Shqyptare* was an impressive example of the push that women were giving to the intertwined processes of nation- and state-building. For a sense of how groundbreaking this feat was, it is noteworthy to mention here that the first Albanian-language newspaper in independent Albania, *Taraboshi*, was printed in Shkodra a mere ten years earlier, just a few months into the outbreak of the First Balkan War.

“On Feminism” is a powerful window into the dilemmas of building a local women’s movement in Albania during the interwar period. It was a direct response to the first known use of the term “feminism” in the interwar Albanian press, in the newspaper *Agimi* (The Dawn) in 1920.¹ In response to earlier versions of this research, senior scholars of women’s studies conveyed genuine surprise that the term “feminism” was deployed so early on in Albania. The subtext of their collective surprise was a questioning of what the relatively unknown entity of “Albania” and “Albanian-ness” was in this period. Could there have been space for avant-garde ideas in this small and poor country on the edge of Europe? These kinds of genuine reactions remain stubbornly persistent both in and outside of Albanian academia.² Albanian historian Fatmira Musaj, who has researched women’s history in the early twentieth century, conveyed that she had felt a similar surprise at the discovery of women’s magazines and of a larger cultural movement for women by women, when for so long her own and earlier generations of colleagues maintained that Albanian society during the interwar period was simply “waking up from centuries-old slumber” imposed upon them by the so-called “Ottoman yoke.” And yet, the article “On Feminism” below, this short, two-page-long text on this supposedly foreign topic testifies to the contrary: Albania was no less connected to the outside world in terms of women’s emergence in the public sphere than anywhere else at the time. Albanian women writers, whether they openly identified with feminism or not, were seeking to define a broad social movement for women on their own terms by engaging with comparisons from the world around them.

The opening lines of “On Feminism” make this point clear: feminism was being debated in the Albanian press. The article also acknowledged that the topic was considered “delicate.” Despite continued publicity and campaigning, it was difficult for women to advance their causes, and those were many. British and American women had

1 See in Pahami, “Of Women, Faith and Nation,” 279.

2 To date, no study in English or Albanian has looked into the continuities between the various stages of the Albanian women’s movements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rather, women’s studies tend to be sectioned off in three or four distinct phases: interwar, state socialism, and the never-ending postsocialist “transition.” Emira Danaj and Klejd Këllici’s 2021 English-language analysis of the socialist-era magazine *Shqiptarja e re* (The New Albanian Woman) and its role in the emancipatory discourse of the period drew no connection to the similarly titled *Shqiptarja* magazines of the interwar period. See Danaj and Këllici, “The Magazine ‘Shqiptarja e re’ as a Tool of Women’s Emancipation in Communist Albania.”

just won the right to vote at the end of the First World War, after more than half a century of struggle. In many other parts of the world, including much of Western Europe, suffrage would only become possible after the Second World War. Women peace activists from Albania continuously petitioned the victorious Allies to be included in the peace settlement in Paris, only to receive symbolic gestures and appeasement.

What is absent in Çoba's article is an explicit discussion of the ways in which feminism was being debated in the press. There are strong clues, however, as to what they were. To begin, Çoba juxtaposes her vision of feminism with what she describes as the "excessive" pursuit of freedoms from women's groups in the "most advanced societies of the world," presumably the West. These "excessive" freedoms were expressed in apparel and in behavior. It is not unreasonable to imagine that the take of Albanian newspapers on "feminism" was connected to new trends in women's clothing (read: lower hemlines), their pursuit of careers outside the home (which would also take root in interwar Albania), and also to increased socializing with men (including dancing, which would become politicized in Albania). For the Albanian context, in this very first defense of feminism, Çoba recommended a different way of understanding it. In her view as an Albanian woman, women had the natural and "God-given" right to be the equals of men, but that right had to be balanced out with traditional responsibilities towards the family, and was clearly also conditioned by women's reproductive capacities.

Çoba's argument was entirely in step with the mainstream arguments of her Albanian peers from other publications, as well as with activists who argued for women's place within the national movement. The emphasis on cultivating education, ties to family, and achieving an enlightened motherhood, in particular, was neither new nor unique to Albania. The stipulated link between motherhood and citizenship should not be dismissed as a simple nod to conservatism. The Catholic Çoba refers to God repeatedly, stipulating that feminism is God-given and that women were naturally, therefore, equal to men. In so doing, Çoba was probably normalizing an otherwise controversial term to be better understood in a predominantly conservative society.

Albanian nationalism was then and continues to be overtly secular today; however, it would take the entirety of the interwar period for reforms in family law to begin the so-called process of "modernizing" Albanian society. The choice to link feminism to motherhood, to nature, God, family, and domesticity, all wrapped up in the pursuit of intellectual betterment, as Çoba does in this article, was quite strategic and visionary. Over the next two decades, women's magazines continued to guide women on appropriate dress, behavior, and education in and outside of the home. Women authors often used pseudonyms. Their writing was simple and direct: arguing that education made women better prepared to be wives and mothers, pillars of the nation. While there were a variety of views on display, the underlying message tended to be that in order to achieve social progress women would need to be

pragmatic and cautious. Women writers approached the topic of suffrage and working outside of the home. However, whichever women's magazine one picked (out of the four in circulation) there was no escaping the emphasis on the need to establish primary education. And, indeed, thanks to this kind of advocacy, the number of elementary schools rose significantly in the 1920s and 1930s. Basic literacy rates doubled in the interwar period, and the number of women entering professions grew steadily and consistently if not slowly. In light of these developments, this foundational text on feminism set the tone for what women's activism could be in Albania in the interwar period. Emancipation and liberation for women could come through intellectual endeavors in service of the family and society. Otherwise, there could be no pathway forward for a newly independent nation.

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Nevila Pahumi

* * *

Shaqe Marie Çoba On Feminism

For several days now we are reading through Albanian newspapers' elaborate writings on feminism. This being an open and delicate subject, our writers have entered into polemics about the subject.

Until now, we women have stayed outside of these debates, dominated by men, and have been voiceless in the hope that, in their meanderings, men, if nothing else, will somehow accept our rights; sadly, we now realize that the majority of men either do not accept our reality or refuse to understand these rights which stem from nature and the laws of God.

As we know, in Albania women have generally been kept as the slaves of their husbands and for this reason men have the right to entirely neglect them—in the face of humanity—as in the freedom of social life. Can we hope that that auspicious day will come when Albanian women will be forever released from the binds of slavery in which they find themselves and be awarded the respect and rights with which we see the women of the civilized world being honored?

After God created the world, it created Adam and Eve, and the latter it created not to be under men's slavery, as it may be assumed by a large number of men, but to build her own destiny and be a friend and supporter of the husband: it therefore leads to the conclusion that, in wanting to deprive women of their rights, men do nothing else but contradict the will of God in whose eyes men and women are equal.

In truth, women in and of themselves hold an important and powerful role in society. Women are the fortitude, center, and soul of humanity, because through them comes the improvement and elevation of family, the multiplication and growth of youth, the growth of kind sensibilities, of generous sensibilities. Suffice it to say that the wise Franklin³ wrote proverbs with which he has sought to suggest that men, without the comradery of women, cannot exist, cannot progress, and cannot work towards the improvement of humanity.

However we think and whatever we say, woman, a creature [whom] God decorated with mind and sense, has the right to be free within the overall freedom of humanity. That is why Albanian women, in seeking and demanding their rights, will not always put morality behind their backs but will protect it as a precious jewel by always remembering the sweet words of the noted patriot Filip Shiroka: "Albania has men who don't know what fear is and women who don't know what stealth is."

If the Albanian woman manages to understand once and for all the chains that enslave her, and starts to pursue her liberation without shame—that liberty which is in line with the purest morality—she will in a short time and without a doubt reach the same road of civilized women in all places of the civilized world.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing that in some of the most civilized parts of the world not a small group of women are pursuing an open struggle for freedom that frequently contradicts their rights and dignity, the honor of their families, the continuity of social life, a pursuit of freedom that should not be followed by Albanian women, because that kind of freedom cannot contribute to the power of elation and the improvement of the character of Albanian society. On the contrary, it could have a negative impact by damaging and shamelessly destroying [that society].

From the pursuit of a freedom which goes beyond the limits of human wisdom, we cannot expect a genuine civilization, an excellent civilization, and we women have discussed these issues among ourselves, about the mistaken assumptions of

3 Editor's note: The author probably refers to American intellectual Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790).

some who think that civilization is to be experienced by the dressing and dancing and entertaining of the kind we witness today; no, no, true civilization comes only from meaningful intellectual labor.

When mothers pursue a damaging freedom outside the wisdom and humanity of womanhood, naturally their daughters will be pushed further into the pursuit of those freedoms, because the youth fooled by the wrong pursuits of civilization are always ready to abandon the most backward of traditions so that they can elevate the nation above its peers. Our reasoning comes from that old saying, familiar throughout this land: “like mother, like daughter.”

Therefore, from today onward through this periodical, Albanian womankind approaches their fellow Albanian men with the will to seek and achieve freedom, the respect and worth of women in its noble roots. Wisdom and nobility are the character traits that have sustained our nation unbroken. They are the fundamental tools for enabling and improving that type of civilization in which the stars above will shine, with true knowledge, and with knowledge, the unconditional honor of families, upon which human society is built.

A woman from Shkodra

Translated by Piro Rexhepi

Johanna Päts

Why Must Women Elect Women to Parliament?

AUTHOR Johanna Päts

TITLE “Miks naised peavad riigikokku valima naisi?” [Why Must Women Elect Women to Parliament?]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Naiste Hää* [Women’s Voice], no. 4 (1932): 39–42.

LANGUAGE Estonian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Johanna Päts (1890, Tallinn–1977, Toronto) was born as Johanna Veiler into a family of former servants on a manor estate, who had recently moved to Tallinn, a provincial capital in Tsarist Russia. Her father, a former gardener, and her mother, a peasant girl talented in mathematics and music, started a successful grocery store business and soon became part of the emerging urban Estonian middle class in the country, which had for centuries been ruled by Baltic German, Swedish, and Russian noble families. Johanna had three siblings and her parents were determined that they all needed to be well-educated.¹

After primary school, Johanna was admitted to the only local Russian National Gymnasium for Girls, which granted its graduates a teaching diploma as well as the right to continue their studies in higher education, at least in the few institutions that accepted female students. This was also when the young student became interested in politics. Her parents read and discussed some of the most progressive newspapers at the time, and became advocates for the use of the Estonian language in the Russian-speaking public sphere. Johanna was one of the very few Estonian students at the gymnasium, but they were prohibited from speaking their native tongue at school. Most importantly, the failed 1905 Revolution prepared the ground for radical social reforms, such as the land reform of 1919—which expropriated land from the mostly Baltic German landowning elite and distributed it to small farmers—and the introduction of universal suffrage in 1917. Johanna and her parents personally knew several people who had participated in the tragic and cruelly suppressed strikes and demonstrations. One demonstration ended in mass shootings, random state-organized raids, beatings, killings, and arrests. Many intellectuals either fled abroad or went into hiding. The social question became intermingled with resentment over ethnic grievances and ambitions.

¹ The only two available sources for Johanna Päts’s biography are her own memoirs, published in 2013, and the study by Helmi Mäelo of influential women in Estonia: Mäelo, *Eesti naine läbi aegade*.

In 1910, Johanna married Voldemar Päts, a younger brother of Konstantin Päts, one of the most prominent figures in the future Estonian independence movement and a national conservative statesman. Konstantin Päts was Prime Minister of the new Estonian Republic several times in the 1920s; during his term as State Elder in the 1930s, Päts turned the young democracy into an authoritarian regime and became President in 1937. The two brothers both participated in the revolutionary events of 1905 and remained close thereafter. Hence Johanna Päts also lived and acted in the very center of Estonian politics and social reforms, influenced at the same time by Estonian national conservatism and progressivist ideas about women's rights and their role in a changing society.

Russian universities were closed for women, so in 1910 Johanna Päts enrolled in higher education courses in mathematics in St. Petersburg, recognized only as a sort of second-rate and vocational education. Yet she had to quit soon after due to family care obligations. She became a mathematics teacher at a prestigious girls' school in Tallinn, and became active in local literary clubs and charity work.

In 1917, Päts became the founding member and chairwoman of the Tallinn Council of Women, and chaired the First Women's Congress organized soon thereafter. She also became active in party politics as an elected member of the Tallinn City Council, with expertise in education and social work. In 1919, she joined the Labor Party, and advised the government on budget, healthcare, and alcohol policies. In the 1920s, Päts became one of the most prominent spokeswomen for women's rights in Estonia. In addition to authoring press columns and speeches on the topic, she chaired all the Congresses of the Association of Councils of Women, participated in international congresses, and founded several women's educational institutions. She refrained from open political confrontation with her brother-in-law, the head of state Konstantin Päts, although she noted in her memoirs that there was occasional disagreement between them.

During the first Soviet invasion in 1940, the president and his family were arrested and deported to Siberian prison camps, where most of them were either shot or perished without a trace. Johanna Päts and her immediate family hid at first, and then managed to flee Estonia in 1944. They stayed in refugee camps in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, then went on to Sweden, and finally reached Canada in 1951. The family settled there, and Päts soon founded the Baltic Women's Council in Canada just a year afterward, in 1952. She actively continued to seek political support for the recognition of the *de jure* independence for the Baltic States in her new homeland.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • "Naisorganisatsioonide lähemad ülesanded" [The Tasks of Women's Organizations in the Near Future], in *Eesti Naisorganisatsioonide Liidu aastaraamat: ülevaade E. N. Liidu esimesest tegevusjärgust November 1921 – märts 1923* [Yearbook of the Union of Estonian Women's Organizations: An Overview of the First Stage of the Union's Activities, November 1921–March 1923]

(Tallinn: Eesti Naisorganisatsioonide Liit, 1924), 84–93; “Perekonnaõigus ei vasta põhiseadusele” [Family Law Contradicts the Constitution], *Vaba Maa* [Free Earth], May 19, 1932; *Kodu südames: mälestusi, kirju, dokumente* [My Home in My Heart: Memories, Letters, Documents], edited by Anne Velliste (Tallinn: Aade, 2013).

Liisi Keedus

CONTEXT

Estonia, a governorate under Tsarist Russia since 1721, became an independent democratic republic in 1918. During its first tumultuous years, the Tsarist legal framework remained in place. However, women had gained the right to vote already in 1917, during the Russian Revolution, when they could vote and run in local elections. In the new republic, women’s equal right to vote was never a controversial issue but taken for granted. The new Estonian Constitution of 1920 proclaimed gender equality, and gender discrimination became illegal, together with religion-, class-, and ethnicity-based discrimination. Yet these new constitutional rights were in striking conflict with the country’s family law, adopted in 1865 and still in force, which severely limited the legal status of women. According to the Baltic German family law, all women who married became the legal and financial dependents of their spouses. Reforming the family law became one of the major aims of the Estonian women’s councils and women politicians and lawyers in the interwar period, but it still remained in force until the end of the first independent republic in 1939.² Johanna Päts’s article also highlighted this as a major legal hindrance to the improvement of the legal and social status of women.

Among the founders of the new republic there were many women, and women remained politically active throughout its first years. Still, the first two parliaments included only four women representatives, including Johanna Päts; the third and fourth parliaments, one woman; and in the last parliament, before the authoritarian turn, only two members were women. More women participated in local councils and administration, were involved in social, health, and education policies, and dealt with matters related to the rights and welfare of women. While there were few legal or formal obstacles to the more prominent presence of women in the public sphere, public opinion was anything but favorable in general, with the press, for example, either ignoring attempts at legal and social reforms, or predominantly voicing conservative views regarding changes in family life, women in public life, their professional positions, and their access to higher education. Increasing women’s presence in politics and professional life was also not on the agenda of leading politicians or other public

2 There are only a few studies of women’s rights and women’s legal status in interwar Estonia, most notably written by Hesi Siimets-Gross, Marele Leppik, and Merike Ristikivi.

figures.³ It is in this context that Johanna Päts's call not only for women's rights but also for their representation in the highest public and legal decision-making bodies gained particular urgency.

On the one hand, then, momentous social changes brought about by the end of the First World War and the building of a new democratic state, as well as increasing urbanization and professionalization, supported emancipation efforts. Women not only gained the right to vote in this period, but more than half of them (52%) worked outside the home already in the early 1920s.⁴ On the other hand, more conservative family policies, values, and attitudes still posed considerable difficulties for all women who sought prominence in public, professional, and academic life—and even created obstacles to those who simply wanted to gain financial or legal independence, for example in the case of divorce. In this context, much of the organized action which sought to empower women and improve their social status was channeled into a variety of women's associations, among them voluntary cultural, educational, social care, teetotaler, and handicraft associations.⁵ From 1917 onward, these organizations met at the annual Women's Associations Congress, led by Johanna Päts. As with Päts herself, activities within these associations often combined national causes—such as the promotion of ethnic Estonian culture, public health, and social care issues—with the aims of women's movements, even if these were at least partly depoliticized in the process.

Another remarkable development, similar to other young European democracies, was the mushrooming of new periodicals for women. The National Council for Women's Associations, founded by Päts, among others, also had its own magazine, *Naiste Häääl* (Women's Voice), where her article was published. The journal was published monthly between 1926–1932, and declared itself “beyond party politics,” while still “political.” Its editors saw the journal as a watchdog for women's legal and social rights, as a voice of women's associations and of their aims and activities, and placed it in the international context of emerging women's movements. At the same time, *Naiste Häääl* sought to meet the needs of its readership for practical and everyday guidance on agriculture and farming, household work and finances, as well as on healthcare, childcare, and education. Again, promoting the national cause of ethnic identity, culture, and patriotism was also highlighted as one of the journal's main aims, “because especially this field of momentous responsibility is in the hands of women as mothers and educators.” The first issue also included a warm greeting (in English, followed by a translation) from the president of the International Council of Women, Ishbel Hamilton-Gordon, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, from Aberdeen, Scotland.⁶

3 Reinfeldt, “Naise emantsipatsiooni küsimus Eestis 1920. aastatel Postimehe ja Päevalehe põhjal.”

4 Reinfeldt, “Naise emantsipatsiooni küsimus Eestis 1920. aastatel Postimehe ja Päevalehe põhjal,” 15.

5 Poska-Grünthal, *Naine ja naisliikumine: peajooni naisliikumise ajaloost ja probleemistikust*.

6 See *Naiste Häääl* [Women's Voice], no. 1 (1926), <https://www.digar.ee/arhiiv/et/periodika/32663>.

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Liisi Keedus

* * *

Johanna Päts

Why Must Women Elect Women to Parliament?

Estonia has been living its independent national life for fourteen years already. The foundation of our state is its constitution, according to which all citizens are equal before the law. There cannot be advantages or disadvantages based on sex.

If one becomes closely acquainted with our ruling laws and current legislative work, we have to admit, unfortunately, that our constitution is violated frequently. Women do not care about it; they have had little interest in political life and legislative work. Over the years, they have used their political rights passively. Very few women have made it to parliament—only 1%. Isn't the woman interested in political activities, isn't she mature enough for legislative work, is she really indifferent to how a country is governed?

We ought to answer that she has not been completely indifferent: she has used her rights passively. Women have always turned out for elections diligently, they have elected according to their political principles and voted for the lists of parties where, unfortunately, predominantly men have run. In this article, I want to shed a light on the question of why women should become more active, why they should run on electoral lists, and why women should vote for women.

Our daily life is standardized by laws—like the family law, the law of succession, as well as other civil and criminal laws—which have become obsolete. The family law has become especially unfair on current society. According to valid Baltic private law, a wife is under her husband's guardianship, she has been put in the situation of an underaged child, or that of a lunatic who needs care, who cannot govern her own fortune, who cannot make decisions about her own children, who has to leave even her personal premarital fortune to her husband as the sole owner. Even men have realized how this unnatural situation is in conflict with our constitution and with real life. Our codification commission started to draft a new family law, finished it within seven years, and presented the government with its draft. Unfortunately, we have to admit that even this new bill does not satisfy women; it is still based on the principles of male ascendancy.

However, as family law is a law which has to standardize women's rights and obligations in her most important field of activity—that is, being at home with her family—then women cannot be indifferent to how the law will be. Based on a decision made by the Fourth Women's Congress, the signatures of informed citizens were gathered to protest against this unjust bill, demanding it do be edited based on couples' equality. They managed to collect nearly 32,000 signatures, among which the names of some of the most important political and public men can be found. These men have consciously given their signature, recognizing that marriage must be built on justice and equality, taking into consideration our country's constitution.

However, the fate of the protest and signatures gathered is questionable if women themselves are not on their guard. In the future parliament, when the government presents the new draft, family law will be discussed. When deciding on the law that concerns women, women must be there.

In addition to that one law most important to women, women must be interested in drafting all the other laws, because she, just like any man, is as a citizen of this

country, responsible for the maintenance of our state and the welfare of the people. Why shouldn't women be interested in our state form, constitutional amendments, all civil, criminal, tax, welfare, and other laws in general—for she equally has a taste of all the benefits of these laws if they are reasonable and fair, and also suffers from the disadvantages of these laws. Unfortunately, there is a common perception amongst us, especially among men, that the work of women is only valuable at home, in the family, where she fits in due to her special characteristics. In general, the work of women is also accepted and appreciated in the fields of welfare, health, education, and in all fields of social work. This huge and valuable work will be the future of women, because they have done it with great talent and love, and with good outcomes.

However, we cannot forget that we have many women who think politically, who can work in parliament just like men, and participate in legislative work with great success. That is why we have to elect them to parliament. When closely analyzing the national economy, we have to admit that women have been given huge power, which, so far, they have not wanted to use, nor which they have respected. She, as a maker and a consumer, has a big and important task to fulfill. Women do not make items only for the needs of the domestic market, but make up a huge part of our exports—especially agricultural and livestock produce (e.g., butter, meat, eggs), which are directly made with women's care. How these items are produced for export, and what the expenses of mediation and marketing are, are very important to women. It is not irrelevant which laws govern the field of women's economic production. If women had been closer to this field beforehand, perhaps a huge part of these unproductive expenses—which have been covered so far by the state and its people—would have been reduced in the first place. It is common knowledge that women are more cautious and frugal than men. They have become so because of the circumstances in their everyday households. They are used to limiting their own wishes, and so perhaps they do not possess the trait of conducting large-scale business—a fact which has become fatal for our national economy.

Translated by Helis Rõuk

Irena Krzywicka

The Fall of Male Civilization

AUTHOR Irena Krzywicka

TITLE “Zmierzch cywilizacji męskiej” [The Fall of Male Civilization]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Wiadomości Literackie* [Literary News], no. 54 (1932): 15.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Irena Krzywicka (1899–1994) was an intellectual (writer, translator), feminist, and progressive activist for sexual and moral change in interwar Poland.

She was born in Yeniseysk, Siberia, where her parents were exiled for their political activity in the illegal self-educational socialist movement. They were educated Polish Jews: Stanisław Goldberg was a physician, Felicja Goldberg was trained as a dentist and chose to be a teacher of the Polish language. In 1903, they returned to Warsaw, and soon afterwards Stanisław died of tuberculosis. Irena was raised by her mother in the spirit of tolerance, rationalism, and socialist values. She attended the prestigious Ms. Warecka Junior High School for Girls. After graduation, she studied Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw (1917–1922). She did not finish her doctoral dissertation due to a conflict with her supervisor.

In 1918, Goldberg made her debut as a writer with the essay *Kiść bzu* (A Spray of Lilac). At the age of twenty-four she married Jerzy Krzywicki. He was a lawyer, the son of sociologist Ludwik Krzywicki. Their “companionate marriage,” based on friendship, broke with monogamy and both Irena and Jerzy had open relationships with other partners. In 1927, she met Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, a writer, translator, and activist for social reform. A mentor who introduced her to the Warsaw intellectual circle (the so-called Skamanders), he soon became her partner in work and her lover.

In 1928, Irena started to cooperate with the weekly *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary News). Soon she became a recognized writer within the Warsaw artistic milieu, with Julian Tuwim, Antoni Słonimski, Stanisław Witkiewicz (Witkacy), and a group of women writers—Zofia Nałkowska, Pola Gojawiczyńska, Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, Helena Boguszevska, and Wanda Melcer—among her close friends. In 1930, she published her debut novel, *Pierwsza krew* (First Blood), about a teenage girl’s struggle with her sexuality. Two years later, she wrote her next novel, *Sekret Kobiety* (Secret of a Woman), about menstrual experiences. Discussing these issues earned her a reputation as a “depraver.” She was a regular author for *Życie Świadome* (Conscious Life), a supplement to *Wiadomości Literackie*, where

she argued for sexual education, freedom of choice, access to contraception, and the right to abortion.

She was the co-founder of the League of Reform of Customs, aimed at education on sexual and moral issues, including freedom of sexual life, marriages on probation, contraceptives, body hygiene, or prisoners' rights to have sexual relations with visitors. She co-founded the Conscious Motherhood Clinic in Poland, the first institution where gynecological care and contraceptive counselling for working class women was provided by socialist physicians (Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka, Henryk Rubinraut), and supported by leftist intellectuals.

During the Second World War, Irena Krzywicka had to hide because of her Jewish origin, under threat of persecution by the Nazis. She also collaborated with the Polish underground movement. From the beginning of the war, she had to support herself, her mother, and her younger, disabled son. During the war, she lost her husband (killed in mass-executions in Katyn), Boy-Żeleński (shot in Lviv), and her older son (deadly disease).

After the war, she worked as a journalist and a cultural attaché at the Polish embassies in Paris (1945–1946), and Bern (1956–1957). She was a member of the Polish Writers' Union, and after 1956 a member of its Main Board. In 1954 she became a city councilor in Warsaw, where between 1955 and 1962 she ran a well-known literary salon. She left Poland in 1963, accompanying her son on a scientific scholarship to Switzerland, and later to France. In 1968, Krzywicka settled permanently in France. After her death in Bures-sur-Yvette, her body was moved to Warsaw.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Pierwsza krew* [First Blood] (Warsaw: F. Hoesick, 1930); *Sekret kobiety* [Secret of a Woman] (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Rój," 1933); *Sąd idzie, reportaże sądowe* [The Court Is Coming: Court Reports] (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Rój," 1935); *Zwycięzka samotność. Kobieta szuka siebie* [Victorious Loneliness: A Woman in Search of Herself] (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Rój," 1935); *Co odpowiadać dorosłym na drażliwe pytania* [How to Answer Troublesome Questions from Adults: Essays] (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Rój," 1936); *Żywoć uczonego. O Ludwiku Krzywickim* [The Life of a Scientist: On Ludwik Krzywicki] (Warsaw: PIW, 1951); *Dr Anna Leśna* [Dr. Anna Leśna] (Warsaw: "Czytelnik," 1951); *Wyznania gorszyielki, autobiografia* [Confessions of a Scandalous Woman: Autobiography] (Warsaw: "Czytelnik," 1992).

Dobrochna Kałwa

CONTEXT

In November 1918, the Great War was over, Poland became independent, and women achieved political rights. This triple victory opened a new chapter of enormous challenges. Among the most important goals were, the establishment of the political

fundamentals of the new state, the restoration of an economy ruined by war, inflation, and economic crises, and the unification of the society that had existed for decades in different legal and political conditions for generations into a single, modern society. The process of integration affected all aspects of the functioning of both the state and individual citizens. It happened most rapidly through reforms and changes at the central level, with women's rights being a good example of that.

One decree was enough for women to gain their political rights (active and passive). The constitution passed in 1921 guaranteed equality between men and women. The granting of political rights was an important achievement for the women's movement in Poland, but it was only the first stage in the process of women's political and civic empowerment. The removal of regulations that discriminated against women in the labor market or in marriage took many years, and the process was not fully implemented before the outbreak of the Second World War. Even then, the discrepancy between the legal order and patriarchal reality remained evident. The attainment of political rights and citizenship gave rise to a debate that took place with varying degrees of intensity over two decades around the question of the role of women in political, social, and economic life. Activists in the women's movement by and large believed that women were equal, but at the same time different from men. This view stemmed from the widespread acceptance of the thesis of the biological basis of the psycho-physical differences between the sexes. In the case of women, the conditioning factor was the maternal instinct and, consequently, the predisposition to caring, nurturing work, combined with the capacity for self-sacrifice and an aversion to violence and war. Supporters of women's participation in public life expected them to address issues of health, education, childcare, and finally the fight against social maladies. Women activists themselves were keen to justify their social and political involvement on the basis of their moral superiority and their supposedly natural predisposition to act as educators of society.

This way of thinking was also shared by female parliamentarians (there were few in the interwar period), dealing primarily with issues concerning health, family, morality, education and—of course—women's rights. These issues were also the subject of public debate, in which activists in the women's movement, publicists, and writers of a new strand of literature (focused on showing issues and experiences relevant to women) played an important role. Among the themes explored in the novels of prominent women writers were also issues previously absent, such as women's problematic attitudes to motherhood, abortion, discrimination at work, and finally domestic violence, told from the perspective of women themselves. The literature thus resonated with the public disputes over competing worldviews that were taking place around the criminal and civil code drafts.

Particularly controversial in the case of the first draft were provisions concerning reproductive rights and the criminalization of abortion. In contrast, the new civil

code, which included the institution of civil marriage, was a pretext for a dispute over the institution of marriage and its indissolubility. The public debates involved both representatives of conservative circles, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and liberals and socialists involved in modernization and social projects. They presented their views and reformist programs in the pages of opinion-forming weeklies such as *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary News). This weekly, published from 1932 onwards, was aimed at the Polish left-wing intelligentsia, and featured texts devoted to literature and art, alongside texts on socio-political issues, printed both in the main edition and in special thematic supplements. The latter included *Życie Świadome* [Conscious Life], a supplement devoted to issues of moral reform and sex education, homosexuality, contraception, and the criminalization of abortion. The latter topic was the subject of public discussion surrounding the draft criminal law, which in its first version proposed the unconditional criminalization of abortion. Krzywicka was among those who advocated for the liberalization of the law and the introduction of provisions permitting abortion in cases where a woman's life was endangered, or for pregnancies which resulted from rape or incest. The most far-reaching proposal, which ultimately did not make it into the draft penal code, was to also allow abortion on the grounds of difficult social circumstances. Advocates of this solution—Krzywicka was one of them—argued about the negative aspects of uncontrolled fertility, resulting in the progressive misery of families and the degeneration of subsequent generations. The initial discussion of criminal legislation developed into a debate on the need for a reform of morals, an integral part of which was sexual education, a modern, secular model of marriage, or a change of attitude towards homosexuals.

It is no coincidence that the title of Krzywicka's article refers to Oswald Spengler's famous book *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West), although her argument goes in a completely different direction. In it, Krzywicka presents a positive program to combat patriarchy, which titular male civilization is. A key role in this program is played by the activation of women, educators committed to forming a new morality of the next generations and a world in which the axiological foundation will be motherhood and feminine values, with no place for violence, war, and the hypocrisy of bourgeois morality. The article was one of many manifestos and programmatic texts written by the socially committed writers. In response, her views were criticized by conservatives as well as by liberal columnists, whose resentment stemmed from the idea of men's exclusion from the world of women and the instrumentalization of their role in social life.

The ideas expressed in "The Fall of Male Civilization" gave rise to a debate around the idea of putting women in charge of repairing a world devastated by wars—a product of the patriarchal order. Women were to contribute, as Krzywicka's supporters Paweł Hulka-Laskowki and Halina Krahelska wanted, to the humanization of the

world, to the introduction of a new order whose foundation would be motherhood, equal rights, and justice.

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Dobrochna Kałwa

* * *

Irena Krzywicka **The Fall of Male Civilization**

A violent process of world transformation is taking place now, in front of our eyes. We live in a period of constant revolution—which often realizes itself under some of the most reactionary slogans. Calls for this or that go their own way, and organic shocks and transformations their own. Old concepts, old morals are collapsing; old customs are undergoing a complete metamorphosis, approaches to marriage and love, to children and their education are changing, the *savoir-vivre* and life-styles of even ordinary people are changing.

What is at the bottom of all these changes, what is their essence? Isn't it the woman? Isn't it her changing role in society? Isn't it one of the biggest reversals that humanity has known? A strange coincidence: the woman, who has been a support for religion, is becoming the main factor in the destruction of moral concepts derived from Christian ethics. The deep shocks that these concepts underwent were not necessarily connected to social or political change, since they also occur in the most bourgeois and reactionary countries. The woman got the job, she will get money and power, and the world must change in the face of it.

The hitherto male civilization underwent various transformations, created villages and towns, it would exalt and massacre itself for religious matters, it would abolish one form of oppression and introduce another, would decompose and grow

in power, and remain unchanged in only one way: half of the population—women—was permanently left in a state of slavery. They were pushed away from action, consciously stupefied, physically and morally possessed by desirable living conditions, the ideology of virginity, virtue, fidelity, obedience to man.

The French Revolution actually created the most grim, narrow, and limited mores, barely gasping in the shackles of traditional ethics. Feudalism disappeared, capitalism was born, but love became burdened with the stigma of abomination and sin that torments humanity. An impressive bluff has lasted for thousands of years. Its goal was to produce in women a kind of “inferiority complex.” The morality created by men charged any kind of loving passion with sin, as if with a tax. It imposed monogamy, contrary to nature, on women, though never taken seriously by men. Male culture would deliberately stigmatize a prostitute, but did not see a flaw in the conscience of a master leaving her place. For entire centuries, they would torment children, because, until recently, rearing was nothing more than a brutal act of unpunished violence.

Men themselves became caught up in the snare which was supposed to overpower the woman. The poor maniacs, miserable victims of their own superstitions, poisoned life with a fetish of the innocence of the bride, burdened their own honor with a responsibility for the love lives of their wives. Through stupid education, they discouraged children. Conceited blind men!

Am I unfair? So what? I speak up on behalf of those who will win. I represent power. If not quality, then quantity, the majority of our civilized humankind—women. Unfair? To whom am I supposed to tell this? Men? Those who painstakingly establish norms allowing a few distinguished, intelligent gentlemen to murder a criminal, to let the police bring a wife back to her husband, send children to penal houses, and push a doctor, who had saved a despairing woman with an abortion, to the bottom. The world should not count on us to let anyone impose men’s vague idea of honor on us! We never resolved our arguments by piercing each other’s stomachs.

I do not want to be unfair! I have my own interest in it. The sweetness of making a scene in front of a man consists in shouting out all the resentment and disheartening him before he speaks. And what if one brings a lawsuit against all men on behalf of all women. For too long, fascinated by their sex, we pretended to be more stupid and more faint-hearted than we actually are. Discouraged by the brutality and primitive bloodthirstiness of the world created by them, we preferred to hide in the comfort of our homes, to develop internally, to be the people of the future, and wait for times more propitious for the values that we offer.

It seems that these times have come. Male civilization, raising itself to absurdity, has prepared everything to destroy itself. Like a suicidal maniac who took poison and hung himself by the river, it has prepared, with all diligence and pedantism,

all the means of annihilation, it showed considerable ingenuity in killing people, a lot of fantasy for torture, a lot of flair in organizing this spectacle. It carried out, fifteen years ago, a dress rehearsal and improved this and that...

And now stop! Go back to your Valhalla, stupid and childish gods of the previous world! It is high time to lock you in there. Who would always save you when you became involved in an absurd situation without an exit? Who would you always turn to for help, advice, and support when your supposed strength failed? Who would tear down the stacks of your terrible stupidities with common sense? Wasn't it a woman?

From where does your certainty come that it will also be this way in social life? Unfortunately, there is no certainty. But it would be too hopeless not to keep hope. This hope, in turn, can be fueled by the trust that is nowadays placed in the education of children. There is actually no doubt that women constitute the only part of the humankind that, for centuries, have been educated in a pacifist way. They are the eternal civilians, passive and sober witnesses of war. They were also granted the worst part, as it is obviously worse to lose close ones than to be killed.

It is scary to think how terribly burdened men's subconsciousness is. There is an atavistic instinct of killing in each of them. Another instinct also begins to awake in each of them, an instinct known to naturalists and anthropologists: the instinct to fight among young males. There is something very naturalistic in these crowds of old strategists, diplomats, and statesmen, sending crowds of young boys to the slaughter. Somehow it comes too easily to them. Indeed, it is much better with women's subconsciousness. What kind of instincts are there in her? First of all, the maternal and loving instincts, both conducive rather to maintaining life than to destroying it. In comparison to them, men are hereditarily too heavily burdened to keep them in power any longer. Their civilizational role is ending. They elevated the world, with their teeth and claws, to a certain level of culture. They will still be able to think, create, and love (situations that suit them best), but they will not notice how the governments of the world will pass into other hands.

It must be confessed, however, that women did not find themselves yet in this new situation; we cannot understand it. They did not even realize exactly that their private tragedy—quantitative dominance over men—must become one of the factors of their social advantage. So far, their biggest ambition is to match men, to become similar to them. Usually, through imitation, one looks for their own individuality.

However, if the qualities which make woman similar to man enabled her to reach an equal start, it is her distinctiveness that will allow her to outdistance the rulers of the persishing world.

Understanding this distinctiveness and drawing the consequences from it seems to be a very difficult thing. Women, accustomed to look through the lens

forced on them by men, are blinking blind and helpless after throwing them away. Accustomed to see the world through the patterns characteristic of the male mind, they have to make an enormous creative effort in every area to look at the world independently.

Meanwhile, their reality is different than the reality of men, as is their psycho-physical system. What is that reality? It is actually unknown, because women were unable to describe, paint, analyze, synthesize it so far. Until Whistler, Englishmen did not see the London fog; women have not seen themselves so far. Men's suggestive powers were too strong. It is a task of art, especially of literature, to show the face of a woman. So, even though women would often take hold of the pen previously, women's literature is yet to be written.

However, women's influence on the transformations that the family is undergoing can be felt: care for the rational and hygienic upbringing of the child, the regulation of births, downplaying jealousy and infidelity, the overturning of sexual ethics, and a simultaneous change in the face of prostitution. Who would doubt that this is the work of the woman—it is her area, though; to date, her scope and sphere of life. An upcoming objection towards what was an indelible mark of the male world can be felt. A reluctance towards oppression and making life difficult, towards spoiling characters, degeneration and complicating natural instincts, towards disgusting love, is being born.

And now—attention! Turn. Wait a moment! Let us stop, let us think. Am I right? Does such a playful feminism like my own even have foundations! Is it true, as it seemed to me here a moment ago, or are these rather some wishes for the future? Or maybe it is just teasing women. Yes, I want to tease them, as one teases children, I want with all my heart to convince them that they are clever, that they know what they are doing, that they can do a lot. Because so far, it is still incubation stage—nothing more. There is still a long way toward coordinated gestures, to conscious thought. Many new women are already moving and speaking, but even more is done and spoken on behalf of them by farsighted men. A huge mass of women do not see anything yet, looking ahead with the hazy eyesight of a newborn baby, or, at best, stare and remain silent.

How much I would like to have a good opinion about women! They are talented, they have a healthy life-energy. Well, what to do when they are still so immature and so cowardly, so helpless and obedient. When will that pass? In ten years? In twenty? Let us know when it will be possible to communicate with you.

Translated by Anna Topolska

Halina Krahelska

The Roots of Changing Sexual Mores

AUTHOR Halina Krahelska

TITLE “Źródła przemian obyczajowych” [The Roots of Changing Sexual Mores]

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LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Helena (Halina) Krahelska (née Śleszyńska; 1888, Odessa–1945, Ravensbrück) was a writer and activist best known for her advocacy for women and young people in interwar Polish industry. Raised in Odessa, she spent between 1912–1917 in prisons and in exile for her conspiratorial work with the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS). During the revolution of 1917, she helped organize workers’ and soldiers’ councils in Kansk and Odessa, aligning herself with the Left Social Revolutionaries and Józef Piłsudski’s Polish Combat Organization.¹ At the end of 1918, Krahelska left the Soviet Union for newly independent Poland.

Krahelska worked in the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (1919–1921, 1926–1931) as an inspector of working conditions in Polish factories, a position that brought her into frequent conflict with both employers and her superiors in the Ministry. These reached a crescendo during her campaign for factory-based daycare (earning her the epithet, as she mentions in the source text, of the “Polish Madame Kollontai”),²

¹ Editor’s note: Józef Klemens Piłsudski (1867–1935) was a Polish politician and military leader, Chief of State (1918–1922) and First Marshal of Poland (from 1920). He joined the PPS in 1893 and in 1904 formed a paramilitary unit (the Combat Organization of the Polish Socialist Party / Organizacja Bojowa PPS) aimed at resistance against the Russian government. Piłsudski’s major foreign policy initiative was a proposed federation of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, and Estonia, which was intended to resemble the pre-partition Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the Polish–Soviet war (1919–1921), Piłsudski became a national hero as he led the victorious army in the Battle of Warsaw. After a period of withdrawal from politics, Piłsudski returned as the organizer of a *coup d’état* in 1926, which he declared a process of political “restoration” or “cleansing” (*sanacja*). In 1930, he dissolved the parliament and imprisoned key agrarian, socialist, and nationalist political leaders. From then on, he criticized the parliamentary system and advocated a strong presidency, which was introduced by the new Polish Constitution of April 1935 (Konstytucja Kwietniowa) drafted by his close supporters. Despite being authoritarian, Piłsudski’s regime began a period of national stabilization and improvement in the situation of ethnic minorities, including Jews, which lasted until Piłsudski’s death in 1935. See Maciej Górny, “Józef Klemens Piłsudski,” in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945: Texts and Commentaries*, vol. III/1, *Modernism: The Creation of Nation-States*, eds. Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górny, and Vangelis Kechriotis (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2010), 368–75.

² Editor’s note: Aleksandra Kollontai (1872–1952), Marxist thinker and politician, who served as the Commissar for Social Welfare in Lenin’s government between 1917–1918.

mandated by a government decree of July 1928 and fiercely resisted by industry.³ She meanwhile lectured at the Free University in Warsaw and published several studies of working conditions in Polish industry, focusing on women and underaged workers.

As Piłsudski's regime moved further to the right, Krahelska left government in 1931 and pursued an eclectic career as a writer, researcher, and advocate. She wrote prolifically on social and economic issues for the press and published memoirs on her youth in Russia and her work as a labor inspector. As a founding member of the radical literary group "Przedmieście" (Suburb), she wrote the lightly fictionalized reportage *A Polish Strike* (1937), which depicted the violent repression of strikers during the "bloody spring" of 1936 in Krakow and highlighted the sexual abuse of women workers. The book was confiscated by police and resulted in her conviction on charges of defaming the Polish state. In the 1930s Krahelska conducted research on unemployment as an affiliate of the Institute for Social Economy in Warsaw, innovatively using children and unemployed people as informants. Krahelska also collaborated with the institute in its collection of autobiographical writings by workers, peasants, and the unemployed.

In 1937, Krahelska co-founded the antifascist Warsaw Democratic Club, a predecessor to the progressive Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne, SD, founded 1939). After the German invasion of September 1939, she contributed extensively to the conspiratorial press, worked with the Polish underground state's Bureau of Information and Propaganda (Biuro Informacji i Propagandy, BIP), and oversaw the Home Army's (Armia Krajowa, AK) historical archive. In spring 1942, Krahelska's leg had to be amputated after she was hit by a truck on the streets of Warsaw; in the same year, she ghost-wrote the first published account of Auschwitz, based on the testimony of Władysław Bartoszewski⁴ following his release from the camp. Krahelska kept a detailed chronicle of the occupation, drawing on contacts from around the country, including informants in the Warsaw Ghetto. Writing in August 1942, she decried as "undoubtedly a source of future shame for Poland" society's relative quiescence in the face of the destruction of Polish Jewry. Throughout, the chronicle centered the voices of women, including letters and testimonies from women of all classes, documenting everyday matters typically considered mere *bab-skie sprawy* (women's affairs).⁵

3 Halina Krahelska, Maria Kirstowa, and Stanisław Wolski, *Ze wspomnień inspektora pracy* [From the Memories of a Labor Inspector], vol. 1 (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo M. Fruchtmanna, 1936), 327–30.

4 Editor's note: Władysław Bartoszewski (1922–2015) was a politician, social activist, writer, and public intellectual. He was detained in Auschwitz from September 1940 to April 1941. From April 1942 he worked for BIP and then for Żegota, the Council for Aid to Jews. After 1945, he was arrested and imprisoned several times. Although unable to complete his studies, he developed his journalistic and academic career. From the mid-1970s, he was involved in democratic opposition activities and after the transformation of 1989 became an active politician and public intellectual.

5 Katherine Lebow and Anna Müller, eds., *The Chronicle of Agata and Sabina: Struggle, Survival, and Everyday Life in Occupied Poland, 1940–43* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

Krahelska was by all accounts a dynamic personality with boundless energy. As her daughter Halina put it, she was “a charmingly disorganized/highly organized woman with an extreme sense of duty, who could always get by (when required) without thinking of her own safety, comfort, or so-called reputation.” In a single day, she might “pose for a portrait by [avant-garde artist] Witkacy [...], sit however many hours at the hairdresser’s, write a speech for the Democratic Club until dawn—or be completely absorbed in baking Easter cakes.”⁶

During the war, Krahelska lived in hiding, moving some twenty-five times to evade arrest. In 1941, when her second husband Antoni Krahelski and their children were arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo, the younger Halina recalled that her father had reassured her by writing with his finger on her palm: “Nie Mama”—the Gestapo had not caught her yet. Nonetheless Krahelska was denounced in July 1944, most likely by far-right members of the underground resistance,⁷ and sent to Ravensbrück. In the camp, Krahelska miraculously evaded selection despite her wooden leg, lecturing, writing, and drafting plans for a postwar bureau of labor inspection. She died of starvation diarrhea barely two weeks before liberation, on April 17, 1945.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Łódzki przemysł włókienniczy wobec ustawodawstwa pracy* [The Lodz Textile Industry with Regards to Labor Legislation] (Warsaw: Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego, 1927); *Praca kobiet w przemyśle współczesnym* [Women’s Work in Contemporary Industry] (Warsaw: Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego, 1932); *Przeobrażenia w rodzinie współczesnej i w roli kobiety* [Transformations in the Contemporary Family and in the Role of Woman] (Lviv: “Libraria Nova,” 1933); with Stefan Pruss, *Życie bezrobotnych. Badania ankietowe* [The Life of the Unemployed: Survey Research] (Warsaw: Instytut Spraw Społecznych, 1933); *Wspomnienia rewolucjonistki* [Reminiscences of a Revolutionary] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo M. Fruchtmiana, 1934); with Maria Kirstowa and Stanisław Wolski, *Ze wspomnień inspektora pracy* [From the Reminiscences of a Labor Inspector] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo M. Fruchtmiana, 1936); *Polski strajk* [A Polish Strike] (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze “Rój,” 1937); *Zdrada Heńka Kubisza* [The Betrayal of Heniek Kubisz] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Nowej Biblioteki Społecznej, 1938); *Oświęcim. Pamiętnik więźnia* [Auschwitz. Memoir of a Prisoner] (Warsaw: Kopr. [Komisja Propagandy Biura Informacji i Propagandy KG AK], 1942); *The Chronicle of Agata and Sabina*, translated and edited by Katherine Lebow and Anna Müller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

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6 Halina Krahelska [daughter], “Halina Krahelska. Wspomnienia Haliny Krahelskiej,” 440–1.

7 Editor’s note: A Home Army counter-intelligence report from 1944 identified Krahelska and other leading SD activists within BIP as “Jews” and “Communist spies,” calling for such “tentacles” to be “surgically removed.” Many on the list were subsequently assassinated (such as Jerzy Makowiecki and Ludwik Widerszal) or denounced (such as historian Marcei Handelsman, arrested together with Krahelska). Anna Cieniała, “Tajne Oblicze GL-AL PPR. Dokumenty” [The Secret Face of the GL-AL PPR. Documents], *The Sarmatian Review* 2 (2001): 799; Grzegorz Mazur, *Biuro Informacji i Propagandy SZP-ZWZ-AK, 1939–1945* [Bureau of Information and Propaganda ZWZ-AK, 1939–1945] (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1987), 288–9.

CONTEXT

The essay below appeared in a 1937 supplement to Poland's most prestigious literary journal, *Wiadomości Literackie* (WL, Literary News). Under the editorship of the poet, translator, and gynecologist-pediatrician Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński (1874–1941), the journal was known for its coverage of issues associated with the movement for sex reform (*reforma obyczajowa*)—or, as one critic put it, “problems of pederasty, Freudianism, planned parenthood, onanism, abortion, ‘companionate marriages,’ gays, prostitution, venereal disease clinics, and eros generally.”⁸

The Polish sex reform movement emerged at a time of major changes to the regulation of sex, reproduction, and marriage following independence in 1918. Harmonizing three separate codes inherited from the former Austro-Hungarian, German, and Russian empires, Poland's 1932 family law became one of the most progressive in Europe: it permitted civil marriage and divorce, decriminalized homosexuality, and legalized the distribution and advertisement of birth control. Abortion became legal on grounds of health, which in effect gave most middle-class women access to safe medical abortions. However, as Boy-Żeleński vividly publicized in a famous series of feuilletons, rural and working-class women regularly used dangerous chemical abortifacients or back-alley abortions.⁹ Reformers thus called for abortion to be fully decriminalized on social as well as medical grounds.

WL began publishing its quarterly supplement on sex reform, *Życie Świadome* (Conscious Life), the year the new code came into effect. Besides Krahelska, frequent contributors included the writer Irena Krzywicka (see entry in this volume); Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka (1867–1936), a medical doctor, socialist, and founder of Poland's first birth control clinic; and writer/performer Maria Morska (b. Anna Frenkiel, ca. 1895–1945). In word and deed, collectively they advanced arguments for a woman's right, as Budzińska-Tylicka put it, “to live as full a sexual life as a man,” and not only within the framework of heterosexual relationships.¹⁰

Krahelska's contributions to the interwar debate on sex reform focused on the experiences of working-class families and the tensions between reproduction and waged labor. Yet while motherhood was, in Krahelska's view, women's “cardinal obligation,” it was not biology that made it incompatible with work outside the home, but capitalism.¹¹ More specifically, it was the differential wage system, as contemporaries

8 Eva Plach, *The Clash of Moral Nations: Cultural Politics in Piłsudski's Poland, 1926–1935* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 135, 139–40.

9 Published in book form as *Piekło kobiet* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Boy'a, 1933). The title—“women's hell”—made a reappearance in 2020–21 on protesters' signs during the so-called Women's Strikes against Polish abortion restrictions.

10 Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka, *Świadome macierzyństwo* (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze “Rój,” 1935), 30.

11 On interwar feminist maternalism, see Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890–1970: The Maternal Dilemma* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 137–8.

like the feminist Alice Solomon and economist John Kenneth Galbraith had argued, that allowed industry to get women's labor on the cheap and externalize the costs of social reproduction.¹² Indeed, the dirty-tricks campaigns and lobbying against state-mandated factory daycare by Polish employers, which Krahelska described elsewhere, suggested just how profitable they found the gendered status quo.¹³

However, while employers had tried to mobilize women workers against factory-based childcare as an affront to motherhood, Krahelska reported with satisfaction on their failure: working mothers were "easily persuaded to abandon prejudices and backwards ideas about the care of infants," especially when they saw the nurseries in action. Women doctors and childcare nurses, moreover, had demonstrated extraordinary professionalism, wit, and determination in circumventing employer non-cooperation and building up a network of model nurseries.¹⁴ As Krahelska writes here, therefore, although she had seen many negative consequences resulting from women's mass entry to the labor force, she had also increasingly come to understand its socially transformative potential.

In a letter to her sister-in-law, Krahelska referred to this article as an attempt to synthesize her thinking on women's work,¹⁵ and in many ways it builds on her research into unemployment in the 1930s, especially a 1933 study co-authored with sociologist Stefan Pruss (1900–1969), *Life of the Unemployed: Survey Research*. While unemployment research had boomed worldwide during the depression, it rarely treated women as subjects in their own right; the famous Marienthal study, for instance, explained that "the term 'unemployed' applies in the strict sense only to the men, for the women are merely unpaid, not really unemployed."¹⁶ While most Polish researchers acknowledged the existence of unemployment among women—six of the 57 authors in the landmark collection *Memoirs of the Unemployed*, for example, were female—they typically failed to conceptualize unemployment as a gendered phenomenon.¹⁷

12 Gisela Bock and Allison Brown, *Women in European History* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 104–105.

13 Krahelska et al., *Ze wspomnień inspektora pracy*, vol. 1, 301–332.

14 Krahelska et al., *Ze wspomnień inspektora pracy*, vol. 1, 322–23.

15 Archiwum Akt Nowych, Spuścizna Haliny Krahelskiej, 383/II-3, Dopyływ do zespołu, n.p., Letter to Wanda Krahelska-Mackiewiczowa, May 7, 1937.

16 Marie Jahoda et. al., *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 74. Editor's note: The Marienthal Study was published in 1931/32 in Austria, showcasing the research of the Viennese Austrian Research Unit for Economic Psychology. The study focused on the social and psychological effects of unemployment after the closing of the textile factory in the working-class neighborhood of Marienthal in Gramatneusiedl, near Vienna. The report was written by Marie Jahoda (1907–2001), the sociographic appendix was prepared by Hans Zeisel (1905–1992), and the author of the introduction was the leader of the research unit, Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1901–1976). See, e.g., Antoni Sulek, "The Marienthal 1931/1932 Study and Contemporary Studies on Unemployment in Poland," *Polish Sociological Review* 157 (2007): 3–25.

17 Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego, *Pamiętniki bezrobotnych* (Warsaw, 1933).

By contrast, Krahelska and Pruss, approaching unemployment holistically as a phenomenon affecting individuals, families, and communities, showed how it was experienced in what we would now call gendered ways. For women, these were often closely connected to the body and/or sexuality, for example, in the form of heightened sexual abuse in the workplace or the replacement of lost wages through sex work. Krahelska and Pruss also suggested that crisis had the power to erode taboos and reshape sexual mores—citing, for example, survey research showing that children in communities with high levels of unemployment often viewed prostitution as similar to “any normal type of work, analogous to other forms of employment.”¹⁸

At the same time, Krahelska and Pruss stressed that women experienced lower rates of unemployment overall than men. This had resulted in an increasing percentage of families with female breadwinners, with profound implications for gender roles and relations, as Krahelska argues here. For Krahelska, the new “crisis family” proved the fundamental mutability of gender roles and pointed toward a future of shared responsibility between men and women for both material and social reproduction. In short, this was not a family *in* crisis, but *of* crisis—“crisis” understood not just as economic downturn, but as a moment with potential for far-reaching social change.

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¹⁸ Krahelska and Pruss, *Life of the Unemployed*, 87.

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Katherine Lebow

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Halina Krahelska

The Roots of Changing Sexual Mores

Of course, a transformation in sexual mores¹⁹ as a whole is a combination of many and various causes. The external expression of such a change—namely, corresponding legal reform—can be achieved only at an opportune political moment. So, for example, Russia's progressive marriage legislation could not have arisen without revolution; the regressive legislation on women's work in Germany would not have come about without the fascist putsch and Hitler's rise to power. But the external expression [of such change]—namely, legal reform—generally crowns only those transformations that have already taken place in *social* attitudes and relations within a human community. Meanwhile, these same processes of transformation take place over the course of many long decades and emerge from sources of an *economic* nature. Naturally, the *a priori* assumption that it is precisely economic relations that shape socio-cultural relations and the human psyche is characteristic of the Marxist school of thought. But I think I can firmly state that the truth and self-evidence of this postulate is proven by experience and is clear today to all thinking people—such that one can encounter this position ever more frequently also among non-Marxists.

When it comes to the changes in sexual, marital, and familial relations that we all notice today, we must seek their causes in the contemporary *economic system*

19 Translator's note: Here and throughout the text, Krahelska uses the term *obyczaje* (or its adjectival form, *obyczajowy*). *Obyczaje* are customs and attitudes, often but not always related to sexual behavior. In keeping with Krahelska's sociological approach to the topic, I have generally translated the adjectival form as "social," "cultural," or "sexual," avoiding the more normative associations of "moral" (the usual dictionary definition).

and in the economic nature of the phenomenon: namely, the increase in women's paid labor. Anyone who would engage more deeply with the problem of women's work outside the home must account for the interdependence of these two phenomena: women's work, and changes in sexual attitudes and behaviors.²⁰

Capitalism supported the mechanization of production; to cheapen the production process and increase profits, it attracted a cheaper worker: the woman. Across the entire sweep of the capitalist epoch, we see the unceasing and unstoppable growth of wage labor by women outside the home. This could be halted neither by the natural obstacles posed by familial bonds and the needs of children, nor by [legal regulation]. This phenomenon is so strikingly conspicuous as to be uniformly observable in all the industrialized countries of Europe and America, regardless of differences in the extent, character, and conditions of industrial development in those countries.²¹ [...]

Throughout my long years as a labor inspector concerned with protecting women's work in factories, I continually encountered the whole complex of very *negative consequences* of this increase in women's labor—negative in relation to family life and [women's] cardinal responsibility of motherhood, and indeed, often tragic for the children of such women. For a long time, these phenomena [...] obscured for me the other, *positive effects* of women's work outside the home. This is not surprising: I saw up close the abandonment and neglect of children, the illnesses of women resulting from their working conditions, and so on. Only after leaving my job as an inspector was I able to gain a wider view of the phenomenon of women's work and an opportunity to study the question from multiple perspectives.

And then the matter, as often happens, began to reveal other dimensions and to be illuminated in an ever fuller, richer, and more multifaceted manner. Besides the negative consequences of women's wage labor outside the home, positive ones became evident: the increasing *social consciousness of women*; the gradual *liquidation of women's traditional passivity* and servitude; the gradual, but ever-advancing *socio-economic activation of women, liberated from their economic dependency on men*.

And how could it be otherwise? Women, forced by life's circumstances to support themselves and their families just like men, ceased to depend on them; they

20 I have written widely about these questions in a few books: *Women's Work in Contemporary Industry; Transformations in the Contemporary Family and in the Role of Woman*; and *Life of the Unemployed* [see references above].

21 Women have exhaustively illuminated this question in the postwar economic literature of many countries. I can recommend in this respect: for Austria and Germany, I. Strasser, *Frauenarbeit und Rationalisierung*; Käthe Leichter, *Frauenarbeit und Arbeiterinnenschutz in Oesterreich*; A. Geyer, *Die Frauenerwerbsarbeit in Deutschland*; for Switzerland, M. Gagg, *Die Frau in der schweizerischen Industrie*; for France, M. Frois, *Le travail de femmes*; for various countries, Wojtinsky, *Die Welt in Zahlen*, and many others. I refer readers to the bibliography in my book *Women's Work in Contemporary Industry*.

had to learn to rely on their own strength and abilities, had to acquire ever more qualifications. The crisis years, with their profound impact worldwide, revealed many times over this progressive activation of women in both a social and economic sense. Moreover, women have begun in these years to display greater resourcefulness in finding work than men, greater ease in adapting themselves to different kinds of work—sometimes, greater psychological resilience than men. Cases of *families supported entirely by women* have become common, of women supporting not just their children but also, often, their husbands.

In this way, gradually and unnoticed by many, the phenomenon of women's work outside the home has led to profound and deep changes in sexual mores.

In its analysis of social phenomena, society often does not keep up with the pace of actual change. This is especially true in times of dramatic historical rupture like today. The media make note of every passing phenomenon but rarely connect the dots. At the moment, transformations in attitudes and interpersonal relations of the sort that interest us here have already progressed very far indeed. I will touch here upon a vivid example that I have already mentioned several times in my writing.

This is the fact that in 1933, Church statisticians noted a new *type of crisis marriage* occurring *en masse* in the capital: namely, marriage between employed women and unemployed men. I did not personally have access to their sources, but the Warsaw press indicated that according to statistics from the capital in this period, precisely this sort of marriage began to predominate in unpropertied sectors of the population.

What an illuminating sign of the times! It simply upends the traditional notion of marriage in which the husband is the economic mainstay of the family, the guarantor of a secure life for his wife and descendants, consciously assuming responsibility to support the family, conferring upon himself all the resulting privileges—power, authority, supremacy—and leaving to his wife, meanwhile, the domestic sphere and all activities and responsibilities related to care and feeding of the family. How far must men have traveled from these traditional beliefs when they knowingly agree to marry a woman who will be the economic mainstay of the new family, guarantor of its livelihood, etc. One marvels at the elasticity of the human psyche, at how perfectly it manages to adapt to the dictates of changing economic conditions. Indeed, the growth of this type of family allows one to suggest that while marriage, on account of the economic role of men in the family, once constituted material stability for women, under these changed circumstances, marriage becomes just such a form of stability for men who have been thrown from their sources of income by years of crisis. [...]

Returning to my argument, I assert that the economic phenomenon of male unemployment in the crisis years, as well as the economic phenomenon of women's

greater capacity to stay in work of some kind (female labor being extremely flexible in its range), has given birth to momentous changes in attitudes toward the family and in the entire area of sexual coexistence.

The work of a writer wishing to help the public understand changes taking place in society is especially difficult in Poland today. Our public discourse—not to mention our journalism!—is, to my very great concern, generally at a very low level. For the sake of sensation, readership figures, or even worse, collective, individual, or political score-settling, our press most often attacks not the problem, but the person. [...] When, as a work inspector, for instance, I tried with the help of the pen to win over public opinion for the protection of working mothers, factory childcare centers, or workplace safety and hygiene, some journalists and even publicists, taking their dictation from industrial circles, discovered that I was the “Polish Madame Kollontai” and other such nonsense. When today, as a publicist, I try as reliably as I can to illuminate reality in all its complexity, in search of a way towards a brighter future for the Polish nation, state, and society—above all, for the popular masses—I discover from the pages of various magazines that I am a Freemason or foreign agent—that is, when they fail to implicate me of Jewish origins! If it were not for my deepest conviction that precisely by serving the ideas of progress—informed by the most noble Polish cultural traditions of struggle for freedom, tolerance, and the social and economic liberation of the masses—I am simultaneously serving the interests of Poland in the most essential way, I would sometimes really feel like giving up this thankless work of writing. [...]

And yet we *must engage with these issues*. There is one question that crops up the very moment one mentions [...] transformations of the family or sexual mores. Namely: is it a good thing that the place of woman in the family is changing this way? Must we truly proceed toward a future in which the woman, not the man, is the family breadwinner? Am I promoting “discrimination” against or degradation of men? These are classic queries along the line of least resistance—certainly better than charges of “masonry” or “revolution,” but also not costing their authors much mental effort.

Out of habit, I will respond to these questions preemptively. I do not think it good that the entire weight of supporting a family should fall on a woman’s shoulders, one already bearing, moreover, the incommensurably greater burden of motherhood compared to fatherhood. (I am not thinking, of course, of 12 or 24 children—in today’s world, one, two, or three children is often already beyond one’s strength.) I oppose discrimination against men, just as I consider the epochal discrimination against women across human civilization to be a historical atrocity. However, I regard the increasing economic and social activation of women as a positive outcome of the rise in women’s work and all the above-mentioned changes. Positive, because I believe that women should have a right everywhere in

the world to an equal *playing field* with men—and, of course, that there is no other way to achieve this than by *equalizing the valuation of women's and men's work* by putting into practice the principle of equal pay.

When woman achieves equality with man, the cares of supporting children in human families based on love will fall equally to both parents. Those studying this question more deeply are always interested in yet another thing: in a modified system such as, for instance, the Soviet Union, where marriage is a secular institution, will the human family maintain its form as a permanent union of two parents and a child or children? In the first decade of news from the Soviet Union we were forced to read much nonsense and stupidity on this subject. Today, any moderately intelligent person knows that the family exists in the Soviet Union and has gelled in precisely this form; the family has stood firm. The state's interference in childrearing is very strong, but after all, this is also true today in militantly fascist countries like Italy and Germany.

In a non-capitalist system aiming at socialism or some other outcome, will the *family unit* nonetheless *hold fast* as an institution? This is a very interesting theme for discussion, and one to which we will return.

Translated by Katherine Lebow

Angela Vode

The Woman in Contemporary Society

AUTHOR Angela Vode

TITLE *Žena v sedanji družbi* [The Woman in Contemporary Society]¹

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Žena v sedanji družbi* (Maribor: Žena in dom, 1934). The excerpts are translated from the original 1934 edition: "The Meaning of Women's Economic Independence," 36–37; "Women in the Public Sphere," 53–55; "Forwards or Backwards?," 88–91.

LANGUAGE Slovene

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angela Vode (1892, Ljubljana–1985, Ljubljana) was a Slovenian feminist intellectual, writer, teacher, translator, political and antifascist activist, and political prisoner. Vode was born and raised in a working-class family. Her father was a railway worker and a social democrat. She shaped her worldview through him and through the Austrian socialist newspaper *Arbeiter Zeitung*, to which her father subscribed. In 1911 she began to work as a teacher in several primary schools around Ljubljana, but lost her job in 1917 due to her political activism, especially her circulation of anti-Austrian propaganda (including her irreligious views, Slovene nationalism, and socialism). She had no choice but to start working for a bank (Jadranska banka, Adriatic Bank) and later in a foundry, where she held white-collar jobs.

She had always been interested in politics, and in 1919 became a member and secretary of the Slovenian organization of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (JSDS). She was among its most radical members, and became one of those who established the Slovenian Communist Party in April 1920. At the same time, she studied teaching methods for differently abled children in Prague, Berlin, and Vienna. After her training, she began teaching at the Special School for the Disabled in Ljubljana. She did not see her work in the Party as employment (her Party salary hardly covered any living expenses), but more as a calling and moral stand in the increasingly authoritative Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (after 1929, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia).

At the same time, she was a leading member of various Slovene and Yugoslav women's organizations that fought for women's and worker's rights: the General Slovene Women's Association (Splošno slovensko žensko društvo), the Association of Women Teachers (Društvo učiteljic), the Union of Working Women and Girls (Zveza delavskih žena in deklet), the Women's Movement (Ženski pokret), the International

¹ Editor's note: This title was printed on the cover page, while the half title page contains a slightly different title of the same meaning: *Žena v današnji družbi*.

Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (IAWSEC), the International Council of Women (ICW), the Yugoslav Women's Union (Jugoslovenski ženski savez / Jugoslovenska ženska zveza), etc.

Angela Vode was one of the most prominent feminist and socialist thinkers in Yugoslavia and continuously wrote on topics regarding women's, children's, and workers' rights. She was one of the most well-read, original, articulated, and innovative interwar Yugoslav intellectuals and thought of herself as a feminist as well as a communist. Especially in a time of global financial crisis she was a vicious critic of fascism, imperialism, and capitalism (she saw all three concepts interconnected), and offered some of the most intellectually stimulating contributions on these topics.

As a devoted antifascist, she could not accept Stalin's pact with Hitler (1939), and was therefore expelled from the Party. This was a crucial turning point in her political activism that had a huge impact on her life after the Second World War. During the war, she organized humanitarian aid for refugees and their families until she was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in 1944. She was imprisoned for six months, until she was released due to a fortunate turn of events. This was not her only imprisonment. In 1947 she was accused of treason in a show trial called the "Nagode Trial" and was sentenced to twenty years in prison and the deprivation of her civil rights for five years. She was held in prison for more than five years, until she was 61 years old. But even after she was pardoned, she was not allowed to do any public work, her name was deliberately censored, and her books were unavailable. Or, as she put it herself: "In fact my life was over in 1941, and then really over in 1945."²

Angela Vode died in 1985, only occasionally and privately remembered. The first and only public interview with her was published a year before her death. She did not make many new statements, but instead repeated what she had already said or was said about her. She seemed to be resigned and tired of her long life: "As I say, my life is not that bad, I live modestly, but anyways, I still live and live. I don't know, it's just the way it is."³ Her work was rediscovered in the late 1980s and her life and work received feminist attention in the 1990s. Today her most important works, as well as her memoirs, are reprinted, contextualized, and extensively used as historical sources. Her intellectual work, especially about the role of women in society, is still as relevant as it was almost a century ago.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Žena v sedanji družbi* [The Woman in Contemporary Society] (Maribor: Žena in dom, 1934); *Spol in usoda* [Gender and Destiny] (Ljubljana: Naša žena, 1938); *Zbrana dela Angele Vode* [Collected Works of Angela Vode], vol. 1, *Spol in upor* [Gender and Rebellion], eds. Mirjam Milharčič-Hladnik and Karmen Klavžar (Ljubljana: Krtina, 1998); vol. 2, *Značaj in usoda*

2 Angela Vode in letter to Erna Muser, quoted in: Mirjam Milharčič-Hladnik, "Spol in upor" [Gender and Rebellion], *Zbrana dela Angele Vode* [Collected Works of Angela Vode], vol. 1, 20.

3 Buttolo, "O inteligenci in intelektualcih. Pogovor z Angelo Vodetovo," 2791.

[Character and Destiny], eds. Mirjam Milharčič- Hladnik (Ljubljana: Krtina, 1999); vol. 3, *Spomin in pozaba* [Memory and Oblivion] (Ljubljana: Krtina, 2000); *Skriti spomin* [Hidden Memory], ed. Alenka Puhar (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2006).

Manca G. Renko

CONTEXT⁴

The selected text consists of excerpts from three different chapters of the book *Žena v sedanji družbi* (The Woman in Contemporary Society), originally published in 1934 and later reprinted in *Spol in upor* (Gender and Rebellion, 1998), the first of three volumes of Vode's main works, edited and contextualized by Mirjam Milharčič-Hladnik. *The Woman in Contemporary Society* was Vode's book debut and includes the first comprehensive feminist analysis of the position of women in Slovenia, together with a historical overview of inequalities between women and men. At the time, the book was very timely, especially in the ways the author managed to analyze the danger of fascism as the most deviant part of the capitalist system.

When the book was published, Angela Vode was 42 years old. In the same year, Yugoslav King Alexander was assassinated in Marseilles, and the political and social situation in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia remained tense, full of political unfreedom, police terror, and persecution. The Communist Party had already been banned in December 1920, followed by the systematic persecution, torture, and imprisonment of its members. By the early 1930s, Yugoslavia (and Slovenia) was struck by the global economic crisis, which was especially harsh on women. Political and economic unfreedoms were omnipresent for women: they had no political rights (no active or passive voting rights) and were hardly able to achieve any economic independence.

There was a range of issues that Vode pointed out as crucial women's rights: education, employment, economic independence, public and political work, and social equality. The excerpts presented in this volume focus on women's economic independence and women in the public sphere, concepts that she fiercely defended and even personified in the interwar period. Vode's own economic independence and outspoken demeanor made her a role model for many women. After the Second World War, when she was not allowed to work, she lost two things that were very valuable to her: financial independence and the right to speak (and do intellectual work). In the book's conclusion, Vode sums up several topics that she found the most important, especially the dangers of fascism for women (and men) in those uncertain times: "Our position is not very bright, but fascism won't save us."⁵

4 The chapter was written as part of the EIRENE project funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No. 742683: Post-War Transitions in Gendered Perspective: The Case of the North-Eastern Adriatic region).

5 Vode, *Žena v sedanji družbi*, 91; reprint: 209.

For Angela Vode, economic independence was the precondition for women to become independent human beings. She saw economic rights as far more important than political rights. With economic independence, she claimed, a woman could become an equal citizen even if there was not a single law on gender equality. The global economic crisis and the spread of Italian and German fascism, which she directly connected to capitalism, made her skeptical of women's suffrage. Women's right to vote did not prevent Italy from having a fascist government, as she argued in *The Woman in Contemporary Society*. She saw parliamentarism as subordinated to capitalism, and therefore believed that political rights meant nothing without economic safety. Angela Vode problematized democracy not only within the autocratic Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but also as part of the capitalist system that in her opinion led to fascism: "Big capital is looking for a way out of the crisis. When it saw that all the paths along which profit had flowed were closed, it resorted to *autarky*. [...] The bearer of this movement is fascism."⁶ She was one of the first to analyze the role of women in fascism and drew attention to the dangers of nostalgia for the good old days, when a woman was supposed to be a happy housewife, a devoted wife, and selfless mother without any real education, professional ambitions, economic independence, and access to public life.

With the economic crisis, women in Yugoslavia were forced to leave their professions and dedicate themselves to their households. Employed married women were condemned as double earners, and faulted for the unemployment of people who needed work to survive. This was a widely debated topic in the public sphere, where socialists and feminists opposed the idea of decreasing the number of women in public services. Some chapters of *The Woman in Contemporary Society* are based on these debates, deepening the analysis of the structural problems faced by women seeking economic independence.

Throughout the book, Vode showcased how the woman question was an integral part of the social, economic, and cultural questions. At the time, she self-identified as both a socialist and a feminist, a combination considered highly suspicious later, in socialist Yugoslavia. The predominant (official) postwar ideology denied the legitimacy of a separate woman question and foregrounded the social question instead, with the claim that the liberation of the proletariat (*osvoboditev proletariata*) would lead to the liberation of women (*osvoboditev žensk*). Feminism was considered a movement of the liberal bourgeoisie and was therefore erased from public discourse, together with the works of Angela Vode. In this way, one of the most eloquent examples of how socialism and feminism could be combined was pushed into oblivion.

6 Vode, *Žena v sedanji družbi*, 71; reprint: 183–4.

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Manca G. Renko

* * *

Angela Vode

The Woman in Contemporary Society

The Meaning of Women's Economic Independence

A woman's economic independence, enabled by her professional work, represents a great gain for her, particularly from a personal point of view. A newly acquired sense of autonomy—the knowledge that she does not have to depend on anyone and can make a living with her own skills—produces a singular confidence in the economically independent woman. This confidence in turn completely transforms her relationship to life as a whole. If she once prioritized the material and social status of the prospective husband, she can now choose a life companion according to her own preferences. If she cannot find such a companion, single life does not present as great a burden for her as it once did for the old maid, who lacked both a job and a sense of purpose. Indeed, she may choose to avoid marriage for the sake of security completely, and in this way avoid the hopeless life that is all too often the result of loveless unions. It is only the economically independent woman who can also become an independent human being. Independence is among the most significant factors that impact character. It follows naturally that only the independent woman is also free to shape her own character. The qualities of the slave, nurtured over thousands of years, are gradually shaken off, and the economically independent woman begins to walk side by side with man as an equal. As they were not raised with this expectation, men may experience difficulties in taking up this new role. However, an intelligent man will find that a wife who can be his spiritual and material equal is more appealing than a wife who behaves merely as a female mate. And, in any case, the marriage of two people who can, out of mutual economic independence, afford a union of love is doubtless a more moral

bond than the antiquated form of marriage that all too often represents nothing more than the search for material security.

Economic independence also reorients the woman's relationship to public life. First of all, she begins to perceive and take an interest in public life, realizing that she is part of a whole. The understanding that all of our endeavors should be in service of society rather than the individual begins to dawn within her. This realization serves as the strongest driving force in the formation of a sense of personhood, the value of which can only be properly assessed in the relation between the individual and the community.

The employed woman conceives of life entirely differently than the woman whose only preoccupation is the household. Employment broadens her horizons and enables an understanding of social phenomena and relations. Working with others allows the employed woman to develop her social sense, previously limited to the care and love of her children. The employed woman begins to learn that her well-being also implies the well-being of her environment, and vice versa. These tendencies introduce the employed woman into her community of class-belonging. In time, she learns the meaning of solidarity.

Today, women have become nominally equal citizens in many countries that do not contain written laws on female equality. However, the conviction that women are as equal and capable as men is surely of more worth than a paper law that may change from day to day. There are countless examples of this in modern countries.

These are the positive aspects of women's economic independence. Unfortunately, women all too frequently do not have an understanding of these aspects, particularly in our local professional milieus. This is the case because women were not raised and educated to appreciate values that lie outside the framework of their individualistically oriented understanding.

[...]

Women in the Public Sphere

The instant a woman leaves the confines of her home in pursuit of income, she enters the public sphere. This path is the only one capable of opening doors into other domains of public life, including the domain that gives public life its direction and meaning: politics.

Most women do not consciously embark on this path as most are not aware of the inescapable interrelation of all social affairs. All too often, a woman who seeks employment has never taken an interest in the events of public life that influence her fate. Perhaps public life has never influenced women so directly that their frustration might become tangible, as it were. Most women indifferently

allow others—mostly men and perhaps a handful of women—to resolve the issues of society, law, education, and the economy. In doing so, women do not develop the awareness that these are the issues that determine their fate, not only as professional workers but also as wives and mothers.

Although there have been a number of women over the course of history who have directly or indirectly influenced public affairs, they have only done this as individuals. Typically, these were women who achieved great success by employing their femininity. However, the influence of these few women did not transform the nature of the whole in which the position of women was dictated by primarily economic mechanisms. It was only when economic changes began to alter the circumstances in which women lived that their prospects for participating in public life became a real, albeit often unacknowledged, necessity. As previously mentioned, a number of factors allow us to understand why the majority of women have not felt and still do not feel this necessity. Even today, most women display a remarkable resistance toward all activities that require direct political engagement. The sociologist Mathilde Vaerting⁷ argues that this resistance is due to the fact that all socially oppressed classes are conceived of as politically incompetent. In truth, no one can prove their competence or incompetence for work that they are not allowed to do. The principle that politics is a male business, too dirty to be suitable for women's participation, remains prevalent to this day. Such prattle surely speaks poorly of the men who defend this conviction and nevertheless continue to participate in politics. In this way, they indict themselves as co-conspirators in political dirtiness. We can only suspect that it was they themselves who corrupted political life in this manner, thus neglecting the true purposes of politics—the care for public well-being and service in the name of the community. And if *community* is what is at stake, then politics by definition cannot be an exclusively male affair. Marriage law, social security, the care of children, protections for the working wife, housing politics, the determination of wages—all of these issues impact women, particularly the housewife and the mother, in a more tangible manner than they do men. Moreover, deliberations over war and peace also in reality involve women more than they do men. While it is true that only men directly engage in warfare, women in fact suffer more than men as they must not only go hungry, but also care for the wounded, wander the world as refugees, and also sacrifice to war those who are dearest to them, their sons. And yet, men's faulty

7 Editor's note: Mathilde Vaerting (1884–1977) was a German pedagogue and sociologist. In 1923 she became the first full professor for education at the University of Jena. She was among the first women in Germany to receive a chair at a university (and later lost it due to the *Säuberung des Lehrkörpers* ["cleansing of educational bodies"] after the National Socialist seizure of power). Here, Vode refers to her book *Neubegründung der Psychologie von Mann und Weib: Die weibliche Eigenart im Männerstaat und die männliche Eigenart im Frauenstaat* (Founding the Psychology of Man and Woman Anew: The Female Character in the State of Men and the Male Character in the State of Women), published in 1921. The English translation was published in 1923 with the title *The Dominant Sex: A Study in the Sociology of Sex Differentiation*.

arguments have convinced women that these affairs are none of their business, thus reinforcing their passive role. As a result, the number of women participating in public life is extremely low almost everywhere in the world. This is also the reason for the relatively low number of adherents to the women's movement, despite the fact that this movement advocates not only for the right to work, but also for social equality in general. The women's movement has asked concrete questions, and all women should immediately recognize the importance of these questions for their own lives.

In essence, the demands of the bourgeois women's movement are the following: women should be granted equal rights as men in the political, legal, and economic domains. Women, whether married or single, should receive equal pay for their work. Legal protections for the worker woman-mother! Expert organizations in which women participate should be supported as the most efficient means of defending the working woman. An unmarried mother and her child should enjoy equal rights as a married mother and her child. Protections for women and children should be granted not as acts of mercy but as legally recognized rights. Women should be granted the same rights as men as regards changing citizenship. Parental financial support should be issued to women. The chief cause of prostitution is economic hardship, and therefore, the first condition of its elimination is the betterment of economic conditions on the basis of social equality and justice. The market for underage girls, as well as all other exceptional, negative circumstances that involve lower-class women, should be eliminated through regulation! Double moral standards are to be opposed! Women should hold positions of power in police departments that assess cases pertaining to women and children. The first condition of the struggle for long-term peace is the cessation of economic, military, political, and cultural terror, and the adherence of all nations to the principle that each and every war of aggression is a crime.

These are demands that all women should recognize and support. And yet...

After the Great War, country after country granted women political rights. However, as mentioned above, the number of women that fully employed these rights was relatively limited. It seems as if workers' parties, the politically most mature of parties, have been most successful in representing women's rights. The deficient quality of the lives of working-class women makes them more aggressive than bourgeois women who are better situated. The proletarianization of bourgeois women represents a decisive shift in this area as well.

At the same time, to expect women to achieve complete equality with men on the basis of political rights is to fall prey to false hopes. After all, what level of inequality reigns even in those countries that have granted women political rights? The mother, working both professionally and as a housewife, has less right to her child than the father, and this despite her greater contribution to the child's upkeep. And even when the husband is responsible for the marriage's annulment, he still has the last word in deciding the child's fate. Indeed, the situation of the divorced

woman represents the best example of women's disempowerment today, despite our supposed age of women's emancipation. It is well-known that a wife cannot acquire a passport without her husband's permission, she cannot sign a binding contract without his approval, and yet he may make use of her wealth as he pleases, and so on.

Today, the world is experiencing a social crisis along with an economic one. Inevitable consequences will follow. The rights women have struggled for during the last decades are losing their power. Voting rights, for example, have become so restricted that they now resemble little more than a remnant from the history of parliamentary democracies. Thus, the women's movement faces new questions and new decisions, emerging from the realization that women in countries that have granted them political rights are hardly better off than women in countries that have yet to recognize such rights. The battle for survival is at the forefront today, and all political rights put together cannot prevent millions of "politically equal" people from starving to death. In response to this realization, our work must aspire toward equality in a society organized not on the exploitation of the weak by the strong, but on the ethical foundations of social justice.

[...]

Forward or Backward?

[...] And so the woman of today finds herself caught between two powerful forces that attempt to exert their influence on her position. On the one hand, saviors rise up with promises that are too tempting, especially for uneducated women, to consciously and knowingly resist them. On the other hand, the most unforgiving force of all, development, opposes these saviors. Reactionaries would like to push women back into a dependency that they present as a sort of lost paradise, whereas economic development knows no path back to forms of society and labor that can never return. General cultural progress opposes fascist attempts to spin the wheel of history in reverse. These attempts may impair the natural course of events, but they have never been able, and are not able today, to entirely stop or dismantle it. Despite such optimistic faith, the question of women's conscious aspirations is not meaningless. There is no hiding from the fact that most decisions on these matters are incredibly difficult for the majority of women. Although they are aware that their independence can only be based on work and income, the critical experience of our time is too bitter, and can only damage women's belief in their independence. In particular, women now understand that the rights they have struggled for in the last decades have questionable value today. Indeed, in many countries women had already experienced defeat in all areas of life before even the minimum of their political aspirations was achieved.

[...] And how did women accept this defeat? Developments in Germany over the last years offer the most representative answer. We learn from these developments that women themselves significantly contributed to their defeat. We have studied the causes of this fact. Because economic development takes precedence over political rights, women's political rights did not crucially impact women's economic position. Moreover, most women did not entirely understand the gains made in social and legal protections, as they could not properly assess the differences between the past and present. Women's thought tends to be entirely pragmatic, and so they mostly felt the economic ground shaking beneath them. The more an economic crisis intensifies, the more difficult a woman's position. Economic growth elevated the working woman and emancipated her spiritually and politically, but the economic fallout now once again pushes her into poverty and dependence. Out of all social phenomena, women felt this particular one most intensely, experiencing its consequences on their own flesh-and-blood bodies. As they searched for a way out of these insufferable conditions, saviors appeared in the form of fascists. Fascists promised a transformation of society so that women could once again live the painless life of the bourgeois housewives. Women cling to these promises as if to a lifeline. The only exceptions are women who consciously understand themselves as part of the working class and those that aspire, in full knowledge of the meaning of progress, toward emancipation and equality. However, as we have suggested, these women are now a weakened minority, isolated and disappointed in the era of fascism's great promise. With bitterness in their hearts, they gaze at the masses of unknowing bourgeois women, rushing beneath billowing flags towards the shelter of matrimony and "quiet family happiness."

In our own society as well, we can trace the same mentality that characterizes the women of bourgeois social classes elsewhere. Only very few women can be mobilized toward ideological movement, and most only strive to have a narrow understanding of their own material interests. The nightmare that is a life of insecurity hinders any united action, and the impoverishment of collective spirit and humanistic knowledge hinders any organization capable of putting up a real fight.

The women's movement justifiably emphasized the economic emancipation of women, identifying economic emancipation as the foundation for the transformation of the female mentality. However, it neglected every conscious education of the new working masses that emerged from the ranks of bourgeois women. The pioneers of the women's movement waged a struggle for political rights without realizing the danger of voting rights when wielded by the unknowing bourgeois female voter. Fascism rose to a dominant position with the help of bourgeois voting women, and from there it snatched the voting rights of both men and women. Finally, for the benefit of financial moguls, it dismantled the power of the people to congregate, deliberate, and decide. Monopoly capitalism impoverished women, and

its executive organ—fascism—politically disenfranchised them. And in the height of tragic irony, thousands and thousands of women's hands rise in a salute to fascism.

Women need to understand the meaning of their path as they enter public economic life. They have joined the collective workers' front; from this expanded vantage point, they should examine their new position and knowingly come to appropriate conclusions. And yet, these conclusions are currently missing. The new working woman's front has remained intellectually and emotionally barred from the enormous labor complex of our present age. While in reality women are increasingly proletarianized, they continue to cautiously oscillate between the two defining poles of modern society: big capital and the proletariat. When the true state of the woman, like the proletariat, became increasingly declassed and exploited, women desperately clung to the traditions of the middle class, thinking that this class still lived the comfortable life of the secure bourgeoisie. The economic crisis hit too suddenly for women to understand their new position in this era. In short: following the economic crisis, the newly formed working women's masses retained the characteristics of the typical petit bourgeois, participating in the unfortunate fate of this social class. Women sail this wild sea without sail or rudder, subject to the whims of the fatal waves. In this state of panic, they search for lifelines and, out of desperation and suffering, extend their hands toward possible saviors. The desperate and loud cries of the bourgeoisie are heard by modern "leaders." They respond to the earnest desires of the drowning petite bourgeoisie with demagogic trickery and an already prepared program that they propagate with a volume and conviction that is only matched by its falseness. "We must eliminate capital's exploitation and destruction of the small businessman and craftsman and prevent the rowdy working class from fixing wages—only then will the golden age when the bourgeoisie sat around meat-filled pots return!" In Germany, women were promised by this new movement a new phantasmagorical bundle of joyous marriages. Occasionally, they were even similar to old Aryan Germanic rituals.

With a fervor that could almost be envied, the million-strong masses of the declassed bourgeoisie cheer on their "leaders," themselves led and financed from behind closed curtains by the great enemy itself—the monolith of high finance—against which the outrage of the bourgeoisie was targeted in the first place.

Truly, the world has never before seen such a shocking game, played with the interests of millions of lives. And yet it seems that humanity must drink this chalice of suffering to the very bottom *before its path may turn skyward again—towards sun and joy.*

These simple words should be contemplated by our women. The little man is also tempted by these so-called "leaders" in our lands. Our position is not very bright, but fascism will not save us.

2

Women and War

Žena danas Editorial Board

The New Feminism

AUTHOR The editorial board of the magazine *Žena danas*

TITLE “Novi feminizam” [The New Feminism]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Žena danas*, no. 1 (1936): 4. The excerpts used have been taken from *Žena danas. Brojevi 1/1936–33/1944. Fototipsko izdanje* [Woman Today. Issues 1/1936–33/1944. Phototype Edition] (Belgrade: Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena Jugoslavije, 1966).

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

The magazine *Žena danas* (Woman Today) was published in Belgrade in the second half of the 1930s. Twenty-nine issues (September 1936 to August–September 1940) were preserved, whereas the thirtieth, which was the last prewar issue, was confiscated by the police, and the magazine was discontinued. According to available secondary sources, the magazine was printed in three to five thousand copies. However, it is assumed that even more women read each of the copies because it was widely shared.¹ Three issues were published during the Second World War. In the postwar period, *Žena danas* was published as an official magazine of the Women’s Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena, AFŽ), the communist women’s mass organization in socialist Yugoslavia, which in 1945 also became a member of the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF). The magazine was discontinued in 1981.

Žena danas was an antifascist magazine for democracy and peace, pursuing a (left) feminist political agenda, with a profile attracting the youth. The magazine’s editors were members and sympathizers of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ), and they mostly belonged to a broader antifascist and antiregime youth movement, the *napredna omladina* (progressive youth) active in the 1930s in urban centers of Yugoslavia. The KPJ had been illegal since 1920, and after a long period of factional struggles and ultra-leftism, it consolidated around 1932 and undertook a “united front from below” strategy of cooperation with various political parties.² The cooperation and the attempts of the KPJ to legalize its activities increased particularly after the antifascist turn in the Comintern in 1933–1934, following Hitler’s rise to power.³ In this context, a group of antifascist

1 Barać, *Feministička kontrajavnost*, 167.

2 Stefan Gužvica, *Before Tito: The Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Great Purge (1936–1940)* (Tallin: Tallin University Press, 2020), 53.

3 Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (Houndsmills: Macmillan Press, 1996), 120–57.

and communist women students, including the literature student and KPJ member Mitra Mitrović (1912–2001), established *Žena danas* as a magazine which would speak to young women and educate them politically. Apart from Mitrović, the members of the editorial board included biology PhD student Dušica Stefanović, law student Nataša Jeremić, art history student Milica Šuvaković, lawyer in training Olga Alkalaj, Jelisaveta Beška Bembasa, Olga Jojić, and others.⁴ Except for Mitrović, all of the women listed here were killed during the Second World War. Because these women were all associated with the illegal KPJ, it was necessary to have someone else list their name as the official editor of the periodical. So the young women made contact with women from well-known Belgrade families, and sympathetic towards the KPJ, to take responsibility as the magazine's main editors. The first editor was Radmila Dimitrijević, then Olga Timotijević (February 1938 until 1940), and Mira Vučković and Ljerka Babić (in 1940).⁵ Many women from across Yugoslavia contributed to the magazine, including the writer Milka Žicina (1902–1984), the feminist and communist activist Angela Vode, the Jewish left-wing pedagogist and anthropologist Vera Stein Erlich,⁶ and many others.

Although the magazine was formally independent from any organization, it was closely connected to the work of *Ženski pokret*'s Youth Section in Belgrade. *Ženski pokret* (Women's Movement) was the first self-identified feminist organization in Belgrade, established in 1919. In 1923, the Belgrade branch of *Ženski pokret* was one of the founding organizations of the Feminist Alliance (*Feministička alijansa*), the first national feminist alliance which gathered feminists from Belgrade, Ljubljana, Zagreb, and other parts of Yugoslavia. The organization was restructured in 1926 and renamed the Women's Movements' Alliance (*Alijansa ženskih pokreta*). From then on, the Alliance only incorporated other *Ženski pokret* organizations that had been established across Yugoslavia in the meantime. While on the rise in the 1920s, the organization's growth was hindered in the early 1930s. In the context of the Royal Dictatorship (1929–1934)—when King Aleksandar Karađorđević abolished the Yugoslav parliament and assumed dictatorial powers—and the rise of fascism in Europe, these feminists chose a strategy of excluding demands for women's suffrage from their program. The Alliance and *Ženski pokret* organizations were revived only in the mid-1930s, when young communist women began to establish *Ženski pokret* Youth Sections. Despite the ideological and generational differences between the women from *Ženski pokret* and the young communist women who formed *Ženski pokret*'s Youth Sections during the second half of the 1930s, they established cooperation on the basis of their shared antifascist beliefs in the framework of the Popular

4 Mitrović, "Žena danas"; "Žena danas," in *Žene Srbije u NOB*.

5 See "Žena danas," in *Žene Srbije u NOB*, 70.

6 See Angela Vode and Ina Jun-Broda in this volume.

Front.⁷ The Ženski pokret Youth Section in Belgrade was active from 1935 until 1940, and was initiated by Mitra Mitrović and her fellow activists. The Women's Movements' Alliance ceased to function in 1940.

The most important magazine to which the editors of *Žena danas* looked was the French Popular Front magazine *Les Femmes dans l'action mondial* (Women in Global Action), published from 1934 to 1939 in Paris by the Women's World Committee against War and Fascism (WWCWF, Comité mondial des femmes contre la guerre et le fascisme). In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, two similar magazines were published, albeit not at the same time: *Ženski svijet* (Women's World) in Zagreb (1939–1941), and *Naša žena* (Our Woman) in Ljubljana (from 1941 onward). Moreover, *Žena danas* was only one of the many magazines in a transnational network of magazines influenced by *Les Femmes*, among which were the Spanish magazine *Mujeres*, *Woman Today* in the United States, the British *Woman To-day*, and the Chilean *La Mujer Nueva*, as well as the French youth magazine *Jeunes filles de France*.⁸ These local initiatives were connected to the WWCWF, initiated by French feminist and antifascist activist Gabrielle Duchêne in 1934.⁹ Duchêne also wrote the introductory text for the first issue of *Žena danas*, in which she invited the women of Yugoslavia to join this (global) cause for peace and freedom.¹⁰ Overall, *Žena danas* is a unique source for researching feminist activism and women's political thought in Yugoslavia in the 1930s.

Isidora Grubački

CONTEXT

In the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929—a relatively dynamic feminist movement developed. In the interwar period, the legal position of women in different parts of Yugoslavia slightly varied due to six different inherited legal systems from the nineteenth century.

7 Grubački, "Communism, Left Feminism, and Generations."

8 See Grubački, "Communism, Left Feminism, and Generations," 50; Stanislava Barać, "Žena danas (1936–1940) i kultura sećanja" [The Magazine *Žena danas* (1936–1940) and Culture of Remembrance], in Barać, *Časopis Žena danas*, 26. For an analysis of some of these magazines, see Jelena Lalatović, "Internacionalizam ženske periodike: časopisi *Žena danas* i *Woman Today* (1936–1937)" [Internationalism of the Women's Press: *Žena danas* (1936–1940) and *The Woman Today* (1936–1937)], in Barać, *Časopis Žena danas*, 127–46; Mercedes Yusta, "The Strained Courtship between Antifascism and Feminism: From the Women's World Committee (1934) to the Women's International Democratic Federation (1945)," in *Rethinking Antifascism: History, Memory and Politics, 1922 to the Present*, eds. Hugo García et al. (New York–Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), 167–84; Jasmine Calver, "'Warphans' and 'Quiet' Heroines: Depictions of Chinese Women and Children in the Comité Mondial des femmes contre la guerre et le fascisme's Campaigns during the Second Sino-Japanese War," *International Review of Social History* 67, Special Issue 30 (April 2022): 23–47.

9 Jasmine Calver, *Anti-fascism, Gender, and International Communism: The Comité Mondial des Femmes Contre la Guerre et le Fascisme, 1934–1941* (London–New York: Routledge, 2023).

10 Barać, *Feministička kontrajavnost*, 191–92.

However, in all these places women had no active or passive suffrage rights, had relative rights to conduct business, and married women were legally and by custom subjected to their husbands, who in most cases had to approve all of their legal actions.¹¹ When it came to their level of education, while women were obliged to go to elementary school and had the right to study at universities, women's literacy rate was 43.6% in 1931, and only 33.3% of women went to elementary school in 1938–39.¹² The feminist movement had broadly defined feminist demands, which encompassed suffrage, legal and social reforms, equal professional opportunities, the inclusion of women in the administration of the state, equal pay for equal work, and many others.

The main feminist organization was the Feminist Alliance (Feministička alijansa), in 1926 restructured and renamed The Women's Movements' Alliance (Alijansa ženskih pokreta). As explained above in more detail, the revival of the Alliance happened only in the mid-1930s, when a new generation of feminists entered the public sphere, many of them sympathizers or members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ), who formed the Youth Sections of local *Ženski pokret* organizations. For the communist women and more generally the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, illegal since 1921, this cooperation was a way to legalize their activities, whereas for *Ženski pokret* organizations it was a way to revive and rejuvenate the organization.¹³ The cooperation between the two, however, should be seen as more than a simple "exchange"; referring to the *Ženski pokret* leadership in a text she wrote and published in 1959, Mitra Mitrović said the following: "[...] remembering those boisterous youthful days of struggle, I cannot avoid highlighting a certain open-mindedness of those women who gave us roofs over our heads, because thanks to the existence of the Youth Section, almost all active antifascist women of the time went through their organization."¹⁴

From 1936, a group of women close to, but declaratively independent of *Ženski pokret* and its Youth Sections, began to publish the magazine *Žena danas*, an anti-fascist, pacifist Popular Front magazine. The magazine had a communist background which, because of the illegal status the Communist Party had in Yugoslavia, had to remain unstated. Many of the editors of the magazine belonged to a generation of students politically radicalized in the context of the royal dictatorship, and gathered in communist circles at the University of Belgrade.¹⁵ As a part of the *napredni stu-*

11 Neda Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku* [The "Woman Question" in Serbia in the 19th and 20th Centuries] (Belgrade: Devedesetčetvrta–Žene u crnom, 1996), 95–103; Jovanka Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama 1918–1941* [The Women of Yugoslavia in the Workers' Movement and in Women's Organizations, 1918–1941] (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga; Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1978), 56–63.

12 Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije*, 24–25.

13 Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji*, 116–117; Barać, *Feministička kontrajavnost*, 189.

14 Mitrović, "Žena danas," 415.

15 Grubački, "Communism, Left Feminism, and Generations."

dentski pokret (progressive student movement), these women can be seen not only as members of the Youth Section of a feminist organization, but also a feminist section of the student movement. Among other things, in many of their speeches and texts, they emphasized the importance of organizing as women, and the different position female students held to their male colleagues. The student Natalija Bajić argued that the Female Students' Association (Udruženje studentkinja) was necessary because the position of women students was worse than that of their male colleagues. As an example, only male student dorms existed before the Female Students' Association managed to establish the first female students' dorm in Belgrade in 1936.¹⁶ Another example is Mitra Mitrović's 1937 speech as the president of the *Ženski pokret* Youth Section, where she discussed the difficult position of all youth, particularly young women who had suffered from the economic crisis.¹⁷

The agenda of the feminists gathered around the Youth Section of *Ženski pokret* and the magazine *Žena danas* primarily focused on democracy, peace, freedom, and suffrage. The direct anticapitalist discourses were put aside because of censorship and the illegal status of the KPJ, but also because of the Popular Front framework which implied a truce between capitalism and communism.¹⁸ The text "Novi feminizam" (The New Feminism) can be read as a kind of a manifesto of the *Žena danas* editors, and indirectly of the *Ženski pokret*'s Youth Section. The feminist demands mentioned in the program include women's suffrage rights, equal pay for equal work, broad social institutions, equal parental rights in the family, equal morality, divorce rights, and the right for work and a salary. The text offered a brief overview on the history of feminism, from women's pre-First World War, through the post-First World War years of the rise of women's participation in public life, to the "wave of the general economic crisis" which, according to the authors, specifically affected women, and the contemporary danger of war. The possibility of war, they claimed, had divided the world into two camps, "the supporters of peace and democracy and the supporters of fascism."

The writers of the text emphasized several things. First, they called for the creation of a new women's movement on mass bases, in this way making "new feminism" a broad platform for all women. Although the Women's Movements' Alliance was also open to all women, "regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity, or political views,"¹⁹ it did not manage to gather large numbers of women, so "new feminism" can be at the same time understood as a call for a transformation of feminism

16 Neda Božinović and Slavka Morić-Petrović, "Udruženje i domovi studentkinja Beogradskog Univerziteta" [The Associations and Dorms of Female Students at the University of Belgrade], in *Studentkinje beogradskog univerziteta u revolucionarnom pokretu* [Female Students of the University of Belgrade in the Revolutionary Movement], eds. Dobrica Vuловиć and Božidar Draškić (Belgrade: CMU, 1988), 30–40; Grubački, "Communism, Left Feminism, and Generations," 63.

17 "Skupština ženskog pokreta" [The Assembly of the Women's Movement], *Žena danas*, no. 4 (1937): 2–4.

18 Barać, *Feministička kontrapunktnost*, 189–90.

19 "Žena danas," in *Žene Srbije u NOB*, 57.

into a massive movement, as well as an implicit critique of the Alliance's decreased activity in the early 1930s. Secondly, "new feminism" proclaimed that feminism must not be politically neutral in the context of the upcoming war. Related to the second claim, it was specified that the "new feminism" must be for democracy, and against fascism. Therefore, antifascism and, more concretely, the struggle for peace, was the third aspect which "new feminism" platform insisted upon.

In the framework of the "new feminism" platform, the periodical published numerous articles about various issues. The periodical covered current politics, such as the Spanish Civil War and the 1938 German occupation of Czechoslovakia, the position of women in various professions, the conditions of women's work, and the problematic legal position of women in Yugoslavia.²⁰ Without explicitly mentioning the concept of revolution, *Žena danas* also published a portrait of the Polish–German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919), a text about women's roles in the French Revolution, texts about certain Soviet women, about the socialist pacifist artist Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), about the Sino–Japanese War (1937–1945), and women's positions on these wars.²¹ The magazine also published texts about peasant women from various parts of Yugoslavia and about Muslim women,²² as well as short stories, literary and art criticism, and other contributions.²³

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20 "Žena danas," in *Žene Srbije u NOB*, 70.

21 Barać, *Feministička kontrapublic*, 199–230.

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Isidora Grubački

* * *

The New Feminism

Lately, it is possible to sense a strong movement among women. You could even say that large numbers of women are joining their existing feminist organizations and establishing new ones. While for decades women's organizations served as the object of ridicule and crude jokes, today they constitute a significant agent of social life. Although its program remains unchanged, the essence of feminism has undergone great changes. These changes came from the fact that under the influence of external circumstances, the feminist program gained a special, deeper significance. Prewar feminism, which until that point constantly asserted its neutrality and did not take sides, now—wanting to or not—had to take a particular stand.

Until recently the feminist movement's program was unable to attract broad strata of women, whereas in today's changed circumstances, that same program constitutes a center around which women gather. The feminist movement represents the working woman, the progressive woman, even as it fights for the rights of all women.

The movement itself has existed since the beginning of the nineteenth century, but for many long years was unable to represent all women. Up until the World War, women entered social life at a very slow rate, conquering positions nimbly; however, it was only the outbreak of the World War that drew women into the swirl of production. Under remarkably difficult circumstances, women had to test their own abilities. The immediate postwar period had to be spent rebuilding what had been destroyed over the years. In this way, women were able to participate in production in ever greater numbers since their labor, too, was needed.

What the first feminist organizations sought for decades—the right to vote—women won in the majority of advanced countries quite easily, given an obvious need. The participation of women in public life created an entire host of social institutions which primarily serve to protect children and mothers. Women are becoming aware of their rights and want to secure them through their organizations.

After several years of economic enthusiasm came a wave of general economic crisis, which has impacted women first and foremost. Many countries, especially

fascist ones, attempted to solve the issue of unemployment by removing women from production and driving them out from higher education. In addition, men's income has continued to decrease, such that they are much less able to feed their families, whose members have ended up without work. Women are being pushed out from jobs to a much greater degree. As a result of this and of the rising danger of war, women are forced, today more than ever, to gather around their organizations, to defend the legacy of many years of growth and struggle, to maintain their positions, and to realize their long-term demands. In this respect, the women's movement meets with other factions that seek to defend individual freedom. Those events that have divided the entire world into two camps—advocates of peace and democracy, and advocates of fascism—these are the same events that also made women decide to take their place in the democratic camp. Because even the feminist program itself—which demands the right to vote for women, equal work for equal pay, broader social facilities, equal rights for each parent in a family, moral equality, the facilitation of divorce, and the right to work and earn a wage—can send women directly on the path to democracy.

The program of the feminist movement gains significance when it becomes a part of the general struggle for the preservation of democracy. Today we see clearly that with a single decree fascist countries stripped women of all the rights they had gained throughout the years. Fascist ideology is founded on the idea that women are considered second-class citizens who are not able to perform public work, and as such must return to the hearth of the home. The fascist “hearth of the home” is the greatest fallacy by which women are fooled into giving up their social roles without a fight. In Germany today a woman has to serve as a reproductive machine, so that there will be enough soldiers for fascism's militant plans. There is one legacy the fascists have not taken from German women. And that is the right to vote. And this is only because this right can never be exercised. A German woman, as a German man, can vote, but cannot choose whom to vote for. This is why they allowed her this right.

It is also important that a woman is removed only from those positions from which money is earned. No one protests against the hard agrarian labor of women and children, where a woman works alongside her husband and father, but the most competent women are ruthlessly removed from all paid positions and their access to higher education is prevented.

On the other hand, we have democratic countries like France. In the fight for the preservation of democracy, women have performed on par with men, won all rights for themselves, and today we see them in the highest positions of state administration. Scientists like Mrs. Curie-Joliot and others can serve as an example to all women, to show that in democratic countries competence alone decides your position, and women are forced by the circumstances to accept one of these two paths.

The change in the essence of feminism is best understood according to the order in which the demands have been placed. The feminist struggle's key issue thus far—a woman's right to vote—takes on a secondary meaning, and above all else enforces a demand that feminist organizations only began emphasizing in the postwar years, that being the struggle for peace. Feminism does not only seek an equal footing with men, as today that would mean equality in misery and unemployment, equality on the battlefield and in death, but seeks a leveling and equality for all people in a more beautiful and better future.

Translated by Suzana Vuljevic

Ina Jun-Broda

Two Poems by a *Partizanka*

AUTHOR Ina Jun-Broda

TITLE “Samokritika” [Self-Criticism]; “Drugarica Smilja diskutira s drugom Bogom”
[Comradess Smilja Discusses with Comrade God]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED not published¹

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian / Croatian-Serbian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ina Jun-Broda (also known as Ina Erlich-Schwarz/Erlih-Švarc; 1902, Zagreb–1983, Zagreb)² was a poet and translator. She was born into a respectable Jewish intellectual family. Her father was Adolf Erlich, the engineer, and her mother was Ida (née Eisner). She was the youngest child in the family, having had four half-brothers and one sister, **Vera Stein Erlich** (1897–1980, see below).

Ina Jun-Broda’s upbringing and education were bilingual (Croatian and German). After elementary school and *licej* (from the French *lycée*, a secondary school with a focus on humanities) in Zagreb, she then continued her education in music, graduating in 1919. In the early 1920s, she married the then-student, later doctor Milivoj Schwarz, with whom she had a son, Aleksandar Alel, born in 1923.³ After leaving her first husband in 1929, she spent the 1930s specializing in the field of rhythmic gymnastics in Vienna, Prague, and Geneva. She opened a private school for rhythmic and health gymnastics in Zagreb, later also leading the orthopedic and gymnastics ward in the state school polyclinic in Zagreb.

In the 1930s, Ina Jun-Broda also became closer to the intellectual circle of the Jewish left-wing intelligentsia in Zagreb, the so-called Stein Circle, where she met her second husband, Miroslav Juhn (1897–1941), whom she married in 1941. This circle was founded by Ina Jun-Broda’s sister, the social anthropologist Vera Stein Erlich (1897–1980) and her partner, the physician Beno Stein (1890–1941). The Stein Circle gathered a group of intellectuals of different backgrounds who discussed various

1 The author never published these poems, neither in Croatian nor in translation. Notably, an earlier version of the translation of the poem “Samokritika” (Self-Criticism) was published in the online visual archive of the ERC project War&Fun: Reconceptualizing Wartime and Its Experience, on which Iva Jelušić collaborated as a postdoctoral researcher. Link to the post: <https://www.cmi.no/resource/1617-ina-the-poet>.

2 The family name is spelled in at least three different ways in publications, correspondence, and official documents: Ehrlich, Erlich, and Erlih are all in use. For Vera Stein Erlich, we chose this version because this was the name under which she most frequently published in English.

3 Some sources also report 1924 as the year of his birth.

important social issues and new approaches while being predominantly interested in psychology and pedagogy, as well as in Marxism and socialism. Stein Erlich's biography is much more well-known than her sister's. After pursuing her education in psychology and pedagogy in Vienna and Berlin, Vera Stein Erlich published several books about pedagogy in the 1930s. After the Second World War, she worked at the University of California, Berkeley, between 1952–1960, and afterwards she came back to Zagreb, where she taught social anthropology at the University of Zagreb. It was in this period that Vera Stein Erlich published her seminal work *Family in Transition: A Study of 300 Yugoslav Villages* (published in Croatian in 1964, and in English in 1966).⁴ Interestingly, both sisters in the 1930s published in leftist-oriented youth and activist magazines, including the Popular Front feminist magazine *Žena danas* (Woman Today),⁵ published in Belgrade between 1936 and 1940. In this magazine, Ina (at the time) Erlich-Švarc published several texts about the importance of gymnastics and pedagogy; among other things, she wrote about the influence of the “dictatorship of male taste” on women's self-confidence and translated a text by the US journalist Dorothy Thompson. Vera Stein Erlich's contributions were likewise the contributions of an engaged intellectual about pedagogy and youth movements, whereas she also wrote about the beginnings of her research on village families across Yugoslavia, later to be published in the aforementioned book.

The Second World War started in Yugoslavia in April 1941. Ina's son Alel and her husband Miroslav Juhn were detained by the new authorities and killed in the Jadovno concentration camp, the first concentration camp established in the Independent State of Croatia. In 1942, she fled to Split. With the help of the local branch of the Women's Antifascist Front, she transferred to the liberated territory on the mountain Mosor. Until the end of 1943 she served as a Partisan nurse, first in the emerging mountain hospital and then on the islands of Brač and Vis. After surviving a typhus infection, she was evacuated to Bari for recovery, and then Rome, where she worked as a translator for the Relief and Rehabilitation Administration of the United Nations (UNNRA) until 1948.

After the Second World War, she married the Austrian physician Engelbert Broda (1910–1983), an antifascist and communist, with whom she moved to Vienna. Their marriage was short, yet she stayed in Vienna and often visited Zagreb, and worked mainly as a translator. She was a member of the Communist Party of Austria until the Prague Spring of 1968.

Ina Jun-Broda's legacy contains her own poetry and her numerous published and not-yet-published translations. Regarding her poetry—which will be discussed more

4 Vera S. Erlich, *Porodica u transformaciji: studija u tri stotine jugoslavenskih sela* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1964); Vera St. Erlich, *Family in Transition: A Study of 300 Yugoslav Villages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966). Editor's note: Regarding the importance of her scholarly work see the entry on Žarana Papić.

5 See the entry on *Žena danas*.

in the context section—she worked on it mainly during the war and in the 1940s, publishing the poems in the anthology *Der Dichter in der Barbarei* (The Poet in a Barbaric Age). As for the translations, she translated from Croatian and Serbian to German and, less often, from German to Croatian. Regarding the latter, the most relevant are her translations of Bertolt Brecht's poems. Among her translations to German are the works of writers Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981), Ivo Andrić (1892–1975), Branko Ćopić (1915–1984), of which the most praised and successful was her translation of Krleža's *Balade Petrice Kerempuha* (The Ballads of Peter Kerempuch). Moreover, she published several relevant anthologies of Yugoslav poetry (see the bibliography below). In these anthologies, she translated poems of authors from all over Yugoslavia, including Macedonia, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. As many of her contemporaries emphasized, all the works she had translated were of her own choice, thus the selection of these poems should be seen, apart from translations, as Ina Jun-Broda's remarkable intellectual labor and contribution to contemporary Yugoslav literature. She was an appreciated translator during her life, receiving several awards and acknowledgments for her translations of Yugoslav poetry and prose to the German language, also from state institutions. Aside from the numerous published translations, her archival fond in the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts also contains her many non-published translations.⁶

Ina Jun-Broda died in her sleep during a summer vacation in Zagreb in 1983. Most of the biographical notes in this text come from obituaries listed below. While most point to Ina Jun-Broda's extensive and brilliant work, the one of Tamara Morpurgo also mentions Ina's importance as a feminist role model, noting that she belonged to “a small but selected group of those who were the first to prove that a woman, even at these Balkan crossroads of ours, can replace centuries of anonymous subjugation not only with a piano and an easel, but also with hard but successful literary and scientific work.”⁷ As Morpurgo nicely emphasized, Ina Jun-Broda represented Yugoslav creativity outside of Yugoslavia, and the possibility of a woman being a creator within Yugoslavia.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Der Dichter in der Barbarei: Gedichte* [The Poet in a Barbaric Age: Poems] (Vienna: Schönbrunn-Verlag, 1950) · MOST IMPORTANT TRANSLATIONS · *Du schwarze Erde: Lieder jugoslawischer Partisanen* [You, Black Earth: Songs of Yugoslav Partisans] (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1958); Bertolt Brecht, *Pjesme* [Poems] (Zagreb: Lykos, 1961); Miroslav Krleža, *Ohne mich: eine einsame Revolution* [Without Me: A Lonely Revolution] (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1966); *Anthologie neuerer kroatischer Lyrik* [An Anthology of New Croatian Poetry] (Zagreb: Društvo književnika Hrvatske, 1969); *Beschwingter Stein: Gedichte zeitgenössischer Dichter aus Jugoslawien*

6 More information available in: CAHJP – Central Archives for the History of Jewish People, Eventov Archives, E-14.

7 Morpurgo, “In memoriam.”

[The Exhilarated Stone. Contemporary Poetry from Yugoslavia] (Vienna–Munich: Jugend und Volk; Zagreb: Liber, 1976); Miroslav Krleža, *Balladen und Gedichte* [Ballads and Poems] (Zagreb: Kroatischer Schriftstellerverband / Društvo književnika Hrvatske, 1978).

Lucija Bakšić, Isidora Grubački, and Iva Jelušić

CONTEXT

The translated poems are a part of Ina Jun-Broda's wartime diary. Its retyped contents, entitled *Iz moje Crne bilježnice* (From my Black Notebook), are kept in her archival fond at the archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Following the April War, i.e., the German occupation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and its dismemberment in 1941, the majority of Yugoslav Jews faced internment, deportations to camps on Yugoslav territory and elsewhere in the Third Reich, and death. Many, therefore, migrated to the territories on the eastern Adriatic coast that were under Italian administration. The Italian authorities partially interned them, most notably on the islands of Rab and Lopud, but there were no deportations to German camps as long as they were in command. Some among them travelled further, to the Apennine peninsula, and some, due to ideological or purely practical reasons, joined the ranks of the communist-led resistance movement. According to official numbers, approximately five thousand Yugoslav Jews participated in the People's Liberation Struggle in a variety of positions, both in the Partisan army and in the organization of the home front.

Ina Jun-Broda joined the Yugoslav Partisans in 1943, after her husband and son had been killed. At the moment when she joined them, the presence of women on the home front as well as in the military units, in the liberated towns and villages as well as in the forest settlements, was quite a common occurrence. Women's participation in the Partisan units averaged at about ten percent, whereas in some cases it could be as high as twenty percent. According to the official estimates, approximately one hundred thousand women served in the Partisan military units during the war. In addition, the Women's Antifascist Front organized around two million women in home front assignments. Overall, despite the significant number of women in combat positions, the traditional gender division of labor persisted. As recent research has shown, women were far more likely to participate in traditional female occupations such as *sanitet* (the medical corps) than in combat.⁸ Also a nurse, Ina Jun-Broda wrote up perhaps the most pertinent summary of the position of nurses in the ranks of the Partisans in her war diary: "The attitude of soldiers and doctors towards nurses was not constant and always the same. According to the military hierarchy of

8 Batinić, *Women and Yugoslav Partisans*, 133.

the old Yugoslavia, and according to the ‘rations’ that were assigned to us, the poorest in terms of calories, we belonged to the lowest category. To the doctors and the wounded, we represented something between the ‘mother of God,’ the self-sacrificing comrade, and the ‘hospital bedpan.’” She, in several instances, notes that the position of an individual nurse—the amount of work each woman was expected to do, as well as the amount of respect of the male colleagues and of the wounded Partisans and civilians she received—mostly depended on the individual woman’s ability to manage in conditions of insecurity and severe material shortages. The great deal of emotional labor embedded in nursing each and every patient, especially children, is visible throughout the author’s diary.

Ina Jun-Broda’s war diary is a worthy chronicle of everyday life during the war in Yugoslavia. The author’s intense desire to write was realized when she met a young man willing to exchange an empty notebook for seven cigarettes, that is, she explains, a daily ration of cigarettes for women and exactly half of the ration for men. It counts around one hundred pages of episodes from the life of a small wartime community. Its main protagonists are non-combatant women who were of key importance to the Partisan army and men who were (usually) temporarily denied the experience of valued combat masculinity but tried to compensate for the loss with stoicism and sometimes song and alcohol. Many episodes bear witness to the persistence and courage of individuals, quite a few provide insight into their pettiness and self-interest, and all speak of the ongoing re-examination of traditionally defined gender roles that added an additional struggle to women’s lives during the war. For instance, she noted the conversations that happened in the so-called women’s room that, she considers, highlighted the women’s specific experience of war, including discussions about the so-called Partisan morality, the prohibition of sexual contact between women and men among the Partisans, and thoughts about the loss of menstruation, which many women experienced during the war, and which, she repeats several times, violated the very foundations of femininity. Interestingly, she touches upon the matter of war rape only briefly, although it was likely a part of reality in most if not all wartime hospitals. While the entire war diary was never published, a selection of excerpts—although, it is worth mentioning, none of those sections which were critical of individual participants of the war—can be found in the 1965/1967 edition of the *Jevrejski almanah* (Jewish Almanac).⁹

9 Ina Jun-Broda, “Iz moje *Crne bilježnice*. Sjećanja iz partizanskih bolnica na dalmatinskim otocima” [From My *Black Notebook*: Recollections from the Partisan Hospitals on the Dalmatian Islands], *Jevrejski almanah* 1965/67, 189–200, <https://www.jevrejskadigitalnabiblioteka.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/587/JAL0717brodaizmoje.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. On the journal, published between 1925–1930 and 1954–1996 (only 8 issues during this time), see Biljana Albahari and Vesna Trijić, “Uvod” [Introduction], in *Bibliografija Jevrejskog almanaha* [Bibliography of the Jewish Almanac], ed. Biljana Albahari and Vesna Trijić (Belgrade: Savez jevrejskih opština Srbije, 2023), 5–48.

In addition, the author in her diary included songs and poems that were popular among the Partisans and wrote down some of her own. As she noted in an interview in the early 1980s, the poems she wrote during the war arose out of the deeply felt need to express her own and other people's suffering. That includes "Samokritika" (Self-Criticism), the poem recorded in the diary, which spells out precisely and specifically women's problems caused by the war. A small number of the author's poems, in Croatian and German, can be found in the wartime diary. Jun-Broda's entire preserved war opus can be found in the 1950 collection entitled *Der Dichter in der Barbarei* (The Poet in a Barbaric Age). Some poems were then translated into Croatian and published in the literary magazine *Mogućnosti* (Possibilities) and in the *Jevrejski almanah* (Jewish Almanac).¹⁰

Finally, in Ina Jun-Broda's words, her writing was a response to her "need to register the first signs of the dawn of a new world and time, of a new epoch, of which we had dreamt already in our days of youth."¹¹ Historians can thus take her wartime diary as a unique source in which the author consciously attempted to seize conceptual and language change in real time, as well as catch "different stages of transformation of consciousness—political, female, humanly" in this wartime and revolutionary context.¹²

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11 Jun-Broda, "Iz moje *Crne bilježnice*," 190.

12 Arhiv odsjeka za povijest hrvatske književnosti HAZU, fond Ina Jun-Broda, box 7. Ina Jun-Broda, "Iz moje *Crne bilježnice*. Sjećanja iz partizanskih bolnica na dalmatinskim otocima," p. 3.

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Lucija Bakšić, Isidora Grubački, and Iva Jelusić

* * *

Ina Jun-Broda

Poems

Self-Criticism

(Nurse Smilja takes a self-critical look at her behavior in the past week)

I confess, comrades, it is my fault.
It is my fault that I survived every assault
While the comrades died on the mountain peaks,
I still have all my limbs.

I confess, comrades, it is my fault:
I still don't know when was the third assault¹³
Because, during the political course,
I escaped to the park through the hospital doors.

I *had* to, for a while, be alone!
I enjoyed the evening's dark tone...
A petit-bourgeois song rising from my chest was so nice and fine
Yet it certainly was not along the Party line...

Comrades, I confess that it is my fault
I sinned against the Collective.
It is horrible: I would like to have my own home, my own dreams,
My own toothbrush,
my own shoelaces,
my own shoes –
my thoughts...
my comrade and his embrace
and my child...
I know, it is not right
because of *my* kid
to forget our orphans and their grief
But I know that I would love that son of mine
even more than the Red Army and Stalin at the same time!

13 Editor's note: The poet here refers to the Third Enemy Offensive, one of seven major Axis military operations undertaken against the Yugoslav Partisans during World War II, happening in the spring and early summer of 1942 in eastern Bosnia and in Montenegro

Sitting under Tito's photo until late last night
 I spoke to our hateful ally.
 Joe is good and humble, honest, and kind
 And *ours*. But wounded—he was wounded only two times!
 Three years of fighting and still a head on his shoulder!
 I don't know, maybe he is not such a devoted soldier?
 And so, comrade Commissar, I would like to be informed
 Did I sin against our norms...

 That's all. Now let the comrades decide
 So be it as they derive.
 If I'm guilty, liquidate me.
 Put a bullet through my head simply.
 Perhaps it was meant to be –
 The real consciousness, the new, has not yet been awakened in me
 I'm confused and I have no one else to blame but me:
 I still don't know, comrades, how to live.
 Should I follow fervor or head – a new blind allegiance
 or the old compliance?
 Cold discipline or my own ardor,
 My heart or instead – the revolver???!

It is too hard, comrades, that's why I said:
 Bullet in the head. – But when they put me in front of a wall
 once again I will boldly exclaim:
 Death to fascism!!! – and freedom, freedom, freedom
 for the woman!

Translated by Iva Jelusić

Comradess Smilja Discusses with Comrade God

Comrade god! You are the responsible chief
 For war and peace
 In the world. – For chaos and order,
 For honey and tears
 Among people.

I know Marx and Freud and how the world came to be
And that you are not really here.
But to all these problems due
And for simplicity, I turn to You
(although I don't want to)
And I ask You: How on earth have you constructed a woman???

You have created, I admit, a perfect organization
For love, childbirth, and menstruation:
I have every primary and secondary
sexual trait,
all the readiness of joy and ache,
Full breasts, abounding glands,
A dream in my heart. Stars in my eyes.

And what did you give me? Carnage instead of a cuddle
A bomb on my belt, in my hand a rifle,
You even took my menstrual cycle,
Mother's milk, a sweet struggle...
Now I can't even give birth,
Only troop and execute.

I am a fighter now. And all my fortitude
Goes into the struggle. And He is a fighter –
But even when I am not his comrade, but his lover,
We do not understand each other... Why, damn it?
You who are a leader and designer, you tell me!
We are separated by centuries of male spite,
silent Dinaric female pride.

Why didn't you make me like that at once?
Eh... my God, that would be nice!
But to be like this... comrade God,
This cannot be done,
It's a sabotage!
I know, liable are fascism, capitalism
Hitler, and Draža,¹⁴
And all that baggage...

¹⁴ Editor's note: Dragoljub Draža Mihailović was a leader of the Chetnik Detachments of the Yugoslav Army, a royalist and nationalist guerilla force established after the April War of 1941.

I know my Marx, and Freud, and the rest,
 I learned who sends us into crises and bloodsheds,
 But to me You are the nearest, that's why I address you.
 Although I don't want to.
 And not only because of me, because of my pain,
 but in the name of all of us – of the WORLDWIDE FRONT of WOMEN
 W! F! W!
 I am inviting you to the conference! Make excuses!
 Take a self-critical look on the issue of the sexes,
 And we will judge you according to the new due process!!!

Translated by Iva Jelusić

Maca Gržetić

Report on Women in the People's Liberation Struggle

AUTHOR Maca Gržetić

TITLE "Iz organizacionog referata" [From the Organizational Report]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Vjesnik* [Herald], July 23, 1945, 1. Excerpts translated from *Žene Hrvatske u Narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi* [Women of Croatia in the People's Liberation Struggle], vol. 2, ed. Marija Šoljan (Zagreb: Izdanje glavnog odbora Saveza ženskih društava, 1955), 89–92.¹

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian / Croatian-Serbian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marija Maca Gržetić (née Kovačić; 1911, Zagreb–1991, Zagreb) was an activist of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ) and politician. Married to Josip Gržetić, with whom she shared political beliefs, membership in the KPJ, wartime engagement in the People's Liberation Struggle, and, after the Second World War, involvement in the social and political institutions of socialist Yugoslavia.²

Gržetić was born into a working-class family and started working at the age of twelve, first as a housemaid. Later, under the influence of her aunt Fani, who was a worker in a tobacco factory, Gržetić found employment in a textile factory. She worked in several similar factories in Zagreb and Varaždin until the invasion of Yugoslavia in spring 1941. According to her own testimony, her aunt was not a communist or a communist activist, but introduced Gržetić to ideas about the protection of workers and workers' rights in factories through trade unions, especially those under the influence of communists.³ During the 1930s, Gržetić developed into one of the most prominent trade union activists in the Zagreb area. She became a member of the KPJ in 1935.

Party members who were known to the police changed apartments frequently. The police, therefore, came for them at their places of work, in the factories. Gržetić's colleagues customarily informed her about the arrival of the police, hid her, and helped her escape. Despite all of their efforts, she was arrested as many as eight times during the five years between becoming a member of the Party and the beginning

1 In this volume, the entire text that is available in the book and in the daily *Vjesnik* has been reproduced. However, the full text of the speech has not been preserved.

2 Josip Gržetić became a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1933 and was a participant in the People's Liberation Struggle from the very beginning of the war. He became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Croatia (Komunistička partija Hrvatske, KPH) in 1948. In addition, he performed a number of political and social duties within the republican apparatus in Croatia.

3 Kesić, "Samo vojnik Partije," 9.

of the April War, i.e., the German-led invasion of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers in April 1941. A few days before the start of the April War, Gržetić was arrested for the last time. She was first placed in the women's camp in Lepoglava, and then in the Danica camp near Koprivnica. She and her fellow activist Anka Butorac escaped from Danica at the end of December 1941 and attempted to flee to Partisan-controlled territory.⁴

During the war, Gržetić mostly worked in the areas of central Croatia (Kordun, Banija, Gorski kotar). As a representative of the Communist Party of Croatia (Komunistička partija Hrvatske, KPH) in several district committees, she supervised the creation of its representative bodies, primarily the People's Liberation Committees and the committees of the Women's Antifascist Front (Antifašistička fronta žena, AFŽ). At the First Conference of the AFŽ of Croatia, which was held in June 1943 in Otočac, Gržetić was elected the first president of its Main Committee. Gržetić was also involved in the work of the wartime parliaments established by the Partisans, both on the republican level in Croatia and in the Yugoslav one. Gržetić, together with Spasenija-Cana Babović (1907–1977), was elected into the Presidency of the Antifascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije, AVNOJ), which had all the political power of a legislative body and held additional symbolic power as a political institution established in and despite a wartime situation. For her wartime contribution, she received several decorations, including the Commemorative Medal of the Partisans of 1941 (*Partizanska spomenica 1941*) and the Order of Brotherhood and Unity with a golden wreath (*Red bratstva i jedinstva sa zlatnim vijencem*).

Following the end of the war, Gržetić continued her socio-political activism. As a union official, she continued to advocate for workers' rights. She also remained an active member of the AFŽ and its successor, the Alliance of Women's Societies (Savez ženskih društava, SŽD) in Croatia, and was elected its president several times. Before retirement, she was an elected member of all convocations of the Parliament of the People's Republic of Croatia from 1946 until 1963. At the Second and Third Congresses of the KPH, she was also an elected member of its Central Committee.

Despite her long career—as she called herself, “just a soldier of the Party”⁵—Gržetić did not publish anything, neither memoirs nor scientific contributions. Therefore, her activity is poorly known and reduced to only a few footnotes that primarily relate to the development of the labor movement in interwar Yugoslavia. With regard to her activism for women's emancipation, she continued to strive for these goals through the AFŽ. The few interviews that are available in the magazine *Žena u*

4 While Gržetić managed to reach the liberated territory, Anka Butorac (1903–1942) was recaptured and died shortly afterward from the consequences of her interrogations.

5 Kesić, “Samo vojnik Partije,” 11.

borbi (Woman in Combat), published by the AFŽ of Croatia, for the most part repeat the views that Gržetić formulated in the speech translated below. Based on these interviews and Gržetić's biography, her speech at the first postwar conference of the AFŽ in Zagreb speaks to her political views about the successes and further possibilities of women's emancipation in Yugoslavia.

Iva Jelusić

CONTEXT

Following four years of fighting in all Yugoslav countries, Second World War ended with the victory of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, their Partisan army, and a wide range of supporters gathered in the Unitary People's Liberation Front (Jedinstveni narodnooslobodilački front, JNOF). It included the AFŽ, an organization dedicated to women only. The first municipal committees of the AFŽ were established already in the autumn of 1941. The women leading the AFŽ and its municipal committees were activists and often members of the Communist Party. Their views on women's rights and the future of women's emancipation were marked by this political affiliation. The policy of the AFŽ was to grant all women membership in this organization, regardless of their political views and previous affiliations (as long as, of course, they were not hostile to the goals of the Communist Party and the Partisans).⁶ The wide range of tasks performed by women organized through the AFŽ can be grouped into two sets: to organize assistance to the Partisan army and for life in the liberated areas; and to provide political and cultural education for its members. In order to facilitate women's emancipation, the AFŽ organized literacy courses, theoretical educational courses that covered issues of the political situation in the world and in Yugoslavia, communist ideology and the USSR, history and culture, and practical courses focused on hygiene, nutrition, infant care, and health.

The end of the war was a time of military-political triumph as well as a period of accelerated change in preparation for a better future. Many of the public events that took place in the second half of 1945, but also over the following years, testified to these two aspects of the immediate post-war period in Yugoslavia. AFŽ conferences were no exception. During these events (alongside the war and political victory of the KPJ and the leadership of Josip Broz Tito), the wartime achievements of humanitarian, educational, and political activities among women were celebrated. At the same time, tasks for the future were presented to the masses of women who attended these events.

6 This primarily refers to women who in the interwar period were members of the so-called bourgeois women's organizations, that is, those women who did not look at the emancipation of women from the same political perspective.

Maca Gržetić's speech is a balanced amalgam of praise for the past and a projection of future work. She began the speech by celebrating the successes of women in the People's Liberation Struggle by saying that "we, women of Croatia, as all Yugoslav women, are also proud and happy because in this fight we won full equality, freedom, and rights." These words synthesized the official position of the AFŽ and its functionaries, equally valid at the end of the war and during the following decades. In relation to the diversity and importance of women's wartime activism, Gržetić also referenced the double oppression of women in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (legal oppression and oppression as part of the working class) and their resolute resistance to the so-called "fascist conqueror" (by which she meant Germany, Italy, and the local actors that supported them during the war) regardless of their religious and national affiliation. Pride—in women's wartime work, and in the achievements through which they earned their rights—was the emotion which radiated from the speeches of Maca Gržetić and all other participants in this conference, both men and women. In addition, they endeavored to build the figure of the woman fighter (*žena borac*), a new type of Yugoslav woman who would participate in the creation of the new, socialist way of life.

The path to this new, socialist way of life was, of course, paved with a great number of practical assignments. In the spirit of the period, Gržetić described these as being just as demanding as participation in the People's Liberation Struggle. Moreover, these tasks can be yet again divided into two groups: women were supposed to participate actively in the reconstruction of the war-torn country; and to continue their education with the aim of achieving full emancipation. The AFŽ thus mobilized a large number of women for labor actions (*radne akcije*). However, its strength, just like during the war, was in the socialization of traditional women's roles, that is, directing women towards the organization of social and care work. In this regard, Gržetić emphasized that "[w]e women are best suited to participate in the organization of orphanages, in caring for them, as well as in our children's upbringing."

The KPJ assigned the AFŽ tasks similar to those performed by the Zhenotdel, the Soviet Women's Department of the Central Committee Secretariat, between 1919 and 1930. The Zhenotdel organized meetings educating women throughout the Soviet Union, which also functioned as a vehicle for the party to influence the women of the working class more easily. Similarly, the AFŽ reformulated its work and development strategies not only according to the requirements of the period in which it functioned (wartime, immediate postwar period, and later), but also according to the requirements of the KPJ. There is a general consensus among historians on the crucial importance of the AFŽ for the beginning and at least the initial progress of the process of women's emancipation in Yugoslavia through general and political education, vocational training, and the protection of mother and child. However, how

successful this organization was in the emancipation of women is still a subject of historiographic discussion.⁷

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Iva Jelušić

* * *

Maca Gržetić From the Organizational Report

We, antifascist women of Croatia, are holding our first Congress in days, as our people celebrate their triumph over the greatest enemy of humanity—fascism. We are holding the Congress in an equal union of peoples, in Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, we are holding it in a free Federal Croatia, in our free city of Zagreb.

7 See, e.g., Bonfiglioli, "Women's Political and Social Activism in the Early Cold War Era"; and Tešija, "The End of the AFŽ."

And our Congress confirms once again the righteousness and validity of our struggle. In that struggle, we fought for our freedom and independence, forged strong brotherhood and unity among our peoples, and built our people's government. And, above all, we women of Croatia, as all Yugoslav women, are also proud and happy, because in this struggle we won full equality, freedom, and rights, which befits a woman as a human being and a fighter.

In this great manifestation of our strengths, we will present the history of labor and struggle, which has brought us to such great victories. But besides that, on the foundations of experience gained through labor and struggle, we will confirm the most important missions that stand before us as women. Here, we will discuss and conclude which forms of labor and organization will be most suited to today's conditions, which forms of labor and organization will be most helpful in fortifying, expanding, and strengthening our achievements won in the sacred liberation war.

The fact of the matter is that we women, up until the victory of the People's Liberation Movement in our country, were doubly unfree, doubly oppressed. On the one hand, wide masses of women, as the main portion of the popular masses, were unfree and oppressed because, in return for their strenuous work, they were rewarded with poverty and misery. On the other hand, we women were unfree because reactionary laws did not recognize our equality with men. According to those laws, we were not citizens with full rights or free people.

For years the reactionary regimes of old Yugoslavia stifled every action of women, even the most minor, pushing against such a position in society. Reactionary rulers were particularly bloodthirsty in the battle against women, who had linked their struggle with that of the most progressive democratic forces. Keeping women outside social and political matters, rendering them passive, was one of the ways that reactionary regimes tried to prevent women from joining progressive democratic forces, headed by the Communist Party.

And when the fascist conqueror enslaved our country and waged a war that aimed at the annihilation of our peoples, Yugoslav women, regardless of nationality, religion, or class, resolutely rose to defend the liberty of our peoples. Women's participation in the people's liberation war had a range of forms: from aid with medical supplies, provisions, and uniforms, carrying out courier and intelligence services, to demonstrating against the occupiers and participating in sabotage, diversions, and armed struggle in Partisan units. In this way, our women demonstrated for the first time in our peoples' history that they are even prepared to give up their life for popular rebellion. At first, this work was spontaneous, insufficiently organized. Alongside the rise and consolidation of the People's Liberation Army, the People's Liberation Movement, the assistance, labor, and struggle of women took on its own shape in the form of numerous women's councils, which banded together into a robust organization.

[...]

Today, when the liberation of our country has created all of the conditions for the realization of a happier and better life for our peoples, and has placed before us the necessity to take on this task with all our might—which is no easier than the fight at the front—that is, the construction of all branches of the economy in our free homeland. Only by building up the economy will we be able to create better living conditions for the widest masses of working people, and, in this way, to show our people that the selfless sacrifices they made for the creation of a new, free Yugoslavia were not in vain.

Deep traces of fascist plunder remain in our country. Our villages and cities, factories and machinery were burned and razed. Commercial tools and draft animals have been destroyed. Communication lines have been ripped apart. The severe consequences of the war are felt in all regions of Croatia, but especially in Lika, Dalmatia, and Gorski Kotar, where, alongside these difficulties, the issue of feeding the population remains, a large proportion of whom go hungry to this day. The picture of our economy is not at all rosy, which places a huge task before us, whose execution in everyday life requires the mobilization of the entire people and all women.

We women, who took on a major role in the People's Liberation War, who learned to bear the greatest burdens, ought to and must play a significant role in the construction and renewal of our country. Today, at this Congress, it will be the mission of our delegates to decide how and in which ways to engage all patriotic women in the restoration of communication lines, in the construction and repair of factories, in the building of hovels, in providing urgent aid to areas hit hard by the war, especially those where hunger now rules.

That we are able to succeed in this field is confirmed by the work of our women to date. Examples are the work of working groups of women in Lika, where women from Korenički Kotar readied the terrain for seventy hovels, or in Dalmatia, where they cleaned up debris throughout the cities, etc. We could list hundreds of examples of the work our women have done in Kordun, Banija, Slavonia, Gorski Kotar, Primorje, in land cultivation, in harvesting, in road and railway repair, and the like. This is why, today, we can say with absolute certainty that enormous strength lies within us, that we have gained a great deal of work experience, which we need in order to further mobilize all women in the resolution of these important problems.

In order to construct and renew our economy, we need a staff of professionals alongside our peoples' productive forces. Today, we do not have enough of them. Already during the people's liberation struggle, with the liberation of a greater part of our country, and the emergence of more complex problems, our people's government was faced with the task of organizing professional courses. The

vast majority of those who attended were women, such that many of them completed typing, tractor, driving, agricultural, hospital, midwifery, and homemaking courses. Today, where conditions exist for the growth and training of professional cadres, we also need to train more and more women professionals from our ranks.

The interests of our people not only demand that we invest all of our working energy into the reconstruction of all that has been ruined and destroyed, but it is our responsibility to have a proper relationship toward science, toward culturally related work, toward schools and the way children are educated in them. One thing is certain: that our peoples' political and cultural development, especially that of us women, will depend on the rapid and further progressive development of our homeland, the further consolidation of democracy, as all achievements won in the People's Liberation Struggle.

Where the development of the political consciousness of our women is concerned, illiteracy hinders us in many ways, as in all of Croatia, in almost all parts of the country, the number of illiterates surpasses the number of literates. Many of our women, especially those from the ranks of peasants, learned to read and write during the war, under very difficult circumstances, without a pen or paper, with ash and flour. Those kinds of great examples, which demonstrate our women's strong will to rise politically, whether in Lika, Banija, Kordun, or Slavonia, where individual women, in a very short period, learned all the letters of the alphabet. And in this way, until recently illiterate peasant women began to write on wall and pocket newspapers, to write articles for local papers, like the *The Woman of Lika at War*, *Dalmatian Woman*, *The Woman of Primorje*, etc. But despite all of these successes, the majority of women are still illiterate. That is why we must offer our full support to our people's government in its efforts to organize courses for the illiterate. On the other hand, bearing in mind the lack of professional teaching cadres, the main role in this matter must be taken up by women who are literate. They must not allow there to be a single factory, village, city, or street in which there are illiterate women, or that there aren't any organized courses for the illiterate. With proper understanding on the side of us women regarding the necessity of our political advancement, we will be able to be, besides good members of people's committees, members of the committees of the Unitary People's Liberation Front, etc., and good mothers and nurturers of our children, we will be able to control the education of our children in schools, not only to control but also to participate in the selection of the approach taken in nurturing our children at school. In this way, we, on the one hand, and schools on the other, with proper rearing, will develop our children's love of their country, a new Yugoslav patriotism and readiness to defend their country from attack, from whichever side it may come.

I would like to emphasize another thing here: let the antipopular reactionaries know, all of those who are out to thwart the actions of our people's government—and

here in Croatia that is the traitor Maček⁸—that all of their efforts to destroy the accomplishments won through bloody struggle, and, perhaps, for that work to win over our women, will be in vain. That is the message our women will send to all of our enemies at this congress. We women will know how to maintain these achievements and continue the relentless struggle against all remnants of fascism, against all efforts of the reactionaries. If they think that they will be able to bring back the old regime, and that women might help them do it, then we can tell them that they are deluded, and that it will never happen.

The occupiers did not only take their toll on our country's economy. It is known to all of us that the enemy waged war against women and weak children. When invading villages, the occupier mercilessly killed them. Concentration camps in Jasenovac, Nova Gradiška, and other places were filled with women and children, who, under the most intense terror, suffering from hunger, died. The exhibition organized for our Congress displayed pictures of the atrocities that our women, mothers, and children had to endure under the awful terror of the fascist occupier, the Ustaše, the Chetniks,⁹ and other enemies of the people. Those pictures are a chilling indictment of the enemy. Not a single murderer with blood-stained hands, comrades, can go unpunished, not a single innocent life, not a single mother's tear, not a single murdered child must go unpunished. All those who are still hiding in our country, just as those who fled abroad, must be brought before a just people's court.

The war has left thousands of children without parents. Even during the war, we had to help organize aid for those children as well as our wounded and disabled. In this way, even during the war, we laid the foundations of a new social politics. During the war, we created children's orphanages and gave them full maternal care. Until today we succeeded in organizing 159 orphanages with 10,540 children, 121 kindergartens with 3,426 children, 25 boarding schools with 5,000 youths, as well as several children's hospitals.

We women are best suited to participate in the organization of orphanages, in caring for them, as well as in our own children's upbringing. Childcare is one of our main duties now and in the future. Marshal Tito highlighted this in his speech at the Congress of Women of Yugoslavia. Therefore, we should not allow a single child to wander through the streets and villages without parents, without anyone worrying about providing for the child, and to give the child a proper upbringing.

8 Editor's note: Vladimir Vladko Maček (1879–1964) was a politician in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. As the leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, he opposed both pro-fascist Ustaše regime and the Partisan movement in Croatia during the Second World War.

9 Editor's note: Chetniks, a royalist guerilla force that opposed Partisans on the territory of Yugoslavia during the Second World War.

The social politics of the new Croatia and the new Yugoslavia will not only consist of providing for orphaned and handicapped children. True, this is most important, but our country's social care will apply to all who need help.

The women's initiative to resolve these issues through the Women's Antifascist Front will play an important role. The concerns and activities of every council in the village, city, or district, their constant connection with the people, will be a guarantee that none of those who need help will be left behind, left alone, or uncared for. The realization that the resolution of social issues is not a matter only of the state, but also a part of our community, will allow us to solve the issue more quickly and successfully.

In addition to these tasks, in which we women can do the most, the questions of health, the fight against diseases—especially infectious diseases such as spotted typhus and typhoid fever, among others—a mother can be of the most help.

The tasks that stand before the Women's Antifascist Front in the renewal and construction of our homeland are great, and they demand that every person, all women, pledge themselves to its resolution. At the same time, this means that, with our work, it is necessary to find new models, new organizational models suited to today's needs, and which can be most expediently applied. These organizational models must be such that every honest and patriotic woman finds that for which she will advocate and through which she will participate in work and rebuilding.

Women's active participation in the people's, in their own government, and in people's liberation committees is one of the most significant successes of our struggle, but at the same time, one of the most important tasks that stands before us. Women must be conscious builders of their own homeland, masters in their country, prepared for sacrifice and effort. To help, to counsel, to control, to correct and to do everything so that our people's government will be better, stronger, more capable of resolving all matters put before it, that is our right, that is our duty. We must never forget that our people's government is our only guarantee of true freedom, democracy, and equality. But we must also not forget that we will exercise and enjoy that freedom more and more the sooner we eliminate economic misery, wreckage, desolation, destitution, and barefootedness—in other words, the sooner we build our country the better.

Translated by Suzana Vuljevic

Romanian Workers' Party

Fallen in Battle: Olga Bancic

AUTHOR Booklet with unidentified author(s)

TITLE "Olga Bancic"

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Chapter in *Căzute în luptă... Olga Bancic, Haia Lifșiț, Terezia Ocsko, Suzana Pârvulescu, Elena Pavel, Donca Simo* [Fallen in Battle...: Olga Bancic, Haia Lifșiț, Terezia Ocsko, Suzana Pârvulescu, Elena Pavel, Donca Simo] (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Muncitoresc Român, 1949), 6–10.

LANGUAGE Romanian

CONTEXT

The biography of Olga Bancic (1912–1944) translated here was included in the booklet *Fallen in Battle*, published by the Romanian Workers' Party Publishing House in 1949. Two factors influenced the biographical discourse: (1) the building up of the heroic memory of the resistance against fascism and Nazism—a global process initiated after 1945; and (2) the beginning of the Cold War. Romania participated in these global trends. Between 1946 and 1949, the publishing houses of the Romanian Workers' Party, the Communist Youth Organization, and the Patriotic Defense published twelve booklets containing the biographies of seventeen victims, of which nine were individual and two were group biographies (*Fallen in Battle* was one of these two), as well as an autobiography. Ten of the victims honored were men and seven were women.

Despite global coverage of the memorialization of the resistance, the victorious powers—the USSR on the one hand; the USA, Great Britain, and France on the other—dealt with the traumatic past differently. The balance of power created at the end of the Second World War influenced this process. Representatives of survivors' organizations from seventeen Eastern and Western European countries convened in Paris on March 29, 1947, and officially created the International Federation of Former Political Prisoners (Fédération Internationale des Anciens Prisonniers Politiques, FIAPP). Romania followed suit and established a local branch the same year, endowing it with a publishing house and its own journal in 1948. The Romanian FIAPP branch immediately started to popularize communist victims of political repression perpetrated by the bourgeois regime, including female victims such as Suzana Pârvulescu (1898–1942),¹ Haia Lifschitz (or Lifșiț; 1903–1929),² and Terezia Ocsko

1 Ecaterina Chivu, *Suzana Pârvulescu*, 2nd edition (Bucharest: Federația Foștilor Deținuți și Internați Politici Antifasciști, 1948).

2 Nicolae Goldberger, "Haia Lifschitz," in *Eroi și martiri ai clasei muncitoare; Ștefan Gheorghiu, Ilie Pintilie, Bela Breiner, Gheorghe Crosneff, Haia Lifschitz, Jozsa Bela* [Heroes and Martyrs of the Working Class: Ște-

(1917–1940), whose biographies were also included in *Fallen in Battle*. In general, female activists in the clandestine communist movement wrote about female victims.³ This activity was likely a “party task” (*sarcină de partid*).

FIAPP chose April 11, when the United States Army liberated Buchenwald, to celebrate the International Day of Former Antifascist Political Prisoners. The post-war world celebrated it for the first time in 1948. In 1949, when the heroic biography of Olga Bancic analyzed here was published in Romania, the discursive violence which accompanied the beginning of the Cold War was embedded in the ceremonies. The Washington Treaty, signed on April 4, 1949, established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a political-military alliance formed to protect Western Europe from Soviet aggression. A public meeting was convened on April 11, 1949, at the Filimon Sârbu Hall in Bucharest, to honor the International Day of Former Antifascist Political Prisoners. Simion Bughici (1914–1997), an alternate member of the Party's Central Committee and a survivor of the concentration camps in Transnistria, delivered a speech. The speaker used the opportunity to air the Soviet approach regarding the new organization. He reported that the USSR considered NATO an offensive alliance and not a defensive one, as the United States hypocritically advertised it. The gathering adopted a resolution to this end: “When confronted with aggressive menaces, such as those put out by NATO, that is, a military pact oriented against the Soviet Union, all nations voice loudly their support for peace, their will to stand against imperialistic war.”⁴ The Romanian mass media described the United States and Great Britain as “the Anglo-American imperialistic clique” and claimed they continued “Hitler's methods of persecution.”⁵ The articles for the International Day of Former Antifascist Political Prisoners, published on April 12, 1949, echoed the Soviet concern for the fate of communists in Western countries and argued that while the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Greece, Spain, and Iraq mercilessly hunted communist sympathizers, they showed zero interest in prosecuting Nazis, fascists, and their collaborators for the atrocities perpetrated during the Second World War. These points from the political agenda are also the conclusions of Olga Bancic's biography.

The Romanian state socialist regime started working on the cult of the young partisan woman in 1948, unjustly reclaiming the legacy of a transnational activist for local advantage. The process of appropriation proved difficult. At the beginning of the Cold War, Romania popularized Olga Bancic mainly as a non-gendered

fan Gheorghiu, Ilie Pintilie, Bela Breiner, Gheorghe Crosneff, Haia Lifschitz, Jozsa Bela] (Bucharest: Federația Națională a Foștilor Deținuți și Internați Politici Antifasciști, 1949), 55–70.

3 *Fallen in Battle* acknowledges the works of Ecaterina Chivu about Suzana Părvulescu and Ofelia Manole about Donca Simo.

4 *Scînteia*, no. 1399, April 12, 1949, 4.

5 *Scînteia*, no. 1399, April 12, 1949, 4.

communist activist. Motherhood was the single major concession to gender which surfaced from a text soaked in politics. The organizational pattern of the commemorative ceremonies supported the idea that the regime was interested in a political approach: the local branch of FIAPP always took the lion's share in the ceremonies, while representatives of the Union of Democratic Romanian Women (Uniunea Femeilor Democrate din România, UDRW) had secondary roles. On May 10, 1948, FIAPP commemorated at the Women's House in Bucharest the four-year anniversary of the Nazi decapitation of Olga Bancic. Elisabeta Luca (1909–1992), a member of the Executive Committee of the UDRW—herself a Party veteran and the wife of Vasile Luca (1898–1963), an influential member of the communist elite—gave a eulogy. Pia Brătianu Street, a small road in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Bucharest, received Olga Bancic's name (now Al. Philippide) at the beginning of June 1948. A wall plaque was unveiled on that occasion, which was vandalized and removed from its place after 1989. Ștefan Voicu (1906–1992), a Party veteran, and two UDRW representatives paid tribute to the sacrifice of the woman partisan.

Written in a heroic vein, *Fallen in Battle* popularized the life and death of six female communists persecuted on political grounds: Olga Bancic, Haia Lifșiț, Terezia Ocsko, Suzana Pârvulescu, Elena Pavel (1915–1943), and Donca Simo (1910–1937).⁶ The texts do not follow the chronology of the protagonists' passing. Five of them died in Romania—two before and three during the Second World War—and one sacrificed her life abroad, namely Olga Bancic. Interestingly, of all the biographies, that of the activist who perished in exile opens the booklet. It is likely that the editors would have put a victim of Nazism at the forefront for foreign policy reasons and to stress the crime's hideousness.

At the beginning of the Cold War, the official narrative valued only political identity, all other identity markers being treated cautiously. The heroic biographies followed the same path. Men and women were equally supposed to fight Western imperialism on political grounds and not economic, civic, or social ones. Those who had died under the communist flag were summoned posthumously to serve as role models.

The unknown author of the analyzed text addressed some issues extensively but ignored sensitive ones. Other topics, gender included, were subject to negotiation: the biography addressed them partially, considering some parts and leaving others aside. Regarding gender roles, it followed the Soviet line, which ranked motherhood as one of women's most important duties.

The text put a political lens over Olga Bancic's personal and professional life, archival sources giving a better account of the parts relevant for gender analysis. The

6 The booklet is introduced with reference to March 8, the International Women's Day, described as the day of "the mobilization of the broad masses of women against the bourgeoisie," of proletarian women's "protest for peace, freedom, and progress." "Introducere" [Introduction], in *Căzute în luptă*, 3–4.

biography says in the same sentence that she was married and gave birth to a daughter. The information about her marriage only had the role of reassuring readers that the child was not illegitimate. In May 1939, when she became a mother, Bancic's relationship with her partner had lasted for ten years—from the time she was 17 years old and Solomon Iacob (Alexandru Jar after the Second World War; 1911–1988) was one year older. The text likely overlooked Jar's name and biography because he did not suit the portrait of a "perfect" communist hero: he was an undedicated worker who dreamed of becoming a writer. Jar's personal file from the Party archive leads us to believe that he held temporary jobs during the economic crisis of the early 1930s. Concerning Olga Bancic's activity between 1929–1935, the text retained only the political part, failing to mention that during this time she was earning a living as a worker in textile factories. The endeavor to create communist heroes was in its infancy at the beginning of the Cold War. Therefore, the results looked unattractive and fallacious. The authors did not know how to write and the fear of possible mistakes made them choose what they believed to be the safe path. Less information meant fewer chances to make mistakes. Information from the archives supports the idea that, for many years, Bancic was a more consistent breadwinner than her erratic partner.

The text also ignores the context surrounding her decision to emigrate. The young woman left Romania in 1938 to reunite with her husband in Paris after she had served two years in prison. Jar was in Paris in search of literary fame. The text intersects with ideas of solidarity on a gender and class basis when mentioning that on March 8—in an unknown year—she sent small gifts to communist women imprisoned in Romania. The presents offered moral support and helped them resist inhumane conditions.

Definitely, the biography from 1949 portrayed Olga Bancic as a loving, devoted mother. An explanation of the importance attributed to motherhood by the unknown author(s) is multifaceted. Bancic named her daughter Dolores after the Spanish communist Dolores Ibárruri (1895–1989). This detail eased the mission of official propaganda. Like many other communists sentenced to death—men in the majority—the night before the execution, Olga Bancic wrote a short message to her daughter, then five years old, and managed to send it out. The letter became part and parcel of the spiritual legacy of the French resistance after the Second World War, and reached high levels of popularity in France. The Romanian biography of the female hero could not ignore the story. The French Communist Party—*le parti des fusillés* (the party of the executed)—reclaimed Olga Bancic's political legacy. After all, she had fought in the communist resistance. Society sympathized with this story because it portrayed the French people as braver than they really were during the war. In Paris under German occupation, a Jewish communist woman who had emigrated from Eastern Europe was forced to abandon her child to a French family courageous enough to take the risk of hiding a little Jewish girl. Barring this, France did not do well in the war, and after 1944 the country needed to muster a great deal of positive tales to remedy the

traumas suffered after the shameful capitulation of 1940. However, the author(s) of the Romanian biography overlooked the precise reason that made Olga Bancic's letter so famous in France. The text did not say that Olga and her husband were Jews, and did not explain why little Dolores could not live with her loving mother. The text implies that dangerous political engagements kept the female activist away from her maternal duties. In reality, Olga Bancic hid Dolores with a French family firstly to protect her from racial persecution and only in the second place because Olga was busy with politics.

Last but not least, the Soviet view regarding gender roles explains the emphasis on motherhood. A gender revolution accompanied the Bolshevik one. But, after Lenin's death, the Soviet regime ended its experiments and came back to a traditional approach to gender roles. During the 1930s, motherhood ranked among the highest places in the Soviet hierarchy of women's duties.

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Cristina Diac

* * *

Romanian Workers' Party Olga Bancic

Olga Bancic's brief life began on May 10, 1912, and ended on May 10, 1944. The day she would have celebrated her thirty-second birthday, she climbed the steps of the gallows. Her life of fierce struggle was the result of the education she received in the Communist Party.

She was born to poor civil servant parents. Like the other six children of the family, she led a life with few joys in it. A bleak childhood, in a house that screamed poverty from every nook and cranny. With great difficulty, she finished four grades of school. Then, at a rather young age, she went to work as an apprentice in a wool quilt factory to help with the family's expenses.

The first strike she took part in familiarized her with a whole range of dangers. She was arrested and beaten. But being too young, having too little information, she was released after seven days. But this time of trouble brought up huge energies that lay hidden in her. At fifteen, she joined the Union of Communist Youth. At fifteen, she knew she would have to fight and she learnt how to fight. To earn a living, she took a job in a weaving mill, and in her spare time she studied Marxism-Leninism, reading the great teachers of the proletariat all over the world, and acquiring superior general knowledge in a short time. At only sixteen she secretly traveled to the USSR. There, she broadened her knowledge and improved her ideological and political education. She returned to Romania after almost a year.

Closely watched by the lackeys of the bourgeoisie and the big landowner establishment, she was soon arrested. Following a rushed trial, she was sentenced to six months of imprisonment. But she felt neither frightened nor hopeless. From then on, she would often have to deal with being imprisoned and with henchmen. She was only seventeen when she arrived in Bucharest. There, she would find a wider field of action. In 1932, she would become a member of the Romanian Communist Party. She was twenty by then. But what a life rich in experiences! She knew the people, the extreme poverty of those who toil, as well as the luxury of those who exploit them, she knew whom she could trust, as well as whom she had to fight and, more importantly, how to fight them.

She would act tirelessly for the cause until 1935, continuously enriching her knowledge and experience. In 1935, she was arrested once again. This time, she was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. She would be tortured to confess, but the *Siguranța* [the Romanian secret police] would fail to extract anything from her. Later, a group of political prisoners, called on to appreciate her conduct, would deem that "she did her duty as a conscious fighter." From then on, she would go from one prison to another—Mislea, Deva, Dumbrăveni. But despite the hardships of prison life, she would still find ways to make herself useful for others and keep her fighter spirit alive. She fought to improve conditions in prisons, for the conditions were hard, wretched. During the day she would wash the long and cold corridors, or she would toil in the prison workshops without heating.

In 1937, having fulfilled her two-year sentence, she was released from prison. Soon after, she would leave for France.

In 1938, Olga Bancic was in Paris. Having received a Marxist-Leninist education from the party, she understood that wherever she might be, whatever the country,

her fighting against fascism helped the struggle to free her homeland and the working class. And since the Spanish people were fighting at the time against fascism, and they needed help, Olga Bancic enrolled in the campaign to help the Spanish people. Her entire activity was marked by the party's strong influence. Moreover, she would not forget her Romanian comrades, among whom she had developed an ideological and political consciousness, the comrades with whom she had faced so many dangers.

The small gifts that her imprisoned comrades received from Olga Bancic on the occasion of March 8 [International Women's Day] made them stronger and kept up their hope in victory.

Olga married and, in May 1939, gave birth to a girl whom she named Dolores—as a homage to the fierce Spanish [antifascist] fighter, Dolores Ibárruri.

When the war broke out, she was in France. Joining the wave of refugees, her baby in a carriage, she walked 250 kilometers, reaching the *zone libre*. In August 1940, she returned to Paris. Henceforth she would fight to help prisoners and unmask collaborationists.

In January 1942, together with comrades who were also in France at the time, she enrolled and fought alongside the partisans. By choosing to fight fascism this way, she was uniquely brave. Olga Bancic's way of fighting could only make the party that had raised her proud. She would never say no to a task, she would accept whatever was assigned to her. She followed the movements of German brigades and reported their positions; she transported weapons and ammunition for the partisans; she even headed attacks against the Nazi forces and organized sabotage actions that always caused heavy losses for the Nazis. No matter the action, as long as it required courage, skill, and determination, Olga Bancic would carry it out like a true fighter.

This put her in the first ranks on one of the fronts fighting fascism. Not long before she was caught, between two perilous actions, she visited her child. She could not have known that she was seeing her daughter for the last time. Indeed, on November 16, 1943, she was arrested by the Gestapo. They spared no torture method to extract a confession out of her. They used all the evil methods available to wear down her opposition and to destroy her physically.

On February 24, 1944, together with twenty-two partisans, she was tried and sentenced to death. A woman at the gallows! This was too hard a blow for the conscience of French public opinion. So the Hitlerists, under the pretext of an additional trial, took her to Stuttgart, in Germany. The persecutors thus dragged her to their den to proceed with killing her unhindered. But they did not execute her at once, instead prolonging her torment for another two months. From the German prison, she was able to send a letter to her child in the hope that one day her daughter would read her words and understand her mother's sacrifice. "I die with my conscience at peace that you will have a happier and less troubled future than your mother." The date on the letter is May 1, 1944.

On May 10, at dawn, Olga Bancic climbed the steps to the gallows. She was beheaded.

It was her sacrifice, alongside the sacrifice of millions of other people, that won the war against German fascism, which Olga Bancic hated to death as the enemy of the working class and socialism.

But winning the war was not enough.

To properly honor the memory of the fighter Olga Bancic, we must keep fighting for peace, a long-lasting and democratic peace.

Today, when the citizens of the countries of socialism and of people's democracies successfully work to rebuild their countries, capitalists across the ocean sow the seed of discord among peoples, looking to rekindle fascism in Germany, acquitting the vilest criminals against humanity—in a word, the capitalists are looking to start a new war.

Only by continuing to fight with determination against all those trampling on the sacrifices of millions of people, women and men, who have fallen fighting for peace and socialism, will we be able to say that we have done our duty. This is the only way to truly honor the memory of the heroine Olga Bancic too.

Translated by Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

Lina Kostenko

A Female Poetic Voice against Totalitarianism and War

AUTHOR Lina Kostenko

TITLE “Hranitni ryby” [Granite Fishes], “Smertel’nyi padehras” [A Deadly *Pas de Grâce*], “Zatinok, sutinok, den’ zoloty” [A Shady Spot, Twilight, a Golden Day]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *A Hundred Years of Youth: A Bilingual Anthology of 20th Century Ukrainian Poetry*, ed. Olha Luchuk and Michael M. Naydan (Lviv: Litopys Press, 2000), 337; *Landscapes of Memory: The Selected Later Poetry of Lina Kostenko*, trans. Michael M. Naydan, ed. Olha Luchuk (Lviv: Litopys Press, 2001), 37–39, 77.

LANGUAGE Ukrainian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR¹

Lina Kostenko (b. Rzhyschiv, 1930) is a Ukrainian poet and dissident. She was born in a family of schoolteachers in Kyiv Region. In 1936, her family moved to Kyiv. That same year, her father was arrested as an “enemy of the people” and sentenced to ten years in the Gulag. Kostenko wrote her first poem during her school years. After graduation, she studied at the Kyiv Pedagogical University (today the Drahomanov National Pedagogical University), and then at the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute in Moscow, graduating with honors in 1956. At that time, an atmosphere of freedom and creativity reigned at the Institute. Famous poets such as Robert Rozhdestvensky, Ievgeny Ievtushenko, Bella Akhmadulina, and Iosif Kurlat also studied there.

In 1957, after returning to Kyiv, Kostenko published her first poetry collection, *Prominnia zemli* (Rays of the Earth). In 1960–1964, she took an active part in literary events organized by the Club of Creative Youth (Klub tvorchoi molodi), a place that united many figures of the Ukrainian dissident movement. From the early 1960s, her poetry started to be criticized by local party authorities for artificial formalism and apoliticism, which were said to dominate over the work’s ideological and artistic content. In 1965, Kostenko signed a letter of protest against the arrests of members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, and three years later wrote a letter in defense of the Ukrainian politician and journalist Viacheslav Chornovil, who in a series of his works² accused Soviet authorities of human rights violations. As a result, Kostenko was forbidden from publishing in the Soviet press. Her poetry collections *Zoriany integral* (Star Integral) and *Kniazhna hora* (The Prince’s Mountain) were barred

1 Galina Babak’s contribution was supported by the Ukraine in Global Dialogue Fellowship Program, sponsored by the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna.

2 Such as *Pravosuddia chy retsydyvy teroru* [Justice, or: Relapses of Terror], 1966.

from publication; her screenplay *Perevirte svoi hodynnnyky* (Check Your Clocks), co-authored with Arkadii Dobrovolskyi, was criticized and reworked through censorship. During the period of her “inner emigration,” which meant a silent protest against censorship and ideological pressure, she wrote numerous works. They remained unpublished until the late 1970s.

Kostenko published a new book only in 1977, *Nad berehamy vichnoi riky* (Over the Banks of the Eternal River). This was possible due to protests, in particular Kostenko’s hunger strike, and, apparently, due to changes inside the Communist Party itself. In 1979, Valentyn Malanchuk—a secretary for ideology in the Communist Party of Ukraine who was responsible for the publication ban of Kostenko’s works—lost his position. That same year, she published a historical novel in verse, *Marusia Churai*, and a collection of poems, *Nepovtornist’* (Uniqueness). At the heart of Kostenko’s novel in verse is the legend of the Ukrainian female bard Marusia Churai (1625–1653), who represents a woman-creator, a talented and strong personality. Kostenko combined the tragic love story of the female character with the events of the Cossack rebellion, known as the Khmelnytskyi Uprising (1648–1657).

In 1987, Kostenko was awarded the Taras Shevchenko State Prize of the USSR. After the Chernobyl Disaster, she visited the Chernobyl zone on numerous expeditions. She supported the people who remained there, tried to save artifacts, and studied the folk culture of Polissia to preserve the memory of this unique historical region. In 1999, she published the novel in verse *Berestechko*. That same year, at the National University “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” she delivered the important lecture “Humanitarna aura natsii, abo defekt holovnoho dzerkala” (Humanitarian Aura of the Nation, or the Defect of the Main Mirror). In it, Kostenko highlighted the problem of culture and cultural heritage as a fundamental and integral part of the nation’s existence and political sovereignty.

During the years of Ukraine’s independence, Kostenko published numerous poetry collections, screenplays (in particular *Chornobyl’. Tryzna*), and only one novel, *Zapysky ukrains’koho samashedshoho* (Notes by a Ukrainian Madman).

Kostenko was awarded the Omelian and Tetiana Antonovych Foundation Prize, the Honorary Award of the President of Ukraine, the Petrarca-Preis (for the collection *Incrustations* in Italian), the St. Volodymyr the Great Medal (by the Ukrainian World Congress), and the Order of Prince Iaroslav the Wise of the 5th Degree. She became an honorary professor at the National University “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” and a laureate of the Olena Teliha International Literary Prize. Her works have been translated into numerous foreign languages.

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River] (Kyiv: Radians'kyi Pys'mennyk, 1977); *Marusia Churai* (Kyiv: Radians'kyi Pys'mennyk, 1979); *Nepovtornist'* [Uniqueness] (Kyiv: Molod', 1980); *Chornobyl'. Tryzna* [Chernobyl. Tryzna] (Ukrtelefil'm, 1993); *Sad netanuchykh skul'ptur* [Garden of Unfading Sculptures] (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1987); *Buzynovyi tsar* [Elderberry King] (Kyiv: Veselka, 1987); *Vybrane* [Selected] (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1989); *Berestechko* (Kyiv: Ukraiins'kyi Pys'mennyk, 1999); *Soloveiko zastudyvsia* [The Nightingale Caught a Cold] (Kyiv: Mahaon-Ukraiina, 2000); *Hiatsyntove sontse* [Hyacinth Sun] (Kyiv: Lybid', 2010); *Zapysky ukrains'koho samashbedshoho* [Notes by a Ukrainian Madman] (Kyiv: A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2010); *Richka Heraklita* [Heraclitus River] (Kyiv: Lybid', 2011); *Madonna perekhrest'* [Madonna of the Crossroads] (Kyiv: Lybid', 2011); *Trysta poezii* [Three Hundred Poems] (Kyiv: A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha, 2012).

Antonina Tymchenko and Galina Babak

CONTEXT

The Sixtiers was an artistic and socio-political movement within the Soviet and in particular the Ukrainian intelligentsia during the late 1950s and 1960s. In the history of the USSR, the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s is also called as the “Thaw” or the “Khrushchev Thaw,” associated with Nikita Khrushchev’s policy of de-Stalinization. After Joseph Stalin’s death in 1953, and especially after the 20th Party Congress in 1956, a series of political reforms were introduced. The reforms aimed to change or remove the key institutions on which the Stalinist regime relied. During the 1960s, the repression apparatus and censorship were relaxed, and millions of prisoners were released from the Gulag labor camps. De-Stalinization also implied relaxing control over certain spheres of cultural, scientific, and socio-political life. The Thaw made possible some freedom of information in the media, arts, and culture. For example, it started the process of the rehabilitation of repressed cultural figures of the Ukrainian national revival of the 1920s and 1930s (e.g., such prominent Ukrainian poets as Mykhail’ Semenko, Maik Iohansen, or Volodymyr Svidzynskyi)—a period that came to be named the “Executed Renaissance.”³ Such political and cultural transformations had a significant influence on the public mind of several generations of the Soviet Union.

The Sixtiers movement within the Ukrainian Soviet Republic initially aimed at protecting the national language and culture and defending the freedom of creativity and art against ideology. The main representatives were journalists and human rights activists Viacheslav Chornovil, Ivan Svitlychnyi, Iurii Badzio, literati Ivan Drach,

3 The term was suggested by Polish publicist Jerzy Giedroyc for Iurii Lavrynenko’s anthology of Ukrainian writers of the 1920s, first published in Paris in 1959. See Lavrynenko, ed., *Rozstriliane vidrodzhennia*; Hryn, “The Executed Renaissance Paradigm Revisited”; Krupa, “Arguments against ‘The Executed Renaissance.’”

Mykola Vinhranovs'kyi, Hryhorii Tiutiunnyk, Vasył Symonenko, Lina Kostenko, Vasył Stus, Ivan Dziuba, Ievhen Sverstiuk, artists Alla Hors'ka, Viktor Zarets'kyi, theatre director Les' Taniuk, film director Serhii Paradzhanov, and others. The generation of the 1960s was aesthetically rooted in the 1920s–30s. In their attempt to move away from the socialist realism paradigm, they tried to resume the development of various modernist writing practices of that time (formal experiments, automatic writing, universalist reflection on individual and history). Therefore, numerous parallels can be drawn between the laconic lyrics of Ievhen Pluzhnyk and Lina Kostenko's poetry, Pavlo Tychyna's impressionist poems of the 1920s and Vasył Symonenko's poems, Volodymyr Svidzynskyi's philosophical lyrics and Vasył Stus's poetry.

Starting from the 1960s, the movement was criticized by the Soviet authorities. The situation dramatically changed after the resignation of Khrushchev in 1964 and the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU entitled "On Censorship," published in 1965. The turn was perceived critically by Ukrainian intellectuals; many of them took on the position of dissidents. In 1965–1972, a number of arrests of the Soviet intelligentsia occurred, which provoked further waves of protests. The story of poet and journalist Vasył Symonenko illustrates the strong ideological pressure at the time. In 1962, together with Alla Hors'ka and Les' Taniuk, he discovered the mass burial of victims of political repressions during 1937–1941 near Kyiv. Shortly after, Symonenko was brutally beaten by police and died later at the age of 28. Alla Hors'ka, who was a talented monumentalist painter and the life of the dissident movement, was murdered in 1970 while under surveillance by the KGB. Vasył Stus, who was a poet and a human rights activist, died in prison in 1985 under obscure circumstances. Therefore, the Ukrainian intelligentsia, which united not only writers and artists, but also scholars, journalists, and human rights activists, was the first to protest against political repressions in their struggle for national cultural recognition.

Lina Kostenko, a representative of the Sixtiers and a dissident, is one of the few female authors of her generation who had an active civic and artistic position, and became an iconic figure of Ukrainian literature in the second half of the twentieth century and in Ukrainian culture in general. She is often called the "conscience of the nation," as she was never afraid to express her position and to struggle for the human rights to individual freedom and the freedom of creation. In her poetry, Kostenko is innovative in conveying sincerity and mastering a confessional tone. She addresses problems of historical and national memory, the artist's place in society, and the meaning of human existence, which was also true for other poets from her generation.⁴ Nevertheless, her position is clearly gendered. It is through the female worldview that the topic of war is revealed, for instance by

4 For instance, Vasył Symonenko's poem "Ty znaiesh, shcho ty – liudyna?" [Do You Know that You Are Human?].

focusing on destroyed childhoods. In her poetry, women appear as symbols of harmony and beauty, who give new life and a new sense of existence. This image is usually opposed to chaos, war, and violence. An important place in Kostenko's work is occupied by Chernobyl, as a global catastrophe and as a disastrous nature of life. Not being afraid of radiation, Lina Kostenko visited the "exclusion zone" many times to record, preserve, and describe the cultural artifacts of that region (oral history, regional dialects, folklore).

Her poem "Hranitni ryby" (Granite Fishes), first published in 1957, is a metaphor of suffocation, of vital and creative unfreedom. The poem can be considered a diagnosis of the ideological and political atmosphere of the Soviet Union of that time, and of the lack of freedom of expression in particular. The image of fish—mute, petrified, and made of "granite"—stands as a symbol of the inability to speak out and be heard. Although unrelated, it is interesting to note that thirty years later, in 1990, when the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse, the so-called "Revolution on Granite" took place in Kyiv. This was a student movement, a non-violent act of resistance against the communist regime.

The poem "Smertel'nyi padehras" (A Deadly *Pas de Grâce*), first published in 1962, brings up the subject of war as the greatest disaster on Earth. Among the foremost writers of that time, Kostenko was almost the only woman who spoke so openly on the topic. Antiwar writing occupies a special place in her work, running through her oeuvre as a red thread. Notably, it shows in the poems "Mii pershyi virsh napysanyi v okopi" (My First Poem Was Written in the Trenches, 1976) and "Pastoral' XX storichchya" (Pastoral of the Twentieth Century, 1977). "A Deadly *Pas de Grâce*" describes different types of metaphorical dances, with war being one of them. Thus, the most dangerous "steps" (Fr. "*pas*") are those in a war—on the minefield, on the border between life and death. The poem is constructed from a more general description in the first part to subjective perception: "And I walk. And on a minefield / I blindly make a careful *pas*." Kostenko conveys the impression that war and death are never far away, and warns against aggression embodied in weapons and ultimately against the destructive force that can destroy the Earth. Lina Kostenko's pacifist, antiwar position was dissonant to the Soviet tradition of glorifying war and the pathos of victory at any cost. For Kostenko, as for other writers of her generation, every life was valuable, and no war could be victorious.

The poem "Zatinok, sutinok, den' zoloty" (A Shady Spot, Twilight, a Golden Day), first published in 1987, depicts an abandoned village where lonely people live. The poem conveys the feelings of a woman (who could symbolize Ukraine, a mother), who suffers because of the "extinction" of the village. As Ukrainians were traditionally farmers, working the land and living off of what they raised, the village was always a place of extreme importance. The "extinction" of villages, caused by the resettlement of people to cities, meant a break in the transmission of values

and a gap between generations. It is symptomatic that the publication of the poem “A Shady Spot, Twilight, a Golden Day” coincided with the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, which claimed thousands of lives and led to the mass resettlement of people from the Chernobyl zone to the Kyiv region. For Kostenko, the accident was a terrible misfortune and a warning to humanity. She devoted many of her poems to the problem of devastated villages and cities, and to abandoned homes. Loneliness is one of the main motifs of her poetry.

Lina Kostenko’s voice is one of the most important female voices of the Ukrainian Sixtiers. In her struggle for human recognition and for freedom of creation, she contributed to the formation of Ukrainian self-identity as a European nation.

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* * *

Lina Kostenko

Poems

Granite Fishes

Quiet rules over the expanse of ocean,
The winds press close and airless,
And mighty fishes
Splashed out by the sea's motion,
Have turned to stone upon a granite stairway.

Wearied by the pounding of the breakers,
They turned to stone in last convulsive anguish.
The scales have turned to hard, dark simulacres.
Heavy and without movement their fins languish.
And on the angled gills, among the cloven
Scorching cracks of grey granite, salt is gleaming.

The burned-out tang of asphalts, pressed, pressed over,
And scorched magnolias' fragrant-choking dreaming,
A snaky rustling on stones moistly wetted,
Despairing sobbing of a little wave.
Here, blocks of stone had once been raked together,
And in their contours forms of fish were saved.

In this there was
Something so alarming!
In this there was so much bitterness!
Once there passed by the spot a giant-artist,
Once there passed by
But further could not pass.
He took a chisel, engraved the lines deeper.
He carved the granite, hard and scorched and weathered.
So that the people
Might know how hard for fishes
It is to be left waterless forever.

Translated by Vera Rich

And I walk. And on a minefield
I blindly make a careful *pas*.

And I walk. Another step... A few more.
No concept of fatalism.
I've been on the earth for so few years
that most of my life lies ahead.

And people say: there are mines everywhere there.
And people say: they've often exploded.
O, this is my school of ballet—
a deadly *pas de grâce* of the roads of war.

Translated by Michael M. Naydan

A Shady Spot, Twilight, a Golden Day

A shady spot, twilight, a golden day.
White roses cry and pray.
Perhaps it's me, or someone else, or you
sitting over there in a corner of the veranda.

Perhaps he's crying, or waiting—
he heard footsteps, or the wicket gate squeaked.
Perhaps he'll get up, and press his head,
there, on the veranda, against the door.

Where are you, people, who used to live in this house?
My wide world, what flat lands lie here all around!
The sadness of posterity—like the dance of a bee,
the dance of the bee to the immortal field.

Perhaps after a thousand years—
I will not be me, but awakened in genes,
here on the earth I will seek out the trace
of my lineage at least in laments and legends!

Voice of the well, why have you gone silent?
Arms of mulberry trees, why have you grown stiff?
Windows nailed shut, and the lock hanging—
a rusty ring above the claw of the knob.

Rainy weather beats the white side of the building.
Who's wailing there in this house every night?
Perhaps loneliness lives there alone,
stuffing the emptiness into the oven with tongs.

Perhaps this is our pain, perhaps our guilt,
perhaps a balsam for neglected souls—
memory of a well and memory of a window,
memory of a path and a wild pear...

Translated by Michael M. Naydan

Staša Zajović

Antiwar Activism after Yugoslavia

AUTHOR Staša Zajović

TITLE “U svoje ime” [In One’s Own Name]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Žene i politika mira: prilozi ženskoj kulturi otpora* [Women and the Politics of Peace: Contributions to a Culture of Women’s Resistance], ed. Biljana Kašić (Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije / Center for Women’s Studies, 1997), 31–34. Reprinted in: *Ženska strana rata* [Women’s Side of the War], eds. Lina Vušković and Zorica Trifunović (Belgrade: Žene u crnom / Women in Black, 2007), 11–13.

LANGUAGE Serbian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stanislava Staša Zajović (b. 1953, Nikšić) is a Yugoslav, Serbian, and transnational feminist and peace activist. Zajović moved from Montenegro to Belgrade to study Romance languages and graduated from the University of Belgrade’s Faculty of Philology in 1977. From 1985, she was a member of the feminist group Woman and Society (*Žena i društvo*) which operated as Belgrade’s activist counterpart to Zagreb’s more academically-oriented collective of the same name. A steady presence in the Belgrade feminist scene, Zajović was a co-founder of a range of feminist initiatives in the late 1980s and early 1990s, including the Helpline for Women and Children Victims of Violence (SOS telefon za žene i decu žrtve nasilja), the Belgrade Women’s Lobby (Beogradski ženski lobi), the Women’s Parliament (*Ženski parlament*), the Civil Resistance Movement (*Civilni pokret otpora*), the Center for Antiwar Action (Centar za antiratnu akciju), and—most famously—Women in Black (*Žene u crnom*) in 1991. With the latter organization, which she has coordinated for more than three decades, Zajović has co-organized and participated in around 2500 street performances, vigils, peace marches, protests, and demonstrations against war, militarism, nationalism, and patriarchy. During the Yugoslav wars, the group was particularly engaged in helping refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as supporting conscientious objectors in Serbia. Zajović is one of the organizers of the Women’s Peace Network–Network of Women’s Solidarity, which gathered feminist activists from around the globe. She has also been active in the Coalition for a Secular State (*Koalicija za sekularnu državu*) which opposes strong clericalization currents in today’s Serbia. Under her coordination, Women in Black brought together ten women’s groups from the post-Yugoslav space with the view of establishing the so-called Women’s Court (*Ženski sud*). This initiative offered an innovative, feminist model of transitional justice by providing a regional platform for the testimonials of

women who survived war-related violence during the 1990s. Along with numerous commemorative events taking place around the region, Zajović has been a (co)organizer of a series of educational programs, including peace workshops, regional seminars, and transitional justice trainings. She is the author of articles and essays about antimilitarism, feminist peace politics, women's politics, and reproductive rights that have appeared in regional and international media outlets. Zajović has also (co)edited more than ten editions of the Women in Black yearly anthology *Žene za mir* (Women for Peace), published in both Serbo-Croatian and English. Because of her uncompromising stance regarding the necessity to prosecute suspected war criminals, Zajović has over the years been exposed to both verbal and physical attacks by hooligans and nationalist politicians. Although rather unpopular in her own country, she has, in her capacity of Women in Black coordinator, received several international awards for her long-term activist engagement. These include the UN Millennium Peace Prize (2001), the Charlotte Bunch Award for Women's Human Rights (2013), honorary citizenships of Granada and Tutin, and others. She was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize as part of the *1,000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize* campaign in 2005.

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Bojan Bilić

CONTEXT

The Yugoslav wars, most frequently approached through the nationalism paradigm, witnessed intense regional and transnational civic mobilizations which were heterogeneous in form and ideological commitments. One of the most acute reactions to the imminence of military conflict was a protest of mothers whose sons were serving in the Yugoslav People's Army as the protracted political and economic crisis escalated to the point of violence in 1991. This engagement shared affinities with the initiatives that had already taken place in Sri Lanka and in South America (e.g., El Salvador, Argentina) where mothers came together to oppose dictatorial regimes and

bring their criminal representatives to justice. Many women from around Yugoslavia gathered in Belgrade to demand their sons be released from the Army, but did not manage to produce a request that would go beyond their ethnic affiliations. Although they were supported by Belgrade feminist activists, coming up with a united front of action against ever-stronger militarization proved impossible as nationalist authorities strived to instrumentalize the movement and weaken it from within.

One of the earliest instances of more politically articulated antiwar sentiment in Serbia was the establishment of the Center for Antiwar Action, which took place in Belgrade in December 1991. The Center was founded by a group of intellectuals (e.g., Stojan Cerović, Vesna Pešić, Nebojša Popov, Dejan Janča, Sonja Liht [Licht], Tanja Petovar, and Lina Vušković, among others), some of whom were at that point already engaged in a range of (non-governmental) organizations including, among others, the Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (Udruženje za jugoslovensku/jugoslavensku demokratsku inicijativu), the European Movement in Yugoslavia (Evropski pokret u Jugoslaviji), the Women's Party (Ženska stranka), the Women's Parliament (Ženski parlament), the Helsinki Committee in Yugoslavia (Helsinški odbor u Jugoslaviji), and the Forum for Ethnic Relations (Forum za etničke odnose). Initially operating in a private flat, the Center for Antiwar Action organized numerous protests and performances in an effort to resist belligerent Serbian leaders and encourage the wider population to take a more active part in antiwar contentions. The Center was also dedicated to humanitarian law endeavors as well as to project-based activities around non-violent conflict resolution and human rights protection.

Ever since the beginning of its operation, the Center was characterized by an ideological diversity which reflected a wider sense of confusion that accompanied the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars and the discussion about their causes. Mostly belonging to the Belgrade middle class milieu with substantial symbolic and social capital, the activists of the Center could not come up with a unanimous narrative about Serbia's military predominance within the complex architecture of Yugoslavia's disintegration. In the atmosphere of personal and political cleavages, the Center witnessed a series of fragmentations through which Belgrade activists performed a "division of labor" and established their own non-governmental organizations.

The Belgrade-based Women in Black (*Žene u crnom*) is probably the most well-known activist group to emerge in this process. Not only did this collective take an unwavering antinationalist and antimilitarist stance that from the very beginning highlighted the primary responsibility of Serbia (led by Slobodan Milošević) for the violence of the 1990s—as is made obvious in Zajović's text—but they also left the Center because of their dissatisfaction with the way in which patriarchal hierarchies were reproduced in its activities. Building upon Yugoslav socialist feminist networks, which started developing in a more autonomous fashion from the late 1970s, the activists insisted upon a "de-naturalization" of the women's propensity to care and

comfort. They took issue with the principle that peace activism was hardly anything more than an expression of women's traditional role to support men. According to them, such a patriarchal approach to women's engagement constituted a perpetuation of the private-public dichotomy which failed to acknowledge women's efforts and obscured their political character. The group was therefore born out of the desire to show that antiwar activism was not a "motherly duty," but a matter of political choice.

Inspired by their Israeli and—more closely—Italian predecessors (the latter staged a vigil in Sarajevo immediately before the war), Belgrade's Women in Black are the most steadfast voice of feminist antiwar resistance in the Serbian context.¹ Over the last thirty years, from their first protest in front of the Student Cultural Center (Studentski kulturni centar)—the hub of Belgrade alternative organizing throughout the 1970s and 1980s—to the Republic Square and Knez Mihailova Street (Belgrade's main city square and pedestrian street), to more recent performances around the region, Women in Black have developed their feminist politics that is encapsulated in the text chosen to represent them in this anthology. The crucial dimension of their political project has to do with their determination to take distance from—to write oneself out of—the (supposedly) homogeneous ethnic corpus that lies at the heart of patriarchy-military enterprises. The objective is to reappropriate one's own name and rescue it from a nationalist monolith that generates violence, severs transnational ties, and erases the Yugoslav socialist and antifascist past.² In this regard, speaking in one's name is a sign of disobedience to national authorities that makes it possible to maintain (regional) prewar friendships and engage in acts of mourning and cooperation that go way beyond ethnic divisions.

The chosen text was written by Zajović for a feminist conference that took place in Zagreb, Croatia—from the perspective of an author "on the other side of the front line"—in October 1996.³ The following year it appeared in the annual publication *Women for Peace* (published by the Women in Black) and was also included in the edited volume *Žene i politika mira* (Women and the Politics of Peace), published by the Center for Women's Studies in Zagreb, and edited by Biljana Kašić, who is mentioned throughout the text. Ten years later, the text was reprinted in the book *Ženska strana rata* (Women's Side of War), published by the Women in Black, which brought

1 Both the Israeli and the Italian group as well as the worldwide network of Women in Black activists have a clear feminist orientation insisting upon the idea that male domestic violence and armed conflicts are interrelated phenomena.

2 On Yugoslav Women's Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena, AFŽ), see Ina Jun-Broda, Maca Gržetić, and Lydia Sklevicky in this volume.

3 Zajović's troubling positionality in the context of the war-provoked separation between Belgrade and Zagreb feminist friends might be reflected by two different translations of her text's title: "In her own name" (from Zagreb's perspective) and "In my own name" (from Belgrade's perspective). With her engagement, Zajović endeavors to substitute the ethnically charged "Us and Them" with another division, namely the one between Us (antiwar activists, women, feminists, friends) and Them ("brutes, scoundrels, warriors, patriot-killers").

together numerous accounts of the still poorly known women's transnational peace mobilizations that surrounded the Yugoslav wars. Their publishing effort shows how Women in Black and many other activist organizations also operate as epistemic communities which accumulate and disseminate knowledge alternative to mainstream national(ist) narratives. Even though this production, documenting fragile instances of feminist activism, has been intense over the last few decades, it usually cannot count on large circulations or commercial distribution and therefore needs international solidarity channels—like this anthology—to amplify its important message.

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Bojan Bilić

* * *

Staša Zajović

In One's Own Name (Cassandra's Predicament)⁴

Throughout the past few years, we have learned to perform in various metropolises: Rome, Madrid, Berlin, New York ... We have learned to "make statements" for the so-called mass-media; we have learned how to spread a network of counterinformation among alternative media in Italy, Germany, Spain; we have learned to give "talks" in front of international fora, but they have hardly ever heard us, they have just listened to us to ease their conscience.

But here, in front of you, I can neither simply "perform" nor just "make a statement," nor give a speech. As was agreed, at this women's plenary session, I should

4 Editor's note: Only the first (1997) version of the text contains this subtitle. Cassandra's predicament probably refers to the metaphor, originating from Greek mythology, of a person whose valid warning or concerns are disbelieved by others. Many women in the text are, intentionally, only mentioned with first names. In some cases, it was important to identify the reference; in others, we leave it open.

“report” about what we have been doing in glacial, icy Serbia during these past few years. I wanted to, yet I cannot. Besides, I thought, we have followed each other’s work throughout these five years. But I don’t know how much we were able to follow each other’s internal journeys.

Despite my strong desire, despite my deepest respect for this place and for our topic, here in front of you I cannot just read a text that would be expected in an occasion like this one. Here in front of you I would like to give a statement of tenderness and love.

But I was not sure how to do this without seeking advice from my friends and companions that travelled with me through long, slow nights in glacial, icy Serbia. Especially Marina (Tsvetaeva) and Ana (Akhmatova)⁵ and Cassandra. Let me tell you what Sonječka, “crying hot tears,” said to Marina in the winter of 1918/19 in icy Russia: “I know that in other towns ... only you, Marina, are not in other towns, but they are ...”⁶ Because Nela, Biljana, Neva, Đurđa, my prewar friends are not in other towns. Because Mirjana is not in other towns. (I wanted to see her and her to see that we, “women from the aggressor country,” have not changed. I wanted to, yet I cannot. Because Mirjana is no longer in Zagreb nor elsewhere.) Nor are Rada, Sanda, Slavica, Tanja ... my “war-time” friends. They live in Zagreb. And I love those other towns because in them are other people I love.⁷

“But they are ...”—the brutes, scoundrels, warriors, patriot-killers, they are everywhere, and most of all in Belgrade. Not because Belgrade is a large city, but because the great evil originated from Belgrade, because it is from Belgrade that the war started.

A Bodily Thought

That, which I am able to tell you, has passed through my body. This thought is corporeal. Not only because by exhibiting my body in Belgrade’s main square, together with friends, for five years, we have been making our resistance to the Serbian regime and the war visible. But because I am a witness to the truth of

5 Editor’s note: Marina Tsvetaeva (1892–1941) and Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966) were Russian poets and writers. On their relationship, see Amanda Haight, “Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetayeva,” *Slavonic & East European Review* 50, no. 121 (1972): 589–93; Ekaterina Artemyuk, “The Life and Literary Work of Russian Women Writers of the Early 20th Century: Their Artistic Merit, Cultural Contribution, and Meaning for the Present,” in *Defiant Trajectories: Mapping out Slavic Women Writers Routes*, eds. Katja Mihurko Poniž, Biljana Dojčinović, and Maša Grdešić (Ljubljana: Women Writers Route; Forum of Slavic Cultures, 2021), 46–57.

6 Editor’s note: Sonječka (Sonechka) is probably the actress Sophia Holliday, with whom Marina Tsvetaeva had a romantic relationship between 1919–20. See Diana Lewis Burgin, “Mother Nature versus the Amazons: Marina Tsvetaeva and Female Same-Sex Love,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6, no. 1 (1995): 75.

7 Editor’s note: Important feminist and peace activists from the time, among others, were Nela Pamuković, Biljana Kašić, Neva Tölle, Đurđa Miklaužić, Đurđa Knežević, Rada Borić.

Virginia Woolf—"women think through the experiences of their own bodies"⁸—or because Penelope, through the mouth of Adriana Cavarero, left us a pledge: "While philosophers divide, tear, Penelope does not do that, she just weaves, knits what the philosophers have unraveled, separated (spirit from body)."⁹

The Cult of Encounters

When I go to Zagreb again, I will see them all. Again. This is what I said long ago to Anna [Akhmatova], my emotional friend, my spiritual refuge, ever since the glacial era returned to these lands. And Anna [Akhmatova] rarely saw Marina [Tsvetaeva], but she sent her words: "I see, I hear, I feel you ..." And I too was hearing and feeling you. All around Spain I was carrying Biljana's [Kašić] "sensory" poem, addressed to the feminist groups from Belgrade:

When we think of each other
Miles away from
together
[Remembering our dreams and goals
The wholeness
Despite lines and sides
senseless war]
We are not alone
Imagine
outside of the lines.¹⁰

And I translated the poem into Spanish. And my friends, antimilitarists, Concha, Yolanda, and Almudena carry the Women in Black exhibition around Spain with Biljana's poem which I translated; my gentle friend Michele, a poet from Madrid, "polished up the style." I carried Nela's network of tenderness and sisterly devotion within myself. I called upon Đurđa's defiant refusal of the logic of classification—"There are no Serbian women, Croatian women, there is only Staša from Belgrade, Biljana from Pančevo, that is, women exist by way of who they are, not by way of their national belonging."—whenever I was rudely and aggressively asked: "And

8 Editor's note: This is probably referring to the quote: "[The adventure of] telling the truth about my own experiences as a body, I do not think I solved. I doubt that any woman has solved it yet." See "Professions for Women," in Virginia Woolf, *The Death of the Moth, and Other Essays* (London: Hogarth Press, 1947), 153.

9 Editor's note: See "Penelope," in Adriana Cavarero, *In Spite of Plato: A Feminist Rewriting of Ancient Philosophy* (Routledge, 1995), 11–30.

10 Editor's note: Biljana Kašić originally wrote the poem in English. Here, we add the missing lines. Published in *Feminističke sveske* [Feminist Notebooks], 1 (1994), the journal of the Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade.

who are you: a Serb or a Croat or ...?" I am what I choose to be. I am my own individual creation, as [Iosif] Brodsky would say.

Let Us Not be Deceived by Our Own

And while I am writing this, surely during the night between October 22 and 23, 1996, we still do not know whether they will grant us a visa. It's a tactic of exhaustion. They [the officials] assume that we will "get fed up." They "set the lines, and we walk outside of the lines." We know them well. It was on my own body that I first felt what Cassandra told us: "Don't let yourself be deceived by your own" to which she added "nor by others," which we transformed together into a political principle—disobedience to "one's own" governments and states is a form of women's solidarity.

Us and Them—there is an abyss that separates me from them, a "difference" which creates a knot in my stomach. And I can't fulfill the promise to Ana A. that "I won't take revenge nor be bitter." And you, Ana, also asked yourself when the "stars of death" stood over you all, and, "when will the punishment come?" And I ask myself "when will the punishment come" for the administrators of death, who, "under bloody boots, under black wheels [of black police wagons—Ed.],"¹¹ live in the same country as I do. And tonight, I ask myself "when will the punishment come?" maybe for selfish reasons—I want to see all of you in Zagreb. And "the personal is political." And "the personal is international."

In a Foreign Language, the Pain is Also Lessened...

I have not written to you all as often as I felt I should have and wanted to. Mostly I wrote and received letters in a foreign language. (Are the languages of the spacious house of the Mediterranean, to which I spiritually and emotionally belong, also foreign?)

It was in a foreign language that I testified about my inner turmoil, similar to that of Cassandra: "I want to be a witness, even if there were no other living person who would ask me to testify." In a foreign language, the desperation seemed to me less horrifying. In a foreign language, I shared my pain with others, for often the misery and pain of those around me were far greater and more justified than mine. Often, I was ashamed to complain. In a foreign language, Anna [Akhmatova] "ripped black shame from my heart."¹² But in my own language, shouting on the streets "Belgrade, wake up! Belgrade, shame on you!" like that time with Biljana

¹¹ Editor's note: The quotes are taken from the poem *Requiem 1935–1940*. See Akhmatova, *Selected Poems*, 92.

¹² Editor's note: A paraphrase of Akhmatova's lyrics: "I'll wash the blood from your hands, and rip black shame from your heart, and give you a new name to cover the pain of defeat and humiliation." See Sinyavsky, "The Unshackled Voice," 18.

Jovanović¹³ in June 1992, when we climbed a shaky truck and tricked the police, yes, that was my public cry, that was my political choice. I know, responsibility, not guilt. And maybe I accuse innocent people because “everything got confused in this country, one does not know who is a beast and who is a human.”¹⁴ The glacial era continues because many “frozen friendships” for me are still not defrosted, because I walk down the street or I take a bus in Belgrade and wonder: Has this one been in Vukovar? Has this one raped in Bosnia? Does this one terrorize and kill around Kosovo? Did this one shoot at Sarajevo from Pale?”¹⁵

Michele wrote poems in her language to comfort me, and his own language, my dear friend Alex (Langer)¹⁶ shared my/our hope. But then the despair of others sparked an insurmountable feeling of powerlessness in Alex. His suicide was indeed “his choice of definitive solitude.” For months Alex’s choice tormented me. And I wrote about it in his language.

In our language, the language of our mothers, I wish to share with all of you at the Forum the tenderness, and the pain and the hope. I also wish us to continue weaving the networks of disobedience to all the militarists: the fathers of nations, the keepers of traditions, morals and nationhoods, the guardians of states and borders. Let us be disobedient also to the women militarists, of all colors and nationalities.

Friendship and tenderness will save us from them.

Delivered at the conference in Zagreb, October 24, 1996

*Translated by Stanislava Lazarević and by Renée Franić,
revised by Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc¹⁷*

13 Editor’s note: Biljana Jovanović (1953–1996) was a writer, peace activist and feminist from Serbia.

14 Editor’s note: A paraphrase of Akhmatova’s lyrics: “Everything is confused forever, and I can no longer tell beast from man...” from the poem *Requiem 1935–1940*. See Akhmatova, *Selected Poems*, 97.

15 Editor’s note: All these questions refer to the well-known crimes (mostly against civilians) committed by the Serbian forces. On the prosecution of these crimes and their impact on the post-Yugoslav societies see Carsten Stahn et al., eds., *Legacies of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

16 Editor’s note: Alexander Langer (1946–1995) was an Italian journalist, peace activist, leftist politician, and translator. After writing his last article protesting Europe’s inertia in stopping the war in Bosnia “L’Europa muore o rinasce a Sarajevo” (Europe either dies or is reborn in Sarajevo), he died of suicide.

17 This is an edited combination of two different translations, one done by Stanislava Lazarević for the publication of *Women in Black* (Belgrade, 2007) and another one by Renée Franić for the Center for Women’s Studies (Zagreb, 1997). Comparing both versions in Serbian and both translations, it seems that the translations were based on a transcript of a speech which contained more sentences, in various places, than the version originally written in Serbian—the version given here is the extended one.

Światłana Aleksijewič

What Is Our Memory?

AUTHOR A conversation between Almira Ousmanova and Światłana Aleksijewič

TITLE “Chto zhe takoe nasha pamjat?” [What Is Our Memory?]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Belarus’ v mire* [Belarus in the World], no. 3 (1998): 26–33 (Minsk: Issledovatel’ski institut razvitiya i bezopasnosti [The Development and Security Research Institute]).

LANGUAGE Russian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Światłana Aleksijewič (alternative spellings: Svetlana Alexievich, Aleksievich; b. 1948, Ivano-Frankivsk) is a prominent Belarusian writer, journalist, and documentary screenwriter. Born in Ukraine, she writes in Russian.

Her father was Belarusian and her mother Ukrainian. In the 1950s, the family moved to Belarus. In 1965, Aleksijewič graduated from high school in Kapatkiewičy, Homel region. For two years she worked as a teacher in the Mazyr district and as a reporter for the local newspaper *Prypiackaja Praŭda* in Naroŭla. In 1967–1972 she studied at the Faculty of Journalism of the Belarusian State University in Minsk. After graduating, she worked as a journalist in Minsk for the republic-wide newspaper *Sielskaja hazieta/Sel’skaja Gazeta* (Rural Newspaper) between 1973–1976, and was the head of the essay and literary journalism department of the literary and art magazine *Neman* (1976–1984).

In 1983, Światłana Aleksijewič was admitted to the Writers’ Union of the USSR. Since 1989 she has been a member of the Belarusian PEN Center. In 2019, she was elected vice-president of the International PEN Club and chairperson of the Board of the Belarusian PEN Center.

At the beginning of her career Aleksijewič tried different genres: literary journalism, reportage, documentary prose. She often noted that her approach to literary work was shaped by the influence of Aleś Adamovič (1927–1994), Belarusian Soviet writer, with his books *I Am from a Fiery Village* (1975) and *The Blockade Book* (1977). In interviews, she also mentions the influence of writers Vasil Bykaŭ, Hanna Krall, and Ryszard Kapuściński.¹

Researchers define the genre in which Światłana Aleksijewič works as documentary prose, literary journalism, “oratorio novels,” testimonial novels, collective testimonies,

1 “2015 Nobel Laureate Alexievich Discusses Polish Influences,” *Culture.pl*, October 13, 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/2015-nobel-laureate-alexievich-discusses-polish-influences>.

“multivoiced choirs,” or “the literature of fact.” All her works are based on oral histories of the participants in the series of dramatic events experienced by several generations of Soviet people during the twentieth century: the Second World War (the Great Patriotic War in Soviet official historiography, 1941–1945), the Afghan War (1979–1989), the Chernobyl disaster (1986), and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1990–1991).

Her first book, *The Unwomanly Face of War*, was written in 1983. Based on interviews with hundreds of women who took part in the Great Patriotic War, it presents the female experience of war. For the next two years the manuscript laid with various publishers. The author had been heavily criticized for “pacifism,” “naturalism,” and for “debunking the heroic image of a Soviet woman.” However, in 1985, on the eve of Perestroika, the book appeared almost simultaneously in several Soviet publishing houses and literary magazines. The same year, Aleksijevič published her second book, *The Last Witnesses*, a collection of memories of war survivors, people who were children between the ages of six and twelve during the Second World War.

For her next book, *Zinky Boys*, which was published in 1989, Aleksijevič spent four years recording interviews with the mothers of dead soldiers and the veterans of the undeclared Afghan War (1978–1992).² The book provoked vivid discussions, as many could not forgive the author for compromising the heroic image of the Soviet “warriors-internationalists.” In 1992, a politically motivated lawsuit against the author and her book began. However, thanks to a public campaign in defense of Aleksijevič, the trial was suspended.

Published in 1993, *Enchanted by Death* touched on the very sensitive issue of suicides committed by people who could not reconcile with the end of the Soviet era and the decay of communist ideals.

Chernobyl Prayer, known in English translation as *Voices from Chernobyl*, was completed in 1997. This book was based on the recollections of the Chernobyl liquidators,³ the close relatives of the firemen who died of radiation sickness, as well as of refugees from the Chernobyl zone. Subtitled “Chronicle of the Future,” the book talks about the simultaneous development of two catastrophes: man-made and social; it deals with the end of socialism marked by a technogenic catastrophe and the collapse of the ideology of state socialism.

Secondhand Time, published in 2013, is the last book in a cycle that the author herself calls “the chronicle of the great Utopia” or the history of the “red man.” It deals with the moral dilemmas and existential uncertainty of the post-Soviet generations. The book can be read as a cognitive mapping of the state of mind of people who seem already accustomed to living in a world without socialism, but who cannot come to

2 The book took its name from the zinc-lined coffins in which the bodies of soldiers killed in Afghanistan were shipped home.

3 These were civil and military personnel who were called upon to participate in “liquidation” of the consequences of the explosion in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant.

terms with the new economic and political realities that the market economy and post-Soviet political regimes have brought into their lives.

Śviatlana Aleksijevič has received numerous international awards, including: the Tucholsky Prize (Swedish PEN, 1996), the Herder Prize (1999), the Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding (1998), the National Book Critics Circle Award (USA, 2005), the Ryszard Kapuściński Award (Poland, 2011), the Prix Médicis essai (France, 2013), the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought by the European Parliament (2020), and others. In 2015, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature “for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time.” She is the first writer from Belarus ever to receive this award.

Śviatlana Aleksijevič’s books are the sheer evidence of her critical views of the Soviet system, but she is also well known for her consistently negative attitude towards Alaksandr Lukašenka, in connection with which she was subjected to judicial and extrajudicial persecution. Since the early 2000s, she has lived in exile in Italy, France, and Germany. In 2013 she returned to Minsk. In September 2020, soon after the presidential elections in Belarus, because of the mass political repressions and the personal risk of being arrested, she left the country. Since then, she has been living in Germany.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *U vojny ne zhenskoe lico* (Minsk: Mastackaja litaratura, 1985), in English: *The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2017); *Poslednie svideteli: sto nedetskikh kolybel’nykh* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1985), in English: *Last Witnesses: An Oral History of the Children of World War II* (New York: Random House, 2019); *Tsinkovye mal’chiki* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1991), in English: *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); *Zacharovannye smert’iu* [Enchanted by Death] (Moscow: Slovo, 1994); *Chernobyl’skaia molitva* [Chernobyl Prayer] (Moscow: Ostozhye, 1997), in English: *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster* (Funks Grove, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005); *Vremia sekond khend* (Moscow: Vremia, 2013), in English: *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets* (New York: Random House, 2016).

Almira Ousmanova

CONTEXT

Śviatlana Aleksijevič’s name is well known to international readers: her books have been translated into many languages and published in more than twenty countries. She has given hundreds of interviews and delivered many public lectures. Based on her books and with her participation as a screenwriter, several dozen documentaries were shot and theatrical plays were staged. Some of her books also inspired filmmakers to produce fiction films (the HBO series *Chernobyl* in 2019; or *Beanpole*, a film by Kantemir Balagov, in 2019). However, the question of why her work is important for women’s history and feminist thought in Eastern Europe deserves more detailed consideration.

The source included in this volume is the result of a meeting with Śviatlana Aleksijevič in 1998, at her home in Minsk, shortly after the publication of her book on Chernobyl and when the trial over *Zinky Boys* was still fresh in memory. Conducted at the suggestion of Elena Gapova, the interview with Aleksijevič was intended for a thematic magazine issue on gender studies coordinated by colleagues from the then newly established Centre for Gender Studies at the European Humanities University in Minsk, myself included. Some of the questions I outlined in preparation for the interview were: How did the idea of writing a book about the war through the prism of the female experience come about? In what ways did the publication of women's testimonies challenge the official narratives of the Second World War, which were formed during the Soviet era and have been reinforced under Lukašenka's rule?

As a feminist theorist, I was also interested in discussing the issues of women's writing and women's history: the presence of the author's voice in her books, what her approach to literature has in common with ethnographic research and oral history, and what properties of her texts constitute their "literariness." Aleksijevič has never called herself feminist, but based on the interview and her texts, it would be appropriate to consider Aleksijevič's approach to literature as an example of feminist writing. This interpretation is only strengthened by her appraisal of the role of women in the Belarusian revolution of 2020.

The interview excerpts in this volume are structured under thematic headings that replace the interview questions with concise titles, while maintaining the chronological order of the discussion. The wording of the titles is also slightly modernized in order to make the context of the discussion more understandable for a contemporary, English-speaking audience.

This interview, and Śviatlana Aleksijevič's books, have renewed relevance following the events of 2020 in Belarus (often called the "revolution with a woman's face") and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. In the 2010s, the author expressed pessimism regarding the unfinished processes of decommunization in the former Soviet space, threats of a full-scale war in Ukraine and the potential for civil war in Russia.⁴ Her book *The Unwomanly Face of War* stands out among many about the war written by women—writers, scholars, witnesses, journalists, and participants in the events. First, it represents the collective voice of those who remain silent and unseen in the shadows of Great History. As an author and interlocutor, Aleksijevič dealt with traumatic experiences associated with the loss of loved ones, everyday efforts to survive in unbearable circumstances, care of children, the trauma of rape or fear of violence, injuries, hunger, shame, etc. Women often kept silent because their experience, contribution, and sacrifice were seen as unnecessary and devalued in postwar patriarchal

4 Ina Studzinskaja, "Śviatlana Aleksijevič: Budzie vialikaja vajna" [There Will Be a Big War], interview for Radio Svaboda, September 17, 2014, <https://www.svaboda.org/a/26589597.html>.

society, and because they often did not consider their personal stories significant in the context of a bigger tragedy as well as their contribution to the common cause as heroic and worthy of being recorded.

Second, Aleksijevič reveals the connection between hegemonic ideological discourses and women's experience of war, their perception of war (through the prism of dominant narratives), and memories of it. Women were silent and absent from media representations because no one asked them—and because there is generally no place for them in gender biased (heroic and masculine) ideological narratives of war. Aleksijevič writes about a universal female experience of war, despite all differences between countries, peoples, wars, and ideologies that dominate in a particular society.

The subordinate role of women in a patriarchal society and their ambivalent relationship to war was further explored in her book *Zinky Boys*. Mothers, who should (as it seems, for natural reasons) protect the life and health of their children, suddenly take the side of the totalitarian regime that sends them to meaningless death. Aleksijevič asked: how did this become possible?—a question that is ever more relevant in the present context of the senseless and ruthless war in Ukraine.

The trial against Śviatlana Aleksijevič and her book *Zinky Boys* was a intended bullying campaign on behalf of the state propaganda machine. A lawsuit initiated by mothers of Afghan war veterans was in fact the result of planned and staged propaganda actions. The discourse of the patriotic sacrifice of “mothers,” willingly broadcast by both the official Russian media and media abroad, overshadowed the negative attitude (anger, grief, active protest) of many Russian women towards the unjust and monstrous Afghan War. Meanwhile, the symbiotic relationship between the war and the patriarchal order of power remains on the periphery of public attention.

According to American historian Timothy Snyder, the “central attainment [of Śviatlana Aleksijevič is] the recovery of Soviet experience from myth,” which has “made her an acute critic of the nostalgic dictatorships in Belarus and Russia.”⁵ Indeed, Aleksijevič openly articulated her critical position towards the Soviet and post-Soviet totalitarian regimes (the USSR, Putin's Russia, Lukašenka's Belarus) in all of her books and interviews. In this sense, the Nobel Prize was an award not only for her contribution to world literature, but also a manifestation of support for her civic position.

Śviatlana Aleksijevič was considered a dissident even in the period of late socialism, but her critical attitude towards totalitarian regimes manifested itself even more during the rule of Lukašenka. It is worth noting that her books have not been published by state publishing houses in Belarus for exactly thirty years—from the moment of the publication of her book *Enchanted by Death* in Belarus in 1993. In 2016, her Nobel Prize award was deliberately ignored by Belarusian authorities. In

5 Snyder, “Svetlana Alexievich.”

2021, her texts were excluded from the optional readings list in the school curriculum.⁶ In other words, in today's Belarus, Śvialana Aleksijevič's texts are banned, and for the Belarusian authorities, the Nobel Prize—whether in the field of literature, or the Peace Prize, as in the case of the now-imprisoned Belarusian human rights activist Aleś Bialacki, awarded in 2022—is only a reason for political persecution.

In the summer of 2020, Śvialana Aleksijevič supported the candidacy of Śvialana Cichanoŭskaja in the presidential elections. In August of the same year, she joined the Coordination Council initiated by the opposition, but a few days later, after the beginning of prosecution against the members of the Coordination Council, she had to leave the country. Given her moral authority and intellectual influence, in many publications dedicated to the unfolding of the Belarusian revolution, her views on women's role in history are vividly present.⁷ On the eve of the presidential elections in Belarus in 2020, Śvialana Aleksijevič said: "Women realized that they could and should do something, and then they will tell their children: we did everything we could."⁸

At present time (in 2023) Belarus exists in two parallel realities. There is no doubt that after "the last dictatorship in Europe" dissolves into oblivion, the works of Śvialana Aleksijevič will be studied in a new Belarus, both in schools and universities. I hope this time will come soon.

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Almira Ousmanova

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Šviatlana Aleksijevič What Is Our Memory?

How I started writing... I come from a family of rural teachers. My mother is Ukrainian, my father Belarusian. I was brought up at the juncture of these Slavic cultures. Our house was full of books. The countryside, nature, and books. It was from this that my sense of the world's polyphony was born. From the outset, it seemed to me that the world is always many voices, many people, all together. On the one hand there was the seclusion of a "philological girl" and on the other the culture of the village: the sense of a world—many voices, perhaps rough and brutal—outside the walls of the house. In the village one could not close oneself off from the world. The world was beating on the windows, and it was not at all the world that the newspapers told us about...

I searched for myself for quite a long time and initially followed a traditional path. I wrote poetry and worked as a journalist. But then it turned out that what interested me in a human being was of no interest to the newspaper. I was interested in what existed at the juncture of the conscious and subconscious minds. Later I worked out for myself that I was interested in the biological human being, and not the ideological one.

When I read *I Am from a Fiery Village* by Aleś Adamovič,⁹ I was struck by a coincidence with my own perception of the world. When it is both a documentary and, at the same time, art. That is how my first book *The Unwomanly Face of War*

9 Aleś Adamovič, Janka Bryl, and Uladzimir Kalesnik, *Ja z vobniennaj wioski* (Minsk: Mastackaja litaratura, 1975), in English: *I Am from a Fiery Village* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1980).

(1985) was born. Adamovič variously called this genre: “choral prose,” “a novel in voices,” “people telling their own stories,” and “a novel-oratorio.” From book to book I test this genre, in different directions.

I gather details not only from an individual human life, but from the zeitgeist. I do not make things up: I simply organize material from reality itself. A “documentary” is both what those I talk to tell me; but a “documentary” is also compiled by me as a person with my own worldview, my own feelings. And the more I work with testimonies, the more I realize that by “documentary” we mean our own versions, our interpretations of what happens to us. But for me it is important that the documentary works according to the laws of art.

I am not interested in the factual side of events. For me they exist as the canvas of history. My “facts” are feelings. And this is how I define the genre in which I work: the history of feelings. From book to book an encyclopedia of feelings and the inner life of the people of my time is being created.

For me, the sense of history is embedded in the meaning of each individual human life. I believe that the life of each of us is the creation of history. That is, we all create it together, and art then seeks to recreate this picture of the world. Testimonies and documentaries enter into art and fill out this picture of the world. The possibilities of the documentary in art, my own experience tells me, are still far from being mastered and exhausted. Yes, initially there has to be an epic, global event which involves a great many people. And at the intersection of the multitude of these lights, dots, and elements of background lighting, the idea of a book is born, the image of the world is born, in the creation of which the author is also involved.

Each time exists in its own aesthetics, in its own words. Every generation writes its own texts, but the themes are the same: the eternal ones of birth, the anguish of the soul, death, and love. Each person has this mystery (love, crime, fear of death), their own knowledge. And out of this a special, not necessarily coherent and consistent, but unique text is born.

The wo/man at war in a totalitarian system

Thousands of books have been written about the war. And by now a good number have also been written about Chernobyl. I wrote a book about the Great Patriotic War (Second World War) 40 years later,¹⁰ about Chernobyl 10 years later,¹¹ and about socialism when it was already gone.¹² But why, for example, did I write about

¹⁰ Aleksijević, *The Unwomanly Face of War*.

¹¹ Aleksijević, *Voices from Chernobyl*.

¹² Aleksijević, *Secondhand Time*.

Chernobyl only 10 years later? I wanted to write earlier, but I realized that I did not yet have my own vision. At that point I could have written a book that could have been written by other people. But then I heard a new sound, and it was as if everything lit up, manifested itself differently.

Forty years after the war, I came to understand that it is no longer possible to write about how some people heroically killed others. Today we are more interested in the question of *how*: how a person can be able to kill another human being, what happens to them.

There have been many great books written about the war, but the stories people told from the war, which I heard [as a child], were very different from the books I read. I soon realized that in our war literature, a human being existed as a unit of the confrontation between one world and another: but what I was interested in was human beings in war, in their feelings and their consciousness.

I do not remember any books describing how a man plunges into that abyss. A man who finds himself face to face with this possibility of killing another. How does one live with this? So many instincts are awoken, but how does a person deal with them? It is this biological man that I have tried and am trying to understand. I am interested in human nature in general, how strong or fragile it is: how much humanity there is in a person. And how this human being can be protected. I am interested in a person on the threshold of new feelings and new experiences. Each person individually also exists in social time, but for me more intriguing is the human being in general. The so-called “eternal man” is also a biological being: with her or his physiological needs and fears, including the feelings of revenge aroused by seeing another person’s suffering.

I do not only strive to show biological man in my books, but I think it is necessary to do so. In our literature on war, people were stripped of their corporeal identity and were described as defending their homeland, standing up for what is right and so on. But in *Zinky Boys* for example, a former nurse says that sometimes it turns out to be a thrill to kill, a desire to kill arises. Our writers, even the best ones, did not want to see this, or maybe they could not, because they looked at the world through the eyes of the system that created them.

A few years after *Zinky Boys* came out, I met one of the mothers in the street and she said to me: “How wrong we were; it turns out it was true. Our boys were killing people in Afghanistan.” I asked her, “What made you think that?” She replied: “The war in Chechnya. They were killing there just as our boys did [in Afghanistan]. I could not before imagine that our Soviet boys could do that.” She could not get it into her head. Mothers only imagined warriors who were liberators. Little was known about the war in Afghanistan: it was said that our troops there were helping the population, teaching, and building the infrastructure. However, when the war in Chechnya was shown on TV, the question of whether “our boys”

killed people in Afghanistan or not was no longer an issue. Everyone had seen how it was happening on television.

However, at the end of the Soviet era it was a new experience for a Soviet man. This man appeared in a completely new guise, and people did not want to recognize themselves in him. One mother told me: “I used to go to the museum, I used to bring them my son’s shirts and notebooks, and now the museum is closed. This is after your book.” But it wasn’t about my book, it was about the fact that the Empire had collapsed, and the meaning of their children’s deaths was lost. The most important reason was that they did not want to admit that this death had no meaning, that there was no meaning in the life they had lived. So they stood up for that meaning—the old meaning—as they understood it.

I think the time of the Big Myths is over. Modern man seeks meaning in his private life, not in unity with the state. The value of an individual human life (my own, “living” time) is the main meaning of history. Myths are dangerous. They work where and when the consciousness of individual persons is paralyzed. Myths are more likely to be eradicated than defeated.

How do “repentance societies” in Germany work today, for example? The current generation of Germans feel guilty about things that did not happen in their lifetime, but to their country, to their parents. If we compare this to what is happening here, why do our young people think they can free themselves from history and forget the guilt of their parents? It seems to me that this is possible because repentance as such has not happened in our society. It is strange: millions of people died during the years of Soviet rule and only Stalin and Beria¹³ are to blame. Just a couple of individuals, when so many people were killed in the process of Stalin’s purges because of mass denunciations? It seems to me that this sense of a generation gap that has come about is suggestive of a very bad diagnosis. *The past is yet to come.*

As for the Great Patriotic War, I think on the whole that it is impossible not to admit that it was a great event in our history, and that when all is said and done the war was one of liberation, despite the fact that we have now seen the light and understand, in the words of Bulat Okudzhava,¹⁴ that “from one fascism we were defending another fascism.” But then, on a global scale, it was not a question of whether Stalinist fascism would survive, but of whether this entire huge country and the people who inhabited it would not perish. I did not set out to destroy these myths, especially as myths, historical truth, and personal stories are intertwined here. Credibility is born from the intersection of all these stories, big and small.

13 Editor’s note: Lavrentiy Beria (1899–1953) was chief of the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (Naródný komissariát vnútreñnih del, NKVD) under Joseph Stalin during the Second World War.

14 Bulat Okudzhava (1924–1997) was a Soviet poet, writer, musician, novelist, and singer-songwriter of Georgian-Armenian ancestry.

I have been told that my books about the Great Patriotic War or Chernobyl could go on and on. My answer was that the idea itself had been exhausted. One more fact, one more destiny would not add or change anything in my view on those events and the people who took part in them. For the same reason I would not write a book about the war in Chechnya. Another account of the war would not provide me with a definitive answer to the question of what makes one man kill another. What I have understood about this, I have already expressed, it's in my books.

Herstory: big history under the female gaze

Women's perspectives on the war interested me not only and not so much because of the rarity or uniqueness of such accounts. Unfortunately, we still do not know exactly how many women took part in the war (the numbers of female partisans and underground fighters have never been assessed quantitatively at all).¹⁵ I searched for a long time to find a way to talk about the war, until I realized that I was a woman and looked at the war through the eyes of women, and so a completely different type of material opened up. When I talked to Adamovič about the book I was writing, he was amazed and said that he could never have written such a book and was not even aware of the existence of this perspective.

I remember one of the first WWII women veterans I interviewed said that from that year on she had never liked summer again, while another said she had never been able to see cut meat since then, because it always reminded her of human flesh. Especially revealing is the comparison of the memories of a husband and wife who fought together: the man recalled how the battle was fought, and the woman said how terrifying it was when the sailing caps of the dead sailors floated down the river. Can you imagine what a ready-made image that is?

In the women's stories I heard about a very different war. Colors, smells, sounds—everything is different in a woman's perception of war. The details are fantastic in their impact. When I published this book—and this became possible only when Gorbachev came to power; it had a huge circulation of 2 million copies—when it was translated into other languages, when plays were staged in theaters around the globe, it became a sudden revelation for many people. Why didn't they want to publish the book? I was accused of pacifism, naturalism, etc. I have such a story in my book: a woman who dragged two wounded men out of the battle, one of whom turned out to be a German, and the other—in his half-dead state—immediately tried to kill him. Not only did she separate them, but also helped both of them. And how

15 According to various sources, more than 1 million women fought in the Soviet army. Approximately the same number (or more) took part in the partisan and underground resistance on occupied territory. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160530062210/http://www.alexievich.info/index.html>

many stories were told that no matter how much hatred there was for those who had spent four years killing our people, women felt pity for them and their families left in Germany. They saw hunger, cold, the death of loved ones, illness, and other suffering from a universal perspective. Thus, if for a man, war is often just hard work and the hardships of camp life, then from a woman's point of view, it is still murder, just or unjust.

A woman's memory covers that continent of human feeling in war which usually escapes men's attention. If a man was gripped by war as an action, a woman feels and endures it differently because of her female psychology: bombing, death, suffering—for her, it is not yet all war. And what she remembered, what she bore from this mortal hell, today became a unique spiritual experience, an experience of boundless human potential, which we have no right to consign to oblivion.

Male and female memory are two different worlds and two different perspectives. We can find plenty of evidence of this in literature. *Anna Karenina* could only have been written by a man. There are writers who have a bisexual, or androgynous, world view ([Marcel] Proust, for example, or [Nikolai] Berdyaev), but this is rare. A specifically feminine view of the world can be sensed in a certain subtlety of gaze, an understatement.

Why do I have so few author's comments? It can be compared to a perfect temple, about which you cannot say "I built that." The documentary is what my witnesses have told me (for each book I interviewed at least 500 people), but it is also what I have chosen from those stories, how I have arranged them in the book, and then it is also my vision of the world. I do not share the idea that writing is a kind of sacred action. How is my work different from that of a surgeon, who sees a person on the brink every day—tears, pain, grief. He sees what I see. But writing it down is what is seen as something so special.

When I was working on the book *Chernobyl Prayer*, many of my narrators said: "There are no words to express what I have seen and experienced," or "I have never read about it in a book or seen it in a movie." You begin to understand the strangeness of what is happening better. I remember well the story of the woman (a lonely human voice at the beginning of the book) who is told in the hospital "forget that this is your loved one. You can't go near him." Or when the settlers from the Chernobyl zone were talking about how strange it was that "the sun was shining," that onions were shooting, or even that a little mouse was living in the house. One elderly woman said: "I have seen war before, but this is not war..."

I also remember how one of the characters in my book about the war in Afghanistan (*Zinky Boys*) kept telling me: "You have to, but it is impossible to tell." And then he sued me. I asked him: "How could you?" And he said: "I thought you were going to write something else." Different meanings can be extracted from

the same fact. We think at different frequencies of perception. For them it was one meaning; for me it was something more complex and multilayered.

Many people think that writing a book is simple—the more people you interview, the easier it is to write the book. But a book is first and foremost a philosophy, a new way of looking at the world. It is comparable to the way we look at familiar things and suddenly there is an unexpected light which changes our perception of those things. It was also feedback from my readers that convinced me of this. When the *Chernobyl Prayer* was published, people started to call me—from Minsk, Kyiv, and other cities. They all said: “We all knew that, but when we read your book, we saw it with a different perspective.”

I have also faced accusations of necrophilia. I think this is a ridiculous and unprofessional accusation. The death in my books is of different kinds: it is blood, dirt, lice—just like in life. But for something written to be a work of art, it must be done according to its laws. Otherwise human consciousness will not let it in. I cannot just give an unrefined stream of life: it would be a never-ending book (all the stories would have to be published in their entirety). I believe that only fragments of reality filtered by art can make a person reflect, co-experience, and empathize. Many of the eloquent details concerning death found in my books are not important in themselves, but only as a means to enhance the impression of real horror.

Besides, do we have any other experience of history than this one: a sea of blood and a mass grave? My father used to say, “My whole life was always war, after the war, and then, after socialism, all the time on the barricades, in the ruins...” If you take the meaning of life beyond ourselves, then you raise the question of its meaninglessness. In other words, our history is a history of suffering. Suffering is our refuge. Our cult. We are hypnotized by it.

In that sense, I am just a chronicler—I write about what is or what was. Unfortunately, the twentieth century is an age of dreadful totalitarian ideas, and so many human destinies were implicated in the implementation of these ideas. I chose these people and wanted to look back at the past with them, to relive it “for a second time.” I can see no other subject of study for me. It is a very difficult task for art. Of course, there is the problem of defending oneself, one’s fatigue as a human being. But I have happened to follow this path. Maybe that is how my eyes and my senses work. I see the world in its tragic dimension.

*Translated by Almira Ousmanova
English edited by Benjamin Cope*

3

Ideologies of Women's Emancipation

Hana Gregorová

About March 8th and Feminism

AUTHOR Hana Gregorová

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LANGUAGE Slovak

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND THE SOURCE

Hana Gregorová (née Anna Božena Lilgová; 1885, Turčiansky Svätý Martin, Austro-Hungarian Empire [today Martin, Slovakia]–1958, Prague) was a writer, feminist, and pioneer of the Slovak women’s movement. She was a socially, culturally, and politically committed public figure, who also did important work as a publicist and an organizer of cultural and educational events, among other activities. She came from an impoverished middle-class family which had been involved in the dyeing craft for four generations. The Lilge family supported the nineteenth-century Romantic nationalist Slovak National Revival movement, which aimed at promoting the Slovak language and Slovak national culture, especially in literature, against “Magyarization” (forced Hungarianization). As Gregorová depicted in her *Spomienky* [Memories], the major part of the nationally conscious Slovaks belonged to the small and middle strata of the bourgeoisie, which “bore a part of the burden of the fate of the nation on its shoulders. We [the Slovaks] had neither rich men nor great lords.”¹ Her grandfather was a founding member of the most important national organization *Matica slovenská* (1863), banned later because of intensified Magyarization politics (1875), especially after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867.

Hana’s mother, Mária Jamnická, from the family of a Lutheran theologian, married the widower Ján Lilge at the age of sixteen. When the educated young woman came to Turčiansky Svätý Martin, which was the centre of the Slovak National Movement at the time, Lilge’s indigo dyeing business was already in debt. Her ailing husband soon left her in charge of the dyeing workshop, and this arduous work filled her life. This situation also influenced the fate of her daughters; in times of need, they had to help in the household, which prevented their higher education. The

¹ Gregorová, *Spomienky*, 13.

dominant gender stereotypes at this time can be illustrated by Gregorová's following impression: "the disappointment that was revealed in the family by my arrival in the world: a girl again instead of the expected son."² After finishing primary school in Slovak language, Hana Gregorová graduated from a Hungarian burgher (middle) school, although at first she did not speak Hungarian. The recommendations of her teachers for further education at the teachers' institute were denied by her mother, and the unfulfilled desire for education accompanied Gregorová all her life. She constantly strove for self-education, and the conditions in Turčiansky Svätý Martin were favourable for this. The city was the venue of cultural events and important meetings of organizations and associations crucial for Slovak national life, and also confrontations of "young" (more politically oriented students) and "old" (conservative authorities) nationalists. It was here that the young Hana became acquainted with the organization Živena (founded in 1869 as the first Slovak women's organization, named after an old Slavic goddess of life), which, after the ban on national associations, carried on their work as a "harmless women's association." Here, Hana met the important women writers of the time, Elena Maróthy Šoltéssová and Terézia Vansová.³ She made many friends with interests in literature, culture, and politics—among them also the Slovak students from Prague around the "progressive realist magazine" *Hlas* [Voice], which was one of the forums at the time publishing revolutionary views on the equality between men and women.

The magazine was sent to her by the man whom she married in 1907, the acclaimed realist writer Jozef Gregor-Tajovský (1874–1940). Due to the husband's job, the couple lived in Nagylak (now Nădlac, Romania), Prešov, then again in Martin. She published her first book, the short story collection *Ženy* (Women) in 1912. *Ženy* was the first literary work by a Slovak woman author realistically portraying women's inferior social status. Instead of idealizing womanhood, the book talked about violence against women, their unfulfilled desire for education, divorce, the position of the maid, and marriage as an economic necessity. The book and the author faced harsh criticism from conservative

2 Gregorová, *Spomienky*, 29. Hana had five siblings. Her sister Ľudmila Thurzová (born Lilgová) (1881–1971) was a famous herbalist, co-author of *Malý atlas liečivých rastlín* [Small Atlas of Herbs, 1936]. Her brother Ivan Lilge (1886–1918) was a writer, translator, and publicist. Farkašová, "Hana Gregorová," 166.

3 Elena Maróthy Šoltéssová (1855–1939) was the first Slovak woman writer to be accepted into the national literary canon; literary critic, essayist and national activist; from 1894 President, Vice-President, and Honorary President of the Slovak women's association Živena; promoter of women's education. See Jana Cviková, "Elena Maróthy Šoltéssová," in *Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 301–5. Terézia Vansová (1857–1942) was a writer, author of the first Slovak women's novel; women's activist, promoter of women's education, active in the Slovak women's association Živena; editor of the first Slovak women's magazine *Dennica* [Morning Star] (1898). See Jana Cviková, "Terézia Vansová," in *Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 595–98.

authorities. After the outbreak of World War I, Tajovský was enlisted, and in 1916 in Budapest Hana Gregorová gave birth to a daughter. Between 1919 and 1920, she worked as an editor in the daily *Slovenský východ* (Slovak East) in Košice. She also worked briefly at the ministry of education in Prague. For many years it was her dream to live in this city with its lively cultural life, and she always collaborated intensively with outstanding Czech cultural and political personalities, including those from the women's movement. After her husband's return from war captivity, he refused to move to Prague, so they moved to Bratislava in 1921. Here she became involved in various associations. She was one of the founders of the Slovak artists' organization Umelecká beseda (Society of Artists) in Bratislava and was chair of the social organization Solidarita. The Gregors' home was an important meeting place of diverse social and cultural life, especially for young writers from the leftist spectrum, such as the circle around the journal *DAV*.⁴ Gregorová continued publishing her literary work, which focused on the empathic thematization of women's lives and their emancipation across a broad social spectrum. According to the philosopher Etela Farkašová, in one of Gregorová's most important works, *Slovenka pri krbe a knihe* (Slovak Woman by the Fireplace with a Book), published in 1929: "Gregorová analyzed particular social norms governing women in Slovak society and described the lives of several women she thought to have made a contribution to the development of Slovak culture."⁵ This unique socio-cultural essay is situated in the interwar context of feminist thought, not only released in the same year as Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own," but also through the same emphasis on the importance of women's cultural and literary traditions.⁶

After the death of her husband in 1940, Gregorová moved to Prague to live near her daughter Dagmar Prášilová and her family. During World War II, she was involved in the anti-fascist resistance, serving also as a connection between Czech and Slovak anti-fascists. She also actively participated in Ženská národní rada (Czech National Council of Women) meetings and was in contact with the founder of the organization, Františka Plamínková (1975–1942), who was executed by the Nazis in 1942.⁷ In the immediate post-war period, Gregorová remained politically active, but later she withdrew from public life and continued working on her extensive memoirs, which were edited by her daughter, Dagmar Prášilová. Their first, abridged version could only be published in 1979. After November 1989, Prášilová published other books

4 The name was an acronym created with the initials of the journal's editors, Daniel Okáli, Andrej Sirácky, and Vladimír Clementis. *DAV* was a leftist-Marxist journal published between 1924 and 1937 with intervals in Prague and then in Bratislava. Dagmar Roberts, "Slovak Journals between Languages and against Censorship," in *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, vol. 3, *The Making and Remaking of Literary Institutions*, eds. Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 89–94.

5 Farkašová, "Hana Gregorová," 167.

6 See Cviková, "Ženská literárna tradícia," 213–25.

7 About Plamínková, see the entries about Milada Horáková and Hana Havelková in this volume; and Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*.

about her parents, including their correspondence, which is a unique document of the search for equality between women and men in the private as well as public sphere.

In 1945, Gregorová took part at the first congress of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in Paris, where she—upon the recommendation of the Czech antifascist and socialist Milada Horáková—gave a short speech in the closed assembly.⁸ After 1945, for a very short time, Gregorová was the Chairwoman of the socialist Slovak Women's Union (Slovenský zväz žien)⁹ at a time when multiple political parties were competing to control the women's rights agenda in Czechoslovakia. The importance of feminist voices bridging interwar feminism in Czechoslovakia with the post-war period and the state socialist emancipation of women reflect Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová's concept of an expropriated voice, which denotes "the situation where the state took the women's movement's agenda from it with the object of managing it itself—and supposedly better."¹⁰ The excerpt below is from an archival document without a date, but we may well assume that it was a speech and meant for publication. The topic suggests that it was inspired by the immediate post-war climate in 1945, when, among socialists, there was resistance to feminism as "outdated." But there was also a hope to build peace and a new women's movement which took women's rights seriously.

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8 Gregorová, *Ženy–matky za svetový mier*.

9 About the ideological clashes between political parties over women's rights in 1945, see Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 195ff.

10 Havelková and Oates-Indruchová, *The Politics of Gender Culture*, 10.

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Jana Cviková

* * *

Hana Gregorová On March 8th and Feminism

March 8th is the international day of rallies for women’s rights. For their right to education, work, a dignified human life. Women’s rights are, of course, linked to the rights of the family since we claim that women are the heart of the family. By raising the standard of women, we are raising the standard of the family and with it, of course, also the standard of the country. By fighting for a better future for women we are, by the same token, fighting for a better future for men. That is as clear as day! By rallying for women’s rights, we are rallying for the right to live for our children and our men.

Even before World War I, March 8th was celebrated in the Soviet Union as a symbol of the struggle for peace and freedom. A struggle for the lofty ideal which women have not ceased to pursue and lay down their lives for around the globe and, in the case of our country, during the [1944 National] Uprising in Banská Bystrica. In 1919, Women’s Day was a rallying cry “for bread and peace.” What a resonant slogan! Where there is bread there is also culture, there are opportunities for spiritual growth; where there is peace, cultural achievements edify life rather than being misused for the destruction of human beings and of earthly as well as spiritual good. [...]

The most recent March 8th was a rally for the Czechoslovak Republic, for the defense of democratic rights and for peace. [...]

A woman who chooses to stay within the confines of her close-knit family and between four walls to devote her life to caring for her family and refusing to be distracted from what she sees as her natural and sacred duties, a woman such as this neglects, and sins against, her most sacred familial duties. Men will never be able to build world peace—lasting peace—without women. And that is why we must be actively involved in public life, that is why we must keep an eye on everything that is happening, and why we must play our part. We have been granted equality, so we must earn it and defend every position and every role that is placing more and more fresh obligations upon us.

Let me take a glance at the past. At that time, girls were raised as delicate hothouse flowers, protected from any strong gust of wind and harsh sunshine of life, kept away from the secrets of life in order to remain untainted, their world-view limited and sentimentally rose-tinted, in thrall to unhealthy illusions, bereft of poetry. What a colossal mistake to regard this as an appropriate, gentle preparation for marriage, an institution that always has and always will demand significant obligations and a great deal of preparation, rather than the nurturing of cozy, unhealthy dreams and a lack of exposure to real life and its foundations. The amount of pretense, insincerity, and falsehood in matters of cohabitation and life in general that this kind of education has immorally forced upon women! These days we need women to have high moral standards not because we want their eyes closed to the truth, to protect them from life's coarseness and morass, but precisely because we want them to confront the depths of darkness to the fullest, thus steeling them and making them more resilient in the struggle. The reason we must not shield women from the filth in public life is that we expect them to take part in its cleansing. What we need is not some slip of a girl but a woman who is firm, truly moral, determined to fight for the cleansing of both the private and public sphere, to be moral not because she has never known evil but because she has seen it and engaged in deliberate struggle against it.

The modern woman will not pretend to believe in something that is against her convictions purely for the sake of maintaining a positive atmosphere and peace in the family. Nor will her husband demand that of her. A noble and modern man will always value a woman's right to free expression and to be a free spirit, rather than see her cower in her femininity, because he acknowledges a more perfect, human form of her femininity, one that will lead to a more meaningful and productive relationship. The moral principle will spring from her very being and her profound conviction that this is what provides a secure moral foundation for the family, for the state and the entire world.

It would be quite sinful and pointless for us to continue to lag behind the women of the world. We shall be their equal in our work. We shall contribute to

the international efforts to stamp out all traces of fascism and narrow-minded nationalism.

In order to become fully involved in the construction of a new world, we have to gain the right to work in this country, so that the equality guaranteed us by the constitution does not remain only a beautiful—but dead—letter. To claim that feminism, and I mean feminism in the noblest sense of the word, is an outdated issue, shows blindness to the fact that the kind of life that we see before our eyes continues to be unfair to women. There are plenty of specific examples of women who have been condemned, excluded from offices, or denied advancement in their career simply because they are women. This shows an enormous absence of gratitude to, as well as lack of respect for, the feminist movement, the great and lofty achievements not just for the sake of women alone but also their husbands: all of humankind. Feminism is of immense cultural as well as social importance. If it were not for the feminist movement, we wouldn't have any academically educated women, we wouldn't have any female members of parliament, we would not be able to make our contribution to peace in the world.

Translated by Julia and Peter Sherwood

Anna Kéthly

Women in Politics

AUTHOR Anna Kéthly

TITLE “Nők a politikában” [Women in Politics]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Népszava jubileumi naptára 1947* [People’s Voice Annuario 1947] (Budapest: Népszava, 1946), 75–78.

LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Kéthly (1889, Budapest–1976, Blankenberge), the second-born daughter of the Kéthly family, was brought up as a “poor student” (*szegénydiák*) in church schools. In 1905, she worked in the editorial office of the *Tolnai Világlapja* (The Tolnai World Report), and then in various companies in Budapest and Košice/Kassa. While working, she completed night school to obtain qualifications as a stenographer, typist, and accountant. She learned German and became acquainted with the trade union and women’s labor movements by accompanying her father on occasional trips to Vienna. In 1917, she was elected secretary of the women’s branch of the National Association of Private Clerks (Magyarországi Magántisztviselők Országos Szövetsége), and in the same year joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt, MSzDP).

Her political career began after the collapse of the two postwar experimental political regimes in 1918–19.¹ She was elected to the reorganized MSzDP’s National Women’s Bureau (Országos Nőszervező Bizottság), and served for a time as its secretary. After the reorganization of the MSzDP, Anna Kéthly took the so-called Octoberist position: she repeatedly and emphatically distanced herself from the system of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (or Republic of Councils, Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság)² but remained committed to her socialist principles. The same was true of her parliamentary activities from 1922 onward. The recurrent themes of

1 After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, two revolutions took place in Hungary. During the Aster Revolution in 1918, at the end of First World War, the First Hungarian Republic (or The Hungarian People’s Republic, Magyar Népköztársaság) was founded by Mihály Károlyi. In March 1919, the republic was dissolved through a coup d’état that led to the establishment of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (or Republic of Councils, Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság).

2 The Hungarian Soviet Republic (The Socialist Federative Republic of Councils in Hungary) was a short-lived communist state (from 21 March 1919 to 1 August 1919), that controlled approximately only 23% of Hungary’s historical territory. It was the successor of the first Hungarian People’s Republic. The main figure of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was the communist Béla Kun.

her speeches were child education, the situation of (women) workers, schooling and public health, and prison conditions. From the second half of the 1930s, she regularly spoke out against pro-Nazi sentiment and warmongering, deeming these unacceptable, and rejected the successive anti-Jewish laws (*zsidótörvények*).

Winning over the mass of unorganized working-class women to the social democratic movement was largely done by word of mouth and written letters. Kéthly also campaigned for universal suffrage by secret ballot, and used the newspaper *Nőmunkás* (Woman Worker) as a means of winning over the potential female electorate. She joined the Feminists' Association (Feministák Egyesülete, FE) in their struggle for women's suffrage,³ and was in supportive and friendly correspondence with Rózsa Schwimmer and the rest of the FE leadership.

From 1922 to 1939, she stood for and won her seat in every parliamentary election cycle. During the Second World War, she courageously stood up for persecuted Jews. She was one of the most brilliant protesters in the parliamentary debates on the bills of the anti-Jewish laws of 1938–39. In 1943–44, in the company of Károly Peyer (1881–1956), she negotiated with bourgeois politicians who were looking for a way out of the war, contacting British representatives of the Anti-Fascist Coalition (the Allies).

During the Second World War in Hungary, after the German invasion in March 1944, the two leaders of the MSzDP, Károly Peyer and Illés Mónus (1888–1944), were arrested and the party was banned. Mónus was killed by members of the Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross Party after escaping a Gestapo prison, and Kéthly went underground.⁴ She did not participate in the resistance movement and opposed signing the unity agreement between the two workers' parties, the MSzDP and the Communist Party. Following the postwar elections of November 1945, she was re-elected to the National Assembly, where she became leader of the enlarged MSzDP faction and one of the deputy speakers of the parliament. She strove to maintain a balance between different extremes within the party, and in the postwar coalition years this required honed tactical and diplomatic skills, constant mediation, and conflict resolution. It was not so much her position as her authority that made Kéthly the leader of those who opposed the merger of the two workers' parties. As a consequence, in February 1948, during a coup-like meeting of the MSzDP executive council in Budapest, she was expelled from the leadership and later from the party itself. At the same time, she was removed from her post as vice president of the National Assembly and deprived of her parliamentary seat.

3 See Czeferner, "Polgári-liberális, feminista nőszervezetek" [Bourgeois-Liberal Feminist Women's Organizations], 131.

4 On this, see Brunn, "A titokzatos nevelőnő," 71.

Although she retired from public life in the course of the conspiracy trials against the social democrats, she was arrested in June 1950 by the State Protection Authority (Államvédelmi Hatóság, ÁVH), the secret police during the Stalinist era in Hungary. After more than three and a half years of detention without even being charged, she was sentenced to life in prison and the total confiscation of her property. Partly as a result of widespread international protest, and partly as a result of the incipient but highly controversial review of the period's show trials, she was released on an individual pardon. Afterwards she lived surrounded only by her close family. She became politically active again only after Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971) was ousted under external pressure in July 1956. The events of the revolution that began on October 23, 1956, brought her out of her partial seclusion. She participated in the reorganization of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and was elected its president. She traveled to Vienna to attend a meeting of the Bureau of the Socialist International and briefed the body on developments in Hungary. In her absence, she was appointed Minister of State in Imre Nagy's coalition government. She never returned home, but went to New York to brief the United Nations Security Council and mobilize international opinion to save the Hungarian Revolution. As she approached her seventieth birthday, she began her third political period, now in exile. On her return to Europe, she was elected President of the Hungarian Revolutionary Council, which was set up in Strasbourg in early 1957. She settled in Brussels with the support of the International and the Belgian Socialist Party. She took part in the activities of the National Representation of Free Hungary, the Socialist International, the International Federation of Free Trade Unions, and the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in Exile, of which she became President. She was editor-in-chief of the main social democratic newspaper *Népszava* (People's Voice) in emigration and of the emigrant edition of *Szociáldemokrata Szemle* (Social Democratic Review).

In 1962, the Supreme Court of the Hungarian People's Republic acquitted her of the charges of treason and conspiracy made in the 1954 trial. In the same judgement, and in absentia, she was still found guilty of sedition. In the last decade of her life, Kéthly was busy preparing a new party program to adapt to changing circumstances. In 1973, the editorial board she chaired published the "Szociáldemokrata Alternatíva" (Social-Democratic Alternative) as the agreed-upon program of the MSzDP in exile. The "Joan of Arc of Hungarian politics"—as her fellow social democratic politician Vilmos Böhm (1880–1949) called her—died in Belgium at the age of 86. Although she was not burnt at the stake or beaten to death in prison, she met a different fate. After two decades of exile, she was forced to die in a foreign land. Her ashes were brought to Hungary in October 1990 and laid to rest in plot 300 of the Új Köztemető (New Public Cemetery) in Budapest.

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Zsuzsanna Kádár B.

Translated by Cody J. Inglis

CONTEXT

Népszava (People's Voice)—the long-established Hungarian left-wing political daily—relaunched in February 1945 after the end of the Second World War in Hungary, publishing an annual anniversary issue called *Népszava naptára* (People's Voice Annuario). The *Népszava* yearbooks had a similar structure as other such popular publications of the time, with, of course, strong left-wing social democratic content. Anna Kéthly's article "Women in Politics" appeared in the 1947 *Népszava naptára*. It traced women's active role in politics from the second half of the nineteenth century to 1946. According to Kéthly, the debate on August Bebel's *Woman and Socialism* was the starting point for the women's movements within European social democratic parties, Hungary included, on their search for a new path.

The movement for women's suffrage in Hungary was linked to feminism. However, in Kéthly's view, this bourgeois movement, instead of achieving general equality, only led to the relative emancipation of bourgeois women. *Népszava* reported on a lecture given by the Dutch writer Jo van Ammers-Küller, a campaigner for women's rights between the two world wars, who had lectured in Budapest in 1935. The report's note, stating that "socialism alone fights for general emancipation, and therefore honest feminism means socialism," was probably written by Kéthly herself.⁶ In this respect, Kéthly shared the position of other leftist women of the interwar period—including Mariska Gárdos—that the Feminists' Association and the feminist movement did not offer apt representation for working class women. Their lack of trust was

5 Marianne Pollak (1891–1963) was an Austrian social democratic politician.

6 See "A nők szabadságharca" [Women's Fight for Freedom], *Népszava* May 4, 1935, 9. Johanna (Jo) van Ammers-Küller (1884–1966) was a Dutch writer who was very popular in the interwar period. She wrote extensively on women's emancipation and marriage. She was not only pro-German during Second World War, but even celebrated the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. After the war, she never regained her pre-war popularity.

reinforced by the decision of the Feminists' Association to accept new legislation passed in 1912 which expanded suffrage to women with restrictions based on education and property criteria.⁷ Afterwards, it was impossible to regain trust between the two movements. Feminism was not only attacked by the political left: it was also criticized in conservative political circles, which argued that if women did not participate in public life, it was not justified to give them political rights.

With the implementation of partial women's suffrage, Anna Kéthly became the second female member of the Hungarian National Assembly, and the longest-lasting one (1922–1948). She was also elected vice-president of the Provisional National Assembly in 1945. Between 1945 and 1948, Kéthly was very active in intellectual life, becoming editor-in-chief of the re-launched *Világosság* (Brightness), and a member of the editorial board of the theoretical journal *Szocializmus* (Socialism). Throughout, she remained committed to women's rights. In her powerful words, she would not offer women a "cage" with her fellow activists, though she would add an additional burden to their breadwinning, household, and child-rearing tasks: to agitate for their equal rights. She was an advocate and campaigner, and personally played a major role in giving the women's movement—which had its own organizational framework but was not independent of the party—the right of citizenship within the social democratic movement.

Anna Kéthly opposed the participation of social democratic women in the work of the Hungarian Women's Democratic Federation (Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége, MNDSz), founded in February 1945 on the initiative of the Hungarian Communist Party. Although both organizations advocated for the emancipation of women, the MNDSz had the unconcealed aim of winning over women voters to the Communist Party. Kéthly and her followers did not want to give up the well-organized social democratic women's movement, which had effective cadres and was confident in its advocacy. In addition, in Kéthly's view, the post-war political class appropriated the inherently social democratic image of women, reshaped in order to increase the economic power of the communists, while retaining the traditional conservative family model that had subordinated women. When, in 1945, the MNDSz approached her with a proposal that the social democratic women's and youth organizations should be merged into the MNDSz and the communist youth organization, Kéthly flatly refused. On the one hand, Kéthly considered the MNDSz to be a charitable organization without political aims because of its umbrella organization character. In fact, everyone from right-wing bourgeois women through women activists of the Smallholders' Party (Független Kisgazdapárt, FKGP) to communist women participated in the MNDSz. On the other hand, Kéthly also saw that the MNDSz was financially and politically backed by the Communist Party. However, the split

7 Cf. the introduction to Mariska Gárdos's text in this volume, and Szapor, "Sisters or Foes," 199.

within the MSzDP over the merger with the Communist Party was also present in the Women's Bureau, and the wing aligned with Júlia Török (1910–1971), supporting affiliation, eventually prevailed.

Until the merger of the two workers' parties, the Social Democrats and the Communists did not cooperate. However, the political events after 1948 forced women's rights organizations either to dissolve, such as the Feminists' Association, or to merge by means of forced centralization, making their work impossible, which was the fate of the Women's Bureau of the MSzDP. The aim of the united, communist-led women's movement was to make Hungarian women good mothers, understanding wives, excellent workers, enthusiastic citizens, and true patriots.

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Zsuzsanna Kádár B.
Translated by Cody J. Inglis

Anna Kéthly

Women in Politics

In the final years of the last century, it became clear to any thinking person that human labor plays a crucial role in the formation of the national income. Just like water in the infinite oceans, which consist of countless drops of water, capital is accumulated from the retained surplus of the accomplishments of each and every working individual. It was scientific socialism that explained this economic process to the millions of wage slaves coerced by the rule of capital, thus forming and strengthening their self-respect and confidence. At the same time, it also formed and strengthened their consciousness of the necessity to fight for a just share of the fruits of their labor, since they had also learned that their request for a justifiable and fair share would not be met with approval if it was presented with nice words and based on intelligent reasoning. This recognition of the necessity to fight led to the creation of the organizations of the working class. The first economic and professional organizations were followed by political organizations. The changing strength of these bodies led to newer and newer results, or at least they tried to defend the results they had achieved throughout the decades flying past.

There were hardly any women in these organizations when they began. Although Bebel says that "[u]ntil this day no great and important movement has taken place in all the world in which women did not figure as heroines and martyrs," still, their presence in the growing labor movement in the second half of the last century did not reflect their proportion in the labor force. We think that the reason for this is that no one begins to protest and revolt against their fate because of the mere fact of belonging to an oppressed social class. They also need to know and understand that they belong to this class, that they share its fate, and that they can only change their bad, inhumane circumstances by fighting together. Most working women were left deeply uneducated about these questions both by society and by their own social class. We can easily understand the viewpoint of the oppressors. A woman who does not know about the state and the directions of social development of her time is easy prey to the exploiter. Women who believe that their work is precarious and temporary, and that they themselves belong under the patronage of someone else, will put up with any kind of oppression, and they also hold back the men living with them from protesting, teaching even their children to be obedient to power. Uneducated women are great and indispensable tools in the hands of class oppressors: they are much cheaper and less dangerous than the military, the gendarmerie, or the police.

But why did men who had achieved class consciousness not pay attention to the enlightenment of women working beside them? Probably partly because their thinking about the economic significance of women did not reach the level of being

able to acknowledge the change brought along by the formation of capitalism in this area. Because of dominant moral standards, a distinctly differing educational system built on and for the distinctly different social roles of the sexes, the thinking of male workers was also often prejudiced. And if their firm belief in socialism was substantial enough to make them rise above the superstitions used as tools of oppression, it was not necessarily firm enough to draw in the “weak, defenseless” woman to fight together against the brutal and ruthless class enemy. Working men were disturbed in their fight by sentimental points of view, and this sentimentality was fully utilized during the last decades of the past century. Whenever a woman joined the movement, as a “woman from the movement” she was subject to such a wave of abuse, low-minded taunts, and slanders that sensitive men—the “protectors” of women—rather kept their women and daughters away from all this than fight against the seemingly invincible waves of attacks.

The great study by August Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*, justified the necessity of fighting against class repression together. “Women have accomplished as much as they could accomplish under exceedingly unfavorable circumstances, and that entitles us to great expectations for the future,” he states in opposition to those who explain women’s social immaturity with their inferiority. This work and the debate it led to made working women conscious of the significance of their work in society, and the manifestations of this work in the course of social development and especially in the age of the work equipment and methods of the capitalist system of production. This debate led to the formation of the basis and justification of the women’s movement in the social democratic parties, and this is how the social democratic women’s movement started in Hungary too.

This women’s movement distanced itself from the bourgeois organizations dealing with women’s equal rights from the start. These organizations cared only about the disadvantages and harms women suffered; their wishes and demands did not break through the limits of the existing social order. If the legal inequality of the sexes is alleviated by economic advantages and privileges in certain classes in a society, inequality is only an emotional question. The social democratic women’s movement fought not against men but against class society, the termination of which brings along the termination of not only women’s inequality but that of the whole of humankind. For this reason, the social democratic women’s movement has been an agitating and organizing body from the start, working to strengthen the joint movement by exploring and presenting the infringement of women’s rights in the class society. This was necessary in the past system, all the more so as the educational material dictated by the needs of the ruling classes kept women away from dealing with anything but their “natural vocation.” This curriculum was manifested most openly in the aims of the girls’ *levante* movement, which provided paramilitary training organized in November 1943. We can just

imagine how relieved the leaders of our public education system were when they could finally talk openly—after decades of chicanery, concealment, and mendacity. Article 1 says: “The aim of the girls’ *levente* movement is to prepare girls for their service to the nation and the family, and especially for the tasks of the Hungarian mother and military service by educating them in the spirit of traditional womanly virtues.” The Ordinance on Education and Employment further details this goal: “The aim of patriotic training based on religious morality is to develop a heroic attitude toward life coupled with an active religious life.” The ordinance also lists these traditional womanly values: obedience, respect for authority, humility, abidance, pliancy, the ability to keep silent, respect for tradition, endurance of pain and fatigue, and so on.

The social democratic women’s movement started out partly to challenge such explanations of “traditional womanly values” in the early 1900s. It had the task of informing thousands of working women of who their oppressors were and what their fate really looked like. After the liberation, we have heard many times that there is no need for a separate women’s movement within the Social Democratic Party. Indeed, as soon as the spirit of public education in our democracy is reformed, when the separate education of boys and girls, adjusted to serve class principles, will be terminated, then the conditions of the common socialist education of men and women will be born. However, until then, the women’s movement is still needed—as it has been needed—to turn sensitive but distrustful women, unconcerned about public matters, into social democrats. In this organization, we are among ourselves and thus we can encourage women and girls raised in reclusive families to participate in the work of the community, we can strengthen their confidence and inspire them to take on democratic responsibilities. We are going to be happiest when the women raised in the social democratic children’s and youth movements can work as self-assertive socialist women among their male comrades. But we have to re-educate thousands of old-fashioned women until we reach this goal.

The social democratic women’s movement has achieved a lot during these few decades, too. We taught our women to realize that in any social order, the power to rule can have two claims to legitimacy. One is that it follows technological developments and works towards the perfection of production by the means of science. The second is that it supplies humankind with consumable goods as much as the equipment used makes this possible. Our women already know that the capitalist social order has gambled away this double claim. It neither can nor wants to fulfil this dual obligation. Working women know best how many technical innovations and scientific discoveries are not put to practical use even in the most industrially developed countries, partly because manpower is cheaper, and partly because our present institutions cannot deal with productivity augmented by these human

innovations. And the women who keep a house—mothers—know what it means to be hungry, ragged, and live in shelters in an age when the means and methods of production could satisfy many more of the people's needs. Women educated by the social democratic women's movement know that only a new world order can take the misused or hidden means of production away from their present rulers and that only this new order can use these means to fulfil the needs of the human community. This knowledge, a precondition of class consciousness aside from belonging to a class, is what fills working women with the will to take up the class struggle.

Politics today seems to be a struggle with daily tasks, and few people recognize that the everyday activities of striving for stabilization, building bridges, and socialization are meant to be a foundation for a more sensible future coexistence among human beings. Getting better informed about politics teaches us to see the future. Animals do not have a sense of future, and the forces or political reaction artificially killed the sense of tomorrow in the souls of people suffering from hunger. It used people's sense of the future at most to strengthen their discipline at work—by making them afraid of an insecure old age. The socialist thinker is working toward a more distant final goal by observing and maneuvering everyday political events. Is there a more beautiful fight for a socialist woman than the political fight paving the way that leads to this final goal? Is anyone else more compelled than women to bring this world devoid of fear closer to us? Beyond the narrow and selfish vision of women's "natural vocation" created by the reactionaries, she takes upon herself the responsibility and unselfishness of her real natural vocation when she is not resigned to the incidental ease of her own fate. Our women already know that one single crying child's face wipes off a million children's smiles from the faces of those entrusted to us.

If they do not draw a sharp line between their old pursuits and their new obligations, women in politics will be treated as newcomers for a long time—newcomers who are tolerated but also smiled upon. The economic basis of these new obligations was created by the social order that has been producing goods for the past 150 years with methods and tools different from the ones that had been used earlier. We should build our thinking and political demeanor upon these economic facts. The martyrs of the social democratic women's movement preceded this age, and we should not fall behind them. Let us do them justice in the free air of Hungarian democracy.

Translated by Beáta Sándor

Milada Horáková

Women in Politics

AUTHOR Milada Horáková

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Milada Horáková (née Králová; 1901, Královské Vinohrady–1950, Prague), lawyer, feminist activist, politician. Born to a middle-class Czech family, Milada Králová knew from a young age that she wanted to devote her life to helping others. She decided to become a lawyer and graduated from Charles University in 1926. She took a job in the social welfare office of the city of Prague, where she worked until 1939. In 1927, she married Bohuslav Horák; in 1933 they had a daughter, Jana. Horáková became involved in the Czech women’s movement in 1923, when she started to work with the newly formed National Council of Women (Ženská Národní Rada, ŽNR), led by Františka Plamínková (1875–1942). Plamínková, a tireless activist and a Czechoslovak senator affiliated with the Czech National Social Party, had a profound influence on Horáková’s life. Like Plamínková, Horáková was deeply inspired by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Czechoslovakia’s first president. Masaryk believed that the Czech nation was naturally inclined towards democracy, and was also a vocal proponent of women’s equality. Horáková was committed to Masaryk’s vision of a democratic Czechoslovakia and she worked to realize the equality of men and women within that framework. In the interwar period, Horáková’s feminist activism was largely carried out within the auspices of the ŽNR. The ŽNR was a non-partisan organization that concentrated on liberal feminist issues, such as the right to vote or equal pay for equal work. As the head of the ŽNR’s legal section, Horáková was particularly involved in the ŽNR’s campaign to bring gender equality into Czechoslovak citizenship law and family law. While this effort was not successful initially, it eventually came to fruition after the Second World War. Horáková played a leading role in developing the family law code Czechoslovakia adopted in 1949.

During the Second World War, Horáková became part of the Czech resistance to Nazi rule. She was arrested by the Gestapo in August 1940. She remained in German captivity until the end of the war, enduring torture and only narrowly escaping execution. In 1942, she was reunited with her mentor, Plamínková, in Terezín prison. Shortly before Plamínková was executed by the Nazis, Horáková promised her that

she would not abandon their vision of a democratic Czechoslovakia that respected the equality of men and women. After the war, Horáková kept her promise. She created a new organization to replace the ŽNR, the Council of Czechoslovak Women (Rada Československých Žen, RČŽ), and became its president. She took Plamínková's place on the international stage and was elected to the board of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF).

Starting in 1945, Horáková became active in Czechoslovak politics, once more as a member of the Czech National Social Party. She took on a prominent role in the party and was elected as a parliamentary deputy in 1946. Like many Czechoslovaks in the years just after the end of the Second World War, Horáková supported socialist economic goals. But she distrusted the Communists and resisted the attempts of Communist women to take over the Czechoslovak women's movement. When the Czechoslovak Communists took power in a coup in February 1948, Horáková boldly resigned her parliamentary seat in protest. She was one of the few willing to take such a public stand against the new Communist regime. As the Communists moved to consolidate their hold over Czechoslovak society, Horáková was forced out of the Council of Czechoslovak Women and removed from her other positions in public life. But she refused to be pressured into silence. As she had done in the Second World War, Horáková joined the underground opposition. She gathered information and sent reports to the leader of the National Social Party, Petr Zenkl (1884-1975), who had fled to London. She met with other opponents of the Communist regime and worked to create plans for a post-Communist future. As a result of these activities, she was arrested in September 1949. After enduring months of relentless interrogations, Horáková became the central figure in the largest show trial of the anti-Communist opposition held in Czechoslovakia. She was convicted of treason and executed in June 1950. After the fall of the Czechoslovak Communist regime in 1989, Milada Horáková was rightfully lionized for her courageous resistance to dictatorship and her commitment to democratic values. Her extensive work as a feminist, and as an advocate for women's equality, however, has not received as much public attention. During her lifetime, Horáková published many articles on feminist issues and contemporary politics, but her writing has never been collected into a book. Today she is best known for the letters she wrote to her family members shortly before her execution. They were found and published only in 1990.

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Melissa Feinberg

CONTEXT

At the Munich Conference in 1938, Czechoslovakia was forced to surrender its western borderlands to Nazi Germany. In March 1939, Germany invaded the country and dismembered it. Germany and Hungary took control of large pieces of Czechoslovak territory, leaving a rump Slovak state led by Nazi sympathizers. After the end of the Second World War, Czechoslovakia was reconstituted within its prewar borders (with the exception of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, which went to the Soviets). Czechoslovakia's prewar president, Edvard Beneš, returned from exile in London and resumed his post. Beneš led a National Front government composed of a coalition of six prewar political parties, including the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the Slovak Communist Party, which entered government for the first time. This National Front government endorsed what it called a "national-democratic revolution" to create a "people's democracy." This was not a revolution from below, but one engineered by the parties of the National Front. This bureaucratic revolution would reshape the political landscape of Czechoslovakia. Several right-leaning political parties were banned for collaborating with the occupiers and their supporters were purged from their posts. In addition, the new government authorized the expulsion of Czechoslovakia's German- and Hungarian-speaking minorities and the expropriation of their property. Between 1945 and 1946, approximately three million Germans would be forced to leave Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovakia's humiliating defeat at Munich, and its subsequent dismemberment, delegitimized the prewar status quo and convinced many Czechoslovaks that their postwar government should represent a substantial break with the past. With the right tarnished by the stain of collaboration with the Nazis, Czechoslovak politics moved strongly to the left. Of the six parties in the National Front, only one (the Catholic-oriented People's Party) did not embrace some form of socialism. There was broad support for social welfare reform, land reform, the nationalization of major industries, and some degree of state-led economic planning. Many Czechoslovaks, including President Beneš, endorsed closer ties with the Soviet Union. The Soviets had liberated Czechoslovakia from the Nazis, while the West had betrayed its supposed ally at Munich.

Milada Horáková's article, "Women in Politics," reflects the widespread feeling in postwar Czechoslovakia that the country could not simply return to its prewar past. Published only months after the end of the war, the article appeared in *Rada žen* (Women's Council), the magazine of the Council of Czechoslovak Women. When they took power, all of the parties in the National Front declared their support for women's equality and claimed that women and men would be equal in the new people's democracy. In this text, Horáková demanded these promises be realized in practice. She called on the new state to recognize women as equal actors but

also urged women to enter politics and participate in governance. She insisted that women must have representation at all levels of government, from the Cabinet to each city's municipal council. She called on women to be engaged citizens and to seize the moment to influence the new direction of the country and build a new and more socially just society.

The expulsion of German- and Hungarian-speaking minorities was authorized by the Beneš decrees in the summer of 1945. Most Czechs and Slovaks applauded this policy. In the months before this article was written, hundreds of thousands of German-speakers were forced from their homes by vigilante violence. An estimated 19,000–30,000 were murdered, and thousands more succumbed to disease or starvation in makeshift camps.¹ So-called gold-diggers streamed into the western borderlands, hoping to scoop up the belongings the expellees had left behind. Horáková's comments about the expulsions in this text are a reaction to this explosion of lawlessness and brutality. She accepted the need for the expulsions, but urged her countrymen to eschew random acts of violence and called for the property of the expelled to be distributed in a way that would serve the interests of the state, not enrich individuals.

At the end of this article, Horáková told women they must join political parties and become active in them in order to realize their interests. She presented the Council of Czechoslovak Women as a non-partisan institution that could help prepare women to engage in party politics. In the months after this text was written, all of Czechoslovakia's political parties would begin to vigorously compete with each other to gain women's allegiance. In the run-up to the first postwar elections in May 1946, all of the parties tried to present themselves as the true champion of women's interests. Soon, tensions flared between Communist women activists and Horáková and her allies as they also competed for women's allegiance. This article represents a moment when the idea of cooperation between women from all parties seemed more possible.

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Melissa Feinberg

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Milada Horáková Women in Politics

The revolutionary days are ending. Life in all its spheres is again returning to regular patterns. The new intellectual and ideological content brought by the revolution should now be implemented and penetrate into everything, everywhere, so that a new, democratic people’s order can be created in our state. The revival of our constitutional administrative bodies is approaching.

The Interim National Assembly, which will be convened in the near future, will establish a solid starting base. Now is the decisive moment for women to involve themselves effectively in managing the life of the state. All the essential prerequisites for this are here. It’s only a matter of women understanding that the exercise of their rights isn’t only a privilege but also a duty. Today, only deeds matter. That’s why beautiful words and promises will no longer mean anything to us, even the most sincere-sounding ones; instead, we’ll assess the fulfillment of all programs and principles only by deeds. The only ones who are really democratic and really represent the people are those who see women as equal actors and recognize

their work by calling on them to take part in decision-making about the highest posts. Today, an individual is only as valuable and important as his meaning for the whole. Women must take this into account and focus their work beyond the boundary of mere private life. We do not want to speak only through mediation. We have enough experience and opinions ourselves, and we want to use them to participate in solving the serious problems of our time. We have something to tell the world. We have a naturally arising goal in common with all honest citizens: to build a solid state, to build a peaceful life based on people's democratic principles, and to maintain world peace. Together with men, we want to take responsibility, not only in moments of historical national struggles, but also in ordinary, everyday life. This is why we want to co-create and we're not making a secret of what consequences are implied here. To be more precise: we request participation in government, proportional representation in the Interim National Assembly, appropriate participation in regional and district National Assemblies, and representation in all governmental bodies, institutes, and commissions which are of assistance to the government and through which the government implements its goals. We want to have the broadest access to all forms of education and improvement, so that in our actions we will not only draw upon practical experiences, but also theoretical and expert education.

However, we mustn't let our efforts falter at particular degrees of general or expert education, even if they were to be the very highest levels. We want to create awareness of all kinds within ourselves: feminine, civic, human. Our people's order governs with the help of political parties. Let us therefore make a policy of participating in the government. Naturally, this does not mean that we will only lay claim to ministerial seats, parliamentary mandates, and all kinds of other public functions. Above all, we want to think politically and work within the framework of the government's political program and respond promptly to all the problems of our time. There is no time for academic speech and reasoning. Our age is so hungry for deeds that it can bear only those who are ideologically clear and who work. There is no longer anyone else we can blame for causing the bad state of our *res publica*. We are all to blame if things don't go well in public life. [This includes] those who lead and do their work incorrectly and those who allow this to happen and do not immediately, no matter what the circumstances, seek redress. In order to make good judgements and not only express a cowardly discontentment, we must take all circumstances, as well as national and international problems into consideration. It must be clear to us that when we are building a socialist state and implementing nationalization and socialization in all branches of the national economy, we mustn't grieve over having to overcome habituation to all the things that arose out of the liberal-capitalist order, even if some of these consequences are unpleasant for individuals. We all have this goal in common; only

the methods and pathways we pursue toward it vary. We'll come to an agreement on them. One thing is certain: there are so many tasks to manage that there's no time for guessing and for disunity. We are allowed to argue but we must come to an agreement.

Internally, we need to resolve the question of nationality. The problem of minorities must never be allowed to arise here again. The expulsion of Germans and Hungarians is a critical question for us, and any good friend of ours must help us with it. It's unthinkable that we should make decisions about minority education and about cultural and other rights for Germans and Hungarians after what happened. We must therefore steadfastly insist on carrying out the expulsion swiftly and completely. However, during its execution we must proceed in such a way that there is no shame to our humanity and so that we damage neither our national character nor our good reputation. We must secure all the property of the Germans, Hungarians, collaborators, and traitors, along with property that cannot be returned to its owners, and from it we will create a national fund, the income from which will help compensate damages and rectify wrongs caused by the oppression of the occupiers and the war. We know that the government is already preparing relevant measures in this direction. A special institute to which the administration of this national fund will be delegated should be entrusted with a broad competence. A decree on the enumeration of war damages is being prepared and is intended both to prepare the foundation for reparation negotiations and to be a starting point for compensating those persons (or their family members) who actively engaged in battle for the liberation of their country, and, in so doing, lost their lives, health, or property.

The allocation of confiscated land and the orderly implementation of settlement there is one of the most important tasks of our people's administration. The mistakes of our first land reforms must not be repeated. Large land holdings mustn't merely change owners, but must be truly and effectively divided in such a way that the flow and profitability of primary production is ensured and, above all else, that the state's production and supply plan is guaranteed. The settlement office, which will be one of the most powerful agents in implementing the colonization of confiscated land, must take great care that the borderlands receive inhabitants of the greatest qualities and abilities. Everything must be done to make these settlers' tasks easier and to ensure they are assisted in adapting to their work and their new responsibilities. In the prewar years, colonizing states grappled with the question of educating colonists and their wives in order to prepare them for their new work and the conditions in their new homes. We, too, must now address the need to dedicate systematic and ongoing care to our borderland colonizers.

Managing the operation of businesses, factories, and plants and maintaining labor discipline is a considerable task in the near future. The workforce's

participation in operating enterprises has already begun. The forthcoming adjustment to the competence of the workplace councils must bring the kind of solution that connects the goals of social management of the enterprise with the necessity of its economic prosperity.

The way this is accomplished doesn't have to be definitive right away, but it must aim at bringing certainty, expertise, and planning into enterprises and ensuring their prosperity. All of this also assumes the timely formulation of a financial plan. That is the basic prerequisite, and we need to have it soon. Without it, the problem of imports and exports cannot be solved. Putting together a financial plan is our primary concern.

The field of nutritional questions is very broad. The planned economy must still be essentially retained in order to ensure a basic equal distribution to broad strata. However, it is important to specify which fields and types of allocations can be released to free trade, and to what extent. We see the example of the USSR, where besides the rationing economy we also encounter the so-called free market for many products that can be released without causing harm to general provisioning. Of course, just as resolutely as during the war, we must endeavor to eradicate the black market, which could undermine our supply base and civic morale.

Continuous attention must be devoted to the repatriation of our citizens from abroad, and all efforts must be made for this to be undertaken and completed as quickly as possible. We see that the government has decided to implement the establishment of interim legislative and administrative bodies before completing its repatriation duties. But a return to the homeland for all those who were forced to go abroad must be enabled so that all citizens can make decisions together in regular elections.

Women must also contribute to the creation of a proper image of political inclusion. Regular elections should no longer find any conscientious woman undecided. Women should be aware of the simple reality that they can only advance their civic and feminine demands when they join political parties and gain influence within them. Today, there is very little room for those who are undecided and there will be ever less in the future. To that end, women must prepare themselves for their entrance. The knowledge accumulated by the Czechoslovak Women's Council offers them an opportunity. It is dedicated to the service of women and, through this, also to serve our state and to build the life of our people's democratic order. It wants to and it will fulfill its mission to raise awareness, to educate, and to blaze new trails—for the long tradition of our women's movement and the honest and consistent work of Czech and Slovak women of many generations oblige it to do so.

Translated by Melinda Reidinger

Martha Arendsee

The Right to Motherhood

AUTHOR Martha Arendsee

TITLE “Das Recht auf Mutterschaft” [The Right to Motherhood]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Neues Deutschland* [New Germany] 1/32, May 30, 1946, p. 3.

LANGUAGE German

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martha Arendsee (Berlin, 1885–Berlin, 1953) was a German politician, women’s rights activist, and antifascist. Born to a working-class family in Wedding—a traditionally blue-collar district of Berlin—she joined the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) in 1906 at the age of 21 before women were allowed to officially join political parties in Germany (this was legalized in 1908). She became active in its “Women’s Work” section under the guidance of Clara Zetkin (1857-1933), a leader of the Social Democratic women’s movement and editor of the socialist women’s newsletter *Gleichheit* (Equality). Arendsee led the “Women’s Work” section of the Niederbarnim district in Brandenburg between 1909 and 1916.¹ In 1917, following the split of the SPD, Arendsee sided with the Independent Social Democratic Party (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, USPD). In 1920, after another split in the USPD, she joined the faction that merged with the Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD). From 1919 to 1925, she served as a representative in the Prussian state legislature. Between 1922 and 1924, she concurrently worked as the editor of *Die Kommunistin*, the women’s newspaper of the KPD. She was then twice elected to the Reichstag, in 1924 and 1928, serving until 1930.

In April 1933, the police, under orders from the Nazi Party, arrested her for her political activity, which they had outlawed. She served a prison sentence in the infamous women’s prison on Barnimstrasse until September 1933. In May 1934, she went to Moscow to join her partner, Paul Schwenk, working there in various capacities until the end of the war in May 1945. One of her many roles was working with the National Committee for a Free Germany, a Soviet Union-based German antifascist group that distributed anti-Nazi propaganda and worked to undermine the German war effort. In June 1945, Arendsee remigrated to the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany, joined the

¹ Mokry, “Nachlass Martha Arendsee,” last modified 2009, <http://www.argus.bstu.bundesarchiv.de/ny4017/index.htm>.

reestablished KPD, then became a member of the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) in 1946. She worked for the Women's Committee of the municipal administration of East Berlin and for the Trade Union Confederation until 1950, when she retired. She died on May 22, 1953.²

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Der Vater Staat und die Arbeitenden Frauen* [The Paternal State and the Working Woman] (Berlin: Friedrichstadt-Druckerei GmbH, 1925); with Hans Schulz, *Kinder Hungern! Kinder Sterben!; Wir Klagen an!* [Children Go Hungry! Children Die! We Accuse!] (Berlin: Sozialpolitische Abteilung beim Zentralkomitee der Internationalen Arbeiterhilfe, 1932); with Hilde Benjamin, *Über Sozialpolitik* [On Social Policy] (Berlin and Leipzig: Volk und Wissen, 1946); *Soziale Sicherung* [Social Security] (Berlin: Die Freie Gewerkschaft, 1950).

Alexandria N. Ruble

CONTEXT

The end of the Second World War on May 8, 1945, ushered in a new era in German history marked by division and competition. Upon Nazi Germany's capitulation, the victorious Allies—the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain, and France—occupied and divided administration of the defeated state. Almost immediately, it became clear to authorities across the four occupation zones that they had to address the “surplus of women,” the demographic imbalance of 7 million more women than men in Germany. In the Soviet zone, the authorities conscripted women to clean up the rubble in destroyed cities. Despite proclaiming equality for men and women on paper, the Soviet authorities did not initially do much to rectify the situation of most women. Moreover, many women (rightfully) resented the Soviet authorities because of the mass sexual violence committed against them by the Red Army at the end of the Second World War.³

At the same time, Soviet occupation officials were busy reshaping their zone in their image. Almost immediately, in June 1945, the Soviet occupation allowed anti-fascist political parties—the Communist Party (KPD) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD)—to regroup, to aid the reconstruction of the Eastern zone. Within a year, however, it became evident to Soviet authorities that the moderate SPD was more popular than the Soviet-backed KPD. The centrist Christian Democratic Union of Germany (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, CDU) and SPD had fared much better than the KPD in local and regional elections in the American

2 “Martha Arendsee,” *Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*, <https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/kataloge-datenbanken/biographische-datenbanken/martha-arendsee>.

3 About this, see Helke Sander and Barbara Johr, *BeFreier und Befreite: Krieg, Vergewaltigungen, Kinder* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005).

zone, making the KPD and the Soviets wary.⁴ Thus, in April 1946, the KPD forced the SPD to merge into an umbrella socialist party—the Socialist Unity Party, or the SED—to cement electoral power in the Soviet zone. The SED was dominated by the KPD side of the party and became the leading party in the one-party dictatorship of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) after 1949. While the new SED’s platform promised equality to men and women, the party did little to prioritize it.⁵

The source featured here is a newspaper article, titled “The Right to Motherhood,” written by Martha Arendsee and published on May 30, 1946, in the thirty-second issue of *Neues Deutschland* (New Germany). At the time, *Neues Deutschland* was a new periodical, founded only a month before, on April 23, 1946. The paper, published daily, was the officially licensed newspaper of the Soviet zone and the mouthpiece of the newly formed SED. Since the SED dominated the one-party dictatorship after 1949, *Neues Deutschland* effectively became the major newspaper of East Germany.

The author of the article, Arendsee—a longtime activist for women’s rights and a witness to the destructive war—articulated her perspective in *Neues Deutschland* early on. At the time her article was published, a year after the end of the war, occupied Germany was still reeling from the mass destruction of Hitler’s war. Societal changes were evident to contemporary observers like Arendsee, who noted the “surplus” of women, especially unmarried mothers with children. Moreover, food shortages affected the nutrition of expecting and new mothers. For many women, this scenario was not new; they had witnessed a similar situation right after the First World War. Now, they wanted to know who would provide women with the support they needed in the dire postwar circumstances, particularly those left without a male breadwinner. Communists claimed they were in the best position to do so, but the SPD and KPD had a complicated history of addressing women’s issues. While their official party platforms supported female emancipation in principle, the two parties had often relegated women’s issues to the sidelines in practice. Arendsee, a long-time supporter of the KPD and SPD who worked in their women’s sections, would have been aware of this history and likely experienced it herself. Nevertheless, she argued that the newly formed SED was the most likely proponent of helping mothers. It is also possible that Arendsee was trying to place pressure on the SED. At this stage, the SED and the Soviet occupation government had done little to alleviate women’s stress or to level the playing field between men and women. The Soviet military administration’s famous order Number 253 that dictated equal wages for men and women would not go into effect until August 17, 1946—nearly three months after Arendsee’s plea.

4 Major, *The Death of the KPD*, 37; Harsch, *Revenge*, 38; Kaiser, “Change and Continuity,” 687.

5 “Political Programme of the Socialist Unity Party (Berlin, 21 and 22 April 1946),” April 21–22, 1946, last modified July 5, 2016, https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/political_programme_of_the_socialist_unity_party_berlin_21_and_22_april_1946-en-d9c5faf7-5c39-43fa-aa3f-88d541e3746.html.

It is worth noting as well that, at this stage, the Cold War competition that would subsume occupied Germany had not yet fully emerged. The alliance between East and West would crumble over the course of 1947 and early 1948. A series of events—the articulation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, the withdrawal of the Soviets from the Allied Control Council, the introduction of the Marshall Plan, and the Berlin Blockade, among others—pushed the two sides from cooperation to conflict. At this stage, Arendsee still optimistically alludes to cooperation among all the antifascist powers to help solve the food crisis affecting women and children across the four zones of occupation. Unlike later texts, which often lump the Nazis and the Western Allies together as enemies of women's rights, Arendsee barely mentioned the other Allies, indicating that the Cold War competition that would come to dominate all Communist rhetoric had not quite appeared.

This article illuminates the multiplicity of issues facing women in occupied Germany, especially in the Soviet zone. Far from supporting a dichotomy in which women had to choose between work or motherhood, Communist women like Arendsee wanted to find solutions to help women balance the two. She acknowledges that in an ideal world, women would have family support, but in the postwar environment, they must be enabled to raise their children on their own. Interestingly, Arendsee espouses older notions of gender roles and women's roles, noting that many women find ultimate fulfillment in motherhood. Her views would contrast with later generations of women, some of whom rejected the notion of motherhood as a woman's highest calling. In many ways, her article both supported the SED and subtly challenged the party to do better. If women were unable to achieve their highest goal of motherhood, Arendsee implied that it was the fault of the Nazis, whose barbarism and warfare had killed innocent sons and made it impossible for future generations of women to marry and have families. As avowed antifascists, the SED stood in the best position to remedy these problems, according to Arendsee.

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Alexandria N. Ruble

* * *

Martha Arendsee The Right to Motherhood

If women's political activity is increasingly out in the open these days, it is because women—out of maternal instinct—never want to see Nazism or war ever again. A woman wants to give life, to protect, to nurture. A woman is destined by nature to bear children who will prevent humanity from dying out. In motherhood, with all its sorrows and struggles, a woman finds the fulfillment of her greatest task in life. The barbarism of Nazi rule and war has brought boundless heartache to mothers.

Now it is our task to ensure that women find happiness in motherhood again, that the unity of the mother and the child is preserved. Above all, we must succeed in creating a favorable relationship between work and motherhood. The care for pregnant and nursing mothers should not just be a formal matter, limited to the observance of legal regulations; it must be individual and comradely care. It must be considered a self-evident obligation to relieve pregnant women of any heavy labor.

This gruesome war has left behind an immense number of women who must remain unmarried, because women outnumber men. However, it is quite natural that all young women who have lived through the horrors and scarcity of this war now find themselves empty-handed and particularly longing for love. The old problem of the legal status of the mother and the illegitimate child, which the Weimar period also tackled without managing to solve it, is before us in a new form. For instance, the examples in Bavaria indicate that, in all likelihood moving forward, we can expect that many women who do not manage to marry will ultimately still become mothers.

As much as we want a woman's right to motherhood to be safeguarded by a secure family life, we must also recognize the right of women who, aware of their full responsibility to the child, are willing to take on all the duties of motherhood alone. It takes great courage, sacrifice, and much work to take on the responsibility for this little being, the result of love. Respect for the motherhood of such a woman must become the norm.

That is why the labor unions are so strongly committed to full economic equality for women, equal pay for equal work, and equal vocational training and opportunities for further training, so that every woman is also able to provide for her child financially.

The Berlin social security office (*Sozialversicherungsstelle*) grants an insured woman a weekly allowance of 80 percent of her base pay, which corresponds to her net salary, for six weeks before and six weeks after childbirth; this is given for eight weeks for nursing mothers and for twelve weeks after childbirth in the case of premature births. The Maternity Protection Act ensures pregnant and nursing mothers leave of absence and protection against dismissal. What is still missing, however, is an increase to the food ration card starting from at least the fifth month of pregnancy, when the child is alive, and not starting at the eighth month. The child in the womb gets what it needs from the mother. After childbirth, mothers are usually so weak that they are unable to nurse their child themselves, even for a short time. If we still have a very high infant mortality rate, the main reason is inadequate nutrition among pregnant women.

The difficult food situation that has resulted from Hitler's criminal war can only be overcome over time if all anti-fascist democratic forces work together. Anyone

who is aware of their obligation toward our innocent children and who wants to help mothers—to feed their children, provide them with clothes and shoes, let them play in the sunshine—must unite all forces to promote democratic reconstruction.

The SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) has set this goal for itself. Its efforts are also directed at ensuring that mothers can hold their sons as soon as possible, and that women can embrace the father of their children once they return from captivity.

Our women are done listening to sweet words about honoring motherhood; they have a right to motherhood.

Translated by Lea Greenberg

Edwarda Orłowska

Paper Delivered at the Plenary Meeting of the Main Board of the League of Women

AUTHOR Edwarda Orłowska

TITLE *Referat posłanki Edwardy Orłowskiej wygłoszony na zebraniu plenarnym Zarządu Głównego Ligi Kobiet w dniu 12 stycznia 1949* [A Paper by Deputy Edwarda Orłowska, Delivered at the Plenary Meeting of the Main Board of the League of Women on 12 January 1949]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Nasza Praca* [Our Work], no. 1–2 (1949): 21–23.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edwarda Orłowska (1906, Vitebsk?–Warsaw, 1977) was a Polish politician, communist and women’s rights activist, born Esfir (Eстера) Mirer to Jewish parents in a petty bourgeois family, most likely in Vitebsk. From 1918 onwards, her family settled in Białystok in North-Eastern Poland where Estera attended one of the best private schools in the city, the Zeligman grammar school. Influenced by her brother Sania, a co-founder of the local Union of Communist Youth, she joined a circle of radical communist youth. In her memoirs, she also admitted that she chose communism thanks to her father, who taught her “respect for the world of work.”

After her brother’s death during the Polish-Soviet War (February 1919 to October 1920), she formally joined the communist movement: the Union of Communist Youth (Związek Młodzieży Komunistycznej, ZMK) in 1922 and the Communist Party of Western Belorussia (Komunistyczna Partia Zachodniej Białorusi, KPZB) in 1926. This resulted in three arrests: in 1923 (and consequently expulsion from school), in 1925, and in 1934. Until the Comintern dissolved the Communist Party of Poland (Komunistyczna Partia Polski, KPP) and the KPZB in 1938 under accusations of Trotskyism, Orłowska worked as a party instructor. In 1937, she married Memak Sztrycher, also a communist activist.

Under the Soviet occupation of Białystok (September 22, 1939–June 27, 1941) and during the Second World War, she served as the head of a factory committee (*fabkom*). In June 1941, following the outbreak of the German-Soviet War, she was evacuated to Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, together with her six-day-old son. After her husband’s and her son’s deaths, she joined the circle of communists who were laying the foundations for a new political order in Poland. Probably in Alma-Ata she changed her name to “Edwarda Orłowska.” Such a practice was common among communists of Jewish origin, and was intended to prevent associations with

mythical “Judeo-Commies” and to be an element of legitimization in the eyes of Polish society.

Orłowska joined the Polish Workers’ Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR) in 1944. In July 1944, she was summoned to appear in Moscow and then sent to Poland, to operate in the territory being liberated by the Soviet Army. Between October 1944 and February 1946, she was the First Secretary of the Party’s Voivodeship Committee in Białystok. The first units of the Social-Civic League of Women (Społeczno-Obywatelska Liga Kobiet, SOLK) were formed in the Voivodeship of Białystok on her initiative. As Vice-Chairwoman of the League’s Voivodeship Board, Orłowska supported its strict collaboration with the PPR. In autumn 1946, she was appointed Head of the Central Committee’s Women’s Department. Meanwhile, she married communist activist and historian Szymon Datner and in 1946 gave birth to a daughter, Helena.

After the Unification Congress of December 1948, when the Polish United Workers’ Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) was established, Orłowska became head of the Women’s Department, and thus a deputy member of the PZPR Central Committee. From 1947 to 1953, she was active in the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDE). Orłowska supported the idea of the unification of the women’s movement and argued that the League of Women (Liga Kobiet, LK)—the only women’s organization in Poland from 1949 onwards—should be subordinated to the ruling party’s policy. The Women’s Department of the Central Committee of the PZPR was dissolved in 1953, and Orłowska, along with other female activists prominent in the Stalinist years, was placed outside the national leadership elite. Until 1964, she sat on the Presidium of the League of Women and was secretary to the executive board of the Polish-Soviet Friendship Society (Towarzystwo Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej TPPR).

In 1968, due to the antisemitic purge, she was sent into “party retirement.” From then on, she worked on her memoirs and became involved in restoring the memory of the KPP and KPZB. She died after a long illness in 1977.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • Edwarda Orłowska, *Pamiętam jak dziś* [As If It Was Yesterday], (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1973).

Katarzyna Stańczak-Wislicz

CONTEXT

The caesura year of 1948 is used in Polish historiography to divide the “transitional period” of 1944–48 from Stalinism, which began with the formation of the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR). The establishment of the PZPR at the Unification Congress of the Polish Workers’ Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR) and Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna,

PPS) in December 1948 is considered as symbolic in the crystallization of the new political system in Poland.¹

Gender equality was one of the central problems for communists who struggled for legitimacy in post-1945 Poland. During the years 1945–48, both the PPR and the PPS made every effort to win the loyalty of women. They each had their own women's sections and both aspired to shape postwar gender relations. Socialists, while arguing for equal rights, still saw female identity as primarily maternal and familial, emphasized the psychological difference between men and women, and supported the idea of gender-based division of labor.

Activists from the PPR Women's Section, headed by Edwarda Orłowska, had no clear gender approach in their agenda. Endorsing the political goals of communism was their priority. Thus, they based their recruitment strategies on communist slogans and encouraged women, whom they suspected of backwardness and conservatism, to follow more experienced male communist leaders.²

After the Unification Congress and formation of the PZPR in 1948, Edwarda Orłowska became the head of the Women's Department of the party. The department was dominated by communists, and its main goal was to build support among women for the party. Therefore, it controlled the League of Women (Liga Kobiet, LK) which in 1949 became the only mass women's organization in Poland. It was formed by renaming the former Socio-Civic League of Women (Społeczno-Obywatelska Liga Kobiet, SOLK) established in 1945 as a cross-party body. The relation between the League of Women and ruling PZPR is widely discussed in Polish historiography. Natalia Jarska has suggested putting aside the problem of whether the League served the party more than women themselves, arguing that it worked as "part of a system that integrated women's emancipatory agenda with a variety of other policies." She also showed that the League promoted a certain vision of "socialist femininity" and identified its goals with the goals of the PZPR.³

After the period of post-war reconstruction (1944–48), and with no clear gender approach, Stalinism opened a new page in the party's policy towards women, offering them "a set of multiple, yet limited, identities." They could be mothers, wives, labor heroines, or political activists. However, the focus was on women's industrial labor and the workplace became a "prominent site for social experimentation" regarding gender equality.⁴

Edwarda Orłowska gave a speech at the plenary meeting of the Main Board of the League of Women on January 12, 1949, very soon after the Unification Congress of December 1948. It was intended to legitimize the new gender policy in Poland

1 Brzostek, "Contrasts and Grayness," 111.

2 Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland*, 41.

3 Jarska, "A Patriarchal Marriage?," 13–14.

4 Fidelis, "Equality through Protection," 301.

and the close relations between the league and the PZPR. Speaking at the League of Women's forum, Orłowska played a double role: as head of the PZPR Women's Department and as a member of the league's executive board. She remained loyal to the idea of seeking support for the party among women and, therefore, she presented the Unification Congress as a great historic event beneficial for them. She argued that the congress opened a new chapter in Polish history: a period of building socialism as a system that removed gender inequalities. She even identified women's equality with socialism. In line with Stalinist policy towards women, Orłowska emphasized the importance of industrial labor, identifying "the real liberation of women" with participation in production. She focused on women's empowerment as socialist citizens, but at the same time appreciated their family roles. Thus, she referred to the communist idea of the collectivization of the household and promised cooperative laundries, nurseries, and kindergartens. It was an element of official PZPR discourse aimed at winning the support of women and maintaining neutral relations with the Catholic Church, which was still a powerful political actor.

The most important message of the speech was a clear declaration of the subordination of the women's movement to PZPR policy. For Orłowska, the political mobilization of women was part of the broader project of building a new society based on equality. She supported the idea of the unification of the women's movement and advocated a politicization of the emancipation project, understood as a component of the socialist modernization program. Thus, she strongly opposed the tendency towards the depoliticization and fragmentation of the women's movement, as well as the focus on practical activism. Equal rights for women were, for her, a part of the communist idea of equality, and therefore she argued that women's organizations should be ideologically supervised by the party.

Her speech represents the ritual and declarative functions of Stalinist language aimed at shaping women's attitudes. It was printed as a three-page-long transcript in *Nasza Praca* (Our Work), an internal bulletin of the League of Women. The excerpt provided here contains the main points of the speech and omits the fragments based mainly on quotes from Lenin, Marx, and Engels, where ideological slogans dominate over sense. The speech was written in an emotional, rhetorical language. Its style was based on the repetition of words and phrases, as well as the use of colloquial words and contradictions. Although lively and expressive, it used a Soviet-style, routinized, formularized language, an import from Soviet linguistic reality; "a text in translation."⁵ Rhetorical questions with obvious answers, which were meant to reinforce the ideological message—e.g., "Why can only socialism solve the women's issue? Socialism is the only system that can solve the women's issue..."—were not common in the Polish official language.

5 Petrov and Ryazanova-Clarke, *Introduction*, 3.

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Katarzyna Stańczak-Wislicz

* * *

A Paper by Deputy Edwarda Orłowska, Delivered at the Plenary Meeting of the Main Board of the League of Women on 12 January 1949

The Workers' Party Unity Congress was a historic event for the working class, for the entire nation. It was also a great experience for working women in Poland. The issue of the role of women in the work of building socialism has found a wide and deep perspective, and each of them has a huge, groundbreaking importance for millions of Polish women. [...]

The congress has set out a clear development path that our country will follow. We are building the foundations of socialism—that is, a system in which the exploitation of man by man will be abolished forever—and so we are building the only

system in which the women's question can be radically resolved, as we clearly see in the experiences of the USSR. [...]

So we see that the main cause of inequality, the cause of the slave position of women, is that they have been forced out of their share of production. [...]

The most important issue is to eliminate this inequality. No law, no legislation will help if the woman will be forced out of production.

Let us now ask the question, what system can create these necessary conditions? Only socialism creates the necessary conditions for the real liberation of women. For socialism opens up the widest possibilities for the inclusion of millions of women in social production. Only the state, leading the nation through the building of socialism, can free a woman from the slavery of backward, primitive forms of the household. [...]

Returning still to the question of why only socialism can radically solve the women's problem, we find the answer in the words of President Bierut, uttered at the Unification Congress:

What is the fundamental task of people's democracy, which we define as building the foundations of a socialist society? It consists in creating such conditions of prosperity and culture for the popular masses as allowed by modern human knowledge and the natural possibilities of our country. Socialism is not only a fair distribution of socially produced labor products, but above all it is the highest level of productive forces that can be developed and achieved by modern technical knowledge.

So, the building of socialism provides women with cultural development and an improvement in the living conditions of her children, her family, and the whole motherland. [...]

The construction of socialism opens up the widest opportunities for social advancement for working women. [...]

Socialism, abolishing the exploitation of man by man, opening up for women wide opportunities for work and social mobility, will eliminate the most shameful form of human exploitation, which is prostitution. [...]

Only the construction of socialism can create the conditions for a strong family, based on a truly lasting relationship of mutual respect and sincere love, free from all mercantile calculations and considerations. This issue is extremely important because, knowing the sensitivity of women to everything that concerns the family, the class enemy spares no effort to convince unconscious women, especially in the countryside, that socialism means the liquidation of the family [...].

Building the foundations of socialism—that is, involving millions of women in creative work, i.e., introducing facilities that would make it easier for a woman to work in the household and in the field, so that instead of a wooden spatula or

a brake, there would be a cooperative laundry, a flax mill, a nursery, a kindergarten, and a delivery room with a midwife, a health center, electricity, radio.

Building socialism—it means opening the way to social advancement for women. Building socialism—that is, to remove the root causes and to lift the shameful stigma of prostitution. Building socialism means creating a strong, lasting foundation for the family. Building socialism—that is, creating the best conditions for educating a physically and morally healthy child. [...]

So the Unification Congress opened a new page in the development of the women's movement in Poland. The Congress pointed to the important role of women in building the foundations of socialism. The Unification Congress proved that the construction of socialism brings complete liberation to women in towns and villages and constant improvement in the life of the mother, child, and the family hearth. The Congress, on the other hand, indicated that you cannot build socialism without the participation of millions of women. The Unification Congress paved the way for the Party's work among women. The Unification Congress has given us a powerful weapon to win millions of women for the cause of socialism.

Translated by Anna Topolska

Duška Kovačević and Razija Handžić

On Lifting Veils of Muslim Women

AUTHOR Duška Kovačević

TITLE “Iza zara krije se nepismenost, zaostalost i ropski položaj žene” [Hidden Behind the Veil: Illiteracy, Backwardness, and the Slavish Position of Women]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Nova žena: List Antifašističkog fronta žena Bosne i Hercegovine* [New Woman: Journal of the Women’s Antifascist Front of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo] no. 65–66 (September–October 1950): 6–7.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian

AUTHOR Razija Handžić and unknown coauthors

TITLE *Otvoreno pismo muslimankama Bosne i Hercegovine* [Open Letter to the Muslim Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED A few paragraphs from the *Open Letter* published as part of the article “Kroz peču se ne vidi put u socijalizam” [Through the Veil One Cannot See the Path to Socialism], *Nova žena* [New Woman], no. 65–66 (September–October 1950): 8–9. The typewritten text has been presented on the exhibition *Poezija i Muzej Razije Handžić: konfiskacija pamćenja i ženski doprinos kulturi, nauči i institucijama* [The Poetry and Museum of Razija Handžić: The Confiscation of Remembrance and Women’s Contribution to Culture, Science, and Institutions], Museum of Literature and the Performing Arts in Sarajevo, curated by Zlatan Delić, 2016.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Duška Kovačević (1917, Banja Luka–1985, Sarajevo) was a communist socio-political worker¹ in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. She was active in “revolutionary work” already in high school in Bosnia, which continued during her studies in philosophy at the University of Belgrade, where she became engaged in the Women’s Movement (Ženski pokret), the leading Yugoslav interwar feminist organization and a magazine. Kovačević was active in the branch of Ženski pokret in her hometown Banja Luka, together with Vahida Maglajić (1907–1943). Maglajić was one of the few Muslim women who in the 1930s confronted her father to allow her to uncover herself, despite the fact that her family adhered to patriarchal religious norms. She was also a communist activist, who joined the Partisans

1 The concept of “socio-political worker” (f. *društveno-politička radnica*) for a person doing paid and unpaid work with the principal aim of benefiting the common good, is wider than the term politician (f. *političarka*), which has been used (in socialist and post-socialist times) to refer to a person occupying successive public offices. See Tanja Petrović and Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc, “(Un)Making Women’s Biographies in the Wake of the Loss of the Socialist Project in Yugoslavia,” *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women’s & Gender Studies* 21 (2020): 22.

and was killed in combat, becoming the only Bosnian Muslim woman who received the title People's Hero of Yugoslavia. "Together, we studied *Woman and Socialism* by [August] Bebel," Kovačević later remembered.²

Duška Kovačević became a member of the Alliance of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije, SKOJ) in 1937, and of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ) in 1940. During the war she held political positions in the KPJ in Bosnia and Hercegovina as a member of the County Committee of the KPJ of Podgrmeč region, and as a member of the County Committee in Banja Luka. Since Banja Luka was located in the pro-fascist Independent State of Croatia, she was imprisoned and then went underground. Though she was not Muslim, she used a *zar* (the veil worn by Muslim women covering both the head and the face) in order to hide herself while doing "illegal work" for the party and resistance movement. As her war-time comrade stated in a recollection: "in that symbol of woman's age-old oppression, we performed the tasks for the Party towards the complete liberation of the human."³ Covering herself with a *zar* also helped Kovačević escape to liberated territory and join a Partisan military unit, the 7th Krajiška Brigade, where she was a member of the political section. Fighting as a Partisan soldier, her younger sister Zora died in 1943 at the age of 19.

After 1945, Kovačević became a prominent political figure. She was involved in all levels of the party organization, from the County Committee to the Central Committee of the League of Communists (the successor party of the KPJ). She was a Secretary of the Women's Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena, AFŽ) in Bosnia and Hercegovina, and after the dissolution of AFŽ in 1953, she was involved in the establishment of the Alliance of Women's Associations of BH.⁴ She was a member of parliament, i.e., the People's Assembly of BH, in all post-war convocations, and became a Minister of Education in the executive committee (i.e., government) of that republic in 1949. From 1953, Kovačević was the President of the School Council for BH, and of the Commission for Work with Women of the Socialist Alliance of Working People in BH—the main mass organization in the country. As part of her political work, Duška Kovačević was also one of the first

2 Mila Beoković, *Žene heroji* [Women Heroes] (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1967), 196. See also August Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*, originally written and published in German in 1879.

3 Zaga Umičević, "Godine 1941. s banjalučkim ženama" [The Year 1941 with the Women of Banja Luka], in *Žene Bosne i Hercegovine u Narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi 1941–1945. godine: sjećanja učesnika* [Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina in National-liberation Struggle 1941–1945: Memories of the Participants], eds. Rasim Hurem and Jasmina Musabegović (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1977), 49.

4 Aida Ličina Ramić, "Nova ženska organizacija – Savez ženskih društava Bosne i Hercegovine (1953–1961)" [New Women's Organization – Alliance of Women's Associations of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1953–1961)], in *Zamišljanje žene: O ideološkim i kulturnim konceptima ženskog roda u povijesti Bosne i Hercegovine* [Imagining a Woman: On Ideological and Cultural Concepts of the Female Gender in the History of Bosnia and Herzegovina], eds. Sabina Veladžić and Aida Ličina Ramić (Sarajevo: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2023), 163–220.

editors-in-chief of the main Bosnian daily newspaper *Oslobođenje* (Liberation). The newspaper was established as a Partisan informative leaflet in 1943, and after the war was owned by the People's Front of BH, completely reflecting the orthodox stance of the Bosnian League of Communists, following the principles of brotherhood and unity to the letter.

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Ivana Pantelić and Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc⁵

Razija Handžić (1909, Banja Luka–1994, Sarajevo) was a writer, poet, and museum curator from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH). Handžić spent her childhood in Zavidovići, and completed her secondary education in Banja Luka, Mostar, and Sarajevo (all in BH). Her mother was a housewife, her father was a railway station-master in Zavidovići, and both of them were involved in leftist-communist circles, often harassed, arrested, and questioned by the interwar Yugoslav authorities. While her family had Muslim origins, she grew up in a secular household.

She started publishing poems, literary reviews, critiques and translations from Czech, French, German, and Russian in her early twenties. In 1934, she married the

⁵ Both contributions of Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc in this chapter are results of the research program “Historical interpretations of the 20th century” (P6-0347) financed by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

ethnologist Špiro Kulišić (1908–1989) and became more actively involved in the interwar Yugoslav communist youth and the work of the illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia. In this period, she took a break from her studies of Yugoslav literature at the University of Belgrade, and did not graduate until 1941. She subsequently found work as a clerk at Radio Belgrade, but she did not remain there for long. In April that year, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia capitulated to the invading Axis powers and Belgrade was occupied. Handžić moved with her husband back to Zavidovići (which was then within the pro-fascist Independent State of Croatia) where they actively worked on the mobilization of the local population to join the communist Partisans. The pro-fascist authorities quickly arrested them and they were sentenced to death, but thanks to the intervention of Handžić's brother-in-law, they managed to escape and went undercover. Eventually Handžić and Kulišić both joined the Partisan military forces and were sent to different fronts. After the Second World War, Handžić divorced Kulišić, and five years later married Veljko Vujinović, a doctor from Sarajevo.

As a cultural worker, she was engaged in various publishing and cultural programs in Sarajevo and Belgrade. She was the editor of the first two issues of the magazine of the AFŽ for BH, *Nova žena* (New Woman), and the first post-war director of Radio Sarajevo. Then she worked in the Committee on Cinematography in Belgrade and Sarajevo, and the Ministry of Science and Culture of BH. During the 1950s she was a curator and researcher at the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Sarajevo City Museum, and the Museum of the Revolution (the present-day Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina). Handžić founded and became the first director of the Museum of Literature and the Performing Arts in Sarajevo in 1961, which was established after Yugoslav novelist Ivo Andrić won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

She wrote poetry, essays, short fiction, and the screenplay for a documentary film on the Yugoslav food company *Agrokomerc*. She published in magazines for literature, culture, social and political issues, as well as in the daily and weekly press in interwar and post-war Yugoslavia: *Brazda* (Furrow, Sarajevo), *Gajret* (Effort, Sarajevo),⁶ *Glas Krajine* (The Voice of Krajina, Banja Luka), *Nova žena* (New Woman, Sarajevo), *Politika* (Politics, Belgrade), *Oslobođenje* (Liberation Sarajevo), *Slobodna Dalmacija* (Free Dalmatia, Split), *Srpski književni glasnik* (The Serbian Literary Herald, Belgrade), *Učiteljska biblioteka* (Teachers' Library, Šabac), *Zora*

6 *Gajret* was a term borrowed from Ottoman Turkish to Bosnian as well as Albanian and Macedonian, meaning "energy, effort; zeal, ardor," as well as "jealousy; zeal, fervor." See Gjorgji Bufli and Luciano Rocchi, *A Historical-Etymological Dictionary of Turkisms in Albanian (1555-1954)* (Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2021), 165; "rajper", *Wikitionary*. Accessed January 10, 2024. <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%98%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%82>. It was also the name of one of the largest interwar Muslim cultural organisations founded in 1903. As Fabio Giomi shows, apart from offering scholarships to both male and female Muslim students, publishing journals such as *Gajret* and organising cultural and leisure activities, "Gajret became one of the main forums for Muslim (mostly male) public figures to develop a discourse on the Muslim woman question". Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European*, 9.

(Dawn, Mostar), *Žena danas* (The Woman of Today, Belgrade), *Život i rad* (Life and Work, Belgrade).

The significance of this author and cultural worker remains mostly unexplored, neglected, and unknown. The Museum of Literature and the Performing Arts in Sarajevo holds a collection of documentary and literary material on her life and literary work, which was the basis for the exhibition *Poezija i Muzej Razije Handžić: Konfiskacija pamćenja i ženski doprinos kulturi, nauci i institucijama* [The Poetry and Museum of Razija Handžić: The Confiscation of Remembrance and Women's Contribution to Culture, Science, and Institutions] curated by the undersigned in 2016.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • "Počitelj on the Neretva," *Review: Yugoslav Monthly Magazine* 4, no. 1 (1965): 20–27; *Uspravno plamenje* [Upright Flames], book of poetry (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1977).

Zlatan Tunjić

CONTEXT

The establishment of post-war Yugoslavia as a socialist state started a period of accelerated secularization among different Muslim ethnic groups who constituted a substantial part of the population in certain geographic areas of this multiethnic and multiconfessional country. One of the pivotal steps in this process was the veil-lifting campaign, and later the Law on the Prohibition of Wearing the *Zar* and *Feredža*, which was fully implemented by the AFŽ. It should be noted that the legislation aimed at prohibiting the covering of a woman's face, not hair—different types of headscarves were common among almost all of the peasant population, irrespective of confession. Therefore, the Law specifically prohibited particular types of clothing that Muslim women used to cover the head and body—a cloth or silk garment for wrapping the upper body (*zar*) or a baize mantle with adjoining overskirt (*feredža*)—which were both worn with a face veil (*peče*, through which a person could see but not be seen). All of these came in many local varieties. Laws enforcing the ban on veils were passed separately in each of the republics with a significant Muslim population, starting with Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 1950, and then in Serbia (including Kosovo), Macedonia, and Montenegro in the following months.

This was a significant step compared to the prewar situation. In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—from 1929, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia—the male population was given universal suffrage while women were denied equal civil, labor, and political rights. Family relations and part of the educational system remained autonomous from the state and subordinated to Sharia law for Muslims. While some families of Muslim origin (like Razija Handžić's) shifted to a more secular lifestyle, more

traditional Muslim families (like Vahida Maglajić's) followed the rule of stopping the education of their daughters when they started wearing a veil (i.e., when they began to menstruate). In interwar Yugoslavia, only Muslim girls were exempted from mandatory elementary education. Mehmed Džemaludin Čaušević (1870–1938)—a progressive leader of Islamic scholars in Bosnia who had been inspired by Kemalist reforms in Turkey—advocated the unveiling of women, their inclusion in public life and the economy, as well as girls' education. However, he was outvoted on these points by both the *ulema* (religious scholars) and Bosnian Muslim intellectuals in the late 1920s.⁷

After the Second World War, public elementary school became mandatory for all children up to the age of 15. The Law on Marital Relations proclaimed equality for men and women in marriage, as well as mandatory civil marriage regulated by the state rather than religious institutions. The state project of socialist modernization encompassed campaigns aimed at educating social groups perceived as “backward”—the peasantry in general, and the Muslim population in particular—on issues of basic family health and hygiene. Yugoslav communists perceived Muslim women as “the most backward” and as “victims of unfavorable social conditions,” while “the traditions of the Muslim population were deemed foreign, timeless, associated with the Ottoman past, which was viewed as part of the ‘inferior’ and oriental ‘East.’”⁸ A parallel was often made between veiled women and slaves.

Therefore, the state and the AFŽ equated the removal of the veil with the emancipation of Muslim women from the conservative traditional system which had barred them from participating in public, political, social, and economic life, and which had endangered their health. The connection between wearing a veil and infant mortality is drawn in Dušanka Kovačević's speech below.

The laws prohibiting *zar* and *feredža* were preceded by an exhaustive campaign. In the area of Kosovo and Metohija, where a top-down approach was taken, the public uncovering of women was organized already on March 8, 1946. On that occasion, forty Albanian Muslim women took off their veils in front of 5000 people gathered in Prishtina. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the campaign was led predominantly by the AFŽ, and was symbolically initiated at the Second Regional Congress of the AFŽ in BH in 1947 when a mass of women removed their veils. The activities of the Congress were transferred to the work of AFŽ members on the ground. The *Open Letter to the Muslim Women of BH* was probably prepared by Razija Handžić and fellow activists before 1950, at the time of the veil-lifting campaign, with the aim of having it published in one of the media outlets with which she collaborated. However, it was not published at the time of writing. Handžić only included a few paragraphs from the *Open Letter* the article “Through the Veil One Cannot See

7 See Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European*.

8 Simić, *Soviet Influences*, 156.

the Path to Socialism” published in *Nova žena* (New Woman) when the Law was adopted in September 1950.

Great attention was devoted to this topic in all the magazines published by the AFŽ in the republics with Muslim populations. At the time of the adoption of the Law, the magazine *Nova žena* published extensive excerpts from speeches given before the National Assembly of BH by the vice prime minister of BH, Avdo Humo, the Minister of Education, Dušanka Kovačević (translated below), and Sulejman Filipović, President of the BH Assembly, among others. The latter invoked the words of the leaders of the Islamic Religious Community (Islamska vjerska zajednica) who supported the uncovering of Muslim women and allowing them to enter the public arena. It should be noted that the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia was on very good terms with the Communist Party, since the Party placed them on equal footing to the previously dominant Orthodox and Catholic Churches, and provided state donations in return for their support.⁹ The *Open Letter* cited below stresses that even the highest Islamic officials confirmed that no religious rule existed which explicitly demanded women to wear a veil over their face. Therefore, the campaign for the removal of the veil was never directly opposed to religiosity as such.

The magazine *Nova žena* also discussed the practical problems that Muslim women faced after discarding their traditional way of dressing:

It turned out that the biggest problem for most women was how to make a dress or a coat out of the *zar*. They talked with fear about how they would not be able to cope with the new way of dressing and were happy when some of their friends offered to help them with it. A good example is comradess Danica Komljenović, an activist of the IV Basic Organization, who knows how to sew. She gathered several comradesses who helped her cut pieces of the *zar* and sew dresses... Comrade Avdo Dizdar, a tailor, volunteered to reshape a *zar* into a dress... Comradesses also help in choosing cuts, they advise what kind of outfit would be practical, they show their friends how to dress up and comb their hair.¹⁰

What is missing from media reports like this is information on resistance to the veil-lifting campaign. Archival sources show that there was such resistance, and significantly so.¹¹ Even some Party members, who were loyal in all other political issues, were rebuked by the AFŽ for not supporting the campaign.¹² What is mentioned

9 Simić, *Soviet Influences*, 161.

10 Sida Hrisafović, “Pomožimo drugaricama koje skidaju zar i feredžu” [Let’s help the female comrades who are removing *zar* and *feredža*], *Nova žena*, no. 65–66 (September–October 1950): 8.

11 In *Soviet Influences*, Ivan Simić cites reports and meeting minutes of various AFŽ units retrieved from Collection 141 AFŽ, Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia.

12 Simić, *Soviet Influences*, 171.

occasionally in media reports and speeches is the disapproval of some men, which is explained by their social and religious conservatism. Muslim women were perceived as having been forced to wear the veil, and the only force which stopped them from removing the veil was the pressure of their fathers, husbands, or brothers. While Dušanka Kovačević quotes the letter of a respectable Muslim woman, imploring the government to call off the Law on removing the veil, there was no room in the public discourse of the time for the authentic voices of Muslim women who actually wore the veil. And while Razija Handžić mentions “all kinds of calculated resistance slogans,” the voices of those who opposed the removal of the veil were not allowed to voice their opposition in public media.

The testimonies, written down with significant hindsight, reveal a lack of agency and the troubling feelings many women had when they were made to stop wearing veils.¹³ These narratives paint a picture that, in such cases, it was actually fathers and husbands who pressured the women in their family, particularly the younger ones, to remove their veils. While these narratives emphasize that the male family members were required to behave in this way by the Party or the police, they overlook the agency of many Muslims (male or female) who genuinely believed in the project of socialist modernization and aspired to embody it. For those women who wanted to wear a veil, the unveiling was accompanied with shame and the “feeling of being naked” on the street. The memoirs of Didara Dukadžini (Dukagjini) Đorđević (1930–2006) describe the discomfort she felt when she was told not to wear a *feredža* anymore (at the age of 17), but also gratitude for the educational opportunities she was given after lifting her veil, and which eventually led her to have a fulfilling professional and private life, as well as a high-profile political career in socialist Yugoslavia.¹⁴

The two texts, placed side-by-side here, put forward a fairly similar set of arguments in support of the socialist modernization project, but from two slightly different positions. While Razija Handžić speaks from a “we” position, as a representative of “Muslim women who have already freed [themselves]” and are familiar with Islamic religious norms, Dušanka Kovačević speaks from the position of a benevolent outsider, building the idea of sisterhood between Muslim and other Yugoslav women.

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Ivana Pantelić, Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc, and Zlatan Tunjić

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Dušanka Kovačević The Veil Conceals Illiteracy, Backwardness, and the Slavish Position of Women

With respect to the proposal of the law on the removal of the veil, I would like to point out that women began their struggle for the removal of the veil long ago,¹⁵ as early as the national liberation struggle, when the veil impeded the ability of Muslim women—mothers and fighters, participants in the National Liberation War¹⁶—to fight for the liberation of their country and people. They continued to follow that path, which was chosen by huge masses of women from our republic, including a large number of Muslim women, even after the war, during the period of the struggle to rebuild our country. Muslim women removed their veils while at work, during work actions, during the construction of youth railways,¹⁷ as well as the Kladanj–Stupari and Ljubija–Brežićani railways, where they participated in large numbers.

15 Editor’s note: Throughout their texts, Dušanka Kovačević and Razija Handžić use the words *zar* and *feredža*, which we will translate simply as *veil* since that was their target.

16 Editor’s note: The National Liberation War (Narodnooslobodilačka borba, NOB) is the title that Yugoslav communists used to describe the antifascist struggle against Axis occupation forces, their domestic collaborators, and pro-fascist and royalist forces which was entangled with Second World War and the local civil wars that took place in 1941–1945.

17 Editor’s note: “Youth railways” was the expression used for the railway routes built through youth work actions, where young people voluntarily participated in large infrastructure construction projects, with the most well-known in Bosnia being the Brčko–Banovići and Šamac–Sarajevo railways.

In the struggle against the conservative and reactionary elements¹⁸ that prevented them from removing the veil, Muslim women sought the support of the government, demanding that a law removing the veil be introduced.

Speakers who came before me specifically emphasized that the reactionary elements in their struggle against the removal of the veil point out that, behind the veil, behind the closed curtains, and behind the window lattices, a sort of beautiful and happy life flourishes. I would like, comrades and comradeses, to talk a bit about what kind of life this is, about what is hidden behind the veil. The *veil* that reactionaries idealize as happiness, *conceals* awful *illiteracy, backwardness, the slavish position of women*, and unhappy, miserable motherhood. Bosnia and Herzegovina is that part of our country where, before the war, every kind of disease ran rampant, in which the most backward customs predominated, in which the mortality rate of children was equal to death rates only encountered in the colonies [of Western empires]. In the former Yugoslavia, 44 percent of children died, whereas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that percentage amounted to about 51 percent. The statistics on child mortality indicate that high rates of death among children and women giving birth correlated specifically with Muslim areas. That resulted, on the one hand, from general backwardness and ignorance, and, on the other hand, from a conservatism that prevented Muslim women from going to the doctor and seeking medical help during labor, as well as in other instances. Therefore, behind the veil, behind what reactionary elements aim to preserve, today the fact remains that we are still a republic that has not eliminated high rates of child mortality, and it remains a major problem. Children in villages die mostly from illnesses of the gastrointestinal and respiratory organs, which indicates that the main causes of death are living conditions, poor hygiene, and a host of other reasons.

When we talk about the veil, we cannot talk about it as if it is just some kind of residue that will disappear on its own. What we have inherited from the past remains and is transferred from one person to another. Today there are still instances of very young girls being forced to wear the veil, to remain illiterate and to be destined to take the path of their mothers. We cannot and will not close our eyes to the fact that today the problem of children going to school, especially Muslim girls, is a formidable one. Today we still have Muslim villages where not a single female child goes to school. These kinds of villages exist in Zvornik, Srebrenica, Vlasenica, Kladanj, Tuzla, and in other districts. Reactionaries who fight against the removal of the veil fight against the young generation's ability to grow and to be healthy, free, and literate. All of this shows that today those

18 Editor's note: "Reactionary elements" or "reactionaries" is a general expression for individuals and groups who (re)act against the legacies of the communist revolution.

who fight against the removal of the veil are in fact fighting against the enlightenment of women and mothers, against the advancement of the young generation, for the issue of children's upbringing and education is in the first place the mother's issue. If the mother is illiterate or backward, then she cannot raise an evolved, free citizen of this country. Speaking of which, I would like to emphasize that while the broader national masses led the fight for our Assembly to deliver a law on the removal of the veil, reactionary elements were also at work. Realizing that they cannot achieve much on their own, they take advantage of none other than the Muslim woman, illiterate and backward, so that she too would fight against the removal of the veil. This is a typical example of reactionary warfare. The elderly Fatima Duvajdžić, the mother of a fallen soldier—a seventy-year-old woman—writes to government leaders saying: "I implore you to call off the law on the removal of the veil." And, in the same letter, she emphasizes that she has not written the letter herself because she is illiterate. It is clear that she wrote it under someone's influence, at someone else's urging. For those who fight against removing the veil, it is necessary that Muslim women use someone else's hand to write and someone else's mind to think. They seek the support of the most unenlightened strata of people and women in order to fight against our country's betterment and progress.

I would like to take this opportunity to send a message to the elderly Fatima Duvajdžić and thousands of other Muslim women—Partisan mothers—that what we are doing here today, what our nation's masses are after today, this is the cause for which their sons fought and died. Our times demand that a Muslim woman take part in the building of socialism with her whole being, that she be an enlightened housewife and enlightened mother. Muslim women, and all our women know all too well what it is like to be backward and unenlightened, to encounter surprises and to not be able to influence the fate of the country. They understood that best in 1941 when they fled burning houses with their veils on and were forced to remove them in order to fight to liberate their country and to save their children.

Speaking of the law on the removal of the veil, I believe that this is just one part of that great mission which stands before our party, before our national government, and before all mass organizations, that it is one part of a great cultural revolution that we are pursuing in order to transform our country, for a better life in our villages, for the health and happiness of our children. And in the name of happy motherhood, in the name of our country's freedom, in the name of its ability to build strength, to be powerful and to resist all external and internal enemies, in the name of strengthening the ranks of the builders of socialism, I will vote for this law, because it will allow Muslim women fuller and freer participation in the life of their country.

Translated by Suzana Vuljevic

Razija Handžić and unknown coauthors

Open Letter to the Muslim Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina

We, the Muslim women¹⁹ who have already freed ourselves from the veil and have contributed in various ways to the progress of our Fatherland together with you, our sisters who are still covered, are [all] deeply experiencing the greatness of these days. These are the days when the demands of the working people are echoing all over the country to ensure that the black veils which cover faces are also abolished by law, thus enabling the equality of all Muslim women. Just like you, we too experience this primarily with our hearts because we ourselves, or among those dearest to us, have experienced all the humiliation that is inevitably imposed on a veiled woman.

And it is certain that every decent person feels the remarkable greatness of this historic event.

It is only the enemies of socialism, the enemies of progress in general, who try to take advantage of this situation. Thus, there are efforts to inculcate all kinds of calculated resistance slogans in those Muslim men and women who are still susceptible to certain prejudices.

However, when people themselves become ready to achieve great deeds, all reactionary efforts are futile, and, in their deep revolutionary transformation, our peoples have undoubtedly evolved to also be able to free themselves of certain external signs of enslavement, such as the veil.

The enemies of our liberation and progress claim that some Muslim women do not wish to uncover themselves, so as not to sin against their faith, decency, or this centuries-old tradition itself. They further claim that it is difficult to change one's whole wardrobe, and similar things. However, even the oldest Muslim women know that covering oneself has nothing to do with faith and decency. It is common knowledge that even the highest religious officials have confirmed that there is no religious rule on the veiling of Muslim women. As for decency, it is clear that one can hide all kinds of things behind a veil, and the following proverb applies here: "Character, not clothing, makes the person."

Every conscious person must really be appalled by the justification that the covering is a centuries-old habit. Isn't it already monstrous that people had allowed for a large number of Muslim women to be excluded from life even up to our times, women who could have developed in various directions and who could have contributed, with their abilities, to society in manifold ways, just as they do now. And,

19 Editor's note: It is written *muslimanke*, with lowercase letters, thus referring to the religious group. From the census of 1962 onwards, Muslims (capitalized in Serbo-Croatian) referred to the ethno-national group living predominantly in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

anyway, it is a proven trait of our peoples that they quickly adopt everything that is freedom-loving, good, and humane, even when it requires breaking with long-standing habits.

The claim that Muslim women do not wish to uncover themselves is untrue because it is unnatural, and because actually no person wants to look ugly, to be humiliated, neglected and excluded from life in general.

Finally, the problem of changing one's wardrobe is by no means as big a problem as our enemies try to portray. We, Muslim women, have the same rights as the other citizens and we are not deprived of anything in our country. Therefore, we will dress like all other women, in accordance with our possibilities in the present and depending on how much each one of us commits to working for the community.

Our dear sisters, we see that our entire development is aimed at achieving the widest possible democratization of the country, that is, the greatest possible participation of the people in managing the state. Can this be achieved without equal Muslim women? In our experience, being covered up means exclusion from life, it excludes us from all political and social events and, therefore, condemns us to general backwardness. Our centuries-old enslavement has shown that we cannot be truly equal when covered by a veil, nor can we really progress in any respect. This means that being covered up would continue to deprive us of the basic rights and duties that all other citizens of our country have, and that even goes against our Constitution.

This is why, in the country's further democratization and in their preparations for the takeover of economic enterprises, our most conscientious working people gave priority to the true liberation of all Muslim women. In this way, they are implementing the words of our great teacher, Comrade Tito, that the main prerequisite for good management of the national economy is the cultural development of each working person. This attitude opens wide the doors of life to us Muslim women as well, life in which we will be able to participate in all of its aspects and advance like all other citizens of our country.

Translated by Jelena Babšek Labudović

Aina Jurciņa

The Consequences of Emancipation?

AUTHOR Aina Jurciņa

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aina Jurciņa (b. 1934) was a candidate of philosophy, sociologist, publicist. She was born in a poor peasant family in Jaunauce, Latvia. After graduating from the Secondary School of Applied Arts she worked at the Auce Culture House and the cinema “Gaisma.” In 1958 she married the writer and publicist Pēteris Jurciņš (1932–2004). Jurciņš was a policeman, a lieutenant colonel, and every few years he was transferred to a higher position in another city. Aina Jurciņa had to follow her husband, which meant living in different cities and looking for a new job every time. In 1968, Jurciņa graduated from the State University of Latvia, Faculty of Law and Philosophy, as a lawyer and continued her postgraduate studies (1969–1972) studying philosophy and specializing in scientific communism. She defended her dissertation, entitled “The development of a woman’s personality in socialism,” in 1973, supervised by philosopher Augusts Milts (1928–2008), who in his work focused on the field of ethics in Latvian philosophy. Jurciņa then worked at the State University of Latvia, Faculty of Law and Philosophy, first as a lecturer, then as an assistant professor in the Department of Scientific Communism. Jurciņa authored two books, materials for lecturers, as well as numerous articles in the press. In her research, she referred to the findings of the classic authors of the Marxism-Leninist canon—Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and V. I. Lenin—on the main conditions and regularities necessary for the implementation of women’s social equality. Her writing is based on statistical data and sociological research done in Latvia and socialist countries, namely Poland, Hungary, and the GDR. In the 1990s, she worked as a journalist for the newspaper *Latvijas Dzelzceļnieks* (Latvian Railwayman).

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Zita Kārkle

CONTEXT

On August 5, 1940, Latvia became part of the USSR as the Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia. This involved dramatic political, economic, ideological, and cultural changes. The totalitarian state socialist system was already fully established in the Soviet Union, and Latvia simply had to be included according to established norms and values. Latvian women had to become "Soviet women" at a rapid pace, as the creation of a "Soviet woman"—a good worker, a heroine, a mother who dedicated her life to the Soviet state—was one of the tasks of Soviet gender policy. The formation of the "Soviet woman" in Latvia began during the Soviet occupation regime in 1940–41, which lasted only a year until it was replaced by the Nazi occupation. In the summer of 1944, the Sovietization of Latvia resumed. The statement that, for the first time in history, true legal equality between women and men had been ensured in all spheres of life was included in the constitution of the Latvian SSR. On March 30 and 31, 1945, the first Congress of Women of the Latvian SSR convened in Riga. It was held as a grandiose public performance to demonstrate women's loyalty to and support for the regime. The congress, which took place in the Opera House, brought together more than 1,000 women.

In reality, despite officially declared equality, women's secondary position and subordination in all spheres of life was a social reality in the Soviet social order. In the 1960s and 1970s, during the Brezhnev era (1964–1982), it was acknowledged that while formal equality existed before the law, there were problems concerning equality in a broader sense, including political and economic equality and equality in everyday life. Aina Jurciņa's research coincided with the reopening of the woman question, which made it ideologically legitimate to conduct sociological investigations into the "problems" faced

by women. In her dissertation “The development of a woman’s personality in socialism” (1973), Jurciņa approached women’s equality in practice, considering how the impact of gender inequality in work and family relations, the dispersal of free time, and the upbringing of girls influenced the development of a woman’s personality. Her book *Woman—personality*, based on the dissertation, was published in 1975.

While Jurciņa stressed that work—which in the official discourse was identified as the only means of making women free and equal to men—was also crucial to a woman’s sense of self, she also pointed to the social division of labor in the Soviet labor market, which provided lower paid jobs for most women, working mostly in trade, the medical field, education, and culture, while men were worked in the better-paid employment sectors, such as heavy industry. Referring to statistics, Jurciņa also showed that a large proportion of women earned their living through hard physical work and maintained that women should be protected from harmful working conditions (such as dust, chemicals, noise, vibrations, etc.). Jurciņa pointed out that women occupied management positions relatively rarely, and their career growth usually stopped at the middle level. Inequalities persisted in housework and childrearing, one of the domestic spheres in which the unequal social status of men and women was most clearly visible, consequently leaving women with less free time than men. Possibilities to combine women’s professional and social activities successfully with family and everyday life, according to Jurciņa, depended not so much on the improvement of social services and household mechanization. Jurciņa rejected this solution as one-sided and argued that the key was the redistribution of traditional family responsibilities—with both spouses participating equally in household chores and raising children.

Focusing on issues of the legal and actual equality of women, the role of women in contemporary society, family relationships and personal development, Jurciņa gave lectures in various cities in Latvia: in Valmiera, Dobeles, Tukums, Madona, Jelgava, Aizkraukle, Ventspils, and Saldus, among others. In the 1970s and 1980s her articles appeared in various periodicals—the magazines *Skola un Ģimene* (School and Family), *Padomju Latvijas Sieviete* (Soviet Latvian Woman), *Veselība* (Health), the newspapers *Literatūra un Māksla* (Literature and Art), *Cīņa* (Fight), etc.—often before International Women’s Day, celebrated on March 8. Over time, it became a popular holiday in honor of women’s role in the society. The ritual of celebration, among other things, included a man (the father, husband, or son) taking on the role of a woman in the household (by cooking, cleaning the house, looking after the children), which in fact emphasized that there was no real equality between the two sexes in the Soviet system. Removing the heavy domestic burden from a woman’s shoulders for one day, and holding public glorification events, showed respect for her work, but did not solve the underlying problems: the lack of equal redistribution of responsibilities in the family and household, raising wages in those sectors where female labor was dominant, issues relating to the “glass ceiling” in building a professional career, etc.

Jurciņa's article "The Consequences of Emancipation? Theoretical Findings," (1980), translated below, is part of her second book, *Sieviete un sociālistiskais dzīvesveids* (Woman and the Socialist Lifestyle, 1986), in which she elaborated and supplemented with new statistical data the same themes that she researched in her first book. She concluded that the process of women's emancipation was not completed, and the negative aspects of modern women's life were not consequences of emancipation. On the contrary, they were manifestations of its incompleteness, examples of unfulfilled tasks in the process of creating women's social equality. Her writing was grounded in Marxism-Leninism and, using rich factual material and statistical data, analyzed women's lifestyle under conditions of "advanced socialism," paying special attention to women's professional and social activities, family relationships, and the use of free time for personal growth and development opportunities. At the same time, Jurciņa also described the idea of desirable femininity, portraying women as emotional, gentle, delicate, and sensitive. She referred to philosopher Augusts Milts, the supervisor of her dissertation, who wrote about grace—captivating lightness, playfulness, plasticity, which turned into a personality trait, especially enriched femininity, and she maintained that lifestyle conditions should cultivate and stimulate these desirable qualities in women. Jurciņa's argument coincided with concerns about falling birth rates and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. However, by emphasizing character traits that stemmed from biological and psychological differences between the sexes, Jurciņa stressed that these differences did not erase the need for professional growth and sharing housework. She showed that remnants of social inequality were manifested in significant differences in the amount of time spent on certain activities: men still spent almost three times less time than women on housework.

Woman and the Socialist Lifestyle was published during a time when creative intelligentsia, whose opinion was authoritative and trusted in the society, was actively involved in the reassessment of the role of women in Soviet society. In 1986, the magazine *Padomju Latvijas Sieviete* (Soviet Latvian Woman) started a series showcasing the opinions of the Latvian creative intelligentsia (among others, Anda Līce, Viktors Avotiņš, Andrejs Dripe, and Ārija Milta), in which the deep belief in "natural differences" between the sexes was articulated, and therefore it was argued that it would be more correct to separate their spheres of activity and reinforce traditional social roles. In the discourse of the women's press in Latvia of that time, the professional achievements of the average Soviet woman tended to be portrayed more negatively, and the representatives of the creative intelligentsia spoke with great passion about women's return to the private sphere. Patriarchal attitudes and the inherited gender model placed women in a worse position and offered them less opportunities in the new social and economic hierarchy of post-socialist society. Many of the problems that Jurciņa pointed out in her work are still relevant in Latvian society today.

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Zita Kārkle

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Aina Jurciņa

The Consequences of Emancipation? Theoretical Findings

In socialist countries, there is sometimes an inaccurate tendency to attribute all the still unsolved, difficult problems of women's work and family to the consequences of emancipation. [...]

What, then, should be meant by emancipation? Has this process been completed in socialism, so that we can talk about its consequences? In the *Dictionary of Foreign Words*, we read that emancipation is liberation from dependence, subordination, oppression, prejudice, in general, from everything that is outdated and conservative. The meaning of the term includes any liberation from the old yoke, but it is usually understood as the liberation of women from dependence, the struggle for equality and equity in all forms of human life. When we investigate the nature of emancipation, we find that it cannot be reduced to the realization of legal equality; it is also the liberation of man from all dependence—moral dependence, material dependence, dependence in the choice of profession. Opportunities to improve qualifications, to develop abilities and talents. Women's emancipation also means liberation from prejudices, from all that is outdated and conservative, which, unfortunately, can still be found not only in family and domestic relations, but also in work collectives and even in public opinion—in the press, films, and literature. In this unrestricted, unbounded sense, the process of women's emancipation in socialist society is not over, nor is the cultural revolution, of which it is, in

fact, a part. It would therefore be premature to speak of the consequences of the emancipation of women. We are only observing the consequences of an incomplete process of emancipation, including the failures, the shortcomings, the deviations caused by various objective and subjective factors on the undoubtedly difficult, complex path towards social equality, which will only be fully realized in a communist society as part of general social equality. Then we will be able to assess the consequences of emancipation. [...]

Recognizing the role of women in production, in the management of society and in cultural work, while retaining her traditional domestic and family responsibilities, we often attribute to the evil consequences of emancipation the doubling of women's workload, certainly in comparison with men. Without denying that a woman, especially if she is a mother, in a family can and does have a double workload during a certain period in her life, yet it is unscientific and out of step with the truth of life and history to consider this a consequence of emancipation.

Most working women have never been able to confine themselves to looking after their families. They have always, without limitations on hours and working time, supplemented their work on their subsistence or commodity farms, on the fields of the feudal or capitalist lord, in the factory, in the workshop. Nor was the life of women of the moneyed classes always one of idle idleness. In the fierce competitive struggle, the owner of small farms and businesses must be a good housekeeper, a disciplinarian and overseer of the labor she buys to survive and not go bankrupt. ... This is not to justify the greater share of work in the family for modern women, but only to stress once again that this is not a consequence of emancipation but, on the contrary, an unrealized part of the process of creating social equality for women, a task that emancipation has yet to accomplish.

In the field of women's professional work, this task always and everywhere requires respect for the specific nature of women's natural and social roles and certain rules for managing and planning women's employment: firstly, ensuring that the content and conditions of work correspond to women's psychophysiological characteristics and moral and aesthetic requirements; secondly, ensuring the optimum working arrangements that make it possible to combine work and motherhood in a sensible and non-overloaded way (part-time work, rolling schedules, etc.); thirdly, material and moral support from the work collective in the performance of motherly duties (provision of children's facilities, priority in the allocation of flats, priority in the allocation of sanatoriums, rest homes, holidays, travel vouchers and other valuables, honoring the mother, creation of moral privileges). [...]

In noting the progressive, forward-looking trends in the content and conditions of women's work, I am not claiming that all problems have been solved. Women are predominant in commodity production—the B group of industrial

production—where the work is lighter, extremely automated, and mechanized, but also less remunerated. Here, 45 per cent of women and only 29 per cent of men are employed, while 71 per cent of all men employed in industry work in the A group. Group A industries are characterized by more physically demanding, complex work, sometimes in conditions that are harmful to health (mining, metallurgy, heavy engineering, etc.), which is why most of these industries also have higher pay. The pay gap is not necessarily due to job discrimination, but to a match between real physical and mental energy expenditure. Women's work in these sectors does not bring in less than men's work, but it has a detrimental effect on women's bodies and psyches. Around 40 per cent of all women working in industry are employed in ancillary jobs. Unlike men in ancillary jobs, most of whom are skilled professionals—locksmiths, repairers, electricians, machine adjusters—about 80 percent of women work in unskilled manual labor, sometimes in manual trades.

In sectors of work that require mainly physical effort, changes in labor regulations are needed, because for a woman with less physical energy to do the same work as a man means working beyond her strength, or vice versa: if the regulations are geared towards women's strength, men work below their abilities, lowering productivity. In approaching the communist principle of "from each according to his ability," the inequality of physical abilities and the need to spare the mother should be respected first and foremost in the sectors of physical labor. Many sociological surveys have shown that women are more sensitive to working conditions, the state of production facilities, sanitary and hygienic conditions, and the collective microclimate, which leads to increased fatigue and illness.

Despite the problems and difficulties of the emancipation process, which has not yet been completed, in professional work (including in many areas of intellectual work, especially teaching) ... most women in our society do not understand emancipation as abandoning motherhood, but willingly want to combine it with professional work. And society needs both ways of fulfilling a woman's life. There is no need for women to return to the family alone; there is an objective need to help working mothers even more.

Our country's social policy, legislation, and public morals provide the most favorable conditions for supporting mothers and children. It is just that all this good does not always translate into real results where working women could be most supported—in the workplace. ... Women's councils could do much more and be more active in influencing public opinion in the working collectives and in improving the working and living conditions of mothers. That is why they exist, because the tasks of emancipation have not been completely solved. Especially in the sphere of the family and child-rearing, where the prejudices of the past persist, in the unjust division of labor in the household. [...]

In the course of emancipation, we have realized women's equality of legal and, to some extent, social status, although sometimes we have, willingly or unwillingly, exaggerated this, demanding the almost impossible. The final solution of the women's question does not require absolute equality with man always and everywhere, but, in view of woman's lesser physical strength and the difficult task of motherhood, to give her some advantages and privileges at work and in the family. [...]

I would like to share the prediction of the Marxist-Leninist classics that, because of full emancipation, woman will not lose her femininity and maternal feelings, but will develop them to their fullest extent under conditions of society's general favor and support. At the same time, women's professional work in all spheres of activity appropriate to them, including science and the arts, will make a mighty contribution to human progress, and it is unreasonable and reactionary today to frighten humanity with the negative consequences of emancipation.

Translated by Ieva Lešinska-Gaber

Lydia Sklevicky

The Women's Antifascist Front as a Potential Factor in the Process of Cultural Change

AUTHOR Lydia Sklevicky

TITLE "AFŽ kao potencijalni čimbenik procesa kulturne mijene tijekom razdoblja NOB-e" [The AFŽ as a Potential Factor in the Process of Cultural Change During the Period of the People's Liberation Struggle]

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lydia Sklevicky (1952, Zagreb–1990, Delnice) grew up in a middle-class family that left Saint Petersburg following the October Revolution of 1917 to settle in Yugoslavia. She enrolled and in 1976 completed her studies in sociology and ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. Soon after, Sklevicky became an assistant at the Institute for the History of the Workers' Movement in Croatia, where she worked until 1988. For the next two years, she worked at the Institute for Folklore Research. She died tragically in 1990, in a car accident near Delnice in Croatia.

Almost every review of Lydia Sklevicky's life and work refers to the way in which she was characterized by the philosopher and feminist theorist, her colleague and friend, Rada Iveković. Iveković described her as a feminist *začinjavka*, an inaugurator, initiator, or pioneer of feminism in the 1970s in socialist Yugoslavia, historiographically referred to as neofeminism or new Yugoslav feminism.¹ During her fifteen-year-long career, Sklevicky focused on the critical examination of the history of women and women's rights, primarily on the territory of Yugoslavia, and thus became the first Croatian and Yugoslav scholar to address the social history of women on the basis of the intellectual achievements of second-wave feminism.

In 1984, Sklevicky defended her master's thesis, entitled "Women and Power: The Historical Genesis of an Interest," based on a critique of the traditional study of history that tends to ignore the female perspective. Founding her research on the hypothesis that any women's public activity with the aim of achieving equality is at the same time emancipatory, she explored the characteristics of the organized activities of women throughout the existence of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia until the end of the Second

1 Rada Iveković, "Lydiji začinjavki" (To Lydia, The Pioneer), *Kruh & ruže* 3 (1995): 26–27.

World War.² The translated source text below is an overview of Sklevicky's master's thesis, but also of the intellectual foundations on which she wrote a series of texts and began to write her doctoral dissertation. Indicative in this respect is her (later) use of research undertaken by Rajka and Milan Polić. Commenting on their findings, which were based on the quantitative analysis of materials in history textbooks in Croatia—and which showed that there were more horses than women mentioned—Sklevicky ironically noted that women's history in Yugoslavia is needed “also because it is an indisputable fact that women in Yugoslav society make up (slightly more than) half of the population, and also because they have always outnumbered horses.”³

Her doctoral dissertation, which thematically and methodologically continues the work started in her master's research, remained unfinished. It is entitled “Emancipation and Organization: The Role of the Women's Antifascist Front in the Postrevolutionary Changes of Society (Croatia 1945–1953),” and in it the author set out to question the country's project of women's emancipation and the role of women in socialist society. To this day it remains a foundational historical text in which the conditions of the emergence and wartime development of the Women's Antifascist Front in Croatia has been most thoroughly considered.

Sklevicky was a member of the Zagreb Historical Society's Section for Research of Women's History “Nada Klaić,” and one of the founders of the group Woman and Society, established in 1979 under the auspices of the Croatian Sociological Society. At the time, the latter was led by Rudi Supek, a famous sociologist, philosopher, and one of the founders of the Praxis School of Marxism. During the academic year 1984–85, she led the postgraduate seminar on women's history in Yugoslavia as a part of the Section's activity.

Sklevicky was also active outside of academic circles. Thanks to the activities of new feminist groups in the spring of 1988 the first SOS helpline in Yugoslavia for women victims of violence was launched in Zagreb, where Sklevicky volunteered. Academic women such as Sklevicky and Rada Iveković worked together on the helpline with women from other backgrounds, such as the motor behind the Zagreb helpline, the ballet dancer and anti-violence activist Vesna Mimica.⁴ Writing for the

2 The full text of Sklevicky's master's thesis was edited by Andrea Feldman and Mariana Kardum and published in 2020: *Žene i moć: Povijesna geneza jednog interesa*. One of its chapters is available in the well-known collection of Sklevicky's academic and popular science works edited by her mentor, colleague, and friend Dunja Rihtman Augustin: *Konji, žene, ratovi*. Both edited volumes, notably, feature Sklevicky's unfinished doctoral dissertation.

3 Rajka and Milan Polić, “Dječji udžbenici o (ne)ravnopravnosti među spolovima” (Children's Textbooks on Gender (In)Equality), *Žena* 37, no. 1 (January–February 1979), 12–28; Lydia Sklevicky, “Konji, žene, ratovi, itd.: problem utemeljenja historije žena u Jugoslaviji” (Horses, Women, Wars, etc.: The Problem of Establishing Women's History in Yugoslavia), in *Konji, žene, ratovi*, 13–24, here 22: “... već i zbog toga što je nepobitna činjenica da žene u jugoslavenskom društvu čine (nešto veću) polovicu stanovništva, a i zbog toga što su oduvijek brojem premašivale konje.”

4 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 171–222; see also idem., “Feminism and Violence Against Women in Yugoslavia During State Socialism.”

Zagreb-based glossy women's magazine *Svijet* (World), Sklevicky also informed the broader public about a range of relevant issues for women from a feminist perspective, her topics including marriage, family, abortion, and the female body.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • “Od borbe za prava do prave borbe” [From the Struggle for Rights to the Real Fight], *Žena* 34, no. 3 (May–June 1976): 52–59; “Ženske studije u osamdesetim godinama” [Women's Studies in the 1980s], *Revija za sociologiju* 1–4 (1982): 157–62; with Žarana Papić, eds. *Antropologija žene* [Anthropology of a Woman] (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1983); “Karakteristike organiziranog djelovanja žena u Jugoslaviji u razdoblju do Drugog svjetskog rata” [Characteristics of Women's Organized Activity in Yugoslavia in the Period Before World War II], *Polja* 308 (1984): 415–17; and 309 (1984): 454–56; ed., *Žena i društvo: Kultiviranje dijaloga* [Woman and Society: Cultivating the Dialogue] (Zagreb: Sociološko društvo Hrvatske, 1987); “More Horses than Women: On the Difficulties of Founding Women's History in Yugoslavia,” *Gender and History* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 68–75; *Konji, žene, ratovi* [Horses, Women, Wars], ed. Dunja Rihtman Augustin (Zagreb: Ženska infoteka, 1996); *Žene i moć: Povijesna geneza jednog interesa* [Women and Power: The Historical Genesis of an Interest], eds. Andrea Feldman and Marijana Kardum (Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku–Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2020) • MOST IMPORTANT TRANSLATION • Erica Jong, *Voće i povrće* [Fruits and Vegetables] (Zagreb: Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 1981).

Iva Jelusić

CONTEXT

During the 1960s a resurgence of women's struggles unfolded throughout Western Europe and in the United States. These activists—who dealt with a range of issues, including family life and domesticity, the right to work and legal inequalities, reproductive rights and sexuality—became known as second-wave feminists. Silva Mežnarić, a doctoral student in sociology at the University of Ljubljana, who spent some time in the USA during her studies, wrote the first articles about the occurrences observed there for the magazine *Žena* (Woman) already in 1972. From that moment, urban, well-educated, young women “born into socialism,” and predominantly from Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia became known as the proponents of new Yugoslav feminism (*neofeminizam*). Inspired by the work of their European and American colleagues, they examined, questioned, and discussed “the proclaimed, yet to them, unfulfilled equality of women in Yugoslavia.”⁵

The first of these discussions were conducted around the kitchen tables of the participants whom Sklevicky jokingly termed “assault detachments of the morality police” (*jurišni odredi čudoredne policije*).⁶ Along with Sklevicky, some of the members of this

⁵ Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 2.

⁶ Iveković, “Lydiji začinjavki,” 26.

force, whose names are most often mentioned, were Slavenka Drakulić, Žarana Papić, Vesna Pusić, Biljana Kašić, Vjeran Katunarić, Rada Iveković, and Nadežda Čaćinović. Their numbers grew over time as Yugoslav *neofeminists* gathered in several loosely organized groups of academic and, later, activist provenance, not only in Zagreb, but also in Belgrade and Ljubljana. Through the variety of topics they covered, they created a strong and well-argued, yet still diverse feminist discourse in Yugoslavia.

Despite the heterogeneity of this new wave of feminism in Yugoslavia, a general timeline for the development of the movement is still possible. For many of those who were active already in the mid-1970s, the first public forum for presenting their ideas were the activities of the women's organization in Zagreb, the successor to the wartime AFŽ that Sklevicky researched.⁷ Like Mežnarić, many of them published their works in the organization's scientific journal *Žena*, focused on women's issues. Moreover, the state-organized conference on the women's question in 1976 in Portorož was the first event of its kind where the members of the neofeminist group participated. Only two years later, they organized their own, this time international, conference. Hosting some eighty participants during three days in October 1978 at the Student Cultural Centre (Studentski kulturni centar, SKC) in Belgrade, "Drug-ca žena. Žensko pitanje – novi pristup?" (Comrade-ess Woman. The Women's Question: A New Approach?), became a milestone event in the feminist history of socialist Yugoslavia.⁸ By the end of the decade, the representatives of these new feminist trends published in a wide range of academic journals and popular magazines and participated in public discussions, some of which were broadcast on radio and television. Along with Zagreb's Woman and Society group, established in 1976, important loci for the development of neofeminism became the SKC in Belgrade, the Women's section of the Slovene Sociological Association, as well as the Ljubljana Student Cultural Center (Študentski kulturno-umetniški center, ŠKUC), which was one of the foremost promoters of alternative culture in Slovenia.

Although large-scale events with characteristic academic features were held until the end of the 1980s—for instance, federal state-wide feminist conferences and summer schools in Dubrovnik, held for four consecutive years from 1987—the participants returned to small-scale, semi-private gatherings in the second half of the 1980s. This time around, it was a deliberate choice to provide space for consciousness-raising and to train groups, particularly in preparation for the launch of the SOS helpline for women victims of violence (which began to function in 1988). Scholarly research, as

7 The Women's Antifascist Front changed its name, organizational structure, and status within the state apparatus five times during the existence of socialist Yugoslavia. The names of the organization, often a bit unwieldy, were changed in order to more precisely capture the function of this organization in different periods of its existence. The essence of the organization's *raison d'être*, however, never changed. It was an intra-systemic representative of specifically women's interests, and its activities at any point in its existence reflect that.

8 Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Back to Belgrade, 1978;" idem, "Social Equality Is Not Enough, We Want Pleasure!"

well as activist gatherings, played an important role in preparing new Yugoslav feminists for activism which took on much higher stakes in the following years, marked by the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia.

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Iva Jelusić

Lydia Sklevicky

The Women's Antifascist Front as a Potential Factor in the Process of Cultural Change

In this short presentation, I will merely attempt to indicate the problems in the broader study "Women and Power—The Historical Genesis of an Interest" (unpublished manuscript, Zagreb, 1984) which refer to the process of cultural change.⁹ I will focus on the impact of a social movement, the Women's Antifascist Front (Antifašistička fronta žena, AFŽ), on changes to the prevalent pattern of culture, that is, of the social structure. [...]

When documents from this period (1941–45) refer to the equality of women, this idea is not explicitly defined, it is implied that it has an undisputed place in a broader, emancipatory, that is, revolutionary complex of social values. It is believed that enemies of equality or "enemies of the people" are enemies as such, yet when some among the members of the People's Liberation Movement (Narodnooslobodilački pokret, NOP) openly expressed such views in the presence of other members, they were qualified as "unenlightened" *individuals*, their position a result of their misunderstanding, their resistance against the equal acceptance of women in their own ranks merely remnants of "anti-popular regimes" which can be suppressed by persuasion. In the (frequent) examples of "neglecting" the issue of equality in practice, the AFŽ should serve as an important instance of socialization, one important for that segment of culture which political science refers to as political culture. Political culture is defined here as a product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system—thus it is rooted equally in public events and in private experience. Therefore, the AFŽ should be able to ensure the initial political socialization of women (most of whom stood almost completely outside the public sphere in most historical developments to this point) and the resocialization of men (so that they would accept the "unnatural" possibility of women's participation in a traditionally male space).

The activities of a women's organization, as a voluntary association whose task is also the affirmation of values, had to manifest themselves in a series of activities, ranging from the promotion of these values among women themselves (by breaking their "passivity," by means of education—courses, the female press) to offering assistance to women working in People's Liberation Committees (Narodnooslobodilački odbori, NOO) and fighting against the "low political consciousness among men." And while the AFŽ was, in existing circumstances, really

9 The text that served as a model for this presentation is in print in the magazine *Gordogan*, Zagreb, no. 15, 1984. Editor's note: All emphases in the original.

qualified and mature enough for the general and political education of women (which was, at the same time, also education for a specific policy), the political resocialization of men had incomparably fewer chances and was practically inactive. Its effectiveness could only be based on the appreciation of the *autonomy and political character* of the woman's organization, its dimensions of interest, and its authority. However, most often, this was not the case—which is indicated both by the critical protests of female activists themselves, and by frequent self-criticism in the ranks of the other segments of the People's Liberation Movement which pointed out that it is incorrect to view the AFŽ as some "charity" or auxiliary organization.

When I speak of facing the social discrimination of women, I understand discrimination as the unequal treatment of equals. If women's integration into the People's Liberation Movement had at all been possible without major obstacles, the establishment of a separate women's organization would probably never have happened. Namely, the specific consciousness of women in patriarchal culture—that is, their "ahistoricity," "apolitical attitude," and the like—corresponded to the specific consciousness of men in the patriarchal structure of thought. I analyzed how discrimination against women manifested itself within the framework of the new people's government: in the People's Liberation Committees, in the People's Liberation Army (Narodnooslobodilačka vojska, NOV), and in the Communist Party. On the one hand, women were explicitly encouraged to join them, while, on the other, all kinds of obstacles were imposed on them. Looking at the existent organizational structure of the AFŽ, it is noticeable that it lacked the decisive institutional space for a fight against the discrimination of women, which is essential for the realization of their ultimate task—the integration of women on equal grounds, and getting closer to the ideal of an egalitarian social structure.

It was often the case that, in the People's Liberation Committees, "women are not allowed to work because politics are not for women," and there are quite a few examples of strained relations between the People's Liberation Committees and those of the AFŽ. Reasons for this varied, from the overlapping of their tasks, to the belittling of the entire organization which, although the most massive, was also the least powerful. Although women's specific interests, that is, the actual existence of discrimination against women in the People's Liberation Movement, were sporadically recognized, they were not backed by the Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution. It recognizes only one legitimate subject—the Communist Party as the avant-garde of the working class. However, from the use of numerous archival documents, I noticed (and I believe also proved) that, in many cases, its members, *as concrete historical beings*, were not at the level of their own revolutionary program. There was criticism of discrimination against women within the Communist Party, but there was also self-criticism of sectarianism (as it was called

in Party jargon at the time) against certain women as well as against the entire AFŽ organization. Among other things, there were also double standards for the admittance of women and men into the Party. For example, women had to prove that they were literate, that they had achieved a certain level of political education, while this was obviously not required for men, since some documents show that some male members did not apply the existing directives on the inclusion of women because they could not read. There were no *concrete measures* to combat discrimination against women. It is interesting that requirements were always made towards women. They had to get qualified, to prove themselves—only then would they be equal.

The case of the People's Liberation Army is very telling. According to documents and participants' statements, it shows that women, especially the younger ones, were very interested in joining army units. However, it was only in mid-1942 when they managed to be admitted into units in large numbers (the turning point was the formation of the First Women's Unit in Trnava on August 25, 1942). The AFŽ's task of enabling women to join the army on an equal footing is undisputable. However, other considerations—the toleration of traditional attitudes towards women as unfit for warfare—were obviously, in most cases, believed to be more functional than open confrontation with the tenets of traditional culture. The image of an armed woman is not without precedent on Yugoslav territory. It has been a frequent motif in our (and in world) folk poetry, while historical/ethnological precedents of women as national leaders (in cases when there are no men suitable for this position) and the so-called *virđine* or *tobelije* [sworn virgins] among northern Arbanasi [archaic name for Albanians] and Montenegrins (where, due to economic necessity, women take on the social role of men). In these cases, they also enjoy the corresponding prerogatives. However, in both cases it is about accepting an armed woman as a substitute for a man. But is it about accepting a woman as an equal fellow-soldier in the People's Liberation Struggle (Narodnooslobodilačka borba, NOB), or is she rather a substitute for a man, as shown in the ethnological data? In the context of the People's Liberation Struggle, traditional female qualities, such as humaneness, selflessness, reverence—which women truly brought into the struggle—were highly valued, and, in that historical context, they had a certain emancipatory potential. Still, how does one explain the widespread refusal of soldiers to accept women into the army's ranks? At the time it was an irrational move, since more fighters meant a greater chance of winning. (All the more so, since enemy propaganda denounced the ethics of female soldiers—it said that they were all pregnant, that they were promiscuous and the like). I tried to explain that (male) soldiers rejected women because they were not ready to integrate women into a—by definition—male, heroic, epic tradition, such as the army and warfare. In this context, I also cited examples in which history is referred to as an exclusively

male topos. To that end, the chairwoman of the Central Committee of the AFŽ of Yugoslavia gave the example of an old village woman who was being taken to her execution by the enemy and, defying him, said her last words: "I am proud to have stepped in a man's footstep." So, a man's world equals a historical world. This led me to the conclusion that women joining the People's Liberation Army, the People's Liberation Committees, and the Communist Party was understood as *sufficient* and not just as *necessary* proof of emancipation. I also support this with the fact that the protest against the discrimination of women could not develop into a political action. In other words, as a voluntary organization, the AFŽ was able to perform an adaptive function—the adaptation of women as a group without experience into the activities of the until recently "male" spheres of politics and the military. Had the possibility also existed for it to perform its potential integrative function fully, the equalization of the position of women and men would have resulted in the promotion of new, emancipatory qualities. A new quality did manage to affirm itself in the military—a humanness, a new value that became part of a broader system of values. Had this been achieved when women joined the Communist Party, they would not have been integrated solely with the aim of strengthening and expanding the movement and the ideas articulated by the Party. Rather, this would have also contributed to deeper changes at the level of individual consciousness and of building truly emancipated subjects of the new politics.

Looking at traditional values in a new context, I analyzed the way in which ideas about women's duties of selflessness, reverence, and identification with the weak, how the understanding of the role of the mother as a nurturer and caregiver changes, of women's "honor and integrity," of her beauty, and what the new functions of traditional forms of communication are. Some of these virtues, ascribed to women by tradition, such as selflessness, reverence, and identification with the weak, and, to some extent, the role of mother, became the basis of all social functions that women performed through their organization in the People's Liberation Struggle. These were merely transferred to a new context—women appeared as a *collective* provider of services. I therefore arrived at the conclusion that no attempt was made to change traditional values, but that the emphasis was rather on their *modification* in relation to the new context/historical moment. Traditional "female values" were neither denied nor integrated into a new system of values, their emancipatory charge was primarily manifested by the function of its usefulness in widening and strengthening the People's Liberation Movement.

[...]

Searching for a utopian projection of a liberated woman, I came across two approaches. The idealized image of a fully formed "new woman" highlighted the fact of her political equality. However, faced with reality, it also includes concrete

socio-political measures that will guarantee the strengthening of this legacy. These measures can be reduced to the following formula: political equality; the protection of the female reproductive function; the socialization of children's upbringing; education; and work, as it follows the line expressed in Vida Tomšič's report at the Fifth Countrywide Conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1940. What remains outside the boundaries of this line of thinking is the patriarchal prefix of traditional culture untouched by doubt. The second approach consists of texts that, using poetic language (which has the potential to indicate the process of every social transformation), invoke a "new" woman. They were written solely by male authors (Radko Polič, Vladimir Nazor, Svetozar Ritig),¹⁰ and, in addition to the essential differences contained in their texts, what is noticeable is the search for the legacy of the "the new woman" in the past, a past so distant that its traces are lost in mythical mists. The poetic potential of their imagination and language did not prove to be up to the utopian potential of the subject of their writing. The ideological thesis about the completion of the emancipation process, or at least about the sufficiency of its assumptions, did not leave enough living space for imagination, nor did it make room for the real inclusion of utopia in the further vision of society's revolutionary transformation.

The hypothesis I wanted to test was that social values necessary for the process of women's liberation and mobilization would be formulated as anti-traditional and anti-patriarchal. Understood in this way, emancipatory values and corresponding interests, along with the country's liberation from occupiers and quislings, would carry out the socialist revolution—therefore, the achievement of the most egalitarian possible social structure.

When observing the explicit ideological plane, and the activities of the AFŽ as a voluntary association, whose prerogatives, among other things, also included the affirmation of values and the formulation of new roles and relations, highlighting the emancipatory complex of values is obvious. However, the very analysis of the process of the acceptance of emancipatory values, as well as the struggle for their achievement, point to an ambivalent attitude towards traditional culture.

Emancipatory values insist on the extent to which it is necessary to motivate action. This is noticeable from the analysis of highlighted "equality slogans," the social discrimination of women in the People's Liberation Movement, the gendered division of labor,¹¹ and the distribution of power among a truly patriarchal

10 Editors' note: all three men wrote about the character of the new woman in socialism: Radko Polič (1919–1982), Slovenian writer and politician; Vladimir Nazor (1876–1949), Croatian writer and member of the NOB; and Svetozar Ritig (1873–1961), Catholic priest, historian, politician, and member of the NOB.

11 Editors' note: The original text uses the term "sex" instead of "gender" (*spolne podjele rada*), but we decided to use the current term for the sake of readability. Reflective use of the term "gender" (*rod*) became increas-

family. If there was insistence on the actual acceptance of emancipatory values, the organization of the AFŽ would have been conceived in a way that would have ensured the most efficient possibilities for their integration into a new, anti-traditional (socialist) culture.

At the same time, the approach to traditional culture is pragmatic. It is tolerated, and the elements of women's specific position in it are utilized. This is noticeable in how traditional "female" values are used as a crutch, such as reverence and selflessness, honor and honesty, and the highlighting of the image of "a new woman" as part of a mythical continuum.

However, when assessing the potentials of the mobilization of traditional "female" values, we must not lose sight of the crucial importance of historical context. These values truly proved effective in situations of immediate threat to individuals and community, and, by activating women to participate in the People's Liberation Movement, they also bore an emancipatory prefix. From today's perspective, the problem is that they were not integrated into a "joint" sphere within the new culture, that is, the existence of traditionally separate spheres—the female as particular or given by nature and the "male" as general/human—was not eliminated. The declared elimination of traditional divisions did not create the necessary, let alone sufficient conditions for the continuation of the process of cultural change outside of a specific context, such as that of the cataclysm of war.

My starting hypothesis in this analysis was, therefore, only partly confirmed. Emancipatory values were added to the corpus of existent traditional beliefs about a woman's (natural) place in culture, and "female" values defined by tradition—and the social roles based on them—were incorporated, without being disputed, into the process of the socialist revolution's implementation.

An alternative interpretation of this often arbitrary combination of emancipatory and traditional values which women faced could be based on the entire communist movement's ambivalent attitude towards women. Within the revolutionary tradition, and general human emancipation as the goal of social and political revolution, anti-traditional and anti-patriarchal values are the only possible perspective from which the position of women can be viewed.

However, from the point of view of the practical task of organizing the country's governance and the functioning of a new emerging order, traditional values, as an established mechanism of social self-regulation, are far more efficient. Emancipatory values have a revolutionizing and mobilizing effect, while traditional values are a more stable base for any order. To the extent to which the

ingly frequent after the publication of the book *Anthropology of the Woman*, edited by Sklevicky and Žarana Papić. See Žarana Papić and Lydia Sklevicky, eds., *Antropologija žene. Zbornik* (Anthropology of the Woman. An Anthology), trans. Branko Vučićević (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1983).

communist movement was torn between its revolutionary tradition and the task of establishing order, the attitude towards the position of women swayed between emancipatory and traditional. From this point of view, it can be said that although it is true that social values necessary for women's mobilization and emancipation are anti-traditional and anti-patriarchal, the strategy of social action was only partly directed towards this mobilization with emancipation as its goal.

Translated by Jelena Babšek Labudović

Nada Ler-Sofronić

Neofeminism and the Socialist Alternative

AUTHOR Nada Ler-Sofronić

TITLE “Marksizam i neofeminizam” [Marxism and Neofeminism]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Chapter in the book *Neofeminizam i socijalistička alternativa* [Neofeminism and the Socialist Alternative] (Belgrade: Radnička štampa, 1986), 105–108, 114–117.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian / Bosnian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nada Ler-Sofronić (Sarajevo, 1941–Belgrade, 2020) was a feminist, activist, and university professor born in occupied Sarajevo into a middle-class Ashkenazi Jewish family—one of the twelve thousand Jews which then lived in the city. Only a thousand remain today.¹ Both her parents were lawyers, and her mother was a union activist, who thus had close ties to the communist party and later the partisan movement. Her father refused to join the communists out of his progressive liberal stance, and, as Ler-Sofronić recalled, he was “probably the only university rector who wasn’t a party member.” Mother, father, and baby Nada survived the Holocaust. By the time Nada was born, her father, who served in the old Yugoslav army, was already a prisoner of war in Italy. Nada’s mother escaped Nazi-occupied Sarajevo with two-month-old Nada. They first went to Dubrovnik, and after the capitulation of Italy, via the Dalmatian islands, to Italy. They all returned to Sarajevo in 1946, and soon thereafter the parents divorced.

One of the most important influences on young Nada was her mother. Her dedication to socialism, combined with a critical attitude towards the communist party and her deep-rooted anti-authoritarian stance, drove Nada all her life. Equally importantly, her mother never let Nada forget how their survival during the Second World War was due to help from “Serbs and Croats Catholic priests and a young Muslim man who was mobilized by the *Ustaša* army,”² a memory symbolizing Nada’s and her mother’s rejection of any ethnic exclusionism throughout the turbulent history of Yugoslavia and its successor states. After finishing high school, Nada went to study

1 Savić, “Nada (1941), Sarajevo,” 307. This biography builds extensively on three interviews with Nada Ler-Sofronić: Savić, “Nada (1941), Sarajevo”; Djurić, “We Still Need Our Old Marx”; Svirčić, “Mlade žene ne smiju pristati da se njihovo pitanje rješava tek nakon pobjede 99%.”

2 Savić, “Nada (1941), Sarajevo,” 313. The *Ustaša* army was the armed forces of the Ustaša – Croatian Revolutionary Movement (1929–1945), a fascist and ultranationalist organization that between 1941 and 1945 ruled the Independent State of Croatia—a puppet state of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The movement advocated a racially “pure” Croatia which led to the genocide against Serbs and Jews.

in Belgrade and earned her degree in social psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy in 1965. During her time in Belgrade, she met her husband, with whom she had two sons, born in 1969 and 1973.³ After graduation, she worked first as a lecturer and then as a professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo, teaching social psychology. In the early 1970s, Nada Ler-Sofronić started writing about women's place in society while working on her doctoral dissertation on the same topic at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. She defended the dissertation in 1982 and it became the basis for her first published book, *Neofeminizam i socijalistička alternativa* (Neofeminism and the Socialist Alternative) in 1986. She was part of the feminist group *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society)—centered in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana⁴—even after returning to Sarajevo, her home city, which often felt too small for her curiosity and openness to the world.

When the Yugoslav wars started in 1991, Nada's sons were in two different parts of divided Sarajevo, one in Serbian-controlled Grbavica, the other in Bosniak-controlled Mojmiilo. The fear that not only would her sons be used as cannon fodder, but could even be forced to shoot at one another convinced Nada that they had to leave Bosnia: "I felt like that cat who grabs her kittens by the neck and moves them ... to a safer place."⁵ They first went to Belgrade. Nada then moved to Budapest to teach as visiting professor at the Central European University while the boys tried to live in Israel for a while. Afterwards, they all ended up in Rome, where the sons eventually settled. A few years later, Nada accepted a position at the University of Novi Sad, where she taught at the Department of Psychology and contributed to the foundation of gender studies at the university. After the war, she returned to Sarajevo.

As Elissa Helms writes in her essay about Nada Ler-Sofronić: "having lost her position in the university when she fled Sarajevo during the war, Nada threw herself into various kinds of NGO advocacy work in the late 1990s and 2000s, finally launching her own NGO that she named after the Yugoslav feminist collective, *Žena i društvo* (Women and Society). She addressed many activist gatherings with her clear and convincing critiques of power honed over years of writing and teaching in the socialist period but adapted to new circumstances and vocabularies. She liked to start from anthropology and the observation that gender had been the first basis of division of power in human society, long before the advent of capitalism and the existence of the proletariat. Power was always central to her point; she was careful to emphasize that feminism did not advocate 'power over' but a diminishing of power differentials. [...] Post-war Sarajevo was in many ways not Nada's element. She chafed under the new expectations of ethno-national loyalties and identity markers, particularly as an

3 Savić, "Nada (1941), Sarajevo," 323.

4 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*.

5 Savić, "Nada (1941), Sarajevo," 324.

atheist of Jewish origin who did not fit into any of the dominant groups. Her Women and Society organization did not survive the donor game for long, and she began to spend more time on the Croatian coast, where she was to retire.”⁶

Nada Ler-Sofronić passed away in 2020. She is remembered by many as a kind, extremely intelligent woman, and an uncompromising feminist, who also had a beautiful voice with which she would sing *sevdalinke*, songs from her native Bosnia.⁷

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • “Odiseja ljudskog identiteta žene” [The Odyssey of the Human Identity of Women], *Pitanja* 7–8 (1978): 11–28; “Dijalektika odnosa polova i klasna svijest” [The Dialectics of the Relation of the Sexes and Class Consciousness], *Dometi* 13, no. 2 (1980): 5–14; *Neofeminizam i socijalistička alternativa* [New Feminism and the Socialist Alternative] (Belgrade: Radnička štampa, 1986); “Mentalno zdravlje u feminističkoj perspektivi i nova kultura društvene brige” [Mental Health in a Feminist Perspective and the New Culture of Social Care], *ProFemina: časopis za žensku književnost i kulturu* 9/10 (1997): 207–208; co-author, with Branka Inić and Rada Lukić, *Feministički/ženski pokreti i civilno društvo u postsocijalističkim zemljama* [Feminist/Women’s Movements and Civil Society in Post-Socialist Countries] (Open Society Institute, Network Women’s Program, 2006).

Zsófia Lóránd

CONTEXT

1968 was more of a formative experience for Nada Ler-Sofronić than for many other feminists, having been a student at the University of Belgrade already in the early 1960s, and thus more actively and consciously engaged in the events. The student protests of June 1968 took place across Yugoslavia, starting in Belgrade, and continuing in, among other cities, Ler-Sofronić’s native Sarajevo.⁸ At the same time, 1968 was not only relevant as a local phenomenon, but also as a global and transnational one. Moreover, whereas the Yugoslav 1968 remained mostly untouched by gender sensitivities, let alone feminist politics, Ler-Sofronić (similarly to other Yugoslav feminists, such as Rada Iveković and Lydia Sklevicky) was deeply inspired by feminists in the West with a leftist political background, who also felt betrayed by their male comrades in the 1968 movements. She would often travel to Italy, visiting her uncle, where she had access to Italian feminist literature of the time.⁹ What she found most fascinating was that the women on the left, such as Maria Antonietta Macciocchi (1922–2007)

6 Helms, “Feminism with a Smile”.

7 Helms, “Feminism with a Smile” and Đurđa Knežević, “In memoriam Nada Ler Sofronić 1941,” *Ženska mreža BiH*, <http://zenskamreza.ba/in-memoriam-nada-ler-sofronic-sarajevo-1941-beograd-2020/>.

8 Fichter, “Yugoslav Protest: Student Rebellion in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo in 1968.”

9 About the Yugoslav-Italian feminist connections: Bonfiglioli, “Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context.”

and others, criticized communism for its patriarchalism, which resonated with her own dissatisfaction with the macho milieu of the Yugoslav 1968: "When I started reading that literature, and before I started writing it myself, I was in total shock. I had the impression that I was reading what I would have written, as if I had written it myself."¹⁰

Having been in contact with the other Yugoslav feminists, Nada Ler became one of the early members of *Žena i društvo*, and an organizer of the 1978 international feminist conference "Drug-ca žena. Žensko pitanje – novi pristup?" (Comrade-ess Woman. The Women's Question: A New Approach?)¹¹ As she later remembered, at first, she mostly communicated with Rada Iveković, and when she went to Belgrade, met Žarana Papić (both in this volume), who was then an assistant at the Faculty of Philosophy, originally also from Sarajevo. She met Dunja Blažević (in this volume) via Papić, and was then involved in organizing the 1978 conference.¹² The event was a formative experience for many women and, according to Ler-Sofronić, of all the places in former Yugoslavia, it could only have taken place in Belgrade, which then "was truly an oasis of the possibility of free expression and opinion."¹³ She recalled the attacks in Yugoslav media as well, emphasizing that feminism was not in the least welcome with enthusiasm in the Yugoslav socialist political and intellectual space.¹⁴

Anti-authoritarianism to Ler-Sofronić was a defining political stance in any context. She considered patriarchy and capitalism as forms of authoritarianism. At the same time, whilst women had their labor rights protected and, in Yugoslavia, a relatively high level of reproductive freedom, she also asserted that the socialist system "would throw the key issues of women's existence under the carpet."¹⁵ Based on her readings from Western Europe and her training in Marxist and feminist theory, Ler-Sofronić sought to discuss how women in Eastern European countries faced similar issues as women in the West. This meant not only their disillusionment with 1968, but their everyday experience with sexism and exclusion, even within the Yugoslav system.

Summing up her feminist position at the time, Ler-Sofronić said in an interview: "In a theoretical sense, it was a time of serious feminist critiques of the blindness to specific women's issues directed at both dogmatic Marxism and the conservative left, as well as the gender-neutral theory and practice of Western democracy."¹⁶ The excerpt from *New Feminism and the Socialist Alternative* published below is an

¹⁰ Savić, "Nada (1941), Sarajevo," 320.

¹¹ See Rada Iveković in this book, and Bonfiglioli, "Belgrade, 1978. Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Žena.'"

¹² Savić, "Nada (1941), Sarajevo," 321.

¹³ Savić, "Nada (1941), Sarajevo," 321.

¹⁴ See Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 63–64.

¹⁵ Svirčić, "Mlade žene ne smiju pristati da se njihovo pitanje rješava tek nakon pobjede 99%."

¹⁶ Svirčić, "Mlade žene ne smiju pristati da se njihovo pitanje rješava tek nakon pobjede 99%."

excellent example of this. As a social psychologist, Nada Ler-Sofronić critically read classics across an interdisciplinary spectrum, e.g., the structuralist anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss and the classical sociology of Talcott Parsons, pointing out the ways in which their dichotomic approach was embedded in and acted to reinforce patriarchy. She read Karen Horney's proto-feminist critique of Freud from the early 1930s enthusiastically. Her "canon" of critical Marxism was not restricted to the nascent Yugoslav Praxis group and the Frankfurt School (see entries on Nadežda Čaćinović and Blaženka Despot), but also included thinkers like Ágnes Heller. She published her first texts in the 1970s in journals such as the Zagreb-based *Žena*, published by the official women's organization; *Pitanja* for critical theory; and the Sarajevo-based *Opredjeljenja* and *Lica*.¹⁷

As Elissa Helms recalls: "It was her smile she was known for, and she flashed it again as she told me how some Party comrades before the war had called her position 'feminism with a smile.'"¹⁸ She was nevertheless not willing to compromise on feminist principles. As she said in an interview in 2011: "I have a serious problem with theorists who start their lectures with the claim that there are multiple feminisms and that each one deserves due respect. By this, feminism that points to the global character of the coupling between extreme capitalism and patriarchalism [becomes one of] those numerous feminisms and its significance is therefore relativized."¹⁹ This aptly sums up the feminism of Nada Ler-Sofronić: to be open and kind to the world out there, without compromising or sacrificing one's principles.

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Nada Ler-Sofronić

Marxism and Neofeminism

From the time that women's liberation movements in the West, especially in Europe, exploded at the end of the sixties with their socialist content and orientation, and increasingly became movements of proletarianized and semi-proletarianized

classes of women, it is absolutely necessary to account for their multiple and multi-layered relationship with Marxism, both from the point of view of their social bases as movements, and from that of their claims.

When we say “proletarianized and semi-proletarianized” classes of women, we want to emphasize that the movement has a base beyond a narrow class of educated civic intellectuals, as it is often stereotypically categorized. The movement comprises the female industrial proletariat, female workers, mainly communists, who in feminist organizations fight against “the kind of oppression and exploitation that unionists do not take into account.” It also includes unemployed women, educated to a lesser or greater degree, who have been expelled from the production process by the business cycle. Then there is also the unemployed or employed left-leaning intellectual proletariat—educated women, female artists, scientific workers (sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists). There is also the movement of housewives who realize the pointlessness and poverty of existence in the isolation of the “hearth of the home.” It is a fact that a very strong word from educated women, intellectuals, is heard in the movement, but, of course, it would be senseless to use this as an argument for the disqualification of the movement’s progressive character. It is the educated women’s historical task to express, through their actions, the needs of women in general, especially the needs and interests *of the most oppressed—of women*.

We should assess the revolutionary position of modern women’s movements on the basis of their *demands* and on the basis of the *goals* that they strive to achieve.

It can be said that the new claims of women’s movements in Europe in the present are radicalized in such a way that they throw into question the basic values and the very essence of civil society. Their goal is not equality before capital and equality before the laws of civil society, which is often mentioned as a characteristic of historical, so-called bourgeois feminism. Rather, the claims of the neofeminist movement imply completely new social relations, and are a strong contribution and incentive for socialist social changes in that part of the world.

Precisely because of their radicalized demands, women’s movements have a strong tendency to include a good part of the so-called middle class. The common denominator of the poverty of female existence in general, and the awakening of women’s awareness of their own sub-proletarian role, is an important factor in the unique aspirations of movements of women *who belong to different social classes*. Thus, the problems of women’s existence, as they arise today in the developed world, and movements that emerge on this basis, *are an important factor in the formation of alliances of a historical revolutionary bloc of proletarian and semi-proletarian classes*. Women’s movements are an illustrative example of the transformation of classes and class alliances, which is a very important and current topic for Marxist thought and practice in the present day.

It is in this light that we should reflect on the relationship between Marxist thought and practice and women's liberation movements, that is, feminism in the new, current socio-historical situation.

Neofeminist consciousness can have different degrees of maturity and depth, and does not always have to mean a full understanding of the multi-layered socio-historical processes that have determined the position of women. This, at the same time, means that the forefront of the struggle, that is, the identification of strategic goals, does not always have to correspond to the real and important causes of women's subordination. But the awakening of this consciousness is an important prerequisite for advancing to a universal consciousness—and, above all, to a consciousness about basic social and class mechanisms with which female subordination and discrimination is essentially linked and entwined. This female consciousness appears as just a *possibility* of the totalization of revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary action. We say possibility because, due to the contradictoriness of the position of women, which especially stems from the fact that oppression and exploitation of women cannot entirely be reduced to class oppression and exploitation, there can be a tendency to absolutize the zone of "specific oppression" and for the battle of the sexes to be placed above the need for a class struggle, that is, a struggle against all forms of exploitation. Thus, feminism can suffer the fate of *ouvrierism*.²⁰ (As is known, *ouvrierism* is a stream in the workers' movement and in Marxist thought according to which civil society as a whole can only be interpreted through the existence of industrial workers, while the revolutionary process is achieved solely through the struggle of the working class and the leading role of industrial workers. *Ouvrierism* denies the importance of other possible areas of exploitation and inequality, which means that it also does not recognize other subjective forces and their importance in the revolutionary process. This narrows its views and makes it enclosed and exclusive. It may lose sight of the fact that capitalist oppression also applies to other social classes, which are also important actors in the revolutionary process—women, race, the unemployed and the colonized, minorities, etc.—and it may also lose sight of the fact that, in its mentality and way of life, the working class can also be a keeper of conservative concepts. An example is precisely the "proletarian position of women" in the family. Still, *ouvrierism* carries within itself an important revolutionary message rightly emphasizing the exploitation of the industrial workforce and its role in the disintegration of capitalist social relations.)

In a similar way, through the lived experience of female existence in patriarchy, feminism arrives at the cognition of the relations of domination and subordination,

20 Editor's note: *Ouvriérisme* (lit. workerism) became dominant in French social thought from the 1950s on. Ler-Sofronić's account and definition is rather accurate regarding this concept.

and relations of exploitation that prevail between the sexes. This is the first stage in the cognition of the meaning, character, and source of inequality and exploitation in general. What can happen, however, is for feminism to stop within a narrow view of specifically female oppression and to concentrate on a particular practice of subjugation in relations between the sexes, and thus absolutize the one and only social antagonism—that between men and women, ripping it out of its socio-historical context. Thus, an important and specific area of revolutionary struggle is walled off from other necessary areas of the struggle and other revolutionary subjects. On the other hand, it is important to notice that the emphasis that neofeminism places on the theoretical and practical critique of patriarchy, especially in the workers' movement, contributes to the totalization and radicalization of the class struggle and not to the "splitting of the class," which is how it has sometimes been dogmatically qualified on the left.

[...]

Why Marxism?

The closing argument for the critical confrontation between Marxism and the thought and practices of women's liberation movements and feminism naturally follows from the very essence of Marxism and of the practice and thought of women's liberation movements today.

Marxism is, above all, a *theory of revolution*, a theory of changing the old world, and the practices of women's liberation movements throws into question one of the main strongholds of the old world. It is the man-woman relationship that holds the infamous record as the *oldest and most persistent* social relationship of inequality. Deeply antagonistic itself, it has penetrated deeply with its roots into all types of antagonistic and class societies, thus its abolition cannot be imagined without deeply shaking and demolishing the entire antagonistic social structure. And vice versa, a true revolutionary change in these societies is not possible without the abolishment of the antagonisms and relations of inequality between men and women.

Women's liberation movements in the West, for their part, open a dialogue between Marxism and the movements' thought and practices with the question of whether and to what extent Marxist theory is applicable to the analysis of women's existence and to strategies for women's emancipation and liberation in the present. There are tendencies in Marxism itself to develop further and critically Marxist thought where it remained incomplete and where it also enabled interpretations that stripped Marxism of its important humanistic essence.

These are all the situations where Marxist classical thought did not express itself fully, such as the *relationships between personality and society, the natural*

and the social, the collectivity and autonomy of personality; it is the problems of specific areas of exploitation and relations of superiority and subordination that cannot be expressed merely in vulgar-economic categories. All the awareness of problems set in motion by women's liberation movements belong here.

In what way does the proletarian revolution throw into question the issue of patriarchy, and how does it radically change the social status and psychological structure of both men and women? Are there any contradictions that are not solved by themselves through "class struggle" if the aim of class struggle is to change ownership relations or the political power of institutions—and yet does it not, at the same time, extend to the deep layers of consciousness and instinctual structures?

In which ways are autonomous women's movements the initiators of strong and deep social—and especially *cultural*—changes, and in which ways are they also the initiators of the further development of Marxist revolutionary thought?

Our starting point is the present moment, the current situation, which gained its relatively complete expression in the past fifteen or so years.

A whole century has passed since the woman question was raised in classical revolutionary Marxist theory—from Marx and Engels, Lafargue, Bebel, Kautsky, Lenin, Kollontai, Clara Zetkin, Riazanov, Trotsky, even to Reich, who wanted to put an end to the silence in Marxism that fell on sexuality and relations between the sexes as a political issue.²¹

Where are we, in this regard, today?

21 Editor's note: Paul Lafargue (1842–1911), a Cuban-French Marxist thinker, married to Laura Marx and in a controversial relationship with his father-in-law, Karl Marx, over the right interpretation of the theory of the latter; August Bebel (1840–1913), German socialist, one of the founders of the German social democratic worker's movement and the author of the highly influential *Woman and Socialism* (1879); Karl Johann Kautsky (1854–1938), Czech-Austrian Marxist philosopher, a close associate of Marx and especially Engels, highly critical of the Bolshevik Revolution; his wife, Louise Kautsky (1864–1944), was a Jewish social democratic politician and publicist, translator of Marx and Engels (among others), in friendship with Rosa Luxemburg, deported to Auschwitz and died there of heart failure; Vladimir Lenin (Vladimir Ilych Ulyanov, 1870–1924), Russian revolutionary, headed the Bolshevik Revolution, founder and first head of Soviet Russia and later the Soviet Union; Aleksandra Kollontai (1872–1952), Marxist thinker and politician, founder of the *Zhenotdel* (Women's Bureau), extensively wrote about women's liberation (including sexual liberation); Clara Zetkin (1857–1933) was a German Marxist theorist, communist politician, and women's rights advocate, founder of the newspaper for working-class women *Die Gleichheit* (Equality); David Riazanov (1870–1938), Russian Marxist historian, revolutionary, mostly in exile before 1917, founder of the Marx-Engels Institute after the revolution, executed during the time of the Great Terror; Leon Trotsky (1879–1940), Russian Marxist revolutionary, politician and theorist, one of the leaders of the Bolsheviks, head of the Red Army between 1918 and 1925, critical of Stalinism, for which he was expelled from the Politburo and later assassinated in Mexico City; Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957) Austro-American physician, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and sexologist, author of, among others, *The Function of the Orgasm* (1927) and *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933). His work inspired the Serbian director Dušan Makavejev's (1932–2015) satirical film *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971) which became highly influential in socialist Yugoslavia.

In order for us to situate the existence of women in the coordinate system of their important determinants today, we must identify the important characteristics of what we call “the current historical moment.” It is a civic world whose fundamental values are in a deep crisis, a world searching, in new conditions, for ancient strongholds of its survival—for example, patriarchalism. On the other hand, it is the world process of socialism, it is relatively young socialist societies with their revolutionary steps into the future and with all their anachronistic deadweight and all the current contradictions. There is also the new historical subject, “the Third World,” with its specificities that make up the framework of its revolutionary possibilities.

These are the general reference points of women’s existence at present.

What do the crises of capitalism and that of the civic world mean for a woman, to what extent is she herself a strong driving force in overcoming them? What constitutes the historical novelty in the essence of women’s liberation movements in the developed world?

What about women in socialism? To what extent is a woman’s existence, from a historical point of view, fundamentally new, and how do the contradictions of early socialist societies contradict women’s emancipation and liberation?

What about women in the “Third World”? What is the depth of their slavery, and what does the struggle of women in that part of the world mean, from a historical point of view, so that the anti-colonial struggle and its entire practices could develop into a truly revolutionary practice, the result of which would be “the liberation of man,²² regardless of class, race, nation and sex”?

Among expanding social movements, because of the questions they raise, women’s movements have such a historical relevance that Marxism simply cannot bypass them. And among theories, Marxism is the one that can serve to establish the thought and practice of women’s liberation movements on materialistic, historical, and dialectical principles and which can, with its method, fathom out the causes of women’s subordination and formulate an outline of a liberation struggle strategy. However, this task requires further development of Marxism itself. Neofeminist movements in developed countries have arisen at the historical moment of the capitalist system’s structural crisis and the crisis of the values of civil society. To that end, *an analysis of these processes requires further development of the theory of laws of this society’s involution, and of the mechanisms it uses to resolve the crisis.* It is only in this context that we can more clearly see the causes of the overall deterioration of the position of women, their marginalization, suppression from public life, exclusion from production, their overexploitation, and

22 Editor’s note: The original text uses the word *čovek*, the first translation of which is “human,” but also “man.”

of the strengthening of patriarchy, which is always linked with authoritarianism. It is about a toolbox of mechanisms of a society in a crisis, a society that reaches for the strongholds of its own survival and often resolves the crisis precisely at the expense of women.

Marxism also talks about socialism as a society of the future. However, what is missing are analyses of the practices of early socialist societies and their difficulties and contradictions, as well as their tendencies which have also impacted the position of women.

Translated by Jelena Babšek Labudović

Drita Bakija Gunga

The Women of Kosovo in the Period of Socialist Construction

AUTHOR Drita Bakija Gunga

TITLE *Gratë e Kosovës në periudhën e ndërtimit Socialist: 1945–1978* [The Women of Kosovo in the Period of Socialist Construction: 1945–1978]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Prishtina: Kosovo Institute of History, 1986; excerpts from pages 113–120.

LANGUAGE Albanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Drita Bakija Gunga (also Bakia-Gunga, Gjakova, 1943–2020) was born in a market town in western Kosovo, in the border region with Albania. She was part of the first generation of Albanian women who entered the formal education system in Kosovo after the Second World War. She completed primary and secondary education in her hometown. Theater was one of her passions and she acted in several of the first plays staged at the local Gjakova theater. Bakija Gunga married Mitrovica-born artist Fahredin Gunga, an avant-garde poet with surrealist literary tendencies, who studied in Belgrade and worked as a teacher in Mitrovica. Fahredin Gunga ran the Rilindja publishing house in Prishtina and was the director of Radio and Television of Prishtina.

Bakija Gunga initially started her BA studies at the University of Sarajevo and later moved to the Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, at the University of Prishtina, from which she graduated in 1973. Her master's thesis, defended in 1977, was on the women's movement in Kosovo between two world wars. She extended her research interest on women and gender in her PhD studies, focusing on the role of Kosovar women in the construction of socialism. She completed her doctoral studies in 1982 with the dissertation "Kosovar Women in Socialism: 1945–1978" and was the first woman in Kosovo with a PhD degree in history. Bakija Gunga worked as a history teacher in the Hajdar Dushi Gymnasium in Gjakova and the Elena Gjika Primary School in Prishtina. She joined the Institute of History of Kosovo in 1975, where she worked until her retirement in 2009. She was an adjunct professor in the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina. Her works were published in the journal *Kosova-Kosovo*, a publication of the Institute of History of Kosovo.

Along with a group of women in Prishtina, Drita Bakija Gunga was one of the founders and leaders of the Independent Women's Association (Shoqata e Pavarur e Grave) in October 1989, the first association of its kind in Kosovo that gathered Kosovar

Albanian women intellectuals. The main goal of the Association was to enhance the representation of women in public and political life, embracing the principles of inclusion and diversity, and being open to all women in Kosovo. She also founded the Women's Forum of the Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës, LDK, 1995–2000), the largest political party in Kosovo in the 1990s, leading the committee for science. Bakija Gunga's work offers an important historiography of women's lives and changing gender relations under state socialism in Kosovo. Drita Bakija Gunga passed away at the age of 77. She is survived by her daughter, Lerta Gunga Cana, a notary living and working in Prishtina.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · “Gratë e Kosovës në Lëvizjen revolucionare më 1937–1941” [Women of Kosovo in the Revolutionary Movement, 1937–1941], *Kosova-Kosovo*, 6 (1977): 97–109; “Heqja e Çarçafit dhe Peqes në Kosovë” [Removal of the *Çarçafit*/Headcover and *Peqes*/Veil in Kosovo], *Kosova-Kosovo*, 12 (1983): 159–78; “Disa aspekte të zhvillimit të Frontit Antifashist të Grave të Kosovës dhe të Metohisë” [Some Aspects of the Development of the Anti-Fascist Front of Women in Kosovo and Metohija], *Kosova-Kosovo*, 13/14 (1985): 185–98; *Gratë e Kosovës në periudhën e ndërtimit Socialist: 1945–1978* [The Women of Kosovo in the Period of Socialist Construction: 1945–1978] (Prishtina: Kosovo Institute of History, 1986); “Partia Komuniste e Jugosllavisë / Lidhja Komuniste e Jugosllavisë rreth disa aspekteve të çështjes së gruas në Kosovë gjatë viteve 1945–1978” [The Communist Party of Yugoslavia / The League of Communists of Yugoslavia on the Women's Issue in Kosovo, 1945–1978], *Kosova-Kosovo*, 16 (1987): 339–48.

Vjollca Krasniqi

CONTEXT

In socialist Yugoslavia, the policy of gender equality—framed as “the women's question”—was part of the state's constitutional and legal framework, granting women equal access to education and employment, and a family law that liberalized divorce, the right to abortion, and contraception. “The women's question” policy was a constitutive part of workers' self-management, a social and economic model introduced in the 1950s that was distinct from the centrally planned socialism of the Eastern Bloc countries. The gender equality policy did not fully translate into practice, and it was short-lived: the socialist state did not eliminate gender inequality, transform unequal power relations, or displace male dominance in society, economy, and politics. Gender discrimination and the oppression of women in the public and private spheres remained widespread due to the gap between *de jure* equality inscribed in law and *de facto* equality as a lived experience of women. Indeed, women made little use of the legal base to advance their rights due to entrenched traditional gender norms and patriarchal culture.

During socialism, women's relationship with the state varied and was dependent on their position within the larger social structure. This was determined not only

by gender, but also by urban and rural origin, education, ethnicity, political orientation, and social class.¹ In socialist Yugoslavia, gender analysis focused on “work, legislation, services, social integration, political participation, and the construction of socialism.”² The socialist state’s policy and research agendas on gender equality were put under scrutiny in the late 1970s at the conference “Drug-ca žena. Žensko pitanje – novi pristup?” (Comrade-ess Woman. The Women’s Question: A New Approach?), held in Belgrade on October 27–29, 1978, and the first feminist gathering which questioned the policy of “the women’s question.”³

The political context of socialism in Kosovo after the Second World War, and especially in the 1970s and 1980s, shaped the work of historians whose focus, as illustrated in the work of the Kosovo Institute of History, was on studies of the labor movement, the anti-fascist front, and socialist construction, as well as the early history of Kosovo, archives, and documentation.⁴ As in other parts of socialist Yugoslavia, “the women’s question” was part of the institutional framework and research agenda of self-management. In this vein, Drita Bakija Gunga’s work mapped the agency that policies addressing the “women’s question” granted to Kosovar women in public and institutional life, as well as challenges to their implementation.

After the Second World War, education was crucial for Kosovo, especially for the Kosovar Albanians who bore the consequences of a lack of schooling in the Albanian language before the war. As a result, in 1948, “74% of all Kosovo Albanians over the age of 10 were illiterate,”⁵ with women’s illiteracy at over 90%.⁶ This situation changed as education flourished in the following decades, with illiteracy reduced from 32% in 1971 to 18% in 1981. The University of Prishtina was founded in 1970, offering study programs in Albanian and Serbo-Croatian languages. It grew fast, and in just one decade, according to official data, had around 47,000 students, but it was believed the number was circa 30,000 students, which still would have made it one of the largest universities in Europe.⁷ Women constituted 22.61% of the student body of the University of Prishtina.⁸ The massification of education in Kosovo also offered opportunities for women. Kosovo received the first generation of women with university degrees across different disciplines. Education played an important role in the political, economic, and social processes in socialist Yugoslavia more generally. It intertwined with socialist identity construction, making them mutually constitutive and fundamental to the socialist idea of progress and modernity.

1 Bonfiglioli, “A Working Day that Has No End.”

2 Bonfiglioli, “Social Equality Is Not Enough, We Want Pleasure!” 117.

3 Bonfiglioli, “Social Equality Is Not Enough, We Want Pleasure!” 115.

4 Kosovo Institute of History, <https://ih-rks.org/historiku>.

5 Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Kosovo*, 91.

6 Bakija-Gunga, *Gratë e Kosovës*, 12.

7 Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 326.

8 Bakija-Gunga, *Gratë e Kosovës*, 120.

Moreover, education and employment were the cornerstones of policies addressing “the women’s question.”

The selected excerpts are fragments of a mosaic showcasing how state socialism defined and implemented a policy of gender equality and the resistance it faced from competing ideologies. The text provides an insight into the enactment of the educational policy and the role education played in moving Kosovar society towards socialist modernity and goals of gender equality. As a top-down solution to social integration and gender equality, education was one of the greatest gains for women in Kosovo.

Drita Bakija Gunga’s book shows how Kosovar women engaged with the state and the role they played in the social and political processes between 1945–1978. It provides a nuanced understanding of socialism in Kosovo, the socialist state’s ideologies of progress and modernity, and the principle of hope that maintained the socialist utopia. She shows that patriarchal ideologies and traditional gender norms were not dormant, but challenged the socialist vision of modernity and gender equality. Gender equality policies, she argues, need to be accompanied by broader social dialogue on cultural norms which may hinder social transformation and women’s empowerment.

With the nationalist revival in the 1980s, socialism faded away quickly, resulting in the violent dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia, taking along with it the socialist conception of gender equality. The work of Kosovar women scholars was largely invisible in socialist Yugoslavia. Gender politics and women’s experiences during socialism are not part of contemporary institutionalized history in Kosovo. A decolonized perspective of the history of socialism is a must to counteract silence and raise the visibility of women in knowledge production in Kosovo and across post-Yugoslav spaces. Revisiting the work of Drita Bakija Gunga and other women of the first generation of scholars in Kosovo is the first step towards this goal.

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Vjollca Krasniqi

* * *

Dr. Drita Bakija-Gunga

The Women of Kosovo in the Period of Socialist Construction: 1945–1978

Regular schooling

With the triumph of the Socialist Revolution in our country, for the first time in history the Albanian woman achieved the right to be equal in the road towards education and culture in her own language as with her comrades from the rest of Yugoslavia. This was particularly important as they were behind other women in the fields of education and culture.

The new perspectives in the socialist society of our country demand the greater empowerment of women in production, in spirituality, and in all aspects of life. The January 31, 1946, SFRY Constitution designated the right to education as a constitutional right. It stipulated that primary education is obligatory and free of charge, that all schools and educational institutions are opened to all strata of society with the aim of raising the cultural awareness of the people while separating schools from churches.⁹

The 1945–1946 decision for obligatory primary education (7 grades for both genders) was a significant event in the history of education, particularly for Albanian women.

Along with the economic development of Kosovo, the government had to undertake widespread action for the opening of primary schools and for the over-all integration of those generations whose schooling was disrupted by the war into primary school. In this context, primary schools were opened in cities and villages alike. During the 1944–45 academic year, there were 278 operational four-year primary schools, 135 Albanian-language and 143 Serbo-Croatian. Of our 27,000 pupils, 11,573 were Albanian and 15,427 were Serb.¹⁰

⁹ *Službeni list FNRJ* [Official Gazette], no. 10 (February 1, 1946), article 37.

¹⁰ KE, *Neki podaci o razvoju osnovnih škola u godinama pre rata i posle oslobođenja u period 1940–1951* [Some Data on The Development of Elementary Schools in the Years Before the War and After Liberation in the Period 1940–1951], Prishtina: Povereništvo za prosvetu [Board of Education].

There were 388 four-year primary schools that opened during the 1945–46 academic year, integrating 50,747 pupils of all nationalities.¹¹ The number of women in schools in general, and Albanian women in particular, during this period was small.

The first five-year plan foresaw that all school-aged children, regardless of gender, should be integrated into the seven-year primary school system. The goal of the plan was to increase the number of primary schools while also improving their overall conditions.

The 1947–51 period was characterized by the constant struggle of the government and large organizations, including the Women's Antifascist Front, for the greatest possible integration of children into primary school.¹²

These developments were met with multiple challenges, such as the lack of educational staff—especially from the Albanian population—the lack of educational spaces, the lack of teaching materials, as well as other elementary needs that were necessary for the functioning of schools.¹³

A considerable problem was the integration of women, especially Albanian women, into the primary school system. Conservative mentalities about women's capabilities were deeply entrenched and inherited from the past and could not be dealt with swiftly in the socialist period. According to the information of the time, the reasons for the lack of integration of women into regular primary schools were: underdeveloped economic foundations inherited from the past, the conservative viewpoints of their parents, as well the protection of old customs and ceremonies, such as the engagement of girls in their childhood, early marriages, the carrying of scarfs and chadors, all of which were contrary to the progressive struggle for the emancipation of women.

Other obstacles that prevented the education of women were housework obligations that were assigned to women, there were also cases where parents would use various means and declarations to prevent their daughters from being registered in schools.¹⁴

Compared to previous years, in 1951–52 we witness the highest integration of women into regular education. This was achieved thanks to the ongoing struggle of the structures of the popular government for the greater integration of women in schools in general, and Albanian women in particular. Due to the low enrollment of Albanian girls in schools, popular councils in towns and provinces held conferences, lectures, and seminars on the subject of recruitment assistance,

¹¹ Ibid., 81, 135.

¹² Ibid., 173.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ KE, "Izveštaj Povereništva prosvete ONO-a o uzrocima slabog pohađanja učenika na Kosmetu" [Report of the Board of Education of ONO on the Causes of low Pupil Attendance in Kosovo-Metohija].

which needs to be offered by the educational structures. Educational structures then undertook concrete action by propagating among the masses the reasons for the historical necessity of the education of a woman in the new socialist society; for without her cultural and educational emancipation, not only will she not be equal in society, but she will not make a good housekeeper or an educator of new generations.¹⁵

The structures of the government have energetically fought backward customs. Legal measures have been initiated against irresponsible parents. Various methods of labor were deployed with the aim of the greater integration of women into education. One of the methods which produced good results was the large discussion gatherings with parents who did not understand the importance of the education of women.¹⁶ According to the Women's Antifascist Front report on cultural-educational labor in Kosovo and Metohija for the academic year 1951–52, 75% of women were integrated into primary schools, while at the end of the year this number reached 85%.

The approval of the General Law on the governance of schools in 1955 came from the constitutional provisions of 1953. With this law, schools took the complete road towards self-management.

In the larger development of our self-governing socialist society, the emancipation of a woman has a special place. Her affirmation in the public, political, and social life, is dependent on her cultural and educational qualifications. In accordance with the economic development of our society, there is a labor-intensive attention given to the improvement of education. Because of the particular position in which women in Kosovo find themselves, this problem is approached more seriously in comparison to other parts of Yugoslavia and requires a larger engagement of all organized progressive forces. In the current developmental conditions, this became an inseparable task for the Conference for the Social Activity of Women.

Highschool education, which developed in tandem with primary schools, played an important role for the change in the structure of qualifications of women in Kosovo. The development of high school education was conditioned by the demand of pupils who graduated from primary schools and the increasing demands by society to secure qualified professional staff of different profiles in accordance with socio-economic developments in Kosovo.

In primary schools, junior high schools, graduate pedagogical courses, teacher schools, high schools, and other cultural-educational institutions, women enrolled alongside men, even though their numbers in the postwar period were low. The

15 *Këshilli Krahinor Popullor i Krahinës Socialiste Autonome të Kosovës dhe Metohisë 1943 – 1953* [People's Provincial Council of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija 1943 – 1953] (Prishtina, 1955), 17–820.

16 *Ibid.*

1945–49 academic cohort in Kosovo had ten high schools: four Albanian-language and six Serbo-Croatian. These schools had a total of 3884 students of which 1649 were women.

In the Albanian high school of Peja/Peć during the 1946–47 period, there was a noticeable positive turn in the registration of women. There were 299 male students and 51 women. Meanwhile, in the same school, the Serbo-Croatian part of the school had 841 male students and 386 women.

The Albanian Women's High School opened in Prizren during the academic year 1949–50. The school had its own accommodation with decent conditions. Placement in the accommodation was free of charge. Due to the position of women in that period, in the beginning there was little interest for registration. Because of this, the Directorate for Education and Culture of the Provincial Popular Council for Kosovo and Metohija requested an intensified propagation among the regional party members, the administrative workers of the popular government, as well as progressive people so that women would be sent to school.

During the 1951–52 academic year, this high school had three classes of cohorts with 76 students. The first director of this high school was Drande Tupeci. The school played an important role in the education and emancipation of Albanian women.

During 1950–51, there was a positive turn towards the expansion of high school networks and overall growth in the number of students. There were 59 Albanian-language high schools during this period and 62 Serbo-Croatian. During the academic year 1951–52, there were 114 high schools in total in both languages. The very existence and work of these high schools during this time was very important as they were the first institutions of high-school learning.

The path towards greater cultural and educational emancipation traveled by women of this region, especially Albanian women, immediately after liberation, was not an easy one. There were multiple attempts by class enemies to prevent the education of women. Masked reactionary elements throughout Kosovo sought to prevent the education of women. However, they failed in the face of the consequential labor of the Party and other organized progressive forces to spread the light of education and knowledge among the working-class masses, especially in the improvement and formation of women's personalities towards their greater abilities in life and work.

Translated by Piro Rexhepi

4

The International Aspects of Women's Rights

German Democratic Women's League

The First German Women's Delegation to Stockholm

AUTHOR Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands [German Democratic Women's League]: Frieda Radel, Maria Rentmeister, and Emma Sachse

TITLE *Erste Deutsche Frauendelegation in Stockholm* [First German Women's Delegation to Stockholm]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Erste Deutsche Frauendelegation in Stockholm: Bericht der ersten Frauendelegation des Demokratischen Frauenbundes Deutschlands von der Exekutiv-Tagung der Internationalen Demokratischen Frauenföderation im Schwedischen Reichstag vom 22. bis 25. September 1947* [The First German Women's Delegation to Stockholm: Report of the First Women's Delegation of the German Democratic Women's League on the Executive Meeting of the WIDF in the Swedish Parliament from September 22–25, 1947] (Dresden: Sachsenverlag, 1947): 29–33.

LANGUAGE German

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The three authors of this source were among the founding members of the German Democratic Women's League (Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands, DFD), the largest leftist, all-German women's organization of the early post-war period. Together, they were given the difficult task to develop its international relations after the end of the Second World War. In September 1947, they hence travelled together to Sweden, to represent the DFD at an executive meeting of the Women's International Democratic Federation in Stockholm.

The first author, **Frieda Radel** (1869, Altona–1958, Potsdam), was a journalist, seasoned women's rights advocate, and politician who was in her late seventies at the time she embarked on the journey to Sweden. Born in northern Germany in 1869, Radel had been active in the women's movement before the First World War when she wrote for the women's section of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, a widely read daily newspaper. During the Weimar Republic, she then joined the center-left liberal German Democratic Party, representing it in the Citizens' Assembly of Hamburg between 1919 and 1927, where she worked on controlling prostitution and brothelization.¹ When the Nazis rose to power in 1933, however, this initially terminated her political career and Radel moved to Potsdam in 1944. After the Second World War ended in 1945, Radel initially helped set up the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany in the Soviet occupation zone. In 1947, she was among the founding members of the

¹ Victoria Harris, "In the Absence of Empire: Feminism, Abolitionism and Social Work in Hamburg (c. 1900–1933)," *Women's History Review* 17, no. 2 (2018): 281; Michaela Freund-Widder, *Frauen unter Kontrolle: Prostitution und ihre staatliche Bekämpfung in Hamburg vom Ende des Kaiserreichs bis zu den Anfängen der Bundesrepublik* [Women Under Control: The State's Struggle Against Prostitution in Hamburg from the End of the Empire to the Beginnings of West Germany] (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003), 33–34.

German Democratic Women's League, attending its first congress in East Berlin on March 7–8, 1947. From 1947 to 1948, Radel then went on to chair a regional DFD branch in Brandenburg. When the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was created in 1949, she became part of its legislative body, the People's Chamber (*Volkskammer*), before retiring from politics in 1950. Radel officially remained a member of the DFD executive until she passed away in 1958.²

Maria Rentmeister (1905, Sterkrade–1996, Berlin) was a communist politician and anti-fascist activist who served as the Secretary General of the DFD at the time of the meeting of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in Stockholm in 1947. Rentmeister had grown up in the Ruhr region and was politicized at a young age because of her mother, Käthe Rentmeister, a social democrat and communist who publicly opposed the First World War. In the 1920s, Rentmeister underwent commercial training before migrating to the United States, where she worked for several years. After her return to Germany, she joined the German Communist Party (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD) in 1932 and soon headed the women's section in her home city, Oberhausen. Because of these political activities, Rentmeister had to leave Germany when the Nazis took power in 1933 and fled to Paris with her partner, KPD functionary Wilhelm Beuttel (1900–1944). There, she forged connections with the leftist international women's movement, for example at a congress of the World Committee of Women Against War and Fascism (Comité mondial contre la guerre et le Fascisme) in 1934. In the 1930s, she continued working for the KPD and moved to Zurich and Amsterdam, where she assisted the mobilization of women in western Germany. Soon after Germany invaded the Netherlands in 1940, however, Rentmeister was arrested by the Gestapo and put in prison. Her husband managed to escape and went underground, though he was arrested soon after and executed in 1944. Rentmeister survived the war, was released in 1945, and moved to the Soviet occupation zone, where she had a short but steep political career. She helped re-establish the KPD in Dessau, and after its dissolution in 1946 became a member of the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED), the Soviet-backed ruling party of the future East German dictatorship. Between 1946 and 1950, she rose to the ranks of the Party Executive. In 1947, she was appointed as the first General Secretary of the DFD—a position from which she was removed in 1949, likely because of her independent political views and exile experiences in the West.³ Afterwards, Rentmeister worked for the Ministry of Public Education on developing the GDR's cultural relations with other countries, before eventually retiring from politics in 1960. Her interest and commitment to socialist politics, however, remained with her until the end of

2 Sabine Hoffkamp and Monika Pater, "Raum-Visionen: Frauenbewegte Räume zweier Mobilisierungsphasen der Frauenbewegung in Hamburg" [Visions of Space: Spaces Which Moved Women in Two Phases of the Women's Movement's Mobilization in Hamburg], *Ariadne: Forum für Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte* 67–68 (2015): 144–153.

3 Bühler, *Eigenmächtig, Frauenbewegt*, *Ausgebremst*, 344–47.

her life. In 1990, after the collapse of the GDR, Rentmeister joined the Party of Democratic Socialism (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus, PDS), the legal successor of the SED.⁴

Emma Sachse (1887, Göttingen–1965, Leipzig) was an experienced politician and anti-fascist activist, who promoted women's rights and social causes throughout her whole life. She came from a working-class background, left school at a young age, and started as a domestic worker in the German Empire. Before the First World War, Sachse met her husband, a book printer from Altenburg, Thuringia, who worked for a regional newspaper and introduced her to the burgeoning German labor movement. In 1914, Sachse joined the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD); in 1920, she was elected to the Thuringian parliament.⁵ From 1927 to 1933, Sachse served as one of the few female members of the SPD's national executive, helped found the Workers' Welfare Organization (*Arbeiterwohlfahrt*) and became its chair in Thuringia. During the Third Reich, just like other communists and left-wing politicians, Sachse suffered severely from political repressions and persecutions. Right after the Nazis rose to power in 1933, she was imprisoned, but afterward continued to support anti-fascist activists who worked underground. She was arrested in 1944 and taken to the concentration camp in Ravensbrück. There, she met other communist women like Johanna Himmler (1894–1972), with whom she formed a life-long friendship. In 1945, Sachse was freed and moved back to Thuringia, which became part of the Soviet occupation zone. There, she initially resumed her work for the SPD and helped found one of the anti-fascist women's committees (Anti-Faschistischer Frauenausschuss) that emerged across the German occupation zones after 1945. In 1947, Sachse eventually became involved in the founding of the DFD and joined the SED. In 1949, and with the creation of the GDR, however, Sachse was ousted from politics due to her former political connections to the SPD. She spent the last decade of her life involved in local welfare initiatives in the GDR before she passed away in 1965 in Leipzig.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS

FRIEDA RADEL · *Warum fordern wir das Frauenstimmrecht?* [Why Do We Demand Women's Right to Vote?] (Leipzig: Dietrich, 1912); *Die uneheliche Mutter in der Dichtung und im Leben* [The Unwed Mother in Poetry and Life] (Leipzig: Dietrich, 1912).

4 Rita Pawlowski, "Maria Rentmeister," in *Frauenpolitik und politisches Wirken von Frauen im Berlin der Nachkriegszeit, 1945–1949* [Women's Politics and the Political Activities of Women in Post-War Berlin, 1945–1949], eds. Renate Genth et al. (Berlin: Trafo-Verlag Weist, 1996), 313–15.

5 Heike Stange, "Die parlamentarische Arbeit von Frauen in Thüringen und ihre politischen Biographien" [The Parliamentary Work of Women in Thuringia and Their Political Biographies], in *"Jetzt Endlich Können Die Frauen Abgeordnete Werden!" Thüringer Parlamentarierinnen und ihre Politik* ["Now, Finally, Women Can Become Representatives!" Women Parliamentarians in Thuringia and Their Politics], eds. Theresa Wobbe and Harald Mittelsdorf (Weimar: Hain, 2003), 47.

MARIA RENTMEISTER · “Eine lang gehegte Hoffnung ging in Erfüllung” [A Long-Harbored Hope Was Fulfilled], in *Vereint sind wir alles. Erinnerungen an die Gründung der SED* [United Are We All. Memories of the Founding of the SED], ed. Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands [Socialist Unity Party of Germany] (Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 1966); “Kulturelle Beziehungen zu unseren Freunden” [Cultural Relations with Our Friends] in *Die ersten Jahre. Erinnerungen* [The First Years. Memories], ed. Ilse Schiel and Erna Milz (Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 1979).

SACHSE, EMMA · *Klara Zetkin: Eine Tochter des deutschen Volkes* [Klara Zetkin: A Daughter of the German People] (Altenburg: Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, 1947).

Lea Börgerding⁶

CONTEXT

The German Democratic Women's League (Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands, DFD) was founded in March 1947 in Berlin when the anti-fascist women's committees that had sprung up across the four occupation zones after the Second World War formed a unified, all-German women's organization. In German feminist and women's history, the DFD has received relatively little attention so far, given that in October 1949, when the German Democratic Republic was created, it was turned into the state's official mass organization for women. In this process, it was increasingly brought under the control of the ruling SED and aligned with the political trajectories of the East German socialist dictatorship. As a result, the DFD was banned in West Germany in 1957.⁷ However, scholars like Ursula Schröter and Grit Bühler have pointed out that, initially, the DFD was envisioned as an anti-fascist, democratic, bi-partisan, and inter-denominational German women's movement. Indeed, its founding members—who represented different political parties and had often been active in the German women's movement before 1933—believed that, after 1945, German women would have to work together across political and ideological divides to ensure a lasting peace and eradicate fascism in the country.⁸ Their new “sisterly union” had an explicitly feminist outlook in that it declared itself to fight for women's rights and representation in post-war German society. For example, the DFD

6 Lea Börgerding's research is part of the Emmy Noether research group “Reaching the People: Communication and Global Orders in the Twentieth Century”, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), project number 289213179.

Heike Stange, “... scharf aber sachlich”: Emma Sachse” [Sharp, But Factual: Emma Sachse], in *Gelebte Ideen: Sozialisten in Thüringen* [Lived Ideas: Socialists in Thuringia], eds. Mario Hesselbarth, Eberhart Schulz, and Manfred Weißbecker (Jena, 2006), 363–68.

7 Schröter, “Die DDR-Frauenorganisation im Rückblick” [The GDR Women's Organisation in Retrospect], 34–35; Koelges, *Der Demokratische Frauenbund: Von der DDR-Massenorganisation zum modernen politischen Frauenverband*; Mocker, “Historisch-systematische Analyse einer DDR-Massenorganisation.”

8 Ursula Schröter, “Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands (DFD)” [The Democratic Women's League of Germany], *Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv* [Digital German Women's Archive] (2020), accessed October 1, 2022. Available at: <https://www.digitales-deutsches-frauenarchiv.de/akteurinnen/demokratischer-frauenbund-deutschlands-dfd>.

helped to enshrine Article 7 on the equal rights of men and women in the constitution of the GDR and formed women-led factory groups, which were, however, dissolved again in 1949.⁹

The source at hand adds to our understanding of the founding year of the DFD by highlighting its early connections to the leftist international women's movement. It shows that soon after the DFD was founded in March 1947, its leadership reached out to the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), the largest umbrella organization of communist and leftist women of the post-war period. Founded in Paris in 1945 and funded by the Eastern Bloc, the WIDF promoted an anti-fascist and pacifist worldview which appealed to many DFD representatives, who had lived through the Second World War. However, becoming part of the federation was by no means a straight-forward process: Given their experiences with Nazi fascism, many members of the WIDF were at first skeptical and strongly opposed to allow German women to join their ranks. In fact, in the immediate post-war years, many WIDF activists struggled to recreate bonds of care and trust with women from a country that had been their war-time enemy and inflicted lasting atrocities, making solidarity with German women "almost impossible."¹⁰

The Soviet Women's Committee, however, backed the DFD's membership in the WIDF from the start. In the first months of 1947, it organized two missions to the Soviet occupation zone to familiarize WIDF members with the work of the anti-fascist women's committees that were merged into the DFD soon afterwards. Still, when the first German delegation travelled to a WIDF meeting from September 22–25, 1947, in Stockholm, they were nervous about what they would encounter. To convince the WIDF executive of their intentions and shared fight for women's rights and peace, the DFD delegates not only talked about women's grassroots activism and discussed topics like abortion rights and wage equality, but also stressed their experiences in the anti-fascist resistance.¹¹ Decades later, Maria Rentmeister recalled that it was Soviet representative Nadezhda Parfenova who eventually swayed critical WIDF members. She supposedly asked them: "If we don't take up the German women, who will?"¹²

The "first bridge to the women of foreign countries"—as the DFD delegates called it—would shape the international work of the DFD for the next decades: Soon after

9 Böhler, *Eigenmächtig, frauenbewegt, ausgebrems*, 291–99.

10 Zsófia Lóránd, "International Solidarity as the Cornerstone of the Hungarian Post-War Socialist Women's Rights Agenda in the Magazine Asszonyok," *International Review of Social History* 67, no. S30 (2022): 103–29.

11 Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands, *Bericht der ersten Frauendelegation des DFD von der ersten Exekutivtagung der IDFF im Schwedischen Reichstag, 20.–25. September 1947* [Report of the First Women's Delegation of the German Democratic Women's League on the First Executive Meeting of the WIDF in the Swedish Parliament, September 20–25, 1947] (Berlin, 1947), 34.

12 Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, Radio DDR I, *Bericht zur Aufnahme des DFD in die IDFF vor 40 Jahren: Gespräch mit Maria Rentmeister* [Report on the Forty-Year Membership of the German Democratic Women's League in the WIDF: A Conversation with Maria Rentmeister], 30 November 1988.

the meeting in Stockholm, the DFD formally applied for WIDF membership and was accepted in May 1948. Afterwards, it actively participated in different WIDF international campaigns.¹³ In late 1948, members collected a staggering more than 5.3 million signatures to protest the use of nuclear weapons—without consulting the new SED first.¹⁴ However, if there were ever any hopes of a more politically independent participation in the international women's movement, those soon faded. By the end of 1949, DFD founding members like Maria Rentmeister, who stood at the forefront of its early internationalism, either had to leave the DFD or were moved to the backbenches of the League. With this rapid “SED-ization,” the international work of the DFD became increasingly intertwined with the diplomatic goals of the East German leadership. This was especially the case after 1951, when the WIDF moved from Paris to East Berlin and the GDR became its host for the remainder of the global Cold War. Until the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe in 1989/1990, the SED viewed the WIDF as a useful space to promote its socialist emancipatory policies to women across the globe and especially from developing countries. Most notably, in October 1975, the DFD hosted the WIDF world congress in East Berlin to celebrate the UN-initiated International Women's Year.¹⁵ By this time, the DFD was fully integrated into the left-wing international women's movement—something that Frieda Radel, Maria Rentmeister, and Emma Sachse could hardly have imagined when they traveled to Sweden in September 1947.

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Lea Börgerding

* * *

German Democratic Women's League The First German Women's Delegation in Stockholm

Ms. Frieda Radel, *Potsdam*:

“As mothers and women, we were passionate opponents of war and were always united in knowing that we must fight for peace. The last meeting was in 1914 in Vienna and Budapest. When the shots were fired in Sarajevo, we all believed that it was very far away. The women of the International Alliance of Women gathered in Prague and once again made a passionate commitment to peace. Telegrams were sent to governments imploring them to keep the peace. When the first acts of war

began, the ties among the women in the International Alliance were broken. In 1929, the women of the Alliance decided to move their anniversary celebration back to Berlin. When they were together, they were excited about being reunited again and being able to work on promoting solidarity among women globally. In the meantime, women had gotten the right to vote in some places, and the chairwoman said that, if another world war were to break out, it would only be because few states had granted women suffrage. Therefore, it would be necessary to fight on. Since then, we have experienced a second world war, and between these two world wars lay the disaster of fascism for us German people. We all know what it destroyed.

So, when I was called and told to fly to Sweden, I cannot tell you how greatly moved I was and what hope filled me to be able to participate in a rapprochement between women in the world. We already had a slight inkling that our rapprochement was desired.

When this invitation came, we also saw that there was a desire for reviving an alliance between women. We arrived with great difficulty, as Ms. Damerius already told you, as she also told of how much it means to us to stand before this forum.

On the ship, I sat outside and thought about the difference between now and when I came to Stockholm twelve years ago. Back then, we were outwardly and internally connected, and now I came with a small group and the feeling of being intensely burdened. As women, we also bear responsibility.

When we entered the great hall, the women of the world sat across from us, and we felt a little like defendants. You wouldn't believe what we endured mentally, this feeling: what do they want from us? When the lead organizing women came to us, shook our hands, and spoke kind words, a sense of relief came over all of us; we stood there a little comforted and uplifted, and a little bit hopeful. Afterwards, when the Swedish women spoke kind words to us and showed an understanding of our experiences, we felt a great sense of liberation.

We brought with us the certainty that the days we experienced in the community accomplished more than if we had been there during the conference, where the days were filled to the brim anyway. Everything was more personal this way, communicating face-to-face. We have taken with us the feeling that the eight days in Stockholm were an experience of solidarity for a new community of women, in which the meaning of our motto can perhaps come alive again:

'Unity in necessary things; freedom in doubtful things; love in all things.'

Ms. Maria Rentmeister, *Berlin*:

"Now that a wealth of various images has been unfurled before you, I would like to consider two points of view: for all of us, the encounter between German women and women from abroad has left the strongest impression and been the greatest thrill.

When we entered the hall, we suddenly felt how, at that moment, the memory of the years of Hitler's fascism reawakened in these women from other countries. We felt how everything that happened was unfurled before them again, their own suffering and torment in German concentration camps. This wave that suddenly rose bore down on the women; it was like a heavy load burdening them to know that such estrangement could even take place among people in this world.

After the first hours, when various debates worked toward clarifying and easing the situation, hands were finally extended to us from the other side. After this, there was relief and joy throughout the hall knowing that we were on equal footing and that we had found the principles needed to bring us together if we want peace in the world—even though the women from other countries know that, even today, the German people do not represent any guarantee of peace or democracy. We need the help of women around the world in this great undertaking that the Democratic Women's League has put in front of us. We must ensure that the next generation does not one day have to stand like German women before the women of the world, as we do today. We must help to prevent future catastrophes so that our children and grandchildren do not find themselves in such a situation.

The second thing I would like to mention is the warmth that the Swedish women showed us. When one sees everyday life in Sweden—this country that seems like a utopian island to us by today's standards—then one should consider that this is no more and no less than the standard of living that we can readily achieve for everyone around the world. What seems to us like an image from our ruins would be easily realized for the whole world.

The thought that struck us a bit was: do the German people actually see what the War has meant for our people? And I think that is our task: to bring this understanding of what the War means to our own people.

I cannot close without saying a word about Ms. Radel. She was not only the pride of our delegation; she was also a sensation for Sweden. As a woman of almost eighty years, she participates in excursions with physical and mental vigor and represents German women honorably. She has built bridges over almost fifty years in the German women's movement and even now finds just the right words; she represents a good piece of Germany."

Ms. Emma Sachse, *Thüringen*:

"When I learned that I was to travel to Stockholm, I was beset by many kinds of thoughts. I had not really considered it possible that women would be allowed to travel abroad again in order to build connections with women from other countries, which had experienced unspeakable suffering at the hand of German fascism. The thought accompanied me on the trip: How would the women abroad receive us? How would they judge us? Will they be forgiving, or will the once

deeply felt love have turned into hatred? I moved passed the many years of Hitler's fascism and had to come to the conclusion again: The German people had incurred an egregious debt. We have an infinite amount to make up for, and we as women must commit ourselves to make amends. The more honest we are, the clearer this recognition is and the sooner others will also recognize that we German woman have learned from what happened.

Now, does this awareness mean asking for mercy or humbling oneself? I think not. And I repeat: no!

The clearer we are in this understanding, the sooner it will be possible to forge a path of rapprochement, to remove everything that stands in the way and to contribute to an exchange of written and spoken ideas. I left this conference thoroughly impressed. I can only say that Ms. Damerius understood how to explain our situation and our point of view in clear and profound words for the German delegation. When the executive board withdrew after her words and the German delegation had articulated its perspective, it was as if a weight was lifted from us when the president Madame Cotton¹⁶ returned and gave us the response in warm, very heartfelt words.

Two worlds that had been hostile to each other for so long became closer again. That was the value of this conference. And I am happy to be able to tell our members that the first bridge was built here in Stockholm, a bridge on which all women's hearts can come together in the fight for freedom and democracy. We can therefore consider this conference a great success."

Translated by Lea Greenberg

¹⁶ Eugénie Cotton (1881–1967) was a French scientist, socialist, women's rights advocate, active in the anti-fascist resistance.

Call of the Tukums District Female Activists to District Women on the Decisions of the World Congress of Women in Copenhagen

TITLE Call of the Tukums District Female Activists to District Women on the Decisions of the World Congress of Women in Copenhagen

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LANGUAGE Latvian

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

In the terminology of Soviet ideology, the word *aktiv* (activist) had a special meaning. It denoted the most active and “progressive” group of an organization, workplace, or collective.¹ It was widely used in the Soviet Union since the 1920s, especially in various compounds like “party activist,” “school activist,” “community activist,” or “kolkhoz activist.”² It appeared in the Latvian public space and media already in 1940, the first year of occupation. The term was convenient because, on the one hand, it was vague and diffuse in content (it did not make it clear how many people and who was involved), and on the other hand it signaled that the Soviet government had ardent supporters who actively worked for its purposes.

Sources about the Tukums District Women Activists are scarce, and mostly consist of newspaper reports about their activities. The group most likely included members of the local Communist Party and Komsomol (Kommunisticheskij sojuz molodjozhi, the Young Communist League), heads of enterprises and state institutions, women war veterans, and representatives of different professions, such as teachers. A 1955 report on one of the group’s meetings describes what was likely a typical gathering at the time: approximately 400 women listened to speeches by high-ranking party officials, took part in debates to confirm their support for the policies of the USSR government and the Communist Party, and, finally, watched a movie.³ As the newspaper reports attest, the group existed through the Soviet occupation and held its annual meetings until the end of the 1980s. For example, news about the 1978 meeting included, in addition to official addresses, performances by amateur song and dance groups, awarding of activists with honorary diplomas, a raffle dedicated to the Peace Fund, as well as flower and culinary exhibitions. In the 1980s, family problems became the primary concern of

¹ See the Soviet Latvian Encyclopedia: *Latvijas Padomju enciklopēdija*, vol. 1, 129.

² Mokienko and Nikitina, *Tolkovyj slovar' yazyka Sovdeprii*, 26–7.

³ For reports on the tenth anniversary of the Women’s International Democratic Federation in December 1955, see “Sieviešu aktīva sanāksme” [The Meeting of Women’s Activists], *Tukuma Ziņotājs* (December 8, 1955).

the activists. For example, the 1983 meeting focused on discussing the problems of the moral education of youth. Family and child-rearing were the main topics of the activists' meeting in 1988, when the assembled women listened to lectures by experts on sexuality, alcoholism, drug addiction, and other topics.⁴ Soon the growing movement of national independence in the conditions of perestroika and glasnost swept away Soviet customs and organizations, including women's activist groups.

Vita Zelče

CONTEXT

After Stalin's death, changes started both in the USSR and in the other countries of the bloc. The first signs of liberalization were the closure of the investigation into the "Doctors' Plot" in March 1953, and the decree "On Amnesty," issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR, which enabled approximately 1 million people's release from imprisonment. The first few facts about the illegal and arbitrary actions of the State Security Committee that had been made public resulted in general discontent, sometimes even spontaneous protests against Soviet power. In the spring and summer of 1953, there were uprisings in several prisons. Uncertainty, fear, and confusion about the country's future were combined with expectations of change and a better life. Stalin's successors abandoned preparations for World War III and only ten days after his death the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Georgy Malenkov, publicly announced that there was no international problem on which the USSR and the USA could not agree. One of these issues was the Korean War (1950–53). After the armistice of July 27, 1953, the war ended, but Korea remained divided. The leadership of the Soviet Union was well aware that it could not win the war with the Western countries and therefore called for a reduction of tensions in international relations. At the same time, the USSR was neither going to give up the territories and zones of influence in Eastern and Central Europe gained after the Second World War nor eliminate the "Iron Curtain." In June 1951, riots in East Germany, although suppressed by military force, scared the Kremlin.⁵

The situation inside the Soviet Union and its satellite countries raised the issue of people's loyalty to the government. Already during Stalin's years, the occupied Baltic states were subjected to accelerated "Sovietization" based on state terror and the spreading of communist ideology. The newly created elite of Soviet Latvia gained

4 A. Krasts, "Sieviešu aktīva sanāksmē" [At the Women's Activists Meeting], *Komunisma Rīts* (March 21, 1978); Būriņa, "Rajona sieviešu aktīva sanāksmei gatavojoties" [In Preparation for the District Women's Activists Meeting], *Komunisma Rīts* (April 14, 1983); G. Irna, "Viss sākas ar ģimeni" [Everything Starts with the Family], *Komunisma Rīts* (March 22, 1988).

5 See, for example, Service, *Stalin*, 591–604; Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's Team*, 224–54; Zubov, ed., *Istoriya Ros-sii*, 291–302.

material wellbeing and security, but was required to constantly pledge its loyalty through participation in rituals where loyalty could be performed.⁶

From its inception, the Soviet regime considered women a particular social group, an object of special care, whose status needed to be regulated by normative documents, ideological campaigns, social control mechanisms, and mass media. Scholarship refers to this relationship between Soviet power and women as a social contract that was more important for the day-to-day realities of Soviet families than the officially declared, but only formally existing, equality between men and women. The particular mix of policies towards women that this entailed also changed over time. During the Stalinist period, the government combined the use of repression, strict control mechanisms, and social benefits to ensure women's compliance. In occupied Latvia, the authorities' task was also to secure women's loyalty. This was particularly important because of the population losses during the Second World War and Stalinist repressions. Consequently, it was important to the authorities that women, who made up the majority of the population, worked, gave birth, and raised children simultaneously.⁷

The broader context of the call by the Tukums District Women Activists was the International Congress of the Women's International Democratic Federation, which took place on July 5–10, 1953, and was widely reported on in Soviet newspapers. In Soviet Latvia, news articles dedicated to the event started to appear already in March and continued several months after the congress, reaching their peak in July when lengthy reports from congress plenary speeches and debates were published. All these reports were subject to the current foreign policy positions of the USSR, which strictly divided the world into three parts. The capitalist countries of the First World were represented by left-wing delegates who emphasized the shortcomings of capitalism; representatives of the Second World reported success and growth in the countries of the socialist bloc; while the delegates from the Third World called for cooperation and the struggle for peace.⁸ A couple of months later, women activist groups met in various towns across Soviet Latvia (Cēsis, Talsi, Tukums, Ventspils) to express their support for the ideas of the congress—or, more precisely, for the interpretation of the congress by the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS). These meetings were later reported in the respective district's newspapers. Ella Ankupe (1908–1986),

6 See Bleiere, "The Sovietisation of Latvia," 593–629; Mertelsmann, *Everyday Life in Stalinist Estonia*, 9–25.

7 Zelē, "The First Contact," 1–22; Zelē, "Latvian Women after World War II," 281–306; Zelē, "Family History and Memory," 533–61.

8 See "Sakarā ar gaidāmo Vispasaules sieviešu kongresu" [Waiting for the International Women's Congress], *Ciņa* (March 11, 1953); "Gatavojoties Vispasaules sieviešu kongresam" [Preparing for the International Women's Congress], *Padomju Jaunatne* (May 5, 1953); "Austrijas sieviešu apspriede" [Meeting of Austrian Women], *Ciņa* (June 2, 1953); "Sievietes cīnā par mieru" [Women Fighting for Peace], *Padomju Jaunatne* (June 5, 1953); "Darbaļaužu mītiņš Kopenhāgenā" [Meeting of Workers in Copenhagen], *Padomju Jaunatne* (June 9, 1953); "Vispasaules sieviešu kongresā" [In the International Women's Congress], *Ciņa* (June 11–12, 1953); M. Afonin, "Liels spēks ceļā uz progresu" [Great Power on the Way to Progress], *Ciņa* (June 14, 1953).

an official from the Communist Party of Latvia (Latvijas Komunistiskā partija) and the only delegate from Soviet Latvia present at the congress, took part in several of these meetings to share her experience.⁹

Following the Tukums meeting, the women's activist group passed around a call declaring solidarity with Soviet international politics. The call was published in the local newspaper *Tukuma Ziņotājs* (The Tukums Reporter) and expressed local women's support for the peace movement, their promise to put effort into harvesting and the achievement of production plans, their commitment to raising children and caring for their health, and their support for the fulfillment of the five-year plan, thus contributing to the building of communism. The call was written during a politically difficult period, about half a year after Stalin's death and more than two months after the arrest of Lavrentiy Beria, as fights over the legacy of Stalin were still ongoing. In this context, the call fulfilled several tasks: it demonstrated women's loyalty to the Soviet government and the stability of the Soviet system; confirmed support for stopping the war in Korea; and fulfilled the ideological mission of polishing the image of the Soviet state.

Peace, one of the main topics addressed in the call, had a long history as a propaganda theme. Already during the Stalinist period, the struggle for world peace became one of the main propaganda tropes in the Soviet Union, addressing both international and local audiences. In 1949, the Soviet Peace Defense Committee was established. Similar organizations were also established in all Soviet republics. The Latvian Republican Committee for the Defense of Peace was established in September 1951. Formally, its task was to fight for peace in the world and to establish contacts with supporters of peace all over the globe.¹⁰ In fact, it served as a support organization for the Communist Party that echoed its decisions and decrees. Support for the organizations of peace advocates, expressed in the call of Tukums District Women Activists, showed that the theme of peace carried over into the post-Stalinist period.

The text itself is a typical composition of Soviet ideology. It was most likely written by propaganda activists in the Communist Party and was widely circulated in the media and at public events. All the information about the World Women's Congress held in Copenhagen mentioned in the call was carefully filtered through TASS and presented to Soviet citizens as a black-and-white picture of the world, where rapidly developing socialist countries co-existed with capitalist countries where people were suffering from economic hardship.¹¹ Therefore, the possibility that the Tukums District Women Activists had really delved into the activities and decisions of the

⁹ See Ankupe, "Par Vispasaules sieviešu kongresa darbu Kopenhagenā."

¹⁰ Jērāns, ed., *Politiskā enciklopēdija*, 418–20.

¹¹ As Yulia Gradszkova points out, the Women's International Democratic Federation "was often accused by contemporaries of being a 'Soviet front' and a 'Communist organization' not only because the Federation defended Soviet foreign politics and the Soviet model of women's emancipation but also because women from the Soviet Union and other Communist countries constituted an important part of its membership." Gradszkova, "Women's International Democratic Federation," 271.

congress is quite doubtful. The call is typical of Soviet ideology on the issue of gender equality at the time, and should be read in the context of similar pronouncements about the superiority of the Soviet system over capitalism.

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Call of the Tukums District Female Activists to District Women on the Decisions of the World Congress of Women in Copenhagen

Women of the Tukums district, together with all Soviet people, march in the front lines in the struggle for world peace!

Having discussed the decisions of the World Congress of Women in Copenhagen, the World Peace Council, and the Soviet Committee for the Defense of Peace, as well as the Latvian Republican Committee for the Defense of Peace, we, the women's meeting participants, support them and congratulate the success achieved by the peoples of the world in their struggle to maintain international security.

Together with all the working people of Latvia, it was with profound joy that we welcomed the news of the armistice in Korea, which is a great victory for the Korean and Chinese peoples, a victory for the entire peace and democracy camp in the struggle for peace. Like the whole of the Soviet people, like all those who support peace, we, the women of the Tukums district, see in this victory proof that all other international problems can be solved peacefully.

The Latvian people heartily welcome and wholeheartedly support the peaceful foreign policy of the Soviet Government. This policy is fully in keeping with the interests of all peace-loving peoples since it is permeated by the spirit of struggle for the preservation and consolidation of peace.

Together with the whole Soviet people, together with all those who love peace, the Latvian people demand a just and peaceful settlement of the Korean issue as soon as possible. In support of the proposals of the Soviet Government on the question of the peaceful settlement of the German problem, the Latvian people, like all the peoples of the Soviet Union, salute the efforts of the German people, which struggles for the unification of Germany in a single, peaceful, and democratic state, and we wish it great success in this struggle.

We, the women's meeting participants, call upon the women of the district to add their voices to the strong voice of all Soviet people, of all peacemakers, protesting the policy of ignoring China and demanding the restoration of the rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations, as they have been violated there.

We, women, like the whole Soviet people, are in favor of peaceful cooperation among peoples and the development of economic and cultural relations among them. We call on all women of the district to add their voice to the struggle for peace, for a happy childhood and a bright future for their children. To strengthen the peace front, we call on the women of the district to join in the work of the district kolkhozes, enterprises, and institutions even more vigorously.

We call on rural women to struggle for the faster completion of autumn farm work on collective farms, for the multiplication of public herds while increasing their productivity. We call on factory women to fight even harder to meet production plans, to raise the quality of production and reduce costs, and to improve work discipline. We call on the district doctors to take care of the health of children on a daily basis, and on teachers to raise the children to be conscientious, active builders of communist society. We call upon all the women of the district to work even more selflessly to fulfill the Fifth Five-Year Plan, to participate more actively in communist construction, to struggle even more vigorously to strengthen the power of our socialist Motherland, the standard-bearer of world peace.

Translated by Ieva Lešinska-Gaber

Mitra Mitrović

The Woman's Position in the Contemporary World

AUTHOR Mitra Mitrović

TITLE *Položaj žene u savremenom svetu* [The Woman's Position in the Contemporary World]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1960, translated excerpts: 5–13, 15–17.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mitra Mitrović (1912, Užička Požega–2001, Belgrade) was a writer and politician.¹ She was born into a poor family in the small town of Užička Požega in Serbia. Her father, a railway clerk, died during the First World War, so Mitra and her four siblings were raised by their mother. As for most of her generation, her political radicalization began in 1928–1929, after the assassination of several members of the Croatian Peasant Party in the National Assembly and the introduction of the Royal Dictatorship in January 1929. She began her studies at the Department of Yugoslav Literature, Faculty of Arts in Belgrade in 1930, and a year later became active in the progressive student movement. In this period, she met her future husband, communist intellectual and politician Milovan Djilas (also Đilas, 1911–1995, married to Mitrović from 1936 to 1952). During the 1930s, she was an active member of the party, participating in strikes and various other initiatives, officially becoming a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ) in 1933. In this period, her major intellectual influence came from Marxist literature, including the works of Marx, Engels, Bebel, and Lenin, but also Serbian communist political thinkers, such as Sima Marković (1888–1939) and Filip Filipović (1878–1938). After graduating in 1935, she briefly worked in the Library of the National Assembly in Belgrade.

In 1935, Mitrović participated in forming the Youth Section of the feminist organization *Ženski pokret* (Women's Movement) in Belgrade and served as its first president. The section existed until January 1940. Moreover, from September 1936, she was on the editorial board of *Žena danas* (Woman Today), which was a “new feminist”² and pacifist popular front journal. For the editors of *Žena danas*, and more broadly the generation of young women who engaged with feminist activism and thought in

¹ Biographical research on Mitra Mitrović is still in its beginnings. However, historian Veljko Stanić's ground-breaking article—on which this biographical note significantly leans—in which he offers an account of Mitrović's yet unpublished writings, and in particular her intellectual and activist life in the 1930s, is a precious start for researching her activist engagement and political thought. See Stanić, “*Parče velikog života*.”

² See “*Žena danas* Editorial Board” in this volume.

the mid-1930s, “new feminism” meant the active inclusion of broad groups of women, including peasant and working women. Moreover, with “new feminism,” the editors took a political line that aimed to unite leftist and liberal groups and parties to fight the spread of fascism; in the concrete case of the Yugoslav feminists, this was an alliance of liberal feminists of the older generation and leftist, more specifically communist (and not social-democratic) feminists of the younger generation. Apart from Mitrović, the editors were women who were close to or members of the illegal communist party in interwar Yugoslavia. Even though it could not be openly communist, it was subject to censorship, and the publication was finally forbidden by the government in 1940. Mitrović also edited the journal's three wartime issues, and remained its editor in the postwar period, when *Žena danas* continued as the official journal of the Women's Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena, AFŽ).

Mitra Mitrović was one of the speakers during the protests on March 27, 1941, against the pact signed between Yugoslavia and Germany. In July 1941, she was arrested and sent to the Banjica concentration camp, as the camp's first registered prisoner. She managed to escape with two comrades, Vera Vrebalov (1917–1944) and Nata Hadžić (1912–?), and join the Partisan movement, where she held various leading positions. She participated in forming the AFŽ, was a member of its central committee from 1942, and was elected member of the Antifascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije, AVNOJ). After the Second World War, she held numerous political functions. She was minister of education in the Government of the People's Republic of Serbia, president of the Council for Education and Culture of the Government of the People's Republic of Serbia, and member of parliament in the National and Federal Assembly. After 1948 and the Tito–Stalin Split, Mitrović belonged to a reformist current within the Communist Party. 1948 is also when she gave birth to her only daughter, Vukica Djilas (1948–2001). In 1954, she publicly took the side of Milovan Djilas, her by then former husband, who had previously published a set of critical articles in the periodicals *Nova misao* (New Thought) and *Borba* (Struggle) in which he essentially criticized the increased bureaucratization, careerism, and corruption of what he would later name the “new class” in Yugoslavia. Likewise, he called for democratization in the framework of a communist society. As a consequence, Djilas was imprisoned for almost a full decade.³ According to Stanić, Mitra Mitrović was, together with historian and publicist Vladimir Dedijer (1914–1990), the only one to publicly take Djilas's side, supporting not (only) his ideas, but also his right to publish them. She was then side-lined from all major party and state positions. Yet, after 1956, she

3 Veljko Stanić, “Milovan Đilas 1953/54: Između revolucije i slobode” [Milovan Đilas 1953/54: Between Revolution and Liberty], *Tokovi istorije: časopis Instituta za noviju istoriju Srbije* = *Currents of history: journal of the Institute for recent history of Serbia*, no. 3/4 (2008): 251–278; Jasna Dragović-Soso, “Saviours of the Nation’: Serbia’s Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism (London: Hurst, 2002), 17–22.

opted for a compromise and publicly distanced herself from Djilas's ideas. Following this, she worked as a director of the Federal Institute for the Study of Schooling and Educational Issues until her retirement in 1963. She died in Belgrade in 2001.⁴

Apart from *Položaj žene u savremenom svetu* (The Woman's Position in the Contemporary World; 1960), her two most relevant publications are *Veselin Masleša* (1957), a biographical memoir of her friend and comrade Veselin Masleša (1906–1943), and *Ratno putovanje* (A Wartime Journey; 1953), a memoir on her experience of the Second World War and her active participation in the Partisan movement. In the 1970s, she also edited a prose memoir about the Second World War, *Vreme i savest* (Time and Consciousness; 1960), and translated essays of Leo Tolstoy and Lenin into Serbo-Croatian. She left behind her unfinished biographical notes, as well as a biography of the nineteenth century Serbian poet Milica Stojadinović Srpkinja (1828–1878).⁵ Aside from these major publications, there is an abundance of smaller publications from 1944 onwards, such as essays, expert reports, and published speeches on and about the formation of the Women's Antifascist Front, women's suffrage rights, and the equality of women in the context of postwar legislative changes; agitation and propaganda; educational policy and public health policy; youth work; Slavism; and other topics. In the 1960s and 1970s, she wrote brief autobiographical notes, which until recently have remained unpublished.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *O antifašističkom frontu žena* [On the Women's Antifascist Front] (Požarevac: Okružni odbor Antifašističkog fronta žena, 1944); *Pravo glasa žena—dokaz i oruđe demokratije* [Women's Right to Vote: Proof and Tool of Democracy] (Belgrade: Centralni odbor AFŽ Jugoslavije, 1945); *Uputstva i organizacija rada na analfabetskim—nižim prosvetnim tečajevima* [Instructions and Organization of Work on Literacy: Lower Education Courses] (Požarevac: Okružni Narodni odbor, Prosvetno odeljenje, 1945); *Radnička klasa u oslobodilačkom ratu* [Working Class in the Liberation War] (Niš: Okružni odbor USAOS, 1945); *Slovenstvo jedna od poluga mira u svetu* [Slavism—One of the Levers of World Peace] (Belgrade: Ministarstvo prosvete Srbije, Kolarčev narodni univerzitet, 1946); *O slovenstvu* [On Slavism] (Belgrade: Kolarčev narodni univerzitet, 1946); *Veselin Masleša* [Veselin Masleša] (Belgrade: Nolit, 1953); *Ratno putovanje* [A Wartime Journey] (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1957); *Položaj žene u savremenom svetu* [The Woman's Position in the Contemporary World] (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1960); *Otpisana: autobiografski zapisi* [Written Off: Autobiographical Notes], ed. Veljko Stanić (Belgrade: Vukotić media, 2023).

Isidora Grubački

4 Stanić, "Parče velikog života," 62.

5 Stanić, "Parče velikog života," 61–62.

CONTEXT

In the interwar period, in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia, there was a developed feminist movement. In the context of the post–First World War expectations of democratization of the newly established country, women began to organize within a movement with broadly defined feminist demands, including suffrage, legal and social reform, equal professional opportunities, and inclusion of women in the administration of the state, equal pay for equal work, and many others. The main organization was the Feminist Alliance (Feministička alijansa, 1923), which was the organization initiated by Slovenian feminist Alojzija Štebi. It was the first organization which gathered women from different parts of the country—Belgrade, Ljubljana, Zagreb, and many other places—and which focused principally on women's rights issues. Importantly, the organization was formed several months after the big International Woman Suffrage Alliance congress, where Yugoslav women also participated in forming what they saw as a regional feminist organization, the Little Entente of Women. In 1926, the Alliance was restructured into The Alliance of Women's Movements (Alijansa ženskih pokreta). From then on, and until it ceased to function in 1940, the Alliance gathered an increasing number of local *Ženski pokret* organizations.⁶

In the 1930s, with the introduction of the royal dictatorship and the rise of fascism in Europe, a new generation of feminists entered the public sphere, many of them sympathizers or members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The KPJ had been, as in many other countries, illegal at the time; it was banned already in December 1920, shortly after it gained significant support for the national parliamentary elections. After a long period of factional struggles within the party during the 1920s, the party took the path of ultra-left sectarianism in 1929. From 1932, however, it began its transformation into a growing mass organization, and thus became a vanguard of the Popular Front.⁷ The Popular Front was a mass movement which brought together various leftist and liberal groups and political parties, and was in the Yugoslav context dominated by the illegal KPJ. It represented a broad front which aimed to actively include youth, women, and peasants; although women had been active in the KPJ before that, it is in this period that the number of women in the KPJ significantly increased. With the support of the Party, some women who were members of or close to the KPJ formed the Youth Sections of *Ženski pokret* in many towns across the country. The agenda of the feminists gathered around the Youth Sections of *Ženski pokret* and their writings in *Žena danas* primarily focused on democracy, peace, and suffrage. Their proclaimed aim was the creation of a massive women's movement, and,

6 Grubački, "The Emergence of the Yugoslav Interwar Liberal Feminist Movement."

7 Gužvica, *Before Tito*, 53.

among other things, they consistently emphasized women's difficult position in relation to labor rights and poverty.

In 1940, however, in the context of the Stalin–Hitler pact and the Soviet intervention in Finland, a split emerged, and the women from the Youth Section in Belgrade left *Ženski pokret*. While earlier labelling their journal and platform as “new feminism,” the split in 1940 marked the beginning of a distancing from the label “feminism” altogether. The split was cemented in Vida Tomšić's speech on the Fifth Countrywide Conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia—the last big meeting of the KPJ before the war, when the members decided on the strategy for the upcoming war and revolution.⁸ From then on feminism became a problematic word in historiography and more broadly in the socialist public sphere. After the war, so-called “bourgeois feminist” organizations in socialist Yugoslavia were banned, with the AFŽ becoming the main organization. While some historians have seen the end of the AFŽ as the end of women's activism in socialist Yugoslavia, others have argued that this kind of activism was resumed through the heiress organizations of the AFŽ, such as the *Savez ženskih društava* (Union of Women's Societies).⁹

Due to the well-known distancing from the “feminist” label from the side of socialist and communist women, and the existence of the two movements/parties—feminist and communist—the question for researchers remains to what extent and in which periods these two movements intersected, and in what ways were communist ideas feminist. In the Yugoslav case, the programs of these two movements did not differ substantially, and there were cases when they overlapped—not only during the Popular Front period, but in the 1920s as well, when, for example, communist women took active part in the Women's Movements' Alliance.¹⁰ Mitrović's writing illustrates the complex relationship between the two movements. Her feminist political thought was largely shaped during the 1930s and was influenced by her membership in the KPJ, as well as of the youth section of *Ženski pokret*. The excerpts below, from 1960, exemplify the ambiguous relationship between rejecting the “feminist” label and advocating for feminist demands.

The book *Položaj žene u savremenom svetu* is an analytical and comparative piece about the position of women in the contemporary world, published several years before Mitrović's retirement. Due to the lack of research on women's activism in the 1950s and 1960s, we do not know much about the context of the book. Her political thought, however, represents a continuity with her views in the 1930s, which connects communist and feminist ideas. In the excerpt, Mitrović reflects on the history of the “so-called feminist movement” (her formulation), as well as on Clara Zetkin's criticism

8 Tomšić, “V. Konferencija KPJ.”

9 Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*; Bonfiglioli, “Cold War Internationalisms, Nationalisms, and the Yugoslav-Soviet Split”; Tešija, “The End of the AFŽ—The End of Meaningful Women's Activism?”

10 Barać, *Feministička kontrajavnost*; Bujaković, “Reinvestigating Communist Women's Activism.”

of the feminist movement. Ultimately, Mitrović suggests that the woman question should be dealt with on its own, even though it is part of a broader social question. Mitrović also comments on the decreased attention to the woman question during the Second World War. When turning to the importance of the “so-called woman question” in the contemporary world, Mitrović aims to present the issue in a global scope and takes into account the Cold War division into capitalist and socialist/communist countries. While pointing to “the dangers of ‘feministically’ going astray,” she maintains that women in the contemporary world still needed to defend themselves against oppression on the basis of sex. Interestingly, one of her main sources was the 1955 UNESCO publication “Participation of Women in Political Life,” based on a questionnaire circulated in the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Norway, and Yugoslavia. Mitrović’s global perspective still rested on the binary between civilization and backwardness, which she problematized to an extent from the perspective of women’s rights. On the whole, her reflections aimed to uncover the contemporary complexities of women’s emancipation in different parts of the world.

Excluding the introduction and conclusion, the book is divided into five main sections, the first being “Woman in Politics.” Mitrović considers women’s right to vote the highest priority, and the excerpt shows an interesting take on the relationship between the political and economic rights of women. Reflecting on the question of what is more important—women’s political or social and economic rights—she explains that the question itself is incorrect, as these two rights are inseparable. Although she quotes Clara Zetkin’s statement that suffrage is ineffective without economic freedom, Mitrović nevertheless underlines that women’s political rights are the most “expressive affirmation of women as citizens with full rights,” and argues for the importance of the demand for women’s suffrage rights in all contexts where these are lacking. In the continuation of this chapter, she makes a comparative overview of the history of the feminist movement, from the Paris Commune and the French Revolution to Seneca Falls and Imperial Russia, and further discusses the effect of political rights in the contemporary world, negatively evaluating women’s participation in politics in Yugoslavia. The rest of the sections showcase the richness of Mitrović’s considerations on the “woman question,” covering professional women’s work, the conflict between women’s economic and family roles, the right to education, and women’s psychology with a focus on creativity.

At the end of the text, Mitrović concludes that women’s position in the contemporary world underwent great changes in capitalist, socialist, underdeveloped, and even colonial countries. On the one hand, she notes that the solutions to the woman question were different in different countries, and, taking a comparative perspective, she argues that socialist countries were at an advantage in solving the issues. On the other hand, she identifies and underlines the common features of the status of women from around the whole world, highlighting that regardless of the socio-political system

and the economic-cultural development of their context, all women have been going through the same historical path, and face the same problems in a time of changes in their status. She then lists a number of commonalities, including the predominance of women's unqualified work, the still slow overcoming of traditions and customs, their status in the family, the contradictions between family and professional life, etc. Yet, she sees the chief commonality in the function of motherhood, what she refers to as a "universal problem of the whole contemporary world," the problem being essentially the difficulty of reaching equality between men and women regarding women's right to work *and* her function of motherhood. She suggests that the solution to this problem is the intervention of the state in terms of various protective measures and legislation, encompassing, among other things, women's right to maternity leave, social security during the leave and in case of dismissal from work, breaks from work for breastfeeding, free medical help, etc. These are the measures which, if truly followed in practice, could allow for the much needed social environment in which women would be equal.

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Isidora Grubački

* * *

Mitra Mitrović

The Woman's Position in the Contemporary World

It seems as if discussion of the so-called woman question has become a bit outdated, as if the contemporary world has overcome the problem. Yet the problem remains, however, of first-order significance, both politically and sociologically. It has been unfolding for almost a century and a half as a social issue, which is to say that it cannot be skirted—now more than ever, in the contemporary world, when the subject is being broached, when it is beginning to get resolved. It is true that far bigger problems—unfortunately those like war, for instance—can make this seem like a meager issue because of the other, more frightening ones that the contemporary world has not yet resolved. And we could always leave the question alone, especially since the idea of women's equality has suppressed that other, backward one, and penetrated deep into the world.

But, the question itself—whether there has been great progress made in the hundred-plus years since the problem was first posed as a social one—already creates confusion. We open the map of the world and it is at once mottled with light and dark colors. Over the large expanses of countries, even deep in Asia where, according to all the rubrics by which a woman's position is determined by her

rights as a sex, we encounter major progress, even if it is not always in terms of her actual position, but nevertheless in terms of the idea that she deserves an equal place, at least as much as a man. Suddenly, once again, even a long-civilized European country elicits surprise: Switzerland, for example, where women do not have basic political rights, that is, the right to vote. Or one is surprised by some long-outdated law, which, it could be said, does not reflect the image of France, whose revolution, as a great social movement, was first to highlight the question of women's equality within its own framing. Then we see the wealthy parts of Latin America, where, in contrast to North America, the struggle for women's basic political and civil rights is still ongoing. Colonized countries just started counting young girls in the ranks of their primary school students. The first generation of girls who will not wear a headscarf is emerging. Socialist countries, however, are trying to enforce legal provisions as part of a very wide and—in principle—just program, as well as legislation that consequently anticipates, at the furthest boundaries, an ideal solution for women's equal rights.

And perhaps unlike any other question—suddenly, an enormous range: from full civilization to full discrimination. Nothing unusual. From magnificent wealth to abject poverty, or from a highly developed country to complete backwardness. But it seems that here, as far as this problem is concerned, perhaps even more than the race and class problem, enslavement is even more bleak, more complex, because it does not depend only on the powerful, distant, and foreign, the wealthy or the white, but on men and individuals closest to them, a father and a brother, even a son, who themselves cannot escape the frame of prejudice and understanding imposed on them as well, understandably, sometime long ago, but which has become an integral part of life and customs and family order.

In the interpretation of that inferior situation in which they found themselves, and where women still find themselves in part even today, there is certainly the danger, great or small, of somewhat “feministically” going astray. But, however that may seem, one cannot and should not escape from the fact that in the social polarization of men and women, men are the ones that, for centuries, have held superior social and familial positions, even when they are not powerful and wealthy. We are still forced, even today—at least due to the roots of social and class enslavement in the broadest sense of the term—to shield, protect, and defend ourselves against oppression on the basis of sex. Of course, we are solving this as a social issue, with the means and methods used to solve other social issues.

Certainly, that solution, aside from enormous successes, comes along slowly when oppression has lasted for centuries. But, if we take the beginning of the twentieth century (say, from the end of the nineteenth) as the point of departure on the way to women's equality—and we know for a fact that after the First World War many European countries saw women in elected roles for the first time, or in

the university, let us say—then progress looks swift. Then again, when we remember that the first French women had already demanded the right to vote in 1789 but gained it only in 1945, then progress seems extremely slow. Slowly, and under great hardship, women took their rights one by one in a world where they actually make up half of the population of the globe.

Women's situation in the contemporary world is quite diverse today. It depends on many factors and it is difficult to consider independent of the position and living conditions of the entire population, from the problems of human rights in general to social structures, economic and political systems, and, it is understood, from the level of development in general itself: economic, technical, and cultural; from the place of religion, and that of customs. All of that together plays a role. But there are those problems that purely concern women, problems of their equality, which we can and must separate, which stand out by themselves, whether we want to consider them separately or not, they appear somehow common to women all over the world, in almost the same way. In some places they are resolved, in some places they are not. It depends to a great extent on socio-political systems.

It would be simpler if we could stick to the general conclusion that the class and social system is the bearer of women's equality, so that once it is destroyed, women's equality will be resolved to its full extent. However, only then, as shown by the developments in socialist countries, only when the problem is posed and opens up all of these issues to their fullest extent, especially the problem of motherhood, it becomes clear that real women's equality requires us to overcome countless obstacles, and how complex that social problem is. On the other hand, we cannot remain wedded to the conclusion that the capitalist system, according to its class structure, does not permit women's equality. Contemporary life in recent decades, especially, brought about many changes in the position of women in these countries too. Women's advancement in economic, political, and cultural life is of such a momentous character that it represents one historical process; the contemporary world, irrespective of social system, comes face to face with the problem of women's equality so that not even the capitalist system can avoid a certain solution to that problem.

In the international arena, more and more, especially following the Second World War, women's rights are being seen within the frame of human rights in general.

The point of this informative book is to provide as much information as possible on the situation of women in the world, especially in the capitalist world, about this large process and its complexity, which is in full swing. The varying situations of women in countries with different social systems will already be obvious according to the data; even if there will not always be conclusions, comparisons themselves will be imposed. For systematic comparison and analysis, it would be

necessary to have much more information on each individual country, and many more results from sociological research, and an even wider geographic range. Here, we are discussing only a wider presentation of the main problems and occurrences in the contemporary world that relate to basic questions of women's equality, above all in economic and political life. Only where it is essential will there be information on our country, to point out a relevant problem and serve as comparison. However, the analysis of women's positions in socialist Yugoslavia is sufficiently familiar to our reader, to the extent that this analysis has been done, but it is certain that all further changes in the life of Yugoslav women require constant observation and research.

The majority of information in this brochure comes from official documents of the United Nations and its organs, specifically those that are prepared by the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women. Many other data and opinions from economic and sociological publications are also used, and each source is indicated throughout the text.

[...]

The Woman in Politics

The Struggle for Women's Right to Vote

The question often asked in places where women do not have equal rights is: What is more important: economic or political rights? Once at some international conference, a journalist hastily asked me one of those questions: "If women had no rights—which would you fight for first?" With some thought, I responded that it would, nevertheless, be political rights, the right to vote, and the right to be elected to serve in all political representative bodies. I replied that way, but in the same moment I knew that neither was the question well posed, nor was I giving an adequate answer, as those rights are indivisible. Clara Zetkin once said, in a nutshell, that the right to vote without economic freedom is nothing but a bill without value. And that is precisely right when the problem is considered from the standpoint of full and real equality of women in society.

The participation of women in economic life is difficult to determine timewise. Women have generally always worked like men. But women's entry into economic life—in the modern sense of the term, "the right to work" is understood as the departure of women from the home to work, or better said, entering into a wage contract—that breakthrough happened quite a long time ago, at the beginning of the last century, and quite simply and crudely, without many consciously placed demands. With the development of industry, women, and even children, became highly sought-after workers to whom anything could be done: hired to work, fired,

paid less, and, in general, be subject to rougher exploitative machinations than male workers. Women's incursion into economic life goes alongside great progress in economics and technology, by force of socio-economic laws. It represents huge progress, a historical act in the social status of women, one of the most significant changes in the social status of women. That incursion—if not so celebrated with respect to the conditions of work and the extreme lack of protection for women's work—provides the basis from which one can only move forward. Women's mere participation in the economy outside of the home highlighted new problems that society had to resolve: the protection of women's work, the education of women, her civil rights. And political rights, understandably. Ultimately, women's independence and equality is above all based on her work outside the home, on her economic independence. It is almost as if it does not mean much whether she is a voter if her full socio-economic position is not conducive to her independence and real equality.

But nonetheless, women's political rights—the right to vote—are the most visible, loudest, most expressive affirmation of women as citizens with full rights in at least one area of social life. No matter how little they gained in terms of the actual changes in women's positions, inasmuch as those rights, and the equality of women in general, were incomplete and abstract if not associated with real economic independence or other solutions that make women equal to men, they were still, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, one of the strongest women's slogans. And in contemporary times, in countries where women do not have political rights, the right to vote likewise is one of the first demands put forth by women and their organizations, by progressive movements—which are, above all, communist and socialist—and today even by those that cannot be considered progressive on account of many other issues.

[...]

The first demands for the right to vote are regularly linked to the so-called feminist movement. The feminist movement deals with objections about its own limitations precisely because its main feature, especially at the beginning of its existence, of its emergence, was an almost exclusive focus on women's right to vote. As if this solves the problem of women's social equality, as if this is the main goal, and not just a means of solving other problems of women's position in society. The limitations of the feminist movement have been expressed even more and therefore criticized for placing the blame for the status of women in society, for her political disenfranchisement, exclusively on men.

“Besides the fact that the bourgeois suffragettes neither want nor are able to achieve the social liberation of women proletarians, they are incapable of solving the serious new conflicts which will be fought over the social and legal equality of the sexes within the capitalist order. These conflicts will not vanish until the exploitation of man by man and the contradictions arising therefrom are

abolished,” says Clara Zetkin in an article commemorating the twentieth anniversary of Marx’s death.¹¹

This critique certainly and with good reason relates to the feminist movement of a later period, from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when the labor movement was already a carrier of all progressive demands for women’s equality.

But, at the beginning and in the middle of the nineteenth century, it is difficult to raise objection to those first feminists that waged their battle in isolation, solely as a women’s battle, or to their not seeing other causes, socio-political and class-based, but casting all of the blame on men. It was not easy to avoid those errors. Ultimately, the first women who fought for women’s political rights came from the bourgeois class, against whom men of their class stood as usurpers of law and power. No bourgeois revolution has given women rights, not even the right to vote, to women, to its own women, of its own class. This fact should not be ignored when historically determining the attitude toward these bourgeois women’s often lone and quite naïve actions, for whom no one had yet given support from their ranks. For the struggle for women’s rights has quite a long, and not so simple history. In the beginning it was full of surprises, courage, and even adventurism and resistance of its own kind, toward an environment that opposed any thought regarding women’s political equality.

In the history of the struggle for women’s rights, even ineffective struggles—which have been full of delusions, and excessively “female”—can rightly be considered one of the first great strides that women make almost entirely on their own, which do not have the support of any kind of movement, and where not even women themselves are sufficiently enlightened to give that women’s movement momentum. Later, of course, this women’s movement lost its vigor of rebellion, the however limited rebellion of an oppressed sex, which then turned into a feeble women’s action for suffrage, irrespective of all other political and social questions that modern capitalist society opened regarding women’s socioeconomic position, especially working women in wage contracts.

The bearer of power, class-based and all others, especially towards women, was man. This fact would inevitably—along with a lack of knowledge of the social class causes that led to this—paint the first struggles for women’s equal rights with the feminist shade of the struggle against men as guarantors of women’s oppression.

Translated by Suzana Vuljević

¹¹ Editors’ note: The original refers to Clara Zetkin, “Was die Frauen Karl Marx verdanken” [What the Women Owe to Karl Marx], *Die Gleichheit*, March 25, 1903. The translated quote here is from Clara Zetkin, “What the Women Owe to Karl Marx,” in *Selected Writings*, edited by Philip S. Foner (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 95. In Mitrović’s original, she talks about “feminist movement” instead of “suffragettes.”

Rózsa Ignác

Connections to Distant Women through Travelogues

AUTHOR Rózsa Ignác

TITLE *Zebredob-híradó. Kelet-afrikai útinapló* [Zebra Drum News: East African Travelogue]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Budapest: Gondolat, 1968, translated excerpts: 43, 47–48, 50, 119–20, 157–58.

LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rózsa Ignác (1909, Covasna/Kovasna/Kovászna–1979, Budapest) was an actress, writer, and translator. She was born in Transylvania, on the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, into a Hungarian family. Her father, László Ignác, was a pastor and member of the parliament of Romania after the country's unification (1918) as a representative of the Hungarian minority community. His relentless labor for a dignified existence in minority influenced his daughter greatly, and after his death Rózsa moved to Budapest with her mother. She graduated from the Theater Academy in Budapest and worked first in Szeged, moving later to the National Theater in Budapest, where she struggled to secure major roles—she was constantly criticized for the Transylvanian dialect she spoke. Her career as a writer also started at the National Theater, and she married her cousin, János Makkai in the meantime, with whom she had a child, Ádám. Being dissatisfied with her career prospects, she left for Paris as a correspondent for a short while (1939–1940).

She made her breakthrough upon her return to Hungary from France, as she published her first novel, *Anyanyelve magyar* (Mother Tongue: Hungarian) in 1937. Thereafter, she traveled frequently to Transylvania, often incognito, and published a series of books on the lives of Hungarians and interethnic relations. The choice of topic and her style made her a celebrated author of the irredentist Horthy regime. She separated from her husband and raised her son alone, which prompted her to reflect on the difficulty of making a career as a writer and a woman. During the Second World War, she helped rescue Jews from persecution, provoking the attention of the Arrow Cross administration that wanted to capture her, but only in vain. The end of the war found her in hiding. She remained active in the immediate postwar years but was prevented from publishing from 1948 on for two main reasons. First, she was suspicious for being popular during the Horthy regime; second, her preoccupation with the grievances of Hungarian minorities in Transylvania made her work potentially subversive. She did not stop writing though, and literary critics maintain that the best novels she wrote were completed during the early 1950s. Due to her reluctance

to endorse the official narrative about 1956, she could only work on children's books and translations in the second half of the 1950s.

Ignác remained alone in Budapest after her son, a vocal critic of the early Kádár regime, emigrated to the US to reunite with his father, where he became a renowned linguist (Ádám Makkai died in 2020). Ignác, now on her own, slowly started to be able to travel internationally and publish her works again, travelogues for the most part, starting from the late 1950s, as scores of intellectuals who had been repressed in the preceding years experienced a relaxation of cultural policies. The genre was not entirely unknown to her, as she first experimented with travel writing in the early 1940s. Yet, her novels from the early 1950s could only be published posthumously. She died in a traffic accident in 1979. While her travelogues were published in popular book series that made her a household name in the 1960s and 1970s, her literary legacy is largely forgotten.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Anyanyelve magyar* [Mother Tongue: Hungarian] (novel) (Budapest: Dante, 1937); *Levelek Erdélyből* [Letters from Transylvania] (short stories) (Budapest: Dante, 1939); *Keleti magyarok nyomában* [In the Footprints of Hungarians in the East] (travelogue) (Budapest: Dante, 1941); *Az igazi Ibrinkó* [The Real Ibrinkó] (stories for children) (Budapest: Ifjúsági Kiadó, 1956); *Zebradob híradó* [Zebra Drum News] (travelogue) (Budapest: Gondolat, 1968); *Hajdanában Zambiában* [Once upon a Time in Zambia] (children's book) (Budapest: Móra, 1973).

Réka Krizmanics

CONTEXT

Rózsa Ignác's prose was heavily influenced by her experience of living and then escaping a minority existence, only to face different difficulties when she moved to the center of the "mother country," as Hungary had been perceived by Hungarians in Transylvania. Her hard-won literary success at the end of the 1930s was enough to discredit her for a long time in the eyes of the state socialist authorities. Yet, her travelogues testify to her mobility both before and under state socialism, and in these, she expresses various ways of thinking about otherness.

Owing to growing interest in the origins of thinking about colonial others in Eastern Europe, an increasing number of works analyze and assert the existence of colonial fantasies even in those societies that did not participate in colonial enterprises or only to a limited extent.¹ Hungary was no exception in this sense. Thinking about distant bodies and distant lands was shaped both by the impact of Western cultural goods (especially lowbrow adventure literature) and local intellectuals. In

1 See eg. Kalczewiak and Kozłowska, "Introduction," 1–18; Eric Burton et al., "The Travelogue: Imagining Spaces of Encounter," 237–60.

terms of positioning Hungarian culture, they maintained a regional focus, positing Hungarian cultural supremacy compared to the new states that emerged in its neighborhood after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The global horizon was present in the internalization of the global racial order all across the region, a process inherited from earlier periods.² A hierarchical image of peoples was heavily influenced by Herderian ideas about the survival of nations, thus displaying strong cultural, rather than phenotypical concerns, without completely abandoning the latter. The impact of the former was greater than the latter, and only state socialism posed a deliberate challenge to these constructs through the idea of socialist internationalism.

Socialist internationalism promised a non-hierarchical and thus anti-racist way of conducting international relations, especially toward the decolonizing Global South. Currently, there is a debate about whether this promise had been fulfilled or not. Nonetheless, in light of these debates in scholarship, it is interesting to look at Ignác's narrative strategies as she engaged with various socio-cultural settings in the Global South in her travelogues while she was traveling during the times of state socialism. Already an aging writer, she grew up with pre-1945 colonial fantasies, and yet she had been exposed to the premises of socialist internationalism as well. The most prolific women travelogue writer of the period, Ignác belonged to an earlier generation than most other women authors who published in the same series, which makes her accounts all the easier to investigate in terms of such continuities and discontinuities.

It is unclear how she was allowed to travel extensively. Ignác had to wait until the early seventies to be able to visit her son in the US, but many of her trips that she recounted in this literary form she accomplished earlier. Her travelogues should be read as products of a state socialist publishing regime, whose functioning, especially the extent to which different types of censorship—restrictive, prescriptive, self-censorship, etc.—is still not fully understood by scholarship. Therefore, the contextualization of Ignác's work is necessarily incomplete. What we know for sure is that she published the travelogues with the large and prestigious Gondolat Publishers in Budapest. The travelogues appeared in a high number of copies, in subsequent reprints. It is safe to assume that their style and content did at least not seriously diverge from the state's official views. A high number of sold copies in the case of travelogues might allude to a truly broad readership, as the bulk of the population could not even think of seeing the phenomena on display in person. Travelogues enabled armchair traveling in an age when television was already a serious contender but did not yet threaten the primacy of books.

The excerpts stem from one of these travelogues, entitled *Zebradob-híradó* (Zebra Drum News), which Ignác published in 1968. In it, she recounted her travels in

2 For Polish examples see: Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order*, 65, 138, 194.

1966 to Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, which she claimed to have been able to accomplish at the invitation of a childhood friend, who married a former British colonial officer. Ignác, using various means of travel, encountered people both in rural and urban settings, and gave voice to some of her interlocutors in the travelogue. Apart from these sources, she built on existing anthropological-ethnographic knowledge as well, which she made sure to reference. Ignác never fashioned herself as an advocate for women's rights and her engagement with the situation of women of various social status and standing followed from the genre of travelogue itself. She was an experienced traveler both within her home region and to distant lands, having a remarkable restraint in her prose to pass judgement on cultural phenomena that she deemed foreign. Already this made her stand out among the authors of popular travelogue-writers, who were predominantly a generation born and raised in state socialism. Whilst their ideas about otherness were rooted in communist ideology, Ignác, born in 1909, encountered ideas for another half decade. First growing up in an ailing multi-ethnic empire, and later experiencing the traumatized, paranoid, and xenophobic *Zeitgeist* of interwar Hungary, she was exposed to imageries of coloniality mostly through Western cultural products in her youth. Moreover, she was sidelined and penalized based on her parentage multiple times, which gave her a unique way to relate to distant peoples targeted by modernizing/developmental projects.

The excerpts here showcase Ignác's approach to indigenous populations in Africa in general, and women in particular. Her writing aimed not only to portray African societies in their complexity and heterogeneity, but also to educate the readers about language used to describe African people. This language was supposed to resonate with the language African societies used about themselves. The didactic tone Ignác employed to this end was not alien to state socialist travelogues, enabling the transmission of the socialist state's preferred discourses concerning the Global South. Yet, this mindset did not prevent her from echoing "white savior" narratives when it came to the prospect of helping survive the traditional way of life of local communities. As the title of the second small subsection below shows, Ignác saw the Maasai people—similarly to mainstream dialogues in international organizations—in need of saving. One might argue though that she tacitly linked the position of women in this community and access to education (especially for girls) a key issue concerning the future of Maasais. The third excerpt testifies to the resilience of obsession with the body of the "other," especially the woman "other." Ignác did not refrain from discussing male bodies either, but the bodies of women: young, pregnant, nursing, and aging, is an especially pertinent trope in travel literature. State socialist mores and literary culture were rather prudish, thus her erotic undertones (and many of her colleagues) become more apparent.

The title of the fourth excerpt ("Does Her Husband Exploit the Kikuyu Woman?") sounds unusually provocative for Ignác's style. The term "exploitation (*kizsákmányolás*)"

invokes a Marxist vocabulary, a rare occurrence in her prose. However, all she offers is a short summary of the Kenyan author Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938) about the traditional division of labor in the Kikuyu household, without any kind of critical engagement.³ Ignác's observation that prompts this passage—a permanent physical damage of Kikuyu women resulting directly from hard labor—leaves the conclusion to the reader. In contrast, in the excerpt about mothers in Kenya, Ignác allows that uninterrupted body contact may be the most beneficial for babies, as she never saw them agitated during her stay, and her endorsement of baby carriers (as opposed to child care institutions, such as nurseries and kindergartens widespread in socialist countries in Eastern and Central Europe at the time) may be extended to the primacy of motherly care during the child's early age.

Ignác travelled through parts of Africa as a citizen of state socialist Hungary, a patriarchal system that prided itself in advocating for women's equality with men more effectively than regimes on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Ignác also had vivid memories of women's conditions before the Second World War, and her attitude toward African women was informed by this experience as well. Mostly refraining from explicitly evaluating gender relations in the visited countries, the book is full of tacit suggestions. Clear parallels are mostly preserved for childhood memories from rural Transylvania. Another type of comparison that Ignác employed relies on the hierarchical view of people across the globe (the language of developmentalism), signaled by remarks about "qualities" and "levels." Therefore, her account may be read as an idiosyncratic take on far-away lands and peoples—including women—that mirrors diverse strategies of othering, complicating Ignác's otherwise curious, open-minded and caring demeanor.

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Réka Krizmanics

* * *

Rózsa Ignác

Connections to Distant Women through Travelogues

I.

How Many Tribes Can There Be in Kenya?

In 1966, self-conscious African people consider it disrespectful, even an insult, if someone calls them and other non-European, non-white, non-Arab, non-Indian residents of their continent simply "blacks" or even Negroes. Nigerians are not Negroes either, but "Africans," and within that they belong to a *tribe* living according to a shared set of customs in a community of their country. In the eyes of Africans, Negroes are the descendants of those people from the African continent who were taken as slaves centuries ago and who live in the United States today. The large number of former Africans living in Brazil are not Negroes. (What they should be called was not told to me by Tom Nguo, a young teacher from Limuru who wants to be an ethnologist and trains for that privately, after teaching 10 hours a day in two shifts. He would like to become a professor in this field, if a department of ethnology is eventually set up at the University of Nairobi.)

2.

Halfway to Makarina, Giriamas

Already about two miles from Mombasa, we meet more and more coastal women. They walk on the country road, in twos and threes. Each member of a group of three holds a tool for field work: a small hoe, with a handle of 16 inches. Others, again in groups, carry sorghum sheaves on their heads.

"Giriamas," Ilonka⁴ points towards them.

Their upper bodies are naked. They only wear skirts, two wide white skirts folded into pleats on top of each other. The upper one reaches below the hips with only 10 inches, the lower reaches a palm's length above the knee. With their step—also because of their lordosis spine and slightly protruding tailbones—the nearly forty yards of loosely woven, white cotton skirts (the *hando*) are swaying. [...] Giriama women never cover their upper body here, beyond the city, back home in their hut or in the field. Sometimes they wear two rows of glass beads and a bracelet. If they have to go into town, they cover their breasts with a carelessly criss-crossed motley cloth.

Young Giriama women have a beautiful upper body. The sight of their narrow, thin piles of uncovered breasts does not surprise even travelers who are not used to nudity. It seems natural here in the humid heat of the coast, where brown bodies are covered with shiny pearls of perpetual sweat. Their lower legs are crooked, rickety. Their beautiful white teeth shine from under round Mongolian cheekbones.

3.

Carrying Babies

Six-month or two-year-old little Africans get about in the city crouched on their mother's back too (I never saw one in a pram). This woman who lives near the city came in to shop. Or perhaps she is a housewife (a first, second, or third wife) living in an urban working-class residential area. They never entrust their children to someone else nor leave them at home until they are at least two years old. They wear sleeveless, brightly colored cardboard dresses. For the last fifteen years, they are no longer allowed to enter the inner territory of Mombasa bare-chested. Women tie their baby on their back in another colorful cloth, so that the little one, even if it is only five or six months old, and otherwise would not be able to sit, sticks out both legs through the two openings of the cloth wrapped for this purpose; that is, they straddle wrapped in a shawl on their mother's back. (I kept a lookout for months, but did not see or hear any baby crying, whining, or whimpering. As if the

4 Editor's note: The friend who sent Rózsa the invitation to travel.—R.K.

best and safest place for a baby was a cloth holding it on her mother's back.) You cannot take a photo of a child on their mother's back in a way that their eyes can be seen—their mothers cannot be talked into it, they won't give permission even for money. It is not the mothers who should not be photographed. They know what it is. But it is the child! These mothers still believe the superstition that "he who takes the image of a child's eyes, also steals the child's soul."

4.

Saving the Maasai in the Very Last Moment

In the end, the world "moved" not so much to revive the remaining Maasai people and their domestic animals, but rather to save the large game population near the savannahs (with UNESCO help). Partly because of this helping movement, and partly out of tribal self-reliance, two Maasai camps pulled through: the Ol Tukai and the Egolok.

[...]

Maasai women are so freed from the knot of their old customs that they no longer wear several kilograms of metal hoops on their body, they dare to walk on the street, in the community alone, not only if they are accompanied by another wife or under the supervision of their husband (like the woman selling bananas). And they turn up to report to the police alone (like the woman who reported the leopard-hyena case). Only about five percent of the children taught to read and write, as well as to wash themselves and get dressed, are the girls in the Maasai elementary schools.

5.

Do Their Husbands Exploit Kikuyu Women?

I could see up close the skulls of Kikuyu women working in farming; their bald head is indented a finger's length above their forehead from the constant carrying of burdens. This seems to be an indispensable place for the load-carrying belt.

So do their families, their husbands exploit Kikuyu women?

In *Facing Mount Kenya*, Kenyatta proves they do not. It is natural that women carry the burden on their head. They also carry the human in the making, the fetus, in their womb. Women bear the burden. Apart from this, according to the *Facing Mount Kenya*, Kikuyu women do not do *hard* work, as they do not have to fight, kill wild animals, or clear the bush of the virgin land. These are done by their husbands. They only work on the soil made fruitful. Men also build their houses,

and women only have to make the decoration and finish the house, preparing the roof made of palm strings. Among the Kikuyu farmers, the division of labor takes place according to laws that have been established for centuries.

Translated by Beáta Sándor

Esma Redžepova

Songs by a Yugoslav Romani Vocal Icon

TITLE “Hajri Ma Te Dikhe Daje” [May You Not See, Mother]

PERFORMER/AUTHOR Esma Redžepova, arranged by Stevo Teodosievski

ORIGINALLY RECORDED Esma Redžepova – Esma (Amadeo AVRS 9189, 1965), Austrian television show 1968, and many other versions

LANGUAGE Romani

TITLE “A Bre Babi So Kerdžan” [Oh Father, What Have You Done]

PERFORMER/AUTHOR Esma Redžepova, arranged by Stevo Teodosievski and Medo Čun

ORIGINALLY RECORDED Esma Redžepova, uz Narodni Anseml Stevo Teodosievski (Jugoton EPY-3112, 1961)

LANGUAGE Romani

TITLE “A Bre Kako Dilineja” [Hey, Crazy Uncle]

PERFORMER/AUTHOR Esma Redžepova, arranged by Stevo Teodosievski; more recent arrangement by Simeon Atanasov

ORIGINALLY RECORDED Esma, Ansambl Teodosievski: Romski pesni i čočeci (PTC- NL 00121, 1987); and recent versions

LANGUAGE Romani

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/PERFORMER

Esma Redžepova (1943–2016, Skopje, North Macedonia) is perhaps the most famous Romani singer in the world, but the challenges she faced as a Romani woman, and how she overcame them, are not widely known. She not only wrote and performed songs that are still sung today, but she also created a niche for Roma performers on concert stages and served as a model for female Romani vocalists. In addition, she explored the subordination of women in her lyrics and became an icon of Yugoslav multiculturalism. One of US National Public Radio’s 50 Great Voices, Esma emerged as a teenage star, toured internationally for over 50 years, won numerous prizes, gave over 10,000 concerts (including many benefit shows), recorded hundreds of albums, and mentored and fostered 47 children.

Esma was born into a poor Muslim family. Her mother was a seamstress, and her father was a disabled bootblack. As a child, her talent was noticed. She won an amateur singing contest but feared her parents’ wrath because it was considered shameful for women to perform for strangers. Singing was an especially sensitive topic in

her household because her sister Sajka had refused an arranged marriage and ran away to become a café singer, bringing disgrace to the family. Esma resisted her parents' attempts to marry her off in her teens. She was brought to the attention of Stevo Teodosievski (1934–1997), an ethnic Macedonian arranger at Radio Skopje who later became her husband. He wanted to train her as a concert artist (not a café singer), and eventually Esma's parents agreed.

Esma's career with Stevo's ensemble, Ansambl Teodosievski, was an instantaneous success and characterized by daring innovations. She was the first Balkan Romani musician to overcome historical prejudices and achieve commercial success on non-Romani stages; she was the first female Romani artist to record in Yugoslavia; and she was the first woman in Macedonia to sing on (the new medium of) television. Esma gave credit for her success to Stevo, but she herself composed most of her songs and choreographed her performances. Esma strategically used her voice, her body, her costumes, and her stagings to craft a signature Balkan Romani yet cosmopolitan style. Esma displayed her pride in her heritage through singing in the Romani language while modestly performing Romani solo dances wearing traditional Romani costume.

Esma and Stevo strategically crafted an image that drew from the allure of the historical stereotype of the “Gypsy” woman as beautiful, sensual, and fiery, but made her respectable. Esma also embraced Yugoslav multiculturalism via repertoire and costuming; she performed folk songs from all six republics, dressed in the folk costume of each, and sang in every Yugoslav language. She was often summoned by Marshal Tito to his residences to perform, and she sang at the first Non-Aligned Movement Conference in 1961. She further broadened her repertoire to songs from neighboring Balkan countries, and also songs in German, Hebrew, Russian, and Hindi. In addition, she performed in modern clothing with bobbed hair and danced the twist on Austrian television in 1968, showcasing her cosmopolitan, modern identity.

Esma solidified her Romani identity by cultivating ties to India, the Romani homeland. Esma and Stevo made their first trip to India in 1969, followed by two invited trips in 1976 and 1983. In 1976, the two were crowned “King and Queen of Romani Music” at the First World Festival of Romani Songs and Music in Chandigarh. In addition, the ensemble toured to countries where there was a significant Yugoslav migrant population, such as Australia and the US. Thus, Esma became a global singer.

Esma's humanitarian contributions included numerous benefit concerts for orphanages, hospitals, disabled people, victims of natural disasters, etc. She was an honorary president of the Red Cross and won several awards from UNICEF. She had a special interest in women's issues, and in 1995 the Macedonian Association of Romani Women incorporated her name in its title. In 2002, she won the Woman of the Year title from the magazine *Žena* (Woman), and in 2010 she took part in

a United Nations conference on women as part of the Macedonian delegation. In 2000, the American Biographical Institute awarded her their Medal of Honor, and the Sorority of Roma Women proclaimed her Woman of the Millennium. In 2002, Esma received the Mother Teresa Award, was nominated as United Nations Ambassador for Refugees in Macedonia, and was nominated a second time for the Nobel Peace Prize. Although she eschewed activism specifically for Roma (and was criticized by Romani activists for this stance), Esma was a universal humanist, stressing pacificism and cross-cultural understanding. Unfortunately, her legacy is ignored today in North Macedonia, and her home, which she planned to turn into a museum of her life, is in ruins. But she paved the way for future female musicians, and she remains a music icon for Roma around the world.

RECENT RECORDS • *Pomegu dva života* [Between Two Lives], KMP KA005, 2007; *Čekaj živote* [Wait, Life], Mister 128, 2006; *Queen of the Gypsies*, Times Square Records TSQ 2090, 2000.

SELECTED VIDEOS • Esma Redzepova TV Nino in (Turkish), 1960s, <https://youtu.be/jMJlN-w25huc>; “Čhaje Šukarije,” 1965, Austrian show, <https://youtu.be/UcEJzOHH1mw>; “Romano Horo,” 1965, Austrian show, <https://youtu.be/fP9FYpp6p6s>; “Čhaje Šukarije,” Grand TV Serbia, 2007, <https://youtu.be/-M3Qgx6-Zg>; “The ‘Gypsy Queen’ of Macedonia,” CNN, 2011, <https://youtu.be/nTETHbbVXGs>; Esma Redžepova & Folk Masters, 2016, Live on KEXP, Seattle, <https://youtu.be/yfoIwS2e9E>; “Hajri ma te dikhe daje,” from the film *When the Road Bends: Tales of a Gypsy Caravan*, 2006, <https://youtu.be/2eYuF9lG09g>; “Dzelem Dzelem (Romale Chavale),” Zoran Dzorlev TV show, 2010, <https://youtu.be/pooSBRknTsQ>. All accessed December 19, 2023.

Carol Silverman

CONTEXT

Esma’s success is remarkable, considering the long historical discrimination against both Roma and women. Roma are Europe’s largest minority and have long been stereotyped through both criminal and romantic tropes. Assumed to be artistic, passionate, and sexual, Roma are also assumed to be swindlers. As musicians they are revered, but as people they are reviled. In 1950s Yugoslavia, Tito’s policy of *bratstvo i edinstvo* (in Macedonian; *bratstvo i jedinstvo* in Serbo-Croatian, meaning “brotherhood and unity”) embraced multiculturalism, but music production still discriminated against Roma. According to Esma, “many singers passed [as other ethnic groups] because there was an embargo on Romani singers.... I risked a great deal when I said I was Romani and I wanted to sing in my own language.... Romani women were afraid at the time to say they were Roma—they said they were Turkish, Macedonian, Albanian, anything but Roma.... I opened the way for Roma, in the first place, to admit that they

are Roma, and not to be ashamed they are Roma.”¹ At Radio Skopje, Teodosievski was repeatedly told: “Take... other singers—why a Gypsy?” His colleagues said cruelly, “Stevo, why have you brought this Gypsy to disgrace us?”² Exclusion was so virulent that Esma’s songs were not played on Macedonian media for twenty-five years; Esma bitterly recalled: “Two or three persons had closed the doors of Radio Skopje on us.”³ In addition, reviews of Esma’s performances were often racialized, comparing her skin color to “well-baked bread.”

Although Esma’s visual image also drew on historical stereotypes of Romani women, Esma and Stevo cultivated these stereotypes as long as they were positive. Vulnerable groups sometimes self-stereotype when necessary for marketing purposes. Historically, Roma have had few opportunities to alter their imagery and discourse because they have never been in control of their representations.

Esma never labelled herself a feminist, but her song lyrics boldly reveal the dilemmas of women faced with gender and age discrimination, early marriage, arranged marriage, and violence, all intersecting with issues of class. In “Hajri Ma Te Dikhe Daje” (May You Not See, Mother), which was written by Esma and her sister Sajka, a daughter curses her mother for marrying her off to poor villagers, where there is little to eat. Cursing a mother was very bold in the 1960s. The song was always staged as a dramatic lament, with the intended husband portrayed as much older, and with Esma crying as she sings, wearing a black veil. It became one of her signature signs of emotional performance.

“A Bre Babi So Kerdžan” (Oh Father, What Have You Done?) similarly deals with the threat of arranged early marriage, in this case entwined with the issue of an absent father. The lyrics imply that without a father, the family has sunk into poverty, and as a result the daughter has no choice but to marry young to ease the burden on her mother. However, the daughter boldly resists her intended match, speaking directly to him, and telling him she will not give him “her youth.” Esma specifically references the hard life of a new bride who is moving into her husband’s household, according to Balkan patrilocal custom. Fetching cold water was one of the iconic tasks of a new Balkan bride; she was supposed to awaken first in the morning and get water from a communal well for washing and cooking (often carrying heavy jugs) for the whole family. And she was supposed to be the last to go to sleep, after taking care of everyone else’s needs, including cleaning the house, and washing her husband’s and father-in-law’s feet. Balkan proverbs attest that the new bride is “first to rise, last to sleep.” Both age and gender hierarchy are embedded in class analysis in this song, whereby the youngest woman does the most work.

1 Carol Silverman’s interview with Esma Redžepova, May 29, 1997.

2 Teodosievski and Redžepova, *On the Wings of Song*, 95.

3 Katin, *Esma Redžepova-Teodosievka*, 257.

Many other song texts authored by Esma deal with arranged marriage, which was common not only among Roma, but also among all ethnic groups of the Balkans until approximately the 1960s. Some Romani groups have retained the practice. Another common theme is deception in love. “Bolna ležam” (I Am Lying Sick; in Macedonian) recounts the story of a woman who is dying of a broken heart because her lover is marrying her best friend, which Esma explained had happened to a friend of hers. He is in church with his bride while she is in a grave with her youth. Similarly, “Naktareja Mo Ilo Phanlja” (He Closed My Heart with a Key; in Romani) describes how a woman’s heart is broken because her lover deceives her and marries her best friend.

“A Bre Kako Dilineja” (Hey, Crazy Uncle) is one of the few Romani songs that deals directly with male alcoholism and domestic violence. Esma describes the chaos and child abuse when older males neglect their family duties; furthermore, she specifically criticizes violence with the direct question “Why are you breaking things and beating your wife?” In contrast, Esma’s most famous song is “Čhaje Šukarije” (Beautiful Girl), an upbeat text about love, covered by many artists even today.

Esma’s innovative performance strategies were textual, audible, and visual. In her lyrics, she dealt with the challenges of poverty and male domination. In her signature vocal style, she embodied virtuosic ornamented technique and powerful, emotional energy. And in her stagings, she was both Romani, Yugoslav, and cosmopolitan. She boldly overcame the formidable challenges of being a woman and being Romani, to emerge as a global icon with millions of fans.

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Carol Silverman

* * *

Esma Redžepova Songs

Hajri Ma Te Dikhe Daje

Hajri ma te, dikhe daje
So dindžan man tuda
Ko gavutne Roma, daje
But buti kerena, daje
Hari maro hana
Me terni, daje, dade mori
Me da rovava
Ko brazde sovava, daje mori
Hari maro hav.

May You Not See, Mother

May you not see, mother [a curse]
What you did to me
[You married me] to (poor) peasants, mother
They work too much, mother
And eat very little
I’m young, dear mother, father
I’m crying
I sleep in the garden furrow
And eat very little

A Bre Babi So Kerdžan

A bre babi so kerdžan,
tu dindžan
Terni bori me na džav
šudro pani me na anav

Oh Father , What Have You Done

Oh dear father what have you done?
You’ve abandoned me
I won’t be a young bride
I won’t fetch cold water

Ači suži
mo ternipe me tuke na dav
Tri na, na.... terni bori me na džav

Beautiful,
I’m not giving away my youth to you
I won’t be a young bride

A bre babi so kerdžan
tu man tikni tu dindžan
tu man terni tu dindžan

Oh father, what have you done?
You abandoned me when I was small
You abandoned me when I was young

Terni bori me na džav
 čororen me na arakav
 A bre babi so kerdžan
 tu man tikni tu dindžan
 tu man terni tu dindžan
 Terni bori me na džav
 šudro pani me na anav

I won't be a young bride
 I won't find myself poor
 Oh father, what have you done?
 You abandoned me when I was small
 You abandoned me when I was young
 I won't be a young bride
 I won't fetch cold water

A Bre Kako Dilineja

Hey, Crazy Uncle

A bre kako dilineja
 So kereja te šereja

Hey, crazy uncle [an older man]
 What are you doing with your head?

Le le le le le roven o čhavore
 Ov' rovena pe dade rodēna

Your children are crying
 Crying and looking for their father

A bre kako so pijeja
 So pijeja to šero phereja

Hey uncle, what are you drinking?
 Drinking, and filling up your head

A bre kako kaj tov staklo
 Kaj tov staklo, e rakjako
 A bre kako zulumi kereja
 So phageja, te romnja mareja

Hey uncle, where is that glass
 Where is that glass of brandy?
 Hey uncle, you are making a mess
 Why are you breaking things and
 beating your wife?

Translated by Carol Silverman with assistance from Sani Rifati

Vida Tomšič

On the Question of Women's Social Position in the Contemporary World

AUTHOR Vida Tomšič

TITLE "K vprašanju o položaju žensk v sodobnem svetu" [On the Question of Women's Social Position in the Contemporary World]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Teorija in praksa: Revija za družbena vprašanja* [Theory and Practice. Journal of Social Issues] XIII, no. 5–6 (1976): 394–426.

LANGUAGE Slovene

ABOUT THE AUTHOR¹

Vida Tomšič (née Bernot; 1913, Ljubljana–1998, Ljubljana) was a Slovenian lawyer, pre-war communist, member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistična partija Jugoslavije, KPJ) and the National Liberation Front, Minister of Social Affairs (1946), drafter of Yugoslav policies on women and children, member of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia and of Yugoslavia, President of the Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia (Antifašistična fronta žena, AFŽ), President of the Federal Council for Family Planning (akin to Planned Parenthood), part of numerous Yugoslav parliamentary delegations abroad and speaker at several UN conferences (social development, women's rights, childcare), and Professor of Family Law (without a PhD, doctor honoris causa). She received the Order of the People's Hero for her contributions in the National Liberation Struggle (Narodnoosvobodilni boj, NOB) during the Second World War.

Vida Tomšič became a member of the illegal Yugoslav Communist Party in 1934. A year later, she had already spent eleven months in prison. In 1940, she became a member of both the Slovenian and Yugoslav Communist Parties' leaderships and held her first speech about the Communist Party and the woman question. Over the years she kept returning to the topic and developing her initial demands: maternity leave, child care, medical care, workers' rights, equality in education and in professional life, equal pay for equal work, and active and passive voting rights (granted by the first postwar Yugoslav constitution in 1945). Tomšič carried out her work illegally in this period. She gave birth to her firstborn in 1941 under the secret name Marija Pevce. In the same year, she joined the National Liberation Struggle. Her son,

¹ The chapter was written as part of the EIRENE project funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No. 742683; Post-War Transitions in Gendered Perspective: The Case of the North-Eastern Adriatic region).

only a few months old, was left with different people who hid him. When she and her husband Tone Tomšič were arrested and tortured in 1941, fascists tried to break her silence by finding her son, but were unsuccessful. Her husband was sentenced to death, and she was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. After Tone Tomšič was executed, Vida was sent to a fascist concentration camp in Italy, where she refused to do forced labor and convinced her comrades to join her. As a leader of this rebellion, she was sentenced to four months in solitary confinement. Despite the unbearable conditions, she found a way to send her comrades parts of Italian newspapers and encouraged them to learn Italian: she believed they would survive prison only if they occupied their minds.² This remained her *modus operandi* after the war as well: she always kept herself busy.

After Italy's capitulation in October 1943, she was transferred to the camp of the Anglo-American war administration in Carbonara, near Bari. She planned the Party organization in the camp and participated in forming the 1st Overseas Brigade (Prekomorske brigade), where she was deputy political commissar. In December 1943, she returned to Yugoslavia and a year later was elected to the Slovenian National Liberation Council (Slovenski narodnoosvobodilni svet, SNOS). In the last year of the war, she was the editor of *Ljudska pravica* (People's Rights), the newspaper of the Communist Party of Slovenia, and did political fieldwork.³

In 1945, she became the Minister of Social Policy in the first Slovenian national government (until 1946). She married Franc Novak (partisan name: Luka), a former partisan doctor and a gynecologist. She had two more children (and later ten grandchildren).

The worldview of Vida Tomšič was primarily shaped by her mother, a servant, who became pregnant by the son of the family in which she served. From this, Vida Tomšič learned a great deal about the exploitation of women and the exploitation of the proletariat in general. Throughout her entire intellectual and political development, she linked both types of exploitation to class struggle. Vida Tomšič was raised alone by her mother for four years, until the man who impregnated her—a teacher named Bernot—finally agreed to marry her. They had four more children, and when Tomšič's mother became pregnant for the sixth time, she decided to have an abortion. Soon afterward, Tomšič recalled overhearing her mother telling her friend how the priest did not give her absolution: "Think, the priest is sitting there, he doesn't have any idea what it's like to have five children, and he doesn't want to give me an

2 National and University Library, Ljubljana, Slovenia (Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, NUK), MS 1432, Fond of Erna Muser, VIII, 1. 24, Tomšič Vida, "V ljubljanskih in italijanskih zaporih" [In Prisons in Ljubljana and Italy], typescript.

3 Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (Arhiv Republike Slovenije, SI AS) 1413, Box 114, Vida Tomšič, Biography, October 1988, typescript.

absolution.”⁴ Years later, in 1937, Vida Tomšič had an abortion herself.⁵ Through her political activities, she sought the gradual legalization of abortion, initially for social reasons only, but in the 1970s the absolute right of choice was enacted. At the same time, she supported contraception as the best prevention.

She did not perceive women as the fairer sex, but as fighters. She despised the flirtatious femininity promoted in the West and believed that a woman should be a comrade to her partner, not a domestic goddess.⁶ She did not believe that the “woman question” should be separated from addressing social conditions. Although her work is full of Marxist references to the great men of the revolution, she developed her own original ideas, especially on women's rights, the role of the family, and social justice.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • “K vprašanju o položaju žensk v sodobnem svetu” [On the Question of Women's Social Position in the Contemporary World], *Teorija in praksa* [Theory and Practice] 13, no. 5–6 (1976): 394–411; *Izbrani teksti* [Selected Texts] (Ljubljana: Zavod SR za šolstvo, 1980); *Ženske v razvoju socialistične samoupravne Jugoslavije* [Women in the Development of Self-Managing Socialist Yugoslavia] (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1980), English translation: *Woman in the Development of Socialist Self-Managing Yugoslavia*, translated by Margot and Boško Milosavljević (Belgrade: Jugoslovenska stvarnost, 1980).⁷

Manca G. Renko

CONTEXT

As part of the activities of the International Year of Women (1975), several Yugoslav academic and social institutions prepared a conference on “The Social Position of Women and the Development of the Family in Self-Governing Socialist Society.” The conference took place between March 18–20, 1976, in the Slovenian coastal town of Portorož. There, attendees sought to assess critically the theoretical state-of-the-art and the practical achievements of creating an equal position for women in the society of socialist Yugoslavia. Drawing attention to the shortcomings of these processes was not frowned upon, but rather encouraged—as long as the socialist framework itself was not questioned. The congress focused on four main thematic areas: Marxist theory on the social position of women; the family and its transformations; women in the modern world; and research and statistical representation of the situation of women and the family in Yugoslavia. More than fifty papers were presented at the conference, and a selection was published in *Teorija in praksa*

4 SI AS 1413, Box 114, Interview with Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, 4. 6. 1998, typescript.

5 SI AS 1413, Box 114, Interview with Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, 4. 6. 1998, typescript.

6 NUK MS 1432, Fond of Erna Muser, VIII, 1. 24., Tomšič Vida, Govor na plenumu ZŽDS 10. 11. 1958 (Speech at the plenum of the Association of Women Workers' Councils, November 10, 1958), typescript, 2.

7 Editor's note: The translation is of poor quality.

(Theory and Practice), an academic social science journal based in Ljubljana. One of the papers that evolved into an article was written by Tomšič. As one of the most prominent Yugoslav political figures following the end of the Second World War, her paper was given from a position of authority, not meant to be discussed or even criticized. However, the central positions of this paper are a reaction to the UN declaring 1975 the International Women's Year. Her contribution represents a direct confrontation with the prevailing Western-centric view of women, women's issues, and feminism. The translated excerpts here offer a different take on the issue of women in the modern world from that of second-wave feminism, which was often taken for granted as a global discourse and which largely overshadowed other processes and theories that were emerging at the same time.

The World Conference of the International Women's Year took place in Mexico City in the summer of 1975 and it was the first such conference in the UN Decade of Women. At the conference, three objectives were identified for the Decade: full gender equality and the elimination of gender discrimination; the integration and full participation of women in development; and an increased contribution by women towards strengthening world peace. Mexico City was not the first international stage for Vida Tomšič, who had continuously worked at the international level. She participated in the sessions of the General Assembly of the UN (1954, 1970) and in working groups organized by the UN on social development, women's rights, childcare, and family planning. She was also a member of the Board of International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) in Santo Domingo (1979–1985). She was the Yugoslav representative to the Social Development Commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from 1960 to 1963 and again from 1971 to 1974. She chaired the Commission in 1963.

One of the most vital outcomes of the Conference in Mexico City was the confrontation of multiple forms of women's political agency, predominately liberal vs. socialist visions. The first clash between the two concepts was their very attitude towards feminism. Vida Tomšič saw feminism as a bourgeois movement of more or less privileged ("white") intellectuals fighting for their own interests. This is a well-known socialist perspective, which she had already emphasized at her first ever public appearance, the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in Zagreb (1940). She never really believed in a separate woman question. Instead, she insisted on the fundamental reshaping of class structures. Tomšič blamed (Western) feminists for their inability to see beyond the capitalist system. She saw the efforts of Western second-wave feminists only as a documentation of women's lives under capitalism, largely lacking the ability to reshape their socio-economic conditions. The consistency of Vida Tomšič's thought from her initial public engagement to the conference in Mexico City is also reflected in the fact that she remained faithful to the idea of the importance of public administration. Healthcare, paid maternity leave, childcare, education, the transfer of

domestic work to public services, planned parenthood, and workers' rights were in her opinion prerequisites for women's equality, which could later lead to women being equal to men in the public and professional spheres. She did not see the problem of inequality in the biological destiny of women, but in capitalist socio-economic relations, which produced extreme poverty for the majority of the world. As long as there was global economic inequality, she claimed, there would also be all other inequalities, including that of gender.⁸ She believed in the international struggle against inequality and treated the Non-Aligned Movement as its primary terrain. Vida Tomšič was dedicated to abolishing every kind of discrimination between people and nations, whether racial, national, social, or based on biological sex. She insisted on new relations between people and between nations. To be non-aligned meant to organize a struggle on a global scale, since this was, she believed, the only possibility to fight for freedom.

Vida Tomšič regularly wrote, lectured, and was publicly engaged. However, her persona as a "political worker" (*politična delavka*), active for almost half a century, overshadowed the essence of her intellectual contributions. Besides her heroism during the Second World War, she is mainly remembered for her political work, especially for the laws she enforced. The achievements most often attributed to her are the exercise of women's suffrage, the legalization of abortion, and equal rights for children born in and out of wedlock. In the shadow of her *realpolitik* in unenviable times, her valuable intellectual reflections on unsustainable global inequalities, international integration, and the transformation of the family are still waiting to be adequately illuminated.

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Manca G. Renko

* * *

Vida Tomšič

On the Question of Women's Social Position in the Contemporary World

I. The United Nations Defines the Question of Women in the Contemporary World as a Global Issue

[...]

In an era when the world is convulsed by the well-known crisis of global capitalism and the world's societal problems are intensifying, the question of *the societal position of women* has been brought to the fore—as one element in a complex situation, as additional proof of the obsolescence of the old, as a humanitarian question, as a question of human rights, and as a question of socioeconomic development and the struggle for peace. In 1972, the UN resolved that 1975 would be International Women's Year. The significance and meaning of this year was defined in the following programmatic form: "equality, development, peace." The UN appealed to both political mechanisms and the global public to explore the cause of the pronounced differences between legal proclamations and reality in this domain. Women themselves were asked to respond as well, but at the time the question posed was a political one, framed as the prerogative of each individual nation. [...]

II. Differences and Dilemmas in Resolving the Woman Question

[...]

How should we approach the woman question? asked various neo-feminist movements,⁹ which were, among others, responsible for the UN's decision to tackle the issue in the first place. Here, I would like to briefly describe how the feminist movement (insofar as we can speak of a single unitary movement—I am of the opinion that we cannot) resurged after the Second World War and began to articulate the questions that were most relevant to women. At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, feminist movements had emerged mostly through the efforts of (somewhat) educated bourgeois women. This was a period when the theory and practice of inequality and the unequal value of women was dominant. To take just one example, Clara Zetkin, even within the workers' movement, had to struggle against bourgeois prejudices and the prevalent conception of women as men's economic and social competitors. Subsequent socialist revolutions and national liberation struggles entirely dismantled such positions. They did so not merely in theory, but, in the first place, in a practical sense. During the Second World War, women everywhere became involved in all aspects of the economy. Their pronounced role in anti-fascist national liberation struggles was particularly important. However, after the war's end, the patriarchal conviction that women belong exclusively in the home reasserted itself, particularly in capitalist nations and most notably in the United States (...) ¹⁰ The idea of motherhood and housekeeping as a woman's primary tasks was promoted quite successfully for a period of time (...). In industrially developed countries and in the context of class exploitation, the conviction that girls ought to marry and devote themselves to their husbands and children led first and foremost to discrimination against employed women who experienced difficulties in entering certain professions and were—in ways that were entirely legal—paid unequally for the same work that men did. Publicly financed childcare addressed only the most urgent social questions. Women were almost entirely prohibited from participating in decision-making about public issues.

9 Editor's note: Here, Tomšič refers to what we know most commonly as second-wave feminism, and not what is described in the chapter entitled "New Feminism," authored by the Editorial Board of *Žena danas*. It was a common name in the Yugoslav context of the 1970s and 1980s. Feminists of the time in the Anglophone world also referred to themselves as "new feminists," and the feminists who appeared in Yugoslavia at around the same time referred to themselves with the same name. See, in this volume, entries by Dunja Blažević, Nadežda Čačinović, Blaženka Despot, Slavenka Drakulić, Rada Iveković, Sanja Iveković, Vesna Kesić, Jasenka Kodrnja, Nada Ler-Sofornić, Silva Mežnarić, Lepa Mladenović and Biljana Branković, Žarana Papić, Lydia Sklevicky, Suzana Tratnik and Nataša Sukić.

10 Editor's note: Tomšič's texts are often transcripts of her speeches, where she used very long sentences that needed to be shortened for publication. (...) marks where the original was shortened, and [...] marks where the published original was shortened for this publication.

Women everywhere began to vigorously resist this state of affairs. In the United States, these were primarily white, female intellectuals. [...]

The feminist movement situates the issue of female participation in decision-making procedures at the forefront of its concerns. Because there has been no apparent progress regarding this aspect of public life, feminists proclaim the contemporary order to be a male world, one which women cannot and should not even try to enter. The primary characteristic of the new postwar feminism is that it largely fails to move beyond gender relations and engage questions of class. (...) Although certain advocates of women's rights who are professed feminists have discovered the Marxist critique of women's discrimination, the majority nonetheless continues to operate narrowly—lacking a path to movements that would agitate for the fundamental reshaping of class structures—or even to reveal, in their own ways, the weakness of class-based workers' revolutionary movements. In this respect, it is worth mentioning a certain position that became prominent during the International Women's Year in 1975. Numerous active feminists from the world's most developed countries claimed that development and increasingly high standards of living themselves, as well as voting rights and other similar gains, do not in their experience offer real solutions for women. Moreover, a number of bourgeois economists argued that industrial development in less advanced countries only dismantled old social structures in which women were still able to occupy a certain role. In contrast, they claimed, industrialization transforms the woman who was once a housewife, a producer, or a small businesswoman, into an inhabitant of an overpopulated city, incapable of adaption, increasingly dependent on her husband, scraping by in shantytown suburbs or remaining in the village, now living with a double burden. These critiques of industrialization—largely as it unfolds in capitalist countries—underestimated demands for faster economic development as a precondition for transforming women's societal position, and neglected the questions of planned capitalist industrialization, improved economic prospects for both women and men, corresponding development in rural areas, etc. Instead, they mostly advocated educational solutions. (...) In this way, the feminist movement again exposed its misreading of exploitation, whether assessed in individual nations or by global measures. This misreading rested on the presumption that high standards of living are meaningless if even women in developed countries do not enjoy full equality. (...) Despite the many excellent analyses by feminists of the impossible conditions that have the most detrimental impact on women, their solutions to such problems were nonetheless inadequate, as they—in one way or another—objectively defended the contemporary global order and its social structures. (...) While neo-feminism remedied this error by thoroughly documenting life under capitalism—its unsustainability and dehumanizing, alienating procedures—it still approached the issue as if the independent struggles of women across the

world might overcome these phenomena, thus falsely assuming that all women can be treated as a unitary social structure. [...]

III. Answers to the Open Questions and Dilemmas posed by UN Forums on the Woman Question

[...]

The unequal position of women was illuminated through the distinct frameworks of individual societies on the one hand and the unequal global division of labor on the other. The still dominant division of labor according to gender lines is primarily related to the patriarchal form of the family as well as to other anachronistic social structures. In this respect, a significant consensus was developed regarding the importance of women's direct involvement in social development through labor. In a Marxist formulation, the aim was to overcome the model of the patriarchal marriage and family, which in turn fundamentally depends on the private ownership of the means of production, the legitimization of ownership over and against labor, and the anonymous work of women in an individualistic economy and family model. If women seek work outside the home under conditions of capitalism, it is they themselves who must suffer the consequences of their "double" burden, as well as a greater degree of exploitation than the male worker experiences.

[At the United Nations World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico, at the 60th Session of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva in June 1975, and at the 30th Session of the UN General Assembly at the end of 1975] the position was developed that both the societal position of women and social development as such required the direct involvement of women in labor, national economic developments, political life, and indeed all functions of decision-making and administration. The engagement of women in the totality of the social fabric is not a gesture of paternalistic charity to women, but should rather be understood as an innovative structure of productive forces and relations. This new structure is a crucial issue for the development of every society and the world as a whole. It is highly significant that we have reached these shared conclusions despite our numerous differences about more specific issues. These conclusions juxtapose the function of the mother and housewife with that of the woman as a worker or direct producer. The conflicts that emerge between these two functions must be addressed and resolved as a collective social question. This conception stands in stark contrast to previous approaches where even certain global documents stipulated "aid to women," requiring them to adopt new functions while their position within the family remained unchanged.

[...]

Ultimately, in the context of the emancipatory struggles of both men and women, the conclusion that the development of contemporary forms of equality—equality understood as taking place between persons and genders—should not be viewed as a self-generating, elementary process is extremely significant. Conferences on the subject raised calls for the design of plans and strategies to implement suitable changes as dictated by both national and international standards. Such changes—as we Marxists affirm—do not occur merely through the functioning of economic laws. The conferences appealed to governments to intentionally and systematically approach this issue as one of the central questions of development. Today, it is widely accepted that a nation's development, if it is measured only by the percentage of economic growth, does not accurately reflect improvements in the quality of life of its citizens. If planned economic development is to have positive consequences for all individuals, it must necessarily include women in industrial growth, the improvement of agriculture, and all other societal activities. While this approach is becoming increasingly common, nations still lack the experience that must necessarily complement a theoretical understanding of the problem. The inclusion of women in development intervenes deeply in prevailing ways of life, which is why an inquiry into such questions is crucial for all nations. The potential consequences when this view of men and women's roles in various domains is implemented—to take two examples, in the case of housing policies and the concept of violence—have been thoroughly explored. Particular attention has been devoted to democratic forms involving all people, and especially women, as a means of promoting female societal involvement and the mobilization of citizens' potential in the development of all states across the globe.

[...] The unity of women in the world, from developing and developed countries alike, cannot be a unity of sex, but can only be built in a common struggle to limit exploitation in national and international contexts, which is in the vital interest of all. Bridging the gulf in development between various countries urgently requires the world's wealthiest nations to cease their limitless, global exploitation, and also to implement changes within their own borders that curb the exploitation and discrimination of domestic workers. In the context of the necessary social changes developed countries must undertake, the most crucial steps involve the redistribution of wealth across the broadest mass of workers—these are measures that can be evaluated with the concept of quality of life. In addition, the improvement of public administration in the domains of childcare, education, healthcare, etc., is a necessary prerequisite for women's equality. The global proportions of are caused not by the “biological destiny” of, but by the necessity to change contemporary socio-economic relations in a world order that produces extreme poverty in the majority of the world, while simultaneously manipulating the inhabitants of developed countries. The struggle against the discrimination of workers

who otherwise enjoy different stages of development—an issue that is particularly highlighted by the discrimination of women—serves as the foundation for relating the women's movement to the general struggle for the transformation of national and labor structures.

Thus, the situations of both women and men require profound changes. These changes can only occur when the lives of individuals are transformed in conjunction with their mentality, that is, with their consciousness. The struggle against the discrimination against women, and the advocacy of such transformations, as described above, serve as one component of the contemporary global struggle against imperialism and hegemonism, colonialism and racism. This struggle is waged in the name of equality and collaboration among developing and developed countries. This struggle occurs in each nation individually. On the global stage, it is best represented by socialist nations and, in particular, by the remarkable Non-Aligned Movement. [...]

Translated by Lukas Debeljak

Marija Gimbutas

An Interview about Prehistoric Matriarchy

AUTHOR Marija Gimbutas (interviewed by E. Sliesoriūnienė)

TITLE “Į Vilnių—įkvėpimo” [To Vilnius, for Inspiration]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Tarybinė moteris* [Soviet Woman], no. 7 (1981): 14.

LANGUAGE Lithuanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marija Gimbutas (née Birutė Alseikaitė; later Marija Birutė Alseikaitė-Gimbutienė; 1921, Vilnius–1994, Los Angeles) was born in 1921 in Vilnius, annexed to Poland at that time, to a family embedded in Lithuanian intellectual circles, including such figures as Jonas Basanavičius and Vilhemas Storosta-Vydūnas.¹ Characteristically of her parents' milieu, she grew up showing interest in Lithuanian folklore, and became committed to the Lithuanian national struggle early on. After starting her studies in Kaunas, she transferred to the newly reestablished Vilnius University, when Vilnius was returned to Lithuanian hands in 1939. There, she chose archaeology as her major, and studied under Jonas Puzinas, the founder of scientific archaeology in Lithuania. Gimbutas studied, got married, and gave birth to her first child during the time when the country was ravaged by two foreign occupations: the first Soviet occupation that started in June 1940, and the German occupation between June 1941 and 1944. The first Soviet occupation was tragic for Gimbutas, as she saw many of her relatives deported and killed by the Soviet government as part of the systematic annihilation of the local cultural and political elites. While the Jewish community was cruelly obliterated during the German occupation, it was a more stable time for Gimbutas's family, who were ethnic Lithuanians.

The return of the Red Army in summer 1944 forced Gimbutas and her family to flee to the West together with thousands of other Lithuanians. After escaping through German-occupied Poland and Austria, she greeted the end of the Second World War as a displaced person in the French occupation zone in Germany. After the war she entered Tübingen University, where she finished her PhD in 1946, published her dissertation on prehistoric burials in Lithuania, and gave birth to her second child. Gimbutas started to publish popular scientific articles on Lithuanian prehistory and

¹ Jonas Basanavičius (1851–1927) was an activist and proponent of the Lithuanian National Revival. Vilhemas Storosta-Vydūnas (1868–1953), mostly known as Vydūnas, was a teacher, poet, humanist, philosopher and writer. He was one of the leaders of the Prussian Lithuanian national movement, who also played a prominent role in the theosophical movement in East Prussia.

folklore already during her studies in Lithuania, and continued doing so in diaspora magazines. The most prominent topic in her texts was the old pagan religion and its particular role in the revival of authentic Lithuanian culture in modern times.

In 1949, Gimbutas's family managed to emigrate to the United States, where she was quickly accepted as a research assistant at Harvard University. The academic work was unpaid, however, and Gimbutas had to take up menial jobs to support the struggling family. In 1954, she gave birth to her third daughter. Despite unfavorable financial circumstances and the generally restrictive gender roles in postwar United States, Gimbutas soon established herself as an expert in Eastern European archaeology, began to receive prestigious funding for her research, and was made Fellow at the Peabody Museum at Harvard in 1955. Already in 1956, Gimbutas proposed her Kurgan hypothesis, which placed the original homeland of Proto-Indo-European (PIE) speakers in the Pontic-Caspian steppe. This hypothesis, nowadays generally accepted and recently supported by genetic research, became the cornerstone of her academic career. With the help of her extensive scholarly network, which included the linguist and pioneer of structural linguistics Roman Jakobson (1896–1992) and many prominent archaeologists, Gimbutas was offered an appointment at the University of California. After separating from her husband, she moved with her three daughters to Los Angeles and in 1964 became Professor of European Archaeology and Indo-European Studies at the University California, Los Angeles. In the following two decades, Gimbutas conducted five major excavations in Southeastern Europe and published multiple books and articles, becoming one of the most prominent authorities in her field.

Beginning in the 1970s, Gimbutas's focus shifted from the Bronze Age to the Neolithic, with a particular focus on culture and religion. In 1974, she proposed the Old Europe hypothesis, wherein a peaceful, egalitarian, women-centered and Goddess-worshipping civilization had existed in Europe before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans. This idea was met with skepticism in the archaeological community, but instantly grabbed the attention of second-wave feminists, who found it an inspirational alternative to patriarchy. Despite her anti-communism, Gimbutas visited the Soviet Union a few times, starting in 1960, aiming to stay in touch with her relatives and the cultural elite in Lithuania. Her visits fostered interest in prehistoric religion and influenced anti-establishment subcultures, especially the neopagan movement. Her book on the prehistoric Balts and some of her popular articles were published in the Soviet press already in the 1980s, but she became even more popular in Lithuania after the declaration of independence in 1990, including, also, among post-socialist feminists. After a struggle with cancer which lasted over a decade, Gimbutas passed away in 1994.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Ancient Symbolism in Lithuanian Folk Art* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1958); *The Balts* (New York: Praeger, 1963); *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe: 7000 to 3500 BC; Myths, Legends, and Cult Images* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

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Rasa Navickaitė

CONTEXT

Late socialism in the Lithuanian SSR, like elsewhere in the Soviet Union, was marked by economic and socio-political stagnation and disillusionment with communist ideology. Although the inclusion of women in education and the workplace and declarative support for women's emancipation never disappeared from the Soviet agenda, the underlying traditionalist assumptions about the "natural differences" between genders became more commonplace in this period. The ubiquitous women's magazine *Tarybinė moteris* (Soviet Woman), which ran between 1952 and 1989, was an important propaganda tool and shaped women's self-perceptions as it balanced between communist ideas of gender equality and latent beliefs in a special "womanly" mission, which later resurfaced during perestroika. This tension can be seen in the interview with Marija Gimbutas from 1981 featured here, where she is asked about her professional achievements while at the same time implying her responsibility for child-rearing and household chores. The part of the conversation where the journalist seamlessly asks Gimbutas about "the times when Europe was ruled by women," and "the relics of matriarchal culture" in contemporary Lithuania is even more telling about the specific national gender ideology at that time.

Gimbutas started developing her ideas on prehistoric matristic culture, which she named Old Europe, during her excavations in Southeastern Europe in the 1960s and the 1970s. She presented them for the first time in the book *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe: 7000 to 3500 BC; Myths, Legends and Cult Images* (1974) which was met with resistance by the academic community, but was instantly embraced by the feminist art and spirituality movement in the United States. Gimbutas's hypothesis that authentic European culture before the arrival of warlike and hierarchical Indo-Europeans was matristic, matrilineal, peaceful, egalitarian, and Goddess-worshipping inspired radical feminism, which aimed to challenge the predominant patriarchal thinking in contemporary times. Although Gimbutas never called herself a feminist, she was supportive of the women's movement and developed a close relationship with the neopagan Goddess spirituality circles in 1980s California, where she lived. In her books and articles, starting in 1974, she advocated a vision of society that was characterized by the equality of sexes, a non-hierarchical, non-violent, and

environmentally friendly structure, with women's sexual freedom and political leadership. This makes her thought comparable to (and her texts indeed appeared next to) a number of second-wave feminist thinkers, such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Mary Daly, Audre Lorde, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and others.²

Gimbutas found it important to spread her ideas in Lithuania as well, even during the Soviet period, when the general attitude of the Lithuanian diaspora regarding any relations with the Soviet Union was negative—it was seen as a legitimization of the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states. Gimbutas first visited the Soviet Union in 1960, and returned again for a longer trip in 1968, when she was allowed to give a lecture at Vilnius University. Gimbutas's work was known to some people already, as her book on Lithuanian folk art³ was unofficially translated and circulated underground. Her visit coincided with and probably reinforced a rise of interest in folklore, mythology, and ethnic traditions, and the revival of paganism in Lithuania.⁴ In the 1970s, the Soviet Lithuanian Encyclopedia dedicated considerable space to Marija Gimbutas and her scientific achievements. Even more influential was Gimbutas's visit to Soviet Lithuania in 1981, when her lecture series gathered an audience of more than 500 people. It was during this visit that Gimbutas gave an interview to *Tarybinė moterys*, published here. In the 1980s, her articles on Old Europe appeared twice in the magazine *Mokslas ir gyvenimas* (Science and Life),⁵ and in 1985 her book on prehistoric Balts was officially translated and published by a state publisher in the Lithuanian SSR.⁶

Gimbutas' biographers would later emphasize that her works were censored in Soviet Lithuania and portray her almost as a dissident.⁷ It is however quite clear that the Soviet state gradually accepted Gimbutas's scholarly work and her ideas on Old Europe, and even put in effort to publicize them. Since the 1960s, the Communist authorities in Lithuania encouraged and supported interest in prehistoric Baltic culture, beliefs, and rituals.⁸ They saw the interest in neo-paganism and the particular fascination with Lithuanian folk culture as politically non-threatening (unlike the Catholic Church) and essentially compatible with Soviet ideology.⁹ These reasons might have contributed to the relative acceptance of Gimbutas's works in late socialism, when she could give lectures and get published even before perestroika.

2 Spretnak, *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*; Plaskow and Christ, eds., *Weaving the Visions*.

3 Gimbutas, *Ancient Symbolism in Lithuanian Folk Art*.

4 Trinkūnas, "Baltiškioji Marijos Gimbutienės tyrinėjimai."

5 Marija Gimbutienė, "Senoji Europa ir pilkapių kultūra" [The Old Europe and Kurgan Culture], *Mokslas ir gyvenimas*, no. 7 (1981): 19–22; Marija Gimbutas, "Senųjų europiečių raštas" [The Old European Script], *Mokslas ir gyvenimas*, no. 5 (1985): 29–31.

6 Marija Gimbutienė, *Baltai priešistoriniais laikais: etnogenezė, materialinė kultūra ir mitologija* [The Balts in Prehistory: Ethnogenesis, Material Culture, and Mythology] (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1985).

7 Marler, "Marija Gimbutas: Tribute to a Lithuanian Legend."

8 Rudling, "The Cult of the Balts."

9 Putinaitė, *Šiaurės Atėnų tremtiniai*.

The interview in *Tarybinė moteris* shows how Gimbutas's hypothesis of prehistoric "matriarchy" could be read as reconcilable with the Soviet gender equality paradigm. It did not differ fundamentally from the theory of social evolution proposed by Friedrich Engels (except that Gimbutas did not see matriarchy as an "inferior" stage compared to those coming after it), and did not advocate any substantial agenda for women's liberation in the present. While in the context of radical feminist movements in the Anglo-Saxon world, Gimbutas's ideas were seen by some as a disruptive challenge to patriarchy, in the context of the Soviet Union, with its illusory achievement of gender equality, they could be read as a reaffirmation of the special role of "femininity" in socialist society, and an idealization of the peaceful character of Lithuanian folk culture. Despite, or perhaps because of this ambiguity, Gimbutas later became an important inspirational figure for the revival of Lithuanian feminism in the 1990s.¹⁰ She influenced feminist academics and artists, and, in 1995, became a reference point for the Lithuanian Women's Party, established by Kazimira Prunskienė, the first Prime Minister of Lithuania. Her ideas on women's ancient power seemed both inspiring and non-threatening, as they did not carry the word "feminism" with them, and instead suggested the search for a harmonious society without gender conflict.

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Rasa Navickaitė

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Marija Gimbutas interviewed by E. Sliesoriūnienė To Vilnius, for Inspiration

In this issue of our magazine, we welcome archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, visiting the Soviet Union on exchange from the University of California. While here, she held a series of seminars on European archaeology for the students of Vilnius University; she also visited Moscow, Novosibirsk, Kemerovo, and Samarkand, where she became acquainted with their archaeological scholarship and gave lectures about her own research.

Most international scholars continue to disagree about where the Indo-Europeans originated. You've devoted much of your own scholarly work to this topic. Professor, please say a few words about this. What conclusions have you drawn?

I enjoy talking about the synthesis of different sciences and complex solutions to problems. The great achievement of the hard sciences is radiocarbon dating, which revolutionized archaeology, even rendering many of our findings outdated. The Indo-European question, for nearly 200 years examined only by linguists, was thus seen in a new light, raising the question of how archaeology should address it. I published my first papers on this topic in 1963.

From 1967 to 1980, I led archaeological excavations in Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy. These investigations and many of our findings convinced me yet again that Indo-European culture could not have originated in Central Europe.

In 1956, at an international ethnologists' conference, I referred to the Kurgan (burial mounds) hypothesis, which has now been generally accepted in discussions about Indo-European migrations to Central Europe.

In 1972, I introduced the term "Old Europe" into the archaeological literature. The term does not refer to Indo-European culture, but to an entirely different culture which preceded the appearance of the Indo-Europeans in Europe. The arrival of the Indo-Europeans led to contact between two cultural systems, but ultimately the mobile, horse-riding, war-like transmitters of Kurgan culture transformed the culture of Old Europe over the course of the subsequent 2000 years, i.e., they conquered the matriarchy and established patriarchy.

Interest in the matriarchy persists. Professor, please elaborate on the civilization of Old Europe as you conceptualize it. What do the archaeological findings tell us about Europe when it was ruled by women?

I consider Old European civilization to have originated c. 6500 BCE. At this time, we find agriculture: wheat, barley, peas, and vetch. Animals had been domesticated, but not yet horses. This was a sedentary farming culture, with no knowledge of weapons. For example, large copper mines were excavated near Stara Zagora. Here, around 4500 BCE, jewelry and various tools, but not weapons, were being produced using copper still in its soft form.

We now have a good number of indications that metallurgy appeared in Europe itself and was not brought to Europe from elsewhere as was believed previously. This is supported by research by other archaeologists including Dr. E. N. Černych (Moscow, 1978), and Dr. B. Jovanović (Belgrade, 1971).

Old Europe was familiar with the wheel and the cart. These have been found in archaeological excavations in Romania and Bulgaria and radiocarbon-dated to the 5th century BCE. The cart, it turns out, was discovered in Old Europe and not brought to Europe from Mesopotamia, as was previously thought.

This was a nearly urbanized culture. We now know of a 2.5-km-length settlement of the Vinča culture in Yugoslavia and settlements over an area of 300 hectares in Western Ukraine. The homes (sometimes several stories tall) were built in open areas, very rarely reinforced or entrenched with ditches. The living space was made up of two to four rooms. The floors were made of split logs and fired clay. Bread was baked in home ovens, but meals were cooked outside.

Old Europe would seemingly have developed into an urban culture had it not been arrested at its peak. When the Indo-Europeans arrived, the culture of Old Europe continued in the Aegean Sea region in Crete until it was eventually wiped out even there.

During the peak of Old Europe's flourishing, 5500–4500 BCE, was when copper metallurgy spread in the Danubian region. Ceramics used for various rituals and functions were created there; these were decorated with polychromes, gold, and sgraffito. We have many sculptures which allow us to establish an entire pantheon of goddesses. Only two percent of these sculptures depict male subjects. Central to the pantheon is the Great Goddess, her body eternally creating: birthing and breastfeeding. The birth-giving mother and the birth of her child is the primary motif. The Great Goddess (in ceramics and sculpture) has her own artistic symbolism: the head of the female bird, with large breasts and a certain recurrent geometric or spiral pattern. This pattern has its own hieroglyphs which require new Columbuses and Champollions to decipher them.

Professor, you've mentioned in your lectures that there are many relics of matriarchal culture in Lithuanian folk art, mythology, and folklore...

Yes, from the perspective of an archaeologist, there are several chronological layers within our mythology. In my opinion, the deities of Baltic mythology like Laima, Giltinė, Laumė, and Ragana are manifestations of the very same Great Goddess, the goddess of life and death.

In Latvian songs, Laima always assists the birthing mother; she saves her. Laima is the spinner of fortune in the life of humans, determining their fate. She spins, weaves, and cuts, winding their life thread on her spindle. Upon death, the thread breaks. Similar motifs are found in the mythologies of the Germanic and Slavic peoples, as well as others. Laima appears at the beginning of life; she reappears as Giltinė at the end. Laima is tasked with caring for the sick and determining which lives must be terminated. There are many such motifs in Lithuanian folklore.

We can reconstruct a great deal from such "feminine relics" in the mythology. I'm convinced that a considerable portion of Lithuanian mythology is 10,000 years old. The feminine element of Lithuanian mythology remains despite its suppression by Indo-European (masculine) mythological imagery: Perkūnas, *velnias* [the devil], etc.

Whether in pre-historic times or today, women have never lacked curiosity. I'm curious about how you raised your three now adult daughters. How do you manage your home life? Do you have any hobbies?

I don't pretend to know the secrets to raising children... But I do enjoy keeping my home neat and tidy. And I do all the gardening myself. I have a dog, he's my protector.

I understand that the last time you visited Vilnius, your birthplace, was ten years ago. How do Vilnius and its residents look to you today?

It's only when I walk along the winding streets of the Old Town that I remember my childhood. The newer parts of Vilnius have expanded so dramatically.

My encounters with *vilniečiai* [the residents of Vilnius] have been warm, bringing back many beautiful memories, and inspiration.

Thank you for this conversation.

Translated by Jura Avizienis

Elena Lagadinova

Statement at the Nairobi Conference

AUTHOR Elena Lagadinova

TITLE “Statement by Mme Elena Lagadinova, Head of the Delegation of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria (Nairobi, July 16, 1985)”

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Unpublished document from Elena Lagadinova’s personal archive.

LANGUAGE English

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elena Lagadinova (1930, Razlog–2017, Sofia) was born the daughter of a poor carriage driver. At the age of eleven, she began running medicine and messages to the communist partisans hiding out in the Pirin Mountains during World War II. In 1944, after gendarmes burned her home to the ground, she became the youngest female partisan fighting against the Nazi-allied Bulgarian monarchy. Her code name was “The Amazon.”

After World War II, she married a fellow partisan and moved to the Soviet Union where she pursued a doctorate in agrobiolgy at the prestigious Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy between 1948 and 1953. She had two children in the USSR and, after earning her degree, she completed two research internships in Sweden and the United Kingdom where she learned some English in addition to her fluent Russian. When she returned to Sofia, she was appointed as a research associate at the Plant Breeding Institute within the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In 1959, the government of Bulgaria awarded Lagadinova the prestigious Order of Cyril and Methodius, in recognition of her scientific achievements in the successful breeding of a hybrid of wheat and rye.

In 1968, Lagadinova reluctantly left her scientific career to become the president of the newly reorganized Bulgarian Women’s Committee, just as she gave birth to her third child. Together with that of her colleagues, Lagadinova’s research and advocacy led to a special 1973 Politburo decision: “Enhancing the Role of Women in the Building of a Developed Socialist Society.” In 1975, as head of the Bulgarian delegation, Lagadinova distributed English translations of this progressive Politburo decision to the assembled delegates to the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City, highlighting her country’s achievements in supporting women and families.

Between 1976 and 1985, hundreds of women from Asia and Africa visited Bulgaria on the invitation of the Women’s Committee, and Lagadinova set up a special training school for women’s activists from the Global South. She also traveled extensively,

building coalitions with women across many different political divides. She led the Bulgarian delegation to the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985, and later served as a board member for the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) between 1986 and 1988. In 1991, the Claremont Graduate School in California awarded Lagadinova their President's Medal of Outstanding Achievement. The honorary citation read:

The world, Elena Lagadinova, is your deliberately chosen arena. Dedicated resistance fighter, recognized scientist, and stateswoman acclaimed by the international community of nations, your contributions make a trajectory that inspires and astounds us. Dedicated to improving the position of women in all countries around the globe, you have the wisdom to conceptualize women's issues not as theirs alone, but as [society's] most fundamental challenges... Long before a new world order emerged, you envisioned one. You acted as if it already existed, and through your actions you contributed to its emergence. You reached beyond the narrow confines of party and nationality to create an international network of scholars and policymakers devoted to the improvement of women's lives. Through your work with the United Nations, you have influenced women's lives throughout the world, and through them the destinies of their families.

In 1990, Lagadinova was forced into retirement after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the official disbandment of the Bulgarian Women's Committee. She spent the rest of her life as a recluse, and died in her sleep in October 2017.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • "Study on the Character of Inheriting the Qualitative Elements in the First Generation Intervariety Hybridization of Winter Wheat," *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie bulgare de Sciences* 16, no. 4 (1963): 417–20; "Investigation on Vernalization Stages of Hybrids between *Triticum Aestivum* and *Triticale* (2n=56)," *Plant Science* 2, no. 7 (1965): 3–11; "Equality, Development and Peace: An Interview with Elena Lagadinova, President of the Committee of Bulgarian Women," *Mladezh*, no. 3 (1975); "The Social Liberation of Bulgarian Women," *Politicheska Agitatsiya* 18, no. 5 (1977): 36–40; "Bulgarian Woman as Worker, Mother, and Public Woman," in *Women in Socialist Society* (Moscow: Secretariat of CMEA, 1980), 7–16; "Sociological Surveys and Social Policy on the Problems of Women, Children and Family," in *Sociological Theory and Social Practice* (Sofia: Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1982), 249–57.

Kristen Ghodsee

CONTEXT

The text included here is an excerpt from the speech that Elena Lagadinova gave at the United Nations Third World Conference of Women in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985. Lagadinova's published writings were primarily in scientific journals, although she

sat for many interviews during the twenty-two years she served as president of the Bulgarian Women's Committee. Lagadinova wrote and delivered this speech for the official conference in her capacity as head of the Bulgarian delegation and, later, as the General Rapporteur of the entire conference.

The 1985 World Conference on Women in Nairobi occurred in a changing geopolitical climate broiling with international tensions. The Soviets were stuck in an unpopular occupation of Afghanistan. Under President Ronald Reagan, the Americans supported death squads in Central America and had invaded the small island of Grenada. The Iranian Revolution had ousted a pro-Western monarch and brought a new theocratic regime into power. In October 1983, Hezbollah terrorists killed 241 American Marines and other members of a UN peacekeeping force stationed in Beirut, Lebanon, heightening Middle East tensions. The United States continued to support the brutal apartheid regime in South Africa and was propping up right-wing military leaders like Augusto Pinochet in Chile just as Mikhail Gorbachev was introducing reforms to the Soviet economy and society through the twin policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

The conference in Nairobi was the final event of the United Nations Decade for Women, and the delegates were supposed to agree on a forward-looking document which would set out the agenda for the international women's movement for the remainder of the century. The United States had threatened to boycott the entire conference unless the Kenyan hosts agreed to make certain procedural changes to help the Americans avoid being humiliated as they had been at the 1980 women's conference in Copenhagen.

The conference was held from July 15 to 26, 1985, and was led by Margaret Kenyatta as the conference president and Leticia Shahani as its secretary-general. In the end, about 1,400 delegates representing over 150 nations attended the conference, including the United States, whose official delegation was headed by Maureen Reagan, the president's daughter. The parallel NGO forum held at the University of Nairobi was attended by over 15,000 activists. After much deliberation, the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women were adopted by consensus, with the United States submitting reservations to several key paragraphs.

As General Rapporteur, Lagadinova became the face of the official UN conference to the world's press corps, and it was her duty to report on the outcomes of the meetings and the agenda for women's rights that had been agreed upon for the remainder of the twentieth century. It was a huge honor and responsibility for Lagadinova. One American professor who knew her from her international work wrote that Lagadinova's election as Rapporteur by the conference delegates was a "testimony to how much she was esteemed by an immense international network of policy makers, political activists, and academics."¹

1 Lipman-Blumen, *The Connective Edge*, 299.

The speech included in this volume is Elena Lagadinova's opening statement to the official conference on July 16, 1985, in her capacity as the delegation head. She emphasized Bulgaria's solidarity with the women of Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well as Bulgaria's progress in terms of women's rights while subtly attacking the United States. From our vantage point in the present day, what is particularly fascinating about Lagadinova's speech is her emphasis on the intersection of gender issues with issues of race and class.

Four years before Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's seminal 1989 paper, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics,"² African women had fought to have a discussion of apartheid included on the program of the Nairobi conference. Since the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975, liberal feminists from the United States had insisted that a women's conference should only discuss the status of women. Other topics not related to promoting gender equality, they argued, should be debated (by the men) in the General Assembly. In response, women from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, together with their allies from the state socialist countries of Eastern Europe and Cuba, protested that a women's conference should allow women the chance to speak about all global concerns, whether or not the Americans considered them "women's issues."

For their part, the Americans in the official delegation considered the discussion of topics like South African apartheid or the need for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) an unnecessary "politicization" of the meetings. Directives from the Department of State and the U.S. House of Representatives admonished the official American delegates to the women's conferences to narrowly focus on "women's issues." In response, the women of the Second and Third Worlds argued that you could not separate "women's issues" from issues of racism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. What was the point, Eastern European women asked, of discussing women's rights in societies divided into classes of oppressors and oppressed? What was the point, African women asked, of discussing women's rights in South Africa when the category of "woman" was so obviously divided by race?

Although they did not name their shared perspective, those women in the Global South and the state socialist East who believed that you could not discuss the issues of gender independently from issues of race and class were in fact promoting a kind of proto-intersectionality, and Elena Lagadinova's speech in 1985 embodies the spirit of their shared perspective.

2 Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 1 (1989): 139–67.

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Kristen Ghodsee

* * *

Elena Lagadinova

Statement at the Nairobi Conference³

Madame President,

Allow me first of all to congratulate you on your election to the high post of President of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. We hope that under your able leadership the Conference will achieve positive results. I would like to extend congratulations also to the other members of the Bureau.

We estimate highly the fact that this extremely important international forum is held in the capital of hospitable Kenya, Nairobi. We would like to state anew that the People's Republic of Bulgaria regards with deep understanding and sympathy the problems of young states which have recently been liberated from the oppression of colonialism and which have chosen independent political and socioeconomic development. Only twenty-five years divide us from the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the historical Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which laid the beginning of the end of the shameful colonial system. The collapse of colonialism played a major role also in the liberation and the enhancement of the role of the African woman, who is forceful, industrious, and determined.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria has always supported and supports the struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America to gain their political independence.

³ The text was lightly edited for style and clarity.

It now supports developing countries' aspirations to achieve economic independence through the restructuring of international economic relations on a just and democratic basis and through the establishment of a new international economic order. We are well aware that this aspiration is part of the common effort to overcome backwardness and poverty, to solve major socio-economic problems, including also the full integration and the enhancement of the role of women in society.

Here in Africa, at this competent forum, we cannot but also think about another problem of vital importance to all peoples—while humanity is still faced with the necessity to solve such hard problems as the elimination of starvation, misery, diseases, and illiteracy, enormous amounts of money are spent on the development of ever newer and more dangerous weapons. The uncontrollable arms race, spurred by the most reactionary, militarist circles, combined with aggressive policy and a striving towards world domination, represent the greatest threat to peace and international security. A nuclear war, if unleashed, would not spare anyone—neither developed nor developing countries, neither the sated nor the hungry, neither men nor women. There would be no victors and no vanquished.

Therefore, Bulgarian women consider as their most important task today the undertaking of concrete steps towards guaranteeing that basic human right: the right to life in conditions of peace and freedom. An example of such a responsible attitude to the fate of humanity is provided by the socialist countries, which have presented a comprehensive program of measures for the prevention of nuclear war, [against the] militarization of outer space, for disarmament.

History, this great teacher of peoples, makes us today, forty years after the end of World War II and the victory over fascism, not only remember its lessons, but also place a reliable barrier before the revival of fascism and every man-hating theory.

History also teaches us that where there are conflicts and crises, where the rights and freedoms of entire nations are trampled upon, where intervention takes place and subversive actions are organized, peace is seriously endangered. Can the peoples aim their efforts at peaceful and constructive labor, at solving the socio-economic problems, part of which represent the problems of women, in the conditions of international tension and confrontation, apartheid and foreign occupation, aggression and permanent foreign threat, inequitable economic situations and blockades? Allow me to express once again our solidarity with the women of South Africa and Namibia, the women of Palestine, the women of Nicaragua, the millions of other women fighting for the realization of their people's right to self-determination and independence, for justice and social progress, who fight for the implementation of their right to work, equal access to education, and health protection. The women of Bulgaria, in the whole seventy-year history of the organized socialist women's movement in Bulgaria, have not [avoided] the settlement of

the important political problems of humanity. Now, too, with their active participation in peace marches, demonstrations, signature collecting campaigns, with their contacts and solidarity with the women of the whole world, they prove their genuine aspiration for peace and a peaceful future for all.

Madame President,

The United Nations Decade for Women played a major role in mobilizing the efforts of the international community for the implementation of its three objectives: equality, development, peace. In close interrelation and interdependence, in the realization and advancement of all three, we see the guarantee for solving women's problems.

Undoubtedly, our Conference has a solid basis for the review and appraisal of these achievements—the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace, the World Plan of Action, the Programme of Action of the Second Half of the Decade. These documents not only have retained their validity, but continue to serve as landmarks for drawing future directions of action.

The achievements during the Decade are many. Of these important achievements, we should no doubt place among them the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation. Now it is necessary to strictly implement these important international documents.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention. As was demonstrated in the presentation of the First Report of the Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in implementation of the Convention in January, 1985, our experience and practice have surpassed in many respects the standards and requirements of the United Nations in this field. The People's Republic of Bulgaria concludes the Decade with a rich balance in the elaboration of differentiated policies with respect to women and with new real achievements in the confirmation of their role and positions in all spheres of life.

In socialist Bulgaria, the women's right to work has been implemented in reality—85 per cent of able-bodied women are employed or engaged in studies. Labor develops the personality of women and allows them to take a new position in society and in the family. In Bulgaria, the possibility to participate in social production is guaranteed for women, and they receive equal payment to that of men for equal work, which accordingly gives them a position in society equal to that of men.

Women in Bulgaria have equal access to education at all levels. They form 47.6 per cent of the graduates of the higher education establishments and 61.7 per cent of college and secondary school graduates. During the Decade, the number of women participating in the management of the economy has increased from 37.4

per cent to 47.9 per cent; their possibilities to participate in socio-economic activities and the management of the country have increased.

The socialist society treats maternity with deep respect; it has been recognized as a function of social importance. The State regards care for mothers, children, and families as one of its priority tasks. During the Decade, [double the amount of] funds have been allocated for the establishment of such conditions in which women can combine their participation in work and in sociopolitical activities with their obligations as mothers.

Everything which we have said so far does not mean that we have no problems, awaiting their solution, or that we do not have further far-reaching objectives. Their implementation is determined by the dynamism, inherent to the socialist society, by the continuous aspiration of our socio-economic policies to improve the well-being of the entire nation, including women.

Madame President,

In spite of the great efforts of the majority of States, however, the enhancement of the role of women in society is still insufficient in order to bring about necessary quantitative and qualitative changes. We should not forget that the solution of the problems of women goes beyond formal legal equality and requires deep socio-economic changes in the whole society. Therefore, a particularly important task, facing the present Conference, is to map out correct strategies for the Government's activities up to the year 2000. It is our deep conviction that in order to meet the requirements of the political and socio-economic realities, these strategies should first of all be based on the documents which have been adopted so far within the framework of the Decade and which have not lost their validity.

At the same time, they should put as their basic task the removal of the obstacles to the achievement of equality for women, which in many cases have been generated by mass poverty, general backwardness of the majority of the population in the world, and underdevelopment—which is a product of imperialism—and also by unjust international relations. To put it differently, the international community should adopt as its basic strategic objective the elimination of the political, economic, social, and cultural factors, generating, time and again, inequality, backwardness, and insecurity. Women's problems are problems which may and must be solved solely in the context of solving the important political and socio-economic problems facing society.

As Cdc. Todor Zhivkov, Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, said, "The kind of life a woman has in a family, the kind of life a woman has in a society, characterizes the family itself, characterizes society itself. The fate of the woman—this is the judgement a system passes on itself."

Madame President,

1985 is a year of remarkable anniversaries. Among them the 40th anniversary of the setting up of the United Nations Organization takes an important place, the basic aim of which is to promote the strengthening of international peace, security, and cooperation. It is the World Organization that inspired and generated the majority of ideas, initiatives, projects in the framework of the Decade for Women.

In conclusion, allow me to assure you that the People's Republic of Bulgaria shall further render all-around support and shall make its contribution to the common effort for genuine equality of women in the conditions of lasting peace, development, and social progress for all peoples in the world.

5

Politicizing Motherhood (and Fatherhood)

Maria Skokowska-Rudolfowa

Mother and Child Day

AUTHOR Maria Skokowska-Rudolfowa

TITLE *Święto Matki i Dziecka* [Mother and Child Day]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Kobieta Dzisiejsza* [Woman of Today] (Warsaw), no. 5–6 (1946): 1–2.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Skokowska-Rudolfowa (née Skokowska, 1895, Stryjowa–1975, Warsaw) was a Polish physician, Doctor of Social Medicine, pediatrician, and social activist. She was born in Stryjowa, near Zwiahel, on the territories incorporated into the Russian Empire after the second partition of Poland in 1793. Her father was a small landowner, her mother worked as a teacher. After graduating from a private high school for girls in Zhytomyr (Żytomierz) in 1917, Maria attended the Women's Medical Institute in Kyiv, a higher professional school for women. She did not complete her education as during the Polish–Soviet War (February 1919 to October 1920) she left Kyiv for Zwiahel, where she became a nurse in a local hospital. In 1919, she left for Warsaw and was admitted to Warsaw University's medical faculty. At the same time, she worked as a nurse in Warsaw and at the sanitary post in Hrubieszow. She continued her medical education after the war ended and during her studies she was involved in health promotion and fighting typhoid and tuberculosis epidemics.

After graduation in 1924, she became a municipal sanitary doctor in Warsaw. In 1926 she earned a Rockefeller Foundation Scholarship and completed a course in physiatry at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health in Baltimore. After returning to Poland, Skokowska-Rudolfowa worked as a tuberculosis inspector at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare between 1927 and 1930. In 1928, she married Zygmunt Rudolf, the founder of public health engineering in Poland, and a year later she gave birth to their son. Until the outbreak of the Second World War, Skokowska-Rudolfowa was a counsellor for tuberculosis, childcare, and the fight against new diseases at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. In medical magazines, she published several articles about the organization of preventoria and special health camps for children at risk of developing tuberculosis. In 1934–36 she served as Deputy Secretary-General of the Executive Committee of the International Union against Tuberculosis. During the Nazi occupation of Poland, she worked at the Center for Tuberculosis in Warsaw, taught hygiene in municipal vocational schools, and participated in the organization of illegal sanitary courses for resistance groups

and sanitary staff for service in sanitary battalions in the event of an uprising. She stayed in Warsaw during the 1944 uprising¹ and ran a sanitary post. After the capitulation of the uprising, she became a head physician in the Polish Red Cross (Polski Czerwony Krzyż, PCK) hospital on the outskirts of Warsaw.

Because of the large number of women with children in the hospital, she later reorganized it and turned it into a Mother and Child Home. Such a model was developed in the autumn of 1945 as a network of support centers for single mothers, mainly former forced laborers, concentration camp inmates, and victims of war rape.² It served an element of the postwar "population policy" developed by communist authorities. Skokowska-Rudolfowa was involved in the organization of the maternal and child-care system, and from 1945 to 1959 she was the head of the Maternal and Children's Department in the Ministry of Health. At the same time, she contributed to the popular women's magazine *Kobieta Dzisiejsza* (Woman of Today), where she explained the state's population policy to wider audiences.

Throughout her career, she was focused on the problem of preventing and treating tuberculosis. Until her retirement in 1965, she was an assistant professor at the Institute of Mother and Child in Warsaw. In addition to her scientific work and medical practice, Skokowska-Rudolfowa collaborated with the Circles of Rural Housewives (Koła Gospodyń Wiejskich),³ the Polish Red Cross, and numerous local organizations. She was involved in the popularization of hygiene and basic medical knowledge among women. In her press publications, she advocated for the development of a network of nurseries and kindergartens, counselling centers for mothers, and a system of support for single mothers. Although she was a member of the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS) and later of the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR), she did not engage in political activity. She died in 1975 in Warsaw.

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Katarzyna Stańczak-Wisłicz

1 Warsaw Uprising (August-October 1944) – an unsuccessful attempt undertaken by the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK) to oust the German army and seize control of the city before it was occupied by the advancing Soviet army. The uprising's failure allowed the pro-Soviet Polish administration to gain control of Poland. As many as 15,000 insurgents and 250,000 civilians were killed during the uprising.

2 Gałczyński, *Niedopowiedziane biografie*, 312.

3 Circles of Rural Housewives (Koła Gospodyń Wiejskich, KGW) an association of rural women legitimized by a pre-1939 tradition, subordinated to the Union of Mutual Aid of Peasants (Samopomoc Chłopska). The circles organized numerous courses for rural women: from cooking and baking to hygiene and child rearing.

CONTEXT

The post-Second World War public discourse about women and family in Poland was strongly affected by wartime experiences. Since 1918, women in Poland had political rights, the new communist authorities based their legitimacy on the promise of gender equality, but nevertheless, after 1945, women were officially appreciated primarily as heroic mothers and wives who resisted the occupiers and upheld national honor. Motherhood became politicized, and the figure of the Polish Mother (*Matka Polka*), a notion of patriotic womanhood developed during the time of partitions (1795–1918), regained importance.

The politicization of motherhood was linked to the postwar population policy based on the concept of the numerical strength of the nation and to the emerging collective memory of wartime atrocities. The aim of the population policy introduced by communist authorities was to replace war casualties. This became an axiom of public discourse during the years of reconstruction (1945–48) and the Stalinist period (1949–55). Already in January 1947, the Polish War Reparations Bureau (*Biuro Odszkodowań Wojennych*, BOW) estimated the “biological losses of Polish society” at 6 million victims, including circa 3 million Jews. Only 10.7% of them were victims of direct military operations, while 89.3% perished in mass executions, death camps, ghettos, concentration camps, or died of malnutrition and exhaustion.⁴ On the one hand, the estimation was overstated, and on the other, it did not include the representatives of national minorities—mainly Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Lithuanians—who had inhabited the former eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic, incorporated into the USSR as the Soviet Republics of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine, and were the victims of Soviet war crimes. Even though war casualties were difficult to estimate (the debate continues, and the latest estimates range at about 5,900,000 citizens of the former Second Polish Republic), more important than exact data was the huge subjective sense of social loss. Official memory culture after 1945 was founded on victimization in terms of the population loss.

Women, and primarily mothers, played a particular position in the public discourse about the aftermath of the war, and the construction of politicized motherhood was based on an internal contradiction. Regardless of political differences, all social actors—communists, socialists, prewar women’s organizations, and the Catholic Church—emphasized the sufferings of Polish mothers and children and argued that they were victimized in exceptionally hard circumstances. They referred to the stereotype of female vulnerability and claimed that women and children belonged to the group which should have been protected and defended from the atrocities of war.

4 *Sprawozdanie w przedmiocie strat i szkód wojennych Polski w latach 1939–1945* [Report on Poland’s War Losses and Damage in 1939–1945] (Warsaw: *Biuro Odszkodowań Wojennych*, 1947), 24–25.

Therefore, the crimes “against motherhood” were described as crimes against humanity, violating fundamental social norms. At the same time, motherhood was equated with strength, fortitude, and effective resistance to the Nazis. During the years 1944–48 popular magazines reproduced the images of heroic mothers who sacrificed their sons to the Fatherland (Ojczyzna), saved their small children, took care of orphans including Jewish children, supported the partisans, and even took part in combat in the ranks of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK). The “everlasting will to live” attributed to women as mothers was said to be the basis for the postwar recovery.⁵

The “New Woman,” a common discursive concept designating a fresh start in postwar Europe,⁶ was based on belief in the power of maternal instinct. In the Polish context, the concept was related to the powerful icon of the Polish Mother (Matka Polka). Catholic intellectuals claimed that a new society should be based on marriage and family: in 1946, the head of the Polish Catholic Church, August Hlond, argued that women, due to their “female vocation,” would be able to restore the Polish family and so the entire nation.⁷ Communist authorities appreciated women as a workforce needed to replace absent men, and at the same time as mothers and caregivers.

The project of postwar reconstruction included a comprehensive “population policy.” All contributors to this public debate agreed on the need to replace war casualties and populate the so-called “regained territories” (lands from former East Germany, which were to compensate for the loss of half of the interwar Polish territory to the USSR) and to secure the state’s security. Therefore, the communist authorities declared that Poland needed strong families and the state would care about “proper and happy family life.”⁸ The main purpose of marriage was to have as many children as possible. To support large families, in 1947 the authorities introduced a system of financial support for parents, including a special allowance for non-working mothers.⁹

One of the dimensions of the population policy was the focus of public debate on women’s and children’s health conditions. In 1946, Skokowska-Rudolfowa declared: “Every child is a treasure for us, which we want to preserve and raise. This is not just a matter of affection, but of reasonable population policy.”¹⁰ Thus, the Ministry of Health expanded the network of clinics, nurseries, kindergartens, and daycares.

5 Editorial, *Kobieta Dzisiejsza* 1 (1946): 1.

6 Duchen, “Une femme nouvelle.”

7 August Hlond, *Zadania kobiety katolickiej w Polsce dzisiejszej. Przemówienie wygłoszone w kościele MB Zwycięskiej w W-wie na Kamionku w dn. 23. VI. 1946* [The Tasks of Catholic Women in Today’s Poland: A Speech Held at the MB Church of the Victory in Warsaw on Kamionek, June 23, 1946] (Warsaw: Drukarnia Loretńska 1946), 7.

8 “8 marca – międzynarodowy Dzień Kobiet” [March 8 – International Women’s Day], *Kobieta Dzisiejsza* no. 2 (1946): 1.

9 Klich-Kluczeńska, “Making Up for the Losses of War,” 317.

10 Maria Skokowska-Rudolfowa, “Stan i potrzeby zdrowotne dzieci w Polsce” [The Health Condition and Needs of Children in Poland], *Polski Tygodnik Lekarski*, no. 4 (1946): 125.

Physicians developed projects for regular surveys of the “biological value” of Polish children of different age groups in order to estimate how their health was affected by the war.¹¹ In 1948, the Institute of Mother and Child in Warsaw was founded.

Motherhood was also symbolically appreciated. Mothers of many children were awarded the Cross of Merit, and in 1946 the Mother and Child Day was officially proclaimed on May 26, replacing the moving Mother’s Day, celebrated since 1923 on the last Sunday in May in honor of the Virgin Mary.

On this occasion, Skokowska-Rudolfowa, who regularly contributed to women’s magazines, published a text in which she presented the principles of population policy in terms of protecting motherhood. Using emotional language, she referred to wartime suffering and acknowledged women’s reproductive work as “creative work for the Nation.” She insisted that women’s care work deserved recognition, and criticized overestimating the value of so-called “male occupations.” Her text is representative of the first years of reconstruction (1945–48), with their emphasis on women’s maternal roles. During Stalinism, their role in the workforce would be given importance instead.

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Katarzyna Stańczak-Wislicz

* * *

Maria Skokowska-Rudolfowa

11 Jan Bogdanowicz, “Projekt okresowych badań biologicznej wartości dzieci polskich” [The Project of a Periodic Survey of the Biological Value of Polish Children], *Polski Tygodnik Lekarski*, no. 15 (1946): 477.

Mother and Child Day

It is good that Mother and Child Day has been established, that once a year people will remember the vulnerable being—the weakest one—and the other, the only one who protects, nurtures, and prepares for life with all the power of her affection, with all her strength, and demands nothing in exchange.

We, Poles, have a special duty to celebrate Mother's Day in order to reflect on the enormity of suffering experienced by Polish mothers and children, on their heroic participation in the fight for freedom, on their—Mother's and Child's—great role in the future of Poland.

The war created terrible conditions for the Polish mother and Polish child. The Nazi regime aimed at the complete destruction of our nation.

During the occupation, not only was there no consideration for the protection of motherhood, but rather everything was done to murder (physically and mentally) the Polish mother and the Polish child. The occupation left behind conditions that profoundly threaten the health of future generations; it has produced a large number of exhausted women who give life to fragile beings, who are unable to feed children.

[...]

Now in free Poland, every year, on Mother and Child Day, one should look back and realize what has been done for Mother and Child, what part of the program covering the protection of the Child and of Motherhood has been carried out.

[...]

The Mother should be protected, not only should she be provided with obstetric help and good working conditions—these are known and elementary things—but most of all we need to create an atmosphere of respect for motherhood. A mother-woman is not someone who deserves an allowance because she is temporarily unable to work. A woman in today's Poland is an eligible and fully-fledged citizen who takes part in the creative work of the Nation.

The protection of motherhood, the protection of the child, can be properly established as long as there is the right atmosphere all over the world. Therefore, the slogans that the women's world has proclaimed from the beginning must be implemented. Women want peace, women want possible conflicts to be resolved peacefully, not with arms in hand, women want mutual respect for dignity in human relations, they want protection of life, creative protection, free human thought, universal security, the development of international relations in a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect for freedom.

Then Mother and Child Day will become a truly joyful holiday. Today, when we celebrate this holiday for the first time in free Poland, we must shake off the melancholy—we must be able to cheerfully and joyfully look to the future. And to

use this serenity, optimism, and even enthusiasm to feed the hearts and minds of our children.

Time will heal the wounds of the world, and the mother will be sure that she is raising a human, not “cannon fodder,” that she is raising him in the spirit of the best principles of mutual human relations—then Mother and Child Day will have its highest sense.

Translated by Anna Topolska

Zlata Grebo

The Hopes and Fears of Rural Women

AUTHOR Zlata Grebo

TITLE “Neki socio-psihološki aspekti položaja žene na selu u svjetlu jednog anketnog istraživanja” [Some Socio-Psychological Aspects of the Position of Women in the Countryside in Light of One Survey]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Sociologija i prostor: časopis za istraživanje prostornoga i sociokulturnog razvoja* [Sociology and Space: Journal for Spatial and Sociocultural Research] (Zagreb), no. 13–14 (1966): 64–74.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zlata Grebo (née Salahović; 1922, Trebinje–2019, Sarajevo) was a Yugoslav sociologist. She grew up in Mostar, Bosnia and Hercegovina, where she finished grammar school. During the Second World War, she joined the antifascist People’s Liberation Movement (Narodnooslobodilački pokret, NOP), just like her three sisters and a brother, as well as her soon to be husband Hamo Grebo (1916–2010), and his sisters. After the war, Zlata Grebo was engaged in establishing the City Council of the Women’s Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena, AFŽ) in Mostar and intensively worked on women’s organizing and their emancipation.

She continued her education in Belgrade, finishing at the Higher School for Foreign Trade in 1947. Later, in Sarajevo, she graduated from the Higher Pedagogical School in 1954. In 1960, she enrolled in the first generation of students at the Higher School (now Faculty) of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade. There, she defended her doctoral dissertation, entitled *Socijalna uslovljenost nataliteta stanovništva u Bosni i Hercegovini i demografska politika* (The Social Conditioning of the Population’s Birth Rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Demographic Policy), in 1973. During part of her post-graduate studies, she was employed at the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade (1959–1963), with which she collaborated in the following decades as well.¹

Grebo participated in the process that transformed the Higher School of Political Sciences, established in Sarajevo in 1961, into the Faculty of Political Sciences under the University of Sarajevo in 1966. This was a process of changing a school established predominantly to train political cadres into an academic institution dedicated to social

1 Goran Bašić, ed. *Institut društvenih nauka: od crvene akademije do institucije od nacionalnog značaja* [The Institute of Social Sciences: From Red Academy to Institution of National Importance] (Belgrade: Institut društvenih nauka, 2022).

research. At the Faculty, Grebo was the first woman dean in the period 1975–1977 and still remains the only woman who occupied this leading academic position. She was also an editor of the first collection of articles written by academic staff of this young institution.² Furthermore, she was the president of the Council of the University of Sarajevo in the period 1981–1983, again holding a prominent academic position.

With regard to her research work within sociology, Grebo was mostly interested in demographic policies and the role of women in social development. She led many projects related to these issues in Yugoslav society, and as such was a member of the Yugoslav delegation at the World Congress of Women in Helsinki in 1969.³ She was heavily involved in the preparation of the methodology for the 1971 population census at the Federal Statistical Bureau of Yugoslavia.⁴ Her research on population studies and family planning continued until the end of her professional career in the late 1980s.

For her scholarly work she gained recognition, receiving the Veselin Masleša Award for achievements in the social sciences in 1976. After her death, a special Letter of Thanks was issued for her contributions to the development of sociology at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo. She was mother of Zdravko Grebo (1947–2019), a professor of law and prominent activist against nationalism, who also participated in establishing the first gender studies program at the University of Sarajevo in 2006.

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2 *Zbornik radova: 1961–1976* (Sarajevo: Fakultet političkih nauka, 1976).

3 Amila Hrustić Batovanja, Masha Durković, and Hatidža Gušić, *#ŽeneBiH – ilustrirana knjiga o izuzetnim ženama Bosne i Hercegovine* [#WomenBH – An Illustrated Book of Exceptional Women from Bosnia and Herzegovina] (Sarajevo: A. Hrustić Batovanja, M. Durković, and H. Gušić, 2020), 102.

4 Đokanović et al., "Women in Socialism," 138.

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Nermina Mujagić and Sarina Bakić

CONTEXT

Zlata Grebo’s article presents a fraction of data from a larger survey that was gathered by the Belgrade Institute of Social Sciences in 1962 as part of an international opinion poll led by the Institute for International Social Research from Princeton under the guidance of Hadley Cantril (1906–1969). The international survey “On Human Happiness” was systematically conducted (with local partners) through the use of standardized polls in a number of countries starting in 1958, with the aim to get quantitative comparable data on respondents’ aspirations and concerns.⁵ The survey used open-ended questions, to which respondents gave narrative answers about their personal wishes and concerns, as well as their hopes and fears for their country. The answers were then coded qualitatively according to standardized categories which allowed the researchers to identify which topical theme best fit the answers (e.g., health, peace, social justice, etc.). The methodology is still used in the Gallup’s World Poll.

As pointed out by Svetozar Ćulibrk (1924–1982), the leader of the Yugoslav research group, which included Grebo among others, the translation of the methodology into the Yugoslav setting required adjustments, “as some categories did not respond to our social reality.”⁶ Therefore codes referring to the “fear from becoming a socialist country” or “fear from the communist threat” were substituted with “fear of threat, aggression, or occupation by a foreign power.” On the other hand, some new codes were added, such as “hopes for the preservation and development of socialism,” as well as the “wish that Tito may have a long and healthy life”—reflecting what people of Yugoslavia expressed in their unstructured answers.

While Ćulibrk analyzed the responses from the whole Yugoslav sample, Zlata Grebo focused specifically on data relating to female respondents that were further clustered into professional categories: housewives (392), agricultural producers (137), workers (92), clerks (81), women with personal income (41), and others (19). In the study from which the excerpt is given below, Grebo aimed to extract differences

5 Hadley Cantril, “Predgovor” [Introduction], in Svetozar Ćulibrk, *Želje i strahovanja naroda Jugoslavije* [Hopes and Fears of the People of Yugoslavia] (Belgrade: Institut društvenih nauka, 1965), 3.

6 Ćulibrk, *Želje i strahovanja*, 161.

in the opinions of women living in urban and rural areas from the given data. She focused further on comparing the responses of women agricultural producers (usually employed on their family's farmsteads) and housewives (with no personal income) in the countryside. Her focus only on the responses of women, analyzing them as a heterogeneous group, seems to be unique and not a common feature of the publications that came out of this vast research in the 1960s.⁷

Zlata Grebo belonged to the generation of women who participated in establishing the Institute for Social Research at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, where many female researchers conducted women-related studies, such as Desanka Ćuntić-Ikić (on women's unemployment), Safeta Kovo (the sociology of the family), and Nada Ler-Sofronić (see chapter in this volume). In Grebo's works as of the 1970s, one can observe an interdisciplinary approach to sociology that examined issues in a gender-sensitive way.⁸

Her research confirmed that processes of rural-to-urban migration had led to changes in the gender structure. Many economically active working men who left the countryside also left women to tend to agriculture, take care of household work, and raise the children. In other words, women obtained three different roles, acting as an agricultural producer, housewife, and mother. This trifold role persisted in spite of the fact that the urbanization of villages (which is still ongoing today), created the conditions for women to overcome the obstacles and difficulties which determined their inadequate and unequal position in the community. Despite these changes, this particular gendered division of labor prevented women in rural areas from achieving better quality of life.

When comparing Grebo's data and the situation today in Bosnia and Herzegovina, few conclusions could be drawn. It appears as a constant that young people most often leave rural areas and move towards urban ones, pursuing an education and finding jobs unrelated to agriculture. Following the 1992–1995 war, the situation has been the same, with the difference that the youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina are leaving the country en masse, regardless of the area from which they come. Another constant is that rural women still desire living, nicer houses, and home appliances. Furthermore, women's fears and insecurity around what to expect in their old age are still common today. Finally, their wishes to work less and the desire to move somewhere else, particularly among younger women, is still present.

Even though the entire context of Bosnia and Herzegovina has changed since the 1992–1995 war, many issues have stayed the same. Others have even become more complicated and troubling due to the change of the political system, economic depression, emigration and internal displacement, and other consequences of the war, as well as the conflicts between modernism and traditionalism. In light of such long-lasting trends,

7 For instance Cantril, *The Pattern of Human Concerns*.

8 Ždralović, "Doprinos naučnica," 100.

rural areas face depopulation and progressive ageing, which is notable in the rising number of empty (deserted) villages across the country. In general, the position of women in contemporary Bosnian society is influenced by numerous factors, regardless of area, such as the gender wage gap, the harmonization of work and family life, the multidimensional exclusion and economic vulnerability, prejudices related to women, increased psychological, physical, and sexual violence, and the vulgarization and objectification of women in popular culture and media. All of this implies that these challenges are more complicated and obscure for women in rural areas today. Nowadays, however, there are no studies on rural women such as the ones conducted by Zlata Grebo.

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Zlata Grebo

Some Socio-Psychological Aspects of the Position of Women in the Countryside in Light of One Survey

Despite all the changes in socialist development,⁹ and especially after the efforts to create unity between the countryside and the city within the commune, the difference between these two forms of social organization of space remains visible.¹⁰ In the rural household, based on private land ownership, the economic dependence of a woman is great, while patriarchal relations are common and rooted deeper than in the city. In such conditions one could expect significant differences between the needs, and therefore the attitudes of women in the city and those in the countryside. This is supported by the data on high illiteracy [rates] among the female population,¹¹ the still great influence of obsolete customs, traditions, religious misconceptions, as well as the miniature size of rural settlements, and the inability to urbanize them.

The processes of abandoning the countryside led to changes in the gender structure due to the greater draining of the economically active male population from agriculture. Women are increasingly becoming the primary agricultural producers. According to statistical data, women comprise 42% of the active agricultural population,¹² but it would be justified to assume that every woman in the countryside takes part in agricultural production, even though they still most often remain the anonymous producer within the private holding. This is why one could say that women in the countryside play three social roles: agricultural producer, housewife, and mother. The fact that the most competent female workforce is both socially and territorially more mobile impacts the process of the demographic ageing of women in the countryside. All of these factors could

9 This article is a slightly adapted text of a talk that the author gave at the Fifth International Seminar on Socio-Economic Changes in the Countryside and the Position of Women and the Family.

10 The poll that is referred to in this article fits into the broader international poll "On Human Happiness," conducted by the Institute for International Social Research at Princeton, in several countries (USA, Cuba, Brazil, Israel, India, Nigeria, Poland, Federal Republic of Germany, Yugoslavia, and others), under the leadership of Professor [Hadley] Cantril. The study in Yugoslavia was organised by the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade, under the title "Personal and General Hopes and Fears," in May 1962. The poll aimed to establish similarities and differences between various social systems through the comparative study of wishes and fears, by applying a special research method. The sample consisted of 1,524 respondents, of which 756 were women between the ages of 21 and 71.

11 Of the total number of illiterate people over the age of ten, 75% are women. This percentage is even higher in the countryside. Therefore of the total illiterate female population over the age of ten, 87% live in the countryside.

12 *Statistički bilten* [Statistical Bulletin], no. 398, Savezni zavod za statistiku [Yugoslav Federal Statistical Office], April 1966, 72.

lead to the deepening of difference in the attitudes of women in the countryside and in the city.

However, in the countryside, there is a presence of other factors that influence the social behavior of women. A growing number of women are taking seasonal agricultural jobs, in cooperative works of individual agricultural producers and agricultural cooperatives, and some at the socially [i.e. state] owned agricultural farms. In the social sector of agriculture the workforce is 35% female.¹³ This accelerates the process of transforming the private ownership relationships within individual farmsteads and it also changes the position of a woman in the family. In the phase of the transition from natural to commodity production, the countryside cannot be perceived as a homogenous socio-economic entity. Only 58% of the households in the countryside are purely agricultural. Around a quarter of the countryside population is employed outside of agriculture. Therefore, the countryside is becoming a mixed settlement, and, on the other hand, it can be expected that the needs and consequently the aspirations of rural women are becoming similar to the aspirations of women in the cities.

The economic development of the country and the urbanization of the countryside have caused a process of stratification among the rural population into the agricultural rural population and the non-agricultural de-agrarianized population. While the agricultural population in our country accounts for 49%,¹⁴ around 71% of the population lives in the countryside. Women in the countryside are therefore divided into two large groups: women farmers and women outside of agriculture. Within the first group there is a differentiation between women agricultural producers and women homemakers [housewives] in households of the individual agricultural farmstead, and in the other the differentiation is between employed women and housewives.

These processes affect the creation of conditions for overcoming economic, cultural and social obstacles that have determined the unequal position of women in the countryside. Despite that, there are notable tendencies that prevent the position of women in the countryside from improving significantly. To an extent, the rural environment shapes certain attitudes of women regarding themselves, their family, and the country.

*Attitudes of women in the countryside about themselves and the social community*¹⁵

¹³ See the report by Dr. P. Marković at the abovementioned Seminar.

¹⁴ *Statistički bilten* [Statistical Bulletin], no. 398, Savezni zavod za statistiku [Yugoslav Federal Statistical Office], April 1966, 72.

¹⁵ The analyzed data was published in the publication *Hopes and Fears of a Yugoslav Woman*, published by the Institute for Social Sciences, 1965.

The abovementioned study has shown what are the basic aspirations and concerns of the women in the countryside, both in personal as well as in social community terms. Furthermore, by applying self-anchoring scaling, [respondents] determined their personal position and the position of the nation in the past, present, and future.

Personal aspirations

[...] In first place is the wish for happiness and the future of their children. Aspiring to vertical mobility through the children's education is apparent in the countryside. The countryside is primarily being abandoned by youths who gain an education and are employed in non-agricultural occupations. Data shows that around 40% of the total number of households educate all their children and do not intend on retaining a successor to the farmstead.¹⁶ The expressed wish for having an apartment, house, or improved housing conditions, which ranks third, indicates that the aspirations for a better housing situation are very prominent. It is a known fact that housing development is greater in scope in the countryside than in the cities. If one adds to this that the wishes for modern house outfittings are often expressed as the wish for nicer furniture (expressed by 7% more in the countryside than in the city), as well as the wish for the improvement of the living standard, it can be concluded that new habits, new needs, are developing in the countryside. The results of the study of the family budgets of rural farmsteads indicate that the percentage of expenditure on the modernization of household items and appliances is very high in the structure of the overall expenditure. In addition to the positive efforts towards urbanization, there is also a negative component here. This is the insufficient investment in expanded reproduction in agriculture and insufficient stimulation and interest in intensive agricultural production. Consumption is increasingly gaining advantage over production, even in the case of individual [agricultural] producers in the countryside.

The wish for personal health and the health of the family members lies in a human's anthropological nature, regardless of the type of settlement, and according to frequency it is among the top wishes of all women. A happy family life is also one of the dominant wishes.

The wishes that bear the characteristics of the rural environment appear with a slightly lower frequency. They reflect the working conditions of the women in the countryside. Speaking to this effect is the expressed wish to work less (7%). The wish for a good crop (8%) stems from the still high dependency on agricultural production. For example, a housewife from the countryside stated: "I want

¹⁶ See the cited report by Dr. P. Marković, 16.

to have cattle, pigs, to harvest a lot of wheat from three *jutros* of land.” A reduction in taxes also appeared as a wish amounting to approximately 13%. The wish to move to the city appeared in 6%, along with the expressed ambition to remain an agricultural worker (7%). Analysis according to the age of the respondents showed that the wish to move to the city appears among young respondents. Insight into the poll questionnaires shows that sometimes the wish to move to the city where the husband works is linked to the fear of disruption of marital relationship. On the other hand, older residents whose mobility is naturally reduced expressed the wish to remain agricultural workers. Furthermore, in analyzing these results one should bear in mind that it is predominantly the male population that migrates from the countryside, therefore tradition also impedes the territorial mobility of women, while the low level of education and lack of qualifications appear as objective factors that tie them to the countryside.

It is interesting to note that the wish for amusement appears half as much in the countryside compared to the city (5% in the countryside and 10% in the city). Wishes linked to work—permanent employment, a good job, success at work, as well as the wish for vocational training and further education—are less prominent, which also illustrates the living conditions of women in the countryside. [...]

Personal fears are mostly grouped around the modalities of illness and death. The fears that are related to the respondent's family are mostly grouped around the modalities of illness and death in the family, an unhappy family life, and children's failure. Respondents from the countryside fear a low standard [of living] almost twice as much as those from the city (11.5% in comparison to 6%), which speaks about the wish for a better life as much as it does about the insecurity of the socio-economic position of agricultural producers. This is also confirmed by the expression of fears of a bad crop. The position of women in the countryside can to some extent be perceived from their fear of an unhappy old age, which speaks about the insecurity that can be expected in old age. [...]

Attitudes of women farmers and housewives in the countryside about themselves and the social community

In this part, we will restrict ourselves to examining the attitudes of women agricultural producers as [economically] active persons, and those of rural housewives as dependents, since this study offers that kind of data, even though one should take with great reservation the self-classification of women in the countryside as women agricultural producers and housewives. However, it is justified to assume that every woman on an individual farmstead is at the same time both an active agricultural worker and a housewife. The analysis lacks information on the attitudes of women employed in non-agricultural occupations who live in the countryside,

which would certainly provide a more complete picture.

The position of a woman as an [economically] active person greatly differs from the position of a woman as a dependent. In addition to the functions of housewife and mother, an employed woman also has the function of a worker. It is especially significant that employment makes a woman economically equal to a man. Classifying an unemployed woman as a dependent also has a sociological dimension. Economic dependency is also complemented by isolation from production processes and other social activities. Only an employed woman gains a certain level of social power and social standing as part of [one's] social compensation in addition to material goods.

A woman agricultural producer is most commonly employed on the individual agricultural farmstead¹⁷ that is linked to her household, and which comprises the basis of the economic existence of her family. Therefore her personal and general attitudes differ from the attitudes of women employed in non-agricultural activities. Housewives in the countryside have a decreased ability to note problems and needs that are beyond the direct needs of her household.

Personal aspirations – The results that were obtained in this study are as follows:

	Women agricultural producers %	Rural housewives %	Difference in %
Happiness and children's education	43	48	-5
Personal health	30	41	-11
Modern house outfittings, furniture, car	28	28	/
Having a house, apartment; improved housing situation	25	33	-8
Happy family life	23	30	-7
Tax reduction	23	8	+15
Family health	20	25	-5
Improved living standard	15	25	-10
More money	14	7	+7
Remaining an agricultural producer	12	5	+7
Good crop	11	6	+5

Based on the percentage of the expressed wishes, certain differences can be noted between women agricultural producers and rural housewives. For example, the wish for a happier life and the children's future, which is otherwise ranked at

17 Out of 5.5 million persons active in individual farmsteads, approximately 3 million are women.

the top as a wish of both [groups], is 5% more prominent among housewives. The wish for personal health, the health of family members, an improved living standard, or to have a house or apartment, are also aspirations that are more expressed by rural housewives. However, women agricultural producers have a greater wish for lower taxes (and here the difference is most prominent, being 15%), more money, to remain an agricultural producer, and for a good crop. Therefore, if there are certain differences, they are reflected in the fact that rural housewives are more focused on the household and women agricultural producers more on the farmstead. [...]

Translated by Vuk Tošić

Serhii Hryhoriev

Son

AUTHOR Serhii Hryhoriev

TITLE *Syn* [Son], 1969, painting

ART COLLECTION Museum of Modern Art of Ukraine, Kyiv. Photograph by Katarzyna Stańczak-Wislicz.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Serhii Hryhoriev (1910–1988) was a Soviet Ukrainian artist, born in Luhansk to the large family of a railway guard. At the age of 13, he finished art school in Zaporizhzhia and then studied in Moscow until, in 1928, he was accepted at the Painting Faculty of the Kyiv Art Institute (now the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture). While studying at the institute, Hryhoriev became a member of the Union of Young Artists of Ukraine, an informal group active during the years 1929–32, officially criticized for departing from socialist realism. He took part in designing the Palace of Culture for one of the mining cities in the Donbas. After his graduation from the Kyiv Art Institute in 1932, Hryhoriev worked in the poster workshop of the Literature and Art publishing house based in Kharkiv. After one year, he accepted a teaching position at the Kharkiv Art Institute and later became a docent at the Kyiv Art Institute.

In the 1930s, Serhii Hryhoriev participated in numerous local and international exhibitions with his genre paintings (mostly of the youth), landscapes, and portraits. His career was interrupted by the Second World War: he was conscripted into the army in 1940 and returned home when the war ended in 1945. In his post-war works, the theme of childhood became key: many of his paintings portrayed children at school or with their families, children playing music, doing sports, or exploring nature.

In 1947, Hryhoriev became a professor at the Kyiv Art Institute; in 1951–55, he was the Institute's rector. During the 1950s, he also became a member of the Academy of Arts of the USSR and received several state awards.

Some encyclopedias describe Hryhoriv's work as influenced by impressionism. However, his genre paintings are rather realistic, often with the significant influence of Soviet socialist realism. His landscapes were described as "calm, lyrical, devoid of excessive expression, compositional complexity and decorativeness." The artist's paintings are kept in collections in Ukraine, Bulgaria, Russia, and Japan.

Serhii Hryhoriev died in 1988 in Kyiv. He was a father and grandfather of four Ukrainian artists: his daughters Halyna and Maya, and his grandchildren Ivan and Olha. His wife, Liubov Hryhorieva-Steletska, was also an artist: a painter and book illustrator.

Olena Gulenok

CONTEXT

Hryhoriev's 1969 painting "Son" depicts a young father with his baby. The man is leaning over his son, who is lying on colorful blankets; it seems that the baby is smiling while the father is saying something to him. The big window of a newly built flat is open, letting in warm air on a sunny day. Purple flowers on the windowsill and the blue sky with a few white clouds make the scene look even cozier. Bright warm colors enhance the feeling that this is a moment of happiness and joy. The baby will grow up surrounded by a loving and caring family, particularly his father who is there from the very first moments. Due to the contradictory nature of the Soviet gender regimes, such representations were quite common in Soviet art. On the one hand, the Soviet government brought a certain degree of equality in terms of gender roles compared to the traditional (or "bourgeois") family against which it fought. Under Soviet rule, women gained greater access to institutionalized education and the labor market, and to public activities. On the other hand, much less equality existed in real everyday life than in the official discourses: as in most places and most times, women in the Soviet Union were burdened with what is now called a "double shift," being expected to take paid jobs as well as perform most of the reproductive labor at home.

When it comes to gender roles, Soviet legislation and government policies can be divided into three distinct periods. The period from 1918 to about 1930 can be described as a state-led liberation experiment in the field of gender and sexuality. Starting from 1930 and lasting until Stalin's death in 1953, however, the Soviet government reconsidered their predecessors' experiment, reinforcing a rollback towards traditional family roles and pro-natalist state policies (particularly in response to population losses during the war), while still promoting women's economic involvement. The period of the 1950s–1980s saw another liberalization of state gender policies, coupled with rising criticism of gender relations in society, even though much of it was censored.¹

Despite differences in policies across these three periods, scholars have identified several common features present throughout the Soviet era. First of all, the Soviet state aimed to take control over the private sphere. In doing so, it promoted "defamilialization," with its most active phase in the 1920s–1930s. Men did not occupy

1 Bureychak, "Masculinity in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine," 326.

a central position in the Soviet family: both when—adhering to the socialist rhetoric—the government was liberating sexuality and blurring gender roles in its fight against the “bourgeois” family; and when, later, the family was redefined as a basic unit of socialist society.

Examining the masculine ideals prevailing in Soviet culture up to and immediately after the Second World War, and mostly manifested in visual propaganda such as posters, Tetyana Bureychak has identified the “Defender of the Motherland,” the “Selfless worker,” the “Athletic man,” the “Builder of Communism,” and the “Leader of the Country,” the latter images of Lenin and Stalin.² None of these ideal types were related to family roles or fatherhood. In the 1950s–1960s, however, numerous other models of masculinity arose, partly as a postwar consequence: physically and mentally traumatized men that came back from war found it hard to relate to the image of the strong defender, the athletic man, etc. Thus, as Tamara Martsenyuk argued, new, alternative masculinities made their way into the public sphere, such as the “Romantic man” (particularly represented by bards, singers who performed their own songs usually accompanied by the guitar, with “real friendship” being one of the key themes).³

After Khrushchev took power following the death of Stalin in 1953, “a much broader, visual reconceptualization of the place of men within the home” took place.⁴ In particular, the development of domestic technologies in the 1950s turned the home into a space no longer occupied exclusively by women. The kitchen became a stage for the demonstration of Soviet scientific progress. At the same time, this masculinization of domestic space was rather discursive, as men’s participation in household chores did not increase noticeably with the introduction of modern devices. Analyzing testimonies by Soviet magazines readers (letters to the editors and polls conducted by magazines in the early 1960s), Claire McCallum concluded that there was “confusion” regarding men’s roles within domestic space: a recognition of the need to alleviate women’s burden alongside the notion “that the husband was little more than a casual assistant for women’s household duties.”⁵

Official visual representations of men’s domestic role were rather unambiguous. After the Second World War, the man was placed into images of the family and the home as a returned father, a symbol of “normal life.” Later, after 1953, the Soviet man as a father became a “multifaceted figure” appearing “everywhere” in Soviet visuals. Paintings and magazine covers began to portray fathers spending time with their kids. Thus, unlike visual representations during the Stalin era, those of the Khrushchev

2 Bureychak, “Masculinity in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine,” 328–31.

3 Martsenyuk, “Zakhysnyky halaktyky,” 113–15.

4 McCallum, “Man About the House,” 333.

5 McCallum, “Man About the House,” 334.

“thaw” constructed a new image of Soviet man—a father actively participating in his children’s upbringing.⁶

This shift in Soviet visuals happened as part of Khrushchev’s “normalizing” strategy that attempted to control people by disciplining their everyday lives (in contrast to Stalin’s repressive politics). The visualization of participatory fatherhood in mass culture reflected a new “moral renewal” policy that depicted fathers as responsible for raising their sons as New Soviet Men.⁷ Serhii Hryhoriev’s 1969 painting “Son” was representative of this change.

Fifty years later, in 2019, the painting was featured on the Facebook page *Arkhiv khudozhnoi simi Hryhorieviykh* (Archive of the Grigoriev Family of Artists), along with a photo “Vania i Mark” (Vanya and Mark). The photo shows a young father with his baby, repeating the same gestures as in the 1969 painting. Vanya the father in 2019 is Vanya the baby from 1969. Putting these two pictures side by side can be interpreted as a discussion about the images of masculinity in Ukrainian society, about the legacy of the communist period and the modernization of the family.

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⁶ McCallum, “Man About the House,” 334–36.

⁷ Randall, “Soviet and Russian Masculinities,” 866.



Serhii Hryhoriev, *Syn [Son]*, 1969.

Marik i Vania 1969, *Vania i Mark* 2019 [Marik and Vanya 1969, Vanya and Mark 2019], 2019. From the Arkhiv khudozhnoi simi Hryhorievkykh [Archive of the Grigoriev Family of Artists]. Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ArhivGrigoryevih>. Accessed December 20, 2023.

Alla Hors'ka

Maternity in Ukrainian Dissent

AUTHOR Alla Oleksandrivna Hors'ka

TITLES *Autoportret z synom* [Self-Portrait with Son], oil on canvas, 1960; *Materynstvo* [Maternity], colored pencils and gouache on paper, 1961; *Abetka* [The Alphabet], tempera on canvas, 1961; *Shevchenko Maty* [Shevchenko. Mother], gouache on cardboard, 1964.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alla Oleksandrivna Hors'ka (1929, Yalta–1970, Vasil'kyv) was a Ukrainian artist and dissident. Hors'ka was born in Crimea but grew up in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) in a family employed in the film industry: her father Oleksandr was a director of various film studios, while her mother, Olena, worked as a costume designer. After World War II, her family moved to Kyiv, where Hors'ka began studying at the Academy of Arts of Ukraine and where, due to her lack of knowledge of the Ukrainian language, she developed the idea that she had been Russified at the expense of her Ukrainian origins. At the Academy, she met the artist Viktor Zarets'ky, whom she married in 1952. Sometime later she came across the initiatives of the theater group of the Club of Creative Youth (Klub Tvorchoi Molodi, KTM), founded by the director Les' Taniuk, with whom she became close friends. It was through her activity in the KTM that Hors'ka met the leading figures of the Ukrainian cultural renaissance of the 1950s and 1960s, the so-called *shistdesiatnyky* (sixtiers). Her artistic aspirations thus joined a growing political commitment, which from 1965 increasingly took the form of dissent against Soviet political power and Russian-language-dominated Soviet culture.

In addition to drawings and paintings, which often portrayed friends active in the *shistdesiatnytstvo* movement, Hors'ka worked extensively as a costume and set designer for theatre and film. As was usual in the Soviet period, she often contributed to the creation of art for public spaces, above all large mosaics which decorated museums, stations, and restaurants. Hors'ka apprenticed in the school of Ukrainian monumentalism of the 1930s, so-called Boichukism, a form of public art typical of socialist realism. She, however, merged this more traditional style with an aesthetic inspired by naïve art and popular art, from which she drew a particular use of perspective, proportions, and colors. In this way, Hors'ka effectively avoided the rhetoric of socialist realism by creating monumental art which was close to popular sensibility. Beside the originality of her aesthetic approach, Hors'ka introduced the themes of Ukrainian national culture that her generation was committed to revitalize through

new forms of expression. Among other projects, Hors'ka was part of the group of artists that created the most famous artwork in 1960s Ukraine, namely the stained-glass windows for the entrance staircase of Kyiv's Shevchenko University in 1964. The central window, which depicted Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko in the act of protecting a woman (a metaphor for Ukraine) caused great scandal, and the stained-glass windows were soon destroyed by Soviet authorities. In the meantime, the home of Hors'ka and her husband became one of the movement's central physical locations: thanks to the greater space artists were granted to house their artistic studios, the couple's apartment became one of the main locations for informal meetings of the developing cultural dissent.

Hors'ka animated a network of female friendships, especially with the actress Nelli Kornienko (Les' Taniuk's wife), the historian Mykhailyna Kotsiubyn's'ka, and with Nadia Svitlychna, the sister of literary critic Ivan Svitlychny, who would become the leading representative of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group abroad in the 1970s. This women's network also imagined and managed a system of solidarity with the families of those affected by repression: money was collected to help arrestees' relatives who had often lost their jobs but had to raise their children and pay lawyers. The money was delivered by someone who did not contribute to the donations to avoid the embarrassment of the recipient towards the donors. It was thanks to this initiative that these women met Raisa Moroz, whose husband, Valentyn, had been imprisoned for his writings, although he had no previous relationship with the *shistdesiatnyky*.

Hors'ka's political activism soon earned her the hostility of the Soviet authorities: on November 28, 1970, she disappeared along with her father-in-law (with whom the family lived), and their bodies were found dead a few days later. Police speculated a case of murder-suicide, although all the evidence suggested instead that both were killed by KGB agents who then tried to cover up their own crime. After 1991, even the parliamentary investigative committee headed by Taniuk failed to find documents that could definitively solve the mystery.

HORS'KA'S WORK IN ART CATALOGUES AND COLLECTIONS OF TEXTS • *Chervona tin' kalyny: lysty, spohady, statti* [The Red Shadow of the Viburnum: Letters, Memories, Articles], ed. Oles' Zarets'ky and Mykola Marychev's'ky (Kyiv: Spalakh LTD, 1996); *Alla Hors'ka: dusha ukrains'koho shistdesiatnytstva* [Alla Hors'ka: The Soul of the Ukrainian Shistdesiatnytstvo], ed. Liudmyla Ohnieva (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2015); *Iskusstvo ukrainskikh shestidesiantikov* [The Art of the Ukrainian Shistdesiatnyky], ed. Ol'ha Balashova, Liza Herman, and Maria Lan'ko (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2015); *Alla Hors'ka* (Kyiv: Dukat Auktsionnyi Dim, 2017); *Alla Hors'ka: spalakh pered svitankom* [Alla Hors'ka: A Flash before Dawn] (Kyiv: TOV "Vydavnytstvo Klio," 2019).

CONTEXT

Similar to what happened in other Soviet republics, after the death of Stalin in 1953, Ukraine underwent a period of relative liberalization, usually known as the "Thaw." The new political climate allowed what can be defined as a renaissance of Ukrainian culture after decades of the violent repression of Stalinism. The protagonists of this cultural revitalization were a new generation of writers, artists, and critics that went under the label *shistdesiatnyky* (sixtiers). They had a couple of distinctive characteristics: they were mostly born in the 1930s and had experienced the Second World War as children or teenagers. They therefore grew up believing in the myth of Stalin as a savior, considered themselves communists, and were usually involved in Party (Komunistychna Partiya Ukrayiny, the Communist Party of Ukraine, CPU) and Komsomol (short for Lenins'ka Komunistychna Spilka Molodi Ukrainy, the Leninist Communist League of Youth in Ukraine) organizations. They had absolutely no ties with the previous generations of the Ukrainian national movement, but most of them came from the countryside, from Ukrainian-speaking families surrounded by traditional Ukrainian peasant culture. They were very good students and were able to move to the most prestigious Ukrainian universities because of their good grades. In the Russified urban cultural environment, they discovered that Ukrainian culture was marginalized if not repressed and they strived to include their native culture into the official Soviet Ukrainian public space. They did not consider themselves opponents of or dissidents toward Soviet power, but as part of those who were collaborating to reform the Soviet Union, rediscovering a more authentic Leninism and Marxism: the former also included a positive evaluation of the contribution that the Ukrainian national movement could bring to the construction of a socialist society. They also shared some common features with their analogues in the other Soviet republics: they promoted a rediscovery of individuality and of its role in society, of the importance of the self and of its quest for happiness. They believed in a set of values that differed from the ethics of the 1930s, which was limited to the sphere of collectivity; these new values included friendship, love, and freedom. Consequently, they promoted a re-evaluation of human civil rights, for which they started to fight in both art and civic life.

Regarding women's and sexual rights, the Ukrainian *shistdesiatnyky* thought that the Soviet Union, despite the official propaganda on women's emancipation, was a sexophobic and sexist society that imposed definite roles onto both men and women. The *shistdesiatnyky* fostered art that addressed the questions of corporeality and sexuality, and underlined the importance of the role played by women in cultural preservation and in the education of children. They stressed the importance of and reclaimed a right to intimacy that sharply distinguished them from traditional Soviet values, which condemned any activity carried out in private, arguing that individuals could only find real fulfillment in collective activities carried out for the community.

The four pieces of figurative art that follow appeared in different contexts, but all share the same subject: motherhood. The first one is a painting dated 1960, a self-portrait by Alla Hors'ka with her son; the second is a sketch for a print to be published in the periodical press (1961); the third is a portrait of a peasant woman with her child, entitled *The Alphabet* (1962), and the last one is a sketch of one of the stained windows for the entrance staircase of Kyiv's Shevchenko University. All four women are mothers and all four are bearing or embracing their sons in a behavior of care and affection. This was a revolutionary way to represent children and their relationship with adults; they can be considered a sort of evolution of the poetics of the *shistdesiatnystvo* that progressively addressed public opinion. The works presented here deal with the theme of motherhood first in works designed for private use (a portrait or painting) and later in works addressed to the public like a drawing for the press or a stained-glass window in a university. In doing this, Hors'ka followed a path similar to many other intellectuals and artists who initially addressed a small circle of friends but who, over time, presented their ideas and creations more and more explicitly to Ukrainian society as a whole. Children were often depicted in the art of Stalinist socialist realism, but they were either depicted together with their own peers (e.g., art celebrating the pioneers) or together with adults who oversaw their political education. Children (usually girls) were often depicted in the arms of an adult man who was their protector: the two archetypal images are that of Stalin holding the famous Gelya Markizova,¹ and the image of the little girl in the arms of the Soviet soldier in the central statue of the Soviet War Memorial in Berlin's Treptower Park. It was no accident that children were not together with their parents: the USSR pushed for the loosening of family ties, as the whole society had to take care of the education of young people. Children and young people were even urged to denounce their parents if the latter engaged in anti-Soviet behavior. The rhetoric of the heroism of children denouncing their parents to the authorities was precisely accompanied by an education in which children were pushed to see themselves as children of society, a collective that looked after them thanks to the institutions and organizations, not leaving them "alone" with their families.

Given all of this, one can understand how Hors'ka's portrayal of motherhood was revolutionary: first, there is a curious inversion of genders that sees an adult woman, the mother, in a protective role toward a male child, thus breaking with a custom that saw men as the ones capable of providing protection. Above all, the motherhood represented by Hors'ka is not the stereotypical motherhood of the motherland, whose children are usually soldiers (called precisely to protect the mother and not the other

¹ Engelsina (Gelya) Markizova (1928–2004) was the little girl portrayed in 1936 in Stalin's arms in one of the most famous propaganda images of Stalinism. The following year, her father was executed as an enemy of the people and her mother sentenced to the Gulag. Gelya was discriminated against as a daughter of enemies of the people until de-Stalinization.

way around), but a concrete, individual motherhood. These children do not look out toward the public but take refuge in their mother's breast and do not perform any heroic or public deeds: they were "bad children" from the Soviet point of view, since the intimate moment has the upper hand over the Soviet imperative to find fulfillment in the collective. The very idea of a portrait to be enjoyed in private and not in public was nonconformist. Mothers are depicted in the colors of the Ukrainian nation or busy teaching (a function that would be the school's and not the parents') how to read and write, in an allegedly "peasant" language such as Ukrainian. This portrayal of motherhood, eventually occupying a public space such as the stained-glass window of Shevchenko University, could only strongly clash with Soviet public morals and certainly contributed to the decision to destroy this piece of artwork.

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Simone Attilio Bellezza

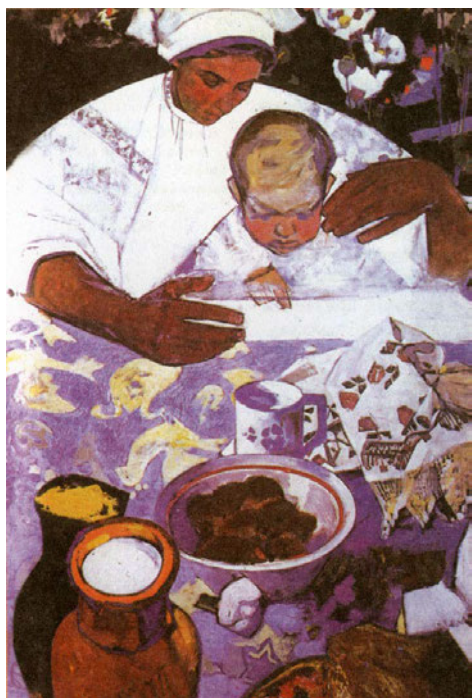
2 Author's note: Please note that Kasianov here chooses not to use the word "dissident" in Ukrainian, that is why I have used "Dissenters," which is more literally what he wrote.



Avtoportret z synom [Self-Portrait with Son],
oil on canvas, 1960.



Maternystvo [Maternity], colored
pencils and gouache on paper, 1961.



Abetka [The Alphabet], tempera on canvas, 1961.



Shevchenko Maty [Shevchenko. Mother], gouache on cardboard, 1964.

Leokadija Diržinskaitė-Piliušenko

Soviet Women—Active Builders of Communism

AUTHOR Leokadija Diržinskaitė-Piliušenko

TITLE “Tarybinė moteris—aktyvi komunizmo kūrėja” [Soviet Women—Active Builders of Communism]

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LANGUAGE Lithuanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leokadija Diržinskaitė-Piliušenko (1921, Ančlaukys–2008, Vilnius) was a Soviet Lithuanian politician and member of the Communist Party since 1950. Born and raised in a peasant family in independent Lithuania, Diržinskaitė made her way to the top ranks of the Communist Party, holding the highest positions in the Soviet government after the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union. From 1960–1964, Diržinskaitė served as a candidate for the Lithuanian Communist Party Central Committee; in 1967, she was elected member of the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania; and during the period 1962–1966, she was a member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Diržinskaitė served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Soviet Lithuania in 1961–1976, and became the first Lithuanian female cabinet member. Under the Soviet regime, however, this position held no power for independent political decisions. In 1976, Diržinskaitė was also appointed deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania, and served until her retirement in 1985.

Diržinskaitė’s political career coincided with the political thaw and implementation of the Soviet type of gender equality encouraged by Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964. Despite grand official statements by the regime, Diržinskaitė was not naïve about the patriarchal gender system in the Soviet political apparatus. Describing her incredible social ascent and influence, she admitted that there was a glass ceiling:

You have to understand that period: During the postwar years, men had a lot of power, you see, they were “war heroes.” Work was for women, power for men. Everything was done as the man said. The first secretary of the Communist Party in Šiauliai was Petras Kareckas, who had studied with my husband; they had the same rank,

the same roots, and the same way of thinking. Anyone who had gone through the Russian “school” was powerful and their word carried a lot of weight.¹

Diržinskaitė belonged to the party’s nomenklatura her entire life, and although she was much more informed and better-travelled than the average Soviet citizen, and enjoyed certain privileges of Soviet life unavailable to most, key aspects of her own family life (her strategies for childcare) and interpersonal relationships (her understanding of romantic love and friendship) resembled those of common citizens. Despite Diržinskaitė’s personal satisfaction with her career in the Party and her own private life, she nevertheless had a sober comprehension of the iron grip of the regime. She would repeat: “Who could break it? What can you break on your own? You will not break the system alone. You can’t blow against the wind.”²

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Socialinė pažanga ir kultūra* [Social Progress and Culture] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1979); *Paminklai ir visuomenė: metodiniai nurodymai* [Monuments and Society: Methodological Indications] (Vilnius, 1982); *Kultūra ir valstybė* [Culture and the State] (Vilnius: Mintis, 1985). Diržinskaitė-Piliušenko’s writings can also be found in Soviet journals. As a high-level Soviet official, she occasionally published articles on communist society, culture, and ideology.

Dalia Leinarte

CONTEXT

Leokadija Diržinskaitė was a member of the upper echelon of the Communist Party of Soviet Lithuania. She firmly maintained her conviction in communist ideals and was one of the few communist leaders who did not change their beliefs after the break-up of the Soviet Union. During an interview I conducted in 2002 at her home in Vilnius, where she had lived since the early 1960s, Diržinskaitė underscored her conviction that communist principles were the only possible way to achieve improvements in women’s lives. To her, class conflict and struggle and not patriarchy were the main obstacles to implementing gender equality.

Diržinskaitė herself was the architect and designer of the role model of the Soviet woman. Her article “Soviet Women—the Active Builders of Communism,” published on the occasion of the International Women’s Year announced by the United Nations in 1975, exhibits the regime’s advocacy for the Soviet type of gender equality and social policy. Although she raised some questions and challenged several Soviet achievements, this did not mean that Diržinskaitė had any doubts about the regime

1 Interview with Leokadija Diržinskaitė, in Leinarte, *Adopting and Remembering Soviet Reality*, 96.

2 Ibid, 70–89.

as the most effective means for promoting and protecting women's rights. This was a case of so-called "criticism and self-criticism" that emerged during the Stalinist period as a way to display errors and at the same time assure full commitment to the regime. Indeed, her piece did not reflect Soviet reality but was crafted on the model of Soviet-style propaganda. Despite the Soviet government's promise to fully develop a network of preschool institutions and help women combine work and family life, this promise was only realized in the last decade of the regime. The number of preschools did increase in the 1960s, but only 22.5 percent of city dwellers and 12 percent of residents of rural districts were able to enroll their preschool-aged children in day schools or seasonal preschool institutions. In 1960, only 42 small creches and nursery schools operated in the rural districts in Lithuania. The highest numbers were reached in the 1980s: approximately 40 percent of children under the age of six were enrolled in creche-kindergartens in Lithuania.

In the early 1960s, the Soviet government had planned to create a network of home services in order to liberate women from household chores; however, throughout the country, women continued to accept their double burden. In a public opinion poll conducted in 1973, 1,343 Moscow residents were asked how often they visited cafés on holidays and weekends. Barely 0.6 percent responded "Often and very often"; 12 percent responded "Rarely or very rarely"; 15.5 percent said "Sometimes"; 73 percent of respondents said they never went to cafés on any occasion. Expensive eating establishments and food shortages in the stores were reflected in household time schedules: in the Soviet household, 30 percent of time dedicated to domestic chores involved meal preparation.³

In 1962, Lithuanian cities and rural district centers saw the opening of 750 new stores, 300 cafeterias, and 36 household service companies offering home vacuum cleaner and mechanical washing machine rentals. But the very same year, it was found that what was really needed in the republic were hygiene-promoting facilities such as public shower or Russian sauna facilities and hairdresser shops. In the end, the dream of "a beautiful and aesthetic lifestyle" propagated in Soviet journals remained unfulfilled because of the inefficiency of light industry: in 1971, ten years after the Twenty-First Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the government was still proposing the same initiatives for improving the production of consumer goods. And regardless of the mass construction of residential properties, for most people in Lithuania, an apartment of their own was a dream that remained difficult to realize. In 1970, approximately 70 percent of newly-weds began their new lives living in the parental home of one of the spouses.

The ideal of the working Soviet women never challenged patriarchal gender roles in the family. In a 1972 study, women in Lithuania were asked how their husbands' attitudes

3 Sysenko, *Ustoichivost' braka: problemy, faktory, usloviia*, 41.

about sharing domestic chores had changed: 4.6 percent of respondents said that their husbands' contribution had increased significantly, 24.3 percent said somewhat, 55.4 percent said that housework remained their own exclusive responsibility, and 10.3 percent of respondents said that their husbands' help with the housework had in fact decreased. Of the women in Lithuania, 98 percent washed all of their families' laundry by hand or used a mechanical washing machine, and 87.2 percent of them were solely responsible for meal preparation in their home. Men's contributions to domestic work were somewhat more significant with respect to child-rearing: 17.8 percent of men attended parent meetings at their children's schools and 18.84 percent helped their children with homework.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs, Diržinskaitė was frequently compared to the famous Soviet politician Yekaterina Alexeyevna Furtseva (1910–1974). Furtseva at first became one of the secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, the highest Soviet institution where all state decisions were approved. In 1960, Furtseva was appointed Minister of Culture of the USSR. She held this position for 14 years until 1974. To a certain degree, both Diržinskaitė and Furtseva reflected the Soviet gender quota system of representation of women and men in decision-making. The number of women members deputed to the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania was frozen in a formal quota system and never changed. In 1967, women comprised 32.4 percent; in 1971, 32.33 percent; in 1975, 34 percent; and in 1980, 35 percent. This was the result of formal gender equality reflected in everyday life of Soviet women. By the end of the 1960s, women across the Soviet Union received approximately 60 percent of men's wages and this percentage did not change until the 1990s.

Like many other Communist Party members and ordinary citizens of Soviet Lithuania, Diržinskaitė sincerely believed that socialism was the way to prosperity. According to her, it was only a question of time. During our interview, she explained that:

In the countries I visited, they were also building socialism. For instance, in Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, even Vietnam and Cuba. [...] My wish was to reach the level of the developed countries, only by different means. [...] I first saw America in 1967 when I was a part of the Soviet delegation that visited a session of the United Nations. After that, I spent three more months doing some work there, so I had a chance to drive around and see a lot. Certainly, I felt envious of America when I saw for the first time those skyscrapers, double-deckers, and so many cars and well-kept roads. But I had enough wisdom to understand that miracles don't just happen, and that such changes needed material resources.⁴

Diržinskaitė firmly believed that during her lifetime, everyone was creating socialism and everyone looked at it with hope.

4 Leinarte, *Adopting and Remembering Soviet Reality*, 105.

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Dalia Leinarte

* * *

Leokadija Diržinskaitė

Soviet Women—Active Builders of Communism

1975 has been declared the International Women's Year, thus acknowledging the important role of women in contemporary society, building awareness about the need to end the discrimination against women which still exists in many countries around the world and to encourage women to participate actively in political and economic life and contribute to the fight for peace and democracy. [...]

Speaking about the situation of women, and women's contribution to the development of contemporary society, it is important to examine at least briefly how that situation developed at various stages in different nations.

Historical analysis shows that the situation of women varies from nation to nation and from historical moment to historical moment, depending on the extent to which women participate in social life.

Before there was a clear distribution of labor, women and men were equal. In some agricultural societies, women held positions of status even higher than men's. This was under the so-called matriarchy. But as crafts and artisanry separated

from agriculture, men began to more actively participate in the professions, leaving women with the responsibility of housekeeping and child-rearing.

Gradually, women ended up dependent on men. With the emergence of private property, women's inequality increased all the more. Men took on primary roles in social production. It was only as the forces of capitalist production increased that the situation of women began to change.

As automatization replaced the need for physical labor, employers favored women and children who had more flexible joints and whose labor could be bought for lower wages. The labor of women and children became a significant object of exploitation.

While exploiting the labor of women, capitalism nonetheless retained women's previous dependent position within the family and their lower status in society. Paul Lafargue⁵ has argued that capitalism pulled women away from the hearth and threw them into the maelstrom of social production, not in order to emancipate them, but to exploit them to a greater extent than men.

The conflict between women's growing role in social production and their lack of social rights led to the so-called woman question and created the impetus for women to fight for their rights. [...]

Classical Marxism-Leninism argued that the first precondition for woman's liberation is her return to social production. However, doing this requires a radical reform of society and the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, which is the basis of all exploitation.

Over 100 years ago, Engels formulated the primary demands of the workers' movement as it relates to the woman question: equal wages for equal work, the protection of women's labor in production, the recognition of motherhood as woman's social function, and a balance between motherhood and work that was deemed useful to society. To this day, Engels's agenda remains the basis of women's fight for emancipation. Aside from traditional methods of discrimination, new forms of exploitation—which are more flexible, more refined, and better disguised—developed in contemporary capitalist society. Exhausting work, the non-existence of time for rest, the difficulties of child-rearing, a total disregard of women's work: these are the painful problems that women face in capitalist society. [...]

Women can be emancipated only by a society which has eliminated everything that exploits human beings. [...]

State ownership of the means of production has fundamentally changed the situation of women. It has eliminated the social reasons for discrimination against women and created the conditions necessary for realizing equality. In its first

5 Editor's note: Paul Lafargue (1842–1911) was a Marxist theoretician, journalist, and leading member of the French socialist movement.

months of existence, the Soviet government enacted a thorough coup of the laws regarding women. It “swept away” without exception all traces of women’s inequality.⁶ Our Party has taken on the task of fighting for women’s social and economic equality, drawing her into socially productive life, pulling her out of the kitchen, and disentangling her from the traps of religious superstition.

However, establishing women’s equal rights under the law did not mean total equality. That was only the first step. In order to achieve full equality for women, conditions are required for women to be able to make use of the rights given to them and to free them from exhausting, unproductive labor in the home. [...]

Socialism, by turning women into equal members of society, opened up opportunities for education, thus creating ample conditions for women to develop and grow as individuals and allowing them to explore their talents and abilities. Women’s active participation in economic and political life became their true political school. [...]

Although Soviet Lithuania set out onto the path of socialism two decades later than other Soviet republics, nevertheless dramatic changes have occurred in the lives of women there as well. The number of women workers and professionals compared to that in 1945 increased more than elevenfold while the number of workers and professionals overall increased sevenfold. Women make up 50.4 percent of the working population. Today there is hardly a single sector of the republic’s economy that does not employ women. With their hard work, women have actively contributed to the 43-fold increase in industrial production and significantly greater agricultural yields, making our holiday tables much more bountiful. And for this we are sincerely grateful to them. [...]

An important premise for the mass incorporation of women into the workplace is the improvement of their education so that every woman is able to enter into her desired profession. Depending on their abilities and desires, Soviet women can become weavers, engineers, teachers, or doctors; they can choose a career in the arts or culture, or become scientists or scholars. [...]

Sixty-one percent of all specialists in our republic are women; 54 percent of those who have a higher education and 65 percent of those with vocational secondary school degrees are women. Every third engineer or lawyer and every fourth agronomist is a woman. [...]

[Previously] women pursued only degrees in the humanities. During the 1939–1940 academic year, 702 men and only 8 women were enrolled in technical studies at Kaunas University. There was not a single female student at the Academy of Veterinary Studies. [...]

6 V. I. Lenin, *Raštai* [Writings], vol. 30 (Vilnius: Mintis, 1954), 374.

As the republic's economy was restructured according to the principles of socialism, the life at work and at home of women in the villages changed beyond recognition. Electricity was delivered to the rural areas and natural gas was supplied to 100,000 apartments. There are no longer any oppressed women in the countryside, like Žemaitė's Katrė in her short story "Marti" [The Daughter-in-Law], no longer any persecuted unmarried mothers, like the infamous Veronica in Antanas Vienuolis's short story "Paskenduolė."⁷ [...]

It is worth remembering the 1949 Soviet Conference of Women *Kolkhoz* Workers. Of the 650 women representing our republic, not a single woman had a higher education, and only four delegates had a secondary education. 226 were functionally illiterate, while 234 had rudimentary reading and writing skills. For this reason, one of the topics of the conference was the imperative: to study. [...]

Today 45 percent of all specialists with university or vocational secondary degrees in agriculture are women. 95 percent of all milkmaids are hard-working rural women, 50 percent of those raising calves and 75 percent of pig feeders are women. [...]

What is it that drives our women's active participation in society? Many years of experience show that women's interest in working increases as they become more educated, their professional qualifications and work conditions improve, and their responsibilities at home decrease. Encouragement and recognition of their contributions play a significant role as well. To that end, every third government award is now given to a woman, every fourth Hero of Labor is a woman, sixteen women have been named a Lithuanian SSR Artist of the People, over 100 women have been named Lithuanian SSR Distinguished Doctors, and 570 Lithuanian SSR Distinguished Teachers.

Doing work that contributes to society, participating in government, and pursuing a fulfilling life are key to a woman's well-being, overall development, and her political and civic consciousness. Equal participation in industrial production and social life widens women's worldview, fosters their deep sense of civic understanding and responsibility, and helps them to escape household responsibilities, enabling economic independence and increased status in society as well as in family life, and helping shape women as individuals. [...]

Soviet labor laws provide special measures for protecting women at work, taking into account specific characteristics of women's anatomy and ensuring the interests of mothers. The codex of labor law forbids the exploitation of women's labor in occupations that are extremely physically demanding or dangerous to

7 Editor's note: Paskenduolė (lit. "the Drowned Woman") is a fictional character in Antanas Vienuolis's (1882–1957) short story of the same name. She commits suicide by drowning because as an unmarried pregnant woman she had no other options.

women's health. Pregnant women are relieved of night shifts, and if necessary, they are given less demanding work. Mothers benefit from long pregnancy or maternity leaves, and sick leave should their children get sick. Nursing women's work-day hours are reduced. Mothers can opt for unpaid leave until their child is one year old. Mothers of more than four children under the age of eight are allowed to receive their retirement pension at age 50, that is, five years earlier than other women. In the Lithuanian SSR, there are 19,000 mothers of large families. They, like single mothers, receive benefits, which, during the course of a year, total 2.5 million rubles. [...]

Another important initiative of our Party and government is social assistance to families raising children. Approximately 115,000 children are currently enrolled in nurseries and pre-schools, which is 30 percent of all children of pre-school age. [...]

The same can be said about boarding schools, schools with extended-day curricula, and after-school programs for children. Over 100,000 children every year spend their vacations at pioneer camps. [...]

The ambitious founding goals of communism today demand that we provide conditions for continued improvements to women's general education, preparation for manufacturing work, professional proficiency, and overall wellbeing. We are concerned that many women still participate in demanding physical labor, although we are heartened that in recent years the number of women working in road and building construction has decreased, and questions about shorter work days for women raising children and allowing them to work from home are currently being deliberated by various departments and ministries. [...]

We must admit that the number of women promoted to managerial positions is still not adequate. Today in our republic barely 3 percent of company managers and only 1.6 percent of collective farm directors are women. Women are two-to-three times more likely than men to take time off for family responsibilities. [...]

To be quite honest, our flats, particularly our kitchens, are still poorly adapted to present-day conditions. Homemakers waste an irrational amount of time caring for their homes. Our manufacturing sector must produce a better selection of household appliances. Feeding their families at cafeterias, homemakers save up to six hours of additional leisure time per week. [...]

[In addition,] the network of pre-school institutions in rural areas is still unfortunately at a preliminary stage. Solely because they have no place to leave their children, 24,000 working-age women cannot participate in collective farm production.

The construction of nurseries and pre-schools in rural areas is an issue that collective farm directors, district executive committees, and the Ministry of Agriculture ought to take on more boldly. Indeed, the expansion of creches and pre-schools in the cities as well as rural areas is an economic issue. Researchers

have determined that the cost of maintaining creches and pre-schools is five times lesser than the contribution of working women to the national coffers. It is critical to continue funding pre-school institutions. Workers in the education and health sectors ought to study the high incidence of children falling ill at nurseries and pre-schools, and fight for improved working conditions there. [...]

The further development of the national economy must be geared towards meeting the material and cultural needs—including the household needs—of the Soviet people according to scientifically established norms in order for our people to develop fully. Plans call for the employment of significantly more workers in production as the number of individuals participating in the domestic economy is down. And, as we know, most of these individuals are women. The number of workers employed in non-industrial production will gradually increase, thus services will continue to improve.

The task is to provide every family with their own flat, to provide water and sewer services to every city and rural area, to increase the availability of centralized hot water and natural gas. [...]

Generally all questions related to the situation of women in society are examined within the framework of socialism. The experience of the Soviet Union in tackling the woman question has inspired and continues to inspire women of the entire world in the fight for their rights.

Translated by Jura Avizienis

Cristiana Nicolae

Two Movies on the Lives of Women Factory Workers

DIRECTOR Cristiana Nicolae

TITLES *De dragul tău, Anca* [For Your Sake, Anca], Bucharest: Casa de Filme 1, 1983, 90 min.; *Sanda*, Bucharest: Studioul Cinematografic “București,” 1992, 89 min.

RELEASE DATES December 19, 1983; February 17, 1992.

LANGUAGE Romanian

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Cristiana Nicolae (née Iliescu; b. 1943, Târgoviște) is a film director, screenwriter, film directing and script consultant, lecturer, occasional actress, acting teacher, translator, and transpersonal psychotherapist. Her mother was a well-educated descendant of the boyar family Alimăneșteanu and her father was an engineer with more humble origins whose first job was at one of industrialist Nicolae Malaxa's enterprises. During the early and most repressive phase of the Romanian communist regime, many male members of her maternal family were denounced and imprisoned as agents of imperialism, while the women were forbidden to work. One of four siblings, Cristiana Nicolae studied in Bucharest at the “Zoya Kosmodemianskaia” High School (now the Central School) and at the Institute of Theatre and Film “I. L. Caragiale” (now the National University of Theatre and Film “I. L. Caragiale”). In her childhood and adolescence, she practiced competitive and synchronized swimming and thus traveled to several socialist countries in East Central Europe. Her mother bought Russian-language textbooks and she learned Russian at home. Before starting her film directing studies, she worked as a Russian-language translator for TAROM and as a flight attendant on the company's international flights, including to the West.

Her homemaker mother's artistic educational background and family connections among the interwar cultural elite played an important role in Cristiana Nicolae's formation, as well as the director's own appetite for reading at a time when the number and diversity of translations from foreign authors increased, starting in the 1960s. When she was admitted to the Institute of Theatre and Film in 1966, she was married to journalist and screenwriter Nicolae Cristache (*For Your Sake, Anca*; *Fourth Fence along the Wharf*), and by her graduation in 1971 she had her first child. She worked as an assistant director until her 1973 debut feature *The Return of Magellan*. As one of the only three female directors to achieve prominence working in the state-owned cinema system of the time (the other two being Malvina Urșianu and Elisabeta Bostan), Cristiana Nicolae tackled a broad range of subjects and styles in her fiction

films and was officially involved in writing and co-writing half of them. Her filmography in Romania spans two dramas set during the Second World War, a detective film, a sports film, a children's television series, three psychological dramas about teenagers, an original adaptation of a Romanian fantastic short story, and a drama about the daily life of a wife, mother, and factory worker during the 1980s.

While not unpopular among viewers, her works were largely overshadowed by those of her peers, and their critical reception remained ambivalent throughout the years. Although she was not an outright dissident, her films did not adhere to the codes of representation imposed by the party line. Her frequently realistic style called attention not to class struggle, but to the inner lives of her characters and their conflictual relationship with the world around them, or subverted those narratives that had a clear ideological bent by spotlighting psychological processes. As she has reflected in a series of interviews which I conducted,¹ Cristiana Nicolae does not remember her career in communist Romania fondly, mentioning systematic censorship of her work and a sense of ostracism in the industry. But she has confessed to having felt pride and hope in her country when Nicolae Ceaușescu condemned the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. A participant in the post-revolutionary Bucharest University Square protests along with Nicolae Cristache, she left Romania shortly before the June 1990 miners' strikes in order to present her 1988 feature *The Inn between the Hills* at a film festival in Montréal and stayed there. According to her, it was the first time she traveled to a foreign event where one of her films had been selected, having been deterred from doing so until the fall of the regime in 1989. She was then followed by her two sons and, at a later time, by her then husband. In Canada she continued to make films through her own production company. Later she took an interest in transpersonal psychology and trained in order to practice it. A critical reevaluation of the films she made in her native country—which are mostly forgotten now—has only just started.

MAIN FILMOGRAPHY (AS DIRECTOR IN ROMANIA) • *Întoarcerea lui Magellan* [The Return of Magellan] (feature, 1973); *Râul care urcă muntele* [The River that Climbs the Mountain] (feature, 1977); *Cumpăna* [The Balance] (feature, 1979); *Stele de iarnă* [Winter Stars] (feature, 1980); *Racheta albă* [The White Rocket] (TV series, 1982); *De dragul tău, Anca* [For Your Sake, Anca] (feature, 1983); *Al patrulea gard, lângă debarcader* [Fourth Fence along the Wharf] (feature, 1985); *Recital în grădina cu pitici* [Violin Solo in the Elves' Garden] (feature, 1986); *Hanul dintre dealuri* [The Inn between the Hills] (feature, 1988); *Sanda* (feature, 1990/1992).

Georgiana Vrăjitoru

1 The interviews were conducted online via Zoom in March 2022, on the occasion of the first and to date only retrospective of her work, which I curated. They resulted in a profile of her film career, which was published on the online cultural platform *Scenag*: Vrăjitoru, "Regizoarea căreia i s-a pierdut urma." The event was organized by the Romanian-based "F-SIDES," a film club and discussion group aimed at encouraging and showcasing female perspectives in the film industry, in partnership with "Arhiva Activă" (a project of the National University of Theatre and Film "I. L. Caragiale"), and took place in April 2022 in Bucharest, at the Romanian Cinematheque's Eforie venue.

CONTEXT

Romanian cinema in the 1970s saw a return to film as a tool for state propaganda, as the so-called July Theses of 1971—a party program calling for the retightening of ideological control over cultural and artistic production—took effect. Cinema was tasked once again with upholding and popularizing the moral and educational values that the Party sought to instill in its citizens, and the re-dogmatization process continued up until the Revolution of 1989. With few notable exceptions, whether they tackled historical figures or dealt with the construction of socialism, films became increasingly didactic, nationalistic, and limited in their view. Additionally, women's rights and empowerment had taken a step back through Decree 770 of October 1966, which criminalized abortion in all but a few strictly regulated situations. Despite policies aimed at promoting gender equality, the change in women's status was undeniable, and the cinema of the 1970s and 1980s closely echoed it.

Women were portrayed in movies as equal contributors to society, working as hard as men in factories or on building sites. At the same time, unmarried or childless women were presented as immoral, unhappy, or not fully developed. Films aimed at young audiences especially frowned upon such choices, penalizing women who did not fulfill their reproductive duties. Seemingly emancipatory narratives that raised awareness about domestic work imbalances or celebrated women's right to choose ended up as pleas for the unity of the family, as exemplified by *Alo, aterizează străbunica!...* (Hello, Great-Grandmother Is About to Land!...; dir. Nicolae Corjos, 1981) and *Promisiuni* (Promises; dir. Elisabeta Bostan, 1985). Compared to these two examples, Cristiana Nicolae's coming-of-age *De dragul tău*, *Anca* tells something of a less idyllic family tale by looking at childhood from within. Her first film dealing with teenagers, this is the story of a 13-year-old girl who is bullied at school and looks for ways to rebel against oppressive (gendered) norms of behavior.

Set in Bucharest, the film follows Anca Visarion (portrayed by Alexandra Duca) over the course of a winter in which she moves with her family (her mother, father, and sister) from a communal residence to a newly-built block of flats in one of the city's developing areas. The story tracks her adjustment to the new setting and her growing discontent with her colleagues and teachers, up to the point where she decides to quit school altogether.² Because of her passion for football, her clown impressions, and her boyish appearance, the protagonist also has difficulty being accepted by her neighbors,

2 Interestingly, the institution depicted in the movie is the director's own school, the "Zoia Kosmodemianskaia" High School; this and other self-referential gestures cast some doubt on the (sole) authorship of the screenplay, which is attributed to Nicolae Cristache, Cristiana Nicolae's husband at the time. As a couple, they collaborated on this film and on *Al patrulea gard, lângă debarcader*, but archival research is needed in order to ascertain exactly to what extent each of them contributed to the definitive versions of these written works.

her playmates, and even her family—who complain about and punish her talking out of line, emotional outbursts, and so-called unfeminine demeanor. Anca's is a story of loneliness and the anguished anticipation of adulthood, as the destinies of most grown women around her hardly accommodate her own desires and sensibilities. Through her perspective, Nicolae offers a transversal look at the choices women could make then, and at the overlap of gender and class hierarchies of the time.

By showing the unadorned daily life of a factory workers' family, the film indirectly paints an unflattering picture of the asymmetry of roles within it; consequently, it speaks to the inefficiency or superficiality of the era's gender equality measures. Employees of the same industrial facility, the mother (Rodica Mandache) and the father (Dan Condurache) have very different schedules and obligations at home. The mother almost single-handedly deals with the transfer from one house to another, shops, cooks, cleans, supervises the seamstress of the family; when too overwhelmed by her competing personal, professional, and civic duties, she reprimands Anca and her sister Mirela (Raluca Iordăchescu) for not giving her a hand around the house. Without explanation, the father is exempt from working outside of his paid job. His lack of involvement is apparent in how he approaches the girls' education, as he only steps in violently to curb Anca's perceived disobedience. Not without irony, when he falls asleep on the couch after acting in a show for the factory's artistic brigade (which the mother was also in), he is coddled and tucked in with the utmost care by his wife and daughters. The camera then pans around him lying under the blanket and reveals the mother standing up at the other end of the couch, tenderly watching over him with their two girls, while the Romanian unification anthem "Hora Unirii" is heard playing on the radio in the background. She sighs with both worry and relief ("He is tired!..."), although, as her daily schedule suggests, she may be the most tired of them all and in need of care. This sequence takes place during the last third of the movie and is referenced in the first still provided in this chapter.

Although they are frequently shown together in the same space, there is never enough time or patience for the four to truly listen and understand each other. In one telling sequence, Anca tries to have a heart-to-heart conversation with her meek, headscarf-wearing mother, who dismisses her under the pressures of domestic chores and reminds her that all she and her husband ever do is for the sake of their children. Elsewhere, Anca is expected to be a dutiful daughter and accept injustice from figures of authority so as not to cause further turmoil to her incredibly burdened mother. Nicolae approaches these issues with unexpected humor (and even an upbeat finale) given the gloomy outlook of her main character, but the fact remains that Anca's growing anxiety points to a dreaded experience of womanhood during the last phase of the Ceaușescu era.

As unusual as its overriding of the official imagery and discourse may be, the film was released after some sequences were cut (in circumstances that remain unclear) by

the Council of Socialist Culture and Education. Censorship did not address domestic violence, working women's triple burden, class differences between women, bullying by teachers, or the privileged status of children of nomenklatura, but focused rather on hiding social unrest and softening Anca's disinterest in formal education and her frustration with society. Critics also brushed over these aspects, and instead wrote candidly about what they saw as a well-acted but typical, transient teenage crisis.

After the Revolution of 1989, Romanian cinema entered a period of instability that turned into a downright crisis by the year 2000, when no Romanian feature film premiered on national screens. The abolishment of censorship notwithstanding, liberation from ideological constraints set the industry on an unexpectedly uncertain path, while critics and filmmakers were trying to redefine the principles, goals, and directions of the medium in the radically different context of a market economy. Negative trends that Romanian cinema had already faced shortly before 1989—such as the erosion of its credibility and the decline in attendance—were further accentuated during the 1990s. Though it is little wonder that Cristiana Nicolae's 1992 feature film, *Sanda*, failed to get proper attention around that time, the reasons for its cold reception and quick disappearance from public memory are more complex.

The director's last film made in Romania, *Sanda*, is a hybrid, fractured work on multiple levels. First and foremost, its outline had existed since 1985, but the screenplay itself was written in early 1990, allowing it to address aspects of women's lives under Ceaușescu more transparently than it would have been possible before; filming and editing took place in the first months of the year. After Nicolae's departure to Canada, the studio hired director Nicu Gheorghe for the remaining postproduction processes, specifically the film's mixing. According to Nicolae, Gheorghe cut and reshot some sequences and added others that were not in her screenplay, along with an electronic film score (composed by Ion Cristinoiu) that she had not approved. Marred by discordant artistic intentions, the film was nonetheless screened in an off-competition section at the Créteil International Women's Film Festival in 1992, the year of its release. There, by her own account, the director spoke of her humiliation and discontent with the final version of the movie. In its present and only available condition, *Sanda* attests to Nicolae's post-revolutionary desire—one shared by numerous other directors at the time—to show the previously un-showable, but it also bears the marks of a chaotic cinematic transition in its second director's attempts to alter the tone of the film to increase its commercial appeal.

Viewed solely through Nicolae's lens, *Sanda* can in many respects be considered a sequel to *De dragul tău, Anca*. Set in the same Bucharest factory working-class milieu, it further develops the former's realistic aesthetic, but it shifts the focus entirely to the wife and mother, and adopts a decidedly more somber tone. Sanda Iovan (Florentina Mocanu), a 24-year-old woman, works in a plastics factory and is a mother of three children. She has abandoned her studies at the time of her marriage

and is the only caretaker of the house. Her husband Adrian (Andrei Zaharescu) is not only averse to domestic chores, but also much less interested in his family than the father in *De dragul tău*, *Anca*, and he openly holds Sanda in contempt. Beyond her productive and reproductive capabilities, he treats her as if she were nonexistent. Although she does not protest and manifests a detached resignation to his abuses, including sexual abuse, her disgust is visible as she repeatedly recoils from his touches and attempts to draw near her. Not only is her marriage a living hell, but the women in her own family are judgmental both of her choice of partner and her lack of interest in dolling herself up for him. Significantly, conversations initiated by Sanda's acquaintances revolve almost obsessively around men's needs and women's duty to meet them.

Largely criticized for its mundanity at the time of its premiere, the slice of life that Nicolae reenacts here has remained one of the few (if not the only one) to look closely into the actual conditions and pressures faced by the heroic, but invisible female worker of late Romanian communism. Not even those films of the Romanian New Wave set in the late 1980s went as far in exposing the degradation and harassment of women under their husbands and the state's control—seen as a double patriarchal submission. With the exception of the film's more melodramatic beginning, which highlights the protagonist's packed morning schedule, Sanda's daily race between her home, the children's kindergarten, her shift at the factory, and the queues for rationed food is presented in a uniform manner, as if to stress its monotony. Her small breaks from routine consist of innocuous chats with her colleagues or short meetings outside of work with her friend Miuța (Emilia Popescu), her mother (Iarina Demian), or her sister Laura (played by an unidentified actress), who is a nurse in an obstetrics and gynecology hospital. Against this background of utter exhaustion, Sanda's liaison with the doctor (Marian Râlea) who investigates her chronic back pain provides her an escape and the hope that she could live differently.

The unsettling element of Nicolae's film is arguably the way state violence towards women's bodies and lives permeates the everyday and the private realm to the point of acceptance. Laura's desensitization regarding her dying patients who have attempted abortion or women's passive waiting at the factory for their mandatory pelvic examinations speak volumes about the social atmosphere, even more so than the shabby, squalid interiors where people were shown standing muffled up, and the background of food, electricity, and gas shortages.³ The cruelty of these violations then flows into casual conversations about a much-awaited vacation or what to wear for a family event—minor distractions from a stifling existence. *Sanda's* realistic depiction of 1980s Romania blends the horrific and the commonplace; the visual style of the movie deftly conveys the blurring of the boundaries between the two. Nicolae makes her points with a touch of dark humor, such as when a neighbor wonderingly asks

3 On the reproductive policies of the Ceaușescu regime, see Ana Blandiana in this volume.

a pensive Sanda what there is to look at outside the balcony of the garbage chute or when the protagonist wearily tells her incredulous husband that she has slept with another man.

In the latter sequence, placed towards the end of the movie, Sanda returns home from one of her trysts with the doctor to find a mountain of dirty dishes and a daughter discontent with her father's lack of care and attention. She starts tidying up and, as her husband enters the kitchen, the camera tracks his movement and stops as he sits at the table, showing him in a medium close-up (facing the camera), while Sanda remains in the background (stooped over the kitchen sink, washing the dishes, with her back against him and the camera). Their absurd conversation takes place from these fixed positions and the long take—employed by the director at various points throughout the film—emphasizes the parasitic, almost comically one-sided nature of their relationship. After her searing, ignored confession that she was late because she had cheated on him, at his request she begins explaining a chemistry lesson from his book to help him grasp it for his evening high-school classes. The shot is referenced by the second still provided in this chapter.

Given the dearth of discourses and representations from a feminine point of view and the rampant sexual violence towards the female body that characterized the male-dominated cinema of the transition period,⁴ *Sanda* emerges as one of the few efforts (if not the only one) of the Romanian cinema of the 1990s to analyze the power imbalance of gender roles and relations and to call into question and dismantle women's naturalized duties and burdens.

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Cristiana Nicolae: Still from *De dragul tău, Anca*



Cristiana Nicolae: Still from *Sanda*

Júlia Szilágyi

A Spoken World

AUTHOR Júlia Szilágyi

TITLE “Von frühreifen Wunderkind zur verspäteten Schriftstellerin” [From Precocious Wunderkind to Belated Writer]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Chapter in Renate Windisch-Middendorf, *Die kluge Genossin. Begegnungen mit Frauen in Rumänien* [The Clever Comrade: Encounters with Women from Romania] (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1983), 85–109.

LANGUAGE German

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Júlia Szilágyi (1936, Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca, Romania) is an essayist and literary critic. Her deep attachment and committed presence to Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca, where she spent her whole life, and to her triple identity as Hungarian, Jewish, and a woman living in Romania, define Júlia Szilágyi’s work. Kolozsvár/Cluj underwent major and dramatic transformations during her life. When she was born in the 1930s, it had a Hungarian majority population and a significant Jewish one (16,000 people were deported to the ghetto in 1944); by comparison, the city’s population in the early 2010s was 80% Romanian and 15% Hungarian, with a minuscule Jewish population.

Szilágyi spent her childhood, youth, and active years in the shadow of two totalitarian regimes, fascist and communist. She recalls reciting in school “The National Poem” (Nemzeti dal) by Sándor Petőfi,¹ after which she was beaten up because a Jew should not recite a Hungarian poem. In 1940, the city was annexed by Hungary following the Second Vienna Award. In late May 1944, together with her family, she had to flee to Romania from Kolozsvár/Cluj because of life-threatening persecution as Hungarian Jews. During the war, her father was sent to forced labor, and her grandparents and other relatives were deported to Auschwitz and killed. After 1945, the family moved back to Kolozsvár/Cluj. Szilágyi recalls this family history in a short text published in 1974,² and in her beautiful memoir, *The Sleepless Book* (2014), the only one of her volumes that was also translated into Romanian (2017).

1 Sándor Petőfi (1823–1849) was a Hungarian poet who is considered a national hero. “Nemzeti dal” is his most well-known poem, written for the 1848 Revolution. Whilst Petőfi was a progressive-liberal nationalist, contemporary ethno-nationalist conservatives frequently attempt to appropriate his legacy for their political agenda.

2 The anthology *Keserű órák* [Bitter Hour] (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1974), in which Szilágyi’s text was published, was devoted to the thirtieth anniversary of the deportations.

In 1960, Szilágyi graduated from the Babeş-Bolyai University in Kolozsvár/Cluj with a teaching degree in Hungarian language and literature. She formed lifelong, important friendships, especially with the poet Domokos Szilágyi (1938–1976) and the linguist Kálmán Nagy (1939–1971), translator of the *Kalevala*.³ During her student years, she began to publish in *Korunk* (Our Age) and *Utunk* (Our Way), the former founded in 1926 as a left-wing publication. She ran the cultural column of *Dolgozó Nő* (Working Woman) from 1963 to 1967, and was a member of the editorial board of *Korunk* from 1967 until 1991. At the invitation of professor Éva Cs. Gyimesi (1945–2011) she became a lecturer at the Department of Hungarian Literature at the Babeş-Bolyai University from 1994 to 2006, after she had already retired.

Júlia Szilágyi never became the leader of any institution, nor held any influential formal position. She could not have been the head of *Korunk*, as a woman, and also because she was under surveillance by the Romanian secret police, the Securitate, since the early 1960s. There is not a single Hungarian cultural and literary journal or publishing house in Romania that has been headed by a woman, with the exception of *Dolgozó Nő*, which was viewed as a “women’s magazine.”

Married twice, Szilágyi became a single mother. As she recalled:

When I gave birth to a child out of wedlock, in this rather broken world [i.e., the early 1970s], the president of the abortion committee in Cluj had begged me to do all the paperwork and not have it because I would be an outcast, lose my job... But my parents were happy. Then, when my son was born, I was celebrated like Hanna Honthy after the hundredth *Die Csárdásfürstin*.⁴ Especially the women who celebrated their missed opportunities in me. And then I became the patron saint of mothers in Cluj-Napoca!⁵

In the source included in this volume, she also reflects at length on being a mother and a writer.

Szilágyi’s main genre was always the essay: she has published eight volumes, mostly essays and literary criticism. Her oeuvre is rooted both in her own city—the title of

3 *Kalevala* is a Karelian-Finnish epic poem, reconstructed in the nineteenth century by Elias Lönnrot. It tells the story of the creation of the world and the struggles between two tribes and is treated as the tale of origin of Estonians, a fellow Finno-Ugric people. There were no similar remnants of a Hungarian origin myth, therefore the *Kalevala* became part of the Hungarian national canon. The story of *Kalevala* inspired Tolkien’s *The Lord of Rings* trilogy, among others.

4 *Die Csárdásfürstin* is a famous operetta by Imre Kálmán (1882–1953), which premiered in Vienna, and has been popular ever since. It was turned into a movie in the Soviet Union in 1981. Operetta is a popular genre with a long Central European tradition, but it is considered more a part of popular culture than high culture. Hanna Honthy (1893–1978) was a Hungarian actress and operetta singer, who in her fifties returned to *Die Csárdásfürstin* in the role of the main male character’s mother, both on stage and in the Hungarian movie.

5 Tompa, “Hármas kisebbségben. Interjú Szilágyi Júliával,” 91.

her first collection of essays is *The Power of Place* (*A helyszín hatalma*, 1979)—and in the works of universal culture, from the Bible to Virginia Woolf, from her contemporaries to Jonathan Swift. Her first book, a small monograph on Jonathan Swift, is a doubly coded speech: on the one hand, a direct reflection on the “Irish question,” and on the other, a reflection on the minority situation in general, more familiar to contemporary readers.

Her work as an university lecturer inspired the book *Can Essays Be Taught?* (2007), which does not teach any particular technique, but addresses the genre itself, providing the reader with analyses of the perhaps freest, most reflective prose genre. “The essay is an attempt, the essay is an experiment,”⁶ Szilágyi writes.

After her retirement, which coincided with the collapse of the communist dictatorship in 1989, Szilágyi has been even more active: she teaches, writes, often expresses her opinions as a publicist and public figure, shaping social dialogue with frequent critical and analytical reflections. With a good command of Romanian, she has been critical of the limited links between the Hungarian and Romanian communities and has contributed to strengthening them.

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Andrea Tompa

CONTEXT

“I was always interested in the marginal things,”⁷ states Szilágyi, the small and not mainstream forms of writing and talking, often in informal environments. It is no coincidence that the source text in this volume is both an oral text, an interview,

6 *Lehet-e esszét tanítani?* [Can Essays Be Taught?] (Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca: Korunk–Komp-Press, 2007).

7 Szilágyi, *Feljegyzések az akváriumból*, 42.

and published abroad, not in the country where she was born and lives. The fact that Júlia Szilágyi was courageous enough to talk to Renate Windisch-Middendorf, a foreign journalist, during a tough dictatorship, is an important gesture. The 1980s were a time of censorship of all printed materials and lack of free speech in formal settings—in her multiple-minority position, she was already a dissident in her own country, which further magnified the importance of the spoken word. The interview, more generally, is one of her main genres, part of her oral heritage. The book where it was originally published, in 1983, is a collection of interviews with women from Romania, focusing on their exceptional achievements as well as the multiethnicity of Romania as a country. Renate Windisch-Middendorf (b. 1946), a literary scholar with an additional background in art history and history, interviewed seven women to learn about their professional possibilities as well as their lives and personal struggles, but also about the cultural life in Romania (besides Szilágyi, Windisch-Middendorf interviewed Emma Moisesescu, Elena Viorel, Ildikó Kovács, Eta Boeriu, Alexandra Rus, and Ana Lupaş). As the blurb of the book says, Windisch-Middendorf was also interested in “their numerous conflicts with men, who even in a socialist land are reluctant to share authority [*Herrschaft*],” something on which Szilágyi also reflects in her interview.

The intellectual significance of Júlia Szilágyi is linked to her writings on the one hand, and to her spoken word and oral impact on the other. The latter unfolded mostly in private talks during the Romanian dictatorship and in the social sphere and media after the collapse of the regime. The tradition and influence of the spoken word is very significant during a totalitarian regime: the church and the theatre, and sometimes other ritual occasions such as funerals, became spaces where one could speak somewhat freely and critically. There was also a certain degree of freedom within the walls of schools and universities. Although Júlia Szilágyi was only invited to teach at the university after 1989, her home, a rented flat, where she still lives, became a private, intimate, friendly meeting place in the heart of the city, in the company of thousands of books and a rich collection of folk art and contemporary Transylvanian art. Her quiet, critical, and analytical spoken word is a product of dictatorship. This invites re-evaluation of the Latin proverb “the word fades away, the writing remains” (*verba volant, scripta manent*); the power of the spoken word is reminiscent of biblical times, of pre-literacy, when the spoken word becomes action. As Szilágyi reflected: “Montaigne says that his conversations are better than his writings, and that he really just likes to talk. In fact, I only like to talk, I say modestly, following Montaigne. I like to be understood, I like to be argued with, I like to listen to others. I find the dialogue between generations particularly useful for myself.”⁸ In

8 Tompa, “Hármas kisebbségben. Interjú Szilágyi Júliával,” 89.

contrast to the old Greek dialogical tradition, Júlia Szilágyi had no formal disciples, only discussion partners; monologuing for an audience has always been foreign to her.

A great woman of small stature, Szilágyi always confessed that her greatest passion was reading and talking. Her entire oeuvre is a dialogue with books she read and people she met. The publication of her first monograph in 1968 coincided with a brief period of cultural liberalization in Romania. The same year, Nicolae Ceaușescu, who was already building his dictatorship, condemned the Soviet military intervention in Czechoslovakia, which made him acceptable to the West. Not long after, the so-called mini-cultural revolution in Romania, which began in 1971, led to the increasingly brutal censorship of all forms of free speech. Fundamentally and primarily a critical spirit, whether on literature or social or human rights issues, Júlia Szilágyi published only one more volume of literary essays during this period of dictatorship, in 1979. All the awards she received were after the collapse of communism. Moreover, the focus differed in Romania and Hungary, complicating the contextualization of her oeuvre and showing the complexity of her reception: the awards she received in Romania were for her literary achievements, whereas in the case of the state awards in Hungary her person was in the focus.

In Szilágyi's critical thinking, the personal, the social, and the political are deeply intertwined: as a survivor of two totalitarian regimes, the experience of oppression, persecution, and the will for freedom and free speech inform her humor-infused, playfully light-hearted but always reflective and critical spirit. In her literary criticism, Szilágyi maintains that the authors' individual fates and social experiences must be intertwined with the interpretation of their works, as located in concrete time and space and imbued by them, even when the desire for freedom also extends to being independent of one's context.

Szilágyi described the essay as an important genre and an "intellectual attitude" in the Hungarian literature in Romania of the twentieth century. A fluid genre even under constraints, the essay dominated in Transylvanian scholarship also in opposition to criticism, which had been gradually ideologized and increasingly turned into a mouthpiece for party polices in the second half of the twentieth century.

Criticism as practiced by Szilágyi is more of dialogue-based thinking, a flow of thoughts around a work of art, than a strong journalistic opinion or judgement. She always preferred to be more an analytical than strongly opinionated writer. Universal classics, from Tolstoy to Thomas Mann and Virginia Woolf, and local (Hungarian) contemporaries, like János Székely (1929–1992) or Domokos Szilágyi are in the focus of her interest. Important women poets have a special place in her writings; she reviewed the poetry of Zsófia Balla (b. 1949) and Gizella Hervay (1934–1982). Szilágyi built a life-long friendship and intellectual partnership with the outstanding puppet theatre director Ildikó Kovács (1927–2008; the only Hungarian woman director at the time), and with the Hungarian literature professor Éva Cs. Gyimesi,

a woman of great political and scientific stature in the humanities.⁹ It is very telling that all these women were partly in marginal situations—puppet theatre was considered inferior to mainstream drama theatre; Cs. Gyimesi never held a full professorship before the regime change; and finally both poets, Balla and Hervay, emigrated from Romania. Júlia Szilágyi was surrounded by many tragic fates; a succession of friends committed suicide. Always making an effort to see personal fates in historical context, she reflected on how most of them were victims of marginalization during the communist regime.

One of Júlia Szilágyi's main interests after 1989 became the empathic, nuanced, and dispassionate approach to the burdened past. "Behind us a past that can't be buried," she quoted her lifelong friend and poet Domokos Szilágyi.¹⁰ As very few others did, she contended with her own past as part of a leftist family which adhered to communism because of its antifascist and egalitarian promises, and accepted her own early commitment, which she explained in the context of the era. Szilágyi's disappointment and definite rejection of the communist regime was a long process, but one of its catalysts was the 1956 Revolution in Hungary, after which many innocent people, among them university students and peers of Szilágyi, were persecuted and also jailed in Romania.

As for many intellectuals of her generation, existentialism (e.g., Camus and Sartre) was of the greatest importance in her intellectual, spiritual formation, influencing her attitude toward political realities. "Existentialism, which makes me responsible for myself. It's not that the party will decide what is right. Don't let the party lead. I should lead myself," she explained.¹¹

Unlike many intellectuals in the Hungarian community in Romania, she has not seen society as divided among victims and perpetrators, but saw people—among them her most important friends, such as the poet Domokos Szilágyi who later proved to be an informant of Securitate—as complex victims and "an instrument to persecute others."¹² Júlia Szilágyi considers with complexity and rigor the social and historical processes of which she and her community were part. This renders her an intellectual who takes time to analyze and question; she never had easy, loud messages or slogans, which would turn her into a media or political figure. Critical thinking of all

9 Éva Cs. Gyimesi's intellectual heritage as a scholar and as a critical and political thinker is still to be mapped; there are no biographies or collective volumes devoted to her personality and achievements. As a university professor of contemporary Hungarian literature, she was one of the key figures to resist the nationalist regime that the Ceaușescu dictatorship turned into in the 1970s–80s, when she was in the strong focus of the Securitate. After 1989, she took active part in building a new, modern, democratic, multiethnic society in Romania, which still retains a strong local identity. She has always been a strong critic of any nationalism.

10 Szilágyi, "Sajtóértekezlet" [Press Conference], 212. Translation by the author.

11 Tompa, "Hármas kisebbségben. Interjú Szilágyi Júliával," 89.

12 Szilágyi, *Feljegyzések az akváriumból*, 41.

phenomena of social and intellectual life is primarily important in her oral and written work: to have a complex and analytical look on the reality we all live in.

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Andrea Tompa

Júlia Szilágyi

From Precocious Wunderkind to Belated Writer

I belong to a minority in three respects: as a Hungarian, as a Jew, and as a woman.

I have certain reservations about feminism. I think that no social group has the possibility or even the right to isolate itself. The woman's problem is a social one—like any other. The woman does not live somewhere in a world of her own. She lives in a world that cannot be divided by gender. If certain women's problems still exist, then they must be considered in a social context.

For example, I began my literary career in the years after 1960, at a time that was particularly fertile for cultural renewal throughout southeastern Europe. That's how I see it from here, among southeast Europeans, and I don't know whether people in the West would agree with me on this.

At that time, I came up with a very interesting poetics. Had poems or novels come out of it—I probably would have advanced much faster in literary life and could have published with no problem. It is indeed something beautiful when a woman writes poetry, has sublime feelings, speaks about love, about children, whatever—about nature and so on...

But a woman who wants to do literary criticism, literary essays, has a harder time.

"How do you imagine," an older, experienced literary editor told me, "that you're going to explain how to go about this to a man who's accomplished in the field?"

I was quite taken aback by this, as I had assumed that I would not be working as a woman but as a person trained in this profession, as someone who has their own views on this and who advances by engaging with cultural matters.

And so I was pulled back into the dark reality—that I was a woman and could not allow myself to criticize men. This struck me unprepared and unexpectedly, although I should have figured it out on my own.

Ten years later—I'm now jumping in time a bit—when I had occupied my place within the Hungarian literary scene in Romania for a while and when I was expecting Mihály, my son, a writer friend asked me, "What do you feel?" I answered her:

"What can I say? You gave birth to two children yourself, and you know very well how I feel!"

To which she replied:

"No, I think you are feeling something more!"

I said, "Until now I felt equal to men; now I feel equal to women."

Being a woman means no more, but also no less, than being a man. But it also means being something different, something special.

I don't think that I read a book as a woman. Sometimes educated people in literature such as writers—predominantly men—try to explain to me that there is a “feminine principle” as well as a “masculine principle.” I always wonder how they can explain how Tolstoy could write *Anna Karenina* or Flaubert could write *Madame Bovary* without being a woman.

I could also give other examples of women who are not exactly feminine, such as the books of Anna Seghers, who possesses nothing of what is commonly called “typically feminine,” not even in her worldview. There are plenty of others, such as Virginia Woolf, whom I recently considered in a study. She certainly possessed even more sensitivity, but this sensitivity is also exhibited by numerous men. What I mean to say is that in the 25 years that I have been working continuously on literature, I have not yet managed to identify anything specifically masculine or specifically feminine in it. I can say this with the utmost conviction.

Psychological structures of hardness or sensitivity, of determination or—if you will—of special intuition can be found in men as well as in women. But all this is demonstrably not linked to “the male” or “the female” sex. It can be connected to certain personal experiences and is of course determined by what a man or a woman might feel.

And I return to *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary*. While reading these texts—especially the very “feminine” passages on the spread of feelings—I asked myself in my youth: How is it possible for a man to feel such a thing?

Similarly, many men might wonder how Simone de Beauvoir manages to draw certain conclusions about the behavior of the sexes so apodictically.

But that is not how I see the situation. I do not believe that the world is divided into a man's world and a woman's world, into a man's culture and a woman's culture. I agree with Simone de Beauvoir, who said that it took five centuries before we were able to discuss the problem of gender equality on the basis of—if you like—statistical data, as this is a relatively new idea in the history of mankind.

[...]

The day before I went to the clinic, as the birth of my child was imminent, I left a sheet in the typewriter, half of which was already written on. I had started an essay on Dostoevsky. It was a lot of trouble to write it, because I am small and had a big belly from which a big child was about to come out, and it was downright physically difficult for me to get to the machine. I had to laugh at myself while working, although the somber and tragic subject was not exactly occasion to do so. I was overcome by the feeling that I was becoming increasingly stupid and could no longer work. The page I had started was to remain stuck in the typewriter for three months.

Then I gave birth to my son. From that moment on, I was attuned to him with spirit and body. I nursed him. This bodily-spiritual contact with a life born from me, with a body from my womb, was an enormous feeling of happiness.

Exactly three months and three days after I gave birth to my son—it was right on my birthday in the middle of summer—the moment came when I suddenly had no more milk. The child cried out of hunger, I gave him the bottle—and wept all day. I cried like a mother who feels like she has lost the greatest joy in her life. I felt as though something had come to an end; and that same evening, I sat down again at the typewriter and finished the essay on Dostoevsky: I had to be useful again, to do something. Work became a consolation, as is often the case, a consolation for my loss. There were periods when I was alternately a mother and a writer—or both simultaneously. This is likely specific to us women of this era, who set out to accomplish something (which, with a lot of goodwill, can be called creativity) without renouncing the eternal destiny of women, the traditional goal of being a mother.

We often, almost daily, have a guilty conscience that we neglect our duty as mothers and our duty as human beings, as creative human beings. This neglect tears at one's heart—and all the more so because motherhood and creativity demand the whole person.

Mathilde Niel very rightly points to this problem in the title of her book: *Le drame de la libération des femmes* (The Drama of Women's Liberation).¹³

Women's liberation is indeed a drama. It is a drama when my son comes to me, wants something from me, and I have to tell him, "Dear Mihály, I have to work now! Tomorrow I have to give a lecture!" Or: "I don't have time now, I have to do something for the editors!"

Or the other way around, when he is sick and I leave any work until I get him back on his feet...

I have two passions that create joy and suffering at the same time: the passion of being a mother and the passion of working on something that I choose and that I like. I have to choose between the two every day.

I don't believe that men are keeping watch at the bedside of their feverish children at night—at least not the creative men: a reason why the creatively engaged women are considered less creative than the men. A reason why the high-level professional work of women, the creative activity of the "mother woman," is judged disparagingly.

There is likely no panacea for how to solve this problem. I have searched for my personal solution and believe that every woman who finds herself in this situation must decide for herself what framework she operates in.

[...]

13 Editor's note: Mathilde Niel, *Le drame de la libération de la femme* (Paris: Le Courrier du Livre, 1968).

The fact that I grew up in a family made up of several nationalities through mixed marriages has been formative for my path to become a human being and for my capacity for tolerance (which I consider to be a basic trait of my being—whether in professional life or in everyday family life). Our family includes Hungarians, Romanians, and Germans—that is, the most important nationalities of our area. We’ve always been in good contact with people of different ethnicities and mother tongues. I grew up without being particularly aware of being Jewish. We simply did not make any distinctions between people. I only realized that there were different holidays, which were celebrated according to the old traditions of the denominations—Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. In all families the church holidays were celebrated with similar pomp; they cooked particularly well, there was cake—and the “Christmas apples” were a must. Around me I saw a large family with the most diverse habits and customs, which never led to differences. The same picture emerged in social terms. In our family there were rich and poor, there were communists and capitalists. Of course, this often led to quarrels. But when someone was in need, the others helped that person. Everyone maintained their personal convictions, but when danger threatened, they stood together. When a communist from the family was in prison, the others took care of his wife and children, even though they did not share his political convictions.

This solidarity among people was the principal experience of my youth. That is why it was even more difficult for me to understand later why people became so hostile to one another from one day to the next. Where did so much hatred come from, hatred I had never known before and which was something completely foreign to me? It was like being in a terrible dream from which I could not wake up. In 1944—I was eight years old at the time—I saw with my own eyes what was happening to the Jews in our town. We all had to wear the yellow Star of David. I had just received a new shawl and was proud of the jewelry that was sewn onto it. I did not understand why my mother was crying. I went out in the streets with my aunt, who was considered a Romanian by marriage to a Romanian and had converted to Christianity. We lived at that time at this aunt’s house in Cluj. My father had already been transported to Russia with a work crew. He was taken in 1943, and we did not hear from him until the end of 1945, when he returned from the camp. He also lived through Dachau. When he was liberated with the rest there, he only weighed 39 kilos. The Americans placed him in a sanatorium for some months because he could not even walk. On the day of liberation, many more died because the Americans had opened the camp’s storerooms, with good intentions. These were still full of sugar, which the starving people pounced on and which they gobbled down in large quantities until many of them fell dead. This is what my father told me. He did not want to talk about anything else and also never did.

Conversely, my father had no news of us. He had heard that Jewish women and children were taken directly to the gas chambers after they were rounded up. He had to assume that we were also no longer alive.

But what had happened?

The Christian part of our family, the Romanians and Hungarians, saved us by taking us across the border from Transylvania, at that time Hungarian, to Romania. [...]

Yet beasts do not even tear each other apart; I cannot understand how people are capable of killing each other. And I am convinced that if I were not a believer, I would have never dared to have a child. I believe that we have the chance to choose between the inherited predispositions of humanity, which pass down good and bad qualities, and to choose the good ones.

This would lead to a mature age for humanity—any lesser sacrifice, on the other hand, would mean disaster for the whole human race at the present stage of technological development.

Hemingway expressed a great truth in his novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*: the bell always tolls for thee.

Every loss that someone suffers will ultimately be suffered by those who caused it. This is my deepest conviction.

Translated by Lea Greenberg

Maria Dinkova and Chavdar Kyuranov

Women, Gender, and the Use of Time

AUTHOR Maria Dinkova

TITLE “Dve dini pod edna mishnica – mogat li da se nosyat dolgo” [Two Watermelons in One Hand—Can They Be Held for a Long Time?]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Zhenata dnes* [Woman Today], no. 5 (1971): 16–17.

LANGUAGE Bulgarian

AUTHORS Maria Dinkova and Chavdar Kyuranov

TITLE *Reshenie na Politburo na TsK na BKP za izdigane roliata na zhenata v izgrazhdaneto na razvito sotsialisticheskoto obshtestvo ot 6 mart 1973 i 26 julu 1974 g.* [Decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party for Improving the Role of the Woman in the Building of Developed Socialist Society from March 6, 1973, and July 26, 1974]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Sofia: Partizdat, 1979.

LANGUAGE Bulgarian

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Maria Dinkova (b. 1928, Plovdiv) graduated in law from Sofia University, studied in Moscow from 1973 towards a candidate of sciences degree which she earned in 1977, and earned a PhD in sociology in 1991. Dinkova is one of the first Bulgarian sociologists and feminists from the postwar period, and authored studies dealing with women's and gender issues from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Dinkova contributed to the magazine *Zhenata dnes* (Woman Today), where, as a journalist, she published a series of texts resulting from the large-scale sociological studies “*Zhenata v stopanskia, obshtestvenia, kulturnia zhivot i v semeistvoto*” (The Woman in Economic, Social, and Cultural Life and in the Family) and “*Tiput na suvremennata bulgarska zhenata*” (A Profile of the Contemporary Bulgarian Woman). After her sociological articles were well received by readers, in 1969 Sonia Bakish, editor-in-chief of *Zhenata dnes*, advised Dinkova to study sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS) and the *Visshata Partiina Shkola* (Higher Party School). Dinkova participated in a project initiated by *Zhenata dnes* that worked towards a “solution to the woman's question” in order to achieve “real equality between the sexes.” This subsequently became the basis for a party document on social policies towards women-mothers, which Dinkova developed together with Chavdar Kyuranov in 1973.¹ The document was discussed, accepted, and promulgated as the “Decision of the Politburo

1 Dinkova, “Strasti po velikata zhenska revolyutsia,” 34.

of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party for Improving the Role of the Woman in the Building of Developed Socialist Society from March 6, 1973.”

From 1968 to 1978, in parallel with her work as a journalist, Dinkova was an active member of the Committee of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na dvizhenieto na bulgarskite zheni, KDBZh), to which she was appointed in 1971. During this time, Dinkova was a speechwriter for Elena Lagadinova (leader of the committee between 1968–1989), but communication with her was not always easy.² From the 1970s onward, she held expert positions in several state institutions, such as the Council for Reproduction of Human Resources, and the National Institute for Youth Research (where she served as a department head), facilitating the improvement of legislation in line with new policies towards women, such as marriage and pronatalist legislation. After 1989, Dinkova continued her sociological research. Most notably, between 1994–1997 she conducted the project “Brakut v Bulgariakato predstava, cennost i realnost” (Marriage in Bulgaria as Concept, Value, and Reality) at the National Institute for Youth Research. This remains one of the key sources on issues related to family and marriage in Bulgaria.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Suvremennoto bulgarsko semeistvo* [The Modern Bulgarian Family] (Sofia: Otechestven front, 1976); *1000 vuprositelni pred suvremennata devoika* [1000 Questions For the Modern Girl] (Sofia: Narodna mladezh, 1978); *Socialen portret na bulgarkata* [Social Portrait of the Bulgarian Woman] (Sofia: Profizdat, 1980); with A. Atanasov and T. Bostandzhiev, *Mladoto semeistvo* [The Young Family] (Sofia: Narodna mladezh, 1985); with Ch. Kyuranov, T. Bostandzhiev, et al., *Dneshното bulgarsko semeistvo* [The Bulgarian Family Today] (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1987); with D. Mirchev, *Brakut kato predstava, cennost i realnost* [Marriage as Idea, Value, and Reality] (Sofia: ASSA-M, 1997); with P. Amudzhiev et. al., *Nacionalen analiz na polozhenieto na bulgarskite deca i semeistva 1992* [National Analysis of the Situation of Bulgarian Children and Families] (Sofia: Bulgarski nacionalen komitet za UNICEF, 1992).

Chavdar Kyuranov (1921, Sofia–2004, Sofia) was a Bulgarian sociologist, professor of sociology at Sofia University, in opposition to the communist regime under leader Todor Zhivkov, and a social democratic politician after 1989.³ Kyuranov was a free-thinking communist who, for example, supported the idea of continuing women’s emancipation and raising women’s role in society on liberal grounds, and, on the basis of human rights, opposed the forced renaming of the Bulgarian Turks by the Zhivkov regime in 1985–1986. As a sociologist and member of the Bulgarian Communist Party, he was appointed in 1971 to the Human Resources Council in the State Council

² Dinkova, “Strasti po velikata zhenska revolyutsia,” 48–60.

³ The biography is also based on private communication with Deyan Kyuranov and Dennitsa Kyuranova, the son and daughter of Chavdar Kyuranov.

of Bulgaria. There, in tandem with his immediate superior Dr. Vladimir Kalaydjiev, a reformer of Bulgarian healthcare, and the sociologist Maria Dinkova, he worked on maternity legislation which, when put into practice, proved to be among the most progressive worldwide.

Kyuranov graduated in law from Sofia University after the Second World War, and in the first half of the 1950s continued postgraduate work at Moscow State University, where he wrote the thesis "The Process of Redistribution in the People's Republic of Bulgaria," later published in Bulgarian. From 1956 to 1965 he was a researcher at the Economic Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), and then became Bulgaria's representative at the European Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva). Back in Bulgaria, he worked at the Institute of Sociology at BAS, where between 1971 and 1988 he was in charge of the Sociology and Labor Department. Kyuranov also served as Vice President of the International Council of Social Sciences at UNESCO. He was a scholar of significant academic presence and contribution to the development of Bulgarian social science, with research interests in economic sociology, the sociology of labor, and social groups.

Kyuranov idealistically joined the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) in 1948, but returned from the Soviet Union a critic of the communist system initially on economic, and subsequently on political grounds. This was privately voiced criticism, after the fashion of the communist *frondeur* (rebel) intelligentsia of Bulgaria. Kyuranov made his stance public when in 1988 he became a founding member of the Club for Support of Glasnost and Perestroika. He was expelled from the Bulgarian Communist Party, along with other members. After 1989, he rejoined the BCP, was elected to its governing body, and founded the reformist Alliance for Social Democracy within that party; the Alliance was crushed by the communist conservatives in 1998. In 1990, Kyuranov accepted an offer to run for President of Bulgaria on his party's ticket, but did so unsuccessfully. He was an MP in the 7th Grand National Assembly (1990–1991), and in the following three National Assemblies (1991–2001). In 1995, he founded the Club for Neutrality (of Bulgaria) and was among the leaders of the neutrality movement until his death on March 23, 2004, in Sofia.

MAIN WORKS • *Sotsialni klasi i sotsialna stratifikatsia* [Social Classes and Social Stratification] (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1977); *Choveshkite obshnosti: Ocherti po sotsiologia na sotsialnite obshnosti* [Human Communities: Studies in the Sociology of Social Communities] (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1982); *Dneshnoto bulgarsko semeystvo* [The Bulgarian Family Today] (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1987); *Ruchniyat trud* [Manual Labor] (Sofia: BAN, 1988); Dicho Uzunov and Chavdar Kyuranov, *Neutralitet ili NATO* [Neutrality or NATO] (Stara Zagora: Djemi Stratus OOD, 2003).

Boryana Yankova

CONTEXT

The sociologists Maria Dinkova and Chavdar Kyuranov studied social groups with a strong interest in family and labor processes in socialist Bulgaria. Together, they scientifically argued for new policies regarding women, and developed the 1973 strategy *Reshenie na Politburo na TsK na BKP za izdigane roliata na zhenata v izgrazhdaneto na razvito sotsialisticheskoto obshtestvo ot 6 mart 1973 i 26 julu 1974 g.* (Decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party for Improving the Role of the Woman in the Building of Developed Socialist Society from March 6, 1973, and July 26, 1974), henceforth referred to as *Reshenie* (Decision).

Dinkova's 1971 article "Two Watermelons in One Hand—Can They Be Held for a Long Time?" is typical for her writing. It presents the new policy of the reformed KDBZh with regard to the social function of women and proposes measures to improve their role in society, discussed in a series of texts published in the *Zhenata dnes* journal as their platform. The article mainly focuses on the issue of the double burden, the second / third shift, or, in Sonya Bakish's words, "women's crucifixion,"⁴ and on the impossibility of women combining maternal, domestic, and productive duties. It highlights the resulting problems facing women: an unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities, the shortage of and limited access to childcare facilities, difficulties in improving professional qualifications, and increased morbidity among female workers. These are analyzed in depth in *Reshenie*—in fact, a large portion of Dinkova's research and publications preceding the document address the need for changes in women's daily lives. In her work, Dinkova advocated for the participation of all family members in household duties, pointing out still-existing patriarchal traditions and cultural attitudes, "which change more slowly than political and economic structures."⁵ Because of the preservation of old understandings about their role in society and the family, concluded Dinkova, women did not have the possibility to realize their professional and intellectual potential to the fullest. The efforts of the KDBZh to engage fathers jointly in sharing domestic responsibilities and to minimize the gendered division of labor, including responsibility for children, had not been particularly successful. For example, a suggestion by Elena Lagadinova and the KDBZh to include in housing plans a playground for children and a café for fathers to supervise them was received coolly.⁶

Nevertheless, Dinkova described the political and social context of the period 1965–1975 (when *Reshenie* was conceived, created, and implemented) as "the most progressive leap forward for Bulgarian women."⁷ During this time, the Bulgarian

4 Daskalova, "Gendering the Cold War," 331. See also Sonia Bakish in this volume.

5 Brunnbauer, *Socialisticheskiyat nachin na zhiivot*, 427.

6 Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*, 74.

7 Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*, 59.

People's Women's Union was transformed into the KBDZh, women's organizations were restructured, the number of close international contacts with the WIDF increased under Tsola Dragoicheva's chairwomanship,⁸ and a committee for the study of woman in developed socialist society was established within the Academy of Sciences.

Reshenie was the first document to openly discuss new policies toward women implemented by the Bulgarian Communist Party and the image of the Bulgarian woman according to the official ideology in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It recognized for the first time that the social progress of Bulgarian women had given rise to many new and diverse problems in society. Solving these was the necessary condition for ensuring the further successful functioning and development of the entire social system. Dinkova and Kyuranov proposed an all-encompassing analysis of the situation of Bulgarian women in all spheres of life, which then evolved and was articulated by the KDBZh and by the editorial board of *Zhenata dnes*.

This party document has received significant scholarly attention in Bulgaria. The most comprehensive analysis from a feminist perspective is Savina Sharkova's study of the document's preparation, key participants in the process and preliminary discussions, and of its modernizing effects. Sharkova argued that factors such as intense urbanization, the massive entry of women into paid work,⁹ along with emerging issues such as the so-called double burden concerning the gendered division of household chores contributed to *Reshenie*. For example, a questionnaire published in 1967 by *Zhenata dnes* showed that women spent approximately five hours a day on housework. The results prompted the article "Da otmenim 'vtorata smyana'!" (To cancel the "second shift"!) by Sonia Bakish (published also in this volume).

The article by Dinkova included in this volume mentions the survey on "Woman in Production, Public Life, and the Family," conducted in 1969 by the KDBZh, the Council of Ministers, and *Zhenata dnes*. The survey resulted in the concept study *Konceptsia za osiguruvane na optimalni usloviya za suchetavane zadulzheniyata na zhenata kato proizvodstvenichka, maika i obshtestvenichka* (Concept for Ensuring Optimal Conditions for Combining the Duties of Women as Producers, Mothers, and Public Figures). After going through two versions in 1971 and 1972, it was adopted at the twentieth congress of the BCP in 1971, as Sharkova points out, not without the "blessing" of Todor Zhivkov.¹⁰

In line with modernization strategies regarding women, a committee was set up at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, entitled "Woman in the Conditions of Developed Socialist Society." The committee introduced scientific approaches towards issues

8 Daskalova, "A Woman Politician in the Cold War Balkans," 72. See also Tsola Dragoicheva in this volume.

9 Sharkova, "Socialisticheskata zhena mezhdur publichnoto i chastnoto," 64.

10 Sharkova, "Socialisticheskata zhena mezhdur publichnoto i chastnoto," 66.

such as women's labor, marriage, family, upbringing, and upskilling opportunities, and coordinated research on these topics.¹¹ Research also focused on equalizing political participation between men and women.

To address demographic issues that became more visible in the 1960s, legislative changes were introduced, among them the *Decree on the Promotion of Fertility* and the *Family Code*. Both defined motherhood as "the woman's" primary "natural" and "social" function. In the text by Dinkova and Kyuranov, the natural function belongs to the woman-mother, homemaker, and wife, who assumes the duties of reproduction and family, while the social function primarily refers to women's paid work.¹² The boundaries of the private and public spheres of the socialist woman are both ever-fluctuating and intersecting: thus motherhood, for example, considered to belong to the private sphere, has significant implications for public life, while the labor process represented one of the major guarantees of gender equality in private life as well.¹³

Motherhood under socialism was considered part of the public interest, and its regulation is one of the central themes of *Reshenie*, which aimed to tackle several interrelated issues such as the double burden, the decline in fertility, women's entitlement to longer annual sick and maternity leaves, spousal relationships, the family's time budget, and the possibility of upskilling as a precondition for increasing the birth rate. In this way, motherhood as understood by Dinkova and Kyuranov become a "national task": "More children in every Bulgarian family, more young forces for the Motherland!"¹⁴

The state's pronatalist policy included health and social care for single mothers, equalizing their rights with those of married women through a range of administrative, social, material, and educational measures.¹⁵ Since the sanctions on extramarital unions were primarily moral, *Reshenie* provided for educational programs to inculcate in young men and women the responsibility and commitment to equal partnership in socialist marriage and society.¹⁶ More generally, this corresponded to the new ideological image of women (woman-friend, partner, etc.) and the imposition of moral categories (care, protection) in the public realm as seen in pronouncements by communist leaders such as Georgi Dimitrov.¹⁷

The mass participation of women in the labor market was one step towards achieving gender equality, but from the perspective of motherhood, achieving this posed some problems. Analyzing the effects on fertility and the overload of working mothers and pregnant women, Dinkova and Kyuranov proposed social strategies to alleviate women's

11 Sharkova, "Socialisticheskata zhena mezhdru publichnoto i chastnoto," 65.

12 Sharkova, "Socialisticheskata zhena mezhdru publichnoto i chastnoto," 67.

13 Sharkova, "Socialisticheskata zhena mezhdru publichnoto i chastnoto," 63.

14 *Za izdigane rolyata na zhenata*, 24.

15 Kasabova, "'Samotnata maika' v Bulgaria," 10.

16 Brunnbauer, *Socialisticheskijat nachin na zhivot*, 395.

17 Luleva, "Zhenskijat vupros' v socialisticheska Bulgaria," 161, 163.

workloads, such as flexible working hours, better access to childcare, and financial support. Women's participation in socio-political life and government was also seen as part of the modernization process and a marker of democratization. Despite the indisputable presence of women in the workforce, including in managerial positions, they still faced biases and were underestimated in their professional competences and leadership qualities. As pointed out by Sharkova, Dinkova and Kyuranov argued that women's diverse capacities in fact recommended them to serve in government.¹⁸

Reshenie is indicative of changes in the 1960s and early 1970s, revealing how it was not the male-dominated political establishment but the activists of the women's movement themselves who formulated the ideas that later on became part of the Bulgarian Communist Party's policies toward women.¹⁹ The project faced ideological pushback: several critical articles published in *Zhenata dnes*—which dealt with the issue of the double burden and can be considered preliminary to *Reshenie*—provoked harsh reactions by censorship organs due to the implication that Bulgaria had violated the International Labor Convention, an agreement which the country had ratified. The underlying reason for the pushback, however, was that existing problems were exposed to the public. Initially, the feedback to the concept for *Reshenie* was also somewhat negative—the accusations ranged from questioning the necessity of such a document to indicting it for putting forward consumer demands. The Party had considered the issue of women's condition under socialism solved and gender equality achieved in law, education, and labor, and criticized the feminist implications in the document.²⁰

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18 Sharkova, "Socialisticheskata zhena mezhdú publichnoto i chastnoto," 79.

19 This point was previously made, based on a different set of underexplored sources, in Daskalova, "A Woman Politician in the Cold War Balkans."

20 Dinkova, "Strasti po velikata zhenska revolucia," 34.

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Boryana Yankova

* * *

Maria Dinkova

Two Watermelons in One Hand—Can They Be Held for a Long Time?

[...]

According to data from a sociological survey conducted at the end of 1969 by the State Information Agency, the Central Committee of the Trade Unions, the Labor Research Institute, the Committee of Bulgarian Women, and *Zhenata dnes* magazine—and which focused on women’s status in production as well as in social and family life—34.2% of married employed women do all the housework in the household, whereas 46.2% do the main housework. Consequently, for 4 out of 5 married employed women, it seems almost impossible to uphold their sense of duty to their children, family, and professional interests at the same time, as well as to satisfy their cultural needs and to maintain their health.

[...]

However, both my personal observations and several surveys indicate that the Bulgarian woman somehow manages to fill up her daily routine with different activities while remaining a good mother—but often at the expense of reading, entertainment, and recreation.

[...]

This feat was not born out of nothing but expected by society. Since day one of the people's democracy—twenty-six years ago by now—women have been prepared and encouraged through all the means of Communist Party ideology and various cultural organizations to fight for a place in life.

[...]

Women's social freedom cannot be achieved only by legislative measures and political support. It cannot be fully achieved even by accomplishing Engels's "basic condition"—namely a woman's inclusion in social production. Women must take up diverse positions and enter various professional fields so that they will no longer be a secondary social category.

[...]

As is known, in the not-so-distant past, a woman's social function was exclusively concentrated with reproduction. Giving birth, raising, and rearing her children—as well as maintaining the household and the comforts of home—were time-consuming to the point of practically depriving women of the opportunity to engage in other social activities. In order for a woman to express her true intellectual and productive potential, new conditions for reproduction are highly needed. Household chores have to be reduced to a minimum and children's care and upbringing should, to some extent, become the responsibility of society.

Having realized the necessity of such changes, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) updated its program and that of other political organizations and added amendments to the Constitution as well. The implementation of policy involving kindergartens, public food catering facilities, and public utilities was initiated. Nonetheless, the aforementioned demands still do not fit into the structure of everyday life. Above all, we have not managed to establish enough childcare centers to provide help for employed women. Statistics show that less than 20% of women with children under three years of age use the services of full-day or weekly nurseries, about 25% of women with children between three and seven years of age make use of full-day or weekly kindergartens, and only 2.1% of mothers send their children to after-school centers.

At present, this problem is being solved mainly with the assistance of the inexhaustible possibilities of the old patriarchal tradition: half of the children of preschool age are raised by elder siblings. In the absence of grandparents and kindergartens, however, around 20% of parents with children of preschool age are forced to take care of them in shifts as the only caregivers, which causes exhaustion.

Another 10% of parents live with constant anxiety around leaving their children home alone. The same applies to pupils between seven and fourteen years of age. [...]

Although household appliances are now commonly used, twenty years ago they were in short supply. Fortunately, 63.7% of women use a washing machine. However, only 38.7% of women own an oil or gas stove top, as well as an oven; a fridge, 35.1%; a vacuum cleaner, 23.4%; a boiler, 15.4%; other small kitchen appliances, 35.1%. All of this suggests that households are short of electrical appliances. The use of public laundries to support housework is practically non-existent. In Bulgaria, only 0.4 kilograms of laundry per capita is washed on a yearly basis in such facilities, as compared to 10 kilograms in the GDR. Further impediments are also the underdeveloped trade network, the clothing industry, as well as little food variety and the lack of prepared meals.

[...]

However, what is closely related to productive force, apart from the aforementioned factors, is a woman's qualifications, which remain markedly lower than those of men. According to the survey, the biggest difficulty for respondents is that they are unable to take up qualification courses due to their obligations as housekeepers and mothers. Even university-educated women, instead of keeping themselves up to date with the latest scientific developments, are expected to spend part of their leisure time in the kitchen. A woman's heavy double burden as a worker and housekeeper—reducing her working efficiency and causing a higher morbidity rate among female employees compared to their male counterparts—are closely connected.

[...]

In the last few years, scholars and practitioners from all socialist countries increasingly define a problem, articulated by classical Marxist thought: in order to facilitate housekeeping, household labor should be reduced and nearly replaced by the "big socialist economy," which offers services, semi-processed food, ready-to-wear clothing, catering facilities, interior design, and electrical appliances. Therefore, ways to revolutionize household maintenance are being sought. [...] Discussion on these problems are highly topical, especially after the Tenth Congress of the BCP. The sixth Five-Year Plan envisions to double the number of places in kindergartens, with the aim of providing for 76% of children from three to seven years of age; to introduce full- and half-board school education gradually; to extend the range of manufacturing services by 70–80%, with special attention given to public laundries, dry cleaners, catering facilities, etc.

[...]

Women's stances on that problem is no less important. Sadly, many are not aware of these issues and believe that domestic and professional responsibilities can be alleviated by reducing working hours.

[...]

An in-depth analysis of women's motivations, however, reveals another illusion: a woman's "good name" is made mainly by demonstrating her abilities as a housekeeper.

[...]

A critical eye suggests that [...] the Bulgarian woman is not the best housekeeper. Being a poor organizer, she is so preoccupied with tasks of any kind that she finds it impossible to divide up the household chores between family members.

[...]

The question naturally arises: Is a radical change in the division of labor within the household achievable? The fact that 10% of husbands engage in housework at the same level as women, and 36.2% help regularly, is encouraging enough. Their involvement depends on their degree of education. Men with a higher education degree tend to help the most, followed by those with a lower degree and those with only a primary school degree. There is an alarming tendency for children to not participate in housekeeping and to be freed from domestic duties. The irrational distribution of responsibilities has a detrimental effect on both middle-aged women and on children's formative character-building years.

* * *

Maria Dinkova and Chavdar Kyuranov

Decision of The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party for Improving the Role of the Woman in the Building of Developed Socialist Society²¹

Decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP, March 6, 1973

Decision of the State Council of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, July 26, 1974

[...]

The Woman in Household Work

The Party and the State's policy for promoting the role of the woman in our socialist society forms a new type of family, radically transforms everyday life, and sets a model of proper upbringing at the same time. In the past period, the socialist state and society took great care and provided funding to unburden the domestic

21 Due to the length and repetitive nature of the official document, the excerpts translated here have been slightly edited for conciseness. Original subtitles have been kept.

labor of women. Nevertheless, the transfer of domestic work to social production is still in progress. This is especially true for semi-processed food, interior design and furniture, household services, household chemicals, etc. The traditional understanding of women as solely responsible for household work has not yet been overcome—domestic labor is time-consuming, with some negative effects on child upbringing, marital relations, and women's cultural development. Reducing and alleviating household chores depends on the equal participation of the spouses in home life, which requires:

- First and foremost, the fight against obsolete stereotypes, habits, and attitudes in terms of the division of domestic labor;
- Second, that the youth should be prepared both by society and family to perform their obligations from a very early age;
- Third, that the population should be educated on how to maintain a household rationally. In light of optimally combining a woman's functions, her time budget needs to be reevaluated to reduce commuting time and household chores in favor of the time spent on children's care and upbringing as well as on leisure activities.

The Woman in Public Work

In order for mothers to have enough free time, it is necessary to plan and carry out a more careful division of labor, the criteria of which should be the effectiveness of women's labor and work conditions, corresponding and adapted to the peculiarities of the female physiology. Another important step towards relieving working mothers is the transition to a five-day workweek, combined with more flexible working hours. For that reason, more convenient working schedules are recommended, such as seasonal or every-other-day work, part-time or hourly work, working on contractual agreements—all of these measures enable as many women from all ages as possible to be engaged in the working process. [...] Kindergartens should adapt to a flexible working regime, convenient for parents' working schedules. The reduction of sick pay should be reconsidered. In case of a child's sickness at preschool age, 100% of the monthly salary should be paid, and sick leave for up to two months should be granted. Women of childbearing age up to forty-five years, pregnant women, and nursing mothers should practice occupations in accordance with their physiology. Because of that, they should be banned from certain jobs. In addition, due to their intensity and damage to health, the reevaluation of some professions—so far considered traditionally female—is needed. The same reassessment needs to be done with regard to a few typically male professions, which can now be opened to women, owing to scientific and technological progress. Workplaces should provide women with certain conditions, such as

the gradual reduction of a woman's participation in night shifts and an improved work environment. Pregnant women are protected by the new Labor Code from the moment their pregnancy is ascertained until the child reaches the age of three.

The Woman in the Family

1. The maternal function of the woman

Since motherhood is a biological and social function, the woman plays a prime role in building socialist society and the nation's prosperity, both of which are closely connected to reproduction. Motherhood is instrumental in achieving this national task as well as a prerequisite for a woman's fulfillment and happiness. Our socialist society acknowledges and highly values motherhood, supporting women in raising and bringing up children, while holding the strong belief that a family should decide how many children to have on its own. Declining birth rates negatively affect the population's natural growth and the family's spiritual life, and thus upbringing. Special attention has to be paid to maternity leave. For instance, women should be entitled to take unpaid leave up to the first three years after giving birth while keeping their jobs. The paid periods of pregnancy and maternity leave should be granted as follows:

- for the first child, mothers receive four months of full paid leave and six months of [minimum] paid leave;
- for the second child, mothers receive five months of full paid leave and seven months of [minimum] paid leave;
- for the third child, mothers receive six months of full paid leave and eight months of minimum wage paid leave.

Women engaged in co-operative farms are entitled to the same right of pregnancy and maternity leave.

Annual leave must be increased from three-and-a-half to seven days for the first, second, and third child up to ten years of age, respectively. Mothers who are unemployed for a valid reason must obtain government support at the amount of the minimum wage during the entire period of paid leave for a child. Mothers who are students are allowed a one-year break and a transfer from full-time to part-time studies, retaining the right of scholarship and insurance. They also enjoy the privilege of priority enrollment in kindergartens for their children.

A growing number of full-day kindergartens and other childcare centers should meet the needs of the population no later than 1980. The decisions taken at the December plenum include the following:

- Single mothers should be provided additional help, such as an increase in child support by the end of 1973;
 - Benefits should be granted to every child regardless of the parent's days worked in the month;
 - An increased age limit for the payment of students from sixteen to seventeen or eighteen years of age, that is, until the completion of secondary education; and
 - An increase in the lump-sum of the maternity allowance from twenty to one hundred leva for the first child, from two hundred to two hundred and fifty leva for the second, while for the third child the payment should remain five hundred leva.
- [...]

2. Woman in marital relations

In case of the irregular payment of child support by one of the divorced parents, the state is expected to intervene and collect the amount due. A network of boarding schools for children of commuter parents, or those unable to provide care, should be established. Public influence on the fathers of extramarital children has to be intensified in view of achieving favorable agreements with their mothers. [...] The Bulgarian family, and the wife in particular, have to receive support in areas such as: preparing young people for family life; ideological and educational work that affirms communist morality; and sanctions for those undermining the foundations of the family community or who grossly violate their parental and marital obligations. Therefore, a system of marital and family education for all ages has to be established, and school curricula should include such educational programs. Priority should be given to the harmonious integration of a woman's functions, with special attention paid to motherhood and the family. The systematic struggle against the so-called psychological barrier as an impediment to increases in the number of family members has to be undertaken.

The Woman in Political Life and Government

[...]

The image of the Bulgarian woman should take a worthy place in national art, mass media, and propaganda in order to raise the public prestige of motherhood and to raise awareness about the importance of women's role in society.

[...]

Since Bulgarian society is, on the whole, interested in women's familiarity with politics and their sensitivity to social problems, the Bulgarian woman has established herself not only as producer and mother, but also as an active participant in socio-political life and the governance of the state. Today, women comprise 26%

of the Bulgarian Communist Party's (BCP) membership; 50.5% of the Fatherland Front (FF); 41.9% of the total number of the syndicates and 49.1% of Dimitrov's Communist Youth Union. Surveys show that more than 20% have been elected to the governing bodies of social-political organizations; 22.5% carry out social assignments; another 36% are engaged in political education. Women make up 14.2% of the managerial staff of companies; 10.6% are chief specialists and their deputies; 18.7% are Members of Parliament, and 24.8% are members of city and regional administration. The Politburo of the Central Committee of BCP believes that women's involvement in socio-political processes and in government should be raised to the level of their education, as well as their social maturity and work activity. Considering that, the Party launches a continuous awareness campaign about women's equality with men in terms of their professional and managerial skills and functions. Upon promoting a woman to a managerial position—depending on her character—it should be taken into consideration that she too, like a man, possesses the following leadership qualities: responsiveness to employees' needs, the ability to create a proper work environment, tactfulness and flexibility, and a high sense of responsibility. Therefore, women must be instructed according to Marxist-Leninist principles and have the opportunity to enjoy more free time and to obtain better qualifications.

[...]

The changes in the social status of the Bulgarian woman and the resulting consequences for social and family processes should be a subject of research conducted by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, research institutes, and universities, all of which are expected to study topics related to women's and family's issues.

Translated by Boryana Yankova

6

Time Budgets and Double Burden

Libuše Háková

Promoting the Marxist Conception of the Woman Question

AUTHOR Libuše Háková

TITLE “Prosazovat marxistickou koncepci ženské otázky” [Promoting the Marxist Conception of the Woman Question]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Zpravodaj Českého svazu žen* [Newsletter of the Czech Women’s Union] 1, no. 1 (1967): 12.

LANGUAGE Czech

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Libuše Háková (1927–death date unknown) graduated in 1952 from the Pedagogical Faculty—probably at Charles University—as doctor of pedagogy (PaedDr, *paedagogiae doctor*). From 1946 onward, she was a member of the Communist Party. For eleven years, she worked as an editor of the magazine *Nová mysl* (A New Mind),¹ published by the Socialist Academy (Socialistická akademie). She left *Nová mysl* in 1964 to avoid being fired. Before her, a number of colleagues had to leave the editorial office because of “ideological differences.” Afterwards, she took a postgraduate course in sociology.²

Háková’s work as a journalist contributed to her eventually becoming a sociologist. As she said herself, the “woman question” was responsible for her transition to this field. “I was once asked to write an article with a colleague from the editorial office for International Women’s Day. And because the articles in *Nová mysl* used to be very long, the twenty-page essay on the woman question was actually a smaller ‘piece.’ This made me an ‘expert’ on the woman question. I soon realized that I could not just focus on the issue journalistically, so I started to look at it from a sociological perspective even before I moved on to my next job.”³

From July 1965 until the end of 1969, Háková worked as a researcher at the Institute of Sociology, in the Department of Sociology of Social Groups (Sociologický ústav, Oddělení Sociologie sociálních skupin).⁴ She published extensively both professional

1 Přehled pracovních sil v ústavu: - rozbor kvalifikační struktury, tabulky, přehledy, hlášení ÚV KSČ, Inv. 19, Box 2, Fond Sociologický ústav ČSAV, Masarykův ústav a Archiv Akademie věd ČR.

2 Melanie Rybářová, “5x5x5,” *Vlasta* 22, no. 31 (1968): 10.

3 Rybářová, “5x5x5,” 14.

4 Přehled pracovních sil v ústavu, Inv. 19, Box 2, Fond Sociologický ústav ČSAV, Masarykův ústav a Archiv Akademie věd ČR.

and popular science texts and gave press interviews and lectures. Her language skills included English, German, Russian, and Polish.⁵

Both in her profession and in the field of women's activism, she focused on the issue of employed women in socialist society and the question of combining paid employment with motherhood. Already in 1963, she became a member of the Committee of Czechoslovak Women (VČŽ, Výbor československých žen) and Chair of its Ideological Commission.⁶ Moreover, she participated in transforming the VČŽ into the new mass organization called the Czechoslovak Women's Union (ČSSŽ, Československý svaz žen) and became a key representative of the women's movement during the transformative period of Prague Spring. She became Vice-Chair of this new organization and again Chair of the Ideological Commission. The Commission focused on the position of women in society from the perspective of sociology, economy, history, and philosophy. It was meant to help the organization to clarify women's needs and conditions for the harmonization of paid work and motherhood.⁷ Moreover, Háková was on the editorial board of the widely read magazine *Vlasta*, published by the women's organization.

Her work was very important to her and occupied as important a place in her life as her family. When she was on maternity leave with her first son, in her own words, "I felt like only half a person, and I missed terribly the contact with my work, with the wider environment, and the stimulus that my work gave me even then, under conditions when journalism was not the most joyful job."⁸ Her mother, who lived in the same household, took care of domestic work, allowing Háková to work and, at the same time, devote herself to her two sons as much as possible. However, she was of the opinion that it was not the quantity but the quality of time one devotes to children that matters.⁹

Because Libuše Háková joined the reformist movement of the 1960s, the August 1968 occupation of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops had strong repercussions for her professional career as well as her involvement in the official women's organization. By the end of 1969, the main leaders of the ČSSŽ—denounced as right-wing opportunists—were forced to resign. On September 22, 1969, she resigned as vice-chairwoman of the Czech Women's Union, and on November 5, 1969, as a member of the Central Committee of the Czech Women's Union.¹⁰ In 1970, the Institute of Sociology was dissolved by merging with other departments. The involvement of the Institute's staff

5 Přehled pracovních sil v ústavu, Inv. 19, Box 2, Fond Sociologický ústav ČSAV, Masarykův ústav a Archiv Akademie věd ČR.

6 "Složení nového Výboru československých žen" [New Composition of the Committee of the Czechoslovak Women], *Vlasta* 17, no. 22 (1963): 2.

7 Pro schůzi předsednictva ÚV ČSŽ dne 9. ledna 1968. Návrh plánů činnosti komisí při ÚV ČSŽ. Box 35, Fond 360 Československý svaz žen – ústřední výbor, Praha, Národní archiv Praha.

8 Rybářová, "5x5x5," 14.

9 Rybářová, "5x5x5," 11.

10 Dr. Libuše Háková. Publikační činnost od ledna 1968 do května 1969, Činnosti jednotlivých pracovníků ústavu, plány a zprávy (neúplně)/A-Z, Inv. 41, Box 3, Fond Sociologický ústav ČSAV, Masarykův ústav a Archiv Akademie věd ČR.

in the reformist movement during the Prague Spring and their subsequent condemnation of the occupation of Czechoslovakia were fatal for the institution. The Institute of Sociology was replaced by the Institute for Philosophy and Sociology (Ústav pro filosofii a sociologii ČSAV), and half of the staff were forced to leave.¹¹ The ban on working in the field of sociology also applied to Háková, who was listed in the Unified Central Register of Representatives, Exponents, and Bearers of Right-Wing Opportunism, Organizers of Anti-Party, Anti-Socialist, and Anti-Soviet Campaigns and Actions.¹²

There is very little information available about Libuše Háková after her resignation from the ČSSŽ. One reason could be that she became a banned author and had no chance to return to her profession later (in comparison with others who published under pseudonyms, or returned to their work only after the Velvet Revolution in 1989). Even in Zdeněk R. Nešpor's extensive sociological encyclopedia, we cannot find information about her life, only references to her work at the Institute of Sociology. There is no trace of her in the archives of the Academy of Sciences or that of the ČSSŽ after the beginning of normalization, and the location of her personal archives is unknown.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · with A. Svarovská, "Socialismus a ženy" [Socialism and Women], *Nová mysl* 15, no. 3 (1961): 309–20; "Ženy a dnešek" [Women and the Present Day], *Nová mysl* 20, no. 5 (1965): 3–5; "Ženy v sociální struktuře naší společnosti" [Women in the Social Structure of our Society], in *Sociální struktura socialistické společnosti: sociologické problémy soudobé československé společnosti* [The Social Structure of Socialist Society: Sociological Problems of Contemporary Czechoslovakia], ed. Pavel Machonin (Praha: Svoboda, 1966), 547–64; *Identifikace pracujících se závodem: výsledky sociologického výzkumu v potravinářském závodě Centrál* [Workers' Identification with the Plant: Results of Sociological Research in the Food Plant Centrál] (Praha: ČSAV sociologický ústav, 1969); "Úvaha a podněty k chápání společenských funkcí ženy" [Reflection and Suggestions for Understanding Women's Social Functions], *Sociologický Časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 6, no. 5 (1970): 436–48.

Marie Lánková

CONTEXT

The source below was presented in 1967 by Libuše Háková at the founding congress of the Czechoslovak Women's Union as a newly established women's organization that joined the 1960s reformist movement of the Prague Spring. The period meant,

11 Zdeněk R. Nešpor, "Sociologický ústav ČSAV (1965–1970)" [Institute of Sociology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences], *Sociologická encyklopedie, Sociologický ústav AV ČR*, https://encyklopedie.soc.cas.cz/w/Sociologick%C3%BD_%C3%BAstav_%C4%8CSAV.

12 In Czech: Jednotná centrální evidence představitelů, exponentů a nositelů pravicového oportunismu, organizátorů protistranických, protisocialistických a protisovětských kampaní a akcí. See Emanuel Pecka, *Sociologie politiky* [Sociology of Politics] (Prague: Grada, 2010), 232.

on the one hand, political reforms and liberalization in socialist Czechoslovakia, the abolition of censorship, and the increase in state support for science that made possible a scientific and intellectual flowering.¹³ However, on the other hand, women had to deal with newly appearing anti-emancipation tendencies and the re-traditionalization of their roles as primarily mothers and carers.¹⁴ It was a time when contradictory opinions concerning the full or optimal employment of women were emerging in Czechoslovakia.¹⁵

According to Háková, the theoretical debate about the “woman question” ceased during the 1950s because it was officially presented as solved, but the contradictions within Czechoslovakia and also within the Communist Party about women’s employment persisted and were covered by a semblance of universal consent with women’s full employment. The mere appearance of this consent became clear in the 1960s, especially during the debate about the country’s new economic system.¹⁶ In her article from 1970, Háková gave a detailed account and critical analysis of the discussions about women in the labor force. Not only among experts, but also on the pages of the daily press in 1966–67, we can follow discussions about the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of women’s employment, the overemployment of women, the harmful feminization of certain fields, the low return on resources invested in girls’ education, and about the family, which cannot exist without a woman as the protector of the family hearth.¹⁷

As the sociologist and representative of ČSSŽ Jaroslava BauEROVÁ argued in her book from 1974, according to some economists, employing women with small children did not pay off because the state had to subsidize preschool facilities for their children with large sums. Indirectly, they proposed to exclude women with lower incomes from the area of paid work.¹⁸ But the discussion did not involve only economic aspects of women’s employment, but also the impact on their children. According to public health officials, no child younger than 18 months should attend nursery.¹⁹ Psychologists and pediatricians challenged the employment of women with small children, relying on the claim of developmental psychologists that institutionalized care and the too-early separation of children from their mothers leads to emotional deprivation and causes developmental problems.²⁰

13 Including the social sciences and the revival of sociology as a discipline, Kolář and Pullmann, *Co byla normalizace?*, 148.

14 Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style*, 157–80.

15 Věra Hájková, “O ženách pro ženy” [About Women for Women], *Vlasta* 22, no. 1 (1968): 3.

16 Libuše Háková, “Úvaha a podněty k chápání společenských funkcí ženy” [Reflection and Suggestions for Understanding Women’s Social Functions], *Sociologický Časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 6, no. 5 (1970): 436–38.

17 Háková, “Úvaha a podněty k chápání společenských funkcí ženy,” 437.

18 Jaroslava BauEROVÁ, *Zaměstnaná žena a rodina* [Employed Woman and the Family] (Prague: Práce, 1974), 124.

19 Věra Hájková, “Spor o ženu naší doby” [Dispute over the Woman of Our Time], *Vlasta* 21, no. 41 (1967): 6–7.

20 Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style*, 164.

An important group of experts from the State Population Commission, which influenced gender policies in Czechoslovakia,²¹ pointed out that women were overworked, and together with State Statistical Office analysts “called for better support for women since the results of research on married women with children, and the ways they spent their time, show that the so-called liberation of women from the household and their involvement in public life has only brought them troubles and obligations so far.”²² According to Háková, the generally promoted model of an economically active woman who is at the same time a mother and equal with men in all spheres of life was not attractive enough as it was not easy to implement it fully, especially because of the insufficient material and cultural conditions. “In the conditions of a poorly functioning economy, including transport, trade, services, and social facilities, its implementation leads to physical and psychological strain on women, to constant stress and frustration, to the gradually prevailing belief that the simultaneous fulfilment of women’s economic, maternal, and civic roles is impossible for most women in the current state of society.”²³ The ministries involved in improving the listed services, however, reported that they could not improve the conditions of these in less than five years. Moreover, the state of the economy required the limitation of workers. Under these circumstances, argued some experts, and given how overloaded women were as well as the insufficiency of state services, the ideal solution seemed to be to keep women in the home longer.²⁴

It was in this context that the ČSSŽ was established. They were strongly opposed to the re-traditionalization of women’s role in society. At the founding congress, next to Libuše Háková, the demographer and secretary of the State Population Commission, Jiří Prokopec, warned that the position of employed women could worsen and stressed the role of the official women’s organization as a defender of women’s rights.²⁵ The ČSSŽ proposed—in the words of Háková—an expert, differentiated approach to the woman question, as women were a group deeply differentiated on the basis of socio-professional and demographic characteristics.²⁶ In its “Action Program,” the ČSSŽ acknowledged that “highly qualified women find in their employment the meaning and purpose of their lives. Different women have a different degree of interest and potential of self-realization in employment and the family.”²⁷ That is why the ČSSŽ pushed for women to retain their freedom of choice and decide whether to stay at

21 This Commission included medical experts, lawyers, demographers, national committee representatives, party officials, trade union foremen, and journalists.

22 Lišková, *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style*, 115.

23 Háková, “Úvaha a podněty k chápání společenských funkcí ženy,” 438.

24 Hájková, “Spor o ženu naší doby.”

25 Jiří Prokopec, “Tvořit předpoklady pro spokojený život žen” [Creating the Conditions for a Happy Life for Women], *Zpravodaj Českého svazu žen* 1, no. 1 (1967): 11.

26 Háková, “Úvaha a podněty k chápání společenských funkcí ženy,” 438.

27 Akční program Čs. svazu žen, 26.–27.6.1968.

home with small children for up to two or three years or return to their paid work as soon as possible. Háková, as a representative of the women's organization, supported a wide variety of measures, including a longer paid maternity leave, which was widely accepted by the public and the political discourse, and in part by experts too. She also argued for accessible, high-quality care for children in nurseries.²⁸ The first claim was gradually implemented in the form of a prolonged paid maternity leave; in 1968, Czechoslovakia became one of the countries with the longest paid maternity leave at twenty-six weeks.²⁹

Háková's paper presented at the Congress (alongside lectures by other speakers) was published in the *Zpravodaj Českého svazu žen* (Newsletter of the Czech Women's Union), thus the ideas from the founding congress were available to all members. The *Newsletter* from 1967 exists in five versions in five libraries in the Czech Republic (National Library in Prague, Moravian-Silesian Research Library in Ostrava, the Research Library of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, the Olomouc Research Library, and the Moravian Library in Brno).

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28 Háková, "Úvaha a podněty k chápání společenských funkcí ženy," 446.

29 Rákosník and Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu*, 62–68.

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Marie Láníková

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Libuše Háková

Promoting the Marxist Conception of the Woman Question

Discussions about the woman question have been taking place here, with longer or shorter breaks between them, for several years: they mainly focus on employed women and problems connected to raising their children. The opinions publicized by our press and radio are not only diverse, but often entirely contradictory. We would be lying to ourselves if we entertained the delusion that the conception of the woman question outlined in the main paper³⁰ was the only one, and that it was universally acknowledged and endorsed in our country. Although most of the authors of readers' letters seem to be aware of this, some voices that we read from time to time in *Rudé právo*, *Literární noviny*, *Kulturní tvorba* [Red Justice, Literary News, Cultural Creation], and in many other periodicals, are truly an expression of the clash of at least two differing conceptions, two ideas about what, in our contemporary socialist society, a woman should look like and be like.

If we attempt to bring these discussing voices to the basic point where they differ, then, with a certain oversimplification, we can say that one of them stems from the traditional image of a woman as a mother, wife, and housekeeper. It places a one-sided emphasis on maternity and considers women's employment as

30 Editor's note: Háková refers to the main lecture presented at the founding congress of the Czechoslovak Women's Union.

a temporary evil or a caprice suffered only by a narrow stratum, a kind of elite of highly qualified women.

The second conception arises out of the present experiences of the global development of industrially advanced countries. It considers women's employment to be a natural and progressive phenomenon of modern society, which must, whether it wants to or not, adapt to it in the economic, political, and ideological spheres. In the polemics with the first model of the woman, sometimes an inverse one-sided image is imposed, i.e., there is an exaggerated emphasis on a woman's economic role and an undervaluation of her maternal role.

This is why I consider the ČSŽ's primary task today to intervene in this struggle of ideas much more effectively and offensively than it did before and to bring before the eyes of the general public the kind of model of a woman which—based on the Marxist conception of the woman question—will be liberated from both one-sided concepts and will take into account both the current real situation of our society and the final goals that socialism wants to achieve.

It is not and will not be an easy task. Very often, as before, we have quoted the theory of ideas, the ideas which become a material force as soon as they control the masses. The other side of this thesis is the fact that old ideas that have so far been maintained in the thinking of the masses are also a material force, but in the negative sense: they are a material brake. And as we can see, twenty years of socialist development, a period long enough from the perspective of one generation of women, is too short for ideas about the new social functions of women to truly take hold in the masses and become firmly anchored in their consciousness.

If a public opinion survey were conducted in Czechoslovakia today, in which people were to say what they see as a woman's primary mission, which of her roles they consider fundamental, it's very likely that most of those asked would mark a woman's main role as motherhood, because a woman is irreplaceable in her maternal function. [...] And if we were to ask them whether they consider harmony between economic and maternal roles to be possible, perhaps most respondents would again answer that it definitely is not, and this is precisely on the basis of their own experiences until now, because the rapid growth in women's employment here has not been matched at all by an increase in facilities and services in the broadest sense, which are supposed to enable them to perform simultaneously their maternal and economic functions, and which directly condition this. Not only men would answer so confidently. Our present lifestyle, with all of its shortcomings that we know well, also evokes an unpleasant complex of maternal guilt in women—and even in those who truly like their careers, at the very least in certain periods of their life—and the heavy feeling that although they must, they cannot divide their energy and their ideas with their families and at their jobs without excessive physical and mental exhaustion.

Nevertheless, the opinion that the general release of women from employment and their permanent return to the family hearth would resolve the modern woman's conflict is an illusory opinion. Even in conditions of utter sufficiency and affluence for the majority of the population, the reduction of women's functions to family functions would not banish the woman question from the world. Evidence for this is provided by, among other things, the current situation in the USA, where the ideal of the caring mother, tender wife, and painstaking housekeeper who is not gainfully employed is broadly realized not only in the bourgeois strata but also in many working-class families.

In her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, the American psychologist and journalist Betty Friedan describes how the implementation of this model leads to different complications and difficulties for women and the negative consequences it entails for women, children, and husbands. On the basis of the experiences of the highly developed capitalist society of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, her book unwittingly confirms Marx and Engels's old theses that a woman who permanently stands outside social activity ceases to develop as a human being. The American author convincingly demonstrates that even the most dedicated service to family and children is no longer able to give the vast majority of women lifelong fulfilment, or to create sufficient space for the talents, abilities, will, and energy that are hidden in the same amount in women as in men.

The longevity of illusions about a possible return in the future to the middle-class idyll of the family—where the man is the sole provider and applies himself with all his energy in the big world of manufacturing and politics, while the woman is satisfied in her little world of family domesticity—is all the greater the less we are able to eliminate the negative phenomena that deepen the conflict of women's dual role and prevent the achievement of a relative harmony between them.

This is why, in my opinion, the ČSŽ cannot limit itself to use only agitation and propaganda in getting the Marxist conception of the woman question across. At the same time, it must also proactively put forward proposals that will gradually solve the most burning problems of women's social status in our country. If I say gradual, it's because everything can't be solved at once, but we should start immediately. There will be no controversy that the group of women who most urgently need a greater degree of attention and help are employed mothers of small children. Emphasizing the importance of women's economic activity for society and for the women themselves in our conception is not and will not be identical with the demand that every woman should be employed in every period of her life. In discussions in the press and here at the conference of the ČSŽ, the demand for further prolongation of paid maternal leave was raised several times; a demand that society—not only with words but with further deeds, especially financial remuneration for raising children—appreciate the social significance of motherhood. In some

places, in the press, these opinions were justified with considerable one-sidedness, which is perhaps understandable in the West's journalism and in the effort of promoting their idea and with a call for broad public discussion. However, I think that at the present stage a further development of the broad discussion could hardly bring any new impulses, and time is ripe to replace it with a well-founded discussion by experts. Expert discussion has the advantage that there is no place for mere appeals to emotions, and that it isn't possible to interpret research either one-sidedly or even falsely. This is where scientifically proven facts and politically supported conceptions have their say.

In my opinion, then, the initiator and coordinator of such an expert discussion could and should be the ČSŽ. Its result could then be the creation of a working team composed of demographers, economists, sociologists, philosophers, pedagogues, and psychologists who, in close cooperation with the ČSŽ, and actually at its bidding, would work up a solid, comprehensively justified proposal for how the problems of employed and "unemployed" mothers of small children can be solved in today's circumstances.

[...]

It would be entirely in the spirit of the line established [by the 13th Congress of the Communist Party], and in the spirit of the party's orientation toward deepening socialist democracy, if the Czechoslovak Women's Union, as an interest organization for all Czechoslovak women, brought an alternative proposal and gave leading political authorities the opportunity to take into account the various conceptions, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and then choose the optimal variant.

With this activity, i.e., by combining ideological action with the promotion of practical measures, the ČSŽ will build up the appropriate social authority and will thus best prove the legitimacy of its existence—because many still have doubts even about this—and strengthen the trust that women have in it. This style of work will also release new sources of women's energy and initiatives, which—when they are applied in the right direction—will mean the enrichment of our entire socialist society.

Translated by Melinda Reidinger

Working Women's Commission of the CRZZ

The Professional Work of Women and the Family

AUTHOR Working Women's Commission of the Central Council of Polish Trade Unions (CRZZ)

TITLE "Praca zawodowa kobiet a rodzina" [The Professional Work of Women and the Family]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Kobieta pracująca w PRL* [Working Woman in the Polish People's Republic] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Związkowe CRZZ, 1967), 39–53.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Central Council of Polish Trade Unions (Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych, CRZZ) operated from 1949 to 1980. It was a supervisory body for the Association of Trade Unions (Zrzeszenie Związków Zawodowych, ZZZ), founded in 1949 after a short period of union pluralism (1945–1949). The creation of the ZZZ and the CRZZ was a result of the Soviet-type centralization of trade unions. The CRZZ managed the funds of the trade unions and represented them before state authorities and abroad. The local counterparts of the CRZZ were the Provincial Trade Union Councils and until 1975 there were also district, city, and neighborhood trade union councils.

The CRZZ was legally and practically subordinated to the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR). It was also a part of the USSR-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions. In December 1980, after all trade unions withdrew from the ZZZ, it stopped its activities.

All trade union branches could establish social problem commissions, which in 1973 were renamed councils. The Women's Commission attached to the Trade Unions' Central Committee was set up in 1946, along with its low-level counterparts known as women's councils. In 1963 they were renamed the Working Women's Commissions. Two years later, more than 6,800 commissions across the country gathered about 32,000 female trade union activists. According to social historian Natalia Jarska, the Women's Commission (later the Working Women's Commission), as an organization for female employees, was among the official bodies which constituted the women's movement in communist Poland. The others were the League of Women, aimed at mobilizing women for political participation, and the Circles of Rural Housewives, operating in rural areas.¹

One of the activities undertaken by the CRZZ and its social problem commissions was publishing. The CRZZ Publishing House (Wydawnictwo CRZZ) issued

1 Jarska, "A Patriarchal Marriage?," 18.

newsletters and periodicals. According to the National Library in Warsaw catalog, it also released over 1,200 books on a variety of topics, from household manuals to expert sociological analyses. During the 1960s and 1970s, the CRZZ published several books dedicated to the so-called "woman issue," such as *Rights and Privileges of Working Women* (1966), reports from the world women's congresses (1963 and 1975), and *Working Woman in the Polish People's Republic* (1967), from which the translated source below is taken. The latter was a collective volume, prepared by the central Working Women's Commission.

Katarzyna Stańczak-Wisłicz

CONTEXT

The most important factor which changed the Polish family, and Polish society generally, after 1945, was the massive entry of married women into the labor market. It was one of the fundamental elements of the communist project of modernization, women's labor force participation rate increasing up to the 1970s. Women made up 29% of the total workforce in 1949 and almost 40% in 1970. Moreover, the percentage of working married women increased from 18% in 1950 to 62% in 1970.

Following this change, women-related topics became increasingly popular in Polish academic sociology, which was revived after 1956. A number of studies on urban and rural families recognized women's mass access to the labor market as a great modernization factor, and some authors associated it with the evolution of Polish families from the patriarchal toward the partnership relationship model.² However, in the 1960s, a group of researchers appeared, mostly women, who described the shortcomings of the state policies toward women. They worked in the Polish Academy of Sciences and other state-sponsored research institutes, such as the Institute of Labor (Instytut Pracy; from 1972, the Institute of Labor and Social Studies, Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych), and the Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS). For some of them, women-related issues were the main points of research interest. For others, they were marginal and subordinated to other topics.

In general, sociologists pointed out that—regardless of communist rhetoric, which promised gender equality—women were still perceived as "natural" homemakers and caregivers for their families and thus were supposed to have paid jobs and simultaneously take responsibility for their households. Researchers diagnosed this problem in terms of a "double burden" or "second shift." Referring to Marxist terminology, they described it as exploitation, and blamed women's constant overwork on traditional beliefs about gendered family roles.

2 Klich-Kluczevska, "Biopolitics and (non-)Modernity," 160.

Helena Strzemińska (b. 1931), a sociologist from the Institute of Labor who analyzed the time budgets of working women, emphasized that women were affected by the “double burden” regardless of their social position and level of education. However, she also showed that in families of the urban intelligentsia, men were slightly more eager to share domestic chores. In 1967, Strzemińska defined housework in terms of paid jobs and developed the idea of its professionalization.³

Magdalena Sokołowska (1922–1989), from the Polish Academy of Sciences, was the main editor of the fundamental study *Kobieta współczesna: z badań socjologów, lekarzy, ekonomistów, pedagogów i psychologów* (Contemporary Woman: From the Research of Sociologists, Physicians, Economists, Pedagogues, and Psychologists, 1966), which diagnosed gender relations under state socialism. Sokołowska described the phenomenon currently known as the “glass ceiling,” arguing that despite the official discourse of equality, gender stereotypes, which were strong in Polish society, and the unequal division of domestic duties were the main obstacles to progress in women’s professional careers.⁴ In her English article “The Woman Image in the Awareness of Contemporary Polish Society,” she identified mechanisms due to which women had limited access to the public sphere. She blamed this on Polish tradition, which glorified the domestic and maternal roles of women, and stated that changes in the sphere of beliefs about female and male roles in the family and society occur much slower than in the sphere of politics and economy.⁵ Like other researchers, she found the “double burden” to be the main problem for the women’s movement in socialist Poland.

Marcin Czerwiński, a prominent sociologist working at the Polish Academy of Sciences, argued that the problem of the “double burden” resulted from the clash of rapid industrialization and urbanization with traditional views on family roles. The state’s inability to solve this problem had led to women’s disappointment with the communist project of emancipation.⁶

Academic discourse strongly affected public opinion. During the 1960s, women’s magazines, opinion journals, and newspapers started to regularly publish articles on women’s time budgets, free time, and the “double burden”—the latter among the main concerns of the women’s movement. The Home Economics Committee, affiliated to the League of Women and established in 1957, focused on developing practical solutions to help women reconcile the role of a housewife with a professional career

3 Helena Strzemińska, *Praca zawodowa kobiet a ich budżet czasu* [Women’s Professional Work and Their Time Budget] (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne 1970), 12.

4 Magdalena Sokołowska and Krystyna Wrochno, *Kobieta współczesna: z badań socjologów, lekarzy, ekonomistów, pedagogów i psychologów* [Contemporary Woman: from the Research of Sociologists, Physicians, Economists, Pedagogues, and Psychologists] (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1966).

5 Magdalena Sokołowska, “The Woman Image in the Awareness of Contemporary Polish Society,” *The Polish Sociological Bulletin*, no. 35 (1976): 41–50.

6 Marcin Czerwiński, *Życie po miejsku* [Urban Life] (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975), 107.

and political activity. The Committee experts propagated modern methods of house-keeping and an equal gendered division of labor. The Women's Commission, attached to the Trade Unions' Central Committee, concentrated on the problems of working women. Based on sociological research, the Commission released several brochures on women-related topics.

The excerpt translated below is from the last chapter of *Kobieta pracująca w PRL* (The Working Woman in the Polish People's Republic), a 50-page brochure published in 1967. It was divided into three chapters: "Kobiety w życiu zawodowym" (Women in Professional Life), "Udział kobiet w życiu społecznym kraju" (Women's Participation in the Country's Social Life), and "Praca zawodowa kobiet a rodzina" (The Professional Work of Women and the Family). The brochure provides consistent information about the situation of women in Poland, focusing on access to the labor market. It is not an original work, but rather a report which summarizes the state of knowledge in the 1960s. Its authors referred to research by Helena Strzezińska, Magdalena Sokołowska, Adam Kurzynowski (b. 1934), and Jerzy Piotrowski (1907–1983), the latter a prominent sociologist who examined changing gender relations in Polish families. In the last chapter, the authors identified the "double burden" as the main problem to be solved by party-state policies, although they took for granted women's double social roles. They argued that women's mass access to the labor market was essential for the economy and therefore there was no chance to return to the traditional family model of the stay-at-home wife. Finally, they concluded that in the new, modern reality, a professional career was equally important for both men and women.

Topics such as the gendered division of labor within the family, the "double burden," and women's free time, which were also discussed by Western second-wave feminism, were the subject of academic debate and public interest in Poland and other state socialist countries. They can be interpreted as an element of criticism from within the socialist system, directed toward unfulfilled promises of gender equality. The women's movement, although subordinated to the party-state, was an important actor in this critical debate. It acted as an advisory body, giving opinions on women-related topics, and sometimes clearly pointed out errors and shortcomings in the party's policies.

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Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz

* * *

The Professional Work of Women and the Family

When we talk about working women, we also usually talk about their family responsibilities, about the fact that women fulfill a dual social role: as mothers and as professional workers outside the home. It is commonly believed that the family role of a woman is a more important role, a fundamental one. It is also usually believed that only a woman has a dual role to fulfill: familial and professional, as if men were not husbands and fathers, as if they did not have family responsibilities. This is due to the fact that, although in the vast majority of families in Poland, wives and mothers work professionally, these changes in the economic system of relations are not immediately followed by changes in customs, in widespread beliefs about how things should be.

There is a widespread view that certain unfavorable phenomena occurring in our social life, such as: the increase in the number of divorces, the breakdown of the traditional family model, often treated as a symptom of a crisis of the family, hooliganism among young people—that all these phenomena result from the professional work of women.

The professional work of women is a natural consequence of the economic and social development of the country: industrialization, urbanization, and an increase in the level of education of the population. However, these positive socio-economic changes are accompanied (not only in our country) by certain negative phenomena. The rapid industrialization of the country, the demand for labor in cities and the consequent migration of people from the countryside to industrial centers—these are changes that, especially in the initial phase, apart from positive effects, also cause certain phenomena of social disorganization. People have to adapt to new conditions, to a new way of life. New conflicts arise before new mores are established. Perhaps the most important factor causing changes in the modern family is the professional work of women.

[...]

In a family where both spouses work, there are changes in roles between husband and wife, mother and father, parents and children. The system of relations, known by sociologists as the patriarchal model of the family, disappears and is replaced by a system called the egalitarian model.

[...]

As soon as a woman also works outside the home professionally and fulfills her family responsibilities, there must be changes in the way decisions are made in the family, and also, though not immediately, changes in the division of household duties.

The egalitarian family—based on an equal division of rights and obligations, on partnership, friendship, camaraderie, and love—does not arise without conflicts. They result from the fact that old beliefs and the traditional attitudes of people towards reality change slower than reality. There are some common ideas about the role of women. A woman is expected, above all, to be a good wife and mother, to be able to run the house, raise children, and to “take care of her husband and the house.” The professional work of married women is still often treated in our society as a necessary evil, the result of economic necessity.

[...]

Such a model of the family, well-established by tradition, in which a woman—even if she works professionally and earns a living on an equal footing with her husband—is mainly responsible for raising the children and for the atmosphere in the family, is one of the reasons for the difficulties faced by working mothers trying to reconcile these double responsibilities: familial and professional.

It is enough to quote here the data on the time budget of working women. This data was provided by a study conducted by Helena Strzemińska from the Institute of Labor among female workers, clerks, and shop assistants in 1962–64. It covered over 1,300 women. The research shows that working women with domestic duties work a total of 14–15 hours per day. The most time—apart from work—is occupied by activities related to buying food and preparing dinner (and over 80% of the surveyed women ate only at home and most of them cooked their lunches on their own; only 0.4% of the surveyed workers used canteens, 10.5% of clerks, and 5.2% of shop assistants). The next labor-intensive and time-consuming item in the time budget of working women is the washing—about 90% of the surveyed female employees did laundry during the week, devoting usually about 6 hours to it, and female workers even more: 8 to 9 hours (21.4%), 9–12 hours per week (9%).

As the research shows, the help obtained by working women from household members is small. 52% of female workers, 42% of clerks, and 52% of shop assistants did not use any help in carrying out household duties. And the scope of this assistance, even if it exists, is generally very limited and sporadic. Overall, 12.1% of

female workers, as many clerks, and 21% of shop assistants benefited from the husband's help in household chores. From the help of the mother, mother-in-law—20.3% of female workers, 30.8% of clerks, and 22.6% of shop assistants. However, the husband's help was generally limited to carrying out various home repairs, sometimes shopping, and help with the laundry. 11.8% of female workers and 15% of shop assistants used the help of children, but the scope of this help did not increase with an increase in the age of the children.

[...]

So, according to the research cited here, a woman who has a house and children works literally two jobs. No wonder that she does not have enough time for training, for social work. And let us remind you—women who are married and have familial responsibilities constitute the majority of working women in Poland.

[...]

It is not in the interest of women, but in the interest of society, to develop all those institutions that can help both parents fulfill their familial functions: the development of service points, improvements in supply, the development of canteens and all cheap mass catering establishments, increases in the number of places in nurseries and kindergartens, as well as the wide dissemination of knowledge about rational time management among the population.

[...]

Above all, however, the new division of family responsibilities between a woman and a man should be widely promoted as fair and just, and the traditional and still existing beliefs that dealing with household activities “does not befit a real man” should be overcome.

Translated by Anna Topolska

Sonia Bakish

Let's Cancel the Second Shift

AUTHOR Sonia Bakish

TITLE “Da otmenim vtorata smiana” [Let's Cancel the Second Shift]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Zhenata dnes* [Woman Today] 22, no. 6 (1967): 1–2.

LANGUAGE Bulgarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sonia Bakish (1923, Plovdiv–2010, Sofia) was born into a Jewish family. Her father, Albert, owned a small booth for newspapers while her mother, Sara, was a housewife. Sara spoke several languages, and at the age of 90 read Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* in the original. According to Kalin Todorov, one of her two sons, Sonia's proficiency in languages clearly showed the influence of her mother.

Sonia Bakish studied at the Italian College in Plovdiv. During the “old regime,” before 1944, her family—as other Jewish families in the country—was pushed to relocate to the provincial town of Ferdinand (today's Montana), and obliged to wear the yellow star. Repression against the Jews, and lack of any alternative for them, was one of the major reasons Bakish joined clandestine actions and participated in communist “fighting groups.” As the British historian Eric Hobsbawm pointed out, participation in the communist parties and their organized clandestine resistance was common for Jewish people in Central and Eastern Europe during the Second World War.¹ Bakish was a consistent advocate for social justice—another reason that brought her into the Communist Party.

After the Second World War, Bakish worked as a journalist for the newspaper *Rabotnichesko delo* (Workers' Action) and the journal *Uchitelsko delo* (Teachers' Action). She also joined the editorial board of *Zhenata dnes* (Woman Today), then already the organ of the Committee of the Movement of the Bulgarian Women (Komiteta na dvizhenieto na bulgarskite zheni, KDBZh), the major mass organization of women in Bulgaria. From the late 1950s, Bakish was deputy editor-in-chief of *Zhenata dnes*, and between 1965–1980 she served as the journal's editor-in-chief. During that time, she cooperated with many of the leaders of the Bulgarian Women's Movement, such as Elena Lagadinova, and with scholars such as sociologist

¹ See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London; New York: Michael Joseph; Viking Penguin, 1994).

Maria Dinkova or sexologist Todor Bostandzhiev.² Her term in office brought radical changes in the agenda of the periodical, in particular the “awakening” of the female reading public by introducing new, provocative topics which had not been tolerated, or were even unthinkable, during the previous years.

Bakish was married to Stanko Todorov (1920–1996), a high state and Communist Party functionary for many years, notably Prime Minister of Bulgaria (1971–1981) and President of the National Assembly (1981–1990). She kept her maiden name, going against the still persistent patriarchal custom that married women should take their husbands’ family names. Some anecdotal sources of the time present both spouses as quite different from the rest of the communist establishment: they were called *siromahomili*, i.e., those who care about the poor.

Kalin Todorov maintained that, until the end of her life, Bakish believed in the ability of socialism to create “a society of equality and justice.” Keeping in mind her rebellious character, independent mind, and the high protection of her husband, under her editorship *Zhenata dnes* step by step turned into a tribune and a discussion forum dealing with the hot issues of “the woman question” of the day. Not only did the journal spell out the problems of women’s everyday lives (and gender relations) but suggested measures to change the situation as well.

Bakish supported unpopular social causes, condemned by the regime, such as ecological protests. The Bulgarian ecological movement originated in the late 1980s as a genuine civic initiative. Since many women (mothers fighting for clean air for their children) were active in it, the movement acquired ecofeminist traits. Because of her participation in the committee which supported the protests against air pollution in Ruse in 1988, Bakish was presented with an ultimatum: either publicly denounce the Ruse committee or leave the Party. As the first option meant “civic death,” she chose the latter. In solidarity with his wife, and in protest against the brutal way the members of the Central Committee behaved with her, Stanko Todorov resigned from the Politburo and from his position as President of the National Assembly.

After 1989, Bakish and her husband no longer participated actively in political life. In the context of postsocialist anticommunism, they were also denounced and even mistreated as members of the old nomenklatura. Bakish is remembered by her former colleagues as a physically thin, small, restrained, and propitiatory woman with a gentle smile, a person who hated philistinism and had always been on the side of the truth.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • Articles in the newspaper *Rabotnichesko delo* (Workers’ Action) and in the journals *Uchitel'sko delo* (Teachers’ Action) and *Zhenata dnes* (Woman Today); *Momcheski istorii* [Boys’ Stories] (Sofia: Profizdat, 1988).

Krassimira Daskalova

2 See chapters in this volume.

CONTEXT

Official communist propaganda insisted that after the Second World War, the emancipation of women in Bulgaria had been achieved, which made it difficult for criticisms of women's problems to find their way into public space. Tsola Dragoicheva, who belonged to the older generation of communist women's activists—and one of the very few (if not the only one) with a critical stance toward the party line among them—was criticized and ostracized several times by the male party establishment when trying to speak and act independently on behalf of women during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Bakish's terms as deputy and then editor-in-chief of *Zhenata dnes* brought about radical changes and new provocative topics in the periodical, among them the "second shift," which Western feminists at the time called the "double burden."

Zhenata dnes was established in 1945 as organ of the Bulgarian People's Women's Union (Bulgarski naroden zhenski suiuz, BNZhS). In 1950, BNZhS was transformed into the Committee of the Movement of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na dvizhenieto na bulgarskite zheni, KDBZh). The journal was one of the longest existing and most widely circulated periodicals in the country, read by both women and men. Starting with a circulation of 20,000 copies in 1945 and printed in twenty-four pages, by 1976 the journal had forty-eight pages and a circulation of 400,000 copies, and by the end of Bakish's term in 1980 the periodical had reached 500,000 copies in Bulgarian and 100,000 in Russian. Already in 1953, the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party decided to intensify "work among Turkish women" and instructed the KDBZh to start publishing 2,000 copies of *Zhenata dnes* in the Turkish language as well. Kristen Ghodsee interpreted this huge circulation as securing a kind of autonomy for the KDBZh and its organ.³ Maria Todorova explained the popularity of *Zhenata dnes* with its policy not to ideologize the stories about women's everyday lives.⁴ Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that parallel to the ideological and indoctrinating materials, which were widespread, *Zhenata dnes* spoke more openly about a number of burning issues relating to the everyday lives of women. The magazine contained different permanent sections (among them "Readers criticize and suggest," "Letters from the readers," and "Women's fashion"), but it also had sections which changed according to the public needs, as seen by the editors. Bakish's spirit and ideas are recognizable in both the design of the journal and her openly expressed views in the editorials, which featured critical attitudes towards issues in women's lives, and her taking a feminist stance on important matters.

Although the term "feminism" was not used in a positive way in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe during the Cold War, critically minded activists brought their

³ Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*, 60–61.

⁴ Todorova, "Historical Tradition and Transformation in Bulgaria," 137.

own understanding to the subject. Recent scholarship has argued that under Elena Lagadinova's leadership, the Bulgarian women's movement pursued a feminist agenda both nationally and internationally. With Lagadinova in charge of the KDBZh, as Kristen Ghodsee put it: "Bakish fired the opening shots in the 'great women's revolution.'"⁵ She published a series of materials showing the real problems faced by Bulgarian women during the 1960s. Among the most intensively discussed topics in *Zhenata dnes* was the double burden and related issues regarding the rights of women as both producers and reproducers under state socialism. During the 1960s and 1970s, the journal systematically and openly addressed topics from the everyday lives of ordinary working women. These told stories of women's overburdened family life (the private sphere) and social life (the public realm). In some texts, Bakish addressed the difficulty of combining professional work with household chores, or women's combined duties as mothers, spouses, and housewives. The term she used for this—"women's crucifixion" (*zhensko razpiatie*)—can, at first glance, be interpreted as a passive acknowledgement of women's victimhood under the patriarchal order. However, step by step, explicitly or implicitly, Bakish turned the criticism voiced in *Zhenata dnes* towards the Bulgarian Communist Party's politics, which neglected and belittled women's problems. In the memoir she wrote about her sons at the end of the 1980s, Bakish clearly showed empowering (relational) feminist sentiments (Karen Offen), in favor of combining motherhood and family life with a professional career:

I wonder whether my female contemporaries instinctively felt that women's fates would be irreparably hurt if we push it in only one direction: If instead of combining her different duties, "the woman" exchanges marriage and motherhood for a professional career or an easy life? With consciously chosen or imposed loneliness?⁶

At the same time, Bakish openly articulated the pain and difficulties she experienced as a working mother:

[...] I try to relax, but everything in me shakes. At many other times I feel crucified. Professional work, social work, and family duties, and mostly the thing for which I alone am responsible—the smashing feeling that I am behind my time... Is it possible to bear such pressure, I ask myself, and answer to myself: I am not the only one!⁷

The second shift (*vtorata smijana*) is another metaphor used in *Zhenata dnes* to convey the difficulties of combining family and professional duties. A great number of

5 Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*, 66. The "great women's revolution" is a metaphor used by Maria Dinikova in her memoirs with the same title, published in *Vezni* in 2003 and 2008.

6 Bakish, *Momchesbki istorii*, 162.

7 Bakish, *Momchesbki istorii*, 162.

materials dealing with this subject were published. Some of them spoke even in terms of women's "triple burden": family and household; professional life; and participation in endless and (as some authors argued) meaningless political tutelage meetings.

Bakish's personal understanding of the double burden is openly articulated in the article "Da otmenim vtorata smijana" (Let's Cancel the Second Shift), which addresses the lack of (societal) awareness regarding the existing injustice towards "half of society," and how impossible it was for women to meet even their basic needs for professional and cultural development. The article sets off the alarm that this so-called "second shift" of the working woman lasts too long. Her feminism transpires also in the concluding remarks that perhaps the share of women's work at home would not have been so high had the deeply rooted patriarchal understanding that household labor is "the woman's duty" not existed.

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* * *

Sonia Bakish

Let's Cancel the Second Shift

This is not about the second shift in the factories, but about those extra hours devoted to childcare and household maintenance which lie mainly on the woman. They weigh on her every day. Everyone knows that, and sociologists prove it, too.

Although partial, some of their research confirms that the "second shift" of the working woman takes her too long. A survey conducted by the newspaper *Rabotnichesko delo* [Workers' Action] among 100 workers from the sewing factory "Orlov" in the town of Tolbuhin revealed that women workers spend an average of 3 to 8 hours a day on housework and shopping. A survey of the research group at the Central Committee of Trade Unions, conducted in the last two-to-three years among women from the Trade Union of Workers in Mechanical Engineering, Chemistry, and Energetics, shows that they spend an average of 242 minutes on housework after their working day has ended, and nearly 397 minutes—or 6 hours and 37 minutes—on their day off.

Almost the same duration of domestic work was found by other surveys involving approximately 12,000 people. If we continue analyzing the data, we will see that the married working woman, and especially the mother, is engaged professionally and with housework between 80 and 90 hours per week.

Maybe the percentage of women's employment at home would not be so high if the traditional belief that domestic work is a woman's duty was not so deeply rooted in our national mentality. It cannot be denied that its foundations have already been shaken, but this experience has lasted too long.

Working women's high workload is a problem that should have been comprehensively considered and studied long ago, since its consequences harm not only the individual woman, but society as a whole. After all, women are half of the population! And only women who are highly skilled professionals, well-trained mothers, and active public figures could successfully fulfill their role as builders of the new society.

There is no detailed study on how a woman's workload affects her personal plans and her multiple duties to family and society. But individual surveys and data help to draw a rough picture of the difficulties and conflicts women face in their professional and private lives in the current social structure. Much emphasis is placed on the responsibilities of the mother as an educator. But how could a working mother fulfill her supreme moral obligations to her child and society when, according to a group of sociologists, she usually spends 33% of her free time cooking, 17% washing and ironing, 29% cleaning and tidying up the house, 14% shopping, and only 5% paying attention to her children?

A survey conducted by the editorial board of *Zhenata dnes* (Woman Today) among female construction workers in the Kremikovtsi plant showed that 72% of the respondents do not have opportunities for cultural activities due to lack of time. [...]

Certainly, the modernization of the household, equipping it with electrical appliances, will assist women and reduce the time of their work at home. [...]

The experience of the industrially developed socialist countries, where the household has been technically much better equipped for years, shows that only well-organized public services relieve people of the burden of domestic obligations. And this means the development and improvement of public catering, enriching the forms of home care (cleaning, laundry, clothes mending, caring for the sick, repairs and maintenance of technical appliances, etc.), expansion of the network of public laundries, dry-cleaning, all forms of delivery trade, production of goods that help people in their everyday lives, etc.

The constantly growing network of nurseries and kindergartens will not be able to meet all these needs in the coming years. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the training of women who can work as babysitters. [...] It is high time to learn from the example of the Soviet Union and some other socialist countries in which domestic services are well developed. The All-Union Ministry of Consumer Services was established in the USSR. Such institutions already function in many other republics. They lead modern, highly mechanized, and profitable companies which cover more and more of the domestic services. They hire qualified staff who have won public trust and respect. Special schools train young staff for these companies. The Kyiv City Company for Household Assistance uses a large number of students in its various services, too. They receive accommodation in the company's dormitory, have undergone preparatory courses, and work in their extracurricular activities as reputable educators and home teachers. Many retired women work in the company as babysitters and assistants to single or sick people. Similar examples of the scale of public services can be given for the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and other countries.

We have a company offering all kinds of services, but its activity is not comprehensive at all. There is also some fragmentation in the management and organization of domestic service enterprises. It is time to take measures both to coordinate this activity and to bring it quickly into line with the needs of life. Whether this will be the administration, the directorate, or a company with greater scope, capacity, and obligations will be decided by the competent authorities.

The decisions of the 9th Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party also impose a comprehensive improvement of the level of domestic services. They said: "It is necessary to more and more fully meet the needs of the population, to develop public institutions for industrial, communal, and domestic services to the people."

When we approach these problems with scope and understanding, the first decisive step to cancel the very heavy “second shift” of the working woman will be taken. This will open up even greater opportunities for her to develop and express herself as a person. And this will primarily benefit our whole society.

Translated by Valentina Mitkova

Ecaterina Oproiu

Two Key Questions

AUTHOR Ecaterina Oproiu

TITLE “Două întrebări cheie” [Two Key Questions]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED “Condiția femeii, condiția umană” [Woman’s Condition, Human Condition], *Era socialistă* 55, no. 5 (1975): 24–26. The version with the title translated here is an excerpt from *Cartea fetelor* [The Book for Girls] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1977), 70–83. First edition 1971, revised and expanded editions in 1974 and 1977.

LANGUAGE Romanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ecaterina Oproiu-Murgescu (1929, Bucharest–2024) was a journalist, film critic, playwright, and writer. She was the only child of Ion and Dominica Oproiu, a merchant and a housewife. By the time Oproiu graduated from the Faculty of Law, University of Bucharest, in 1953, she was already working as a journalist. Between 1948–1954, she wrote for the daily newspaper *România Liberă* (Free Romania), first as a field reporter, and later as a cinema and theatre critic. From 1950 to 1958, she also taught in the film history department at the Institute for Film in Bucharest, which merged into the I. L. Caragiale Institute of Theatre and Film Arts in 1954 (since 2001, the National University of Theatre and Film I. L. Caragiale). During this period, Oproiu reported on theatre and cinema for the Romanian Radio and wrote hundreds of articles on cinema for the daily *Scânteia* (The Spark), the official newspaper of the Romanian Communist Party. She also wrote for some of the main cultural and literary magazines at the time, such as *Teatrul* (Theatre), *Tânărul Scriitor* (The Young Writer), *Gazeta Literară* (The Literary Gazette), *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), and *Viața Românească* (Romanian Life).

In 1958, Oproiu was fired and banned from writing in the press. The published anthology of fragments from diaries she kept during state socialism opens with the account of how she became an “enemy of the people” after reviewing the first film that featured Lica Gheorghiu, daughter of the first secretary of the Romanian Communist Party Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.¹ Unemployed for several years, Oproiu sought a different career path, and taught herself mathematics and drawing. In 1962, she was admitted to the Institute of Architecture “Ion Mincu” in Bucharest (since 2000: “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urban Planning).² She continued publishing

1 Oproiu, *Jurnal* 1, 9–12. The review of *Erupția* (1957, dir. Liviu Ciulei) was published in *Contemporanul* 12, no. 1, 10 January 1958, 4.

2 Oproiu, *Jurnal* 1, 20–24.

under a pseudonym (e.g., as Ileana Costin, the regular TV critic for *Contemporanul* in 1963–1964).

In the context of the “thaw,” or liberalization, in the 1960s Oproiu could return to working in the press under her own name. She became deputy editor of the magazine *Cinema* (1964–1967), then editor-in-chief until 1989. The magazine, originally published between 1924–1948, was relaunched as a monthly, reached a circulation of hundreds of thousands of copies, and received the Golden Lion for best publication for the popularization of cinema at the 38th Venice Biennale held in 1978. Beginning in 1966, Oproiu presented a series of movies for the popular program “Telecinemateca” on the Romanian Television. She also published on the topic of stardom, most notably *Un idol pentru fiecare: mituri și anti-mituri* (An Idol for Everyone: Myths and Anti-Myths, 1970), and several essays, including one on Greta Garbo for a collection published in 1972. Oproiu held the regular column “Tele-observator” (TV Observer) in *Contemporanul* (1965–1983), hosted the program “Homo Cinematographicus” on the Romanian Radio (1972–1977), and wrote the column “Cronica filmului” (Film Review) in *România liberă* (1976–1986).

Oproiu also had a successful international presence as a cinema critic. In 1975, she was vice-president of the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI), and she reported from numerous editions of the Cannes Film Festival. She was awarded the prize of the Film Critics Association in Romania (ACIN) in 1977 and 1982.

Beginning in February 1972, Oproiu wrote a column entitled “Woman’s Condition” in the cultural magazine *Contemporanul*, where she published commentary as well as interviews. Eight of these interviews with women in different professions—e.g., factory workers, architects, a peasant, a small-town mayor, a theatre photographer, a university professor, a member of the academy of sciences—were collected in the volume *3x8 plus infinitul* (3x8 Plus Infinity, 1975) together with readers’ letters she had received in response to her articles. She translated and wrote the introduction to the only volume of Western feminism published in its entirety before 1989 in Romania, Mathilde Niel’s *Le drame de la libération de la femme* (1968; translated as *Drama eliberării femeii* [The Drama of Woman’s Liberation], 1974).

Oproiu’s first theater play, *Nu sunt Turnul Eiffel* (I Am Not the Eiffel Tower), about a couple, was staged in 1964 at the Youth Theatre in Piatra Neamț, and achieved national and international success. Her other theatre plays also addressed the relationship between men and women, women’s condition in contemporary society, and couple life: *Interviu* (Interview, 1976), which drew on material from *3x8 plus infinitul*, was awarded the Ion Luca Caragiale prize for playwriting by the Romanian Academy in 1978; the comedy *Cerul înstelat deasupra noastră* (The Starry Sky above Us, 1984) received eleven national awards, including the Grand Prize at the Romanian Playwriters’ Gala. These were republished, together with plays written in the 2010s, in the anthology *Comedii cu nisip în dinți* (Comedies with Sand in the Teeth, 2014).

In the 2010s, Oproiu also published two novels. After 1989, she initiated the column “A doua jumătate” (The Second Half) in the daily *Cotidianul* and established the magazines *Timpul Femeilor* (Women’s Time) and *Lumea Femeilor* (Women’s World). Between 1992 and 2002, she was member of the National Audiovisual Council. After withdrawing from public life, she published several anthologies of fragments from her diaries, which she started writing at fourteen. Ecaterina Oproiu was married to economist Costin Murgescu, and had one daughter, architect Ileana Tureanu.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Un idol pentru fiecare: mituri și anti-mituri* [An Idol for Everyone: Myths and Anti-Myths] (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1970); *3x8 plus infinitul* [3x8 Plus Infinity] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1975); with Tatiana Corvin, eds., *Enciclopedia căminului* [The Household Encyclopedia] (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1975); *Nu sunt Turnul Eiffel: pseudo-comedie în două părți* [I Am Not the Eiffel Tower: Pseudo-Comedy in Two Parts] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1978); *Cerul înstelat deasupra noastră: o piesă în două părți* [The Starry Sky above Us: A Play in Two Parts] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1986); *Jurnal 1* [Diary 1] (Bucharest: Semne, 2013); *Jurnal 2* [Diary 2] (Bucharest: Semne, 2014); *Comedii cu nisip în dinți* [Comedies with Sand in the Teeth] (Bucharest: Semne, 2014); *Jurnal 3 - Salutări de la Cannes* [Diary 3: Regards from Cannes] (Bucharest: Semne, 2015); *Miss România: roman* [Miss Romania: A Novel] (Bucharest: Semne, 2016); *O garsonieră în iad* [A Studio in Hell] (Bucharest: Semne, 2017) • MOST IMPORTANT TRANSLATION • Mathilde Niel, *Drama eliberării femeii* [The Drama of Woman’s Liberation] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1974).

Ileana Tureanu

translated by Adela Hincu

CONTEXT³

In 1960s Romania, critical discussions about “woman’s condition” in contemporary society found their way to TV and the radio, onto theater stages and the pages of popular magazines, and into literature and the cinema. Spanning these different media, Ecaterina Oproiu established herself as a distinctive voice that addressed broad audiences in a persuasive, provocative, and polemical style. Her theoretical ideas about women’s emancipation are best systemized in the introduction Oproiu wrote to Mathilde Niel’s *The Drama of Woman’s Liberation*, which she translated into Romanian in 1974. Here, Oproiu argued against a narrowly understood, “secarian” definition of women’s emancipation as separate from or against men, which she ascribed to contemporary (Western) feminism.⁴ She maintained that emancipation could only be relational, the restructuring of historical power relations

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4 Oproiu, “Foreword,” in Niel, *Drama eliberării femeii*, 7.

between women and men through a “peaceful and [...] tender” revolution.⁵ At the same time, she was clear that the most important task that men and women shared was that of perpetuation. On state socialism, Oproiu also argued that in spite of “top down” emancipation and the acceptance of equality in theory, in practice, prejudice persisted: the distinction between traditionally male and female professions; the essentializing of biological differences; and contrasting emancipation with femininity. To challenge these ideas, Oproiu returned time and again to a situated understanding of women’s long history of oppression and to identifying the contemporary opportunities and obstacles to emancipation. She also referred to Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*, which was not translated into Romanian in its entirety before 1989, as “a profoundly progressive and luminous” book.⁶

Oproiu articulated her ideas against the backdrop of visible changes in the public representation of women in the 1960s–70s, to which she in turn contributed. The main women’s monthly, *Femeia* (The Woman), published under this title by the National Women’s Council (Consiliul Național al Femeilor) beginning in 1948, relayed official policies towards women while also addressing women’s everyday concerns in the workplace, within the family, and as citizens. The contents of the magazine have been a rich historical source for analyses of the portrayal of women and gender relations in state socialist Romania.⁷ After representing women in their efforts for peace and postwar reconstruction in the 1950s, in the 1960s *Femeia* started to broach more controversial topics, such as the unequal division of housework between men and women, domestic violence, or difficult parenting, alongside topics related to health, nutrition, and beauty.⁸ The following period, particularly between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s, has been described as a time of “cosmopolitanism,” when women in the magazine “displayed a touch of elegance and sophistication, of freedom and of sexual seduction.”⁹ In comparison, in the 1970s and 1980s individuality and intimacy were increasingly downplayed in the representation of women and motherhood in *Femeia*, which again put a heavier emphasis on the importance of women’s productive and reproductive duties towards society.¹⁰

Femeia was itself concerned with issues of representation. Responding to a survey on the image of women in contemporary art initiated by the magazine, Oproiu

5 Oproiu, “Foreword,” in Niel, *Drama eliberării femeii*, 8.

6 Oproiu, “Foreword,” in Niel, *Drama eliberării femeii*, 18.

7 See Sorana Alexandra Constantinescu, “How Women Made the News: A Case-Study of *Femeia* Magazine in Communist Romania under Ceaușescu,” *Journal of Media Research* 10, no. 1 (2017): 32–41; Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare în România comunistă*; Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*; Oprea, “Between the Heroine Mother and the Absent Woman”; Teampău, “The Romanian Red Body”; and Iringó Tóth Gödri, “Propaganda, Emancipation, and Stalinist Internationalism,” *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Philosophy & Humanistic Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2017): 13–25.

8 Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 66–71.

9 Oprea, “Between the Heroine Mother and the Absent Woman,” 287.

10 Oprea, “Between the Heroine Mother and the Absent Woman,” 289–92.

resisted the premise that artistic creation should “honor” women, and instead argued for the need to “understand the enormous effort—full of contradictions, of bravery, and sometimes of cowardice—made by the feminine species to overcome its historical handicap and rise in practice, not just in theory, from the quality of being a woman to the rank of being a human.”¹¹ Oproiu acknowledged the fact that women, as represented in contemporary cinema, systematically were secondary characters. At the same time, she explained this was not a consequence of a “racism of sex,” of “militant, lucid misogyny,” or “the cineasts’ conscious, voluntary, organized underestimation,” but rather the consequence of the overrepresentation of men and their perspective in cinema. Women needed to make their voices heard, yet Oproiu concluded that “only the synthesis of masculine and feminine perspectives could lead to a *human perspective*.”¹² Women’s representation in film was also debated in the magazine *Cinema*, with Oproiu editing an entire issue on the topic.¹³ Similar discussions took place about the condition of women writers and women’s representation in Romanian literature at the time.¹⁴

Considerations about woman’s condition in contemporary society also had an educational dimension. *Cartea fetelor* (The Book of Girls), the anthology from which the excerpts included in this volume were translated, was a collection of texts intended for young female readers. These were written by psychologists, essayists, and journalists, and covered topics such as adolescence, choosing a profession, rules of conduct, beauty, relationships, and the psychology and ethics of love. “Equal rights so far involve twice as many and not equal duties,”¹⁵ read the introduction, in reference to the multiple social expectations girls and women faced in terms of work and career, reproductive duties, and civic obligations. Within the volume, Oproiu’s text discussed this issue of the double/triple burden with most detail. The unequal distribution of domestic and care work between women and men was well documented by time-budget surveys that were conducted starting in the 1960s.¹⁶ These showed

11 Ecaterina Oproiu in “Eroină în viață, figurantă în artă?” [Heroine in Life, Extra in Art?], *Femeia* 26, no. 3 (1973): 23.

12 Oproiu in “Eroină în viață, figurantă în artă?,” 23.

13 “Condiția femeii în film” [Woman’s Condition in Film], *Cinema* 10, no. 8 (1972): 4–19, 21–35.

14 “Femeia: Autor și personaj literar” [Woman: Author and Literary Character], *Luceafărul* 16, no. 9 (1973): 3, 9. The survey brought together the perspectives of women writers of different generations, such as Maria Banuș, Constanța Buzca, Alexandra Târziu, Ileana Mălăncioiu, Cella Serghi, Maria-Luiza Cristescu, and Corina Cristea. For a literary theory perspective on women’s prose from the 1970s, see Dana Dumitriu, “O tendință a prozei feminine: autodizolvarea” [A Tendency in Women’s Prose Writing: Self-Effacement], *Orizont* 21 (March 1970): 40–44.

15 *Cartea fetelor*, 5.

16 For a detailed contemporaneous analysis of these studies, see Moskoff, “The Problem of the ‘Double Burden.’” Moskoff conducted research in Romania in 1976, concluding that married women had a heavier domestic burden compared with data on women in Finland and the Soviet Union at the time (87), and similar to that in the US. He found that despite this unequal distribution of domestic duties, in terms of decision-making in the household neither women nor men dominated (87–88).

that women spent around thirty hours per week on housework, while men spent on average three hours less than women on housework per day; moreover, a comparison between stopwatch measurements and self-reported time budgets revealed that (especially married) men's understanding of what constituted work within the household and how it should be distributed continued to be skewed by patriarchal beliefs.¹⁷ Domestic work and women's double burden were also recurrent topics of critical discussion in the magazine *Femeia*, with the portrayal of women managing multiple demands "intended to showcase—and thus normalize—Romanian women's facility in combining the role of mother, worker, and wife."¹⁸

The source text illustrates some of the contradictions in the approach to women's emancipation in general, and the issue of the double burden in particular, in socialist Romania. It opens with framing the UN International Women's Year (1975) and the Women's Decade as responses to the historical necessity of addressing women's situations worldwide.¹⁹ On the issue of women's solidarity in the struggle for emancipation, Oproiu emphasizes that women are not a homogeneous social category and reasserts the Marxist standpoint that class inequalities prevail over inequalities between men and women. Building on the work of August Bebel, she describes women's condition as one of "multiple servitudes," further aggravated by women's lack of historical experience in liberation struggles: "The experience of suffering is shared, but the organizational, theoretical, and ideological experience of class struggle is a male experience."²⁰ Leading to the excerpt translated in this volume, Oproiu outlines the policies of the Romanian Communist Party in terms of women entering productive labor, supporting motherhood, and promoting women in leadership positions. Against this background, the translated excerpt focuses on women's roles as workers, citizens, wives, and mothers.²¹ The two "key questions" that Oproiu identifies speak to prevailing double standards in the evaluation of women's and men's work. They allow Oproiu to elaborate on the importance of achieving equality in terms of the distribution of household labor and care duties, as well as in terms of the social recognition of reproductive work, without questioning the imperative of parenthood.

17 Francisc Albert, *Dialog cu timpul liber* [Dialog with Free Time] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970), 50–53, 62–63; Moskoff, "The Problem of the 'Double Burden.'" On this and scholarship on women's condition from 1970s Romania more broadly: Hincu, "Ambivalentes Empowerments," 110–16; Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare*, 202–207; Teampău, "The Romanian Red Body."

18 Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 214.

19 The text was also published in *Era Socialistă*, the theoretical organ of the Romanian Communist Party, under the title "Woman's Condition, Human Condition."

20 Oproiu, "Două întrebări cheie," 73.

21 On the representation of women's different roles in *Femeia* in the 1960s–70s, Petruța Teampău argued that these "roles were wrapped in a complex ideological script that managed to re-enforce traditional sex roles while pretending to 'emancipate' women." See Teampău, "Women's Role in 'Popular Democracies,'" 51. For women's reproductive roles, see Kligman, "Spreading the Word."

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Adela Hîncu

* * *

Ecaterina Oproiu

Two Key Questions

[...] This overall figure—44.7 percent²²—shows as clearly as possible—and even poetically—that the famous link that drags forward the whole chain, in other words, the key to women's emancipation, to their rise, is work, work, work. (And this is not work inside the conjugal home which is, of course, "a must." The revolutionary question, if you will, or in any case, the unnerving one for 49 percent of the

22 Editor's note: The author refers to the Decision of the Plenary Meeting of the Romanian Communist Party of June 1973: "Women stand for 44.7 percent of the population employed in the national economy."

population is: Where, in what tablets of stone, is it carved that women are the only ones to do this chore, this “alienating work”? For human personality cannot flourish doing laundry and cleaning floors, frying onions, and darning socks.) Confined to the domestic world, overwhelmed by domestic problems, shrinking the world and herself to the size of the home, domestic dramas, and domestic ambitions, a woman could never be the equal of a man who is grounded in the life of the polis, concerned about the problems of the polis, understanding himself in relation to his polis and the world of which his polis is part. There is domestic work, but there is no domestic emancipation. Women cannot rise unless they participate.

The basic form of participation, just like the basic form of “emancipation,” is work. Work, the antidote to alienation. Work associated with the satisfaction entailed by the verb “to produce.” Work, an outlet to society and history. Work, the basis for economic independence (which is not the same as “emotional independence.” People should be emotionally attached, but economically independent. This type of independence does not destroy the love of the couple, it makes it stronger. It is the most convincing evidence that this woman stays with this man because she loves him, not because “she has to.”).

[...]

“We must,” our Party’s secretary general urges, “start from the necessity that all our institutions see and treat women as any other citizens. This is how we should judge them, and not as a group that needs to be taken care of every now and then.” In this perspective, that is, the perspective of the interests of the entire people, the question of women’s emancipation is no longer only a question of women becoming emancipated, but it is as much—or even more—a question of men becoming emancipated.

Unfortunately, this essential truth is little understood in practice, or rather it is slowly, too slowly understood, and more often than not it is not understood at all. It is accepted as an instruction. It is accepted as in “if it’s an order, I’ll do it gladly”; because, let’s admit it, in our country the promotion of women has become a necessity insofar as it was imposed top-down. Moreover, not everywhere though, this necessity continues to take the form of “pressure,” a well-meaning pressure that the Party’s leadership relentlessly exercises.

The difficulties derive from objective conditions, but also to a large extent from subjective ones. While difficulties arise from preconceptions, preconceptions are not derived only from men’s distrust, but also from women’s lack of courage. But most of all, difficulties come from the mentality—and a relatively more progressive one—that we can achieve qualitative changes “if women are helped.”

This mentality is founded on an honest acknowledgement of a fact. All citizens have equal rights, there are no prohibited professions, nor are there inaccessible positions. Any willing woman is allowed to climb up the ladder just like any

man is. Theoretically, there is full equality of opportunities. In practice, however, everybody knows that “a working woman” works more than a “working man”; that a woman who reached a management position had to make double the efforts, sometimes triple, because a woman, just like her husband or her colleague, has a duty as a citizen and a duty as a worker. She is, she has become, a builder of a new life. But a woman is more than what she has become, after she was acknowledged an equal. She is and will continue to be what she used to be for centuries before—when she was not an equal—that is, also a wife. And as a wife, in addition to being the builder of life in general, she feels, traditionally, a duty to be the builder—the main builder—of family life. She, the woman, is not merely a builder and the builder’s life partner, she is also the mother of builders. She gives birth to the future masters of this country. She watches over them at night when their teeth are coming out, she raises them, teaches them the meaning of the words “father” and “mother,” “country” and “my country.”

In practice and in terms of general behavior—for the sprouts of a new mentality are there, but they are for now the exception—the responsibility of the man is multiplied by one, while the woman’s is by three. That we have come to know and acknowledge this reality is in itself a step forward, but an insufficient one given that the laws of biology—known and acknowledged—do not allow for equality, that is for both men and women to give birth, or at least take turns. Further, this progress—the acknowledgement of a reality—has become insufficient, given that the laws of progress assert more and more boldly their imperatives: the nation needs to grow. The nation needs young people. The family needs to be strengthened. The new generations need to be given an education, and even an increasingly better one.

Therefore, the quantity and quality of duties cannot be decreased in either the sphere of public interest or of private interest. A richer world does not have to be a world poorer in feelings. A more balanced world does not have to effeminate the man and masculinize the woman. This richer world does not have to rob each species of its charm. On the contrary.

As I said, plenty of improvements have been made in terms of objective realities and a few in terms of subjective realities. The gap between the two remains wide, however. Most difficulties arise, in my opinion, from the mentality that the hardships associated with woman’s condition are natural. This mentality is by no means limited to the so-called backward groups. You only have to read the newspapers or watch TV to see the interviews that we, journalists, conduct with managers of enterprises, collective farm chairmen, or heroes of socialist labor. With male heroes, we talk about the economy, increasing the production per hectare, boosting productivity, or reducing waste. With women heroes, we talk about all the issues we talk about with male heroes, but we invariably add the following

two questions: (1) How do you accommodate your duties as a leader and those as a wife?; and (2) How do you accommodate your duties as a leader and those as a mother? The questions are in no way absurd. They are, on the contrary, as natural as possible. Unnatural and absurd is the fact that no one ever thinks of asking the director of a large industrial combine or the chairman of a collective farm: (1) How do you accommodate your duties as a leader and those as a husband?; and (2) How do you accommodate your duties as a leader and those as a father? And even if someone did ask, they would only embarrass themselves. And if a male director did answer—the way women directors usually do—that after the hours spent at the factory he hurries home because there is a lot of work to be done at home too—food to prepare, children to wash, and ironing—because he understands that he needs to be not only a director but a husband and father as well, such a reply would elicit a half-smile or even laughter. The answer would be perceived as an extravagance almost as big as that of young Swedish men having decided that, after the baby was born, the “maternity” leave could be taken by either spouse on agreement, considering, of course, the profession of each, so either by the mother or by the father, because if the father was able to learn how to solve cybernetics problems, he could also learn how to make semolina pudding.

Unfortunately, as already mentioned, progress is still too slow in terms of subjective changes. The capacity to adapt traditional values to the values of modern society is still inadequate. While the family is supposed to be the joint project of two persons with equal abilities, the “guardian” angel of this equality-based union remains, in practice, the woman. The person responsible for the family is the woman. The woman “can receive help” at best. The child is the fruit of both parents. But the worries, the immense worries that come with raising a child fall firstly, secondly, and thirdly within the mother’s remit. The person responsible for the children is the woman. The woman “can receive help” at best.

Undoubtedly, this “help” means one or even several steps forward. But it can only be an intermediary phase. In a world such as ours, it is not enough that the man *helps* the woman to fulfill her three jobs. He must *share* in the work with her. And the sharing is not to be done based on some soulless calculation, but in the name of warm respect. Indeed, the phrase *to help the woman*, with its vaguely charitable meaning, rings somehow hollow. In our country, it has been a long time since the woman stopped being a helpless being, who needed help to stand on her two feet.

The issue here is, therefore, to understand that if men can be responsible builders, then women can too. If wives can be “life partners,” so can the husbands. If there are ideal mothers, there must also be ideal fathers. In terms of objective realities, we have made a giant leap. But subjective achievements will have made the same giant leap the day when, without any fear of ridicule, interviewed

men will answer the journalists' two questions that today we deem natural to ask to a woman running an enterprise, but embarrassing to ask to a man running an industrial combine. For a woman director, talking about raising children and doing housework feels natural, while a male director doing the same would appear belittled to us, stripped away of his male attributes, should he talk about how he accommodates his work at his job and housework. The home is perceived as being exclusively the woman's realm. Here, at home, the man sees himself as a collaborator at best. But it is high time now that our collaborator be promoted to the position of co-author.

Translated by Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

Mileva Filipović

The Working Class and Woman's Emancipation in Socialism

AUTHOR Mileva Filipović

TITLE “Radnička klasa i emancipacija žene u socijalizmu” [The Working Class and Woman's Emancipation in Socialism]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Chapter in the book *Radnička klasa i oslobođenje žene* [The Working Class and Woman's Liberation] (Titograd: Pobjeda, 1979), 47–57.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mileva Filipović (1938, Spuž–2020, Podgorica) was a Yugoslav and Montenegrin sociologist and political science scholar. Her fields of interest included general and political sociology, epistemology, and structuralist and feminist theories. In 1973 she graduated with a degree in sociology from the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences, and then also received her Master's (1976) and doctoral degrees (1983) from the same faculty. While working on her doctoral dissertation, she trained at the École normale supérieure in Paris, under Louis Althusser (1918–1990).

In 1974 she started working at the University of Montenegro, Faculty of Law, in Titograd (now Podgorica), first as teaching assistant and assistant professor of sociology, and later as associate professor (1995) and professor (1998–2003). In 1980 she received the Liberation of Titograd Award for Science. She was a member of the Committee on Legal and Political Sciences and the Committee on Philosophy and Sociology of the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts (Crnogorska akademija nauka i umjetnosti, CANU), and editor of the CANU project “Encyclopedia of Montenegro” for the subject area “Social and State Order—Law. Sociology.” Though proposed for membership in CANU in 2015, she was not elected into the highest academic institution in the country.

Her scientific interest in gender issues within Marxist theory emerged in the late 1970s, resulting in the book *Radnička klasa i oslobođenje žene* (The Working Class and Woman's Liberation), published in 1979. Simultaneously, her interest in structuralism was showcased in the book *Istorijski materijalizam i strukturalizam u sociološkoj misli* (Historical Materialism and Structuralism in Sociological Thought) from 1984.

In the early 2000s, her preoccupation with gender studies became increasingly prominent both in her scholarly research and in her translation and editorial work. This corresponded with the entrance of feminist ideas into Montenegrin scholarly and public discourse, while Filipović participated in efforts to establish women's/

gender studies as an academic program in Montenegro. To this end, she tried establishing the postgraduate program Women and Law at the Faculty of Law, University of Montenegro, which however did not come into being.¹ Her book from 2003, *Društvena moć žena u Crnoj Gori* (The Social Power of Women in Montenegro), was strongly influenced by *La domination masculine* (Masculine Domination) by Pierre Bourdieu, which she translated into Serbo-Croatian/Montenegrin, publishing it the same year as the first English translation.²

A significant part of her professional engagement was dedicated to translating French sociologists and theorists. She prominently contributed to local gender studies as an editor of the book series *Femina*, launched by the Centre for Publishing (Centar za istraživačko-izdavačku delatnost, CID), Podgorica. In this period, she translated several publications focusing on gender issues (listed below).

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Radnička klasa i oslobođenje žene* [The Working Class and Woman's Liberation] (Titograd: Pobjeda, 1979); *Istorijski materijalizam i strukturalizam u savremenoj sociološkoj misli* [Historical Materialism and Structuralism in Contemporary Sociological Thought] (Titograd: Univerzitetska riječ, 1984); *Uvod u opštu sociologiju* [Introduction to General Sociology] (Belgrade: Agora, 1995; reprints: Podgorica: CID, 1998, 2010); "Studije roda: dilema, izazov, mogućnost na Univerzitetu Crne Gore" [Gender Studies: Dilemma, Challenge, Opportunity at the University of Montenegro], *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta* (Podgorica), no. 31 (2000): 31–37; *Društvena moć žena u Crnoj Gori* [The Social Power of Women in Montenegro] (Podgorica: CID, 2003); "Moška dominacija Pierra Bourdieuja" [Masculine Domination by Pierre Bourdieu], *Ars & Humanitas* 2, no. 1 (2008): 121–32 • MOST IMPORTANT TRANSLATIONS • Henri Mendras, *Osnovi sociologije* [Elements of Sociology] (Podgorica: CID; Univerzitet Crne Gore, 2001); Pierre Bourdieu, *Vladavina muškaraca* [Masculine Domination] (Podgorica: CID, 2001); Raymond Boudon, *Imoralizam: sumrak morala? sumrak vrijednosti?* [Immoralism: Decline of Morals? Decline of Values?] (Podgorica: CID, 2005); Alain Touraine, *Svijet žena* [Women's World] (Podgorica: CID, 2011); Sylviane Agacinski, *Žene između pola i roda* [Women between Sex and Gender] (Podgorica: CID, 2015); Alain Touraine, *Kraj društava* [The End of Society] (Podgorica: CID, 2018).

Nataša Nelević and Ervina Dabižinović

CONTEXT

The book *The Working Class and Woman's Liberation* by sociologist Mileva Filipović came out in 1979, as an adapted Master Thesis she defended at the Faculty of

1 Dabižinović, "Mileva Filipović," 405–6.

2 Pjer Burdje, *Vladavina muškaraca* [literal translation: The Rule of Men], trans. Mileva Filipović (Podgorica: CID; Univerzitet Crne Gore, 2001).

Political Science, University of Belgrade. It was published in the period of late socialism, when the issue of women's emancipation in socialist Yugoslavia was mostly considered resolved. By that time, the revolutionary women's organizations that had been engaged in the widespread emancipation of women in the postwar years—the Women's Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena, AFŽ)—had been disbanded more than twenty years before. The so-called women's question had been reduced to rectifying certain social problems faced by women, and this task was ceded to the women's branches of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia.

In the mid-1970s, female Yugoslav intellectuals gathered in larger centers, such as Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana, started to warn that the class struggle had in fact not eradicated the discrimination of women, especially in the private sphere, thus adopting the legacy, ideas, and experiences of Western feminism.

These influences are not apparent in Mileva Filipović's work. The fact that the Montenegrin intellectual environment had not been influenced by these ideas was not the only reason for this. In fact, Mileva Filipović remained permanently engaged exclusively in academic work, i.e. her theoretical work developed outside of the public sphere of feminist and other debates. Her lifelong interest in the "women's question" was solely linked to scholarly work within the field of sociology. The development of her ideas was initially and predominantly influenced by Marxist philosophy, and was only later influenced by structuralism, the theoretical ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and Louis Althusser, and within this theoretical framework by feminist ideas. Her book also had no influence on public discourse. Several scientific reviews penned by her colleagues from the academic community were the only reactions to this work.

In *The Working Class and Woman's Liberation*, Mileva Filipović strived to theorize motherhood as bioproduction along Marxist lines, and openly distanced it from the assumptions of bourgeois feminism. Filipović insisted that her interventions were only "methodological in nature," and that she remained in accord with the Marxist perspective on the double slavery of women (due to class and in the private sphere) and on the means of achieving women's emancipation through class struggle. At the same time, she maintained that Marxist theory does not offer an answer to specific features of "women's slavery" within the private sphere, which is primarily related to biological reproduction. In this aspect, Filipović grappled with questions similar to those raised by Western Marxist feminists such as Mariarosa Dalla Costa (b. 1943), Silvia Federici (b. 1942), and Selma James (b. 1930), who advocated in the 1970s for the recognition of and remuneration for housework. However, there is no evidence in Filipović's work that she was influenced by this strand of Western feminism at the time of writing.

Filipović also confronted the two extreme (and in her view equally unacceptable) answers to the question of biological reproduction—the first of which reduced women to their biological functions, denying them the right to participate in society, while the second ignored motherhood as a woman's specific experience. Through

her scholarly contributions, Filipović strived to fill in these blanks in Marxist philosophy and pave the way for Marxist theorization of motherhood as bioproduction, “an unrecognized sphere” of labor, the particularities of which remained hidden from view in the work of leading Marxist theorists. As is apparent from the excerpts included in this volume, she also raised the issue of the unsatisfactory systemic response of the socialist society to the bioproduction issues. She asked about the possibility of different solutions to the transition of bioproduction, as reproductive labor, into the productive sphere—i.e., the economic and social recognition of bioproduction—without losing hope that this solution is possible and that it primarily relates to the further development of productive forces and socialism.

In Mileva Filipović’s work, we can recognize the anticipation of contemporary Marxist-feminist debates and attempts to correct the Marxist theoretical and political treatment of women’s reproductive work. The issue of situating bioproduction into the realm of socio-political issues remains unresolved to this day.

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Nataša Nelević and Ervina Dabižinović

Mileva Filipović

The Working Class and Woman's Emancipation in Socialism

[...] The discrepancy between the real and the legal equality of women—between the normative and genuine position of the working class and women—exists because, in a society with dynamic changes such as ours, the goals of social development and their normative projection must be ahead of reality. Some forms of this disparity, this discrepancy, are as follows: the complex of problems related to society's bioproduction and its recognition as a general social need; the inadequate participation of women in political and self-management decision-making bodies; the discrepancy between the increase in women's employment and social care for children; the increase in the educational level of women and their vocational training; the problem of neglecting [the development of the] social standard for the sake of [developing] the technical equipment for individual households,³ etc. The manifested forms of these problems are more deeply rooted in certain objective conditions within the processes of material production, in the social division of labor, as well as in the social being of the working class and in social awareness—all of which has a cumulative feedback effect on slowing down the emancipation of the working class and women.

One could almost say that the current goals of women have been achieved spontaneously, if they (objectively conditioned by the driving forces of social progress) were on the path where historical goals could accept them, and if [women's goals could not be accepted] they remained on the sidelines, as their own specific [problems]. For example: a very small number of functioning nurseries,⁴ day-cares, kindergartens for accommodating the children of employed mothers—“*the seed of communism*,” as Lenin called them. This example could in fact also serve as an illustration of the combination of current with long-term goals. Including children in nurseries, kindergartens, and similar institutions has been an enduring, ongoing, present problem for the employed woman. However, only when this problem becomes a class problem—a problem for the working class, as a problem of abolishing one of the root causes for the reproduction of social inequalities—only when

3 Editor's note: Here the author refers to the never-fully-achieved goal of Yugoslav public policies to transform the relations within the family through state intervention via the socialization of housework (provision of childcare, public cafeterias, washing and cleaning). See Leda Sutlović, “Let's Preserve the Achieved—And Ask for More!': Transformations of Gender Politics in Croatia,” *Women's Studies International Forum* 77 (November–December 2019): 102–137. On the other hand, socialist Yugoslavia had a well-developed local industry for household appliances.

4 “The few kindergartens that had existed were liquidated; the vacation homes and all of that were liquidated. Now we must start anew. That was our great mistake. It cannot be said that this is a socialist relationship...” From the interview with President Tito by Dara Janeković for the newspaper *Vjesnik*, “Imamo u Centralnom komitetu dosta žena, pa neka se bore unutar Partije” [We Have Enough Women in the Central Committee, So Let Them Compete within the Party], *Žena*, no. 1 (1976): 5.

it has become a class problem and not a woman's problem,⁵ the issue of including children in preschool education was linked to and is now part of the historical mission of the working class—to abolish inequality. “Namely, the working class is not able to immediately remove the basic sources of the class structuring of society (the social division of labor, the contrast between ownership monopoly and labor, the substantially unequal satisfaction of needs) but attacks the chain of elements of class structure, starting with its end parts.”⁶

The Elementary Premises of Emancipation: Clearing Land for Construction, But Still Not the Construction Itself

“We are now seriously preparing to clear the land for socialist construction, and the construction of socialist society will start only once we, having achieved the full equality of women, take on the new labor together with the women liberated from that petty, stupefying, unproductive labor. We will have to work on that for many, many years.”⁷ Lenin, as well as Engels, did not believe nor could have believed that abolishing the legal inequality between women and men was a condition for women's liberation. For both of them this was only the first step, a possibility for this issue to see the light of day. The second step towards the complete liberation of women is the *abolition of private ownership*, which places women in the position of dual slavery.⁸ However, it is clear to Lenin that this is “only the clearing of the land for the construction, but still not the construction itself.”⁹ *The true liberation of women, true communism, will start then and there, where and when there is the general struggle* (under the leadership of the proletariat, which holds social power in its hands) *against the petty homestead*.¹⁰ The abolition of private ownership in a socialist type of society is in fact an underlying assumption and necessary condition for women's emancipation, but it is not true emancipation, because there is private ownership, understood in Marx's sense of the disposal of another's (i.e. a woman's) labor within the family.

There is another term for that ownership: the division of labor within the family. “Of the 1,479 respondents, only 33 (2.2%) have obligations only at their workplace, while 1,446 (97.8%), in addition to obligations at their workplace, also have obligations related to running the household, and some of them also have obligations related to providing additional income... In these key tasks, in running the

5 Although we do not have precise information, from the daily press in the past two or three years it could be noted that there has been an increase in the number of institutions for accommodating children.

6 Zoran Vidaković, *Društvena moć radničke klase* [Social Power of the Working Class] (Belgrade: Rad, 1970), 55.

7 V. I. Lenin, *O radnicima i seljankama* [On Workers and Women Peasants] (Belgrade: Kultura, 1947), 19.

8 Lenin, *O radnicima i seljankama*, 16.

9 Lenin, *O radnicima i seljankama*, 11.

10 Lenin, *O radnicima i seljankama*, 12.

household, an employed woman carries out: food preparation (87.9%), house cleaning (91.0%), mending and cleaning clothes (92.8%), washing dishes (86.1%), grocery shopping (74.8%), tending to the garden and fowl (19.8%), while the others (husband, children, grandfather, grandmother, etc.) are contributing in the following ratios: food preparation (28.6%), house cleaning (39.2%), mending and cleaning clothes (14.4%), washing dishes (32.9%), grocery shopping (57.9%), tending to the garden and fowl (30.4%). From all of the above, it arises that an employed woman, in addition to her function in the workplace at the company or institution, performs more or less all the household chores that she performed while she was only a housewife-mother, which inevitably must reflect on her socio-bio-mental state.”¹¹

The abolition of private ownership within the family, which is the basis of the primary slavery of women, is linked to society's biological production. However, in our settings there are also opinions that the abolition of private property “inevitably abolishes those functions of the family that, by the nature of the social ownership of the means of production, belong to society,” and therefore puts under question the existence of the family's class type in our setting.¹² However, despite the undisputed—but sufficiently unexplored—influence of global society on the family, there is no absolute identity between the processes that transpire in society and in the family. The process that the family is based on as a group or community has its autonomy, its inherence—bioproduction. The mechanical transfer of the processes that occur in global society onto the family is unacceptable. If that were possible, a woman-worker in social production would not be a slave in the family, and she is that—as long as the maternal function does not become a need of associated labor.¹³ The demand for respecting the biological function of women as a vital need of society did not emerge yesterday. It has appeared in various forms and variants, in some cases as the demand for the housewife calling to be recognized as a productive vocation,¹⁴ or to recognize legally biological reproduction as a social need,¹⁵ or, yet, the complete economic recognition of the work of house-

11 Mladen Koritnik, “Funkcija zaposlenosti žene u kući” [The Function of Woman's Employment in the Home], results of the study “The Impact of Women's Employment on the Structure and Function of the Family,” published in: Miro Mihovilović et al., *Žena između rada i porodice* [A Woman Between Work and Family] (Zagreb: Institut za društvena istraživanja Sveučilišta, 1975), 111–12.

12 Safeta Kovo, quoted in Anđelka Milić, “Porodica u socijalističkom društvu” [The Family in Socialist Society], *Gledišta* 16, no. 2 (1975): 197.

13 Editor's note: In the theory of self-management, associated labor refers to the community of workers joined together at one workplace.

14 During the creation of the women's movement in Montenegro, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1936. See *Glas Crne Gore* [The Montenegrin Herald], no. 1 (November 15, 1939), in Jovan R. Bojović et al., *Žene Crne Gore u revolucionarnom pokretu 1918–1945* [The Women of Montenegro in the Revolutionary Movement, 1918–1945] (Titograd: Istorijski institut, 1969), 81.

15 Nikša Milošević, “Jesmo li doista osigurali potpunu pravnu jednakost žene u našem društvu” [Have We in Fact Ensured the Complete Legal Equality of Women in Our Society?], *Tribina SSRNH* [Debate of the Socialist League of the Working People of Croatia], appendix 5 (July–August 1968): 20. See also:

wives as one of the vital elements of workforce reproduction.¹⁶ In the current stage of our society's development, the limitations on the realization of this demand are determined by the development of the material forces of production. Precisely this development conditions the existence of the social division of labor,¹⁷ in which the mass of unqualified and semi-qualified female workers is strongly linked to a certain section of societal work, a certain sector. What also remains underexamined is the spillover effect that some aspects of the social division of labor have on the division of labor within a family. [...]

Instead of a Conclusion

[...] The liberation of women in the context of the working class entails an important dimension that is common to both, and which to a certain extent stems from their union in slavery—that one cannot become free without the other. There is no freedom, no emancipation of a woman vis-à-vis a man as the oppressor, but rather being only together with him [...]—there is no freedom for one with the negation of freedom for the other. The need for the radical resolution of the woman question through the resolution of the problem of bioproduction as an unrecognized social sphere was noted rather early on. Regarding this issue, our research has led us to [the conclusion] that: it is a long and arduous historical path; in contemporary society there are only seeds that need development for such a solution, which is based on jointly applying production forces and self-management; this path leads to a classless society—towards the freedom of a worker and a woman, because there is no freedom for one without the other; the solution for the economic valorization of women's work is partial; women's emancipation is such a complex social issue that every partial approach—be it political, legal, or economic—remains partial; the scientific and technological revolution and self-management are a merger of the historical interest and the possibility for the development of production forces, which creates the climate for the development of the seeds of the future; these seeds lie in overcoming various forms of the social division of labor; and one cannot depart on the journey to the realm of freedom with only half of humankind, of

Roland [Leroy], "True Social Equality Will Be Ensured When Society Recognizes This Dual Function of a Woman," in *Femmes du XXe siècle: Semaine de la pensée marxiste* (Paris, 20–27 janvier 1965) [Women of the 20th Century: A Week of Marxist Thought (Paris, January 20–27, 1965)] (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), 4.

16 Hasan Hadžiomerović, *Ekonomija ženskog rada i položaj žene u društvu* [The Economy of Women's Work and the Position of Women in Society] (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1959), 376.

17 "The social division of labor is still rooted in the conditions of the material life of society, in the level of the development of material and spiritual production [...] in the objectively conditioned uneven development of parts of society, in the way of the distribution and socialization of labor." Zoran Vidaković, *Društvena moć radničke klase: teorijsko-kritički ogled* [The Social Power of the Working Class: A Theoretical and Critical Examination] (Belgrade: Rad, 1970), 62.

either gender. The sooner this is understood, the sooner it should lead to mutual bonding and thus achieve the historical and immediate interests of the working class and of women.

Translated by Vuk Tošić

Vizma Belševica

Time Budgets and the Double Burden

AUTHOR Vizma Belševica

TITLE “Māksla ir humāna jeb ‘Mans kakla laužamais mūžs’” [Art Is Human or “My Neck-Breaking Life”]; “Jaunā liepa un es” [The Young Linden and I]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Padomju Jaunatne* [Soviet Youth], May 31, 1981; *Raksti* [Collected Works], vol. 2 (Riga: Jumava, 2000 [1983]), 286–287.

LANGUAGE Latvian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vizma Belševica (1931, Riga–2005, Riga) was a writer and the most outstanding Latvian woman poet of the Soviet period. However, her relationship with the USSR was strained because of her anti-Soviet stand.

She was born in Riga to a poor worker’s family and had a younger sister and brother. After her parents divorced in 1944, she lost contact with her father, who emigrated to the West after the Second World War. She graduated from a vocational school in 1948; later, she studied at a technical school for cultural and educational workers. In 1955, she went to Moscow to become a student at the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute. She became involved in Moscow literary life and lost her illusions about communism, turning into a passionate defender of personal and creative freedom. After graduating from the institute in 1961, she lived in Riga, working as a translator, mainly from English and Russian.

In 1963, Belševica was one of the authors of the new generation (Ēvalds Vilks, Māris Čaklais, and Monta Kroma, among others) who received harsh criticism for their modernistic writing from high-ranking communist party officials. Her poetic sequence “Safes of Hearts,” published in the literary monthly *Karogs*, was criticized for aestheticism, subjectivity, and even decadence. After the publication of her collection of poems *Gadu gredzeni* (Rings of Years, 1969), containing poems with rebellious anti-Soviet subtexts, she experienced a hysterical reaction from party officials: scathing reviews and articles that contained accusations of “pseudomodernist” tendencies and false interpretations of historical facts. It became even worse in 1973, when she defended the Ukrainian critic Ivan Dziuba at his trial for his essay “Internationalism or Russification?” (a copy of the essay was found in her apartment when the KGB searched it in June 1972). Belševica faced a total publishing ban from 1971 to 1974. After this period, she changed the subject matter of her poems and explored themes of nature and personal feeling. She experienced a decade of relative recognition, and

her publications of poetry, fiction, and translations followed, as well as translations in several other languages.

Beļševica had two sons, Klāvs Elsbergs (1959–1987) and Jānis Elsbergs (b. 1969), both of them poets and translators. In 1987, Klāvs, the leading poet of the new generation, died in uncertain circumstances in the writer's residence in Jūrmala Resort after spending an evening with a group of Russian writers from Moscow. Beļševica and her family believed he was murdered. However, the case was never adequately investigated; it remains a mystery. After her son's death, she quit writing poetry.

She spent the 1990s working on the *Bille* trilogy, an autobiographical fiction about her childhood and youth in the times of the First Republic of Latvia, the Second World War, and its aftermath. In the trilogy, she revealed her complicated relationship with her mother, her inner struggles of growing up in a poor family, and the dramatic period of the Soviet and Nazi occupations during the war.

Beļševica is a well-known and highly respected translator of Shakespeare, Dante, Pushkin, Poe, Twain, Kipling, Rimbaud, T. S. Eliot, Hemingway, Tomas Tranströmer, and many others. Her *Collected Works* in four volumes were published from 1999 to 2002, supplemented by a selection of her poetry translations, *Atdzeja* (2004). Several of her books were translated into foreign languages over the years. She was the laureate of the Andrejs Upīts Prize (1982), the Ojārs Vācietis Prize (1988), the Einar Forseth Prize (Sweden, 1992), the Kārlis Goppers Prize (1993), the Spīdola Prize of the Latvian Cultural Foundation (1997), the Prize of the Ministry of Culture (1997), the Tomas Tranströmer Prize (Sweden, 1999), and twice the Latvian Annual Literary Award (2002 and 2004). She became an honorary member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences in 1990. In 1994, she was awarded the Order of Three Stars. She died on August 6, 2005, in Riga. Conferences dedicated to her work took place in Riga in 2006 and 2021. Since 2016, her unpublished works have been collected by her son Jānis Elsbergs and published as the “Archival Notebooks” series.

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Kārlis Vērdiņš

CONTEXT

The issues of the time budget and double burden of working women are a minor subject in Belševica's poetry. However, in her short stories, she often focused on the daily life of women who tried to survive in the USSR and on their eccentric life choices, treating the subject with irony and black humor.¹

The 1981 conversation with literary critic Anda Kubuliņa, titled "Art is Human, or 'My Neck-Breaking Life'" (meaning "life, full of trouble"), from which an excerpt is translated, was dedicated to Belševica's fiftieth birthday. The conversation touches on different subjects, including her creative work, memories from the past, and, less characteristically, women's everyday life. This is one of the rare occasions when she addresses the problems of a working woman who is a mother and has to manage her household. Following the many pieces of advice given to such a woman by various experts, she calculates the time necessary to satisfy all the different family needs. She concludes that these amount to 392 hours per day. As this hyperbolized account reveals, being a Soviet woman was an impossible task. Belševica herself refused to become "a machine that is just throwing clothes, food, and other things at her children," and decided to limit her household chores to four hours a day. As her experience shows, this amount of time was not sufficient; however, holding to this schedule served as a compromise between her obligations to her family and her creative work.

These reflections took place at the beginning of the 1980s, a period that now is known as the final years of Brezhnev's "stagnation." Soviet people had abandoned hopes for political change and concentrated more on their individual well-being and the material opportunities offered by Soviet-type economic planning.² It was obvious to Soviet citizens that this kind of planning could not achieve a balance between supply and demand: almost all categories of goods were in short supply, and people had to struggle and compete to be able to provide for their families. Belševica, like her colleague, the Latvian prose writer Regīna Ezera, was perfectly aware of the shortcomings of the Soviet economy and its impact on the quality of life of its citizens. However, open criticism of Soviet policies was not possible, so she could only point out some minor problems encountered by Soviet citizens.³ This approach lim-

1 On this difference, see Belševica's interview with Guntis Berelis: Belševica and Berelis, "Māsa dzeja un māsa proza."

2 On economic planning in the USSR, see Judith Pallot and Denis J. B. Shaw, *Planning in the Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

3 As Belševica's "Archival Notebook No. 2" shows, another aborted attempt to give voice to her troubled everyday experiences was her unfinished short story "Uz dārziņu pēc bērna" (To the Kindergarten to Pick Up the Kid), written approximately in 1975. In the story, the female narrator always hunts for groceries in short supply and constantly carries several plastic bags in her purse to be able to put them to use if an opportunity suddenly arises to buy some delicacy. Belševica, *Bille, Anss un citi*, 78–81. Thanks to Dr. Zita Kārkla for the reference.

ited Belševica to register the experiences of everyday life, for example, standing in long lines at the grocery stores or carrying home heavy bags of food.

Besides the interview, the everyday existence of a Soviet woman was also revealed in her poem “Jaunā liepa un es” (The New Linden and Me), written in 1983, which was left out of her collections of poems and published only in 2000. In this poem, Belševica borrowed the style and graphics from another outstanding Latvian poet, Monta Kroma (1919–1994), who was famous for her urban *vers libre* poems about everyday experiences. We see the protagonist of the poem on her way home from a grocery store with a bag in each hand, so full that her hands are worn out. Encountering a young linden tree on the side of the street becomes a moment of epiphany that reveals the enormous gap between the perceived ideal of feminine beauty (the linden tree is a common symbol of femininity in Latvian folklore) and the actual situation of women in Soviet Latvia. The reasons for the pain and sadness felt and articulated by the narrative voice of the poem stretch much further than the particular moment captured in the text. As the poem shows, Belševica wrote for an audience aware of this scene’s implications.

Inspired by folklore, the image of the linden tree in the poem becomes the image of a young woman in whom the narrative voice sees its heir. This new woman is still beautiful, physically strong, and full of ideals. As the knowing voice of the poem tells, the young girl will soon encounter all the problems and troubles already experienced by the narrator, and her youthful appeal will dissolve because of the hardship that the Soviet economy and family politics will inscribe on her body.

Belševica depicts the situation of Soviet women as irresolvable, thus echoing other voices who pointed out the impossible pressure put on female Soviet citizens. As Mary Buckley wrote in 1981, the Soviet leadership’s expectations of women were irreconcilable. They were needed as a labor resource and at the same time supposed to be mothers, preferably of three children.⁴ In this situation, writers and artists found themselves in a better situation to voice those problems than scholars: their inductive approach based on specific observations of everyday life allowed for more liberty than the deductive approach taken by most Soviet sociologists, psychologists, and other family experts whose attempts to show an accurate picture of the Soviet society were often crippled and censored by the government. Belševica’s hints at her impossible life as a Soviet writer and mother can be read as her deep rage against the totalitarian regime in which she had to spend most of her life, expressed through the small anxieties of her daily life.

4 Buckley, “Women in the Soviet Union,” 79.

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Kārlis Vērdiņš

* * *

Vizma Belševica Art Is Human or "My Neck-Breaking Life"

Anda Kubuliņa: Your prose books make me want to reread them, if only because, most often, the protagonists feel that they truly live only when they are working. And you do not deprive them of this self-reliance. But you subordinate the insight that work is a proper part of being human, which I think is one of the keys to your characters' democratic appeal, to an ethical imperative: What are the fruits of their labor for? Life? Or destruction? And only if they serve life do you add to the action the warmth of humanity, although you do not deny that, with passionate enthusiasm, subjectively remaining honest, a person can work for and contribute to death. So, once again, responsibility and the defense of life, of living, is the basis of your deeply feminine art world.

During our conversations, you also repeated several times that men live in a world of frosty abstractions, whereas a woman sees and feels the manifestations

of life everywhere, her whole activity is always directed towards its protection. These are your words: “A woman discovered radium, but a woman would never have created the atomic bomb.” [...]

You work a lot, both creating original works and translating. And, as you yourself admit, translation is often the hardest part of the job. But creative work is not your only duty. There are also family worries. How do you juggle it all?

Vizma Belševica: I don’t. And I suffer from it very much, although I try to see the comical aspects of the situation and not lose my humor. When my youngest was a baby, and I couldn’t cope, I tried to find out, from advice in magazines and from baby care, housekeeping, and “For You, Women”-type of books, how much time which activity should take and where I was doing it wrong. I had read a statistical estimate that our working woman, a mother of two or three children, devotes two to three-and-a-half hours a day to housework. The baby, naturally, comes first. I counted all the obligatory activities that a baby requires. Seventy-two hours a day are needed to do them! I repeatedly looked for an error. But there was none.

A wiser person would have realized that any further effort was pointless, but I continued. The house maintenance was not so crazy. It would take about ten hours to get a house full of books dust-free (dust is death to your child!). Food... wholesome and varied. Three times a day, freshly cooked... Don’t get it in your heads, women, that you can cook something in advance! Refrigerated food loses its nutritional value, and the wilted shop vegetables are also worthless, but three meals... no way! My men—and probably other ones too—come and go at different times. But don’t imagine, woman, that you can set the plates on an oilcloth! Here are the patterns—see how you can make charming napkins out of a worn dress! Don’t forget to decorate your table with flowers either, so find the time to run to the market or to Sakta!⁵ And factor in the unquantifiable—queues! Don’t let yourself go! A woman must be well-groomed. The most treacherous is the neck! It takes a couple of hours a day. The rest is not so terrible. Just add another five hours—and that will do. Exercise! Housework doesn’t exercise the right muscle groups. Dress smartly, with a stamp of individuality! If you haven’t crocheted that scarf or embroidered that flower on your left breast yourself, you are a vulgar creature without any discernible personality. The primordial principle of home production should be accorded the place of honor, the division of labor does not seem to exist—and perhaps it really does not. What have I left out? Oh yes! Develop connections with the right people... Stop! These activities converted into time equals three hundred and ninety-two hours a day. But we are talking about a working woman. So, another eight hours a day. And then there are the guests... holidays...

5 Editor’s note: *Sakta*, a popular place for flower vendors in Riga’s city center.

In short, I realized that books and magazines, by inertia, still demanded of one what they demanded of rich ladies who had a whole staff of servants at their disposal. I decided that, unlike the faster women who devote two to three-and-a-half hours a day to their household duties, I would devote four. That is what I do. The results are sad. We are not plagued by insects, we are not exactly starving, and we do change our clothing, but that is all I can manage. Could I devote more time than those four hours? Yes, but then I'd have to let go of any work for my brain. And then it would be at the expense of books, of seeing the world, of exchanging thoughts. But it's not just me who needs an exchange of ideas. Is it enough for children to have a mother who is a household automaton, throwing food, clothes, toys, and notebooks their way? I cannot make it all work. And I am far from the ideal woman everyone is waiting for.

Vizma Belševica

The Young Linden and I

The young linden and I (a shopping
bag in either hand, a full one, cutting
circulation), so let me get past, young
linden, – can't you see, I'm in a hurry and
it hurts and it's heavy, and the pave-
ment is black muck, and muck is driz-
zling, and wheels are splattering muck
and stench, and my feet
are already wet,

so let me past, I'm telling you, they're pull-
ing my arms and yes, I do see some
glow, some wildly round
drop at the end of each
but you make and retain from
this muck, yes, yes, I get it, no
need to lecture me about pull-
ing myself together and surface
tensions, yes, indeed,

it's impressive – a drop at the end of
each bud, and thousands of buds...
let me past, I'm telling you, you are
young, your branches must
not hurt from this ephemeral tension in
each bud, and forgive me: there's

also that lead that drives one into the
ground and there's also the sky on
your shoulders,
but you are young, your branches don't yet
hurt and a broken egg doesn't soil your
shopping bag – eh, what a poet –
it's nonsense, so heavy that
they seem to cut off my arms, these bags, let me go,
so I don't start screaming that the dissolving
mess the street sweep is shovel-
ing on your roots is salt,
and there'll be no blooming for you, lin-
den, and in vain, in vain (I would scream
vainly – what use is a screaming
poet?) those round drops in each red bud...
let me go, my children are expecting me for lunch,
and my feet are wet, and they hurt.

Translated by Ieva Lešinska-Gaber

Regīna Ezera

Betrayal

AUTHOR Regīna Ezera

TITLE *Nodevība* [Betrayal]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Karogs* [The Flag], nos. 10, 11, 12 (1982); excerpts translated from Regīna Ezera, *Nodevība* [Betrayal] (Rīga: Liesma, 1984): 14–15, 22–23, 53–54.

LANGUAGE Latvian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Regīna Ezera (née Šamreto; 1930, Riga–2002, Ķegums) was born to a working-class family. Her father was a carpenter, and her mother was a housewife. After graduating from secondary school, she studied journalism at the State University of Latvia, Faculty of History and Philology (1950–1955), while also working in the editorial office of the children's newspaper *Pionieris* (1954–1957). In 1955, she published her first literary text, a poetic sketch, under the penname Regīna Ezera, meaning Lake, inspired by her attachment to nature.

She married twice, and at the age of twenty-seven she already had her third daughter. Neither of her marriages were successful and she raised her daughters—Inese (b. 1951), Ilze (b. 1955), and Aija (b. 1957)—almost completely without any help. In 1957, when her third daughter was born, due to the lack of living space in Riga, Ezera left her job at the editorial office and moved to the countryside. She became a professional writer and engaged extensively in literary criticism, making her living by writing reviews of literary works.

In 1961, Ezera published a collection of stories, *Un ceļš vēl kūp* (Dust on the Road Still Unsettled) and the novel *Zem pavasara debesīm* (Under the Spring Skies), and became a member of the Latvian Soviet Writers' Union (Latvijas Padomju Rakstnieku Savienība), thus confirming her status as a professional writer.

From the 1960s onward, Ezera developed her creative style by focusing on psychological prose. Initially dreams, visions, intuition, and the merging of the fantastic and the real gained increasing importance in her writing, allowing her to portray human existence in an inimitable poetic style and to search for new forms of expression in the modernist and postmodernist traditions. Ezera's last novels were "expeditions to the periphery of literature, to the territory where the traditional novel dies and completely different forms of writing dominate: forewords, notes, letters, diaries, reflections, fragments, etc."¹

1 Berelis, *Latviešu literatūras vēsture*, 197.

The author's self-image, which first appeared in the long story *Nakts bez mēnesnīcas* (Moonless Night, 1971) became an important character in Ezera's prose, adding to her works' self-reflections about literature and the creative process. Writing for Ezera was an effortful daily task that required harsh discipline as it had to be combined with housework and raising children. During her most productive period, the late 1960s and 1970s, she released a book per year, and during her lifetime she published a total of 28 original books (novels, short stories, autobiographical prose, literary criticism). In her works, Ezera explored feminine and masculine worlds that meet in ironic confrontation, questions of female happiness and its limitations, as well as ecological issues and global responsibility. Writing from a closed Soviet sociocultural space, Ezera raised similar questions to those of the new feminist consciousness that had emerged in works by Western writers.

Ezera was highly valued by both readers and critics. In 1971, she received the Ordenis Goda Zīme (Order of the Honorary Sign); in 1972, the Latvian SSR State Prize; in 1974, the honorary title of Latvijas PSR Nopelniem bagātā kultūras darbiniece (Latvian SSR Cultural Official); and, in 1981, the title of Tautas Rakstniece (People's Writer of the Latvian SSR). In 1988–89, Ezera, along with other intellectuals, became politically active in the re-awakened national movement for Latvian independence. She was awarded The Order of Three Stars in 1995. Changes in the logic of the cultural field in the 1990s—especially the loss of state funding and market pressures—most dramatically affected the older generation, including Ezera, who spent her later years troubled by poverty, health problems, an alcohol addiction, and depression.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Saules atspulgs* [The Reflection of the Sun] (Riga: Liesma, 1969); *Nakts bez mēnesnīcas* [Night Without Moonlight] (Riga: Liesma, 1971); *Aka* [The Well] (Riga: Liesma, 1972); *Cilvēkam vajag suni* [A Person Needs a Dog] (Riga: Liesma, 1975); *Zemdegas* [Smoldering Fire] (Riga: Liesma, 1977); *Slazds. Zooloģiskās noveles* [Trap: Zoological Stories] (Riga: Liesma, 1979); *Varmācība* [Violence] (Riga: Liesma, 1982); *Nodevība* [Betrayal] (Riga: Liesma, 1984); *Princeses fenomens* [The Princess Phenomenon] (Riga: Liesma, 1985); *Pūķa ola* [Dragon's Egg] (Riga: Press nams, 1995).

Zita Kārkle

CONTEXT

While the Soviet state legally and politically guaranteed equality between men and women in all areas of life, and some basic ideas of feminism became part of the official discourse, public policy and the reality of people's lives differed. Women were supposed to be active in professional and public life, but at the same time they were expected to continue to submit to traditional gender roles, as they had full responsibility for the household, the well-being of the family, children, as well as men's

professional achievements and morals. Inequality and overload in household chores were clearly revealed in time budget studies on the Latvian population. Women's workload in the home space was almost equal to full-time work, and they spent 2–3 times more time doing housework than men.

The first half of the 1980s was a period of growing economic crisis, the effects of which pervaded people's daily lives. This meant a shortage of food and household goods, leading to an increase in the proportion of time needed to search for food and necessities. Consequently, lack of free time and fatigue was a daily problem for Latvian women; besides, women's domestic work, in general, was not publicly valued, but rather despised. In the 1960s and 1970s, the increase in ideologically-permitted space for discussion about women's lives was made possible by a political shift. During this period, it was acknowledged that while formal gender equality existed before the law, there were problems concerning equality in the spheres of politics, the economy, and everyday life. As a consequence, the conflicting pressures of women's "double burden" could be examined in some detail.

Not only sociologists (e.g., Aina Jurciņa, *Sieviete—personība* [Woman—personality], 1975; *Sieviete un sociālistiskais dzīvesveids* [Woman and Socialist Lifestyle], 1986), but also writers and artists started to work more actively in this direction and to voice their opinion more openly. The difficulties of combining professional work, a creative career, and motherhood are at the center of Daina Avotiņa's novel *Nenogaliniet stirnu...* (Don't Kill the Deer..., 1970) and Cecīlija Dinere's novel *Cilvēks no Šeherezādes* (The Man from Scheherazade, 1971), both portraying the subjectivity of a young female poetess struggling unsuccessfully with the "double burden."

Regīna Ezera, probably more than any other writer, explored the life of Soviet Latvian women in all its aspects. The novels *Varmācība* (Violence, 1982), and its sequel *Nodevība* (Betrayal, 1984), which form parts of an unfinished tetralogy "Pati ar savu vēju" (With Her Own Wind), are among her masterpieces, dealing with issues of women's victimization, motherhood, the "double burden," and female creativity. The novel *Nodevība* consists of diary entries by the acknowledged Author, and her letters to the young teacher and aspiring writer Irene, who is struggling with work, household labor, and her literary texts. In her letters to Irene, the Author repeatedly raises the issue of the so-called "double burden," depicting her own struggle to combine her writing, public duties, household chores, and childcare, revealing that she has not resolved the dilemmas that afflict other women. Thus, having finished a text on the "specific problems of the female writer," the Author decides to change the intended title, "Balance," to a more precise one, "Betrayal," concluding that telling a story about a woman writer means revealing the impossibility of "managing and uniting" disparate aspects of her life. The Author not only challenges the official discourse of gender equality, reminding the reader that, despite an increase in the level of education and the expansion of the field of professional work for women, the traditional gender

order has remained unchanged. She demystifies the idea of the genius who creates literary texts in undisturbed silence, pointing out that women and men produce their literary works under unequal conditions.

Writing in 1984, the literary scholar and critic Broņislavs Tabūns focused on the universal ideas in this novel, entirely ignoring its gender aspect. Despite the fact that the central character of the novel is a woman writer, in his review, published in the prominent literary magazine *Karogs*, he switches to the masculine Author, whose “self-revelation, deep understanding of his mission, and the analysis of his creativity” are convincingly revealed.² Markedly different is literary critic Astrīda Skurbe’s review, published later in the same literary magazine, which starts with the statement that she as a woman identifies with and highly appreciates how vividly Ezera reveals the difficulties that women encounter every day, doing the second shift of work, in particular motherhood, while conflicted with creative aspirations.³

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the preoccupation with declining birth rates linked the woman’s question to the demographic problem, resulting in a focus on women’s role as mothers and child-carers, thus limiting discussions about the “double burden.” In Latvian prose of the 1980s, the prevailing opinion was that a woman should work for a wage, but, unlike a man, her work should not dominate her life. A woman devoting herself to work in the same way as a man was mostly depicted as a careerist; the drama of the strong and independent woman was a complete collapse of her emotional life, her inability to form relationships, and in the end punishment with loneliness.⁴ *Nodevība*, based on Ezera’s own experience and rooted in women’s social reality and experience of gender inequality, questions conventional notions of femininity and addresses the struggle of a woman writer to balance motherhood and professional work.

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² Tabūns, “Varonis un laiks.”

³ Skurbe, “Jauns krāsu loks.”

⁴ Plēsuma, “Sieviete 80. gadu prozā.”

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Zita Kārkle

* * *

Regīna Ezera Betrayal

[...] Yesterday, when I was still at the crest of a frothy wave, I thought that I had managed to create a fairly typical modern woman, educated, independent, self-confident... and not too happy. Today I see that I have not answered the most important question: why? Perhaps because I could not decide what to consider the ideal and closest to my heart. Was it Maria Callas, ruthless to herself and others, ready to sacrifice everything and trample everyone on her way to the brilliant heights of art? The passionate Alexandra Kollontai, who had the strength to destroy her family in the name of the revolution, to leave her dearly beloved husband and give her only son to strangers to raise? Or was it the sturdy mother of multiple children who has the strength to support her family and welcome home her husband with a delicious dinner not only if he is a good welder but also if he is just a good drinker? [...]

I confess that when I was writing this particular work, I asked myself often: What do I know about a person? [...] When I study the inner contradictions of a person, don't I myself get entangled in contradictions? Doesn't Undine remain a mystery that has never been solved? I can't hang a tag on her or stash her away on any shelf. I can neither condemn her nor justify her. She is neither a role model nor someone to be feared. She has illegitimate children, but I cannot call her a whore. I cannot tell whether she hopes for something or, on the contrary, hopes for nothing and is just enjoying the scant moments accorded her. Are children for her a souvenir of happy moments or a plaster on the wounds of disappointment? In my attitude towards Undine, I split into two beings: the woman and the writer. As a woman, it's easy for me to give in to the impulse of the moment and say "yea" today and "nay" tomorrow. I cannot have seven different opinions (one for every day of the week) about the same thing. As a writer, I need to have a strong opinion and stick to it until the end. But as a writer I need not only to judge but also to forgive, not only to preach but also to pity. As a woman, I belong to the sex to which the tradition of centuries has entrusted the moral battle-axe. As a woman, I am responsible for the male in general and morality in general. As a writer, I have

neither “woman in general” nor “man in general” nor “morality in general.” As a woman writer, “morality in general” for me is a Procrustean bed where I cut the feet [...] and the heads of my women and my men. As a woman, I can understand other women condemning Undine’s life because it is immoral to love another’s husband (and even crazier to do it openly!). As a writer, I question whether it is more virtuous to sneak around or sleep with one’s own unloved husband. As a woman, love to me can be permitted or forbidden. To me as a writer, love knows neither any forbidden time nor a forbidden place and is only a gift from God or a punishment from Satan, which I have spent my whole life trying to figure out, wondering again and again where it comes from and where it goes, as life comes from a mysterious place only to vanish into some other mysterious dimension. As a woman, I consider the one who is no longer loved to be the sufferer in a marriage. As a writer, I guess that often the one who no longer loves suffers more, because something in the marriage has painfully failed her. As a woman, I think that the prosaic mishaps of romantic relationships can be reasonably resolved in the gynecological wards of hospitals. As a writer, I believe that it is always wiser to spare life than to destroy it. As a woman, I have seen such suffering in Vineta’s gaze (and even in her trembling pinkie!) that I was ready, with all my feminine being, to protect the child from it at all costs. But as a writer, I clearly understand that I can never offer anyone, under any circumstances, a life without suffering, because suffering, like breathing, is a part of existence from which only death can happily redeem us. [...]

The moment your child came into the world, a new phase began in your literary biography: you became fifty per cent more visionary towards the world, but your possibility of realizing this vision in artistic practice was reduced by at least seventy-five per cent. For more than two years you have written almost nothing... In the meantime, the spinsters have really got ahead of you, my dear. While you were washing diapers, they were reading Aristotle and Kant; while you were breastfeeding, they were travelling to Cuba and India; while you were teaching your daughter her first words, they were learning obscure foreign languages. What your future will be, I do not know. Will the child be a steppingstone for you as an artist, or will your art drown in the child? It’s so individual that I don’t dare to predict anything. Your recent stories were so vivid and extraordinary that it would be impossible to write them without talent, but it is equally impossible for talent to write nothing for two years, because for talent to write is the same as to breathe. This contradiction, I must admit, made it very difficult for me when I wanted to emphasize the right things in the opus. “Maybe you are not a talent, but an illusion of a talent?” I asked myself. “But maybe the mistake is in my misconception of talent?” I said to myself. If ever I have been afraid of being wrong, it is now, for I am afraid of fatally misleading you and leading you away from the path that I think you have chosen—to be a happy mother and not to share that happiness

with anyone or anything. Whether that will be enough for you for the rest of your life, I do not know. Whether the day of agonizing regret will not come, I do not know either. Because the child is yours and not only yours—it is also a part of society. And in the same way, your literary gifts are not only your personal property—they are also the wealth of the whole of society, which imposes obligations on you. Well, here I go, lecturing again... [...]

Countless times I have wished to sacrifice everything I possess as a writer for the happiness of being only a wife and only a mother. I would love my husband and my children. Their lives would fulfill mine. I would be a vessel for their sorrow and a mirror of their joy. And at night I would be awakened only by his snoring and their sighs, and strangers who have never lived would not break through the fragile wall of sleep into my brain, with their lamentations and their cries, would not thrust themselves into me, destroying my peace and making me their slave. But this seductive serenity has always been unattainable for me, because as often and as fervently I have longed to sacrifice everything, everything that belongs to me as a woman, and become a prose nun, deprived of all the joys of life, whose bliss is harmony with herself, a few sheets of white paper, a sharpened pencil, and some bread. As a woman, I have longed for one day off a month to catch my breath. As a writer, I have met work without respite. As a writer, I have longed to look down into the well of life, to see into the well of life to the bottom, to drink the beer of life to the bitter dregs—without fear even of death. As a woman, I have tried to guard my cherished delusions like the flame of a match—fearing even the occasional draft. I have not been able to fulfil any of these wishes. All my life I have oscillated between extremes, groping from emptiness to fulfilment, from satisfaction to disappointment, from despair to triumph, and from inebriation to hang-over. It has been too hard for me to give up this pleasure. Any clear-cut answer here would be untrue.

Translated by Ieva Lešinska-Gaber



Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence

Blaženka Despot

Feminist Marxism and Violence against Women

AUTHOR Blaženka Despot

TITLE *Žensko pitanje i socijalističke samoupravljanje* [The Woman Question and Socialist Self-Management]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Zagreb: Centar za kulturnu djelatnost, 1987, translated excerpts: 122–123, 128–129, 133–134.

LANGUAGE Croatian / Serbo-Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Blaženka Despot (née Lovrić; 1930, Zagreb–2001, Zagreb) was born into a solidly middle-class family in the interwar period.¹ Her mother, Melanija Lovrić, was a piano teacher, her father, Dr. Stjepan Lovrić, was a lawyer. Blaženka married a doctor, Pavle Gugić, when she was very young, at the age of 18, and soon after, her daughter Iris was born. Iris had a chronic illness from early on, and Blaženka took care of her mostly on her own, as she divorced Gugić after five years. She continued her studies at the University of Zagreb, graduating in 1954 with a degree in philosophy. She became a high school teacher and worked as such for ten years. She married her colleague Ivo Mimica, but the marriage only lasted for a short while.

It was in the 1960s when she became the philosopher we know as Blaženka Despot. This was the time when she started publishing in the Yugoslav Marxist humanist journal, *Praxis*, edited by the philosophical group of the same name. In 1964, she became a lecturer at the University of Zagreb, where she taught sociology and social theory. The same year, she married the Praxis philosopher, Branko Despot. Though this marriage also only lasted for five years, Blaženka kept the name, and all her publications after their marriage were under the name Despot. In 1977, she entered into a new relationship with Zoran Žugić, a professor at the Faculty of Kinesiology, whom she married in 1990 and lived with until the end of her life.

Despot's doctoral dissertation, written in the 1960s and defended at the University of Ljubljana under the title "Humanitet tehničkog društva" (The Humanity of a Technical Society), marked out many of her intellectual engagements. In this work, she was invested in Hegelian and Marxist thought, which she continued to expand on in her work in the 1970s. Her second book, *Plädoyer za dokolicu* (A Plea for Leisure, 1976), focused on the importance of free time and leisure within a Marxist framework.

1 Personal details about Despot's life are found in the biography written by her friend and fellow philosopher, Gordana Bosanac, "Blaženka Despot."

Whilst Despot was never fully integrated into the Praxis Group, she was deeply invested in critical Marxism. In 1971–72, she spent a year in Frankfurt am Main, at the Institute for Social Research / Institut für Sozialforschung, better known as the Frankfurt School. Later, she was also guest scholar at the Universities of Konstanz and Bamberg. In 1974, she became associate professor at the Veterinary Faculty in Zagreb, “teaching sociology, political economy, introductions to Marxist philosophy and the social sciences, as well as the theory and practice of self-management.”² She founded and led the Institute for Social Research at the Veterinary Faculty, and in 1989 she joined the Institute for Social Research at the University of Zagreb.

Despot’s work has, from early on, reflected on the complicated relationship of women and socialism. Her investigations got new wind when the new Yugoslav feminist groups in the mid-1970s began to form. Women mostly of the younger generation, such as Rada Iveković, Lydia Sklevicky, and Žarana Papić were investigating the possibilities of reading feminism “from the West” and creating a local version of feminism, which critiqued and interpreted the Yugoslav lived reality of socialism for women. Despot joined the group *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society), founded in Zagreb in 1979 as part of the Croatian Sociological Society, and supported her younger colleagues in their endeavors, whilst she was also inspired by the discussions. Her probably most important book, *The Women’s Question and Socialist Self-Management* from 1987 was infused with ideas from her involvement with the feminist group. She followed up on some of the ideas in her 1989 book, *Emancipation and the New Social Movements*. She retired from the University of Zagreb in 1993 after suffering permanent injury to her vocal cords in a car accident. Remarkably, her last two books were written already after the accident. She published her last book in 1995, with the title *New Age and Modernity*. Her friend and fellow feminist philosopher, Gordana Bosanac (1936–2019) remembers her as a woman “endowed with a brilliant intelligence and great physical beauty, as well as an unpretentious spontaneity,”³ who made some of the most important contributions to Marxist feminist philosophy in East Central Europe.

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2 Bosanac, “Blaženka Despot,” 115.

3 Bosanac, “Blaženka Despot,” 117.

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Zsófia Lóránd

CONTEXT

Two of the most impressive intellectual circles in socialist Yugoslavia, Praxis and new Yugoslav feminism (*neofeminizam*, also known as the *Žena i društvo* / Woman and Society group), could both claim Blaženka Despot as one of their members. Still, Despot remained a thinker of her own, never actually lining up behind one or the other.⁴ She was critical of Praxis, and she developed her own very specific idea of what a Marxist feminism should look like. Praxis was always heavily male-dominated, and so was the entire Marxist humanist scene,⁵ and Despot could develop her ideas more freely outside the constraints of the group. She was one of several women around the group, alongside with Nadežda Čaćinović and Zagorka Golubović, among others.⁶ Nevertheless, she published in the journal *Praxis*, participated in debates and in the famous Korčula summer school, a venue where critical Marxists from all over the world met. Her interest in a re-reading of Marx through Hegel, and primarily her interest in human freedom, time, and nature connected her to Praxis. At the same time, as Despot was working on her critique of not only the “dogmatic,” but also revisionist Marxist approaches to the women’s question, the *Žena i društvo* group was reading and discussing feminist ideas from Luce Irigaray through Juliet Mitchell to the writings of the New York radical feminist Redstockings. Drawing, but not intellectually dependent on these ideas, Despot argued for the need of a “feminized” form of Marxism, or Marxist feminism.⁷

Together with other new Yugoslav feminists, Despot suggested to “reopen the woman question” in order to achieve real societal change. She found what she referred to as “bourgeois feminism” just as crucial as the aims and methods of the class struggle

4 About Praxis in English, see Satterwhite, *Varieties of Marxist Humanism*. About Yugoslav feminism, Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, and entries in this book.

5 Blagojević, “The Praxis Journal and Women Intellectuals”; Mervart, “Dissatisfied Breadwinners”; Čakardić, “*Praxis* škola i feminizam: marksistički humanizam i nevolje s rodom”.

6 Blagojević, “The Praxis Journal and Women Intellectuals.” See some of these women’s short biographies (Branka Brujić, Marija Brida, Ljerka Šifler-Premec) in Croatian, in Skuhala Karasman, “Hrvatske filozofkinje”, 20–26.

7 Blaženka Despot, “Feminizirani marksizam” [Feminized Marxism], interview by Dragan Jovanović, *NIN* 35, no. 1723, 8 January 1984, 17–18.

for this change. In her philosophy, concepts such as *nature* and *time* needed to be reinterpreted, as the way these were treated in Hegel and Marx was insufficient from the perspective of women's emancipation. Despot identifies the concept of the "working mother" as the main hindrance in the existing approach to the 'woman question'. Both theory and practice, argued Despot, center around her figure, replacing the concept of woman with one that prioritizes her reproductive role (i.e., nature) over her productive one (societal, productive aspects). In the dialectic of nature and society, if nature is seen as the eternal and never-changing and is "attributed a secondary significance in society's value system, then the inference to be drawn is that all that is biological, natural, unhistorical, female – is regarded as being of a lower value," argues Despot in her essay "Women and Self-Management" from 1981.⁸ This adherence to nature she considered highly dangerous, "to confine history to historical beings who are, to a lesser extent conditioned by nature, is an absolute-scientific premise (Hegel) for *racism*." (149) Both Despot and Gordana Bosanac used the terms *male racism* or *sex-based racism* to describe patriarchy and the women's oppression in it.

When analyzing the concept of time and work based on Marx, Despot again argues for the insufficiency of women's emancipation in socialist Yugoslavia. Women's access to work and time is defined by the ideal of the working mother, relying on a static approach to nature. Self-management carried the promise of a revised attitude to nature, which would change the conditions of "the division of labor, the state and authoritarian relations, as a whole" (150). Yet, as the promise was betrayed, women remained on the margins of politics, of decision making, and struggled with the lack of time, be that for political activism or free time. Already in the early 1980s, as in the article from 1981, Despot connects this type of exclusion and oppression of women to the phenomenon of violence against women. She is concise and brave, writing: "Self-managers beat their wives, too" and arguing that "the old authoritarian relations within the family and society" mainly affect women, making them vulnerable to violence (150).

It is this argument that Despot follows up on in her book *The Women's Question and Socialist Self-Management*, from where the excerpt below is translated. She claims that if women's emancipation is subsumed under and is reduced to the class question, violence, "the violation of the body," will be ignored. However, she argues, we only need to go back to Hegel to find that physical violence is considered worse than any attack on private property, and the lack of violence Hegel handles as a prerequisite of freedom (prevention from slavery).⁹ To Gordana Bosanac, this argument represents

8 Despot, "Women and Self-Management." (Further references are in the text.) I repeat some of my arguments in my introduction to the essay here: Lóránd, "Introduction and Commentary."

9 Blaženka Despot, *Izabrana djela Blaženke Despot* [The Collected Work of Blaženka Despot], ed. Gordana Bosanac (Zagreb: Institut za društvena istraživanja – Ženska infoteka, 2004), 128. See also Bosanac, "Mjesto i značenje Blaženke Despot u suvremenoj hrvatskoj filozofiji," 364.

such a move in Despot's entire career, that it was even the thought which ultimately differentiates her from the thinkers of Praxis.¹⁰ Clearly inspired by the feminist struggle against violence against women, Despot provides a detailed list of the most prevalent forms: beating, rape, control of their fertility, verbal abuse, and vulgar, violent utterances about the female body and sex (as in the source text below).

Around the time when Despot published *The Woman Question and Socialist Self-Management*, Yugoslav feminist activists established the first SOS helplines for women and children victims of domestic violence. The first SOS Helpline was established in Zagreb in 1988, with fifty volunteers and operational 24 hours every day. It was followed by one in Ljubljana in 1989 and one in Belgrade in 1990, though the preparations had already begun in 1985.¹¹ In Zagreb, the SOS Helpline activists set up a shelter with three beds, the first in the region.¹² The women on the helplines across the cities were exchanging ideas and co-creating a training program. Gordana Cerjan-Letica, a sociologist in Zagreb, published a review article about violence against women in the journal *Žena*;¹³ other women brought back manuals from the US and other countries with existing anti-violence helplines, and Lepa Mladenović combined her work on anti-psychiatry with activism for the helplines.

These helplines and the shelter were not just counter-institutions, but also new terrains of knowledge-production. This knowledge was simultaneously co-developed by the women and children calling the helplines as well as by the volunteers working on them. The experiences of victims and survivors of gender-based violence, evaluations of this violence, and critiques of the possibilities for response informed subsequent publications.¹⁴ Women's magazines, such as *Bazar* (published in Serbia) and *Svijet* (published in Croatia), but also Maja Miles's work in the magazine *Start* (see the intros to Slavenka Drakulić, Vesna Kesić, and Jasenka Kodrnja in this volume), directed public attention to the issue. When Vesna Mimica, a ballet dancer from Zagreb, took the courage to discuss her own story about partnership violence in the press, she changed the public stereotypes about victims of gender-based violence. The lawyer and expert on criminology, Vesna Nikolić Ristanović published her book *Women as Crime Victims* in 1989, with special attention to rape and best practices

10 Bosanac, "Mjesto i značenje Blaženke Despot u suvremenoj hrvatskoj filozofiji," 364.

11 Vesna Mimica, "Kako smo u Zagrebu počele da se organiziramo protiv nasilja nad ženama. Povodom 20 godina rada skloništa AŽKZ-a – 2011" [How We Started to Organize against Violence against Women in Zagreb: On the Occasion of 20 Years of Work of the AŽKZ-2011]. Facebook note, 2011, www.facebook.com/autonomna/posts/7301718203279340.

12 Dražena Peranić and Merima Hamulić, "Ko to lomi adamovo rebro" [The One Who Breaks Adam's Rib], *Oslobođenje*, 6 November 1988 (Presarijum SKC).

13 Gordana Cerjan-Letica, "Nasilje prema ženama u obitelji" [Violence against Women in the Family], *Žena* 46, no. 6 (1988): 28–38.

14 See Lóránd, "Feminism and Violence against Women in Yugoslavia."

in legislation abroad.¹⁵ Blaženka Despot's feminist intervention into the history of Marxist thought in Yugoslavia was, at the same time, a crucial step for establishing a philosophical discourse on violence against women.

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Zsófia Lóránd

* * *

Blaženka Despot

Feminist Marxism and Violence against Women

[...] (T)he possibility of a theoretical grounding of Marxist feminism is of exceptional importance also because of the very distinction between real socialism, statist socialism and self-management. The distinction of these three ideas is theoretically grounded in the understanding of the difference between dogmatic Marxism and open Marxism. The distinction between dogmatic and open Marxism is the distinction in the very understanding of the meaning of emancipation.

[...]

The association of producers with the aim of rationally organizing its exchange with nature, and then also with the women's nature, that is, with the relationship in the family and the relation between the sexes, is significantly different in state socialism and in self-management. Reflecting on the woman question from the position of Marxist feminism belongs to one of the controversies of Marxism. In Yugoslavia, Predrag Vranicki was, if not the first, then among the first, who signaled this controversy.¹⁶

From the perspective of open Marxism, Marxist thought must be critical of itself. First, it must be critical of the controversy concerning the social position of women in real-socialism and in socialist self-management.

Second, for the theoretical development of open Marxism, the challenge of the alternative movements that are coming into being is essential. Especially important is the feminist movement, which is a prerequisite for the development of a robust dialogue between the labor movement and new social movements, feminist movements especially. This is all the more important with the strengthening of conservative politics and ideology in the West, to which not even the working

16 Predrag Vranicki, *O nekim kontraverzama u marksizmu* [On Some Controversies in Marxism] (Rijeka: Marksistički centar, 1979).

class of the West is immune. Socialist societies are not immune to conservative, anti-feminist ideas either.

Third, the foundation of Marxist feminism is necessary for the awareness and emancipation of that half of humanity which is called women. Hitherto, the relationship between Marxism and feminism was that of an “unhappy marriage,” as socialist feminist Heidi Hartman said.¹⁷ I would add that this relationship was mostly that of an extramarital union, where the unhappiness was not because it was “extramarital,” but because the “extramarital” in a patriarchal society is seen as an accidental union or a “wild marriage.”

[...]

When Marxism reduces the woman question to a class question, and the problem of women's emancipation to the problem of emancipation from private property, it fails to see the following: a) that for Hegel, jeopardizing my body is a greater threat to my freedom than jeopardizing private property and b) that women, who have historically progressed in their consciousness of freedom, recognize their body as an object of their freedom. Thus, women understand any bodily harm done to them through beating, rape, through the control of their fertility, through verbal offenses against their female body or sex as an attack to their, theoretically already achieved, freedom. Also, relatively independent of these offences, women even see it [the issue of physical violence] as more important than the encroachment of the objectivization of freedom in property. It should also be emphasized that the injury of the body, which to Hegel is worse than the damage to private property, is already a progress in the consciousness of freedom that abolishes slavery.

The deafness of Marxism to these crimes against freedom expressed as the attack on the body, as well as the neglect of these problems as if they belonged to the female obsession with sexuality, to the triviality of talking about cutting the clitoris, orgasm, abortion, etc. brings about the situation in which one part of the feminist movement, the movement for the emancipation of women, negates the foundation of women's emancipation in Marxism as objectivist and economist.¹⁸ As a result, the paths of liberation are sought in the understanding of the psychological, patriarchal, ideological, traditional, male, sexist orientation of society.

17 Editor's note: Heidi Hartman is an American feminist economist, who published her influential essay “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union” in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1981), 1–42.

18 Translator's note: Despot refers to the existing criticism of Marxism which argued that as a social theory, Marxism reduced all social phenomena to an economic basis. Thus, Marxism was criticized for being based purely on economic relations (economism), which implied also a certain type of objectivism that reduced the needs of a subject to an objective and natural necessity of production of a given historical period.

Agreeing with Marxism in pointing out Hegel's bourgeois conception of private property as a mediation of the will free in itself and for itself, Marxist feminism leaves the theoretical analyses and even the achievement of women's self-consciousness as part of liberation which emphasizes sexuality and the differences in the violence of male sex towards female sex as relatively independent from the bourgeois way of the production of life.

Historical progress in the consciousness concerning women's freedom is gradual because this consciousness also remained relatively ahistorical in the sanctity of the family. "In this social relation, morality consists in the members behaving towards each other not as individuals possessing an independent will, not as persons. The family therefore is excluded from that process of development in which history takes its rise."¹⁹

The remnants of archaism concerning the relation towards women are found partly in the family, which is excluded from history and therefore is not the subject of philosophy. Hegel knows when this exemption of the family from the process of development ends "...when this self-involved spiritual Unity steps beyond this circle of feeling and natural love, and first attains the consciousness of personality, we have that dark, dull center of indifference, in which neither Nature nor Spirit is open and transparent, and for which Nature and Spirit can become open and transparent only by means of a further process – a very lengthened culture of that Will at length become self-conscious."²⁰ However, since Hegel brings the self-conscious will into a relationship with the state, for Marxist feminism the object of critique is the difference in the mediation between woman and man in the family, in order to move from the subjective spirit of the family to the objective spirit of the state. [...]

Flow: private property – family – civil society, as freedom in itself and for itself of the free will that wills itself, is the thought of both the ruling class and the ruling sex. This is the notion of the freedom of private property and the male notion of domination over woman.

[...] Established Marxism has lost the revolutionary character of Hegel's dialectical-speculative method of the philosophy of freedom.²¹

19 Editor's note: Despot quotes the Serbo-Croatian translation of Hegel's *The Philosophy of History* (G. W. F. Hegel, *Istorija filozofije*. Translated by Nikola Popović. Belgrade: Kultura, 1970). Here, we rely on this English language translation: G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree (Batoche Books: Kitchener, 2001), 75. Punctuation and British/American spelling have been modified for consistency with the rest of the text.

20 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 75.

21 Translator's note: Despot refers to the idea that the 'official' Marxism became theoretically ossified and interpreted in terms of a list of prescriptions on how to organize a socialist society. Hence, it had lost an element of freedom essential for its further development. Hegel's speculative dialectics allow for the development of Marxism because when the contradictions between theory and praxis arise, it is not that the theory is disproved or negated, but that it develops further. In the Yugoslav context, one finds the references

Marxist feminism as a theoretical field of the interwoven conceptualization of feminism and Marxism, in its reflections and research, is an assumption of emancipation of both women and men. As a theory, it does not understand sexual difference: woman-man as understood by mere common sense, which understands otherness as intolerable for each other. Marxist feminism, as we understand it here, is the theoretical articulation of women's self-consciousness, which questions the ideas of both the ruling classes and ruling sex about the ways of the productions of life which up to now was considered a given. The de-ideologization of the "sanctity of marriage"²² includes the authoritarian principle of the organization of the family, i.e., the division of labor, technology, the productive forces of labor and the state. Therefore, the feminist position of the 1960s, though not yet sufficiently thought through, is correct in its essence: *the personal is political*.

Grounding Marxist feminism as the interwoven conceptualization between Marxist and feminist thought enables an understanding of the woman question that is different from the one envisioned in real socialism. The difference in the understanding of emancipation by these two ways of the production of life [Marxism and feminism] gets its own concreteness in the understanding of the critique and the analyses of patriarchy as something relatively autochthonous and independent from capitalism, which therefore cannot be resolved through the abolishment of private property. Legal and economic equality of women does not abolish patriarchy, which from its own position and with its authority in the division of labor and morality stays as a mediator between civil society and the political state. Grounding itself in open Marxism and in Marxist feminism, socialist self-management succeeds in men and women developing self-consciousness and leads to their fundamental human emancipation. Patriarchy is incompatible with the idea of socialist self-management, the same way bureaucracy is. Through their silenced or at least non-conscious alliance, both patriarchy and bureaucracy enable a "firm hand": the former in the family, the latter in the state.

Denouncing feminism as bourgeois, in particular by referring to bourgeois feminists, who in the first phase of emancipation fought only for the right to vote and not for socialism, presupposes that the representatives of the bourgeois class, through their fight for the right to vote, won this right in the name of the entire *sex*, *female sex*, including female workers. This is a crucial civilizational achievement insofar as it is in the field of rights, politics, and the state that the genuine class struggle takes place today.

to 'open' Marxism (for example by Praxis philosophers) and to the idea that Marxism is a thought of a revolution and a 'living' theory.

22 Editor's note: This is what Marxist feminism strives to do based on the reading of Hegel's work on civil society.

The non-recognition of feminism in socialist countries aims to challenge the claim that woman is not at the level of class emancipation that rightly belongs to her. However, just as the abolishment of private property and the legal socialization of labor still does not imply a genuine socialization of labor. Similarly, the legal equality of women, even in the economic sphere, does not presuppose their genuine equality. The continuous and violent circumstances that denounce the rights of women even in their economic equality, for example contestations whether they are able to work as men if they wish to do so, or whether they are even reliable enough to have a full position at work entrusted to them, phenomenologically points out that these atrocities are possible and that they cannot be solved through normative-regulative procedures, since their cause is not in that sphere.

Pointing out patriarchy as the real hindrance to the emancipation of women, but also of an entire class in self-management, is possible only from the perspective of the theory of Marxist feminism. Therefore, the continuous analyses of the patriarchal forms in social relations, in culture, in morality, in fact point to the hindrances in the concretization of those postulations, which were set as a task by the socialist self-management in the self-consciousness of the working class.

Women will be more involved in the institutional forms of self-management only when society is liberated from its patriarchal dominance.

Translated by Una Blagojević

Fraunteestube Weimar

our critique of the legal concept of rape

AUTHOR Weimarer Fraunteestube [Weimar Women's Tea Parlour]

TITLE "was wir an der juristischen auffassung von vergewaltigung kritisieren" [our critique of the legal concept of rape]¹

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Internal group document. Circulated privately. Robert Havemann Archive, GZ-PS 04.

LANGUAGE German

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The **Weimarer Fraunteestube** (Weimar Women's Tea Parlour, formed 1983–dissolved?) was one of the many non-state women's groups formed in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the 1980s which operated under the umbrella of the Protestant Church. The group emerged in 1983 after two women from Weimar attended the second annual Friedenswerkstatt (Peace Workshop) in Berlin. This workshop was one of the most important events on the calendar of the growing peace movement in East Germany. Inspired by the workshop, the two women returned home and formed a local chapter of Frauen für den Frieden (Women for Peace). By 1984, they had obtained access to meeting rooms in the Johanneskirche and renamed themselves the Frauengruppe der Johanneskirche (Women's Group at the Johannes Church). During this time, the group was small—it never had more than 10 members—but active. They took part in all regional women's meetings and the broader events of the non-state women's movement throughout the 1980s. The group is most well-known for their work examining the position of women under East German socialism, in particular the issue of sexual violence. In November 1986, and in January and July 1987, the group held meetings at the home of Berlin activist, and Frauen für den Frieden founder, Ulrike Poppe (b. Rostock, 1953) to discuss the topic of rape. At the event in July 1987, an estimated 30 to 40 women were in attendance. Increasingly, the group specialized in the study of sexual violence, holding lectures and discussions on rape and violence against women at women's groups across the GDR. It was also at this time that the group started meeting at the Herderkirche in Weimar and began to use the name Fraunteestube in der Herderkirche (Women's Tea Parlour at the Herder Church), or simply Fraunteestube (Women's Tea Parlour).

¹ Editor's note: No capitalization is used in the title of the original document.

The focus on sexual and gender-based violence was spearheaded by two of the group's founding members, Christiane Dietrich (Berlin, 1958) and Petra Streit (Grimma, 1952). While Streit had initially trained as a cattle breeder, she worked various jobs, including in factories and as an ice cream seller, and had been active within women's groups in Berlin (including *Frauen für den Frieden*) before moving to Weimar in the 1980s. Dietrich, meanwhile, studied pedagogy and theology in Berlin and Potsdam before she too moved to Weimar in the 1980s. For Streit, the interest in violence grew out of a desire to know more about the position of women in East Germany. As Streit made clear in one *Tea Parlour* document circulated within the church, "I have gone through a huge number of women's books and am better informed about the situation of women in western Europe, America, and Asia than I am about the position of women in the GDR."² Out of this attention to violence against women, the group developed a grassroots survey on women's experiences of rape, and other forms of gender-based violence. The one-page questionnaire asked respondents (anonymously) if they had been raped or experienced an attempted rape, and if so what were the circumstances of the attack. It then followed with questions about other forms of sexual harassment, whether they had been abused as children and whether they experienced any psychological problems because of these experiences. These surveys were circulated at the discussions and lectures given by the group across the GDR between 1987 and 1989, with the request that participants also share them with other women after the event. A total of 153 completed surveys were returned to the *Frauentestube* and the results were tabulated in 1992 as part of a research project on improving police responses to violence against women.

Alongside this survey and the parallel lectures, the group also wrote internal papers on improving the position of rape victims and on reforming the law of rape. The trajectory of the group following the political developments of 1989/90 is harder to trace, but they may have changed their name to *Xanthippe* in 1989. Although this was a very busy time for women's activism, the speed of reunification processes, alongside the existential issues facing East German women (unemployment, loss of the social security net, loss of reproductive rights) led to much upheaval and transition in these activists' lives. This has made their histories difficult to follow. Still, both Streit and Dietrich broadened their work during this period. Streit was one of the founding members of the *Unabhängiger Frauenverband* (Independent Women's Association), one of the largest women's political organizations during the transition to democracy and was a key member of the *Frauenzentrum Weimar* (Weimar Women's Centre) established in 1990. Dietrich, meanwhile, was the first Equal Opportunities Commissioner for Weimar in 1990/91.

2 Petra Streit, "Projekt – Wie leben Frauen in der DDR," in *Frauengruppen in der DDR. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Samirah Kenawi (Berlin: GrauZone, 1995), 300.

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Jane Freeland

CONTEXT

During the 1980s, the dissident movement in East Germany grew. This was enabled by the March 6, 1978, agreement between the ruling Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED, Socialist Unity Party) and representatives of the Protestant Church of East Germany that ensured greater freedom and autonomy for the church under socialism. From this point on, the Protestant Church developed as a crucial meeting space for people and groups who held critical attitudes towards the SED, most prominently the emerging peace movement, but also groups dedicated to environmentalism, Christian theological issues, and lesbian and gay rights.

Women also seized upon this opportunity to meet autonomously and discuss their lives under socialism in relative freedom. Since 1949, women's political organization in the GDR was centered in official socialist bodies, like the Demokratische Frauenbund Deutschlands (DFD, the Democratic Women's League of Germany) and public discussions of women's issues were guided by the official SED narrative of equality between men and women under socialism. Newspapers, magazines, and even films presented women as ideal socialist heroines, learning, growing, working, and reproducing for socialism. This slowly began to change in the late 1960s and 1970s, as films, visual art, and creative writing increasingly depicted a more differentiated—and less ideal—socialist woman. In particular, women writers in East Germany used their work to reflect critically on socialist womanhood. Writers like Christa Wolf,³ Irmtraud Morgner,⁴ Brigitte

3 Christa Wolf (Landsberg an der Warthe, 1929–Berlin, 2011) was one of the most prominent and well-known women writers and a leading figure in literary feminism in the GDR. Her major works include *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (Quest for Christa T., 1968); *Kindheitsmuster* (Patterns of Childhood, 1976); and *Kassandra* (Cassandra, 1983).

4 Another leading figure of literary feminism in the GDR, Irmtraud Morgner's (Chemnitz, 1933–Berlin, 1990) works drew from magical realism, poetry, and fantasy. *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz*

Reimann,⁵ and Gerti Tetzner⁶ all touched upon issues of desire, self-fulfillment and -realization, and the failure of the SED's system to meet their needs.⁷

Drawing on these broader discussions of women's issues, and now able to meet under the auspices of the Protestant Church, many non-state women's groups emerged in the GDR throughout the 1980s. These groups varied in size, and they often had transient memberships, with some women involved in several different groups at any one time. There were also often overlaps between women's organizing and other dissident groups. For example, the largest non-state women's group—Frauen für den Frieden (Women for Peace)—was also part of the peace movement, and while centered on women's experiences and lives it rejected the label “feminist,” understanding itself to have a broader mission of ensuring peace. There were also many women's groups focused on sexuality and dedicated to the rights of lesbians.

It was out of this milieu that the Frauentestube (Women's Tea Parlour) emerged in Weimar. Although initially formed as a Weimar branch of Frauen für den Frieden, the group soon shifted their focus to violence against women in the GDR. While the SED politicized socialist equality between men and women, this did not result in a critical approach to gender-based violence. Public discussions of sexual and domestic violence were very limited in East Germany, and often put in the service of constructing socialism. Violence against women, according to official socialist media, was a Western phenomenon resulting from the fundamental inequality of men and women under capitalism. In this context, discussions of violence against women in the GDR framed the male perpetrators as either mentally ill, “asocial” outsiders, or as having failed socialist consciousnesses.

For this reason, the work of the Frauentestube is particularly important. They were one of the few sites of critical engagement with violence against women in the GDR and spearheaded this subject in the emerging East German women's movement. The group drew from diverse sources in their approach to gender, from works on women in Europe, Asia, and Africa, as well as East German women's literature. But what made the group's feminism unique was their grassroots survey work with women in the GDR. Rather than draw from established definitions of rape, sexual assault and harassment, the survey foregrounded women's own experiences to define sexual violence. The survey is also one of the only studies on this subject conducted

nach *Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura* (The Life and Adventures of Trobadora Beatrice as Chronicled by Her Minstrel Laura, 1974) is one of her most important feminist works.

5 Brigitte Reimann (Burg bei Magdeburg, 1933–Berlin, 1973) was a writer known for her engagement with feminist themes, especially in her posthumous novel *Fransizka Linkerhand* (1974).

6 Gerti Tetzner (Wiegleben, 1936) is a less well-known author, but whose work *Karen W.* (1974) is one of the earliest reflections of women's subjectivity in the GDR.

7 Nancy Lukens and Dorothy Rosenberg, *Daughters of Eve. Women's Writing from the German Democratic Republic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993). On film see: Andrea Rinke, *Images of Women in East German Cinema, 1972-1982: Socialist Models, Private Dreamers and Rebels* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).

under socialist rule, as researchers connected with universities and institutes in East Germany failed to study the topic for fear of its political consequences.⁸ Indeed, by examining violence against women and collecting evidence of women's experiences, the Frauentestube were actively challenging the SED's claims that gender-based violence was alien to socialism. Instead, their work revealed how commonplace sexual violence, harassment, and domestic abuse were in the GDR.

Alongside the survey, the group also presented lectures on the topic of rape to women's groups across East Germany between 1987 and 1989. The Frauentestube was very well connected within the women's movement in the GDR. They developed their work on violence against women with Ulrike Poppe from Frauen für den Frieden and co-organized regional women's events hosted by the Protestant Church with other women's groups from the area. These connections enabled them to take their lectures to different women's groups across the GDR.

These lectures presented a feminist critique of responses to rape in East Germany; it challenged the myth of "stranger rape"; contested the limited way in which the law protected women and men from rape; detailed how protections for victims could be improved; and emphasized that rape was a tool of patriarchal oppression. The text of the speech was a constant work-in-progress as the handwritten notes dotted throughout the lecture materials held in the GrauZone collection at the Robert Havemann Archive reveal. The following extract—"our critique of the legal concept of rape"—is taken from this lecture.

The extract describes the Frauentestube's main criticisms of the East German rape law. At this time, Paragraph 121 of the East German Criminal Code limited rape to extra-marital, vaginal intercourse perpetrated either violently or under threat of lethal violence.⁹ With such a narrow definition, as the extract makes clear, the law failed to protect women (and men) from rape.

In making these critiques, the extract offers a unique insight into the way the Frauentestube drew from feminist politics in their discussion of the law. For example, in their analysis of the marital rape exemption, the group not only contested the claim that the law protects the "sexual self-determination" of women, but also argued that by excluding marital rape the law reflected the long-standing patriarchal conceptualization of rape as an injury to a man's property rights over women. They also reflected on the gendered aspects of the law: comparing theft to rape, the group highlighted how the expectation of resistance undermined the very concept of consent and failed to consider the ways in which women are socialized to be passive.

8 Schröttle, *Politik und Gewalt im Geschlechterverhältnis*.

9 See §121, Strafgesetzbuch der DDR vom 12. Januar 1968 (Criminal Code of the GDR, January 12, 1968), <https://www.verfassungen.de/ddr/strafgesetzbuch68.htm>.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and in the years after German reunification, the work of the Weimar Frauentestube was largely forgotten. However, in 2018, thanks in part to the mass media attention given to sexual violence arising out of the #MeToo movement, the work of the group found a new audience. At that time, the German television show *Zeitreise* (Time Travel) discussed the ground-breaking work of the Frauentestube to tackle violence against women in the GDR.¹⁰

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Jane Freeland

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¹⁰ Sabine Cygan, "Sexismus und sexuelle Gewalt in der DDR. #MeToo in der DDR: Aufbruch zum Tabuthema," *Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk*, March 5, 2021, <https://www.mdr.de/geschichte/ddr/alltag/familie/sexismus-sexuelle-gewalt-metoo-100.html>.

Fraudenteestube Weimar our critique of the legal concept of rape

The commentary on the Criminal Code states:

Rape and forcible compulsion to perform sexual acts constitute a particularly serious disregard for the personhood of an individual and seriously affect the interests of society and its citizens. Sexual offenses always violate the respect and dignity of the opposite sex and the freedom of sexual self-determination.

§121 serves to protect women's dignity and sexual freedom of choice. Every female person is protected regardless of age.

How can *every* woman's sexual choice be protected if marital rape is exempted? Either the woman renounces her right to sexual self-determination in relation to her husband by entering the marriage, which no one claims, or the purpose of this punishment is indeed not the woman's right to sexual self-determination. The current negation of marital rape is in the tradition of viewing rape as a violation of male property rights over women. How can a man take possession of something that is already legally his?

Restricting the crime of rape to vaginal intercourse indicates that the original purpose was to prevent unwanted pregnancy and to protect the virginity of unmarried women.

But if sexual self-determination were truly paramount, the legislature would not have retained the distinction between rape and sexual assault.

How can the legislature think that, for example, oral or anal intercourse is less severe for the victim than vaginal rape?

In the event of a robbery, no one would think that we gave away our money voluntarily.

By contrast, in the case of rape, we are expected to resist just to be able to prove that it was rape at all and that we did not consent to sexual intercourse.

The prerequisite of resistance ignores the psychological constitution of the victim and the social environment that instills fear and passivity in women.

It is a degrading notion that a woman can become sexually aroused against her will by violent sexual contact and then desire intercourse.

In the explanations of other paragraphs dealing with crimes against the person, the threat is clearly defined as a means to force the victim to behave in a certain way (§130, coercion) or, rather, forcing them to acquiesce to the crime (§126, robbery). But §121 says: “The threat must aim to influence the woman’s *will*.” So a woman changes her will if, for example, her life is threatened? Or, like the other victims, does she not have to abandon having her way?

The formulation “to resist out of shame or coquetry” indicates that women are clearly but minors whose behavior need not be taken seriously and who, if necessary, can be pleased sexually by violence.

Translated by Lea Greenberg

Andra Neiburga

Domestic Violence

AUTHOR Andra Neiburga

TITLE “Kalnā kāpējs” [The Climber]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Izbāzti putni un putni būros* [Stuffed Birds and Birds in Cages] (Rīga: Liesma, 1988), 87–94.

LANGUAGE Latvian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andra Neiburga (Riga, 1957–Riga, 2019) is considered one of the most outstanding Latvian short story writers. Neiburga’s father was born into a wealthy family in Riga and was later deported to Siberia. The family led a humble life under the Soviets. Neiburga studied industrial design at the Art Academy of Latvia and graduated in 1986. She worked as a graphic designer for literary journals and as an assistant manager at the Latvian Writers’ Union.

Neiburga made her literary debut with the autobiographical story “Spīdēja saule” (The Sun Was Shining), published in the cultural weekly *Literatūra un Māksla* (Literature and Art) in 1985. In the story, the surroundings of the Āgenskalns neighborhood, located on the left bank of the Daugava River in Riga, are seen through the eyes of a child in the 1960s. Both the psychological manifestations of characters and the accurate visual representation of objects are the result of close observation.

Neiburga’s literary activity can be divided in two periods. From 1985 to 1993, when a new generation of writers entered Latvian literature, she was identified by critics as one of the “angry young girls” who represented the “new wave” of prose focused on the ugly, unpleasant truth of the last years of the agonizing Soviet Union. Her stories in the debut volume *Izbāzti putni un putni būros*, 1988 (Stuffed Birds and Birds in Cages) the story *Elina ir laimīga* (Elina is Happy) in particular, show maturity in their treatment of the characters’ inner worlds. In the foreword of the debut collection, the Latvian writer Regīna Ezera (1930–2002) noted Neiburga’s talent for skillfully creating characters. The uniqueness of her talent among writers of her generation was also praised by critic Guntis Berelis, who emphasized that the portrayal of characters proves Neiburga’s talent as a writer. In 1991, *Stāsts par Tilli un Suņu vīru* (Te Story about Tille and the Dog Man), a novella for children, was published.

In 1993, when Neiburga’s family recovered their real estate, which had been nationalized by the communists, she left the literary scene and spent the rest of her life managing it. The period of restoration of independence and political instability

in the early 1990s turned out to be a turning point that brought a sense of disappointment into her work.

After almost a decade of publishing just opinion columns in the daily newspaper *Diena* and occasionally giving interviews, Neiburga returned to fiction writing in 2002. The publication of her second collection of stories, *Stum stum* (Push Push), followed in 2004. The book strengthened the importance of Neiburga as the leading short prose author of her generation. The book also included four stories from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Critics have described Neiburga's characters as strangers, losers, or removed from life; however, through her depictions of such characters, using a dialogical approach that balanced the conditional and the concrete, the grotesque and the real, Neiburga also recorded social change. The writer's immersion in her characters tends to be so precise that it resembles a psychoanalytic approach. An important role in the representation of mental processes is assigned to dreams. Neiburga entrusts the process of the character's analysis to her readers, offering a fragmented text with an open finale, which is most often created from a subjective point of view as a character's confession or self-revelation. After *Push Push*, Neiburga published a few more short stories until 2011. She passed away suddenly on March 2, 2019.

Translations of Neiburga's short stories have been published in literary journals and anthologies in Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, German, English, French, Czech, Swedish, and Georgian. *The Story about Tille and the Dog Man* was awarded The Pastariņš Prize in children's literature (1993) and the copyright agency AKKA/LAA prize (2003). *Push Push* received the *Diena* newspaper annual prize in culture (2004) and was shortlisted for the Annual Latvian Literature Award (2004).

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Izbāzti putni un putni būros* [Stuffed Birds and Birds in Cages] (Rīga: Liesma, 1988); *Stāsts par Tilli un Suņuvīru* [The Story about Tille and the Dog Man] (Rīga: Balta, 1991); *Stum stum* [Push Push] (Rīga: Valters un Rapa, 2004).

Jānis Ozoliņš

CONTEXT

From the 1930s to the 1960s, Soviet authorities did not publicly address the problem of domestic violence. It was only in the late 1960s that Soviet criminologists offered the concept of *semeino-bytovye* (family-domestic) crimes to distinguish them from other types of hooliganism and violence. As Marianna Muravyova observed, “the criminologists thought they had found an ideal concept that reflected the very nature of these crimes: they were committed by family members against each other within the same house and for obvious motives—domestic quarrels or alcohol consumption.”¹

1 Muravyeva, “Bytovukha,” 100.

In May 1985, after Mikhail Gorbachev became leader of the USSR, the Communist Party started a massive campaign against the overuse of alcohol throughout the Soviet Union. This was intended to raise the productivity of workers by curbing excessive mass drinking. On May 24, 1985, the Supreme Council of Soviet Latvia echoed Moscow's initiative by adopting a decree on the fight against alcoholism. During the next two years, several alcohol production factories and specialized alcohol stores were closed in the USSR; the remaining stores were banned from selling alcohol before midday. The price of popular vodka brands rose approximately two times.² Soviet people regarded the campaign as another attempt of the government to control their lives and, instead of conforming to the new policy, looked for ways to evade it.

Although the typical alcohol consumer was usually considered to be a man (in the 1970s the number of male alcoholics outnumbered females by an order of ten), some publications in popular media also warned about the increase in female alcoholism. Doctors cautioned that 40 percent of female alcohol users gave birth to children with intellectual disabilities, while in 70 percent of cases children were born with a tendency to suffer from lung cancer and heart and kidney diseases. Another common phenomenon was family alcoholism, when both parents consumed alcohol on a regular basis. According to official statistics, in the late 1970s, approximately 5–6 out of 100 families in the Latvian countryside suffered from family alcoholism.³

These negative sides of late Soviet everyday life, as well as silenced pages from Latvian history under the Soviet regime—together with issues such as sexuality and gendered relations of power—became important themes for the young writers of the “new wave.” Among them emerged a group of “angry young women” who challenged the established canon of socialist realism and developed a new aesthetic program focused on the hardships of life in the late Soviet Union. Authors of the “new wave” wrote short prose fiction and published in the monthly journal *Avots* (Source). Andra Neiburga was one of these “angry young women.”

In the short story “The Climber,” Neiburga depicts a family affected by alcoholism. The story is designed as a short, chronological chain of events arranged in four thematic blocks. The first is dedicated to Marija, a Latvian countryside woman, and describes the events before her son Jēkabs was born. From the very first sentence, the narrator hints at Marija's flourishing sexuality. Her suitor, the tractor driver Jāzepe, is described as a helpful, simple, cumbersome, and hard-working man. However, Marija does not want to settle for a predictable life in the countryside and leaves for Riga.

2 “Kā 1985. gadā latviešus no dzeršanas atradināt gribēja” [How They Tried to Teach Temperance to Latvians in 1985], *Delfi.lv*, May 24, 2015, <https://www.delfi.lv/izklaide/skats/vesture/ka-1985-gada-latviesus-no-dzersanas-atradinat-gribeja.d?id=46007473>.

3 Dr. Ručevska, “Sieviešu alkoholisma problēmas” [Problems of Female Alcoholism], *Komunisma Rīts* (Tukums), April 5, 1979.

The reader is not privy to her life in the city; this can only be guessed from a short episode when Marija returns home. Accepting Jāzeps's proposal, she reveals that she is pregnant. He perceives this as an insult to his self-esteem and his manhood. The fragile line of mutual trust is broken, and the first signs of violence show. In the second part of the story, the physical and emotional violence against Marija, who constantly has extramarital affairs, is seen through the eyes of Jēkabs, her illegitimate son.

The domestic violence is also exacerbated by the condemnation of the surrounding community with no less cruel manifestations—ridicule, slander, and questioning of Jāzeps's masculinity. The fact that Jāzeps, in the opinion of the villagers, is unable to prevail over his wife calls into question his manhood not only socially but also in terms of sexual performance. The violence is concealed, although Marija's body testifies to it. It is also the norm for the surrounding men—who turn against Jāzeps as a cuckold—to use violence against Marija. Jāzeps's violence is directed not only against Marija but also those involved in the family drama by the village gossip.

The stepfather's violence against his mother, and both parents' alcoholism, leave their mark on Jēkabs's personality. In his teenage years, he attempts to conform to the local standards of masculinity: he smokes cigarettes, falls in love with a girl few years older, and even beats his mother after another scandal caused by one of her extramarital affairs. At the end of the excerpt presented in this anthology, Neiburga depicts Jēkabs's dissatisfaction with his life, unsuccessful attempts at social climbing, and the return to the village. The tragic finale of the story equates Jēkabs's return with that of Christ on his way to Calvary, thus substantiating the semantics of the names of the characters as modern versions of the heroes in the Bible (Joseph, Jacob, Maria).

Neiburga focuses on the influence of the social environment and the individual pathologies of her characters. She depicts domestic violence and alcoholism as both causes and outcomes of the gloomy life on a collective farm (*kolkhoz*) in the Latvian countryside. Characteristically, she does not offer any solution or conclusion to this situation. Neiburga's short stories often end without a denouement.

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Jānis Ozoliņš

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Andra Neiburga The Climber

In June, without a warning to anyone, Marija left for Riga.

Jāzepe found a letter on the kitchen table. Marija asked him to look after grandma and the animals, to harvest the hay from the field next to the lake, and to water the vegetable garden. Because summer had really arrived, hot and dry.

The ground cracked, the roads turned into clouds of dust; dogs walked around with their tongues hanging out, flanks heaving, and their eyes runny; milk turned sour quickly and the meat ran rancid; the cattle in the collective farm barn got some kind of a disease and were dying; and the whole village slowly became filled with the nasty smell of carrion. Marija's grandmother got terribly thin, she blackened and shriveled up like burning paper, but her eyes under her drooping eyebrows glowed like never before.

People thought she was going to die this summer.

In the village, they said all sorts of things about Marija, but soon fell silent because no one knew anything for sure. And the summer sapped everyone's

strength so that neither did people want to talk nor dogs to bark. All but Jāzepts forgot about Marija.

But in the autumn Marija was back. Paler in the face than when she left, dressed in urban clothes, she maneuvered in her high heels from the morning bus to her house, and her hands were empty.

For quite a long time Marija stood on the doorstep, as if deliberating whether to go in.

When Jāzepts came running, she had already changed her clothes and was bending her back in the potato field.

Jāzepts blanched when he saw Marija. She seemed so strange, beautiful, and unattainable.

But that evening he sat opposite Marija and told her that he wanted to take her as his wife. Marija replied in a grave manner.

“Yes,” she said, “but my first one will be a love child.”

And she put her hands on her belly.

Jāzepts grabbed Marija by the wrist, but let go immediately. He could not lift his hand against a love child.

Grandmother sat in a corner and murmured prayers.

The white fingerprints on Marija’s wrist gradually turned pink.

In November they were married.

There was no snow that winter.

*

Summer. Jēkabs has rowed a raft into the pond. Sun is at its noon high. Heat from above, from the clear sky, heat from the painfully brilliant water surface. Not a ripple. A multitude of dragonflies, pondskaters. Like a black, inflated sail, Mother sweeps down the hill, her feet getting entangled in the grass, slipping on the red, clayey shore. Mother falls and, flailing her arms, she yells:

“Jēkabs! Jēkabs! Row to the shore, you little bastard... come at once!”

The men on the footbridge sip their beer and snigger:

“What’s wrong, Marija? What are you kicking and screaming about? Are you afraid the boy will get his feet wet?”

One of them shouts so loudly that the water swirls:

“Doesn’t this little Jesus of yours know how to walk on water?”

And the men roar with laughter, winking at each other, and the beer gurgles in their throats, and the smoke of their cigarettes wafts up in the air, and grasshoppers chirr, and the water-flies glow, and Mother wails, but Jēkabs stands calm on his raft in the middle of the pond, and he has no fear whatsoever.

These are the first memories.

Then the next ones.

Room, darkness, heavy, stale air. His sisters are coughing and tossing in their sleep, Jēkabs feels hungry, his grandmother is snoring behind the wall, the front door is opening and slamming shut, heavy footsteps, the stench of vodka. Jēkabs clamps his ears shut—he knows what will follow.

Father is breathing heavily, Mother is panting, the room is swaying.

“Who was he?... Who was he?...” His father’s strangled voice.

Jēkabs hears the blows, they alternate with other, unintelligible sounds.

“Mommy, mom, mommy,” whispers Jēkabs into his pillow.

Grandmother murmurs a quiet prayer.

“Who was he! Who was he!”

All night long.

At the age of eight, when Jēkabs starts school, he already has four sisters.

But Jēkabs is the one his mother loves most.

When his father raises his hand at his mother during the day, Jēkabs throws himself between them. Father does not hit him, just throws him aside like a bundle. He never hits him.

Little Jesus. At school, Jēkabs is called Little Jesus.

Sometimes he skips lessons, runs through the village, across the field and the highway, past the cow farm where his mother works, and past the alder grove to climb Poliškalns Hill. You can see far from the top of it. You can sit for a long time without any sense of time. However, Jēkabs rarely does this; he studies hard, wanting to make his mother happy. He has the best mom.

When he is not studying or working, Jēkabs makes something from wood. Later, he befriends the Carpenter. Intoxicated by the heady smell of sawdust and resin, he listens to the Carpenter’s stories and learns to make something useful.

In autumn, Jēkabs helps his mother in the potato field. They have brought a thermos of tea from home. The sky is the color of unbleached canvas, clean and smooth, with only the tips of the forest trees, having torn off pieces of it, adorn themselves with tatters of clouds. His mother holds the hot cup in her bluish, soiled fingers, while Jēkabs crawls into the warmth of her half-jacket under her arm. Mother doesn’t say anything for a long time, looking into the distance. Then she says:

“When you are grown, Jēkabs, you have to leave here. I don’t want you to get stuck here forever.”

Her broad face beams with quiet joy, her shawl has slipped down to her shoulders, the momentary glare of the setting autumn sun throws a pink crown over her hair.

[...]

The teacher is a stout woman with purple hair. She cannot forget that she is from Riga and “almost became a writer.” Now and then articles with her name appear in the local newspaper. One time you can read about the Jēkabs’s family: “The father is an alcoholic... the mother doesn’t refuse a drink either... The younger children show signs of debility... Missed work days at the collective farm... Fodder disappearing... Why doesn’t society pay attention?”

In the evening, the mother, her hands raking her shaggy hair, bangs her forehead on the table and screams:

“Holy Mother of God! I didn’t! I didn’t steal! I didn’t!”

Father fetches a bottle from under the bed.

When Mother lifts her head, tears have left grey streaks on her red face.

At school, the teacher strokes his head.

“Poor child,” she says.

A few days later, someone has smashed all the windows of the teacher’s house.

As he grows, Jēkabs notices how the village boys look at his mother.

Barefoot, Mother walks along the mechanical workshops, the sun edging her dark figure with gold. Mother holds her head high, her hips swaying.

The boys, reclining in the grass by the fence, are enjoying the midday sun. Eyes, looking after Marija, have an oily glow.

“Hey, Marija!” someone yells and whistles. Another shouts an obscenity.

Mother stops and slowly turns her head.

Father split her lip last night, her mouth is swollen and crusted, but she looks beautiful.

Mother stops and slowly turns her head, and Jēkabs sees that there is neither shame nor anger in her face. Her eyes, seductive and burning, turn to the one laughing, and words even coarser than the ones she has just heard roll over her lips, the end of what is said is drowned out by the roar of the boys’ laughter.

The mother has not noticed Jēkabs.

As he walks home, he stomps his black, callous feet furiously in the footprints Mother has left in the road dust and wipes away tears of resentment.

Cows come from the pasture and break the pattern of footprints.

The bellowing of the cattle fills the air.

In the village, they say that Marija has left Antons and is seeing Pēteris in the old dry-house. And how can Jāzeps put up with this?

Grandmother has taken a turn for the worse. Waking in the middle of the night, she starts howling like a dog.

Jēkabs falls in love with Anna, a girl older than himself, white and fleshy like a well-risen loaf of bread. As she sits on the doorstep, cleaning potatoes, her cotton skirt pulled high above her pink knees, his heart misses a beat in sweet expectation. Now and then, Anna winks at him.

He begins to smoke to become more manly.

At a dance, guys tell one another who has slept with Anna and how.

And Marija has hooked up with Antons again. Swear to God, Jāzeps is a real nincompoop.

"All broads are the same," says Juzis, "there is only one distinguishing feature..."

"What?" Jēkabs wants to know.

"Can't tell you yet..." Juzis says with a disgusting smirk.

In autumn, a wedding is celebrated at the lower end of the village. Marija dances with the old, with the young, and even with mere boys. She has become heavier, her breasts and hips shake when she jumps. Momentarily plopping down at the table, she is panting like a foaming horse, downs a glass or two and jumps up again. Jāzeps, gloomy and sullen, occasionally goes for a smoke on the porch.

At night the first snow falls.

When the people come out into the yard at dawn, they see a blood-red streak leading from the stable to the barn. In the barn, Anton lies stabbed. Jāzeps is missing. No one remembers the moment when the two went out.

Antons's wife, howling like an animal, throws herself at Marija, grabbing her by the hair. The men restrain her. The wife's fingernails have left red marks on her forehead.

Jēkabs takes his mother home and beats her up. He is sixteen years old, and unbeknownst to himself, he has become a man.

Jāzeps turns up three days later and is immediately arrested.

A week later, Jēkabs withdraws his papers from school and says goodbye to his family.

"I can't live here anymore," he says.

His mother's face shows a glimmer of the brightness of the past:

"Yeah... you really are... fifty percent a city boy."

Grandmother's eyes are blank; as Jēkabs heads for the door, she shakes her finger sternly.

Before leaving, Jēkabs also stops by Carpenter's. They sit down on the doorstep.

"So after all, you..." Carpenter says.

"Yes," Jēkabs replies. And shyly he reveals what he hasn't told anyone:

"I'd like to achieve something... to get away from here, to forget."

And then he adds quite furiously:

"I have to show them all!"

“Pity,” says the Carpenter, “you could have been good at this.”

The first snow has melted, it is drizzling. Jēkabs struggles to the bus through ankle-deep mud.

He has to get to the top.

At all costs.

Translated by Ieva Lešinska-Gaber

Mojca Dobnikar

Feminism and Social Work

AUTHOR Mojca Dobnikar

TITLE “‘Feministično socialno delo’? Ne, hvala! Za političnost feminizma in proti izgubi spomina” [“Feminist Social Work”? No, Thank You! For the Political Character of Feminism and Against the Loss of Memory]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Delta: Revija za ženske študije in feministično teorijo* [Delta: Journal for Women’s Studies and Feminist Theory] 3, no. 3–4 (1997): 117–30.

LANGUAGE Slovenian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mojca Dobnikar (b. 1957, Brežice) is a translator and publicist, one of the leading figures in the feminist movement that emerged in 1980s in Slovenia, then part of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). She studied languages, philosophy, comparative literature, and agronomy, and graduated in economics. Throughout her career she has translated seminal works in the fields of social theory, philosophy, and gender studies, as well as art history and theory from English and German to Slovenian. She has translated the works of Karl Marx (a collection of texts on censorship and the freedom of the press, together with Vlasta Jalušič in 1985; and *Das Kapital* in 2012), Sigmund Freud (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, 1995), Jürgen Habermas (*Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur*, 2005), Wilhelm Reich (*Sexpol*, 1984), Heinrich Wölfflin (*Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, 2009), and from the feminist canon Gisela Bock, Judith Squires (*Gender in Political Theory*, 2009), Seyla Benhabib (*The Rights of Others*, 2010), Cinzia Arruzza (*Dangerous Liaisons*, 2016), bell hooks (*Where We Stand*, 2019), among others. Her early work as a translator, editor, and publisher contained an element of feminist activism which contributed to the knowledge base of the emerging movement. Most importantly, she edited a collection of Alexandra Kollontai’s work in 1982,¹ and three years later compiled a volume of radical feminist texts by Ti-Grace Atkinson, Kate Millett, Martha Shelley, Luce Irigaray, Christina Thürmer-Rohr, Rita Mae Brown, and Charlotte Bunch.² In the period 1987–1990, she was editor-in-chief of the book collection Library of Revolutionary Theory (Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije, Krt)³ published by the University and the Republic Conferences of the Alliance of the Socialist Youth of

1 Aleksandra Kollontaj [Alexandra Kollontai], *Ženska v socializmu* [Woman in Socialism] (Ljubljana: Krt, 1982).

2 Dobnikar, *O ženski in ženskem gibanju*.

3 It later transformed into the independent publishing house Krtina, which still exists today.

Slovenia (Zveza socialistične mladine Slovenije, ZSMS, the official youth political organization), which reflected and intellectually shaped the burgeoning civil society and new (alternative) social movements of the time.⁴

Mojca Dobnikar was one of the founders of the feminist group Lilit in 1985,⁵ which was sort of a “continuation and extension, or better yet, a socializing-mobilizing enactment of the debate-orientated Women’s Section of the Sociological Society,” an academic group that started in late 1984.⁶ Dobnikar herself claimed to be inspired by the Berlin feminist and women-only scene she experienced while travelling there the year before.⁷ Lilit was somewhere between a group aimed at socializing the like-minded and a consciousness-raising or self-help group, similar to those that existed in the West Europe.⁸ They organized round-table discussions, lectures, exhibitions, and notorious women-only night parties—which were bashed as “women’s separatism,” even by the men from the alternative cultural scene and progressive weekly *Mladina*. The Lilit group operated as a “section” within the Students’ Cultural-Artistic Center (Študentski kulturno-umetniški center, ŠKUC-Forum) in Ljubljana, which provided premises and basic resources for their events. Dobnikar was one of the leading organizing forces behind these events, including the so-called First Yugoslav Feminist Gathering in December 1987.⁹

As described in the text below, it was the Lilit group that opened up public discussion on violence against women in Slovenia in 1987. Again combining her publicist and activist work, Dobnikar edited the translation of the seminal work by Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* from 1975.¹⁰ Learning from the activism and knowledge accumulated among Croatian activists, Dobnikar

4 Tomaž Mastnak, “Civil Society in Slovenia: From Opposition to Power,” in *The Tragedy of Yugoslavia: The Failure of Democratic Transformation*, eds. Jim Sroka and Vukasin Pavlovic (London–New York: Routledge, 1992), 113–50.

5 Named after Lilith, a female figure in Mesopotamian and Judaic mythology, who was the first wife of Adam and was banished from the Garden of Eden for not obeying him. Dobnikar chose this name because of the Lilith Women’s Bookshop (*Frauenbuchladen*) on Knesebeckstraße in West Berlin where she acquired feminist literature at the time. See the interview with Mojca Dobnikar in Jalušič, *Kako smo bodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 127.

6 Among others, members of the twenty-five-person Women’s Section were Mirjana Ule, Vlasta Jalušič, Tanja Renner, Milica Antić, and Srna Mandič. It was initiated as part of a discussion night on new social movements at the Institute of Sociology, Ljubljana, which was attended, among others, by the feminist Silva Mežnarič. See Jalušič, “Prispevek k razkrivanju novega feminizma v Sloveniji,” 31–2.

7 Dobnikar in Jalušič, *Kako smo bodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 118; Dobnikar, “Ne bom dala miru, dokler ne bom imela Berlina v Ljubljani” [I’ll Have No Peace until Ljubljana Becomes Like Berlin], interview by Bojana Vesel and Nataša S. Vegan [aliases for Suzana Tratnik and Nataša Sukič], *Revolver*, no. 6 (December 1992), 12–15.

8 See Dobnikar’s statement in “Zapis strokovne javne razprave” [Transcript of the Public Discussion among Professionals], in *Nevladne ženske organizacije za napredek položaja žensk v Sloveniji* [Nongovernmental Women’s Organizations for the Betterment of the Position of Women in Slovenia], eds. Vera Kozmik and Violeta Neubauer (Ljubljana: Urad za žensko politiko Vlade Republike Slovenije, 1995), 26.

9 On the numbering of the feminist gatherings, see note 29 in this chapter.

10 Susan Brownmiller, *Proti naši volji: Moški, ženske in posilstvo* [Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape] (Ljubljana: Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije, 1988). The work was important for shifting the paradigm on

participated in the establishment of the telephone helpline for women and children victims of violence (SOS telefon za ženske in otroke – žrtve nasilja) within Lilit, which was initiated in January and started operating in October 1989.¹¹ She remained active in the telephone helpline for more than a decade, following its transformation into an NGO that exists even today (Društvo SOS telefon). In this capacity, she edited a number of publications, such as a guidebook for training volunteers on the helpline.

Dobnikar was active in several other feminist initiatives and organizations in Slovenia, such as the Group Ženske za politiko (Women for Politics), which played a key part in protecting abortion rights in 1990/1, Ženski center (Women's Center) organized in Metelkova (the former barracks of the Yugoslav Army in the center of Ljubljana which were squatted in 1993), and the Vita Activa Association for the Enforcement of Equality and Plurality (Društvo za uveljavljanje enakosti in pluralnosti), which she led between 2003 and 2011. Through Vita Activa, she was involved in a string of projects that tackled topics beyond gender-based violence, including the regulation of pornography and the position of migrant women. She participated in compiling and publishing archival documents of the four Yugoslav Feminist Meetings in 1987, 1988, 1990 and 1991. The organization Vita Activa established the feminist internet portal www.spol.si, which participates in the annual award for the most sexist statement in Slovenia, the Bodeča Neža (named by the flower *Carlina acaulis*), established by the international queer and feminist festival Rdeče zore (Red Dawns)—both have an important position on the feminist scene in Slovenia today. Nowadays, Dobnikar has retired as a freelance translator, occasionally taking part in discussions on the historicization of the Slovene/Yugoslav feminist movement.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • “Predgovor” [Preface], in Aleksandra Kollontaj [Alexandra Kollontai], *Ženska v socializmu* [Woman in Socialism], partially translated by Mojca Dobnikar (Ljubljana: Krt, 1982), 7–17; ed., *O ženski in ženskem gibanju: zbornik* [On Woman and the Women's Movement: A Collection], trans. Mojca Dobnikar (Ljubljana: Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS & Republiška konferenca ZSMS, 1985); “Uvod” [Introduction], in Susan Brownmiller, *Proti naši volji: Moški, ženske in posilstvo* [Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape] (Ljubljana: Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije, 1988), 7–10; “O nasilju” [On Violence], *Socialno delo* [Social Work] 28, no. 3 (1989): 317–23; “Nasilje nad ženskami kot oblika socialne kontrole” [Violence Against Women as a Form of Social Control], *Časopis za kritiko znanosti* [Journal for the Critique of Science] 19, no. 136/137 (1991): 138–42; with Vera Kozmik, eds., *Dosje: Nasilje nad ženskami*

sexual violence, arguing that rape is a conscious process of intimidation (rather than the result of a sexual urge) which has the primary aim of subjugating women (rather than provide sexual pleasure to the rapist).

11 The same kind of helpline started operating in Zagreb in March 1988, organised by Ženska pomoć sada (Women's Help Now), and in Belgrade, organised by the members of feminist group Žena i društvo (Woman and Society) in March 1990. See the chapters on Vesna Kesić, Blaženka Despot, and Lepa Mladenović in this volume.

[Dossier: Violence Against Women] (Ljubljana: Urad vlade Republike Slovenije za žensko politiko; Društvo SOS telefon; Feministično informacijsko kulturno središče; Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 1999); "War, Discourse, Women – What about Us?", in *War Discourse, Women's Discourse; Essays and Case-Studies from Yugoslavia and Russia*, ed. Svetlana Slapšak (Ljubljana: ISH Fakulteta za podiplomski humanisti študij; Topos; Študentska založba, 2000), 359–68; with Milica Antić Gaber and Irena Selišnik, "Gendering Violence Against Women, Children and Youth: From NGOs via Internationalization to National States and Back?", in *Violence in The EU Examined: Policies on Violence Against Women, Children and Youth in 2004 EU Accession Countries*, ed. Milica Antić Gaber (Ljubljana: Faculty of Arts, 2009), 17–29; with Nela Pamuković, eds., *Jaz, ti, one ... za nas: Dokumenti jugoslovanskih feminističnih srečanj 1987–1991 = Dokumenti jugoslovenskih feminističkih susreta 1987–1991 = Dokumenti jugoslovenskih feminističkih skupova 1987–1991 = Dokumenti od jugoslovenskote feministički srečavanja 1987–1991 = Dokumente të takimeve feministe jugosllave 1987–1991* [Me, You, Them ... for Us: Documents of the Yugoslav Feminist Meetings 1987–1991] (Ljubljana; Zagreb: Društvo Vita Activa; Centar za žene žrtve rata ROSA, 2009); "Gibanje proti nasilju nad ženskami med feminizmom in socialnim delom" [The Movement Confronting Violence against Women between Feminism and Social Work], *Dialogi* 45, no. 11/12 (2009): 98–110.

Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc¹²

CONTEXT

In socialist Yugoslavia, the sanctioning of violence against women in private life and in intimate partnerships was not regulated at the systemic level, but rather the treatment of this problem was left to the initiative (and resources) of local services. Domestic violence was only recognized as a criminal offense in its own right at the end of the 1990s. Prior to this, existing criminal law did not allow for the systematic prosecution of this form of violence. The only exception were marital rape and rape between intimate partners, which have been punishable under criminal law since 1977—but only in Slovenia; it was not recognized as a criminal offence in other parts of Yugoslavia. The socialist welfare system perceived the family as an institution to be protected by the state and its mechanisms (legal regulation, social transfers). The family was understood as a homogeneous social group, while the different social positions of individuals within it were disregarded.¹³ Before the rise of SOS helplines and

12 This text is a result of the research project "1980s and the creation of the new cultural field: Slovenian civil society between Nationalist policies and intercultural involvement" (J6-2576) financed by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

13 Katja Bašič, "Nasilje nad žensko," *Revija Policija* 13, no. 2 (1993): 185–94; Kozmik and Dobnikar, *Dosje; Špela Veselič*, ed., *Na poti iz nasilja: Prakse dela proti nasilju nad ženskami* [On the Way Out of Violence: Practices of Work against Violence against Women] (Ljubljana: Društvo SOS telefon, 2007); Darja Zaviršek, "O nasilju nad ženskami" [On Violence against Women], *Revija za kriminalistiko in kriminologijo* 41, no. 2 (1990): 119–122.

shelters for women and children victims of violence, social work institutions were the sole institutions which addressed the problems of violence in the private sphere and in the familial context, although most of them focused and directed their activities on keeping the family together.¹⁴ Their most significant shortcoming was that they were not focused on the individual needs of the ones in subordinate positions (i.e., women, children, the disabled, the elderly, the weak, etc.). Until the late 1980s, when small feminist-oriented groups started to deal with women as victims of violence, there were no substantial changes concerning prevailing attitudes toward dealing with this issue in Slovenia and other parts of Yugoslavia. In this regard it should be noted that the early activities of these feminist groups were interconnected among groups and professionals from Zagreb, Belgrade, and Ljubljana.

Under the auspices of the feminist theoretical perspective and the women's movement, the first empirical research and the first shelter for victims of domestic violence in the United States was established in 1964.¹⁵ In Europe, the first women's shelter was the Chiswick Women Aid Shelter for Battered Women in London, opened in the United Kingdom in 1971 by the English activist and writer Erin Pizzey.¹⁶ As described in Mojca Dobnikar's text below, the first such organization in Slovenia was the SOS Helpline Association for Women and Children Victims of Violence, which was founded in 1989 as an informal group. In 1997, the association also opened one of the first non-governmental women's shelters in Slovenia.

The SOS Helpline Association is essentially a feminist project that grew out of needs identified on the ground¹⁷ and was defined by a small group of women who were dissatisfied with the inadequate help that Yugoslav social protection and legal systems gave to the women who experienced violence, which was still normalized within society. The key founding members of the association were Mojca Dobnikar, Nives Brzič, Gordana Kunaver and Mojca Šemerl Harmel. The group, as a subsection of the larger feminist group Lilit, was also one of the main actors that started a public debate on the problem of violence against women and its inadequate treatment in Slovenia/Yugoslavia, and so began to conduct the first investigations, campaigns, and political pressure in this area. The association still exists today and is one of the most important non-governmental organizations in this field in Slovenia. Some of

14 Špela Veselič, "Nasilje nad ženskami v družini – najpogostejša oblika nasilja nad ženskami" [Violence against Women: The Most Common Form of Violence against Women], in Jalušič and Zagorac, *Človekove pravice žensk*, 179–205; Mateja Sedmak and Ana Kralj, "Nevarna zasebnost – nasilje v družinah v Sloveniji" [Dangerous Privacy: Violence in Families in Slovenia], *Družboslovne razprave* 22, no. 53 (2006): 93–110; Zaviršek, "O nasilju nad ženskami."

15 The first shelter for victims of violence (primarily due to alcoholism) in the modern world was Haven House, which opened in 1964 in California.

16 Dobnikar, "Gibanje proti nasilju nad ženskami."

17 In 1988, the Lilit group, as part of its preparations for the SOS Helpline participated in conducting two surveys. The questionnaires were published in print media and asked readers to mail back their responses filled in. See Dobnikar, "Feministično socialno delo?," 120.

the former members of the SOS Helpline formed other feminist and/or victim-oriented groups and organizations.

The road from initial activism to the first substantive legislative and systemic changes has been long and difficult for most countries, and legislation treating domestic violence as a criminal offense is relatively new in most countries, including Slovenia. In Yugoslavia, domestic violence was not recognized as an independent, specific criminal offence, nor were there systematic mechanisms for reporting domestic violence, protecting victims, or prosecuting perpetrators. Until the late 1990s, prosecution was limited to individual crimes in the family environment, which were generally treated only as misdemeanors. It was not until the late 1990s, in 1999, that domestic violence was defined as an individual criminal offence through an amendment to the Slovenian Criminal Code. A somewhat longer tradition of criminalizing domestic violence exists in the United States, where some states introduced specific domestic violence prevention laws in the late 1970s.¹⁸

Research on legislative changes addressing violence against women in the new EU member states which joined in 2004 (including Slovenia) came to the conclusion that there were three main types of actors who contributed to the substantial change in the way violence against women had been treated: (1) NGOs, (2) state institutions, and (3) international organizations.¹⁹ Concentrating on the changes in Slovenia, one can see that various NGOs dealing with violence against women filled a gap, made by state institutions' inactivity: they were the first to initiate and organize services for victims; gather data on the prevalence of violence against women, children, and youth; conduct at least small-scale research and studies; propose necessary improvements in legislation; carry out public awareness-raising campaigns; pressure international organizations to change their policies worldwide; initiate a multiagency approach; and even conduct the first training of professionals in state institutions.²⁰

In this text, Mojca Dobnikar presents systematically and chronologically how the feminist movement influenced changes in the systemic approach to violence against women, especially in the field of social work. An important contribution of the feminist movement to the new way of dealing with women victims of violence is certainly the insight into the importance of the autonomy of victims in the proceedings, which means that women were given the power to make decisions independently in the proceedings without institutions interfering too much with their autonomy.

18 Karen D. Stout, "'Intimate Femicide': Effect of Legislation and Social Services," in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, eds. Jill Radford and Diane E. H. Russell (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), 133–140; Joan B. Kelly and Michael P. Johnson, "Differentiation among Types of Intimate Partner Violence: Research Update and Implications for Interventions," *Family Court Review* 46, no. 3 (2008): 476–99.

19 Milica Antić Gaber, ed., *Violence in the EU Examined: Policies on Violence against Women, Children and Youth in 2004 EU Accession Countries*, (Ljubljana: Faculty of Arts, 2009).

20 Antić Gaber, Dobnikar, and Selišnik, "Gendering Violence against Women."

In the article, the author mainly presents the importance of the activist feminist efforts in this field, which were crucial for all the steps and milestones achieved in the systemic and also social treatment of violence against women and the study of this phenomenon.

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Jasna Podreka

Mojca Dobnikar

“Feminist Social Work?” No, Thank You!

For the Political Character of Feminism and Against the Loss of Memory

Introduction

Social work, social care, social security, and social policy are all inventions of the modern state. The notion of charity, which emerged as a concept with the rise of bourgeois society, can be understood as one of the predecessors of social work. Bourgeois women became involved with the causes of charity in the nineteenth century; for them, charitable activities represented an entry permit into the public sphere.²¹ Besides the salon, charitable activities were the only suitable reason for bourgeois women to be out of the home. Vlasta Jalušič describes the limitations of this path out of home in her book *Dokler se ne vmešajo ženske...* [Until Women Get Involved...]: “The first female charitable foundations and societies thus had to be founded on a non-professional, as well as non-political, basis so that women could appear in public.”²²

Social work, social care, and social policy flourished alongside the welfare state in the first half of the twentieth century when the state increasingly began to intervene in people’s lives with the aim—according to its own interpretation—of improving their quality. To summarize Vesna Leskošek,²³ one possible categorization of the methods of social work draws a distinction between those that provide individual services to people and reject the political role of social work, and those that act from the conviction that “changing circumstances is more important than changing individuals.” The latter are thus “political” in the sense that they aim to “cocreate the common conditions of life, including at its lower levels, for example at the level of local communities.”²⁴

Social work is now seeing the gradual introduction of the concept of guaranteeing the social rights of the individual. In contrast, the notion of providing aid during times of need [*pomoč v stiski*] is becoming antiquated. According to this older principle, the state, and specifically its institutions and the experts who inhabit them, assess when an individual is in need and intervene when they deem

21 Vlasta Jalušič, *Dokler se ne vmešajo ženske ... ženske, revolucije in ostalo* [Until Women Get Involved ... Women, Revolutions, and the Rest] (Ljubljana: Krt, 1992), 72.

22 Jalušič, *Dokler se ne vmešajo ženske*, 72.

23 Vesna Leskošek, “Socialno delo ni politično (ali pač?)” [Social Work Is Not Political (Or Is It?)], *Socialno delo* [Social Work], 34, no. 3 (1995): 196. Editor’s note: exact page corrected. It should be noted that Leskošek claims that social work is inherently political, thus marking the difference between those who do not acknowledge it (and understand their work as professional and ‘above politics’), and those who acknowledge and embrace the political character of social work, understanding it as a form of activism.

24 Leskošek, “Socialno delo ni politično (ali pač?),” 196.

it appropriate: they may do so without the consent of the individual. According to the more recent concept, the state's intervention is only possible on demand or with the consent of the individual whom the intervention concerns.²⁵

The contemporary feminist movement has had a decisive impact on the shift towards these new methods in the doctrine of social work, particularly with its actions directed at violence against women. Projects for helping women who are victims of violence emerged in western European and North American countries in the early 1970s as a form of self-help within a feminist movement that was explicitly political. It was only in the 1980s, a decade after the first self-help groups, safe houses, and counselling services for women appeared, that the term "feminist social work" began to establish itself. At the same time, these projects began to lose their political character, which only reappeared later with the "discovery" of women's human rights in the early 1990s. While feminists in other European countries have practically abandoned the concept of "feminist social work" and reoriented themselves entirely towards the concept of "women's human rights," feminists who are involved with social work in our country continue to use, with affection if also some embarrassment, terms such as "feminist social work," "feminist psychoanalysis," etc.²⁶

Violence Against Women: The First Round

In the first place, how did the question of violence against women enter the purview of social work in Slovenia? As I have written elsewhere,²⁷ it was feminists, both in Slovenia and everywhere in the world, who were the first to organize actions addressing violence against women. In 1987 and 1988, the feminist group Lilit was the first to call attention to this issue [in Slovenia]. In May 1987, the Lilit group organized the first public discussion on this issue.²⁸ In December of the same year, it organized the so-called First Yugoslav Feminist Meeting,²⁹ which took place in Ljubljana. Among other things, the following was written in its resolutions:

25 Leskošek, "Socialno delo ni politično (ali pač?)," 196.

26 See, e.g., Darja Zaviršek, "Diskurzi o nasilju in pomoči" [Discourses on Violence and Help], 329–45; Diana Jerman, "Primer iz prakse ženske svetovalnice" [A Case Study from Women's Counselling Office], 399–406; and Mojca Urek, "Od feministične socialne akcije k feminističnemu socialnemu delu" [From Feminist Social Action to Feminist Social Work], 383–97. All articles in *Socialno delo* [Social Work] 36, no. 5/6 (1997).

27 Mojca Dobnikar, "Nasilje nad ženskami" [Violence Against Women], in *Pravo in družbene resničnosti* [The Law and Social Realities], ed. Alenka Bogovič (Ljubljana: KUD France Prešeren, 1997), 59.

28 One of the discussion evenings organized by the Lilit group addressed the theme of violence against women and featured Vesna Mimica from Zagreb. Editor's note: As a survivor of her partner's violence, who was one of the first to speak about it in 1984, Mimica was involved in the establishment of the telephone helpline for victims of violence, together with the Ženska grupa Trešnjevka [Women's Group in Trešnjevka, a district of Zagreb], in 1988. As a contemporary dancer, she brought aerobics from abroad to Yugoslavia, and became renowned as "our Jane Fonda."

29 As the organizers, we called the event the First Yugoslav Feminist Meeting. The name itself elicited a number of protests at the event. According to some interpretations, the first such gathering had actually taken

- that violence against women is extremely widespread in our country: marital rape and rape outside marriage, the physical abuse of women and children, the sexual extortion of women. We resolve to organize aid and self-help for women who are the victims of violence through helpline services, counselling services, safe houses for women, etc. We call on the institutions that are concerned with this issue to join these efforts, as they have inadequately addressed the problem thus far. [...]
- that women's action groups will critically examine existent legislation and prepare proposals for their reform, particularly legislation regarding the family and familial relations, the penal code of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, and the penal codes of its constituent republics, etc. [...]³⁰

With the publication of the meeting's resolutions, the Lilit group began a campaign for the acknowledgment of the problem of violence against women. From December 1987, the time of the first meeting, to October 1989, when the SOS Helpline for Women and Children Victims of Violence began to operate, the Lilit group and later the SOS Helpline group within Lilit,³¹ averaged at least two media appearances per month, addressing the question of violence against women (interviews, self-authored articles, press releases, press conferences, etc.).³²

At the end of 1988, the Second Yugoslav Feminist Meeting took place in Zagreb. The joint statement of this meeting's participants included, among other items, the following concrete proposals for the reform of the penal code:

- that criminal offenses of light and severe bodily injury, the violation of safety, and coercion committed within the framework of violence in the family, [...] to be prosecuted *ex officio*; [...]

place in 1978 in Belgrade, according to others it was before the Second World War, during the time of the Yugoslav Women's Alliance. In any case, while the designation "first" may have seemed presumptuous, the event did represent the first gathering of feminist groups and individuals that belonged to the "new wave" of feminism that emerged during the 1980s in the urban centers of the former Yugoslavia. The meetings went as follows: December 1987 in Ljubljana, December 1988 in Zagreb, March 1990 in Belgrade, and the last one in May 1991 in Ljubljana. Editor's note: For the documentation about the gatherings see Dobnikar and Pamuković, *Jaz, ti, one ... za nas: Dokumenti jugoslovanskih feminističnih srećanj 1987–1991*. For reflection on the Fourth gathering in May 1991 see text by Teuta Arifi in this volume.

30 For the statement of the First Yugoslav Feminist Meeting, see, e.g., Vlasta Jalušić, "Srećanje feministk" [A Meeting of Feminists], *Mladina* [Youth] (December 18, 1987), 3.

31 In January 1989, the SOS Helpline Group was founded under the auspices of the Lilit Group and prepared the hotline project. In 1990, the SOS Helpline Group became an independent entity and registered with the official title "SOS Phone Group": the project was commonly known to the public under the names "SOS Phone" or "SOS Helpline for Women and Children Victims of Violence."

32 See, e.g., *Mladina* [Youth] (December 18, 1987); *Nedeljski Dnevnik* [Daily on Sunday] (December 27, 1987); *Dnevnik* [Daily] (December 29, 1987); *Naša žena* [Our Woman] (February 1989), etc., as well as Radio Val 202, December 11, 1987; Radio Glas Ljubljane, December 19, 1987; Val 202, December 19, 1988; Val 202, January 10, 1989; Radio Študent, April 6, 1989, etc.

- that an expert is present during the interview of the victim and that the victim has guaranteed legal representation in accordance with official procedures in the prosecution of the criminal offense of rape;
- that new security measures be implemented in the cases of criminal offences mentioned above: specifically, that the offender is prohibited from attacking, threatening, intimidating, or interacting whatsoever with the victim [...].³³

In October 1989, the SOS Helpline for Women and Children Victims of Violence in Ljubljana started operating. This represented the first specialized Slovenian project to help those who experience violence in the family, in romantic or familial relations, or otherwise.

The SOS Helpline did not understand itself as a social project, but as a feminist project, in the sense that, while it offered counselling services by phone to women and children, these were only one of many activities that the organization pursued. Other significant activities that were (and continue to be) undertaken by the SOS Helpline include: research and gathering information on the prevalence of violence, preventive workshops for youth, publicity work, advocating for reforms of the penal code, volunteer training programs (in which over 700 women have participated thus far, of which approximately 130 engaged in counselling work by phone), efforts to influence the political programs of certain (emerging) political parties, etc. All of these activities, which were regularly communicated to public, caused significant changes in the perception of violence against women in Slovenia. [...]

[Women] experts who attempted to introduce “feminist principles” into social work have been trapped in the illusion that something like “feminist social work” is even possible. “Feminist social work” is a contradiction in terms: any feminist action is a political action par excellence and any concrete social aid and support necessarily unfolds as a part of that political action.

It is no coincidence that no expert from the institution of social work has thus far proposed changes in the penal code or any other element of legislation that concerns violence against women. Instead, feminists have done so. Similarly, it is no coincidence that it is not feminists who learn from social workers how to engage with women who have experienced violence, but the other way around. In this respect, social work is merely one component of aid and support. As soon as we address the question of violence against women on the individual level of “social

33 See, e.g., the statement published under the title “Organizirana pomoč ženskam v vsej državi” [Organized Aid to Women all Over the Country], *Naša žena* (February 1989): 5.

work,” we encounter—if our eyes are open, of course—the issue of social context:³⁴ the social definition of the family and the role of women within it, cultural norms and the position they dictate to women, the guarantee of women’s rights in legislation, etc. The perception of this broader context, as well as efforts to change it, are a constituent part of any “feminist action,” one that institutional social work will never take on as an integral part, despite its possibly good intentions—or perhaps precisely because of them.

[...]

Translated by Lukas Debeljak

³⁴ Authors addressing “feminist social work” are well aware of this, of course. See, e.g., Urek, “Od feministične socialne akcije k feminističnemu socialnemu delu,” 389; Zaviršek, “Diskurzi o nasilju in pomoči,” 334.

8

Women in Politics

Júlia Rajk

Christmas Troubles

AUTHOR Júlia Rajk

TITLE “Karácsonyi gondok” [Christmas Troubles]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Asszonyok* [Women] 2, no. 18 (December 18, 1946): 2.

LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Júlia Rajk (née Földi; 1914, Budapest–1981, Budapest) was a communist activist and the wife of László Rajk (1909–1949), one of the leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party. Júlia was born into a lower working-class family with a strong communist tradition: Her father had been a soldier during the short-lived Hungarian communist revolution of 1919 and was subsequently on the police’s watch list during the Horthy Era (1919/20–1944). From 1936 to 1939, Júlia lived in Paris and was a member of the French Communist Party. At the beginning of the Second World War, she returned to Hungary and became a member of the illegal Hungarian Communist Party. As a female member of the illegal Communist Party, the task she received from the party was to take care of László Rajk as an unpaid domestic servant. They were both arrested by the Hungarian police in 1944 and Júlia was released in 1945. The same year, she married László Rajk, who then became the communist Minister of Interior between 1945 and 1949. Following the marriage and László Rajk’s rise in the Party leadership, Júlia also entered the Party elite, which enabled her to work as a leading functionary in the communist-controlled Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége (MNDSz, the Hungarian Women’s Democratic Federation). Following her husband’s arrest and execution in 1949—a victim of one of the first notorious Stalinist show trials in Hungary—Júlia was also arrested and sentenced to five years of imprisonment. She was charged with supporting her husband’s “subversive policy” and for her activity within the women’s organization. Her five-month-old infant son was placed in an orphanage and renamed István Kovács, the most common name in Hungary. After five years’ imprisonment, Júlia Rajk was freed in 1954 under a different name, Lászlóné Györk (Mrs. László Györk). Her name, and also her son’s, were changed without any consultation, condemning the name of her husband to oblivion. She soon started to fight for her husband’s rehabilitation and signed her appeals by both names: Rajk and Györk.

After her time in prison, Júlia became a political activist associated with the internal Party opposition (that is, Party members critical of the leadership). The

events of 1956 became a major turning-point in her life. She used her unquestionable and uncontested moral power as the widow of the innocently executed hero of the Hungarian communist movement to force the Party leadership to initiate and complete the rehabilitation of political prisoners. Owing to her insistence, her husband was soon reburied with all possible official honors on October 6, 1956. After the reburial, she regained her name as Lászlóné Rajk (Mrs. László Rajk) and her son as László Rajk Jr. (1949–2019). Less than two weeks later, Júlia Rajk became involved in the revolutionary events of 1956; all of the leaders were her personal friends. On November 4, 1956, when the Soviet Army occupied Hungary, she asked for political refuge at the Embassy of Yugoslavia together with Prime Minister Imre Nagy—the leader of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956—and members of his cabinet. Nagy, Júlia Rajk, and others who had sought refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy were kidnapped and transported to Romania by the Soviets. During the two years she spent in Romania, she created her own school—“Júlia’s school”—which kept the vulnerable and increasingly apathetic prisoners busy and helped the children, after their return home, to fit back into society.

After returning to Hungary in 1958, she became “*the* Júlia,” an institution in and of herself, who always protected the weak against those who abused their power. She became one of main protectors, among others, of anti-communist intellectuals vis-à-vis the party leadership. She organized the first NGO in Hungary after the ban on associations in 1951—a dog shelter—and collected signatures to support Charter 77. When the first proto-feminist movement was organized against strengthened anti-abortion laws in 1973, she was the first to sign Zsuzsa Körösi’s petition, offering the security and weight of her name to the first dissent action organized in Hungary after 1956. Júlia Rajk never held a position of formal or institutional power; even in the women’s umbrella organization, she was merely a functionary. Nevertheless, after the execution of husband, she built up massive symbolic and informal influence for herself.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · Júlia Rajk’s achievements and ideas are barely documented in her printed writings. Some of her articles are accessible in the magazine of the MNDSz, *Asszonyok*,¹ and in the proceedings of the MNDSz itself, held in the Hungarian National Archives.²

Andrea Pető

1 About the history of the magazine, see Zsófia Lóránd, “International Solidarity as the Cornerstone of the Hungarian Post-War Socialist Women’s Rights Agenda in Women’s Magazines”, *International Review of Social History* 67 (Special Issue 30, 2022): 103–129.

2 For further references to her work, see Pető, *Geschlecht, Politik, Stalinismus in Ungarn*.

CONTEXT

There was only one woman in Hungarian history whose destiny it was to have as personal enemies the two most influential Hungarian politicians of the post-WWII period: Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971) and János Kádár (1912–1989). Together, they were the masterminds of the execution of Júlia Rajk's husband, László Rajk, after the first Hungarian show trial in 1949.³ Her husband, László Rajk, was a legendary fighter in the Spanish Civil War, the leader of the homegrown communist movement in Hungary, and the postwar Minister of the Interior who administered Hungary with an iron fist. In addition to other actions, he founded the communist Hungarian secret police and signed the decree banning women's organizations in Hungary. Nevertheless, his wife became an atypically influential woman politician in twentieth-century Hungarian history. Júlia Rajk was a social justice activist already in the 1930s, first as a nurse working in the impoverished areas in Hungary, later supporting Spanish republicans as a member of the French Communist Party in Paris.

The text selected for this volume serves to introduce the extraordinary political trajectory of her life, from beneficiary of Communist rule to informal leader of the opposition. When MNDSz activists were recruited, and the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party appointed Júlia Rajk to be the organization's General Secretary, she was placed into a symbolic position well above her abilities. During her life, she experienced vicious attacks and hatred, not only from her fellow co-workers—who did not leave an opportunity unused—but even at her show trial in 1949 and her rehabilitation trial in 1955, each time being reminded about her supposed incompetence. Her attackers emphasized how she was only given such a high leadership position because of her husband, and how this act was also further proof of the hypocrisy of the male leaders of the Communist Party regarding its emancipation policy.

The political success and influence of Júlia Rajk was due to her explicitly non-political use of language. She spoke publicly as a mother and as a wife, which undermined the disenchanted political discourse inundated with Stalinist newspeak. The "language of grief" was first and foremost women's language, and this gave Rajk her confidence.⁴ Standing up for her executed husband gave meaning to her own years in prison. As a wife fighting for the honorable burial of her husband, she also overcame the controversies and dividing lines of Hungarian politics more generally. The struggle did not end with the graveside photograph taken of Júlia, accompanied by her son, at her husband's reburial in Budapest's Kerepesi Cemetery, subsequently published

3 On political transformations in post-WWII Hungary, see Kenéz, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets*; Ständeisky, *Demokrácia negyvenötben*; and Palasik, *A jogállamiság megteremtésének kísérlete és kudarca Magyarországon 1944–1949*.

4 For a longer study of Júlia Rajk's "language of grief," see Pető, "Hungary 1956: Júlia Rajk or the Power of Mourning".

in the international press. The fact that a reburial was held inspired the leaders of the Hungarian Revolution, who saw that it was possible, just by using the telephone, to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people for a cause. The implacability of Júlia Rajk, and her insistence on the broadest publicity for her husband's reburial on October 6, 1956, turned out to be the psychological dress rehearsal for the 1956 Revolution.⁵

Júlia was also the first practitioner of "anti-politics," one who built up separate institutions in the semi-public sphere: she ran a salon for discussing politics and recent gossip, a dog shelter, and brought the children of imprisoned comrades to cake shops, among other efforts. She institutionalized informality and created institutions—already during her forced exile in Romania as part of the group around Imre Nagy—like the "Júlia School" (1956–1958) and the "Júlia Tours" (i.e., organized bus tours of the West). She used the power of conversation as a form of resistance.

Usually, women's life stories, especially communist women's lives are narrated as *Bildungsromane*, as stories of how the heroine became increasingly determined and ideologically more convinced. Júlia Rajk's life story should be presented differently. It is not a *Bildungsroman*, a story that developed out of her childhood experiences—her socialization—in a leftist working-class family. She was a committed social democrat and a member of the underground communist party, and she remained so until her death in 1981. She always used her power—the power of a widow, as a victim of the show trials—to achieve what she wanted: from the rehabilitation of her husband to obtaining passports for dissidents in Kádár's Hungary. Her story is rather an *Unbildungsroman*: a process of constant learning, of adapting to changing political circumstances, and doing so while not giving up one's values. Her life story moved from that of an illegal communist party activist, to that of a wife and widow and mother, and to the founding mother of the Hungarian democratic opposition.

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Andrea Pető

* * *

Júlia Rajk Christmas Troubles

Christmas, a celebration of love, is coming. It is a centuries-old tradition where people give gifts to their beloved ones, relatives, and friends during this festival—Christmas is about peace and love. Hungarian people, especially us women, also want peace, rest, and homes for our family after the devastations of the war, the immense suffering, ruin, inflation, and hunger. But even this Christmas has not brought us a life of ease and serenity. Instead of preparing for a peaceful and happy Christmas, women in Budapest and in the countryside are striving to secure the basic existence of their children and families by attending delegations, marches, and demonstrations.

Were we, Hungarian women and girls, right to go into battle right before the festival of peace and love? Thousands, tens of thousands of us have lined up, in cities and in villages, and declared war on high prices. Yes, we were right. Because we are fighting for our beloved ones. Because we give voice to their pain and suffering. We lean gently over the cradle of our kids and hug them with love, but we fight fiercely if our children and families suffer from deprivation.

We, Hungarian women and girls, have suffered through the dark and difficult months of inflation. Many times we returned home with empty bags from the market. We have been fighting heroically, taking part in the production of goods in the fields, in the plants, in the offices, and working at home, in order to create a strong currency.

We, honest Hungarian workers, have been struggling manfully, as we know that it is our work that can create a strong Hungarian currency.

During the past few weeks, however, we have seen that, despite our efforts, the prices of the most important commodities—such as flannels, potatoes, onions and so on—have been rising, or that these goods have completely disappeared from the market. Why are things more and more expensive after we fulfill our obligations? This is because our honest work is opposed by the enemies of the people, parasites who do not use their arms to work, who do not lean above work benches. These scroungers smuggle and traffic, and raise prices, so that they can pocket as much profit as they can. They don't care about workers who cannot cope with increasing prices, or the thousands of children who cannot go to school because they do not have shoes or clothes. They make all workers, whether in cities or in villages, suffer.

We have declared a fight against these parasites. The ones who smuggle all the flannel out of Hungary. The ones who want immense profits when selling goods. The ones who set the price of sewing a man's garment at 300–400 forints. We also fight against those who support the enemies of the working people from the highest offices.

Our demands drafted at the assembly against high prices, the demands of all honest working women, have been passed on to responsible statesmen. And the results we have reached are to a large part the result of the struggle of women for justice. The activities of the enemies of the people are placed under martial law. We demand that this is applied rigorously, as this will most probably prevent further speculation. We have reached a certain drop in the price of gas and electricity. Meat has become less expensive, too, but the price of cabbage is still almost as high as it has been.

We'll keep on fighting, since we still have demands. Our children need shoes. At the same time, shop windows are full of luxury shoes. The shirts and other clothes of our husbands cannot bear more patches, but the closets of black-market speculators are full of clothes. We demand the production of uniform shoes and clothes. We demand the introduction of a voucher system, so that commodities actually get to the workers in villages and towns. We know that we have had a bad yield, but we demand the equitable sharing of the little that we have, so that we could feed our family with some cooked noodles alongside the flour-based soup. We can now get meat, sugar, and fat, but we also demand a voucher-based distribution of potatoes for Christmas.

And if there are not enough people to check prices, the women of the Hungarian Women's Democratic Federation, as well as the women of the labor unions, will all volunteer to responsibly support the work of the competent authorities. Our fight, demands, and complaints were understood by those who are deeply sympathetic to us and fight with us for a more peaceful and trouble-free future. Whoever thinks

that our alliance is not about providing help in the fight against speculators and the black market does not help the workers of the villages and the cities and towns but supports the enemies of the people—whether intentionally or unintentionally.

We are expecting Christmas overburdened by troubles. However, let us not forget that we have made tremendous progress during the last two years. We Hungarian women and girls have played a major part in this two-year struggle. And we shall continue to do that. We are moving forward, following the path we have set, smartly, courageously—and fighting if that is what is required to reach our common goals as soon as possible.

Translated by Beáta Sándor

Tsola Dragoicheva

Eight Years of Equality and Happiness

AUTHOR Tsola Dragoicheva

TITLE “Osem godini ravnopravni i shtastlivi” [Eight Years of Equality and Happiness]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Zhenata dnes* [Woman Today], no. 7–8 (July–August 1952): 2–3.

LANGUAGE Bulgarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tsola Dragoicheva (1898, Biala-Slatina–1993, Sofia) was born in the small city of Biala-Slatina, in her own words, as a daughter of “moderately prosperous” farmers. Her parents and all her siblings were Communist Party members. Her brother Tseno, who emigrated to the Soviet Union after the 1923 communist uprising, disappeared during the Stalinist purges in 1938.

Dragoicheva graduated from the Higher Pedagogical Institute in Sofia (1921), and until 1924 worked as a teacher. She joined the Communist Party in 1919, participated in clandestine actions under the pseudonym Sonya Tsvetanova, and was fired from her teaching position because of her political activities and banned from practicing her profession in the whole Kingdom of Bulgaria. She was a member of the illegal armed wing of the Communist Party, participated in the 1923 uprising, and—after the communist militants bombed the St. Nedelya church in 1925—was sentenced to death for “anti-state” activity. The sentence was commuted to lifelong hard labor following international protests and because of her pregnancy. One of her supporters, the French novelist and member of the French Communist Party Henri Barbusse (1873–1935), met her while she was in prison and told her story in *Les Boureaux* (The Hangmen). In prison in 1925, Dragoicheva gave birth to her son Chavdar, who was raised in the Soviet Union and later became a professor and a well-known Bulgarian heart surgeon.

Thus, by the age of twenty-seven, Dragoicheva had the experience of an unsuccessful rebellion, the dream of an imminent revolution, and her first death sentence. After her amnesty in 1932, she went to the Soviet Union and graduated from the International Lenin School in Moscow. She also worked at the International Women’s Secretariat of the Comintern (1933–1935), while remaining in close contact with women activists such as the Spanish antifascist Dolores Ibárruri (known as La Pasionaria) (1895–1989), the Romanian communist Ana Pauker (1893–1960), and the Bulgarian Stela and Natalia Blagoeva, daughters of the influential socialist-feminist

Vela Blagoeva (1859–1921).¹ After the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (1935), Dragoicheva was sent to France (January–July 1936), where she helped popularize the ideas of the (cross-ideological antifascist) Popular Front. Upon her return to Bulgaria, she worked as editor (1936–1937) of the clandestine newspaper *Otbrana* (Defense) and of the periodical *Rabotnicheskoto delo* (Worker's Action, 1942–1944), reporting the situation of the political prisoners and struggles in the country. In 1937, she became a member of the Central Committee (CC) of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) and in 1940 of the clandestine Politburo. Arrested again in 1941, and placed in a women's labor camp, after a few months Dragoicheva managed to escape in December that year. She took part in the activities of the Party and the armed resistance of the Fatherland Front (FF, the major antifascist organization in the country, established in 1942) against Bulgaria's alignment with the Axis Powers in World War II. Sentenced to death in absentia in 1942, Dragoicheva continued her antimonarchic activities until the coup d'état on September 9, 1944, when her party—as part of the FF—came to power.

From 1944 to 1948, Dragoicheva was general secretary of the National Committee (NC) of the FF and, as such, supervised the Council of Ministers and exercised control of the economy. *The Times* of London, emphasizing her extraordinary position within the male world of politics, called her “the real ruler of Bulgaria,” while the Toronto-based *Magazine Digest* wrote that her influence “keeps the parties of the Fatherland Front coalition working together,” and—with a hint of admiration—called her “Bulgaria's Lady Stalin.”² Her political enemies accused her of turning the NC of the FF into a “preliminary government”: the problems of the state were discussed there first, before being introduced to the Council of Ministers. Anticomunist publications blame Dragoicheva for her participation in the fight against the “bourgeois opposition” (until 1948), in the execution of leading activists from both the Agrarian Union and the Communist Party, and for her acting as a censor of culture and arts.

She was president of Bulgarski naroden zhenski sujuz (Bulgarian People's Women's Union, BNZhS) and participated in the founding congress of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in Paris in 1945, representing Bulgarian women in the federation. From 1947 to 1957 Dragoicheva served as the first Bulgarian woman-minister of the Postal Service, Telephone, and Telegraph. She was also in charge of the National Peace Committee (1949–1952). After the end of her ministerial career (1957), Dragoicheva was appointed chair of the NC of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship Committee, and in 1963 became vice-chair of the NC of the FF.

1 Krassimira Daskalova, “Blagoeva, Vela (1858–1921),” in *Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 62–65.

2 Daskalova, “A Woman Politician in the Cold War Balkans: From Biography to History,” 69, 72.

Women who met her in the 1970s and 1980s were impressed by her steadfastness and the optimism that gripped them in her presence, and by her charming, quite straightforward answers. Dragoicheva has also been romantically described as a “tragic iron person” who melted with the seductions of power and survived the denial of the communist ideal.³ Speaking about her character, a journalist once mentioned: “no idea, however noble, can endure unless the character absorbs it and gives it meaning. And no character, however militant, can expand and manifest itself if there is no idea to light its way.”⁴ Dragoicheva, according to this journalist, had “both natural strength and boldness of mind coupled, since early youth, with an ideal: to fight for the people’s well-being,”⁵ that is, for both women and men.

Dragoicheva’s life spanned two crucial twentieth-century historical periods: the interwar era in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe, and the Cold War period. During the first one, her proletarian social origin, clandestine revolutionary life, and experience of imprisonment turned her into a militant communist activist. During the second period, as a member of the Bulgarian establishment and leader of the women’s movement, she actively participated in the enhancement of women’s rights and status, both nationally and internationally.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Smelo i gordo da zashtitim bulgarskata zhena i maika* [Courageously and Proudly to Defend the Bulgarian Woman and Mother] (Sofia: Otechestven front-Natsionalen komitet, 1945); “Intervention de Mme Tzola Dragoicheva, au nom de la délégation Bulgare: la participation des femmes à l’œuvre de restauration de la démocratie et de la consolidation de la paix” [Intervention of Mrs Tsola Dragoicheva, on Behalf of the Bulgarian Delegation: The Participation of Women in the Reestablishment of Democracy and in the Consolidation of the Peace] and “Rapport déposé par la délégation de Bulgarie: la participation des femmes à l’œuvre de restauration de la démocratie et d’établissement de la paix” [Report of the Bulgarian Delegation: The Participation of Women in the Reestablishment of Democracy and in the Consolidation of Peace], in Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes, *Congres Internationale de Femmes* (Paris: WIDF, 1945), 139–143, 183–186; *Doklad pred Plenuma na Bulgarskia naroden zhenski suiuz* [A Report for the Meeting of the Bulgarian People’s Women’s Union] (Sofia: Bulgarskia naroden zhenski suiuz, 1947); *Demokratichnite zheni v sveta v borbata za traen mir i domokratsia (Doklad, iznesen na Natsionalnia kongres na privurzhensite na mira, Sofia—3 april)* [Democratic Women in the World in the Struggles for Lasting Peace and Democracy (Report at the National Congress of Peace Supporters, Sofia, 3 April)] (Sofia: Biblioteka BNZhS, 1949); “Svetovniat kongres na zhenite v Kopenhagen” [The International Women’s Congress in Copenhagen], *Zhenata dnes* 8, no. 7 (July

3 Iliana Marcheva, “Bulgarskata ‘Lady Stalin’: Tsola Dragoicheva” [Bulgarian “Lady Stalin”: Tsola Dragoicheva], in *Bulgarski durzhavnitsi, 1944–1989* [Bulgarian Statespersons, 1944–1989], ed. Maria Radeva (Sofia: IK Skorpio, 2005), 118.

4 Popova, “An Exceptional Life,” 54.

5 Popova, “An Exceptional Life,” 54.

1953): 4–5; *Doklad za rabotata i resheniata na sesiata na Izpunitelnia komitet na MDFZh, Geneva, 16–19 Januari 1954, iznessen na plenuma na KDBZh ot nashata predstavitelka na sesiata dr. Tsola Dragoicheva* [Report on the Work and Decisions of the Meeting of the Executive Board of Women's International Democratic Federation, Geneva, 16–19 January 1954, Presented at the Plenary Session of the Committee of the Movement of the Bulgarian Women by Our Representative at the Meeting Comrade Tsola Dragoicheva] (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Natsionalnia suvet na Otechestvenia Front, 1954); *Mezhdunarodnata demokratichna federatsia na zhenite: velika sila v borbata za mir* [The Women's International Democratic Federation: A Great Force in the Struggle for Peace] (Sofia: Komitet na demokratichnite bulgarski zheni, 1954). For the full list of Dragoicheva's publications, see Elena Savova, *Tsola Dragoicheva: Bio-Bibliographia* (Sofia: BAN, 1974.)

Krassimira Daskalova

CONTEXT

Already in October 1944, the new regime in Bulgaria introduced gender equality in all spheres of life. All women were granted full voting rights (some categories of women got them already in 1938); civil marriage was introduced and became the obligatory form of marriage. However, rapid political and economic changes did not go hand in hand with the erasure of patriarchal customs, which changed very slowly. As socialist feminists argued, the legal equality of the sexes was not enough to eliminate women's subordinate position in society and the family, even if traditional class and gender hierarchies were challenged.

One of the first actions of the new regime was to expropriate the old “bourgeois” Bulgarian Women's Union (Bulgarski Zhenski Sujuz, BZhS), led between 1926 and 1944 by Dimitrana Ivanova (1882–1960), and to rename it the Bulgarian People's Women's Union (Bulgarski Naroden Zhenski Sujuz, BNZhS) with Tsola Dragoicheva in charge. The communists removed not only the pre-communist/“bourgeois” president of the organization but all members of its board as well, and appointed women belonging to the antifascist Fatherland Front (FF). In 1950, the BNZhS was transformed into the Committee of the Movement of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na Dvizhenieto na Bulgarskite Zheni, KDBZh), led again by Dragoicheva, who represented Bulgarian women in international networks and especially in the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF).

At first, the KDBZh was affiliated with the National Committee (NC) of the FF (1950–1952), but subsequently existed as an independent structure with its own budget. Parallel to the KDBZh, several other structures existed that dealt with women's issues: between 1951 and 1957 there were special “women's departments” within the structure of the Central Committee (CC) of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) for regional and town party structures around the country. There were also women's commissions affiliated with the NC of the FF and the National Council of Trade

Unions. All of these structures were formally under the control of the “Women’s Department” of the CC of the BCP.

Thanks to Dragoicheva’s high position within the communist hierarchy, her dynamic and iron character, and the symbolic capital she possessed as an antifascist, women’s activist, and representative in the WIDF, her endless publications in the periodical press, her initiatives and pro-women’s activities were the most visible in the public space. During her entire career she was considered the real leader of Bulgarian women. This did not go unnoticed by the communist male establishment, which in the second half of the 1940s criticized her for what they regarded as her individualistic attitude.

Some preserved documents from the 1950s and 1960s also demonstrate the existing tensions and power struggles among the different women’s units and personalities within the communist state and party structures. On several occasions, the leaders of the Women’s Department of the CC of the BCP managed to impose their own opinion and neglected suggestions coming from the KDBZh and Dragoicheva.

After 1944, the memory of the achievements and networks of the old, pre-communist women’s movement was actively forgotten. However, for activists like Dragoicheva this went hand in hand with building up new networks, solidarities, and connections, especially within the WIDF. Left-wing women’s sisterhood (although often very problematic, with its internal contradictions and silences) within the WIDF and their feeling of belonging to the family of progressive “women of the whole world” strengthened their gender (or even feminist) consciousness and sensitivity.

Dragoicheva’s text tells the story of women’s emancipation in the first eight years after WWII—when Bulgaria started to turn from an underdeveloped agricultural country with more than 75% of the population categorized as “peasants” and a small educated middle class of women with prestigious professions into a dynamic state and a more egalitarian society—with the important contribution of both girls and women. Parallel to the usual self-congratulatory rhetoric of official communist and party parlance, Dragoicheva’s article clearly shows the role of the WIDF and its agenda in shaping her own understanding (and that of the Bulgarian women’s movement she managed) about the most pressing women’s issues of the time: the struggle against militarism, for peace, for freedom, and for the well-being of both women and children.

The WIDF’s anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-war, pro-women, and pro-children agenda gave Francisca de Haan reason to characterize this long-forgotten organization, stigmatized as a Soviet front, as “a progressive, ‘left feminist’ international umbrella organization.”⁶ Clearly, “intersectionality” was part of the WIDF’s agenda

6 Francisca De Haan, “The Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF),” 10. For the ongoing debate about the character and role of the WIDF in the international women’s movement during the Cold War, see the work of Yulia Gradska, who sees the WIDF as “an organization advocating women’s rights, as a part of the women’s movement, and as a variant of feminist organization.” Gradska, *The Women’s International Democratic Federation*, 6.

well before western feminists made it part of a “new” feminist paradigm. The member organizations of the WIDF and their leaders defended not only women’s political, professional, and economic rights, but they also worked together to change the situation of mothers. Thus, most of the participants fit what Karen Offen would call the category of “relational feminists.” In the 1960s and 1970s, while the older generation of Bulgarian women activists uncritically supported the official party line that women’s problems had already been resolved, Dragoicheva took the side of the younger generation, led by Elena Lagadinova and Sonia Bakish, who insisted that there were still many “women’s issues” to be addressed.

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Krassimira Daskalova

Tsola Dragoicheva

Eight Years of Equality and Happiness

[...]

Only eight years ago, the mother, the working woman, the peasant woman, the girl, the woman-citizen were forced to lead, side by side with their husbands and sons, a fierce struggle against the monarcho-fascist capitalist government—a struggle for a better social order, against bloody exploitation, unemployment, and political, civil, and economic inequality. [...]

Prior to September 9 [1944], women did not enjoy equal rights—the right to vote and to be elected. They did not have access to all professions. Working equally with their husbands, women received up to 50% lower wages. In case of unemployment, only the head of the family was entitled to paid work, i.e., only the man. The latter could beat the members of his family, drive his wife out into the street, squander the family income, sell and squander even his wife's property. This was considered a private issue.

The family did not enjoy state protection. The married woman was deprived of the right to manage and dispose of her own property. After her husband's death, the mother could not become the guardian of her own children. [...] Unemployment reached alarming proportions during the years of economic crisis and was a terrible scourge for working families. Children grew up malnourished, pale, with rickets, prone to tuberculosis. [...]

The people's uprising on September 9 brought a radical change in the development of Bulgaria. It put an end to its past and marked the beginning of great political, economic, and cultural transformations, which, taken together, defined and strengthened the people's democratic system, paved the way for the liberation of workers from all forms of exploitation, to building a socialist society in the country by the example and with the great help of the Soviet Union—our liberator. [...]

With the Dimitrov Constitution, endless possibilities and bright prospects opened up for the Bulgarian woman. Nowadays she is an equal, highly valued, and respected citizen of our people's republic. She does not face the issues discussed at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Women's International Democratic Federation held in Bucharest: the struggle for women's equality, for moral, political, and economic protection from reactionary governments, as well as from the atrocities of the imperialists and their cannons already fighting at one end of the world. [...]

Taking into account the results of the implementation of the Dimitrov Five-Year Plan in four years, we can show to the whole nation, as well as to our Soviet sisters, to our comrades, organized in the WIDF, what women are capable of when living in a country where socialism is built, where the daily example and help of the Soviet Union is followed.

The functioning giants of our native industry such as the “Stalin” plant, the “Valko Chervenkov” power plant, the “Ernst Thälmann” spinning mill, the “Kl[iment] Voroshilov” low-current plant, etc., speak of the new man, the new attitude to work, of the achievements of our men and women-shock workers.

The success of our electrical industry, light industry, and socialist trade are largely an achievement of women and girls, many of whom were awarded with gold and silver labor medals. [...]

In less than four years, we have implemented the five-year plan in agriculture, too. There is a huge rise among women cooperators, which is a clear sign of the rapid development of the labor-cooperative farm. About 500,000 women work in field and livestock brigades of the cooperatives—more than 20,000 are team leaders, 3,030 are members of the management boards, 13 are chairwomen, 4,142 are livestock breeders, 758 girls are tractor drivers, etc. We have 14 women “heroes of socialist labor.”

The equal and free Bulgarian women participate in the government of our people’s republic, too. The eight years of people’s power brought women to politics: a woman minister was elected, as well as a woman ambassador, five women deputy ministers, 37 members of the Parliament and thousands of women representatives in the councils of the workers’ deputies. [...]

The care of the mother and the child is written forever in the basic law of our country—the Dimitrov Constitution. The people’s government is constantly concerned with the gradual improvement of the material and cultural well-being of the working people, of mothers and women, of our children—the greatest capital of the future. [...]

Women, men, and young people in our country welcome with great satisfaction the decisions of the extraordinary session of the World Peace Council, and promise to spare no effort in order to enforce them and win the victory of peace! They participate and will participate *en masse* in the preparation of the Congress of Nations for Peace, fully implementing the decisions of the XIII Session of the Executive Committee of WIDF.

By fulfilling all party and governmental tasks, women will demonstrate their international solidarity with the millions of women in the capitalist and colonial worlds who are fighting hard for their political, social, and economic rights. By actively engaging in the performance of their duty as shock workers in factories, fields, and institutions, as educators of children, guardians of people’s health, and a force in the ranks of the Patriotic Front, [...] women will strengthen the foundations of our beloved homeland even more.

Let’s work with even greater love in the further strengthening of the unbreakable Bulgarian–Soviet friendship, the main guarantee for our national independence and the socialist development of our country.

Let's attract the broadest strata of women in the struggle to protect peace and expose the instigators of a new war. [...]

Let's educate women and children in the spirit of revolutionary vigilance. [...]

Let's fight tirelessly at the forefront of WIDF to protect women's rights.

Let's save children from war.

Let's enthrall all women to participate *en masse* in the preparation of the National Congress for the Protection of Peace and the World Congress of Peace.

The exciting address of the XIII Session of the WIDF Executive Committee is important especially to us, who eight years ago buried the world of injustice forever. Let's go to all women, to tirelessly explain to them that it is possible to avoid war, that it is necessary to end the war in Korea! Military armament needs to be reduced! It is necessary to ban nuclear and bacteriological weapons! It is necessary to prevent the revival of German and Japanese militarism!

Translated by Valentina Mitkova

Latinka Perović

Ahead of the Elections

AUTHOR Latinka Perović

TITLE “Pred izbore” [Ahead of the Elections]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Žena danas* [Woman Today], no. 225 (June 1963): 2.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Latinka Perović (1933, Beloševac–2022, Belgrade), historian and politician, was born in a village near Kragujevac, Serbia, Kingdom of Yugoslavia. She graduated with a degree in Serbian Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade in 1954. At the same faculty, she earned her master’s degree in 1956 by defending her thesis titled “Supplementary and Determining Phrases in the Language of Ivo Andrić.” She defended her second master’s thesis, “Cultural Policy in Yugoslavia After the Second World War,” at the School of Political Sciences, later the Faculty of Political Sciences, at the University of Belgrade, in 1965. At the same faculty, she earned her PhD with the thesis “From Centralism to Federalism: The Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the National Question,” in 1975.

She became politically active at high school in Kragujevac when she became member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1951. At the age of 27, she became a president of the Conference for the Social Activity of Women of Yugoslavia (Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena Jugoslavije),¹ the position she served in the period 1960–1964. After that, Perović was elected into the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, and served as its secretary from 1968 to 1972. In this capacity she closely collaborated with the president of the Central Committee Marko Nikezić, in what was later recognized as a Serbian reformist leadership.

During her activity in the political leadership, especially around 1971, Perović was suspected of being anti-Soviet and too Western-oriented, and distrusted for opposing repressive measures, in particular the dialogue that she engaged in with critically oriented intellectuals from the Serbian Literary Guild (Srpska književna zadruga). The overthrow of the Serbian reformist leadership was finalized after four-day talks with Josip Broz Tito, the Yugoslav President and the leader of its League of Communist. This was the pinnacle of the party’s reorientation toward a “more

1 This was an umbrella women’s organisation in the country which inherited some of the functions of the Women’s Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena, AFŽ).

revolutionary course” as the new conservative orthodoxy, which came after the downfall of the Croatian reformist leadership in December 1971.² Marko Nikezić and Latinka Perović were characterized as being too liberal towards dissidents and the media, accused of diverging from the federal party leadership, and thus deviating significantly from Tito’s revolutionary line. They were both politically stigmatized and they resigned from all political positions on October 21, 1972. Consequently, the entire Serbian state and party leadership was dismissed. Two years later, Nikezić and Perović were expelled from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Their leadership was blamed for “endangering socialist relations” and promoting “bourgeois-type democracy in which different political orientations could coexist,” insisting on formal education and generational turnover in leadership positions, but neglecting the “moral and political qualities” of party cadres, as well as the absolutization of the role of the market in the economy. After an interrogation before a special party commission, Latinka Perović refused to accept blame for her political conduct as party secretary.

After being expelled from the League, Perović reoriented towards scholarly work, gained her PhD, and started working as a principal research fellow (1976–1999) at the Institute for the History of the Labor Movement of Serbia in Belgrade, renamed the Institute for the Recent History of Serbia in 1992. However, up to 1983, she was not able to publish anything. Never returning to direct politics, Perović devoted herself to historical research and became known as one of the most prominent experts on the history of political ideas and Serbian history from the nineteenth century onwards. In her research, she was particularly dedicated to the history of socialist as well as liberal thought in Serbia, and the influence of Russian ideologies. To this end, she also edited twenty-one books of primary sources with extensive introductions. At her institute, she established a prominent research project entitled “Serbia in the modernization processes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,” editing four volumes which resulted from it, including *The Position of Women as a Benchmark for Modernization* (1998) and *Women and Children* (2006).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, acting as an independent intellectual, she stood against nationalism and wars in the former Yugoslavia, publicly opposed to the regime of Slobodan Milošević, and advocated the protection of human rights, remaining an active figure on the civil society scene until the end of her life. In her writings and speeches, she often emphasized that Serbia needs political leadership which would publicly claim responsibility for the destruction wrought in the former

2 Also known as the end of the Croatian spring or Maspok, see Milivoj Bešlin and Petar Žarković, “Srpski liberali i Hrvatsko proleće: hrvatsko-srpski odnosi i novi koncepti Jugoslavije krajem 1960-ih i početkom 1970-ih” [Serbian Liberals and the Croatian Spring: Croatian-Serbian Relations and New Concepts of Yugoslavia in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 53, no. 3 (2021): 791–821; Tvrtko Jakovina, ed., *Hrvatsko proljeće: 40 godina poslije* [The Croatian Spring: 40 Years Later] (Zagreb, 2012).

Yugoslavia in order to help reconciliation with neighboring states and prevent the recurrence of this kind of tragedy.

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Ivana Pantelić

CONTEXT

Both in her scholarly and political work, Latinka Perović strongly emanated the belief that the political emancipation of women is an indispensable element in the modernization of society as a whole. During the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia,³ though the legal system was not uniform throughout the country, having been inherited from

3 The state was named the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes from 1918 to 1929, when it was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was then dissolved by Axis forces in 1941, and substituted by the Communist-led republic after the end of the Second World War.

previously existing states, in regard to political rights, all the legal systems in the Kingdom were unanimous that women should not have passive or active suffrage. Full political rights for women were part of the political program of the communist-led anti-fascist movement, and women voted for the first time in the elections for the constitutional assembly on November 11, 1945. Women's right to vote was guaranteed in Article 24 of the 1946 Constitution.

One of the main indicators of women's participation in political life was their representation in political institutions, particularly in representative bodies, i.e., assemblies. This percentage fluctuated in the Federal Assembly of Yugoslavia up to the late 1980s, but it never exceeded 20% of the deputies at any given moment. The percentage of elected women changed over the years, and predominantly depended on the agitation and political propaganda that preceded particular elections. If the need for the involvement and nomination of women was highlighted during a campaign, the assembly would have a higher number of women deputies. Greater agitation preceded the 1963 elections, when the highest number of women in the Federal Assembly was recorded (19.6%), and the average number in the assemblies of the republics also increased.⁴ An article by Latinka Perović, the President of the Conference for the Social Activity of Women, was published in *Žena danas*, a leading women's magazine in Yugoslavia, as part of the wider political campaign ahead of the elections.

The lower participation of women in politics was also manifest in other positions of political power: the assemblies of the republics, the Federal Government, and the governments of the republics. Since Yugoslavia was a single-party state after the Second World War, all the centers of power were controlled by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY, later named the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), so the boundary between partisan and institutional power was often blurred or nonexistent. The participation of women in the party's highest bodies was also quite small. For example, at the Fifth Congress of the CPY in 1948, three women were appointed to the Central Committee, which was 4.7%, and at the Seventh Congress in 1958, 5.2% of the appointees were women. The presence of women in the party's decision-making bodies was far lower than their proportion in the membership. The reason for this was the increased withdrawal of women from the public sphere, primarily from politics, with the exception of those cases when that was their profession. After the war, many women continued or started their education, got jobs, created families, became mothers, and all of these obligations took up all of their time, preventing them from volunteering in politics. They did not have time to apply themselves to their job, their family, and party assignments with equal quality. This problem

4 In the elections of 1958, the percentage of women in the Federal Assembly was 7%, while in regional assemblies it ranged from 4.7% in Montenegro to 18% in Slovenia. The percentages improved in the elections of 1963, reaching 19.6% in the Federal Assembly (and ranging from 12.2% in Kosovo to 24% in Slovenia), but significant regional differences remained. See Tomšič, *Žena u razvoju*, 205.

was noted by the party leadership and was discussed at top-level meetings which concluded that greater women's participation in politics was necessary and that this could be achieved by freeing women from the burden of some of the daily obligations that had been imposed on them by society. Patriarchal matrices were the most difficult to deconstruct in the private, i.e., family sphere, and this great problem has not been successfully overcome by the time socialist Yugoslavia ceased to exist.

Regarding the highest state offices, it must be pointed out that there were few women ministers in the postwar governments of the republics. Mitra Mitrović was Minister of Education in Serbia (1945–1948), Anka Berus was Minister of Finance in Croatia (1945–1953), and Vida Tomšič was Minister of Social Affairs in Slovenia (1955–1962), to name a few. The first Federal Government was comprised only of men, while the first woman minister on the federal level was Milka Minić, a General Director of the Directorate for Crude Oil Processing, in 1949. During socialist Yugoslavia, the only woman to head the federal government was Milka Planinc (1982–1986). The breakup of the country drastically accelerated the process of the re-patriarchization in all post-Yugoslav societies. The first multiparty parliament in Serbia, following the 1990 elections, comprised only 1.6% women, while at the previous elections for the socialist assembly, in 1986, women accounted for 23.5% of the deputies. The statistics were similarly devastating in the other republics where the percentage of women in national representative bodies fell from the 1986 to 1990 elections: in Montenegro from 11.2% to 3.2%, in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 24.1% to 2.8%, in Croatia from 15.8% to 5.2%, in Macedonia from 17.2% to 4.2%, and in Slovenia from 24% to 11.2%.

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Ivana Pantelić

* * *

Latinka Perović Ahead of the Elections

The first phase of preparation for the upcoming elections is complete. At the assemblies [*zbor*] of the voters and the assemblies of the working people in the work organizations,⁵ candidacies for the future communal, provincial, republican, and federal lawmaking bodies [*skupština*] are being presented. While it is still difficult to say what all of this rich political activity has indicated and [specifically] in relation to a woman's social engagement, one may still consider some of the tendencies observed in the course of that activity.

Above all, among the most important criteria for the election of new members to representative bodies was the demand that there be more women in them. This demand was made in the most authoritative political fora and accepted and supported by voters.

The reason for so much insistence on both nominating and electing a greater number of women in the course of preparations for these elections is twofold. Firstly, the new Constitution stresses the extraordinary role of representative bodies in our system and underscores the importance of citizens being engaged in their work. Secondly, the social standing of a woman in our country has changed considerably. The number of women employed in the economic and social sector has reached one million,⁶ while female children and youth make up half of the total number of those educated in all schools—from primary to higher education. These are the objective conditions that make it impossible and unjustifiable for a portion of producers to be left behind, that is, women in governing social matters. Thus, the issue of the position of women [in society] has truly become an integral part of the struggle for our country's material growth and the development of socialist societal relations in it.

5 Editor's note: Working people (*radni ljudi*) is a notion larger than 'workers' and encompasses occupations outside of direct production. Work organization (*radna organizacija*) refers to an economic enterprise within the Yugoslav socialist socio-economic system. See Goran Musić, *Making and Breaking the Yugoslav Working Class: The Story of Two Self-Managed Factories* (Budapest & New York: CEU Press, 2021), 108, 55–56, respectively.

6 Editor's note: The share of women in the employment force was 29.2 % in Yugoslavia in 1964. See Tomšič, *Žena u razvoju*, 197.

It is understandable that this whole problem also has its own ideational essence. A lag in women's participation in sociopolitical life is not only attributable to women's workload in the family and in the household, but also to the conservative environment and bureaucratic-technocratic treatment of women in the workplace and in society in general. This is precisely why sociopolitical organizations, the League of Communists and the Socialist Alliance of Working People⁷ first among them, in light of the objective capacities on the ground, insist so heavily on overcoming the hitherto weakness and lag.

What has the pre-election activity shown us to this end? Let's mention here several significant tendencies that will be important for orienting further work on these questions.

Above all, even though it is already clear, as far as the candidacies are concerned, that there will be a strong breakthrough regarding adequate space for women in representative organs, [as well as] in production, there is still resistance. Resistance is, of course, most typical in rural areas, but one encounters it even in considerably developed ones. One needs to call out resistance, because presenting candidacies is part of the job, while resistance can significantly influence the people's choices [at the elections]. Resistance may be direct, but sometimes is presented as "protection" of women from great burden, and this is specifically so in the areas that should have, based on their level of development, overcome these kinds of understandings long ago.

We have no reason, especially now, not to point out a certain formalism when the election of women is concerned: the same percentages are set out [everywhere] with no regard to the real conditions and capacities within the communities, and sometimes the requisite for quality is disregarded, which, of course, should not turn into [applying] stricter criteria for the election of women.

Our country's postwar development, the system of workers' and social management,⁸ increased rates of women economically active women, and the mass education of female children and youth led to a considerable rise in the number of capable societal workers⁹ from the ranks of young generations of women.

7 Editor's note: The Socialist Alliance of Working People (Socijalistički savez radnog naroda), known before 1953 as the People's Front (Narodni front), was the largest and most influential mass organization in Yugoslavia (1945–1990), which had the purpose of involving citizens in political decision-making formally outside the Communist Party structure, and eventually included most of the adult population of the country.

8 Editor's note: This was a feature of the Yugoslav socio-economic and political system (also called self-management or self-governing socialism) in which the government of economic enterprises (i.e., work organizations) was delegated to the workers, while political governance was delegated to the citizens through multiple levels of the Socialist Alliance of Working People.

9 Editor's note: Societal worker (*društveni radnik*) is an expression used during Yugoslav socialism for a person "doing (paid and unpaid) work with the principal aim of benefitting the common good." See Tanja Petrović and Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc, "(Un)Making Women's Biographies in the Wake of the Loss of the Socialist Project in Yugoslavia," *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's & Gender Studies* 21 (2020): 22.

Thus, there is still the need for continuously rising numbers of both old and young women engaged in social and political life, especially in the municipalities.

It is important to understand from the very start that our system of rotation, as well as the restrictions on re-election, require that our personnel base constantly expands and draws also from the ranks of women. The new elections will, in that respect, bring a new quality. But we should not stop there, it is imperative to consistently and systematically work toward developing women's engagement in work organizations, governing bodies,¹⁰ and socio-political organizations. Only in this way will we naturally arrive at a higher number of women who are up to the complex tasks with which representative bodies deal. Their place and equal treatment in representative organs will depend on the quality of their work.

Translated by Suzana Vuljevic

¹⁰ Editor's note: The governing body (*organ upravljanja*) refers to a decision-making unit within the self-management system that embodied the idea that "workers had the political right to participate in the running of their enterprises." See Musić, *Making and Breaking the Yugoslav Working Class*, 28.

Olivia Clătici

On the Social Condition of Women

AUTHOR Olivia Clătici

TITLE “Despre condiția socială a femeii” [On the Social Condition of Women]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Era Socialistă* [Socialist Era], no. 9 (1973): 26–28.

LANGUAGE Romanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olivia Clătici (1931, Răstolița–2019) was born in a small village in Transylvania, to a proletarian family. Her father was a railway worker and her mother a stay-at-home wife. The beginning of the Second World War and the 1940 occupation of Northern Transylvania forced her family to seek refuge first in Blaj, then Luduș, to finally settle down in Turda where she was enrolled in the first year of high school in 1942. In Turda, she joined different (not communist or socialist) youth organizations. But the key moment for her future career as a communist activist was the death of her father in 1947. While struggling with extreme poverty and the burden of providing for her baby sister, Clătici made the choice to join the communist cause. In 1948, she became a member of the Association of Romanian Students, and in 1949 she started to work as an activist within the propaganda sector for the regional branch of the communist youth organization in Mureș County. One year later she moved to Bucharest, where she continued her political activity but also her studies at the University of Bucharest, the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology. Her political career stopped abruptly in 1952, when she was excluded from her job as a communist activist. The official reason was a so-called weakness or fault in her personal file, i.e., having an uncle who was living in the United States. She was a collateral victim of the fight for power inside the Romanian Communist Party at the time, which touched not only important communist leaders such as Ana Pauker, but the entire party structure. This exclusion affected her deeply.

A true believer in the communist cause, Olivia Clătici thought that activism was the only solution to build the inclusive, egalitarian society promised by the new regime. Therefore, she was more than happy to resume her political activity in 1956, when she became a member of the Communist Party and continued her work as secretary within different party structures at the Bucharest Institute of Oil and Gas and later at the University of Bucharest, as secretary responsible for propaganda and organization until December 1989. Between 1953 and 1989, Olivia Clătici taught courses on scientific socialism.

In her memoirs, Clătici expressed few regrets regarding her political involvement within the Romanian Communist Party, with one notable exception—her activity as vice president and later member of the National Committee, or leading board, of the communist women's mass organization (Consiliul Național al Femeilor). Her busy schedule and the limited power of the Council prevented her from developing the egalitarian politics she hoped for: equal division of domestic work between partners, subsidized childcare programs such as before/after school programs, promotion opportunities for all working women, etc. As a sociologist, Clătici became particularly interested in the topic of feminized industries. She analyzed the harsh working conditions present in many Romanian factories, but also in agriculture. As a critical response to the propaganda materials praising Elena Ceaușescu and the party's success in promoting more women into leadership, Clătici started to publish a series of articles under the title "Anonimele" (The Anonymous) in *Femeia* (The Woman), the main women's magazine at the time. Each article presented a portrait of anonymous but successful women in their field of activity: factory workers, manual workers, teachers, nurses, etc. Finally, in 1973, she published the article "Despre condiția socială a femeii" (On the Social Condition of Women).

After the fall of the communist regime, Clătici stopped her political activity, but continued her academic and publishing projects. In the new political context, topics such as Marxism-Leninism and scientific socialism disappeared from the curriculum. Olivia Clătici adapted to the change and taught sociology, publishing important papers in the sociology of law.

Clătici married young and had two children. Instead of being an obstacle in her political and professional career, having a family that shared all the household responsibilities inspired Clătici to address the problem of the double and triple burden and the absence of state mechanisms that could alleviate it. She also found inspiration in her work as secretary responsible for organization within the University of Bucharest. The position was similar to that of a manager. The holder was in charge of the management of personnel, enrolled students, and the university infrastructure. In the post-communist period, it is not this part of her work as a communist activist which is remembered, but her position of secretary responsible for propaganda. Several important anti-communist intellectuals had met her during their university studies and later criticized her inflexibility in applying the party's regulations. In her memoirs, Clătici explained that the hate speech against her represented a rejection of the communist authority for which she stood, and not a reaction to her work as a manager and an academic.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Societatea de consum. Mit și realitate* [Consumer Society: Myth and Reality] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1974); with Ion Ardeleanu and Maria Anghel, *Cunoștințe social-politice* [Socio-Political Knowledge] (Bucharest: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1986);

Elemente de sociologie generală și juridică [Aspects of General Sociology and of the Sociology of Law] (Bucharest: Editura Universității Ecologice, 1999); *Opțiuni politice... Experiențe politice* [Political Choices... Political Experiences] (Bucharest: Casa de Editură și Librărie “Nicolae Bălcescu,” 2007); *Amintiri, întâmplări, destine* [Memories, Events, Destinies] (Bucharest: Estfalia, 2011); *Nu privesc înapoi cu mânie* [I Don’t Look Back with Anger] (Râmnicu Vâlcea: Bibliostar, 2011); *Nimic important... niște femei. Povestiri* [Nothing Important... Some Women: Stories] (Bucharest: Estfalia, 2017).

Luciana Jinga

CONTEXT

Ensuring equality between men and women was one of the priorities of the new, pro-communist government after August 23, 1944. Even before winning the elections and adopting the first communist constitution in 1948, Romanian women benefited from important decisions such as the right to vote from 1946 and the abolition of all restrictions concerning their access on the labor market. A strong signal had been the appointment in February 1945 of the first two women as magistrates in the Romanian justice system, Sanda G. M. Solomon and Yolanda Eminescu.¹ Also, in April 1945, Alexandrina Georgescu became the first woman elected as mayor in Țândărei,² a village in a poor agricultural region in southern Romania. The equality between women and men in all spheres of economic, social, and political life was stipulated for the first time in the 1948 Constitution: “All citizens, irrespective of gender, nationality, race, religion, culture, are equal before the law.” The first communist Labor Code was introduced in 1950 and included two important regulations for women. The first one was the principle of equal pay for equal work, regardless of age, sex, or nationality. The second was more substantial and was dedicated entirely to labor safety for new and expectant mothers. They were to be removed from any work (including night shifts) that could endanger pregnancy, and offered suitable alternative work at the same rate of pay. Other measures included thirty-five days of paid time for antenatal care and fifty-five days of maternity leave. After returning to work, all new mothers, according to the law, had the right to take a half-hour break every three hours for breastfeeding. Mothers with toddlers under the age of two were allowed to take special sick leave to attend to a sick child.³

Special protection for women employees, mothers, and mothers-to-be had been one of the highlights of communist propaganda in the interwar period. Therefore, the

1 “Primele femei magistrați din România” [First Women Magistrates in Romania], *România Liberă*, no. 171 (February 19, 1945): 3.

2 “Prima femeie primar din România” [The First Woman Mayor in Romania], *România Liberă*, no. 216 (April 12, 1945): 1.

3 Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare*, 210–14.

labor laws from 1950 represented a kept promise. Introducing the concept of equal pay for equal work was a major step forward, a real policy of inclusion, establishing equal opportunities for male and female employees. In comparison, the long-awaited maternity protection plan proved to be a Trojan horse, used by both the Party and managers whenever they needed to regulate the labor market. During the Stalinist years, when men-dominated fields like the judiciary, the military, or transportation were opened to women, the Romanian Communist Party declared that equality between men and women had been established for good. Nevertheless, practice proved that for the Romanian socialist society women remained closely connected to their biological condition. The subsequent legislative measures defined the working woman as a working mother.

In 1972, a new Labor Code was introduced. This new law came after the implementation of pronatalist policies in October 1966, and most of the changes regarded only women employees. The package of measures to protect future mothers was extended, albeit in practice only few of these measures had been respected. For example, women were removed from some areas of activity in which they had entered, such as working underground or in the navy, but those working in the industrial sector, for example in textiles, kept working night shifts, even though night work was strictly limited by law.⁴ An innovation was the possibility for young mothers to suspend their activity for six consecutive years without losing their position or seniority. In practice, managers refused to give women this time off.

The same law brought a narrower definition of how the state calculated the salary of Romanian employees. The principle of equal pay for equal work had been kept, along with a national unitary remuneration plan that made no difference between men and women employees. The novelty was the retribution according to a complexity and efficiency-based approach. If an employee produced more than the daily/monthly norm, he/she could earn more, but also lose their rightful salary in case of failure. The law did not include any disclaimer for young mothers that took breastfeeding breaks or days off for attending to a sick child. The retribution also depended on the complexity and the degree of responsibility implied by the task, a principle that favored employees with high skills and those in management positions, mostly men. Corroborated, all these measures led to a visible pay gap and discrimination for women employees, especially those working in different industrial fields.⁵

As a direct effect, managers became reluctant to hire women, especially young women, fearing instability due to permanent staff rotation. In case of a pregnancy, they had to remove a skilled worker and place her in a different position, most of the time an inferior one, for which she had neither the experience nor the necessary

4 Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare*, 210–14.

5 Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare*, 246–50.

knowledge. Anticipating all the perturbation, most managers preferred to place the newcomers at first in inferior, unskilled positions. As a consequence, they were paid less and had fewer chances to obtain a management position than a man coworker with the same skills and education. The situation is depicted in numerous internal reports by the women's mass organization, though no official complaint was ever presented to Party leaders.⁶

Moreover, a female candidate for a decision-making position had to make herself noticed not only by her commitment to the communist cause, but also by an exceptional professional activity and a steady involvement as member in different mass organizations (youth, trade union, and women's organizations). An ordinary manual worker could never have reached such a political profile. Moreover, despite the progressive postwar legislation, Romanian society preserved its patriarchal beliefs. Women remained the main caregivers in their families, responsible for domestic work and for caring for the young and elderly. Young men were advised to share the burden of housework, but surveys published in the women's press showed that only few acted accordingly.⁷ Public services such as dry cleaning or restaurants offering take-away meals were scarce in the cities and were lacking completely in the countryside. Last but not least, pronatalist policies did not include a coherent plan for expanding the school system in order to properly accommodate the generations born after 1966, when the number of births more than doubled. The architectural design used to build most Romanian schools did not include a cafeteria or dedicated rooms for an afterschool program. More than that, crowded institutions organized a daily schedule where pupils came to school in three shifts, from 7am until 8pm, with an average school day of only four hours. Lunch was provided only in some kindergartens. As for the nurseries, the network was significantly developed during the 1970s, but the conditions offered were so poor that attendance rarely reached 10% of their capacity.⁸

In 1973 and 1976, the Romanian Communist Party passed several laws to increase female participation in all fields of activity and especially in politics. A gender representation quota for women, 25% of all decision-making positions (including for the Romanian Communist Party), was introduced. Until the fall of the communist regime, in December 1989, the target had not been reached, with one important exception, the percentage of women among party members, which went up to 36% in 1989.⁹

6 See the magazines *Femeia* [The Woman] and *Femeia muncitoare* [The Working Woman] for the period 1945–1980.

7 Bucur and Miroiu, *Birth of Democratic Citizenship*, 44.

8 Doboș, "Evoluția sistemului de creșe."

9 "Hotărârea Plenarei Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român cu privire la creșterea rolului femeii în viața economică" [Decision of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Concerning the Larger Participation of Women in the Romanian Economy], June 18–19, 1973, published in *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 96, July 4, 1973.

The source, albeit summarizing, addresses the main discriminatory situations women, and especially working, women faced in Communist Romania during the 1970s and 1980s. Olivia Clătici does not go against the official propaganda that presented mothers as the main caregivers in the family, but makes a public plea for an equal division of the tasks, better childcare services, larger and diversified retail, cafeteria, and laundry infrastructure, and more educational programs for women. Clătici shows that the severe imbalance between partners' involvement in the household triggers the discrimination of women on the labor market. The text points out the reluctance of managers to hire and promote working women, mothers, or potential mothers. The embedded patriarchal perception of women only as workers, never managers, is identified and criticized from the perspective of state policy, and of a state that was incapable of implementing its own laws.

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Luciana Jînga

* * *

Olivia Clătici

On the Social Condition of Women

[...] Providing the right to work to all citizens on a democratic basis, the socialist order has created vast opportunities for women to express their talents, as well as professional, organizational, and intellectual capabilities in all spheres of social life. At present, women are industrial workers, skilled farmers, teachers, doctors, engineers, researchers, etc.; they are dynamic actors in social life, while at the same time tending to their preoccupations as housewives, mothers, and wives [...] The conditions necessary for women to learn and exercise professions formerly inaccessible to them were created.

Women well-respected in their work collectives are skillfully and responsibly running people's councils, collective farms, factories, schools, research institutes; they are deputies in the Great National Assembly. The woman as wife, mother, wage worker enjoys protection under the law, as well as appreciation and respect.

However, one cannot consider that the solutions to realize equal opportunities for women and men in practice have reached their terminus, or that there are no longer issues that call for firmer action to turn women's equal rights as set out by law into everyday reality, across all sectors and levels of social life [...]

It is our intention to bring to your attention some persistent negative phenomena, which deserve careful thought and, most of all, practical action, actual solutions.

The woman: wife and mother

[...] To support women as mothers and to provide good quality education to the young generation, a series of actions, both short-term and long-term, should be taken to intensify the program to build crèches, kindergartens, study rooms,

school cafeterias, and boarding schools. Voluntary individual money contributions and some funding from the local institutions of the state could be directed with priority to building such facilities. In addition, with the growth of schooling capacity, a lunch program should be gradually introduced in schools, in exchange for a reasonable money contribution, as well as an after-school program where trained teachers would supervise students while they do their homework. This would also greatly help with promoting social equality, providing all students with increasingly equal possibilities for free time organization and for schooling.

[...] Mothers' educational duties could be better realized with the support of women's councils at the level of neighborhoods and villages, of teachers, as well as by further developing the program of women's learning groups where they could debate pedagogical issues, or even clarify some subjects in the curriculum—especially in the primary school curricula. Also more high-quality TV and radio programs that address the family and highly topical issues could be created. The producers of programs for women and family audiences could approach major topics more consistently, thus avoiding the limitation of these programs to what is known as *presse de cœur*.

[...] Without meaning to offend poets and filmmakers, I believe they could reflect on the image of the woman as mother and wife that they produce in their work. Indeed, the image of a tired woman in front of the crib where a tiny person is fighting pain, or of a pile of laundry that, in a few days' or hours' span, must look fresh on young, growing bodies might not feel very "artistic" but it is real-life experience, with its own poetry and beauty.

[...] To make domestic work easier the service sector is to be developed, at reasonable prices, to include the workplace; in addition, grocery shopping should be available close to the workplace and home.

[...] Having women participate in a diversity of paid work, social, and family activities has generated for them—in addition to positive effects—an overload of duties that leads to fatigue and exhaustion, often to the detriment of focusing on the children's education and continuing their own professional, political, and general education. Sociological surveys have revealed that women work an average of two to four more hours than men per day.

[...] Poor management in some work sectors, practices such as fulfilling the plan in a last-minute rush¹⁰ and doing overtime—which the Party combats but continues to occur often in some enterprises—or using up the employees' time outside of work with activities insufficiently well designed to impact the distribution of family tasks, deprive the wife of her husband's help with domestic work and children's

¹⁰ Editor's note: The original Romanian phrase is most probably translated from the Soviet concept of *sbturmovshchina*.

education, and even generate tension within family relations. At the same time, these managerial shortcomings translate for women wage workers into an unbalanced management of their time and, more worryingly, into serious obstacles in carrying out their professional activities. Some enterprise and institution managers are reluctant, even hostile, when it comes to hiring women, precisely because women are often constrained by the schedules of schools, crèches, and kindergartens, and therefore cannot easily engage in such activities.

Women participating in the social and economic life

[...] Referring to the role of women in production, the Party leadership pointed out recently that firmer efforts should be made to promote women to positions of responsibility to reflect their weight in the mass of employees and the general population, as well as their training and skills.

Promoting women to positions of responsibility is so far occurring at a very slow pace. There are ample examples of this at all levels of social life. Surprisingly, the care for not overburdening women is invoked when blocking their promotion; the same people who do not hesitate to engage women in genuinely time-consuming, unpaid activities fail to improve women's social status and to offer them increased possibilities to participate in running enterprises and society. Between two candidates for promotion, who have the same level of education, experience, and skills, it is a common practice to prefer the man, arguing that he is the more energetic, as he has no "burdens" to take up his time.

Despite all the measures taken to implement the Party's instructions, there continue to be enterprises where the employees are predominantly women—light industry in particular—but the manager, the secretary of the Party organization, and the trade-union president are men. There are too few women in the management bodies, their presence being sometimes purely formal. [...] In higher education, at the lower levels—lecturers and assistants—the women to men ratio is balanced, with women even dominating in some departments. From the level of associate professor upwards however, we notice a sudden change, with women being very much in the minority, while at the level of professorships, women become a rarity. Before the latest elections for academic councils and senates, there was not one woman rector and only a handful of women pro-rectors or deans. In collective farming, although it is unanimously acknowledged that most of the work is carried out by women, the majority of collective farm brigadiers, chairmen, and accountants are men.

[...] The Party leadership has also pointed out the need to expand work from home and to have it carried out predominantly by women, thus enabling them, in addition to earning a steady income, to better care for their children. Such

measures, coupled with social and cultural actions to help women keep up with the pace of change and not be left behind in social and political activity, could prove very useful.

[...] While generally damaging for their work capacity, commuting has even more negative effects on women, affecting, among others, their time budget. This is compounded by the poor management of public transportation in some cities. Implementing certain provisions of the law on the administration of the state's housing stock, creating a housing stock for each enterprise, concluding a lease as an addendum to the employment contract would solve, we believe, some of these problems and have positive consequences on the stability of labor.

To offer mothers the possibility to work part-time for a period of time, enterprises must be granted more liberty in hiring temporary employees for the positions of those women who are on maternity leave or have asked for unpaid leave or an extended period of working part-time in order to care for their small children, provided that, on their return, the women should be rehired in their former positions.

[...] The Women's National Council could take a more active role representing, researching, and solving the various problems that women employees, mothers, and wives face, and improve the social conditions in which women carry out their activities. Having seen its role wrongly diminished for a while now, this mass organization has particularly important responsibilities in social and political life. A series of legal initiatives from this organization are salutary and could have a wide reach in the future. Having the organization represent the government could, in my opinion, also be worth considering.

Translated by Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

Vera Veskovik-Vangeli

Women in History

AUTHOR Vera Veskovik-Vangeli (interviewed by Bora Đorđević)

TITLE “Prva Makedonka doktor znanosti: Matrijarhat tek dolazi” [The First Macedonian Woman Obtaining a PhD: Matriarchy Is Yet to Come]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Start* (Zagreb), no. 136 (April 10, 1974): 18–20.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian / Croatian-Serbian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vera Veskovik-Vangeli¹ (1933, Veles–2007, Skopje) was a Macedonian historian of women’s and gender history. Born and raised in the town of Veles, she moved to the Macedonian capital Skopje to study. She graduated in history from the Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje in 1957 and continued her studies by enrolling in a doctoral program at the Humboldt University in (East) Berlin. After defending her dissertation entitled “The influence of the German proletarian women’s movement on the Yugoslav countries from the 1870s until the end of the First World War,”² she received her doctorate in 1974. At that time, she was among the few Macedonian scholars who researched local history with the aim of including women as active subjects of historical processes, and throughout her career she became known for her work on women’s and gender history.

Crucial for Veskovik-Vangeli’s career was her employment at the Institute of National History in Skopje as early as 1960. One of the very first projects entrusted to her was the collection of documentation on the participation of Macedonian women in the Yugoslav People’s Liberation Struggle (1941–1945), the Communist-led anti-fascist resistance. The Central Board of the Women’s Antifascist Front (AFŽ)³ of Yugoslavia established the Commission for the Collection and Processing of Historical Materials in 1950. This commission organized and oversaw the collection of documents on the history of the progressive movement of women in Yugoslavia since the turn of the century, while the republican units of the AFŽ and its successors⁴ were supposed to carry

¹ Her maternal surname appeared in transliterations also as Veskovic or Vesković.

² “Der Einfluß der deutschen proletarischen Frauenbewegung auf die Entwicklung der proletarischen Frauenbewegung in den jugoslawischen Ländern von den 70er Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des ersten Weltkrieges,” Doctoral Dissertation, Humboldt University, Berlin, German Democratic Republic, 1974.

³ Antifašistička fronta žena (in Serbo-Croatian), Antifašistički front na ženite (in Macedonian), and Protifašistična fronta žensk (in Slovenian).

⁴ The Women’s Antifascist Front changed its name as well as its organizational structure and status within the state apparatus five times during its existence (until 1990).

out its plans. When the republican units lacked the capacity for such extensive projects, they made agreements with other research institutions. At the same time, they participated in the implementation of these projects in an advisory role, which was exactly the case in Macedonia from 1963 onwards.⁵ Until 1977, each republican branch published at least one collection of either documents or memoirs. Vera Vesković-Vangeli, in cooperation with Maria Jovanović, edited the *Collection of Documents on the Participation of Women in Macedonia in the People's Liberation War and Revolution: 1941–1945* in 1976. This collection is divided into two main parts: the first consists of thematic sections of the archival documentation showing various forms of women's participation in the resistance movement on the territory of Macedonia, and the second part lists short biographical notes on almost six thousand women.

Almost two decades later, Vesković-Vangeli coordinated another collection which focused on the wartime activities of the Women's Antifascist Front of Macedonia, established in 1943. The two collections are fundamental for any research on women's and gender history in Macedonia during the Second World War.

In her own research, conducted both during the existence of socialist Yugoslavia and after its collapse, Vesković-Vangeli focused mainly on the social position and emancipation of Macedonian women throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. All her publications show that elements of a feminist approach to history were present among the older generation of Yugoslav historians, even if not formulated explicitly as such.⁶

In the period 1994–1996, Vesković-Vangeli was vice-rector of her alma mater, the Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, a position in which it is still rare to find women. The changes caused by the transition from socialism to capitalism and the breakup of Yugoslavia greatly influenced her research. Until the end of her career in the mid-2000s, she focused on the processes that led to the deterioration of the social position of women and the return to stereotypical patriarchal roles in Macedonian society.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • with Marija Jovanović, eds., *Zbornik na dokumenti za učestvoto na ženite od Makedonija vo narodnoosvobodilnata vojna i revolucijata: 1941–1945* [Collection of Documents on the Participation of Women in Macedonia in the People's Liberation War and Revolution: 1941–1945] (Skopje: Institut za nacionalna istorija; Konferencija za opštestvena aktivnost na ženite na Makedonija, 1976); *Ženata vo revolucijata na Makedonija: 1941–1945* [Women in the Macedonian Revolution: 1941–1945] (Skopje: Institut za nacionalna istorija; Zavod za napreduvanje na stopanstvoto vo SRM, 1982); edited texts by Vida Tomšić: *Ženata i opštestvoto: Izbor statii* [Women and Society: Selection of Texts] (Skopje: Misl, 1987); *Ženata vo osloboditelnite borbi na Makedonija*

5 Hadjievska, "Political Advancement of Women," 54–55.

6 de Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, "Introduction."

(1893–1945) [The Woman in the Liberation Battles in Macedonia (1893–1945)] (Skopje: Kultura, 1990); *Antifašističkiot front na ženite na Makedonija (1943–1945): zbornik na dokumenti* [The Women's Antifascist Front of Macedonia: (1943–1945): Collection of Documents] (Skopje: Organizacija na ženite na Makedonija–Odbor za odbeležuvanje 50 godini na AFŽ–Globus, 1994); *Ženata vo vitelot na antagonizmot na tradicijata* [Women in the Whirlpool of Antagonism to Tradition] (Veles: Društvo za nauka i umetnost, 1999); “Kostadina Bojadjieva Nasteva-Rusinska,” “Veselinka Malinska,” “Haim Estreya Ovadya,” and “Rosa Plaveva,” in *Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Francisca de Haan, Krasimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006).

Iva Jelušić

CONTEXT

Vera Vesković-Vangeli was among the first women outside of the cultural scene who agreed to speak with a journalist from the magazine *Start*, published by the major publishing company *Vjesnik* in Croatia, Yugoslavia. The insistence of the editorial board on journalistic content laced with sex and sexism and generously decorated with women's bare breasts was far beyond the generally accepted norms of decency in 1969, when the magazine came into existence. Because of the “law on kitsch (*zakon o šundu*),”⁷ its transformation from a “magazine for truck drivers” into one combining erotica with serious journalistic content, including social criticism and the voice of neo-feminists,⁸ started in the beginning of 1973.⁹ Sexism remained a feature of the magazine, and gender stereotyping was clearly visible also in 1974 when the interview with Vesković-Vangeli was published. Thus, the journalist Bora Đorđević, who interviewed Vesković-Vangeli, in the very first sentence of the introduction, informed the readership that his interlocutor, the first Macedonian woman to obtain a doctorate in history from the internationally renowned Humboldt University of Berlin, does not correspond at all to “the usual idea of a (male) scientist.” He continued by describing how she is physically attractive, while at the same time an extremely educated and successful woman.

Vesković-Vangeli had just defended her doctoral dissertation about the influence of the German proletarian women's movement on the Yugoslav countries in the late

7 This law, with the full name “Law on Amendments on the Republican Tax on Retail Goods” (*Zakon o izmenama i dopunama o republičkom porezu na promet robe na malo*), was enacted in Serbia at the beginning of 1972. In the following years it became part of the legal regulation of the media in the other republics as well. Its primary purpose was to discourage the publication of all kinds of art and media products that could be deemed artistically inferior or morally questionable.

8 See entries on Jasenka Kodrnja, Vesna Kesić, and Slavenka Drakulić in this volume, and Lóránd, “Engaged or Critical: *Start*”, in *The Feminist Challenge*, 153–157.

9 For more about *Start*, see Jelušić, “*Start*'s ‘Sexual Swashbucklers’ and ‘Our Girl’ Ideology”; Biljana Žikić, “Dissidents Liked Pretty Girls: Nudity, Pornography, and Quality Press in Socialism,” *Medijska istraživanja* 16 (2010): 53–71.

nineteenth and early twentieth century. Yet, the journalist did not ask a single question about that topic. Instead, he asked her questions related to women's history that were general, a bit sensationalistic, and tended to reify well-known gender stereotypes. For instance, Veskovik-Vangeli's final message in the interview described a future in which women would achieve ultimate freedom. Nodding to the widespread misrepresentation of feminists as wanting to subjugate men, the journalist misconstrued this message in the title of the interview, which, perhaps even in a ridiculing manner, referred to the arrival of "matriarchy." His approach to the subject gives the impression of a man who had just realized that women are part of history.

The generation of women who were active in the People's Liberation Struggle that led to the establishment of the Yugoslav Federation in 1945—and particularly those who organized and led the Women's Antifascist Front, both independently and in cooperation with historical institutions—researched, spoke, wrote, and published about the history of women's struggles for political participation, particularly within the workers' movement, including women's participation in the Second World War. This tradition of writing women's history had developed since the early postwar years. It emerged from the publishing activity of the republican AFŽ units and its successors. Each republican unit published a women's magazine that, especially in the first postwar years, represented an important source for women's history. They, moreover, published collections of documents, annotated bibliographies of pre- and post-war women's magazines, and collected oral histories, that is, sources that were considered relevant for future historians.¹⁰ By working on the 1976 *Collection of Documents on the Participation of Women in Macedonia in the People's Liberation War and Revolution*, Veskovik-Vangeli joined the by then standard practice of researching women's history. In connection, throughout her research career she aimed to present women as active contributors to historical processes. In the case of the People's Liberation Struggle in Macedonia, they were not just wives and mothers, but Partisan nurses and fighters, communist activists and politicians, prisoners and victims, that is to say, participants in state-building process equal to men.

The Yugoslav tradition of historiography about women stemmed from the awareness, shared by both historians and officials of women's organizations, that women's contributions and memories need to be written down, catalogued, and preserved for posterity, as an integral but also distinct part of mainstream history. This can also be deduced from the interview with Veskovik-Vangeli. Though fully devoted to the women's emancipation project and its values, such historiography was positivist in its method, generally dealt with political and public histories (not private ones) and had an essentialist understanding of womanhood. For these reasons, it has become commonplace to claim that it was only the Yugoslav representatives of neo-feminism

10 See Jelušić, *Gender and War in the Yugoslav Media*.

(most notably Lydia Sklevicky) who inscribed the image of women into domestic history.¹¹ However, it would be fair to state that Sklevicky's genuine contribution was rather in applying contemporary structural feminist epistemology (including the concept of gender)¹² to the local history of women that was already established as a research topic. Both of these traditions of feminist approaches to history-writing were developing in parallel, sometimes independently, sometimes in communication with Western second-wave feminism, which had advocated "writing women into history" since the late 1960s and argued that historiography needed to start researching women, gender, and private life.

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Iva Jelušić and Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc¹³

* * *

Vera Veskovik-Vangeli The First Macedonian Woman Awarded a PhD: Matriarchy Is Yet to Come

*Dr. Vera Vesković-Vangeli, the first Macedonian woman to receive a PhD in history, on the woman of the past and the aspirations of her contemporaries.*¹⁴

"Authors who have discussed the role of women in the past were more interested in courtesans than in women revolutionaries—in order to avoid the truth that the woman too is a human!"

Vera Veskovik-Vangeli, the first Macedonian woman to earn the academic degree Doctor of History, on the outside does not at all resemble the usual idea of a scientist. Charming and cheerful, with a smile and a somehow noticeable honesty, she speaks about her calling and job, where, she says, the most difficult thing for her is meeting journalists who also tend to exaggerate some of her achievements.

She dresses sporty, and that gives her appearance a special charm, which becomes even more prominent in the simple office (she complains that she cannot hang a picture on the wall, let alone flowers, because the director has prohibited any nails being driven into the new, but uncomfortably white walls).

She recently defended her doctoral dissertation at the renowned Humboldt University in East Berlin. It was the result of years of research, titled "The Impact of the German Women's Proletarian Movement on the Development of the Women's

¹³ Contribution of Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc is a result of the research program "Historical interpretations of the 20th century" (P6-0347) financed by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

¹⁴ Editor's note: The interview includes a photo of Vera Veskovik-Vangeli in front of a typewriter, with the caption "Vera Vesković-Vangeli: Every woman can be a hero! But can every man be a hero? I don't believe so!"

Proletarian Movement in the Yugoslav Lands, from the 1870s to the End of the First World War.”

“Nothing has changed significantly in my life after this title,” says the Doctor, who was born in Skopje, modestly and without any irritation by the curious journalistic questions, adding “What can I say about myself? I love to work—that’s it.”

Vera Vesković-Vangeli loves automobilism, adores skiing, and has no hobbies.

“My hobby,” she adds cheerfully, “is my family.”

I’m interested in what was decisive in her choice of the dissertation topic.

“It all came about spontaneously. I was working on a collection of documents about the widespread participation of Macedonian women in the People’s Liberation Struggle. This aroused my research curiosity, so I kept exploring further in order to find all those elements in the history of our people that acted so that this great engagement of women in the revolution could occur. I could not stop thinking about the fact that in the interwar period, according to the laws of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which were in effect in Macedonia, women were literally classified together with the feeble-minded and infants...”

The Bogomils Rejected the Myth of Adam’s Rib

“By studying Cosma the Presbyter, Anna Komnene, and other sources, I found irrefutable evidence of the widespread involvement of women back in the anti-feudal Bogomilist movement.¹⁵ According to those sources, the Bogomils believed that woman and man are one creation. They rejected the myth of Adam’s rib and therefore fanned the ember of freedom that was smoldering in a woman following the loss of her fundamental human rights—with the emergence of the patriarchy. The participation of a woman in this movement was a step further in the struggle for her emancipation, because it was made evident that a woman can fight side-by-side with a man. Unfortunately, that movement was not strong enough to destroy the existing patriarchal traditions of feudal society.”

—Folklore recalls the existence of female hajduks [*hajdučice*].¹⁶ What does historical science know about them?

“The oldest information that I used is from a Turkish document from 1636, and speaks about the [female] hajduk Kira, from the village of Capari in the Bitola

15 Editor’s note: The Bogomils were adherents of an early Christian sect that was widespread in the Balkans in the early Middle Ages. Cosma the Presbyter was a tenth-century Bulgarian priest and writer who documented the Bogomils. Anna Komnene (1083–1153) was a Byzantine princess.

16 Editor’s note: *Hajduk*, pl. *hajduci* (in Serbo-Croatian), were outlaws who robbed Ottoman dignitaries and were celebrated as rebels in Balkan folklore. In Macedonian: m. *ajduk*, f. *ajdučka*.

region. There are indications that there were women in the first hajduk companies [*četa*], especially on the territory of Macedonia, and that their heroism and sacrifice has been preserved in folk tradition—folklore, poems, and legends, like in the one about *Vojvoda* Rumena.¹⁷ The fact that members of the hajduk companies accepted women without [inferiority] complexes—and that there were women leaders, *harambaše*—only confirms my old conclusion that women demonstrated great resilience in those struggles, greater than their male comrades.”

—Of all the female characters that you have become acquainted with in the course of your research, you surely have special appreciation for some and point them out as examples of courage and persistence. Who are they?

“There are many of them. The thirst for freedom was never extinguished in the disenfranchised woman. At every favorable moment, whenever she could manifest this desire, she took concrete action. History is full of such examples: Joan of Arc, Louise Michel, Cristine Peutschel, and here the Ninković sisters, Giuseppina Martinuzzi, the teacher from Labin, Ana Delić, [Zofka] Demetrović [Kveder], Cana Jovanović.¹⁸

In Macedonia, women widely took part in the Ilinden Uprising.¹⁹ This impressive phenomenon stands out on its own as a research topic. They appeared at their own initiative, established various revolutionary associations, and offered their assistance, being already organized, to the revolutionary organization. There was widespread participation of women from rural areas, and teachers stood out as organizers. All the things that these brave participants in the Uprising did for their people’s righteous struggle can hardly be put into words.

I can’t single out any one woman from this pleiad of the bold, but I hold in especially high regard the work of Clara Zetkin, [Alexandra] Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg, Malina Popivanova...”²⁰

17 Editor’s note: *Vojvoda*, also spelled *voivoda*, *wojewoda*, etc. is a title denoting a military leader or warlord in Central, Southeastern, and Eastern Europe in use since the early Middle Ages.

18 Editor’s note: Louise Michel (1830–1905) was a teacher and important figure in the Paris Commune. Milica (1854–1881) and Anka (1855–1923) Ninković were Serbian feminists active in the early socialist movement, educated at the University of Zurich. Giuseppina Martinuzzi (1844–1925) was a leading figure in the Women’s Socialist Circle in Trieste. Zofka Kveder (1878–1926) was a Slovene writer who advocated for the emancipation of women. The last name probably refers to Spasenija Cana Babović (1908–1977), the Yugoslav Communist activist, Partisan woman soldier (*partizanka*), and AFŽ activist.

19 Editor’s note: The Ilinden Uprising was an organized revolt against the Ottoman Empire, which took place in regions which now comprise North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey in 1903.

20 Editor’s note: Mentioned alongside prominent names from the global history of Marxist thought and political activism is Malina Popivanova (1902–1954), the Macedonian/Yugoslav and Soviet communist activist.

Every Woman Can Be a Hero

—I cannot avoid putting one question to the woman who studies history, because it is related to women: Could we state that the role of women in humankind's past has been under- or at least one-sidedly researched? We know the most about the lovers of celebrated military commanders, emperors, kings...

“That is true. The authors who addressed the role of women the most in the past were also primarily interested in courtesans, and very little in women revolutionaries, and that is most likely so that they could avoid the truth that needed to be admitted—that a woman is a human!”

—Have you also been interested in the position of women in the vacillation between duty and love? What was stronger?

“The sentimental life of women revolutionaries was always pushed aside, which does not exclude the fact that they were also gentle wives and wonderful mothers. Clara Zetkin always said that a woman—while gaining all her rights—should not be deprived of the attributes that make her a woman!”

—Do you believe that here women have achieved equality?

“A woman's aspiration for emancipation, the complete liberation of her person, as a being completely free to decide its own future, without parental or tutorial intervention, is continuous. Only socialist society can achieve that aspiration. But, without the emancipated man, there is no emancipated woman—and that is most often forgotten. Lenin said that equality before the law for a woman does not mean equality in life. This thought of his is still very timely for us.”

—Do women have some characteristics according to which they should be given an advantage over men?

“They do! For me, the fact that women are predetermined to create and raise new generations in itself is something exceptional and full of responsibility. Perhaps that is the reason why women are more noble and more consistent fighters for the truth!”

—Does that mean that all women can be heroes?

“They can, I’m convinced of that. And let me ask you—can all men be heroes? I don’t believe so.”

Men Are also Jealous

Vera Vesković-Vangeli believes that the Russian writer and theorist Chernyshevsky was among the first to point out a women’s ability to exist autonomously and placed them—for the time in which he lived—in a new dimension by attributing women characteristics that had previously been considered men’s. She points out that among contemporary authors she especially likes how Sartre writes about women.²¹

“Our self-managed socialist society has still not helped women enough,” Dr. Vangeli concludes. “It is necessary to free them more from obligations in the family, enable them to commit more to their job, and make it possible for them to completely develop their personality. Raising children requires an entire person, and that is given little thought when women are discussed declaratively.”

I asked her whether she minds that we see women naked increasingly often—because of fashion, art, and even the style of the time in which we live.

“In principle I don’t mind it. But I don’t like the vulgarization of a woman’s naked body—and that exists on film, in newspapers, everywhere. Only the Renaissance succeeded in showing the entire beauty of the woman, and incomparably better than any epoch of humankind, including ours!”²²

Dr. Vangeli is also slightly angry with our women—when they are not consistent in demanding their rights. It seems to her that men are also jealous of women when they achieve remarkable results. She is convinced that contemporary marriage should imply, primarily, complete understanding and trust in the woman, who is capable of autonomously planning not only her own future, but also the future of the entire family. And what would she recommend to artists, regarding the past and present of women?

“In order to understand the life of women today, it is necessary to have good knowledge of the past—only then will it become comprehensible what all contemporary women expect of society. It would be necessary for the artist to pay more attention to the personalities of women revolutionaries and their struggle. In the case of men, such topics have not been circumvented.”

21 Editor’s note: Nikolay Chernyshevsky (1828–1889) was a utopian socialist. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) was a French existentialist writer and a lifelong companion of the feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986).

22 Editor’s note: As a counterpoint to this statement, the editor of *Start* accompanied the interview with a large photo of a half-naked woman in a seductive pose, which supposedly illustrates how contemporary art photography “praises women’s beauty,” as the caption states in a sexist manner.

Of course, Dr. Vera Vesković-Vangeli believes that the future and the Atomic Era belong to the woman, but that she comprises a complete personality only together with the man. And she concludes:

“The time is coming when women will be completely free of all their traumas, regulations, and humiliations, and will finally achieve their free being!”

Interview by Bora Đorđević

Translated by Vuk Tošić

Women's Forum

To the Presidium of the 9th Extraordinary Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party

AUTHOR Collective Authorship: National Pre-Congress Women's Forum

TITLE *Do Prezydium IX Nadzwyczajnego Zjazdu PZPR (1981) – list kobiet-delegatek* [To the Presidium of the 9th Extraordinary Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party (1981) – a letter from women delegates]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Unpublished, in the collection of the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The Women's Forum preceding the 9th Extraordinary Party Congress in 1981 was organized by the Council of Polish Women (Krajowa Rada Kobiet Polskich) in July 1981. The Council was an umbrella organization that represented all sections of the women's movement, namely the League of Women (Liga Kobiet), the women's sections of the trade unions, rural women's organizations and the women's section of the cooperative movement. The Council was established in 1966 and dissolved in 1983. Formally, it was part of the National Unity Front (Front Jedności Narodu), but acted rather independently from this structure. In 1981, it was led by Krystyna Gromek. The Council established common goals for the women's movement and managed transnational relations. The Forum—entitled “Women in the Program of the Development of Socialist Democracy, Strengthening the Leading Role of the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) in the Building of Socialism and Socio-economic Stabilization: Opinions, Suggestions, Conclusions”—included seventeen women delegates to the Extraordinary Congress of the PZPR, as well as numerous members of women's organizations and structures, female members of various associations and experts.

Natalia Jarska

CONTEXT

In the summer of 1980, a broad strike movement in Poland led to the creation of the independent trade union Solidarity. Solidarity's quest for multi-dimensional socio-economic reform triggered an internal crisis in Poland's communist party, the Polish United Worker's Party, and critical discussions within it. A considerable group of party members engaged in a reformist movement that arose between late 1980 and

mid-1981, demanding more open internal discussions and the democratization of the electoral process. Many of them also joined Solidarity. The need to consolidate the party in crisis, and discuss its reform and new leadership, led to the 9th Extraordinary PZPR Congress, held in July 1981.

At that point, women from the official umbrella organization—the Council of Polish Women—decided to call a women's forum. The aim was to discuss women's demands in preparation for the 9th Extraordinary Party Congress. Women activists detected a lack of concern for women's issues during the preparation process before the Congress, as well as the low representation of women: only 3% of delegates were women, in spite of earlier attempts to pressure local party committees for the greater inclusion of women. Similarly, attempts to increase women's participation in the party-state administration in the late 1970s were mostly fruitless.

Certainly, women's problems were not specifically addressed by the PZPR during the 1980–81 crisis, nor were they given a response by the leadership of Solidarity. Among the famous twenty-one demands formulated during the shipyard strike in Gdańsk—foundational for Solidarity and included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register—workers demanded three-year paid childcare leave and the expansion of kindergartens. While the Solidarity movement worked towards deep economic and social reforms, embracing a broad range of issues, such as healthcare and education, it did not specifically address women's equality, which has been interpreted by scholars as a sign of the movement's conservatism or patriarchy. Starting in the early 1970s, official policies towards women were embedded in a pronatalist rhetoric: maternity leave was extended from 12 to 16 weeks, unpaid care leave to three years, while the network of childcare facilities grew rather slowly.

Solidarity responded to the economic crisis in Poland—which increasingly affected the everyday lives of all Polish women, who faced additional burdens such as shortages and food rationing—with massive “hunger marches” in Summer 1981. But Solidarity's leadership remained male, and no specific women's section was created until 1989.¹

Within this context, the Forum, which gathered over 100 women from the party and organizations such as the League of Women, the women's sections of the trade unions and the Circles of Rural Housewives, as well as female experts on women's issues, was held on July 8, 1981, and demonstrated the great determination of women activists. At the opening, the participants in the Forum refused to start their meeting until a high-ranking party official was present, in order to avoid, as they argued, the usual negligence of the party leadership toward women's issues. After two hours of negotiations, it was agreed that a women's delegation would meet with a party leader after the Forum to present its conclusions. The Forum's participants also issued

1 About women's role in Solidarity, see Shana Penn, *Solidarity's Secret*.

a letter to the praesidium of the 9th Extraordinary Party Congress. The commission that worked on the document extended its activity beyond the Congress and continued to pressure the Politburo to listen and include women's policies in the program.

Women were critical about the shortcomings in policies and underlined the need to establish real equality. They pointed out that economic and social crises led to the deterioration of women's rights and a backlash against them. A general democratization of the society and of the party itself at that time nevertheless did not embrace women's equality. In another document, issued before the Forum, women activists argued that these processes did not bring any change to women in Poland. However, without addressing the issue of women's equality, full democratization could not be achieved. The Forum's participants criticized the party for its superficial and merely ritualistic approach to women's issues and equality.

The following text speaks about the delegate's demands: inclusion in the decision-making process, the establishment of a women's commission, and changes in the statute of PZPR to guarantee the realization of the principle of equality. These would allow for the inclusion of women's problems into the agenda of the party-state and prevent further backlash. The Forum participants also shared the demand formulated by Solidarity to introduce paid leave, but for mothers and fathers alike. These benefits, although leading to a decrease in women's participation in paid employment, were considered beneficial for women, as they helped to lessen the impact of the double burden and the economic crisis on women's lives. Clearly, women activists did not understand the policy of increasing maternal benefits as contradictory to the demand of greater equality.

Women activists linked this quest for equality with leftist traditions and demanded those to be taken seriously in a communist state. This document stands out as particularly critical. At the same time, the women at the Forum declared support for the party-state's policies against the opposition. While the Forum could not change the composition of the 9th Extraordinary Party Congress, its celebration and address to the delegates paved the way for the inclusion of women's issues and demands in the Congress's deliberations, which started a few days later. The Congress elected the first woman in the postwar period to the Politburo, a worker and member of Solidarity, Zofia Grzyb (b. 1928, Radom). Towards the end of 1981, the Politburo discussed women's issues at a separate meeting, and a women's commission was established in 1981 and operated until 1989.

The case of the Women's Forum in 1981 shows activism for women's equality on the part of women's organization and the communist party members during the political crisis in the years 1980–81. Women took an active part in the process of reshaping the party, in spite of their exclusion from the professed democratization process and increasing conservatism of both the regime and the opposition. It was a struggle over representation in leadership, be it political, administrative, or economic.

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Natalia Jarska

* * *

To the Presidium of the 9th Extraordinary Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party (1981) – a letter from women delegates

Dear Comrades,

We, participants of the National Pre-Congress Women's Forum, met in Warsaw on the initiative of the National Council of Polish Women to discuss important problems troubling society. We have gathered

- **to confirm** the importance of the 9th Extraordinary Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party for the nation and the Party, for the creation of conditions for the appropriate and full implementation of the program of socialist renewal,
- **to emphasize** the hopes of the whole society, and women in particular, that the Congress will make a deep assessment of the past, create guarantees for the observance of the principles of democracy, and show the way that will lead the country out of crisis,

- **to express** our concern about regression in the processes of the implementation of equality for women both in the country and in the Party, proof of which is the disproportionately small number of female delegates at the 9th Extraordinary Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party, while Party members from twelve provinces do not have any women representatives among their delegates,
- **to make** society and the authorities **aware** of the need for and necessity of women's participation in all decisions important for the country, the Party, and women themselves.

We believe that we have the right and duty to present our position at the highest Party forum—the Congress. We represent over half of Polish society, approximately 45% of the total number of people employed in all branches and sectors of the national economy, and 27% of all Party members. During twenty-six years of socialist Poland, we have made a measurable and unquestionable contribution to its economic, social, and cultural development. The systemic transformations after World War II created the conditions for the equal acquisition of knowledge and qualification alongside men, the conditions for the professional and political engagement of women. Today, women possess these qualifications. We account for almost half of all employees with higher education and more than half with secondary education. We work professionally and socially, we organize the life of our families, we operate in the Party and in political organizations, in social organizations.

Our life has never been easy, because social policy did not create conditions for the proper accommodation of our multiple responsibilities. Today, our life, the life of women both in the city and in the countryside, is even more difficult than yesterday. The economic crisis has gone on for too long. The social costs of this state of affairs are constantly rising, and its burdens are borne mainly by women. In cities, time is wasted in queues in the face of constantly depleted supplies. In the countryside, the lack of the means of production and basic communal and social facilities leads to overwork.

The problem of equal rights for women, one of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, a condition for building socialism, has always found its place in the program of the Polish revolutionary movement for one-hundred years. In the discussions before the 9th Extraordinary Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party—despite the increasingly evident regression in the understanding of the need for the active participation of women in all areas of social and political life in the country—this problem did not find its proper place.

Yet insurmountable, traditional, unjustified views on the professional and social predispositions of women cause the omission and neglect of the proper and full

use of their qualifications, knowledge, and experience. A striking example is not only the negligible number of women in the governing bodies of social, economic, and political organizations, but also their elimination from supervisory positions at various levels of management. Therefore, it is necessary to define the proportional participation of women in employee self-government and in the bodies of cooperative and agricultural self-government. The available statistics prove that women are discriminated against in wages, in jobs, and managerial functions equal to that of men.

A number of normative acts are still in force which sanction the worse position of women in relation to men; this is mentioned in the Agenda of the 9th Extraordinary Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party.

Dear Comrades,

By addressing our letter to you, to the delegates of the 9th Party Congress, we write only about some of women's concerns. The weeklies *Kobieta i życie* [Woman and Life], *Przyjaciółka* [Girlfriend], *Zwierciadło* [Mirror], and *Gospodyni* [Housewife] write about others. We expect you to share our view, and by developing the ideological, political, and social directions of the Party's activities, you will ensure the conditions for the realization of the full equality of women. Without the participation of women, socialism cannot be built and the Party's credibility cannot be restored. Therefore, it is essential to provide women with the conditions to express themselves on matters that directly concern them. The situation of making decisions about women's affairs cannot persist without their opinions and their positions;

We demand that women be allowed to participate in the processes of shaping legal and organizational solutions for the implementation of economic reform in Poland. The Office of the Governmental Plenipotentiary for Economic Reform, as well as the ministries, must be obliged to consult and agree with the National Council of Polish Women on all normative acts and decisions in matters relating to women and families.

Work on the law on pensions should take into account the opinion of women that pensions ought to be granted for years of work, and not only for years of life.

Given the conditions of young families' advanced professional activity in the countryside and in the city, it is necessary to develop the network of nurseries and kindergartens further, which was neglected in the 1970s and does not find an appropriate place in the projects on the Agenda of the 9th Congress and in projects of social and economic reform. The decision to introduce a childcare allowance for a mother or a father who interrupts work to raise a young child needs to be accelerated. Young farmers expect a positive response to their demand to

introduce a maternity allowance, which would be the equivalent of maternity leave for employees of the socialized economy.

A program of educational activities for the family and for the protection of children's rights is also needed.

Considering that women make up more than a quarter of the Party's membership, we would like to ask for the establishment, among the expected task committees of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, a Women's Affairs Committee, whose main task would be to inspire solutions and ensure the implementation of the principle of social and political equality of women, and to build the authority of the woman-mother and woman-citizen.

It also seems necessary for us to be interested in Polish science, including commissioning the Institute of the Fundamental Problems of Marxism-Leninism to study the women's question in Poland and to develop appropriate conclusions for practice; this is particularly urgent due to the danger of the withdrawal of women from political activity, ideological confusion, and the mood of bigotry and intolerance in matters of ideology.

We wish all of the delegates to the 9th Extraordinary Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party, including the small group of women, fruitful debate, and to work out a party program that will open a new stage in the social and economic development of our Homeland—a program strengthening the Party and its leading role in the realization of socialism in Poland.

National Pre-Congress Women's Forum

Translated by Anna Topolska

Ina Merkel

Without Women, There Is No State

AUTHOR Ina Merkel

TITLE “Ohne Frauen ist kein Staat zu machen. Einige Frauen-Fragen an ein alternatives Gesellschaftskonzept oder: Manifest für eine autonome Frauenbewegung” [Without Women, There Is No State. Some Women’s Questions Regarding an Alternative Conception of Society, or: Manifesto for an Independent Women’s Movement]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Written in December 1989. First published in *Lila Offensive, Frauen in die Offensive: Texte und Arbeitspapiere der Gruppe “Lila Offensive”* [Women on the Offensive: Texts and Working Papers of the Group “Lila Offensive”] (Berlin: Dietz-Verlag 1990).

LANGUAGE German

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ina Merkel (b. Wriezen, 1957) was born only a few years before the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. She grew up in a period of relative stability in the GDR: Cold War détente, the stabilization of the East-West division through West German Chancellor Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* in 1969, alongside the change in East German leadership from Walter Ulbricht to Erich Honecker in 1971, meant that by the time Merkel was a young adult the social experiments of the early years of state socialism were in retreat. Raised in an educated family, her father a diplomat and mother a teacher, Merkel spent her youth in Potsdam and East Berlin. She received her Abitur (examinations in the final year of high school) in 1976, and from 1976 to 1978 completed an internship at *Junge Welt* (Young World), the official newspaper of the Central Organ of the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ or Free German Youth, the official socialist youth organization). She then became a member of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED, Socialist Unity Party) in 1977. In 1978, after completing her internship, she started studying for a degree in Cultural and Theater Studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin, which she finished in 1983. From 1983 to 1986, Merkel pursued graduate research at the Humboldt, where she submitted her doctoral thesis entitled *Historisch-gesellschaftliche Individualitätsformen und Formen der Vergesellschaftung des Individuums. Kulturtheoretische Studie zur Geschlechtsspezifik individueller Vergesellschaftung* (Socio-Historical Forms of Individuality and Forms of Socialization of the Individual. Cultural-Theoretical Studies on the Gender-Specific Socialization of Individuals) in 1985. During her studies, she participated in the interdisciplinary working group on research into women’s issues led by Professor Irene Dölling, one of the major centers of critical research on gender and feminism in East Germany. Merkel also took on various

official Party functions during her studies, both at the university and within the FDJ. After completing her PhD, Merkel stayed on at the Humboldt as a research assistant in Cultural Studies until 1993.

Merkel first came to prominence within feminist circles in East Germany in late 1989. Although she had not been part of the non-state women's movement or dissident activism more broadly, her work on gender and women's issues under socialism became more critical at this time. For example, in October 1989, when the SED's control over East Germany was waning, Merkel wrote a position paper on the discrimination of women under socialism in the GDR. The next month, Merkel, along with the women's group Lila Offensive (an umbrella group of women from various non-state women's organizations in the GDR) and members of the socialist women's initiative, created the Initiative Committee to Found an Independent GDR Women's Organization. This committee was responsible for organizing the mass women's meeting held at the Berlin Volksbühne on December 3, 1989, which resulted in the foundation of the Unabhängiger Frauenverband (UFV, the Independent Women's Association, one of the largest women's organizations active during the *Wende*). At this meeting, Merkel's paper *Ohne Frauen ist kein Staat zu machen* was read out on stage by actress Walfriede Schmitt. From that point on, the text became a manifesto and slogan for the UFV. In December 1989, Merkel rescinded her SED party membership, and in 1990 stood as a representative for the UFV at the Central Round Table in Berlin, an organization aimed at bringing together the citizen's movement of East Germany with representatives of the SED and socialist organizations in service of political transition. However, in March 1990, Merkel resigned as a representative of the UFV and withdrew from politics. From that point on, she returned to her academic work, where she specialized on the cultural history of the GDR, gender and women's studies, and film and media studies. She spent much of the early 1990s on research trips to the United States, and from 1993 to 1999 worked as a research assistant in the Institute for European Ethnology at the Humboldt University. She completed her Habilitation in 1999, and from 2000 was a Professor for European Ethnology and Cultural Studies at the Philipps University Marburg. She has since retired.

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Jane Freeland

CONTEXT

Although a dissidence movement had been developing in East Germany since the 1960s, by the late 1980s dissent reached new heights. This was largely driven by the rapidly declining economic and political position of the GDR. The stability of the economy had long been buoyed by loans from the West, and East Germany had amassed significant debt in an effort to maintain consumption standards for its citizens.¹ At the mercy of global market forces and with an ever-weakening currency, ongoing and increasing shortages of basic consumer goods fed into popular disillusionment with socialist rule. This alienation was exacerbated by the authoritarian leadership of Erich Honecker. In particular, Honecker’s refusal to implement measures like *glasnost* and *perestroika*, introduced in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s that allowed citizens to criticize the regime and introduced multiple reform measurements within the Soviet system, only underscored how out-of-touch the SED were from the East German population.

With democratic reform taking place in both Poland and Hungary in the summer of 1989, dissent in the GDR increased. The opening of the border between Hungary and Austria, alongside Gorbachev’s promise not to intervene in the sovereignty of socialist states, led to a mass exodus of East Germans to the West via neighboring communist countries. Demonstrations and protests were also becoming more common, as growing numbers of East Germans publicly called for reform and change throughout the fall and winter of 1989. In response to this growing instability, Erich Honecker was removed from office on October 18, 1989, and replaced with Egon Krenz. The change in leadership did little to placate East Germans and dissent, and protest continued to grow. On November 4, one of the largest demonstrations in East German history took place at Berlin’s Alexanderplatz. Three days later, the Prime Minister, the cabinet, and much of the Politburo resigned. Two

¹ Zatlín, *The Currency of Socialism*.

days after that—on November 9—the Berlin Wall fell. In less than a year, Germany would be reunified.²

The speed of these developments meant activists had to work quickly. One such group was Lila Offensive. Formed in East Berlin on October 11, 1989, the group was comprised of women from non-state women's groups (e.g., Women's Group Fennpfuhl), the peace movement, gay and lesbian rights groups (e.g., Lesbians in the Church), and students and academics from Humboldt University. Already at the Alexanderplatz demonstration on November 4, Lila Offensive had handed out leaflets calling for women to get involved in the political transformation and for the political transformation to involve women and women's issues. As their leaflet made clear: "Die Frauenfrage ist kein Randproblem (Women's issues aren't marginal problems)."³ On November 23, the group held their first public meeting at the Gethsemane Church in Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg. This site was fitting for such an event: the protestant church had not only played an important role in creating a space for critical discussion and dissent in East Germany, but the Gethsemane Church was a key site for the growing opposition movement in East Berlin from 1988 onwards. At this meeting they decided to create an independent women's association to advocate for women's issues during the political transition, and soon the *Initiativkomitee zur Gründung eines unabhängigen Frauenverbandes der DDR* (Initiative Committee to Found an Independent GDR Women's Association) was formed. On December 3, 1989, this committee established the *Unabhängiger Frauenverband (UFV, the Independent Women's Association)* at a meeting held at the Berlin Volksbühne. Amid speeches, songs, discussions, readings, and short performances, the 1200 women at the theatre that day affirmed the foundation of the UFV.

The UFV acted as an umbrella organization for the women's movement in the GDR and included members of dissident and non-state women's groups, alongside women connected with the SED and the official socialist women's organization, the *Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands* (DFD, Democratic Women's League of Germany). The group initially focused on increasing women's political representation in the transformation of East Germany and advocated for the inclusion of women's issues—beyond the SED's focus on women's economic emancipation—on the political agenda. They also defined themselves as a feminist organization, which positioned them firmly against the SED as they campaigned against patriarchal structures and for an alternative vision of society based on equality, democracy, and social and ecological justice. However, with such different political backgrounds, building consensus on which women's rights to campaign for—and how—was often difficult.

2 On German reunification, see Konrad H. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, and Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*.

3 Lila Offensive, *Frauen in die Offensive*.

One of the texts read at the Berlin Volksbühne that day was Ina Merkel's article "Ohne Frauen ist kein Staat zu machen" (Without Women, There Is No State). From the outset, the piece made a radical claim for women's participation in the process of political transformation. Indeed, the title of the piece implicitly critiqued the popular East German protest motto "Wir sind das Volk (We are the people)" by asserting the presence of women within the *Volk* and the need to address women's issues as a part of the reformation of the GDR.

The text acted as both a rallying cry and manifesto for the newly formed UFV. "We women must state it now," the piece began,

The upheaval of society in the GDR was initiated by the masses in the streets. Women were present throughout as trailblazers and comrades-in-arms, as those affected by the mass exodus, and as victims of power. But in the development of strategies for our society's future and for the renewal of socialist society, women are once again left out.

From this starting point, the text offered eight key reflections on the situation facing women and East Germany and the importance of women taking part and having their voices heard. The piece then ended by calling on the women gathered at the Volksbühne to elect representatives to secure women's presence at the roundtables taking place in Berlin. These roundtables brought together SED officials, socialist authorities, and representatives of the citizen's movement in an effort to transform socialism together. The text further suggested five broad platforms for the new women's association to represent. Specifically, Merkel called for: 1. a modern socialism on German soil in a unified Europe; 2. an ecological reorganization of the economy; 3. democracy, self-administration, and openness; 4. a multicultural society; and 5. solidarity with all social groups.

What is particularly interesting about Merkel's piece is that it does not call for reunification with the West: "Reunification would mean taking three steps back on the woman question." Although critical of state socialism's failure to address women's issues, Merkel clearly shows an awareness that reunification would mean the loss of East German women's rights, as the capitalist model of gender relations in the West largely limited women's roles to the domestic sphere. Instead, Merkel argues for a restructuring and reformulation of socialism. In this, the piece reflects the particular political situation of late 1989, when reunification was not yet a certainty. Within a few weeks of the formation of the UFV, however, this would change, and by March 1990, following the victory of the pro-reunification Alliance for Germany at the East German elections, a rapid merger with West Germany was all but settled.

With this, the role of the UFV changed. The group suddenly had to advocate for the protection of East German women's rights against what was increasingly viewed by feminists as a deeply patriarchal process of reunification; in this respect, Merkel's

article had proven prescient. In particular, the UFV played a central role in the campaign to protect East German women's reproductive rights. Although abortion was decriminalized in East Germany in 1972, it remained criminalized in the West, and women there only had limited access to abortion. While this campaign succeeded in politicizing women's rights during and after reunification, it ultimately failed to transplant East German abortion law to the West. From 1991 onwards, the UFV transitioned away from national political advocacy work, and in 1998 it disbanded altogether. Despite this, Merkel's text remains a foundational document of the East German women's movement and a testament to the vitality of East German women's activism during the *Wende*.

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Jane Freeland

* * *

Ina Merkel

**Without Women, There Is No State. Some Women's Questions
Regarding an Alternative Conception of Society, or: Manifesto
for an Independent Women's Movement**

The woman question has been solved, some claim; it is not an urgent problem right now, others say. It must finally be put on the agenda, say others. But what is it anyway—the “woman question”?

We women must state it now: The upheaval of society in the GDR was initiated by the masses in the streets. Women were present throughout as trailblazers and comrades-in-arms, as those affected by the mass exodus, and as victims of power. But in the development of strategies for our society's future and for the renewal of socialist society, women are once again left out.

“The country needs new men,” was one of the recurrent slogans of the last weeks. Does it not also need new women? The first man of the country, Modrow, teamed up with a woman—is this a new start?

This society is in an intense crisis. As before, citizens are leaving their country by the thousands. The ruling party is morally bankrupt. The dissolution of socialism as a social system seems imminent. On the other side, they are already licking their lips. Can we even afford to engage with the woman question in a situation as complicated as this?

[...]

We must insist that the woman question is not about marginal social problems but rather existentially fundamental questions. They concern society's very way of existence, its reproduction, its potential for development, and its goals. Therefore, I think that if we women want to ensure that our particular interests—ones that we have because of our specific circumstances and experiences—are earnestly taken into account in conceiving of a modern society, we require a society-wide approach. Which issues could be constitutive for such a conception of society? What are general issues and what are specifically women's questions?

I

In recent years, this society has been moving deliberately toward an abyss. There has been a rapid deterioration of people's living conditions, their social situation. This development is very clearly evident, among other things, in the exacerbation of relations between men and women. It is evident in an ever-increasing divorce rate and a continuous decline in the birth rate. It is found in the low standard of living among single mothers; it can be seen in the shameful neglect of our older women, on whose backs this country rose after 1945.

[...]

These are some of the serious socio-cultural consequences of state-administrative, bureaucratic socialism. The arrogance of a male-dominated leadership has led this country to the brink of the abyss. Men are primarily responsible for the policies of the past decades, and men in particular have supported these policies as political leaders, directors, and company managers, even though they should have known better. Women also share political responsibility for the situation that has arisen, but they have been in a subordinate position in all spheres of society.

2

[...]

Do we want to reunite with the gentlemen in Bonn and replace the dictatorship of the Politburo with the dictatorship of the Federal Chancellery? Reunification would mean taking three steps back on the woman question—to put it in exaggerated terms, it would mean: women, back to the kitchen. It would mean fighting all over again for the right to work, fighting for spots in the kindergarten, and fighting for school meals. It would mean giving up much of what has been painstakingly achieved instead of bringing it yet another step forward.

Women do not have a fatherland to lose but rather a world to gain. We should seize the opportunity right now to showcase, through a renewed form of socialism, the diversity of our ways of life, our individual differences, our needs, and our demands. Let us bring our women's movement up to date. Let us join the leftist forces in Europe. Let us work for a multicultural society in which everyone can live a lifestyle that corresponds to their national, cultural, and social identities. Let us ensure that no one is excluded in our country because of their origin, nationality, or disability, or simply because they are different. Rather, let us create the conditions for creating relationships based on solidarity—between men and women, between parents and children, between old and young, between the healthy and the sick.

3

[...]

The peoples of the earth today face existential global problems. Environmental destruction, the danger of war, and the life-threatening situation in the Third World are the consequences of the unrestrained expansion of male-dominated industrial societies. The far-reaching logic of development that is based on the domination of nature and the oppression of large populations (among them women in particular) must be broken if humanity is not to destroy itself in the end. Women are perhaps more directly affected by this logic, and as mothers they have a special responsibility to ensure a human(e) future.

The consequences of the continued destruction of the environment are already being felt today. We women bring our children into an endangered world, and we are afraid for their future. With them, we suffer polluted air, constant coughing, and allergies. We wonder if we can continue to feed them with our lead-poisoned breast milk. Already today, in many parts of the GDR, we receive bottled drinking water for feeding babies. We mothers should be extremely worried about the decay of nature and of the cities, about the loss of cultural history and of the landscapes. Because if things continue as they are now, our children will soon not know what a butterfly is; we will sit with them in the summer by waters in which they cannot bathe. We will not dare to go pick mushrooms or berries with them.

We women should therefore advocate an economic plan that sees the ecological reorganization of society (i.e., the economy and our way of life) as the key approach for overcoming this crisis.

[...]

4

[...]

We no longer want to be the humble, hard-working, and underpaid helpers and employees who can be taken for fools and be given a meager “thank you” every year on March 8th. We are advocating for a fair distribution of work and benefits. To achieve this, we need fundamental structural changes in the gender-specific division of labor, but these can only be achieved through targeted quotas: quotas for women in high-output fields, in management roles, and in attractive positions. But quotas are also needed for men, to make it easier for them to enter professions that have been feminized beyond a reasonable degree in public education, the service industry, and healthcare.

[...]

5

A radical quota system, i.e., immediately dividing all relevant positions in half, is a prerequisite for real democratization. A quota system and democratization are inextricably linked to the renewal of political culture. The woman question is an ongoing problem for all parties and political movements, but it is still not public. Therefore, we need our own political organization, a rallying movement, that will ensure that women's issues gain public attention and become politically viable.

Only when women are represented according to their share of the population will they be able to rise above their interests as a marginalized group and address overarching social issues just as men do. Women are not a social minority—they are half of humanity. And precisely for this reason, they must be able to cast their vote on all questions affecting humanity.

[...]

6

We women should therefore argue for a fourfold separation of powers. That is, the classical separation of powers between legislation, administration, and judiciary must be expanded with a fourth power: a democratic public sphere. We therefore advocate the creation of a far-reaching women's public sphere in the form of its own publications, its own daily newspaper, and its own radio stations and television studios. But it would also take the form of women's cultural centers, women's cafés, independent women's research institutes, etc., while also involving the creation of diverse democratic representative bodies to address the problems of consumption habits and lifestyle; of education and upbringing; and of wages and pricing. We need consumer organizations that decide on the ecological suitability of products, and we need independent parents' associations that can have a say in curriculum and pedagogical strategies.

7

But our immediate interest—and this is the aim of the immediate program—is working women. Confronted with the strategies of rationalization and effectiveness found in business and administration, we see the acute danger that the direct interests of working women will be undermined in this work. We see the risk of women being removed en masse from their familiar work environments without sufficient programs for retraining or a reasonable transfer to other work assignments.

[...]

8

To make these immediate measures and a strategically oriented program politically actionable, we need an active and capable democratic women's movement.
[...]

Translated by Lea Greenberg

9

Reproductive Rights and Demography

Maria Jaszcukowa

Proposal on the Criteria of Abortion Permissibility

AUTHOR Maria Jaszcukowa

TITLE No title. Proposal on the criteria of abortion permissibility given during a parliamentary debate on April 27, 1956.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Sejm PRL 1952–56. Protokoły Komisji Pracy i Zdrowia, t. XI, Stenogram posiedzenia sejmowego nr 13 [Sejm of the Polish People's Republic 1952–56. Minutes of the Committee on Labor and Health, vol. XI, Transcript of the Sejm Meeting No. 13], 475–517.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Jaszcukowa (May 30, 1915–December 21, 2007) was a politician and social activist. Born and raised in Warsaw, Maria Jaszcukowa was the daughter of Stanisław Guzicki, a devoted communist and member of the Polish Communist Party prior to Second World War. She followed in her father's footsteps even before the war, first by joining the Socialist Youth Organization "Życie," and later the democratic anti-fascist movement. In 1937, she became a member and secretary of the Warsaw Democratic Club, which united clubs on all sides of the political spectrum by their opposition to the authoritarian regime of the late 1930s. After the clubs united in 1938, the Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne) was formed and Jaszcukowa became an active member. The Democratic Party's founding principles included the need to nationalize major industries, enforce land reform, implement a planned economy, and raise the overall level of education.

Before the Second World War, Jaszcukowa started to study law at the University of Warsaw but did not finish. She would not re-enroll until after the war. During the Second World War, she ended up in the Soviet-occupied zone and accepted a post as a history teacher in Białystok. When she was arrested in 1942, she was the wife of Bolesław Jaszcuk and the mother of a one-year-old boy. She was first detained at the Pawiak Prison in Warsaw and later sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the winter of 1945, she was transferred to the Ravensbrück camp in a death march. Thanks to the efforts of the International Red Cross, she was taken to Sweden in April with a group of other female prisoners and returned to Poland the following year.

The return to Poland in 1945 marked a turning point in Maria Jaszcukowa's political career. She re-joined the Democratic Party, which became subordinated to the communist party and was deprived of its political autonomy. It was unlikely that she was oblivious to this game. Bolesław, Maria's husband, was a prominent communist activist and politician, first in the Polish Workers' Party, then in the Polish United

Workers' Party, a long-time member of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic, vice president of Warsaw in the 1940s, and Poland's Energy Minister from 1952. He was appointed Polish ambassador to Moscow in 1959, and left with Maria for the Soviet Union for five years (1959–1963). The couple lived among the upper echelon of the then-governing class.

Maria Jaszczukowa's activities went far beyond her involvement in the Democratic Party, which served as her ticket to the Sejm (Parliament): between 1945 and 1957, she was a member of the State National Council (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*), the Legislative Sejm (*Sejm Ustawodawczy*), and the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic for the first term (*Sejm I kadencji*). She successfully combined her parliamentary efforts with promoting women's rights in the League of Women (*Liga Kobiet*), children's rights through The Friends of Children Society (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci*), and the fight for freedom within the Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*).

Jaszczukowa entered the first board of the Socio-Civic League of Women (after 1949, the League of Women) in 1945. Although the organization referred to its pre-war roots, its operations had already been subjected to the new rule. The League was established to act as the only female-focused interest group in communist Poland.

Maria Jaszczukowa's parliamentary work for women's rights in the 1940s and 1950s (along with other female activists such as Edwarda Orłowska, Stanisława Garnarczykowa, and Irena Sztachelska) was arguably the most significant aspect of her life and career. She worked on a variety of projects, including changes to the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act, which covered the protection of pregnant women's employment among other things. She advocated for housewives' working status to be equal to that of their husbands' paid employment, especially in rural areas. In 1957, she became the first head of the League's Home Economics Committee, whose mission it was to modernize the household, and which also became a symbol of women's rights in 1956. Her final and most vehement act in the Sejm was her proposal on the criteria for allowing abortion, which she attempted to pass into law during a parliamentary debate on April 27, 1956.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Byliśmy w ZSRR* [We Have Been to the USRR] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Spółdzielni Wydawniczej "Współpraca", 1948); "Przeżyłam Oświęcim (I Survived Auschwitz)," *Tygodnik Przegląd*, no. 5, February 6, 2005, <https://www.tygodnikprzeglad.pl/przezylam-oswiecim/>. Accessed January 19, 2024.

Barbara Klich-Kluczevska

CONTEXT

The abortion debate in communist Poland began during the Thaw,¹ after years of being taboo under Stalinism. It challenged the prohibition of abortion set by the legal code of 1932 (art. 231–234). Under this legal order, a woman who underwent an abortion was subject to punishment, as was the person who assisted her. The former faced a three-year prison sentence; the latter, five or ten years (in case of the woman's death). The state's policy toward abortion after the Second World War was thus a continuation of the prewar policy and fell within the scope of the Stalinist state's broader pro-natalist measures taken in the name of the biological reconstruction of the nation after the war. Between 1950 and 1955, control policies tightened, and the number of illegal abortions grew rapidly, reaching an estimated 300,000 cases per year, of which 80,000 women were hospitalized. While trials under art. 231–234 were sporadic prior to Second World War, beginning in 1949 efforts were made to curb illegal abortion by prosecuting and judicially punishing women. Also part of this battle was the "civilizational" fight against the practices of elderly, medically uneducated women in villages, the so-called *babkas*, which could result in death or disability. At the same time, there were constant debates among specialists about possible paths for tightening abortion laws, which referred, among others, to the abortion law issued in the USSR in 1936. Planned, although ultimately not implemented at the time, the changes were to exclude the possibility of abortion when the pregnancy endangered the woman's life. In the first half of the 1950s, legal debates in Poland also included a proposal to replace the term "fetus" with "unborn child." These proposals went hand in hand with demands coming from the Catholic Church.

The debate around abortion was opened in autumn 1955 by media discussions about the danger abortion posed to a pregnant woman's life, the growing black market for abortion, and the need to spread knowledge about "conscious motherhood," meaning sexual education and the availability of contraception. The final breakthrough came with the decree legalizing abortion issued in the USSR on November 23, 1955. The same year, work on a similar draft began in Poland, accompanied by heated debate in the press and on the radio. The draft "Law on the Conditions for Permissibility of Abortion" was sent to the Sejm on April 12, 1956. The draft stipulated that pregnancies could be terminated by a doctor following medical indications if the pregnant woman lived in difficult conditions, or if the pregnancy was the result of a crime. The doctor would make the final ruling on the necessity of the procedure. A person who was not authorized to perform the procedure would be

1 "The Thaw" is the term used for the period of cultural and political liberalization after Stalin's death in 1953, resulting from the policies of his successor, Nikita Khrushchev. The term can be used more broadly for phases of liberalization during state socialism in Eastern and Central Europe.

subject to punishment, unlike the pregnant woman who underwent the procedure. Importantly, the object of protection henceforth was the health and life of the woman, not the life of the fetus (the concept of removing the fetus was replaced by the term “termination of pregnancy”).

The law was passed on April 27, 1956, after a heated debate among MPs. Five Catholic MPs voted against the bill. It came into effect on May 8 with publication in the official *Journal of Law*. Three days later, a decree was issued that clarified the new law, becoming a source of great controversy. This was needed because the law did not provide a clear definition of the difficult living conditions that qualified women for abortion, did not detail the procedure for issuing a ruling, and did not specify up to what month of pregnancy the procedure could be performed.

On April 26, 1956, Maria Jaszczukowa referred to the bill from the rostrum on behalf of the parliamentary committees. She became the symbol of the project. Opening the discussion, Jaszczukowa subjected the 1932 legislation to harsh criticism. She pointed out that the law was on the one hand overly strict, and on the other hand limited in its application (a “dead law”). She also explicitly referred to the decree introduced in the Soviet Union in November 1955 as a model to follow. The parliamentary debate saw a clash between two opposing value systems and perceptions of the social order, proof of the continued divisions that had governed the Polish debate on abortion since the interwar period. Opposing each other were, on the one hand, representatives of Catholic circles, and, on the other, supporters of progressive thinking about the need to promote conscious motherhood. Those in favor of legalizing abortion directly referred to the tradition of Boy-Żeleński and the progressive activists/women of the pre-war era.² The fact that openly critical opinions against the legalization of abortion could be voiced in parliament, exemplified in particular by the speech of Jan Dobraczyński, a Catholic publicist and writer, has been interpreted by historians as a concession to the Church characteristic of the period of the early Thaw, which was meant to create the appearance of a full democratization of public debate. Importantly, both sides of the debate saw abortion negatively, as a phenomenon that should sooner or later be eliminated from social life. The letters on the topic of abortion that citizens sent en masse to the media prove that this division in parliament nevertheless largely reflected the diversity in society’s views on the topic at the time.

2 Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński was a writer and social activist, the author of a collection of articles on abortion titled “Women’s Hell.” He co-founded a group of activists for sexual education and conscious motherhood in the 1930s.

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Barbara Klich-Kluczevska

* * *

Deputy Maria Jaszczukowa

Proposal on the Criteria of Abortion Permissibility

Members of the House! On behalf of the Labor and Health Committee and the Committee on Legislative Affairs, I am proposing a bill on the conditions of the permissibility of the termination of pregnancy.

The previously binding provisions of the Penal Code and the ordinances of the Minister of Health are very strict. The procedure may be performed by a doctor when it is deemed necessary for the life and health of a pregnant woman, or when the pregnancy was the result of a crime.

In other cases, both the person performing the procedure and the woman undergoing the procedure may be imprisoned. The matter of the living conditions

of a pregnant woman was completely disregarded—although it was demanded by not only progressive but all real-minded lawyers and doctors in the prewar period—during the discussions on the draft penal code.

The experience of many years of experience have shown us how dead the paragraphs are that, in practice, were unable to oppose the reality of life and prevent mass abortion.

According to the assessment of the Ministry of Health, the number of treatments performed in violation of the existing regulations is at least 300,000 annually. In 1955, over 80,000 miscarriages that started at home wound up in our hospitals. The law is completely powerless.

Only in a few dozen cases, per hundreds of thousands, the law can say something. It is avoided in various ways. Treatments take place illegally, often in unsanitary conditions, which often lead to negative health effects, disability, and even death.

Each of us can recall many examples showing that the existing law inhibits doctors who want to take the law into account, but opens the field of action to all kinds of high-fee risk-takers, “*babki*,” and women themselves who, by necessity, operate with various so-called “domestic” remedies.

Seeking a “plank” of legality, a number of doctors find fictitious health conditions that justify the termination of a pregnancy and do so with a clear conscience.

It is abnormal and immoral to uphold laws that ruthlessly disrupt everyday life. There is therefore a need to revise our position and legislation. This issue, especially after the publication of a decree in the Soviet Union allowing for the termination of pregnancy, became the subject of wide debate in society. [...]

Knowing that hardly any mother will terminate a pregnancy without valid reasons, it is better that—in contrast to the prewar period—she is protected by the family code and has the opportunity to take advantage of extensive care for mother and child, and, considering that, in general, a woman who wants to terminate her pregnancy is in a particularly unfavorable situation, the need arose to respond in the Act to a fundamental issue: When is it possible to terminate a pregnancy?

This question is answered in Article 1 with the following wording:

Termination of pregnancy may only be performed by a doctor if the reasons for termination are:

- a) medical condition, or
- b) difficult life conditions of a pregnant woman

and when it is reasonably suspected that the pregnancy resulted from a crime. [...]

In order to properly regulate these matters, the Ministry of Health has prepared a draft executive order which abolishes the existing medical boards and allows a doctor to make a one-man decision and issue a judgment on the basis of which a gynecological procedure may be performed. On the other hand, medical boards operate only when a woman appeals as a result of a doctor's refusal.

Under no circumstances is a woman punished for undergoing the procedure.

Translated by Anna Topolska

Zsuzsa Körösi et al.

Petition for the Protection of the Freedom of Abortion

AUTHOR Zsuzsa Körösi et al.¹

TITLE “Petíció az abortusz-szabadság megőrzéséért 1973” [Petition for the Protection of the Freedom of Abortion 1973]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Samizdat petition, circulated via unofficial fora. The archival source used for the translation below: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives), MNL OL MSZMP KB TKKO 288. f. 36 / 1973 / 34. 6c.

LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zsuzsa Körösi (b. 1950, Budapest) is a freelance journalist, translator, and documentary film director. Born into a working-class family, Körösi attended the Faculty of Humanities at Eötvös Loránd University (1968–1973), where she studied English literature and history and made acquaintances with young university students dissatisfied with the socialist Kádár regime. Körösi encountered the leftist movements of 1968 at the 9th World Festival of Youth and Students held in Sofia, Bulgaria. Inspired by this experience, she traveled to London and Paris in the summer of 1971, where she was influenced by second-wave feminism through local people. In Paris, everyone was talking about the “Manifeste des 343” published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (April 5, 1971): a short text by Simon de Beauvoir was signed by 343 women stating “Je me suis fait avorter (I’ve had an abortion).” At the time, Zsuzsa Körösi was the partner of György Pór, a well-known figure of the leftist intellectual opposition, imprisoned in 1968 for “conspiracy endangering public order.” They had connections with different alternative groups out of which the Hungarian democratic opposition later formed, including philosophers from the Budapest School around György Lukács.² In the spring of 1973, inspired by the French manifesto, a group of young female students—Körösi and her friends, including Júlia Veres, a university student and active figure of the opposition, and Piroska Márkus, a high school student—formulated a petition to protect the existing institution of free abortion. This is considered to be the only movement generated by feminist ideas during the Kádár regime. The action

1 Based on the current stage of research and following the editing principles of present volume, we identify Zsuzsa Körösi (in other forms: Suzanne or Zsuzsanna) as the main author of the petition. However, she has argued for collective authorship in her publications (Körösi 2019, 2020). Körösi stated that the text itself was an intellectual product of about 15–20 authors. See Körösi, “Petíció az abortusz-szabadság megőrzéséért 1973 (1. rész)” and Körösi, “Petíció az abortusz-szabadság megőrzéséért 1973 (2. rész).”

2 See the entry about Ágnes Heller and Mihály Vajda in this volume.

was supported by renowned figures of the opposition like Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, György Dalos, János Kis, György Bence, István Eörsi, Miklós Haraszti, and György Pór. During the summer, 1553 signatures were collected, an unprecedented result in communist Hungary. Among the signatories were famous singers and actresses, well-known sociologists, historians, philosophers, and ordinary working women and men. The regime retaliated, and Körösi was excluded from higher education. Körösi and Pór left the country in 1975 for France.

After her emigration in 1975, Körösi studied at the Sorbonne (Paris), and received her master's degree in 1979 with a dissertation on the economic, sociological, and ideological factors of Hungary's demographic evolution in the interwar period. She held a fellowship at Columbia University (New York) and earned a MPhil degree there in 1981. During her time in the US, Körösi published about Squat Theatre, a Hungarian avant-garde theatre company working in New York (led by Péter Halász and Anna Koós) in *The Drama Review*. After returning to Paris, she also earned a master's degree in theater studies from Paris III in 1987 and directed plays.

In the 1990s, Körösi turned to documentary filmmaking. She co-directed *Crossed Lives, Imre Nagy and János Kádár*, produced by ARTE in 1996 on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the 1956 revolution. In 2014, her film on sustainability, urban agriculture, and the food autonomy of Budapest (*Nehogy az ördög ülve találjon / Villes Fertiles* [Lest the Devil Find You Sitting / Fertile Cities]) was released. In 2015, she conducted research on the 1973 petition as a Visegrád Fellow at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives (OSA), Budapest. The 19 interviews she conducted with participants and signatories as part of the research can be found at the OSA.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · "Tézisek a nők helyzetéről Magyarországon, 1972" [Theses on the Situation of Women in Hungary, 1972] (samizdat publication); "Une petition pour l'avortement en Hongrie: lettre à une amie française [A Petition for Abortion in Hungary: Letter to a French Friend]," *Les Temps Modernes* 33, no. 376–377 (1977): 706–713; "The Nonexistence of 'Women's Emancipation,'" in *Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology*, ed. Robin Morgan (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press–Doubleday, 1984), 289–293; "Petíció az abortusz szabadság megőrzéséért 1973, 1–2. rész" [Petition for the Protection of Abortion Freedom, Parts 1–2], *TNTeF* 9, no. 2 (2019): 1–22 and *TNTeF* 10, no. 2 (2020): 99–133.

Fanni Svégel

CONTEXT

1973 was a turning point in many aspects of Hungarian history. After the Hungarian revolution of 1956, János Kádár became the leader of the country, and in 1968 introduced economic reforms to curb civil anxiety and satisfy growing consumer demands in the indebted country. The violent Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia the

same year, in which Hungary participated, dispelled intellectual's hopes for a change in the system through reforms. The Western student riots, anti-war movements, and second-wave feminism also left their mark on the young Hungarian intellectual and alternative art scenes. Still, beyond the small circles of intellectuals aspiring for freedom, in the 1970s many felt they were running out of air. Police launched several proceedings against young avant-garde artist groups and dissident writers, sociologists, historians, and philosophers for "endangering public order." During this period, mostly critical social scientists and leftist university students were prosecuted. György Pór, Sándor Bencze, György Dalos, Judit Gáspár, and others were sued for protesting against the Greek military coup and the Vietnam War. Public dissatisfaction grew, and police forces broke up a demonstration held in Budapest on the occasion of the 125-year anniversary of the 1848 revolution. Many of the participants were arrested. Some days after, the students of the philosopher György Lukács—Ágnes Heller and Mihály Vajda—were dismissed from their workplaces and excluded from all universities. In May, Miklós Haraszti was arrested for his book on the labor conditions of workers.³ In this climate, gossips of planned abortion restrictions forced young intellectuals to take action.

In the spring and summer of 1973, it was not yet clear when and what kind of restrictive measures would be introduced by the state. Therefore, this petition action was not against planned legislation, but to protect the existing status quo of 1956: induced abortion access without restriction. The topic of pregnancy termination and demographic crisis waxed and waned in public discussions during the 1960s. The party leadership considered the introduction of restrictive measures to be a hazardous political decision, however, and the topic of abortion appeared in public discourse from time to time. As economic reforms failed in 1972, right-wing and nationalist notions of national obliteration met the demands of the economy. In their capacity as mothers, women were seen as one solution to the problem of hidden unemployment. Despite the equality propaganda of the 1950s, the state saw women primarily as mothers, and subsidies were introduced in 1967 to reinforce this status, including the three-year Child Care Allowance (GYES). Meanwhile, however, the image of the working woman was also present in public discourse, thus creating a dual, conflicting system of expectations from women for paid employment and housework and child-care (the "double burden").

The decree made on October 18, 1973, on the re-regulation of access to abortion was accompanied by a number of maternity benefits. The decree 1040/1973 primarily focused on financial support, the development of healthcare infrastructure, and

3 The original title was *Darabbér* (Piece-Rates). English translation of the book: Miklós Haraszti, *A Worker in a Worker's State: Piece-Rates in Hungary*, translated by Michael Wright, foreword by Heinrich Böll (Harmondsworth: Penguin–New Left Review, 1977).

conscious family planning, but also incorporated the regulation of abortion committees.⁴ Based on a decree issued by the Minister of Health,⁵ an application for a pregnancy termination had to be submitted on a form that was assessed by the abortion committee on the basis of ten pre-defined grounds, including social cause. These three-membered medical committees were established in 1952 to evaluate whether a woman is entitled to have an abortion. However, from 1956 up to 1973 they had no veto over the woman's decision.

The current source is the unabridged petition letter preserved in the Hungarian National Archives, in the collection of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSzMP). The petition, addressed to the members of parliament, defended the existing abortion regulation of 1956, and was signed by 1553 people. The text itself is the intellectual product of about 15–20 authors, written in private apartments. The emerging opposition at the time was a loosely connected network of several smaller informal groups, so this action can be considered one of the first civil, grassroots movements to develop through collective work. The petition was a completely new form of protest in the socialist country at the time, inspired by French and German examples. Members of the network, connected by the idea of freedom of choice, approached their acquaintances to sign and distribute it, mainly in private apartments and workplaces. The signatories included the three “widows of the nation”—Ilona Duczyńska, Katinka Andrássy, and Júlia Rajk—who were the widows of influential leftist politicians (Károly Polányi, Mihály Károlyi, and László Rajk),⁶ as well as famous singers and writers, but also many other intellectuals as well as ordinary workers and mothers. Initiators of the petition believed that the parliament would discuss the possible re-regulation of abortion, but on July 17 the Politburo stated that the issue of abortion would be re-regulated through a government decree, thus the petition could not reach its original goal. Prof. Imre Zoltán, head of the No. 1 Clinic of Obstetrics and Gynecology, who was among the signatories of the petition, wrote a letter to the Ministry of Health to express his dissent. His deputy, András Kovács, resigned in protest.

To collect as many signatures as possible, the text targeted wider social strata, not only feminists and allies. It outlined the authors' objections to the tightening

4 “A Minisztertanács 1040/1973 (X. 18.) számú határozata a népesedéspolitikai feladatokról [Decree No. 1040/1973 (X. 18.) on the Tasks of Demographic Policy],” *Magyar Közlöny: A Magyar Népköztársaság Hivatalos Lapja*, no. 71 (October 18, 1973): 774–778.

5 “Az egészségügyi miniszter 4/1973 (XII. 1.) EüM számú rendelete a terhességmegszakítás iránti kérelem elbírálásáról [Ordinance No. 4/1973 (XII. 1.) by the Minister of Health on the Evaluation of the Application for the Termination of Pregnancy],” *Magyar Közlöny: A Magyar Népköztársaság Hivatalos Lapja*, no. 80 (December 1, 1973): 836–841.

6 Ilona Duczyńska (1897–1978) was an intellectual and revolutionary activist, born into a noble family, who dedicated her life to revolutionary socialism. Her second husband was the economic historian and philosopher Karl (Károly) Polányi (1886–1964). Katinka Andrássy (1892–1985), born Countess Katalin Andrássy de Csíkszentkirály et Krasznahorka, was the wife of the Hungarian politician Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955), the prime minister and then president of the short-lived First Hungarian Republic (1918–1919). Also known as the “Red Countess,” Mrs. Károlyi led a politically active and engaged life.

of abortion regulation in four points, and also offered solutions to problems hindering childbearing in four points. The necessity for accessible contraception, as well as improving childbirth conditions and easing the financial situation of families, were also articulated. In her recollection, the philosopher Ágnes Heller stated that it was not the content but the action itself that made a difference.⁷ She also pointed out that feminist arguments such as women's right to self-determination were omitted for strategic reasons, to maximize the number of signatories. The consequences of the action included the expulsion of some members from the party (e.g., Tamás Bauer), the dismissal of media workers (e.g., Júlia Láng), and the exclusion of Zsuzsa Körösi from all universities in the country—she was scapegoated as the initiator of the petition. Although some signatories were in a difficult position, the state's reaction was nowhere near as harsh as expected. The action, which lasted only one summer, had no continuation. The majority of the democratic opposition did not consider this petition as the starting point for their formation, but rather the Czechoslovak Charter 77 (1979) became the basis of their identity. Hungarian feminist groups were formed only in the 1990s, so little attention has been paid to the 1973 petition in the past thirty years.

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7 HU OSA 432, interview collection of Körösi Zsuzsa.

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Fanni Svégel

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Petition for the Protection of the Freedom of Abortion

Dear Member of Parliament,

The Council of Ministers made a significant decision in 1956, one which allowed for the possibility of terminating an unwanted pregnancy. Unfortunately, more and more press outlets have recently reported on opponents of the present practice of legal abortion. Moreover, at the end of July, a medical practitioner talked about changes to the laws as if they were a matter of fact. Those who suggest that the existent legislation should be tightened argue by referring to what they see as insufficient population growth on the one hand, and the harmful health effects of abortion on the other. A possible restriction on abortion would have a very serious impact on everyone, especially women and low-income earners. Therefore, we feel it is important and necessary to inform you and the Parliament about our opinion by lawful means.

1. We consider abortion to be a harmful method of birth control, both physically and psychologically. However, there is only one desirable way of eliminating it: making it unnecessary. It is not the availability of abortion that causes the low number of childbirths, or the small proportion of people using preventative contraception. This means that the proposed restriction would not at all reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies; it would only be suitable for forcing women to carry out pregnancies. Possible population growth following a ban on abortion would be the result of an increase in the number of unwanted children. Such population growth would not be in the interest of society or its members.

2. Carrying out an unwanted pregnancy has negative impacts on the lives of children and parents alike. Research and experience show that unwanted children often live in poverty, in unsuitable housing and emotional conditions. This entails a higher prevalence of negative effects on the mental health of children, anti-social behavior, juvenile delinquency, and the necessity of state custody. An unwanted child further deteriorates a possibly bad relationship between parents, and may poison well-functioning relationships too. Moreover, such measures

would probably increase the number of children whose parents separate from each other. Thus the task of their upbringing would burden women even more, further limiting their social roles and enhancing women's immobility, especially as the provision of nurseries and kindergartens is already insufficient even at the current rate of population growth, which is considered low.

3. Just as a restriction on abortion would enhance the growth of the population in an anomalous way, it would offer a pseudo-solution in the field of healthcare as well, since a possible restriction would necessarily increase the number of unauthorized interruptions and illegal abortions. It is well-known that these are much more dangerous than abortions properly performed in hospitals.

4. A restriction on abortion would have harmful social consequences, since it would especially concern the financially and culturally disadvantaged. Unwanted pregnancies occur more often among them because of the less effective use of contraception. Illegal abortions performed by doctors would also be less accessible for them, and thus they would be more likely to risk unskilled intervention.⁸ Finally, their standard of living would be affected most negatively by having to raise an unwanted child.

We rather see a list of other ways that would make abortions unnecessary:

1. New ways of birth control should be developed, including accessible, medically harmless preventive contraception that is suitable for all. The contraceptive pills currently available (Infecundin, Bisecurin) have a 99.5% safety record, but might have side effects, and thus they are only available by prescription and under medical supervision. Other chemical and mechanical tools, however, do not guarantee an adequate level of safety. There is a new type of pill (Cervicindin) on the horizon, which would be available without a prescription. It offers 97% safety, and so abortion would only be necessary in case of "accidents," but it would still be necessary to allow for the possibility of abortion.

2. Advertising campaigns reaching all age groups should be conducted regularly, through television, radio, and the press, too. These should be as effective as the propaganda about postal codes.⁹ Modern sexual education, which has been introduced in some schools, should be made a part of the general curriculum, and contraceptive methods should be taught for 8th grade students in primary schools.

3. A possible restriction on abortion would not contribute to people's willingness to have more children. This cannot be done by force: a higher proportion of the national income should be spent to solve housing problems quickly, as well as

8 Editor's note: This sentence contrasts illegal abortion performed by doctors with abortions performed by those who are not qualified medical professionals. Illegal abortions performed by doctors were available at a high price even when abortions were almost completely banned.

9 Editor's note: The new system of postal codes, still in use in Hungary today, was introduced in 1973 and was promoted through a massive promotional ("propaganda") campaign.

to develop the capacity of nurseries and kindergartens. Initiatives aiming at children's group supervision locally should be encouraged and supported.

4. The following measures need to be taken in order to make sure that raising children does not lead to a reduction in families' standards of living:

- a. An increase in the amount of state-funded child benefit, as well as its extension to each and every child;
- b. The introduction of a childcare allowance that is guaranteed to any family member who stays at home with a child (whether it is the mother, the father, or a grandparent) until the child reaches the age of six.

Both benefits would be especially effective if the sum of the allowance increased progressively and was inversely proportional to the per capita income of a family, that is, families with the smallest income would be entitled to the highest amount of childcare allowance.

We ask you to inform the Parliament about our opinion and arguments, and to take action against alterations to the legislation on abortion or the present practice of abortion, urging other solutions to related problems—including the ones we propose here. We also ask you to encourage an open social debate on this question in order to better understand the opinions of the constituents.

The following well-known personalities are among the signatories of the letter:

Péter Bacsó, film director; Endre Bajomi Lázár, writer; Endre Bálint, painter; Katalin Berek, actor; Yvette Bíró, film theorist; Tamás Cseh, musician; István Csurka, writer; István Eörsi, writer; Zsuzsa Ferge, sociologist; Miklós Gábor, actor; Gyula Gazdag, film director; Dr. Dénes Goldschmidt, medical practitioner; Árpád Göncz, writer, translator; Magda Gutai, writer; Imre Gyöngyösi, film director; András Hegedűs, sociologist; Gyula Hernádi, writer; Gitta Horváth, writer; Zoltán Huszárik, film director; Éva Janikovszky, writer; Ferenc Jánossy, economist; Gabi Jobba, actor; Mihályné Károlyi; Ákos Kertész, writer; Ilona Keserü, painter; Zsuzsa Koncz, singer; György Konrád, writer; Kati Kovács, singer; István Kristóf Nagy, art theorist; György Kurtág, composer; Miklós Laczkó, historian; Mihály Ladányi, writer; Balázs Lengyel, writer; Judit Máriássy, journalist; István Márkus, writer; László Marsall, poet; Ferenc Mérei, psychologist; Márta Mészáros, film director; András Mihály, composer; Ágnes Nemes Nagy, poet; Péter Nádas, writer; Éva Ruttkai, actor; Dr. András Szabó, philosopher; Dr. Zádor Tordai, philosopher; István Tótfalusi, poet; Tamás Ungvári, writer; Dr. László Vekerdi, historian; Dr. Erzsébet Vezér, literary scholar; Sarolta Zalutnay, singer; Boris Zsigmondi, film director.

Translated by Beáta Sándor

Aimée Beekman

Freedom to Choose

AUTHOR Aimée Beekman

TITLE *Valikuvõimalus* [Freedom to Choose]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1978. The excerpt is based on this edition, 119–123 (no interruptions), 237–240, and 251–252.

LANGUAGE Estonian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aimée Beekman (née Malla; b. 1933, Tallinn) has been one of the most productive Estonian novelists in the period 1960s–70s. She published 18 novels, children's, and travel books. Her most creative and productive period as a writer coincided with the comparatively more liberal years of the Soviet regime, when artistic freedom was tolerated to a certain extent, yet ideological censorship still largely shaped what could be published or not. An example of the ambiguity of the period was the odd balancing explored in one of Beekman's most renowned novels, *Kartulikuljused* (Potato Bells). The novel is a grotesque depiction of Estonian dissident fighters and refugees who resist or flee the totalitarian regime in 1944, yet a consequent film script that was based on the novel was rejected by the authorities as anti-Soviet. This tension was characteristic of much of Beekman's oeuvre: on the one hand, she adopted the style and moral outlook of Soviet realism, yet on the other hand tested its boundaries by also focusing on the bleaker aspects of Soviet societies.

Aimée was raised in a family of intellectuals and small property owners, but her father was killed at a young age in a gruesome robbery and her childhood was overshadowed by the war and Soviet deportations. When Tallinn was bombed in air raids during the Second World War, her family fled to the countryside for a few years, where she learned farm work. Despite this extremely difficult period, she received the best available education at the time.¹

Her first career choice was to study cinematography—and the only place to get a higher education degree in this field was the highly prestigious National Institute of Cinematography in Moscow, the first film school in the world. Admission was highly competitive and the exams in Russian, but despite the odds against her, Beekman was admitted to the Institute. After graduation, she returned to Tallinn and began

¹ There is a recent biography of the writer on which the present summary relies. See Hiimäe, *Ja kõik läheb mööda*.

working mainly as a documentarian, producing, for instance, highly propagandistic “chronicles” of various aspects of Soviet life: agriculture, industry, urbanization, education, and festivities. The work was, however, physically quite demanding, and despite notable success, she had to quit her job due to illness at a young age in 1960.

This is what prompted Beekman to take up writing. She had a favorable starting position for joining this demanding creative profession. Already before her Moscow studies, she had married Vladimir Beekman, who was the editor-in-chief for literature for the main national, censorship-controlled publishing house. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he was a state-salaried writer and translator, and later became the Chairman of the Estonian Writers’ Union. He was also involved in politics, being a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Estonia and representing Estonia in the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union. These high-ranking political positions placed the couple among the local communist cultural elite. Not only did they enjoy material privileges available to only very few at the time, but they also frequently travelled to the West, including Sweden, Holland, Germany, Canada, the United States, Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, Iceland, and Japan. This was highly exceptional during Soviet rule.

Beekman participated neither in anti-Soviet demonstrations, nor in activities that became common in the late 1980s, nor in the political movements in the early 1990s that resulted in the restoration of Estonian statehood. This was unlike several other intellectuals who had earlier been a part of the communist cultural elite. The change of regime also marks the end of her most productive period as an author, with only one relatively unnoticed novel published in the 1990s. In the first decade of the new millennium, Beekman published two further novels (*Proovielu* [Trial Life], 2009; and *Ulavere*, 2009), which depict and reflect on the challenges that the transition period posed for very different individual lives, presenting a rather melancholic picture of the transformations that Estonian society had recently experienced. She has also published a number of children’s books in the last few years.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Ühe küla mehed* [Villagers], a fiction film, 1961. Script writer; *Väikesed inimesed* [Small people] (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Rirjastus, 1964); *Kartulikujused* [Potato Bells] (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1968); *Kuradilill* [Devil Flower] (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1973); *Viinakuu* [October] (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1975); *Valikuvõimalus* [Freedom of Choice] (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1978); *Tihnik* [Thick Forest] (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1980); *Loobumisevõimalus* [The Choice to Give Up] (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1985).

Liisi Keedus

CONTEXT

The novel *Freedom of Choice* was first published in 1978, at first in the most reputable Soviet Estonian literary monthly, *Looming* (Creation), and then as a book. For its

time, the novel's plot was highly provocative: its main protagonist, Regina, is a well-educated single woman in her late 20s, who has enjoyed her urban life free from family responsibilities but is getting increasingly concerned about becoming a childless spinster. When she inherits a house in a small town, she decides to move there. Since there are no better future husbands available, she marries a decent, kind, and hard-working alcoholic. However, Regina has no intention to procreate with a possibly genetically flawed drunk and instead gets pregnant in secret from one-night stands with men of spotless health records. She gives birth to three children who are raised in a seemingly near idyllic family setting and so sets herself beyond her spinster friends who she believes are becoming increasingly odd and pathetic.

The immediate contemporary reception of the novel, as pointed out in recent literary scholarship, was overwhelmingly hostile.² Beekman stirred many emotions and was widely reviewed, including in literary and cultural magazines, radio shows and cultural television programs, yet most of the reception was outspokenly critical. Indeed, some reviewers praised the novel's timeliness—it addressed rampant alcoholism and its impact on contemporary families, changing family models, and the female social role, educational disparities between women and men (to the former's favor), among other acute social issues. Yet the readers almost univocally condemned the moral standing of the protagonist, having little sympathy for her ethical and existential struggles.

Most critics regarded the novel's aesthetic dimension and literary qualities inseparable from its precarious ethical foundations, as Johanna Ross notes in her detailed study of the contemporary and later reception of *Freedom of Choice*.³ Some readers reproached Beekman for having written an abstract novel where ideas rather than detailed and intricate complexities of life or literary ambitions dominate. They found the characters caricatured, sketchy, hence unconvincing. For them, the complexities of human life were sacrificed for the sake of generalization and the didactic ambitions of the novel. At the same time, critics also appropriately noticed that it was far from clear what exactly the didactic aims were or what the ethical position of the author was. At times, Beekman seems to speak through the voice of the main protagonist, to subscribe to her reasoning, yet at other times to be repulsed by her choices. At times, the authorial intention seems to be to praise Regina's daring choices, at other times to highlight the grotesqueness of her actions.

Nonetheless, as Ross further emphasized, the reception became more favorable in the following few years, when the novel came to be classified as part of the emerging

2 The most authoritative interpretations and contextualizations of the novel are Johanna Ross, "Võimalused lugeda 'Valikuvõimalust,'" in Aimée Beekman, *Valikuvõimalus* (Tallinn: Pegasus, 2010), 253–59, and Johann Ross, "Aimée Beekmani 'Valikuvõimalus': ühe omanäolise romaani vastuvõtu dünaamikast," *Methis. Studia humaniora Estonica* 8 (2011): 21–35.

3 Ross, "Aimée Beekmani 'Valikuvõimalus,'" 21–35.

genre of “everyday literature” in the 1970s. This genre shifted the former focus of socialist realism on ideological and propagandistic aims to the private and intimate life in the Soviet every day, and had a particular interest in and for the first time was allowed to discuss—and did extensively—sexuality. In a way, this was a sign of the liberalization of Soviet censorship, for which sexuality had been a decadent bourgeois theme. On the other hand, the “everyday literature” genre also emerged as a kind of acceptance and conformism regarding the social and political repression of the regime, retreating into and enjoying the pleasures of the private and intimate sphere, while also consolidating an amnesia of public and civic consciousness. It is in this context that Beekman’s novel gained a recognized position as one of the most experimental and daring of its kind. At this point, it also started to resonate with emerging efforts to rethink critically female personal and social identity in other artistic fields, particularly in documentary and artistic film production, and in post-Realist, new avant-garde arts. The prominence of Beekman’s *Freedom of Choice* in the Estonian literary canon—while it has never been elevated to the status of a classic—was sealed by the release of a movie *Regina*, based on the novel, in 1990, obviously in an entirely new political context.

The placement of the novel into the history of Estonian feminist thought is, however, a later phenomenon. Indeed, neither Beekman herself nor the literary reviewers related it directly to female emancipation discourses, and even to today’s reader the authorial voice in this matter is highly ambiguous.⁴ While clearly provocative and progressive, Beekman appears at the same time to share the ambivalent attitude of her contemporaries regarding emancipation. On the one hand, the Soviet rhetoric on gender equality had come to signify propagandistic hypocrisy and triggered mostly skeptical attitudes. On the other hand, blatant inequalities and discrimination faced by women in their everyday lives and careers, combined with the first voices of feminist and sexual revolutions reaching Estonia—still tacit, but woven into literary, artistic or film narratives—encouraged women to gradually begin questioning predominant attitudes and ask for social change.⁵ The processes of emancipation, and the very term itself, did not become part of the public stage until 1990s, and even then, the ambiguity inherited from the Soviet period, including from novels like Beekman’s *Freedom of Choice*, remained highly characteristic of most efforts and counter-efforts toward traditional feminist aims. It is also for this reason that Beekman’s work is truly part of the Estonian feminist literary and discursive canon.

4 This is pointed out in Ross, “Aimée Beekmani ‘Valikuvõimalus,’” 28ff.

5 About feminism in Estonia after 1990, see Marling and Koobak, “Intersections of Feminisms and Neoliberalism: Post-State-Socialist Estonia in a Transnational Feminist Framework” and Marling, “Out of the Room of One’s Own? Gender Studies in Estonia”.

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Liisi Keedus

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Aimée Beekman

Freedom to Choose

At this fateful moment, Regina had deeply exhaled before she said, "Look, Mari, blood transfusions are done, and it doesn't startle anyone. Why couldn't a woman use the help of strange men to conceive?"

"Don't be silly!"

"What's so impossible about it?"

"You gather children from the whole wide world to place them in Pampel's nest as if they were cuckoos. Why did you need the drunkard in the first place?"

"Children need a normal family. Whole generations grew up without fathers after the war, why should children nowadays be nearly orphans?"

"You're blatant," blurted Mari.

"Situations whip me," Regina answered coolly. "I didn't want to live my life as a statistically average spinster, I prefer to be a mother. There's nothing wittier I can achieve."

"You're driving me crazy," Mari burst out crying.

Regina left the other one to shed tears, went to the kitchen, poured some water in a glass, added two teaspoonfuls of sugar—based on her previous experience with Gerta—and brought Mari something to drink.

Mari reluctantly took a sip of the sweet water, hiccupped as if the liquid didn't want to go down her throat.

"You're challenging your fate?" said Mari and refused to believe Regina's words.

"Yes, I acknowledge my own intentions. Believe me, that's not something easy to achieve."

"I wouldn't be able to do that," Mari shook her head and rubbed her reddened eyes.

"Sometimes it also seems to me that you wouldn't."

"You have to make the fathers of your future children agree," mumbled Mari. "This is nasty."

"No way! They can't find out what I actually need them for."

"So innocent affairs and the goal are only clear to you!"

"Yes."

"I'm the only one who knows?" Mari was surprised by Regina's trust in her.

"Yes. I'm counting on you. I need your help."

"How can I help you?"

"You'll help me get the data about the fathers of my future children."

Mari was left speechless.

"Dispensary file cabinets are partly confidential, anyways a stranger wouldn't obtain any information there," said Regina and remained silent for a while to find the words for what was to follow. "You have acquaintances among nurses at every medical institution. I'll give you a name and you'll check with a mental institution whether they have this person there with a hereditary mental illness or maybe they have treated themselves in narcology."⁶ Regina tapped on her head. "At least in this department, the daddies should be decent."

"You want to get involved in a grand affair," sighed Mari.

"There have always been men who have bastards all over the world. Why don't you want to admit that there could be bastard fathers whose children don't even know they exist?"

"Don't you think that how you treat you husband is vile?"

"It was vile of him to become a drunkard and lose his chance."

"In medicine, experiments are conducted on guinea pigs and rats, you want to carry out experiments on people."

"In today's civilized world, where both water and air are constantly polluted, a permanent experiment is being done on the health of mankind. It doesn't daunt us because we know there's no alternative," parried Regina.

"Don't change the subject."

"All right," agreed Regina. "I have other claims to spare. In today's age of divorce mania, there are children who in the case of a new marriage of one or the

6 Editor's note: Mari worked as a nurse in a hospital. It would not have been uncommon for medical personnel at one institution to gain access to medical files at another hospital.

other parents end up being raised by a stepfather or stepmother and this is considered normal. I believe that the change of a parent will inflict a wound in the child's soul that will never disappear. But nobody cares about it."

"In this case nobody cheats on anyone. It is a harsh reality that people eventually come to terms with."

"All right, which option would you recommend?" asked Regina curiously.

"In the States, there is even in vitro fertilization."

"Go to hell with your America, where everything is done," Regina gave up.

"I guess this method is used somewhere here as well," thought Mari.

"Thank you very much!" exclaimed Regina. "I'll send an application where necessary, gather all the resolutions, especially get the signature of my legal husband and finally from the trade union committee and then I go to artificial insemination like a cow!"

"Don't swear," begged Mari.

"Sorry," mumbled Regina. "In the end, no method is bad for those who don't have another choice."

"Maybe your own genetic code is so lousy that even in the case of the best man, there is no hope that you'll give birth to strong and healthy children," said Mari and started a new attack.

This was almost a bullseye. Mari is a person full of surprises, thought Regina. She has a mixture of empathy and a sharp tongue.

"Yes," said Regina. "My genes are truly quite poor. My father was killed in the war so young that no serious illness had prevailed itself. My exhausted mother died of an infectious disease and we can't make any far-fetched conclusions based on that. I had myself checked before the marriage: my heart, lungs, kidneys, and liver were found to function normally. Of course, that doesn't say anything. In addition, a blood-type test was conducted. Luckily I don't belong among those 15 percent of people whose rhesus factor is negative."

Mari started laughing out loud.

"What's so funny?" said Regina in an upset manner.

"Our ancestresses were fertile, each of them had nearly ten children, they didn't discuss, they acted."

"Now let's chant that mother took the cradle to the meadow," Regina said ironically.

"And who have you chosen to be the father of your first child?"

"So you don't reject helping me?" asked Regina relieved.

"Well, I can try," mumbled Mari hesitatingly. "Make sure you don't change your mind. Very nice, the infant in a baby carriage and along stumbles Pampel, intoxicated with happiness and vodka. That kind of environment is not suitable for a new-born. There's no room for a baby in a place where drunkards shout, throw

China, and fight with their dear wifey. Even a child with brilliant genetics can become neurotic in this milieu. A kid looks for protection and support from his father but ends up beaten.”

“You’re right, Mari. Luckily, Ants Pampel is a quiet drunkard, the kind who gets drunk and nods off in the corner. Alcohol has a stifling impact on him. I also try to tame him—perhaps I can limit his desire to drink. By the way, he’s not the most inveterate drunkard that his hands and legs would shake. In the village bar “Crocodile”, those type of guys who constantly fall gather all the time. Quite often they have bruises on their face or a black eye. But once they get a hold of their jug, they wet themselves out of happiness. Doctors say that these people have no trace of a liver anymore and are out of both kidneys—maybe just a quarter functions. These low-life hoodlums ask passers-by for some kopecks, go to their acquaintances and beg for glass bottles so they could somehow save money for their next bottle of wine.”

“Your Ants can end up the same. Be careful, you’ll go home and see that those hoodlums and whores are storming around in your rooms and the house is destroyed. The puppy has long ago been impaled and fried.”

Regina tried to smirk.

“Think well before you start expanding your family together with a fanatic. Believe me, you’ll have to break through several walls. What will be left of you like this?”

“Don’t try to convince me, I’ve made up my mind.”

“All right,” sighed Mari. “Whose information do I need to obtain?”

[...]

Regina listened—where was the sound of the motor that should have broken the wall of silence a long time ago! They tried to prolong Regina’s pain on purpose. Would this inevitable battle finally commence! Who knows have many times Regina had imagined a car line that would move towards her house along the empty street in the outskirts of the village. Today most men of action are tied to their shiny boxes of tin and so they, sitting on the upholstery and without physically tiring themselves, they show up at her stairs, drive over Regina as if with a road roller, lecture her with a voice that sounds like iron clatter—and then? What is the solution?

Regina was losing her patience.

A kangaroo court should fill their ennuied souls at least for a moment with this unique bitter-sweet grumble, condemning somebody should give them the chance to relieve their turbulent inner tensions.

Why aren’t they rushing to use this fine opportunity?

Or did they start to feel sorry for the defenseless woman? Regina is still the mother of their children.

Maybe they'll show up with carrying bouquets and eyes filled with tears of joy because I have grown their family on Earth.

If the situation weren't so tense and nerves extremely on edge, this upcoming score settling could be viewed in a funnier light. It would be quite comical to observe Viktor and Haldor, one pushing the other aside: Regina's third child is mine! No, don't come forth, it's actually mine! The tough-looking and burly cousins would start a squabble, perhaps they'd even push each other down on the grass and wrestle a bit: they'd pull each other from the lapels and take turns rolling each other's ears. Their wives would squeal and change their outcry into laughter. How fun it is to wrestle in the grass!

Afterward they would remember their noble purpose which brought them there. As if on command, they'd become serious: we are such positive people and in good standing, we are highly admired (honorary certificates, medals, diplomas, and bonuses) and we can't stand a lack of morals. It doesn't go together with today's way of life. They'd encourage their anger, hiss, deplore sexual immorality and vileness—people would truly fulfil their civic responsibility. By crushing Regina, they'd have a good opportunity to forget their shady moments in life. Compared to a black sheep, they'd look luminescent white to themselves. Anyways, they have always made sure that their fun ventures don't have unpleasant consequences. And women would look at Regina as if she was of the fatuous kind: is she really so behind the times? Doesn't she know that today contraceptives are the gate to true freedom for an emancipated woman? Before there were only words that equality with men exists and real difference wasn't really noticed—only men enjoyed the possibilities of fulfilling their moods and wishes. Why did she trick everyone so ridiculously? She wanted the burden of a bunch of children?

Somebody rang the bell at the door for a long time.

Regina flinched.

She wanted to jump up from the chair, her knees were weak. She took a moment to compose herself, it seemed like forever before she was able to drag her feet across the floor. She stumbled at the threshold in the hall and nearly fell against the door that she was trying to unlock with her unsteady hand.

The fateful moment had arrived!

They could have honked in the street to warn Regina.

A glum young man was at the door, hair untidy, the buttons of his checkered shirt open until his waist—was it suddenly hot outside?

The young man passed her a telegram, put a piece of paper and a short pencil in the palm of her hand, pointed with his finger where to add her signature and time. Regina hesitantly wrote on the paper: R. Pampel. How long will she use Ants' name?

Regina closed the door, locked it twice as if this naïve attempt to part with the outside world could protect her and provide some peace. She stood in the middle

of the room, motionless for a while, holding the telegram between her fingers. She was totally confused.

“Unfortunately, I can’t take part in the get-together. I wish everyone good spir-its and cloudless skies. Greetings, Tiit.”

Why Tiit? What did he have to do with it?

What has this insane Mari done now?

Regina didn’t have a single child with Tiit!

Had Mari invited him to be a spectator at this thrilling show?

They had broken up with Tiit on the eve of the day when Regina pulled out the certificate of succession. Hereafter Regina barely remembered Tiit. Regina had got rid of this old story quite easily. Contempt for Tiit didn’t help her: What sort of man lets his parents slip a woman into his bed! Mummy and daddy put a ring on his finger—live and procreate! Mollusk!

Why did Tiit send her a telegram?

Waiting for the enraged gang, Regina had repeatedly imagined the tempestu-ous anger in their pale faces, but she had never envisioned Tiit with them. What did this guy have to do with Regina’s children?

Mari had totally lost it. It’s as if contact with Haldor’s daughter-in-law had hit her on the head and logical connections were broken. How do those weird delu-sions end up in the brain of a person who has been sane so far? Who had she, in addition to the parties involved and Tiit, lured to the meeting?

If Tiit already had been introduced to Regina’s children, then Ants Pampel could be named the real father of Reesi, Rein, and Riina—the names in the man’s passport count for something as well!

It’s embarrassing to think that recently Regina had briefly wished for some-thing: the real father of her fourth child should be Ants Pampel. Why not? In a cou-ple of years, they could consider it since the child would not have to suffer from his past alcoholism. At least this is claimed in pop-sci articles. Pampel’s love for alcohol had, for a while, been diminishing; if there’s no setback, one can hope the deviations in the organism created by vodka could level off with time. Who the hell knows, everything was quite messy in this case. All kinds of writings were edited into something more optimistic than the opposite, oftentimes the truth was only read between the lines by guessing—maybe an idiot is born?

Regina had started to re-evaluate Ants when she ended up in hospital at the end of winter.

Until then Regina had dealt with doctors only in connection with her future children. She was completely stunned when she collapsed due to severe pain and was taken to the hospital at night.

In the early hours of the morning, they operated on her appendix. People who have suffered a lot could have ridiculed Regina—what a tragedy! To be honest,

removing a burst appendix is apparently more difficult than the removal of a regular appendix, but the doctor had calmed the patient down and consoled her that all went well, there's no need to expect complications, she just has to have some patience, lay still, not move around, and quite soon her health will be good again.

Laying still-tortured Regina, impatience made her body tingle. For some reason the feeling that her whole life she hadn't spent so much time not washing herself started to bother her, even her hair was clinging to her scalp.

Ants had come to look after her at night. The other women in the hospital room knew Ants, they didn't mind him sitting there—in situations like this, the people in the village were used to no fuss. Of course, there were not enough orderlies and Ants was willing to complete small requests.

But women got scared and started judgmentally whispering when Ants wet a towel and started rubbing Regina's limbs.

Excess care seemed like borderline sexual immorality to the others. It seemed to offend the women that a man has been changed into a plain servant. Regina didn't allow their prejudice to bother her. In the morning, she complained to Ants that her hair was really dirty and it was just unbearable. She announced that despite the doctor's orders she would stand up and go to the bathroom to wash her hair. Ants was startled, started clumsily stroking her hand and asked her to be patient a bit more—he'd arrange everything.

Ants showed surprising initiative, quite soon he came with a bowl and buckets, pushed the seats together, moved her in the bed, set a stool under her neck for support and calmly started washing her hair. She allowed Regina to touch the temperature of the rinsing water, made sure it was suitable, poured some over Regina's hair with a jug and set her hair in a towel in a turban.

Enjoyable exhaustion that followed this procedure gave some hope—now her health was coming back.

Ants was adjusting Regina's pillows when they started to hear quiet sobbing from the corner of the hospital room.

Regina had really wanted to take a nap, but this bitter whimpering touched her soul and kept her awake again. Ants tried to console that crying woman and offered her some help, she only had to tell him what was bothering her. She mumbled in the corner through her tears that there was nothing wrong except for the fact that her life was messed up.

[...]

Regina started running around the room as if wound up. She scrambled, but for some reason she was unable to run out the door. It seemed to her that before rushing to the post office there was something important that needed to be arranged in

her house. She laughed a nervous laugh: she's not going to put a sign on the door that read "Dear enraged fathers, wait. I'll be back soon!"

Regina put her shoes on in the hall and for some reason staggered on her heels. She encountered a strange fear: on the way, she will sprain her leg and won't make it to the post office on time. Having removed her shoes, she moved out of the room in her slippers and was spooked by the slam of the door. Out of breath, she arrived at the post office and asked for an urgent call.

The startled girl at the office acted quickly. She occasionally glimpsed at Regina who was leaning against the counter panting.

After a few minutes, Regina was in the booth, took the receiver and asked, "Mari, is that you?"

"Yes," said Mari inaudibly.

Suddenly Regina didn't know how to start, which tone to use. To beg the other one or pretend she's overjoyed: I have the advantage!

Mari used Regina's moment of silence and started talking.

"Be calm," she said mockingly. "Everything's cancelled. We agreed that we'd start the drive in the morning. They promised to be there on time. I stood along the edge of the square under the trees for two hours and stared at every passing or parking car. But nobody showed up. Nobody showed interest in you or the children. Unbelievable, but true!" exclaimed Mari gaily.

"You worked hard for nothing," mumbled Regina.

She was shocked by what she'd heard.

"Forgive me," said Mari. "I don't understand today's people. I'm old-fashioned. I belong in a junkyard."

"Mari!" shouted Regina. Her throat felt tight.

"Live happily among your family and forget what happened."

In another situation, Mari's emotional way of expressing herself would have amused Regina, now tears were pouring down her face and dripped off her chin straight down on the floor.

"I'll come to visit you some time, Mari," said Regina regaining her strength and hiding her sobbing.

"Come-come," said Mari in a tired manner and hung up.

Regina slouched and ran out of the post office without looking up once.

She couldn't be happy.

She started to feel unbelievably sad and bleak that her children happened to have fathers who didn't care at all about their own flesh and blood.

Jasenka Kodrnja

The Diary of a Woman in Labor

AUTHOR Jasenka Kodrnja

TITLE “Dnevnik jedne roditelje” [The Diary of a Woman in Labor]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Start* no. 335 (November 21, 1981), 56–57. Reprinted in her collected essays: *Žene zmije – rodna dekonstrukcija* [Snake Women—Gender Deconstruction] (Zagreb: Institut za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu, 2008), 226–32.

LANGUAGE Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jasenka Kodrnja (1946, Zagreb–2010, Zagreb) was a Croatian sociologist, philosopher, feminist activist, a poet, and one of the certainly more interesting figures on the Yugoslav and, later, Croatian intellectual scene. The argument for the latter should be found in her uncompromising nature and exceptional courage in the fight for her own convictions, a fight she was more than happy to bring to the public sphere without worrying too much about how many feathers she would ruffle while doing so. A good example of this is precisely the article “The Diary of a Woman in Labor,” published in 1981 in one of the most popular and widely read Yugoslav magazines, *Start*.

Jasenka Kodrnja was born in Zagreb, where she graduated in sociology and philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb (in 1971). From 1973 to 1975, she attended postgraduate studies in anthropology at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade. In 1979 and 1980, using a French government scholarship, she was in Paris at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences), studying under Alain Touraine. In 2000, she received her doctorate from the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb with the dissertation “The Social Position of the Female Artist.” She later published the results of her doctoral research in her most important work, *Nimfe, Muze, Eurinome* (Nymphs, Muses, Eurinomes). In it, she presented her often criticized and contested research practice of using myths as methodological models for the study of reality. Kodrnja’s friend and intellectual influence, Blaženka Despot, wrote a foreword defending her research procedure and justifiably referring to the epistemological problems of contemporary science prone to neglecting women as subjects and creators of knowledge as well as denigrating their methods of acquiring it.

From 1980 onward, as a member of the feminist group *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society), she was one of those who significantly contributed to the institutionalization

of feminism in Croatia. Thus, she joined intellectual figures such as Lydia Sklevicky, Blaženka Despot, Nadežda Čaćinović, Vesna Kesić, Rudi Supek, Vjeran Katunarić, and Slavenka Drakulić who, through the work of the group, discussed numerous feminist topics within existing socialist frameworks but also outside of them. From 1988 to 1996, she worked as a volunteer on the SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence, the first of its kind in Central and Southeastern Europe. During that period, she spoke to thousands of women victims of domestic violence, listening to their shocking testimonies and trying to provide them with help in times when almost no institutional help existed. Her work on the SOS Hotline deeply affected her, and although she rarely discussed the testimonies she heard, one of them she decided to recall in the story “Kill Me,” published in her book *Trinaest razloga za šutnju* (Thirteen Reasons for Silence).

In 1990, Jasenka Kodrnja participated in the establishment of the first shelter for women victims of domestic violence in this part of Europe: The Autonomous Women’s House. The shelter started working when female activists—Jasenka Kodrnja among them—occupied an empty apartment in Zagreb using the method of squatting.

She worked at the Croatian Cultural Institute as a researcher, at the Ministry of Culture as a consultant, and, for a short period of time, she was a high school teacher. In 2000, she started teaching at the Faculty of Croatian Studies, among the first to introduce feminist topics into the academic community through the courses “Introduction to Gender Studies” and “Feminist Theories.” In 2001, she was employed at the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb where she managed two scientific research projects: “Gender/Sex Determination of Space and Time in the Republic of Croatia” and “Identity of Others in the Republic of Croatia.” Along with Blaženka Despot, her intellectual role models were Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Jean-François Lyotard. In addition to scientific work, she was a prolific writer, publishing poetry, prose, and essays in the publications *Oko*, *Quorum*, *Rival*, *Književna republika*, *Zarez*, *Novi list*, and the Third Programme of Croatian Radio.

She died on July 1, 2010, in Zagreb, following a short illness.

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Ana Maskalan¹

CONTEXT

It is quite disconcerting and infinitely sad when a forty-year-old text describing a particular case of (social) injustice still sounds familiar and fresh. Such a text confronts us with depressing thoughts about stagnation and the irreparability of the human condition, becoming more pronounced in the face of an ideology of the present that sometimes uncritically glorifies the supposed enormous progress of today's societies compared to the "old ones." This is particularly characteristic of contemporary post-socialist societies, which find nothing redeeming in the former social structure, while at the same time being unaware of their own reluctance to overcome some of the injustices of the past.

Jasenka Kodrnja's article, "The Diary of a Woman in Labour," published in the Yugoslav magazine *Start* on August 21, 1981, represents exactly one such text.² In it, she describes in detail what some would say is a very ordinary and insignificant experience: the experience of giving birth in a hospital environment. Despite this, or precisely because of this, the text "The Diary of a Woman in Labour" caused certain controversies in socialist Yugoslavia.³ What was so controversial about it? First,

1 This paper presents results from the project "Croatian Women Philosophers in the European Context," which is financed by the Croatian Science Foundation under the number UIP-2017-05-1763 and hosted at the Institute for Philosophy, Zagreb.

2 "The Diary of a Woman in Labor" was also published in Jasenka Kodrnja's book *Žene zmije – rodna dekonstrukcija* [Snake women—gender deconstruction] in which she gathered selection of unpublished or previously published texts, mostly on feminist topics, from 1975 to 2007. "The Diary of a Woman in Labor" is, hence, among her earliest feminist writings.

3 The controversy around Kodrnja's text was derived from conversations I held with Kodrnja's contemporaries and colleagues. Although some of them did not know Jasenka Kodrnja at the time of its publication, they remembered the discussions it caused as well as the discomfort stemming from bringing up such an intimate topic in public. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that as far as I know no social debates following Jasenka Kodrnja's article were documented. However, women's birth conditions were discussed from a more scholarly and transnational angle a few years after Kodrnja published "The Diary of a Woman in Labor". For a detailed analysis of this, see Lóránd, "Feminist Writing about Women's Health", in *The Feminist Challenge*, 188–192.

the author decided to go public with a deeply intimate topic that, precisely because of its intimate nature, was considered inappropriate in the context of public speech. Describing the pains of childbirth, as well as other (non-sexual) processes related to a woman's body, was historically determined a transgression of good taste and pushed into the realm of whispers or, even better, silenced. Another reason for the controversy was the fact that Jasenka Kodrnja dared to touch the untouchable: the medical profession and its paragons, whose authority and competence (along with those of priests and judges) were until then rarely questioned in the Balkans. The third, maybe the most important reason was that Jasenka Kodrnja's case wasn't unique. Exactly the opposite! Numerous Yugoslav women recognized themselves in her experiences, and this is exactly what made her text compelling and controversial.

What certainly contributed to the popularity of Jasenka Kodrnja's article was the medium in which it appeared. The magazine *Start*⁴ was a popular Yugoslav periodical publication that was published in Zagreb (Croatia) in the seventies and eighties, often proclaimed "the Yugoslav *Playboy*."⁵ Although its content varied, distinguishing itself with texts on culture, politics, and the media that were being written by some of the most prominent Yugoslav intellectuals, what contributed to *Start*'s popularity, especially among men, were its covers and spreads, which often featured beautiful nude women. Despite this, the editors of *Start* encouraged the publication of provocative and unexpected topics, among which some were feminist.⁶ That is why Jasenka Kodrnja's article found its place there.

"The Diary of a Woman in Labor" described the medical ordeals that Jasenka Kodrnja suffered during giving birth to her daughter Jana in one of the most reputable hospitals in Yugoslavia. It began with the words from the (male) editor who, although justifiably mentioned that Jasenka Kodrnja's case had raised many ethical, professional, and social questions, fell short by reducing it to the power relationship between doctor and patient. So despite this rather neutral introduction and the fact that Jasenka Kodrnja described only her own experience without wider social contextualization and abstraction, she quickly introduced a feminist moment in her second paragraph by saying: "When I decided to keep the baby, I tried to carry out that duty as best as I could." This emancipatory attitude of a woman who thinks about her own body and freely makes decisions about it should be partly placed in the context of socialist Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1980s, when the intensity of state

4 "Start." *Hrvatska enciklopedija*. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža. <https://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=57877>.

5 Editor's note: Despite this comparison, the quality of the texts in *Start* surpassed those of *Playboy*, making it a one-of-a-kind Yugoslav and Balkan publication. About *Start*, see the entries about Slavenka Drakulić, Vesna Kesić and Vera Vesković-Vangeli in this volume.

6 Slavenka Drakulić and Maja Miles, a trailblazing feminist journalist of the 1980s in Yugoslavia, wrote for *Start*. Vesna Kesić's text on Miles: Vesna Kesić, "Nagrada Maja Miles" [The Maja Miles Award], <https://old.hnd.hr/hr/arhiva/show/60883/index.html>. Accessed January 19, 2024.

interventions in the field of women's human rights was weakening, and the feminist activist one was strengthening. Yugoslav politics significantly contributed to gender equality in a geographical area that after the Second World War recorded major social differences between men and women, by contributing to the eradication of female illiteracy and increasing the education and the employment of women, and social protection and care for their children.⁷ Socialist Yugoslavia also introduced women's right to abortion in 1974.⁸ Despite its shortcomings, it is still in force in the Republic of Croatia.⁹

In addition to the specific Yugoslav intellectual environment of the eighties in which she lived and worked, Jasenka Kodrnja may have been even more influenced by Western second-wave feminist writings, especially those regarding women's (reproductive) health.¹⁰ Certainly, one of the most significant books in this regard was Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978)¹¹ that Jasenka Kodrnja often referred to in her later works. The influence of the aforementioned book, in which the author discussed the relationship between the medical branch governed by omniscient male authorities approaching women as mindless objects deprived of agency and opinion, is also recognized in "The Diary of a Woman in Labor." At the same time, Jasenka Kodrnja did not reduce medicine, in this case gynecology, exclusively to patriarchal power relations, but opened up questions of all power relations between (self)proclaimed authorities and those expected to obey them.

In discussing her case, Jasenka Kodrnja was most upset by the discrepancy between the medical birthing procedures described in the books she read to prepare for labor and her own experience. And while the books promised medical care, compassion, and respect for the patient's opinion, her own experience was marked by medical dehumanization, neglect, and ignorance, which not only hurt her dignity as a human being, but also put her and her child's life in danger. She compared the feelings experienced in that moment with those of being raped. Her final impression of one of the most sensitive, frightening, and beautiful moments in a woman's life was defeatist and sad, and she rounded it off with the words: "Every person is once and somehow born. Surely that first encounter with the world is some indication of what kind of world that is."

7 Ana Maskalan, "Place of Women's Rights in Supranation-Building," *Politička misao* 59, no. 2 (2022): 41–65. <https://doi.org/10.20901/pm.59.2.02>.

8 See the entry about Vlasta Jalušić in this volume.

9 Ana Lovreković, "Nismo mi krive – bilješke iz povijesti pobačaja 1" [It's Not Our Fault—Notes from the History of Abortion 1], *Libela*, October 10, 2018. <https://libela.org/sa-stavom/9865-nismo-mi-krive-biljeske-iz-povijesti-pobacaja-1/>.

10 For more details on feminist writing on women's health see Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 188–192.

11 Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

Unfortunately, forty years later, the medical, particularly gynecological, treatment of women, supported by radical conservative political and religious ideologies in the Balkans, still rests on cruel and humiliating practices further reinforced by the social tabooing of women's bodies (as part of the way society regulates and controls the human body, i.e., body politics). Recent examples concern performing the curettage procedure without anesthesia¹² (opening up further questions of performing curettage itself in cases when there are less invasive and more humane alternatives at disposal), the mass "conscientious objection" of doctors, which makes abortion unavailable in large geographic areas,¹³ the inhumane treatment of women during labor,¹⁴ providing IVFs only to married women,¹⁵ etc. Unfortunately, all of this makes Jasenka Kodrnja's text more relevant than ever before, reminding us at the same time that the fight for women's human rights is a never-ending and a never-forgotten task.

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- 13 For the case from Croatia, see Helena Trenkić, "Mass Conscientious Objection Is Making Abortion Inaccessible in Croatia," *Human Rights Pulse*, July 12, 2022, <https://www.humanrightspulse.com/mastercontentblog/mass-conscientious-objection-is-making-abortion-inaccessible-in-croatia>.
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- 15 For an example from Slovenia, see "After Marriage Equality, Focus Shifts on IVF for Single Women," *The Slovenia Times*, January 31, 2023, <https://sloveniatimes.com/after-marriage-equality-focus-shifts-on-ivf-for-single-women/>.

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Ana Maskalan

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Jasenka Kodrnja

Diary of a Woman in Labor

The medical staff of the modernly equipped department of a distinguished hospital in Zagreb made several mistakes and oversights during one birth, for which the new mother is suffering the consequences even today. The case that she has described in great detail opens up many ethical, professional, and social questions, and suggests that the doctor-patient relationship has turned into a relationship in which one party wields its power over the one that seeks help. Is this the rule or the exception?

The matter that I will describe is not the outcome of any premeditated observation or experiment. I was going to be a mother, to give birth. In these situations, one feels the weight of responsibility and a hidden desire to escape the natural predestination to reproduce, which in a way makes us equal to all other living things. But only a woman can say: "I want to do it" or "I don't want to do it," so the natural act of human reproduction becomes more and more an issue of choice. The rest is an issue of technology, biology, and medicine.

When I decided to keep the baby, I tried to carry out that duty as best as I could. I began collecting literature on pregnancy, delivery, and childrearing. I got my hands on and read one, two, three, four books. The books that I read were from the genre of popular science, but were sufficiently informative on the development of a baby in the mother's womb, the changes that take place in the mother, and they included basic practical instructions on behavior during pregnancy, labor, and following childbirth. In my case, there were also some "aggravating" circumstances: I am thirty-five, which can make pregnancy and delivery more difficult; at the beginning of my pregnancy, the baby was accidentally exposed to radiation when I did an x-ray of my lungs; my Rhesus factor is negative. Those were the circumstances, however, that had to be kept in mind, and to be heeded. But very quickly it became clear that it should not be a reason for concern. Regular ultrasounds showed that the baby was developing normally, and my "age" did not at all interfere with my everyday activities. What is more is that I felt wonderful. I would often look at my body in the mirror, getting round and big: my belly grew larger and more beautiful. In the fourth month, the baby

began to move. I became more aware of the feeling that I'm a human being that reproduces.

Then came the question of choosing a physician and finding a hospital where I would deliver the baby. Some of my colleagues mentioned a hospital in Zagreb where, people say, the obstetrics and gynecology department functions smoothly. I started going to regular monthly check-ups with a well-known specialist at that hospital and classes for mental and physical fitness for pregnant women once a week. Check-ups were really short, two or three minutes, but, given that everything was fine, it didn't bother me. I wasn't paying too much attention to all the talk about labor "incidents" (the result of doctors' mistakes). Since I took my pregnancy seriously and took the proper steps during the pregnancy, I believed that nothing bad would happen.

On the night of July 5, 1981 (it was a Sunday), I began feeling pressure in my lower abdomen. I didn't sleep the whole night, but not because of the pain (the pressure, although, gradually intensified, still was not painful), but out of excitement. Around five o'clock in the morning, I started getting ready to go the hospital. I felt wonderful, confident in my state of health, curious, and impatient. I was familiar with all of the phases of birth and the proper behavior of an expectant mother, breathing in particular.

I arrived to the hospital right at seven o'clock in the morning on July 6, together with the father of the future baby, in the waiting room of the maternity ward of that Zagreb hospital. Another married couple was already there waiting. From seven to eight o'clock the reception area was empty. I wasn't feeling any pain, so that hour went by pretty fast. Sometime after 8, after a group of people in white robes arrived, the physician who did my check-ups called me in. He confirmed that the birthing process had begun, but I wasn't dilated enough (only two centimeters), so he would—if I didn't want to go home temporarily and wait to dilate—induce labor. "No need for delays, I want to give birth as soon as possible," I replied quickly.

Then the intake process began: date of birth, the names of my parents, prior illnesses, wedding date (?!), and lots of other pieces of information; detailed registration took at least twenty minutes. My physician didn't even have the time to come and check on me, let alone talk to me, or comment on some information, particularly the kind that could eventually make labor more difficult. That is how the hospital staff took me in; labor had formally begun.

The predelivery room seemed nice, clean, and freshly painted. It had five or six beds. Two women were already laying down there. One was getting liquids for prevention of premature labor, and the other was getting an IV (a hormone concoction that induces labor and is given through an infusion). In today's modern maternity wards, an IV is more often used for inducing labor. After the regular preparations, they gave me an IV, too.

Around 9:30 in the morning, the doctor on duty broke my water as well as the water of the woman lying in the bed next to mine. The doctor checked our dilation and wrote the information on a medical chart hanging from the end of the bed. A device held against my stomach used rhythmic signals to register what was happening in the uterus. They also gave us a sedative injection. The doctor left and didn't come back until noon. The contractions were quite mild. During my contractions, I was doing the kind of breathing appropriate for the first phase of labor—similar to a dog's pant. That kind of breathing helps the baby get more oxygen, and a focused mother in labor forgets the pain entirely that way. I was feeling fresh and well-rested. Between the contractions, I chatted with the woman in labor next to me.

Around noon, the doctor on duty came, checked us using his hand and a device and left. The doctor on duty who cared for us up until that point was replaced with another one in the afternoon.

Around one o'clock in the afternoon, I became impatient. The pains were getting more and more intense, and there was no one in the predelivery room, there were no doctors or nurses. In the books I read, it says that the doctor and midwife visit the mother frequently during labor. "Don't worry one bit: You will have a bell in your hand, and if the cramps worsen and start to become more frequent, you can call the nurse immediately. Someone will come to check on you." (From the book "*Vaše dete i vi* [Your Child and You]," BIGZ, Belgrade, 1979, p. 46).¹⁶ Here, there was no bell, and over the span of four hours, they only checked on me twice. I called the nurse. I explained that my pains had gotten worse and that I would like the doctor to examine me.

"The doctor is in the delivery room, he's busy," she replied.

Until two o'clock, time passed slowly. The contractions were becoming longer and more painful, and the intervals shorter. Shallow breathing was no longer helping.

Around two o'clock, it became unbearable. It was as if I had turned into pain itself. I lost control. I started yelling. The intervals between contractions were magnificent oases that I longed for. During those intervals, I was rested, fresh, and fully aware of what was happening to me. Through contractions that became long (longer than a minute) and strong, I figured that the second phase of labor has begun: delivery of the baby. This is a dramatic phase of labor because the baby goes through a narrow birthing canal. Now the presence of a professional who could help in different ways was definitely needed. If that phase lasts too long, it could be dangerous and lead to complications for the mother and the baby.

16 Editor's note: This was a Serbo-Croatian translation of the co-authored *The Baby Book*, issued in numerous editions by the American publisher Better Homes and Gardens from the 1950s until the late 1990s.

I started calling the nurse and the doctor to check me and take me to the delivery room.

The doctor came. He advised me to calm down because I was disturbing others. I begged him to check me. He didn't; he said that I was not dilated enough yet and left. I was left alone, aware that anything could happen. I was thinking. In that phase, the mother needs assistance; "pressing" helps accelerate delivery of the baby. I stopped with the breathing needed for the first phase, since it no longer helped. Should I start pushing on my own? If I decide to and don't have enough strength to do it on my own, I could suffocate the baby. What to do? The handbooks say that childbirth is performed under the normal care of a professional staff. It doesn't say anywhere what has to be done if that care is not available. Should I try to give birth on my own? I didn't know anything about that. I was helpless.

Sometime after three o'clock, two doctors came. They didn't examine me. One fastened electrodes from a machine to my back, which he said lessens the pain and stimulates contractions. The other one left and came back again. Finally, he examined me. With that machine and the IV, the nurse and doctor took me to the delivery room.

The pain didn't let up now. When I laid down on the gynecologist's table in the delivery room, the baby's head was already on its way out of the birth canal; the nurse actually said that she saw the baby's hair. Finally, I began pushing. I delivered in a few minutes. It was 3:30. The only help the doctor gave during childbirth was an episiotomy (an incision done with scissors at the base of the birth canal and perineum, performed during most births to avoid an abnormal tear that is hard to stitch). I watched the baby come out: she flew like a colorful ball of yarn. Then I put my head down. I felt a big relief. The pain totally disappeared. I was peaceful and content.

Shortly after birth, the midwife pulled the placenta by the umbilical cord. They gave me a clean baby. A girl—what I wanted. Her hands and feet were blue. "Is she healthy?" I asked anxiously. "Yes," they replied. Later, in the discharge summary I read: "Apgar 7" which means that her overall state was not so good, that childbirth was hard on her. (Apgar is a test that evaluates the following characteristics of the newborn: heartbeat, breathing, muscle tone, reflexes, and skin color. Newborns with 10 points are normal, 6–9 are at risk, and 5 and below are in immediate danger of death.)¹⁷

The doctor and the midwife moved to another woman in labor in the cubicle next to mine. They were doing something there. After that they left the delivery room. I was left partly naked with my robe raised. My whole body was shaking

17 Editor's note: The Apgar score was invented by Virginia Apgar (1909–1974), an American physician, obstetrical anesthesiologist and medical researcher.

from the shivers that often occur after birth as a result of hard physical labor. The fourth and final phase of birth was performed. The main part was over, the baby was born alive. In the book that I mentioned earlier it says: "The first hour and a half following birth is very important to your future health. During that time doctors and nurses will provide special attention. It might bother you when they massage your stomach vigorously and perform certain examinations. But that is all important, especially in order to prevent subsequent hemorrhage." The staff returned approximately an hour later. The doctor stitched up the incision made during the episiotomy and that was it. No examination or massage.

They put me in a wheelchair and took me to a room where women who had given birth stayed. Another neat, clean room with six beds and two extra ones. Women were chatting over music coming from a transistor radio.

After some time, I felt wet sheets under me. I asked the other women how much they bled. "Not that much," they replied. A few times women from the room called for nurses. The nurse that came changed my bedsheet and pressed my stomach. Then after some time, another two nurses did the same. Then someone said that they should call the doctor, and someone else said to wait for the doctor to make the rounds. They didn't wait for the doctor to make the rounds but instead they wheeled me to the delivery room. It was late in the afternoon, almost evening, sometime between six and seven o'clock. A man in a white coat told me that I would be getting an anesthetic and that I would be unconscious for a period of time.

Waking up felt unreal; like hallucinogens are described in literature. My consciousness returned gradually and faintly. Then I remembered that I'd given birth.

"Where am I?" I asked.

"In the delivery room."

"But I already gave birth."

"You were bleeding," I was told.

"How is my baby?"

"She is well," a patient voice replied over and over again.

A large wall clock read 11:15. It was nighttime. "What day is it?" I asked. "Monday." Then everything came back to me. The transfusion needle was still sticking out of my right arm.

Around midnight they took me to the predelivery room. Several women were laying there. As time passed, one woman's pains became more intense. There wasn't any medical staff around for about three hours. Then the doctor examined the women. To the question of what had happened to me, I received a vague answer. "A certain rupture..." I didn't hear the last part of the response, it was as if he muttered something to himself. The doctor then did not show up again for about three hours, until six in the morning. I didn't sleep all night. In the meantime, I spoke with the woman who was lying in the bed next to me who had also given birth.

The morning went by slowly. Sometime before noon they took me to the room where I was staying before.

Life in the hospital has its daily routine, the time is filled with necessary activities. At five in the morning, the women get up, change their sheets (you get clean sheets and a robe every day) and shower, but you wait in line for an hour for the shower since there is only one for about thirty or forty women. It's very tiring, especially for those who are feeling weak. Women have solidarity, so they help one another. At six o'clock they bring the babies, then the doctor's rounds are made, and then breakfast. The babies are brought back every three hours.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, the visitors come. Because visitors are forbidden to enter the space where the mothers are, conversations take place through a small window, and that's a few people on either side at the same time. Because it's crowded, some talk through the windows of the hallway or the bathroom, which the nurses try to prevent unsuccessfully.

The doctor's visits should have a special significance. But they are very short: the morning visit is a few minutes long, and the evening one not even that long. The evening doctor just comes in and out of the room. For the morning visit, doctors prescribe medicine and injections; generally, they don't speak to the women. To the questions that I asked about the poorly stitched seam and the injection given to Rhesus-negative women, once I didn't get a response, and the other time the response was rude. In general, women neither ask questions nor request anything.

During my stay at the hospital, no one asked me how I was, nor did I notice any of the other women being asked this question.

On the fifth day, before returning home, the woman pediatric physician gives basic instructions on caring for the baby. Then you receive your discharge summary. In mine, among other things, it wrote: "Very heavy bleeding following birth. Suspicious placenta. The uterine cavity has been examined by hand. Sewing of the cervix and episiotomy. The usual course of events that follows labor." (Translation from the Latin.)

Right before I went home, I used the telephone at the front desk. I asked the nurse if that is something you have to pay for. "No," she said. "You'll be paying for all of that," added the physician who happened to be there and should have known my condition well since he was a regular member of the doctor's rounds. I looked at him with shock, and just after that it became clear that I had "paid" dearly for certain medical procedures.

No one explained to me why I bled and what kind of surgery was performed, but the incision from the episiotomy was poorly sewn up, so that the wound did not heal. Following my return home, I decided to consult with some physicians.

The first thing I did was I visited the doctor at the above-mentioned hospital, whom I used to see for check-ups, but who wasn't present at the birth. He repeated

a vague response, like “Everything’s fine, don’t worry.” A consultation with a few other gynecologists showed something different: the staff that oversaw my delivery made the following mistakes:

- The labor process was not sufficiently and regularly monitored. The labor period of three hours, especially considering that I got an IV, was unacceptably long, which was needlessly exhausting for me and the baby.
- Following birth, the necessary exams weren’t executed, which is why I bled after. (The cervix and placenta weren’t properly examined.)
- The incision made during the episiotomy was done poorly, so one portion of the wound simply remained open. This could have been corrected through a second subsequent stitch, but that wasn’t done.

Today, three months after birth, I still feel pain in the area where the incision was made and I will feel it, according to the doctor’s prognosis, for some time.

A month after my return from the hospital I walked with great difficulty, and I couldn’t sit at all. I was almost always laying down, and that was the time when the baby needed me most.

How is it possible that in a modern maternity ward they could make such “amateur” oversights and mistakes? Examinations of the placenta and cervix are, in fact, among the most simple, necessary, and routine procedures, in the textbook of obstetrics, so that oversights should not occur even for a beginner in the profession. What does it mean to be a modernly equipped delivery room (with all kinds of machines, drips, and the like) if during childbirth the professional staff is not available? How is it possible that only one doctor is on duty in that department? If a whole team is on duty, where is it and what is it doing?

Does the physician-patient relationship—despite being the result of a division of labor, a relationship between a superior and an inferior (between the one who has power over health and life and another who lacks that power but seeks help)—enable the abuse of position and the acquisition of privileges?

Since delivery, I kept asking myself these kinds of questions and similar ones about the relationships between physician and patient, the medical service and society, and society’s attitude toward a woman’s role in biological reproduction.

Every person is once and somehow born. Surely that first encounter with the world is some indication of what kind of world that is.

I imagined the birth of my baby as a joyful act, with which the staff, whose profession it is, would assist. After I gave birth, I felt like I’d been raped; by people I didn’t know, by institutions, and by the circumstances.

Ana Blandiana

Children's Crusade

AUTHOR Ana Blandiana

TITLE "Cruciada copiilor" [Children's Crusade]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Amfiteatru* [Amphitheater] 18, no. 12 (1984): 10.

LANGUAGE Romanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR¹

Ana Blandiana (*nom de plume* for Otilia-Valeria Rusan, née Coman; b. 1942, Timișoara) is a writer and civic activist. Her father, Gheorghe Coman, was an orthodox priest imprisoned for several years between 1948 and 1964 on political grounds, and was considered an opponent of the communist regime in Romania. He died in 1964, shortly after being released from prison. His daughter took the pseudonym Ana Blandiana (after the name of the village where her mother was born) when she published her first poems in the literary magazine *Tribuna* in 1959, at the age of 17. Later, she remembered that she did not use a literary pseudonym on purpose, but that it was just an innocent game.² However, two weeks after her poems were published, political censors realized that behind this name hid the daughter of an "enemy of the people," and she was forbidden to publish for five years (1959–1964). Along with other youngsters with "unhealthy social origins," Blandiana was also not allowed to apply for admission to the University of Cluj. When this interdiction was lifted in 1962, after four years of rejections, she successfully registered for the university exam and was finally admitted to the University of Cluj, Department of Letters (Romance philology) in 1963. She graduated in 1967, ranking first in her cohort. After her publication ban was lifted, Blandiana started to publish poems in the Bucharest-based cultural magazine *Contemporanul*, which, during the 1960s, was gradually becoming a well-respected literary publication. In 1964, Blandiana also published her first volume of poetry, *Persoana întâia plural* (First-Person Plural), which was severely altered by censorship.

At the end of the 1960s, Blandiana moved to Bucharest together with her husband, the writer Romulus Rusan (1935–2016), and worked as junior editor of the monthly literary magazine *Amfiteatru*, a publication of the Students' National Union,

1 Corina Doboș's work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, CNCS - UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-1076, within PNCDI III.

2 Blandiana, *Soră lume*; Frandzen, "Interview with Ana Blandiana."

founded in 1966. A marginal magazine, *Amfiteatru* was used by many young writers as a platform for their debut or as an induction into the literary world of Bucharest. The literary environment in Bucharest proved quite prolific for Blandiana. She published several more volumes of poetry and was awarded the Writers' Union Poetry Prize (1969) and the Prize for Poetry of the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania (1970).

At the begging of the 1970s, Blandiana and her husband won a scholarship to the Univesrity of Iowa, and spent six months in the United States (1973–1974), where they met Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) and other members of the Romanian diaspora or fellow writers who remained in the United States. Blandiana and Rusan became painfully aware of the material and spiritual limitations of their life under the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Upon their return to Romania, they continued to publish poetry and prose, but they became ever more disappointed with the political regime in their country. In 1982, Blandiana was awarded the prestigious Herder Prize. Following the publication of four poems critical of the regime in the December 1984 issue of *Amfiteatru*, including the one in this volume, Blandiana was once again forbidden from publishing.

When the publication ban was lifted one year later (1985), she came out with two more poetry volumes, before the final publishing ban from 1988, when she was punished for mocking Ceaușescu in a children's book, in which the main character, a cat named Arpagic, imitated "what Ceaușescu used to do."³ While Blandiana originally thought that her parody would pass unnoticed, both the public and the Party easily recognized the main character and reacted: the book was banned half a day after it came out. Her books from different libraries were made unavailable to the public, and she and her husband were subjected to police harassment, secret police surveillance, and even death threats.

During and after the 1989 Revolution, Blandiana became an emblematic figure of civil society, being actively involved in anti-communist politics and memorialization. She is the founder of Alianța Civică (1990), one of the first civil society organizations in Romania, and of the Sighet Memorial (1993), dedicated to the victims of the communist regime and to the heroes of the anti-communist resistance. She was also involved in the establishment of the prestigious PEN Club in Romania and acted as its first president (1990–1994). In 2016, she was elected as an honorary member of the Romanian Academy. Nevertheless, during the post-socialist decades, Blandiana,

3 Frandzen, "Interview with Ana Blandiana." Blandiana published two children's books about the cat Arpagic: *Întâmplări din grădina mea* [Events from My Garden] (Bucharest: Editura Ion Creangă, 1980) and *Alte întâmplări din grădina mea* [Other Events from My Garden] (Bucharest: Editura Ion Creangă, 1983). The book mentioned in the interview was the third in the series: *Întâmplări de pe strada mea* [Events from My Street] (Bucharest: Editura Ion Creangă, 1988).

along with many major Romanian public figures, turned increasingly conservative, especially in questions of cultural identity.⁴

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS⁵ • POETRY • *Persoana întâia plural* [First-Person Plural] (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1964); *Călcaiul vulnerabil* [Achilles' Heel] (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1966); *A treia taină* [The Third Sacrament] (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1969); *Somnul din somn* [The Sleep Within Sleep] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1977); *Stea de pradă* [Predator Star] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1985); *Poeme 1964–2004* [Poems 1964–2004] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004) • PROSE • *Cele patru anotimpuri* [The Four Seasons] (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1977); *Proiecte de trecut* [Projects of the Past] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1982); *Sertarul cu aplauze* [The Drawer Full of Applause] (Bucharest: Editura Tinerama, 1992) • CHILDREN'S LITERATURE • *Întâmplări din grădina mea* [Events from My Garden] (Bucharest: Editura Ion Creangă, 1980); *Alte întâmplări din grădina mea* [Other Events from My Garden] (Bucharest: Editura Ion Creangă, 1983); *Întâmplări de pe strada mea* [Events from My Street] (Bucharest: Editura Ion Creangă, 1988); *Cartea albă a lui Arpagic* [Arpagic's White Book] (Bucharest: Editura DU Style, 1998) • ESSAYS • *Calitatea de martor* [The Nature of the Witness] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1970); *Eu scriu, tu scrii, el, ea, scrie* [I Write, You Write, He, She Writes] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1976); *Cea mai frumoasă dintre lumile posibile* [The Most Beautiful of Possible Worlds] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1978); *Autoportret cu palimpsest* [Self-Portrait with Palimpsest] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1986); *Fals tratat de manipulare* [False Treatise of Manipulation] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013); *Istoria ca viitor și alte conferințe și alte pagini* [History as Future and Other Essays and Pages] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017); *Soră lume* [Sister World] (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 2020).

Corina Doboș

CONTEXT

During the 1980s, the atmosphere turned unbreathable in the Socialist Republic of Romania. The economic decline since the end of the 1970s translated into a daily struggle for survival for common citizens. The ideological ossification that manifested in all spheres of culture and education, the increasing control and surveillance that the Securitate (Romanian secret police) exerted over society, and the repeated violations of human rights led to social and political unrest. A growing number of dissident figures and actions in the second half of the 1970s, the 1977 miners' strike in Lupeni, the formation of SLOMR—the Free Trade Union of the Working People of Romania (Sindicatul Liber al Oamenilor Muncii din România) in 1979, a labor organization calling for social justice and denouncing the harsh

4 Iovănel, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane*, 164–65.

5 The most comprehensive bibliography of Ana Blandiana's first editions and reprints can be found on her personal website: <https://www.anablandiana.ro>. Ana Blandiana's work was translated into numerous languages. For an up-to-date list of translations, see: <https://www.anablandiana.ro/ro/category/carti-traduse/>.

conditions under which workers lived during state socialism—all of these signaled society's growing dissatisfaction with the political regime. After a period of relative prosperity and ideological relaxation in the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, the disenchantment with real existing socialism became ever more acute for the Romanian public.

However, for women (and for many of their children), the disenchantment with the regime came much earlier. In October 1966, during the period of full liberalization, access to elective abortion and modern contraception was severely restricted. In the first two postwar decades, the party-state had enacted many emancipatory measures for women, granting them political, economic, and professional rights, and non-discriminatory access to education and the labor market. During the 1950s, in an effort to attract women to the labor market, the new regime also enacted social legislation meant to support motherhood for employed women (such as maternity leave, child allowances, and free medical care for mothers and children). In 1957, women were also granted the right to elective abortion.⁶

Following the liberalization of access to elective abortion, and in the absence of reliable contraception, the number of abortions rose significantly in the next years. This occurred simultaneously with a sharp decrease in birthrates and in the context of the massive social changes brought on in Romania by the socialist transformation of society and economy. From the beginning of the 1960s, many medical professionals and population statisticians expressed their concerns regarding the harmful effects that (repeated) abortions had for women's health and reproductive capacities, on one hand, and for population size, growth, and age structure, on the other. Their patriarchal calls for limiting elective abortion became a matter of political concern with the regime change in 1965, when Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918–1989) became the new Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party, succeeding Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1901–1965).⁷

In 1966, the proposals of medical professionals and population statisticians to limit elective abortion were turned into reality, albeit in a much more restrictive form than originally envisaged. Under the Decree 770, released in October 1966, women were allowed to ask for an elective abortion only if they already had four children or if they were older than 45. The only exception were victims of sexual abuse (rape, incest, underage pregnancy). At the same time, the divorce procedure was made increasingly difficult (Decree 771/1966), and while *de jure* modern contraception was not banned, *de facto* it was difficult to get.⁸ The emancipatory promises of the communist

6 Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare în România comunistă*, 202–33; Inglot, Szikra, and Raț, *Continuity and Change in Family Policies of the New European Democracies*.

7 Doboș, "Disciplining Births."

8 Soare, "Reglementarea accesului la avort și contracepția modernă," 154–60.

regime had reached their limits for women, with Ceaușescu declaring in the 1980s that “a woman’s womb is the property of the entire socialist nation.”⁹

The measures had limited demographical effects: after an initial boom in birth-rates in 1967–1970, women adapted to the new situation, and birthrates steadily fell again. At the same time, maternal deaths (until 1989 more than 10,000 women died because of back-alley abortions), infant mortality numbers, and the number of abandoned children rose significantly. Despite numerous signals that forced reproduction policies did not work, elective abortion restrictions were not repealed until 1989. Between 1972 and 1985 there was a slight improvement in the conditions under which elective abortions could be performed, with the woman’s age for which elective abortion was allowed decreased from 45 to 40. In 1985, however, following a rise in the number of legal and underground abortions in 1983–1984 and low birthrates, much stricter conditions were (re)introduced: elective abortion was allowed only for women who already had five children and were 45 years old.

Elective abortion restrictions were criticized in many letters that citizens sent to the Ministry of Health (especially in 1966–1967).¹⁰ Nevertheless, the pronatalist propaganda continued undisturbed and no public voice dared to express open criticism. Women in positions of power in the party-state (Lina Ciobanu, Elena Ceaușescu, or Alexandrina Găinușe)¹¹ did not raise any questions concerning the restriction of abortion. On the contrary, in 1984–1985 when the number of children after which a woman was entitled to an elective abortion was raised from four to five and the woman’s age from 40 to 45 years, Elena Ceaușescu pointed out that a woman could easily give birth to 6–7 children before turning 45.¹²

“Cruciada copiilor” (Children’s Crusade) represents a rare piece of public criticism towards the regime’s cruel pronatalism. This was one of four poems Blandiana

9 David and Baban, “Women’s Health and Reproductive Rights,” 237.

10 Ministry of Health Archives, Fund Cabinet 1, f. 11/1966, unnumbered.

11 Lina Ciobanu (b. 1929) became member of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in the mid-1960s. Afterwards, she held numerous high-ranking positions, including vice president of the National Commissions for Demography and president of the National Women’s Council (1974–1989). She was Minister of Light Industry as well as a Member of the Politburo and Vice-President of the Council of Ministers. After the Romanian Revolution of December 1989, she was tried together with other members of the Executive Political Committee of the Romanian Communist Party for complicity in genocide and to suppress the Revolution (later switched to complicity in aggravated murder) and sentenced to 16 years in prison. In 1996, she was pardoned by then-President Ion Iliescu, as he was about to leave office. Alexandrina Găinușe (1932–2012) was a member of the Executive Political Committee of the Romanian Communist Party starting in 1979, and at the peak of her career, vice-president of the State Council, Deputy Prime-Minister, and Minister of Light Industry, among others. Elena Ceaușescu (1919–1989) was member of the Central Committee and Executive Political Committee of the Romanian Communist Party starting in the early 1970s. Over the years, she held numerous high-ranking positions, including as First Deputy Prime Minister and president of different councils, as well as academic positions in the field of chemistry. Together with her husband, communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu, she was tried for genocide by an Exceptional Military Tribunal and executed on December 25, 1989.

12 National Archives of Romania, Fund “CC al PCR - Cancelarie,” file 82/1985, 17v.

published in December 1984 in the Bucharest-based student magazine *Amfiteatru*. Blandiana later confessed that when she sent the poems for publication she did not imagine that they would ever pass censorship, as they contained explicit elements of criticism, denouncing in a poetic yet easily understandable language some of the cruel realities people were struggling with on a daily basis: from the obligation to have unwanted babies (“Children’s Crusade”), to the scarcity of basic commodities contrasting to the hilarious images associated with official ideology and propaganda (“Totul” [Everything]), to the moral, legal, and psychological pressures that ordinary citizens experienced living in socialist Romania (“Delimitări” [Delineations]), or to the lack of courage to revolt against dictatorship (“Eu cred” [I believe]). In “Children’s Crusade,” a short and powerful poem, Blandiana addressed the main categories of victims (women and children) of Ceaușescu’s cruel pronatalism, as well as the collective guilt of a society that accepted this cruelty and the unfair treatment of women, who were forced to give birth against their own will.

The 1984 December issue of *Amfiteatru* was banned from circulation, and the editorial committee was dismantled. However, the four poems were widely circulated, being copied by hand (around 6,000 copies, almost as many as the banned *Amfiteatru* copies), read on Radio Free Europe, constituting a good example of *samizdat* literature, and also used to illustrate the horrors of pronatalism in Romania for an international audience.¹³ After 1989, Blandiana explained that the publication of the poems was made possible due to a series of favorable circumstances: as the winter break was coming, the magazine editorial board hurried to finish the December issue, and it published the poems without first obtaining all the otherwise mandatory signatures from different instances of control and censorship.¹⁴

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13 The poem was included, for example, in an article by Pavel Câmpeanu, published with his name withheld in *The New York Review of Books* on October 23, 1986. Available as: Name Withheld (Pavel Câmpeanu), “Birth and Death in Romania, October 1986,” *Making the History of 1989*, Item no. 694, <https://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/694>.

14 Steliu Lambru, “Presastudențească în România comunistă – Cazul revistei *Amfiteatru*” [Student Press in Communist Romania: The Case of the Magazine *Amfiteatru*], *Radio România Internațional*, September 1, 2014, https://www.rri.ro/en_gb/presa_studenteasca_in_romania_comunista_cazul_revistei_amfiteatru-21571.

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Corina Doboş

* * *

Ana Blandiana
Children's Crusade

An entire people
Still unborn,
Yet sentenced to be born.
Regimented for birth,
Fetus next to fetus,
An entire people
That cannot see, nor hear, nor understand
But marches on
Through the writhing bodies of women,
Through the blood of mothers
Never asked.

Translated by Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

Vlasta Jalušič

Abortion, Women, and Politics

AUTHOR Vlasta Jalušič

TITLE *Splav, ženske in politika: Več majhnih Slovencev ali Hrvatov ali Srbov ... toda, manj majhnih Albancev, Bosancev!* [Abortion, Women, and Politics: More Little Slovenians, Croatians, and Serbians... But Fewer Little Albanians and Bosnians!]

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LANGUAGE Slovene

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vlasta Jalušič (b. Maribor, 1959) is a political thinker and activist, a prominent figure of the peace and feminist movement of the 1980s–90s in Yugoslavia and Slovenia, and one of the founders of the Peace Institute in Ljubljana. Throughout her career, she has combined academic research and civic activism related to a wide range of human rights issues. She earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in sociology at the University of Ljubljana, the latter with a thesis on “Women and Revolution.” During her studies, she had a visiting fellowship funded by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung at the Freie Universität Berlin in the Fall Semester 1985–86, as well as the Bertha von Suttner Fellowship at the University of Vienna in the period 1992–95. There, she obtained a PhD in political theory in 1996 with a dissertation on the political theory of Hannah Arendt. The three main topics that successively emerged in her professional biography, and which she then pursued in parallel, are feminism, human rights activism, and Arendtian political theory.

After a brief assistantship at the Faculty of Sociology, Political Science, and Journalism at the University of Ljubljana (1982–84), she worked as a freelance translator, author, and columnist for the progressive weekly *Mladina* (published by the Alliance of the Socialist Youth of Slovenia, the official, but by the 1980s, increasingly independent youth political organization). Throughout the 1980s, she was on the editorial board of the publishing house Krt (meaning ‘mole’ in Slovenian, but also short for *Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije*, Library of Revolutionary Theory) and editor-in-chief of the journal *Problemi/Eseji* (Problems/Essays), one of the important venues for intellectual public discussion at the time of flourishing social movements and the liberalization of the public sphere in Slovenia. She was one of the founders of the feminist group *Lilit* within the platform of the Student Cultural-Artistic Center

(Študentski kulturno-umetniški center, ŠKUC) in Ljubljana in 1984, active in writing commentaries in print media and organizing roundtables. Her piercing ability to connect abstract theoretical/feminist concepts with everyday politics made her an inspirational figure within the feminist movement of the 1980s.¹ She was also a prominent actor in the fight for protecting the right to abortion in the 1991 Constitution of the newly independent Republic of Slovenia. In the 1990s, she was consulting editor of the Slovenian feminist journal *Delta*.

Jalušič was also active in the peace and anti-nuclear movement, yet another activist group that emerged under the auspices of the ŠKUC in the first half of the 1980s. In this period, she kept in touch with women in East-German opposition groups such as Ulrike Poppe.² She was among those who advocated for the demilitarization of Yugoslavia, turning army barracks into public social spaces, and following principles of non-violence.³ This became a hot political topic in 1988, when the Yugoslav People's Army tried to curb the ensuing process of liberalization and democratization in Slovenia. Motivated by the idea to prevent armed conflict in Yugoslavia and to create an independent Slovenia as a demilitarized state, Jalušič participated in founding the Peace Institute (Mirovni inštitut, MI) in 1991. Very soon, some of the political actors with whom she collaborated in the dynamic prelude to Slovenian independence turned out to be proponents of nationalism in the new state (most notably Janez Janša, presently the leading right-wing politician in Slovenia). This ideology overtook the political mainstream, positioning Jalušič into political opposition and on the activist margin. During the Yugoslav wars, when anti-war and feminist activism went hand-in-hand in Serbia and Croatia too, Jalušič was one of the main actors from Slovenia in this cross-border network. At the same time, the Peace Institute advocated for and provided help to Bosnian refugees and immigrants from other parts of Yugoslavia, who became increasingly unwelcome in Slovenia. She was the director of the Peace Institute (1995–2004) at a time when combining academic research with hands-on political activism proved to be both the main quality and the biggest challenge to the sustainability of the organization. Its activism made the MI largely unfit for stable scholarly funding, which in turn made it increasingly dependent on foreign funding (e.g., the Open Society Foundation). The MI became both notorious and hailed for advocating the rights of Yugoslav citizens who were erased (*izbrisani*) from Slovenia's register

1 For Vlasta Jalušič's description of the movement and its history, as well as recollections by the actors involved, see *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo* [How We Attended Feminist High School].

2 Ulrike Poppe (born 1953) founded the "Women for Peace" network in 1982 and was involved in the "Initiative for Peace and Human Rights" (Initiative für Frieden und Menschenrechte) in 1985, the earliest opposition group in East Germany. See Renata Schmidtkunz in conversation with Ulrike Poppe, Ludmila Rakušanová, and Vlasta Jalušič, "Zeitgenossinnen im Gespräch: 3 Frauen – ein Mauerfall" [A Conversation among Women Contemporaries-in-Arms: Three Women – One Fall of the Wall], Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF) Ö1, November 6, 2014, <https://oe1.orf.at/programm/20141106/367363/Im-Gespraech>.

3 See Hren, "The Slovenian Peace Movement."

of permanent residents, causing serious violations of human rights—an act of state that was later adjudicated as unlawful and discriminatory. Jalušič was one of the first to research and analyze this case, putting it in the context of political theories on dehumanization and the totalitarian state.⁴ Political activism and the projects carried out at the MI were often inspired and driven by Jalušič's intellectual reflection on a range of burning political issues and research topics: refugees and migration, hate speech, multiple discrimination and intersectional approaches, sexual harassment, gender equality policies, and the ideology and racism of EU migrant policies, to name a few.

Vlasta Jalušič also became internationally renowned for her work on Hannah Arendt.⁵ She is recognized as one of the leading interpreters of Arendt's work in the Yugoslav region, together with Daša Duhaček, a fellow feminist from Serbia. Her greatest strength is her ability to synthesize common features of different types of violence that took place during Yugoslavia's dissolution and ensuing wars,⁶ and to put these in relation to Arendtian ideas and other concepts from political philosophy and theory.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • “‘Žensko vprašanje’ kot izvirček (marksizem, feminizem in razredni boj)” [The ‘Women’s Question’ as a Leftover (Marxism, Feminism, and the Class Struggle)], *Problemi: revija za kulturo in družbena vprašanja* 24, no. 9 (1986): 1–8; *Dokler se ne vmešajo ženske ... Ženske, revolucije in ostalo* [Until Women Start Meddling ... Women, Revolutions, and the Rest] (Ljubljana: Krt, 1992); “Women in Post-Socialist Slovenia: Socially Adapted, Politically Marginalized,” in *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (The Pennsylvania State University, 1999), 109–29; with Milica G. Antić, *Ženske – politike – možnosti: perspektive politike enakih možnosti v Srednji in Vzhodni Evropi / Women – Politics – Equal Opportunities: Prospects for Gender Equality Politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut, 2001); “Organized Innocence and Exclusion: ‘Nation-States’ in the Aftermath of War and Collective Crime,” *Social Research* 74, no. 4 (2007): 1173–1200; “Post-Totalitarian Elements and Eichmann’s Mentality in the Yugoslav War and Mass Killings,” in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race, and Genocide*, eds. Richard H. King and Dan Stone (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 147–70; *Zlo nemišljenja: arendtanske vaje v razumevanju posttotalitarne dobe in kolektivnih zločinov* [The Evil of Thoughtlessness: Arendtian Exercises in the Understanding of the Post-Totalitarian Age and Collective Crimes] (Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut, 2009); “Stretching and Bending the Meanings of Gender in Equality Policies,” in *The Discursive Politics*

4 Jalušič, Dedić, and Zorn, *Izbrisani*.

5 For instance, she contributed several entries to the encyclopedia Wolfgang Heuer, Bernd Heiter and Stefanie Rosenmüller, eds., *Arendt-Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung* [The Arendt Handbook: Life-Work-Action] (Stuttgart–Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2011).

6 Most systematically executed in the book *Zlo nemišljenja* [The Evil of Thoughtlessness] (2009). See also Vlasta Jalušič, “Post-Totalitarian Elements and Eichmann’s Mentality in the Yugoslav War and Mass Killings.”

of *Gender Equality: Stretching, Bending and Policy-Making*, eds. Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier, and Mieke Verloo (London: Routledge, 2009), 52–67.

Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc⁷

CONTEXT

In the countries of former Yugoslavia, abortion rights have been fought and won over a long history, though they were and still are occasionally questioned, endangered, and discussed in political fora and on the streets. Jalušič's text comes from a crucial period in this long history, when the important battle for securing abortion rights in Slovenia took place against the backdrop of the nationalist politics which dominated all corners of Yugoslavia, before and after its dissolution in 1991.

Abortion was completely criminalized until 1929, and from then on allowed only for medical reasons. However, data from the 1930s shows that almost a third of all pregnancies ended in abortion, suggesting that there was a vast grey economy for abortions.⁸ In interwar Yugoslavia, organizations such as Ženski pokret (The Women's Movement), and some prominent feminists (e.g., Angela Vode) and communist activists (e.g., Vida Tomšič) argued that abortion should be allowed for socio-economic reasons. Following the creation of socialist Yugoslavia after the Second World War, a 1952 federal regulation was passed, wherein abortion was allowed in the first trimester of pregnancy for medical, legal, socio-medical, and other related social reasons (e.g., dire poverty), if approved by a commission. In parallel, a system of women's clinics introduced family planning programs and contraception services, and addressed other aspects of reproductive health, though these were not equally accessible across Yugoslavia. In Slovenia in particular, the regulation further relaxed in 1960, allowing abortion for social reasons and greatly restricting the discretionary power of the medical commission. "Freedom of choice in childbearing" (*svobodno odločanje o rojstvu otrok*) became a constitutional category in the 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and in the constituent republics' respective constitutions. This was further ensured by a liberal Law on Health Measures in Exercising Freedom of Choice in Childbearing enacted in 1977,⁹ which is still in effect. Since the legislative changes of the 1970s, pregnant women and women on maternity and

7 Both of the texts in this chapter are results of the research project "1980s and the creation of the new cultural field: Slovenian civil society between Nationalist policies and intercultural involvement" (J6-2576) financed by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

8 Rožman, "Geneza pravice do umetne prekinitve nosečnosti v nekdanji Jugoslaviji" [The Genesis of the Right to Abortion in the Former Yugoslavia], *Ars et Humanitas* 3 (2009): 303.

9 Vida Tomšič, "Človekova pravica, da svobodna odloča o rojstvih otrok" [The Human Right to Decide Freely on Childbearing], in *Svobodno odločanje o rojstvu otrok: ustavni, pravni in zdravstveni vidiki* [Free Choice on Childbearing: Constitutional, Legal and Medical Aspects] (Ljubljana: CZ Uradni list SRS, 1977), 10–35.

family care leave have been protected from losing their jobs, provided with full-pay compensation during this leave (lasting 12 months), and given access to an affordable network of public nurseries and preschool.¹⁰ At the present moment, the regulation of abortion in Slovenia “is one of the most liberal in Europe,” providing access to abortion on demand during the first ten weeks of pregnancy, after which it requires authorization by a (two-tier) commission and a parental notification in case the pregnant woman is below the age of 16.¹¹ At least 80% of the costs of the procedure are covered by the compulsory health insurance.

Though the Yugoslav legislation was progressively developing, abortion rights had to be negotiated, fought for, and defended time and again by women politicians (such as Vida Tomšič) and representatives of women’s organizations against initiatives to curb them.¹² Discussions about low birth rates and the ageing population (in certain parts of Yugoslavia), referred to as the “white plague” (*bela kuga*), intensified in the course of the 1980s. It became a fully-fledged media topic and point of commonality among both communist party elites and emerging anti-communist and/or nationalist political forces, as Jalušič points out in her text in this volume. Her opinion piece was published amidst public discussions on a population policy document prepared by the (socialist) republic-level government at the beginning of 1990. As a fellow activist from this period, Metka Mencin, points out: “One version of the [policy document] even suggested limiting the right to abortion, which was later taken out, but nevertheless the right to abortion ... became one of the key points in dispute ... before the [first multi-party] parliamentary elections in [April] 1990 and in debates over the constitution after the elections.”¹³

In her public interventions at the time, and in her later scholarly works, Jalušič spoke out against the reduction of women to the role of “national reproduction,” which included constructing the issue of “too liberal” abortion rights as a “problem” that needed to be curbed. This argument legitimized nationalistic, neo-conservative, and anti-feminist discourses, which easily crossed the divide between “old” and “new” political forces at the time of the transformation from a socialist to a democratic system. She also warned about another argument held in common by the “old” and “new” political forces in Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia: they constantly implied that

10 While the system was nominally the same across all Yugoslav republics and provinces, its execution varied depending on the material and organizational investment of local governments and communities, being probably the most efficient in Slovenia where the overall standard of living and women’s employment rate were the highest.

11 Mencin Čepлак, “Abortion.”

12 See Vida Tomšič, “Proti pradávnemu prekletstvu” [Against the Ancient Curse]. Interview by Alenka Puhar in *Prešernov koledar 1984* [The Prešeren Yearbook 1984], eds. Ivo Tavčar et. al. (Ljubljana: Prešernova družba, 1984), 54–64; Manuela Dobos, “The Women’s Movement in Yugoslavia: The Case of the Conference for the Social Activity of Women in Croatia, 1965–1974,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 7, no. 2 (1983): 47–55.

13 Mencin Čepлак, “Abortion,” 1376.

the demographic boom in the poor segments of Yugoslav society, particularly among Albanians and Bosnian Muslims, took place at the expense of low natality rates in the richer republics. Through this, she showed how nationalism subsumed ethno-national hierarchies. From a Slovene perspective, this was a widely accepted point of criticism towards Serbian nationalism, but a hard pill to swallow in relation to the Slovenian movement for independence. The latter equated processes of democratization and “national self-determination,” an idea embraced across ideological divides in Slovenian politics. Jalušič argued that Slovene nationalism contained the same features of discrimination against “unwanted people” (e.g., immigrants from other parts of Yugoslavia) as the Balkan nationalist ideologies it condemned, making her a “troublemaker” in the Slovenian public domain from the 1980s onward.

The issue of abortion rights was once again hotly debated during the preparation of the new Slovenian constitution in 1990–1991, when propositions to safeguard principles of the “sanctity of life” and “conscientious objection” (potentially applicable to medical staff) endangered the constitutional clause guaranteeing “freedom of choice in childbearing” as a basic human right (Article 55). Prominent feminists, including Vlasta Jalušič, Metka Mencin, Zoja Skušek, Mojca Dobnikar, Eva D. Bahovec, Tanja Renner, Mirjana N. Ule, and Milica Antić Gaber, to name a few, as well as medical workers such as Mateja Kožuh Novak, Lidija Andolšek Jeras, and Dunja Obersnel Kveder, joined forces with very heterogeneous groups of women and women’s factions within various political parties represented in the parliamentary Commission on Women’s Politics (Komisija za žensko politiko), reaching a rare case of cross-party and cross-ideological unity and managing to defend the right to abortion. Despite these efforts, the issue of abortion recurringly emerges as a political topic in Slovenia, especially in times of crisis and the rise of conservative and nationalistic forces.

In this text, Vlasta Jalušič also discusses a question that became prominent in her later academic work, namely the need for “women’s politics” (*ženska politika*)¹⁴ to confront discrimination against women, and in response to the relegation of social reproduction to the private sphere and thus keeping women’s labor unpaid. In her later work, Jalušič adopted the concepts of “gender equality” and “the politics of equal opportunities,” which have dominated feminist political theory and policymaking since the 1990s. Spending two decades in academic discussions and policy-related projects, however, she has since developed critical positions regarding the politics and discourse of “gender-mainstreaming” as it plays out within the framework of the European Union.

14 In her own work, Jalušič translated the expression “*ženska politika*” interchangeably either as “women’s policy” or “women’s politics” (see Jalušič and Antić, *Ženske – politike – možnosti*), but eventually opted for the latter translation as more adequate.

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Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc

* * *

Vlasta Jalušič

Abortion, Women, and Politics**More little Slovenians, Croatians, and Serbians... but fewer little Albanians and Bosnians!**

That Slovenia has witnessed the emergence of polemical discussions concerning abortion at the beginning of the 1990s should not surprise attentive onlookers. This includes observers who might not be familiar with developments within the church, namely the campaign that took place within the Slovenian [Catholic] church following screenings of the film *The Silent Scream*.¹⁵ This is the case because discussions about the “abortion question” emerged not only in the church and with the appearance of Christian Democrats in public life, but are primarily the product of a certain kind of Slovenian national unity. At least two indicators point to this fact:

1. First, these discussions tend to revolve around the issue of the diminishing natality rate in Slovenia, an issue that has been circulating for several years and has been largely propounded and shaped by the media. Initially, the debate about abortion was not explicitly related to the thesis that an excessive number of abortions was the cause of this “state of affairs.” Discussions were initiated by certain party-affiliated demographers, and, indeed, the first public discussion on this topic took place in the Marxist Center of the League of Communists of Slovenia. Only a couple of years ago, population policies were one of the few concerns that were a matter of consensus among various political orientations: the Slovenian Communist Party, the “national” opposition, the League of Communists of Serbia, etc. This consensus was critically summarized by two journalists at the magazine *Danas* [Today], Tanja Torbarina and Slavenka Drakulić: Yugoslavia wants more little Slovenians or Croatians or Serbians, but fewer little Albanians and Bosnians.¹⁶ The discourse of the demographers was cautiously wrapped around catastrophic projections about the extinction of certain national groups. The policies that emerged from these inflated projections were passed under the banner of “balanced demographic growth.” However, there have been three different approaches, each advocating a different path towards the “resolution” of these “problems.” The repressive approach championed social intervention by all available means; the

15 Editor's note: This controversial film from 1984 was narrated by Bernard N. Nathanson, founder of the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (today known as NARAL Pro-Choice America), while the film was distributed worldwide as a tool in anti-abortion campaigns. In the film, the fetus is described as appearing to make outcries of pain and discomfort during the abortion process.

16 Editor's note: See entry on Slavenka Drakulić in this volume. She is a Croatian feminist writer who intensively published for the Yugoslav and Croatian press until she was ostracized by nationalist fervor in late 1992. Tanja Torbarina is a Croatian columnist. *Danas* was a political weekly published by the publishing house *Vjesnik* [Herald] in Zagreb from 1982 to 1992.

so-called non-repressive approach proposed “soft solutions” (so-called “positive” demographic policies); whereas the third approach questioned the utility of any demographic policies at all, either repressive or “positive,” instead emphasizing quality of life, higher living standards, etc. [...]

2. The second indicator refers to the symbolic dimension that structures exchanges between the governing party and the fomenting Slovenian opposition. On this level, as well, a “minimal” consensus was reached, one that resembled the consensus regarding the adoption of “Zdravljica” [A Toast] as Slovenia’s national anthem. The vulnerability of the Slovenian nation “from the outside” was most clearly revealed by the lines of the poem that address Slovenian women and their role in the Slovenian community: “Sons you’ll bear/Who will dare/Defy our foe no matter where.”¹⁷

In these discussions, it was “fertile” women that were addressed as the central category of woman and as the object of demographic policies. Already in 1987, newspapers ranging from *Delo* to *Naša žena*¹⁸ featured bombastic article titles such as the following: “*Two children are too few – the number of Slovenians is dwindling. Will we go extinct as a nation?*” And even before this, people were already employing the language of population policies in their demands, for example, for apartments for youths and improved treatment of young families.

European Questions?

Despite Slovenia’s constant striving towards Europe, which has become the new watchword for all political subjects, both old and new, most discussions lacked the component that occupies a high position in the list of priorities of European political parties (if it is not the central European political issue of today), namely, the issue of women’s equality. Concretely, this issue takes the form of quotas, programs that explicitly support women’s causes, legislation that would allow both fathers and mothers to devote more time to their children, the question of supervision bodies with the role of countering discrimination against women in both political entities and corporations, etc.

17 Editor’s note: A poem by the nineteenth-century Romantic Slovene poet France Prešeren (1800–1849), inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution. It was first adopted as an anthem of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia in September 1989, and remained the national anthem after the independence of June 1991. The quoted lyrics are taken from the official translation by Janko Lavrin.

18 Editor’s note: *Delo* (Labor) was the main daily newspaper in Slovenia during socialism and remains the most circulated quality newspaper to this day. *Naša žena* (Our Woman) was a “women’s magazine” initiated by the Women’s Antifascist Front of Slovenia after the Second World War that shifted its emphasis from “educational” and political to what could be called “lifestyle” content “for women” over the years, surviving well into the post-socialist period.

It is not only that women's equality has not been addressed, but the attempts that have been made—and sometimes succeeded—inevitably subject this question to the project of increasing the amount of new little Slovenians. Population policy was equated with family policy and women's politics, the latter issue rarely being an explicit part of public discussions. What's more—and I believe this has never happened in any democratic country—population policy was directly related to the freedom of choice in childbearing as a human right. Finally, all pretenders to power in the “post-communist era” prescribed to this equivalence, be it knowingly or without giving it much thought. This was the state of affairs in which the crystallization of various positions began to revolve around discussions of abortion. The inflated treatment of this issue reveals how these pretenders to power perceived the question of abortion: namely, as both a source of mobilization and a novelty that surpasses other political questions, from Slovenian independence to the project of joining Europe, which have saturated the political sphere and become wearisome to citizens. But who is to be mobilized through this question [of abortion]? Women? Youth? Catholics? Probably so, since these are the segments of society that appear most apolitical. And what can this mobilization achieve? At this point, no one can answer this question with confidence, which is why certain figures fear the issue [of abortion] while others believe it will benefit them during periods prior to elections. It is also abundantly clear that even the most apolitical of women have begun to follow pre-election debates due to this issue. [...]

Women's Politics

Those who simply cannot understand the syntagm “women's politics/policy” need only think of, for example, migration policy (or the policy towards foreigners, which—how symptomatic!—does not exist in our country). Women's politics is without a doubt related to these issues, as all of them belong to the sphere of decision-making that extends to both the public and private domains, although not the intimate one. In other words, women's politics—or to use another syntagm, one that is also unknown to us in Slovenia, the support and enabling of women (the German word for this is *Frauenförderung*)¹⁹—deals with enabling women to fully realize their equality before the law. It is a set of measures intended to provide the basis for an equality that consists of independence, as well as the construction of a public space in which women can compete as equals and with equals. It is not that women, in and of themselves, will produce some kind of “better” politics. Rather

19 Editor's note: The German expression *Frauenförderung* could be translated as “women's empowerment.” It should be noted that here Jalušič uses the expressions *podpiranje žensk*, *omogočanje žensk*, while in the discourse developed since the 1990s, the common translation for “empowerment of women” is *opolnomočanje žensk*.

they must be allowed to participate in current affairs as equals. This conception is precisely the opposite of the argument that is predominantly employed today by those who seek the greater participation of women in politics.

The Danger of Division?

[...] The division between the communists and [the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia]²⁰ is not as great as it seems, since consensus has been reached on the following issue: Slovenian women are bearing too few children. The difference consists merely in the strategy by which Slovenian women might be made to have more children. [...]

The production of an alleged division of “the Slovenian” [political] space plays a different and hidden role. In my opinion, the watchword “abortion” serves to obscure precisely the absence of discussion on such a major issue as the one of women’s politics. The self-propelling logic of these discussions is not only detrimental in the actual possibility that legal abortion could be prohibited. Rather, the true danger of this logic is that it creates a situation in which people forget the “marginal problems” of social policies: for example, employment policy, the effects of the market and different working hours on the everyday life of women. It is as if once “the great danger” of the prohibition of abortion is “eliminated,” we can all “breathe a sigh of relief”—they have saved “us” from this danger and can now wash their hands of other issues. Whether consciously or not, this is precisely the role that is played by any anti-abortion campaign, as well as any anti-anti-abortion campaign.

The question of abortion thus represents a distraction from the dismantlement of entire legislative arrangements that are relatively favorable to women today. This dismantlement is occurring—slowly, stubbornly, and invisibly—behind the closed doors of the Executive Council²¹ and other committees that determine the price of nursery schools, working hours, the provisions for collective bargaining that unions undertake in the name of all employees, the school system, etc. The question of abortion is the tip of the iceberg whose submerged body contains our society’s fundamental strategies for development. This issue concerns not, in the first place, “the introduction of the market economy and our entry into Europe,” but mainly the manner in which we structure our own political and social environment. There is one dangerous version of the solution to the unenviable position

20 Editor’s note: Also known as the DEMOS (Demokratska opozicija Slovenije) was a coalition of center-right political parties that emerged after December 1989, and won the first multiparty elections of April 1990.

21 Editor’s note: The Executive Council was an expression denoting a federal or republic-level government during socialism.

in which the small nation of Slovenia finds itself. It claims that we should “simply” defer problems of unemployment and social poverty to “family solutions”: that is, to those that—at least according to some—should feel responsible for the family sphere and its survival.

Women's Politics? Never Heard of It!

Needless to say, to strip women of their (economic) independence—a political gain that was, with relatively favorable legislature, in fact the greatest achievement of socialism (perhaps the only domain in which socialism produced such concrete results)—is to step away from Europe, which has on the level of the European Parliament made demands regarding the social position of women to specific member states. Of course, the effort to strip women of their independence, economically or otherwise, does not require explicitly repressive measures. Instead, subtle adjustments to taxation policies, more expensive or less accessible childcare, working hours that do not overlap with the opening hours of childcare facilities, the reduction of maternity leave, and other similar maneuvers, can do the job. These measures alone could compel women to remain in relationships that are unbearable. Even this “soft” variant of social, family, and employment policies suffices to transform autonomous individuals into partial citizens and to undermine the preconditions for women's equality, thereby producing second-rate citizens whose only purpose is the reproduction of the nation (something that women are not interested in anyway, as they do not give birth to children simply to hand them over to the national army).

All those who equate population and family policy without seriously addressing women's politics in general are drifting further and further away from Europe. [...]

A Ministry for Women

In fact, it is fortunate that the question of abortion has been raised during the pre-election period. The truth is that this area of policymaking showcases the positions of old and new parties regarding potentially positive programs in all domains of policy that affect the situation of women. What is at stake, then, is not a method of producing more Slovenian children or offering aid to families, but the prospect of a policy that relates to women, that is, female citizens of this state-let and offers possibilities for them to assert their rights. For this purpose, many modern countries have established ministries for women's affairs—as a separate entity from family policies—a point that in the Yugoslav context was emphasized by Lydia Sklevicky, a sociologist and researcher of women's movements who tragically passed away last week. Similar demands have begun to be articulated in

countries that are shaking off their communist past. In a time when more than half of the members of West Berlin's and Kassel's city senates are women, when some of the most powerful West German joint-stock companies are implementing quotas, and when the Independent Women's Association is involved in the round table in East Germany,²² here in Slovenia, both the old and new political parties attempt to disregard such developments as ridiculous or "insignificant," or push them into prepared programs in deformed and dilettantish ways—*pro forma*, of course. It seems as if our political parties aren't even capable of understanding the foreign programs they are supposedly attempting to emulate.

Translated by Lukas Debeljak

22 Editor's note: The Independent Women's Association (Unabhängiger Frauenverband) was a women-only political party that participated in a series of meetings—referred to as the Central Round Table (Zentraler Runder Tisch)—during the political transformations in East Germany in late 1989 and early 1990. The Association helped bring women's issues to the political forefront, but quickly lost importance after the reunification of Germany. See the entries about Irene Dölling et al. and Ina Merkel in this volume.

Ágnes Geréb

The Circumstances of a Home Birth Case

AUTHOR Ágnes Geréb

TITLE Levél Dr. [...] -nak, az Állami Népegészségügyi és Tisztiorvosi Szolgálat Fővárosi Intézete Egészségügyi Igazgatási és Szakfelügyeleti Főosztálya vezetőjének (1995) [Letter to Dr. (...), Head of the National Public Health and Medical Officer Service, Budapest Institute, Department of Healthcare Administration and Supervision (1995)]¹

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Geréb Ágnes, "Dr. [...] -nak," www.szules.hu (archived webpage, last updated March 5, 2002)

LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ágnes Geréb, MD (b. 1952, Szeged) is an independent midwife, obstetrician-gynecologist, psychologist, homeopath, and mother of four children. She was born into an intellectual Jewish family in the city of Szeged in southeastern Hungary. Her father, Dr. György Geréb (1923–1982), was a professor of psychology and her mother, Rozália Geréb, MD (1925–2019), was a pediatrician. Ágnes Geréb graduated in general medicine in 1977 from the University of Szeged where she started to work in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology as a trainee. Geréb worked at the University Hospital of Szeged until 1994, when she moved to Budapest with her family. Already during her early years in Szeged, the injustices of the profession made her rethink the relationship between pregnant women and doctors. Her first transgressive act was to allow fathers in the delivery room, which was forbidden at the time and triggered broad societal discussions about birth and (what we would now call) gender issues.

Among the most important inspirations for Geréb, the American psychologist Carl Rogers and the American social anthropologist feminist midwife Sheila Kitinger should be mentioned. She first met Rogers at a conference in Szeged in 1984. Rogers' humanistic, person-centered psychology, which focused on the client's individual needs to help them make free choices, motivated Geréb to work out her model of childbirth. She even obtained a psychology degree from the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest in 1986. After participating in the First International Conference on Home Birth (London, 1987) organized by Beverley Beech and Sheila Kitinger, among others, Geréb had the opportunity via family and friends to travel to California and explore the practices of American midwives in 1990. These

¹ Editor's note: We have removed the names of the doctors mentioned by Geréb in her letter.

experiences motivated her to apply the approach of midwives in her obstetrical practice. Because of the exceptional freedom Geréb provided mothers during labor and delivery, women looking alternative pathways through the technocratic medical culture in Hungary started to seek her out and ask for her support during delivery.

Ágnes Geréb was a licensed medical doctor, but from 1989 on she considered herself an independent midwife, which meant a radically different attitude to childbirth. At that time, she was the only one in Hungary who ensured professional help at homebirths. After 1989, Geréb was active in civil society organizations for reforming childcare. Her work is also better documented in the post-1989 period. With Katalin Domján Harsányi, Geréb established the Alternatal Foundation (1992), a non-governmental organization for the support of undisturbed childbirth. The Alternatal Foundation also aimed to implement the 1985 WHO recommendations regarding childbirth and carry out educational and professional training activities. Their principles included prioritizing the freedom of individual mothers and their ability to make informed decisions. These principles had an agenda beyond birth: they envisioned large-scale societal change, in the hope of a more peaceful, tolerant, and open world.

In 1994, she became the co-founder of the European Network of Childbirth Associations (ENCA), and, together with Domján Harsányi, she introduced the practice of *doulas* into Hungarian birth culture. Later, she and Harsányi parted ways. Geréb organized several events, through which she was in personal contact with experts of undisturbed birth such as Sheila Kitzinger, Ina May Gaskin, and Michel Odent.

Her pioneering role, however, was seen with resentment mainly by the obstetrician-gynecologist community. Notwithstanding persistent bureaucratic obstacles, Geréb operated as a midwife until 2010, despite being banned from the obstetrician-gynecologist profession. The first assaults came in 1995, connected to a case of Nyíregyháza, where a newborn died, and the attacks persisted for several years. Eventually, these resulted in the Hungarian Medical Chamber Ethical Committee's decision against Geréb in 1999. In 2005, she graduated in midwifery from the University of Debrecen. Two years later, she was accused of violating professional rules and was banned from the medical profession for three years and deprived of her doctor's license.

During her trials, Geréb was always tried as a doctor and not as a midwife. Until 2011, there was a legal hiatus on the matter in Hungary: neither home births nor independent midwifery as professional out-of-institute birth assistance was regulated by law. As such, she could not be charged as a midwife. Following the death of an infant possibly connected to birth, she was accused of negligent malpractice, arrested in October 2010, and imprisoned for 2.5 months. Accompanied by international outrage, and the successful mobilization of mothers and birthrights activists, the President of the Republic of Hungary János Áder gave a partial pardon in 2018.

This act notwithstanding, she was summoned to court several times in the intervening years and was under house arrest for almost four years.

Owing to widespread media interest, she came to the forefront of international attention. Her work was presented together with several childbirth-related human rights activists and professionals in the documentary film *Freedom for Birth* (2012) directed by Toni Harman and Alex Wakeford. She received numerous awards, including the Danish “A Good Start in Life” award (2013) as the only foreign citizen ever to receive it. In honor of her decades-long work, the international organization Human Rights in Childbirth established the Ágnes Geréb Champion Award in 2019.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Az utolsó szó jogán* [The Final Plea] (2017), <https://www.otthonszules.hu/utolso-szo-jogan-2017-aprilis-20/>.

Fanni Svégel

CONTEXT

After the change of regime in 1989, Hungary, along with other Eastern European societies, found itself in a state of freedom, full of hope for democratic transition. However, as it turned out later, human rights and expanded civic rights did not appeal to everyone. The absence of feminist ideas, or at least the explicit politicization of women's rights issues, characterized the newly forming regime. With the establishment of József Antall's nationalist-conservative government, a conservative turn in the approach to women and families could be observed. The pro-natalist discourse and the anti-abortion lobby strengthened, while the humanization of childbirth was missing from the political agenda. It could seem contradictory that the pro-natalist conservative government, in expressing the importance of family life, could not or did not take action to support the growing dissatisfaction with obstetrics care. However, the pro-medicalization approach in obstetrics and gynecology and Hungary's patriarchal political culture converged, leaving scarce space for female voices.

The technocratic approach to labor and delivery persisted in the post-1989 era, but was established already in the 1950s, when traditional midwifery was repressed in the name of modernization by state socialist healthcare reforms, and childbirth fell under the exclusive authority of obstetricians. This meant the normalization and standardization of interventionist hospital births. The professionalization and medicalization of reproductive decision-making characterized the socialist regime: access to legal abortion was granted and from the 1970s on birth control pills could be purchased, however these social practices remained part of a patriarchal praxis.

The continuity with pre-1989 medical practices meant that the political democratization of the country did not result in the democratization of reproductive rights or childbirth. A change came from women intellectuals who sought information

and wished to have the final decisions over their births, their bodies, and the future of their families. These values were in line with contemporary feminist demands, emerging from a growing feminist civil and intellectual scene after 1989 in Hungary. Importantly, Ágnes Geréb never defined herself as a feminist; however, she was part of the intellectual subculture where feminist ideas about bodily autonomy spread.

Geréb's struggle for a more humane approach to childbirth is closely entangled with her legal prosecution. First, and partly as a result of the struggle, but rather due to declining birth rates, the Deputy National Commissioner for Civil Rights declared homebirth a constitutional right in 1997. However, the institutional framework (infrastructure, midwives) was still missing and the persecution of Geréb continued. She was held responsible for three infants' deaths linked to their birth. Eventually, in 2009, the Central District Court of Pest charged Ágnes Geréb with negligent endangerment causing permanent disability and negligent endangerment causing death in the course of her employment. On October 5, 2010, a pregnant woman arrived for a consultation at the Daylight Birth Center and went into labor, but her request was to deliver her child in hospital. Together with the ambulance, police forces entered the house and immediately placed Dr. Geréb in pre-trial detention. Two months later, she was placed under house arrest.

Based on her experience of more than 3500 homebirths, in 2007 the Preparatory Committee for the Regulation of Out-of-Institute Childbirth—the members of the Committee included the Alternatal Foundation and the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ)—announced a document for the legal regulation of homebirth. However, the legislation that regulated—and for the first time, allowed—midwives' ability to guide childbirth outside of medical institutions (2011) happened seemingly without her, in the aftermath of her arrest. At her last trial in 2017, Geréb summarized her motivations as such: "I am aware that [by doing so] I violated the internal agreements, customs, and unwritten rules of the obstetric profession at that time. I did so because I recognized, after many years of professional experience, that these rules are incorrect and contrary to the interests of pregnant woman, the interests of newborns, and thus the interests of society as a whole—which is what our profession should serve."

Up to the present, Geréb is the only medical professional in Hungary who, in the capacity of obstetrician and gynecologist, was summoned to court and whose full name was released to the public related to medical malpractice. Deaths during childbirth in medical institutions—whether the mother or the infant—are treated with a much higher level of discretion by the hospitals and rarely make it to trial. Therefore, there is very little information available about institutional malpractice.

The letter from Ágnes Geréb presented below points to the nature of the doctor–midwife opposition, the clash of the authoritarian medical system with the midwife model, which prioritizes mother's choice and the needs of the fetus instead of following the mechanized norms of obstetrics. Geréb herself has published

relatively little, so her principles of obstetrics and about the broader issue of women's and human rights are rather known from her talks and some of the interviews she has given over the years. The importance of this document lies in her arguments, which reveal many of her principles: information-based free choice does not conflict with evidence-based medicine, only with harmful professional traditions. Her professional choices have always been made on medical grounds with respect to the mother's will: American and Western European standards, recommendations and good practices supported also by the WHO were incorporated into her professional toolkit, keeping the safety and dignity of the mother and newborn in mind.

Her work was also pioneering among the modern midwives and alternative childbirth movements that appeared in Eastern Europe in the 1980s and 1990s. Parallels can be discovered with the Polish Fundacja Rodzić po Ludzku (Childbirth with Dignity Foundation) and the activities of the Polish midwife Katarzyna Oleś, whose work for humanized childbirth was accompanied by large media support. The Hungarian campaign "To Give Birth With Dignity" in 1999 in the daily *Népszava* was inspired by Polish activists, who issued a call and a questionnaire in the newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* on the experiences of women connected to childbirth. In the Czech Republic, the experiences of the Third Neonatological Conference (1980) shaped the history of childbirth practices. Inspired by Michel Odent's lecture, Dr. Hana Marková and her team incorporated the methods of gentle birth into the obstetrical practice of the Ostrov hospital. However, it was only after the turn of the millennium that the voices of women searching for alternative methods strengthened, as did the backlash from professional obstetrics and the patriarchal post-socialist state: the midwife Ivana Königsmarková in Czechia was persecuted for very similar reasons as Ágnes Geréb.

Geréb's activities shaping attitudes and introducing new conceptions slowly passed into public consciousness and proved decisive for the lives of the generation reaching motherhood in the 1990s and early 2000s, even if the majority had never been in direct contact with homebirth. Her advocacy for liberties and respect for women's dignity in vulnerable situations also had a direct and indirect impact on contemporary activism in Hungary, but it also brought about a change in some obstetric practices. Through the acceptance of maternal awareness and the upbringing of a midwife generation, albeit for a narrower stratum, information and evidence-based free choice concerning childbirth became more accessible.

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Fanni Svégel

* * *

Ágnes Geréb

Letter to Dr. [...], National Public Health and Medical Officer Service
(1995)

National Public Health and Medical Officer Service, Budapest Institute
Department of Healthcare Administration and Supervision
1055 Budapest, 13–15 Kossuth tér, 1st Floor, Room 1.

Ágnes Geréb [address]
Ref. number: 806/FJ

Dear Dr. [...],

I am writing in reply to your letter dated November 2, 1995. I am happy that, because of X.Y.’s case, others may also be informed about the fact which I have talked about several times in public debates (most recently, at a discussion organized and also recorded at the Marble Room of Hungarian Radio in May 1995), that

is, the fact that because the profession does not acknowledge the existing demand to give birth outside of traditional institutions but with professional assistance, and is not willing to provide professional help in organizing and developing the required safety conditions, but is rather hindering these, it endangers the few who need urgent care.

It is a regrettable fact that, on several occasions, we have found that, upon arrival to the hospital, when we explained that the patient wanted to give birth at home but a complication occurred, instead of providing immediate health care, the hospital staff took their time and marveled for a while longer. This makes me uncertain—perhaps I should not distract them by mentioning home birth when someone needs urgent help.

[...]

X.Y. had been in Budapest for several days. She told me one morning that she thought the amniotic fluid was leaking. She had no fever, I did not see any amniotic fluid leaking, and she did not need to use cotton wool either. She had no uterine contractions. Her heartbeat was listened to several times a day, and it was impeccable. Labor started with rare and irregular contractions during the third night after that morning. Her blood pressure was normal. Her heartbeat was still perfect. We usually listen to it every thirty minutes during the active phase and at each contraction in the intensive phase. Around noon, she entered the intensive phase of labor. There were strong contractions lasting for 55–60 seconds every two minutes, and the amniotic fluid (which was clear) flowed during a contraction. After this, we listened to her heartbeat again, and I heard synchronous deceleration [a decrease in the number of heartbeats in sync with uterine contractions]. I immediately examined her; the cervix was open to nine centimeters and the skull was not yet in such a position that it could have been expected that the baby would be born within five minutes. We listened to her heartbeat again after the contraction, and it had settled down, but we immediately started to transport her to the hospital.

[...]

We were in front of the Obstetrics Department of the János Hospital within ten minutes of noticing the first bradycardia [slowed heartbeat]. I told X.Y. and her partner to go into the delivery room. They asked what to say. Since the first thing they do when someone enters the delivery room is an examination and listen to the heart, I told them that there was no need to say anything special. They can say what they feel like saying. I was informed about the outcome of the birth by

phone within half an hour. I learned that the child was born in perfect condition and the mother was also well.

X.Y.'s husband told me during the day that the umbilical cord had been torn as the baby was pulled out, and that X.Y. suffered huge damage to her perineum. He also said that he felt that I had let them down and sacrificed her wife and child for my career and out of hunger for money. His sentences really struck me, because having put myself in his situation, yes, it was possible to experience it this way, it was possible to interpret it this way. We didn't know each other for long, they knew little about me. They didn't know that this was what I had wanted to achieve for a long time, that things would be different and such things could not happen; and that it was precisely my bad preliminary (and, unfortunately, in retrospect, because I had similarly bad experiences recently when I uncovered the antecedents of this case) experiences that made me think that care would be smoother and faster if I did not go in with them. They did not know that I had no appetite for money either. I worked at the Women's Clinic in Szeged. I had never accepted envelopes.² I even developed a method in my private practice that made it possible to separate money and work: we put a box in the dressing room, and anyone could put in (or take away) any amount without me seeing what they did in the room.

I do not consider myself unscrupulous, irresponsible, money-hungry, or a careerist. I feel and know that all of this is not right. But I have been talking about this for years—this is what I want to change. I feel and know (many people say, too) that the profession is waiting for the occasion to prove a mistake of mine.

Many people are probably against home birth out of benign convictions, genuine distress for women and newborns, and bad experiences in delivery rooms, since they have never seen a normal birth. But there are people who have gained experience abroad and admit that a traditional, out-of-institution birth accompanied by professional assistance and an organized hospital backstop is no more dangerous than giving birth in a hospital. The profession here in Hungary has rejected the good examples from abroad on the grounds that our infrastructure has been inadequate. In England and America, there have been home births and birth centers for 30 years, and home births have never stopped in the Netherlands. However, Hungary may not be 30 years behind in terms of infrastructure. If the birth centers are five minutes (or even fifteen minutes) away from a hospital, if they are equipped with both landline and mobile phones, if they can transport anyone to the hospital with their own car that uses a distinctive sign, and last but not

2 Editor's note: In the Hungarian health care system, it has been common practice to offer money in an envelope to medical personnel. It is either a silent expectation, or an explicit pre-condition for receiving medical services within the state health care system. Whilst this practice is widespread across all medical branches, the extra informal payment on top of what is already covered by one's insurance has been especially central in the case of childbirth. This practice is illegal since January 1, 2020.

least, if the arrival of the person in need can be legally signaled from the birth center, if specialist assistance can immediately start the necessary intervention on the spot, giving birth in a birth center is just as safe as it is in a hospital. We sent a letter, a cooperation plan, to hospitals and clinics (addressed to their directors and the heads of their obstetrics departments) in Budapest in September 1995. It contained a detailed explanation of our suggestions in five pages. We received two written and one oral answer: one hospital wrote that it had unfortunately closed its obstetrics unit, so they could not cooperate with us, while the other wrote that, based on the opinion of the Professional College, they could not enter into a contract with us, but were willing to provide urgent care, and the oral answer was that we should discuss things in person. However, this discussion has been postponed since the beginning of September—and not because of us.

I have turned to many people and institutions in various forms for many years: to Professor [a renowned obstetrician and gynecologist], to the Ministry of Public Welfare, as well as the National Public Health and Medical Officer Service, so that those who choose this path can give birth in the safest possible conditions.

This time I am appealing to You.

Sincerely,

(Ágnes Geréb)

Budapest, November 8, 1995

Translated by Beáta Sándor

10

Health and the Body

Katalin Ladik

Performance Art and Marginalization

AUTHOR Katalin Ladik

TITLE Sound Poetry Performance (with Jenő Balaskó), József Attila Cultural Center, Budapest, Hungary, 1970. Gelatine silver print, 2 pieces, 9 x 9 cm each.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katalin Ladik (b. 1942, Novi Sad) is a poet, performer, and actress. She was born into a Hungarian family living on the outskirts of the multiethnic city of Novi Sad (Serbia) during the Second World War. Both her parents worked as manual laborers. Her father was illiterate, while her mother was a maid and cleaning lady with an affinity towards books and languages. Impressed by the natural multilingual environment of Novi Sad, and learning Serbian out on the streets, Ladik took an interest in poetry and recited poems on Radio Novi Sad from the time she was twelve. These early encounters with the diverse linguistic qualities and musicality of languages paved the way for her to become the first female sound poet in Yugoslavia. Her experiences with a microphone as a child and the reach toward an audience through a very popular channel, the radio, gave her the aspiration to engage in diverse forms of performativity, and to combine sound, visuality, and language in her work.

After studying economics and working as a bank clerk for a short period, she decided to turn into a professional artist. From 1964 to 1966, she studied at the Drama Studio (Dramski Studio) acting school in Novi Sad. Along with her ambition of being an actress, she started to publish poems in 1962, and soon she became a regular contributor to the most important literary journals in Yugoslavia. Her first book of poetry was published in 1969. Entitled *Ballad of the Silver Bicycle*, it came with a record containing phonic interpretations of four poems featured in the book. One of the poems was recited by Ladik while playing a Hammond organ, an electric instrument that was frequently used in pop music at the time. Her poetry had a shocking effect on the Vojvodinian and Hungarian literary scenes, not only because of the highly eroticized language, but also the performative mode of her poems' presentation, signaling Ladik's disengagement from prevailing poetic norms. Her replacement of the written text with orality resonated with the search for identity that characterized the work of female artists in the 1960s.

In 1968, Ladik was invited by Hungarian poet Tamás Szentjóby to take part in his happening called *UFO*, which inspired her to develop a performative practice that transcended written poetry. Following this experience, she associated the radicalism

of women's writing with the radicalism of body language. From 1969, she developed her own performance practice called *UFO Party*, in which she performed her poems with folk instruments, using her naked body as a sound instrument. The title of the performance referred to the fate-turning experience of the happening, but also to her own multiple minority situations as a female poet-performer and a Hungarian in Yugoslavia. During the course of the 1970s, she put on several variations of phonic performances in both Yugoslavia and Hungary. *UFO Party* performances were held in March 1970 at the Belgrade International Theater Festival (BITEF), hosted in the Atelje 212 Gallery's basement, as well as presented at the experimental film festival GEFF (Genre Experimental Film Festival) in Zagreb. Besides linguistic and musical elements, the feminine body also played an integral and transgressive role in the performative process. Due to her poetic radicalism and eccentric performances, she became an emblematic author of the New Art Practice movement and a popular icon in contemporaneous Yugoslav culture.

Her album *Phonopoetica* was released in 1976 in Belgrade, a major discovery in contemporary international sound poetry. In the meantime, she continued her theater work, of which Ottó Tolnai's *Bayer Aspirin* (1981), a piece directed by the famous Hungarian filmmaker Miklós Jancsó, stands out. She also participated in several visual-sound pieces (for example: Attila Csernik, Katalin Ladik, and Imre Póth, *O-pus*, 1972) and feature films. In the 1980s, the visual language of her performances transformed as she integrated the methodology of alternative theater practices, for which her most important reference was Antonin Artaud. In 1992, during the Yugoslav wars (1991-2001), Katalin Ladik emigrated to Hungary, and currently shares her time between Budapest and the island of Hvar, Croatia. In recent years, her lifework underwent great international rediscovery, as she was an exhibiting artist at Documenta 14 in Kassel and Athens, and her pieces became part of acclaimed international collections like Tate Modern in London and MoMA in New York, while her major retrospective exhibition opened in Haus der Kunst, Munich, in spring 2023.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • PUBLICATIONS • *Ballada az ezüstbicikliről* [Ballad of the Silver Bicycle] (Novi Sad: Forum, 1969); *Mesék a hétfejű varrógépről* (Novi Sad: Forum, 1978), in English: *Stories of the Seven-Headed Sewing Machine*, trans. Emöke Z. B'Racz (Sylva: New Native Press, 1992); *A parázna söprű – Bludna metla* [The Lustful Broom] (Novi Sad: Forum, 1984); *Élhetek az arcodon? Regényes élettörténet* [Can I Live on Your Face? A Novel-Like Life Story] (Budapest: Nyitott Könyvműhely, 2007) • SOUND POETRY • *Phonopoetica*, recording, Galerija Studentskog kulturnog centra, Belgrade, 1976 • PERFORMANCES • Pozorište Atelje 212, Belgrade, 1970; Studentski kulturni centar (Student Cultural Centre), Belgrade, 1972; Gallery of Contemporary Art / Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb, 1976; *Tekst in Geluid* [Text in Sound], Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 1977; *Randkunst-Kunstrand*, Hand Press Gallery / Handpresse Galerie, Würzburg, 1978; Paris (France), Pompidou Centre / Centre Georges Pompidou: Rencontres Internationales de Poésie Sonore (International

Sound Poetry Festival) 1980; *Ladik Katalin szerzői estje* [An Evening with Katalin Ladik, with Miklós Erdély, László Beke and Zsolt Király], Young Artists' Club / Fiatal Művészek Klubja, Budapest, 1982; International Poetry Centre / Centre International de Poésie, Marseille, 1995; *All the In-Between Spaces*, Oval Staircase, Megaron – the Athens Concert Hall, Athens, 2017.

Emese Kürti

CONTEXT

Katalin Ladik, born in Novi Sad of Hungarian origin, belonged to a marginalized community in a political construction named Yugoslavia, based on the coexistence of many different ethnic groups. The province of Vojvodina, in the context of the Serbian state, was one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country, perhaps also in all of Europe. A total of twenty-five different ethnic groups can be found in Vojvodina. The phrase “minority” was not officially used, though, and the post-war Yugoslav constitutions (1946, 1953, 1963, 1974) preferred to differentiate between “nations” and “nationalities” depending on whether a given nationality had a state of its own somewhere else. Because Albanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, and Italians had nation-states of their own, these ethnicities were considered “nationalities,” whereas Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Bosniaks, and Montenegrins did not and were categorized as “nations.” After the Second World War, the reformed Yugoslav state was based on the principle of ethnic coexistence and considered nationalism the most dangerous enemy of communism.¹ This political position allowed for a certain restricted concept of multiculturalism, while the right of minorities to speak their own languages and maintain their distinct cultures was generally accepted. The ability of the Hungarian minority to represent its own interests was greatly compromised by geopolitical and ideological factors, and compared to the period before the Second World War, it was forced to accept a completely new institutional framework and cultural-political identity established by the Yugoslav state. Altogether, in the 1960s, the Hungarian community in Vojvodina was a self-managing group within the larger Yugoslav socialist system, which was replete with a nascent market economy, a strongly mediated and urbanizing culture, an administratively manipulated program of “emancipation from above,” and the remnants of a traditional patriarchal outlook all mixing together to produce a contradictory social system.

An important basis of this new minoritarian identity was the journal *Új Szimpozion* (New Symposium), where Katalin Ladik started her career. The journal served as an organ for left-wing intellectuals and artists, often highly critical of Tito's regime. This intellectual environment gave expression to a wish to collectively transcend contemporary social conditions, while seeking to reconcile minoritarian concerns with a broader

1 Várady, “Minorities, Majorities, Law, and Ethnicity,” 19.

utopian perspective, working toward “the promise of a concrete universality.”² The theoretical outlook of these authors could not help but be universalistic, as the Communist regime had methodically eliminated the reception of all “bourgeois” or “fascist” writers, including most literary works that had formerly been part of the Hungarian literary canon. Within this disturbed continuity, the absence of prior references enabled a more intimate connection between Hungarian Vojvodina artists and contemporary artists elsewhere in Yugoslavia, especially in Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia, and allowed them to draw upon international models more freely.³ The violent disconnection from the Hungarian “non-Homeland” culture, as the Vojvodina writer Ottó Tolnai referred to Hungary, meant that “Yugoslavization” was not just a distancing from what formerly could be defined as “Hungarian,” but also the creation of a completely new artistic language that resulted in a far more international and contemporary culture.

In this regard, Katalin Ladik’s work can be considered a unique product of a specifically Yugoslav cultural-political model. Although she was connected primarily to Hungarian culture, she knowingly gravitated toward the hybridity of languages and cultures, exploiting a temporary geopolitical situation and social experiment which allowed for greater interethnic transitivity. Her artistic program attempted a mediation and redefinition of Hungarian and Balkan cultural traditions through the expressive and improvisatory language of the international musical avant-garde. In her work there are clear traces of inspirations from folklore, but her sound poetry, musical scores, and compositions are nevertheless organized along the lines of contemporary musical methodology. The integration of traditions into an avant-garde practice was not a completely self-evident move in a literary generation that was characterized by a general distancing from traditional (patriarchal) norms. Ladik’s interest in such topics can be traced back to childhood fairy tales, prose poems, songs, rhymes, and mourning songs she encountered in her family environment. Yet the frequent non-linearity of such texts represented a fundamentally alien logic to the intellectualized and urbanized cultural environment. Ladik’s method consisted not so much in conserving folkloristic remnants, but rather in rethinking the traditional poetic form, extending it to incorporate different conceptual elements. Sound poetry, particularly the performative elements that were incorporated into it, meant the end of the strictly “poetic” form, while “radically extending its expressive power.”⁴

Ladik’s poetry combines modern poetics with folkloristic methodology, decomposing and deconstructing the traditional levels of meaning in written poetry from the position of a female author. Themes centered on a fragmented female subject and motives of femininity, which claimed references to female eroticism and a language

2 Losoncz, *A hatalom (nélküliség) horizontja*, 19–20.

3 “We were pioneers. We had to start almost everything from scratch. We didn’t bring anything with us from our family background. We had no tradition.” Végel, “Szellemi krónika – Hatvannyolc,” 294.

4 Agamben, *The End of the Poem*, 23.

previously reserved for men. Her poems, breaking with linguistic-political conventions, would have been categorized as belonging to feminist discourses in a “Western” biopolitical context, yet paradoxically even the author denied this character of her works.⁵ The reluctance to identify with feminism and feminine writing at the time was due to stereotypes about women’s poetry. Whilst there was a growing feminist presence in the Serbo-Croatian intellectual scenes in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Ljubljana, with a growing awareness of and sensitivity for women’s art and women’s writing, this had little effect elsewhere even within Yugoslavia.⁶ In the Vojvodina Hungarian cultural scene, women’s poetry was assumed to be dilettantish compared to men’s normative poetry, and something Ladik certainly did not want to identify with. This situation was quite typical in the rest of Eastern Europe at the time, due to the lack of feminist discourses and the belated, almost imperceptible effect of Western theories. The new generation of women opposing traditional male narratives, language, and the oppressive mechanisms of everyday life feared nothing as much as being identified with the notion of the female, that is of marginality.

The practice of her phonic performances, pioneered at the 1970 *UFO Party*, was a radical attempt at self-interpretation from the perspective of her multiple marginal positions. In Katalin Ladik’s words, this title appealed to her greatly, because back then she was considered “this weird creature back home in Yugoslavia. Even if the culture accepted me, I was unusual. My strangeness, if you could put it that way, was somehow of an ‘unknown origin’ inside Yugoslavia, because, you know, I was Hungarian, and a woman, multiple deficits, marginal... and then I thought, UFO means exactly this!”⁷ This experience was underscored by Katalin Ladik’s first performance in Budapest, held in a typical underground venue in front of a large audience, where figures of the underground and representatives of cultural life were both present. The sound poetry performance opened with a singing-like recitation of her poems. At this stage, she performed the surrealistic texts, astonishing with distant associations, still opened for an interpretation in a semantically traditional way, and then withdrew from the stage. She returned to the darkened space already by candlelight, wearing bear fur on her naked body, and the way the poems were performed was also transformed: the traditional use of lyrics was replaced by the meaningless abstraction, minimalism, and vocal richness of pure sound poetry. The erotic and archaic character of her performance was enhanced by the bear’s fur and the sounds of folk instruments or playing on her hair like on a violin. Although the recuperation

5 “...I am fighting feminine poetry most of all, though I wouldn’t need to, as I hope my poetry is not women’s poetry in a bad sense. I like to have things relevant to women in my poems, but I refuse to be classified as an author of ‘women’s’ poetry.” Hornyik, “Jaj annak ki erdőt hord magában,” 18.

6 See the entry about Teuta Arifi in this volume; Miškovska Kajevska, *Feminist Activism at War*; Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*.

7 Author’s personal conversation with Katalin Ladik, 2016.

of the erotic and the female body was not the sole aim of Ladik's performance, it was this aspect of her ritual that questioned the conventions of both the neo-avant-garde and the official cultural sphere the most. Her presence and performance had a destabilizing effect also on the Budapest underground community, pushing it out of its masculine comfort zone by offering the unfamiliar experience of a female position.

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Emese Kürti

Katalin Ladik

Sound Poetry Performance (with Jenő Balaskó), József Attila Cultural Center, Budapest, Hungary, 1970.



Sound Poetry Performance, József Attila Cultural Center, Budapest, Hungary, 1970. Gelatine silver print, 9 x 9 cm each. Courtesy of the Irokéz Collection and the Artist.

Maria Pinińska-Bereś

Is a Woman a Human Being?

AUTHOR Maria Pinińska-Bereś

TITLE *Czy kobieta jest człowiekiem?* [Is a Woman a Human Being?], 1972, photographed by Marek Gardulski

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED First exhibited at the 5th Krakow Meetings in 1973, entitled *Our Time: The Artist and Civilization*.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Pinińska-Bereś (née Pinińska; 1931, Poznan–1999, Krakow) studied sculpture in Krakow between 1950 and 1956 in the studio of renowned artist Xavery Dunikowski, who supported the individual development of his students, including women. There, Pinińska met Jerzy Bereś, also a student at that time, whom she married in 1957.¹ Their only child, Bettina—today an artist as well—was born a year later.

Pinińska-Bereś lived and worked in Krakow until the end of her life. In the beginning, her activities concentrated at the Union of Polish Artists and Designers and its Krakow headquarters “Dom Plastyków,” an active cultural space. Later, she became associated with the milieu of the Second Krakow Group and the Krzysztofory Gallery, although she only became an official member of the former in 1979.

During the 1960s, Pinińska-Bereś created two series of sculptures: *Rotundas* and *Corsets*. In both series, she evoked a feeling of imprisonment and violence. Metaphorically they referred to women—more specifically to female sexuality—being suppressed and oppressed by social conventions (still present in modern socialist society) and the Catholic Church. In later self-commentaries written in the 1990s, she revealed that the works had an autobiographical aspect, specifically growing up under the supervision of a conservative, severe grandfather. At the end of the 1960s, women, as presented by Pinińska-Bereś, seem to have rid themselves of the corset. Their naked bodies and erotic feelings started to be exposed, and women’s intimate relationships (always heterosexual) became the main subject of Pinińska-Bereś’s art.

Pinińska-Bereś’s had her first solo exhibition in 1970, but it went almost unnoticed. Her subsequent shows in the 1970s were met with bigger interest, and her art received prizes and was acquired mainly by public collections. Her art was perceived as dealing with women’s issues. As a contemporary critic remarked: “Creatively

1 After the marriage she started using, as many other women in Poland, a double family name.

drawing on culture, referring to myths or archetypes, it nevertheless remains highly critical of the iconic sphere produced by this culture” (Sawicki, 1975). As the 1970s progressed, Pinińska-Bereś increasingly replaced realist representations of the female body with formless figures which can be considered as an attempt to avoid the objectification of women that had developed in the iconosphere in Poland in this period.

Pinińska-Bereś developed a characteristic style, using specific materials (linen, plywood), colors (white and pink), and forms (soft, as if organic), which stood out not only against the background of Polish art in general, but also Polish women’s art in particular. She went further and created *Personal Banner*, a work in the form of a piece of plain pink fabric with neither decoration nor inscriptions which she used in her performances and exhibitions “as a symbol of my own art and of women’s issues” (Pinińska-Bereś, 2017: 165).

The term “feminism” was not used in art-writing in state socialist Poland until the end of the 1970s, when the number of events by female artists which focused on women’s issues in their work significantly increased. One such event was the festival *Women’s Art*, organized in 1980 in Poznań, where Pinińska-Bereś was recognized as a pioneer of women’s art in Poland. She also took part in one international feminist exhibition, *Feministische Kunst Internationaal*, organized in 1979 in Holland, but she did not travel to see the show. The development of women’s/feminist art in Poland was dramatically disrupted by political events, especially by the introduction of martial law on December 13, 1981. For a couple of years, Pinińska-Bereś lost her faith in the significance of dealing with the subject of women and femininity. When she came back to it at the end of the 1980s, her art changed in character. Pinińska-Bereś focused on reworking various motives from her earlier works, as in the *Rotundas*, which came back in the form of cages used in several pieces. She strengthened her position as an artist dealing with feminist issues, and as a pioneer of feminist art in Poland, but her new art did not arouse much interest. Pinińska-Bereś’s first retrospective exhibition took place in Krakow in 1999, and was accompanied by a monographic catalog of her works. She died a couple of months before the exhibition opened.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · Gajewska Bożena, Hanusek, Jerzy, eds., *Maria Pinińska-Bereś 1931–1999*. (Krakow: Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej Bukier Sztuki, 1999); Hanusek, Jerzy, ed. *Maria Pinińska-Bereś. Działania efemeryczne* [Maria Pinińska-Bereś. Ephemeral Works 1967–1996] (Warsaw: Fundacja Monopol, 2017); Pieczyński, Cezary, ed., *Maria Pinińska-Bereś. Imaginarium cielesności* [Maria Pinińska-Bereś. Imaginarium of Corporeality] (Sopot: Państwowa Galeria Sztuki w Sopocie, 2012); Heike Munder, Małgorzata Micuła, and Jarosław Suchan, eds., *Maria Pinińska-Bereś*, (Wrocław: Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu, 2024).

Agata Jakubowska

CONTEXT

Created by Maria Pinińska-Bereś in 1972, *Is a Woman a Human Being?* touches upon the theme of women's status as consumers and as consumed. The piece is a critical commentary on the situation of women in her contemporary world.

In a rather cramped box, with a front-facing wall of glass that resembles a shop window, a swimsuit is displayed. Attached to it is a label that reads "DATE OF PRODUCTION... / EXPIRY DATE...", i.e., information which is labelled on food, or more broadly organic products—not clothes. The swimsuit is shaped in such a way that it seems to be a representation of the naked female body (breasts, navel). This unclear status of the form—swimsuit/body—is crucial to the meaning of the work. Perceiving it as a costume directs our attention towards fashion and the beauty industry; perceiving it as a body draws attention mainly to the process of the objectification of women, their transformed into commodities.

This work was created in state socialist Poland at a time when moderate and controlled consumerism had developed in the post-Stalinist period.² Following changes in the ruling party leadership in the 1970s, consumerism received even greater support. From the point of view of Pinińska-Bereś's art, two consequences of this policy were important: firstly, a strengthened emphasis put on beauty and fashion; and, secondly, the increased presence of erotically saturated images of attractive women in popular culture.

Maria Hussakowska claimed that the artist used the form of a swimsuit which was fashionable in the early 1970s.³ Indeed, in popular magazines (e.g., *Przekrój* [Cross-section], a weekly which was read by the artist, or *Zwierciadło* [The Mirror]), we find fashion pages with photos of such swimsuits. The work of Pinińska-Bereś, who was interested in fashion, and always dressed in accordance with the latest trends, does not, however, express the pleasure of being fashionable. It refers to the pressure felt by women with the growth of consumerism, either in terms of admiration of an exposed (semi-) nude body (a swimsuit/body is covered with kisses), or meeting expectations regarding their appearance. Izabela Kowalczyk observed that the artist showed here "the female body as an object used to satisfy male needs, and at the same time she points to treating it as useful only when it is able to satisfy these needs."⁴

The more intensive development of the culture of beauty at that time was connected with the intensification of messages addressed to women, in which various aspects of disciplining the body appeared. Małgorzata Fidelis and Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, in their analysis of the place of beauty in state socialist Poland,

2 Crowley and Reid, "Introduction," 3–51.

3 Hussakowska-Szysko, *Inny nieco aspekt lat siedemdziesiątych*, 136.

4 Kowalczyk, *The Space Embodied*, 33.

stated that “caring for appearance skillfully cultivating beauty were, especially in the last two decades of communism, presented as a female duty.”⁵ Indeed, the message of several beauty guides published in 1972 was the same: a woman’s goal is to look well-groomed, healthy, relaxed, and youthful. This last element seems to be most significant in the context of Pinińska-Bereś’s work. The label, which is a part of the work, attached to the swimsuit/body, referring to the date of production and expiry, leads us directly to the subject of the woman’s age. It is worth remembering in this context that Pinińska-Bereś was 41 when she created the piece.

Fear of rejection at not meeting the social expectations of physical beauty is also the subject of another work by Pinińska-Bereś from 1972, *Keep Smiling*. The title, written on the lid of an ordinary metal waste container in which the artist placed the plaster sculpture of a woman’s face with red lips, read as an encouragement to take a more optimistic view of the situation, addressed to a woman who was discarded (supposedly because of her age). In *Poetic Place* (1974), Pinińska-Bereś proposed an alternative to the reality in which a woman’s body is objectified and exposed to scrutiny. In this work, a mirror is used to represent building a relationship with oneself, not with another person, by excluding the viewer from the space between the mirror and the body it reflects.

Is a Woman a Human Being? has an interesting history. In 1973, it was shown at the 5th Krakow Meetings, entitled *Our Time: The Artist and Civilization*. Among works that dealt with industrialization, Pinińska-Bereś commented on consumerism and the way it affected women. A few years later, she received an annual stipend from the Lenin Steelworks in Krakow and donated the work to the collection of the plant. Collaborations between artists and industry such as this were intended to bring these communities together.⁶ From there, the sculpture found its way to the museum in Radom, a provincial city in Poland.

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⁵ Fidelis and Stańczak-Wiślicz, *Piękne i zaradne*, 441.

⁶ Stano, *Artysta w fabryce*.

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Agata Jakubowska

* * *

Maria Pinińska-Bereś

Czy kobieta jest człowiekiem? [Is a Woman a Human Being?]



Czy kobieta jest człowiekiem? [Is a Woman a Human Being?], 1972, photographed by Marek Gardulski.
Courtesy of Bettina Bereś and Jerzy Hanusek

Anna Świrszczyńska

I Am a Baba (Selected Poems)

AUTHOR Anna Świrszczyńska

TITLE “Stara kobieta” [Old Woman], “Kobieta rozmawia ze swoim udem” [A Woman Talking with Her Thigh], “Pod czarną gwiazdą” [Under the Black Star], “Śmierć” [Death]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Published in the volume *Jestem baba* [I Am a Baba].¹ Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972, translated excerpts: 42; 48; 50; 52.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Świrszczyńska (also Anna Swir; 1909, Warsaw–1984, Krakow) was a Polish poet, prose writer, dramatist, author of poems and books for children, translator, editor, social and women’s rights activist. Her father, Jan Świerczyński, was a painter, sculptor, and ethnographer; her mother, Stanisława née Bojarska, was a homemaker. Anna grew up mostly under the influence of her father, being devoted to art. She dreamt of studying the arts. However, she graduated from the University of Warsaw with a degree in Polish literature. She debuted as a poet in the early 1930s, and in 1936 she became a member of the Professional Union of Polish Writers (Związek Zawodowy Literatów Polskich). From the beginning, she chose to write pieces for children. Between 1936 and 1939, she was the editor of the children’s magazine *Mały Płomysek*, and published in other children’s magazines published by the Polish Teachers’ Union.

Świrszczyńska published her first volume of poems and poetic prose at her own expense in 1936. It was received well by critics. In this phase of her work, she was strongly invested in various forms of cultural stylization, drawing inspiration from the world and language of antiquity as well as from Old Polish². Her poetry was also highly descriptive. During the Second World War and the German occupation (1939–1945), she stayed in Warsaw, making a living from various odd jobs and participating in the cultural life of the city. During this period, she wrote the drama *Orpheus* (which was later rewritten many times) and a historical novel for young people entitled *Arkona – gród Świętowita* (Arkona – The Town of Swietowit). She took

¹ The word *baba* in the Polish language means an old woman and has overtones that emphasize her ugliness and vulgarity. It is primarily associated with an old woman from the lower classes, but can be used as an insult toward any aging woman.

² The Old Polish was a period in the history of the Polish language and culture between the 10th and the 16th centuries.

part in the Warsaw Uprising (1944) as a nurse. This traumatic historical event had a strong impact on her work, although it found its fullest expression only in the volume *Budowałam barykadę* (Building the Barricade), published in 1974, as the poet spent decades searching for the right form to describe it.

After the war was over, Świrszczyńska moved to Krakow. In the following decades, she made a living from her creative work, publishing in numerous cultural and socio-political magazines, as well as collaborating with the theater, radio, and television. Her literary position after the war was not high, but her pre-war left-wing views helped her to find her feet in the new reality. However, they also made her enemies, who suspected her of communism or opportunism. She herself initially seemed to place hope in social change and to support certain egalitarian trends, if only in women's issues.

The second volume of her poetry, *Liryki zebrane* (Collected Lyric Poems), containing, among other things, poems from the war years, was not published until 1958. In 1953, Świrszczyńska married the actor Jan Adamski. She gave birth to a daughter, Ludmiła. In 1968, she got a divorce. Constant family problems—the irresponsibility of her husband, the necessity to work and care for older family members and the child at the same time—hampered her work, but also provided material for reflections on the condition of women. They found their fullest expression in the volume *Jestem baba* (I Am a Baba), published in 1972. Both volumes, which were groundbreaking for twentieth-century Polish poetry, were written by Świrszczyńska already in her sixties and brought her the recognition of a great poet. The innovative poetics of the two volumes had been heralded in the earlier volumes *Czarne słowa* (Black Words) released in 1967 and *Wiatr* (Wind) from 1970 and continued in the excellent volume *Szczęśliwa jak psi ogon* (Happy as a Dog's Tail) published in 1978, which also illustrated the poet's original spirituality. Since the 1970s, Świrszczyńska was awarded with several prestigious national literary prizes. Moreover, some of her poems were translated into English. She died in 1984 in Kraków.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Liryki zebrane* [Collected Poems] (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1958); *Czarne słowa* [Black Words] (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967); *Wiatr* [Wind] (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970); *Jestem baba* [I Am a Baba] (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972); *Budowałam barykadę* [Building the Barricade] (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1974); *Szczęśliwa jak psi ogon* [Happy as a Dog's Tail] (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1978); *Cierpienie i radość* [Suffering and Joy] (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1985). English translations of her work as Anna Swir: *Building the Barricade*, translated by Magnus J. Kryński and Robert A. Maguire (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979); *Fat Like the Sun*, translated by Margaret Marshment and Grażyna Baran (London: Women's Press, 1986); *Happy as a Dog's Tail*, translated by Czesław Miłosz with Leonard Nathan (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985); *Talking to My Body*, translated by Czesław Miłosz and Leonard Nathan (Port Townsend, Washington:

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Monika Rudaś-Grodzka and Katarzyna Nadana-Sokołowska
Translated by Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz

CONTEXT

The four poems, “Old Woman,” “A Woman Talking with Her Thigh,” “Under the Black Star,” and “Death” by Anna Świrszczyńska come from the volume *Jestem baba* (I Am a Baba, 1972). The volume was and still is an astonishing phenomenon in Polish poetry and culture because of the feminist consciousness that runs through the whole book. It was at the time of the publication of the volume, in the early 1970s, that the shortcomings of the gender equality policies in Poland became apparent. Although the Constitution of the Polish People’s Republic (1952) legislated women’s full equality in public and family life, and guaranteed equal rights in education and work, state support for women’s emancipation was more strategic than genuine. Women faced structural gender-based discrimination in the workplace, were underrepresented in party structures and positions of power. Moreover, while they were being promoted into the workforce, they were still seen as “natural housewives” and burdened with family and domestic duties. The official discourse in the 1970s emphasized their domestic role. At the same time, the party claimed that women’s equality had been achieved. The League of Women (Liga Kobiet, LK), the only mass women’s organization in communist Poland, recognized the problem of the double burden and women’s limited access to well-paid, prestigious jobs, but did not challenge this narrative. In the public debate, gender inequality was described as a Western problem and feminism was perceived as a foreign idea inapplicable to Polish reality.

However, it was not that critical reflection was nonexistent. It was expressed through two channels: academic sociological reflection (for example by Magdalena Sokołowska, Helena Strzebińska, and Marcin Czerwiński) and women’s art. Artists such as Maria Pinińska-Bereś, Ewa Partum, and Natalia L.L. turned directly to feminist ideas, drawing attention not only to structural inequalities but also to the persistence of patriarchal attitudes in Polish society and the commercialization of sexuality in the media. Pinińska-Bereś’s works were even considered by some critics to be ahead of Western feminism, while Natalia L.L.’s theoretical texts referred to the achievements of second-wave feminism.

Świrszczyńska was in the forefront of women’s poets of her time. There is no evidence that she was influenced by feminist theory or that she was familiar with the achievements of the Western representatives of second-wave feminism. Despite the many similarities and parallels between her writings and the feminist works of the

time, she developed her own independent literary idiom based on her individual sensibility and leftist worldview. This made her work an original and unique phenomenon in Polish literature of the time. It can only be assumed that she was familiar with Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, which was translated into Polish by the poet's friend Maria Leśniewska (in collaboration with Gabriela Mycielska) and first published in Poland in 1972. In the same year, Świrszczyńska published her revolutionary, radically feminist poems.

Świrszczyńska's poetry is situated between two poles: on the one hand, it could be read as an act of disagreement with female suffering, resulting from the gender difference as a social determinant, and on the other, it was an intimate register of her own experience. Her poetic feminism is an expression of empathy for women in general and an affirmation of her own corporeality. *I Am a Baba* is a collection of several cycles of poems, including poetic reportages on the lives of "ordinary women" from rural and working-class backgrounds, images of the daily lives of the marginalized: beggars and madwomen, and a series of works on love that reveal a strong female subjectivity. Her poems, which can be classified as social poetry, describe in a harsh manner the cultural disempowerment of women who were subordinated to male authority, vulnerable to various forms of violence, including domestic violence, and burdened with slave labor at home. However, her other works, such as the poem "A Woman Talking with Her Thigh", presents an intelligent, educated woman who uses her body and eroticism as a tool to learn about the world. This female subject explores and celebrates her own carnality, emotionality, and pleasure, while challenging patriarchal culture and men who were potentially hostile to her subjectivity in the struggle for her independence, opportunities for personal development and self-improvement (including in the spiritual dimension). She also struggled with her own biology.

Motherhood became the theme of many of Świrszczyńska's poems. It was described in physiological terms, as a cultural and almost metaphysical fact. For Świrszczyńska, motherhood was an experience of trying to find a balance between maternal responsibility and love for the child on the one hand, and the mother's need to protect her own world on the other. In the poems presented, one can see a reflection on the condition of the woman-mother, who stands both close to life and death. For her, motherhood is a metaphysical fact—the woman, giving life, is predestined to the role of the law-giver just as it was in the matriarchy. The poet rejects the patriarchal image of a woman subordinate to man and makes her an independent subject with her own agency.

The redefinition of the canon of female beauty that Świrszczyńska proposed in her poetry seems subversive even from today's perspective. She placed the female body at the center of her poetry—damaged by successive pregnancies and childbirths, plump, ageing, and tired—in poems such as "Old Woman and Her Belly". The poet exposed cultural and social taboos in poems about unmarried pregnant women, such

as “Obiecał” [He Promised] and “Napiętnowana” [Stigmatized]; she defended the right of mature and elderly women to love (the poem “Stara Wariatka” [Old Crazy Woman] in the volume *Wind*); she tenderly described homeless or mad old women (“Siostry z dna” [Sisters from the Bottom] and “Bunt” [Revolt]). She sympathized with and articulated a sense of community with marginalized and underprivileged women, which can be interpreted in terms of the “sisterhood” of second-wave feminism. Świrszczyńska’s poetry of the 1970s was recognized by critics of the time as an outstanding phenomenon. It has recently been rediscovered by Polish feminist-oriented researchers and became very popular among readers.

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Monika Rudaś-Grodzka and Katarzyna Nadana-Sokołowska
Translated by Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz

* * *

Anna Świrszczyńska
Poems

Old Woman

Her beauty
is like Atlantis

is yet to be discovered.
Thousands of humorists

wrote of her desires for love.
The most brilliant
are included in the canon.
Only her love-making with the devil
had the solemnity
of the fire at the stake.
And could be imagined
like the stake.
Humanity created for her
the most insulting
words in the world.

Under the Black Star

Born under the black star
we gave birth
to the World.

A Woman Talking with Her Thigh

It is only thanks to your beauty
that I can take part
in the celebrations of love
mystical ecstasy,
delightful betrayals
as a scarlet lip pencil
perverse rococo
of psychological complications,

sweetness of bodily longing
choking breath in my chest

craters of despair,
collapsing all the way to the bottom of the world—

I owe you
oh, how tenderly I should everyday

beat you with a whip of cold water
if it is you who let me achieve

beauty and wisdom
that cannot be replaced.
There, open in front of me,

in a moment of love
souls of lovers and I have them in my power.

I am looking, like a sculptor
at my work,
at their faces shut with eyelids

tormented with ecstasy
thickened
with happiness

I am reading like an angel

thoughts in skulls
I am feeling in the palm of my hand

a beating human heart
I am listening to the words

that are whispered by a human to a human

in the most honest moment of life.
I get into their souls,
I wander
through the path of delight or horror

to stupendous lands

like oceans' bottoms.

Then, laden with treasures,
I am returning very long

to myself.
Oh, so many riches,
numerous precious truths,

growing in a metaphysical echo,
many initiations

tender and thrilling
I owe you, my thigh.

The most delicious beauty of my soul
would not give me any of these treasures,
if not your light soft charm
of an amoral little animal.

Death

We are giving birth to a life
assisted by death
she silently
stands under the clock at the delivery room.

She listens to groans,
she counts ebbs and flows of pain,
she follows
the fingers of a midwife, turning on
the oxygen tube.

Alert as an actor
awaiting
going on stage.

Translated by Anna Topolska

Sanja Iveković

Sweet Violence—Mass Media and Feminist Art in Yugoslavia

AUTHOR Sanja Iveković

TITLE *Sweet Violence / Slatko nasilje*. Video, black and white, 5:56 min, 1974. Reprinted here: one still; *Double Life / Dvostruki život*. Gelatin silver print, magazine page and typewriting, 60.3 x 80 cm, series of 64 images, 1975–76. Reprinted here: one image; *Pattern of the Season* 1982, pencil and indian ink on paper, 1981–82; *Personal Cuts / Osobni rezovi*. Video, black and white and color, sound, 3:35 min, 1982. Reprinted here: two stills from the video; *New Star / Nova zvijezda*, collage with colored paper and human hair, 1983.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sanja Iveković (b. 1949, Zagreb) was born four years after the end of the Second World War in which her parents, Nera Šafarić-Iveković and Hrvoje Iveković, took active part as members of the communist-led anti-fascist resistance. It could therefore be said that she was a true child of the Yugoslav Partisan struggle and the new socialist state to which it gave birth. Growing up in Zagreb, one of the most propulsive economic and cultural centers of the Yugoslav federation, Iveković had access to the increasingly rich and diverse array of cultural institutions and events in the city during the 1960s, as well as their protagonists. She studied graphic arts at the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts from 1966 to 1970. In 1968, she took part in the student protests, which spread from Belgrade to Zagreb and were the first mass demonstrations organized in socialist Yugoslavia. The rebellious energies of 1968 greatly impacted the new approaches to art that characterized Iveković and the artists of her generation. In place of traditional fine art media, artists developed interactive gallery environments and designed interventions for public spaces. During the 1970s, video, performance, and conceptual art became the predominant forms used by contemporary artists whose work the local critics grouped under the heading of the New Art Practice.¹

Iveković was one of the few women artists active on the contemporary art scene in Yugoslavia. By the mid-1970s, her identification as a woman—and a woman artist—became a recurrent topic of her work. She was particularly interested in exploring the sexualized and commodified representation of women in local and international media. In 1973, she produced her first video work, *TV Timer*, in collaboration

1 See Ilić, *A Slow Burning Fire*.

with her then partner, Dalibor Martinis. During the 1970s and 1980s, she became internationally known primarily as a video artist, but she also worked with performance, installation, collage, and drawing. Among her most well-known early works today is the 1975–76 series of collages *Double Life*, in which she juxtaposed photographs from her personal archive with images of female models taken from Yugoslav and Western European women's magazines in the 1970s. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, she made a series of works that thematized the contradictions of Yugoslav socialism from a feminist perspective, often while appropriating the image of the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito. During the 1980s, her videos and drawings often explored the private sphere, including a woman's entrapment inside the home, motherhood, and the dynamics of heterosexual relationships.

During the 1990s, Iveković made artistic and activist work that engaged with the social and political consequences of the war conflicts that destroyed the Yugoslav socialist federation. She began collaborating with women's organizations, and designed campaigns thematizing the issue of violence against women and the participation of women in political life. Her works such as *Ženska kuća* (Women's House) (1998–2002), *Gen XX* (1997–2001), or *Lady Rosa of Luxembourg* (2001) took the form of public interventions, which gained great visibility and provoked heated debates. She has also made a number of works exploring the twentieth-century revolutionary legacies of socialism, especially from the perspective of women's history. Iveković's work has received growing international acclaim in the past two decades. She has participated in major art exhibitions such as documenta in Kassel (in 2001, 2007, and 2017), has had retrospective exhibitions in museums such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Her most recent works are the artist book *Jao si ga onome tko se boji duhova* (Woe Betide Anyone Afraid of Ghosts, 2022), based on a selection of poetry written by her mother, who was a WWII Partisan fighter and an Auschwitz survivor, and the performance *Majka i kći* (*Kokoš i jaje*) (Mother and Daughter (Chicken and Egg)), both produced as part of her retrospective at the Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna.

MOST IMPORTANT BOOKS DOCUMENTING SANJA IVEKOVIĆ'S WORK • Sylvia Eiblmayr, ed. *Sanja Iveković. Personal Cuts* (Vienna: Triton, 2001); Nataša Ilić, and Kathrin Rhomberg, eds. *Sanja Iveković. Selected Works* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2008); Roxana Marcoci, ed. *Sanja Iveković: Sweet Violence* (New York: MoMA, 2011); Lisa Gabrielle Mark, with Cornelia Butler, ed. *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*, (Los Angeles–Cambridge, MA: Museum of Contemporary Art–MIT Press, 2007); Tihomir Milovac, ed. *Sanja Iveković: Is This My True Face* (Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998); Ruth Noack, *Sanja Iveković: Triangle* (London: Afterall Books, 2013); Helena Reckitt, ed. *Sanja Iveković. Unknown Heroine: A Reader* (London: Calvert 22, 2013).

CONTEXT

Sanja Iveković belongs to the generation of Yugoslav artists who were decisively affected by the rebellious energies of the global 1968 movements and the changes in society and art that they engendered. As a student at the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts, Iveković joined the 1968 protests in Yugoslavia, which were the first mass articulations of disillusionment with growing economic disparities in a nominally classless, socialist society. In the same period, artists and curators were renewing the avant-garde calls for art's democratization, and embracing experimental, "dematerialized" art practices that rejected traditional academic disciplines and training. Since her first solo exhibition in 1970 until today, Iveković has experimented with various artistic media and approaches—including public interventions, video, photography, collage, performance—in her ongoing exploration of art as an alternative and potentially emancipatory mode of communication. During the 1970s, this research focused increasingly on the relation between the public and private, and at the same time became more anchored in Iveković's own positioning as a woman artist in Yugoslavia.

In the early 1970s, Iveković was concerned with ways in which art could intervene in the already existing, built environment of the city or the gallery space. Using industrial materials, such as neon lights, or plastic tubes, she aimed to transform the known experience of urban or gallery space and incite the viewer to become an active part in this transformation. Since 1973, this testing of the tension between the existing and the possible has shifted towards mass media, especially television and popular magazines. Her first video, made in collaboration with Dalibor Martinis, and titled *TV Timer* (1973), was conceived as a series of short clips with which the artists planned to intercept, at regular intervals, the program of Austrian state television during prime time.² In 1974, Iveković made three videos that foregrounded the personal experience of watching television, a new medium that was turning into an integral part of everyone's life. All three videos—*Gledanje* (Looking at), *Svitanje* (Sunrise), and *Slatko nasilje* (Sweet Violence)—posed the question: What, if any, is the agency of the viewer, construed as a passive recipient of the "official" message, including local and international news, sports, and commercials?

Iveković's answer to this question consisted in performing optical, tactile, and auditory interventions on the television monitor—the "personal" transmitter of the "public" message. In the video *Looking at*, she cut and reframed the television image by recording only the bottom right corner of the television screen during the broadcast of evening news on Radio-Television Zagreb. As the speakers' voices report on

2 The work was produced for the exhibition *Trigon'73. Audiovisuelle Botschaften / Audiovisual Messages* at Künstlerhaus in Graz in 1973. The intervention was realized only in the form of installation.

the most recent political events—the 29th United Nations General Assembly, talks between the USSR and US on nuclear disarmament, the visit of the Sri Lankan Prime Minister to Yugoslavia—the stability of the narration is disturbed by the conspicuous partiality of the image, revealing only a segment of the speaker's face or legs of people passing by. In the video *Sunrise*, Iveković decreased the screen brightness and muted the volume during the broadcast of a football match. Gradually, she increased the brightness of the screen, allowing the image to become visible, but the sound remained muted, submerging the football game into the sounds coming from the room and the street. Finally, in *Sweet Violence*, during commercial breaks—dubbed in Yugoslavia the Economic Propaganda Program—she covered the screen with horizontal black tape, reminiscent of a cage or prison cell.

The three videos reveal the three key components of the television program: news, sports, and advertising. Of the three, the “Economic Propaganda Program” shows a conspicuous presence of women and is specifically targeting women. By advertising cosmetics, cleaning products, instant food, and soft drinks (including Pepsi and Coca-Cola!), the Yugoslav television program breaks away from the “public” focus on local and global news, as well as sports entertainment, both of which feature predominantly male protagonists, and turns to the private realm of the household, which, despite the socialist promise of women's emancipation in Yugoslavia, is still primarily the space designated for women. This paradoxical position of women in Yugoslavia—where they were celebrated as WWII Partisan heroines and granted equal political rights, but were at the same time still imprisoned within the (increasingly commodified) private sphere—emerged as a central theme of Iveković's art during the 1970s and early 1980s.³ In a number of videos made in this period, including *Instructions* (1976) and *Make-up, Make-down* (1976), Iveković showed herself in the process of applying make-up or following other beauty procedures picked up from a host of Yugoslav and Western women's magazines. In her famous series of photo-collages, *Double Life* (1975–76), she revealed intriguing resemblances between photographs from her personal photo album and images of women models circulating in women's magazines.

The “double life” in the title refers to the distinction between the public and private, but it can also be read as a marker of the boundaries between the capitalist and socialist life, boundaries which clearly dissipate in Iveković's collages. The collages implicitly pose the question of the very inexistence of such difference, as well as the actual inexistence of the “new Yugoslav woman,” which was supposed to arise as a political subject born out of the socialist revolution and in opposition to Western

3 This also became the key focus of the second-wave feminist movement in Yugoslavia. See Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*. The commodification of both the private and public sphere, including the presence of typically Western products, such as Coca-Cola, on the Yugoslav market was itself a sign of the increasingly market-oriented development of Yugoslavia's socialist self-management. See, e.g., Vučetić, *Coca-Cola Socialism*.

bourgeois patriarchy. In the early 1980s, Iveković explicitly questioned the success of this emancipatory promise. In a series of carbon copy drawings, *Čekajući revoluciju (Alisa)* (Waiting for the Revolution (Alice)) (1982), she portrayed the Yugoslav revolution as a fairy tale, a story of a woman looking at a frog, and waiting for the frog to turn into a prince, i.e., “the revolution.” From one drawing to another, however, the frog never changes shape, it only changes color.

Iveković made these drawings one year after the revolutionary leader and life-long president of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, died, which escalated the ongoing economic and political crisis in the country. Iveković reflected on this crisis from a feminist perspective. In other drawings, such as *Tito in My Bedroom* (1982), she once again took up the role of mass media in the process, and their obsessive dissemination of Tito’s image following his death, as if the leader’s ghost could save Yugoslav socialism and its multinational structure. In the collage *Nova zvijezda* (New Star) (1982) and the video *Osobni rezovi* (Personal Cuts) (1982), the female figure moves beyond that of the (ironic) observer and transforms into an active protagonist of Yugoslav history, as if to counter its ongoing erasure, and the negative implications that this erasure had for the entire history of Yugoslavia’s socialism. In *New Star*, Iveković used colored paper to make a copy of the Yugoslav flag, while replacing the five-pointed star in its center with a triangular mass of human hair, reminiscent of pubic hair. Iveković used the same triangular shape in an earlier drawing titled *Pattern of the Season* (1981–82), which shows the pubic hair as a “pattern” that leaves its place at the center of the woman’s nude body, and contaminates the entire page. In *New Star*, it “arrives” on the Yugoslav flag, tracing a journey of women back from the commodified, sexualized private sphere of beautification and advertising, to politics.

The same move characterizes the video *Personal Cuts*. In it, Iveković intercepts the broadcast of a television documentary, which narrates the progress of Yugoslav history, with the performance in which she cuts holes in the black stocking that covers her face, until her face is fully revealed and facing the audience. This video, in which she symbolically cut through the official representation of the history of Yugoslavia, where women once again played only a minor role, was produced and broadcast by Radio-Television Zagreb in 1982. With this, Iveković closed the circle begun eight years earlier, with the video *Sweet Violence* (1974), in which she diagnosed women’s imprisonment behind the seductive bars of the “Economic Propaganda Program.” *Public Cuts* was no longer an intervention made on an individual TV set, but one that invaded the public television broadcast. This was at the same time a closing of the “heroic” era of both second-wave feminism and art’s democratization in the late 1960s and 1970s, but it was also an announcement of the new one to appear during the post-socialist and post-war 1990s, when Iveković’s work, once again, used advertising and mass media to bring back the ghost of female political agency, as well as the ghost of socialism.

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Ivana Bago

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Sanja Iveković

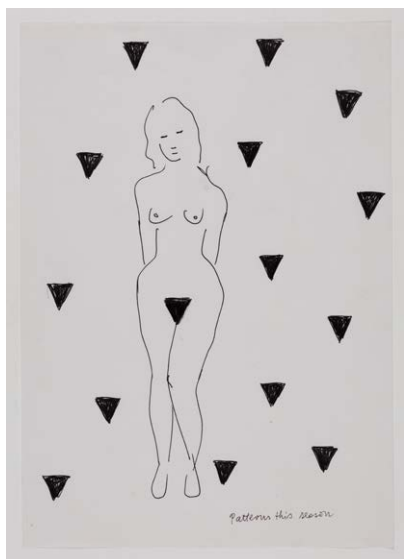
Sweet Violence; Double Life; Pattern of the Season; Personal Cuts; New Star



Sweet Violence / Slatko nasilje. Video, black and white, 5:56 min, 1974.



Double Life / Dvostruki život. Gelatin silver print, magazine page and typewriting, 60.3 x 80 cm, series of 64 images, 1975–76.



Pattern of the Season 1982,
pencil and indian ink on paper, 1981–82



Personal Cuts / Osobni rezovi. Video, black and white and color, sound, 3:35 min, 1982.



New Star / Nova zvijezda, collage with colored paper and human hair, 1983.

Lepa Mladenović and Biljana Branković

Alternatives to Psychiatry

AUTHORS Lepa Mladenović and Biljana Branković

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LANGUAGE Serbian

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lepa Mladenović (b. 1954, Belgrade) is a Yugoslav, Serbian, and transnational feminist, antiwar, lesbian, and democratic psychiatry activist. Probably the most widely known post-Yugoslav feminist activist, Mladenović earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, in 1980. Already in that decade, she took part in the operation of the Network of Alternatives to Psychiatry (*Réseau international d’alternative à la psychiatrie*) and volunteered at the Center for Mental Health San Giovanni in Trieste, Italy, established by the psychiatrist Franco Basaglia. Mladenović was also among the youngest participants at the pioneering 1978 conference “Drug-ca žena” (Comrade-ess Woman), which took place in Belgrade, marking the beginning of the new feminist wave in socialist Yugoslavia. In the wake of that gathering, she co-founded the feminist group *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society) and towards the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s took part in and helped organize four Yugoslav feminist meetings (1987–1991). Particularly devoted to the issues of rape and violence against women in the post-Yugoslav region, Mladenović worked as a counsellor from 1992 to 2012. In this capacity she was one of the co-founders of the Helpline for Women and Children Victims of Violence (SOS telefon za žene i decu žrtve nasilja) and the Autonomous Women’s Center (Autonomni ženski centar) in Belgrade. She was also among several feminist activists who in 1991 established Women in Black (*Žene u crnom*), an antiwar initiative still active today.¹ In the same year, Mladenović was among the co-founders of Arkadija, the first activist initiative for gay and lesbian rights in Serbia, which started operating before homosexuality was decriminalized in the

1 See also the entry about Staša Zajović in this volume.

country (1994). Later on, in 1995, she was also one of the co-founders of Labris, the Organisation for Lesbian Human Rights (Labris – Organizacija za lezbejska ljudska prava). Mladenović was a lecturer at the Belgrade Center for Women's Studies (Centar za ženske studije) and is the author of a number of articles and essays about war-related violence, violence against women, feminist antiwar resistance, transitional justice, lesbianity, women's solidarity, and self-care. For her longstanding engagement, Mladenović has received numerous awards, including the 1994 Felipa de Souza Award given by OutRight Action International as well as the 2013 Anne Klein Women's Award of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

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Bojan Bilić

Biljana Branković (b.1964, Belgrade) is a Yugoslav, Serbian, and transnational feminist activist, women's and children's rights scholar. Branković graduated in psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, attended a non-degree program in gender studies, and earned a master's degree in the same area at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade. A steady presence in Belgrade feminist circles, Branković, like Mladenović, was one of the founders of the group Žena i društvo (Woman and Society) and also participated in the Yugoslav feminist meetings in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Following her interest in the issues of mental health already from her student days, Branković was a representative of the group Woman and Society at the first international conference on mental health of women which took place in Rome in 1987. In the summers of 1986 and 1987, she was a student-volunteer at the Center for Mental Health San Giovanni in Trieste, Italy. There she worked with patients of the former psychiatric hospital which had been reorganized on the basis of the model of alternative psychiatry proposed by Franco Basaglia. In that period, she was also a teaching assistant for the course Clinical Psychology at the Department of Psychology, University of Belgrade, and a consultant for alternative approaches to psychiatry within the film section at the Student Cultural Center (Studentski kulturni centar) in Belgrade. Throughout the 1990s, Branković was particularly active in the area of children's rights and was one of the founders of the Yugoslav Children's Rights Center (Jugoslovenski centar za

prava deteta). More recently, in the 2000s and 2010s, Branković worked as an internationally visible consultant and researcher devoted to fighting gender-based violence as well as eliminating discrimination against Romani people. In this regard, she has been a facilitator of gender-sensitive trainings on violence against women for journalists, editors, and media professionals in Serbia. Branković's bibliography counts over 120 references, including books, book chapters, and research papers, as well as numerous evaluation reports about violence against women and women's human rights protection.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Violence against Women – Does the Government Care in Serbia?* (Budapest–New York: Open Society Institute Network Women's Program, 2007); *Responding to Silent Screams: Mapping of Provisions of NGOs in Serbia in the Area of Gender-Based Violence* (Belgrade: The United Nations Country Team in Serbia, 2009); *Be Realistic, Strive for the Impossible: Roma and Egyptian Women Speak: Ten Years of Women's Empowerment Programs of SOS Hotline, Nikšić, Montenegro* (Nikšić, Montenegro: SOS Hotline for Women and Children – Victims of Violence; Nikšić, Montenegro: Centre for Roma Initiatives; Stockholm, Sweden: Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2011); *News from the Future: the Istanbul Convention and Responsibility of the State for Combating Violence against Women* (Belgrade: United Nations Development Programme, 2013).

CONTEXT

Throughout the 1980s, the last decade of socialist Yugoslavia, Yugoslav (autonomous) feminism started to undergo an important transformation which would culminate during the following war-ridden years. Feminist initiatives that in the late 1970s had a strong academic and elitist (middle class) dimension began to acquire an activist charge and broaden their social base. This process was associated with an increasing focus on those feminist endeavors which problematized the private-public dichotomy and rendered domestic violence against women more visible. With the intensification of lesbian activism and the wider debates about (de)population policies in the ethnically homogenizing republics, issues like violence, health, sexuality, and abortion came to the foreground of feminist gatherings.² Inspired by their counterparts in Western Europe and the United States, Yugoslav activists were ever more courageously opening the space for women's personal narratives about their lives in strongly patriarchal environments. As the discourses of human rights and democracy beyond a one-party system gained more currency, feminist activists undertook the first step to institutionalize their engagement and establish feminism as a source of resistance to destructive nationalist politics.

2 See entries about Vlasta Jalušić and Teuta Arifi in this volume.

Around a decade earlier, the Italian psychiatrist and neurologist Franco Basaglia (1924–1980) pioneered a concept of mental health and mental illness treatment that was so radical in scope as to lead to the dismantling of psychiatric hospitals in Italy. Supported by his wife Franca Ongaro Basaglia (1928–2005) and a group of enthusiastic colleagues, Basaglia spearheaded the so-called Democratic Psychiatry movement (*Psichiatria democratica*) which opposed the segregation of people living with a mental illness and in 1978 led to the Law 180 (Basaglia's Law) that served as the basis for a profound reform of the Italian psychiatric system. In accordance with this law, psychiatric hospitals were gradually replaced by a variety of community-based services and a ban was imposed on the opening of new ones. Alternative forms of decentralized community care for persons with mental illness stemmed from the effort to restrict psychiatric power and destabilize widely popular associations of mental distress with violence and danger.

Basaglia's deinstitutionalization campaign, which unfolded throughout the 1960s and 1970s, was embedded in a plethora of other emancipatory movements and encouraged similar initiatives around the globe, including Yugoslavia—at the time, Italy's neighboring country. It is in this context that questions around mental health appeared more prominently on the feminist activist agenda within the Yugoslav socialist federation. Some members of the group Woman and Society, like Sofija Trivunac, Lepa Mladenović, and Biljana Branković, were psychologists who started approaching psychiatry's violent character through a feminist lens, perceiving it primarily as a manifestation of its patriarchal foundations. Mladenović and Branković were committed to this cause to such an extent that they traveled to Trieste to volunteer at the newly established community care center for those living with a mental illness. Such direct encounters with the most progressive Italian psychiatrists (almost all of whom were men) were crucial for understanding that, in contrast to the Yugoslav anti-psychiatry mobilization, the Italian Democratic Psychiatry movement came “from within”—thus enabling the implosion of psychiatric hospitals—but was not necessarily devoid of sexist elements or particularly sensitive to feminist struggles.

The text chosen to illustrate the democratic psychiatry dimension of Yugoslav feminist activism appeared in the journal *Kultura* (Culture), which was established in Belgrade in 1968 with the objective of being an avant-garde scientific outlet in the area of the sociology of culture. At the time of the publication of Mladenović and Branković's article, the editorial board included (among others) Žarana Papić, Sonja Liht, and Milena Dragičević Šešić, who were involved in feminist, human rights, and, later on, antiwar engagements. This text is a revised version of the one published in the Ljubljana-based *Časopis za kritiko znanosti* (Journal for the Critique of Science, ČKZ), another progressive publication open toward alternative social movements

beyond Slovenia. As in the case of *Kultura*, the editorial board of ČKZ included Vlasta Jalušič, the feminist, peace, and human rights activist and scholar.

In their contribution, the authors introduce *Kultura's* readership to the Réseau, an international network of alternatives to psychiatry initiated by Félix Guattari, David Cooper, Mony Elkaïm,³ and Franco Basaglia in Brussels in 1975. An unprecedented activist endeavor, the Réseau brought together groups and individuals from around the world interested in thinking about and putting into practice approaches to psychiatric treatment that would oppose “classical psychiatric ideology, logic, or violence” (see the article below). After presenting the Italian model based on “negating the institution”⁴ and highlighting the social and political features of mental distress, the authors took a look at Yugoslavia, where alternatives to psychiatry were, in principle, not welcomed by the official representatives of the psychiatric profession.

The question as to why “our self-management psychiatry” did not fare appreciably better—that is to say, was not much more humane—than the one practiced in the capitalist world figured prominently at the gathering of the Réseau, which Mladenović, as a feminist and increasingly visible lesbian activist, organized at the Belgrade Student Cultural Center in 1983.⁵ This conference, titled *Psychiatry and Society*—after the feminist activist group Woman and Society—unveiled strong tensions within the field of mental health care in the country and was a marking moment in the history of Yugoslav psychiatry. It was the first time that the political, social, and legal implications of patriarchal psychiatric power were publicly discussed and approached also from the perspective of psychiatric patients. This event finished with a statement by a group of psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals who agreed upon the necessity to radically transform the Yugoslav psychiatric system.⁶ In this regard, *Psychiatry and Society* constituted an impulse for a more critical approach to psychiatric practice that would take into consideration socialism’s (alleged) allegiance to equality, justice, and human dignity. However, as was the case with many other emancipatory accomplishments of the socialist era, the potential of the democratic psychiatry movement, which was already fragile throughout the 1980s, would in the following decade be truncated by the destructive force of Yugoslavia’s disintegration.

3 Félix Guattari (France), David Cooper (South Africa/UK), and Mony Elkaïm (Morocco/Belgium) were psychiatrists and some of the leaders of the antipsychiatry movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

4 Basaglia, ed., *L'istituzione negata*. See also Foot, *The Man Who Closed the Asylums*.

5 Félix Guattari, David Cooper, Franco Rotelli and other prominent members of the network attended this event. Franca Ongaro Basaglia was not in Belgrade, but sent her contribution for the collection mentioned below.

6 Lectures by international participants were later published in a book coedited by a group of editors and translators, including Mladenović, Branković, and several others. See *Alternative psihijatriji*. Proceedings of the conference sequel, entitled “Problems and possibilities of the psychiatry and alternative psychiatry in Yugoslavia,” attended by Yugoslav psychiatrists and mental health professionals, were published in the Belgrade-based journal for clinical psychiatry, psychology, and related disciplines *Engrami* 5, no. 3/4 (1983).

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Bojan Bilić

* * *

Lepa Mladenović and Biljana Branković
Réseau – An Alternative to Psychiatry

We felt in those days⁷ that all the people we were meeting had something in common with us. That each one of us was, in our guts, living through the dreadfulness of psychiatric violence and finding ways to fight it. Nothing about this crowd was reminiscent of typical international meetings. Following the introductory day at the university lecture hall, discussions and other events took place in the

7 The text was written on the occasion of and about the last *Réseau* international conference entitled "No Man's Land," held in Rome in 1984.

courtyards of a former slaughterhouse where, in 1938, Ugo Cerletti⁸ applied the first electric shock to an ox, and then to a young man. Dramatic discussions in working groups took place outdoors, under a roof that had once protected animals, as horses passed us by or it rained. Others, who were stepping outside their groups, hung around and talked on the grass. We are finally together—even if in a limited time and space, regardless of the squint, attaché case, wheelchair, or other grounds for discrimination. Academic titles mean nothing here, nor does the division into participants and visitors. The silent ones are also participating; as is Amelija, who interrupted talks by shouting “COMMUNICATION”; and a group of former patients from Trieste who acted out parts from Macbeth during breaks.

What does *Réseau* (Fr. ‘réseau’ = network), or the Network of Alternatives to Psychiatry actually mean?⁹ When it is not an organization, or an institution, it has no hierarchy of its own and is, therefore, as invisible and non-existent as it is material and real. Back in 1975, on the initiative of Félix Guattari, David Cooper, Mony Elkaïm, and Franco Basaglia, all the dissatisfied workers in and around psychiatry who were already implementing a different practice or were still just wanting to do so assembled in Brussels. That led to the creation of the *Réseau, an organization that assembles groups, teams, and individuals with a common will to overcome the practices of exclusion and confinement to psychiatric hospitals and institutions to which children, the elderly, the handicapped, etc., were sent away*. From that point on, *Réseau* meetings were convened by enthusiasts who had the energy and the conditions for it. The second meeting was held in Paris on the initiative of Félix Guattari, the third in Trieste on the initiative of Franco Basaglia, then in Mexico on the initiative of Sylvia Marcos,¹⁰ followed by Brazil and Holland. Network activists also participated at the Belgrade international conference Psychiatry and Society held in December 1983. [...]

In our country, in most psychiatric wards, even at present, a person detained in the capacity of a patient is not asked anything. She is crazy. Therefore, none of what she says is of any value; she has no right to speak. (Just like any subordinate social class, minority, sex.) Speaking on her behalf are precisely those who deprived her of her words when she was born, those who are detaining her.

Now it is easy to say what the alternative approach consists of: psychiatry is viewed from the point of view of psychiatric patients who become the subjects of the new practice. Enabled is a pathway for their life stories, for their reality as they experience and interpret it. This is not easy. It requires the negation of all

8 Editor's note: Ugo Cerletti (1877–1963) was an Italian neurologist who invented the method of electroconvulsive therapy used in psychiatry.

9 Editor's note: The title in original: *Réseau – Alternative à la psychiatrie*.

10 Editor's note: Sylvia Marcos is a Mexican feminist sociologist-anthropologist researching indigenous communities.

the academic knowledge in the field of psychiatry that teaches these tormented people that they are hopeless cases, that they are ill, infected, and that they are looking at “a progressive deterioration of all life functions”—this is a phrase from our textbooks. Actually, it is institutional psychiatry itself that forces even the most resilient and strongest ones into this “deterioration.” The misery it produces with its repressive organization psychiatry embeds into its victims’ genetic code. “Endogenous” means “originating from within oneself and developing from within oneself.” Thus the consequences of institutionalization and the psychiatrization of the human body and sensitivity are explained by “endogenous factors.”

In the light of this firm psychiatric ideology the alternative can do nothing but fully negate the whole of psychiatry, embrace tormented people and enable them to speak. For when human suffering is revealed, all aspects of life, appropriated by social institutions, are thrown into question. That is when we get to the very bottom, to the beginning and end of all alternatives, to HUMAN NEEDS. How are true needs set free, how are they distinguished from the false, derived, and imposed needs? How does one find ways of satisfying them that will not encompass a threat to OTHERS, to her or to him. Of course, this calls for a change in society. [...]

Many questions open up to us here. Why do our psychiatrists accuse alternatives to psychiatry by claiming they are capitalist propaganda, when these very alternatives undermine capitalism in their own countries? How come our psychiatry, seeing as it is in a socialist society, refuses the idea of an alternative and still advocates the classical psychiatric logic, the madhouse, medication? Why does it still confine those who are suffering, applying to them all the techniques of psychiatric violence by means of which order and division into classes is maintained in capitalist countries? Why does it still have its own coded specialist language, the sole purpose of which is to justify violence against its object by means of mystification, while, on the other hand, it discriminates against the participation of the very object and its surroundings in demystifying this violence? Thanks to this mystification, our psychiatry is still not coming out of its scientifically justified shelter which enables it a practice behind the scenes, meetings closed to the public, secret files and locked offices. In that case, not only did the population not approve of the methods and goals of psychiatry, but it was deprived of the possibility of ever learning of them. Psychiatry appears as some unknown force that rules over the weak and drives fear into people. (Two men in white coats and one in a police uniform come to get you, to take you away.)

Here, too, self-managing communities of interest¹¹ play only a formal role in linking the needs of users with the executive body that fulfils needs. What a pity. It is

11 Editor's note: “Self-managing community of interest” was a term for a public service provision within the Yugoslav self-management system that was based on the idea of collective management of an organization by all groups of its employees and users.

precisely from this unique self-managed instance that radical changes could be initiated. As it is, our self-management psychiatry is no different from the capitalist one. It seems that the characteristics of a total psychiatric institution do not change with the change of social system.

In a survey conducted by Belgrade medical students, psychiatrists say: "We would give them as many as seventy electroshocks a day. They would bring them in the morning, after their baths, all warm and relaxed... it was Auschwitz." In the name of what idea? In the name of what goal (healing) when these very psychiatrists claim that "...the consequences of an electric shock are: death, spinal fracture, the infarction of the heart or brain, impairment of intelligence and memory, micro-bleeding, airway closure..." There is a rule that every psychiatric ward should have an electric shock machine. Most of our psychiatrists, at one point or another, signed an order for electroshock therapy, including their popular leaders, whose poeticized texts we read in our literary magazines. (They are usually self-proclaimed humanists.)

Even though it does happen that sometimes someone really helps somebody in the hospital (usually accidentally and incidentally), the issue of overcoming the psychiatrization of human suffering remains in our country as well as with the Italians and the French. There is no doubt that we, too, have the same problems as those raised by the participants of the *Réseau*. Our post-war reform did a significant thing in opening small services, but the madhouse is just slightly humanized, whereas it should be abolished. There are currently 20,000 people in psychiatric hospitals in Yugoslavia. And not only that, under the official proposal for measures to improve psychiatric care, this is insufficient—there are plans to open new ones.

Finally, we wonder how it is that, except for the more up-to-date language, the new psychiatric law of 1982 is practically identical to that of 1934. Is it possible that the status of psychiatric patients saw absolutely no progress anywhere and for anyone with the transition from semi-feudalism to socialism? What self-management terms are used to justify this medieval oppression? Not just by means of electroshocks, but also by poisonous psychopharmaceuticals, ropes, belts, cages. Yes, cages. The law is merely a formality when it comes to the wretched of the Earth. Because it is already quite clear to everyone that, because of and in spite of the law, anyone in this country can commit anyone else to a madhouse—and not just when that someone poses "a threat to oneself and others," which is the typical civil formula, but also when that someone poses "a treat to oneself, others and to property"!

The one who said that "in a society that strives for freedom, an injustice done to one—is an injustice to all" was probably not a "psychiatrist-humanist."

Translated by Jelena Babšek Labudović

11

Sexuality

Ágnes Heller and Mihály Vajda

Family Structure and Communism

AUTHOR Ágnes Heller and Mihály Vajda¹

TITLE “Családforma és kommunizmus” [Family Structure and Communism]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED excerpts *Kortárs* 14, no. 10 (1970): 1655–65. “Family Structure and Communism,” translated by Andrew Arato, *Telos*, no. 7 (Spring 1971): 99–111. The published here are from Andrew Arato’s English translation, which differs in places from the Hungarian version published in *Kortárs*.

LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHORS²

Ágnes Heller (1929, Budapest–2019, Balatonalmádi) was a Hungarian philosopher and public intellectual. Heller was born into a diverse Central European Jewish family, where the different branches had different takes on Judaism, tradition, and nation. There was a strong artistic trait on both parents’ sides: visual arts on the father’s, music on the mother’s. Ágnes’s grandmother on her father’s side, Zsófia Meller, was one of the first female students at the University of Vienna, where she graduated in history and German literature. Though living in modest conditions, Ágnes Heller was brought up in an intellectually stimulating environment. She went to the Jewish high school for girls (*gimnázium*) in Budapest and took dance classes from the pioneer of dance education Sára Berczik (1906–1999).

Heller’s childhood, similar to that of her entire generation, was cut short by the Holocaust. Her father was transported to Auschwitz on June 20, 1944, and he died because of the conditions in the camp in January 1945. Ágnes and her mother survived the Holocaust in Budapest, due to fortunate coincidences and not only once thanks to the courage and wit of fifteen-year-old Ágnes. Her autobiographical writings give fascinating recollections of these events, which shaped not only her personality, but her philosophy too.³ After the war, she became more closely acquainted with Zionism, when her mother, due to a lack of access to any food, had no choice but to send her to a Jewish orphanage. Eighteen-year-old Ágnes Heller was determined to reconcile communism with Zionism, and eventually she and her future first husband,

1 The focus of this introduction is on Heller, as the most significant woman philosopher of the Marxist renaissance from Central and Eastern Europe. While Mihály Vajda is a philosopher with a significant oeuvre in its own right, Heller is prioritized in this volume based on her continuous attempt to both engage and disengage with women and women’s rights in her work.

2 Author’s note: I would like to warmly thank Mónika Nagy for her help in acquiring the materials that helped me write this introduction.

3 Heller, *Bicikliző majom* and *Der Wert des Zufalls*.

István Hermann (1925–1986), joined the communist party “out of solidarity with the poor.”⁴ This was the time when she was finishing high school. Choosing what to study, she started out as a physics student, but after hearing György (Georg) Lukács’ (1885–1971) lecture about the history of cultural philosophy from Kant to Hegel, she decided to switch subjects. As she recalls: “I couldn’t understand a single word of what he was saying. What I took away was that this is what I must find a way to understand. I will dedicate my entire life to understanding this.”⁵

For Heller, becoming a student of Lukács meant becoming a Marxist. She also treated communism (as well as Zionism) as a means to liberate herself from what she called the identity of “the ghetto Jews.” At the same time, she was increasingly suspicious of the political developments and the way the communists seized power in Hungary by 1948. When the party turned against Lukács in 1949, it did not deter Heller and her friends from continuing to learn from him. The years until 1953 were filled with fear, but this was also the time of Heller’s early philosophical education and her first publications. Later, when the post-Stalinist Thaw (a period of reduced censorship and general oppression) came, she reassessed her work from before 1956 as “all bad.”⁶ The reason for this was primarily her youth, her writing being driven by her innate brilliance and her enthusiasm but lacking in depth and criticism. She started seriously reading Marx after 1953, when his work became more freely accessible after Stalin’s death. It was around this time that she personally got to know Leszek Kołakowski (1927–2009) and Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017), the leading critical Marxist philosophers in Poland. Heller and Kołakowski remained good friends.

After 1956, Heller’s publications quickly earned her the label of “anti-revolutionary” (a term used for those who stood against the regime and actually supported the 1956 Revolution), and she was dismissed from the party. She was fired from her teaching position at the university and between 1958 and 1963 worked as a high school teacher, even instructing some of the members of the following generation, the “Lukács Kindergarten,” such as the philosopher Mária Ludassy (b. 1944). During this time, she divorced her first husband, with whom she had a daughter, Zsuzsa (b. 1952), and married fellow philosopher and member of the Lukács School, Ferenc Fehér (1933–1994). With Fehér, she had a son, György (b. 1964). Heller and Fehér co-authored multiple books and lived in a happy marriage until his untimely death.

After 1963, Heller worked at the Academy of Sciences, in the Sociology Research Group until 1973 and the “Philosophers’ trial” (see below). In 1977, when she was offered a job in Australia, at La Trobe University in Melbourne, she and her family left Hungary. Heller increasingly distanced herself from Marxism, first in her book

4 Heller, *Bicikliző majom*, 67.

5 Ibid., 69.

6 Ibid., 113.

Everyday Life (*A mindennapi élet*), published in 1970. She continued to writing about Marx, but her interest shifted to what she called “individual philosophy,” but also ethics and aesthetics, and, in books co-written with Ferenc Fehér, she wrote extensively about the postmodern in philosophy.

In 1986, the Heller–Fehér family moved to New York, and she became professor at The New School for Social Research, where she taught until her retirement. There, she founded the Hannah Arendt Professorship in Philosophy, which she was the first to hold. Her position at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was restored after 1989 and she regularly returned to Hungary to teach at the University of Szeged and the Loránd Eötvös University (ELTE) in Budapest. Heller was an outspoken critic of the increasingly right-wing and anti-democratic Orbán regime. She remained an active and engaged public intellectual with often controversial opinions up to her death. On July 19, 2019, at the age of 90, she drowned in Lake Balaton while swimming, a sport she adored and practiced regularly since her youth.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *A mindennapi élet* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1970), in English: *Everyday Life*, translated by G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); *The Theory of Need in Marx* (London: Allison and Busby, 1976); *A Theory of History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982); with Ferenc Fehér and György Márkus, *Dictatorship Over Needs* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); *Beyond Justice* (Oxford–Boston: Basil Blackwell, 1988); *General Ethics* (Oxford–Boston: Basil Blackwell, 1989); with Ferenc Fehér, *The Postmodern Political Condition* (Cambridge–New York: Polity Press and Columbia University Press, 1989); with Ferenc Fehér, *From Yalta to Glasnost: The Dismantling of Stalin’s Empire* (Oxford–Boston: Basil Blackwell, 1990); with Ferenc Fehér, *The Grandeur and Twilight of Radical Universalism* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990); *A Philosophy of Morals* (Oxford–Boston: Basil Blackwell, 1990); *An Ethics of Personality* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1996); *A Theory of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1999); *Immortal Comedy: The Comic Phenomenon in Art, Literature, and Life* (Lanham and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005); *Filozófiám története* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2009), in English: *A Short History of My Philosophy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010); *Az önéletrajzi emlékezés filozófiája* [The Philosophy of Autobiographical Memory] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2015) · **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEW BOOKS** · *Bicikliző majom. Kőbányai János inerjúregénye* [Cycling Monkey: An Interview Novel by János Kőbányai] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1998), in German: *Der Affe auf dem Fahrrad. Eine Lebensgeschichte*, translated by Christian Polzin and Irene Rübberdt (Berlin: Philo, 2009); *Der Wert des Zufalls: Ágnes Heller über ihr Leben und ihre Zeit* [The Value of the Accidental: Ágnes Heller on Her Life and Time], interview novel by Georg Hauptfeld (Vienna and Hamburg: Edition Konturen, 2018), in French: *La valeur du hasard: Ma vie*, edited by Georg Hauptfeld, translated by Guillaume Métayer (Paris: Rivage, 2020).

Mihály Vajda (1935, Budapest–2023) was a philosopher and Germanist. He was one of the core members of the Lukács School, but gradually distanced himself from

Marxism. His focus in the 1960s and 1970s was on Husserl and phenomenology. In the wake of the “Philosophers’ trial,” he left Hungary and became a professor in Bremen. After 1989, he was offered a professorship at the Lajos Kossuth University in Debrecen, Hungary. He was also director of the Institute of Philosophy at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences between 2005 and 2009.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *A mítosz és a ráció határán. Edmund Husserl fenomenológiája* [On the Boundary between Myth and Reason: The Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1969); *Fascism as a Mass Movement* (London: Allison and Busby, 1976); *The State and Socialism: Political Essays* (London: Allison and Busby, 1981); *Marx után szabadon, avagy miért nem vagyok már marxista?* [After Marx, Freely, or Why Am I Not a Marxist Anymore?] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1990); *Túl a filozófián* [Beyond Philosophy] (Budapest: Typotex, 2013); *Utam Marxtól: Vajda Mihály válogatott művei* [My Path from Marx: Selected Works of Mihály Vajda] (Pozsony: Kalligram; Budapest: Pesti Kalligram, 2015); *Meine Gespenster. Essays zur Zeitgeschichte* [My Specters: Essays on Contemporary History], foreword by Péter Esterházy, translated by Heike Flemming (Wien: Passagen, 2016); *Emlékezet. Idegenség. Zsidók és más idegenek* [Memory. Foreignness. Jews and Other Strangers] (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2018).

Zsófia Lóránd

CONTEXT

The Lukács or Budapest School⁷ grew out of the community of students of the internationally renowned Marxist philosopher, György Lukács (1885–1971). Ágnes Heller together with Ferenc Fehér, György Márkus (1934–2016), and Mihály Vajda were its closest members. Besides the four philosophers, Mária Márkus (1936–2017), who worked both on social theory and sociology, and András Hegedüs (1922–1999), a sociologist and former politician, belonged to it in a looser sense. In order to understand the story of the Lukács School, Heller herself, and the source text re-published here, one needs to understand the relationship between the Hungarian communist regime and Lukács. Young Lukács spent years in Berlin and Heidelberg, where his thought was inspired through his acquaintance with Max Weber (1864–1920) and Georg Simmel (1958–1918), as much as with Ernst Bloch (1885–1977), to mention just the most prominent thinkers of the time. His turn to communism can be tied to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Lukács joined the newly founded communist party in Hungary in 1918. He was not spared from internal party conflicts, but survived the interwar purges and remained a widely respected figure both in the Hungarian and

7 In a way, this was the “second Budapest school,” following the psychoanalytical school of Sándor Ferenczi (1873–1933), and itself followed by the documentary film-making school of the same name in the 1970s and 1980s. The Budapest School in the case of this group of philosophers is also a reference to the Frankfurt School and their critical Marxism.

the Soviet Communist Parties. The wide international acknowledgement of his philosophy was probably his main protection, since being a devoted communist would not suffice, as shown by the fate of many others in the movement. As György Márkus wrote: Lukács was “living proof that it is possible to develop a Marxism which faces the big problems of the age, which is a rightful heir to the classical philosophical tradition and at the same time capable of transcending its antinomies.”⁸

The 1956 Revolution in Hungary⁹ was a turning point for Heller, Vajda, and their group. They were all involved in the revolution, while their mentor, Lukács, served as Minister of Education in Imre Nagy’s revolutionary government. To Heller, the revolution was also what she called a “moment of clarity,” despite being expelled from the party, losing her job, and not being able to publish. 1956 can be interpreted as a trigger for the “renaissance of Marxism,” and it also marked the critical or revisionist turn in the work of not only Lukács, but especially that of his students. 1963, however, was another turning point: in the aftermath of the amnesty of the ‘56ers, the Lukács group had renewed access to publicity. This year bore witness to the “alienation debate,” in which Heller shifted the discourse from the issue of alienation in capitalism to arguing for the presence of alienation in socialism. This was a creative move, though she herself later called it “the most superficial critique of tyranny and dictatorship.”¹⁰

The new leftist revival of Marxism in the 1960s was crucial for the Lukács School, and the Lukács School made substantial contributions to new leftist thinking. To Heller, this was a time when the utopianism in Marx took center stage, since it is here “that in the vision of communism, alienation ceases to exist. This is messianism itself. It was the Jewish, messianistic, Talmudist message of Marxism that stood closest to me. To the entire Budapest School.”¹¹ The most important thinkers read by the Marxist revisionist strand of the post-1968 left were Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) and Lukács, more specifically the latter’s *History and Class Consciousness*. One of the most important venues for personal encounters between these thinkers from Europe and North America was the Korčula Summer School, a hub for critical Marxist philosophy on the Croatian island Korčula, organized by the Praxis group in Yugoslavia.¹² Here Heller got to know Ernst Bloch, Herbert Marcuse, and Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), among others. However, Korčula was also a venue for political organizing, and this is where she, György and Mária Márkus, together with two other Hungarian philosophers, Zádor Tordai and Vilmos Sós, signed the declaration condemning the military intervention of Warsaw Pact countries in Czechoslovakia, as a reaction to the Prague Spring in 1968.

8 Márkus, “Nem kérem vissza az iskolapénzt,” 8.

9 See also the entry about Erzsébet Galgóczi in this volume.

10 Heller, *Bicikliző majom*, 168–69.

11 Ibid., 87.

12 See the entries about Nadežda Čačinovič and Blaženka Despot in this volume.

This source is one of the many examples of how the Marxist renaissance / revisionist Marxism read and interpreted Marx's work not only to critique existing socialism, but also to explore possibilities of a more just and free society. "Family Structure and Communism" was first published in 1970. Heller and Vajda wrote it together from sentence to sentence, even though from an interview they gave in 2008, it transpires that their priorities were different already then. It was Heller to whom the matter of women's emancipation and its social consequences was of crucial importance.¹³ Their suggestion was to replace the bourgeois family, a source of authoritarian oppression, which not only survived, but was supported by the existing socialist state, with the commune, the community of free individuals. The text appeared in a slightly altered English translation made by fellow philosopher Andrew Arato (b. 1944) in the journal *Telos* only a year after the Hungarian text.¹⁴ The article connects to many sections in this volume, such as the role of the sexual revolution in gender relations and its place in Marxist theory, as well as the gendered division of domestic labor and childcare. It is one of the rare occasions that gender relations were discussed in detail in Marxist revisionism, and probably the first comprehensive attempt at such discussions within the Lukács School.

Heller and Vajda's article, probably to a large extent due to its unfaltering dedication to human freedom, gave ground to the communist establishment to put the two thinkers on trial. The signature of the 1968 declaration against the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia eventually did not go unpunished. In the so-called "Philosophers' trial" in 1973, the main accusation against Heller and Vajda was the "complete corruption and destruction of the Hungarian family."¹⁵ Mária Márkus and András Hegedüs were charged with obstructing economic reform. György Bence, János Kis, and György Márkus, the authors of a book not even allowed to be published—*How Is Critical Political Economy Possible?*—were condemned for "destroying the basics of Marxism."¹⁶ As Mária Ludassy emphasizes, the "Philosophers' trial" happened parallel to the petition for the freedom of abortion, initiated by Zsuzsa Körösi and others (see in this volume). Concerns about decreasing population numbers enabled a deeply conservative view on women's reproductive functions, and Heller was singled out as a woman heralding rotten Western values and contributing to the deterioration of population numbers. Heller and Fehér, like many of their friends, were not only

13 Mihancsik, "Olyan világról álmodoztunk."

14 Editor's note: The excerpts below are from this translation, and the full-length article both in Hungarian and in English are accessible via online repositories.

15 The term *szétzüllesztés* (demoralization and destruction) was frequently used as an accusation against critical intellectuals and artists.

16 Ludassy, "1973," 56. *Hogyan lehetséges kritikai gazdaságtan?* [How Is Critical Political Economy Possible?] (Budapest: T-Twins Kiadó, 1992) was eventually published after 1989. János Kis and György Bence, both philosophers, were the students of György Márkus, the next generation of critical intellectuals, and founders of the democratic opposition. They are often referred to as the generation of the "Lukács Kindergarten," an expression that is heavily incorrect in many ways but signals the continuity between these generations.

demoted to badly paid and intellectually non-stimulating jobs and banned from publishing, but were also subjected to constant police harassment, which eventually led them to the decision to leave Hungary in 1977.

Heller's work is rarely interpreted as feminist, although she often wrote, and after 1989, even more frequently talked about gender issues and women's rights. In her role as a public intellectual after 1989, she made harsh statements about her reservations towards gender studies. She also found it important to emphasize that her resistance to any *-ism* included feminism, but this does not mean that she was against feminism. Even after giving up on grand narratives in her philosophy, Heller remained on a quest after "universal" questions and explanations, and expressed concern that focusing on particularities would lead to fragmentation. A closer reading of her work (such as the text below) shows, however, that both as a Marxist, and later as a liberal thinker, her concern for human freedom always held a special place for women.

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Zsófia Lóránd

Ágnes Heller and Mihály Vajda Family Structure and Communism

Unlike the utopians, Marx did not describe communist society in detail, since he claimed that men¹⁷ themselves shape human relations in the course of human activity and social struggles. Fixing the concrete structure of the future in advance would have meant the confrontation of an ideal with reality. But this omission does not mean that Marx did not presuppose values without whose realization a communist society could not even have been imagined. These values deny alienated human and social relationships. Yet they are *not simply negations*. Marx based the denial of existing social relations on positive value presuppositions. The goal is not simply the substitution of new social forms for existing ones. The main objective is more fully human individuals and social relations.

[...]

Today, as a result of changes in the structure of modern capitalism, the majority of bourgeois families are no longer organized around production but around consumption. Thus, even within capitalism, the economic function of the family is diminishing. The phenomena usually described as the “dissolution of the family,” or “crisis of the family form” are probably connected to this change. What are these phenomena? (1) The end of monogamy in the strict sense. Divorce *de jure* (or at least *de facto*) is universally accepted, although some attention has been paid to its socially negative characteristics. The most dramatic manifestation of this phenomenon was the suggestion in Sweden and Denmark to legally abolish marriage as an institution. (2) The almost complete *de jure* elimination and the *de facto* reduction of male authority in marriage. This is connected to so-called women’s emancipation, the gradual widening of the circle of occupations open to women, the achievement of political equality by women, etc. (3) The transformation of moral norms relating to sexuality, which improves the situation of women and is connected to the increase in divorces. (4) The practical disappearance of the multi-generational family: the narrowing of the family to the “nuclear family.”

From the viewpoint of the basic value of free choice of human ties, this process must be considered positive even if it leads to insoluble conflicts which society is powerless to solve even when it seeks to eliminate them in an organized manner. One such basic conflict flows from the contradiction between the freedoms of divorce and raising children. The financial problems involved are easily solved if

17 Editor’s note: By “man” or “men,” Heller and Vajda mean “person” or “people”: in the Hungarian original, the authors use the generic singular noun *ember* (person, human) and its plural form, *emberek* (people, humans).

the society is sufficiently affluent. This is not as serious a problem as the disruption brought about by divorce in the lives of many children.

[...]

Sexual revolution as a slogan and as a movement expresses and stimulates this process of disintegration, although its main aim is the formation of free human relations. [...] At the same time, the sexual revolution restricts the program of establishing human ties to the free choice of sexual partners. It fails to analyze the relationship between sexuality and other types of intense ties: first and foremost, the relations between adults and children. [...]

[...]

The Marxism of the Second International considered the total social process and the formation of psychic character to be immediately related: it was convinced that the transformation of the former leads mechanically to the transformation of the latter.¹⁸ Originally, Bolshevism did the opposite. Thus, in the period immediately following the October Revolution¹⁹ it seemed natural that decisive changes must occur in the relations between man and woman and in the basic forms of communal living, since the creation of proletarian authority and the liquidation of the ruling classes does not automatically imply these changes. There were fundamental changes in family law, along with decisive attempts to completely transform everyday life. Even experimental communes were launched.²⁰ In this context, the most promising product of the period was Makarenko's *Forging of the New Man*, a beautiful document concerning the relations of collective life and psychic formation. As has often been pointed out, the success of this experiment depended partially on the fact that the children in Makarenko's community were not originally brought up in bourgeois families.²¹

The ideology that became predominant in the 1930s and restored many theoretical conceptions of the Second International also restored Social Democratic conceptions of family structure. Conscious steps were taken to restore or to strengthen the bourgeois family structure. Although they might have felt it instinctively, they

18 Editor's note: The Second International (1889–1916) was an international organization of socialist, social democratic, communist, and labor parties. It was dissolved during the First World War due divisions along loyalties not only to the Allied and the Central Powers, but also the third, strictly anti-militaristic faction.

19 Editor's note: In 1917, i.e., after the dissolution of the Second International.

20 Cf. this kind of phenomenon depicted in Kollontay's [sic] novel. Editor's note: It is not clear which novel the authors mean. Aleksandra Kollontai was not widely published in Hungarian, and not at all between 1945 and 1970, when the current article was written. Both Heller and Vajda read German fluently, thus it is possible that they read Kollontai in German, or one of the early Hungarian publications from the 1910s and 1920s. The reference may be to one of these books: *Vasilisa Malygina* or *Red Love* (novel, 1923/1927); *The Winged Eros* (1923); *Great Love* (1927), among others.

21 Editor's note: Anton Makarenko (1888–1939) was a one of the most influential Soviet educators. He promoted the idea of self-governing children's collectives. Heller and Vajda refer here to the fact that after the Russian Civil War (1917–1923), Makarenko founded self-managing orphanages for children orphaned in the war.

were not conscious that this tendency strengthened the authoritarian character of the whole system. When other socialist countries came into being, the transformation of the family structure was definitely not on the agenda. There was concern only with those aspects of the bourgeois family which were directly connected with all of society, while the family ideal itself remained untouched. The shaping of the new man necessary for the formation of a new society was dealt with entirely in terms of the *model of the enlightenment*, i.e., by changing the *content* of education by teaching basic socialist principles and the norms of communal life, “clearing up” world views, moral influences, etc.

In the history of Marxist theory, however, a different conception has been developed which now plays an important role in Western European Leftist movements. This conception does not consider the shaping of a “new man” merely as a result of ideological “influences” nor does it view this aim simply as the mechanical result of the transformation of the total social structure. Rather, it considers the development of a new psychic character in relation to the democratic transformation of the *units of social production*. This notion was worked out by Gramsci in connection with the social experience of the years following the October Revolution. Naturally, the democratic transformation of the structure of the workshop is also one of the basic preconditions of communism. However, even this provides no answer to our problem. [...]

A solution to this problem is possible only through a *radical transformation of the family*. What criteria must be met by the new family structure? (1) It must be a democratically structured community which allows the early learning of democratic propensities. (2) It must guarantee many-sided human relations including those between children and adults. (3) It must guarantee the development and realization of individuality. The basic precondition of this is the free choosing and re-choosing of human ties even in childhood. (4) It must eliminate both the conflicts originating in monogamy and those originating in its dissolution. This is the type of solution to be sought in the new type of family, which we will call the *commune*.

Marxian communism is not utopian. It bases the possibility of realizing social conditions corresponding to its value premises in tendencies present in existing society. The question of which family structure is adequate to communist society can be asked within Marxian theory only if it is not associated with some imagined “ideal” society but instead satisfies existing social needs—even if they are not yet present today in mass proportions. As indicated, the bourgeois family is unable to satisfy many needs which are increasingly becoming universal. But there are also positive needs which lead to the transformation of the family structure. The various and growing commune experiments point unambiguously to these positive needs. That this new kind of needs has been registered only in circles

free of everyday material problems certainly does not mean that these needs do not exist elsewhere and that a social movement aiming at their development could not make them explicit.

The following will outline how we conceive of family structure in communist society. It is useless to work out details since, as always, the organizations of the future cannot be realizations of prior “plans.” Furthermore, in the same way that there are many different types of monogamous families, the “collective family,” or the commune, will also take on a variety of guises. In fact, since it is a matter of putting together a much more complicated structure than the monogamous bourgeois family, it is likely that the number of variations will be greater.

This commune is the “successor” of the bourgeois family. Thus it is not the basic economic or political cell of communist society. The whole organization of society is completely independent of the commune, which is the *organizational center of everyday collective life*.

Thus, our commune has nothing in common with Fourier’s phalanx²² or other similar plans for communes functioning as productive units or communities based on the sharing of the same living space. Since it functions *only* as a family, the realization of our commune is *not* independent of the socio-political situation and of the *overall* realization of communism. This commune would help bring about communist transformation by producing the type of men and frameworks needed for such transformation. [...]

[...]

“Liberation” from housework does not seem possible in the foreseeable future, and the service industry, in spite of its growth, is not a solution. The modernization of the household helps, but it does not solve the problem. Within the commune, however, it is possible to substantially reduce the time spent running the household, even under present economic and technological conditions: larger households are much more economical and conducive to the use of machines. This alone increases the amount of free time which, in the commune, can also be used in radically different ways. Whereas in the monogamous family parents with small children are tied to the house, such is not the case in the commune, and the “house” itself allows a *diversified* use of free time. Even “within the house,” free time should not be restricted to consumption but should be active, cultural, and conducive to personal development. [...]

[...]

22 Editor’s note: Charles (François Marie Charles) Fourier (1772–1837) was a French utopian socialist thinker. He imagined the ideal society as one based on cooperation between people. He worked out a detailed plan for collectivized housework and childcare, organized in massive four-story buildings with wings, the so-called phalanxes.

The psychic character of children who grow up in these circumstances will be conducive to democratic life. They will *never accept as natural* a situation in which they do not have a voice in determining their fate. At the same time, they will not develop a need to oppress other men.

[...]

It is utopian to believe that the commune *alone* can solve the most basic social problems. No isolated political or economic transformation can be final or prevent the reproduction of old social structures. Thus, e.g., workshop democracy can easily be deformed and transformed into manipulated democracy. An isolated solution to the problem of the family is no exception and, if it remains isolated, the commune will definitely be deformed. Thus, a basic social task of commune members is to assist in communist transformation in *every* social sphere. Similarly, without the revolution of the family, structural changes in a communist social direction cannot become irreversible. The formation of a new psychic character can take place only within the revolutionized family. This is the only locus of mass education for individuals who are to take an active part in the direction of social affairs, not only in times of great social crises but “every day.”

Translated by Andrew Arato

Todor Bostandzhiev

Sexology—A Belated Conversation

AUTHOR Todor Bostandzhiev

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LANGUAGE Bulgarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Todor Bostandzhiev (1924, Veliko Tarnovo–2010, Sofia) was the son of Panayot Bostandzhiev, a judge, and Stefanka Seizova, a philologist. Growing up in an intellectual environment, he developed interests in various fields. His family traditions, connected with the memory of the revolutionary Velcho Dzhamdzhiyata, an ancestor, had a particularly strong influence on his early formation. In his youth, Todor Bostandzhiev developed an interest in Bulgarian history, which he maintained for the rest of his life. However, he was disappointed by the change in historical interpretations after the communists came to power in 1944.

It was that disappointment and the influence of the other role model in his life—his uncle Hristo Siezov, a famous doctor in Sofia—that led him to medicine, and psychiatry in particular, as a way to pursue another early interest of his. In 1952, he was accepted to study at the Medical Academy in Sofia. From the beginning of his education there, he aspired to study family relations and their impact on mental health.

Decisive for Bostandzhiev’s professional development in the field of sexology was his acquaintance with the work of William Masters (1915–2001) and Virginia Johnson (1925–2013), pioneers in the field of sexology in the 1960s and the 1970s in the United States.¹ After graduating from the Medical Academy and working in several psychiatric clinics, he established the first Department of Sexology at the Institute of Neurology and Psychiatry in Sofia in 1963. His close friendship with the famous Soviet sexologist Georgiy Ivanovich Vasilchenko (1921–2006)—who became a reviewer of his doctoral dissertation and provided decisive support for the development of Bulgarian sexology—contributed significantly to the

¹ Although it was extremely difficult for Bulgarians to obtain Western publications during state socialism, Todor Bostandzhiev received the two emblematic volumes by Masters and Johnson—*Human Sexual Response* (1966) and *Human Sexual Inadequacy* (1970)—through unknown channels. His son, Rumen Bostandzhiev, remembers that the books were delivered to his father almost as soon as they were published. In the same way, Todor Bostandzhiev obtained other key Western texts in the field of sexology, which he translated for personal use with the help of a translator friend.

establishment of the Department. Bostandzhiev was its chair until his retirement in 1984. In the 1960s, he also founded and chaired the Scientific Society of Sexology in Bulgaria, which organized three national conferences with international participation. In the 1980s, favorable conditions for the field were created as a result of state policy to increase birth rates and support young families in Bulgaria. In this context, Bostandzhiev was invited to participate in the Demographic Commission established by the State Council, chaired by the sociologist and politician Chavdar Kyuranov (see chapter in this volume). At the same time, Bostandzhiev was often invited to the events of the Institute for Youth Research at the Central Committee of the Communist Youth Union.

Apart from introducing sexology as a new field in the Bulgarian academic context, Bostandzhiev actively contributed to the cultivation of sexual education among Bulgarians at the time. He was a regular guest on National Television and Radio programs dedicated to sexual relations. He also collaborated as an author to a number of periodicals over the years, and in 1970 he was invited to be a columnist for one of the most popular magazines at the time, *Zhenata dnes* (Woman Today). The texts he published under the regular column heading “Sexology—A Belated Conversation,” which covered traditionally taboo topics like sexuality and sexual communication between men and women, were of great interest to Bulgarian readers. He wrote the column until the late 1970s, when its themes began to appear more and more often in readers’ letters. As the driving force behind the first initiatives in the sphere of sexual education in the country, Bostandzhiev published several monographs and hundreds of popular articles on the subject.

Although his relatives were repressed after 1944, Bostandzhiev never commented on the topic with his family, including his wife Zaharina (also a psychiatrist) and his children Rumen and Stefka. Throughout his life, he remained critical of those in power, but never sought active political expression. He never joined political parties and formations, neither during state socialism nor after 1989. His priority until the end of his life was his professional development and defending his position as a specialist. His personality and work were an inspiring example for his son Rumen Bostandzhiev, nowadays one of the most prominent sexologists and psychotherapists in Bulgaria.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Pol i polovi razstroistva* [Sex and Sexual Disorders] (Sofia: Medicina i fizkultura, 1978); *Razgovor predi braka* [A Conversation before Marriage] (Sofia: Medicina i fizkultura, 1979); *Semeistvo i polovo vuzpitanie* [Family and Sexual Education] (Sofia: Otechestven front, 1981); *Kak sum se rodil* [How I Was Born] (Sofia: Narodna mladezh, 1985); *Sexualna disharmonia v semeistvoto* [Sexual Disharmony in the Family] (Sofia: Medicina i fizkultura, 1988).

CONTEXT

One of the key features of state socialism in Bulgaria, emphasized by existing scholarship, was the absence of eroticism in both official culture and public debate, particularly before the 1960s.² Privileging social interests over one's aspirations and duty to personal happiness, as well as the consciousness of collective belonging over individualism, the communist project of social engineering almost completely marginalized certain aspects of private life, including manifestations of the hedonistic body—that is, the display of sexuality. Instead, socialist life in Bulgaria was defined by “sensory asceticism”: the regime imposed significant restrictions on sexual practices and manifestations, enveloping them in silence, and forbade access to certain styles of music, fine arts, and dance, interpreting them as incompatible with socialist morality.³ Historians writing on the early socialist period in Bulgaria have traced the roots of the regime's fear of eroticism and sexuality to an interpretation of Marxist ideology which opposed “reactionary” or “bourgeois decadence” in human nature—those areas of human behavior which could not be ideologically modified and instrumentalized by a progressive, teleological discourse.⁴

Socialist morality legitimized sexual practices only within the family. But even the family framework could not justify the self-serving pursuit of sexual pleasure. The ideal of a socialist family was the family which promoted equal relations between partners, based on mutual love and responsibility. Love was interpreted mostly as a sharing of views and goals, requiring spiritual maturity, which in turn presupposed “proper” political awareness. Similarly, in terms of sexual life, concepts such as “responsibility” and “high consciousness,” implying behavior in harmony with biological and social laws, dominated. Hence the deep problematization of practices that went beyond the framework of “normality” (such as non-heterosexual, extramarital affairs, etc.), and which did not fit into the conservative and basically asexual socialist morality. The Bulgarian researcher Anelia Kasabova analyzed the regime's contradictory attitude towards unwanted pregnancies, “single-parent families,” and “single” mothers, which is traceable in the context of the successive pro-natalist reproductive policies in socialist Bulgaria. The problems of extramarital pregnancies were taboo in public discourse during the 1950s; single mothers were stigmatized and hidden from society, and children who were born out of wedlock and deprived of parental care were institutionalized. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, in the context of economic difficulties after a period of extensive industrial development, of demographic problems, and of the negative effects of orphanages

2 Gospodinov, “Sex po vreme na socializum: higiena, medicina i fizkultura,” 224.

3 Popova, “Sexualnostta i socialistichesките diskursi v Bulgaria.”

4 Penchev, “Nacional-erotikata na socializma,” 208–10.

on the social adaptation of youth,⁵ single mothers were heroized, and a number of administrative, material, social, and educational measures were devised to support them. However, in spite of changes in attitudes over time, illegitimate births were still seen as an anomaly, a violation of social norms and values. The continued search for “guilt” for an extramarital pregnancy was individualized, without looking for the structures and mechanisms behind it.⁶

Among these mechanisms was the sustained tabooing of reproductive health issues in socialist Bulgaria. In a study on abortions in the country during state socialism, Vivian Pramataroff-Hamburger points out that even after optional abortion was allowed in 1956, the very procedure was difficult to undergo, and was associated with many administrative obstacles and humiliations. In 1972, additional restrictions were placed on optional abortions: they were forbidden to married women without children or those with one child.⁷ The same study shows that these limitations were accompanied by the absence of any promotion of contraceptives among Bulgarians: the topic was only briefly mentioned in medical education, and in public consciousness hormonal contraceptives were attributed (without scientific evidence) to many side effects, from carcinogenicity to infertility.⁸

A characteristic feature of state socialism in Bulgaria in the 1950s was the absence from public space of any journalistic or scientific materials on sexuality, as well as the lack of an adequate language to discuss intimate relations and eroticism. Discursively, family sex did not exist, including reproductive sex. Conversely, sexual intercourse outside the sanction of marriage was always presented under the negative euphemisms of “frivolous” or “dishonest” relationships.⁹ The taboo on sexual discourses was particularly radical with regard to non-heterosexual relations. The 1951 Penal Code provided for imprisonment for up to three years for sexual intercourse between individuals of the same sex, but more often gay or lesbian people were classified as “idlers” and “hooligans,” and ended up in educational dormitories. Even when non-heterosexual contacts between adult partners were decriminalized in 1968, the liberalization of legislation did not significantly change the status of individuals living in the zone of anonymity.¹⁰ Other sexual practices, like masturbation, were also tabooed or rarely mentioned in public: in the few discussions on sexual education and in the

5 The institutional establishments for children who were born out of wedlock proved to be extremely insufficient and unable to meet children's physical, emotional, social, and educational needs. Due to their very nature as “orphanages,” they also cultivated habits and lifestyles necessary for living within the establishments, which were largely opposite to ways of life outside of them. Kasabova, “Samotnata maika” v Bulgaria—mezhdú stigmatizirane i geroizirane,” 10.

6 Kasabova, “Samotnata maika” v Bulgaria—mezhdú stigmatizirane i geroizirane,” 149–64.

7 Pramataroff-Hamburger, “Za nezakonnata i nevuzmozhnata Lyubov,” 257–69.

8 Pramataroff-Hamburger, “Za nezakonnata i nevuzmozhnata Lyubov,” 263.

9 Popova, “Sexualnostta i socialisticheskite diskursi v Bulgaria.”

10 Popova, “Sexualnostta i socialisticheskite diskursi v Bulgaria.”

almost missing sexology literature, masturbation was interpreted as a habit leading to disease and causing insanity.¹¹

However, in the 1960s, in the context of “the April wind of renewal” and Zhivkov’s “liberalization,”¹² which allowed partial autonomy in the private sphere, some articles on marriage and sexual education appeared in the country, in periodicals such as *Mladezh* (Youth) from 1964, and *Zhenata dnes* from 1963. In the 1970s and 1980s, more literature on the topic of intimacy and sexual life was published: translations such as *Muzhut i zhenata intimno* (Man and Woman, Intimately), some edited volumes by Bulgarian authors,¹³ articles in periodicals such as *Otechestvo*, *Lada*, *Bozhur*, or *Semejstvo i uchilishte*,¹⁴ and brochures issued by the Ministry of Public Health intended for a younger audience. In the mid-1980s, lectures on sexual education began in some schools, most often limited to a number of prohibitions and warnings about the dangers associated with sexual life. Popular propaganda and sexual education during state socialism rather aimed to divert young people’s attention away from sex, to present it as full of terrible consequences. The discussion on sexual relations never found adequate language: it wandered between biology, medical discourses, and a quasi-romantic notion of love during socialism.¹⁵ Publications on sex remained episodic in the vast field of other types of didactic literature. The problems of sexual education remained outside of the focus of the Komsomol and the school system until the very end of the regime, and even in the 1980s youth sex and eroticism continued to be lost in a thematic “black hole.”¹⁶

Compared to texts from the 1960s and subsequent publications from the 1970s and 1980s—which generally medicalized sexual relations and reduced education on the topic of sex into a tool for social discipline—the articles that Todor Bostandzhiev wrote for *Zhenata dnes* were significantly more enlightening and eye-opening for the Bulgarians of that time.¹⁷ Bostandzhiev published materials on intimate relations between men and women—the lack of sexual desire in some women, infidelity and jealousy between partners, high libido among youngsters, etc.—in the magazine between 1968–1969,¹⁸ and in 1970 he was invited to be a regular columnist under the

11 Pramataroff-Hamburger, “Za nezakonnata i nevuzmozhnata Lyubov,” 259–61.

12 With the April 1956 plenum of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party—part of the fundamental political shift in Eastern European state socialist regimes in response to Soviet de-Stalinization—the so-called process of “defrosting” or formal liberalization of the political regime in Bulgaria began. The leadership of the Politburo, and thus of the state, was then entrusted to the First Secretary Todor Zhivkov (1911–1998).

13 E.g., Elena Spasova-Hadzhievaed, ed., *Dom, semejstvo, bit* [Home, Family, Everyday Life] (Sofia: Zemizdat, 1978).

14 Daskalova, “Gendering the Cold War,” 336.

15 Gospodinov, “Sex po vreme na socializum,” 232–33.

16 Popova, “Sexualnostta i socialisticheskite diskursi v Bulgaria.”

17 Daskalova, “Gendering the Cold War,” 337.

18 Such publications were “Ima li studeni zheni?” [Are There Frigid Women?], *Zhenata dnes*, no. 4 (1968): 16–17; “Tova ne e sport, devoiki!” [This is Not a Sport, Young Girls!], *Zhenata dnes*, no 6 (1968): 11–12, etc.

column heading “Sexology—A Belated Conversation.” Aimed at the sexual education of young people and intended to improve sexual culture among Bulgarians more generally, the rubric came to compensate for the lack of sexual education from the school curriculum, as well as in the medical universities in the country. Guided by the belief that young people did not need “dry, ascetic morals, but persuasive words and guidelines [...] that corresponded to real modern life,”¹⁹ he wrote on the necessity to talk in the family, between partners and with children, about intimate relationships, on the process of sexual maturation in adolescents, on factors influencing erotic attraction, etc. Todor Bostandzhiev remained faithful to this enlightening cause until the end of his life in 2010.

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19 Bostandzhiev, “Seksologija,” 8.

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Valentina Mitkova

* * *

Todor Bostandzhiev

Sexology—A Belated Conversation

Early sexual relations

Sexual maturity occurs much earlier than the body's overall physical maturation. Therefore, any early sexual intercourse—before the age of 17–18 for girls and before the age of 18–20 for boys—puts an extraordinary burden on the organism with activities that are not inherent in this age.

Sexual life is a productive activity by its biological nature. That is why it is atypical for young age, when people mature. Youth is a period during which the individual grows as a person, not only completing his/her physical development, but also accumulating the necessary knowledge and experience that lay the foundations for his/her future life. Early sexual intercourse not only hinders the proper physical development of the young organism, but also diverts young people's attention from their basic tasks and has a severe impact on their overall personal development. On the other hand, youngsters are significantly at risk of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

A number of observations show that young mothers who have not yet reached full maturity find it more difficult to endure pregnancy. [...] Its artificial termination, which a young girl is often forced to resort to, performed even in the best hospital conditions, always carries some risk, and can lead to serious disability or to permanent infertility, which would make a woman unhappy for life. The mental damage that abortion causes, especially in the first pregnancy, can often be significant and dramatic. That is why young people need to be aware of ways to prevent pregnancy. Preservation of a woman's reproductive capacity is directly related to the fight against abortion, which means proper protection against unwanted pregnancy, adequate education, and appropriate, publicly available contraceptives. [...]

Many people naively believe that sexually transmitted diseases are now limited. But Bulgarian and international surveys show that such diseases are widespread, especially among young people and minors.

What has been said so far is enough to show why it is necessary for boys and girls to abstain from sexual relations and not start them prematurely. This should not be an imposed ban, but a conscious attitude and behavior, the result of inner conviction. The energy saved could be very appropriately used for educational, scientific, athletic, artistic, or other useful activities necessary for the youth, so as to develop a harmonious, spiritually and physically well-built personality. [...]

Is it just an animal instinct?

Sexual life is a biological necessity. For people, however, sexual need has long ceased to be a blind animal instinct and has become one of the most beautiful and tender human feelings—the need for friendship, mutual love, and affection. Sexuality has been “humanized” in the process of civilization. Animal instinct has been transferred into human joy, happiness, and love.

And the feelings, their diversity and depth are not given in advance—they gradually develop and enrich with age and personal maturation. The adolescent, being inexperienced, often gets carried away, overestimates exterior lust, and does not see the spiritual emptiness laying behind it. That is why young people should be careful and modest in their feelings and not waste them lightly.

Sexual life must begin when feelings have already matured, when psycho-sexual development has been completed, i.e., when purely physiological sexual attraction, sex itself, has been enriched with mental and emotional excitement, the eros, when both of these components [...] have become an organic unity.

[...]

Free sexual behavior becomes harmful when it breaks away from its ethical and emotional underpinnings, from lasting, deep, and beautiful feelings between the two [partners]. [...] If there can be no complete love without sex, then sex without love is fake, empty, and unsatisfying as an experience.

Love is not an end in itself

Parents and teachers should not oppose the first sprouts of love in children with excessive severity. But they must carefully and sensibly cultivate this tender and fragile feeling in young souls. [...] Parents and educators need to make it clear to adolescents that true love develops and strengthens in the mutual overcoming of difficulties in life. Sex alone is not enough to connect two people for a long time, for life. Setting a useful goal, in the achievement of which friendship and love will

flourish, develop, and strengthen, a goal through the realization of which the two will learn to help each other and cooperate, to need and to respect each other—this is what young people should be educated to do. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry says: “Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward together in the same direction. We cannot call friends people who are not connected with the same rope when climbing the same peak—the place where they will meet again.”²⁰

Is sexual abstinence harmful?

Love is not an end in itself. The common ideal, the mutual enrichment of knowledge, experience, and feelings, the friendly assistance in building each other's character and personality—this is the goal for which love is the stimulus and engine. Thereby feelings strengthen and acquire various, most beautiful shades. This is what brings satisfaction and happiness. Then sexual intercourse comes as a natural peak, as a physical symbol of spiritual unity. And until those feelings are strengthened—let the young learn to abstain. Abstinence is not harmful for the adolescent. It hardens the will and builds self-discipline. Obstacles to love could only make it stronger. In the millennial development of human society, due to certain socio-economic conditions, a number of prejudices and superstitions have accumulated. In the field of sexual life, sexual relations, and sexual morality, they are especially relevant and weigh on modern people's mentality. The worldview and morals of the new man, of the builder of socialism and communism, must be freed from these prejudices. And this is one of the greatest tasks of our modern education.

One must get free from the pretentious and unmotivated shame of his/her body. This shame, resulting from an incorrect and inhuman worldview, which declares everything earthly to be a sin before God, does not contain anything beautiful [...], as it testifies to ignorance, stupidity, and insurmountable religious fanaticism. It is not a manifestation of some deep morality at all. On the contrary, it is very often a hypocritical cover-up of too deeply seated immorality.

Translated by Valentina Mitkova

20 Editor's note: The quote is from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Wind, Sand, and Stars* (1939), the author's significantly revised version of the French original, *Terre des hommes* (1939), which was translated into English by Lewis Galantière and republished in numerous editions. Whereas the first sentence of the quote corresponds to the English translation, the second sentence does not. Lewis's English translation reads: “There is no comradeship except through union in the same high effort.” See, e.g., Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Wind, Sand, and Stars*, trans. Lewis Galantière (New York: Bantam Books, 1945), 231.

Slavenka Drakulić

Women and the Sexual Revolution

AUTHOR Slavenka Drakulić

TITLE “Žena i seksualna revolucija” [Woman and the Sexual Revolution]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Dometi: časopis za kulturu* [Scopes: magazine for culture] 2, no. 13 (1980): 45–50.

LANGUAGE Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Slavenka Drakulić (née Sušanj; b. 1949, Rijeka) is a writer and journalist, one of the most well-known feminists from former Yugoslavia. Slavenka was married three times and kept the name of her first husband as her first surname. In the 1970s and 1980s, she published both as Slavenka Drakulić and Drakulić-Ilić. She was born in Rijeka, but the family moved frequently; her father was a military officer in the Yugoslav People’s Army (Jugoslavenska narodna armija, JNA). She went to school in Split, then Rijeka, and studied in Zagreb. She gave birth to her daughter in 1968 and maternity leave interrupted her studies at a very early stage. Her daughter, Rujana Jeger, is a writer in her own right, today living in Vienna. In her short autobiographical note from 1984, Drakulić writes about being the mother of a small girl at an early age with love and care, but also adds: “Whilst my husband and our friends were studying and staging the revolution, I was raising a child”¹—a shared everyday experience of women in progressive political groups across the globe, and especially so in the post-1968 era. Slavenka finished university in the mid-1970s, and became one of the founding members of the feminist group *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society) in Zagreb.² As a journalist, she wrote for the most prominent journals and newspapers in the former Yugoslavia, such as *Danas*, *Dometi*, and *Start*.

Her first book was the collection of essays entitled *The Mortal Sins of Feminism* (*Smrtni grijesi feminizma*), released in 1984, in which the essay translated here was republished as well, along with a selection of essays previously published in newspapers and magazines about feminism. The volume is a brilliant collection of texts, and her only volume that was never published in English.³ This collection was soon followed

1 Drakulić, *Smrtni grijesi feminizma* (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2020), 220.

2 See entries in this book: Dunja Blažević, Nadežda Čačinović, Blaženka Despot, Rada Iveković, Sanja Iveković, Vlasta Jalušić, Vesna Kesić, Jasenka Kodrnja, Nada Ler-Sofornić, Lepa Mladenović and Biljana Branković, Žarana Papić, Lydia Sklevicky, Suzana Tratnik and Nataša Sukić; and Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*.

3 See an introduction to the book in English: Lóránd, “The Stakes of Feminism.”

by her two novels, *Holograms of Fear* (1987) and *Marble Skin* (1989). Through these novels, Drakulić joined Irena Vrkljan, whom she considered one of her literary role models, and Dubravka Ugrešić, Biljana Jovanović, and Judita Šalgo, to mention the most prominent women to establish a firm and flourishing women's literary scene in Yugoslavia.⁴ *Holograms of Fear* is Drakulić's first novel about the body and disease, inspired by her own struggle with kidney disease from a young age on. This is also one of the first times when she uses a multi-vocal and multi-focal narrative to provide space for the perspectives of multiple female voices.⁵ She follows this thread of writing in her later novels, woven together with her theme of women and pain, such as in her novel *Frida's Bed* about Frida Kahlo; and about women who lived and created in the shadow of famous men, such as Dora Maar (*Dora and the Minotaur*) and Mileva Einstein (*Mileva Einstein: My Life of Sorrow*). The story of pain, disease, and connection between women across continents is written into the captivating narrative of *Flesh of Her Flesh* (2007). Having survived a severe case of COVID-19 in the first wave of lockdowns in the spring of 2020, she published her experience in an essay in *The Yale Review*.⁶

Her international career started around the time these first three books reached the Yugoslav public. She attended the "Sisterhood is Global" conference in Rhode Island in 1982, initiated by Robin Morgan, the American radical feminist, editor of the books *Sisterhood Is Powerful* (1970) and *Sisterhood Is Global* (1984), as well as of *Ms. Magazine*. *Sisterhood Is Global*, which was a highly ambitious effort to bring feminist sources from across the globe together, published a text by Rada Iveković and Drakulić, as well as Zsuzsa Körösi.⁷ Drakulić herself started publishing in *Ms.*, the American feminist magazine established by Gloria Steinem, and *The Nation* in the late 1980s. Perhaps her most famous volume from before the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* (1992), is a collection of essays written for an American publisher, based on her travels around Eastern Europe, with stories about cooking, husbands, and women struggling to cope with the lack of basic products like sanitary napkins or tampons from Yugoslavia to Poland and Romania, showing how these seemingly personal matters were also deeply political.

The other volume that brought Drakulić broad international recognition was her first volume of essays about the war, *Balkan Express*. The book was published in

4 In English, see Hawkesworth, "Croatian Women Writers 1945–95"; Lukić, "Women-Centered Narratives in Contemporary Serbian and Croatian Literatures"; Lukić, "Women's Writing and Dismemberment of the Ex-Yugoslavian Cultural Milieu."

5 I call this "writing the sisterhood" elsewhere. Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 105–12; and Lóránd, "Sisterhood and Second Wave Feminist Stakes in Women's Art and Women's Literature."

6 Slavenka Drakulić, "Surviving COVID-19. Waking up after six days on a ventilator," *The Yale Review*, November 9, 2020, <https://yalereview.org/article/surviving-covid-19>.

7 In *Sisterhood Is Global*: Rada Iveković and Slavenka Drakulić-Ilić, "Yugoslavia: Neofeminism and Its 'Six Mortal Sins,'" 734–38; Körösi, "The Nonexistence of 'Women's Emancipation,'" 289–93.

English right after the defamatory attack made in the magazine *Globus*, which targeted five antiwar female intellectuals: Drakulić herself, Rada Iveković, and Vesna Kesić (in this volume), the writer Dubravka Ugrešić, and the journalist Jelena Lovrić. The article—with the title “Croatian Feminists Rape Croatia!”—accused these women of a lack of loyalty toward the newly founded Croatian state, and published (often false) personal information about them. The hate campaign in the aftermath of the article led Drakulić, Iveković, and Ugrešić to emigrate from Croatia.⁸ After leaving Zagreb, Drakulić continued publishing about the war, such as in her novel about war rape *As If You Were Not There* (1999), and in her essays in *Café Europa* (1996). Further, the volume *They Would Never Hurt a Fly* (2003/2004) focused on war criminals and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague.

She keeps on working as a writer and a journalist for journals and magazines in Croatia and abroad, while living between Croatia and Sweden. Since 1993, she has been married to Richard Swartz, a Swedish journalist with expertise on Southeastern Europe. Her latest work includes the book *Invisible Woman and Other Stories* (2021/2022), about women and aging, and *Café Europa Revisited: How to Survive Post-Communism* (2021).

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8 About the context of the *Globus* article, see Miškowska Kajevska, *Feminist Activism at War*, 100–104. A detailed report in English: Meredith Tax, “Five Women Who Won’t Be Silenced,” *The Nation*, May 10, 1993, 624; and Drakulić’s own recollection: “How I Became a Witch: Nationalism, Sexism and Post-Communist Journalism in Croatia,” *Media Studies Journal* 13, no. 3 (1999): 134–39. Some of the best essays against the ethnicization of rape from this period were written by Drakulić’s fellow witches: Ugrešić, “Because We Are Just Boys,” in *The Culture of Lies: Antipolitical Essays*, translated by Celia Hawksworth (London: Phoenix, 1996); Rada Iveković, “Women, Nationalism and War: ‘Make Love not War,’” *Hypatia* 8, no. 4 (1993): 113–26; and Vesna Kesić, “Muslim Women, Croatian Women, Serbian Women, Albanian Women,” in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, edited by Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 311–22.

9 Probably the most comprehensive bibliography of Drakulić’s work is on the author’s website. For articles, see <https://slavenkadrakulic.com/about-slavenka-drakulic/slavenkas-articles-selection/>. For her books (including translations), see <https://slavenkadrakulic.com/bibliography/>.

Christina Pribichevich-Zorić (New York: Penguin, 2008); *Dora i Minotaur: Moj život s Picassom* [Dora and the Minotaur: My Life with Picasso] (Zaprešić: Fraktura, 2015); *Mileva Einstein, teorija tuge* [Mileva Einstein: My Life of Sorrow] (Zaprešić: Fraktura, 2016); *Nevidljiva žena i druge priče* (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2021), in English: *Invisible Woman and Other Stories*, trans. Christina Pribichevich-Zorić and Jacob Agee (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2022); *Ponovo u kavani Europa: Kako preživjeti postsocijalizam* (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2021), in English: *Café Europa Revisited: How to Survive Post-Communism* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2021).

Zsófia Lóránd

CONTEXT¹⁰

Yugoslavia in the 1970s was buzzing with ideas of sexual revolution and offered a multitude of reinterpretations of the concept. Intellectual discussions and artworks probed the limits of sexual inhibitions, and explored the liberatory effects of greater freedom in sexual expression. The Marxist humanists around the journal *Praxis* explored “free creativity for all individuals,”¹¹ and a new generation of Yugoslav filmmakers (*novi film*) experimented with the implementation of these ideas in art. Dušan Makavejev’s movie *WR: Misterija Organizma* (WR: Mysteries of the Organism, 1971) was inspired by the work of the sexologist Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957) and addressed “more specifically another overriding concern of Marxist humanists: the immoral consequences of dogmatism, bureaucratism, elitism, and charismatic leadership.”¹² Makavejev’s movie, together with Želimir Žilnik’s film *Rani radovi* (Early Works, 1969) from two years earlier, put emphasis on the shortcomings of socialist women’s emancipation. This was there in the spirit of the time; other prominent male authors were tiptoeing around the same issue of women’s persistent inequality and the (Yugoslav) socialist revolution. What these excellent artworks shared was the repetition of the stereotypical portrayal of women, including the objectification and violation of their body despite their attempt at a critical angle. Women artists and writers with a feminist angle (Sanja Iveković, Katalin Ladik, and Drakulić herself in this volume)¹³ needed to arrive to the scene in order to reinterpret women’s agency, and for women to take control of their language, their life, and their action in artworks.

At the very same time in Yugoslavia, sexuality was also increasingly commercialized, as the Yugoslav economy kept opening up its market dynamics. Make-up, dieting, and selling goods with female nudity became part of everyday visuals. These

10 The contextualization of the sexual revolution is based on the author’s article: Lóránd, “A Politically Non-Dangerous Revolution is Not a Revolution.”

11 See entries about Nadežda Čačinović and Blaženka Despot in this book.

12 Herbert Eagle, “Yugoslav Marxist Humanism and the Films of Dušan Makavejev,” in *Politics, Art and Commitment in East European Cinema*, edited by David W. Paul (London: Macmillan, 1983), 133.

13 See Lóránd, “Feminist Dissent in Literature and Art,” in *The Feminist Challenge*, 85–136.

processes called for a feminist intervention, which indeed did take place as the new Yugoslav feminist scene developed rapidly from the early-to-mid-1970s onwards. As much as the feminists were critical of the idea that excessive female nudity, more explicit pornography, and commercialization as such would be liberating for women, they were also savvy enough to know how to use popular media with such content for their own political agenda. Some feminists wrote and edited glossy women's magazines, such as Neda Todorović (who also wrote media science books about the same topic), the psychologist Sofija Trivunac, and Maja Miles, a feminist journalist. Others, such as Drakulić and Vesna Kesić, worked with the magazine *Start*, one of the most bizarre media products of socialist Yugoslavia. The bi-weekly published the best quality journalism in the country, whilst its pages were filled with sexually explicit images of female nudity.

Many of Drakulić's essays from the volume *Mortal Sins of Feminism* first appeared in *Start*, together with Vesna Kesić's highly critical writings about pornography. *Start* was one of the most prestigious magazines to work for at the time, due to the high-quality journalism, its intellectual milieu, and its wide circulation. *Start* and the glossy women's magazines meant getting feminist ideas to a broad range of readers. It is easy to criticize in retrospect, or from the outside, but writing for *Start* meant reaching hundreds of thousands of readers with feminist ideas written in a complex and subtle manner (multiple sources in this volume were first published in *Start*), something many feminist authors long for even today. And while it was not easy to be a feminist among sexist male authors, Drakulić and Kesić stood their ground. *Start* published articles about Gloria Steinem, Élisabeth Badinter, Erica Jong and Shere Hite, as well as Susan Brownmiller, and Simone de Beauvoir. *Start* was also a venue for greater freedom of speech in Yugoslavia, in part because it was financially independent of the regime (to a large extent its popularity was due to the nude images).¹⁴ Whilst Drakulić and Kesić were deeply opposed to any kind of objectification of women, they also warned to tread cautiously when it came to freedom of expression. In this regard, they differed from American anti-porn radical feminists, such as Catherine MacKinnon, who in the 1990s attacked them for writing for *Start* without apt understanding of the context in which they lived.¹⁵ In a socialist country, freedom of expression had a value unimaginable to American feminists.

¹⁴ This argument is repeated in the author's introduction to the new publication of *Smrtni grijesi feminizma* (2020); in English, see Lóránd, "The Stakes of Feminism."

¹⁵ Catherine MacKinnon, "Turning Rape into Pornography: Postmodern Genocide," in *Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, edited by Alexandra Stiglmayer, translated by Marion Faber (Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 73–81. See Vesna Kesić's response: "A Response to Catharine MacKinnon's Article 'Turning Rape Into Pornography: Postmodern Genocide,'" *Hastings Women's Law Journal* 5, no. 2 (1994): 276–77.

The text in this volume is from *Mortal Sins of Feminism* with the subtitle *Essays about Testicology*. The original term is *mudologija*, and was coined from *muda* (male sexual glands) and *logos* (word and law). It is used to describe the power dynamics between language and the male oppression of women, similar to the term *phallogocentrism* in contemporaneous French post-structuralist feminism. The essays in *Mortal Sins* were written from a feminist angle, about a range of issues from sexuality, gendered moral double standards, to women's invisible labor. The idea of "mortal sins" came as a reaction by the communist establishment to the Yugoslav new feminism of the time. Feminism's mortal sins were shattering everyday patriarchy, as well as its criticism of self-managing Yugoslav socialism for its shortcomings in achieving women's full equality. In these early essays, Drakulić refuted this criticism with precision and humor. To her, to talk about class and gender as mutually exclusive terms is absurd, and so is to treat Marxism and feminism as ideologies opposing one another, which creates a "false dilemma." Battling class oppression and women's oppression are not mutually exclusive. Still, she claimed, it is only feminism that can tackle a multitude of aspects of women's oppression.

She argued for feminism as necessary to make certain topics subjects of political debate. The official politics of the *žensko pitanje* (the woman question) did not talk about prostitution, rape, women being beaten at home (domestic violence), unpaid housework, and sexism in education. Drakulić also considered hypocrisy and sexual double standards crucial in maintaining women's oppression, and insisted on discussing women's pleasure as a means of liberation. Her early writings were influenced by the work of the American sexologist Shere Hite and her pathbreaking exploratory research on women's sexuality in the 1960s–70s, starting with *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study on Female Sexuality*.¹⁶ Parts of Hite's work were translated and published in *Start*, another case when a feminist critique of patriarchal sexuality was literally on the same page as the subject of its criticism.¹⁷ While talking about women's sexuality was part of their liberation, heralding a fulfilled sexual revolution, in Drakulić's view, was part of the problem. She and Jasenka Kodrnja, who approached the topic in her theoretically complex and well-argued social science article from 1975 in the journal *Review of Sociology*, agreed that without fundamental changes in societal relations, the sexual revolution would be impossible.¹⁸

16 Shere Hite, *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study on Female Sexuality* (New York: Macmillan, 1976).

17 The male *Start* editors also attacked Hite in the magazine. On this, see Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 153–54.

18 Jasenka Kodrnja, "Seksualna revolucija (Marginalije na temu)" [Sexual Revolution. (Marginalia on the Topic)], *Revija za sociologiju* 5, no. 3 (1975): 46–53. Rada Iveković also problematizes the issue in her essay in this volume.

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Zsófia Lóránd

Slavenka Drakulić

Women and the Sexual Revolution

Sexual revolution is a term that, in everyday speech, implies changes in sexual behavior that happened in the past fifteen or so years. This term was imposed through means of mass communication, and it seems that it does not require any special explanation. If we go by the definition in the lexicon *Science on Sexuality*, we learn that “[...] the sexual revolution is an occasional (?) occurrence in the relationship between the sexes which is manifested in the mass efforts of young people of both sexes to win the right to greater freedom in their sexual lives for themselves. [...] It is, in principle, a fight against the constraints, unnaturalness, and inhumanness of the relationship between the sexes burdened by opposite-sex posturing and various sexual things.”¹⁹ We can, therefore, conclude that the creators of the lexicon—our recognized sexologists and scientific workers—accept the existence of this term as a fact and even try to define it. I cannot at all agree with this definition, and I find the term *occasional* sexual revolution particularly ambiguous. In further consideration of this phenomenon, the word *revolution* should definitely be the starting point. However, if we proceed in this manner, we immediately notice a deficiency in the aforementioned definition: it is somewhat restrictive to reduce the revolution (even if it is a sexual revolution) to “a fight against constraints,” etc. Rather, it could be said that it should be *a radical change in the relations between the sexes as well as in the relations between a person and their own sexuality and sexual role in society* (assuming that we are only talking about a sexual revolution and that it is possible). Proceeding from that, it is justified to ask the question whether what is called a “sexual revolution” is truly a sexual revolution. Have the changes that have taken place radically changed the attitude towards sexuality?

The liberalization of sexual behavior dates back to the sixties. [...] The amount of information is such that we can rightly speak of information inflation. At the same time, the quantity and lack of evaluation criteria leads to confusion and contradictions in which one gets lost. The everyday imposition of cliché behavior and ideal types constantly has a person measure themselves against them, feel inadequate, and, therefore, also insecure. Because information is not just information, a certain view of the world is served through them, which again directly reflects on changes in behavior, which altogether isn't the least bit benign. It could be said that there are some noticeable and general characteristics of the talk on sexuality in the means of mass communication:

19 *Nauka o spolnosti* [The Science of Sexuality] (Belgrade: Interpres, 1971), 445.

Defining sexuality as a separate field: every subject must be separated in a way so it can be discussed, but talk about sexuality goes to the extremes in this because it often fails to stick to any kind of referential framework, but is brutally “ripped” out of life. The press and specialized literature support the belief that sexuality is a special area, separated from the context of everyday life. [...]

Stemming from this is also the propaganda of the “sexual revolution” (precisely sexual, not any other) that actually, as a unique phenomenon, exists only in the press (means of mass communication) and through the press. As we will see later on, relevant research denies the “sexual revolution” in practice and brings to light the disproportion between the portrayed image and reality.

In this sense, the exploitation of sexuality is a suggestive indicator, especially of women’s sexuality, reducing a woman to her body or even to some parts of her body—it is clear that a woman depicted in this manner loses the status of a subject, of a personality with its own identity, and rather becomes a sexual object.

It is believed that one of the most important changes brought on by the sexual revolution is the (sexual) liberation of women. In connection with this, we are interested to learn about the relationship between the evident exploitation of women’s sexuality and women’s liberation. At the very first glance, it is already noticeable that a certain disproportion has no place here if the “sexual revolution” truly functions. On the one hand, the status of women has changed, and it is different from that in a traditional, patriarchal culture, primarily owing to the fact that she is included in the production process. A woman becomes increasingly economically independent, which is an important prerequisite to a whole series of other changes. On the other hand, she continues to be a sexual object. How do we explain this?

The sexual revolution of the sixties was a response to long-term social changes that were reflected on the structure of family and a woman’s role in it. [...] But since marriage (in its original form as the right to property) had been created so that the father could be sure of his paternity of the child, now that paternity is no longer so important, marriage (as traditionally defined) is no longer so necessary, and women can be “allowed” sexual “freedom.”²⁰

In other words, the question is what changed with the “sexual revolution,” to what extent, and, especially, what did women really gain?

It is one thing to proclaim revolutionary changes, and another to proclaim their accomplishment. Changes that undoubtedly happened could be called the liberalization of behavior, or even reform, rather than a revolution and that reform of customs, sexual behavior, ethics, language, fashion, and values—in other words, what we usually refer to as culture—because, in spite of the platitudes in the press,

20 Shere Hite, *The Hite Report* (New York: Dell, 1976), 448. Editor’s note: A more common reference is Shere Hite, *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study on Female Sexuality* (New York: Macmillan, 1976).

a radical change (that is, a revolution) never took place (nor can a sexual revolution happen with all other spheres of life remaining intact). This is well proven by a comprehensive study of female sexuality, known as *The Hite Report* (1976), conducted by the sociologist Shere Hite on a sample of 3000 American women between the ages of 14 and 78. In the preface to her study, Shere Hite says that:

Women have never been asked how they felt about sex. Researchers, looking for statistical “norms,” have asked all the wrong questions for all the wrong reasons—and all too often have wound up telling women how they *should* feel rather than asking them how they do feel. [...] Sex, as we define it, is part of the whole cultural picture; a woman’s place in sex mirrors her place in the rest of society.²¹

The study covered all the important issues of female sexuality: masturbation, orgasm, sexual intercourse, clitoral stimulation, lesbianism, sexual slavery, the sexual revolution, the sexuality of older women, and new female sexuality. The results and data obtained in this way form the basis for a completely new theory of female sexuality (thus also for the redefining of male sexuality). The results of the study confirm several important facts:

In their sexual behavior, human beings are not ruled by “biology” and “hormones,” (which is very important because the starting point of all sexologists are the different effects of male and female hormones in the body, which is where the theory of “male” and “female” nature is derived from). [...]

Female sexuality is not just a response to male sexuality, it has its own characteristics.

The relationship between female sexuality and reproduction: in Western culture, reproduction is the main goal of sexual intercourse. The position of men, and respectively, women, is precisely in line with this: in order for insemination to occur, a man needs to have an orgasm, but a woman doesn’t. This is the reason why this aspect of female sexuality and sexuality in general was particularly suppressed. Even today’s generations still live under the shadow of Judeo-Christian codes, and pleasure is not on an equal footing with reproduction. This is why a fact to which S. Hite arrived is very interesting, one that testifies to and proves that the first characteristic of sexuality is *pleasure*, not *reproduction*, and that the opposite belief is merely a cultural pattern and nothing more. Namely, it has been proven that women are more inclined to have sexual intercourse when they are not fertile: “It is interesting to notice that women are generally more interested in sex during times of the month when they are not fertile. This agrees with findings of other sex researchers. Kinsey found that approximately 90% of his sample preferred sex

21 Hite, *The Hite Report*, 11.

during the pre-menstrual phase, and Masters and Johnson have shown that women produce more lubrication at this time.”²²

When it comes to research on the “sexual revolution,” S. Hite concludes,

[...] what we think of as “sexual freedom”—giving women the “right” to have sex without marriage, and decreasing the emphasis on monogamy—is a function of the decreased importance of childbearing to society, and of paternity to men. Although this change has been labelled “sexual freedom,” in fact it has not so far allowed much real freedom for women (or men) to explore their own sexuality. [...] Finally, it is important to remember that *you cannot decree women to be “sexually free” if they are not economically free*; to do so is to put them into a more vulnerable position than ever, and make them into a form of easily available common property.²³

It is true that new possibilities have opened up to women, but it is also a fact that these have not been fully achieved. On average, women are still educated to a lesser extent, they have jobs paying lower wages, and work at lower positions, they still bear unwanted children and, in spite of socially recognized equality, their position in the family changes very slowly. As long as this is how things stand, women are in a position to fight.

However, let’s go back a little. We were interested in how the growing exploitation of female sexuality is possible in the era of the “sexual revolution” and women’s struggle for equality. The exploitation of female sexuality is in accordance with the actual position of women. It confirms the constant rule of dual morality and the real coordinates in which most women live: mother and housewife on the one side, whore and entertainer on the other. This is an indicator of possible changes and a testimony to the *mass media character of the “sexual revolution.”* Both women and men remained weighed down by their traditional roles.

Still, it cannot be said that nothing happened. A woman did not get freedom (and anyway, freedom is not something that can be given), that is, the possibility to behave freely in line with the characteristics of her own sexuality. She just won freedom from the traditional behavior of women in a patriarchal society—but on one condition: that she uses it as a man, according to male patterns and rules of the game. To be prepared to make love at any time, with anyone, no strings attached—this is the ultimate implication of such behavior. Earlier, her sexual role enabled her to say no—now it obliges her (confirmed by research) to say yes. By accepting the male model of sexual behavior—which is what the results of the “sexual revolution” boil down to—women get nothing, because in relations established in this

22 Hite, *The Hite Report*, 629. Editor’s note: Arthur Kinsey (1884–1956), William H. Masters (1915–2001), and Virginia E. Johnson (1925–2013) were American sexologists, the latter two working as a team. They pioneered contemporary knowledge about human and—importantly—women’s sexuality.

23 Hite, *The Hite Report*, 449.

manner, no new value is created, quantity does not give new quality, people are even more distanced from one another, and the specific features of female sexuality are still suppressed. A woman loses her traditional position while still failing to realize herself in a new one, which is why she is yet to engage in a struggle to express her own sexuality in all areas (which she has been entitled to for a very long time). Admittedly, women have been able to achieve this quite well through literary creativity. Accepting the male model of behavior means limiting oneself, only in a different way. This way sex is reduced to a consumer good. Namely, it seems that this whole thing is moving in the direction of the instrumentalization of sexuality. At the same time, as the need for authentic relationships still exists, the myth of romantic love is revived, especially in dime novels and second-rate films, with gutter press also keeping pace. Precisely this revival of romantic love on the one hand, and exploitation of sexuality on the other, testify to the failure and pseudo-revolutionary nature of the "sexual revolution" and to the absurd situation in which people are forced to live on a daily basis. The forced division into spirit and body, passion and emotions, love and sex and morality that justifies this whole insane situation—this is the image of the world, and sexual behavior is just one part of it.

[...]

Sexuality is an incredibly important component of life. Most people find no pleasure or personal fulfilment of their abilities in their day-to-day work, and it is a well-known truth that they see work as nothing but an extremely tiring routine, a way to make money in order to spend money and nothing more. In this situation, it is logical for personal life to become the only domain in which a person tries to find personal fulfilment and so, this way, our personal and public life are in opposition. Sex is increasingly becoming a "universal panacea" (as a survey respondent put it) for all kinds of illnesses, from headaches to economic depression and tense political situations. It is also clear that a growing number of people resort to such a withdrawal. Thus, all the literature that glorifies and encourages efforts to "introduce order" into one's sex life would also introduce order into all other spheres of life. This, however, has consequences, and, as mentioned previously, all different kinds of consequences. First of all, sex is instrumentalized, used, and employed solely in order to satisfy personal lust without achieving any true connection between partners. In addition, focusing solely on personal problems of this kind (into which a person retreats due to the feeling of powerlessness on a broader scale) leads to passivity, to complicity with the status quo. And so we arrive at another aspect of the proclaimed "sexual revolution" that we could, in this context, colorfully call a "revolution on the reins." If any partial revolution were truly possible, then the sexual revolution would definitely be the ideal of such a revolution. Because it is, essentially, a manipulation. It is necessary and useful to

create at least a semblance of a revolution with very little change, and especially of a sexual revolution that does not aim for broader social change. If there isn't one, it should be invented. A case of having the cake and eating it too. Because the reins on one such "revolution" could prevent some more dangerous and radical changes in society. When understood in this way, a sexual revolution would be devoid of deeper meaning and, what is especially important, it would be politically harmless.

As it is, not only is the proclaimed "sexual revolution" not a revolution, but it is simply an attempt at a game of hide and seek between the system and the individual. Nothing important has changed, yet there was much ado.

Translated by Jelena Babšek Labudović

Radu Dumitriu

Sexology and Sexual Education

AUTHOR Radu Dumitriu

TITLE *De vorbă cu tinerii: probleme de educație a sexelor* [Dialogue with the Youth: Problems of Sexual Education]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Excerpts translated from the chapter “Viața sexuală” [Sexual Life], from the edition *De vorbă cu tinerii: probleme de educație a sexelor* (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1968), 133–39. Revised edition: Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1972.

LANGUAGE Romanian

CONTEXT

Sexology in socialist Romania was a dynamic, fascinating, and ideologically complicated field of research and popular education. However, sexology had an ambivalent effect on the understanding of women’s sexuality by promoting some degree of sexual “liberation” without access to contraceptive methods or the possibility of abortion. Sexology was not just an imitation of regional scholarship, nor a simple reproduction of Western European and North American advancements in the field. The re-emergence of Romanian sexology, starting in the 1960s, was the result of a complex web of factors. This included a favorable political international context that helped alleviate national-totalitarian, pronatalist, and profamily orientations, the presence of similar trends in other state-socialist countries in Eastern Europe, and the development of modern sexology in the West.

Romanian sexology brought together interwar national expertise with the activity of formal networks of scientists (working within different scientific institutions), but also informal ones (created based on political and intellectual affinities). These networks managed to preserve and promote Western disciplines despite the ban on their political and ideological backgrounds. Sexology and sexuality were quite fashionable subjects among Romanian endocrinologists, involved in the interwar period in research on human hormones and how they influence sexual motivation, but also among urban, middle-class Romanians who could enjoy press articles and educational brochures on the subject. The price was complicity with the regime’s priorities as these transformed over time. Postwar Romanian scholarship in the field of sexology was the result of the scientific interests of Ștefan Milcu (1903–1997)—a long-time party protégé and respected member of the international scientific community—and of his inner circle, which included remarkable scientists such as Victor Săhleanu (1924–1997) and Tudor Stoica. The political fall of the major contributors

had as its side-effect the discipline's decline in the 1980s, although a formal ban was never imposed by the communist authorities. Milcu and Săhleanu lost their positions within the Romanian Academy, but also their social status. Milcu retired, but Săhleanu was excluded from scientific life, his works were withdrawn from libraries, and his name could no longer appear in books or publications.¹

Presenting the public in socialist Romania with information about sexual and reproductive functions, and sometimes even elaborate descriptions of sexual techniques, was never meant to enhance personal sexual satisfaction, or to spark any form of sexual revolution. The Romanian production of sex-educational manuals and of sexology works was part of a state policy towards a better, stable family life, aiming for collective and social happiness. Rather than showing the superiority of the socialist system in terms of egalitarian policies for women (including in the sexual sphere), socialist Romania insisted on the dominance of socialist society in terms of the quality of life of its citizens, protected from all forms of so-called Western degeneracy.

Among the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, the Romanian case was no different in terms of acquiring women's emancipation through economic independence and the rise of a socialist sexual morality. During the first decade after coming to power, the communist regime introduced policies to open all fields of activity to women, while promoting them in traditional masculine positions, including politics. But the Romanian communist regime did not see gender equality as an ongoing, gradual process. From the state's point of view, once the legal framework granting equal rights for all the citizens was in place, the effects were guaranteed. Therefore, all subsequent policies concerning sexual life under state socialism were tailored on the assumption that within the couple, the relationship between a man and a woman was guided only by "authentic love, true friendship, mutual understanding."²

In the postwar turmoil, the communist government, still in its consolidating phase, had good reason to support the traditional, patriarchal family model. Rapid industrialization and urbanization processes involved significant population migration, not only between countryside and cities, but also between Romania's different regions. The government feared that the displaced, mostly young population, once liberated from the scrutiny of their community, would enter a promiscuous life, with all the expected consequences: venereal diseases, unplanned pregnancies, prostitution. Therefore, marriage was the perfect solution to (re)establish and enhance control over an important population segment.

Communist propaganda on the sanctity of family as "the true nucleus of society" increased after the adoption of a fierce pronatalist policy. Decree 770 of 1966 severely limited access to abortion for women under forty-five, and for those with fewer than

1 Jinga, "Science and Politics during the Cold War," 95.

2 Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare*, 297.

four children, reversing an earlier law permitting abortion on request.³ At the same time, also by decree, divorce became the exceptional solution for dissolving a marriage. The communist regime sweetened the pill by slightly increasing family allowances, building new nurseries, and, last but not least, providing professional help for a happy, fulfilled sexual life. Therefore, in the sexology discourse in postwar Romania, sex was limited to married life.

The Romanian public started to read publications containing elements of sexology in the second half of the 1960s, when the first postwar educational manuals were published.⁴ Authored by medical practitioners, most of them endocrinologists and men, the clear purpose of the manuals was to educate the population on how to understand and deal with the sexual component of their married lives. These works were usually a mix of important information on the human reproductive system, anatomy, conception, and pregnancy, with official propaganda on the role and place of the family inside the socialist system. According to this, spouses owed each other mutual love, respect, and support, and shared the moral duty to raise a family, as “children are the true richness of a married couple.” Usually, the last chapters included practical advice regarding best sexual positions; an analysis of the existing contraceptive methods and their hazards, with the clear intention of dissuading potential users; and discussion of the risks of illegal abortions and venereal diseases.⁵ If some authors included the idea of the new, egalitarian status of women in socialism, the general advice leaned toward the patriarchal family model, in which women remained the main caregivers.

After this first step in the 1960s, sexology as medical specialization made its official comeback in 1970 when the endocrinologist Tudor Stoica published *Sexologie normală și patologică* (Normal and Pathological Sexology), and soon after, in 1972, *Sexologie* (Sexology). In 1972, two other doctors, Victor Săhleanu and Ion Macavei, published their work on sexology under the title *Vita sexualis*. All three publications were authored by professionals at the peak of their research careers in endocrinology. A closer look into their medical publications reveals a postwar interest in research on sexual hormones.⁶ They were also part of a larger group of scientists working at the Institute of Endocrinology, who authored the first sexual education manuals. Both

3 On-demand pregnancy terminations remained possible for health reasons, but also if the pregnancy was the result of a sexual aggression (rape, incest). See Dobos, Jinga, Soare, *Politica demografică a regimului Ceaușescu*.

4 Jinga, “Science et politique pendant la guerre froide,” 88.

5 Dumitriu, *De vorbă cu tinerii*, 146.

6 Victor Săhleanu, Madeleine Maicanescu, and Bogdan Ionescu, *Probleme de sexologie masculină* [Problems of Male Sexology] (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1958); Victor Săhleanu and Madeleine Maicanescu, *Introducere în sexologia masculină* [Introduction to Male Sexology] (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1966); Tudor Stoica and Ștefan Milcu, *Mecanismele neuroendocrine ale comportamentului sexual. Rolul sistemului nervos în comportamentul sexual* [The Neuroendocrine Mechanisms of Sexual Behavior: The Role of the Nervous System in Sexual Behavior] (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1966).

Săhleanu and Stoica had a close professional relationship with Milcu, the scientific leader of the group, who also had a strong interest in sexology.⁷

The adoption of a pronatalist policy in October 1966 gave Milcu the perfect opportunity to promote the work of his closest collaborators, putting forward the field of sexology as interdisciplinary research that included endocrinology, psychoanalysis, and genetics. As a member of the National Commission for Demography and the Supreme Sanitary Council—the two organs formally in charge of the direction of the pronatalist plan—Milcu had the opportunity to share his vision and apprehension regarding a demographic plan that showed no concerns for the “quality” of the children who were to be born. Milcu and his research team identified both genetic and social causes for child morbidity in Romania, and believed that teaching the population the fundamentals of sexology would lower the number of sick and disabled children. Milcu was convinced that sexology would eventually change the retrograde, patriarchal mentalities which he identified as the main threat to the nation’s health.

According to Stoica, sexology could offer necessary sexual education to all citizens, while “building and maintaining one’s morality.” This came in total opposition to capitalist countries, where “bourgeois theorists, long oppressed by the Church, jumped to the other extreme and started using pornography in order to explain sexual problems.” Sexology was seen as useful for married adults, because “having the appropriate knowledge on the physiology of sexual organs, sexual hygiene, normal and pathological sexual phenomena, helps the couple to maintain its health and harmony.”⁸

At the same time, sexology was also considered useful for adolescents, as a means of social control. It was supposed to provide the necessary information to ease the hormonal storm during puberty and subsequently any antisocial behavior. Although tributary to the medical specialty of the authors, in the Romanian communist context, sexology was defined as a “multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary field, a ‘synthetic’ specialty that goes beyond the framework of biology,”⁹ practiced by medical doctors who understood the particularities of the discipline and were ready to use, alongside their initial training in gynecology or urology, other disciplines such as endocrinology, genetics, psychology, or sociology.

The contents of sexology books usually covered human sexual hormones, possible causes for infertility, and possible causes for both masculine and feminine sexual dysfunction. The publications relied almost exclusively on Western scientific works. Their approach was similar to Western sexology, with an interdisciplinary method

7 Ștefan Milcu and Madeleine Maicanescu, *Andrologie clinică* [Clinical Andrology] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1970); Ștefan Milcu, Barbu Ionescu, and Constantin Maximilian, *Formele clinice de intersexualitate și clasificarea lor* [Clinical Forms of Intersexuality and Their Classification] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1971).

8 All quotes from Stoica, *Sexologie normală și patologică*, 12.

9 Săhleanu and Macavei, *Vita Sexualis*, 178.

that looked into physical, psychological, and environmental factors for infertility and sexual dysfunctions. Romanian sexologists maintained that in most cases of sexual dysfunction, the real cause of the suffering was of a psychological origin (forgotten events, dissimulated conflicts, reluctance, remorse, fear of consequences, obsessions, or even expression of non-heterosexual tendencies), or that psychological troubles aggravated urological or endocrine problems. Therefore, the treatment involved both Western medicine and alternative wellbeing solutions such as physiotherapy, reflexology, acupuncture, or homeopathy.

The excerpt included in this volume is typical of texts on sexual education published in the second half of the 1960s.¹⁰ Similarly to other authors of sexual education manuals, Radu Dumitriu was a medical doctor: he specialized in dermatology and venerology.¹¹ Based on the limited information available, in the 1950s he also served as director of the publishing house Editura Medicală, which specialized in medical textbooks and scholarship.¹² Following a sexual education manual dedicated to parents and educators published in 1964,¹³ which discussed reproduction in plants and animals, the anatomy and physiology of the human reproductive system, issues of morality, and information about sexually transmitted diseases, in 1968, Dumitriu also published a manual for youth, *De vorbă cu tinerii* (Dialogue with the Youth). In the 1960s, he was head of department at the Dermatology and Venerology Center of the Ministry of Health.¹⁴ By 1972, when the revised edition of *De vorbă cu tinerii* was published, according to the title page, he had become the center's director. The eight chapters in *De vorbă cu tinerii* covered similar ground as the previous manual from 1964, but also included chapters on puberty and adolescence, mental maturity, instinct and consciousness, relationships between sexes, and sexual life. The excerpt is part of the chapter "Viața sexuală" (Sexual Life), which covered the physiology of the sexual act.

According to Dumitriu and others, one key to happiness inside marriage was the woman's sexual satisfaction and the female orgasm. In its absence, family dynamics as well as the insensitive or inexperienced husband were to suffer. Sex education manuals asked young people to give up the prejudices according to which only the man should

10 For a detailed analysis of Dumitriu's *De vorbă cu tinerii* and Alecu-Ungureanu's *Viața sexuală și căsătoria*, see Biebuyck, "The Collectivisation of Pleasure."

11 Some of his other volumes: with Aurel Conu and M. Ivan, *Manual de boli dermato-venereice pentru școlile de asistente medicale* [Textbook of Dermato-Venereal Diseases for Nursing Schools] (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1960); with Tiberiu Roxin, *Tratamentul bolilor de piele* [The Treatment of Skin Diseases] (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1970); with Mioara Cârsteanu, *Biochimia pielii* [Skin Biochemistry] (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1976).

12 Radu Dimitriu, "5 ani de activitate în slujba ocrotirii sănătății poporului muncitor" [Five Years of Activity in the Service of the Health of the Working People], *Informația Bucureștiului* 7, no. 1889 (1959): 2.

13 Radu Dumitriu, *De vorbă cu părinții* [Dialogue with the Parents] (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1964).

14 Mioara Cârsteanu, "Exosmoza sodiului, potasiului și calciului din pielea umană în diferite stări patologice," *Studii și cercetări de biochimie* 9, no. 3 (1966): 268.

have the initiative in sexual relations, and invited them, as equal partners, to give pleasure to each other, having both the initiative and responsibility towards the satisfaction of the other. Thus, girls and young women were advised to be much more uninhibited in the bedroom, and to explore their own sexuality. Nevertheless, by focusing on the negative consequences of all methods of contraception, especially the pill, and emphasizing that abortion was a crime, the discourse of Dumitriu, among others, was also “clearly designed to reinforce pronatalist policies.”¹⁵

The Romanian public showed a vivid interest in both sex manuals and the publications on sexology. Each edition sold 100,000 copies within a couple of months. The sex manuals continued to circulate even after the fall of the communist regime.

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15 Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 124.

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Luciana Jinga

* * *

Radu Dumitriu

Dialogue with the Youth

In the previous chapters, the sexual act and one's sex life were approached in a very general manner. This was because of the need to first understand a series of elements—directly or indirectly—involved in its performance.

Unlike animals, for humans sexual intercourse is not just a physiological act. The psychological component involved in its performance turns it into a human act.

This component is made up of several elements, among which the most significant are affectivity and moral conceptions that mutually influence one another and are intertwined.

The more prominent the psychological component is, the less animalistic and the more human the sexual act becomes; it does in no way diminish the physical

component. On the contrary, it is only when the latter moves into the background that the two components, the physical and the psychological, more naturally complement and complete one another.

The fulfilled sexual act, therefore, stops being just physical pleasure. The involvement of affectivity, imagination, and fantasy increase fulfillment; they refine it, nuance it, and raise it to another level. Moreover, monotony disappears, with each sexual intercourse distinguishing itself from previous and subsequent ones.

From this perspective, shame is taken out of the sexual act.

Under these circumstances, there can only be one partner, there can only be monogamy. Monogamy also ensures that the children produced can be raised and educated, thus eliminating any possible antagonism between one's sex life and one's moral conceptions.

Without psychological involvement, sexual fulfillment is insignificant, even disappointing. What is more, the psychological component can sometimes have a negative impact, triggering inhibitions and thus creating a psychological barrier that can lead in some cases to genuine impotence (in men) or frigidity (in women) caused by psychological factors.

In the absence of the psychological component, the sexual act is always the same. With monotony come boredom and the search for new pleasures. This in turn leads to changing partners. Many sick persons, afflicted by venereal diseases precisely due to sexual intercourse with multiple partners, admitted to having changed partners because of too little or no fulfillment. Some, luckily very few, in their search for unusual pleasures, end up doing sexual perversions or using intoxicants. But this is a door to hell that one should not open even a little.

The extent to which the two components influence the performance of the sexual act differs from one sex to the other. Thus, the role and significance of the psychological component is downplayed in men compared to women. Even if the psychological component is much reduced or even altogether absent, men can maintain an erection and ejaculate, as well as experience some degree of pleasure. In the case of women, however, the psychological component is in the foreground; without it, fulfillment is basically non-existent. More than that, this component has a high inhibitory potential that can be activated by a variety of factors, especially rough words or gestures. Once it sets in, the inhibition can be temporary or even permanent. In any case, it is much more difficult to eliminate it than to prevent it. It all depends on the behavior of the man she loves. Tact and patience are necessary here more than ever; one word, one gesture can ruin everything that had been previously achieved.

The woman's lack of fulfillment, which leads to her participation in the sexual act being entirely passive, means insufficient fulfillment for the partner. And this

creates a vicious circle, as the man's psychological component is also annihilated. This is the shortest way to boredom and, later, to aversion. The spouses no longer love each other, they just put up with each other. They are no longer bound by love but by shared duties, or the tie is dissolved altogether.

Medical statistics in numerous countries show that this occurs quite frequently. Given its negative influence on marriage solidity, next we will provide a few facts related to the physiology and, in other words, the technique of the sexual act, given that the aforementioned situation is often the result of a lack of knowledge about such things.

[...] When arousal occurs, the woman's erectile organs become turgescient, causing the vaginal opening to slightly increase in size and the clitoris to become engorged and come down, facilitating better contact with the penis.

At the same time, the glands situated around the vaginal opening produce a mucus secretion that makes it easier for the penis to penetrate the vagina.

Women feel pleasure from having their clitoris touched and the vaginal opening and walls, and, according to some, even the cervix rubbed. So there is not only one area; and for some women some areas can be more erogenous than others. These differences are not anatomical in nature, as they arise from previous sexual experience; that is, they are acquired during one's sex life. As we could see, female pleasure is more diverse and more subtle than male pleasure.

Another major difference between men and women is that, in women, the intensity of sexual arousal and sensations grows slower and, once it has reached a peak, it comes down slowly until it reaches the previous state.

Women do not ejaculate. At peak arousal and pleasure, a series of segmental and possibly alternate contractions of the vagina and even the uterus (orgasm) can occur.

We have dwelled on these physiological differences because they have a series of consequences. Men should take into account these physiological aspects specific to women in order to achieve the synchronization of the woman's orgasm with the man's ejaculation. The synchronization is dependent on the woman having attained a particular degree of arousal. If so, the woman feels the man ejaculate, and this triggers her orgasm. If the woman reaches peak arousal earlier, her orgasm will occur before the man's ejaculation and keep occurring until the man ejaculates, her orgasm reaching peak intensity at that moment. This is the optimal situation for both partners.

Finally, should the man ejaculate too early, before his partner has had a chance to reach the required level of arousal, she will not orgasm at all. This will leave her unfulfilled and, should this happen again, the finely tuned physiological mechanism will break, leading to the formation of inhibitory mechanisms, to frigidity.

This is a disaster for any marriage, even if sexual relations are not of the first importance. One day the husband is bound to discover that there are other women out there. As for the woman, in most cases she will become resigned. But she will continue to passively “put up” with her husband, or else develop a feeling of revulsion. In some cases, she can find out that she is normal, but with another man. In yet other cases, fortunately not many, this can lead to frequent change of partners, as she seeks something that none of them can offer. This is due to the woman remaining in a permanent state of sexual arousal.

More often than not the lack of synchronization is determined by a set of circumstances that boil down to a lack of knowledge about the physiology of the sexual act; misconceived shame, which makes many women unable to relax sufficiently, to discuss it openly with the husband, or to make an appointment with a doctor; and, quite often unfortunately, to the husband’s selfishness that makes him oblivious to the wife’s need for fulfillment and how her fulfillment depends, to a large extent, on him. He is often content to acknowledge the discrepancy and seek a new partner, without ever thinking that he might bear the main responsibility for the situation.

Knowledge of the physiological aspects described above makes it possible to discuss the means to obtain synchronization and therefore maximum fulfillment for both partners.

It should be kept in mind from the beginning that these methods are not and should not be an end; they must remain a means. On the other hand, these are but a few tips, for love cannot be learnt from books, only from experience.

Finally, this initiation of intercourse should not end up becoming a pattern, a schedule. Enough room must be left for spontaneity and fantasy, bearing in mind the general data while adapting to each individual situation.

Translated by Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

Erzsébet Galgóczi

“I Am the First Woman Writer of Peasant Origin in Hungary”

AUTHOR Erzsébet Galgóczi

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED The source texts are from two different sources: “A törvényt teremteni kell. Beszélgetés Galgóczi Erzsébettel” [The Law Must Be Made: Conversation with Erzsébet Galgóczi], interview by Anna Földes, *Kritika* 10, no. 4 (1981): 25–27; and Erzsébet Galgóczi, “Magyarországon én vagyok az első paraszt származású nőíró...” [I Am the First Woman Writer of Peasant Origin in Hungary], typescript, 1975, Petőfi Literary Museum, Budapest, Manuscript Collection.

LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erzsébet Galgóczi (1930, Ménfő–1989, Ménfőcsanak) was born into a peasant family with eight children in the village of Ménfőcsanak in western Hungary. After graduating from the Győr State Girls’ High School, she enrolled at the Faculty of Arts in Budapest because her parents did not allow her to attend the Academy of Drama and Film. She left university after six weeks and worked as an iron turner for a year, writing in her spare time. In 1950, she sent a story to the art competition called “Liberation,” held by the People’s Alliance of Hungarian Youth, and won the first prize. She then enrolled at the Academy of Drama and Film, majoring in scriptwriting and dramaturgy. After her graduation, from 1955 she worked for the newspaper *Művelt Nép* (Educated People) for two years, then after the newspaper ceased to exist, she was a dramaturg at the Budapest Film Studio. From 1959, she worked as a freelance writer.

Her first volume, *Egy kosár hazai* (A Basket of Home Goods, 1953) shows her enthusiasm for communism and contains socialist realist short stories. This was followed by an existential, personal, and creative crisis: she was accepted into the Communist Party only after several applications, her book plans were rejected, and she was shocked to discover her lesbian sexuality, which she did not consider compatible with the party’s principles nor her own ideals at that time. From the second half of the 1950s, her critical attitude towards the system strengthened, and instead of the official party ideology, she moved towards real community empowerment in her writings. In the beginning, she mostly found her role models in folk writers, but realism being always stronger in her own works, she never propagated national mythology or showed an aversion to the city.

From the beginning of the 1960s, she published reportages, novels, and short stories, partly with sociographic, later increasingly autobiographical motifs. The main topics of her reportages are the negative social effects of the forced collectivization of

agriculture and the conflicts in the processes of modernizing peasant society.¹ The heroes of her autobiographically motivated prose are “young women intellectuals who drifted to the periphery of society, left alone in the big city, whose lives slipped aside during the Rákosi era or after the [1956] revolution. They are unemployed, they only consume coffee, unfiltered Munkás [cigarettes] and cheap cognac.”²

She became a popular writer among readers and was recognized by the regime too, despite the fact that in her journalist work as well as her realist prose she strongly criticized certain phenomena of the socialist system. Along with her critical attitude, however, she basically remained loyal to the consolidating regime of János Kádár (1912–1989), the party General Secretary between 1956–1988. She received the Attila József Prize, one of the main literary awards in Hungary, in 1962, 1969, and 1976. In 1978, she was awarded the even more prestigious Kossuth Prize. From the beginning of the 1970s, she was also involved in film and TV production. Between 1980 and 1985, Galgóczi was a member of parliament. In 1987, she served as president of the Hungarian Writers' Union.

The theme of love between women appeared already in her early short stories. The teenage love of two girls appears in her story “A hamis tanú” (The False Witness) in 1969,³ and the subject can also be found in her other writings. Her autobiographically inspired novelette *Törvényen belül* (Within the Law, 1980; published in English under the title *Another Love*, 1991), a critical realist work, shows the situation of intertwined political and sexual dissidence, and is the first of its time to depict lesbian love. The novel describes the struggles of a talented and brave journalist with the system's hypocrisy, and her love that ended in tragedy, embedded in the Hungarian political reality of the late 1950s. The book touches on all the sensitive topics of the era: the 1956 revolution, defection, suicide, censorship, corruption, the information and surveillance systems, moral policing, and non-heterosexuality. In 1982, Károly Makk directed a film based on the novel, titled *Egymásra nézve / Another Way*,⁴ which won the Prize of the International Film Critics (FIPRESCI Prize) at the Cannes Festival. The lead roles were played by two Polish actresses (dubbed into Hungarian), Grażyna Szapolowska and Jadwiga Jankowska-Cieślak, the latter winning the Cannes Festival Award for best actress.

Her stirring political documentary novel *Vidravas* (Otter Ice, 1984) deals with the 1949 MAORT (Hungarian–American Oil Joint-Stock Company) sabotage trial, in which the leading geologist of Hungarian oil exploration was imprisoned on

1 About industrialization and modernization in post–Second World War Hungary, see Lampland, *The Object of Labor*; and Pittaway, *The Workers' State*.

2 Szolláth, “Galgóczi Erzsébet szerepdilemmái,” 182.

3 The short story was published in her volume *Inkább fájjon* [It Should Rather Hurt] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1969).

4 *Egymásra nézve / Another Way*, dir. Károly Makk, Mafilm Dialog Filmstudio and Meridian Films, 103 min, 1982. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083872/>.

trumped-up charges, but still managed the work from prison. Some parts of the book were censored, and after publication, one of the characters in the novel under his real name sued Galgóczi, but the case was settled.

From 1976 until the death of her partner, Galgóczi lived with the openly lesbian actress Hilda Gobbi (1913–1988).

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Ott is csak hó van* [There Is Only Snow There] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1961); *Nádtetős szocializmus* [Thatched Socialism] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1970); *Kinek a törvénye?* [Whose Law?] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1971); *Pókháló* [Cobweb] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1972); *A közös bűn* [The Common Sin] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1976); *Közel a kés* [The Knife Is Near] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1978); *Törvényen kívül és belül* [Outside and Within the Law] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1980), in English: *Another Love*, translated by Ines Rieder and Felice Newman (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, c1991), reprinted in 2007; *Vidravas* [Otter Ice] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1984) · FILMOGRAPHY · (Galgóczi as writer; selection): *Közös bűn* [The Common Sin], dir. Imre Mihályfi, 1978; *Egymásra nézve / Another Way*, dir. Károly Makk, 1982; *Szent Kristóf kápolnája* [The Chapel of St Christopher], dir. László Nemere, 1983.

Anna Borgos

CONTEXT

Erzsébet Galgóczi faced a series of dilemmas and shifts during her life course, in terms of class, way of life, political affiliations, and writer's roles: the struggles and overlaps between being a peasant, worker, intellectual, and artist, between village and city, family and lesbianity, committed communism and dissidence, community speech and personal voice left a mark on her works. As Dávid Szolláth argued, "During her youth, the role dilemma can be captured in the situations of decision between the conflicting requirements of working-class writer and popular writer, and later on in the incompatibility of the roles of the socially active writer representing the people and the socially unacceptable [...] lesbian intellectual."⁵

In Galgóczi's relationship with herself, above all with her lesbianity, the political slogans of the 1950s—"self-criticism," "vigilance," and the "internal enemy"—echo: "There is my newest enemy: my organization," she wrote in one of her desperate letters to a friend in 1953. She assigned non-heterosexuality a class meaning, classifying it as a "bourgeois, decadent" disease; her internalized homophobia, self-pathologizing, and self-hatred are articulated in a political language: "Our society does not need decadent artists! But beyond all narrow literary aspects—I myself hate this disease, so much so that if this tendency (or what) was a part of my body, I would have it operated on." Galgóczi fell into a serious crisis, attempting suicide three times by the

5 Szolláth, "Galgóczi Erzsébet szerepdilemmái," 163–64.

age of 29. The director of the Academy of Drama and Film referred her to a psychiatrist in the hope she would “recover” from lesbianity.

In the 1960s, Galgóczi gradually turned from “self-criticism” to critical realism, and from keeping a “decadent” secret to the thematization of (sexual) taboos. Her autobiographical works were labeled “existentialist” and “pessimistic” by most contemporary critics. For Galgóczi, personal stories and dramas were always embedded in their social environment. As Péter Nádas remarked:

Galgóczi wanted to talk about nothing else, only and exclusively about herself, about her own innermost sufferings, while her obsession was that she had to testify about the entire era, her class, and what’s more, Hungarian reality. [...] She is really the only Hungarian writer who, without any ideological bias, gave an account of what the petty-bourgeois, one-sided, and lying modernization of the Kádár regime, wandering between the village and the city, actually accomplished. It is probably no coincidence that it was a woman who revealed the authentic stories of millions of people to us.⁶

The first source text by Galgóczi is an excerpt from an interview conducted by Anna Földes (1930–2017)⁷ and published in the cultural weekly *Kritika* in 1981. The second text is the manuscript of a 1975 lecture from the Petőfi Literary Museum’s manuscript collection, which Galgóczi wrote for an international women’s congress organized in Italy (about which we have very little information otherwise). She did not make it to the congress in the end (according to her own statement, due to financial reasons), but wrote her speech.

In these two documents, and also in other interviews, Galgóczi emphasized that there were no separate women’s issues, in her view; she interpreted the situation of women as part of broader social inequalities, in connection with them—that is, in a kind of intersectional framework. (“Women’s equality can only be set as an attainable goal where social inequalities have already been eradicated,” she writes in the lecture.) Her attitude is relevant, but at the same time its evasiveness is characteristic for the more general attitude towards women’s issues and feminism coming from the “West” at the time: “I’m not interested in feminist movements; I’m interested in people and society. There are no separate women’s issues.”⁸ It is as if she considered the sit-

6 Nádas, “Galgóczi brutális hazája,” 128, 131.

7 Anna Földes (1930–2017) was a literary scholar and journalist. Among other jobs, she was the cultural editor of the main women’s magazine in Hungary, *Nők Lapja* (Women’s Journal) between 1957 and 1993, author of multiple monographs in literary history, as well as volumes of interviews. From 1990, she was member of the Committee of Theater, Film, and Dance at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; from 1993 she was a college professor in journalism. Throughout her career, she was invested in women’s lives and women’s history.

8 Bertha, “Beszélgetés Galgóczi Erzsébettel,” 86.

uation of women to be too particular or irrelevant in itself, a topic that only had the right to exist if it was included among broader, "universal" issues.

In her self-definition as a writer, Galgóczi emphasized her double bond: her peasant origin and her femininity. She acknowledged the historically disadvantaged position of women, but she believed that in the present day, only traces of it remained. At the same time, she reflected on her role as a "token" woman, and on the fact that through her, the cultural leadership also wanted to illustrate the equal status of women writers. As she formulated it in a radio interview with István Antal:

I am the first female writer of peasant origin in Hungary. [...] This double commitment [...] determines my whole life, but it is perhaps obvious that one writes primarily about what one knows. [...] In Hungarian society, not only the lower social classes, but also women were quite oppressed until the last decades. [...] Those women who had the financial means were not supposed to engage in intellectual work, and those from poor origins could hardly push themselves to the point where they could become writers. [...] If someone can overcome this centuries-old disadvantage, there is no obstacle to reaching the highest position in any intellectual field. [...] In my own field, I have never experienced any disadvantages related to the fact that [...] I am a woman. [...] This may have happened because our top cultural political leadership really stands up for the principle that women have every opportunity.⁹

In addition to women's equal opportunities and participation in work and decision-making, she also called for the social and socio-political recognition of motherhood—her experiences with her own mother played a role in this. As she wrote in the source text, before the introduction of farmers' cooperatives, there was a "matriarchy" in the village, with the woman taking on the role of managing the whole family. On the issue of the changing role of women, Galgóczi considered maternal presence a priority: "I think that women who give birth to children and take on the role of mother in the family are just as full-fledged workers as those who go to type. From a child's point of view, there is nothing as important as a mother's love."¹⁰

In her novelette *Törvényen belül* (Within the Law), she turns the theme of lesbianity into a tragic story, inscribing her own conflicting views on the topic into the different voices of her characters/alter-egos. Galgóczi saw this as a worthy literary subject, and as illustrated in the interview published here, she sensed that as the taboo surrounding non-heterosexuality was lifted, more and more writers would take up the subject. *Törvényen belül* is a multi-layered representation: through its characters, it also reveals

⁹ Antal, Radio interview with Erzsébet Galgóczi.

¹⁰ Bertha, "Beszélgetés Galgóczi Erzsébettel," 85.

the contemporary image of homosexuality in psychiatry and society.¹¹ The novel places lesbianity into the matrix of other social constraints and forms of marginalization, and the strategies of coping with them. Accordingly, by being a lesbian, the main character Éva Szalánczky can paradoxically feel like a victim of outside forces, a “tragic hero” who can thus maintain her self-respect—and she finally “fulfills this tragedy” by being killed by the border police whilst trying to illegally leave the country. In the surprisingly nuanced psychological interpretation of Major Blindics (one of the author’s mouthpieces in the novel), who nevertheless considers lesbianism a “symptom,” Szalánczky’s attraction to women is in fact part of her social and ideological protest.

To honor Erzsébet Galgóczi’s legacy, in 1991 a memorial room was set up in the Bezerédj Castle in Ménfőcsanak (today part of the city of Győr), where, in addition to her works, awards, and personal objects, the study from her apartment in Budapest was reconstructed. The memorial room censors the aspects of Galgóczi’s biography related to lesbianity. Although, according to Galgóczi, the local environment was accepting of “deviances,” presumably the family and the village cannot and do not want to include this part of her life in her public biography.

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11 For the situation of lesbians in the Kádár era, see Borgos, “Secret Years.” For the state socialist history and legal status of (mostly male) homosexuality, see Takács, “Disciplining Gender and (Homo)Sexuality in State Socialist Hungary in the 1970s”; Takács and Tóth, “Liberating Pathologization?”

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Anna Borgos

* * *

The Law Must Be Made

Interview with Erzsébet Galgóczi by Anna Földes

[...]

How did this comeback and literary turn happen? Your second volume¹² has a different tone, a different atmosphere—it is a different Galgóczi...

By the mid-fifties, my own personal expectations had been developed and nurtured, it's just that I couldn't put them down on paper. To restart, to liberate myself, I needed the historical experience which the 1956 Revolution meant to our generation; this experience that Hungarian history try and clarify itself. But I also needed to acquire those particular life experiences which are fundamental for writing prose. When I started again, I tried different things, and suddenly—this was unexpected even for myself—I realized that I could write. I even remember the date: March 8, 1958. That night, I was sitting at my desk, in an unheated room, in an unfurnished flat, wearing a coat, and working on the long version of an untitled short story. Just as I was about to ask the old peasant "What's happening over there?" the answer suddenly appeared on the page: "There's just snow there too."¹³ And then I was overjoyed. I felt that it was really me. Then I immediately wrote

12 Editor's note: Here, the interviewer probably refers to the novella *Félúton* [Halfway] from 1962.

13 Editor's note: The reference is to Galgóczi's volume of short stories from 1958: *Ott is csak hó van* [There Is Only Snow There] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1961).

this sentence at the beginning of the short story and a working fever came over me. I wrote five short stories in two weeks.

In an interview, you said that you became a peasant writer out of necessity and lacking other personal experiences. In principle, it is possible that the choice of heroes and themes in your new works is related to the fact that this compulsion has passed. But I think you have always been more of a first-generation intellectual writer, and that hasn't changed.

If you look through my volumes, and from the beginning, even in *A Basket of Home Goods*,¹⁴ I've been writing about that peasant girl in town. The change in lifestyle is that of my own experience, which I lived through with my siblings and with the villagers from the village. There were talented young peasants before me who were able to excel. I have an uncle who became a priest. But mass excellence—that's only typical of our time. At the same time, when I went on to study, from our village only thirty young people studied in the city.

For our generation, the change in lifestyle was a very real problem. So much so that many didn't even survive: they collapsed, turned back. The other day I came across the *Anthology of Young Writers* published in 1951. Of the fifty-two names it contained, only three of us remain on the surface of literary life: Margit Szécsi, Imre Takács, and myself. Perhaps this also says something about the transition, about the difficulties of survival.

The hero of *Within the Law*, the journalist Éva Szalánczky, is also from this generation. But in the end, she did not make it all the way. Her tragic end—shot by a border guard while defecting—is a form of suicide. Was her death necessary?

Yes, I think so. Éva Szalánczky was the kind of unyielding, uncompromising person that István Szabó was—the only other person I knew like that during the Rákosi era.¹⁵ His fate also ended in tragedy. Those who didn't bow, broke.
[...]

The hero of *Within the Law*, as you write, is “a heretic in creation.” You break another taboo by depicting homosexuality.

14 Editor's note: *Egy kosár hazai* [A Basket of Home Goods] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó, 1953) was Galgóczi's first volume of short stories.

15 Editor's note: Galgóczi refers to the writer István Szabó (1931–1976) here. Szabó was a writer of peasant origin too, who documented the transformations of rural Hungary after 1945 in his prose.

A long time ago, in my short story "False Witness," I had already mentioned the love of a teenage girl. But I've been avoiding it for twenty years now and haven't managed to write it. I wrote about it in about four hundred pages, but it didn't feel real. Now I've started again.

Weren't you afraid of social prudery?

Now look! First of all, I trusted that the proximity of nature has always protected the peasantry from this. There were sanctimonious old women in every village, but most of them, along with the philosophers, would have said that "nothing that is human is alien to me." In fact, centuries of inbreeding have meant that the village has long since ceased to be as biologically vibrant as the village researchers of the 1930s would have liked. However, it has always been taken for granted that there are deviant elements, degenerates there. But I also had the example of world literature, from Shakespeare to Gide and contemporary writers...

I also knew that if I didn't do it, someone younger would beat me to it. After all, the next generation is much more open-minded and has not developed the inhibitions that we carry in our nerves and are trying so hard to overcome. And even though I have been working on this subject for twenty years, it is not worth writing it a second time... Anyway, I feel that young people have come at the right time to refresh the circulation of our prose literature. We can only welcome the impetus and momentum they give us. Prose literature has generally dealt with homosexuality as a moral issue, but by portraying the biological and social dimensions of the issue I wanted to show that it has just as much to do with morality as any other kind of sexuality.

Of course, the same question can be asked in this context. After all, there may and will be readers who are only interested in the lesbian stories, and others who are more receptive to politics. But I hope that there will be people who, on the whole, will understand the tragedy of a hero who is unable to adapt and who takes on her own law. Flaubert said that "Madame Bovary is me." How much of Éva Szalánczky's character does Erzsébet Galgóczi take on?

Éva Szalánczky is also me, naturally. Although I was not so uncompromising. I was more adaptable in the most difficult times. But, of course, Major Blindics is me too. And in *The Chapel of St. Christopher*, I'm Zsófia Túű. The writer works partly from models and partly from themselves. I modelled the parish priest of *The Chapel of St. Christopher* on an older friend. I'm not exactly the same as any of my characters, but I try to identify with each of them when I write. [...]

Erzsébet Galgóczi

"I Am the First Woman Writer of Peasant Origin in Hungary"

I am the first woman writer of peasant origin in Hungary. We had women writers and nuns who already wrote in the Middle Ages, we had aristocrat and bourgeois women writers of great talent between the two wars, and between the two wars there were even swarms of male writers of peasant origin—but the oppressed classes: the daughters of the peasantry and the working classes have only made their way into intellectual careers *en masse* since the historical turn of 1945.

Women's equality can only be set as an achievable goal once social inequalities have been eliminated. The second paragraph of our constitution reads: "In the Hungarian People's Republic, all power belongs to the working people." Further, the sixty-second paragraph states that: "In the Hungarian People's Republic, women and men shall enjoy equal rights. The equal rights of women shall be ensured by the following: the provision of employment opportunities and working conditions in an appropriate manner: paid leave in the event of pregnancy and childbirth, increased legal protections for mothers and children, and a system of institutions for the protection of mothers and children."

So, among us, there is nothing wrong with the law and its principles. It's rather the practice that sometimes and in some places falls short of the given principles, or goes directly against them.

In my work as a writer, I am wary of treating the so-called woman question as a separate issue. This is the job of sociographers and reporters. Just as in reality there is no such thing as a women's issue taken separately from the context of society, there can be no such thing in sophisticated prose either. I write a lot about women. I think that's understandable: the most interesting encounter of my life was with Erzsébet Galgóczi. My other greatest experience was with my mother. She gave birth to ten children and raised eight of them—the other two died in infancy. She is a recurring protagonist in my novels. I saw her life up close until I was twenty, because I lived in the village next door until then. She was disproportionately more burdened than my father. In my village, until the organization of the cooperatives, there was in fact a matriarchy: the peasant families formed an economic community, and the one who held the family together and organized its life, work, and the future of the children was always the mother. My mother's sense of responsibility went even further: she was the doctor for those who lived on the street. She mended broken arms, pulled out splinters with her teeth, cured stomach aches with tea and *pálinka*.¹⁶ I can still hear my father's voice today, anx-

¹⁶ Editor's note: A spirit made of various fruits, made across Central and Southeastern Europe under different names.

ious and whining: "Christ took upon himself only the sins of the world—you take upon yourself the care of the whole world."

Equality should be free, not compulsory.

Women can now choose study, to remain at work, but not yet to devote their life to raising their children and their family. Or, rather, only for those three years for which we provide maternity leave benefits to the mothers who need it.

Translated by Cody J. Inglis

Vesna Kesić

Isn't Pornography Cynical?

AUTHOR Vesna Kesić

TITLE "Nije li pornografija cinična?" [Isn't Pornography Cynical?]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Start* (Zagreb), no. 355 (August 28, 1982): 74–75.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian / Croatian-Serbian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vesna Kesić (1948, Zagreb–2020, Zagreb) was a journalist, feminist, researcher, and anti-war activist. After graduating in psychology and sociology at the University of Zagreb in 1974, she worked as a journalist for almost two decades, publishing in Yugoslav newspapers and magazines such as *Danas*, *Mladina*, *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, *Nin*, and *Start*. After participating in the canonical 1978 conference "Drug-ca žena" (Comrade-ess Woman) that gathered Western and Eastern feminists in Belgrade, and which for the new Yugoslav feminists represented "the moment when it all started," Kesić became one of the most prominent feminist activists in the country. The same year she took part in the founding of *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society), a section of the Croatian Sociological Society which became a focal point of feminist activity in academia and is still active today. With the collapse of Yugoslav socialism, Kesić quit journalism and became an activist, which, in her own words, "seemed like the only possible moral act at the time."¹ She focused on feminist, anti-war, and anti-nationalist activism, and initiated and co-founded numerous organizations, such as the Centar za žene žrtve rata (Center for Women War Victims), the Group for Women's Human Rights – B.a.B.e.,² *Ženska mreža Hrvatske* (Women's Network Croatia), *Ženski Lobby Zagreb* (Zagreb Women's Lobby), *Građanska inicijativa za slobodu javne riječi* (Citizens' Initiative for Freedom of Public Speech).

For her outspoken criticism of the new nationalist regime, in 1992, together with other prominent female intellectuals and writers, Kesić was publicly condemned in the (in)famous "Vještice iz Rija" (Witches from Rio) case of media ostracism, to which she responded with a courageous and humorous text entitled "Confession

¹ "Preminula Vesna Kesić (1948–2020)" [Vesna Kesić Has Passed Away (1948–2020)], *Novosti*, December 27, 2020. <https://www.portalnovosti.com/preminula-vesna-kesic-1948-2020>.

² The acronym stands for "Budi aktivna. Budi emancipiran," meaning "Be active (in female gender). Be emancipated (in male gender)."

of a Croatian Witch.”³ During the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (1991–1995), through humanitarian and activist work, Kesić became most engaged on the issue of sexual violence in war, on which she wrote extensively. The response to Catherine MacKinnon’s paper,⁴ which argued that access to pornography was one of the main causes for sexual violence during the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, remains her most famous and most influential text in the international context. In this paper, she showed not only how MacKinnon’s argument stood in the way of the feminist movement in the region and its aims to develop solidarity through the interpretation of sexual war crimes, but also how, with its oversimplistic view on the complex historic and political causes of the wars, it actually fed into and further reinforced nationalists’ aims.

Together with feminist activists from the region and international women’s rights advocates, Kesić worked towards ensuring that international criminal tribunals recognized rape and other forms of wartime sexual violence as war crimes, which was finally achieved in 1998. She further pursued these issues in academic contexts, at the New School for Social Research in New York, where she worked as an associate at the Transregional Center for Democratic Studies, completing the MA program in Liberal Studies in 2002. Her thesis was titled “The Status of Rape as a War Crime in International Law: Changes Introduced after the Wars in the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.”

Upon her return to Zagreb, Kesić continued to be active as a lecturer and researcher in civil society organizations and has also worked as an advisor in the office of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality. More recently, she wrote the screenplay for the documentary film “That Other Village,” which deals with the topic of ethnic division between Serbs and Croats, and the existence of two distinct histories in a village with two names. Her other (literal) pet project “Prrrrvic, the island of happy cats” aimed at improving the quality of life of a small island’s community of people and animals.

3 The “Witches from Rio” case is the most illustrative reaction of the post-socialist political system towards feminists who challenged the new Croatian regime and wrote critically about the war. In the unsigned article “Croatia’s Feminists Rape Croatia,” published in a weekly political magazine, the author calls out the “five witches” or five prominent feminist intellectuals, Dubravka Ugrešić, Jelena Lovrić, Rada Iveković, Slavenka Drakulić, and Vesna Kesić as traitors and communists, working against the country. It alleged that at the PEN congress in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the listed women lobbied against holding the next congress in Dubrovnik, Croatia. The article also included their biographies, underlining their lack of loyalty towards the new, ailing state. The media hate campaign that the article provoked is paradigmatic for the public treatment of oppositional voices that questioned the dominant nationalistic discourse and its particularly harsh effects on women. The media frenzy relating to the “Witches of Rio” case lasted almost a year. For more, see Women Memory–Gender Dimension, “Witches of Rio,” <https://www.women-war-memory.org/index.php/en/povijest/vjestice-iz-ria>; Batinić, “Feminism, Nationalism, and War,” 9; Benderly, “Feminist Movements in Yugoslavia,” 202; Miškowska Kajevska, *Feminist Activism at War*, 194.

4 See Catherine A. MacKinnon, “Turning Rape into Pornography: Postmodern Genocide,” *Ms. Magazine* 4, no. 1 (July/August 1993): 24–30; Kesić, “A Response to Catharine MacKinnon’s Article.”

Numerous obituaries published after her premature passing emphasized her tireless energy, activist drive, creativity, comradeship, and continuous support for various actions and initiatives. The Nada Dimić Award, promoting socially engaged cultural and artistic practices in the City of Zagreb, was also initiated by her.⁵ Today, another related award for brave and critical journalism is named after Vesna Kesić.

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Leda Sutlović

CONTEXT

The 1980s in Croatia, as in other parts of federal Yugoslavia, were marked by openings or “liberalizations” of the public sphere, which was particularly visible in the popular mass media. As Zsófia Lóránd’s book *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in*

5 Nada Dimić (1923, Divoselo–1942, Stara Gradiška) was a Yugoslav Partisan and People’s Hero, known for her bravery and resistance to the Croatian pro-fascist Ustaša regime during the Second World War. At the age of 15, she became a member of the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije, SKOJ), and later on joined the first Partisan unit in Brezovica by Sisak, where she took part in various diversionary actions. Captured amid one of these by the Ustaša police, after two months of torture and no information extracted, Dimić was executed in the Stara Gradiška prison camp. Many streets in Croatia and Serbia are still named after her, as well as a once famous textile factory in Zagreb.

Yugoslavia shows, the gradual devolution of press control, albeit still under control of the League of Communists of Croatia, together with the possibility to finance media based on market demand rather than solely on state subsidies, created new genres and a rather commercialized press scene.⁶ Perhaps the most famous example of the sort was the Zagreb-based magazine *Start*, which was distributed throughout the country and diaspora, reaching at its peak a circulation of 300,000 copies (p. 138). The magazine was maintained by an interesting combination of “high-level journalism and publication of erotic images of naked women” (p. 142). At the time when a full-blown pornography debate was taking place in the West, polarizing deeply the second-wave radical feminist movement, in the socialist East this kind of press media became the most unusual bedfellow of feminist activism.⁷

Unlike elsewhere in East Central Europe, where organized forms of feminism remained an exception until the late 1980s, in Yugoslavia these emerged in the mid-1970s, first within the universities and later through activist initiatives. Questioning the “already resolved” issue of women’s emancipation within the system of Yugoslav socialist self-management, and challenging its unfulfilled promises, was most visible at the famous 1978 “Drug-ca žena” (Comrade-ess Woman) conference,⁸ on which Kesić reported on the pages of *Start*. After this conference, the activities of Yugoslav “neofeminists” intensified, and by the time of Kesić’s text, republished below, feminist initiatives in Yugoslavia were well established.⁹ Within the academic context of higher education institutions, discussion groups titled *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society) were formed in Zagreb (1979), Belgrade (1980), and Ljubljana (1984), while in the public sphere the formation of discourse within the socialist feminist frame took place and became increasingly present in the popular mass media, most notably in *Start*.¹⁰

Founded in 1969 as a recreational magazine, *Start* soon changed its profile by “boosting the subscriptions” with photographs of naked women, which created

6 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 140–42. Further citations to this work are given in the text.

7 The relationship with the editors was far from unproblematic, and the male editors were not supportive of feminism. See Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 137, 148, 153–54.

8 Bonfiglioli, “Belgrade, 1978.”

9 The term “neofeminism” was used by some of the new Yugoslav feminists to signify several points: the continuity with pre–Second World War feminists, a novel strand of feminism produced in a socialist self-managing country, and a form of distancing from bourgeois feminism. See Lóránd, “A Politically Non-dangerous Revolution”; and Zaharijević, “The Strange Case of Yugoslav Feminism.”

10 The feminist counter-discourse to women’s socialist organizations, or the “struggle of opinions” as it was called at the time, was allowed within the Yugoslav system provided that the overall socialist orientation was not contested openly (for more, see Bonfiglioli, “Belgrade, 1978.”). Moreover, according to Lóránd, feminism in Yugoslav popular mass media was accommodating to the medium in which it appeared, while remaining subversive both towards the medium and the wider political context (Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 139). Feminist issues were introduced to *Start* by Slavenka Drakulić and Vesna Kesić, who later became the magazine’s editor. Other feminists who occasionally wrote for *Start* were Bojana Pejić, Žarana Papić, Jasenka Kodrnja, Maja Miles, among others.

financial independence from public funds and what Lóránd calls, a relative intellectual freedom (p. 156). The magazine combined serious, high level political journalism, and texts on topics like rock music, modern art, and fashion, with tabloid-like obscene joke strips and pornographic images of women (p. 148).¹¹ Interviews with well-known Yugoslav and international personalities, such as Gloria Steinem, Erica Jong, Simone de Beauvoir, Shere Hite,¹² next to the ones of Gabriel García Márquez, Noam Chomsky, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, were regular.

As Lóránd shows, the pornography debate, taking place in the United States at the time, entered Yugoslavia through *Start*, in which neofeminist reactions to pornography were published. Two authors that most frequently wrote on the issue—Vesna Kesić and Slavenka Drakulić—opposed pornography in principle, but were also critical of the radical feminists in the United States (p. 157). It should be pointed out that their criticism primarily concerned the issue of censorship that arises from the specific Yugoslav context, providing an entirely different backdrop for the domestic reception of the pornography debate. More specifically, the fact that the state equally judged the pornographic content and introduction of new social movements and ideologies made feminism subject to the same type of control as pornography. For Yugoslav feminists, as Lóránd demonstrates, Western anti-pornography activism did not solely raise concerns related to the freedom of speech, but also spurred criticism on the alliances they forged. Regardless of their respect for the US radical feminists, the neofeminists questioned Catherine MacKinnon's and Andrea Dworkin's Women Against Pornography (WAP) campaign, especially their alliances with conservative republicans, who otherwise opposed the right to abortion and contraception, were generally against feminism, and considered communism immoral and criminal (p. 157). This nuanced, "in-between" attitude, critical of the tactics and methods of their Western "sisters" while still being explicitly against pornography, is evident in Kesić's text.

The text, with the cliffhanger title "Isn't Pornography Cynical?," further reveals the object of that cynicism: the exploitation of female sexuality. Kesić's warning of how speaking up against pornography may put one into the group of "moralist crusaders" who would ban anything with sexual content, clearly echoes the hypocrisy of the morality of the "socialist man" promoted (and challenged) in Yugoslav public discourse, as well as criticism towards the anti-pornography campaign of radical feminists. Kesić scrutinizes the liberal stance that portrays pornography as something

11 For example, besides Kesić's text, this issue of *Start* (no. 355) also included the following articles: "The World of Weapons—A Season of Novelty" by M. Lazanski; an interview with the dancer and choreographer Milko Šparemblek by V. Stojsavljević; "Dolly Parton: Between Nashville and Hollywood" by D. Vrdoljak; "A Fugitive from Stalinism to Socialism" by S. Zvizdić; "Computers: The Triumphant Rise of the Colorful Apple" by M. Mihovilović; "Art: 120 Days of Kassel" by B. Pejić, etc.

12 About the clash between the male editors of *Start* and Hite, see Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 153–54.

progressive, which widens the limits of sexual freedoms, and freedom as such, and establishes women as a "subject" of popular culture, which for Kesić represents the peak of cynicism. As was pointed elsewhere,¹³ she takes a contrasting position by elaborating how "feminists do not put pornography on trial because it depicts sex and the human body, but because it is done in a reckless and dehumanizing way, usually in relation to psychological and physical violence against women."

Discussing the main focus of the text—the Canadian documentary film *Not a Love Story*, which depicts the porn-world from the protagonist's perspective, stripper Linda Lee Tracey—Kesić targets problematic aspects of the movie, such as torture and the degradation of the sex-worker, and reflects on its class aspects ("the guys at the bottom are themselves declassed and alienated, and it is hard to figure out who is the one pulling the strings"). Using the pages of *Start* to criticize pornography, Kesić almost foresees and dissuades MacKinnon's attacks of the 1990s in which she stated that "[s]elect women [...] privileged under the Communist regime" participated in the normalization of pornographic content.¹⁴ Kesić's text here demonstrates quite the opposite, and indicates a specific position towards the issue in the Yugoslav context, in which the very reception of the pornography debate takes place in a magazine such as *Start*. Moreover, by making a connection between the increase in sexual assaults, rapes, and murders of women in the United States and the increase in mainstream pornographic content in society, Kesić evidently shows inclinations towards a radical feminist argumentation against pornography. She further ponders whether pornography truly is "an expression of the collective crisis of the male *ego* and a need for revenge," associated with a sense of threat in their sexual functions since the existence of the women's emancipation movement. Thereby, she clearly outlines the zeitgeist of the pornography debate in the West and presents it to the domestic public. In her conclusion, Kesić reflects upon the dangers of the small-scale smuggling of pornographic videotapes into Yugoslavia, and the profits that fuel the further spread of pornography elsewhere, giving a warning about possible, similar events at home.

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13 Lóránd, "A Politically Non-dangerous Revolution," 132–33.

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Leda Sutlović

* * *

Vesna Kesić

Isn't Pornography Cynical?

The documentary *Not a Love Story*¹⁵—filmed by Canadian feminists without any pretenses to "objectivity," but with plenty of arguments to support its position against pornography, depicted in the film in all of its most radical forms—urges us to reconsider a question that feminists have long posed: Isn't pornography a cynical exploitation of female sexuality?

To bring pornography into the focus of public interest is *a priori* a double-edged sword, especially when women are the ones who do it. First of all, every opposition to pornography feeds the fire of the traditional hypocrisy of moralistic crusaders who see all evil in the fact that the immanent content of pornography is sex and nudity "as such," however without considering at all the context and structure of "pornographic" work. According to that logic, even the works of De Sade, Chaucer, Lawrence, and Bataille are "dangerous," since, as Susan Sontag proved,

15 Editor's note: Bonnie Sherr Klein (director), *Not a Love Story: A Film About Pornography*, 69 min., National Film Board of Canada Studio D, 1981.

they carry the markers of the pornographic genre, but transcend them in the relevant artistic works of their time.¹⁶

On the other hand, and no less hypocritical, is the general position of liberals and radicals that pornography is good, even progressive, because it extends the boundaries of sexual freedom and the boundaries of freedom in general. In a conglomerate of these kind of understandings the peak of cynicism is contained in the thesis that pornography (for those partial to euphemisms—erotica) turned the woman into the “subject” of contemporary mass culture, because it puts her on the covers of sexy magazines and at the center of porn films, tailored to male sexual desires. According to American statistics, 90 percent of all pornographic material is intended for a heterosexual male consumer. The remaining 10 percent caters to homosexual male tastes. The average user of these goods is a white, rather old, married member of the middle class, and in the majority of the visual material, there is a naked woman's body and a variety of activities that could be realized with this body. Therefore, with regard to *how* the porno industry brought women to the forefront and what its consumers and liberal advocates themselves think of women, radicals and liberals alike hypocritically keep quiet, as do the members of the “moral majority,” who do not even attempt to ask themselves what enables the flourishing and democratization of “dirty passions.” Do the reasons not lie precisely in their own moral codes and sanctioned social values?

When women (usually feminists) talk about pornography, both sides of the sword come down on their necks with equal ferocity. Moralists see women's mere discussion of sex in any context as an attack on morality (and launch the hunt for modern witches), with the aggravating circumstance that feminists do not put pornography on trial because it depicts sex and the human body, but because it is done in a reckless and dehumanizing way, usually in relation to psychological and physical violence against women. Their depersonalized bodies are therefore tied, chopped, stabbed, cut, doused with boiling solutions, and, according to the needs of the most depraved (for whom all of this is not sufficiently stimulating to the adrenal glands), women are even killed in the most imaginative ways.

There is an equally fierce reaction among liberals who claim that a woman's demand for an assessment of the function of pornography in society is automatically conservative, irrational, “hysterical,” and, at the very least, proof of a lack of a sense of humor and sportsmanship. Above all, of course, they also do not try to

16 Editor's note: Susan Sontag, “The Pornographic Imagination,” in *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969). Sontag refers to the following works: *Histoire de l'œil* [Story of the Eye] (1928) and *Madame Edwarda* (1937) by Georges Bataille; and *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* [The 120 Days of Sodom] by Marquis de Sade (written in 1785, published in 1904). Geoffrey Chaucer was a fourteenth-century English poet famous for his *Canterbury Tales*, while D. H. Lawrence wrote *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), a novel controversial for its time.

understand how—in that large freedom-loving-exercise arena—the subject-objects feel. “Pornography is not the celebration of sexual freedom; it is the cynical exploitation of women’s physicality and sexuality,” claims a group of American authors.

The Canadian documentary film *Not a Love Story* (it could be translated as: *Nije ljubavna priča*), an independent production, is one such attempt to penetrate the porno world from the standpoint of those who are involved in it *en masse* but who, as a female ex-porno model said, “are not in a position of control in the porno business, in the same way that they are not in positions of control in society.”

A journalist colleague saw the film in Canada, talked about it, and pointed out that an important quality of the film, “in contrast to the majority of other feminist films, is that it is not militant.” I don’t know, however, what the attribute “militant” actually means when one talks about the revindication of women—it is like advising striking workers not to take such a “militant” approach to their struggle. After seeing the film in London, I realized that *Not a Love Story* does not differ significantly from many feminist documentary films, especially in its level of “militancy,” because it is, obviously, just one of the prejudices most commonly leveled at everything that is “feminist” or that someone considers as “feminist.” Countless films such as this one—the ones that are simultaneously pieces of research, a reportage, and also carry certain attitudes and feelings of the authors, thus do not pretend to any kind of “objectivity,” in principle a suspicious category—have been made in Europe and America: on prostitution, on lesbians to whom courts in America hardly ever give the custody of children following a divorce, on women of color, and women workers, to name just a few themes. The only difference is that in those films, partly thanks to the relatively high quality of production, and partly due to ever-growing public interest and the gradual but definite realization of the importance of these phenomena, are now more and more often shown through normal cinema distribution, and not just in the oases of specialized cinemas and the ghettos of avant-garde film festivals.

Through the world of pornography, the author of the film, Bonnie Sherr Klein, is led by a stripper, Linda Lee Tracey, who in this way becomes the main narrator of the film. Linda herself, however, is in the first circle of that hell; she performs a kind of striptease parody in a relatively safe club. Posing as a girl with pigtails, in a short dress, you can see that when she jumps or does a handstand, she has nothing on underneath. Her audiences are the respectable *petit bourgeois*, tourists, young daddy’s boys in search of some unusual entertainment, who drink their beer and limit themselves to some pseudo-witty, lewd commentary. At the start of the film, Linda claims that she “earns her money respectfully, she entertains people and along the way learns about male nature from hearing how men hit on her.”

Linda and Sherr move deeper and deeper into the world of that entertainment, and the pornographic forms become ever more radical. They go to porno shops,

clubs where there are *live shows* (live sex), *peep shows*, porno cinemas and theaters, video cassette stores. They talk to performers, sellers, and the audience. The atmosphere becomes ever darker, and the audience ever creepier. A young couple, a muscular Black man and a white girl with a very pretty face and defined cheekbones, perform live sex and talk about how the audience especially likes the Black-white combination. The comments range from: "Fuck her, rail her!" to "Kill her!" The girl talks about how this is still a better job than prostitution because she is protected from direct violence, while on the streets she was at the mercy not only of her clients, but also (it is a well-known fact) of a pimp. Her mother was also a prostitute. She talks about all this calmly and with an air of self-confidence; she has a good and relatively easy job. Stratification and bigotry exist in this as in any other job. All of these women exhibit a certain aversion and dislike toward feminists, who are almost without exception middle-class women, and who approach the issue from a position of relatively protected social status.

"Never has anyone from a poor, working-class background asked me 'How were you ever able to do that?'" says a former porno model. "Middle-class feminists, who were supposed to be my sisters, have no idea what it's like down here. They ought to know who their real enemy is, who has the power, to whom all this is sold." Distrust is understandable, yet it has to be overcome. After all, even among the women in the porno business, competitiveness and jealousy rule. They are goods thrown on the market, and they behave according to the rules of the market.

Perhaps most unsettling, scary, and painful is the indifference and complacency of people who buy and sell pornographic goods. The movie reaches its emotional climax when Linda watches a film at a porno cinema in which a woman is subject to genuine medieval torture. At the end, maybe she is killed, or at least the killing is simulated, as a little sexy entertainment. Linda comes out of the cabin visibly roused and rattled. "That is really insulting," she states. The dark-skinned "consumer" continues to disinterestedly state that it is just harmless fun. He is most definitely not at the top rung of the profit "output" ladder of the porno-sewage industry. The guys at the bottom are themselves declassed and alienated, and it is hard to figure out who is the one pulling the strings. Sometimes these people are very respectable and influential citizens.

Field reports alternate with conversations. People connected to pornography through work or by interest speak in front of the camera. Kate Millett, the author of several very popular feminist books, tries to explain the difference between erotica and pornography.¹⁷ It is very dubious work, especially when we are talking about a mass-market culture where erotica—the meaning of which comes from the Greek *eros* (love, longing for love, passion) and implies, therefore, a positive choice

17 Editor's note: Kate Millett discusses these issues in her book *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

and free will—actually, as a rule, refers to mild and demure forms of pornography (from the Greek *porne*, which means harlot). Kate Millett considers pornography simply *unsexy* and, by way of contrast, displays some drawings of women's bodies that she considers erotic. One man talks about his experience in the porno world, an ex-porn star who left his job—it sounds unbelievable but is most likely true—because he realized that pornography always and without fail degrades women. He also had personal issues: he was sometimes (in his personal life) expected to perform what would normally take him a few weeks to film. Members of the movement against male violence talk about how their own gender is falling victim to these kinds of fantasies.

Exaggeration is a genre-marker of pornography, but the realistic depiction of sexual intercourse and genitalia, a kind of hypertrophied realism, is also important. All that its consumers ultimately expect—or, to a lesser degree, do—is depicted as if it were real. The man who watches the abuse and exploitation of women in the darkness of a video cabin or behind the *peep-show* plexiglass, surely satisfies some of his needs, but, at the same time, is a diminished and impoverished human being, as is the woman who, in pornography, becomes the means of satisfaction of sexual demands that can also never be her own. Because there is not a single reason why someone who is not completely disturbed would want to be psychologically and physically abused and made insignificant. Participants of porno programs say this on the subject: “It is disgusting when their sperm splatters on the glass in front of my face, they are infinitely disgusting to me, but here at least the glass protects me from real violence.” Psychologists spoke about the possible connection between the rise of pornography and sexual violence. The FBI has data indicating that a woman is raped in America every eight minutes, on the street or in an apartment. A police report from one station indicates that there are fewer and fewer “regular” rapes. Rapes are more and more frequently accompanied by other kinds of physical torture, brutal humiliation, and murder. At the same time, the increasing spread of pornography throughout the media is becoming a social norm, and this gives abusers a sense that they are really doing “something ordinary,” even normal.

The poet Robin Morgan¹⁸ wonders why something that expresses such an intense hatred toward women is on the rise, because what else is it if not hatred when, on the faces of the consumers of porno materials, you can see the wild expressions of satisfaction mixed with passion and aggression. What else but

18 Editor's note: Robin Morgan (b. 1941) is an American poet and radical feminist activist renowned for editing *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Random House, 1970) and *Sisterhood Is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1996) to which Rada Iveković and Slavenka Drakulić contributed.

hatred do these titles convey: *Awaited Pain*, *The Cry of Rape*, *Black and Chained*, *Love*, *Gestapo Style*, *Physical Punishment*, *The Club of Brutal Force*, and so on and so forth...?

"Perhaps men feel their sexual function to be threatened since the women's movement for emancipation emerged. In fact, they don't want that equality, and the domination that eludes them in their relations to the other sex, they seek in pornography"—so the publisher of many porno magazines (the same one that publishes "Charlie Brown") tries to explain "male motives," and likewise, but a bit less confidently, claims that he does nothing bad or "against women." Is pornography really an expression of the collective crisis of the male *ego* and the need for revenge?

Canada is a market colony of America, author Bonnie Sherr Klein says at the beginning of the film while pointing to a bookshelf in an ordinary supermarket filled with porno magazines. A lot of it comes mainly from the traditionally puritanical neighbor. A sophisticated *Playboy* and much more vulgar *Penthouse* magazines are sold at a rate two times higher than *Time* and *Newsweek* together. In the last twenty years, profits from the porn industry grew from five million to five billion dollars monthly. All of women's attempts to stem the tide that the rules of the market have dictated are bound to fail; screenwriters are also aware of it. What is the point of talking about it or making films at all? Maybe because it will help women to see their role in a profiteering, racist, and sexist world, in which pornography and wars are a logical byproduct. But what is the point of writing about it here, where porno cassette tapes are still being smuggled across the border to satisfy the needs of the privileged, while the stuff that is legally sold is only enough to tickle the balls of the *petite bourgeoisie*? Maybe because pornography could soon be "democratized" in our country, too...

Translated by Suzana Vuljevic

Suzana Tratnik and Nataša Sukič

The Slovenian Lesbian Movement

AUTHOR Suzana Tratnik

TITLE “Feministični pogled na lezbištvo” [The Feminist View of Lesbianity]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Chapter in the BA thesis “Lezbično in gay gibanje — subkultura ali pravica do življenjskega stila?” [The Lesbian and Gay Movement—Subculture or Fundamental Right to a Way of Life], supervisor Dr. Mirjana Ule, Edvard Kardelj University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Sociology, Political Science, and Journalism, September 1990.

LANGUAGE Slovene

AUTHOR Nataša Sukič (alias Nataša S. Vegan)

TITLE “Med lezbijkami, (lezbičnimi) feministkami in lezbičnimi separatistkami” [Among Lesbians, (Lesbian) Feminists, and Lesbian Separatists]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Revolver*, no. 1 (December 1990). Publisher: Roza klub [Pink club], Ljubljana.

LANGUAGE Slovene

ABOUT THE AUTHORS¹

Suzana Tratnik (1963, Murska Sobota) is a lesbian activist and writer. She grew up in a small-town working-class environment and moved to Ljubljana upon entering studies in sociology at the Faculty of Sociology, Political Science, and Journalism (nowadays Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana). During her student years she became involved in the punk scene and the nascent civil-society movement, frequenting events of feminist and homosexual groups (Sekcija Lilit and Magnus, respectively). She was one of the founders (together with Nataša Sukič) of the first lesbian group in Yugoslavia/Slovenia, ŠKUC LL, in 1987. In entangled (then) intimate and activist partnership, Suzana and Nataša were the backbone of the lesbian movement throughout 1990s, organizing activist gatherings and events dedicated to lesbian culture and socialization, issuing publications, while Suzana in particular was much involved in sustaining communication with members of the community, via letters and telephone. Together, Suzana and Nataša compiled the first historiography of the lesbian movement in Slovenia in 1995, thus fortifying the lesbian stride of the LGBTQ+ scene they founded and in which they are still active.

¹ All contributions in this chapter are results of the research project “1980s and the creation of the new cultural field: Slovenian civil society between Nationalist policies and intercultural involvement” (J6-2576) financed by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

In 2004, Suzana gained her MA in gender anthropology from the graduate school Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis in Ljubljana, under the mentorship of Svetlana Slapšak. She published scholarly articles and wrote and translated texts for lesbian fanzines (*Lesbozine*, *Lesbo*, *Pandora*) and gay-lesbian-queer magazines (*Revolver*, *Narobe*). Since the late 1990s she developed a flourishing literary career, publishing collections of short stories and novels, thematizing the childhood and contemporary urban life of people on the margins of society, including lesbian characters. Over time, her literary work received prominent national literary awards and was translated to foreign languages, contributing to the recognition (and normalization) of LGBTQ+ themes. Working as a writer and essayist, she also translated important feminist and lesbian authors into Slovenian.² Nowadays, she is involved in activist and/or cultural events, such as the festival *Lezbična četrt* (Lesbian Quarter), which started in 2012, and is a known public persona also outside activist circles.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • with Nataša Sukič (alias Nataša S. Segan), eds. *L: Zbornik o lezbičnem gibanju na Slovenskem: 1984–1995* [L: Collection on the Lesbian Movement in Slovenia: 1984–1995] (Ljubljana: ŠKUC, 1995); *Ime mi je Damjan* [My Name Is Damjan] (Ljubljana: ŠKUC, 2001); “Lesbian Visibility in Slovenia,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 8, no. 3 (2001): 373–80; *Lezbična zgodba: literarna konstrukcija seksualnosti* [Lesbian Story: Literary Construction of Sexuality] (Ljubljana: ŠKUC, 2004); *Tretji svet* [Third World] (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2007); *Pontonski most* [Pontoon Bridge] (Ljubljana: Beletrina, 2007); *Konec strpnosti* [The End of Tolerance] (Ljubljana: ŠKUC Vizibilija, 2013); *Lezbični aktivizem po korakih* [Lesbian Activism Step-by-Step] (Ljubljana: Založba /*cf., 2013).

Nataša Sukič (1962, Ljubljana) is a lesbian activist, politician, and writer. She grew up in Murska Sobota and Maribor and moved to Ljubljana for her studies. She graduated in electrical engineering, but never took it up as a profession. During her university studies, she joined the feminist group Lilit, partly in exploration of her own sexual identity, and (together with Suzana Tratnik) became one of the founders of ŠKUC LL in 1987. As a driving force of lesbian activism (often in tandem with Suzana), she was involved in major events and initiatives, including the overtake of the former military barracks Metelkova in 1993 and establishment of the lesbian club *Monokel* within it. She acted as a DJ at lesbian club nights, contributed prolifically to gay-lesbian magazines and lesbian fanzines (listed above), published scholarly articles mostly relating to popular music and gender, and was the editor of a book series on lesbian topics (ŠKUC Vizibilija, 1998–2005) and host of the monthly radio show “Lezbomanija” on Radio Študent (1998–2015), both of which still exist. She remained engaged in lesbian activism throughout its partial transformation from voluntarism

2 As documented on her personal website, www.suzanatratinik.si.

towards NGO-ization, and was involved in referendum campaigns for the recognition of equality between same-sex partnerships and traditional marriages. Nataša also participates in the activism festival *Lezbična četrt*. She published several collections of short stories and novels revolving around lesbian themes. Since 2014, Nataša Sukič came to be involved in politics as a member of the political party (now titled) Levica (The Left), which she represented as a member of the Ljubljana Municipality Council (2014–2018) and in the national parliament (since 2018).

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • with Suzana Tratnik, eds. *L: Zbornik o lezbicnem gibanju na Slovenskem: 1984–1995* [L: Collection on Lesbian Movement in Slovenia: 1984–1995] (Ljubljana: ŠKUC, 1995); “Ženske v rokenrolu devedesetih” [Women in the 1990s Rock’n’roll], *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo* [Magazine for Critique of Science, Imagination and New Anthropology] 23, no. 177 (1995): 63–74; “Queer telesa v elektronskih medijih” [Queer Bodies in Electronic Media], *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo* 35, no. 229–230 (2007): 51–61; *Otroci nočnih rož* [Children of Night Blooming Flowers] (Ljubljana: ŠKUC, 2008); *Piknik* [Picnic] (Ljubljana: ŠKUC, 2015); *Amplituda: remiksi in drugo* [Amplitude: Remixes and the Rest] (Ljubljana: ŠKUC, 2021).

Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc

CONTEXT

In Slovenia, as a federative part of Yugoslavia, the 1980s were marked by a progressive liberalization and pluralization of the public sphere, albeit under the formal control of the League of Communists of Slovenia, which was increasingly growing apart from the umbrella Yugoslav party organization. This was the political setting in which new social movements (peace, anti-nuclear, ecological, feminist, homosexual, etc.) flourished, often using the platforms of the official youth political organization, the Alliance of the Socialist Youth of Slovenia (Zveza socialistične mladine Slovenije, ZSMS), and of the Student Cultural and Artistic Centre (Študentski kulturno-umetniški center, ŠKUC) in Ljubljana. The support included financial and publishing resources and use of available premises. ŠKUC, in particular, enabled grassroots movements to freely organize in the form of “section.” Hence, the section Magnus gathering gays was organized in 1984 and the women’s (feminist) section Lilit was founded in 1985. Out of the latter emerged *Lezbična Lilit* (Lesbian Lilith, often referred to as Section LL or ŠKUC LL), first as a subgroup in 1987 and then as an independent group in January 1988. The gallery ŠKUC and the student night club K4 were public places where social events, seminal for the spreading of feminist and sexually nonconforming thinking took place, such as the Magnus festival of gay and lesbian film (April 1984 and May 1985), women-only parties organized by Lilit (throughout 1985), public lectures by local and foreign feminists and lesbian

activists, the video-festival of lesbian film organized by Section LL (December 1988), and the first and fourth Yugoslav Feminist Meetings (December 1987 and May 1991).

Even though homosexuality (between men) was decriminalized in Slovenia in 1976 (and lesbian sex was never criminalized as such), it was publicly invisible well into the 1980s. Suzana Tratnik describes in her memoir the level to which homosexuality was a taboo, so much so that as teenager she believed she was “the only lesbian in Yugoslavia.”³ In the 1980s, gay (and to a lesser extent lesbian) related topics started appearing in Yugoslav popular culture and media, though framed in some form of “othering.” The intentional push to change the discourse on lesbians came precisely from feminist circles. For instance, in 1985 the Women’s Section (Ženska sekcija) within the Slovene Sociological Association edited a supplement of the political weekly *Mladina* (Youth) dedicated to the 8th of March, in which they included a text by American radical feminist Anne Koedt (b. 1941), “Lezbično gibanje in feminizem” (Lesbian Movement and Feminism).⁴ Another example is a 1985 collection of feminist texts edited by Mojca Dobnikar,⁵ which included texts by American feminist authors Rita Mae Brown (b. 1944) and Charlotte Bunch (b. 1944), the group Radicalesbians,⁶ and other lesbian feminists.

Since the start of Sekcija Lilit, lesbian issues were listed as one of the topics of interest for the group, while some of its members declared themselves “political lesbians” (*politična lezbijka*), which for them meant primarily directing (political) energy towards women even without sexual attraction towards them.⁷ The first meeting of the subgroup on lesbian issues took place in May 1985, but no further activities ensued. Around the same time, the Magnus festival of gay and lesbian film was a venue where leaflets by homosexual organizations were available—and this is how Suzana Tratnik made contact with the International Lesbian Information Service (ILIS). This was the turning point in her personal and activist life, as she vividly describes in her memoir and autofiction, *Tretji svet*.

The Section LL was formed as a separate group in the process of preparing another supplement of *Mladina*, “Nekaj o ljubezni med ženskami” (A Few Things about Women Loving Women), which was published in October 1987. It was edited

3 Tratnik, *Lezbični aktivizem po korakih*, 15.

4 This was an excerpt from the text “Lesbianism and Feminism” by Anne Koedt, first published in the collection *Notes from the Third Year: Women’s Liberation* (New York: New York Radical Women, 1971). Her well-known essay written in 1968, *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm* (Boston: New England Free Press, 1970), influenced the local discourse at the time.

5 Mojca Dobnikar, ed., *O ženski in ženskem gibanju: zbornik tekstov* [On Women and Women’s Movement: Collection of Texts] (Ljubljana: Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS, 1985).

6 Established in 1970 in New York as the Lavender Menace, the group co-authored the influential manifesto “The Woman-Identified Woman,” which redefined the term “lesbian” as a political identity as well as a sexual one. It disbanded by the end of 1971.

7 The notion of “political lesbian” among Western authors is associated with the assertion that sexual orientation is a political and feminist choice, advocating lesbianity as a positive alternative to heterosexuality for women as part of the struggle against sexism and patriarchy’s political structure.

by Suzana Tratnik, Veronika (Roni) Starič, Erika Schauer, Nataša Sukič, Marjeta Pogačnik, and Davorka Ljubišić—all in their twenties then, and all undersigned only with first names. It made a breakthrough in the discourse on lesbians that also reached other parts of Yugoslavia, as stated by Lepa Mladenović from Belgrade during the Yugoslav Feminist Meeting later that year. The supplement included translations of the manifesto “The Woman-Identified Woman” (“Ženske, ki se identificirajo kot ženske”) authored by Radicalesbians in 1970, which is considered one of the founding documents of lesbian feminism; ILIS and Amnesty International leaflets; and a summary of the chapter on lesbianity from the book *Our Bodies, Our Selves*.⁸ A special section was dedicated to the idea of “imposed heterosexuality” (“Problemi vsiljene heteroseksualnosti”),⁹ which prevents women from freely choosing the way they want to live. The original (unsigned) texts were excerpts from the student seminar work of the group members presenting anthropological and psychological scholarship on homosexuality, which was deconstructing the fallacies of classical sexology.

The source text by Suzana Tratnik included here is an excerpt from her BA thesis, which she defended in September 1990, but was the result of several years of reading and discovering scholarship alongside her social activism. The student work of Suzana Tratnik (and Davorka Ljubišić, who defended her thesis “Psihološki in kulturološki vidiki homoseksualnosti” [Psychological and Cultural Aspects of Homosexuality] a year before), was considered outlandish by mainstream academia and required the strong support of the supervisor Mirjana Ule, a feminist sociologist herself. The main local historian of the lesbian movement, Nataša Velikonja, points out that these two theses were the first (local) sociological thematizations of lesbian and gay topics. Suzana Tratnik’s presents discussions in traditional, Freudian and contemporary psychoanalytical, as well as alternative theoretical approaches to lesbian issues. These include the feminist views presented in the selected excerpt, while the rest of the thesis deals with the development of lesbian identity, the social construction of sexuality, social expressions of homosexuality, and homophobia. Suzana Tratnik adopts the approach of lesbian feminism (e.g., Charlotte Bunch, Rita Mae Brown, Adrienne Rich, the group Radicalesbians), which understands lesbianity not merely as a sexual orientation but rather as a chosen way of life that is radical (and radically feminist) in its negation of patriarchy. While this choice puts lesbians on the social margins, for Tratnik being a lesbian is an emancipatory practice because it provides women with social and sexual agency. Though she is critical of the early radical feminist essentialization of gendered relations, her discussion is still situated within the paradigm of

8 The book was collectively created, and constantly revised, by the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, first being published in 1984.

9 The title of text has also been translated as “mandatory heterosexuality” (Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 180). This text puts in simple terms some of the points from the article “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” by Adrienne Rich.

male oppression and thus within the gender binary understanding of the division of social power.

The other selected source text is an article written by Nataša Sukič and published in the first issue of the gay and lesbian magazine *Revolver*, in December 1990. The magazine was founded by Roza klub (Pink Club), an organization resulting from the merger of Magnus and LL. *Revolver* built on the experience with the fanzines *Gayzine* (1985–1989) and *Lesbozine* (1988–1989), as well as the “Gay strani” (Gay Pages) in the weekly *Telex* (January–March 1990). The magazine was important for raising visibility and self-awareness, and for supporting the self-organization of the LGBTQ+ community, though in retrospect, lesbian activists were disappointed by the (lack of) attention to lesbian topics. Most of the texts were actually written by Nataša Sukič and Suzana Tratnik, though often undersigned only by first name, a fictional name (e.g., Bojana Vesel), and/or an alias surname (for Sukič this was Vegan, Segan, Slokar, etc.). The reason for this was fear for their security and privacy, at a time when being publicly lesbian demanded tremendous courage, but also the wish to present the group as more varied than it was. In the source text, Nataša Sukič widens the conventional understanding of lesbians, differentiating the lesbian subculture practices from the first half of the twentieth century in the West from the contemporary political construction of the concept within the paradigm of lesbian feminism. The article also engages with arguments against pornography, common to both second wave feminism and traditional lesbian feminism, and also voiced on the local scene (for instance when Sekcija Lilit criticized the exhibition *Obszöne Frauen* [Obscene Women] of lesbian erotic photography by Krista Beinstein shown at the Magnus festival in 1986). In discussing the political ramifications of (lesbian) sexuality, the text steps away from the rigidity of traditional lesbian feminism and lesbian separatism (a movement advocating for the creation of women-only communities and economies as a way to escape the dominance of male-supremacist society). It presents as equally valid other forms of expressing women’s sexual agency (allowing erotic playfulness, even with traditional gender tropes). Such embracement of the ambivalence and plurality of lesbian existence took distance from the divisive issues within Western lesbian and feminist activism.

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Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc

* * *

Suzana Tratnik

The Feminist View of Lesbianism¹⁰

[...] Feminist theory defines lesbians as women who identify with other women, which means that "they invest their emotional, psychic, and erotic energy in other women, refusing to participate in the continuation of the patriarchal status quo."¹¹ Lesbians thus represent a threat to the phallogocentric structure of power, which seeks to define women through their relations to men and prescribes behaviors to both genders that are "appropriate" to their respective roles. In contrast, lesbian feminists do not view marriage and heterosexuality as inevitable, and certainly not as a privilege that is necessary for the survival and fulfilment of women.

Feminist theory views the right to choose a lesbian lifestyle as fundamental, regardless of the causes of sexual orientation. The choice of a given way of life is the result of both personal and social experiences. Women arrive at their decisions in various ways: differences among them are as common as similarities. What is crucial is the ability to freely choose without social constraints or imposed definitions of what is "appropriate" gendered behavior.

¹⁰ Tratnik and Sukič use the Slovenian words *lezbištvo* and *lezbičnost* interchangeably, which are both translated here as *lesbianity*, thus avoiding the somewhat outdated word *lesbianism*, which (in English) could be seen as pejorative, as it has its roots in psychiatric discourse.

¹¹ Christine Browning, "Changing Theories of Lesbianism: Challenging the Stereotypes," in *Women-Identified Women*, edited by Trudy Darty and Sandy Potter (Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1984), 23.

And yet we can only speak conditionally of the free choice of lesbians. Women that choose a stigmatized way of life experience social repression on many levels. They do not benefit from legal protection against discrimination in housing, in the workplace, or in the adoption and raising of children. They do not receive the economic and social support that married heterosexual couples do. They often live in hiding and in fear of potential social reprisals and rejection.¹²

The existence of lesbians is distorted in (scholarly) literature, in media imagery, and especially in the pornographic industry. In popular belief, the latter conveys the most “typical” image of lesbians. In (heterosexual) porn, lesbians are depicted as lifeless sexual objects that appeal to male sexual fantasies. Pornographic images of lesbians are distorted in that they depict lesbianity as perverse and as a threat to other women and children. Moreover, they promote the view that lesbianity is pornographic in and of itself. At the same time, the tolerance of lesbians in pornography creates the illusion that society itself tolerates lesbians, at least to a greater extent than it does male homosexuals. This conclusion is far from the truth. In fact, women are socially stripped of their sexuality. Thus, sexual relations between two women present no threat and can be “easily and painlessly incorporated into the pornographic universe: pornography is exceedingly democratic and non-discriminatory in its appalling process of vulgarization. The threat of lesbianity resides in the fact that women can live fulfilled and rich lives that take place independently of men.”¹³ Moreover, the oppression of lesbians and gay men also impacts the lives of heterosexual people. Fear of the homosexual label keeps men and women in their appropriate “spaces.” Only behavior that belongs to prescribed gender roles is respected, and this reinforces the asymmetries of power that govern interpersonal relations and social structures. Feminists believe that patriarchal values perpetuate a hierarchical structure that directly or indirectly propagates classist, racist, and sexist ideologies, and limits the possibilities for all individuals to realize their full human potential.¹⁴

Feminist conceptions of lesbianity and gender inequality are far from uniform or monolithic. In the early feminist period, feminists typically focused on the sexual behavior of men in order to explain essential properties of masculinity, the male soul, and male dominance over women. Lynne Segal concludes that—particularly as regards questions of male violence and war—this period saw the formation

12 Browning, “Changing Theories of Lesbianism,” 23.

13 Slađana Marković, “Zemlja bez jezika: uvod u lezbijску književnost” [The Land without Language: Introduction into Lesbian Literature], *Potkulture*, no. 3 (1987): 58. Editor’s note: The title of this article is a reference to the poetry book of Adrienne Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language* (New York: Norton, 1978). *Potkulture* [Subcultures], was a journal published by the Research and Publishing Centre of the Alliance of Socialist Youth of Serbia, Belgrade.

14 Browning, “Changing Theories of Lesbianism: Challenging the Stereotypes.”

of a simplified radical feminist sociobiology.¹⁵ For example, the radical feminist Jill Johnston described the male as “the biological aggressor.”¹⁶ In contrast, Segal recognizes that many women also supported “male” wars, despite the feminist assertion that women give birth and men sow death.

Other feminists point out the absence of men in childrearing. In this view, men, seeking a substitute for children to which they cannot give birth, instead “give birth” to science, weaponry, and atomic bombs. Dorothy Dinnerstein claims that the greater participation of men in childcare would reduce gender inequality. The fact that responsibility for childrearing rests almost exclusively on women has led to the social organization of gender inequality. Her thesis that both women and men collaborate in the perpetuation of gendered relations and the madness of history,¹⁷ as well as in relations that are destructive towards life itself, was largely met by negative reactions from the feminist community.

Notwithstanding the countless variations and nuances of specific theories, the feminist view consistently supports the conviction that sexual orientation is a matter of individual choice. To choose a lesbian way of life is no less pathological than to choose a heterosexual one. The right to choose a way of life should be recognized as a fundamental right for all human beings. Emancipation from both social and gender roles is a necessary precondition for the liberation of humankind.

Translated by Lukas Debeljak

* * *

Nataša Sukič

Among Lesbians, (Lesbian) Feminists, and Lesbian Separatists

The more the lesbian community has developed, the more possible convictions, models, patterns, and positions available to the community began to vary. These included, of course, the rules for being a lesbian. Initially, the lesbian movement was primarily concerned with simply securing the right to exist. Initially, this struggle almost took the form of an apology in the face of the heterosexual world.

15 Lynne Segal, “Lepotica in zver” [Beauty and the Beast], *Problemi—Eseji*, no. 5 (1988): 98–106. Editor’s note: This is translation of an excerpt from Lynne Segal, *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism* (London: Virago Press, 1987). It is noteworthy that the journal *Problemi—Eseji* [Problems—Essays], published by the Republic Committee of the Alliance of the Socialist Youth of Slovenia, Ljubljana, regularly featured feminist texts (by local authors as well as translations), while Vlasta Jalušič (see the entry in this volume) was on the editorial board.

16 Jill Johnston, *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973).

17 Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (1988): 635. Editor’s note: Here, Adrienne Rich cites the book of Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and the Human Malaise* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

It was only later that demands for an authentic, enlightened, and real lesbianity were articulated.

And what is, in fact, authentic lesbianity? Both sexologists and lesbians, (lesbian) feminists, and lesbian separatists seem to hold a view on the matter. Early sexologists described lesbians as physically and psychologically deformed human beings, entirely masculinized women who belong to the so-called “third sex”. Their conclusions were surely a response to the initial lesbian subculture that emerged between the 1920s and 1950s, the members of which displayed a rigorous division in the adoption of female and male roles. Needless to say, sexologists studied primarily “inverts”—that is, lesbians who adopt male roles.

The adoption of *butch* and *femme* roles, both in the past and today, remains a controversial issue for lesbians. Advocates of the butch and femme styles claim that, despite the fact that heterosexual models are assumed, these roles occur in the context of authentic lesbian interactions. *Butch* lesbians never wanted to become men but instead desired the attributes that men enjoy: freedom, power, independence, and the right to be with a woman. In this respect, traditional male–female relations were simply the only available model to emulate. In that period, lesbians were too preoccupied with bare survival in a hateful world to devote attention to the formation of novel, non-sexist relations. Nevertheless, early lesbian subcultures articulated radical sexual and political positions that may now appear, in the ironic light of social change, atavistic, unaware, and non-feminist.

Many (lesbian) feminists have articulated a different set of opinions. According to them, the adoption of *butch* and *femme* roles is nothing more than the uncritical imitation of heterosexual and patriarchal practices and the eroticization of power and oppression—obstacles in the way of the development of authentic lesbian erotic. In this context, early lesbian subcultures are rehabilitated as a historically significant, if homophobic, period of lesbianity. Lesbian feminists thus tolerate the adoption of *butch* and *femme* roles only insofar as these practices belong to the historical past. This is typical of a certain tendency within the lesbian community as such, namely, the tendency to disown or silence realities that may be used against lesbians. Sexological definitions and folkloric accounts of narcissistic, perverted, and ugly lesbians, as well as the notion that women cannot survive without penetration, are all very much alive. These ideological projects are intent on seizing upon the “mistakes” of the lesbian community. Thus, the tendency toward idealization and the demands for an authentic lesbian sexuality, an authentic culture, and authentic roles, should come as no surprise.

The polarization of opinion regarding the question of *butch* and *femme* roles has, at times, even led to censorship. Certain feminist newspapers refuse to publish “ideologically improper” articles, for example, articles that espouse a positive attitude toward role-playing. Moreover, the American organization Women Against

Pornography¹⁸ condemns “sexual perverts” that blindly flirt with heterosexual patterns, cultures of oppression, and violent gay sex. This position is also held by the American lesbian-feminist newspaper *Off Our Backs*.¹⁹ In contrast, its Californian counterpart, *On Our Backs*,²⁰ publishes erotic lesbian photography and offers positive views of role-playing, S/M sex, etc.—in short, of everything that enlightened women should not want. This view, just as its opponents, appeals to an authentic lesbian sexuality, emancipated from all imposed constraints.

Finally, lesbian separatists occupy the most marginal or, if you prefer, the most enlightened position. They are done with straight and gay men, heterosexual feminists, and even lesbians who do not hold separatist views. Authentic lesbianism, they claim, can only be lived in complete disassociation from the insane, patriarchal world—that is, in harmony with untouched nature.

How, then, does one live as an enlightened lesbian? Listen to your own voice, and authenticity will follow on its own.

Translated by Lukas Debeljak

¹⁸ Editor's note: Women Against Pornography was a radical feminist activist group based in the United States that was an influential force in the anti-pornography movement of the late 1970s and the 1980s. On the pornography debate in the US and its reception in Yugoslavia see entry about Vesna Kesić in this volume.

¹⁹ Editor's note: *Off Our Backs* was an American radical feminist periodical that ran from 1970 to 2008.

²⁰ Editor's note: *On Our Backs* was the first women-run erotica magazine and the first magazine to feature lesbian erotica for a lesbian audience in the United States. It ran from 1984 to 2006.

Polish Lesbian Initiatives: The Violet Pulse, Fury the First

AUTHOR Stowarzyszenie Inicjatywa Gdańska [The Gdansk Initiative]; OLA-Archiwum

TITLE *Fioletowy Puls* [The Violet Pulse], *Furia Pierwsza* [Fury the First]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Gdansk, July 1994–December 1995; Warsaw, 1997–2000.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE INITIATIVES

Fioletowy Puls (The Violet Pulse) was a lesbian bulletin published irregularly by Inicjatywa Gdańska (The Gdansk Initiative) from July 1994 to December 1995. Only four issues were published: July 1994, December 1994, July 1995, and December 1995. Stowarzyszenie Inicjatywa Gdańska (The Gdansk Initiative) was founded in May 1992 as an informal group, and in 1994 began publishing two bulletins: *Różowy Puls* (The Pink Pulse), addressed to gays, and *Fioletowy Puls* (The Violet Pulse), addressed to lesbians. *Różowy Puls* was published much longer than *Fioletowy Puls*, from March 1994 to March 1997 (there were twenty issues). *Fioletowy Puls* had the subtitle “Bulletin for Gay-Girls.” It was an eight-page publication containing information on lesbian and bisexual initiatives in Europe, practical information for non-heterosexual women in Poland, and pieces of poetry and prose. There was no information about the editorial board, and the editor-in-chief signed under a pseudonym. *The Violet Pulse* was a rather low-quality publication, following the (anti-)visual aesthetics characteristic of Polish zines of the 1980s and 1990s, which, much like their Western counterparts, challenged accepted norms of press appearance through their components, such as headlines, fonts, and illustrations.¹ The front and back covers of the bulletin were printed on violet paper, while all the photos and illustrations inside were black and white. The graphic on the front cover of each issue, featuring a female figure, was kept in a punk aesthetic. The few illustrations in the issues were amateur graphics and photographs, probably reprinted from the Western popular press.

The magazine had no regular funding and depended on contributions from its readers. It ceased publication probably due to lack of funding. Another reason may have been the fact that the only press distributor in Poland at the time refused to publish lesbian magazines, defining them as pornography. Moreover, in the male-dominated Polish society, non-heterosexual women may have been more afraid to come out publicly and less eager to join organized groups, and thus remained less visible than non-heterosexual men.² *Furia Pierwsza* (Fury the First) was a literary, feminist,

1 Flont, “(Anty) wizualna estetyka polskich zinów,” 261.

2 Cywicka, “Poland,” 598–99.

and lesbian magazine published irregularly between 1997 and 2001 by the OLA-Archiwum, a lesbian-feminist archive based in Warsaw. Only eight issues were published: one issue each in 1997 and 1998, two in 1999, a double issue in 1999/2000, and three in 2001. In 2001, the OLA-Archiwum was closed, and the magazine ceased to exist. From April 2010, the Feminoteka Foundation started publishing *Furia!* (Fury!), the successor of *Furia Pierwsza*.

Furia Pierwsza was created by Olga Stefaniuk, then-president of the OLA-Archiwum. Stefaniuk, together with Joanna Mizielińska (b.1969), a sociologist and cultural scientist based at the Polish Academy of Sciences, formed the core of the editorial team. However, it was not until the sixth issue in November 2000 that their names appeared in the editorial footer. Before that, only the names of the magazine's contributors were mentioned. Issue seven (December 2000) was subtitled "Gender Studies Journal" and marked the beginning of a new project.³ The magazine, which followed the aesthetics of academic journals, did not publish any illustrations except for the photo on the front cover.

From the beginning, *Furia Pierwsza* published texts categorized as lesbian studies, such as the first Polish translations of Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich, and Monique Wittig. Besides, the magazine offered Joanna Mizielińska's pioneering research on Polish lesbianity, articles on the social and legal situation of lesbians in Poland, and a series of interviews with lesbian activists.

Each issue featured a motto from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, "the lesbian is no more a 'failed' woman than a 'superior' woman," and a powerful statement in both Polish and English about the journal's origins in the fury and anger against the marginalization of lesbians and lesbian sexuality. It emphatically declared that "Fury will contain texts that deal seriously and comprehensively with lesbianity and the issue of relations between women."

Katarzyna Stańczak-Wislicz

CONTEXT

The first systematic attempts at gay and lesbian self-organizing in post-1945 Poland were intertwined with the emergence of journals and magazines in the 1980s. Their significance lied not only in their capacity to challenge mainstream discourses and to introduce the issue of homosexuality in the public sphere, but also in their ability to create a sense of common identity and establish transnational communication.⁴ Most of them were short-lived, irregularly published newsletters, often in zine form, and mostly aimed at gay men. The first magazines for lesbians did not appear until

3 Darska, "Polskie pisma feministyczne i genderowe po 1989 roku," 29.

4 Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 125.

the 1990s, which was linked to the general invisibility of non-heterosexual women in the public sphere.

According to recent studies on LGBT+ history in the Polish People's Republic (1945–1989), there were many reasons why systematic self-organizing only started in the 1980s. First, there was no space for grassroots movements under state socialism. Second, gay and lesbian sexuality was mostly silenced in public debate and treated as non-existent. Even though same-sex acts were decriminalized as early as 1932, homophobia was still the common attitude in Polish society. It came from the Catholic Church, but also from state authorities, who occasionally blackmailed gay men and forced them to cooperate with the regime.

Regarding non-heterosexual women, it is argued that because Poland did not experience successive waves of feminism, a separate lesbian component did not emerge.⁵ Moreover, lesbians were generally absent from public discourse. For a long time, they were rarely and if, almost exclusively discussed in negative contexts: as criminals or residents of youth custody centers, while lesbian sexuality was perceived as a substitute for heterosexual encounters.⁶ Even when Polish sexologists called for acceptance and adopted a more positive attitude towards lesbians, they defined female homosexuality as a deviation from the norm, of minor importance.⁷ Such stereotypes determined the interpretation of public manifestations of lesbian sexuality and led to the ignorant treatment of female homosexuality as belonging to the private sphere.⁸ It was not subject to communist state surveillance, as was male homosexuality, which was made “public against the will” of individuals during the “Hiacynt” actions of 1985–1987, a secret mass operation undertaken by the communist police (*milicja*) meant to create a national database of all gay men and the people who were in touch with them.⁹

Gay and lesbian activists in Poland could legally self-organize only after 1989, when the right of association was guaranteed by law.¹⁰ However, the first informal attempts at association were made in the 1980s. During this period of social, political, and economic crisis—and as HIV/AIDS became an epidemic in Poland—approaches to gender and sexuality, including homosexuality, began to shift. Mainstream media, including the prominent weekly *Polityka*, published the first informative articles on homosexuality, focusing on gays and the risk of HIV/AIDS. With the exception of the period of martial law (1981–1983), the 1980s were also a time when communist

5 Olasik, “Towards Lesbian Studies in Poland,” 64.

6 For example: Magdalena Jasińska, *Proces społecznego wykołajenia młodocianych dziewcząt* [The Process of Social Derailment of Adolescent Girls] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, 1967).

7 Kościńska, *Płeć, przyjemność i przemoc*, 102–106.

8 Sokolová, *Queer Encounters with Communist Power*, 350.

9 Majewska, “Public against Our Will?,” 67.

10 Mizielińska and Kulpa, “Contemporary Peripheries,” 16.

authorities somewhat relaxed censorship. This allowed an “alternative public sphere” to emerge.¹¹

The emergence of the independent trade union Solidarity (NSZZ Solidarność) in September 1980—despite its conservatism in matters of gender and sexuality and its strong connections to the Catholic Church—provided a framework for self-organizing, including opportunities for feminists and LGBT activists.¹² During the 1980s, initiative groups appeared in various Polish cities, such as Etap (Stage) in Wrocław, Amico in Łódź, Filo in Gdańsk, and Gej (Gay, later the Warszawski Ruch Homoseksualistów / Warsaw Homosexual Movement) in Warsaw. They released their own newsletters and bulletins, most of them dedicated to gays.

Published from 1986 onwards, the Gdańsk-based magazine *Filo* was the first all-Polish gay-lesbian magazine.¹³ It adopted the Western rhetoric of homosexual affirmation, introducing the Polish terms *gej* and *lesbijka* interchangeably with “homosexual.” It also presented success stories of coming out and advocated for non-heterosexual visibility in society. Lesbian-related issues were also discussed in *Filo*, mainly in its last issues, after Paulina Pilch, Doctor of Law and legal adviser, joined the editorial team in June 1989.

Although the Warsaw group had its lesbian section named after the famous writer Maria Dąbrowska,¹⁴ who was known for living in a romantic relationship with writer Anna Kowalska (1903–1969), lesbians were still on the margins of Polish LGBT+ activism.¹⁵ Lesbian initiatives emerged with increased force only after 1989. In 1990, Fiolka Najdenowicz (b. 1963), a musician, started to run Café Fiolka—a meeting point for gays and lesbians in Warsaw.

On February 23, 1990, the Stowarzyszenie Grup Lambda (Lambda Groups Association), was the first legally registered LGBT+ organization in Poland, and non-heterosexual women were also active in it. In 1991, Lambda Bilitis was founded in Warsaw. It initially had ten members and focused on organizing various events to integrate the lesbian community. Lambda Bilitis did not publish its own magazine.

The first exclusively lesbian magazine (or rather zine), *Violet Pulse*, was published by Stowarzyszenie Inicjatywa Gdańska (The Gdańsk Initiative) from July 1994 to December 1995. The Gdańsk Initiative was founded as an informal gay and lesbian group in May 1992, and in July it merged with the Lambda Groups Association under the name Grupa Lambda Gdańsk II (Lambda Group Gdańsk II). In November 1995, it became a legal entity. The Gdańsk Initiative led the first Gay and Lesbian

11 Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 135.

12 Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 101.

13 Więch, “Różowy odcień PRL-u,” 263.

14 Maria Dąbrowska (1889–1965) was a Polish writer, essayist, journalist, and playwright. Best known for the historical novel *Noce i dnie* (Nights and Days), she was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature multiple times. She studied sociology, philosophy, and natural sciences in Lausanne and Brussels. Her themes as a writer and journalist were human rights and social issues.

15 Szulc, *Transnational Homosexuals in Communist Poland*, 194.

Information and Counselling Centre in Poland, which cooperated with Western organizations, as well as with the Polish Ministry of Health and local authorities in Gdansk. Although it published a bulletin for lesbians and was officially addressed to all non-heterosexual persons, in fact, it focused on gay activity. The appeal for the members of the movement launched in May 1992 made no mention of non-heterosexual women. In 1996, The Gdansk Initiative ceased to exist, partly because some of the activists left the group. In 1997, the Lambda Groups Association also ended its activities. It was continued by a few informal groups and newly registered associations. From the late 1990s, Poland saw a rapid increase in the number of published anarchist and feminist zines. And in the early 2000s, the lesbian and queer zines that started appearing, such as *Lechtaczka* (Clitoris) or *ggul*!, challenged the model of gender citizenship imposed by the post-transformation church-state system and attempted to reconceptualize it.¹⁶

The first initiatives to build an archive of queer and lesbian movements in Poland date from the second half of 1990s. The OLA-Archiwum, the first lesbian-feminist archive, was established in Warsaw in 1996. The Archive collected and preserved books and magazines in Polish, English, French, German, and Russian documenting the lesbian movement. It also published the magazine *Furia Pierwsza*, ran a reading room, and organized courses in lesbian studies. In 2001, the OLA-Archiwum was closed and with it the magazine. The successor of *Furia Pierwsza*, entitled *Furia!*, has been irregularly published by the Feminoteka Foundation since April 2010. The documentation of the queer movement continues to be handled by the Lambda Archive, which has existed since 1995, and L*AW. Lesbijskie Archiwum Wirtualne (Lesbian* Virtual Archive), founded in 2022.

Formal lesbian organizations began to emerge in the 2000s, yet lesbian invisibility within Polish LGBTQ+ activism and feminism remained a debated issue, culminating in the 2017 manifesto “Lesbijaska Inspira” (The Lesbian Inspira Manifesto), which was the voice of non-heterosexual women claiming their place even within the LGBTQ+ community. Its authors criticized patriarchal mechanisms that treated lesbians as less capable, less responsible, less independent, also arguing that “the path taken by gay men doesn’t have to be the path for lesbians.”¹⁷

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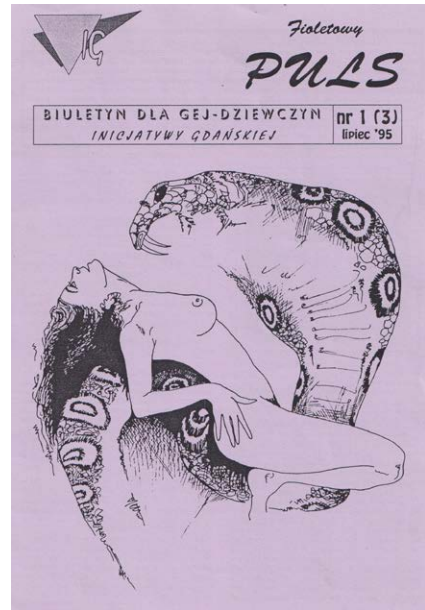
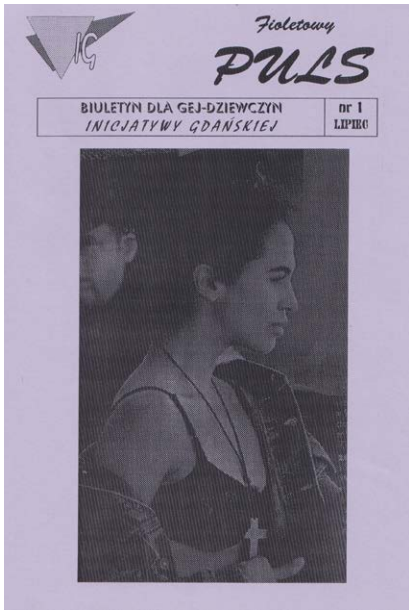
16 Dynda, “Feministyczne archiwa,” 60–62.

17 See Lesbijaska Inspira / Lesbian Inspira, “Manifest / Manifesto of Polish Lesbians,” <https://feminoteka.pl/lesbijaska-inspira-manifest-instant/>.

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Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz

The Violet Pulse



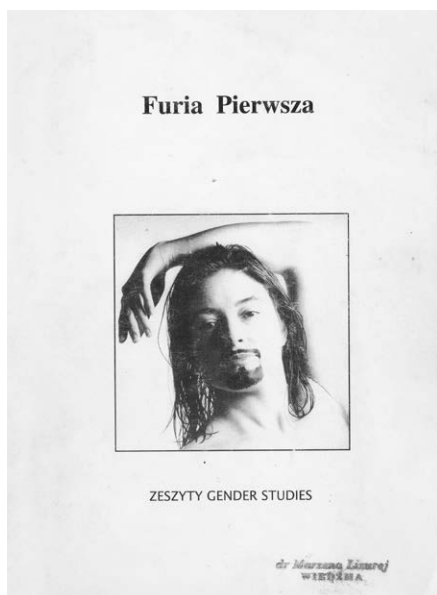
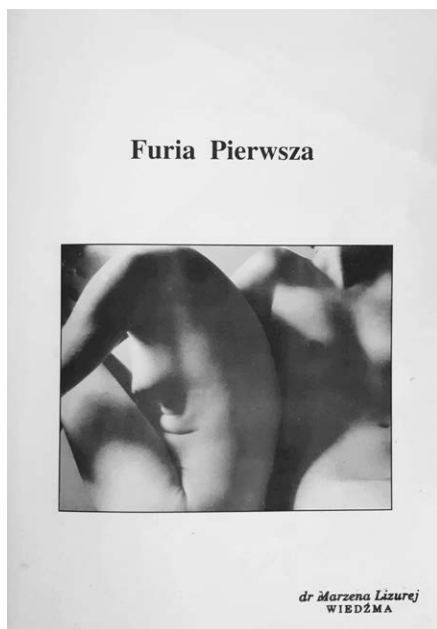
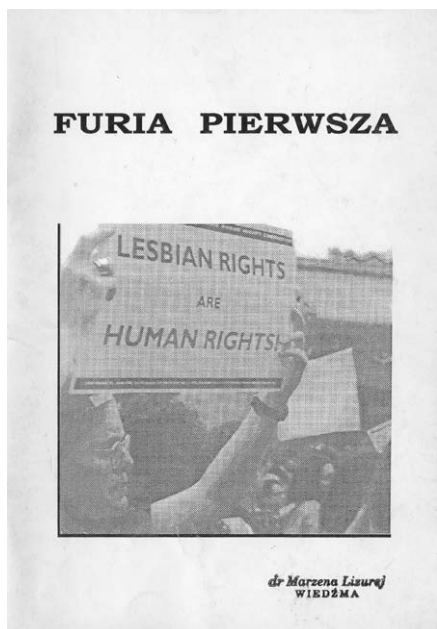
Cover of *Fioletowy Puls*, no. 1 (July 1994), from the Lambda Warszawa Archive collection.

Cover of *Fioletowy Puls*, no. 2 (December 1994), from the Lambda Warszawa Archive collection.

Cover of *Fioletowy Puls*, no. 1 (3) (July 1995), from the Lambda Warszawa Archive collection.

Cover of *Fioletowy Puls*, no. 2 (4) (December 1995), from the Lambda Warszawa Archive collection.

Fury the First



Cover of *Furia Pierwsza*, no. 3 (January 1999) from the Foundation Q Polish LGBTQIA Museum collection

Cover of *Furia Pierwsza*, no. 6 (November 2000) from the Foundation Q Polish LGBTQIA Museum collection

Cover of *Furia Pierwsza*, no. 7(1) (December 2000) from the Foundation Q Polish LGBTQIA Museum collection

12

Debating “Western” Feminisms

Nadežda Čačinovič

Equality or Liberation

AUTHOR Nadežda Čačinovič-Puhovski

TITLE “Ravnopravnost ili oslobođenje: Teze o teorijskoj relevantnosti suvremenog feminizma” [Equality or Liberation: Theses on the Theoretical Relevance of Modern Feminism]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Conference proceeding in *Žena: znanstveni časopis za društvena i kulturna pitanja žene i porodice* [Woman: Scientific Journal for Social and Cultural Questions of the Woman and the Family] 34, no. 3 (1976): 125–38. Reprinted in: *Društveni položaj žene i razvoj porodice u socijalističkom samoupravnom društvu* (Portorož, 18.–20.3.1976) [Social Position of the Woman and the Development of the Family in the Socialist Self-Managing Society (Portorož, 18–20 March 1976)] (Ljubljana: Komunist, 1979), 502–505.

LANGUAGE Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nadežda Čačinovič (b. 1947, Budapest) is a philosopher and a feminist author and activist, born to a Slovenian family.¹ Čačinovič attended schools in various European cities, including Zürich, Bern, Belgrade, Murska Sobota, and Ljubljana, following the posts of her father, Rudolf Čačinovič, as a prominent Yugoslav diplomat. She studied philosophy, comparative literature, history of art, and linguistics at the universities in Ljubljana, Bonn, and Frankfurt. In 1972, Čačinovič majored in philosophy and comparative literature at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, and in 1985 she defended her doctoral dissertation, “Aesthetics of German Romanticism,” and obtained a doctoral degree in philosophy (aesthetics) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb.²

In the early 1970s, Čačinovič was an assistant to Danko Grlić (1923–1984), at the time professor at the university, an established philosopher of aesthetics and a core member of the well-known philosophical journal *Praxis* and its international Korčula Summer School, who represented a humanist approach to Marxism. Since 1976 Čačinovič taught aesthetics and philosophy at the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, where she became a full professor in 1998. Čačinovič is a co-founder of the Centre for Women’s Studies in Zagreb, established in 1995 as a platform for dealing with the problems faced by women in postwar Croatia. In 2017, she retired and received the honorary title Professor Emerita. Her elder

1 Nadežda Čačinovič’s surname is sometimes mistakenly printed as Čačinović, i.e. in its Serbo-Croatian version rather than the Slovene one, as in the case of the first printing of this source text in the journal *Žena*.

2 Ankica Čakardić, “Introductory Words and Remarks,” in Čakardić, ed., *Filozofija je ženskog roda*, 11.

sister, Gabi Čaćinović Vogrinčić, is a renowned scholar in her own right—a psychologist who spent her professional career at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana.

The early philosophical engagement of Nadežda Čaćinović can be linked to the intellectual environment in Zagreb and Yugoslavia, which from the early 1960s was dominated by the activity of the *Praxis* circle and their international Korčula Summer School. Čaćinović contributed to the journal *Praxis* with her paper on Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (*Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 1944), where she analyzed in detail how critical theory approaches nature and the subject's separation from it, among other topics.³

Her contributions to the development of Yugoslav philosophical life in the 1970s included translations of seminal works of philosophy, including the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1974, for which she also wrote an introduction. The following year, in 1975, she translated Herbert Marcuse's lecture "Marxism and Feminism," which was published along with her commentary in the academic journal *Žena*.⁴ In addition, Čaćinović translated Theodor W. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (*Negative Dialektik*, 1966) together with Žarko Puhovski, whom she met at the Korčula Summer School in 1971. The two were also married.

Čaćinović was part of the circle of young women in Zagreb who first started writing about feminism in the mid-1970s, together with Lydia Sklevicky, Vesna Pusić, Gordana Cerjan-Letica, Vesna Kesić, and Rada Iveković. In 1978, they established the important feminist group *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society) as a section of the Sociological Society of Croatia (Sociološko društvo Hrvatske). This was the first formally registered feminist group in Yugoslavia, which would over the course of the 1970s and 1980s organize many gatherings, public talks, lectures, and workshops, creating a platform for the emerging feminists in Croatia and Yugoslavia to discuss a variety of feminist issues.

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3 Nadežda Čaćinović Puhovski, "Dijalektika prosvjetiteljstva ili prosvjetiteljstvo dijalektike" [Dialectic of the Enlightenment or the Enlightenment of Dialectic], *Praxis: filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 10, no. 1–2 (1973): 177–93.

4 Nadežda Čaćinović Puhovski, "Teorijska relevantnost ženskog pokreta. Napomena uz tekst Herberta Marcusea 'Marksizam i feminizam'" [The Theoretical Relevance of the Women's Movement: Remarks to the Text "Marxism and Feminism" by Herbert Marcuse], *Žena* 33, no. 5 (1975): 75–77.

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Una Blagojević

CONTEXT

The 1970s marked a new phase of Yugoslav self-managing socialism. The increased opening towards the West and the political liberalization in Yugoslavia that started from the mid-1960s created a market socialism that operated on the principle of profitability and efficiency. This ushered in various societal problems, even as the era was characterized by a relative freedom of thought and expression. In the early 1970s, the proponents of further economic liberalization and political decentralization (represented by the younger party leadership) were removed from their positions, while the critical philosophical journal *Praxis* and its affiliated Korčula Summer School—whose critiques of social inequality and dialogues with the New Left⁵ inspired the autonomous student movements in Belgrade and Zagreb—ceased to exist due to the withdrawal of state subsidies.

At the time, the official policy towards women did not significantly differ from policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, since the state implemented mainly non-feminist socialist women's emancipation politics and discourse.⁶ From the position of the socialist women's emancipation project, feminism was outdated, Western, and bourgeois. From the early 1970s, however, young Yugoslav feminists started to

5 Broadly understood, the New Left stood for political and intellectual tendencies and currents in Western European countries and North America that emerged in the 1960s. The New Left gathered students, intellectuals, and activists with predominantly liberal, radical, and Marxist orientations who advocated for civil rights, feminism and gender roles, anti-colonialism, social justice, and democracy in all spheres of life.

6 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 226.

question such claims in various ways, drawing on the contradictions between the promises of the regime and their own experiences of emancipation. For example, working women still predominantly occupied lower positions and had lower salaries than men. Reasons for this included structural issues and prevailing patriarchal ideas that held that working women were less successful than male workers.⁷ Moreover, from the early 1970s, due to relative liberalization and growing decentralization in Yugoslavia, feminists could follow Western second wave feminism, but they also started looking at various interwar feminist traditions in the Yugoslav region.⁸ What distinguished them from the feminists in the West was that they “constituted a generation of women whose mothers bore the legacy of Partisan resistance to fascism and who helped build socialist Yugoslavia and establish its progressive laws for women’s rights.”⁹ While the journal *Žena* (published by the Croatian Conference for the Social Activity of Women, a state-sponsored organ) would sometimes publish in-depth summaries of leading international works by and about women (e.g., Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan), from 1975 there was already a large number of journals in Yugoslavia that accepted feminist contributions.¹⁰

The debates on “the woman question” and feminism in Yugoslavia intensified in the mid-1970s. At the First World Conference of the International Women’s Year that took place in Mexico in 1975, Yugoslavia signed the international Declaration on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace. The UN International Women’s Year helped open the public discourse on feminism in the Yugoslav intellectual circles and most debates in the 1970s “aimed at negotiating between feminism and socialism, with the aim to prove the legitimacy of feminism vis-a-vis socialist approach to the ‘women’s question’ (*žensko pitanje*).”¹¹ Thus feminism in Yugoslavia grew out of “socialist political and cultural frameworks,” and it had a Marxist basis, yet at the same time it went beyond the Marxian categories of “human emancipation” or “labor.”¹²

Following the UN International Women’s Year 1975, the state women’s organization Conference for the Social Activity of Women (Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena, KADŽ) organized a conference in Portorož on the “Social Position of Women and the Development of the Family in Socialist Self-Managed Society.” This was attended by politicians (such as Vida Tomšič and Marija Šoljan Bakarić),

7 Dobos, “The Women’s Movement in Yugoslavia,” 51. For further examples of tensions between tradition and emancipation, see Jelušić, “Jovanka Broz and the Yugoslav Popular Press.” On a related topic concerning the possibilities of women’s socio-political participation in Yugoslavia, on the example from Slovenia, see Petrović and Mihajlović Trbovc, “Agency, Biography, and Temporality.”

8 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 226.

9 Tumbas, “The Return of Jugoslovenka,” 6–7.

10 See Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*; and Bonfiglioli, “Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context.”

11 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 31.

12 Zaharijević, “The Strange Case of Yugoslav Feminism,” 264.

intellectuals (e.g., the *Praxis* philosopher Predrag Vranicki), a range of social scientists, psychologists, economists, pedagogues, and a group of feminists (Nadežda Čaćinović-Puhovski, Lydia Sklevicky, Silva Mežnarić, Vesna Pusić, and Gordana Cerjan-Letica), who presented their views in the panel “Contemporary Feminism.” From the Marxist position, Vida Tomšič approached women’s rights as mainly depending on the social and economic development of Yugoslavia, and not as a separate issue.¹³ Vranicki employed the common Marxist argument claiming that Marx and Engels saw the emancipation of the working class as the source of freedom for everyone, and did not think of humanity in terms of duality.¹⁴ From the position of the party, the principles of self-management were supposed to restructure the private sphere, including domestic labor (which was to become socialized). However, drawing on their own experiences, the feminists regarded such claims of equality as nominal.¹⁵ Most notably, the Portorož conference showed divergent approaches to the women’s question between politicians, Marxist intellectuals, and the feminists. The latter emphasized the importance of the contemporary feminist movement for revitalizing the women’s question in its historical context instead of subsuming it under the Marxist (and Marxist humanist) universalist claims of “human emancipation.”¹⁶

In her text, Nedežda Čaćanović opposed such reductive assumptions and challenged the formal equality given to women in Yugoslavia by the constitution as insufficient. Engaging with the ideas of Ernst Bloch (1885–1977) and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) on the importance and revolutionary potential of contemporary feminism, Čaćanović argued against the abstract idea of formal equality which does not go far enough in fighting for the concrete conditions of a genuine liberation that would allow the exercise of rights given by socialist institutions. Differing from the idea that Marxism offers liberation for humanity in general, Čaćanović reminded the participants at the conference that Marxism was not an enclosed system defined by the borders of a particular school of thought, but an open theory (echoing also the *Praxis* approach to Marxism), and argued for the importance of sustaining a dialogue with contemporary feminism. Such dialogue, just like a dialogue with existentialism or critical theory, would contribute to a revitalization of Marxist thought as well as to its relevance. Drawing on Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), in which Friedan criticizes American society’s attachment to the idea that women ought to accept their own nature “which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love,” Čaćinović emphasized that the inequality

13 Bonfiglioli, “Feminist Translations,” 243.

14 Predrag Vranicki, “Marksizam o društvenom položaju žene” [Marxism on the Social Position of Women], in *Društveni položaj žene*, 44.

15 Čakardić, “Ženski problem u političkoj ekonomiji.”

16 For a more detailed account of the divergent approaches between the politicians and the feminists, see Lóránd, “Socialist-Era New Yugoslav Feminism between ‘Mainstreaming’ and ‘Disengagement.’”

between women and men was neither natural nor biological.¹⁷ She claimed that from a Marxist perspective, it was a well-known fact that one's position is socially conditioned. However, calling on Marxist and socialist feminist dialogues with psychoanalysis, Čaćinović stressed that the change in one's social role in a society did not change the "female" and "male" roles in society, as the traits assigned to them formed a "second nature." That is, one's freedom could not be achieved simply by changing the social status and the role of women in a society, as Marxists thought.

Thus, she responded to the politicians' claims that women in Yugoslavia had already gained what contemporary feminists in the West were still demanding (i.e., the establishment of services and institutions like kindergartens), by stressing that genuine liberation could not simply be a by-product of these institutions. In this way, Čaćinović radicalized the critical Marxist arguments that the establishment of socialism does not automatically eliminate alienation (which has been, from the classical Marxist perspective, linked only to capitalist societies), by adding a feminist angle.

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Una Blagojević

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Nadežda Čačinovič-Puhovski

Equality or Liberation. Theses on the Theoretical Relevance of Modern Feminism

1. The women's movement initially emerges as a bourgeois movement focused on achieving equality; it is because of this that, for quite a while, it could have been viewed as *outmoded*, *replaced*, and *postponed* (E. Bloch).¹⁸ The movement is *outmoded* insofar as it was based on the liberal fiction of equal rights as a guarantee of life worthy of a human; it is outmoded also because, in most modern societies, in addition to the achieved equality in formal rights, an increasing number of women are drawn into the production process the same way as men. The original women's movement was *replaced* because the proletarian movement also included in its platform the women's movement goals, demonstrating that, in a class society, the possibility of exercising rights and the nature of these rights depend on the class position, while a true liberation of all people, therefore, the resolution of the "woman question" as well, is only possible in a classless society. The women's movement was, therefore, *postponed* until a time when everyone would be given the opportunity to realize their human potential.

2. This kind of assessment of the initial bourgeois women's movement for equality does not primarily affect the movement for resolving the specific women's issues following the first phase of the socialist revolution. However, any women's organization that remains at the level of a struggle for abstract equality, rather than a struggle for conditions for the actual exercise of these rights, and which does not take into account the social context and the needs and possibilities of

18 Editor's note: Čačinovič references Ernst Bloch's seminal work *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* [Principle of Hope] (Aufbau Verlag: Berlin, 1954).

women's participation in the production process, can be charged with being *outmoded* and *replaceable*.

3. The theory and practice of contemporary feminism introduce major changes both in regard to the bourgeois women's movement from the beginning of the century and in regard to the women's movements within the traditional labor movement. The focus is shifted to that part of the women's movement's goals that it was believed should be postponed. The development and affirmation of the qualities of liberated and self-conscious women is now put forward as a prerequisite or a lever for changing society: if this proposition holds, we must no longer consider the women's movement outmoded and replaced.

4. The first problem that arises here is the question of what talking about feminine traits (or masculine ones for that matter) actually means: can these really be just biological or mystical markings, traps of accepting distorted social living conditions?¹⁹ In principle, there should be no difficulty for Marxist thinking: it is not a slave to the perception of [social] science which, in the name of the ideals of calculability and generality, leaves wide areas to irrational and intuitive considerations (as shown by the so-called "critical theory of society"²⁰).

5. Marxist thought, which is inevitably open and must not reduce the specific and individual to the form of declaring some fundamental categories of a closed system, cannot in advance disqualify the issue of certain feminine and masculine qualities and their relevance, having in mind human emancipation and revolutionary potential.

6. The differentiation of certain traits mainly attributed to men or women can be interpreted by the socio-historical context, that is, different status and role in society, but such traits do not automatically change with shifts in the sexes' social status and role. The sexes' traits are part of the overall problem of a person's "second nature," a category that makes it impossible to unilaterally confront the natural (biological) and the social characteristics (which, therefore, also cannot simply be a mere expression or reflection of the material living conditions).²¹

19 Editor's note: Reference to Betty Friedan, who coined the term "feminine mystique" to describe the societal assumption that a "truly feminine" woman would be fulfilled as being only a mother, wife, and housewife.

20 Editor's note: By referencing critical theory of society, Čačinović refers to the project initiated by the Institute for Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung) founded in 1923 in Frankfurt-am-Main. The Institute gathered theorists like Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and others, who used the term "critical theory of society" to describe their version of Hegelian Marxism.

21 Editor's note: Čačinović draws on Herbert Marcuse's text "Marxism and Feminism," which she had translated the previous year, and in which Marcuse stated that the feminine characteristics are socially conditioned, yet that due to the long process of social conditions they had become "second nature," which could not be automatically changed by simply establishing new social institutions. As he notes "There can be discrimination against women even under socialism." Herbert Marcuse, "Marxism and Feminism," *Women's Studies: An Inter-Disciplinary Journal* 2, no. 3 (1974): 280.

7. It is precisely the socio-historical volatility and the conditionality of the characteristics and ways of behavior that create the connection between the women's movement and the struggle for socialism. The so-called predominantly feminine traits—receptiveness, sensitivity, non-violence, tenderness, etc.—are largely attributed to women in the ideological function of justifying specific forms of repression and exploitation that they were exposed to throughout history. The repression of patriarchal societies points women in a specific direction; the women's movement stands up to this by fighting for the fullest possible economic, social, and cultural equality. In an unfree society this can only mean equal unfreedom (even though the struggle against women's double burden is necessary). The lack of freedom in developed societies implies the rule of the principle of efficiency, work alienation, promotion of competitiveness, aggression, and pushiness; this world of work is represented by qualities that are considered male. The idea of so-called feminine socialism, modern socialism that takes into account social categories, is about the women's movement—beyond and even after achieving equality—leading a struggle for the liberation of men and women by referring to the possibilities for a qualitatively different life in which it would truly be possible to live in line with the so-called feminine qualities that we have listed: sensitivity, tenderness, non-violence. (This is theoretically best shown by Herbert Marcuse in his latest works.²²)

8. The consciously socialist part of modern feminism therefore created a starting point for revolutionizing existing relations: such highlighting of the "subjective factor" is in line with Marx's thesis that the socialist society will not inevitably and automatically result from quantitative changes in capitalism. In this sense the movement for the liberation of women is yet to be "replaced" by a broader movement of all people such as the movement for the equality of women, just like the movement for the equality of all women is, regarding its original goals, replaced or outmoded.

9. The practical relevance of modern feminism therefore stems from the possibility of raising awareness and assembling by means of new content; theoretical relevance is not, however, limited to just the necessity of interpreting these mobilization possibilities (fashionable and sensationalist content does not devalue modern feminism as much as they speak of the real state of things in society, in which even the idea of a life worthy of human is used to make profit). The theoretical

22 Editor's note: Nadežda Čačinovič refers to Marcuse's Freudian reading of capitalist societies in which the Performance Principle is the ruling one (that is, the governing values are the profitable productivity, competitiveness, assertiveness, efficiency), which eventually leads the capitalist society to a "total mobilization of aggressiveness" that expresses itself in militarization, and fusion of sexuality and violence, among other things. Marcuse poses socialism as the antithesis to such capitalist society, yet equality in itself would not automatically entail freedom. He saw the liberation of women as the antithesis to the Performance Principle, which would turn the feminine characteristics on its head, and envisioned the image of socialism through a notion of "feminist socialism."

relevance of modern feminism is, principle-wise, inseparable from Marxism: it is not about the Marxist “redoing” of certain theses, or about feminist “supplements” to Marxism, but about the fact that the problems of modern feminism can only be radically considered in a Marxist manner.

10. Modern feminism as a deliberation of the problem of the “female version of human” and of ways of eliminating its constraints (thus also men’s unfreedom), is not a “female” theory, but women are not its subject matter in a purely empirical and pragmatic way that would prevent the use of its methods and procedures. Of course, there are no specifically female truths, but the fact that women did not participate for centuries in, for example, the most advanced theoretical work, makes them especially suitable for discovering the theoretically still insufficiently perceived connections between pure, completely non-particular rationality and the social principle of economy. In other words: female liberation does not mean the realization of a separate female culture; instead, both men and women must free themselves from a series of supposedly general and generally valid truths, theoretical and common-sense truths, which actually serve particular interests. And since family relations and relations between the sexes largely determine people, truths about the hidden traps in these relations, which are revealed by contemporary feminism, contribute to changing human consciousness.

11. In our country, in principle, no “postponement” of the goals of the original women’s movement is permissible, and, in fact, modern feminism should be anticipated. Realistically, however, there are a number of practically and theoretically unresolved issues: on the one hand, equality is only proclaimed, and, in places where it is institutionally guaranteed, its basically formal nature is evident. On the other hand, women doing the same jobs as men are not only expected to do additional domestic work, but this double burden is perceived as achieved emancipation. Women’s better living conditions do not only depend on material possibilities (economic development). What should be considered already in the process of planning and construction of relevant institutions (kindergartens, services) is the realization that freedom is not an automatic product of institutions (which is the main theme of contemporary feminism), and what should especially be considered is what kind of institutions we actually need and want. The ones currently planned are an unsatisfactory substitute for traditionally female duties, rather than a beginning of the elimination of traditional male and female roles. Instead of the old “female” dependence and “male” dependency on work, the ultimate goal for both women and men can only be self-realization in work and enjoyment in unrestrained sensibility, regardless of whether the differences between the sexes will be greater or lesser.

Rada Iveković

The Position of Women: Immediate Tasks and Neglected Aspects

AUTHOR Rada Iveković

TITLE “Položaj žene: neposredni zadaci i zapostavljeni vidovi” [The Position of Women: Immediate Tasks and Neglected Aspects]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Unpublished manuscript written for the conference “Drug-ca žena” [Comrade-ess Woman], where the participants could read it in print. It was translated by Joan and David Rouge in 1978, revised by Chiara Bonfiglioli and Rada Iveković in 2022.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian¹

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rada Iveković (b. 1945, Zagreb) is a philosopher, Indianist, and writer. Born after the Second World War to highly educated parents engaged in the People's Liberation Struggle (Narodnooslobodilačka borba, NOB), Iveković spent some time in Italy and Germany, where her father was appointed Yugoslav ambassador, then attended school in Belgrade, after which she passed her high school leaving exam in Zagreb. She graduated from the University of Zagreb in 1969, with degrees in Indian Studies and English Language and Literature, after which she studied philosophy. Her first trip to India dates from 1970, and in 1972 she received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Buddhist Philosophy from the University of Delhi. Once back in Zagreb, she taught mainly the History of Asian Philosophy and Comparative Philosophy at the Philosophy Department from 1975 till 1991, when she left for France and held various positions as professor in different institutions, notably the University of Paris-8 Vincennes, of Saint-Etienne, and the Collège International de Philosophie. Rada Iveković has also been a visiting professor at universities in Graz, Rome, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Calcutta, Hsinchu (Taiwan), and Singapore.

Iveković's role as a feminist public intellectual started in Yugoslavia in the 1970s, when she published several articles on second-wave feminism and contributed to the organization of the first international feminist conference held in Yugoslavia in 1978. She was later among the founders of the *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society) section within the Sociological Society of Croatia, and a key presence in emerging women's and gender studies in the region. Her role as a public figure became even more

1 Rada Iveković's note: At the time of the publication of the source, Serbocroatian or Croatoserbian. Today called “zajednički jezik” (Shared language); or called locally after the fourfold national names (Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian).

pressing in the early 1990s, when she was among the five female intellectuals and journalists who were blacklisted by *Globus* magazine in the infamous “Witches from Rio” case for refusing to side with nationalist propaganda in Croatia.² Her engagement resulted in pioneering publications on the role of gender and sexual difference as a key element of nationalist discourse, and on women’s bodies as signifiers of national and ethnic borders during processes of partition. The book *From Gender to Nation*, edited with Julie Mostov, considers the significance of nation and gender in the context of post-1989 transitions in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and in the context of post-partition India. More recently, Iveković has been a key voice in the study of political translation across disciplinary fields and across nations and cultures, engaging with post-colonial and post-socialist studies and challenging the epistemic and political borders and amnesias of “Fortress Europe.” Even if her previous life in Yugoslavia felt “untranslatable” after she moved to France,³ her commitment to create bridges between people, languages, disciplines, and historical temporalities has been unfaltering. It is about time, then, to discover her earlier writings, which can be seen as a pioneering example of feminist translation, particularly when it comes to the different political languages of the feminist second wave in Europe.

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Chiara Bonfiglioli

CONTEXT

Rada Iveković’s previously unpublished article, reprinted below, was part of the works of Yugoslav feminist authors that had been translated into English in preparation for the international conference titled “Drug-ca žena. Žensko pitanje – novi pristup?” (Comrade-ess Woman. The Women’s Question: A New Approach?), which was organized at the end of October 1978 within the premises of the Students’ Cultural Center (Studentski kulturni centar) in Belgrade. The conference saw the participation

² Miškovska Kajevska, *Feminist Activism at War*.

³ Iveković, “Avant et après,” 434.

of over eighty local and international guests, and is considered a foundational event for the establishment of “neo-feminism” in Yugoslavia.⁴ The translated texts written by Yugoslav authors were distributed to the international guests who attended the conference. The other texts in the collection had already been published in local journals and magazines, and were authored by other key figures of the Yugoslav second-wave feminist scene, notably the conference organizers and sociologists Žarana Papić from Belgrade, and Nada Ler-Sofronić from Sarajevo, as well as other prominent members of the to-be-established *Žena i društvo* section in Zagreb, that is, historian Lydia Sklevicky, journalist Slavenka Drakulić, philosopher Nadežda Čaćinović, and sociologist Vesna Pusić. The conference organizers also prepared another reader, which included translations of various American, British, French, and Italian feminist texts, with the aim of introducing Western feminist ideas to local audiences. The variety of texts that were translated testifies to the familiarity of Yugoslav activists with second-wave women’s movements in Europe and the United States.⁵

While the idea to organize the conference emerged between Belgrade and Sarajevo and was spearheaded by Žarana Papić, Nada Ler-Sofronić, and curator Dunja Blažević, who at the time was the program director of the Students’ Cultural Center, the contribution of Rada Iveković and other members of the *Žena i društvo* group was significant, as made evident by recent testimonies by Blažević,⁶ and as apparent from the videos of the conference made by filmmaker Jasmina Tešanović, as well as by the transcripts of the conference debates held in the SKC archives in Belgrade. Iveković herself recalls that she had an important role in contacting many of the feminist guests based in Rome. From the mid-1970s to the late 1970s, when this text was written, Rada Iveković was living between Zagreb and Rome, where her husband used to work at the local Yugoslav embassy. Žarana Papić had asked Rada Iveković to contact potential participants from Italy, and she got in touch with well-known feminist figures whose books and articles she had read, via their publisher or via the newspapers they wrote for. The Italian group included many notable activists of the feminist second wave, such as Dacia Maraini, Carla Ravaioli, Letizia Paolozzi, Manuela Fraire, Adele Cambria, and other women who were active in feminist publishing, journalism, and the art scene.

Rada Iveković’s text is clearly influenced by Western feminist critiques of Marxism, particularly those associated with the feminist movement in Italy and France. These were, as she recalled, the “years of her feminist education, which was an Italian one. That is where I bought all the feminist books, even in Italian translations, of

4 Bonfiglioli, “Belgrade, 1978.”

5 For an overview of such translations, see Bonfiglioli, “Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context.”

6 Gudac Dodić, “Konferencija ‘Drug-ca žena. Žensko pitanje – novi pristup?’”; Blažević, conversation with Vera Gudac Dodić and Olga Manojlović Pintar, 2019.

U.S. feminists and of Luce Irigaray for instance.”⁷ Many of the articles published in Yugoslavia at the time of the conference noted that the international guests were members of their respective communist parties, as a way to highlight their left-wing credentials and also the possibility to combine Marxism and feminism, something that sounded unprecedented in the Yugoslav public sphere. This revisitation of Marxism by the Žena i društvo group was influenced by the male-dominated circle of dissident Marxist philosophers affiliated to the *Praxis* group, and challenged the official discourse of the Conference for the Social Activity of Women (KDAŽ), according to which feminism was a “bourgeois” and mostly Western phenomenon.⁸

Against such orthodoxies, Iveković’s text highlights the limits of socialist gender equality, from women’s lack of representation in decision-making bodies and tokenism, to women’s double burden despite the “socialization” of (some) welfare services, from women’s alienation within the family and lack of collective consciousness, to the specific brand of Yugoslav gendered consumerism and sexualization of the female body. It also stressed the relevance of Western second wave feminism for the Yugoslav context. Thanks to its “solid Marxist theoretical foundation,” according to Iveković, the second wave feminist movement in the West embraced “problems which are in our midst (although we have others in addition), and so it is not alien to us, but in fact valuable.” The author added however that “of course, there can be no question of the transplanting of problems or solutions,” showing her deep awareness of the need for feminist movements to find a language specific to their local context. Such resistance to cultural imperialism clearly emerged during the “Drug-ca žena” conference, when Yugoslav women stood their ground while interacting with Western guests, who objected to the presence of men within the conference hall, or who mistook the organizers’ critical engagement with state socialism as a sign of conformity to official discourse.⁹

Given that many second-wave feminists in Yugoslavia were daughters of women engaged in the antifascist resistance, they were keen not to burn bridges with past generations, while they simultaneously interrogated the ways in which women’s crucial role in the People’s Liberation Movement had been depoliticized and partially forgotten during socialist times. Lydia Sklevicky wrote her posthumously published dissertation on the demise of the Women’s Antifascist Front in the early 1950s, and famously noted that there were “more horses than women” in Yugoslav history books, while Rada Iveković discovered that her mother had been a feminist during the inter-war period, and had published in the feminist journal *Ženski svijet*, but never told her about it. Due to “feminism” being a bad word, reclaiming one’s (neo)feminism in the

7 Iveković, interview with Chiara Bonfiglioli, unpublished, 2008.

8 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*.

9 Bonfiglioli, “Belgrade, 1978”; Bonfiglioli, “Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context”; Blažević, conversation with Vera Gudac Dodić and Olga Manojlović Pintar, 2019.

1970s was not an easy choice, and could result in ridicule and marginalization, particularly on behalf of male colleagues in academic departments. Iveković herself recalls that when trying to combine de Beauvoir and Marx, and arguing that women had to turn from a “class in itself” to a “class for itself,” her whole department “fell off the chair laughing.”¹⁰ It certainly took great courage and determination to wander off the beaten path, as Rada Iveković did throughout her life. Over forty years after this text was written, we can still perceive the currency of the issues she raised, as well as the urgency of her feminist vision.

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Chiara Bonfiglioli



¹⁰ Iveković, interview with Chiara Bonfiglioli, unpublished, 2008.

¹¹ Copies of the original interview and of other interviews with conference participants are available in the Atria archive in Amsterdam.

Rada Iveković

The Position of Women: Immediate Tasks and Neglected Aspects

“Judging by election returns in Yugoslavia and the distribution of leading political positions, it is obvious that all power has been conclusively and irrevocably taken—by men. Faced with a choice between women as housewives or as officials, Yugoslavs decided in favor of housewives” (Stevan Nikšić, *NIN Magazine*, May 1978). Briefly and succinctly, this is a symptom of a much more profound contradiction in our entire society, and is more a result than a cause. There is no point in wondering, no point in exerting ourselves to make women into “functionaries.” If they are not to be found in responsible positions, there are good reasons for it. The error of our politics is, and has been, that on the one hand “the woman question” has been neglected, considered resolved or nonexistent, while on the other hand action was taken in situations (like this one, immediately before or after elections) when it was necessary to meet quotas for the form’s sake, to balance a slate of nominees, etc. After vigorous dispute as to whether or not there is a “woman question,” matters are at last clear: there is no doubt that even in statistical terms women in our society do not play a role proportionate to their number or, ultimately, to the requirements of a genuinely humane community.

[...]

In Yugoslavia it is often thought that women have drawn even with men by virtue of the fact that they are accorded statutory equality (although this is something that merits further examination). All post-war experience points to the opposite, and increasingly so. Even if this were not the case, women of course could not be satisfied (nor should men be with mere equality, for in present-day conditions it still means, at best, an equal right to a number of unresolved situations, and a lack of freedom). Moreover, with reference to women it is often asserted that their positions have been resolved by mere employment, which is similarly not the case and is entailed in the preceding argument. This is an old contention familiar to all: after the job, women must deal with the housework, and it is no wonder that they cannot—and will not—become involved in socio-political affairs. The inadequate solution of daycare centers and laundry services is proposed, and right away the problem is falsified by reducing the woman question to the issue of daycare. By what criteria are daycare centers, or for that matter household labor-saving devices, exclusively aids to women, and not also to men? [...] It is no solution to shift the responsibilities or chores of women to someone—or something—else: the point is for men and women to share these things. Only when men assume their share of responsibility at home (and when a part of the common tasks is, then, if possible, delegated to service workers), will it be possible for women to assume their share of responsibility in society.

[...]

The woman/housewife is separated from production (often even when she is employed outside the household) and condemned to a world of consumption that is rudely, unnaturally (but purposefully) separated from production. With respect to the real world of production and human action in the world, it is the man who mediates for the woman, and who still mediates today, inasmuch as women are disproportionately underrepresented in public life. By virtue of the laws of social life, the relationship of men and women is artificially separated into "public" and "private," to the exclusion of the perception of the unity of these two aspects of the same life. No human problem of human beings is a "private" problem, nor can it be unworthy of the attention of society at large and of broad discussion. Once acknowledged as a general problem, there is no "private" problem which ought not be termed a political problem in the most positive sense of the word. The division into private and public amounts to and perpetuates a double, false morality: a differing morality for men and for women, for private life and for public positions, for married and unmarried women, for youth and for adults. Such a morality, nourished in the (*petit*) bourgeois family, is a conditioning factor. In such circumstances, how can one hope that the family will truly be the locus of de-alienation, when the family itself is a conditioned product of the forces under which we live? There can be no solution without an individual and total effort equivalent to a revolution in morals, in fact a cultural revolution in the best and broadest sense of the word.

It has been predicted that movements lacking a firm party organization would not endure, but those predictions have proved incorrect, particularly in Italy and France in recent years. In any case, the Chinese revolution was quite successfully run on the same principles. In Western Europe the women's movement (or movements) has a solid Marxist theoretical foundation, and aims at a broader goal than one would conclude from its narrow title. It possesses practical forms of various political orientations, at times exalted and aggressive, in keeping with the frustrations to which women are subject. The movement has also aroused interest in Yugoslavia, although doubt exists as to its objectives, and out of inadequate acquaintance it is belittled or ridiculed. But such as it is, the movement embraces problems which are in our midst (although we have others in addition), and so it is not alien to us, but in fact valuable. Of course, there can be no question of the transplanting of problems or solutions. One of the special values of the women's movement is that it has exposed, expressed, condemned, and elucidated a host of situations in everyday life which all theoretical currents have sidestepped (but which now must be taken into account) and, what is more interesting, has often confronted these situations from an unusual new angle. Any new view of a problem can contribute to a solution. But do women truly manifest as much mutual

solidarity as one might conclude from the foregoing? It would seem that they do not, and that they lack some sort of common consciousness. This is only understandable in light of their dispersion among various classes and cultural backgrounds. Women do not constitute a class, and have common interests solely in one specifically feminine condition—their domination by men, regardless of class. [...] The problem of the nonexistence of a collective women's consciousness, and the fact that a man and a woman of the same social class are often closer to one another than two women of differing class background, have presented the chief obstacle to the emancipation and liberation of women.

This is not to mention the fact that a number of features of our style of living in this consumer society directly obstruct this process. How can one describe the incredible advertisements that appear on commercial television and in the stupefying “women's” magazines, coupled with those magazines themselves? What is one to say about the degrading petit bourgeois image of women which is systematically formulated in domestic journals devoted to fashion, advertisements, cosmetics, hints to the housewife, shamefully tasteless household décor, furnishings, etc.? What of the furniture suites entitled “Tanja,” “Alma,” etc., bedroom sets for petit bourgeois brides in white, clumsy, outsized furniture created for apartments no one has and marriages that ought never to be, with the household “hearth” and the “queen of the hearth,” the pretty, radiant cover girl bride who joyously awaits the husband returning from work. The focal point of a marriage of this type and of such a marital environment, symptomatically but truly, is the bedroom suite composed of a king-sized bed and a wardrobe for hiding the dirty laundry, old junk, and possibly a lover, who could only belong in such a marriage. “My hands have always been smooth and white since I began using detergent X,” says the lady in the flowered apron in the advertisement. Or, “This detergent is so wonderful that now even HE wants to wash the dishes,” says the advertisement only ostensibly more intelligent than the last. What are we being asked to swallow? The consumer logic to which our life is subject (because it is unfortunately alleged to be the condition for economic growth), does not permit the authorities to proclaim this worst of all possible *Schund*¹² for what it really is: a disgraceful, immoral, inhuman, unsocialist, harmful display. Falling into the same category of evils that are tolerated and dog our footsteps are the lyrics of popular songs, want ads for jobs calling for “W” or, more often, “M.” Or, to take another illustration from the newspapers, look at the death notices: Jovan Savić, father, engineer, teacher, and what have you. And then, for women: Jovanka M., mother, widow of the economist Todor M., etc. Naturally, the contrast is not always so evident, but a simple statistical computation and a fifteen-minute count of the obituaries yields approximately such

12 Editor's note: German for (piece of) trash.

a picture. And what is one to say of the sad celebrations of March 8, Women's Day. (Tellingly, the senseless descriptions in the store windows say "Long Live March 8," instead of "Long Live Women!")

The so-called "sexual revolution" that took place not so long ago (which pertained ultimately to the relative liberalization of certain customs), was still primarily an exclusively "male" phenomenon, and the liberation of sexuality took place only from the perspective of the male, with the female as the sex-object, of course. Testimony to this is provided by all the "skin" magazines, whose pin-ups are still only women. [...] Sexuality is thus channeled by means of the patriarchal and repressive aspect of a kind of instrumentalization. And despite a degree of liberation, it still exclusively serves the purposes of male physiological needs: it was in this sense that Freud dealt with sexuality (see Luce Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme*, Paris, 1974). [...] Women are above all uninformed about their sexuality. They are acquainted with their bodies by means of their reflection. This is all that was left to them, and so women have become accustomed to see their sexuality from a distorted male perspective. Today they must learn to master their bodies and sexuality, and to make use of these. This is something for the general benefit. The issue is somewhat complicated by the fact that in the physiological sense, female sexuality is learned: it must be learned, for it is much less automatic or mechanical than male sexuality. The more so as in it and in its application (to the joint sexual life of man and woman) lies the possibility for the greater humanization and sublimation of the sex drive.

*Translated by Joan and David Rouge in 1978,
revised by Chiara Bonfiglioli and Rada Iveković in 2022*

Stana Buzatu

Issues for a Fruitful Dialogue between Feminism and Marxism

AUTHOR Stana Buzatu

TITLE “Probleme deschise dialogului creator: General și particular în lupta pentru eliberarea femeii” [Issues for a Fruitful Dialogue: The General and the Particular in Women’s Fight for Liberation]

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LANGUAGE Romanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR¹

Stana Buzatu (1934, Voietin, Romania) was born into a peasant family. Her paternal grandfather died in the First World War, leaving six children behind. Her maternal grandfather was a church cantor, who took part in the 1907 Peasant Revolt and also fought in the First World War. The Second World War, as well as the draught and famine of 1946, left a deep impression on Stana as a child, as did her mother’s efforts and that of village women in general in times of crisis. With her father left disabled after the Second World War, her mother had to care for the household and her four children. Stana remained attached to village life well into adulthood, returning to the village during summer breaks to support the local youth who wanted to continue their studies.

Between 1953 and 1958, she studied at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest, on a merit scholarship. She was a theatre and concert goer, developing a life-long passion for classical music. After graduation, she briefly taught historical and dialectical materialism at the “Nicolae Grigorescu” Institute of Arts in Bucharest (currently: National University of Arts) and the “Ciprian Porumbescu” Conservatory (currently: National University of Music). From 1959, she was an activist, then member (1961) of the Central Committee of the Union of Communist Youth. In 1960, she married Corneliu Buzatu, a graduate of the Polytechnic University in Bucharest, who taught at the same university and was scientific director of the National Institute of Metrology.

Between 1963 and 1965, Stana Buzatu enrolled in postgraduate studies in philosophy at the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Academy. In 1965, she was offered a chance to move

¹ This biography is based on personal communication with Stana Buzatu, who has kindly shared her life story in writing (email correspondence, April 21, 2023) and welcomed me warmly to her home in Bucharest for an interview (April 25, 2023) and for continued conversation. Raluca Maria Popa has offered helpful advice in preparation for the interview. This contribution was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS/CCCDI – UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P4-IDPCE-2020-0707, within PNCDI III.

to Berlin as representative of the National Women's Council (Consiliul Național al Femeilor) to hold the position of Secretary of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). She relocated with her husband and their small child. She held the position until 1971, and also gave birth to their second child during this time. From Berlin, Stana organized and participated in international conferences on children's rights in Stockholm (1966),² solidarity with women from Vietnam in Paris (1966), and women and world peace in Nicosia (1967), as well as the World Congress of Women in Helsinki (1969).³

Upon returning to Romania, she was a researcher and head of the documentation department at the Institute for Political Science and the Study of the National Problem (Institutul pentru Științe Politice și Studierea Problemei Naționale) between 1971 and 1973. During this time, Buzatu had research stays in Paris and Rome, and was preoccupied with two research topics: the condition of women and the rise of neo-fascism in Italy. In the 1970s, she also taught courses on the history of Romanian culture for foreign students and postgraduate courses for cultural workers at the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Academy (disbanded after 1989).

Stana Buzatu met French sociologist and feminist Andrée Michel (1920–2022) at a UN conference in Geneva in 1975, and the two remained close. Michel sent her contemporary feminist scholarship, which informed Stana's dissertation in philosophy, entitled "Woman's Condition: A Dimension of Contemporary Progress," and defended in 1979 at the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Academy. Her PhD supervisor was the philosopher Constantin Borgeanu, while the philosopher C. I. Gulian (head of the Institute of Philosophy in Bucharest and editor-in-chief of the main journal of philosophy at the time, *Revista de filozofie* [Journal of Philosophy]) and the philosopher of culture Al. Tănase were part of the defense committee. The book with the same title was published in 1979 by one of the main publishing houses in Romania, Editura Politică, and received the "Simion Bărnuțiu" Prize of the Romanian Academy in 1981.

After 1989, Stana Buzatu collaborated with various NGOs to organize national and international events on topics related to women's social condition, children's rights, and the social and material costs of transition. Following a meeting she had in Bucharest with representatives of the International Abolitionist Federation visiting Romania, and her participation at the UN International Human Rights Conference in Vienna in 1993, she was deeply moved by the issue of sexual violence against women. In 1994, she organized the first conference in Eastern Europe on the topic in Bucharest, for which she received the support of publicly well-known lawyer Paula

2 "Conferința mondială a copilului" [World Conference for Children], *Știința* 36, no. 7121 (October 4, 1966): 5.

3 "Cronica zilei" [Daily Chronicle], *Știința* 38, no. 8094 (June 13, 1969), 2.

Iacob (1932–2015). With Iacob, Buzatu founded the Association of Women in Legal Careers (Asociația Femeilor de Carieră Juridică), which she also represented internationally as its secretary. Stana Buzatu concerned herself with the status of women during the transition, and organized different international conferences, notably in 1999 on legal aspects related to women, family, and children in South-Eastern Europe. She was founding member of the UNESCO Club for Romania and of the Federation of UNESCO Clubs, as well as the Club's president between 2005 and 2010. Throughout her career, she maintained a presence at national and international conferences, in the press, and on TV.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • “Considerații critice la *Limitele creșterii*” [Critical Considerations on *Limits to Growth*], in *Limitele creșterii în câmpul dezbaterii critice* [*Limits to Growth in the Field of Critical Debate*] (Bucharest: Academia de științe sociale și politice, 1973), 45–55; *Condiția femeii: Dimensiune a progresului contemporan* [Woman's Condition: A Dimension of Contemporary Progress] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1979); “Neofascismul în Italia” [Neofascism in Italy], in *Neofascism, terrorism, noua dreaptă: Probleme vechi, ipostaze noi în lumea capitalistă* [Neofascism, Terrorism, New Right: Old Issues, New Aspects in the Capitalist World] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1981), 144–73; “Edificarea socialismului în România, tărâm istoric al emancipării și afirmării depline a femeii în societate” [The Edification of Socialism in Romania, Historical Terrain for the Emancipation and Complete Affirmation of Women in Society], part I in *Anale de istorie* 34, no. 3 (1988): 75–90, and part II in *Anale de istorie* 34, no. 4 (1988): 45–60.

CONTEXT

As in other state socialist contexts, women's history, especially the lives of interwar communist activists, were a visible topic during the 1950s in Romania.⁴ The 1960s saw contemporary women's issues, such as the double burden, discussed more openly, especially in the press.⁵ Then, in the 1970s, several book-length studies came out which dealt with the economic, social, psychological, and philosophical aspects of the so-called “woman's condition.”⁶ Overwhelmingly written by women, these addressed in substantial ways concerns related to women's integration into productive work and participation in social and political life, envisioning economic measures but also

4 For women's history and how it was marginalized in the period after high Stalinism, together with the “amateur” women historians who wrote it, see Ghiț, “Professionals' and Amateurs' Pasts”; for a comparison with Hungary, see Zimmermann, “In and Out of the Cage: Women's Gender History Written in Hungary”; and with Yugoslavia, Vera Veskovik-Vangeli in this volume.

5 See Ecaterina Oproiu in this volume.

6 For a more detailed discussion of these studies, see Hîncu, “Ambivalentes Empowerment,” on which this contextualization is based.

socio-cultural adjustments to correct the gender inequalities made overt by women's unprecedented entry into the labor force over the previous decades.⁷

The context for this scholarship was complex. A Plenary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party held on June 18–19, 1973, addressed ways to increase women's roles in the country's economic, political, and social life.⁸ At the same time, these works came out around the United Nations International Women's Year (IWY) in 1975, and through to the following United Nations Decade for Women (1976–1985). As Raluca Maria Popa has showed, this was not a case of merely reacting to international developments, but instead, women's organizations in Romania (and other state socialist countries) and the activists working within them participated in “the formulation of the equality, development, and peace discourse of IWY and in its circulation in their respective national contexts.”⁹ This is consistent with the work of Celia Donert, Francisca de Haan, and others, about socialist women's central role in the formulation of women's rights as human rights surrounding the IWY.¹⁰ Popa has found that the echoes of the IWY were much more limited and tentative in the Romanian press compared to Hungary, but that international involvement had a lasting effect if not on public discourse, which according to Popa “nationalized” transnationally framed global concerns, then certainly on individuals, Stana Buzatu being an exceptional example for that.¹¹

The scholarship published in Romania in the 1970s rarely engaged overtly or substantially with contemporary feminist or Marxist feminist debates abroad. Ecaterina Deliman (1936–?), member of the Party's Central Committee between 1969 and 1974, referred to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* on the issue of women's social versus biological nature.¹² She also followed the debates of the early 1970s on household labor in *Political Affairs*, the theoretical organ of the Communist Party in the United States, but did not reflect on the substance of the arguments on women's reproductive labor in relation to the production of surplus value by men, or the consequences of such an analysis for the unity of class struggle. Deliman merely agreed with the

7 The most important of these studies: Georgeta Dan-Spinoiu, *Factori obiectivi și subiectivi în integrarea profesională a femeii* [Objective and Subjective Factors in Women's Professional Integration] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1974); Aneta Spornic, *Utilizarea eficientă a resurselor de muncă feminină în România* [The Efficient Use of Female Labor Resources in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R. S. România, 1975); Ana Gluvacov, *Afirmarea femeii în viața societății: Dimensiuni și semnificații în România* [Women's Self-Assertion in the Life of Society: Dimensions and Meanings in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975); Ecaterina Deliman, *Femeia, personalitate politică în societatea noastră socialistă* [Woman: Political Personality in Our Socialist Society] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1977).

8 Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare*, 217–21. See also Olivia Clătici in this volume.

9 Popa, “Translating Equality between Women and Men,” 61.

10 Donert, “Women's Rights in Cold War Europe”; de Haan, “Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations.”

11 Popa, “Translating Equality between Women and Men,” 71–72.

12 Deliman, *Femeia, personalitate politică*, 19. On Deliman, see also Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare*, 203–207.

conclusion, not as controversial at that time, that women's integration into production was not a guarantee for their liberation.¹³

Stana Buzatu's *Woman's Condition: Dimension of Contemporary Progress* (1979) is exceptional in this intellectual context because of its close engagement with contemporary feminism as a movement and ideology and its treatment of the topic of woman's condition from a global perspective. With more than 500 pages and a bibliography in Romanian, English, French, German, and Italian, the book is structured into five chapters. The first chapter clarifies "the notion of woman's condition" and elaborates a Marxist, historical, and materialist-dialectical perspective on its evolution. Here, Stana Buzatu argues against what she calls contemporary "radical feminism," and especially Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, and restates the pre-eminence of social determinations over biological ones,¹⁴ in line with the insights of Engels in *The Origin of the Family* and contemporary anthropology and ethnography. The second chapter offers a class analysis of the situation of women in contemporary capitalist societies. The third and longest chapter deals with feminism "past and future." In the last two chapters, Buzatu sketches the situation of women in the "third world" and in socialism, respectively.

In the chapter on feminism—the core of the book—Stana Buzatu draws on a wide array of authors, especially American (e.g., Shulamith Firestone, Betty Friedan, Kate Millett) and French (e.g., Simone de Beauvoir, Andrée Michel, Mathilde Niel, Luce Irigaray). She recognizes the merits as well as class limitations of bourgeois feminism in the struggle for civil rights, and proceeds to critically discuss the issues raised by "radical feminism" or "neofeminism," as defined by Firestone, in the context of the social movements of the 1960s in the West. Buzatu focuses, among others, on the relationship between feminism and ideology,¹⁵ particularly in relation to Marxism, acknowledging radical feminists' use of Marxist concepts such as class, exploitation, or discrimination, and their critique of capitalism. She nevertheless notes the limitations of radical feminism in terms of enacting change as a stand-alone ideology, and in its capacity to account for the complexity of existing social, economic, and cultural structures (e.g., racism and the position of women of color).

At a time when abortion had been severely restricted in Romania under the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, the general secretary of the communist party and leader of the country between 1965 and 1989,¹⁶ Buzatu discusses at some length the approach of radical feminism to sexuality, including the use of contraceptives and abortion, crediting feminism for having brought the topics of sexual education and women's choice

13 Deliman, *Femeia, personalitate politică*, 47. Among the authors to whose articles she refers are Isabel Largaia and John Dumoulin, and Margaret Cowl.

14 Buzatu, *Condiția femeii*, 32–38.

15 Buzatu, *Condiția femeii*, 177–90.

16 See the context for Ana Blandiana in this volume.

into public discourse. She agrees that the use of contraceptives was a means to give women control over their own bodies and allow maternity to be, more than sexual determinism, a conscious means of women's fulfillment.¹⁷ At the same time, Buzatu stresses that advocating for the availability of contraceptives cannot replace fighting for fundamental social changes in the condition of women. Similarly, on the issue of abortion she quotes the lawyer and feminist activist Gisèle Halimi (1927–2020), who had described the ban on abortion (in France) as “a repressive, narrow, anachronistic law contrary to women's freedom.”¹⁸ According to Buzatu, most abortions were motivated by social and economic hardship. She is careful to delimit this discussion to capitalist societies, yet in the context of its time, including it at all should be seen as an important statement. Buzatu also addresses feminist approaches to women's productive and reproductive roles, and gender roles within the family (praising, for example, the Swedish model already then famous for its progressive take on child rearing). She presents discussions about women's alienation or the role of science in maintaining inequalities between women and men at length.

The source text included here is part of a broader discussion on the relationship between feminism and Marxism, and supports the possibility of a creative dialogue between the two. Notably, Stana Buzatu proposes the integration of the concept of “sexism” into political language and social practice in Romania, following the model of “racism” or “underdevelopment.” In what she identified in our private conversation as a conscious strategy to instrumentalize the official discourse of Nicolae Ceaușescu for advancing new ideas, in the source she argues that if new concepts were made necessary by the socioeconomic consequences of colonialism and imperialism, then in turn the term sexism would illuminate the realities of discrimination against women that were otherwise naturalized.

Woman's Condition is widely informed by and reflects the transnational context of the 1970s. Within the WIDF in Berlin, Stana Buzatu recalled she sought to establish equal relations with her peers from all over the globe. International conferences, such as a meeting organized by the International Institute for Labor Studies in 1975 in Geneva, which she remembers as a formative moment for her interest in feminism,¹⁹ were opportunities to establish lasting contacts and intellectual affinities. Most importantly, Stana Buzatu offered an impressively well-read, inquisitive, and committed theoretical reflection on the condition of women historically and across the globe, entirely contemporaneous with the feminist debates of her time, and in a scholarly context in which this kind of theorizing was almost entirely missing.

17 Buzatu, *Condiția femeii*, 201.

18 Buzatu, *Condiția femeii*, 203–204.

19 Popa, “Translating Equality,” 72.

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Adela Hincu

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Stana Buzatu

Issues for a Fruitful Dialogue: The General and the Particular in Women's Fight for Liberation

[...] That the pivotal contributions to the development of Marxist theories were made, and the key positions in the leadership of the communist, socialist, revolutionary movement were—and continue to be—held by men, partly explains why feminist movements have manifested suspicion—and still do—toward the revolutionary consistency of Marxism and of socialist movements when it comes to the women's question. This suspicion has gone as far as introducing terms such as "caste," "male chauvinism," "womanhood," "sexism," etc., as they were deemed more adequate to account specifically for issues related to women's exploitation than traditional terms. Given that the critical mention of this feminist response—perceived as abusive, excessive—has proven likely to generate numerous stances of

complete denial towards radical feminism (neofeminism), labeling it *en bloc* a bourgeois ideological diversion, it is time we discussed the issue more thoroughly, starting from these very concrete historical elements.

Having ridden the wave of growing—but nonetheless discriminatory—participation of women in social life and having been shaped at the same time by a new generation entering the stage of history, a generation that was suddenly faced with the obstruction of its professional aspirations, feminism was objectively pushed to its radical forms, to a conception of women's revolution as a starting point for global, structural transformations of human relations identified as bearing the mark of maleness. On the other hand, the narrow space to which the social and human issues of women continue to be assigned within revolutionary movements, from extreme left movements—those that actually gave rise to the “new wave of feminism”—to the parties whose programs and actions make them akin to Marxist, communist, socialist, etc. parties, has only confirmed an oppositional theoretical view of the matter.

Numerous analyses and studies indicate that there is a significant gap between the place and role of women in communist and socialist parties compared to those of men, especially given the complexity of the problems deriving from women's inclusion in social production, from the extent and intensity of the contradictions they face because they must accumulate paid work and domestic work, their duties as workers and mothers, etc. Under these circumstances, one can understand and explain the endurance—even the development—of what sociologists regard as a sort of women's “subculture.” In the same framework, some feminists reject culture wholesale on grounds that it is dominated by “men.” [...] Nothing seems to be easier than to reduce solving the women's question to the emasculation of dictionaries or seizing upon a vast social theme via a quasi-academic repertoire based on a new, eminently feminist vocabulary.

[...] From the list of feminist terms, we will dwell on the term *sexism*, with its meaning emphasizing both class oppression and the oppression of one sex by the other. Interestingly, while the term *racism*, essentially similar to *sexism*, is widely used in Marxist theory, the notion of *sexism* has always been regarded with hostility in the practice of revolutionary and democratic struggles—indeed, it is often used as an argument for qualifying feminism as bourgeois ideology or, at best, as an artificial linguistic concoction, generating false problems. What could account for this? In our opinion, unless it is a blatant case of distorting the general-particular relation or a case of acute intellectual inertia, this phenomenon is mainly explained by the conservatism of certain structures that the system of moral and cultural education and training has inherited. [...]

Indeed, it would be more comfortable to use well-tested classifications, grids, or forms that require little—if any—adjusting of the data. But discrimination based

on sex remains an indisputable fact that has existed for millennia, continuing to take a variety of forms to this day. Undoubtedly, the substance, the genesis, and the endurance of the phenomenon cannot be attributed solely to psychological residues that fuel and reproduce misogynistic attitudes. Obviously, asymmetry between sexes and women's oppression are determined by social, cultural, ideological conditions, and only in the final analysis are they dependent on objective, deep-seated laws of society. But discrimination will always resort to the argument of the so-called "biological," "natural" determination of the sex, brushing away the fact that the heart of the matter is quite another, and that the circumstances of the current developments in science and technology and, partly, in morals are reshaping the social meanings of some of women's particularities. [...]

Consequently, we must refer to sexism as servitude, a specific form of discrimination and enslavement. This notion is needed precisely to define particular, concrete aspects that are often left unvoiced and unacknowledged inside more general categories—such as "social relations," "mode of production," "human alienation," etc., etc. We do not believe that using the term as such to express this state of affairs qualifies in any way as ideological confusion. [...]

Only recently Marxism in political and social sciences and in political economy has started to use a series of new terms—not without hesitation, not without overcoming early doubts. The need to enrich the meanings of general–particular or unity–diversity relations has brought into use a number of new indicators, such as the level of development of technological infrastructures, the level of the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, and others. Through the lens of these indicators, the world is nowadays divided into poor and rich countries, poorly developed, developing, developed, and very developed countries, etc. Indeed, the realities that these terms describe have existed for a long time but only now has the analysis of social formations started to use a wider range of concepts to define these phenomena. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that this is also the case for the term *sexism*. The situation that it describes has been going on for millennia. How is it that these terms have come into use only now? In our opinion, what we are witnessing, overall, are natural processes of crystallization and the better articulation of old realities acquiring new meanings in today's historical time. This is the time that, under the circumstances already described, has led to accelerated processes of the development of the consciousness of large, popular masses.

With women being pushed *en masse* onto the social and political scenes of their countries, the way has opened for a more direct challenge to the social environment in which they have, so far, been assigned to live in resignation, what was more a fate than a dignified life that they could consciously control. Undoubtedly, categories such as developing, developed countries, etc., as well as the term sexism are characterizations based on partial criteria that cannot replace the scientific value

of more comprehensive categories established by the revolutionary theory of social systems. Answering the question, “How accurate is the classification of countries into rich and poor?” comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu showed: “First, this classification reflects a fact obvious to anyone today. Second, it is the expression, at a world level, of a politics of exploitation of numerous peoples and of the consequences of inequality and inequity relations promoted by imperialism and colonialism.”

We do not feel it is an exaggeration to say that the same applies to the term *sexism*. Why? Because:

1. in both cases the terms reflect observable, verified, and evidence-based facts;
2. both amount to centuries of specific conditions of oppression that doubled the fundamental structures of oppression;
3. the need to overcome the historical conditions that make them manifest for both cases: (a) awareness of their existence and importance; (b) envisage solutions meant to essentially reject the class system that generated and deepened them.

We emphasize however the similarities in the context of earlier remarks. Both sexism, or discrimination and sex-based oppression, and underdevelopment point to their cause as a specific economic and social system, a specific type of sociopolitical relation, and the system of values that justifies them. Moreover, we point out that, just like the phenomena of underdevelopment, due to particularities of the dialectics of conceptions and mentalities, sexism exists even in a new social system, qualitatively different from capitalism. To the extent that awareness of the reality and gravity of existing sex-based discrimination can be increased by naming this discrimination *sexism*, then there is no reason to contest the term. Sex-based discrimination is fundamentally contrary to the revolutionary process, to social practice based on working-class philosophy. In a society that makes inequality between sexes a permanent, intrinsic source of ever higher profits, sacrificing the deepest, most natural human values—themselves turned into commodities—on the balance scales of the brutal exchange of commodities, to say it out loud that sexism is the ally and permanent outcome of a society that is alienating by its class nature, appears to us to be working towards clarifying the understanding of the more general phenomenon of class struggle. This adds up to complementing the general character of the theory and concept of class struggle with new, palpable data, namely the characteristics of an entire group of the population that experiences exploitation twice and, being thus doubly alienated, could eventually tip the balance in favor of class struggle by contributing significant revolutionary reserves.

The same as the population discriminated against because of race, women experience their condition of inferiority in much more complex ways and are more

responsive to the problems of their own group. It is therefore not by chance that, within the framework of historical materialism, political economy, sociology, etc., the category of interest, for instance, conveys the original synthesis between the objective and the subjective, the general and the particular, taking into account a certain direct, immediate engagement of the individual, the group, the class, etc. Openly acknowledging the existence of structures of discrimination based on sex constitutes a prerequisite for overcoming strong prejudices and even illusions about the possibility that the historical subject can acquire certain concepts in the absence of actual experience of the realities that such concepts generalize. Acknowledging and revealing prejudices does not occur only at the level of common knowledge, but also at the level of systematic knowledge as long as we deem applicable in this case, too, the truth that essences are always manifested in phenomena and that, in general, abstractions do not just float around disconnected from realities.

Much more courage is still needed to break the patterns, to make sure that concepts match realities, and not the other way around. To be actual dialecticians of the general and the particular, to eliminate the orthodoxy often generated by an atheist cult of the essences, we must focus on integrating instead of juxtaposing. Promoting this type of thinking will contribute also to eliminating the false notion that the trajectories of contemporary Marxism and that of feminism can never cross. On the contrary, we will find many surprising confluences and overlapping spheres that need to be acknowledged even at the risk of rethinking and reconsidering views that are now perceived as axioms. "Could this ideological convergence be a random one?"—the cautious mind will reasonably ask in the shadow of conservatism. No, there is no such danger as long as the key issues of women's mass liberation are not only implicit in Marxism, but also a necessity if Marxism is to achieve its totalizing worth as an integral theory and far-reaching historical action in practice. Moreover, to approach women's issues as a tributary to the more encompassing and convergent action of all those who experience a whole range of frustrations, humiliations, and indignities is to effectively use the theory of the general and the particular to navigate the concrete challenges of contemporary social life.

Translated by Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

Žarana Papić

Sex and Gender—Categories of the Social Organization of Sexuality

AUTHOR Žarana Papić

TITLE “Pol i rod—kategorije socijalne organizacije polnosti” [Sex and Gender—Categories of the Social Organization of Sexuality]

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LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Žarana Papić (1949, Sarajevo–2002, Belgrade) was born in Sarajevo, but lived in Belgrade until the end of her life. She became a student of sociology at the University of Belgrade during the turbulent events of 1968, and, being inquisitive and bold, published her first text already in 1972. Observant and knowledgeable, thereafter she published translations, reviews of books and events, and texts for general audiences in popular weeklies such as *Start*, *Svijet*, *Danas*, and *Reporter*. She followed some of the important events of her time, such as the Conference of the Croatian Sociological Society in Portorož on the occasion of the United Nations International Women’s Year in 1975,¹ or the seminar on Women Studies at the Inter-University Centre Dubrovnik, 1976.² In 1978, Papić organized the seminal conference “Drug-čaka žena: Žensko pitanje – novi pristup?” (Comrade-ess Woman. The Women’s Question: A New Approach?), the first explicitly feminist conference in the socialist world after the Second World War. From the beginning, she did not only participate in the burgeoning Yugoslav feminist scene, but also made that scene happen.

1 The conference proceedings from the section titled “Contemporary Feminism” were published in the journal *Žena: znanstveni časopis za društvena i kulturna pitanja žene i porodice* [Woman: Scientific Journal for Social and Cultural Questions of Woman and Family] 34, no. 3 (1976). All the conference proceedings appeared in *Društveni položaj žene i razvoj porodice u socijalističkom samoupravnom društvu (Portorož, 18.–20.3.1976)* [The Social Position of Women and the Development of the Family in Socialist Self-Managing Society (Portorož, March 18–20, 1976)] (Ljubljana: Komunist, 1979).

2 In a text published in 1977, where Papić reviews the event, she begins with a quandary: “What is ‘women’s studies’ [written in English] and how does one translate this term? Is it only about the position of a woman, or is the meaning of this term wider?” See Žarana Papić, “Društveni položaj žene—specifičnosti i teškoće utemeljenja problema” [The Social Position of Women—The Specificities and Difficulties in Establishing the Problem], *Žena* no. 3 (1977): 106.

In the aftermath of “Drug-ca žena,” many roundtables on the topic took place, and special issues in journals ranging from *Marksistička misao* (Marxist Thought) to *Sociologija sela* (Rural Sociology) tried to figure out how to approach the “woman question” differently. Papić took part in almost all major attempts to revisit this question. She brought Western feminist theory closer to home: *Antropologija žene* (Anthropology of the Woman), a 1983 volume she edited with her long-time friend, the historian Lydia Sklevicky, is a prominent case in point. Likewise, she thematized an “Eastern” variant of feminism, with the aim to examine critically the position of women in socialism. Her 1989 monograph *Sociologija i feminizam* (Sociology and Feminism) was one of the first books in Serbo-Croatian to focus on the relationship between a scholarly discipline (sociology) and the feminist movement. It demanded a more inclusive scholarship which would help build a more inclusive version of everyday life.

After she became an assistant professor of social anthropology in 1989, together with Anđelka Milić and Marina Blagojević she established the first university-level gender studies course in Serbia in 1993. Papić was also one of the founders of and lecturers at the Women’s Studies Center (Centar za ženske studije) in Belgrade, an alternative institution dedicated to the production of feminist, anti-war, and anti-nationalist knowledge. Her academic development coincided with the breakup of Yugoslavia, the fall of socialism, and the ensuing wars. Although her location did not change, her politics of location did, and she felt the need to leave traces of that. Papić had always been a revolutionary: *in medias res*, and ahead of her time. She designated herself as a “postmodern feminist.” At the beginning of the 1990s, she wanted to introduce masculinity studies as an academic topic in Serbia; in her doctoral dissertation, she argued for the rejection of the sex/gender distinction in order to liberate the body from nature.³ She was confronted with the unbearability of war, the establishment of a nation whose war machinery devoured half-emancipated socialist men and women, and the “fascistization” of society.⁴

Žarana Papić was a paradigmatic feminist theorist well before the term became widely used. However, since she always translated reality into theory, the lived reality of war required far more than thinking. In the 1990s, she joined the anti-war organization Women in Black (*Žene u crnom*) to protest the atrocious politics of the Serbian government and to mourn its victims. She was a relentless anti-war advocate who tirelessly corresponded with feminists abroad, wrote against nationalism through an emphatically feminist lens, and travelled to cities destroyed by war. Hers was the idea to organize the Women’s Court for the Former Yugoslavia,⁵ which would eventually

3 Published as *Polnost i kultura: telo i znanje u socijalnoj antropologiji* [Sexuality and Culture: The Body and Knowledge in Social Anthropology] (Belgrade: Biblioteka XX vek, 1997).

4 Papić, “Women as Ex-Citizens in Ex-Yugoslavia.”

5 “Women’s Court—Feminist Approach to Justice/Ženski sud. Feministički pristup pravdi,” <https://www.zenskisud.org/en/index.html>. See Zaharijević, “On Trial at The Women’s Court.”

take place in Sarajevo in 2015. In 2002, soon before her death, she was also behind the idea of the “Women’s Caravan,” and was one of the fifty activists who traveled through the region of the former Yugoslav republics and Albania, crossing twelve borders on foot.⁶ Her idea that feminists need to cross borders continuously turned into “Žarana’s principle” for the generations of feminists that came after her.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • with Ivan Vejvoda, eds., “Žena je čovek” [Woman is Human], special issue on feminism of *Student*, no. 9 (1976); with Lydia Sklevicky, eds., *Antropologija žene. Zbornik* [Anthropology of the Woman: An Anthology], trans. Branko Vučićević (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1983); *Sociologija i feminizam: savremeni pokret i misao o oslobođenju žena i njegov uticaj na sociologiju* [Sociology and Feminism: The Contemporary Movement and Thought on the Liberation of Women and Its Influence on Sociology] (Belgrade: Istraživačko-izdavački centar SSO Srbije, 1989); “The Feminist Critique of Patriarchy Between Universalism and Relativism” and “Women as Ex-Citizens in Ex-Yugoslavia,” in *Against Patriarchal Thinking: A Future Without Discrimination?*, edited by Maja Pellikaan-Engel (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Press, 1992), 149–54, 327–32; “The Possibility of Socialist Feminism in Eastern Europe,” in *Women and Citizenship in Europe: Borders, Rights and Duties*, edited by Anna Ward, Jeanne Gregory, and Nira Yuval-Davis (London: Trentham Books & European Forum of Socialist Feminists, 1992), 101–103; “Nationalismus, Patriarchat und Krieg” [Nationalism, Patriarchy, and War], in *Frauen zwischen Grenzen: Rassismus und Nationalismus in der feministischen Diskussion* [Women Between Borders: Racism and Nationalism in the Feminist Discussion], edited by Olga Uremović and Gundula Oerter (Frankfurt–New York: Campus Verlag, 1994), 107–115; *Polnost i kultura: telo i znanje u socijalnoj antropologiji* [Sexuality and Culture: The Body and Knowledge in Social Anthropology] (Zemun: Biblioteka XX vek, 1997); “Women in Serbia: Post-Communism, War, and Nationalist Mutations,” in *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, edited by Sabrina P. Ramet (Pittsburgh: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 153–70; “Europe after 1989: The Ethnic Wars, Fascistization of Civil Society and Body Politics in Serbia,” in *Thinking Differently: A Reader in European Women’s Studies*, edited by Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti (London–New York: Zed Books, 2002), 127–44; “Bosnian, Albanian, and Roma Women Are Our Sisters: Feminist Politics in Serbia,” in *Feminists Under Fire: Exchanges Across War Zones*, edited by Wenona Giles, Malathi de Alwis, Edith Klein, Neluka Silva, with Maja Korać, Djurdja Knežević, and Žarana Papić (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003), 45–54; *Tekstovi 1977–2002* [Texts, 1977–2002], edited by Adriana Zaharijević, Zorica Ivanović, and Daša Duhaček (Belgrade: Centar za studije roda i politike; Rekonstrukcija Ženski fond; Žene u crnom, 2012).

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6 See the thematic issue edited by Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes and Svetlana Slapšak, “Žene Balkana za mir. Aktivistkinje prelaze granice” [Women of the Balkans for Peace: Activist Women Crossing Borders], *ProFemina* 31–32 (2003).

CONTEXT

In 1984, Tito, the father of all Yugoslavs, had been dead for four years already. The Sarajevo Winter Olympics had taken place, and Yugoslav socialism was slowly but surely finding itself at the crossroads of stifled but (re)emerging nationalisms, New Wave youth culture, and old political structures struggling with new and pressing economic issues. The source text below was published six years after the 1978 conference “Comrade-ess Woman. The Women’s Question: A New Approach?,” a gathering of international and local guests from all over Yugoslavia. The conference was not only the first (explicitly) feminist event in Eastern Europe, but—even more importantly—the springboard for further feminist efforts. In the meantime, and largely due to the conference itself, feminism would cease to function as a curse word although it was still widely considered an import from the West. As a consequence, roundtables on issues related to a variety of women’s topics were organized relatively frequently, gathering researchers from different fields, political figures from state bodies committed to the advancement of Yugoslav women, and feminist activists. The informal group *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society) emerged first in Zagreb as a section of the Sociological Society of Croatia, and soon after took root in Belgrade, tied to the Student Cultural Center (Studentski kulturni centar), where the “Comrade-ss Woman” conference had taken place. Feminism, sometimes still in the foil of “women’s emancipation,” was publicly discussed. Slavenka Drakulić Ilić and Rada Iveković’s piece on Yugoslav women appeared in Robin Morgan’s edited volume *Sisterhood is Global*, published in 1984.⁷ Lilit, the first feminist civic group, would appear a year later in Slovenia.

In the aftermath of “Comrade-ss Woman,” many issues which the conference aimed to open were for the first time seriously discussed. According to the English-language brochure of the conference, these could be summarized as follows: What is the real position of women in socialism?; what has already been achieved by their socialist emancipation?; and what still needs to be done for the liberation of women? The conference reader—prepared by Žarana Papić—included, among others, texts by Alexandra Kollontai, Sheila Rowbotham, Shulamith Firestone, Juliet Mitchell, Luce Irigaray, and Manuela Fraire, and texts by Yugoslav authors who considered the possible applicability of feminist analyses to Yugoslav society. Thus, the context in which the source text and Papić’s general theoretical endeavor should be considered provided that: (1) a dialogue between “Western” feminism and women’s emancipation in socialism was necessary; (2) that there was space for constructing something that merited the name “Eastern feminism”; and that (3) the successful solution of the woman question needed tools and experiences from the “West,” whether those were the field of women’s studies or consciousness-raising groups.

7 Iveković and Drakulić Ilić, “Yugoslav Neofeminism,” in *Sisterhood is Global*, 734–38.

Before introducing the sex and gender distinction in her article in 1984, Papić had already developed her understanding of the politics of sexuality, which was tightly bound to her criticism of socialist women's reality. As she wrote in 1980:

It seems to me that even when we think about woman's real equality and the "ultimate" solution of the woman's question, we in fact think it is possible to conserve the bright tradition of good old patriarchy and we cannot, even in thoughts, imagine something different... It is forgotten, however, that the "revolutionizing of all domains of life" cannot bypass this "domain" we all live through and which, both on the personal and social levels, determines our "female" and "male" destiny.⁸

She went on to claim that these are not natural traits or private choices, but an expression of the social relationship of the sexes which only appears as natural. Her discovery of anthropology, the translation of Western authors who critically approached some of the tenets of Marxist explanations of women's lot, and the publication of the seminal edited volume *Anthropology of the Woman* in 1983, provided Žarana Papić with a new language, one which would become accepted in Yugoslav feminist jargon well before the end of socialism.

The text republished in this volume, "Sex and Gender—Categories of the Social Organization of Sexuality," appeared in the journal *Revija za sociologiju* (Sociological Review), as part of a section devoted to the work of Vera Stein Erlich (1897–1980), a famous Croatian ethnologist.⁹ Erlich had made significant contributions to the field of social anthropology, especially focusing on the position of women in traditional societies and the transformation of the rural family. In the late 1970s, Ehrlich was still active in the Commission for the Advancement of Family Development and of Solving the Social Problems of Women in the Socialist Republic of Croatia (Komisija za unapređenje razvitka obitelji i rješavanje socijalnih problema žena u SR Hrvatskoj). In 1979, a year prior to her death, she was awarded the Kata Pejnović Award for science, named after a partisan heroine and politician. In Žarana Papić's short contribution, Ehrlich's research was linked to the distinction between sex and gender. At the time, this was crucial for evolving feminist theory and women's studies, thereby appropriating the language of the "Western" feminist tradition and applying it to the local findings of a renowned and appreciated figure. Behind this, one can also discern Papić's longstanding endeavor to develop and integrate the language of feminist theory into the social sciences and humanities. This can surely be understood as an expansion of the scientific understanding of emancipation, which was at the very foundations of its political application in socialism.

8 Papić, "Emancipacija u granicama tradicionalne svijesti," in *Žarana Papić. Tekstovi 1977–2002*, 68.

9 About Erlich, see the entry on Ina Jun-Broda in this volume.

It is worth noting that, only five years later, Papić abandoned the sex/gender distinction despite her own pivotal role in establishing it theoretically. She later insisted that human sexuality can be thought of only as a social, cultural, and political category, which makes the distinction between sex and gender redundant. In this spirit, she opened her last book with a question: “Can we perhaps say that in the human world each fact of nature is culturally defined, transformed according to a specific cultural code—thus becoming constructed as a fact of culture?”¹⁰

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Adriana Zaharijević

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Žarana Papić

Sex and Gender—Categories of the Social Organization of Sexuality

The cultural legacy of the forms of masculinity and femininity, a process of construction of sexuality launched at the very beginnings of humankind—the imposing of social goals on a part of the natural world—and the “historical and moral element” (Marx) in which the entire realm of human sexuality and sexual oppression can be placed, remained for centuries in the dark corner of the social sciences’

¹⁰ Papić, *Polnost i kultura*, 5.

awareness, giving off the impression of being unproblematic or unambiguously “natural.” The social sciences, especially those whose subject matter was their “own” history and society or their “own” psyche and its inconveniences, such as history, sociology, and psychology, still have not managed to step beyond the rigid rules and grammar of their own *language of culture*. To a potential bystander, however, its foci seem “so striking that it is difficult to understand how the locals fail to notice them, they know so little about them, as much as an individual knows about characteristic movements.”¹¹ The sexual asymmetry of Western culture, marked for centuries by a patriarchal construction of sexual relations which erases “the distinction between human capacity and the necessity to create a sexual world, and the empirically oppressive ways in which sexual worlds have been organized [...] *subsumes both meanings into the same term*,”¹² is a permanent characteristic of the current development and the degree of the cultural “drowning” of the social sciences. The extent of the social sciences’ lack of criticism towards their own cultural structure is reflected in their inability to observe their own system of sexuality “from the outside” and thus see that it is neither “natural” nor universal. Failure to problematize the process of acculturation of biological sexuality in the social sciences, and the *opacity* of the fact that sexual anatomy is the important and the sole determinant of what a person is in patriarchal sexual asymmetry, are the reasons for the present “insensitivity” and unreceptiveness to a distinction that is necessary and paramount to every understanding of sexual relations in society—the distinction between sex in the biological sense and gender—that is, sex in its social meaning and form. The powerlessness of sociology or psychology to introduce this distinction as an instrument to understand that realm of human sexuality which “has been subjected to, and changed by, relentless social activity for millennia,”¹³ speaks about the extent to which these sciences have interiorized the horizon and the boundaries of their own culture.

Anthropology however—thanks to its subject matter and focus on researching “different” societies and cultures, and which, in its long early phase, calmly (in accordance with its own culture) categorized and interpreted them as “exotic,” “primitive,” “prelogical,” or “unarticulated”—managed to begin dismantling its own cultural optics and to engage in evocation, in raising its awareness and criticizing its own practice of interpreting other forms of sociality. At the same time, it managed, more than others, to name and understand the limitations of the *subject* that it interprets as being a scientist—a member of the ruling, foreign, and

11 Vera St. Erlich, *U društvu s čovjekom* [In the Company of Man] (Zagreb: Liber, 1978).

12 Gayle Rubin, “Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna R. Reiter (New York & London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 168. Emphasis by Žarana Papić.

13 Rubin, “Traffic in Women,” 166.

white culture—and to accept the “devastating” fact that the *power of persuasiveness* of its interpretive models was inextricably linked to the period of the developed West’s dominance over “other,” inarticulate societies. Anthropology’s greater sensitivity to the boundaries of its own discipline and methods is not, however, a result of its secretive intelligence or of its greater value than that of other disciplines, but rather stems from the fact that a *dialogue of cultures* is a prerequisite to and a principle of its action and that, just like in any human dialogue, no subject can fully remain within the boundaries and in the “dungeon” of its own language and behavior.

In spite of anthropology’s increased openness, the distinction between sex and gender, as a starting point in the analysis of the social organization of sexuality, did not gain its first momentum under the auspices of anthropology. The powerful women’s movement of the seventies—which, in addition to its *practical* goals, also made never before so influential and inspiring *theoretical* contributions—sharpened and defined this distinction in an effort to try and break the impasse in the analysis of “the world-historic defeat of the female sex.” Anthropology was, however, precisely due to its greater openness and the dialogical character of its opinion, a far better ground for the consideration and development of this distinction. In recent years, efforts are being made within anthropology, more so than within other sciences, to develop and view this initial distinction in the light of diverse cultural and social experiences. The very beginnings and fragments of relativizing the rule of sexual asymmetry, and the receptiveness of anthropology to understand the social and cultural construction of sexuality as one of the many mechanisms of the actions of culture and sociality, existed—although not in their purest form—in the works of some male and female anthropologists even before the rise of the women’s movement. Margaret Mead, and before her, for example, Daisy Bates and Phyllis McKaBerry, demonstrated in their works that it is also possible to wrest the social shaping of sexuality out of common-sense and judgmental interpretations, and therefore establish that “social conditions, not human biology, must be regarded as the significant determinants of sexual roles.”¹⁴ Among those pioneers who relativized biological rules in anthropology is also Vera St. Erlich and her rich presentation of patriarchal “rules that govern sexual life.”¹⁵

The differentiation between *sex* and *gender* is a key moment in this relativization of “natural” laws and of the critique of biologism in anthropology, and the initial element of the analysis of the origin of sexual asymmetry in almost all known societies. This distinction rests on the belief that “the notion that men and women

14 Ernestine Friedl, *Women and Men: An Anthropologist’s View* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975), 4.

15 St. Erlich, *U društvu s čovjekom*, 198.

appear as two mutually exclusive categories must arise out of something else, and not from a non-existent 'natural' opposition."¹⁶ The differentiation of sex and gender and the construction of sexuality is thus an eminent *act of culture*: the final result of the social organization and semanticization of human biological sexes is that "completely different realities exist for men and women."¹⁷ The construction of gender is based on the need for "a reciprocal state of dependence between the sexes" (Levi-Strauss), but gender is not a mere identification with one sex: it also entails "that sexual desire be directed toward the other sex" (Rubin). The division of work according to sex is believed to be a result of a social process that sorts human sexes into two mutually exclusive categories, deepens their biological differences—*assigns them genders (engenders)*—and can be considered "a taboo against the same gender of men and women" and against sexual relations that are different from heterosexual ones. The category of *gender* is a result of the acculturation of biological sexuality and an expression of a universal human need for a cultural *construction of a sexual world* and relations within it. Even though human history is a witness that this construction of a sexual world was most often expressed in the form of an asymmetrical and oppressive way of organizing sexuality, still, Gayle Rubin believes that "the sex/gender system is a neutral term which refers to the domain and indicates that oppression is not inevitable in that domain, but is the product of the specific social relations which organize it."¹⁸

Vera St. Erlich's research and work (in which she focused mostly on the study of the patriarchal way of life and system of values), contains openness and flexibility of categories that also help read the important, although fragmentary elements of the anthropology of sexuality. Even though, for example, she believes that what lies at the basis of "the everywhere noticeable greater disempowerment of women" is "an immutable biological element," in this same place she adds an important reservation—"which *affects*... her adversely,"¹⁹ thus she clearly allows and assumes the *effect* of culture on immutable biological elements: sexuality. The view that human sexual asymmetry in the patriarchal system is a result of the *acculturation* of biological sexuality can also be noticed in her almost casual remark that "it is possible that compulsion for a woman to quickly and fully adapt is favorable for (a patriarchal) marriage,"²⁰ and that a patriarchal environment "consistently undermines a woman's feeling of importance."²¹

16 Rubin, "Traffic in Women," 179–80.

17 Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (London: Paladin, 1972), 151.

18 Rubin, "Traffic in Women," 168.

19 Vera St. Erlich, *Jugoslavenska porodica u transformaciji* [Yugoslav Family in Transition] (Zagreb: Liber, 1971), 206. Emphasis by Žarana Papić.

20 St. Erlich, *U društvu s čovjekom*, 154.

21 St. Erlich, *Jugoslavenska porodica*, 76.

Two important although insufficiently elaborated points lie at the basis of these fragments of Vera Erlich's *anthropology of sexuality*. The first is that "biological differences between the sexes are differently deformed in every culture. Their importance and roles in society and family are different. The very relationship between a man and a woman depends on some organic fact, but even more so on cultural elements,"²² and the second is that "belonging to the female sex often fully means belonging to a social stratum, usually a stratum low on the scale."²³ The fate of women in the patriarchal system is to build their safer existence on a single, solely cultural activity, the aim of which is "to be lovable" and always "pretend to be content." Because of the—for our region—surprising sensitivity to the complexity and conflicting quality of the process of constructing sexuality and sexual subordination, the work of Vera Erlich contains seeds that, in light of new discoveries and definitions, makes it extremely modern, and makes the read even more interesting because of the opportunity to discover different layers in it, the *earlier* and the *later*, of the "then" and of the present moment.

Translated by Jelena Babšek Labudović

²² St. Erlich, *U društvu s čovjekom*, 268.

²³ St. Erlich, *U društvu s čovjekom*, 275.

Agate Nesaule

Conversation about the Second Sex

AUTHOR Agate Nesaule

TITLE “Otrāis dzimums” [The Second Sex]. Agate Nesaule in conversation with the journalist Magda Priedīte.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Atmoda* [Awakening], August 13, 1991.

LANGUAGE Latvian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Agate Nesaule (also Agate Nesaule Krouse; 1938, Riga–2022, Madison, WI) was a writer and literary scholar. She was born in the Nītaure parish in the family of a Lutheran pastor, and had a younger sister, Beate. In 1944, when the front of the Second World War approached the territory of occupied Latvia for the second time in three years, the family fled the Soviet occupation and departed for Germany. They lived in a refugee camp, and after some months found themselves once again in a Soviet-occupied zone. Seven-year-old Agate witnessed the plunder, violence, and rape committed by the Soviet soldiers after her father, together with other men, were separated from their families. One of the most traumatic events of the time, she later recalled, was the moment when the Soviet soldiers placed the refugees in a line and threatened to shoot them all. Her mother decided to proceed to the front of the line and asked to be the first to be shot, in order to spare her daughters the bloodshed.¹ After some time, the family reunited and managed to escape to the British zone, where Agate attended a school for refugees and, like many other children of her generation, experienced the humble and uncertain life of displaced persons.

In 1950, her family was permitted to leave for the United States, where they found a new home in Minneapolis. Agate graduated from Shortridge High School in Indianapolis, and then studied at Indiana University Bloomington. During these years, she married Harry Crouse, and their son was born. She received her BA in 1961 (summa cum laude) and her MA in 1963. That year, the family moved to Whitewater, Wisconsin, and she became an assistant in English Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. In 1966, she became an assistant professor and later helped to establish a women’s studies program at the university. In 1972, she received her PhD

1 As Inta Miške Ezergailis argued, after this experience, Agate’s mother became the central source of tension throughout her life and made her sensitive to the issues of femininity. See Miške Ezergailis, *Nostalgia and Beyond*.

in English Literature from the University of Wisconsin for her dissertation “The Feminism of Doris Lessing.”² She published scholarly papers on English-language modern women’s literature and wrote essays on the Latvian canonical woman writer Aspazija (Johanna Emīlija Lizete Pliekšāne, 1865–1943). In 1991, she visited Latvia after long decades of absence, and took part in the World Congress of Latvian Scholars in Riga.

Nesaule’s own literary attempts dated back as far as 1955, when she published a short story in the literary magazine *Jaunā Gaita* (New Way) under the pen name Andra Nereta. She developed her creative writing after she divorced her husband and entered therapy to finally come to terms with her past. In 1995, her major work, a book of memoirs, *A Woman in Amber*, was published to major acclaim by American readers and critics. The book dealt with her traumatic childhood experience and demonstrated its deep footprints in her adult life. Nesaule clearly showed that neither her family, her marriage, nor the exiled Latvian community gave her any means to heal her past traumas. Such a message stood against the usual narratives of first-generation Latvian exiles who tended to silence the marginalized voices of individuals in favor of national unity and masculine success stories about accumulating wealth in American capitalism. *A Woman in Amber* was selected for Outstanding Achievement Recognition by the Wisconsin Library Association Literary Awards Committee and won a 1996 American Book Award. Translations in Danish, German, Swedish, Russian, and Chinese followed, and a major movie based on the story was planned. Nesaule wrote two more books that both dealt with themes of memories, autobiography, and the life of an exile.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *A Woman in Amber: Healing the Trauma of War and Exile* (New York: Soho Press, 1995), in Latvian: *Sieviete dzintarā*, translated by Ingūna Beķere (Riga: Jumava, 1997); *In Love with Jerzy Kosinski* (Madison: Terrace Press, 2009); *Lost Midsummer’s: A Story of Exile and Friendship* (Madison: Birch Grove Press, 2018), in Latvian: *Zudušie saulgrieži*, translated by Velga Polinska (Riga: Vesta LK, 2018).

Kārlis Vērdiņš

CONTEXT

The title of the interview with Agate Nesaule, “The Second Sex,” might seem like a provocation to Latvian readers, who—at the moment when it was published in 1991—had not yet been fully freed from the political and military occupation of the Soviet Union. However, Simone de Beauvoir was known to them only as the author of the novel *Les Belles Images* (the only Latvian translation of de Beauvoir in the Soviet

2 V. O., “Dr. Agate Nesaule-Krouse,” *Universitas*, no. 32 (1973): 69.

period), and the interview took place a couple of years before excerpts from her key work started to become available in Latvian translations in the mid-1990s.³

The ideas of second-wave feminism were not known in Soviet Latvia. The tense political situation in the last months of the Soviet Union and the economic hardship after its collapse resulted in the marginalization of feminism for another several years. Women scholars who grew up and studied in Soviet Latvia went on exchange programs to Western universities and discovered feminism themselves, occasionally collaborating with diaspora women researchers. Moreover, feminist ideas seemed to contradict the new model of the stay-at-home wife, which was attractive for a number of Latvian women after decades of obligatory and relatively low-paid work.

When Agate Nesaule returned to Latvia for the first time, in 1991, she participated in a conference that brought together scholars of Latvian descent from many countries. Here, Nesaule presented the paper “Sieviešu tiesības un sieviešu zinātnes kursi” (Women’s Rights and Women’s Studies Courses). The ideas of second-wave feminism, which were spreading in American academia at the time, contributed to Nesaule’s self-understanding and provided exciting trajectories of thought for reading both English-speaking and Latvian-speaking modern women writers. Thus, after the conference, when she was interviewed by journalist Magda Priedīte for *Atmoda* (Awakening), the leading newspaper of the nationalist movement at the time, she shared her opinions on the life of women in Soviet Latvia. Among the problems she pointed out were issues that women writers and intellectuals had been allowed to discuss already before perestroika and glasnost, such as the scarcity of goods following from Soviet-style economic planning, which made women waste their time standing in lines to feed their families. Nesaule also mentioned the lack of women’s hygiene products (like sanitary pads and tampons) and the unavailability of effective contraceptives. She hinted at the hardship that awaited all Latvian women in maternity wards because of the lack of modern equipment and the staff’s treatment. On cultural issues, Nesaule pointed out the absence of respect and equality for women professors and the male professors’ lack of manners in the institutions of education and research they controlled. In this passage, she openly contrasted her positive experience in the United States with the puzzling culture of academia in Latvia. As in her *A Woman in Amber*, in this interview she identified with the perspective of American feminist circles rather than with the majority of the Latvian exile community. The exiles most likely would downplay her concerns as irrelevant for the divided Latvian nation at that moment of great historical change (the interview was published just a week before the August Putsch, which proved to be the final blow to the agonizing Soviet Union).

3 Irēna Auziņa published and introduced three excerpts from *The Second Sex* in her Latvian translation: *Aspazija*, no. 6 (1993): 15–16; *Karogs*, no. 12 (1994): 151–63; *Kentaurs XXI*, no. 40 (2006): 116–43.

Taking this into account, it is not surprising that Nesaule's interview provoked more reactions in Latvian exile periodicals in North America than in Latvia. A couple of months later, the exile newspaper *Latvija Amerikā* (Latvia in America) republished most of the interview, annotating it as an "interesting" article with valuable points about men's attitudes towards women professors. The publication hinted at the relevance of Nesaule's message for the exile Latvian community as well. However, the editors of the newspaper did not offer any conclusions about the text.⁴ The small Latvian Canadian monthly journal in Montreal, *Monreālas Latviešu Biedrības Ziņotājs* (Bulletin of the Montreal Latvian Society), referred to Nesaule's criticism of male academics by publishing a caricature in which a man walked with an umbrella in the rain without sharing it with the woman walking next to him.⁵

Obviously, Nesaule's perspective on feminism was formed before intersectional feminism and queer studies gained currency in American feminist circles, so themes of gender, class, race, or trans rights were not mentioned in the interview, even if the interview took place shortly after the pioneering publications of Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.⁶ As the next two decades showed, the Latvian version of feminism formed as a relatively closed academic research topic that reevaluated cultural interpretations of women of the past rather than entering passionate discussions about the present situation of "wild" capitalism in the 1990s or expressing radical political or aesthetic views. Addressing issues of second-wave feminism and discussing Simone de Beauvoir or Virginia Woolf took another two decades, and new approaches to women's creativity, equality, and motherhood only appeared in the early 2000s.⁷

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6 Editor's note: Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* were both published in 1990.

7 See Kukaine, *Daiļās mātes*; Kārklā, *Iemiesošanās*; and Meškova, *Subjekts un teksts*, which includes a chapter on Nesaule's *A Woman in Amber*.

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Kārlis Vērdiņš

* * *

Agate Nesaule

The Second Sex; A Conversation with Magda Priedite

A month has passed since the World Congress of Latvian Scholars, which was, on the whole, a great success. But the Congress also exposed some weaknesses. In particular, the education session highlighted a problem that has persisted in our country, and Agate Nesaule's paper on women's studies in America made us take a hard look at the situation at home.

Women's Studies in America developed in the 1960s, and is now a subject on the curricula of many universities. They have several aims: to correct misinformation about women that scientists have acquired by studying only men; to complement all sciences by adding the achievements of women scientists; to teach, as separate subjects, information about women in history, literature, and the arts; and finally, to raise women's rights in personal, economic, and political life.

Listening to the clever, witty, and charming presentation by Professor Nesaule, it became clear to me (and I think, to many of the ladies present) that women have hardly any rights at all in our country. Incidentally, the popular idea that women talk a lot does not stand up to criticism, according to research done in America. So, first, excerpts from Dr. Nesaule's presentation:

[...] In situations where women and men are together, it is common that men always talk more than women. This is the case at academic conferences, parties, political conferences, and conversations between married couples. Besides, who has the guts to interrupt others? 98% of the time, it is men! Women do not interrupt men, nor do they protest when men interrupt them.

[...] Changing the subject. Again, it is men who change the subject. Usually with the words “Please let’s not discuss side issues now!” or “Let’s stop talking about trivial matters!” This means: please let’s talk about what interests me and what I want to talk about. That’s how men usually control the end and the topic.

The quotes could go on and on, including more serious things. For example, the reluctance of men in America to give leadership positions to women. Or how difficult it is for women in science in America. But here, too, are the professor’s observations on Latvia:

At the opening of the congress, an academic mentioned several men and only one woman. He then said: “The next Nobel Prize laureate may be here.” How language is used is very important. He should have also used the word “laureate” in its feminine form. If this attitude prevails, then girls are indirectly excluded from working in science already during their studies.

What are your thoughts about Latvian women in Latvia after everything you have seen?

They are very hard-working. Over 95% of Latvian women are in paid employment. At the same time, they are also responsible for their families and children. It’s difficult here—you can’t buy shoes for your children, you have to stand in lines, and you don’t know if you will be able to buy bread today. Standing in line is terrible. It saps all your energy, which could be used to think, to write, to create something. To plant a beautiful garden. The energy of creation is robbed.

The other thing I’ve learnt is that Latvian women are smart and educated, and yet they are paid less everywhere. If you look at who is in charge, it is always men, women are mostly left out, even though they are capable.

And further, women find it difficult to cope with all the practical things, and the government is not interested at all. Menstruation, for example. Many women are embarrassed to mention it. I’m not. It is a normal thing. But you can’t get tampons or pads here. If there’s a party, you even have to stay at home sometimes. If men needed something every month, I think there would still be something here. It’s difficult to have birth control—there are no contraceptives. That is also very important for women. In addition, children are born here in difficult circumstances.

How did you—purely psychologically—come to the conclusion that women’s studies are for you?

I think we are often like our mothers. My mother was a very gifted and educated woman. When we came to America, it was extremely difficult. My mother worked

for more than ten years washing dishes. She did, however, go to university, studied in the evenings, and, at the age of 70, got a doctorate in philosophy. But she always said: “I am not interested in women’s rights. It’s not feminine, and it’s not right.” But the way she studied and lived was a good example for me.

In the 1960s, we started reading the first books about women in America. Many of them raised women’s issues for the first time. That family is important for women, and children are important, but there are many things that are important for each woman individually.

How do male scientists look at women’s studies?

Most researchers in women’s studies are women themselves, but in the most recent studies in America, men’s names also appear. Almost every scientific conference has papers on women’s studies. So, they tend to evolve.

This is your first time in Latvia. Have you encountered any particular inequalities here?

Latvian professors and deans at universities still don’t know how to deal with women scientists, even though we have the same degrees and the same achievements. In America, we are treated with the same respect as male scientists. Here, we are treated quite strangely. For example, I gave a paper together with a very well-known woman scientist in America in one session. No man introduced himself to us, the presenter did not say hello to us, neither before nor after the papers. It is unthinkable! It’s rude. But we had a nice and warm welcome at the Faculty of Education, and it was by Professor Špona.⁸ The difference was very drastic. It was also perceived by the women scientists in other sessions. There was almost an attitude that we women didn’t really belong in the family of scientists.

At the banquet after the congress, we laughed that we were called ladies. The male professors were called professors, but we—even though we are professors as well—were called ladies. I am not any professor’s missis. I am Professor Nesaule. On the opening day of the congress, there were also only a few women in places of honor, but somewhere in the last row. And not a single woman was allowed to speak. Academic people should be brighter and set an example in this respect too.

8 Editor’s note: Professor Ausma Špona, the chair of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, University of Latvia.

Do you have a family?

Yes. I married an American, and I have a son. My husband and I are separated.
Now I have a boyfriend.

Translated by Ieva Lešinska-Gaber

Jiřina Šmejkalová, Pavla Horská, and Jaroslava Pešková

Feminism and the Woman Question at the Time of Transition

AUTHOR Jiřina Šmejkalová

TITLE “Co je feminismus: kam s ní/m?” [What Is Feminism: What to Do about Her/Him?]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED The article appeared in five parts in *Tvar* 2, nos. 37–41 (September–October 1991). Translated excerpts from parts 1, 4, and 5: *Tvar* 2, no. 37 (September 12, 1991): 16; no. 40 (October 3, 1991): 16; and no. 41 (October 10, 1991): 16.

LANGUAGE Czech

AUTHORS Pavla Horská and Jaroslava Pešková

TITLE “Rozhovor mezi filosofkou a historičkou o ženské otázce v Čechách” [A Debate between a Philosopher and a Historian on the Woman Question in Bohemia]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Filosofický časopis* 40, no. 5 (October 1992): 757–68. Translated excerpts from pages 757–60, 762, 765–66.

LANGUAGE Czech

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jiřina Šmejkalová (b. 1960, Prague) is a literary, cultural, and gender studies scholar. She grew up in a family of university-educated professionals in the Prague residential neighborhood of Vinohrady. Her formative childhood influences were her mother, with her enthusiasm for reading and Masarykian humanist ideals, and her nanny, a retired ballet dancer. Jiřina graduated from Charles University in Prague in Czech language and literature, as well as psychology. She obtained her CSc (Candidate of Science, roughly the equivalent of a PhD) in sociology of culture from the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1991 with the dissertation “Sociological Aspects of Literary Taste Formation.”

She was able to take advantage of the new mobility opportunities for Czechoslovak researchers after 1989, when she became only the second Czech to win a scholarship from the American Council of Learned Societies and spent a year at the University of California in Santa Cruz in 1991–92. After returning to Prague, she taught one of the first courses in gender studies in Czechoslovakia at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University. She also immediately began to cooperate with the newly founded Curriculum Centre and Library for Gender Studies in Prague, an important hub and meeting place for feminist and gender scholars. It was established by the former dissident and sociologist Jiřina Šiklová, with seed funding from the Network of East–West Women established by the committed American academic and activist Ann

Snitow.¹ Jiřina Šmejkalová was a member of the founding circle of scholars and activists when the Centre registered as an NGO in 1992 as the Gender Studies Centre (Nadace Gender Studies) and was a long-standing member of its Board of Directors.

In the early 1990s, she relocated professionally to Budapest, first as a Fellow at the Collegium Budapest Institute for Advanced Study, and later as an archivist at the Open Society Archives. In the latter function, she took care of the relocation of the Czechoslovak holdings of the Radio Free Europe Archives from Munich to Budapest. Also at that time, she was a member of the Interregional Seminar on Gender and Culture established by the founder of the program in gender studies at the new Central European University, Prof. Nancy Stepan. This circle of scholars brought together many researchers and educators developing gender studies in East Central and Southeastern Europe. From 1997, Jiřina Šmejkalová taught at the Ustinov Institute of the Department of Slavonic Studies at Durham University, achieving the rank of Reader (Associate Professor) in Media and Cultural Studies in 2007, and later at the University of Lincoln. She returned to Prague in 2015, where she taught first at the Faculty of Social Sciences and since 2017 at the Institute of Information Studies and Librarianship of the Faculty of Arts.

Throughout her academic career, she cooperated with several other research centers and NGOs: she worked for the human rights section of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, was one of the founding members of the women's organization ProFem in Prague and of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing (SHARP), and won a fellowship at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies (IFK) in Vienna. The focus of her research has been the history of the book, specializing in the history of book production and reception in the context of the Cold War. In the 1990s, she also did pioneering work in feminist theory and gender studies, as a researcher, lecturer, and public intellectual. In the latter field, she is best known as a keen contributor to the East–West debates on the need for feminism and its agenda in East Central Europe.²

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Knihy (k teorii a praxi knižní kultury)* [The Book: Theory and Practice of Book Culture] (Brno: Host, 2000); *Cold War Books in the "Other" Europe and What Came After* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); with Lenka Pořízková, eds., *Co jsou dějiny knihy?: antologie textů k dějinám a teorii knižní kultury* [What Is the History of the Book? An Anthology of Texts on the History and Theory of Book Culture] (Prague: Academia, 2021).

1 For more information on the Network of East–West women, see <https://www.neww.org>; and Snitow, *Visitors*.

2 This biography is also based on the author's email communication with Jiřina Šmejkalová, November 2022.

Pavla Horská (née Vrbová; 1927, Prague–2021, Prague) was a historian and historical demographer. She came from the family of mechanical engineer Alois Vrba. She studied at the French gymnasium in Prague and then completed degrees in French and history at the Charles University in Prague. After her graduation in 1952, she worked, for a short time, as head librarian at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, and from 1953 until her involuntary retirement in 1983 as a researcher at the Institute of History of the newly founded Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. She obtained her CSc in history in 1958. She returned to the Academy of Sciences in November 1989. However, historical demography fell victim to the austerity measures in academia in the early 1990s and was removed from the research agenda of the Institute of History. With the support of the new head of the Institute of Sociology, Jiří Musil (1928–2012), Horská was able to transfer there and establish a new center for historical demography. She retired from active research in 2008.

Horská was an energetic networker and organizer. She was a founding member of the Czechoslovak Demographic Society of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. In 1967 she co-founded the Committee for Historical Demography at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, became its chair, and also the editor-in-chief of its annual publication *Historická demografie* (Historical Demography). The period following the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968 brought a setback to her work. Unlike her husband, the historian of science Zdeněk Horský (1929–1988), she could keep her employment, but she was expelled from both the committee and the editorial board in 1975. The publication of *Historická demografie* was suspended and renewed only in 1983 through the effort of the demographer Ludmila Fialová (b. 1947), who reestablished cooperation with Horská, albeit unofficially. Horská resumed the post of editor-in-chief after November 1989. She did not resign her networking work even after 1975, and established a working group for historical demography within the Czechoslovak Demographic Society, which was one of the niche subjects in which intellectuals enjoyed less surveillance and could venture into more critical discussions. She contributed to the Society's key work, a paper on the health of the Czechoslovak population published at the end of the 1980s.

Her educational background oriented her toward France, and she nurtured contacts, for example, with the founder of historical demography Louis Henry (1911–1991) and the historical demographer Jacques Dupâquier (1922–2010), as well as with the French Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) and the Société de démographie historique in Paris. From the 1960s, she was also a member of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) and in Prague she collaborated from the 1990s with the French Research Center in Humanities and Social Sciences (CEFRES). Her other collaborators included the historical demographers Irena Gieysztorowa (1914–1999) in Warsaw and József Kovácsics (1919–2003) in Budapest.

Horská specialized in the period from the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. She was always attracted to neglected topics, such as the history of technology and its broader social context, or the history of populations. Her turn to historical demography was tragically occasioned by the death of her colleague, Ludmila Kárníková (1932–1963), whose manuscript on the population development in the Czech lands she prepared for publication.³ Through her contacts with French historical demography, she became acquainted with new methods of using vital records to study demographic changes and to reconstruct families, in order to study population development. She was among the first Czech historians who addressed the issue of women in Czech history. Apart from her work on the family, she began to write articles on the economic history of women already in the 1980, followed by a keen interest in the nineteenth-century women's movement.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Hlavní otázky vzniku a vývoje českého strojírenství do roku 1918* [The Key Issues of the Development of Czech Mechanical Engineering up to 1918] (Prague: ČSAV, 1959); *Počátky elektrifikace v českých zemích* [The Advent of Electrification in the Czech Lands] (Prague: ČSAV, 1961); with Milan Kučera, Eduard Maur, and Milan Stloukal, *Dětství, rodina a stáří v dějinách Evropy* [Childhood, Family, and Old Age in European History] (Prague: Panorama, 1990); *Naše prababičky feministky* [Our Grandmothers, Feminists] (Prague: Lidové noviny, 1991); with Ludmila Fialová et al., *Dějiny obyvatelstva českých zemí* [The History of the Population of the Czech Lands] (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1996); with Eduard Maur and Jiří Musil, *Zrod velkoměsta: Urbanizace českých zemí a Evropa* [The Birth of the City: Urbanization of the Czech Lands in the European Context] (Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2002).

Jaroslava Pešková (née Bělohoubková; 1929, Pilsen–2006, Prague) was a philosopher. Her father was a Classics' scholar, a Czech legionnaire, and later an officer in the Czechoslovak Army. Her mother's family owned the publishing house František Švejda, Drama Publisher and Bookshop. She grew up partially in Prešov and Poprad, while her father was posted to Slovakia, but when the Czechoslovak state fell apart at the beginning of the Second World War, the family moved to Prague and joined the family business. During the war, she organized summer camps for children and trained as a nurse with a resistance group. She put this qualification to use during the Prague Uprising in 1945, when she worked in an operating room. From the 1940s until its dispersal by the new Communist regime, she was active in the Scout organization, working with young women. She re-joined the Scouts during their short revival in the 1960s and again when it was renewed in 1989, reaching the top level of leadership. Also in the 1940s, she joined the Social Democratic Party and remained a member even after it merged with the Communist Party in 1948. Her work in Scouting

3 Ludmila Kárníková, *Vývoj obyvatelstva v českých zemích 1754–1918* (Praha: ČSAV, 1965).

earned her the cancellation of her Party membership after the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, which affected her professional career for the next twenty years. One of the limitations imposed on her was a narrowing of subjects she was allowed to teach. In 1953, she married philosopher Jiří Pešek (1929–2004), but the marriage ended in the early 1980s. Her son is Jiří Pešek (b. 1954), a professor of history at Charles University.

In 1948, Jaroslava Pešková enrolled at the Charles University in Prague to study philosophy, history, and pedagogy, and graduated in 1952. From 1953, she taught at the Department of Philosophy of the same faculty and obtained her habilitation (a postdoctoral qualification) in the history of philosophy in 1965 with a work on Czech utopian socialism. She was forced to leave the Philosophy Department in the 1980s and move to the Department of Pedagogy, where she continued to teach philosophy, focusing on the philosophy of education. In the latter field, she obtained her professorship in 1991. In the same year, she returned to the Department of Philosophy as its head and the first woman vice dean at the Faculty of Arts. She made another career move in 1993, when she transferred to the Faculty of Education, established the Department of the Philosophy of Education, and a year later became the head of the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences.

A key turning point in the thought of Jaroslava Pešková resulted from the influence of Jan Patočka (1907–1977), who introduced her to phenomenology and Heidegger's ontology in the mid-1960s. She attended Patočka's "living room seminars" on phenomenology and, following his example, she and her husband started similar seminars on ontology in their home. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, she participated in alternative seminars that brought together a circle of people often referred to as the "grey zone" intellectuals. One of these seminars was the Uherský Brod Comenius Days (Uherskobrodské dny Komenského), another the Smetana Days (Smetanovské dny) in Pilsen. Her lifelong research interest lay in the history of Czech philosophy and in the place and meaning of the past for our understanding of the present. In the later phase of her career, she focused on Comenius and the philosophy of education and remained intellectually active until the last years of her life.⁴

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Utopický socialismus v Čechách v 19. století* [Utopian Socialism in Bohemia in the 19th Century] (Prague: Svobodné slovo, 1965); *František Drtina (1861–1925)* (Prague: Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání, 1991); with František Kožík, *Všichni na jednom jevišti světa* [All on One Stage of the World] (Prague: Svoboda, 1991); with Ladislava Schücková, *Já člověk... Jak dělat vědu o člověku dnes a zítra* [I, Human... How to Do Humanities Today and Tomorrow] (Prague: SPN—Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1991); *Role vědomí v dějinách* [The Role of Consciousness in History] (Prague: NLN—Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1997); Anna Hogenová,

4 This biography is also based on the author's email communication with Jiří Pešek, November 11, 2022.

David Krámský, and David Rybák, eds., *Vybrané spisy Jaroslavy Peškové* [Selected Works of Jaroslava Pešková] (Prague: Univerzita Karlova and Křeace, 2010).

Libora Oates-Indruchová

CONTEXT

Immediately after the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, Czech society was just as alive as in the months around the Prague Spring of 1968. It was eager to get acquainted with as many societal and cultural trends, as well as intellectual directions as possible, particularly from the “West.” In her work on the publishing industry, Jiřina Šmejkalová documented the boom of small publishing houses in the early 1990s. A similar rapid increase occurred in other communication venues: radio stations, daily newspapers, or magazines. Ideas of Western feminism belonged to those new trends, about which Czech intellectuals wanted to inform the educated Czech public, a public that apparently not only wanted to hear, but also to listen—at least at the beginning of the social and political transformation. Issues of gender equality were not among the priorities of the Czechoslovak government, but they became an early concern of women’s political and civic activism: Alena Valterová (1953–2008) founded the Political Party of Women and Mothers of Czechoslovakia, and Alexandra Berková (1949–2008), Miroslava Holubová (b. 1948), and Anna Kovaříková (b. 1948) founded the civic organization *Nová humanita* (New Humanity) very shortly after 1989.

The source texts by Jiřina Šmejkalová (1991) and by Pavla Horská and Jaroslava Pešková (1992) are symptomatic of the early post-1989 years. They aim to explain a Western intellectual trend to a Czech audience and at the same time assess its potential to contribute to the development of intellectual thought in the fledgling Czech democracy. Moreover, Horská and Pešková take a historical perspective, rare at the time, and review the place of “the woman question” in the Czech women’s movement of the nineteenth and first third of the twentieth centuries. These were some of the first, but by far not the only academic or popularizing texts that seriously engaged with feminism and women’s and gender issues and pointed out their acuteness in the transformation of the societies of East Central Europe.

Today’s two most important platforms for academic research and civic education in gender studies were created in the early 1990s: the Gender and Sociology research department of the Institute of Sociology of the Czechoslovak (later Czech) Academy of Sciences was founded in 1990, and the circle around Jiřina Šiklová (1935–2021) that later founded the Gender Studies Centre in Prague began to form in 1991. The unit at the Institute of Sociology led by Marie Čermáková (b. 1946) published a study

on women in the social structure in 1992,⁵ and two volumes of translations from European and American sociology in 1992 and 1993.⁶ Hana Havelková edited for the UNESCO Center for Education in Human Rights the proceedings from a conference on women in social transformation held in 1991.⁷ Numerous magazines and journals (e.g., *Historické listy*, *Slovenské pohľady na literatúru a umenie*) published articles and from 1992 whole special issues on women and on feminism. These included *Filosofický časopis*, from which the Horská and Pešková excerpt has been translated here, but also the periodicals *Iniciály*,⁸ *Prostor*,⁹ *Souvislosti*,¹⁰ *Profil súčasného výtvarného umenia*.¹¹ These publications contained the first original articles by Czech and Slovak researchers: the sociologists Marie Čermáková, Hana Navarová, and Jiřina Šiklová, the psychologist Šárka Gjuríčová, the sociologist and philosopher Hana Havelková, the lawyers Soňa Hendrychová and Pavla Horská, the philosopher Zuzana Kiczová, and the literary scholar Jiřina Šmejkalová. They also published the first (short) translations of texts by Western feminists of various agendas and disciplinary backgrounds, among them Joan Acker, Rosi Braidotti, Christine Delphy, Barbara Ehrenreich, Susan Faludi, Betty Friedan, Alison Jaggar, Elisabeth List, Kate Millett, Michèle Le Doeuff, and Herta Nagl-Docekal.

The interest in women's and gender issues began to extend outside of the academic sphere as well. For example, the Czech Television broadcast a discussion on feminism with the title "Respektování" (Respect-ing) in October 1991 at the initiative of the film director Ljuba Václavová (b. 1941). Carola Biedermannová (1947–2008) published a commercially successful feminist polemic with popular publisher Ivo Železný in 1992.¹² Jiřina Šmejkalová's five-part critical review of the key issues in Western feminism was published in the leading literary magazine *Tvar* in 1991, from which the excerpts in this book were taken. This piece was by far the most extensive account on the subject in mainstream print media in the early 1990s. It can be argued that this period of relative openness toward a constructive discussion in the Czech media ended after the publication of a three-part article on the "dangers" of American

5 Marie Čermáková, *Ženy v sociální struktuře 1991: výzkum pracovních a životních podmínek žen v České republice a Slovenské republice: základní data*, 1. část [Women in the Social Structure 1991: Research on Working and Living Conditions of Women in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic: Basic Data, Part 1] (Prague: Sociologický ústav ČAV, 1992).

6 Marie Čermáková and Lumír Gatnar, eds., *Sborník překladů z evropské a americké feministické sociologie* [A Collection of Translations from European and American Feminist Sociology], vols. 1 and 2 (Prague: Sociologický ústav ČSAV, 1992–1993).

7 Hana Havelková, ed., *Lidská práva, ženy a společnost* [Human Rights, Women, and Society] (Prague: Evropské středisko UNESCO pro výchovu k lidským právům, 1992).

8 Special issue "Feminismus... ano?" [Feminism... yes?], *Iniciály* 2, no. 25 (1992).

9 *Prostor: kulturně politická revue* 5, no. 20 (June 1992).

10 *Souvislosti: revue pro křesťanství a kulturu* 3, no. 4 (1992).

11 *Profil súčasného výtvarného umenia* 3, no. 2 (1993).

12 Carola Biedermannová, *Mstivá kantiléna, aneb, Rigor magoris, aneb, Feministický nářez* [Vindictive Cantilena, or Rigor magoris, or a Feminist Blast] (Prague: Ivo Železný, 1992).

feminism by the prominent Czech émigré writer Josef Škvorecký in another mainstream intellectual magazine, *Respekt*, in the autumn of 1992.¹³

Similar to many other “new” discussions in the early 1990s, the domestic discussion of feminism and gender was fueled by the foreign professional travel of Czech and Slovak academics and public intellectuals, as well as by visits by Western researchers, journalists, and activists to Czechoslovakia. However, feminist ideas were the only body of thought that later earned the derogatory epithet “Western import”; derogatory, because it began to connote “alien.” Yet, both source texts included here show not only the keen interest of Czech researchers in feminist and gender issues, but also considerable sophistication in confronting Western feminism in the Czech post-socialist context.

Šmejkalová writes from the perspective of an East Central European scholar encountering feminist theories during her postdoctoral studies in the United States. She reads them both in their historical and cultural context and against the East Central European experience with theories of social movements. She assesses critically the American development of feminist thought and concludes that it finds itself at a crossroads after a period of pioneering and rapid theoretical formulations. American feminism, according to Šmejkalová, needed to redraft its political and academic agendas in order to remain relevant to the movement for social change. She recognizes the usefulness of Western feminist theory for the post-socialist situation, but cautions that it would need to be carefully adapted to different historical and cultural contexts.

Horská and Pešková, writing a year later, take a different approach. They draw on their considerable knowledge of historical sources of the Czech women’s and national movement of the nineteenth century. They argue for the existence of a long tradition of emancipatory thought in the Czech context and juxtapose that tradition to the agenda of contemporary feminist discussions among historians and philosophers. In their conceptualization, the substantial Czech historical record should provide a fertile ground for new discussions enriched by new developments in international gender studies and feminist thought.

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Libora Oates-Indruchová

Jiřina Šmejkalová

What Is Feminism: What to Do about Her/Him?

What's feminism about?

When someone decides to seek information on something they don't know about, they'll probably look for the relevant literature in a library catalogue. In the State Library under the heading of "feminism," we find six books, all in English, and the most recent is from 1985. A reading of Czechoslovak encyclopedias shows us it's a "bourgeois women's movement that strives for equal rights for women but does not reveal the essence of women's dependent position in capitalism."¹⁴ The newest Czechoslovak encyclopedia from 1985 has several sentences that discuss two meanings of feminism—a theory of women's equality with men, and a manner of behaving that is typical for a person of the female sex. It identifies feminine traits with feminism, and the entry on "feminism" cross-references "suffragettes"; i.e., "fighters for women's political rights" in the second half of the nineteenth century who used "extremist forms of combat (a list follows), without having revealed the 'essence ...,' etc., see above." The commentary on the "woman question" in Masaryk's encyclopedia is comprehensive, but it dates from 1926.

[...]

Internal paradoxes

"Western" feminism today indeed finds itself in a certain limit situation. Women went through an early period of self-discovery, confirming and confronting their experiences in mass events and in political struggles for constitutional and economic rights. They have established their own organizations, university departments, magazines, and publishing houses. Both popularity and opposition [to feminism] have been on the increase.

[...]

One of the main contradictions had already become apparent in the 1960s. Feminism understood and asserted itself as a *theory* with practical *political* ambitions. It thus got itself into a paradoxical situation: it rejected the western European theoretical tradition, while at the same time wanted to outline a positive vision of the future. This *constructive practical part* was lacking a theory that would describe and justify it. Merely rejecting the past and resenting it is insufficient. It cannot explain reality or provide much of an account of it. Feminist theory is thus

¹⁴ *Přítuční slovník naučný* [Educational Reference Library], 1962.

caught between two fires—between what it has revealed and gained, and what this revelation has not touched.

The historian Barbara Ehrenreich researches the *practical* consequences of this paradox in the life of contemporary American society. On the one hand, women asked for the radical abolition of everything they understood as the “world governed by the masculine principle,” but on the other hand they also tried to integrate into it. They demanded access to elite professional and social positions while at the same time attacked opinions that considered certain activities as exclusive and exceptional.

They wanted nurses’ work to be valued just as highly as a surgeon’s work. Ehrenreich calls this the contradiction between revolution and assimilation. Over the last ten years, American women have entered politics, management, and medicine, and their representation in the most demanding professions has increased by about 300 to 400 percent. So they chose assimilation and won. But of course not without consequences.

The originally egalitarian ideology of feminism contributed to a significant strengthening of the middle class. Marriages with dual careers and dual salaries meant economic power for the intellectual middle classes and a deepening of the chasm between them and the “blue collar” working class. Partners from another class became almost unavailable for uneducated women, and women without education still perform the most menial labor today. The equal rights and independence of women on the middle rungs of the social ladder has de facto deepened the discrimination against women on the lowest rungs. Of course, even a class-limited victory came at a price. The birth rate of the white, educated, affluent population declined drastically.

[...]

Language

Thus, methodological questions are related to problems of language. Feminists ask: do we need a new language? Who should develop it and confirm its adequacy and suitability on whose behalf? Who is going to abuse it for purposes of manipulation and self-delusion?

At least three factors influence the translation of feminist texts into Czech, and their interpretation and the search for concepts to describe their own situation.

First of all, the aforementioned ossified terminology of feminist theories cannot be uncritically imported into the Czech context. Feminist vocabulary is very attractive for a simplified interpretation of the recent history of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Some budding Bulgarian and Soviet feminists describe their native milieu as expressions of patriarchal principles of power, force, and lust for

power taken to their most extreme expressions. A woman is the most wretched part of society, crushed between two boulders: the twisted principles of civilization of conquering and having, while at the same time there are shortages in the material and spiritual attainments of civilization in everyday life (it's interesting that there is less reflection on the latter).

Interpretive paradigms formed on the basis of reading a few randomly available books, rather than in conscientious scholarly and public discussion cannot suffice for understanding men and women in our society. I doubt that it is possible to build hypotheses about their self-images, self-awareness, etc. without systematic interdisciplinary research.

Second, it is difficult to translate feminist texts into an environment where the psychoanalytic tradition was interrupted, the Marxist tradition was compromised, and poststructuralism and deconstruction are practically non-existent. The phenomenological tradition (from which deconstruction—one of the sources of feminist thought—derived) could aid the understanding of feminist philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics. However, it was limited to a fairly small circle of Patočka's male (not female) pupils. It therefore couldn't take part in the cultivation of perception and expression in experts nor in the wider public.

Literal translations of texts that conceive of the human being from the perspective of its gender arouse a range of reactions from ridicule to aggression. At best, they evoke the atmosphere of the women's organizations of the National Revival era. We live in a country where pornography sold from street stands was one of the first manifestations of a liberated democratic culture.

Third, it seems to me that the ability of the Czech reader, viewer, or listener to perceive and think about the concept of uniqueness other than within the schemes of communist materialism—anticommunism or idealism—has weakened in recent years, similar to the ability to think about theories instead of Theory and about methods instead of Method. The concepts commonly used by feminists, such as "opposition," "alternative," "marginal," "dissident," "underground," etc., here refer to entirely different realities.

Czech feminists

The fate of feminism in our country is, among other things, a question from the field of the sociology of the intelligentsia. Feminism as a manner of expressing and thinking is imported from abroad and will probably mainly attract educated women. A seemingly politically innocent "interest in women" can serve as a convenient shell that covers one's political and professional past. Paradoxically, it's a movement that's considered the most politically antagonistic in the West. A feminism specifically understood as emphasizing the value of feelings and experience

could attract female humanities scholars mainly of the middle generation who have not asserted themselves in the male-communist-controlled sciences for either moral or professional reasons. Feminism will then be a suitable channel for relieving feelings of self-pity, guilt, lack of education, missed chances, and above all else, confused self-images in private and professional roles.

Do women in this country want feminism? Are we ready to accept its consequences in everyday behavior? He shares in all kinds of care for the household and children, but no one opens doors for her, he doesn't order her meal and pay for her at restaurants, or bring her flowers or help her put her coat on. And it's not at all because he doesn't earn money to pay a nanny or because he's a cad, but because everything that creates divisions between "first-second" and "strong-weak" is abolished. Women's true social and cultural independence requires not only accepting a change in established roles but also reconciling ourselves to the loss of traditional symbols of respect and love.

But something is beginning here. Dozens of women's organizations are being registered, the federal government passed a resolution to ensure equal rights for women, a feminist theory group is being established, and lectures on contemporary feminism have penetrated into the Charles University's Faculty of Arts.

But notwithstanding that: "A woman cannot consider whether she wants or doesn't want a child in the moment when she's pregnant, but prior to that, before she begins to make it ... Because she has to know who she's going to bed with!"—this is how the spokesman for the Czech Republic's Ministry of Health concluded an interview on the amendment to the law on abortion for *Lidové noviny* (March 20, 1991, p. 9). If no one found the content and manner of his speech disconcerting, it seems to me that the feminist project may not be a waste of effort.

So why feminism? Our world was determined by principles of seizing *power*, dictatorship, and enmity, which was moreover infallibly *scientifically* justified. Even with its internal contradictions, feminism draws attention to other possibilities, to the concept of "difference" as such. It's one of the self-images of the contemporary world, *one* of the perspectives on its diversity, seriousness, and folly.

Naturally, a certain eclecticism, of gathering together what has already been found, will probably be necessary at the outset. However, I think that there's more at stake—it's a culture of starting something new.

The End

[June 30, 1991]

Translated by Melinda Reidinger

Pavla Horská and Jaroslava Pešková

A Debate between a Philosopher and a Historian on the Woman Question in Bohemia

Pavla Horská [P. H.] – Institute of Sociology ČSAV, Prague

Jaroslava Pešková [J. P.] – Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague

P. H.: The attention the Czech public paid to feminism, feminists, and the so-called woman question one hundred years ago contrasts strikingly with the utter absence of the feminist issue in its renewed Western European or North American forms, not only in the Czech mass media, but also in primary social science research in the Czech lands. Was this issue suppressed, solved, forgotten, or is it yet to emerge in our society?

J. P.: I think that even a hundred years ago, the Czech public paid a different kind of attention to feminism than was common elsewhere in the world. It can be said up front that the “woman question” almost never arose in a form in which the emancipation of the individual was asserted at all. On the contrary: in the nineteenth century, women’s emancipation was understood as an important aspect of the search for a civic and human identity here.

Perhaps this is because a certain overtaking but also a certain delay have been conspicuous throughout our historical development, both in the real operation of the events of history and in reflection on them. In the 1790s, there were no conditions for a woman’s feminism, and in the first half of the nineteenth century the leading thinkers absolutely took women for granted as equal partners. Bernard Bolzano’s utopia *On the Best State*,¹⁵ which systematically summarizes the opinions expressed in speeches to academic youth in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, mentions in the chapter on legislation that “by the council of older, experienced, and proven citizens, I understand the collective of persons of both sexes who are elected to this dignity, in each community where they live, for three years ...” [...]

P. H.: It’s not that the “women’s issue” isn’t studied professionally by Czech historiography.¹⁶ However, a connection between philosophy and history is missing

15 Bernard Bolzano, *O nejlepší státě* [On the Best State] (Prague: Vyšehrad, 1952). Editor’s note: Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848) was a Bohemian philosopher, mathematician, theologian, and Catholic priest who was known for his liberal views.

16 For the most recent study, cf. Božena Kopiczková, “Historické prameny k studiu postavení ženy v české a moravské středověké společnosti” [Historical Sources for the Study of Women in Bohemian and Moravian Medieval Society], in *Práce Historického ústavu ČSAV: Řada A. Monographia*, vol. 4, Prague, 1992.

in the overview of this problem. [...] How much has changed during a single century! When the nineteenth century ended, Czech society, as well as German society in the Czech lands, was entirely up to speed for its time within Europe, at least as far as the “woman question” is concerned. Similarly, as in other European countries, the “women’s movement” was fully represented in print, in political parties, and in the struggle for suffrage. The girls’ lyceum with an exit exam [*matura*] that was established in Prague in 1890 was the first in the entire Habsburg Monarchy. And before the end of that century, the first graduates of this school were entering college.¹⁷ The woman question had a prominent place in educational activities, just behind the worker’s question, which was the most topical at the time. Let us especially recall T. G. Masaryk’s journalistic and lecturing activity!¹⁸

However, it cannot be said that contemporary Czech historiography’s interest in this famous period of the “woman question” was spontaneous. Rather, it seems that Czech historians were pushed toward this subject by its general popularity in world historiography over the last twenty years. It’s just not possible to remain indebted when Helena Volet-Jeanneret, a Swiss historian, publishes a work about women of the Prague Czech bourgeoisie from the 1860s to 1895,¹⁹ and when a French sociologist chooses a quote from Milan Kundera’s *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* as the motto for her study on feminist research in France.²⁰ This, in itself, would not mean anything if precisely these mentions of the “Czech woman” in the European context had not created the implication that there is something deserving of attention here, particularly ours.

[...]

J. P.: Němcová, Světlá, and other intellectually active women fought for “intellectual growth” and their idea of women’s identity merged with the idea of a general

17 Pavla Horská, “K ekonomické aktivitě žen na přelomu 19. a 20. Století” [On Women’s Economic Activity at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries], *Československý časopis historický* 31, no. 5 (1983): 711–43; Pavla Horská and Ludmila Fialová, “Česká žena očima statistiky posledních sto let” [The Czech Woman in the Eyes of Statistics in the Last Hundred Years], *Historické listy*, vol. 1 (Prague: Lidové noviny, 1991); Pavla Horská, “Za práva žen” [For the Rights of Women], *Dějiny a současnost* 14, no. 1 (1992).

18 Editor’s note: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937) was a Czechoslovak politician, sociologist, and philosopher, as well as one of the founders and the first president of Czechoslovakia. He was committed to the cause of women’s suffrage and women’s rights in a broader sense. Many consider him a feminist. He was married to Charlotte Garrigue (1850–1923), an advocate of women’s rights and socialism, and took her name.

19 Helena Volet-Jeanneret, *La femme bourgeoise à Prague 1860–1895. De la philanthropie à l’émancipation* [The Bourgeois Woman in Prague 1860–1895: From Philanthropy to Emancipation] (Genève: Slatkine 1988).

20 Rose-Marie Lagrave, “Recherches féministes ou recherches sur les femmes?” [Feminist Research or Research on Women?], *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 83 (1990): 27–39. Cf. Rose-Marie Lagrave, “Les paradoxes du féminisme” [The Paradoxes of Feminism], in *Femmes, féminisme et recherches* [Women, Feminism, and Research] (Toulouse: AFFER 1984), 909. Editor’s note: Milan Kundera (1929–2023) was a Czech-born writer and dissident who went into exile in France in 1975 and has since then considered himself a French writer. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), which centers on the events of the Prague Spring in 1968, is his best-known novel.

human identity.²¹ The reasons, of which the protagonists were not fully aware, were mainly civilizational. Industrialization means not only a change in women's position, and it didn't only "suck" women into the working process as a cheap labor force, but the reality of women's necessary participation in the work process led to a change in awareness about what is important in a person's life. Simultaneously with the change in living conditions, there also appears a change in the concept of women's productive activity and its significance for women's *subjectivity* and *legal capacity*. Even women who are socially well-to-do seek purpose in volunteer activities for the benefit of society as a whole and for the benefit of women who are not well off. This is why the "specter of feminism" did not haunt the Czech lands, but instead the way to economic independence for individuals was sought as the foundation for their free choice.

[...]

P. H.: Already around 1810, Bernard Bolzano had formulated the previously mentioned theory of the "best state," in which women were not only fully equal to men in all ways, but their ability to achieve the same level of education as men was also acknowledged. The intellectually stimulating company of honorable older, educated women was recommended for young men who were seeking higher education. The women were presumably freed from family responsibilities, because the care of children was supposed to be taken over by the state. Sons inherited their fathers' surnames, and daughters inherited their mothers'.²²

Karolina Světlá's biographer Josef Špičák repeatedly emphasized the influence of Bolzano's opinions mediated by the writer's father, who had once been a keen auditor at Bolzano's lectures. However, which opinions these were is not clear from the above-referenced work. Karolina Světlá mentioned Bolzano several times in her work,²³ but the theory of the "best state" probably remained unknown to her, because otherwise she would have commented on it in her numerous reflections on the equality of women that were variously spread among her correspondences and memoirs.

It's not entirely clear where the "Bolzano legend" came from in the early period of Czech women's consciousness-raising. Helena Volet-Jeanneret considers Bolzano's influence to have been undeniable in the family of František

21 Editor's note: Božena Němcová (1820–1862) was a Czech writer who was closely associated with the Czech National Revival Movement. Karolina Světlá (1830–1899) was a Czech writer and feminist who had a major influence on Eliška Krásnohorská (1847–1926), Czech feminist, writer, and educator.

22 Irena Seidlerová, *Politické a sociální názory Bernarda Bolzana* [The Political and Social Opinions of Bernard Bolzano] (Prague: NČSAV, 1963), 104–105.

23 Josef Špičák, *Karolina Světlá* (Prague: Svobodné slovo, 1966), 22.

Palacký and his son-in-law, F. L. Rieger.²⁴ She refers less frequently to a monograph about Bernard Bolzano from 1881, written by Palacký's granddaughter Marie Červinková-Riegrová, than to the long-term influence of Bolzano's pupil, the priest František Schneider, on the upbringing and spiritual guidance of Palacký's daughter Marie.²⁵ When this Marie became the wife of F. L. Rieger, she allegedly brought Bolzano's ideas about philanthropy as the ideal fulfillment of earthly existence into her personal practice.

The figure of Marie Riegrová-Palacká, whom Volet-Jeannert made into the main protagonist of the women's movement in Prague in the beginning of the 1860s, truly transcends the framework of local or merely Czech circumstances. If someone is writing a history of European philanthropy, Marie Riegrová-Palacká should not be neglected in it.

[...]

J. P.: It seems that Marie Riegrová's activity was oriented toward seeking a *life purpose*. Her philanthropic activity was undeniably given impulses by echoes of the events in developed countries beyond the borders of Bohemia and the monarchy. However, I wouldn't dare to identify them as "ideological" if the word "ideological" meant opinions and ideas spread without regard for the realities of the historical events which were being expressed in her environment.

The development of modern capitalism primarily led to a lifestyle change for the entire society. Roles, priorities within a value orientation, the concepts of morality and immorality, and also of what's tasteful and tasteless, and of an adequate or inadequate intellectual level changed. It was evidently Vojta Náprstek²⁶ who brought the emancipation initiative to Prague's women. But the promotion of sewing machines, etc., was an expression not of American but of Czech conditions, and was the answer to questions that had not yet been formulated in the Czech lands, even though it was possible to answer them immediately.

The emancipation of the bourgeoisie also meant the loss of the framework in which women had previously applied themselves. An emphasis on performance in social reproduction already made it impossible to provide for the subsistence of many unmarried women—aunties and daughters within the family. It was thus

24 Editor's note: František Palacký (1798–1876) was a Czech politician and historian and one of the leaders of the Czech National Revival Movement. František Ladislav Rieger (1818–1903) was also in the leadership of the movement.

25 Editor's note: Marie Červinková-Riegrová (1854–1895) was the daughter of Rieger and a writer in her own right. Marie Riegrová-Palacká (1833–1891) was her mother, Palacký's daughter, and a prominent philanthropist.

26 Editor's note: Vojtěch (also known as Vojta) Náprstek (1826–1894) was a Czech philanthropist, journalist, and politician who lived and worked in the United States. After his return to his homeland, he advocated for women's rights and suffrage.

necessary to find an adequate form of livelihood for which the women were prepared, and which also had a form that created an acceptable crossing of the boundaries of two epochs.

It was precisely to this role that Marie Riegrová subordinated all her personal interests.

Thus, emancipation in the second half of the nineteenth century in the Czech lands meant seeking independence for women in new social relationships, which necessarily included the possibility of deciding for themselves and taking over responsibility for themselves. But all of this was only one of the layers in a massive emancipatory movement of the entire Czech society.

[...]

P. H.: Perhaps this cursory outline of the problem, as it appeared in period documents, is enough for us to reflect on what the feminism of Karolina Světlá and several of her contemporaries brought to Czech thought in the nineteenth century. [...] The feminist Světlá was more conscious of the “woman question” in general human rather than purely feminine dimensions. Růřena Svobodová,²⁷ on the other hand, only perceived it from the narrow viewpoint of the present. In the stylization of her female characters, the problem of women at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which is posed as a general women’s problem, emerges very conspicuously, probably without the author realizing it herself—nor did the gallant critic of her work realize it. Emancipation brings women the opportunity to freely decide about their own fate, which naturally also means taking a certain share of responsibility for organizing their own lives. [...] There, Svobodová’s literary work becomes a reflection of ideas about the “woman question” in the Czech “fin de siècle.”

However, if there is something European in Czech feminism, or if the example of the Czech heroine of Kundera’s novel is considered a generally valid one in today’s conception of the “woman question” in Europe, then it is undoubtedly necessary to look for its sources in the Czech culture of the nineteenth century. That which followed in the twentieth century undoubtedly belongs much more to political science than to philosophy.

J. P.: After all, just one more comment on methodology at the end. The problem of the “woman question,” and “feminism” in the Czech lands thematizes the position of women in society in general, and the reasons for changes in this position in individual regions and in broader, let’s say European or world contexts.

27 Editor’s note: Růřena Svobodová (1868–1920) was a Czech writer, organizer of cultural life, and journal editor. Her work is often read as feminist fiction.

It's also about how the objective position of women is projected into the overall structure of the given society, how changes of this structure influence a change in women's position, or, on the contrary, how necessary changes in the role of women affect the structuring of society.

The "objective" position of women needs to be studied in a variety of contexts: from the perspective of marriage and divorce, the position of the family in society, the influence of industrialization (and postindustrial conditions) and the employment of men and women, the consequences of industrialization on the positions of men and women in the family, in social life, etc. It cannot be said that these questions haven't been properly studied. But they were the object of attention from the perspective of general history, or perhaps from the perspective of particular types of life changes, and (with the exception of matriarchy) they were subordinate aspects of historical movement. In her excellent study, Évelyne Sullerot²⁸ demonstrated the complexity of "lived history" through an analysis of the crisis of the family. It is only through tracing out its complexity that it becomes possible to open a path to the roots of phenomena which either seem unproblematic or opaque to us. No less interesting was the session on "Women's life cycles in a socio-economic and political perspective" at the 17th International Congress of Historical Sciences in Madrid in 1990, under the leadership of the International Federation for Research in Women's History (IFRWH). The goal of the IFRWH is to support and coordinate research in all aspects of women's history in international cooperation. This is why the plenary lectures by Gerda Lerner—"What Does Women's History Mean to Women?"—and Gisela Bock—"Women's and Gender History"—were typical.

This theme attracted a remarkable amount of attention, because it indicated that the "history of the sexes" and "women's history" can open new perspectives on a great many historical phenomena, which can be shown from this non-obvious side, and this can help the understanding of historical events. Sullerot's study fully fits into this context.

Translated by Melinda Reidinger

28 Évelyne Sullerot, *Krise rodiny* [The Crisis of the Family] (Prague: Carolinum, 1998). Published in French as *La crise de la famille* (Paris: Pluriel, 2000). Czech translation of the French contribution delivered at the congress titled "Odkaz J. A. Komenského a výchova člověka pro 21. století" [The Legacy of J. A. Comenius and the Education of the Human Being for the 21st Century], on March 24, 1992, in Prague. See *Historická demografie* 16 (1992): 11–39.

Barbara Limanowska and Agnieszka Graff

Feminism during Political Transformation

AUTHOR Barbara Limanowska

TITLE “Dlaczego w Polsce nie ma feminizmu?” [Why Is There No Feminism in Poland?]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Pełnym Głosem* [In Full Voice] 1 (1993): 3–24.

LANGUAGE Polish

AUTHOR Agnieszka Graff

TITLE “Patriarchat po ‘Seksmisji’” [Patriarchy after “Sexmission”]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Świat bez kobiet. Płeć w polskim życiu publicznym* [World Without Women: Gender in Polish Public Life] (Warsaw: W.A.B., 2001), 14–33.

LANGUAGE Polish

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Barbara Limanowska (b. 1958, Olsztyn) is a Polish feminist and expert on women’s rights, the topic of human trafficking, and gender mainstreaming. She studied art history at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (1977–1982) and followed many courses in human rights (at the Institute for Women’s Global Leadership at Rutgers University, the Canadian Human Rights Foundation, and the International Service for Human Rights). During her years in Poznań, she experienced her first conscious contacts with feminism. Meeting fellow student Ewa Franus, also an art historian who attended Renata Siemieńska’s women’s studies seminar at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Warsaw (one of the first such seminars in Poland, established in 1986), was of special importance for Limanowska. Thanks to Franus, she became acquainted with some of the Western feminist theories of the time. While working in the Art History Institute at the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań, Limanowska articulated her feminist opinions through academic debates and participated in the meetings of informal feminist group in Warsaw which, in 1989, became the Polish Feminist Association (Polskie Stowarzyszenie Feministyczne, PSF). In 1984, Limanowska emigrated to the Netherlands, where she stayed—at the beginning without a permit—for about ten years. She took part in the squatters’ movement, which at that time was considered a form of civil disobedience and revolt, and became involved in different feminist activities. She used her contacts with Dutch feminists to support the feminist movement in Poland. The organization of the first festival of women’s films in Poland, on which she worked with the PSF, was followed by networking aimed at looking for contacts and exchanges between Eastern Europe and women’s organizations in

the West. After almost ten years abroad, Barbara Limanowska returned to Poland in 1993. She was active in PSF and, together with the feminist activist Teresa Oleszczuk, founded the La Strada Foundation against Trafficking in Women. Over the following years, she worked with various organizations against human trafficking in Poland, Thailand, and former Yugoslavia.

In 1995, Limanowska participated in writing the first Polish CEDAW Shadow Report, produced by the Social Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations (Społeczny Komitet Organizacji Pozarządowych, SKOP) in preparation for the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, where she was also present. She spent two years in Thailand as a visiting professor at Mahidol University (1995–1997) and collaborated with the Bangkok-based feminist organizations Friends of Women as well as the Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women (GAATW). After returning to Poland, she became director of the Information Center for the Women's Movement (Ośrodek Informacji Środowisk Kobiety, OŚKA) in Warsaw, a position she held from 1997 to 2001. At OŚKA, she was also the editor-in-chief of the quarterly feminist magazine *Biuletyn OŚKi* (OŚKA Bulletin), one of the first feminist periodicals in Poland. Afterwards, she left for Sarajevo to work on the prevention of trafficking in women. Between 2001 and 2008, she worked as a senior expert on anti-trafficking for a joint initiative of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, UNICEF, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). She authored three reports on trafficking in human beings, focusing on the rights of the victims of trafficking, responses to human trafficking, as well as preventive measures. From 2008 to 2009, Barbara Limanowska worked as the Regional Gender Adviser at the Regional UNDP Office in Bratislava. Since 2010, she has been the Senior Gender Mainstreaming Expert at the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), where she is in charge of the gender mainstreaming program in support of gender agendas of EU institutions and EU governments.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • “Dlaczego w Polsce nie ma feminizmu?” [Why Is There No Feminism in Poland?], *Pełnym Głosem* [In Full Voice], no. 1 (1993): 3–24; “Ucieczka do wolności” [Escape to Freedom], in *Feministki własnym głosem o sobie* [Feminists in Their Own Voice], edited by Sławomira Walczewska (Kraków: eFKA, 2005), 109–120; *Trafficking in Human Beings in South-eastern Europe* (Belgrade: UNICEF, UNOHCHR, OSCE/ODIHR, 2003); “Victim Referral and Assistance System and Gaps Therein in Southeastern Europe,” United Nations Women Watch, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/trafficking2002/reports/EP-Limanowska.PDF>; “The Victim Perspective—A Neglected Dimension,” in *Challenging Trafficking in Persons. Theoretical Debate and Practical Approaches* (Baden-Baden: GTZ, 2005), 27–31; “Prawa kobiet prawami człowieka” [Women's Rights Are Human Rights], *Studia Prawnicze* 2, no. 198 (2014): 159–73.

Agnieszka Graff (b. 1970, Warsaw) was born into a family of intellectuals. Both her parents, Katarzyna Rosner and Piotr Graff, were philosophers working at the Polish Academy of Sciences. They were associated with the Warsaw intelligentsia milieu, and later with the democratic opposition circles. Growing up in such an intellectual atmosphere had an impact on Agnieszka's intellectual development. Although her father was Jewish, and her mother came from a partly Jewish family, Agnieszka was raised Roman catholic. She attended religion classes and, as was relatively common in intelligentsia families at the time, she joined a youth group of the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia (Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej, KIK), founded in 1956 to promote social responsibility as a Christian virtue. She currently identifies as atheist and is active in the Jewish community in Warsaw.

Agnieszka left Poland in 1988, upon completing high school. She studied at Amherst College (Massachusetts, United States), and later at the University of Oxford. After returning to Poland in 1994, she started her doctoral studies at the School of Social Sciences, Polish Academy of Sciences, while also teaching at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw. Her dissertation on James Joyce, defended in 1999, was eventually published as a book in 2012. During her doctoral studies she entered a circle of young feminist scholars who attended seminars with feminist sociologist Małgorzata Fuszara, philosopher Jolanta Brach Czaina, the US feminist Ann Snitow,¹ as well as the prominent cultural historian Maria Janion. Although she had developed an interest in feminist thinking earlier, while still at Amherst, it was in the mid-1990s that feminism became central to her life. She was engaged in public debates on abortion law and she wrote essays about various aspects of gender inequality—these pieces were collected in her book *World Without Women* (2001). She also translated *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf into Polish (1997, 2020) and wrote for intellectual journals such as *ResPublica Nowa*, feminist journals *Zadra* and *Ośka*, major Polish newspapers including *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and women's magazines such as: *Pani*, *Twój Styl*, *Cosmopolitan* with the aim of bringing feminist ideas to the general public. She was among the initiators and main coordinators of Manifa—an annual demonstration organized in numerous Polish cities on International Women's Day since 2000.

Since 2009, Graff has been involved in the Congress of Polish Women (Kongres Kobiet Polskich), which brings together feminist activists, intellectuals, businesswomen, as well as women politicians to discuss and lobby for equality. In this spirit, while pursuing an academic career, she remained active as a public intellectual, who insists on bringing feminist issues and perspectives into public debate in Poland. In her books, she addressed topics such as nationalism and gender, religion

1 About her experiences, see Snitow's posthumously published memoir: Ann Snitow, *Visitors: An American Feminist in East Central Europe* (New York: New Village Press, 2020).

and gender, feminism and motherhood, and the activities of the global anti-gender movement. She has also authored introductions to the Polish editions of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (2012), Susan Faludi's *Backlash* (2013), and Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (2015). She has a regular column in *Wysokie Obcasy* (High Heels), a supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and occasionally writes for *Oko.press*, an independent online news service.

A vocal ally of the LGBTQ movement, Agnieszka identifies as bisexual. Married for twenty years to a man, she is the mother of a boy named Staś (born in 2008). She divorced her husband in 2017 and has shared her life since then with feminist scholar, activist, and artist Magdalena Staroszczyk. In 2021, they came out together on the cover of the LGBTQ magazine *Replika*.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Świat bez kobiet. Płeć w polskim życiu publicznym* [World Without Women: Gender in Polish Public Life] (Warsaw: W.A.B., 2001); *Rykoszetem. Rzecz o płci, seksualności i narodzie* [Stray Bullets: Essays on Gender, Sexuality, and Nation] (Warsaw: W.A.B., 2008); *Magma. Inne próby zrozumienia o co tu chodzi* [The Quagmire Effect and Other Efforts to Understand What Is Going On] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2010); *This Timecoloured Place: The Time-Space Binarism in the Novels of James Joyce* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012); *Matka feministka* [Mother Feminist] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2014); with Elżbieta Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment* (London: Routledge, 2021).

Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz

CONTEXT

Following the profound political and social transformations in Poland after 1989, many independent ideas about the social order and the desired shape of society emerged. Feminism took center stage in public debate as one of the most controversial topics at the time. With high levels of unemployment, a growing gender pay gap, and the gradual loss of reproductive rights, women became some of the main losers of economic and political change. Although public opinion largely aligned with the feminist diagnoses of the situation of women (for example, 69% of respondents to the 1994 survey agreed that women were discriminated against),² Polish society had limited knowledge of feminism, and this set the path to often exaggerated negative stereotypes. In public debate, feminism was mainly associated with efforts to legalize abortion and divorce and was portrayed as a foreign concept in conflict with the traditional Catholic values held by many Poles. The idea of gender equality was mocked with references to the stereotypical image of the Soviet female tractor driver and seen

2 Pawlik, "Ruchy feministyczne i kobiece w Polsce po 1989," 175.

as a threat to “genuine femininity.” According to the dominant backlash rhetoric, the post-transformation state was supposed to support the restoration of a natural gender hierarchy, which had been damaged by enforced socialist emancipation. In the process of re-traditionalization, women were pushed out of the post-transformation public sphere into “the publicly invisible household,” their contribution to opposition movements and the democratic process were silenced and marginalized, perceived as “nothing but a carnival”—a temporary deviation from the natural gender order. The foundational myth of the new Polish democracy was presented as an (almost) solely male construct built on conservative Catholic values.³

Feminism appeared to be marginal. In the early 1990s, despite the emergence of the first formalized organizations, it was mainly limited to academic circles and widely viewed as an elitist ideology. It was represented by the organizations Polish Feminist Association (Polskie Stowarzyszenie Feministyczne PSF, founded in 1989), eFka (Women’s Foundation eFka, founded in 1991), the Confederation for Women and Family Planning (Konfederacja na Rzecz Kobiet i Planowania Rodziny, 1992), and the Centre for Information on Women’s Movements (Ośrodek Informacji Środowisk Kobiety, OŚKA, 1996), and by informal groups around Maria Janion⁴ at the Polish Academy of Sciences, and Renata Siemieńska⁵ at the University of Warsaw. An essential aspect of building the identity of the movement was recognizing its historical legacy and referring to the communist past. Polish feminists acknowledged the legacy of pre-1939 women’s activism, but blamed “state patriarchy” and the only women’s organization under state socialism, the League of Women, for women’s political passivity and their family-oriented individualism.⁶ In the mid-1990s they mostly agreed that there was no feminism during state socialism, that socialist emancipation was “unfinished,” and that the Polish national tradition was based on a conservative view on gender roles. Furthermore, they diagnosed “Poland’s immunity to any talk of women’s rights,”⁷ resulting from women’s political passivity and the weakness of civil society.

In 1996, the only feminist periodical of the time, *Pełnym Głosem* (In Full Voice), featured a debate on the existence of feminism in Poland. Most of the contributors claimed that not only was the feminist movement weak, but Polish women lacked

3 Krzyżanowska, “Polish Feminist Movement after 1989,” 46; Penn, *Podziemie Kobiet*.

4 Maria Janion (1926–2020) was a Polish feminist, literary historian and theorist, professor at the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAS). Her seminar at PAS had a major influence on academic feminists in Poland.

5 Renata Siemieńska (b. 1939) is a Polish sociologist, member of the Advisory Board of the Plenipotentiary of Equal Status of Men and Women in Poland (1992–2005); in 1986, she established a seminar dedicated to gender sociology at the University of Warsaw.

6 Walczewska, “Liga Kobiet – jedyna organizacja kobieca w PRL,” 29.

7 Graff, “Lost between the Waves?,” 104.

a feminist consciousness. Sławomira Walczewska⁸ concluded the discussion by stating that Polish feminism was still in the early stages of forming a movement.⁹ Three years earlier, in 1993, *Pełnym Głosem* published the article “Why Is There No Feminism in Poland?,” in which Barbara Limanowska, as an activist from OŚKA, thoroughly discussed the lack of feminist consciousness in Poland. The article was written in 1987, at a time when no recognized feminist organization legally existed. Firstly, Limanowska identified “a form of hermeneutical injustice”¹⁰ in the Polish language, which meant that “communal linguistic/conceptual resources” lacked words and categories for things and problems important to women. This, in her opinion, made feminist ideas difficult to understand. Then, she argued that women in Poland faced discrimination from three sources: the specific political situation, the national tradition with the powerful icon of Matka Polka (Polish Mother), and the dominant influence of the Catholic Church. Limanowska’s article was a very early recognition of the systemic inequalities in Polish society. Not only did she describe the situation of women as a conflict between Catholic tradition and communist modernization, but she also revealed the interactions between them. The publication of the debate on the same topic in 1993 shows that the situation of women remained largely unchanged after 1989.

In January 1993, the Polish Parliament adopted the Act on Family Planning, the Protection of the Human Fetus, and the Conditions for the Admissibility of Pregnancy Termination, commonly referred to as the “abortion compromise.” In fact, it enforced the Catholic and conservative worldview, as it made pregnancy termination legal only when it was a danger to the woman’s life or health, when it resulted from a crime, or in the case of grave and irreparable fetal impairment. The fierce campaign against abortion, and the national and religious framing of reproductive rights which preceded the Act, helped feminist groups consolidate their position.

When Agnieszka Graff published her article “Patriarchy after *Sexmission*” in 1999 in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poland’s largest daily, it was clear that feminism existed in Poland. With this text, Agnieszka Graff, who publicly identified herself as a feminist, initiated a long debate on women’s contribution to the Solidarity movement. The Independent Trade Union “Solidarity” (NSZZ “Solidarność”), founded in 1980, was commonly acknowledged as a new center of power that unified Polish society

8 Sławomira Walczewska (b. 1960) is a prominent feminist activist and philosopher. In 1991, she co-founded the Women’s Foundation eFKA in Krakow, as one of the first feminist organizations in post-socialist Poland. Between 1993–1997 she edited the feminist magazine *Pełnym Głosem*. She authored the book *Damy, rycerze i feministki. Kobiety dyskursu emancypacyjnego w Polsce* [Ladies, Knights, and Feminists: Feminist Discourse in Poland] (Krakow: eFKA, 1999), which was nominated for the most prestigious book award in Poland, NIKE, in 2000, and was also translated into German: *Damen, Ritter und Feministinnen zum Frauenrechtsdiskurs in Polen*, trans. Ursula Kiermeier (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015).

9 Walczewska, “Feminizm? – jest!,” 25.

10 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 155.

against communism. Although there were numerous women among its founders, and Anna Walentynowicz¹¹ was a central figure during the strikes at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk in August 1980, it had male leadership with Lech Wałęsa¹² as a symbol. Women's contribution to Solidarity was neglected until the 1999 debate. The debate was inspired by the research of feminist scholar Shana Penn, who conducted oral history interviews with Solidarity women, and showed that the role they played in the rise of an independent press and in general, in the fall of the communist system, was belittled by the success of their male counterparts.¹³ In her article, Graff referred to *Sexmission* (Seksmissja) a cult Polish film produced in 1984 in the context of the crisis of late socialism. It was a political satire, based on an exploration of gender stereotypes, showcasing a future society consisting only of women, controlled by a totalitarian government, the League of Women (equivalent to the Communist Party). Graff interpreted *Sexmission* as a popular metaphor in the mainstream media for the communist era. According to this metaphor, communism deprived men of their agency, of their "natural" role in the family and in society; it castrated them and promoted feminine values instead. Graff argued that the transformation after 1989 was not truly revolutionary in terms of gender equality, and on the contrary, the new Polish democracy was built on the idea of restoring the natural gender order after "sexmission," which meant the "remasculinization" of the public sphere. Graff concluded that Polish society was strongly patriarchal, and it was the increasing influence of the Catholic Church that led to the rejection of feminism as a communist legacy. "Patriarchy after *Sexmission*" was re-published in 2001 in a collection of essays in which Graff, using a personal perspective, analyzed the strategies used to silence women in the public sphere.¹⁴

Around the turn of the millennium, common attitudes toward gender equality and feminism began to change. Numerous women's organizations, as well as

11 Anna Walentynowicz (1929–2010) was a trade union activist and co-founder of Solidarity. Her firing from her job at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk in August 1980 initiated the strike at the shipyard and set off a wave of strikes across Poland. A "hero of socialist labor" in her youth, she was a devout Catholic and became a dissident in the 1970s. She was a member of the Solidarity Presidium until the introduction of martial law (December 13, 1981). She lost her position within Solidarity as a result of her criticism of Lech Wałęsa for his "cult of personality." After 1989, she distanced herself from the newly emerged political parties. She died in a plane crash near Smolensk on April 10, 2010, along with former Polish President and extreme right-wing politician Lech Kaczyński.

12 Lech Wałęsa (b. 1943) is a trade union activist, dissident, co-founder of Solidarity, politician, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and former President of Poland (1990–1995). After his symbolic act of climbing over the fence of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, he quickly became the strike and Solidarity leader. He was arrested several times, also after the declaration of martial law. Released, he continued his activism. He was prominent in the establishment of the Round Table Agreement of 1989 and won the presidential election in 1990. After losing the 1995 elections, he founded the Lech Wałęsa Institute and remained a public figure.

13 These studies resulted in books: Shana Penn, *Podziemie Kobiet* [Women's Underground], trans. Hanna Jankowska (Warsaw: Rosner & Wspólnicy, 2003) and *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland* (2005), in Polish: *Sekret Solidarności. Kobiety, które pokonały komunizm w Polsce*, trans. Maciej Antosiewicz (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2014).

14 Graff, *Świat bez kobiet. Płeć w polskim życiu publicznym*.

informal groups that refused to formalize their activities, including anarcho-feminists, emerged.¹⁵ Magda Grabowska argued that the condition of the women's movements at the turn of the century was much more complex than many scholars acknowledged. She claimed that it was a time when "the trajectories of feminism, anticlericalism, and alter-globalization came together in mobilization against the newly emerged regime," which was neoliberal, patriarchal, and radically Catholic.¹⁶ Agnieszka Graff pointed to the multitude of feminist initiatives, and to the visibility of feminism in public discourse. She described Polish turn-of-the-century feminism as eclectic, self-reflexive, and self-ironic, "lost between the waves"—with second wave goals, such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, equal pay for equal work, and third wave tactics, such as performances and street actions in a campy form.¹⁷ This expansion of the feminist movement was followed by a growing interest in the history of women's activism, including by revising the earlier rejection of the legacy of the communist era.

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Katarzyna Stańczak-Wislicz

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15 Fuszara, "Between Feminism and the Catholic Church," 1067.

16 Grabowska, "Bringing the Second World In," 390.

17 Graff, "Lost between the Waves?," 103.

Barbara Limanowska

Why Is There No Feminism in Poland?

Problems with feminism start at the level of definition and language. What is the definition of feminism, and does one universal definition even exist? [...] Is it possible to uncritically transfer definitions, terms, and interpretations from the context in which they once arose and now function, onto Polish soil? And if so, how does one overcome irrational aversion, fear, and hostility towards everything that is even in the slightest associated with Western women's movements, and with the word feminism above all? [...] What language should I use to write about women's problems: everyday fatigue, overwork, damaged hands, fear for children, monthly pains, and the conviction that nothing should be expected from life, that you should give your best and not expect a reward? There is no place for these matters in the language of power, politics, and religion. In Poland, they also do not exist in social, literary, and artistic language, be it official or underground. [...]

The situation of women in Poland is undoubtedly specific, and the theoretical feminist model is not enough to characterize it, or at least it does not exhaust the whole problem. The situation is therefore special: the very difficult conditions of everyday life, the enormous amount of domestic and professional duties, the progressive laws that theoretically guarantee equality, and the subordination to religious norms and the traditionalism of social thinking, which hinder the actual emancipation of women. Moreover, there is no reaction from women to their particularly difficult situation, and no organized protest, even when their rights are violated. [...] When asked why there is no place for the women's question in Polish social and political thinking—when it is impossible to conceal and downplay specific problems concerning over half of the population—from the very first moment a purely feminist answer emerges: Who would talk about it, and why? [...]

In common opinion, there are three arguments that indicate the absence of conditions in Poland for the emergence of a movement which fights for women's real rights as well as women's group consciousness. These are: a special political situation, a special national and family tradition, and a special role for the Catholic Church. [...] The struggle for social subjectivity and political independence is of fundamental importance in Polish reality. [...] From this perspective, the women's problem—like many others—is also irrelevant and marginal, despite the fact that women constitute over half of the fighting society.

The family does play a very special and important role in Poland. It focuses the threads of the romantic national liberation tradition. [...] A woman in a Polish family traditionally fulfilled a special function imposed on her by history: she was a mother, wife, and guardian of not only the home, but also of Polishness. [...] The Church in Poland performs a very special function: faith and patriotism, religious

and national considerations blend together to form a whole in which it is no longer possible to say where God is and where the homeland is. [...] Any changes within the family caused by moral and social changes are accepted reluctantly and at first assessed as negative and unnatural. The emergence of the idea of non-Catholic origin is interpreted as a result of the activities of the “red devil”—communism—in order to break the moral backbone of the chosen people. [...]

The argumentation presented above is based on the statement that the Polish socio-political situation is special and therefore also the activity of people and the prerogatives of this activity must be special and subordinate to the situation. From this perspective, the women’s movement is seen as marginal, luxurious, and amoral. Arguments against the legitimacy of raising the women’s issue, however, are based not on an assessment of reality (because there is objectively discrimination against women), but on the interpretation of this reality from an internal point of view, which assumes not only the superiority, but also the monopoly of the problem of freedom. According to such an internal interpretation, the women’s question has no significance, and not only does it make no sense to raise it, but it can also be harmful. [...] But it should not be forgotten that a different interpretation of the Polish situation is also possible, one that, starting from the facts, will assess them from the “special, difficult, and exceptional” Polish perspective, but in a broader context. [...]

From a point of view that does not focus solely on the analysis of the Polish situation, and even more so from the perspective of the experiences of Western feminism, arguments about marginality, luxury, and immorality as obstacles to the emergence of women’s group consciousness are unacceptable. For wherever the women’s movement has arisen (and it is still the case in those circles in the West that have nothing to do with the social alternative or the Left), women’s problems are treated in this way—as marginal, amoral, and luxurious. However, the presence of such a way of thinking is only an argument for the necessity of creating and operating women’s organizations, for appreciating women’s issues, advocating for women’s rights, and striving for change not only in the social structure, but also in the sphere of stereotypical thinking. This is what feminism is all about. Underestimating the women’s issue, belittling and describing it as socially harmful is a strategy typical of patriarchal society. Taking advantage of this situation and exploiting women is known as a sexist policy. Thus, it seems that women in Poland, accepting their place in society and using sexist arguments against themselves, support and even intensify male chauvinism.

Absurd? No, the “Polish paradox” is simply showing up again. Again, the question arises: Why is that? Why do most women not even realize that they are being exploited and discriminated against? [...] The psychological, social, and political indoctrination of women—the diagnosis sounds ominous. The conditions that allow

for such indoctrination to be carried out are indeed related to the specificity of the Polish socio-political situation. On the one hand, this results from living in a totalitarian political system with a closed, one-sided circulation of information; in a system in which power is concentrated in the hands of a group of men who are not interested either in women's emancipation or in the freedom of the individual. On the other hand, [this results] from the traditionalism and social and moral conservatism supported by the Church.

Living between two extremes—on the one hand, a political system that depreciates the individual, and on the other a system of social norms that is extremely intolerant, rigid, and destructive of the right to personal freedom—influences the attitudes of the entire society and strongly determines the behavior and mindset of women.

Regardless of the perspective from which the women's question is considered—whether from the point of view of psychology (asking about the motivations and psychological mechanisms behind individual attitudes), micro-sociology (focusing primarily on the family as the basic and most important social unit in Poland), or from the point of view of sociology (asking firstly about the mechanisms of social life that assign women specific places and roles in society, and secondly about the reasons and effects of taking this and not another position)—the impact of a dichotomous system, the presence of two systems, two scales of values always seems to be essential. Polish-Catholic tradition and “communist modernity,” family and work for the homeland, Christian morality and socialist morality, “we” and “you,” a Polish woman and a Soviet woman, Madonna and a proven revolutionary—choices are made constantly. All the more so because the systems, or at least their elements, are not stable, and there are constant interactions between them. The Soviet woman changes from the tractor driver Frosi¹⁸—who in the Russian reading in the first grade of high school was deeply satisfied as she led a combine through a collective farm field—into a successful professional and financial director of a state farm; the slogan “words, thoughts, deeds—for the socialist homeland” turns into “Poland sober and pure welcomes the Pope.” The tradition becomes more and more disambiguated by taking on the rough, unleavened mask of peasants. However, the fundamental division still exists, it cannot be forgotten, it forces participation, defines attitudes, gives the illusion of free choice, and at the same time enables the manipulation of the entire society, and in a specific way also women themselves. The possibility of manipulating the social thinking of women is the result of an information monopoly owned by the state, and on the other hand, it results from the unquestionable authority of Church ideology. [...]

18 Frosi or Frosia the tractor driver is a character from the Russian-language textbook for Polish schools in the 1960s and 1970s. She was presented as a symbol of socialist women's emancipation.

The state's information monopoly, looking for consolation and patterns of behavior in tradition, the conservatism of the Church, all these factors make the existing situation seem absolute and hopeless. In the area between the poles of the state and the Church, in which Polish social, political, and personal life takes place, there is no room for new ideas, but there is also no chance to solve existing problems with the available, traditional methods. The problems of women are thus discussed in the same way as the plight of a serf peasant: with warmth, though not too seriously; with sympathy, but without obligations. In addition, all information on Western women's movements is given in the form of a spicy joke and with an ambiguous smile. Devoid of their true content, they only arouse hostility or, at best, skepticism. Hence, the possibility of improving the situation on domestic soil, the fight for women's rights and aspirations for emancipation are automatically identified only with the further procession of "equality" in the communist version. Nobody wonders what equality should mean, because such questions go beyond the vicious circle of "vital problems" of the state, the Church, and the opposition.

Translated by Anna Topolska

Agnieszka Graff
Patriarchy after "Sexmission"

The belief that women should not get mixed up in politics, and that a serious approach to their problems damages democracy, is in my opinion not quite as new as Peggy Watson suggests.¹⁹ In our political culture, this belief predates the democratic transformation by almost a decade, as it constituted one of the fundamental elements of the ethos of anti-communist opposition. And the dissident ethos itself has its roots in the insurgent ethos of the nineteenth century, so it is deeply immersed in Romantic thinking.

Let us remain, however, in the current century: I am interested in the epoch of the so-called "real socialism" and our present ideas of it. The period of "communism" is often described as an embarrassing break in the life of Polish society. This embarrassment is deeply connected to gender, as the time of the Polish People's Republic is, in our collective memory, a time of humiliation, domestication, and the symbolic castration of Polish men. It is no coincidence that the film

19 Editor's note: Peggy Watson is a sociologist who worked in Poland, at the Department of Sociology, University of Warsaw, and at the Technical University of Wrocław in the 1980s. She has published on gender and the 1989 transition in Eastern and Central Europe, e.g., Peggy Watson, "The Rise of Masculinism in Eastern Europe," *New Left Review* 198 (1993): 71–82; "Eastern Europe's Silent Revolution: Gender," *Sociology* 27, no. 3 (1993): 471–87.

by Juliusz Machulski, *Sexmission* [pol. *Seksmisja*], became such a familiar allegory of this period. Our national tale unfolds as follows: a long, long time ago, there was a brave warrior, a father of family, a knight, in a word: a True Man. But then a terrible thing happened. Communism—that witch! that whore!—sent him into internal exile, transforming the True Man into an allotment gardener, a DIY enthusiast, a henpecked husband. He was imprisoned in a paranoid “women’s world,” where the most masculine mission he could embark on was making kitchen cupboards. Now, this new, mongrelized, castrated Man could become active in the political sphere, but to do so was to be “unmanned,” to be a careerist, a conformist—a total humiliation. And the Woman? The Woman—so goes the national tale—was fighting for survival. We would refer to shopping as “hunting,” although it remained in the hands of women. The idea was not to make shopping seem like the domain of men, but to signal that real socialism is an “abnormal” situation, an upside-down world. A world in which—what a horror!—women are forced to hunt.

In a deeply patriarchal society—which is what our society was at the time and what it remains at present—a tale about gender role reversal is a clear metaphor for chaos. Which is why our national tale about the absurdity of the communist system took the shape of the story of *Sexmission*. This vision of Polish society during communism can easily be spotted in mainstream media and academic works. The myth that women had power during the time of the Polish People’s Republic has settled into our mentality as a self-evident truth, and the film which expressed this idea became a cult classic. But if communism “womanized” the Polish man, then it was “Solidarity” that gave him back his manhood. Oh, these were manly affairs, manly talks. In order to express these feelings, a slogan was painted on the wall of the striking Gdańsk Shipyard during the 1980 strike: *Women, do not disturb us, we are fighting for Poland*. This slogan did not outrage anybody at that time, on the contrary, it was perceived as touching—an authentic expression of workers’ culture, a moving reference to the language of national liberation struggles. Look, the men are once again “fighting for Poland” while the women are again crying, making sandwiches, sending more sons into the struggle.

[...]

Let us take a closer look at this slogan, this time in the categories of the rebirth of masculinity. Who is actually speaking here, and to whom? “We” are not just the shipyard workers annoyed at being distracted from the strike by scared wives and mothers. Clearly, “we” refers to men and “you” means women. Masculinity is central and obvious because the struggle is underway. And struggle—we all know this—is a man’s thing. Any attempt to interfere would be a disturbance on the women’s part. At the time, the sentence was fulfilling two functions: it established the subject of the political fight as a truly manly subject, and it simultaneously excluded women from this fight.

Was this symbolic gesture of exclusion, repeated in various ways, truly effective? The answer depends on whether we are interested in the sphere of facts, practical activities in the time of “Solidarity,” or in the sphere of symbols, in the language that frames those facts. The contribution of women to “Solidarity” is undeniable. It is not a coincidence, however, that the women underground leaders interviewed by Shana Penn insist on defining their function as merely supportive. If they were leaders, they insist, this was only temporary, a matter of necessity caused by the arrests of the majority of men.

Whatever they did in reality, they were ready to inscribe their activity into a pattern according to which the struggle as such is something that men—and only men—engage in. They, the women, would not dare disturbing. They were merely doing what had to be done. They were helping out. Only helping.

[...]

My thesis may sound shocking, it may even seem sacrilegious: I claim that the great struggle for national liberation known as “Solidarity” was, on the symbolic level, an act of restoration of the patriarchal order, which had been disrupted by the totalitarian system. Just as communism became, in the collective unconscious, a period of *Sexmission*, a shameful imprisonment in an underworld of reversed roles, so emerging from this underworld constituted a moment of regaining masculinity, of cutting the repulsive umbilical cord.

[...]

The actual history of “Solidarity” starts with the case of Anna Walentynowicz, but this fact has been all but erased from the myth of that movement. It survives in the background, as an anecdote, an apocryphal story of sorts. The proper beginning of that history turned out to be the moment in which the mustached Lech Wałęsa valiantly jumped over the fence of the Gdansk Shipyard. In a patriarchal culture, actual women do not exist in the collective imagination as agents of history. They are substituted, instead, by an elevated and purely symbolic femininity: the Virgin Mary in the Chief’s lapel and in the songs and poems from the time of “Solidarity.” The Black Madonna, the Queen of Poland. This unreal and disembodied feminine is also, of course, mutilated by the enemy’s sword. Its role is to sanctify the revolution, to open the way to the sphere of *the sacred*. But a patroness is not a woman-leader, she is her opposite. Her presence reminds us that in order for the ritual to be fulfilled, actual femaleness—the kind that does not combine virginity and maternity, the kind that does not work miracles—must be driven out of the myth. This is why Anna Walentynowicz does not exist in our collective memory. This is why the women in “Solidarity” did not fight, but merely “did what had to be done.”

Translated by Anna Topolska

13

Dissidence

Nadiia Svitlychna and Vira Pavliiva Lisova

Women and the Dissident Movement in Soviet Ukraine

AUTHOR Nadiia Svitlychna

TITLE *Suchasnyi stan zhinky v Ukraini* [Women's Status in Contemporary Ukraine]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Nashe Zhyttia* [Our Life] (Journal of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America), no. 7 (July–August 1979): 5–6; no. 8 (September 1979): 5–7.

LANGUAGE Ukrainian

AUTHOR Vira Pavliiva Lisova

TITLE *Zhinky v rusi oporu simdesiatykh rokiv* [Women in the Resistance Movement of the Seventies]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED "Simdesiatnytsi" [Women of the 1970s], *Zona* [Zone], no. 12 (1997): 3–12. Revised by Vira Lisova for the Virtual Museum of the Dissident Movement in Ukraine, January 2008: <http://museum.khpg.org/1202337115>

LANGUAGE Ukrainian

ABOUT THE AUTHORS¹

Nadiia Svitlychna (1936, Polovynkyno–2006, Matawan) was born in the village of Polovynkyno, Luhansk region, USSR, to a peasant family with three children. She studied at Starobilsk Secondary School. In 1953, following the example of her older brother, Ivan Svitlychnyi (1929–1992), she entered the Department of Ukrainian philology at M. Gorky Kharkiv University (now V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University). After graduating, she worked as a teacher from 1958 to 1963 and later as a director at the school for proletarian youth in the city of Antratsyt in the Luhansk region. During her university years, she often visited Kyiv and became acquainted with people from the artistic circle oriented toward Ukrainian national culture to which her brother belonged. Ivan Svitlychnyi, at that time an employee of Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature in Kyiv, was an active participant in the Club of Creative Youth (Klub tvorchoi molodi, Kyiv, 1960–64), part of a network of organizations out of which the early Sixtiers² grew. Together with Nadiia and Ivan, the Club also united such well-known future dissidents as Ivan Dziuba, Ievhen Sverstiuk, Vasyl'

¹ Galina Babak's contribution was supported by the Ukraine in Global Dialogue Fellowship Program, sponsored by the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna.

² The Sixtiers (Shistdesiatnyky) were representatives of a new generation of the Soviet intelligentsia, active during the late 1950s and 1960s, after the Khrushchev Thaw. They shared liberal and anti-totalitarian views, and advocated for cultural pluralism and freedom of artistic expression. In the Ukrainian context, the Sixtiers movement was dominated by national ideas.

Symonenko, Alla Hors'ka (also in this volume), among others. In 1963, Svitlychna moved to Kyiv, where she worked as an editor in the agricultural college publishing department and in the Radians'ka shkola (Soviet School) publishing house. In August 1965, her brother was imprisoned for eight months on charges of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda."

On May 22, 1967, together with other activists (including Vira Lisova), Svitlychna participated in a protest against the forced Russification of the press and literary publishing in Ukraine, which took place near the Taras Shevchenko monument in Kyiv. That same year, along with her brother, Ivan Dziuba, and Lina Kostenko, she signed a letter of protest against the arrest of Ukrainian dissident and politician Viacheslav Chornovil. During the 1960s, she took an active part in the production and distribution of *samizdat* (Ukr. *samvydav*) literature, which later became the reason for her arrest in May 1972. She was found guilty of anti-Soviet activity and sentenced to four years in a maximum-security camp. She was sent to the women's prison camp in Barashevo in the Mordovian ASSR (now the Republic of Mordovia within the Russian Federation). In May 1976, she was released.

Svitlychna returned to Kyiv and lived with her son in the apartment of her brother's wife, since she had been denied the ability to register in the Ukrainian capital on her own. In December 1976, she sent a statement to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in which she renounced her Soviet citizenship. Two years later, she and her two sons—Iarema and newborn Ivan—left the USSR for Italy and then for the United States. Eight years later, she was stripped of her Soviet citizenship. In the US, Svitlychna first settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but then she lived in Newark, Irvington, and Matawan in New Jersey.

In emigration, she was an active member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group's External Representation. Between 1980 and 1985, she regularly published the *Visnyk represii v Ukraini* (Herald of Repressions in Ukraine). From 1983 to 1994, she worked for the Ukrainian edition of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, hosting the series "The Sixtiers in Kyiv." In 1986, she edited and published Vasyl' Stus's poetry collection *Palimpsesty* (Palimpsests), having received the manuscript from the imprisoned author in 1978. In 1992, she initiated the "Museum of the Sixtiers" in Kyiv, supporting it by donating part of the money from the Taras Shevchenko State Prize she received in 1994. She passed away in 2006 in Matawan.

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Svitlychnyi, *U mene – til'ky slovo* [I Have Only a Word] (Kharkiv: Folio, 1994) • EDITED PERIODICALS • *Visnyk represii v Ukraini* [Herald of Repressions in Ukraine] (New York, 1980–1985).

Vira Lisova (née Hrutsenko; b. 1937) was born in Kaharlyk, Kyiv region, USSR, in a family of *kolhoz* (collective farm) workers. She had three sisters. Her two older sisters were convicted in one of the “Law of Three Spikelets” trials in 1947.³ In 1954, Lisova graduated from Kaharlyk Secondary School. The next year, she enrolled in the Department of Philology of the Taras Shevchenko State University in Kyiv (now the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv). During her studies, she took different jobs, including working in a motorcycle factory, leading the school pioneer children’s movement, etc. From 1961 to 1964, she worked as an assistant at the Ukrainian Research Institute of Pedagogy (now the Institute of Pedagogy of the NAES of Ukraine). At that time, she became close to the dissidents from the Club of Creative Youth in Kyiv: Nadiia Svitlychna and her brother Ivan Svitlychnyi, Ievhen Sverstiuk, Alla Hors’ka, Ivan Dziuba, Ivan Drach, among others. In 1964, she was fired from the Institute for taking part in the unofficial commemoration of Taras Shevchenko’s reburial on May 22. Between 1965 and 1969, she worked as a teacher in Russian School no. 168 in Kyiv.

In 1971, Lisova returned to the Institute as a junior researcher, where she stayed until 1972. In 1971, she married the philosopher and dissident writer Vasyl’ Lisovyi. After the arrests of Ukrainian intellectuals in January 1972, Vasyl’ wrote an open letter of protest. In July 1972, he was arrested and then sentenced to seven years in a maximum-security camp and three more years of resettlement in exile. Vira Lisova was left behind in Kyiv with two small children. As the wife of a political prisoner, it was difficult for her to find a job. From 1974 to 1976, she worked as a kindergarten teacher. While Vasyl’ was imprisoned, she took an active part in defending him and other dissidents. She wrote statements to Soviet and foreign organizations, sent inquiries to the camps and to the KGB about her husband’s health, and took part in a press conference for foreign journalists in 1974 in Moscow. Lisova became closer to the Moscow dissidents Andrei Tverdokhlebov, Yuri Shikhanovich, and Galina Salova. She also helped families of political prisoners through the Solzhenitsyn Aid Fund.

Because of her activity, Lisova was interrogated by the KGB, ransacked, and was under permanent psychological pressure. In 1979, together with her children, she left for the Buryat Autonomous SSR to join her husband in internal exile. In June 1983, the family returned to Kyiv. Until her retirement in 1990, she worked as a teacher and

3 The law allowed for the prosecution of those who took grain left behind in the fields once the harvest had been collected and officially counted. The decree was notably used during the Soviet famines of 1932–1933 and of 1945–1947. It allowed for prison terms of at least ten years and the confiscation of all property. Amnesty was prohibited.

a librarian. After 1991, she was active as a publicist; she wrote a memoir about the Sixtiers, particularly about women's resistance in the 1960s and 1970s.

MAIN WORKS • "Simdesiatnytsi" [Women of the 1970s], *Zona*, no. 12 (1997): 3–12; *Moim iunym zemliakam* [To My Young Compatriots] (Kyiv: n. p., 2000) • EDITED VOLUMES • Vasyl' Lisovyi, *Spohady. Poezii* [Memoirs. Poems] (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2014); Vasyl' Lisovyi, *Ukraina: povernennia chasu. Polityko-filosofski rozдумы* [Ukraine: The Return of Time; Political and Philosophical Reflections] (Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2019).

Galina Babak

CONTEXT

After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, and especially after the 20th Congress of the The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956, the Soviet Union went through a historical period known as the Thaw. First, this entailed an easing of the Soviet totalitarian regime, criticism of Stalin's cult of personality, and mild selective democratization, especially in the cultural and academic spheres. Hundreds of thousands of prisoners returned from labor camps, a process of rehabilitation of political convicts began, and the entire system of Stalin's Gulag was closed.⁴ In the Soviet public mind, the idea that a new, more just, more open, and future-oriented period was beginning, become firmly established. Most of the Soviet intelligentsia supported these changes at first. However, the rule of Nikita Khrushchev and the first years of Leonid Brezhnev's leadership—in other words, the second half of the 1950s to the mid-1960s—were not an attempt to change the Soviet regime entirely, but to cautiously modernize it.

Against the Cold War backdrop, under conditions of scientific, technical, economic, military, and cultural rivalry and ideological confrontation with the West, the Soviet regime was forced to open some areas of internal life, but nevertheless retained control over them, especially over the political and ideological spheres. Therefore, among some representatives of the Sixtiers, enthusiasm was quickly replaced by indignation, which brought them into the ranks of a new, rather powerful wave of the dissident movement. The true history of the dissident movement in the USSR begins in the early 1960s. The Thaw was very selective and did not affect many areas of sociopolitical life in the USSR, nor, in particular, the national question. Importantly, most of the leaders of the national movements in the USSR did experience amnesty and rehabilitation under Khrushchev. Therefore, in the national Soviet republics, the

4 However, this does not mean that the system of corrective labor camps ceased to exist. In October 1956, the Main Directorate of Corrective Labor Camps was created, which in March 1959 was renamed into the Main Directorate of Prisons of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR.

Thaw had a very specific character, and many representatives of the national intelligentsia began dissident activities already from the early 1960s.

The dissident movement of the 1960s and the 1970s, although it hits approximately the same historical timeframe, consisted of different periods. The 1960s were the decade of the birth of national and religious dissident movements, including the Ukrainian one. There was an attempt to “continue” the national resistance of the previous decades.⁵ The 1970s, and especially the second half, were dominated by the struggle for human rights as the main objective of the dissident movement. The rhetoric of the human rights movement—based on the idea of the equality of all human beings irrespective of their gender, race, or class—was more universal than the slogans of national liberation. In contrast to the 1960s, when dissidents spoke out against different institutions of the Soviet regime, the aim in the 1970s, at least declaratively, was to force the Soviet regime to be consistent with its own Constitution and its international obligations (the Helsinki Accords and Declaration, 1975). The most important tool for achieving these objectives was to make public human rights violations and the failure of the Soviet government to comply with its obligations.

As Vira Lisova points out in her essay in this volume, “we had a glowing hope that this information could enlighten and activate the public and foreign governments and induce the countries that took part in the Helsinki conference to influence the USSR’s policy to make our prisoners’ lives easier.” That is why the dawn of dissident *samizdat* came precisely in the 1970s. During the same period, the Ukrainian anti-Soviet national movement considered the national question in a more universal human rights perspective, which revealed itself in the actions of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group. Therefore, if in the 1960s Ukrainian dissidents were mainly isolated within the framework of one republic, during the 1970s they established contacts with the dissident movement in Moscow, as Lisova describes in her text.

It is this dialectic of universal and national approaches that manifested itself in the sphere of gender roles in the Ukrainian dissident movement. The Ukrainian dissident movement did not have a gender agenda, which means that there was no struggle for women’s rights and no reevaluation of the distribution of gender roles that had settled by the mid-1960s and 1970s in Soviet society. This can be explained by the very objectives of the Ukrainian national dissident movement, which gave national liberation and human rights priority over the rights of the individual. In this logic, the promotion of any other causes would have weakened its resistance.

The response to this seemingly insoluble contradiction was a new form of self-organization of Ukrainian dissident women—a “sisterhood” with an appeal to a rather conservative understanding of the gender order. Women made a huge contribution

5 The Ukrainian liberation movement of the 1920s–1950s unfolded mainly in western Ukraine and aimed to restore Ukrainian independence.

to the dissident movement: supporting political prisoners, being engaged in the production of *samizdat*, and informing Western correspondents on political trials and prison conditions, even though gender relations were still governed by clear hierarchies.

The male leaders of the dissident movement were often compared to soldiers on the frontlines, while women were considered more as “companions” or “faithful wives” who waited for their men and supported them from home, rather than “female comrades.”⁶ Beyond this, women were also expected to care for children and the household. In general, for a woman to come out on top was extremely rare and happened only in particular circumstances. For example, Nadiia Svitlychna became a dissident following the example of her brother Ivan Svitlychnyi, and Vira Lisova became active in the dissident movement after the arrest of her husband Vasyl’ Lisovy in 1972. Rare examples of women achieving high positions in the dissident movement were the Ukrainian activist Alla Hors’ka (brutally murdered in 1970) or the Russian dissident Tatiana Khodorovich. Women, playing the role of faithful wives of their husbands, generally followed them into exile. Vira Lisova, in an interview from 2014, was quite surprised by the question of why she decided to join her husband in exile: “Why? I just know what Vasyl’ is like—he is a very honest man, and he is not inclined to compromise. He is not a showy person, but if he believes in something, he calmly follows up on it to the end. And I was worried about him. I thought that being with him would make it easier for him.”⁷

However, it is also important to note that the very idea of “home” was also expanded. For example, women, such as Alla Hors’ka, made arrangements for political prisoners after their return in shared apartments that served both as a temporary place of residence (a home) and a meeting place for dissidents. Lisova writes in her text that many women took care of prisoners who did not have anyone outside the prison: these women wrote letters to them and morally supported them, sent them food and money.

The horizontal network of women solidarity, a so-called “sisterhood,” was a strong, but not always visible side of the dissident movement. Although it was not directly related to Western feminism of the second and third waves, it was nevertheless an extremely important and fruitful means of self-organization under conditions of severe political pressure. In a way, it was consolidated in parallel to the ties among those fighting against the government. Women were ready to replace men on the frontlines, but this did not question the traditional division of gender roles: “In contrast to the dissidents’ own rhetoric, then, they did not attack the seeming feminism of official ideology; the gender hierarchies among dissident activists, rather, faithfully reflected hierarchies shaped by the socialist system.”⁸

6 Stephan, *Von der Küche auf den Roten Platz*.

7 Ovsiienko, “Lisova (Hrytsenko) Vira Pavlivna”

8 Brier, “Gendering Dissent,” 26.

This is especially evident in Nadiia Svitlychna's speech at the 1979 symposium organized in New York by the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, dedicated to Ukrainian women's lives in the past and present. That same year her speech was published in two parts in the journal of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, *Our Life*. In the first part of her speech, Svitlychna tries to convey to American women all the complexities of the "women's question" in Soviet Ukraine. The essence of her message is that there are a lot of downsides to gender equality in Soviet society. As an example of the absurdity of Soviet women's right to be elected to one-party legislative bodies, she mentioned the Minister of Culture Katerina Furtseva. However, governmental positions, being a part of executive power, were not elective. Her next example, Valentina Tereshkova, the world's first female astronaut, also does not support her argument, as there was nothing absurd from a gender perspective about Tereshkova's flight to space. Even the indisputable cases that Svitlychna cites could be interpreted by an American audience at that time as contradicting her main message. One example is arguing that women were not allowed into many leadership positions and professions, while rightly pointing out that the majority of Soviet doctors and teachers were women. More generally, this should alert readers to the conflictual nature of the relationship between the Western concept of gender equality and the Ukrainian national dissident movement, which insisted on traditional values in one way or another. Svitlychna also pointed to a crisis of gender roles within the Soviet family in the 1970s. She noted that gender equality did not apply to the household, where "there exists a standard which presupposes that household duties lie exclusively with women [...]. This is why equality seems to be one-sided."

The second part of Svitlychna's speech brings her subject to a deeper level. Survival in a Soviet prison or camp is not so much an ideological or political issue, but an existential one. To preserve dignity, to survive, and to remain a human being, one should commit a volitional act of resistance to the ruthless and inhuman system. The question lies in the chosen ways of resistance. And here the practices, characteristic of the traditional gender roles of Ukrainian women, are shown to constitute the very essence of individual human resistance. The Ukrainian woman dissident embroiders in the camp. Moreover, she insists on her right to embroider through hunger strikes, and thus the embroidery, from an archaic traditional gender perspective, becomes an act of individual freedom and resistance.

If Svitlychna spoke of female resistance based on her own experience spending three years in a penal colony, Vira Lisova's text describes the phenomenon of "sisterhood" in the 1970s as it existed in the "big zone," in the world outside of Soviet camps and prisons. In the history of dissident struggle for human rights in the USSR, the mid-1970s was a period when the universal principle of human rights in the dissident movement was stronger than the anti-Soviet national and religious movements.

In the case of the Ukrainian dissident movement, this contradiction was resolved by the fact that the human rights agenda implied the right of an individual to the liberation of his people. It was on this ideological basis that Ukrainian dissidents in the second half of the 1970s established close contacts with dissidents in Moscow and other cities in the Russian SFSR. For example, Lisova recalls a press conference organized at Tatiana Khodorovich's apartment in May 1974, where human rights violations in separate republics of the USSR were conveyed to foreign journalists. In the early 1970s, the Solzhenitsyn Aid Fund was established after Solzhenitsyn donated his Nobel Prize money to support political prisoners, primarily their families. These networks were overwhelmingly run by women, and Lisova was the one who helped transfer the money to Ukrainian families in need.

Thus, the very principle of sisterhood was transformed in the mid-1970s. It was not only expanding geographically, but the very field of activity of dissident women expanded too. Female Soviet dissidents, both in Moscow and Kyiv, were the main technical producers of *samizdat*; they were the ones that typed up the texts banned in the USSR. Lisova only hints at this, but one can imagine that all the publications of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group were typed by the hands of Ukrainian women. Lisova also notes that it had become more difficult and more dangerous to distribute *samizdat* literature from the 1970s onward, and especially to transfer it to the West. The works of the Ukrainian dissidents Ivan Svitlichnyi, Mykola Rudenko, Valentyn Moroz, and others, were published abroad thanks to the risk-taking of their wives.

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Galina Babak

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Nadiia Svitlychna

Women's Status in Contemporary Ukraine

Speech delivered by Nadiia Svitlychna at the symposium organized by the World Federation of Ukrainian Women Organizations in New York on April 28, 1979.

A lot can be said about the status of women in contemporary Ukraine. We can discuss it generally, or highlight some specific things. We can use some examples and argue, for women's rights are provided, guaranteed, and implemented. And those rights implemented for women have their advantages and disadvantages. The very rights women have struggled for in other parts of the world prove to have their downsides where they have already been gained. Although they do certainly have their upsides.

I am not yet well-versed in women's rights and the state of affairs here regarding such basic rights as equal pay, but I have heard that men and women receive different compensation for the same job here. There is no such difference in Ukraine and in the Soviet Union in general. This is good. One can also find some other features of equality there. But today I want to focus on those downsides which make women's lives even harder due to the benefit of equality. Women in the Soviet Union, just as

men, have the right to education and a job, can vote, and can stand as candidates to any electoral body. You know perfectly well what kind of elections those are, so I will not dwell on that. You can also imagine what kind of right to be elected this really is if you look at the ridiculous figure of Furtseva or the experiment with Tereshkova in the cosmos. This is probably not worth dwelling upon either. Still, I want to focus on what is closest to us—say, the right to education. Both men and women can exercise that right. But for whatever reason, most students in technical universities are male while women prevail in the humanities. Teachers and doctors are mostly women. Managing positions in any field belong to men—especially the collective farms, plants, and mines. Officially, women are eliminated from the mines—that is, from the mines’ depths—but I still know women who steer electric locomotives. One does not have to look far to see examples: you just need to take a trolley-bus across Khreshchatyk to see women chiseling the pavement with jackhammers. Even now, when Kyiv is full of international tourists, this is what our equality looks like.

But this very woman who thumps with a jackhammer or works overtime as a doctor at her clinic or teaches and carries a stack of exercise books to check after work, this woman will also burden herself with a bag of groceries on her way home. She will also have to invent something to survive the queue or not stand in it. Every trifle is a problem. Moreover, when she is home, she needs to cook dinner and share cheerful spirits with her children and her husband, with whom she has equal rights.

And still, women manage to remain guardians of the hearth and of old traditions. Men, no doubt, take part in children’s upbringing and try to deal with their share of problems. Nevertheless, a certain moral climate predominates where many men who feel for women do not always dare to express those feelings or offer any help with chores. The thing is that there exists a standard which presupposes that household duties lie exclusively with women, therefore cleaning the floor, let alone cooking, washing clothes, or—God forbid—changing diapers is a shame for a man. This is why equality seems to be one-sided. But I repeat, women mostly manage to teach their children, to wash clothes, and not just to sew something, but also to embroider a shirt, to tell a tale, and to sing a song. And this is a tradition that has lasted for years, for centuries.

There’s an anecdote about a Party member: He was filling in a blank questionnaire and the supervisor demanded to know whether he had wavered from the Party’s policy. The Party member answered, “I wavered together *with* the Party’s policy.” Women’s moral state in contemporary Ukraine also wavers, as in this anecdote, together with the Party’s policy. Women are not excluded from the general atmosphere of total vacuum, emptiness, and purposelessness. They are equal to men in it. Unfortunately, women often fail in their role as humanity’s better half, reaching the very bottom.

There are many women in Soviet Union's concentration camps, as many as 1,500–2,000 in each of them. Since we're talking about criminals, villains, women of easy virtue, killers, and so on, there is a high turnover there. New decrees are constantly issued for those criminals—premature releases and so on. But the production schedule is not affected by that, as new women soon come to replace the released ones. The production schedule in those camps is strict, independent of amnesty or any decrees. And I have never heard of any camp being behind schedule.

An Embroidered First Reader

Female political prisoners from Ukraine are notable because they have always found ways to embroider in camps and prisons where people are otherwise not allowed to have needles or threads. Before, when you could be punished for having a needle, women embroidered with fishbones, pulling out a thread from wherever they could.

Over the course of her first ten years of imprisonment, Iryna Senyk even embroidered the prisoners' numbers on the fabric tags of their uniforms. Iryna, nicknamed Orysia, is generally obsessed with embroidery. In 1972, when she was arrested for the second time, she embarked on a hunger strike for several days, demanding a needle and thread. After this, she finally earned her right to embroider in prison.

In the camp, she did not only embroider—though she did this the most and was the best of us all—but also mixed many patterns together. She was very fond of children's topics and combined patterns to embroider on the pages of children's notebooks, school planners, bookmarks, and monograms. Iryna was especially generous towards my son, Iarema, for whom she combined and embroidered many patterns. Maybe it was her way to soothe the pain of lost motherhood. Or maybe, as with our other friends in the camp, she wanted to improve Iarema's orphaned childhood.

During the three years that I remained in the Mordovian camp, Orysia and I slept on the double-plank bed and shared the most intimate things. Sometimes it seemed that we dreamed the same dreams. But this was only an illusion. Orysia often woke up in the middle of the night to scribble down some Carpathian patterns she had dreamt about. My dreams were more prosaic and almost always black-and-white... with black the most prevalent.

One time, we had an idea—I do not know who thought it up first—to embroider my son's first reader. First, we wanted to collect the fairy tales and poems that my brother and I had sent home in our letters from the camp. Then we wanted to illustrate those with embroidered pages. Orysia started to combine pictures for the stories while we picked out patterns for them (we drafted folk patterns from everywhere and had plenty to choose from) and discussed colors. Then I started to

embroider. We had no proper fabric at the time, so we decided to use the remains of the roll we used for the gauntlets we were otherwise forced to sew.

The first reader began with the acrostic I wrote earlier, during the investigation in Kyiv. The first letters of every line make up my son's name, IAREMKO. The second page contained an illustration of my brother's poem, which starts with the words

*Granny Melasia has many veggies in her pantry
and ends with*

The hare Iaryk can eat his fill every day.

Those final words were a plot for the illustration. The third page has an illustration of Ivan Svitlychy's infinite poem, "The hens in the field sow millet."

We also planned to illustrate my brother's poems about geese and a sick bear, about mice and a cat, as well as my translation of a story about a dinosaur who was kissed by the sun and turned into a giraffe. We thought about drawing pictures for my *Linobil*-versed fairy tale,⁹ co-written with Iryna Kalynets', and for my variation on E[duardas] Mieželaitis's *Bouncing Hare* (*Zuikis puikis* in Lithuanian).

The sudden announcement "*Take your stuff and get out!*" killed our plans. Six weeks before my release, I was taken to prison. While I gained my right for a needle and thread by using Orysia's method, the embroidered first reader remains unfinished up to now.

Translated by Yuliia Maksymeiko

Vira Pavlivna Lisova

Women in the Resistance Movement of the 1970s

At the beginning of November 1976, BBC Radio announced that a new human rights organization had been launched in Ukraine. That was the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, which assisted in fulfilling the Helsinki Accords.

After political prisoners were sentenced and sent to camps at the beginning of the 1970s (1972–1974), a community of relatives and friends who were free cropped up. We started to communicate actively, even though the KGB put obstacles in our way. We also started to connect with the families of prisoners from other Ukrainian cities and villages. We even established some new traditions, like congratulating each other on our birthdays, celebrating the New Year, Shevchenko's Day, the very first day of school for first graders, and other conventional holidays. Halyna Didkivs'ka¹⁰ and

⁹ *Linobil* is the name of the main character of the fairy-tale, a neologism created from the word "automobile."

¹⁰ The wife of Ukrainian dissident Ievhen Proniuk. This and following footnotes by Galina Babak.

her mom, Halyna Polikarpivna, along with Svitlana Kyrychenko,¹¹ Nadiia Svitlychna, and Tamila Matushevych¹² were particularly good at it. Valentyna Berdnyk¹³ organized her own dress-making courses, which she held in Vira Lisova's apartment. This is to say that the isolation, where silence and fear and confusion reigned, made us closer. Communication also allowed us to share the news from the camps and about the prisoners' families.

And now, a human rights organization!

There is still a lot to be collected and processed about women's participation in the human rights movement. But we can roughly outline that period and roundly divide it into stages where the forms of activity changed.

Some of those women who were somehow related to the *samvydav* (self-publishing) of the 1960s found themselves in that limited circle. Now it worked essentially with human rights: petitions, protests, complaints to the Party and state institutions, to the Verkhovna Rada deputies, to the courts, prosecutors' offices, to the Human Affairs Department, and correspondence with the camps' administration. The spectrum of questions was wide, starting with protests and petitions regarding incarceration conditions and political requests. Those were mainly attempts to protect one's own relatives, but not exclusively so. (For example, Svitlana Kyrychenko tried to protect the two-year-old Iarema Svitlychnyi after his mom's arrest, and wrote petitions after the arrests of Mykola Horbal'¹⁴ and others.) They also wrote petitions about the treatment of Ivan Oleksiiovych Svitychnyi and about the men's hunger strikes. There were also numerous individual addresses. Collective actions were not so numerous. One can name among them the Lviv women's action in defense of Valentyn Moroz¹⁵ (involving Raisa Moroz,¹⁶ Olha

11 Svitlana Kyrychenko (1935, Kyiv–2016, Kyiv) was a human rights activist and literary historian, involved in reproducing and circulating *samizdat* literature. Kyrychenko was the wife of the Ukrainian dissident and publicist Iurii Badzio.

12 The sister of Mykola Matushevych, a founding member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group.

13 The second wife of science fiction writer and dissident Olexandr Berdnyk. She is known as the "master of rag dolls (*motanky*)."

14 Mykola Horbal' (born in Wołowiec, Lemkivshchyna region—now Gorlice County, Poland, 1940) is a well-known Ukrainian dissident, human right activist, and a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group.

15 Valentyn Moroz (1936, Kholoniv–2019, Lviv) was a historian, political dissident, and essayist. In 1965, he was sentenced to four years in prison and released in 1969. His next arrest in 1970 prompted several protests by fellow dissidents. His trial, and the severe sentence (nine years in prison and five years in exile) attracted great attention abroad. On April 27, 1979, Moroz and four other Soviet political prisoners were exchanged for two Soviet spies imprisoned in the United States. Moroz spent most of the 1980s in Toronto, and he returned to Ukraine in 1991.

16 Raisa (Levterova) Moroz (b. 1937) is a Ukrainian human rights activist and a member of the dissident movement, translator, publicist, radio journalist, and wife of Valentyn Moroz.

Horyn',¹⁷ Olena Antoniv¹⁸ et al.). Some of those documents were published as *samydav* by the participants.

Did we believe in any positive results? There was not much hope, our voices were from inside a ruined society, the voices of consciousness. Moreover, the reactions were unequivocal: stereotypically dry, heartless answers. Svitlana Kyrychenko's action, for example, did not go unnoticed. On the KGB's direction and instructions from the head of the scientific department (who was also a deputy in the Verkhovna Rada), she was fired from the Linguistics Institute for being "incapable."

Let us honor all the mothers who had their sons and daughters in prison. Their suffering was immense, especially when they lost their children in camps. Trying to protect their sons and daughters, they became well-known and valuable activists for human and civil rights. Oksana Iakivna Meshko¹⁹ is worth mentioning first. We also know of Nina Mykhailivna Marchenko,²⁰ who projected the deep love she had for her son onto all his living, sworn brothers, actively engaging in their activities. We are also aware that most of the mothers from the Western lands whose sons and daughters were in prisons and camps were conscious people who understood and supported their children. [...]

We bow down before the mothers of political prisoners!

After official authorities denied our petitions, a group of women addressed international organizations (like Amnesty International, French and Canadian communists, etc.). So, having benefited from connections between the communist parties of France and the USSR, and with the help of A. D. Sakharov,²¹

17 Olha (Matseliukh) Horyn' (1930, Tsetula Iavoriv–2021, Lviv) was a public figure, member of the Ukrainian dissident movement, and embroidery master. In 1952, she was sentenced to twenty-five years in a maximum-security camp for participating in the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and for distributing *samizdat*. She was released in 1956. In 1963, she married the Ukrainian dissident Mykhailo Horyn'. In 1970, she protested against violations of civil rights, and fought for the legalization of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. From 1991, she headed the Ukrainian Christian Women' Party.

18 Olena Antoniv (1937, Bibrka–1986, Lviv) was a physician, human rights activist, author, disseminator of *samizdat*, and one of the administrators of the Solzhenitsyn Aid Fund in Galicia.

19 Oksana Meshko (1905, Stari Sandzhary–1991, Kyiv) was a human rights activist, author and distributor of *samizdat*, a founding member and leader of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, and twice a political prisoner.

20 Nina Marchenko (1929, Kyiv–2011, Kyiv) was a teacher and mother of the Ukrainian journalist and political prisoner Valerii Marchenko (1947–1984). Valerii was arrested in June 1973. Despite a serious illness he was sentenced to six years in a maximum-security labor camp and two years in exile. From then on, Nina Marchenko devoted her life trying to save her son. In May 1981, Valerii returned to Kyiv. But in 1983, he was arrested again and sentenced to ten years in a maximum-security labor camp and five years in exile. One year later, he died.

21 Andrei Sakharov (1921, Moscow–1989, Moscow) was a Soviet nuclear physicist, dissident, Nobel laureate, and activist for disarmament, peace, and human rights. He became renowned as one of the creators of the first Soviet hydrogen bomb. Sakharov later became an advocate for civil liberties and civil reforms in the Soviet Union, for which he faced state persecution; these efforts earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975. The Sakharov Prize, which is awarded annually by the European Parliament for people and organizations dedicated to human rights and freedoms, is named in his honor.

Tetiana Khodorovych,²² and Parisian friends, Tetiana Zhytnyk–Leonid Pliushch’s wife—succeeded in saving her husband from a mental hospital. However, I failed to do that, though I addressed all the institutions mentioned.

We also disclosed information from the camps about confinement conditions, the emotional atmosphere, about the prisoners’ health. We published prisoners’ writings—their letters, statements, some works—that otherwise would have been censored in the correspondence. Of course, each of us took those documents out of the camps in whichever way she could. Some of us just memorized information from the private meetings, others swallowed paper tubes, or hid notes in bodily cavities.

The KGB interpreted that as sharing information with the world and thus, essentially, took vengeance on women and prisoners in various ways: they prohibited dates, mail, put prisoners into different kinds of isolation, blackmailed them in the “big zone,”²³ fired them, and so on. They concealed the real reasons for their actions. Although those actions hurt people on both sides of the bars, we just could not keep silent anymore. We had a glowing hope that this information could enlighten and activate the public and foreign governments and induce the countries that took part in the Helsinki conference to influence the USSR’s policy to make our prisoners’ lives easier. I remember how carefully we followed the conference in Madrid where the documents about Ukrainian prisoners were going to be considered!

It would be appropriate to mention that some women took care of those prisoners who had no one outside of prison. Letters from the outside helped them to establish connections with the outer world, rescuing them from depression. We sent them proper food packages and money to subscribe to periodicals [...]. As for the women from Lviv and other cities in the Western territories, charity actions at that time engaged a wide range of them. They raised funds and things not only for camps, but also for political prisoners’ families all over Ukraine. They were honorable women, real citizens, and patriots. This story is still waiting to be told.

Self-publishing channels narrowed. Before, we could spread documents in institutions, at literary events, at different celebrations, or through relatives on the periphery. But later, only relatives remained. Those people were dispersed all over Ukraine, reaching its faraway corners. We often dealt with old people from villages. Some of them did not know exactly what they were keeping. Neutral

22 Tetiana Khodorovich (1921, Moscow–2015, Paris) was a Russian human rights activist, member of the Initiative Group for the Protection of Human Rights in the USSR, author of *samizdat*, regular contributor to the *samizdat* journal *Khronika tekushchib sobytii* [Chronicle of Current Events], and administrator of the Solzhenitsyn Aid Fund. In 1973, she signed an open letter in defense of the Ukrainian dissident Leonid Pliushch. In 1977, she left the USSR for France with her younger daughters and son.

23 A colloquial phrase referring to the world outside of Soviet camps and prisons.

people in the cities, and namely in Kyiv, were of no use. The KGB usually took our materials from them. Before the Ukrainian Helsinki Group launched, all the materials moved through Moscow, because the road to the camps was there. Gradually, we established contacts with Moscow dissidents, who later became famous human rights activists [...]. We stayed in Moscow at Les' Taniuk's²⁴ place. Some of us, including Mykola Matushevych's mother, communicated with A. D. Sakharov. When visiting camps and prisons, we used the transfer through Moscow as an opportunity to communicate. We used Kyivers' mission trips to Moscow and Muscovites' trips to Kyiv for that as well [...].

After the Ukrainian Helsinki Group was created, a lot of materials flowed to Kyiv. Here the Memorandums and Informational Bulletins were compiled from them. Thus, at the end of the 1970s, issues 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the Bulletin, based on materials compiled by Lviv residents and made by Olha and Mykhailo Horyn', were transported to Kyiv. From here, they were taken by the known road to Moscow. During that period some Kyiv apartments served as transfer points. Certainly, searches were often conducted there, namely in Oksana Iakivna Meshko's, Lilia Andriievs'ka-Svertiuk's, and Alla Marchenko's flats. Many materials were eliminated in those searches.

Some women kept using verified itineraries, going around the Ukrainian Helsinki Group. In Moscow, it was easier to spread documents abroad through embassies and correspondents. I saw a foreign embassy worker visiting Iurii Shykhonovich's²⁵ apartment, taking a file, and leaving. Also, I once attended a conference that was held for foreign journalists in full daylight in Tetiana Khodorovych's lodgings. Obviously, the tension was immense. The house was encircled with cars, "fellows from the KGB" kept watch in the staircase. But correspondents from several European countries noted down the facts of human rights violations. I presented the general characteristics of what happens in Ukraine and the facts about Lisovyi, Proniuk,²⁶ and Mykhailyna Kotsiubyns'ka,²⁷ who was interrogated in Kyiv, tortured, blackmailed, and eventually fired.

But in Kyiv as well as in Moscow, the KGB took possession of some materials, which resulted in new arrests.

24 Leonid (Les') Taniuk (1938, Zhukyn–2016, Kyiv) was a Ukrainian theatre and film director, publicist, and Ukrainian dissident. After Ukrainian independence in 1991, Taniuk was a multi-term member of the Ukrainian parliament.

25 Iurii Shykhonovich (1933, Kyiv–2011, Moscow) was a Soviet and Russian mathematician, teacher, and human rights activist.

26 Ievhen Proniuk (b. 1936, Khomiakivka) is a well-known figure of the Ukrainian national movement, an author, and distributor of *samizdat*. Proniuk is Chairman of the All-Ukrainian Society of Political Prisoners and Repressed.

27 Mykhailyna Kotsiubyns'ka (1931, Vinnytsia–2011, Kyiv) was a Ukrainian literary historian, translator, and active participant in the dissident movement.

Around 1977 or 1978, an American consulate started working in Kyiv (it was closed several months later). Nadiia Svitlychna and Mykola Horbal' were arrested on the stairs of the Hotel Moskva (where it was situated) while visiting it for the first time [...].

The moral and psychological state in our circles was tough and even appalling at times. We felt constant anxiety and fear because our relatives and children were at the KGB's gunpoint and often became tools for manipulation. First of all, each of us had a criminal investigator or a so-called supervisor who followed us. Those "guys" climbed a career ladder made out of our suffering. They controlled our lives uninterruptedly. Some of them wore a good person's mask. The others were undisguised sadists, furious Ukrainophobes, cruel and cynical [...].

In those extreme conditions, we were rather solid, and even misunderstandings smoothed themselves away. We were much more tolerant than usual and many of us remained friends forever. Preparing packages and getting ready for the visits, we shared all of the necessities. After the visits, we met immediately to hear news about people close to us and about the general situation in a given camp [...].

We had different views as to how the information should be delivered to the public. The KGB's sanctions were severe, and we saw practicality differently. Some of the women routed information into underground channels, sharing their husbands' texts with the world. Thus, Ivan Svitlychnyi's, Mykola Rudenko's, Ivan Hel's, and Valentyn Moroz's works were published abroad thanks to their wives' utterly risky actions which were respectively registered by the KGB. Raisa Rudenko was thrown into a camp. Nadiia Svitlychna was perhaps saved from the same by her little Ivanko, though she was still thrown out of Ukraine [...].

Translated by Yuliia Maksymeiko

Dije Neziri Lohaj

Innocence (A Poem From the *Ilegalja* Movement)

AUTHOR Dije Neziri Lohaj

TITLE “Pafajësia” [Innocence]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Ëndrrat për atdheun* [Dreams for the Homeland] (Prishtina: Era, 2009), 36.

LANGUAGE Albanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dije Neziri Lohaj (b. 1965, Skopje/Shkup) is a respected teacher, a poet, a feminist, and a mother, living in Ferizaj/Uroševac, eastern Kosovo. Given the name Shahadije when she was born in what was then the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, SFR Yugoslavia, to everyone she is known with her short name Dije, which in Albanian means “knowledge.” Dije’s family moved back to Ferizaj when she was ten years old. She grew up in a family in which the state’s injustice toward Albanians was a recurring topic. Stories about the heroism of family members of previous generations, like Sefë Kosharja (1824–1881, a fighter against the Ottoman Empire), left a strong imprint in her upbringing. Her strong personality was expressed also in the way she fought for women’s rights, especially their education.

In 1982, while still in high school, Dije—together with her brother Fatmir Neziri, and seven other friends—founded a clandestine group, named after the Albanian heroine Shote Galica (1895–1927), who fought against the Serbian/Yugoslav kingdoms. This group, like other underground groups and organisations of that period, belonged to the movement commonly known as *Ilegalja* (Illegality), opposed to the state’s discrimination toward and oppression of Albanians in Yugoslavia.

In 1983, the state authorities discovered the “Shote Galica” Group and imprisoned its members. Dije was arrested in her classroom, in front of other students and the teacher—a common police practice at that time. She was sent to the infamous Detention Center in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica (northern Kosovo), where she was interrogated under excessive physical, psychological, and emotional violence. One of the hardest parts to endure emotionally, something that Dije remembers vividly, was the police beating her younger brother Fatmir in front of her. In the Mitrovicë prison, poetry became essential. There, she befriended Shukrije Gashi (b. 1960), imprisoned also as an *Ilegalja* member, and who is known from the 1990s as a human rights and feminist activist, and a poet. Later, Dije was transferred to the Correctional Center in Lipjan/Lipljan (central Kosovo), a prison for minors. In total, she was sentenced to three years of imprisonment. In the Lipjan prison she met other *Ilegalja* activists, like Shemsije Elashani, Hidajete

Kelmendi, Teuta Hadri, Teuta Bekteshi, Hafide Topalli, Minire Ramadani and many others. The shared solidarity empowered them further and strengthened their ideals for a national and women's liberation. These women became important figures in the 1990s and after the 1999 war in locations where they live, and beyond.

Because of the assumed "corrective" role of the Lipjan prison, like other minors, Dije was offered the opportunity to finish high school, which she did. Upon her release from prison, Dije enrolled in a technical higher education school, which at that time offered university degree programs lasting two or three years instead of four. In the meantime, state authorities denied her the right to complete her education, instructing the professors to not let her take her exams—another common practice used by the state toward former political prisoners. In 1989, Serbia abolished Kosovo's autonomy and transformed it into a police state. Although still on the list of students who would be denied education, with the initiative and support of the renowned ethnographer Prof. Shëfqet Pllana, Dije did manage to enroll at the University of Prishtina/Priština at the Philology Department. However, this was not a smooth journey either: in the autumn of 1991, with the presence of the police, the Albanian academic community was not allowed to enter the premises of the university. This practice continued in most public institutions. As an alternative, Albanians created the so-called parallel system, where the health and educational systems (high school and university levels) were organized in Albanian's private houses.

Dije continued her political activities also in the 1990s, mainly through the Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës (Democratic League of Kosovo), the biggest movement of that time, characterized by peaceful resistance, led by Ibrahim Rugova. However, in the underground, Dije was engaged in the formation of the first guerilla groups of the Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës (The Kosovo Liberation Army). In 1997, the Serbian authorities again convicted Dije, in absentia, in which case she was forced to hide (in *illegality*) and then leave for Albania. Dije graduated from the University of Prishtina's Philology Department only after the 1999 war. Soon afterward, she started to work as a teacher of Albanian language in the Gjon Sereçi Primary School in Ferizaj. As was common for most former *Ilegalja* members, only after the war in 1999 did she manage to publish her literary work written in the 1980s and 1990s.

Dije remains active in Ferizaj, especially in the school which every year recognizes her for her teaching and activism. For her collection of poems *Gjëma e Paqes* (The Cry for Peace), she was awarded the second-place prize by Ferizaj's De Rada Literary Club in 2015.

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Elife (Eli) Krasniqi

* * *

Dije Neziri Lohaj

Innocence

The mold of prison cells
Hate released through the nose
Patience loses its road
In the middle of the day.
Me again
I step on myself
And I strike,
So that innocence can have a name
For a prisoner
Shot within walls
And the mold of prison cells.
Not one question,
Not one word,
For the last wish.

Translated by Piro Rexhepi

Larysa Hienijuš and Ivonka Survilla

The Position of Women in the Belarusian Diaspora

AUTHOR Larysa Hienijuš

TITLE *Spoviedź* [Confession]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Minsk: Mastackaja litaratura, 1993. Excerpts from pages: 59–60; 173–174; 176; 210–211; 214.

TITLE List Łorensu Stajnhardu [Letter to Lawrence Steinhardt]; List Zošcy Vieras [Letter to Zoska Vieras]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Zbor tvoraŭ u 2 tamach* [Collection of Works in Two Volumes] (Minsk: Limarius, 2010), vol. 2, 297–98; 331–32.

TITLE “Biełaruska” [Belarusian Woman]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Ad rodnych niŭ* [From Native Fields] (Prague: Biełaruski Kamitet Samapomačy ŭ Niamieččynie, 1942), 141.

TITLE “Kryvioj napoŭnilisia pojmy rek” [The Beds of Rivers are Filled with Running Blood...]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Vybranyja vieršy* [Selected Poems] (Minsk: Krasnyj proletarij, 1997), 288.

LANGUAGE Belarusian

AUTHOR Ivonka Survilla

TITLE *Daroba* [The Road]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Prague: Radyjo Svabodnaja Europa/Radyjo Svaboda, 2008. Translated excerpts from pages 123–130.

TITLE Excerpts from an interview with Ivonka Survilla, Radio Liberty, March 31, 2018.

LANGUAGE Belarusian

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Larysa Hienijuš (née Miklaševič; 1910–1983) was a Belarusian poet, writer, dissident, and active participant in the Belarusian national movement. She was born in Žlobaŭcy (now Vaŭkavysk raion, Hrodna Region, Belarus) and died in Zelva, Belarusian SSR. She came from the family of a wealthy landowner. In 1928, she graduated from the Vaŭkavysk Polish Gymnasium. In 1935, she married Janka Hienijuš. In the same year, their son, Jurka, was born. In 1937, she moved to Prague, where her husband studied and later worked as a doctor.

After the annexation of Western Belarus to the USSR (1939), Larysa Hienijuš's father was arrested. Soon after a short imprisonment in Hrodna prison, he was shot. Larysa Hienijuš's mother and two sisters were deported to Kazakhstan. In 1937–47 the Hienijušes lived in Prague, and in 1947 moved to nearby Vimperk. Larysa

established ties with the Belarusian emigration, and participated in the work of the Belarusian Democratic Republic (Bielaruskaja Narodnaja Respublika, BNR) government-in-exile. In March 1943, she became the Secretary General of the Government and was engaged in preserving and organizing the archives of the BNR. However, as a woman, she could not be appointed chairman of the BNR Council. She took care of Belarusian emigrants, political refugees, Belarusian workers, and prisoners of war in Germany. She took part in the Second All-Belarusian Congress on June 27, 1944.

At the same time, she wrote poetry. In 1942, the first collection of her poetry, *Ad rodnych niŭ* (From Native Fields), dominated by national liberation motifs, was published in Prague. During the years 1946–48, she published poems in the emigrant magazines *Šypšyna* (Wild Rose) and *Sakavik* (March).

From 1945, Soviet authorities sought the extradition of the Hienijušes, accusing them of “anti-Soviet nationalist activities” during the war. Larysa was arrested on March 5, 1948, and on August 12 she and her husband were handed over to Soviet authorities. Her appeals to Western politicians went without real support (for example, read her letter to Lawrence Steinhardt). Larysa and Janka were held in Soviet prisons in Vienna and Lviv, and from the end of 1948 in a prison in Minsk, where Larysa was interrogated by BSSR Minister of State Security Lavrentiy Tsanova, who unsuccessfully demanded that she transfer the BNR archives, hidden somewhere in Czechoslovakia, to Soviet authorities. In February 1949, the Supreme Court of the BSSR sentenced Larysa Hienijuš to 25 years in prison camps. Janka Hienijuš was sentenced to the same term. They served their sentences in the Inta and Abezi camps (Komi ASSR) and in the Mordovian ASSR. Larysa’s texts were recognized as nationalist and banned in the USSR. However, she continued to write clandestinely in prison.

After her release, she settled in her husband’s hometown of Zelva. Both Hienijušes refused to accept Soviet citizenship in principle and remained citizens of Czechoslovakia. On several occasions they requested rehabilitation, but every time received the reply: “Sentenced lawfully.” The KGB followed the poet everywhere, read the letters sent to her from all around the world, and installed spying devices in her house. Nevertheless, the Hienijuš’s house in Zelva became an attractive center for the creative youth of Belarus. Despite the KGB’s supervision, poets and writers, artists and scientists were frequent visitors to Zelva. For nearly ten years, the poet’s works were totally banned. Only in 1963, her post-imprisonment poems were published in Belarusian magazines for the first time. Thanks to the then Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR, Maksim Tank, Larysa Hienijuš’s collection of works, *Nievadam z Niomana* (With a Seine from Njoman), was first published in Belarus in 1967. It was edited by Uladzimir Karatkievič pro bono. It included most of the poems from *Ad rodnych niŭ* (From Native Fields), excluding some excerpts removed by censors, as well as new poems from her Zelva period. Then, for years she was only allowed to publish

children's poetry. At her death, she left several collections of poetry and a testimony on life in the gulag entitled *Spoviedź* (Confession).

In independent Belarus, her name has not been rehabilitated. She is still treated as a "collaborator of the Germans" (which is false) and therefore absent from any encyclopedia. In addition, according to the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, her works are excluded from the Belarusian literature program by the decision of the Ministry of Education.

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Ivonka Survilla or Surwiłła (née Šymaniec; b. 1936), was born in Stoŭpcy, then a part of the Second Polish Republic (now Western Belarus). She was a painter, linguist, translator, politician, and writer. Since 1997, she has been the President of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, a Belarusian government in exile. Her father was an engineer, her mother was a housewife. In 1940, after the Soviet annexation of Western Belarus, her father was arrested by the Soviets and sentenced to five years imprisonment in the gulag system. He escaped due to the German attack on the USSR in 1941.

In 1944 the family fled to the West through East Prussia with thousands of other refugees and eventually reached Denmark where they lived in a refugee camp for several years. In 1948 they moved to France and settled in Paris. They were active participants in the life of the local Belarusian community. Šymaniec studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. She also studied Scandinavian languages and English at the Sorbonne University, where she graduated in humanities. In 1959 she married Janka Survilla, a Belarusian economist, activist, and radio broadcaster. They moved to Madrid, where they ran a Belarusian language radio program supported by Francoist Spain. After the closure of the radio station in 1965, Janka and Ivonka

Survilla moved to Canada in 1969, where Ivonka started working as translator for the federal government and eventually became the head of Translation Services at Health Canada. She also became an active member of local Belarusian organizations. In 1989, with the assistance of her husband and friends Dr. Zinaida Gimpelevič and Ms. Paŭlina Smith-Paškievič, Survilla created the Canadian Relief Fund for Chernobyl Victims in Belarus.

Survilla has participated in more than 30 exhibitions as a painter. At the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts her teacher of painting was the French painter Jean Souverbie. She is best known as a portrait and landscape painter. She works individually and is influenced by both French impressionists and Belarusian graphic artists. Since 1979, the artist has become interested in graphics. She began to work in the technique of woodcut, etching, and aquatint. The artist herself prefers the aquatint technique. She also works a lot with watercolors. The most popular works of the artist are aquatints and woodcuts on Belarusian motifs (*Church in Iškaldź, Euphrosyne of Połack*). Ivonka Survilla has been working on an icon for many years called “*Voś što jany zrabili z majoj pieśniaj*” (“That’s what they did to my song”).

Ivonka Survilla was elected president of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic in 1997. She is the first woman president of the Rada and the first president elected after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the creation of an independent Republic of Belarus. In 2013 she was awarded the Canadian Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for “her lifelong work in restoring democracy to Belarus.”

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Uladzislau Ivanou

CONTEXT

In many ways, the life and professional trajectories of the two Belarusian women Larysa Hienijuš (1910–1983) and Ivonka Survilla (b. 1936) are similar. Even if one of them ended up in the USSR, and the second one lives in Canada, the context in which they acted is largely the same: marked especially by the absence of Belarusian statehood during the twentieth century and by the struggle for it. In addition, the two women are linked by their active work in the Belarusian Democratic Republic.

Belarusians for centuries lived in the shadow of neighboring nations as part of more ambitious empires and countries: the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, then the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939), the Russian Empire (1721–1917), then the Soviet Union (1920–1991). In the twentieth century, the Belarusian national movement was activated thanks to the collapse of the old empires after the First World

War. The first real attempt to proclaim Belarusian independence took place in Minsk on March 25, 1918, when the Belarusian Democratic Republic was proclaimed a state by the Council of the Belarusian Democratic Republic. However, this attempt failed, and Belarusian territories were again shared between the Second Polish Republic and the Soviet Union. Western Belarus belonged to the Second Polish Republic during the interwar period as the northern part of the Polish Kresy macroregion. The rest of Belarus was incorporated into the USSR as the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR). This involved autonomy but not real independence.

Larysa Hienijuš and Ivonka Survilla were ethnic Belarusians and originally Polish citizens. Both women faced the problems and challenges of living under Polish authorities: Polonization, linguistic, cultural, and religious discrimination, and the social marginalization of Belarusians. At the same time, the Soviet policy towards Belarusians was manifested in Russification and the physical annihilation of the population. Both Larysa Hienijuš and Ivonka Survilla managed to escape the challenges of their times: the first left with her husband for Prague where she obtained Czechoslovak citizenship, and the second emigrated with her parents to the West at the age of eight. Both became ardent activists of the anti-Soviet-leaning Belarusian national movement.

Larysa Hienijuš was the figurehead of the Belarusian anti-Soviet and dissident movement. She gave priority to the national movement, and moreover in all her texts she clearly described the main role of women in this movement. Despite incarceration in the gulag system and living under the surveillance of the KGB, she did not change her democratic attitude. In the gulag, she became religious and turned into a leader of the future Belarusian Christian-Democratic movement. Prisoners called her “Mother” and her poems “glucose,” memorizing them by heart and reading them as a prayer. Her collection of poetry *Ad rodnych niŭ* (From Native Fields) published in Prague in 1942 made her a known and important poet.

Patriotism is one of the central themes of Larysa Hienijuš’s poetry. For her, patriotism is connected with the theme of a strong Belarusian woman who can and should fight for independence on an equal footing with men. The poem *Bielaruska* (Belarusian Woman) best demonstrates this theme. In addition, her memories of the years spent in gulag camps (*Spowiedź*, Confession), as well as letters sent to friends are proof of Hienijuš’s civic courage and emancipatory message. *Confession* was written in the 1970s and published posthumously in already independent Belarus, in 1993. This is one of the first and main gulag works in postwar Belarusian literature. The first book, and one of the first in the world, written in the genre of memoirs belongs to the pen of the Belarusian writer Francišak Alachnovič, who in 1933–34 wrote his famous work *U kapciuroch H.P.U.* (In the Claws of the GPU).¹

1 GPU – State Political Directorate (also translated as the State Political Administration) was the intelligence service and secret police of the Soviet Union from December 29, 1922, until November 15, 1923.

Exile, repressions, and the absence of the state are important themes in the literature of Larysa Hienijuš, and even more so in her memoirs and the letters published after her death. As a dissident and unrehabilitated intellectual, Larysa Hienijuš remains a symbol of the struggle against Soviet and neo-Soviet authoritarianism in the form of the Lukašenka dictatorship. In the context of the protest movements in Belarus in 2020–21, Larysa Hienijuš's name was often among the protesters of the Christian Democracy movement, but also of the Women in White movement.

Ivonka Survilla took over from Larysa Hienijuš and continued her strategy and the idea of national struggle under the flag of the Belarusian Democratic Republic. A painter and translator, Ivonka Survilla was an active person of postwar Belarusian immigration in Europe, then in Canada. She belongs to the third wave of migration of Belarusians, which happened after the Second World War (the first wave is known as the economic migration at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and the second wave took place in the interwar period).

During the Second World War, the territory of Belarus became an arena of fierce battles and prolonged occupation, which led to the third mass wave of internal and external migration. The situation of Belarusian emigrants in European countries changed radically with the beginning of the war. On the territories occupied by Germans, there were permanent Belarusian communities with an organized national life (in Prague, Paris, Warsaw, etc.). The capture of Poland by Germany and the reunification of Western Belarus with the BSSR caused the departure of political figures who did not trust the policy of the Soviet government towards the West. The policy of the Soviet government before the Second World War, as well as the attitude towards prisoners of war, who were considered traitors, pushed many Belarusians to seek a better life abroad. After the war, the biggest political movement in the history of the Belarusian emigration took place in the West. Belarusian organizations, institutions, and military formations created in occupied territory went there: the Belarusian Central Council (BCR), the main headquarters of the Union of Belarusian Youth, the Council of Bishops of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, units of the Belarusian Border Defense, part of the intelligentsia, and priests. This wave formed the basis of the Belarusian Western diaspora, which was practically not replenished in the following period due to the lack of the right to emigrate from the USSR.

Since 1919, the Rada, or council, one of the main political structures of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, was in exile, where it preserved its existence among the Belarusian diaspora as an advocacy group promoting support of Belarusian independence and democracy in Belarus among Western policymakers. As of 2022, the Rada BNR is the oldest existing government in exile. The Rada of the Belarusian refugee government elected Survilla president in August 1997. The Rada has no powers, but Survilla has used her position to lobby the EU and other leaders, seeking to keep

her country's plight in the global spotlight. Upon the declaration of independence of the Republic of Belarus in 1990, interest in the Belarusian Democratic Republic has increased. However, Lukašenka's coming to power in 1994 froze Minsk's relations with the Rada. Since then, the Belarusian Democratic Republic in exile has been perceived as a threat, as a competitor, or even as an enemy. However, Ivonka Survilla's optimism remained an effective means at the diplomatic and symbolic levels. Her activities as a translator, but also her humanitarian activism in favor of the rehabilitation of children from the Chernobyl zone, and finally her great political and symbolic role as a strong-minded woman at the head of the government in exile make her the best-known Belarusian woman in the world.

Survilla's book of memoirs *The Road* is composed around the cities and countries where she lived: Stoŭpcy, Copenhagen, Paris, Madrid, Ottawa, and Minsk. The latter symbolizes the dream and desire to return to Belarus. It is the only city on the list where the author has not lived. Minsk is seen by her as the final destination of the government in exile. *The Road* tells the story of the Belarusian diaspora after the Second World War, its struggle for the visibility of the Belarusian cause and for the emancipation of the Belarusian movement. It is an enriching autobiography full of personal stories and curious moments describing the public and political life of the Belarusian diaspora. In addition, it is a textbook on the history of the Belarusian diaspora that offers explanations of how the Rada evolved since the 1940s, when Larysa Hienijuš could not be appointed President because she was a woman. Fifty years later, Survilla was appointed to this position without hesitation. The book is important from a feminist point of view as well, because the author speaks not only of the struggle for the Belarusian cause, but also of the struggle against superstition and weaknesses within the Belarusian movement: a certain conservatism and even machismo of Belarusians or sometimes their lack of solidarity. In addition, in numerous interviews Survilla emphasized the role of women in Belarusian culture and particularly the women who influenced her.

Finally, *The Road* is a book on the road from Belarus to the West and in a long perspective on the road back. As the comments and the reaction of the protesters show, not only Larysa Hienijuš but also Ivonka Survilla still inspires today's Belarusians fighting against dictatorship in 2020–22.

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Uladzislau Ivanou

* * *

Larysa Hienijuš Confession

[...] Meanwhile, in Bohnice near Prague, at the sanatorium for seriously ill tuberculosis patients, Vasil Ivanavič Zacharka, Minister of Finances and Vice-Chairman of the BNR Rada, was living out his days. A few days after having visited him, I received a postcard from him dashed with blood. He begged me: “Little daughter, come as soon as possible,” etc. At the same time, I was visited by Mrs. Krečeuški, who told me that uncle Vasil had become very weak, his throat was strongly bleeding, and he wanted to see me faster.

Even much earlier uncle Vasil had asked me to visit him more often, since he was afraid of other people and no longer wanted to see them. So I came to him.

Uncle Vasil was sheltered by his duvet, whose cover was all bloody. He told me that his life was ending, and that he was among the authors of 25th March Act. After Piotra Krečeuški’s death, Zacharka was serving the Chairman of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, and, as a member of the government elected by the people, on the verge of his death, he wanted to transfer his office to a decent

person. What was to be done? There was no appropriate person, only a woman, but no woman could take the office. Well, that was 1943. No, I said, you must not behave like this! You mustn't take the ideas of our nation's independence with you! – "I trust nobody, little daughter. There are many activists, but each of them has his own orientation, and my office implies loyalty to the people only. I would nominate you, if only you weren't a woman." Then I offered Abramčyk. But I omitted that Mikola was a bit too soft and kind. On the other side, he had mastered a few languages, navigated politics well, and knew how to use every means to do something useful for Belarus.

Uncle Vasil asked to give him sheets of paper. I fixed a pillow for him, he sat up, and began writing his testament. At last, he asked me to get it typed into three copies and to bring them the next day. Mrs. Kosač-Šymanouški, the sister of Lesia Ukrainka, typed the testament pretty well, and the next day uncle Vasil signed all the three copies after correcting some small mistakes. According to the document, Mikola Abramčyk was appointed President of the Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR), and Larysa Hienijuš received the office of the BNR Secretary General. Both of us were assigned to preserve the BNR archives, which had been stored at the apartment of uncle Vasil.

[...]

Once, that happened as late as 1949, I was called away, and they forced me to walk somewhere higher and higher. The guards, mostly bad guys, made me put my hands behind my back, so I hardly could move. Thereafter someone was probably coming towards us, because the guard turned me to the wall, and hit my head against it, so I saw darkness in my eyes. Then the convoy of men pulled me further and further... At last they took me into the residence of Tsanava, a notorious Stalinist. Tsanava was sitting in his office, which was covered by awful green carpets, with its wood-paneled walls. That monster was sitting behind a desk, and to the left, behind another desk, I saw a Czech who was looking at me like a victor. I was similar to a shadow: some skin, a bunch of bones, a bit of courage in my heart, and the rest was anger.

Tsanava asked for my personal data, as they usually do it, and ordered me to take my cap off, but I did not. Then he began yelling: "Who is Abramčyk?" – "He is a friend of mine," I said. "Who is Abramčyk, who is he?" – "A democrat," I replied. – "And do you know what democracy is?" – he went on screaming. I said in Russian: "A way to govern which is based on three principles of the French Revolution." I named them in French, and ironically asked: "Do you need a translation?" – "No, I do not!"

True: first of all, he asked me which language should he choose to communicate with me: Russian, or, maybe, he shall invite a Czech translator? I reacted as follows: "Since you are a minister of the Belarusian State, do speak Belarusian!" How mad

he became! Around him, as I saw, stood many people, some military men, and they nearly laughed when he said: “You speak Russian well enough!” But I replied that I never mastered Russian perfectly. And here it went again: “Give up the archives, give up the BNR archives!” – “I don’t have them, and I don’t know where they are!” – “Beat her, interrogate her day and night!” – squeaked the poor *genatsvale*.² (*i.e. Georgian. – transl.*) Then I, a shadow of human being, stood and told him: “No hair will fall from my head without God’s will, and I’m not afraid of you!” – “You have spoiled her, she behaves like a lady!” – yelled the torturer. And I shouted out: “God is with me!” Later I thought about where my strength came from.

I was taken away from Tsanova’s cabinet, and the interrogators attacked me anew. A certain Harashavin, just appointed to run the investigation department, cried: “I’ll strike you myself, I’ll take off your pants!” Another thug, somehow crooked and dreadful, shrieked: “Let’s hang her on a Minsk street!” – “No birch tree has yet been grown to hang me! Anyway, you won’t hang us all!” They nearly lynched me while yelling: “So you want to take our place!” I reasoned: “Well, you mean only your place, and never care about the people, you don’t think of the people!” I became extremely angry.

[...]

I was cold, and I asked some trifle from my things. For this I needed to write a declaration and to transfer it through the feeder. I was given some paper, and I described my needs in Belarusian. I was so surprised to get the declaration back with inscription that they do not understand Czech. That meant that in Belarus the Belarusian language was confused with Czech! Well, I never expected anything like that even from the Bolsheviks... “Oh, my Belarus...” – I groaned with all my might.

[...]

Belarusian women, in comparison with Ukrainian ones, were not numerous at our OLP (Separate Camp Point). Except from Taisa, all of them had been frightened or paid off. They were rather close to me, but no one could be fully trusted. I ordered them to write to their friends, and to answer the friends’ notes. In addition, I asked the boys to take care of certain girls. Many “couples,” made that way, eventually created real families. I was encouraging the correspondence in order to protect our native language, as well as some mutual obligations among compatriots, and to keep some warm in the North. The experiment turned out quite successful. All the letters were read by us together, and often answered together. That helped us to make a kind of united family.

Many people addressed their notes to me. Sometimes those notes were full of passion, and in such cases we kept laughing. We used to reply in order to support,

2 Translator’s note: That is, “Georgian.”

and not to hurt. The main task was to survive. Still it was funny how men could fall in love with a grey shapeless creature, a victim of Marxism-Leninism, in old wadding trousers, awful felt boots (with a boot on the other foot), wrapped up in unbelievable scarfs, snotty and blue of frost, frequently with a hidden nose. Nevertheless, in our friends' imaginations, we were angels and somewhat martyrs. We lamented their hard work in the mines, and they grieved our ten-hour working days in severe frost. In the mines at least it was a bit warmer there. A rule was proclaimed that people should not be pulled away for work at forty degrees of frost and below, but we were pulled away, and had to suffer between life and death in the open frozen tundra.

Later began different provocations. When authorities detected Belarusian solidarity, a bunch of informants and provocateurs were put against me.

I even began receiving notes written under the influence of a certain Ginko, which said that Belarusians never needed the aristocracy, landlords like me, and so on. Our, as we called it, Belarusian family was especially struck by a senior informer Shapaval, also by Konvega and S. The last one was appointed as an organization to watch us. Once he had joined the "Seagull" organization. It was a group of youth from the Slonim district, and S., as I knew, betrayed his comrades as early as at the stage of investigation. They were about 20, and they wanted more Belarusian language in schools. As a result, the authorities sent them, including 16-year-old teenagers, to the North, to the "white bears." Members of that organization behaved perfectly during the investigation and demonstrated remarkable persistence and patriotism. All of us were a hated and enslaved mob for the Soviets.

[...]

I served as a sort of camp encyclopedia, and was frequently called during the discussions. Once we stood like a grey, wet community (fresh snow had just reached us) by the wall of some "palace" in Inta. Some women, the inhabitants of Inta, were going in front of us, and were driving some Studebakers. Girls from the Baltic states and Ukraine began criticizing the outfits of Inta women, which looked tasteless and too pretentious for such an inhuman climate. The Russian women instantly went on arguing that their outfits were better than in Europe! "What about your cars?" – asked the Ukrainians. – "Yes, even our cars are better." – "So, Mrs. Larysa, would you tell us, if they have their own car brands?" I replied: "Surely." My girls went sour... "And what are their brands, then?" – "Black Maria, for instance." Laughter came over my girls.

Translated by Wolf Rubinčyk

From the Letters of Larysa Hienijuš

2. To Lawrence Steinhardt

Prague, September 5, 1945

Your Excellency,

Would you kindly permit me to disturb you with a very important request. I am forced to appeal to you because of the despairing situation in which I and my family have found ourselves, and I feel confidence in your generosity.

I am a well-known Belarusian writer, who has married a doctor of medicine. My husband graduated from the faculty of medicine in Prague and is working as a factory doctor at the Bohemian-Moravian machine-building plant. I have lived in Bohemia since 1937 (that year I came with my son to Prague). When, in 1939, my homeland Belarus was annexed by the USSR, we wanted to set off for our native country, but we knew that our family there had been, without a doubt, either killed or deported. For this reason we have remained in Prague, living here as apatrides. We have worked constantly for the sake of the Allies and the Czech people, maintaining no contacts with the German invaders. When Soviet troops entered Prague, we welcomed them hospitably and friendly.

Recently we have faced another misfortune. Collaborators of the GPU (the Soviet secret service) tried to coax me into returning to the Soviet Union. As I knew what was expecting me there, I refused. Then the GPU agents tried to entice me out of my flat. When I refused once again, they decided, as far as I know, to take me away from Prague by force, separating me from my husband and son, and to bring me to Russia.

We have never been Soviet citizens, and I was informed that it was impossible to issue an arrest warrant against us. But anyway in such cases people are sometimes pulled to the Soviet Union by force, and there they are subject to accusation and punishment. The GPU agents have already tried to intrude into my flat. My family and I have been forced to hide at my acquaintance's to avoid the horrors prepared for us in Russia.

The Czech authorities do nothing for our security, since they are not able to resist Soviet agents. I know that Soviet agents want to get me to the concentration camp in Strašnice, and then as alleged criminals we would be deported to the USSR, where we would meet misfortune or even death. This situation has also influenced the fact I dare address Your Excellency. I am appealing to the humanism and generosity of an American citizen, and I am asking for your assistance. I beg that me and my family are taken under the aegis of US authorities and troops in Czechoslovakia.

I am sure that Your Excellency, Your High Authority will find a proper method of help, and will set me and my family free from the persecution of the persons who have no right to engage in our security but aspire to that. I am asking Your Excellency for help, and I assure you of my deepest and most thankful devotion.

Signed: Larysa Hienijuš

20. To Zoska Vieras

Zelva, June 17, 1967

[...] Concerning mixed marriages. This is a real tragedy for us. Sometimes it seems that we have no men. Most of them have got some servile and menial features. They are not able to see and emphasize their best qualities. They do not believe in themselves, cling to others, and perish. Let them go, we have enough people! Let the strongest remain! The shoulders of the strongest would better carry our people's fate, and I believe that our people's future is bright!!!

One more great tragedy for our people is the lack of real, popular, high-placed intellectuals. We have been destroyed by everybody... One must work, study, and hope. Let the villages emulate the cities, that's what we need. Let machines and intelligence replace physical work. Our task is to step into this new life with diligence and Belarusian soul, and to take only the best from modernity.

Translated by Wolf Rubinčyk

Larysa Hienijuš

Belarusian Woman (1939)

When the country calls you, my dear,
to fight for the native threshold,
then the sadness will not be on my face,
no fear will be in the chest.

A girl's heart in a minute is so important
never then tremble,
and I will be no less than you brave,
to give you strength.

For the heart of a girl under a thin canvas,
like the hearts of the best sons,
burns with the same love for the native country
and the legacy of our ancestors.

You'll go into battle, and I'll turn the plow,
I will feed and water the horse, –
and so we will protect, sow, build
My dear Belarus.

Like guns and ringing bullets
like a blue steel sword,
always our homeland needs
brave boys and girls.

Translated by Uladzislaŭ Harbacki³

The river floodlands are filled with blood,
The patch of ice-free water bubbles with the despair of
human tears.
I look at the world. I am a camp prisoner, I am a 'con',
Sentenced to a quarter century
of torments.

I am guarded by barbed wire and dogs,
There is a pack of savages surveying me from
above,
And every day convoy guards, trained to kill,
Take aim at my forehead.

Translated by Arnold Micmillin⁴

* * *

Ivonka Survilla The Road

Outstanding women

My mother–Rosa-Maria–Zina Gimpelevič and Paŭlina Smith-Paškievič–Ala
Orsa-Ramana–Liolia Michaliuk, Violetta Kovaleva and Nadzia Drobina–Liuda

³ Pseudonym for Uladzislaŭ Ivanoŭ.

⁴ Arnold Micmillin, "Punishment Without Crime: Belarusian Prison Poetry," *The Journal of Belarusian Studies* 7, no. 1 (2013): 73, footnote 5.

Voytanka–Raisa Žuk-Hryškievič and Valiancina Paškievič–Women can do everything!

My mother

I believe that these memoirs would be unachieved without a chapter dedicated to Belarusian women. Let men forgive me this separation of the Belarusian people, but it's worth recognizing that any words are still not said about great role of women in the life of our country.

I have recently read memoirs of one glorious Belarusian about well-known people, and I've noticed that this person throughout his life, probably, has known no outstanding Belarusian women... As for me, I've been happy to meet a big number of brilliant women, so I dedicate this chapter to them.

I'd rather begin with my mother Evelina Paškievič-Šymaniec (my dad called her Valia). She received her education in incredibly hard conditions. Thanks to her efforts the Bolsheviks did not deport my father to Siberia in 1941. Thanks to her courage and faith we reached Denmark. She used to support all of my husband's ideas, and never rebuked. She had strong faith in God. Through her endless love she gave sense to all the efforts my brother and I made to achieve our goals. She was always proud of our victories and, at the same time, greatly understanding our blunders. She never had claims. When my daughter, Hanna-Pradslava, was studying in France, my mother was her best friend, with whom Hanna could share her feelings much more freely than with her parents. Hanna still mourns her beloved grandmother.

Rosa Maria

I have already mentioned women (not Belarusian ones) who played tremendous roles in my childhood years in Denmark. In France, I also used to meet outstanding women, they became my friends, and I still keep contact with them. Besides, I met female teachers who believed in my abilities before I mastered French. Researchers argue that confidence and support from parents and teachers are very important for children to succeed.

I've already written about our Spanish friend Rosa Maria Melendez. But I'd like to tell more about her, to honour her extreme courage. I first met Rosa Maria at Oxford, in Summer 1958, but Janka had known her before, since she was an incredibly good swimmer at the university swimming pool. Due to poliomyelitis in her childhood, Rosa Maria could not use her feet, and she had to walk with some devices, but she never used a wheelchair. She graduated from the faculty of nuclear physics at the Madrid University and worked all the time as a nuclear physicist. Her valor fascinated all her friends. Beautiful, intelligent, and courageous, she travelled around Europe and Northern America, if not around the whole world. She was our closest friend in Madrid, and I still contact her quite often. Nowadays it is already hard for her to travel. Her hobby now is watching tennis on TV. She is always glad when Belarusians win their games.

Zina Gimpelevič and Paŭlina Smith-Paškievič

In Canada, thanks to our Canadian Relief Fund for Victims of Chernobyl in Belarus, I have met lots of outstanding women. I think it would be better to start with two Belarusians, both of whom are my friends—Prof. Zina Gimpelevič, who now directs the Belarusian Institute of Arts and Sciences (BINIM) in Canada, and Paŭlina Smith-Paškievič, the daughter of old emigrants from the Stolin district. We could never create a fund without them. The matter is, the ministry which was to register the organization required three signatures from people who had no family connections between them. Zina and Paŭlina agreed to sign our declaration, and Zina offered to pay half of the fees needed to establish the fund.

Zina and Paŭlina worked for the fund for many years, and they are its life members. I should notice that not everybody can agree to join a financially binding organization. The generosity and courage of both of these Belarusian women really helped us.

Zina Gimpelevič, professor at the Waterloo University in Canada, wrote a book in English on Vasil Bykaŭ. Since 1989 she has animated the Belarusian presence at the conferences of Canadian Slavists. Every year she presents a paper during the Belarusian sessions of these conferences, informing Canadian researchers on Belarus and Belarusian culture. At the same time, she is a member of Belarusian Canadian Alliance, and takes part in Belarusian public activities.

Paŭlina Smith-Paškievič was born in Canada, into a family of Belarusian Baptists at the beginning of the 1930s. She has always participated in Quebec's public life. I met her accidentally, when she was elected to the English School Board in the region of Outaouais. Since 1991 Paŭlina has done her best in the Canadian Relief Fund for Victims of Chernobyl in Belarus. She served as its Secretary, and regularly hosted translators who used to accompany children from Belarus. Paŭlina has a son, two daughters, and three grandsons. She dreams of visiting her native Stolin district in Belarus.

I remember with love and gratitude all other Belarusian women who have become an integral part of my world. I have been familiar with some of them for a very long time; as for others, I met them later, while traveling abroad as the Chairperson of the Rada. I'd like to include all of them in my memoirs, but it would take too much space, more than this section allows, or even the whole book. Therefore I'll describe only some of them, all living outside of their native Belarus. All of these women are meaningful participants in Belarusian circles around the world, all are wonderful people.

Ala Orsa-Ramana

I guess every Belarusian knows who Ala Orsa-Ramana is. She is an outstanding Belarusian woman, professor, who teaches chemistry at the New York University. She has also taught Belarusian folk dances to our youth for years. Ala herself is

a brilliant dancer, too. She sings in Belarusian church choirs, sets up all the concerts of the Belarusian community in New York, and takes active part in the political life of the Belarusian diaspora in the USA. And that is not all! Ala Orsa-Ramana has established a fund for education which has helped to promote many Belarusian cultural projects. Ala has raised two sons who are good Belarusians as well. They take part in Belarusian life and help the fund established by their mother. I'm personally very grateful to Ala for her precious contribution to the life of the BNR Rada.

Liolia Michaliuk, Violetta Kovaleva, and Nadzia Drobina

I admire the devotion and patriotism of Liolia (Helen) Michaliuk, another Belarusian friend of mine. A long time ago, while raising three sons, she kept helping her husband Janka Michaliuk to direct the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain. She became completely upset when he fell ill. But after his death she found the strength and courage to continue his responsible and hard work. She stood as the Chairperson of Association, and the thankful Belarusian community in Great Britain kept reelecting her to this office for many years.

Violetta Kovaleva directs the brilliant Belarusian choir Yavarovy Liudzi (Sycamore Folk) in Toronto and edits the newspaper of Canadian Belarusians *Belaruskaye Slova* (The Belarusian Word). At the same time, she works to earn money (public activities are not paid abroad) and raises two marvelous Belarusian girls with her husband.

Nadzia Drobina was the Chairperson of the Canadian Alliance for several years. She works for churches, manages everything, helps everyone. She is one more outstanding Belarusian, capable and full of beauty, and it would be difficult to imagine Belarusian life in the main city of Ontario without her. She also works to make money and raises a son with her husband.

Liuda Voytanka

Liuda Voytanka-Bakunovič is my friend from Baranavičy times. Now she lives in New York, where she raises two small twins, her youngest granddaughters. Recently she was elected to the Board of Directors of the Belarusian-American Association (BAZA), but even as an ordinary member of BAZA she has always been interested in Belarusian life, and especially with the situation of compatriots worldwide. Once she kept correspondence with Larysa Hienijuš. When we were living in Spain, Liuda regularly sent packages of clothing for my little girls. Also she used to send me other items which, as she believed, would have been useful for me. Before Christmas she often sent me money. Liuda has an incredibly great heart. She has raised five children, always worked, and always had time and was willing to share her belongings.

Raisa Žuk-Hryškievič and Valiancina Paškievič

I will say about Raisa nothing aside from the fact she is full of energy at 87. She reads the newspaper *Naša Niva* from A to Z. A short time ago she took part in the pilgrimage of our Toronto community to the Belarusian Cross in Midland. That

cross had been established by Raisa and her husband. Until recently she was editing (and delivering to the post on her own) the *Kamunikat* bulletin, where she tried to share her patriotic feelings with Belarusians. Given that, she deserves gratitude from all of us. Let God give her many years of life.

I remember with gratitude and love Raisa's elder sister Valiancina Paškievič. She was reasonable, intelligent, extremely interesting. In Toronto we (Janka, me, and our girls) often came to stay at Valia and Michas Paškievič's place. That was always a big pleasure for us.

Valia Paškievič authored two volumes of a Belarusian handbook for English-speaking youth. The English-Belarusian dictionary, published by the Belarusian Institute of Arts and Sciences, was the result of long-term efforts undertaken by Valiancina Paškievič and a group of Institute contributors.

Women can do everything!

I hope that once I'll write about my new friends as well, the women of Poland, the Baltic countries, and Australia, about amazing girls I met in Czechia and England, about a great artist and all extraordinary women with whom I became acquainted in 1992 in Belarus. And, of course, I hope to write about the outstanding Belarusian women in Canada and the USA, still not described by me.

All of them are beautiful, intelligent, and talented. Life has taught the women from Belarus to stand strong among the worst conditions. All of them earn money, raise (or have already raised) children. And unfailingly they find time to spend on public activities. I greet you, dear friends, and on behalf of the BNR Rada I thank you for the work that you do for the sake of our common good.

Let me reply here to a young Belarusian girl who asked in a broadcast of Radio Liberty: "What can an ordinary girl do for her Homeland?" Well, she can do everything! Any Belarusian woman can make herself Pradslava, Ciotka, Emilia Plater, Larysa Hienijuš. Everything done by these outstanding Belarusian women is still relevant. But before all of that, one must realize: if a person really wants something, he or she can do everything!

Translated by Wolf Rubinčyk

Ivonka Survilla

"Our People Were Not Ready to Elect a Woman, Nor to Elect an Emigrant"

— Ivonka, during the celebration of Freedom Day in Prague a translator from the Czech Republic, Světlana Vránová, read out an excerpt from Larysa Hienijuš's memoirs, which Ms. Vránová had translated from Belarusian to Czech. I guess it

was not an accidental choice for Světlana to translate the recollections of Larysa Hienijuš about her last meeting with Vasil Zacharka, desperately ill by then. “He told me that his life was ending, and that he was among the authors of 25th March Act. After Piotra Krečeuški’s death, Zacharka was serving the Chairman of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, and, as a member of the government elected by the people, on the verge of his death, he wanted to transfer his office to a decent person. What was to be done? There was no appropriate person, only a woman, but no woman could take the office. Well, that was 1943... “I would nominate you, if only you weren’t a woman.” Then I offered Abramčyk,” – Hienijuš wrote. Only fifty-four years later that stereotype was broken, and a woman came to rule the Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR). What would Larysa Hienijuš think of that, and how do you evaluate those words from Zacharka, actually the last ones?

– I know nothing about the social attitude towards such ideas in 1943. Possibly they were quite acceptable. Now it is hard to believe that, despite all declarations on gender equality (it seems the Second Charter of the BNR declares it), twenty-five years later Zacharka could speculate in a similar way. It’s hard to believe, but probably such ideas correlated with the historical period.

– If Larysa Hienijuš would have become the Chairman of the Belarusian Democratic Republic in 1943, could everything have happened differently?

– It seems that what happened was bound to happen. Because if Larysa Hienijuš were arrested two years later, she could assume no functions for the BNR from Siberia. Well, Mikola Abramčyk did lots of work during that period. He was very talented and energetic, and enjoyed esteem everywhere. He served as Chairman of the Paris Bloc, probably even founded that organisation. I became acquainted with him rather early, in Denmark. When he saw me for the first time, I was 10, or perhaps 11 years old. And he nicely wrote in my memory book: “Bravo to Ivonka Šymaniec, who is strong in fighting for her Belarusianness!” I was so proud of his words.

– The second edition of your book *The Road* has just been presented in Belarus and in Prague, Czechia. There, you mentioned your student years, with good time spent in a café near the Luxembourg Palace. In that time, you kept writing essays and discussing world problems such as the Algerian War or Simone de Beauvoir’s feminism. But, Ivonka, might you call yourself a feminist?

– I guess real feminists are women who believe that men and women are absolutely equal. I fully endorse this view, and I kept endorsing it in Paris decades ago. By the way, feminist ideas were quite in vogue in that period. Simone de Beauvoir wrote her book, etc. But one happens to meet aggressive, anti-male feminism, which I do not accept.

– Concerning a woman’s role in family, society, politics, how have your views evolved? You have got one big love for life, you’ve obviously been very happy as

a woman, and wife, and mother as well. Nevertheless you have been working all the time, and you've been a public figure. You lived thirty-seven years together with your husband Janka. How did you manage to share your responsibilities?

– I'd rather begin with my parents' family. For my parents, my brother and I were absolutely equal. They wanted both of us to get good educations—they even believed it was more important to me than getting a higher education, since I was female and had to face more difficulties in life. On the other side, my mother was a good wife to my father, she looked after the family and never worked outside. So my father was a kind of patriarch within the family.

Up to the moment I got married, I had been raised in such a spirit that women and men are equal, and so had Janka, by the way. It seems that time people normally believed there was no great difference between women and men, but Spanish people did not. In Spain there was still a big difference, and young girls wanted to get an education in order to be married and not to work outside. But Janka and I had no clash on this subject, we kept doing everything together.

– Your book *The Road* contains an interesting case from your life in Spain. Janka was hanging up children's laundry, and some Spanish people made fun of him for this, since they had been raised otherwise. Perhaps he went ahead of the epoch in the 1960s.

– Right you are. The matter is, in Spain they hang up laundry on the ropes which are stretched between the windows. So, when you hang the laundry, say, on the sixth floor, everyone knows it. Well, once my husband was hanging up napkins, he never avoided it, believing that work was his as well as mine. One old woman who lived opposite saw the man hanging up the napkins, and yelled to call her family: "Hey, everybody, look at a man hanging up napkins!" And everybody came, and stared out the windows. It looked rather funny. Anyway, after that episode we became good friends with those Spanish people, and they understood our behavior well, and generally liked that Janka and I kept doing everything together.

– You and Vaira Vike-Freiberga, the former President of Latvia, have had very similar fates. She is one year younger than you. Her family, as well as yours, had to escape to Germany from Soviet troops, to avoid repressions. True, she spent her first school years in Germany and Morocco, while you were studying in Denmark. Both of you speak numerous languages. Both of you were very active representatives in the diaspora, both of you lived in Canada and maintained the traditions of your nations in emigration. In 1997 you headed the Rada, the symbolic Belarusian government in exile. And in 1999 Vaira Vike-Freiberga was elected President of Latvia. Latvia has already seen its fifth President after the renewal of its independence, but there has been only one big boss in Belarus for nearly twenty-four years. Could the Belarusians elect a woman and a representative of the diaspora? You might be a President like Ms. Vike-Freiberga, because of a similar level

of education, high esteem worldwide, rich conceptions of the world. Why didn't it happen?

– It didn't happen for one only reason: our people were not ready to elect a woman nor an emigrant. I have already seen myself as an absolute Belarusian. At the very beginning (after Perestroika) we wanted to purchase my grandfather's house in Belarus. But we were told that we had no right to buy it because we were foreigners. That was an awful pain, a great injury to be called foreigners, to be treated like foreigners in Belarus. Even more, that was something difficult to survive. But I consider it to be the strongest factor, along with the fact I'm a woman.

– What do you think, are the Belarusians mature enough to have a woman as the Head of State?

– I guess they are not. I can notice that many people are amazing, and they treat me rather gently, but if they had to express their opinion at a referendum, they would say "no." For some reasons Belarus 'still keeps its patriarchal traditions—men have always occupied important posts in all governments, and all academic institutions. Though, as I can see, actually women do everything at home, within the families. And women are able to do everything like men, totally able. But still there is some old tradition of patriarchal power, which has not disappeared yet.

– Your above-mentioned book contains a chapter dedicated to women. There you inform the readers about the outstanding women in your life, beginning with your mother. And you close the chapter with the sentence "Women can do everything." Which women in world politics or the public sphere are examples for you?

– I guess I wrote those words because I'd felt that in Belarus people were still not ready to accept the idea of women performing equally with men. Therefore, I wanted to describe women that delighted me. Seemingly I described first of all my friends, not internationally known figures. As for international life, I can mention Margaret Thatcher. But I don't particularly like her since she lacked female features (instead, she had a lot of male ones). Well, for instance, Golda Meir was amazing. And in this very moment there are lots of women who take similar positions. In my opinion, women are kinder, and they appreciate life more than men. That is so, above all, because they give birth. For me, by the way, the most important value in life is life. No other value is as important as life, and I think that if I ruled a government, I would do my best to avoid wars. Wars are the worst tragedy for people, for humankind. And it seems to me that male testosterone provokes wars. Women would not allow them.

"Women could change Belarus"

Women count for more than half of the population. They can do everything they want: if not separately, then within large social groups. Women could change Belarus, if they would understand it, if they acted accordingly. They should

understand how much they do for themselves, for their children, for public health, for normal attitudes to women, e.g., at work. It is altogether unacceptable that women cannot occupy the main positions in the country. I believe that everybody, every particular woman and all women together, can change something in this sphere. I fully support them.

“Belarusian men left Belarus with a psychological complex...”

You see, Belarusian men left Belarus with another psychological complex, since they have no sufficient esteem (or, perhaps, can't make their careers) abroad. They try to countervail it in Belarusian life, and they are often eager to prove that they are better than women—they know more, they are more intelligent, and so on. Of course, it is unacceptable for me. If I know some case is right, I will fight for it, even without war. But I can't remember any cases when I was convinced of something I disliked. So a woman also has her own position, her opinion, her ideals—all the human qualities. If a woman believes she is right, it's only normal she can win a conflict. Unfortunately, it is not always the case in Belarus.

Translated by Wolf Rubinčyk

Jana Juráňová

... without context... How Is Feminism Doing in Slovakia?

AUTHOR Jana Juráňová

TITLE "... bez kontextu... Ako je to s feminizmom na Slovensku?" [... without context... How is feminism doing in Slovakia?]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Aspekt (slovensko – český časopis)* [Aspect (Slovak-Czech Journal)] no. 3 (1994): 4–7.

LANGUAGE Slovak

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jana Juráňová (b. 1957, Senica) is an author of novels, plays, essays, books for children and young people; a translator from English and Russian; an editor and publisher; and a feminist public intellectual.

Her family lived in the spa town of Piešťany. When she was a teenager, they moved to Bratislava. Juráňová's mother worked as an accountant for various companies, and her father was a researcher in the field of agriculture. After 1989, he briefly worked as a representative within the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic. Juráňová's younger brother Pavol Jurán (died aged 29) was an actor.

Juráňová graduated in 1981 with a degree in Russian and English translation and interpretation from the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University, in Bratislava. She received the academic degree of PhD. and completed a two-year research residency at the Institute of Literary Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. She worked as a dramaturge at the Theatre for Children and Youth in Trnava. After 1990, she worked as an editor and deputy editor-in-chief of the magazine *Slovenské pohľady* (Slovak Views) until the takeover of the magazine in 1993 by the nationalist-oriented organization Matica slovenská (founded in 1863 during the construction of the Slovak nation, and the first publisher of the magazine). Until 1994, Juráňová worked as a commentator for the Slovak-language broadcast of Radio Free Europe.

In 1993, Juráňová joined the present author and a group of women writers, literary critics, artists in founding ASPEKT, the first feminist educational and publishing organization in Slovakia. Jana Juráňová and Jana Cviková (the author of this introduction) shared responsibility for ASPEKT's projects, both publishing and educational, for 30 years by now. Together with Cviková, Juráňová edited the feminist cultural journal *Aspekt* (1993–2004) for the entire period of its existence, and did the same with ASPEKT's book series (since 1996). Among other activities, she co-edited a number of publications (such as collected texts by Hana Gregorová

(1885–1958) and Terézia Vansová (1857–1942)¹ from the first wave of Slovak feminism) and translated books by Judith Butler, bell hooks, Margaret Atwood, and Virginia Woolf, among others.

Jana Juráňová is one of the most important contemporary Slovak writers. She has published ten books of prose and novels for adults to date, and four books for children and young adults. She has won several awards, and her books have been nominated five times as finalists for the “Anasoft litera” prize, the most prestigious literary award in Slovakia. Her short stories, dramas, and books have been translated into thirteen languages. Juráňová’s most famous work for Slovak readers is the novella for young adults *Iba baba* (Just a Girl), first time edited in 1999. Her best-known work abroad is *Žila som s Hviezdoslavom* (I Lived with Hviezdoslav) (2008), the novel whose narrator is the wife of the iconic Slovak poet Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav. The novel was translated into English under the title *Ilona. My life with the Bard* (2014), as well as into French, Hungarian, and Macedonian. Juráňová is also the author of several plays which portrays women during the nineteenth-century Slovak national revival. Her play *Tichý bič* (The Quiet Whip, premiere 2015), staged at the Slovak National Theatre, explores the fascist past of the prominent Slovak writer Milo Urban, whose best-known work is the 1927 novel *Živý bič* (The Living Whip). For this work, the Literary Fund awarded Juráňová the Award for Original Slovak Literary Creation. A selection of her dramatic work was published by the Slovak Theatre Institute in 2014.

Juráňová’s highly successful book-length interview with the Holocaust survivor, film critic, translator, political prisoner, and emigrant Agneša Kalinová, *Mojich sedem životov* (2012), has been translated into English as *My Seven Lives* (2021), as well as into German, Czech and Hungarian.

In 2019, the President of the Slovak Republic, Andrej Kiska, awarded Juráňová the “Order of Ľudovít Štúr, First Class,” for her extraordinary contribution to the development of democracy, the protection of human rights and freedoms, and the development of literary activity, doing so by “[b]reaking gender stereotypes, applying a healthy dose of irony to deconstructing well-known figures of Slovak history, and speaking out on the most burning issues of the day.”

Juráňová is currently retired, but she continues her work particularly as a writer and translator from English. She is still active in public life as well as in ASPEKT. She lives in Bratislava with her son and mother.

1 Editor’s note: See the Gregorová entry in this volume. Terézia Vansová was a poet, writer, and one of the first leaders of the Slovak women’s movement. She was first the vice-president of the organization Živena. She was also the founding editor of the women’s journal *Dennica* (Morning Star), and after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, the editor of *Slovenská žena* (Slovak Woman) between 1920 and 1923. See Jana Cviková, “Terézia Vansová,” in *Biographical Dictionary of Women’s Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Franciska de Haan, Krasimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 595–98.

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Jana Cviková

CONTEXT

In the first half of the 1990s, no one in Slovakia paid much attention to feminism, which lacked a wider social context. Socialist emancipation was seen as a relic of the past regime, as a double or triple burden for women, and it was hard to find approaches adequate for the changing times. Soon after the 1989 Velvet Revolution, the democratic transformation was threatened by populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism. The wild privatization of state-owned companies, neoliberalism, and unemployment worsened the economic situation of the population. Attempts to restrict reproductive rights, prevailing gender stereotypes in the division of reproductive labor, as well as the decrease of the number of women in parliament had a special

impact on women.² The dominant women's organization of the time was the Union of Women of Slovakia (Únia žien Slovenska), the successor and heir of the properties of the socialist Women's Union (Slovenský zväz žien). According to sociological research, women during the post-socialist transformation were additionally disadvantaged by "a specific *feminine variant of learned helplessness* that characterized political culture during the era of real socialism. If the general syndrome of learned helplessness is the willingness to leave the representation of citizens in the hands of 'experts,' its specific symptom related to women was, and still is, to delegate these powers and competencies to men."³ But nevertheless the oldest Slovak women's organization, Živena (1869), which was forcibly dissolved in 1955, was restored, and other smaller initiatives, including two feminist ones, were established: a series of lectures on feminist theories at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University (which later developed into the Gender Studies Centre) and the feminist cultural magazine *Aspekt* (which developed into the first feminist organization ASPEKT, with broad publishing and educational activities). In this historical situation, it was important for women to become subjects of decision-making—also about their lives. And this is the main topic of Juráňová's essay below, entitled "... without context...." The text was published in *Aspekt's* thematic issue on "witches."

This essay was based on a paper presented by Juráňová at the conference "Five Years After..." on December 16, 1994, in the House of Slovak Writers in Budmerice. The event was dedicated to the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Writers' Community of Slovakia (Obec spisovateľov Slovenska), which was created shortly after the beginning of the revolution in December 1989. Before the Velvet Revolution, only one uniform writers' organization was allowed in Slovakia—the Union of Slovak Writers (Zväz slovenských spisovateľov), which functioned under the ideological supervision of the Communist Party. In the first revolutionary days in 1989, the organization held a congress with the participation of formerly persecuted writers. One of the main topics discussed was the rehabilitation of excluded members. The up to then united organization split along political cleavages into the subsequent Slovak Writers' Union (Spolok slovenských spisovateľov), a successor to the socialist organization with a right-wing nationalist orientation, and the more ideologically revolutionary-minded above-mentioned Writers' Community of Slovakia. The latter organization was—by self-definition—based on dissenting and democratic values. Several founders of the feminist cultural magazine *Aspekt* were also members.

2 Women's representation in the National Council of the Slovak Republic dropped from 30% before 1989 to 11%. For more, see Bútorová et al., *Aspekt*, no. 2–3 (1995): 228–44.

3 Bútorová, *Ona a on na Slovensku. Ženský údel očami verejnej mienky* (Bratislava: Focus, 1996), 169. (English edition: Bútorová, *She and He in Slovakia: Gender Issues in Public Opinion.*) Cited in Cviková and Juráňová, "Feminisms for Beginners," 69–70.

Before the founding of *Aspekt*, the first issue of which was published in October 1993, a group of contributors decided to prepare a so-called women's issue of *Slovenské pohľady* (Slovak Views), the oldest literary and cultural magazine in Slovakia. Under the influence of growing authoritarian and nationalist tendencies, the magazine *Slovenské pohľady*, which had contributed to a more pluralistic cultural scene even before 1989, was later taken over by the nationalistic-oriented organization *Matica slovenská*. The feminist publishing space in the magazine *Aspekt* thus arose, among other things, as a result of the search for new publishing possibilities not marked by nationalism. *Aspekt* insisted on being a Slovak-Czech publishing space, with texts in both languages. The first issue was published shortly after the peaceful split of Czechoslovakia in December 1992 as a Slovak-Czech magazine, with two forewords, by the Czech dissident Jiřina Šiklová and the Slovak editor Jana Cviková.⁴

The founding of the feminist journal—focusing on topics such as the beauty myth, motherhood, and feminisms—was a political act of a different kind than was to be expected from women intellectuals in pro-democratic intellectual circles at the time,⁵ because they were not concerned with the fact that women's interests and perspectives were too often excluded from the then-promoted understanding of democracy. By focusing on the gender sensitization of themselves and society within the gender-homogeneous founding group of *Aspekt*, women intellectuals from the arts and humanities, especially literature, were set apart from the pre-assigned framework within which they were to formulate and express their critique and vision of society. As Juráňová's essay shows, it was once again a "male-dominated" demand to unite against an evil—in this case, the authoritarian nationalist regime embodied by populist Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar⁶—at the cost of pushing aside less serious "women's issues." As Juráňová and the present author recalled twenty years after the Velvet Revolution, "We slowly formulated what we strongly felt at that time: There is no democracy without democracy for women; there are no human rights without women's rights and without the rights of children, the rights of sexual minorities, and of others. But for pro-democratic intellectuals in Slovakia, feminism was a splitting of forces, a weakening of arrays of true democrats."⁷

The text below is the first one in which Juráňová appeared before the conference audience, her public coming-out as a feminist, as one who disrespected accepted hierarchies, values, and goals. Not accidentally, she quoted from Helene Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" (orig. 1975), one of the key essays of the second wave of the feminist movement in the West, which, despite all the internalized fears of public speaking, introduced the concept of women's speaking and women's writing (*écriture*

4 See *Aspekt*, no. 1 (1993): 2–3.

5 See the table of contents of *Aspekt*, available at: <http://www.aspekt.sk/category/knizna-edicia/casopis-aspekt>.

6 Particularly in the years 1993–1998.

7 Cviková and Juráňová, "Feminisms for Beginners," 78.

féminine). The unavoidable abridgement involves the part where Juráňová gives specific examples from the media and literature, explicitly citing crude sexist statements by well-known writers, or in her own way draws attention to the crucial role of women in well-known Slovak folk tales. The deconstruction of fairy tales has become one of her frequent writer's metaphors. She concludes with Czech dissident Václav Havel's oft-quoted statement about "living in truth," which Havel developed as a core idea of his critique of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia and a prerequisite for freedom and democracy.⁸ Juráňová, five years after the collapse of said regime, reinterpreted the concept from a gendered and feminist perspective.

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8 Václav Havel (1936–2011) was a Czech playwright, dissident intellectual, and politician. He was the first democratically elected politician, the president first of Czechoslovakia until its dissolution in 1992, and the Czech Republic between 1993 and 2003. He first developed his idea of "living in truth" in his long essay *The Power of the Powerless* (*Moc bezmocných*) in 1978.

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Jana Cviková

* * *

Jana Juráňová

... without context... **How is Feminism Doing in Slovakia?**

What is most notable about the question in the title is that no one is asking it. It would be nice to have some other word instead of 'feminism,' which has so far entered Slovak heads only as a term of abuse, or else as a term for describing the activities of a few frustrated women who can't think of anything better to do. But I'm not going to try to come up with any new words, or avoid the word feminist, even at the risk of being labelled frustrated or of breaking away from wonderful Slovak society—that poor creature is quite decimated as it is. I do not know what name to give to what I am going to say next. All I know is that if I want to think about the state of feminism in Slovakia, I have to start with the state of thought in general. About the state of thought in Slovakia. And that, in and of itself, is a rather sad subject. In this respect, woefully little has happened in this country over the past *five years*—despite the dismantling of barriers to information and the opening of borders. If I decide to broach the subject of breaking away from the wretched Slovak intelligentsia, decimated as it is and constantly driven by Mečiar into a helpless little herd, or from the section of the population that regards itself as the intelligentsia, or the people who regard themselves as the decent democratic minority, I must break away from this little herd very loudly and vehemently. I refuse to identify with anyone on the basis of a negative principle, that is,

of being in opposition to Mečiar. After all, as is becoming increasingly evident in Slovakia, the number of those who oppose Mečiar will keep growing, their ranks swelled by anyone whom this comeback artist of a politician will make angry and who will therefore no longer be able to agree with him. However, for me this is not quite adequate as a way of thinking about the world and widening horizons and, first and foremost, as a way of building and broadening democracy in Slovakia. And even if it were adequate, the era of communism gave us an opportunity for self-identification. A small bunch united in support of one thing or in opposition to some person will shatter into individuals as soon as their common enemy is gone. But the enemy may not go away. And in any case, I don't want to be a part of a bunch of people, however small. I want to be myself.

There is a reproach—sometimes only latent, sometimes articulated aloud—that we have too many other things to worry about in Slovakia these days than to engage with something called feminism. I hear the question and my response to it is: I object in the strongest possible terms. Because in this country we have to engage with all those things we had neglected or missed over at least the past twenty years. As a woman, I therefore engage with the things I missed out on over the last twenty years. What this means in my case is that, apart from a hectic catching up, I can, I want to, and, for the sake of my own personal growth, I have to engage with what in Slovakia—in a smirking, pejorative and uninformed way—passes for feminism and what to Slovak intellectuals in concert with Slovak non-intellectuals means only that somewhere in Canada a man is not allowed to hold the door open for a woman or help her put on her coat and that as a result, she can no longer feel like a woman. I've never been to Canada and do not know how things are over there, but if the only thing I had to reproach Slovak men for was that they would not hold the door open for me, or help me put on my coat, I would have nothing to reproach them for.

[...]

After we published the third issue of the feminist journal *Aspekt*—in which we made the point of devoting it to feminisms, in the plural, to emphasize that there isn't just one feminism, or two or three feminisms, since every issue that is discussed from a feminist perspective can be seen in multiple ways, i.e. many feminist ways—a male colleague asked me: “My wife told me she has finally understood that feminism is not against men. Is that so?” Unprepared and taken aback by the quality of this question, which I would not have expected at a certain stage and at a certain level, I replied: “Yes, that is so, feminism is not against men.” But as I said it, I felt an itch at the bottom of my soul, which invariably means: are you sure you're not telling a lie? Do you really mean it?

The right answer is not: “Feminism is not against men.” Nor is it: “Feminism is against men.”

What a small—and, so far, very tight and increasingly tighter—group of women around *Aspekt* is trying to do is—forgive me for using a term that has become almost a cliché—to *sensitize people's awareness to certain matters*.

[...]

The first issue of *Aspekt* included two responses to the horrendous things that went on and are still going on in the former Yugoslavia, which focused on the rape of women, and we were attacked on two counts. First, that we were brutal. Us. Not the rapists, but us, the women writing about it. And second, that of all the horrors of the war, we chose the rape of women as our sole focus. Why then does no one else write about all the other things happening in the former Yugoslavia, I asked. I am still waiting for a reply.

[...]

So how is feminism doing? Is feminism in Slovakia against men? I don't know, although to judge by the way some men have reacted, one might think that it is. I don't feel qualified to answer the question of why this is so. All I can do is ask: Why do some men feel threatened by feminism? And what does that mean for me? Will I submit to their fear, or ...? And, indeed, why are *women* in Slovakia (as well as in the Czech Republic) scared of feminism?

I could go on at great length and for a long time about problematizing our own lives—the lives of men as well as women. I could talk at great length and for a long time about the danger to which I am exposing my own peace of mind by becoming aware of problems that I keep hidden from myself as well as from others. However, feminism doesn't oblige anyone to raise these problems. It merely offers us an opportunity to do so—and provides us with the necessary tools.

Admittedly, if men really want it that way, feminism can be against them, but then they will only have themselves to blame. If women wish to be scared of feminism, they will, no doubt, find reasons to be so and no feminist will hold it against them. It will just sadden a feminist—the feminists—to see the world deprived of another genuine female view, another form of self-reflection that might have enriched the self-reflection of humankind, which is made up of the self-reflection of men and women. Nothing more, but also nothing less.

Because the question feminism poses to me and to every woman is: Who are you? Do you know who you are? Do you want to find out? Do you want to be yourself, or do you want to be someone's rival? Do you want to discover your own identity, or do you want to take on the identity of the mistress of the man you are interested in? Do you want to make yourself younger so as not to feel threatened by younger women? Or do you want to age in a meaningful way? What is it that you want? And what is it that you do *not* want? Feminism doesn't take away anyone's right to look after the sick, the aged, those who suffer without demanding recognition, to raise children, to cook or to clean. It asks only: Do you want to do all

of this all on your own? Without being aware that these activities require a certain—not insignificant—amount of energy? Feminism asks: Do you wish to be someone's muse? Do you wish to be a quiet presence, blending into the wallpaper or the music played from a tape? Or do you wish to be a partner? And what about men? Who do they wish to be? And what sort of person do they want to find in a woman?

[...]

Hélène Cixous says in "The Laugh of the Medusa" that

Every woman knows the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away—that's how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak—even just open her mouth—in public. A double distress, because even if she transgresses, her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine...

I don't think I need to stress that in "The Laugh of the Medusa" Cixous is not referring to women who are happy to speak anywhere and at any time as dictated by good manners, or to behave as a sweetly exhibitionistic and flirtatious tease. Cixous means women who are only learning to recognize themselves as being different, to articulate their ideas and find the courage to speak. They are learning to see the world with their own, feminine eyes.

So, *five years on*... How are we doing? Women who are keen to learn have started to emerge, albeit sporadically, slowly, inconspicuously. I want to be one of them and hope that I am. I know that this entails the risk of breaking away from the gaggle of women who speak in the way polite society expects. It entails the risk that I may stutter at times and provide great material for misogynistic jokes to sharp-tongued Slovak humorists. It entails the risk of being told that I am isolating myself and that therefore I am and will remain an outsider. It entails the risk that I will discover things about myself I would rather not know. But it also entails the advantage that I will no longer need to rehearse the fashionable cliché of *living in truth* and actually try to live it instead. Five years on...

The only thing that has changed for me in this respect over the past five years is that more things now offend me and infuriate me. And sometimes also hurt me. [...]

Translated by Julia and Peter Sherwood

Veronika Cherkasova

The Country Just Across the Way

AUTHOR Veronika Cherkasova

TITLE “Eta strana naprotiv. Korrjespondjent ‘Salidarnasci’ vmjestje s ‘chjelnokami’ sьjezdila v Pol’shu i obratno” [The Country Just Across the Way. The *Solidarity* Correspondent Travelled to Poland and Back with Shuttle Traders]

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LANGUAGE Russian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Veronika Cherkasova (alternative spellings: Vieranika Charkasava, Wieranika Tscharkassava; 1959–2004) was a renowned Belarusian journalist. The beginning of her professional career fell on the late socialist period and the years of Perestroika (1985–1991). After graduating from the Faculty of Journalism at the Belarusian State University, she worked in the youth editorial office of Belarusian state TV. There, she was engaged in the production of documentary films and programs for youth. Among the films she produced there were documentaries on Belarusian poet Maksim Bahdanovich, on Sergei Myarzhinsky (revolutionary Marxist, the partner of the Ukrainian poet Lesya Ukrainka), and about her father, Second World War veteran and journalist Anatoly Cherkasov.

In 1991, after the collapse of the USSR, Belarus became an independent state. However, the period of freedom of speech in independent Belarus did not last long. A new censorship regime was established soon after Alaksandr Lukašenka came to power in 1994, and that immediately affected television and other state media. Many journalists, including Veronika Cherkasova, went to non-state print media, which in the 1990s were in great demand among Belarusian readers. After she left television journalism, for some time she published in the newspaper *Golos Rodiny* (Voice of the Motherland), and then started to work in various independent opposition Belarusian newspapers, such as *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* (*BelGazeta*, the Belarusian Business Gazette), where she was deputy editor-in-chief, the only managerial position she held in her lifetime (1995–2003). She also occasionally collaborated with the Russian magazines *Novoe vremya* (The New Times) and *Ogonek* (Spark). In the last years of her life, she worked for the Belarusian independent newspaper *Salidarnasc* (Solidarity).

On October 20, 2004, Veronika Cherkasova was found dead in her apartment in Minsk with more than 40 stab wounds. The profession of a journalist is one of the

most dangerous in the world. However, the specific circumstances of place and time matter. Murdering independent journalists in post-Soviet countries became common back in the 1990s. Veronika Cherkasova was killed three days after Alaksandr Lukašenka held a referendum, thanks to which he received the right to be re-elected with no time limits. Since Cherkasova's murder was accompanied by mass protests, in his usual populist manner Lukašenka reacted by saying that he would give five days to investigate the murder of a journalist. The state investigation insisted on the version of domestic murder. Her 15-year-old son Anton Filimonov and 63-year-old stepfather Vladimir Meleshko were declared suspects.¹ In 2005, the suspicions were removed. The perpetrators have never been found, as in case of several other Belarusian journalists. Cherkasova's colleagues are convinced that her murder was related to her professional activities. One of the most likely reasons could be her investigation into the illegal arms trade between Alaksandr Lukašenka's Belarus and Saddam Hussein's Iraq.²

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • *Krasnym po belomu: stat'i, ocherki, esse* [Red on White: Articles and Essays]. Collected by Olga Babak, Natalia Kulinka, Aleksandr Starikievich, and Ilona Urbanovich-Sauka (Moscow: Prestizh-buk, 2005).

Almira Ousmanova

CONTEXT

More has been written about the circumstances of Veronika Cherkasova's death than about her life.³ Even the little that is known about her life and work has to be collected in bits and pieces, because most of the independent media resources where her texts, films, or information about her were published have been blocked by the authoritarian Lukašenka regime or removed by the journalists themselves to protect

- 1 Attempts to accuse Veronika's son for her murder was not an investigation error, but a method of frightening political opponents based on gender-specific violence against families. This became a characteristic feature of the authoritarian regime throughout the years. Underage children are one of the major "instruments" of blackmailing political activists in Belarus: mothers are imprisoned or placed in psychiatric asylums, while their children are either taken from their families to orphanages, or become imprisoned, at times along with their parents. In 2020–2023 this has become common method of political repression in Belarus.
- 2 During Lukašenka's rule, illegal arms supplies to the countries of the Middle East and Africa have been one of the most important sources of income for the regime and its associates. After visiting Iraq in 2002, Veronika Cherkasova published the article "Dual-purpose country" in *Belgazeta*, no. 24 (340), June 24, 2002, and she continued to work on this topic.
- 3 Belarusian journalists and human rights activists have conducted an independent investigation of her death. See Satsuk, "The Fear As a Plausible Motive"; and "Tajamnica sljedstva. P.S." [The Mystery of the Investigation. P.S.], Leonid Mindlin's documentary about the Cherkasova case, 2014, <https://naviny.bel-sat.eu/ru/films/356/>.

the authors.⁴ Thus, for now, her biography is mainly her texts, at least the few that are currently available to us.

Veronika Cherkasova conducted journalistic investigations and published on such topics as informal border trade, the work of state security forces (the Belarusian KGB), illegal migration and trafficking from Belarus to the EU, and religious sects. She also published articles on Belarusian history, on political repression under Stalinism and its silencing in the 1990s, everyday life under late socialism and in post-socialist Belarus, Roma minorities, ecology, and so on.

Her colleagues and readers noted the meticulousness and thoroughness of her investigations, and they valued the distinctive manner of her writing and approach to journalistic work: “Her texts were not only always recognizable, thanks to their unique style, highlighted by a sophisticated sense of humor. Collected together, they turned into a kind of hypertext, where all our recent history was reflected—with its tragedies, comedies, and tragi-comedies, with its victories transformed into defeats, and defeats that strangely ignited the light at the end of the tunnel...”⁵

Many of the articles published by Veronika Cherkasova during her lifetime are not available online. The only printed collection of her articles was prepared by her friends and former colleagues (Olga Babak, Natalia Kulinka, Aleksandr Starikievich, and Ilona Urbanovich-Sauka) a year after her assassination. This one-of-a-kind book contains 57 essays, published between 1997 and 2004. Collected together, they give readers an opportunity to feel through the daily and political atmosphere in Belarus in the first years of state independence, which coincided with the beginning of the establishment of the authoritarian regime of Alaksandr Lukašenka.

These texts are slices of history that seem to be so recent and yet they already feel very distant. At present, when mass political repressions—which Belarus has not seen since Stalinism—continue, the murder of Veronica Cherkasova, as well as the circumstances of the crime’s investigation by state bodies, no longer seem something extraordinary. Independent journalism in Belarus, which Cherkasova helped to develop, has ceased to exist. After the events of 2020, the Lukašenka regime liquidated the entire sector of non-state media: nearly forty journalists are now in prison, and all independent media that continued their work in exile have been labeled by the authorities as “extremist organizations”.⁶

4 In spring 2022, Pavel Pernikov, a 30-year-old editor of Wikipedia, was convicted in Brest for “discrediting Belarus” by editing Wikipedia articles about the involvement of Belarusian security forces in the murder of journalist Veronika Cherkasova in October 2004 and the death of his countryman Henadz Shutau in August 2020. According to the state prosecution, Pernikov discredited the state bodies of Belarus by adding one line to the Russian-language Wikipedia about censorship in Belarus: “On October 20, 2004, Veronika Cherkasova was killed, a journalist from the opposition newspaper *Salidarnasć*.”

5 Uladzimir Arlou, “Names of Freedom: Veranika Charkasova” [Imjony Svabody: Vjeranika Charkasava (12.1.1959–20.10.2004)], Radio Liberty, October 20, 2006, <https://www.svaboda.org/a/774915.html>.

6 In 2023, the list of “extremist organizations” included 170 organizations, independent media, social media pages of bloggers, music bands, Telegram channels, NGOs and various public initiatives.

The collection of Cherkasova's work takes its title from one of her essays, "Red on White," written in 2001. Red and white (more precisely, the combination white-red-white) are the colors of the historical flag of Belarus, which was approved as a state symbol in 1991, but soon after Lukašenka came to power, it was banned and replaced by the Soviet flag of the BSSR (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic). From 2020 onward, the regime directed all of its efforts to ban and eliminate the historical symbols of independent Belarus from public space, and in the end declared its flag "extremist." For its possession, distribution, and even for using its virtual representation on social networks, Belarusians today receive real prison terms. The title of the collection by Veronika Cherkasova is therefore highly relevant in the context of Belarussians' ongoing struggle for independence. It delineates the polarity of the political situation in Belarus and denotes the danger of the struggle against dictatorship, as in the case of Cherkasova herself.

The text chosen is the first article in the volume, entitled "The Country Just Across the Way. The *Solidarity* Correspondent Travelled to Poland and Back with Shuttle Traders" (2004). This text reads today as an anthropological essay of troubled times, or as a very peculiar kind of travel diary, but also as notes of participant observation that bear the value of historical evidence for scholarship on the role and position of women in the post-socialist informal economy. Describing her travel to Poland on a bus, together with women who travelled to Poland exclusively for shuttle-business purposes, the author took meticulous notes on the hardships of the daily routine of women shuttle-traders on the border between Belarus and Poland. Not many texts have been written about the phenomenon of women's economic entrepreneurship during the transition period. However, for gender scholars of post-socialism, this remains a very important topic. It concerns the change in gender roles after the end of socialism, gender strategies for survival under conditions of economic instability, and gender-based causes of labor migration.⁷

This essay, written twenty years ago, strikingly did not lose its relevance for the understanding of processes that still go on in the countries neighboring the EU. For the majority of countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the transition period after socialism concluded with accession to the EU and, as a result, led to significant progress in political and economic matters, gender equality, and mobility. Meanwhile, in some former Soviet republics such as Belarus, this thirty-year period ended in the collapse of political hopes for a different future. Belarus borders several EU countries, but still remains "the country just across the way." Compared to the 1990s, the situation has only become worse, both for citizens in general and for women, who find themselves in an even more precarious situation characterized by low wages, political

7 See İrdam, "Women in the Shuttle Trade"; Sasunkevich, *Informal Trade*; Sasunkevich, "Ethnography of Invisible."

persecution, and an increasing number of difficulties for labor migration and political repression inside the country.

This text can be read as a prelude to the Belarusian protests against the authoritarian regime of Lukašenka, which began in 2020. Many of the women that Veronika Cherkasova traveled with and wrote about—as well as their daughters, who inherited the spirit of entrepreneurship as a path to women’s autonomy—played a huge role in the Belarusian revolution with a female face in 2020. It is in this vein that it is worth re-reading the final lines of the article by Veronika Cherkasova: “On the plinth will be written: ‘She battled.’ And if they don’t put it up soon, to these two words will be added ‘with whom’ and ‘for what.’” Now, in 2023, we know the answer to the question of what the Belarusian women fought for and continue to fight for in the present circumstances.

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Almira Ousmanova

* * *

Veronika Cherkasova

The Country Just Across the Way: The *Solidarity* Correspondent Travelled to Poland and Back with Shuttle Traders

We set off from Minsk in a Setra bus as planned, at precisely 7pm. On board, mobile telephones ring unceasingly. I start to hate Mozart. We head out of Minsk. The telephones grow silent, and in the ensuing silence can be heard the friendly munching of sunflower seeds. Two hours later—the first stop, during which I take a look at my fellow travelers. 97% of the passengers are women. There are three men: one is somebody’s husband, and there are two boys of about sixteen. Amongst the amenities provided by the transport company are tea and coffee, and also an in-cabin

screening of the young people's comedy *Son-in-Law*, which halfway through fortunately turned out to be irreparably defective.

Trade relations between Belarus and Poland have a history. At the beginning, it was Poles who obsessively proposed lacy underwear and folding umbrellas on the streets of Minsk. At the start of Perestroika, Belarusians firmly established themselves in Polish markets, selling there pretty much anything you can ask money for: from toothpaste and bottles of strong alcohol of doubtful quality to items made from gold. Today, everything is the other way round: Poles, having made their initial capital in petty trade, now produce their own "Blendameds" and drink high quality Martini, while we at the Białystok Bazaar buy the same lacy underwear, folding umbrellas, and other cheap consumer goods. The bus arrived at the Bruzgi border crossing at 11:40pm. We lost an hour's time when the lady-excursion leader mistook a coat hanging from a hook for a seated passenger, and therefore no matter which way she tried couldn't make the number of passengers agree with the number on the list. A Polish border guard boarded the bus, cast a glance at the passengers and joyfully pronounced "All regular clients!" Then they let us into the Duty Free, where people stocked up on cheap vodka with the enigmatic name of Funt Liha.⁸

At 3am, we finally leave the customs area and at 4:15 we get out at a fruit and veg market. This is composed of rows of kiosks and small pavilions, most of which are not working, but in some the light is on and there is brisk trade. In front of the kiosks, trays and crates with fruit and vegetables are set out. Here lie ready-cut salads packed in cellophane: just season with oil and put on the table. In the dark, identical heads of cabbage in green nets look like volleyballs. The prices kill: at a dollar to zloty exchange rate of 1:3.77, a crate of wonderful, all identical apples costs 15 zloty; a basket of kiwis, three and a half. In the shops, sunflower oil in three- or five-liter bottles can be found; spices, pasta, and roast chicken wings are in vacuum packaging. Many buy wholesale tea, coffee, and confectionaries. A butcher's opens, to which half of the bus immediately heads. The sellers joyfully greet the night-time shoppers like family.

The next stop is the wholesale supermarket "Macro," to which we arrive a few minutes before 7. Its doors are shut: only our bus stands in the car park. It seems like we are the first customers.

You wouldn't be able to go around the vast "Macro" in a whole day. We have 45 minutes. If you don't know what is where, you'll leave with an empty basket. After a long wandering through the labyrinth of shelves, I found myself by the cheese counter. But since this is a wholesale store, the cheeses are sold in huge heads and

8 "Funt liha" – an idiomatic phrase meaning "to experience hardship," based on the etymology of being "without pounds."

circles. With difficulty I dig out two wedges, which a sleepy saleswoman takes from me by the check-out. It turns out that you can only buy cheese in packages in which are several kilos of the delicacy.

And now to the last point on our trip: the market for clothes and other household goods. We arrived early and it seems as though the market is empty: you can see neither sellers, nor customers. But if you stand for a minute by one or another item, as though from underground, a polite and attentive Pole appears.

My first impression was that I had not gone anywhere: the landscape in front of me was an exact copy of the Minsk markets. Just that here, in the historical homeland of the goods from “Dynamo” and “Zhdanovichi,” the prices are lower and the choice is greater. The difference in prices sometimes knocks you off your feet: a fifty-dollar chandelier, which I had been eyeing for some time in Minsk, costs precisely twenty here.

Lots of rose and other seedlings, which, despite the ban on transporting them across the border, the shuttle traders stock up on. Some clearly in industrial quantities.

By 10 o'clock in the morning, it's crowded at the market: a few more buses with Minsk registration plates have arrived.

I realize that after all these years of making calculations with banknotes, I have lost the habit of dealing with coins. After just a few purchases, I have pockets full of small change. I am surprised to find that when calculating I get lost with the Polish “kopecks.” Seeing my torment, the saleswoman takes the groszy from my palm in the required amount herself. On all sides are women moving about with the enormous, checkered canvas bags, which have become the specific sign of our native shuttle traders at the stations and markets of Europe.

There are things that seem a priori incomprehensible. Like the size of the universe or how, for the course of the whole trip, dragging such heavy bags, spending two nights without sleep, packing, unpacking, waiting, these women somehow manage to keep looking fresh, to keep their manicures in good order and not forget about make-up. Most of them are single mothers raising several children; one of the married shuttle traders spent the whole trip on the phone trying to “cure” her husband who, left alone, had poisoned himself by eating something not fit for the purpose; another, once every couple of hours, phoned Minsk and after speaking to her faithful husband proclaimed her joy to the whole bus: “Girls, his voice sounded sober!”

Around the bus the women are packing their luggage. Their bags are pushed into the belly of the bus not just anyhow, but with precise planning. It is virtuoso work, a result of which not a centimeter of space is lost. A woman with her last ounce of strength is shoving things into the luggage compartment. An elderly woman with glasses moves her out the way, and with a precise movement gives the

bag a knock-out leaving it sitting ideally in a small hole. Everything is packed so that between two of the vast bags not a mouse, not even a cockroach, could crawl. In the eyes of the women dripping with sweat is a silent question: Will they really have to get it all out at the border? The elder of the group says with a sigh: "It just depends on your luck with the border guards, girls. One bus they let through without looking at, and on another they tell you to weigh the sunflower seeds in your pockets."

On the return journey, we stop at a Leroy Merlin supermarket. As we have already used up most of our money, we don't stay for long. At 1:30pm, we head for home. Ahead of us is the most anxious part of the trip.

Before we get to the border, an energetic exchange of purchased items begins on the bus. It turns out that if a passenger has too much of a specific item, then customs will treat it as a wholesale purchase, for which there is a very different set of charges than for items which have been purchased for personal use. And so: I'll give you my saucepans and you give me your flowerpots. As we went through customs, I personally was the holder of a bag with somebody's mudguards in it.

Our bus arrived at the border at 4:50pm. We would set off for Minsk only at 10:55pm, spending almost seven hours at the border. Despite the fact that there was no queue in front of us.

As soon as we arrived at the border, the border guards gathered our passports. For the next four hours, nothing happened. Absolutely nothing. The bus stood opposite the terminal in splendid isolation: from time-to-time, preoccupied people in uniforms ran past it, without paying us any attention. The wait was obviously dragging on, but it seemed only I was getting agitated. The seasoned travelers relaxed: some prepared a board for a game of "Preference," others were occupied looking for wine glasses, while a third group smoked outside the bus.

"What are the border guards waiting for?" I asked my neighbor.

"What do you mean, 'what are they waiting for?'" she answered in surprise. "Money of course!"

I just note that from the very beginning of the journey I had felt a somewhat cautious attitude towards me. My fellow travelers had known each other for years, while I was someone new, from whom you didn't quite know what to expect. In addition, I had almost no luggage, which only increased the suspicion with which I was regarded. As a result, when, just before the border, the whole bus started to gather money for something, from me they took just a few dollars. To my question "For what?" I just got the vague answer "For crossing the border."

The fifty-kilogram limit for transporting goods from Poland to Belarus were introduced more than a year ago. According to experienced shuttle traders, at first the border guards turned a blind eye to excess weight and the additional kilograms crossed the border without sanction. It was in December of last year that

those coming back from Poland first felt heightened attention to the weight of their luggage. And as time went on, this intensified. The shuttle traders connect the beginning of their difficulties with the latest in a series of presidential decrees toughening the rules on customs' controls, as a result of which, in the opinion of my neighbor on the bus, the government is "raking in money." Whether or not this is the case, now at the border you have to take all the luggage out of the bus, weigh it, and for each kilogram over the allowed fifty you have to pay two euros to the state treasury. In fact, it turns out that for excess weight you have to pay much more, not to the treasury, but into the pocket of a particular individual. To my question "How much?" they answered "From 700 to 1500 dollars." Whether or not this is the case, I am not able to say, I merely note that there is no limit to the zeal of the border guards in the search for excess weight. It happens that in order to achieve the "necessary" result they require women's handbags to be put on the scales.

After four hours, at last they noticed us. The border guard who came up to the bus told us to get all the luggage out. During the trip from Białystok, the things had been squeezed together, and heavy bags landed reluctantly on the asphalt with a soft thud. Close to the bus, like a scaffold, towered huge scales. Dozens of people followed the expression of the border guard's eye: will he say "Go on," or will he make you weigh the luggage; will he limit himself to an external inspection, or will he give the command "To the hall," and then you have to drag your heavy bags for screening up and down the stairs.

"Once, in Bruzgi, they made us turn everything inside out for three hours, and then sent us back," said an elderly woman with a luggage of flowerpots and two blankets.

"Back to where?" I say stunned. "To Poland?"

The lady nodded her head as she smoked. "And what did you do then?"

"We went back and crossed the border in Brest. They let us through there," she says shrugging her shoulders.

We spent an hour more in the open air by our packages and boxes, after which they let us get back on the bus. If packing the bus in Białystok took about an hour, here at the border we squeezed the same process into fifteen minutes. The closeness of our native land gave extra strength.

At the border, even if you are crystal clean, and have not even in dream or spirit infringed any law, you feel surprisingly guilty and helpless. More defenseless than a shuttle trader at the border is perhaps only a prisoner in a pre-trial detention center. Here not long ago the president on television frightened the people with promises to make us love our homeland. I permit myself to propose a counter-initiative: and what if our homeland also tried to love us? Such as we are: oblique, crooked, skinny from underfeeding, flabby from malnutrition, agitated

by television horror stories? With our enormous bags, cases, and seeds in our pockets? Maybe then we won't need to be forced, and our feelings will be mutual, strong, and natural. Whereas forced love stubbornly brings to mind article 166 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.⁹

We returned to Minsk at 3:30am. Before we get off, our passports are collected in case there should be any disagreement about luggage. Our documents are returned only after everyone has collected their things. This offers a kind of guarantee that in the darkness and agitation nobody will go off with somebody else's bag.

Someday they will put up a monument to shuttle traders. This will be a middle-aged woman between forty and fifty hewn out of dark stone, not tall, sturdy, hardy, with short hair and enormous bulging checkered bags in both hands. Behind, holding onto the hem of her skirt, will be hungry children and a not-entirely-sober husband, and in front will loom a threatening border guard. On the plinth will be written: "She battled." And if they don't put it up soon, to these two words will be added "with whom" and "for what."

Translated by Benjamin Cope

9 Article 166 of the Belarusian Criminal Code deals with sexual violence and rape.

14

Transitions

Dunja Blažević

The Activist of the Avant-Garde

AUTHOR Dunja Blažević

TITLE “Aktivistkinje avangarde” [The Activist of the Avant-Garde]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED “Dunja Blažević: Aktivistkinje avangarde” [Dunja Blažević: The Activist of the Avant-Garde]. Interview by Vesna Kesić. *Start* (Zagreb), no. 340 (February 13, 1982): 48–49.

LANGUAGE Serbo-Croatian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dunja Blažević (b. 1944, Zagreb) is an art historian, art critic, and curator. Blažević is a seminal figure in the intersecting histories of performance, conceptual, new media, video art, and burgeoning feminisms during the era of socialism in Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe, as well as in the post-socialist European cultural landscape of contemporary art.

Originally from Zagreb, Blažević’s family moved to Belgrade in 1962. Seeking independence from the large shadow cast by the political career of her father Jakov Blažević—who served as chief prosecutor in the highly publicized case against anti-communist archbishop Alojzije Stepinac in 1946, and who held high positions as prime minister and president in the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Croatia—Blažević remained in Belgrade after her family’s return to Zagreb.

An art historian by training, Blažević earned her degree at the University of Belgrade in 1969 and held a Fulbright fellowship at Georgetown University (Washington, D.C.) and UCLA (Los Angeles) from 1971–1972. She pursued post-graduate studies on cultural policy at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Belgrade (1974–1975).

A leading voice in the alternative cultural milieu of socialist Yugoslavia during the 1970s and 1980s, Blažević was a founding member of the Student Cultural Center (Studentski kulturni centar, SKC) in 1968, and served as the director of its gallery from 1971–1975. From 1976–1980 she was the director of the SKC. Under Blažević’s leadership, the SKC Gallery was the first to exhibit conceptual, performance, and new media art in socialist Yugoslavia. Generating international artistic and intellectual exchanges that probed the social and political power of experimental art, Blažević put Yugoslavia’s New Artistic Practices on the radar of prominent cultural figures in

contemporary art, such as Joseph Beuys, Ana Mendieta, Gina Pane, Germano Celant, Ursula Krinzing, and Richard Demarco.¹

In addition to her pioneering curatorial work in the sphere of contemporary art at the SKC, the context of which launched performance artist Marina Abramović's famed international art career, Blažević organized the first feminist events at the SKC, such as holding a "Women in Art" discussion in 1975, as well as the 1978 feminist conference "Drug-ca žena. Žensko pitanje – novi pristup?" (Comrade-ess Woman. The Women's Question: A New Approach?). A groundbreaking moment in the history of feminist art and activism in Eastern Europe, "Drug-ca žena" was a collaborative effort that included the leadership of feminist sociologist Žarana Papić, and curator and art historian Bojana Pejić, then the assistant for the SKC Gallery, who by the 2000s would become one of the most powerful feminist art critics and curators in contemporary art.

Blažević would leave the SKC to work as the editor-in-chief of the visual arts program at TV Belgrade from 1980–1991, where she first edited the TV show *The Other Art*, followed by serving as producer and director of *TV Gallery* (1984–1991), which centered innovative work in new media and video art. Opening up elite contexts of experimental art to mass audiences in Yugoslavia, Blažević produced over 90 shows.

With the onset of the Yugoslav wars in 1991, Blažević moved to Paris, where she worked as a freelance art critic and curator until 1996, when she became the director of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art in Sarajevo (renamed in 2000 as Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art, SCCA). There, among other efforts to support the war-torn cultural sphere, Blažević buttressed the work of young generations of women artists. During her tenure at SCCA (1996–2016), she also co-curated *Aspects/Positions: 50 Years of Art in Central Europe 1949–1999* (Vienna, 1999–2000), a landmark exhibition in the history of Eastern and Central European contemporary art, and curated the section on Bosnia and Herzegovina for the exhibition *In the Gorges of the Balkans* (Kassel, 2003), which featured what would become one of the most distinguished feminist artworks from the region, Šejla Kamerić's *Bosnian Girl* (2003). From 2004 to 2007, she led the SCCA's multidisciplinary regional project, "De/construction of the Monument," which challenged nationalist paradigms of erasure and destruction in the post-Yugoslav region. Blažević served as an expert for *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* (Vienna, 2009), and in 2012, she curated the exhibition *Dowry*, which highlighted feminist artists from Sarajevo, Belgrade, Ljubljana, and Zagreb.

¹ The term "New Artistic Practices" was used broadly in reference to the burgeoning conceptual and performance art practices in Yugoslavia at the time. There are minor variations in the translation and use of the term, e.g., "New Art Practice." See, for example, Marijan Susovski's 1978 exhibition, *Nova umjetnička praksa 1966–1978* (New Art Practice in Yugoslavia 1966–1978) at the Gallery of Contemporary Art Zagreb.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • “Idealna žena u ‘ženskoj’ štampi” [The Ideal Woman in “Women’s” Press], *Književne novine* 32, no. 601 (March 29, 1980), 29; “Who Is That Singing over There? Art in Yugoslavia and after 1949–1989,” in *Aspects/Positions: 50 Years of Art on Central Europe 1949–1999*, curated by Lóránd Hegyi, in collaboration with Dunja Blažević, Bojana Pejić et al. (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 1999), 92–93; “Bosnia,” in *In the Gorges of Balkan: A Report*, curated by René Block (Kassel: Kunsthalle Fridericianum, 2003), 14–15; “Art as a Form of Ownership Awareness” and “SKC and New Cultural Practices,” in *SKC in ŠKUC: The Case of Students’ Cultural Centre in 1970s: SKC and Political Practices of Art*, edited by Prelom kolektiv (Ljubljana: ŠKUC Gallery, 2008), 7; 81–84.

Jasmina Tumbas

CONTEXT

Vesna Kesić’s 1982 interview with Dunja Blažević in the magazine *Start* represents an important moment of reflection on the questions of art and politics in the socialist Yugoslav context of the 1970s, seen through the lenses of two powerful feminists operating in the sphere of Yugoslav culture. Highlighting Blažević’s extraordinary role in shaping the social and political significance of the New Artistic Practices during the 1970s in socialist Yugoslavia, which flourished under her leadership at the SKC, Kesić categorizes the art historian, critic, and curator as an “activist” of the avant-garde. Such a description necessarily positions Blažević as someone operating against the mainstream; fittingly so, as she—along with a generation of artists and art historians involved in conceptual, performance, and new media art in Belgrade at the time—transformed the SKC into a vibrant and transgressive space for experimentation in the arts. The SKC itself was the result of the 1968 student protests, after which the SKC and other student cultural centers in Yugoslavia were founded by the socialist government to offer spaces for this young generation for critical exchanges.² According to Blažević, it was “the first time for a public space to function as some sort of a laboratory,” which allowed for innovative intellectual and artistic exchanges within the professional context of an art institution dedicated to providing a site for making new art, not just exhibiting it.³ In the interview at hand, Blažević defines her work with the SKC as “applied criticism,” which meant prioritizing collaborations, support of others, and focusing on the intensity of experimental art rather than privileging written criticism or the production of an archive of contemporary art. This emphasis on collaborative and experimental approaches, coupled with socialist Yugoslavia’s lack of draconian travel restrictions, allowed the SKC to become one of the most important historical spaces in the history of performance, conceptual, and new media art practices in Eastern Europe.

2 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 90.

3 Blažević, “SKC and New Cultural Practices,” 81.

Especially renowned for its *April Meetings*, where body-centered performance works, video art, and experimentations in new media attracted Yugoslav and international artists alike, the SKC also featured some of the leading names in women's performance art from the 1970s: French artist Gina Pane, who at the first *April Meeting* in 1972 performed *LIFE-DEATH-DREAM*; Novi Sad-based Yugoslav artist and poet Katalin Ladik, who delivered extraordinary performances at the SKC centered on experimentations with her own body, movement, poetry, and sound; Belgrade-based Yugoslav artist Marina Abramović, whose 1974 *Rhythm 5* performance would become one of the most iconic works in the history of performance art; as well as artists who have since become canonical figures in feminist art, such as Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta,⁴ who performed at the SKC gallery in 1976, and Zagreb-based Yugoslav artist Sanja Iveković, whose commitment to feminist critique and methodologies in socialist Yugoslavia was singular.⁵

At the fourth *April Meeting* in 1975, the SKC held a "Women in Art" discussion that included, among others, Polish performance artist Natalia LL,⁶ German performance and video artist Ulrike Rosenbach, and local art historians and curators Biljana Tomić, Jasna Tijardović, and Blažević.⁷ Blažević's final exhibition as the director of the visual arts program at the SKC Gallery was *Oktobar '75*, a politicized moment for the SKC that represented this young generation's alternative to the art showcased at the state-organized annual Oktobar Salon.⁸ It included the making of the film *Cinema Notes* with British-German director Lutz Becker, which manifested "in a partisan way," Blažević has noted, using an "almost illegally" obtained film role and editing during the night at TV Belgrade.⁹ *Oktobar '75* is but one example of the "strong bond" of the SKC art community, which shared an "openness to artistic experiment of that time and the belief in the possibility of a better and more progressive society,"¹⁰ a political investment powerfully laid bare in statements made by Blažević, Pejić, Tijardović, and

4 Tijardović-Popović, "Performance Art in Belgrade in the 70s," 30–31.

5 For a discussion of feminist performance politics at the SKC and in the broadest context of socialist Yugoslavia, see Tumbas, "I Am Jugoslovenka!"

6 Editor's note: For the Polish art scene and feminism, in this volume see the entry about Maria Pinińska-Bereś.

7 Vuković, "The Feminist Dowry of Dunja Blažević." See also, Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 88–89; Tumbas, "I Am Jugoslovenka," 48–49; and Vesić, "The Conference Comrade Woman."

8 For a more detailed account of *Oktobar '75*, see Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects*, 218–23; and the catalogue for Prelom kolektiv and ŠKUC Gallery's exhibition, *SKC in ŠKUC: The Case of Students' Cultural Centre in 1970s*.

9 Lutz Becker screened his film *Art in Revolution* at the SKC in 1973, which was formative for the SKC group of artists, curators, and intellectuals. Two years later, Becker returned to the SKC and made a film with the help of Blažević and Dragomir Zupanc. See Lutz Becker (producer/director), *Kino Beleske* [Film Notes], 16mm, b&w, 45 mins, with Zoran Popović (assistant), Dragomir Zupanc and Dunja Blažević (project leaders). The following people participated: Dunja Blažević, Dragomir Zupanc, Dragica Vukadinović, Jasna Tijardović, Raša Todosijević, Biljana Tomić, Ješa Denegri, Goran Đorđević, Marina Abramović, Slavko Timotijević, Bojana Pejić, Neša Paripović, Goran Trbuljak, and Zoran Popović. A copy of this film can be viewed at the SKC archive in Belgrade. See also Blažević, "SKC and New Cultural Practices," 83, 98.

10 Blažević, "SKC and New Cultural Practices," 82.

Dragica Vukadinović (among others) in the film.¹¹ Most importantly for the history of feminism and women's rights in East Central Europe, as the director of the SKC, Blažević also co-organized the first international feminist conference in the "East," "Drug-ca žena. Žensko pitanje – novi pristup?" (Comrade-ess Woman. The Women's Question: A New Approach?), a groundbreaking gathering in 1978 that included local and international feminists.¹² The extensive feminist program of "Drug-ca žena" also showcased the feminist work of Yugoslav photographer Goranka Matić.

Kesić's interview with Blažević was published in the magazine *Start*, which Zsófia Lóránd has described as a "curious mixture of tabloid-like joke strips, pornographic images of women," and "feminist writings" that were paired with "exceptionally high quality journalism" habitually critical of the Yugoslav regime.¹³ *Start* employed and featured texts by some of the most well-known feminists of Yugoslavia, such as Slavenka Drakulić, Kesić, Pejić, and Žarana Papić, and included content related to art and culture.¹⁴ Yugoslav feminism as such was deeply embedded in the complicated history of women's emancipation in Yugoslavia.¹⁵ Characterized by a push for gender equality that was enabled and simultaneously hindered by the patriarchal socialist paradigms of the Yugoslav state, Blažević points toward the freedom she and her colleagues enjoyed at the SKC, which was overshadowed by what she calls the "aggressive patriarchal mentality and sexist public outburst" of the Yugoslav cultural milieu, where the question of gender equality for women was "constantly pushed to the margins." Attendant issues, she stresses here, included the fact that women would have to work five times as hard as their male colleagues to achieve recognition. To be sure, two years after this interview, Blažević's hard work made history again, this time in the sphere of video and TV art, transforming socialist Yugoslavia's TV programming into a space for experimental art and critical discussion. Her project *TV Gallery* would last until the onset of the Yugoslav wars (1984–1991). Overall, this interview offers but a glimpse into the underlying misogyny operative in all segments of Yugoslav society, while it also gives unique insight into the transformative power of art and culture under the visionary leadership of women like Blažević during Yugoslav socialism.

11 The film was lost for decades, not because of censorship but because documenting and preserving history was not at the forefront of this generation's priorities. *Cinema Notes* was rediscovered by Dragica Vukadinović in the 2000s. Blažević, "SKC and New Cultural Practices," 83. For individual statements made by Blažević, Pejić, Tijardović, and Vukadinović, see Blažević, "SKC and New Cultural Practices," 7, 11, 19, 25.

12 The most detailed discussion of the conference can be found in Bonfiglioli, "Belgrade, 1978. Remembering the Conference 'Drugarica Žena. Žensko pitanje – novi pristup?'" See also Vesić, "The Conference Comrade Woman," and Vuković, "The Feminist Dowry of Dunja Blažević."

13 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 148. Editor's note: In this volume, further reflections on *Start* in these entries: Slavenka Drakulić, Vesna Kesić, Vera Veskovik-Vangeli.

14 Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, 148.

15 For a discussion on the paradoxical conditions of feminist resistance under Yugoslav socialism, see Tumbas, "I Am Jugoslovenka!" For a detailed account of inequalities faced by the emerging new Yugoslav feminist movements in art and literature, see Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*.

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Jasmina Tumbas

* * *

Dunja Blažević

The Activist of the Avant-Garde

Interviewed by Vesna Kesić

Since the 1970s, Dunja Blažević went with the flow of avant-garde currents in art, and at the same time showed a remarkable level of activist optimism and courage to oppose established understandings. The early ambition to change existing practices and shake things up has not left her since.

On the wall of Dunja's living room there is a standard conceptual work: a large white sign that reads "Do you like your job?" In lowercase letters, Dunja's eleven-year-old son gave a reply: "No!" But this is just one facet of the atmosphere in the home; Dunja would likely never answer the question categorically, neither in the affirmative, and definitely not in the negative, even though I believe that she asks herself this question quite often.

The wider public met Dunja Blažević not long ago on the Belgrade television show *Friday Culture*, where she hosts and edits visual art segments. She tries to bring leaders of the latest currents in the visual arts in front of the camera, which can already be seen despite a relatively short time on the job, but that kind of agility in following trends is the logical result of her life's philosophy, expressed with the slogan on the wall of her living room, and experience from the early 1970s, when in Dunja's immediate surroundings, and with her lively collaboration, a new art movement began to develop, a new art practice, later dubbed conceptualism. During that time, Dunja was a curator at the gallery of the Belgrade Student Cultural Center.

"I have difficulty talking about myself when asked, because I always talk about things that I do and about other people. I never think of myself in that way, and now all of a sudden I feel like I have nothing to say," Dunja says, exaggerating a bit at the beginning of our conversation.

When there is some new stirring and unrest in society, or more concretely in art, the materialized traces behind oneself can be reduced to two parties: artists themselves and their critics and theorists. But there is always a third as well, those who could be called "grey eminences," or to whom the label "artist's companion" could be applied, which [Achille] Bonito Oliva, ideologue of the newest "invention" in art, the trans-avant-garde, came up with quite cleverly. Their contribution is neither artistic nor critical, but they are catalysts of all of those processes. Dunja is precisely that kind of person: dynamic, interested, informed. People gather around her and very rarely are indifferent, they are either decisively for or categorically against her; Dunja Blažević is an activist in the best sense of that compromised notion.

She graduated with a degree in the history of art—that "unpopular profession," as she says—and with a group of people from her generation of the 1970s she took over the Student Cultural Center ... and the work program was, Dunja says, "to become a different cultural institution from those existing, leading a clear and differentiated cultural politics." "We did everything on our own, we were responsible for ourselves, no one looked over our shoulders, which is why we identified so strongly with the institution. The quality of work resulted from this relationship. We were all young, for all of us it was our first job, today something like this would be almost impossible. Long, all-encompassing discussions were the basis of defining all programs that took place there. Luckily, the whole group was exceptionally informed about what was happening in the world and had their own ideas about what needed to be done."

Dunja's first "function" was on the editorial board at the Student Cultural Center's gallery, and the creation of the gallery in 1971 coincided with the emergence of new processes in art among us, the so-called new art practices. Young and middle-aged people gathered around the gallery, art historians, critics (Ješa Denegri, Biljana Tomić, Petar Ignjatović), artists (Marina Abramović, Radomir Damjanović, Neša Paripović, Raša Todosijević, Urkom Gergelj, Zoran Popović, Goran Đorđević), all of whom would later be known as the first generation of Belgrade conceptualists.

[...]

Dunja called her work during that time "applied criticism." "It was a lively process, a time of intensive interaction, investments in others and learning from others, a search for common ground, so that the writing of texts, leaving some traces, was not considered important."

At one exhibit, critics and art historians had to present their texts. Dunja presented and signed a text from a book by Matko Meštrović, *From the Individual to the General*,¹⁶ a book that she considers remarkably important to the formation of her identity: “I fought with that book a lot in the beginning, and every few years I would go back to it and with its help would believe in myself until in the end I did not entirely agree with it.” Her colleagues and collaborators didn’t like the conceptual work and didn’t want to publish it in the catalogue. In response, Dunja asked that a blank page with her signature and a reference to the book be included in the catalogue.

Dunja Blažević’s encounters with art actually began long before her active engagement in art currents. As a little girl, she lived in Zagreb, on I. G. Kovačić Street, where Krsto Hegedušić’s workshop was.¹⁷ His daughter was Dunja’s friend from childhood, and they hung out there together. Besides that, “In Zagreb’s High School No. 5, I had an amazing professor of art history, the late Zagorka Mihelčić Barbieri, a woman who knew how to get people going.” When Dunja’s father, Jakov took on a new League position in Belgrade in 1962, Dunja went with her parents, but when her father’s term ended, she stayed in Belgrade, completed her studies there, and went in search of her own space and identity.

“I was lucky,” Dunja says, “that I broke away from my parents relatively early and that I came to Belgrade during that sensitive time in my life. Had I stayed in Zagreb and tried to carve out a space for myself there, it would have been much harder, especially because of my father. There are simply more of those kinds of people here, but my father is still a different person here than in Zagreb. It’s important that during that time I stayed alone and didn’t feel as much pressure as I would in that constellation that naturally exists in family and social relationships.”

I asked Dunja, as it seems to me that we have hit on one of those domestic taboo subjects, how she experienced that parental-social relationship, to what extent was it an advantage and to what extent a handicap?

“When you are going through a time of finding and affirming yourself as a person and in a social context, in your generation and profession, then it is most difficult ... It’s terrible when they tie you to anyone, father, mother, husband, and you have the need to prove yourself and who you are. That crisis of identity that a person has to go through can have so many different consequences; it can be stimulating, but also an effort to distance yourself in some way and show a different side of yourself than the one with which people associate you, and that can have catastrophic consequences that are not so rare in our surroundings.

16 Editor’s note: Matko Meštrović, *Od pojedinačnog općem* [From the Individual to the General] (Zagreb: Mladost, 1967).

17 Editor’s note: Krsto Hegedušić (1901–1975) was a Croatian painter, illustrator, and theatre designer.

"I still think that I am a strong enough personality, so I didn't take it too seriously or tragically when people, well-intentioned or not, would associate me with my father. Of course, maybe it is easier for me to say that today than it was to pull it off at the time. Those beginnings were still pretty hard, at some points maybe even dramatic... But, on the other hand, that background was probably an advantage to a certain extent, and not just a handicap. Even from childhood, at the beginning, I was definitely advantaged in relation to the majority of my peers and friends who didn't have the opportunities that my family offered; books, information, people, events at my disposal... But then the question comes up: If I was privileged, did I do enough in comparison to people who didn't have the same opportunities and who, that's to say, made more of a mark? But that's something I can't gauge. All of a sudden you realize that you've adopted a certain kind of asceticism, and you yourself aren't even sure where it comes from exactly. On the other hand, you have an awful need to picture yourself as a *self-made person*; you try so hard with people and your surroundings, sometimes even more than you need to. I notice that people in similar situations end up with even bigger traumas, a resistance that in that time of adolescence and puberty can take on self-destructive forms..."

In 1976, Petar Ignjatović, the Student Cultural Center's first director, left, and Dunja was selected to serve as its new head. "With great faith from all the others," she says, "because for me personally all of the obligations and duties that go with the work weren't for me. Despite the everyday issues, getting along and not getting along, different temperaments, etc. I think that the collective functioned and today it functions amazingly because people came to their positions through democratic debate."

Until then, the Student Cultural Center had already reached a high professional level and earned a reputation. It became possible to turn program interests into a mass media phenomenon. At the Student Cultural Center, they began holding regular rock tributes and concerts, all kinds of epiphenomena of rock, and Dunja's program politics was that the official and counter-culture be put on the same level and given equal treatment. At the tributes, they began to have huge gatherings on big topics, among which some like the "Spanish Sundays" gained an international meaning, as this was the first emergence of representatives of the left and Spanish democratic powers after Franco's death. At the "Drug-ca žena" (Comrade-ess Woman) gathering held in 1978, many women from Yugoslavia and abroad came together with their own theoretical or practical work at the heart of the women's movements. "It's impossible to separate that gathering from its context," Dunja says. "Since we did the Spanish event and followed other progressive movements, that also came into our focus." But the response the event garnered wasn't written about so kindly in the papers. After that event, Dunja had a lot of "problems," and her interpretation is as follows: "It was all a function of something

else. They wanted to discredit stuff in some way and make it politically suspicious so all kinds of things were written.”

“My personal motivation was not purely professional,” Dunja says, when she talks about organizing the “Drug-ca žena” gathering, “the same way it wasn’t when I was fully engaged in new art and a new art practice that, like the women’s question, was constantly in question, constantly pushed to the margin, and which was never fully verified as an important arts phenomenon, in the same way the women’s question was not verified as an important social problem, but instead treated as a cliché. So-called organized forces publicly deal with it during periods of election fever. When someone reacts to an aggressive patriarchal mentality and sexist public outbursts, then those forces are silent and label those who deal with the outbursts. We still haven’t gotten used to people’s indirect and self-active behaviors. If you want to survive as a woman, you have to put in five times as much effort as a man.”

Dunja left the Student Cultural Center after nine years. A gentleman’s agreement of the first team from 1970 held that no one was to stay longer than two mandates, and almost everyone adhered to it. “If you begin to feel like you’re not part of the generation that is gathering there, even if you understand them well, it’s time to leave. Of course, under our conditions it isn’t easy to leave since we have nowhere to go, which is why lots of people stay in that extended adolescence. Despite my age and gray hairs, today I’m considered some kind of young woman. The Student Cultural Center, of course, remains my first and greatest love, all of the experience I gained there are very important and I’ll try not to forget them.”

Translated by Suzana Vuljevic

Ágnes Daróczi

Making Gypsiness Bearable

AUTHOR Ágnes Daróczi

TITLE “Vállalhatóvá tenni a cigányságot” [Making Gypsiness Bearable]

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LANGUAGE Hungarian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ágnes Daróczi (b. 1954, Berettyóújfalu, Hungary) was raised in Bedő (at that time, a Romanian minority village close to the Romanian border), the oldest child in an extended Romani family with four siblings. Bedő, her village, was mainly inhabited by Romanians and a few Romani families, including the extended Daróczi family. She went to the prestigious high school linked to the Lajos Kossuth University in Debrecen (1969–1973), where she discovered the poems of Károly Bari (b. 1952, Bükkaranyos, Hungary). He was one of the youngest and most talented Romani poets and writers in the 1970s. Daróczi recited several poems by Károly Bari at various educational and cultural fora. In 1971, she met Bari at the Sárospatak Students’ Days, where she was also the winner of the recitation contest. At around the same time, she was exposed to Romani poetry and translations of József Choli-Daróczi (1939, Bedő–2018, Budapest) who was part of her extended family. In 1972, as a secondary school pupil, she received massive public recognition via a talent show (*Ki mit tud?* / “Who’s Good at What?”) for reciting a poem in both the Hungarian and Romani languages by Károly Bari. Her public recitation of poems by Bari and Choli-Daróczi were the most subversive acts of political aesthetics to emancipate the Roma. She furthered the discourse on Romani identity and political consciousness in an era when official discourse conceptualized Roma merely as a “social problem.” In 1972, at a talent show, Daróczi met her future husband János Bársony (b. 1951, Budapest), who led the musical ensemble Monszun (1967–1986). Later, she became a member of this group as well. Bársony had an important intellectual influence on her and provided constant support for her political activism. In 1973, Daróczi was admitted to the Faculty of Humanities at the Eötvös Lóránd University in Budapest to study literature, cultural management, and then journalism. In 1978, she was the first Romani female public figure to have a university degree. During her university studies (1973–78), she visited, as part of the Monszun ensemble, workers’ hostels that were primarily for Roma and non-Roma menial workers from the most disadvantaged regions of Hungary. They presented and collected Gypsy folk music, poems, and stories. Daróczi and Bársony established a Romani folk music

band, Romano Glaso, in 1976, and another, Kalyi Jag, in 1978. Both involved Romani workers from the hostels. As Daróczi explained, a breakthrough was made when the Hungarian elite saw oppressed Romani culture on the stage.

In 1978 she graduated from university and started to work at the Hungarian Institute for Ethnographic Culture (Népművelési Intézet) as a research fellow at the invitation of the sociologist Iván Vitányi (1925–2021), director of the institute. In 1979, this institutional framework provided her with the opportunity to organize the First National Exhibition of Self-Taught Artists, which Daróczi then reorganized and reconceptualized in 1989 and 2000.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Daróczi belonged to a tiny group of Romani intellectuals, including Károly Bari and Jenő Zsigó (b. 1952), who were considered “radicals” by the state. In 1989, Daróczi was one of the founders of Phralipe Independent Gypsy Organization, which aimed to end the party-state’s Gypsy policy and create democratic representation for Roma communities in Hungary. In the same year she joined the Anti-Ghetto Committee led by Aladár Horváth (b. 1964) alongside other Roma and non-Roma intellectuals to challenge the plan for a segregated housing project, which aimed to remove Roma families from inner-city Miskolc.

After 1989, Daróczi played an important role at the national and transnational level. From 1992 until 2000 she was the founding editor of the Roma program *Patrin*¹ on Hungarian State Television. She also founded the Romedia Foundation, the Romano Instituto, and occupied important organizations transnationally, for example as founder and vice-president of the European Roma Travelers Forum, 2004–2016. She started pioneering research work with her husband János Bársony relating to the genocide of the Roma during the Holocaust. Ágnes Daróczi’s intellectual and political efforts contributed to shifts in the historical and cultural canon of the Roma.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • with János Bársony, *Pharrajimos – cigányok sorsa a Holocaust idején* [The Fate of the Gypsies During the Holocaust] (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2004); with János Bársony, *Vrana Mami mesél* [Grandma Vrana Tells Stories] (Budapest: Sulinova, 2005); with János Bársony, *Kali Trash-Pharrajimos-Samudaripen: fekete félelem, szétvágatás, legyilkolás: a romák sorsa a holocaust idején Magyarországon II.* [Kali Trash-Pharrajimos-Samudaripen: Black Fears, Extinction, and Extermination: The Fate of Roma During the Holocaust, Part II] (Budapest: Cigányságkutató Intézet-Romani Instituto, 2015); Miklós Jancsó, dir. *Megöltétek ártatlan családom* [You Killed my Innocent Family], documentary film, 1994; Miklós Jancsó, dir. *Temetetlen holtak* [Unburied Dead], documentary film, 1995; *Hosszú út áll előttem. Tények és Tanúk sorozat* [A Long Way Ahead of Me. Facts and Witnesses Series], ed. Angéla Kóczé (Budapest: Magvető, 2023).

Angéla Kóczé

¹ *Patrin* has multiple meanings: it is a symbol or signpost left for later travelers in Romani culture, but it also generally means a leaf, a page, a sign, a symbol or a clue.

CONTEXT

Ágnes Daróczi's contribution to scholarly and wider social, cultural, and political life has been insufficiently recognized. Her assertive presence as a Romani woman and her claim for rights and equality of Romani women, men, and children have been blatantly ignored by the representatives of the women's movement.

Since the last decade of state socialism, her great speaking abilities and personal charisma, as well as her rebellious acts, revolutionized the tiny group of Romani intellectuals in Hungary. Daróczi was a key activist in a male-dominated group of Romani intellectuals perceived by the socialist state as "radicals." The state took all possible steps to eliminate their political resistance.² This tiny group of Romani intellectuals dared to critically evaluate state policies on Roma and challenge their oppressive and discriminatory practices. The opinion piece presented here was written by Daróczi for the forum section of *Jel-Kép*, a quarterly scholarly journal on communication and media. Around that time, there was a significant shift in the political claims made by Romani intellectuals towards cultural recognition and representation. Daróczi, and other Romani intellectuals who had been stigmatized as "radicals" (Károly Bari, Jenő Zsigó, and in the late 1980s, Aladár Horváth) articulated a critical framing of ethnicity/ethnic identity in order to challenge the definition of "Gypsy" as either a primordial or socially "disadvantaged," "backward," "uncivilized" population. They unflinchingly claimed the political relevance of the emancipation and liberation of Romani identities, of oppressed Romani gaining political consciousness and dignity.

The forum in *Jel-Kép* consisted of three articles (one of them by Daróczi) on the possibility of publishing a "Gypsy journal" (*cigánylap*). This discussion reflected on important projected changes in the state socialist policy towards Roma. In 1984, the "Gypsy problem" had been assigned to the Patriotic Popular Front (Hazafias Népfront), which presented a new policy emphasizing cultural autonomy and self-representation. The Agitation and Propaganda Committee (Agitációs és Propaganda Bizottság) met on October 2, 1984, confirmed this political shift, and officially asked the Patriotic Popular Front, in cooperation with the Office of the Council of Ministers, to prepare a recommendation for improving Roma affairs and preserve/cultivate their cultural heritage. The Committee also requested to investigate the basis for a possible cultural organization/union that would promote social integration (*társadalmi beilleszkedés*) and explore the need for one journal for the "Gypsies."³

Daróczi aligned herself with the two other authors in the Forum in *Jel-kép*, who also supported the launch of a bilingual (Romani and Hungarian) journal. One of

2 Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 103.

3 Hajnáczy, "Egyértelmű, hogy a cigányok nem tekinthetők nemzetiségnek": cigánypolitika dokumentumban, 1956–1989, 315.

them was Mrs. Vera Kozák (in Hungarian, she published under her full married name, Kozák Istvánné), the Secretary of the Gypsy Coordination Committee, who had been at the meeting on October 2, 1984. In Daróczi's recollection, unlike other political functionaries in the Committee, Kozák was someone who helped and supported the process of Roma emancipation.⁴ The forum provided a scholarly (semi-independent) platform to deliberate the necessity of launching a "Gypsy journal" as discussed in that meeting. In her piece, "Is There a Need For a Gypsy Journal?" Kozák argued that numerous studies from various perspectives already dealt with the integration of "Gypsies," however they themselves seldom had the opportunity to shape and forge discussions about them: "Debates always take place somewhere above, without them."⁵ The third author, Gábor Havas, was a sociologist who belonged to the research group led by István Kemény that in 1971 showed, via empirical research, that the Roma in Hungary were living in deteriorating conditions and were in their majority excluded from every area of life. In the 1970s, Kemény was "silenced" by the party-state. Havas titled his piece with the rhetorical question "Do We Need the Question Mark?"⁶ He avoided going into the perennial definitional debate on whether the Roma are a national minority or social issue, arguing instead for collective recognition and rights. He maintained that a bilingual journal would be a platform for the Roma to articulate their interests and a catalyst for shaping policies that relate to the Roma. Both Kozák and Havas supported Roma self-determination via the Romani language as well as public platforms, such as the journal.

The sequence of articles showcases different approaches to the Roma. The first was written by a representative of the party-state, the second by a scholar, and the last by Daróczi as a Romani activist. She began with a rhetorical question "... if a few Gypsy, or non-Gypsy people nod or protest now, does this give us a Gypsy magazine?!"⁷ Any analysis of her text would be incomplete without understanding the symbolism of a bilingual Romani magazine and its legacy of cultural and political emancipation. In this regard, Daróczi followed in the footsteps of Mária László (1909–1989), the first Romani woman who received a mandate from the socialist state to establish and lead the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association (HGCA, Magyar Cigányok Művelődési Szövetsége) and take the highest office. Although her leadership as Secretary of the HGCA was short-lived (1957–1958), László became a very ardent and effective leader, providing political, economic, and administrative support to Roma.⁸ She turned the HGCA into an organization that represented Roma minority rights and culture and ceaselessly worked for official recognition. She believed that the "elevation"

4 Daróczi, *Hosszú út áll előttem*, 96.

5 Kozák, "Kell-e cigánylap," 73.

6 Havas, "Kell-e a kérdőjel," 74.

7 Daróczi, "Vállalhatóvá tenni a cigányságot," 75.

8 Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 140.

of Romani minority culture, including language, music, literature, and dance, was the best way to boost solidarity in society and emancipate Roma. Mária László was also part of women's history as she paved the way for broader Romani emancipation, and from the late 1970s onwards remained a source of inspiration for several Romani intellectuals and feminists who challenged the politics of state socialism. Her political mission was revived by Daróczi and highlighted in her article.

Another important legacy for this discussion is the *Rom Som* bilingual Romani Journal for the Gypsy Club, edited by József Choli-Daróczi and his disciples.⁹ The first volume was published in 1975, a period of ambiguous policies, as the party-state tried to strike a delicate balance between prohibiting and tolerating, promising, and quickly limiting, the possibility of cultural emancipation.¹⁰ The *Rom Som* journal was conceived as an apolitical monthly program guide for the Gypsy Club in Budapest. However, under the guise of a benign program magazine, Romani intellectuals used it as a public forum to publish pieces in the Romani language. This subversive undertaking was not tolerated by the socialist state, who consequently banned it in 1978.

Daróczi is an influential cosmopolitan Romani intellectual in Hungary and beyond. She has been involved in international Romani politics since the early 1970s. Her first international intervention was at the Third World Romani Congress in Göttingen, Germany Federal Republic, in 1981, where she was one of the very few Romani women out of 300 delegates from twenty-two countries. With this international knowledge and background, she contributed to some remarkable ideas and programs that relate to the cultural and political emancipation of Roma.

Daróczi has had an indisputable influence on Romani women's activisms and feminisms. She is one of the strong, radical—in the sense of uncompromising when it comes to her goals—and most straightforward Romani female activists in Hungary and beyond, who never fails to challenge injustices and engage in controversies to fight for the emancipation of Romani women, men, and children.

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Angéla Kóczé

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Ágnes Daróczy Making Gypsiness Bearable

My answer to the question "Do we need a Gypsy magazine?" is a definite yes. But let me ask a question, too: If a few Gypsy or non-Gypsy people nod or protest now, does this give us a Gypsy magazine?! Or does it make sense to let the genie out of the bottle by organizing a public debate, knowing that the question has been on the agenda in various fora for the past ten years as a concrete proposal: Let us have a Gypsy magazine!

But, well, we still do not have one.

Of course, the exact undertaking of such a magazine—as well as its target audience and themes—are still open questions. Anyway, no matter whether the magazine talks to Gypsy people by reflecting their social expectations, or is about Gypsy people, presenting good and bad examples of mobility, or is a platform for (scientific or not-so-scientific) writings that reflect upon Gypsy people, or a combination of these three—I do feel we need a Gypsy magazine.

Liberation after the Second World War undeniably brought about the possibility for Gypsy people to live a dignified life, too. However, equal rights do not mean equal opportunities. Looking at the Gypsy population in Hungary from the two aspects of social life—that is, culture and economy—I have the strong feeling that, without equal opportunities, social inequality is simply reproduced.

One of the components of the so-called "Gypsy problem" is made up of economic and social problems. A few data in order to have a clearer picture: the

employment rate of Gypsy men hardly (with 3 to 5 percent) deviates from the national average; when we look at Gypsy women, the situation is worse (approximately 50 percent), but this is justified by them having more children, and also the fact that there are less day care institutions, kindergartens, or job opportunities in villages (where 78 percent of Gypsy people live, as opposed to 55 percent of the non-Gypsy population). However, if we take a look at the division of labor, we find that approximately 2–3 percent of Gypsy men working are intellectuals, 13–15 are skilled workers, and 82–85 percent are unskilled. It seems that a major task for the future is to bring along changes regarding this startling disproportion in order for the Gypsy population to take part in the hierarchy of social work-share in accordance with its share of the population.

The other aspect of social existence is culture. To me, the “cultural difference” (as put by Mrs Dr Kozák [in the essay before Daróczy’s in the same journal issue]) of Hungarian Gypsies, besides having a different mother tongue (in Hungary, 80–100,000 Gypsies speak Gypsy and 25–30,000 speak Romanian as their mother tongue), also implies the presence of certain “underprivileged” subcultures separated from the majority. I could talk of several examples when young people who finish primary school with good grades, or are even skilled workers, or finish a secondary school, stay to work as skilled workers in brigades consisting of villagers and acquaintances since they cannot handle the difficulties of leaving their community and being excluded. The reason behind this is not only the fear of prejudice, but also communication in its entirety, or how we build relationships. In situations like these, the integration of whole groups—engendering upward social mobility for whole communities—could be a solution. But at least the conditions of group integration and acceptance should be secured. That is, creating the possibility of integration is a precondition—a precondition of assimilation.

Besides “cultural difference,” several segments of the Gypsy population show definite cultural backwardness. There are still many who are illiterate: the last study, conducted in 1971, showed that 39 percent of the approximately 160,000 Gypsy adults were illiterate or semi-illiterate. At present, only approximately 60 percent of Gypsy youth finish primary school by the age of 16. I do not think we need to speak further about the impact of cultural conditions on people’s economic circumstances.

But you may ask: How is this related to the question of creating a Gypsy magazine?

Of course, I do not believe that a magazine can bring about basic changes in the level of people’s education. But I do think that it can contribute to the clarification of one’s relationship to themselves. And someone with a positive identification acts more self-confidently and assertively, may have more achievements, and face less failure and disappointment. They can socialize the tensions caused

by mobility, and thus fewer of them take the path toward alcoholism, criminality, and maladjustment. (I am referring here to the results of the study conducted by the Faculty of Law: 40 percent of Gypsy people convicted of committing a violent crime were at least partly motivated by the indignation caused by offenses, be they real or imagined, because of their Gypsy identity.)

These all show that the meaning of the word 'Gypsy' must change and be purified from pejorative connotations so that Gypsy identity depends on someone's choice and not on external constraints. We need a tolerant public consciousness, free from harmful negative conditioning, so that everyone can decide whether they want to be Gypsy or not. One's origins cannot be determining factors. Language cannot define community anymore: as a survey conducted in 1971 shows, 21 percent of the Gypsy population speaks Gypsy and 8 percent speaks Romanian, thus it would be most adequate to consider it as the assumption of identity. But for this, we need to make being Gypsy bearable!

All of this means that a Gypsy magazine would face many difficult tasks, as it should undoubtedly contribute to this process. The magazine should also be bilingual: certain pages should be in both Hungarian and Gypsy or Hungarian and Romanian.

Besides the positive experience of being recognized, the publicity of the magazine could also spread values brought from home, opposing these to expected values, and creating a space for the former among the latter. Thus, the mistake frequently made at school—that is, educating against what is taught at home—could be avoided.

The Gypsy magazine could also present the efforts of Gypsy people to take the path of betterment, not only for themselves, but for their wider community and environment, too. This is proven by the one-hundred-and-fifty Gypsy communities that have formed cultural clubs and bands countrywide.

A Gypsy magazine would inform people about the troubles in villages and urban areas, about the joys of family, and, if necessary, could ask for social help and attention—not charity, but solidarity and sympathy. It would help take an objective stance on the so-called Gypsy problem without idealizing.

I could also talk about the astonishment with which simple, unschooled people listen to bilingual (Gypsy and Hungarian) poems. I could tell you how popular the news items or reports about them are. Since Gypsy folklore is still based on oral traditions, these stories are almost immediately transformed into legends. The illiterate ask others to read out what is printed; and the Gypsy topics (even if they are merely rumors) are discussed at family gatherings.

I could say that what they perceive as pertaining to them travels fast, getting into the innermost parts of the country very quickly.

But it is more important to talk about the remarkable examples of neighbouring friendly countries. Chronology requires that we mention the Soviet Union

first, where the first Gypsy magazine in the world (entitled *Romani Zorya* [Romani Dawn]) was published. The theatrical group called Romen, which was established in Moscow, is also world- famous. In Bulgaria, there is a radio show on Wednesdays and also a regular television program that deals with Gypsy people. In Yugoslavia, besides radio and television program, there is a magazine called *Krlo e Romengo / Glas Roma* [The Voice of the Roma].

We hope that Hungary will be next in line.

Translated by Beáta Sándor

Teuta Arifi

Police and Cooking Recipes. Yugoslav Feminism's Precarious Solidarity with Kosovo

AUTHOR Teuta Arifi

TITLE “Polici dhe recetat e gjellerave: Tubimi i fundit i feministeve të Jugosllavisë i mbajtur në Lubjanë u përpoq të japë disa përgjigje, në mesin e të cilave edhe atë për Kosovën” [Police and Cooking Recipes: The Last Gathering of Yugoslav Feminists in Ljubljana Sought to Give Several Answers, Including those on Kosovo]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Koha* [Time] (Prishtina), May 29, 1991.

LANGUAGE Albanian

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Teuta Arifi (b. 1969, Tetovo/Tetovë) is best known as a politician, having served as Mayor of Tetovë between 2013 and 2021, the second largest city in the Republic of North Macedonia. She has held various political and government positions, including that of Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs in 2011. She was also North Macedonia's delegate to the Council of Europe and head of delegation to the NATO Assembly. She has served as Member of Parliament, first elected in 2002 as one of the first Albanian women in North Macedonia in this position. She received her doctorate in 1999 in philology from the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, where she defended her thesis on the representation of women in Albanian traditional law and Albanian literature until the twentieth century. She is now an assistant professor at the Department of Albanian Language and Literature at the same university, where she teaches courses on the history of Albanian literature.

Before her political and academic career, Arifi was already an influential public voice, writing mainly on topics related to Albanian women and gender in socialist Yugoslavia. Her initial public engagement appeared in the form of opinion pieces in the weekly *Koha* (Time), a leading Albanian-language print newspaper published in Kosovo.¹ The text translated in this volume is from Arifi's early writings, specifically from her own column, “Femra” (Women) in *Koha*, where she offered her take on current events from an analytical lens which foregrounded the gendered dimensions of contemporaneous socio-political debate. Her collection of poems, published in Albanian as *Gjeografia ime* (My Geography), also speaks to the breadth of concerns

¹ Kosova or Kosovë are the toponyms in Albanian and preferred by the authors. Kosovo is the one used in Serbian and frequently also in English. The text here combines place names in all three languages and reflects not only the complexity when choosing one variant over the other, but points to how the politics of language and political recognition determine naming practices.

she confronted with her feminist sensibility, affirming the political agency that permeated her writing. She sought to create an engaged public voice which accentuated the political in the quotidian—and did so in a political context where independent journalism was still met with suspicion. She writes:

we sat on the sofas in her room
talked about the politics of information
to her, journalism appeared as spying...
this is how I mixed in politics
like sugar in the red hibiscus tea.²

Moreover, in her poetry, through the personal, Arifi depicts the political within a space where women were under constant suspicion and their loyalties to political projects questioned. She was at qualms with nationalist biopolitics and masculinity, putting in writing what would become one of the major points of tension for the women's movement in Kosovo during the 1990s:

he is the man
who waits behind my door...
love is not his sphere of interest
because he is the man who loves the fatherland more than me
must be on good terms with the people
and I, to give birth to his people.³

Arifi entered public life at a time of political upheaval, when the Yugoslav state's oppression of Albanians in Kosovo became further entrenched, while Yugoslavia as a whole was falling apart. Whether through poetry, editorials, or by means of sociological interpretation, Arifi participated in shaping a new kind of public engagement and resistance taken up by women at the time. Arifi was also a member of the Macedonian delegation to the Fourth World Conference on Women's Rights in Beijing in 1995, and part of the delegation to the inaugural OSCE Human Dimensions conference in Vienna in 1993. Both events were considered ground-breaking for consolidating the articulation of the women's movement in Kosovo.⁴

² Arifi, *Gjeografia ime*, 25.

³ Ibid., 46.

⁴ The selected article speaks to Kosovo's context specifically. The ways in which these conversations and broader Yugoslav feminist activism related to the women's and/or feminist movement in North Macedonia is not explored.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • “Ženata vo albanskite običajni normi i vo albanskata kniževnost (usmena i pišuvana) od nejinite početoci do XX vek” [The Woman in Albanian Customary Norms and in Albanian Literature (Oral and Written) from its Beginnings to the 20th century], doctoral dissertation, St. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, 1999; *Gjeografia ime, poezi* [My Geography, Poetry] (Skopje: Shkupi, 1996); *Feminizmi ekzistencialist / Egzistencijalen feminizam* [Existentialist Feminism] (Skopje: Shkupi, 1997); with Mirjana Najčevska, and Nataša Gaber, *Učestvoto na ženite vo sovremenite trendovi vo Republika Makedonija* [The Participation of Women in the Contemporary Trends of Macedonian Society] (Skopje: Fondacija “Friedrich Ebert” Kancelarija Skopje, 1997); *Shtatë ditë magjike* [Seven Magic Days] (Skopje: Shkupi, 1998).

Linda Gusia and Nita Luci

CONTEXT

In March 1989, amendments to the final constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia abolished the status of Kosovo and Vojvodina as autonomous provinces and put them under the direct rule of Serbia. In Kosovo, protests and strikes in defense of the province’s autonomy were met with militant brutality. At least thirty-two protesters died due to police violence in the early weeks of the protests and many more were brutalized or imprisoned. Under the growing nationalist leadership in Serbia, a set of extraordinary policies—which in public discourse came to be known as the “Violent Measures”—legalized the segregation and disenfranchisement of the Albanian majority. “Violent Measures” is an all-encompassing term used to address the removal of Albanians from all state and public institutions. An entire body of legislation for Kosovo was repealed, leading to the expulsion of Albanians from all state institutions, particularly those serving public education, the police, the judiciary, health, and the media, as well as their massive dismissal from employment. By 1990, Kosovo was placed under martial law, which would last for a decade.⁵ Institutional fractures, on the one hand, and political demands for democracy, on the other, exposed the foundational structures of inequality and the power asymmetries within the federation. While growing distrust among Yugoslav political elites came to the fore, women’s groups, largely outside of the system and serving as an alternative and radical voice, sought to create a new grammar for feminist language and practice in a context of growing violence and systemic transformation.

5 The non-violent and civic disobedience movement was mobilized by the Albanian majority in Kosovo, which ended with the outbreak of full-scale war in 1998–99. Following the NATO intervention, a UN administration set up provisional institutions of self-government until Kosovo declared independence in 2008.

Feminists in Yugoslavia, especially since the 1970s, engaged in significant contestations of the aggrandized state-socialist narrative of women's emancipation.⁶ However, as Arifi recalls,⁷ the Yugoslav socialist state inscribed gender equality only partially. For example, domestic violence and marital rape were recognized as grounds for divorce only in Slovenia.⁸ Also, feminist articulations were disseminated from the centers of academia, mainly Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade, and only by a handful of women who were not attuned to intersecting oppressions which affected others. Albanian women were almost entirely absent from this picture, as was everybody else "south of Belgrade," Arifi often remarks.⁹ This skewed geography of feminist and women's activism consistently troubled her and made her privy to a perspective from the margins, a blind-spot for her feminist interlocutors at the time. However, she believed in the necessity of a feminist alternative voice and stated (in the text selected below) that "at a time when ... across railways, highways, and country roads, people travel horizontally,¹⁰ ... the only normality is a gathering of women who are otherwise totally marginalized and eliminated from patriarchal politics, which can amount to nothing but repression." A linguist, columnist, and one of the few Albanian women participating in Yugoslav feminist gatherings,¹¹ Arifi constructed a feminist critique and engagement that could challenge a militarized patriarchy.

In the early 1990s, Arifi wrote on women's issues in her column "Femra" for the highly influential *Koha* weekly. Amidst a total state-imposed media blackout in Kosovo, an independent print media emerged, and people also turned to then-popular satellite TV. Arifi mobilized her writing to articulate political agency based on her gendered experiences. Under emergent violent circumstances, she utilized her literary skills to provoke Albanian patriarchy and its reliance on nationalism, while at the same time mocking Serbian nationalism and its racialized politics towards Albanians.

The text "Police and Cooking Recipes" was written with a high dose of sarcasm and in a style influenced by the Croatian journalist Tanja Torbarina.¹² The piece draws on an ironic and humorous play of phrases, perhaps making translation difficult, but still allowing her observations to travel from her location in the periphery. Written as the Yugoslav state was crumbling, she informed the Albanian public about how an entire session of the conference focused on "the issue of women in Kosovo", without Albanians and especially Albanian women being properly present

6 See Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*.

7 Linda Gusia, interview with Teuta Arifi, December 28, 2022.

8 Editor's note: See also the entry about Mojca Dobnikar in this volume.

9 Linda Gusia, interview with Teuta Arifi, December 28, 2022.

10 Here, Arifi refers to the bodies of those killed in the confrontation between Croatian policemen and Serbian radical nationalist paramilitaries in Borovo Selo, Croatia, on May 2, 1991.

11 For documentation on the Yugoslav feminist meetings, see Dobnikar and Pamuković, *Jaz, ti, one ... za nas*.

12 Born in 1951, Torbarina has worked for the Yugoslav and Croatian press since 1979. She became famous for her column "Sred pušaka bajuneta" [Among the Rifles' Bayonets] in the weekly *Globus* in the 1990s.

and represented at the conference itself. The panel discussed their high birth rates and the low levels of employment and education among women in the “province of Kosovo.” In her text, Arifi problematizes the focus on these aspects in the portrayal of Albanian women, pointing to dominant discourses and images that had consistently depicted them as birthing machines, both in popular representation, such as in media and film, as well as in specialized and academic language prominent in the 1980s. Arifi spoke out at the conference and published this text afterwards. By means of a semiotic play, she builds a referential frame in an attempt to make the other participants hear her. Namely, she ridicules the derogatory and stereotypical characterizations of Albanian culture that were used to justify repressive institutional policies and thus control over women’s bodies and reproductive choices. At least some recognition of the diverse positionalities and experiences of Albanian women in the Yugoslav context emerges, namely that the question of reproduction had a different dialectic between the personal and political depending on its location. That is, reproductive choice was not only a matter of personal autonomy and emancipation; rather, it was just as much determined by the prevailing structural limits of intersecting inequalities.

Recognition of the economic deprivation in Kosovo, but also in Albanian-majority regions in Macedonia, combined with systematic political violence, pointed to the limitations of mobilizing solely based on “sisterhood,” which had been the central trope of the transnational second wave that characterized Yugoslav feminism at the time. As a result of systemic exclusions from resources and power, Albanian women had mostly remained on the margins of such feminist conversations. From the outside, their absence was seen as indicative of their subjugated position and oppression under a particular cultural patriarchy, in this case Albanian traditions. Furthermore, from the inside, this partial interpretation felt largely as an exclusionary maneuver, an attempt to save Albanian women rather than engage with the micro- and macro-politics of their struggles.¹³ Later on, when anti-war activism and alliances were forged, women’s activism in Kosovo shared the anti-war sentiment of feminist activists in cities such as Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana, but was disinterested preserving the Yugoslav federation and was skeptical about a shared Yugoslav identity.¹⁴ The ambiguities and paradoxes of the emergent women’s movement unfolded in a terrain that was and continues to be shaped by discourses and practices of ethnicization and racialization that marked Albanian women as the ultimate other.

Arifi’s work was committed to what she called an alternative voice. When confronted by the police at a checkpoint in May 1991, on her way to the Yugoslav feminist gathering described below, she assuaged the police officer’s concern with the

13 Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes’ Revisited,” 500.

14 Gusia, et al., *Feminist Conversations*.

explanation that they were only gathering to share cooking recipes. While she did dilute his statist worries and the perceived threat posed by women, she did not bargain with the political potential of women's solidarity against rising militarist patriarchy. Rather, as was the case with Sevdije Ahmeti (1944–2016)¹⁵ and other prominent feminist activists in Kosovo during the 1990s, she would also go on to act with the urgency that speaking back to violent circumstances requires. Specifically, the movement became further rooted in the framework of women's rights as human rights and embedded with the civil resistance movement in Kosovo.

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15 Sevdije Ahmeti was a feminist activist, one of the founders of the Kosovar feminist movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. She worked for the Council for Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms and prepared reports on violations of women's rights for Amnesty International. She also collected evidence for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for sexual violence and mistreatment against women, based on the experience of women from Bosnia and Croatia who sought refuge in Kosovo. Together with Vjosa Dobruna, Ahmeti founded the Center for the Protection of Women and Children in 1993. This organization both helped mothers and children and played an essential role in documenting the tortures inflicted by the Serbian authorities on Albanians in general, and women and children in particular. See Kosova Women's Network, "Sevdije Ahmeti – a powerful voice for the protection of women's rights," <https://womensnetwork.org/sevdije-ahmeti-a-powerful-voice-for-the-protection-of-womens-rights/>.

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Linda Gusia and Nita Luci

* * *

Teuta Arifi

The Police and Cooking Recipes

The latest gathering of Yugoslav feminists in Ljubljana sought to give several answers, including on the Kosovo issue.

The fourth gathering of Yugoslav feminists was certainly the only non-political affair apart from sports events, but which have also been politicized recently.¹⁶ Such a gathering sounds surprising, considering the pervasive militarism of our time. At a time of massive, inhumane protests by [Vojislav] Šešelj in Belgrade, Saint Sava tribunals for Saint Serbia by the Serbian Radical Party, at a time when television landscapes are replete with young dead bodies massacred at Borovo Selo,¹⁷ at a time when, across railways, highways, and country roads, people travel horizontally—the only normality is a gathering of women, who are otherwise totally marginalized and eliminated by repressive patriarchal politics. The police officer that checked our papers on the Belgrade–Zagreb road was unusually interested in knowing where we were traveling to. When he understood the purpose of our journey he asked: "What else do you [women] want when you have everything, why do you have to speak against us [men] when we all work for you, when we would have done anything for you?"

Naturally, such glorification of the irreplaceable role of men would have been fine if the gentleman in question was not fully armed and in police attire. The last

16 Editor's note: The author probably refers to the violent clashes between opposing football fans which were a stage for fuming ethno-nationalism in the final years of Yugoslavia. On that topic see Dario Brentin and Dejan Zec, "From the Concept of the Communist 'New Man' to Nationalist Hooliganism: Research Perspectives on Sport in Socialist Yugoslavia," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 34, no. 9 (2017): 713–28.

17 Editor's note: Vojislav Šešelj is a leader of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party, which heavily abused the symbolism of the Serbian Orthodox Church from medieval history (such as Saint Sava) to claim Kosovo as the spiritual birthplace of the Serbian nation. Borovo Selo, a town on the Croatian-Serbian border, was the place of a violent confrontation between Croatian policemen and Serbian paramilitaries on May 2, 1991, one of the first clashes starting the series of the Yugoslav wars.

kind of protection women need is this kind. He eventually calmed down when we told him that the gathering is not a subversive one, as it entails the exchange of cooking recipes from all over Yugoslavia. All that said, it was hard not to see the maleness which hovered over the feminist gathering in the northern city of Ljubljana, a city which saw the first arrival of alternative movements raising marginalized problems and subcultural issues.¹⁸ The central theme of the first day was “Visions for the Development of Feminist Movements, Past and Future.” It would be difficult to talk about feminism as a movement defined by a small group of women. All women in a particular way are feminists, as their very position as women¹⁹ preconditions them to be one, a marginal position in all forms of political and social life. However, from feminism as a movement of women for basic rights (the right to vote, equal pay at work, maternity leave), at a time when it was difficult to realize them, they had to be demonstrated for, had to be fought for with the police, which was a tool in the arms of muscular men, which produced a meaning of feminism that irritates. Feminism thus developed in several forms: liberal, Marxist, radical, and postmodernist.

Albanians and Pornopolitics

The feminist groups in Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade (other cities have not yet formed groups), are not large groups burdened by statutory formalities or tendencies for massive membership, with delegated governing bodies and presidents elected once and for all that neither God nor the devil can change. These were informal groups with broad-based activities such as voluntary work (not in the socialist sense of the word), SOS phone lines for children and women victims of domestic violence committed by fathers, husbands, or lovers. The women's group “Women's Assistance Now” from Zagreb²⁰ were the most aggressive (which they had learned from the other gender) and had squatted an apartment to make it a refuge for women and children victims of domestic violence. However, the most successful in their work has been the feminist group from Ljubljana, who have confronted the repressive legislation and [demanded] a woman be granted the right to ask for a divorce if she experienced domestic abuse. For the moment, the only legal code with such a provision is the Slovenian one—maybe we will benefit from the cooler temperatures of the north finding a way into our southern laws. More or less,

18 Editor's note: In the 1980s, Ljubljana/Slovenia was a place of progressive social movements (punk, feminist, LGBT, etc.). See entries in this volume on Suzana Tratnik and Nataša Sukič, Vlasta Jalušič.

19 Authors' note: Arifi appears to be claiming that femaleness is a position that is socially determined.

20 Editor's note: Ženska pomoć sada (Women's Assistance Now) is an organization formed in Zagreb (Trešnjevka) in 1988 as a domestic violence helpline, and which still exists.

these were the orienting programs of the Yugoslav feminists and their thoughts on the history of the development of the women's movement for more rights.

One of the central themes on the second day of the gathering was the "Situation of Women in Kosovo," a theme which had a large space for discussion. Perhaps the time was too short to answer this question. Regarding the position of women in Kosovo – which at times is imagined as a republic and at others as three regional provinces²¹ – there was not enough time to discuss the topic at such a general meeting. It could be addressed as an institutionalization of the women's question in a nation in the Balkans. We had to deal with the system which turned half of its nation into a simple instrument of pornopolitics by using its own psycho-social rape phenomena as a political weapon.²² The media campaigns on rape have stopped, not because the state was effective in its emancipatory efforts but because it no longer has any political currency. Maybe the institutions which program and use women's bodies for the 'national' cause are now trying out new forms of women's maximal use. The politicization of natality was also addressed as the phenomenon of a nation which had been othered. Every night before going to bed, men of the nation promised the Almighty that they would turn their nations into the largest ones in the Balkans – all the demographic entities of the injured republic were activated for that reason. Women members of the Women's Lobby in Belgrade²³ have already been declared traitors of their nation and their nation's leadership of salvation. Stanislavka Zajović [Stanislava Staša Zajović] was considered truly naïve because she had fallen for the propaganda of the Albanian mafia by saying that high birth rates had nothing to do with politics, and that it was shameful to bring that very issue up for debate and create a double standard of population governance, one for Serbia and one for Kosovo.²⁴ Good job with the propaganda, this is the way forward.

Militarism and Gynecology

The roundtable on "Reproductive Rights and Abortion," organized by the Ljubljana-based "Women for Politics" group, was chaired by Vlasta Jalušič.²⁵ The main dis-

21 Editor's note: The author seems to suggest that some participants referred to Kosovo as a federal republic (a political demand of Albanians in Kosovo since the socialist Yugoslav federation was formed), while others referred to it as one of the three territorial parts of Serbia (a position held by the official leadership of Serbia).

22 Editor's note: The author seems to refer here to the 1987 demonstrations of Serbian women in Kosovo who claimed they were threatened by Albanian rapists, which was a stereotypical trope used within Serbian nationalist discourse. See Žarkov, *The Body of War*, 19–20.

23 Editor's note: Beogradski ženski lobi (The Belgrade Women's Lobby) was an informal political group gathered around the protection of women's human rights, created in June 1990 and active throughout the 1990s.

24 Editor's note: This argument concurs with the argument in Vlasta Jalušič's text in this volume. See also the chapter on Staša Zajović in this volume.

25 Editor's note: On the group Ženske za politiko (Women for Politics), see the chapter on Vlasta Jalušič in this volume.

cussions revolved around the change of republican²⁶ legislation related to abortion. Discussions were also held on the situation of gynecology in Kosovo and its deterioration after the implementation of the Violent Measures at the Faculty of Medicine in Prishtina. The public manifestation against militarism on Presheren [Prešeren] Square²⁷ was (surprisingly) not prevented by the police, and later we continued the event with literary polemics and women following the presentation of the literary works of the authors Berta Bojetu from Maribor and Gjurgja Miklauziq [Đurđa Miklaužić] from Zagreb. One of the questions which remained open was whether there can be feminism in Kosovo or not. Of course, there can be, if we understand feminism as a plurality of ideas and values in the context from which they emerge. Kosovo fulfills the conditions for feminism to emerge, whence women live under patriarchal repressive politics that enter the gynecological examination room and deprive a seventeen-year-old of her right to life. Feminism gives meaning to life much like other [ideas give] meaning to other ways of life, of development, and of creation. It exists in the soul of every woman, in spite of all other forces that declare it “irritating” or similarly uncomfortable.

Translated by Piro Rexhepi

²⁶ Translator's note: By “republican,” the author means that which is related to a federal unit (republic) of Yugoslavia.

²⁷ Editor's note: The central square in Ljubljana.

Irene Dölling, With Adelheid Kuhlmei-Oehlert,
Gabriela Seibt and Women in the GDR

“Our Skin.” Women about the Fall of 1990

AUTHOR Irene Dölling, with Adelheid Kuhlmei (Kuhlmei-Oehlert at the time of publication), Gabriela Seibt, and the women sharing their diaries

TITLE *Unsere Haut. Tagebücher von Frauen aus dem Herbst 1990* [Our Skin. Diaries of Women from the Fall of 1990]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1992.

LANGUAGE German

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Irene Dölling (b. 1942, Leicester) is a researcher, sociologist, and university professor, born into a German working-class family. As communist party activists, her parents had to flee to the United Kingdom shortly before the Second World War. After 1945, the family returned to the Soviet Occupied Zone in Eastern Germany, where they also stayed after the foundation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1949. From 1961 to 1966, Dölling studied Library Sciences and Philosophy at the Humboldt University in East Berlin. After finishing her studies, she remained at the Humboldt University, where she also received her PhD in 1970 with a dissertation about Marxist theories and the “practical behavior of individuals,” contributing to the field of socialist cultural and social theory. At Humboldt University, she completed her second book (*Habilitation*) in 1976 about personality development from the perspective of cultural theory and the role of biology. Dölling was appointed Professor for Cultural Theory in 1985. After 1986, when she published her third book *Individuum und Kultur* (The Individual and Culture), the focus of her research shifted strongly towards the politically sensitive questions of women and gender relations in the socialist society of the GDR. However, under the specific circumstances of a strongly state controlled scientific system of the GDR, she did not start to openly engage or publish works in this field until the political revolution of 1989.

In early December 1989, just a few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Dölling became co-founder of the new Zentrum für transdisziplinäre Geschlechterstudien (Center for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies) at the Humboldt University. Dölling stayed at the Humboldt University also after the end of the GDR. In 1994, amidst the rapid reconstruction of the East German university system mainly by West German standards and elites in the wake of German Reunification, she moved to the University of Potsdam, where she became a Professor of Women’s Studies. Dölling

retired in 2008 as one of the leading figures who established Gender Studies as a field of research, especially in East Germany. She is a board member of many high-ranking journals (*Signs*, *L'Homme*, *European Journal of Women's Studies*) and on the scientific advisory boards of several foundations of the Workers' Unions (Hans-Böckler-Stiftung) as well as the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.

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Adelheid Kuhlmeiy (b. 1955) is a sociologist and a doctor of medicine, focusing on medical sociology and gerontology in her work. She started to work at the Medical Department of the Humboldt University in 1980. Since 1987, she engaged in research on the psycho-social aspects of disease and age. In 1993, she became Executive Director of the Institute for Medical Sociology at Charité, Berlin. After professorships in the field of gerontology in Neubrandenburg and Braunschweig, she has held multiple important positions. Among others, she became Director of the Institute for Medical Sociology at the Center for Human and Health Sciences at Charité in 2002 as well as Scientific Director of the Charité Center for Human and Health Sciences in 2010. She has published her extensive research findings in leading medical journals.

Gabriela Seibt (b. 1962) is a sociologist. She studied at the Institute of Sociology at the Humboldt University in the 1980s and started to work at the Center of Transdisciplinary Gender Studies in 1991. She continues to publish on issues on gender and aging.

The anonymized women whose diaries we selected are those of a (at the time) 25-year-old dispatcher from rural Saxony (#1), a 35-year-old physiotherapist working in a hospital, with two younger children and a troubled marriage from a small town in Thuringia (#2 and #3); a 22-year-old and recently unemployed surveyor and

young mother from a small Thuringian border town (#4); a 49-year-old confectioner from the city of Magdeburg, divorced with two grown children (#5, #6, #7 and #8).

Marcus Böick

CONTEXT

The early 1990s marked a critical period of dramatic change in the whole post-socialist world of Eastern Europe, East Germany being no exception. However, the German case appears as the odd one out: the end of the GDR and the rapid Reunification with the Federal Republic of Germany in October 1990 clearly paved a different or even unique way from Soviet-style socialism towards Western-style liberal capitalism. This was especially true for women in East Germany. Irene Dölling was one of the first scholars in the 1980s to address the contradictions in gender relations during socialism. On the one hand, goes her argument, the communist regime, with an almost exclusively male leadership, prided itself for its progress in terms of women's emancipation. West Germany was often used as a counterexample when showing markers of the success of women's emancipation: the number of women in the work force, but also of university educated women, including female engineers, was much higher in the East.¹ The state's system of early childcare was extensively developed, as was support for single mothers or children of unmarried couples. On the other hand, these social policy measures were ambivalent at best. Their introduction was first and foremost economically motivated, as the communist regime faced shortages in the labor market due to the high number of people escaping to the West, especially before the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. All in all, the "gender question" was addressed by the socialist regime in an ambivalent way: Despite being true "equals," women in the GDR faced a severe double burden of working full-time as well as taking care of the family and especially the children, while their male partners just stuck to their traditional-proletarian role-models as working-class males.

After the widely unexpected implosion of state socialism in Eastern Europe and East Germany in the late 1980s, these precarious gender relations seemed to be open for new debate. From the early days, Dölling and other leading researchers like Hildegard Maria Nickel and Sabine Schenk were actively engaged in the process of researching and discussing these pressing questions. Female activists and scholars from East and West tried to figure out common ground, but also had to deal with remarkable differences in their political views, social aims, and cultural self-representations. After the conservative and liberal parties won the first free election in East Germany in March 1990, one major obstacle was the looming question of reunification and its possible

1 See Gunilla-Friederike Budde, *Frauen der Intelligenz* and idem., ed., *Frauen arbeiten*.

consequences especially for women. “Would East German women be the ‘losers of reunification?’” was a question not only on people’s minds but also discussed by scholars and activists.² The potential end of the highly developed system of social support and childcare seemed to pose an immediate threat to women in the former GDR, made all the more severe by the conservative rollback towards more traditional and religiously oriented models of family, still dominant in West Germany.

Additionally, the rapid reconstruction of a centralized planned economy into a market economy from 1990, mainly by mass privatizations overseen by the Treuhandanstalt—the newly founded privatization agency—led to the closure of many companies and whole branches of the economy. The staggering rise of formerly unknown unemployment in East German society especially pushed many women out of the job market into the social security system or drove the younger ones towards migrating to the West. Thus, the “reconstruction” of a “male bread winner” system threatened to wipe out the gradual successes of former socialist policies on female employment. Some branches like the textile industry in Saxony, where over 90 per cent of the employed workers were women, were nearly completely shut down within a few years. Even on the political level, the hierarchical nature of the national debate on the different abortion regulations in West and East Germany was symptomatic of how the experience and rights of East German women were often ignored and marginalized in the newly reunited “Fatherland.”

Foreseeing these dramatic developments astonishingly early, Irene Dölling and her co-authors, Adelheid Kuhlmei-Oehlert and Gabriela Seibt, started researching these changes immediately in 1990, as one of the first projects of the newly founded Center of Transdisciplinary Gender Studies. In July, they published a call for diaries in the widely popular newspaper *Junge Welt* [Young World], asking especially younger female readers to start a diary covering the next crucial months before and after reunification. They wanted to get insight into different female (but also male) experiences during these times of dramatic change in East Germany. By the end of the year, they were able to collect 59 *Umfragetagebücher* (research diaries), 55 of them written by women between 16 and 63 years of age. These dairies started on September 1 and finished three months later, on November 30. Additionally, the researchers asked every diarist to fill out an extensive social survey to collect crucial personal information for further analysis.

Dölling and her team encountered a rich variety of material in the collected diaries: ranging from very short entries on the changing prices of groceries by diary novices, to lengthy self-reflections on changing personal relationships by very experienced diarists. Many texts demonstrated the profound and rapid transformations in the everyday life in East Germany, but from often completely overlooked

2 As shown in Rita Süßmuth, Rita and Helga Schubert, ed. *Bezahlen die Frauen die Wiedervereinigung?*

"bottom-up" female perspectives, especially on topics of partnerships, families, the wider society, and a new culture of (capitalist) competitiveness (often referred to as *Ellenbogengesellschaft*, "elbow society"). Besides unexpected conflicts between Westerners and Easterners, topics such as unemployment, inequality, poverty, nationalism, extremism, capitalism, or consumption were prominent, alongside very down-to-earth questions. The texts varied in style and length. In early 1992, Dölling and her team decided to publish an anonymized selection of the texts in an attempt to make the material known not only to other social researchers, but also to a wider public. They picked eight very different diaries from 1990 and contacted the writers to interview them a few years after. Reading these texts after more than 30 years, they provide us with unique and complex contemporary insights and perceptions of women diarists living between the worlds of socialism and capitalism and reflecting on their personal experiences. Kept in the Tagebucharchiv (Diary Archives) in Emmendingen close to Freiburg, this rich material is and will be an excellent source for the recently flourishing field of historical research on post-socialism not only in East Germany, but also in Eastern Europe and beyond.

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Marcus Böick

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Irene Dölling, with Adelheid Kuhlmeier-Oehlert, Gabriela Seibt,
and Women in the GDR

"Our Skin." Women About the Fall of 1990

#1

08/21/90

At work there was debate, debate, debate. The latest rumors concerning rents, taxes, and wages were evaluated; cars, sex, and unemployment were talked about. For years, the heavy-duty truck drivers from the housing construction combine have been coming to us daily at the train station for coffee. They already have the blue letter³ in their pockets. Almost every day there are fewer of them; they only work when needed. And none of them wants to admit how much they fear the impending unemployment.

But they can't fool me.

They went enthusiastically to the streets every Saturday, and most of them on the very first Saturday, on October 17, 1989, when they attacked us with water cannons and clubs. They argued and fought for reunification, and then they were the first to get fired. A pity for them. But in their own company and in front of everyone else, they still pretend to be loud and funny, and those who don't know them can't hear their sad undertones. That sounds sentimental, doesn't it?

#2

08/24/90

Finally, Friday—I'd gotten through the first week of work. If the workday weren't so long, it would be very nice.

Shopping is more exhausting than before. You find out about prices on the spot because there are different prices everywhere. But no information in the newspapers, so that's where our patients come to us; they get quizzed about where things are cheapest. But then there's no time to go there.

Today is our 11th wedding anniversary; we almost forgot it with all that's going on.

Hopefully things don't escalate in Iraq.

08/25/90

The long-awaited weekend. Arguing with my partner about the car. I'm not supposed to drive it, but I got my way and drove alone, what a feeling to finally be able to operate the car for once.

3 Editor's note: Letter of dismissal.

#3

10/04/90

Slowly but surely, we're realizing that we are now one Germany. We are confronted with many new things, which we first need to get used to and still need to learn a lot about. At the moment, for all workers, that thing is dealing with the wage tax card. Today's *Donnerstagsgespräch* helped a lot with that,⁴ and many people can use it as guidance, although the explanations do not fully satisfy me.

10/05/90

Today I also had a conversation with a female patient about husbands. It's not always easy. The longer people are together, the more a certain indifference creeps into a relationship between a husband and a wife. Men compliment their wives less and less, so I'm all the more pleased when my patients think I'm younger and younger.

I'm slowly getting by with money again, but I have to be careful that we don't order too much and lose track. The offers are very numerous, and the travel offers are particularly tempting. If I weren't so busy at work, I would go on a trip around the world right now, that would be my really, really big dream.

#4

10/03/90

So now it's final. The GDR does not exist anymore; we are one Germany. But that doesn't give me any reason to rejoice. And we didn't have any reason to celebrate anyway. So I went to bed yesterday at 10 pm and fell asleep immediately, dead tired. I slept through the reunification—others likely partied hard. At least around me, the joy is very restrained, and the interviews on the radio and on TV were also clear. "The event was indeed moving, and one just had to experience it"—but very few expressed confidence or even joy. Fear and insecurity predominate, and I firmly believe that many who were still shouting "hurrah" will think very differently in the near future. Now there is no turning back, now federal law and federal statutes apply, and the "elbowing" for "survival" will really begin now. How I would now like to sit together with all friends and acquaintances "like the old days" and exchange ideas. How much I miss them all! One thing I know is that very few of them celebrated the reunification. We were so desperate a year ago, we debated, we took to the streets, we agonized in fear and incomprehension of the Honecker administration. Not even when thousands left our country did they give up talking about progress, contentment, people's unity. I was a bundle of nerves,

4 Editor's note: *Donnerstagsgespräch* was the first live television talk show with everyday people's participation in the GDR. It ran between 1988 and 1991.

so very terrified and restless! Above all, the contradiction between my stance and Ingo's profession grew daily. It was as if a time bomb were ticking between us, threatening to explode as soon as our opposing views collided. And so we remained silent on the subject. It was the biggest test of strength for our marriage so far. The old government is no more, the Stasi has been dissolved, and the SED monopoly broken⁵— we can travel and finally make uninhibited and "unobserved" contact with friends abroad—but again, or still, we are the ones who must acquiesce and whose opinion is not sought in any way. How defiantly and loudly our call rang out about a year ago: "We are the people." It hasn't even been a year—forgotten! But I believe it is not forgotten in the hearts and minds of those who dared to start back then. They have lost, they are no longer popular. The beneficiaries of the revolution in our country were people like Mr. de Mazière and his team,⁶ who are now profiting abundantly. Phooey to them, I can only say; they destroyed the true ideals of our revolution and focused only on reunification. Admittedly, they have raked in enough money in their few months in office to be able to talk about prosperity. I would never shake hands with one of these "jumping jacks" of the last GDR government.

But someday there will be a society that is consistent with what socialism should be. But will one ever call this socialism again?

#5

9/18/90

I have resolved to watch the news again properly after October 3rd. We take ourselves far too seriously with our problems that we don't even want to notice that tensions are running so high in Iraq. A war would be terrible.

09/20/90

12:15am, just recorded the national anthem for Lea, could have cried again.

I had a great conversation with Lea yesterday. She really means it when she says that she feels partly to blame for the whole mess, that everything has come to this. People are dealing with their own things now, but our grandchildren will ask why it was all like this. Either Jenny will become a conceited little missy who only drives her Opel to work, or she will become an astute leftist. We'll see.

5 Editor's note: SED – Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands / Socialist Unity Party. The Stasi was the GDR secret police (Ministerium für Staatsicherheit / Ministry for State Security).

6 Editor's note: Thomas de Maizière is a CDU (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands / German Christian Democratic Union) politician, member of the West German team in the negotiations on German reunification.

You almost get the feeling that everything is repeating itself. Our parents were Nazis, grandpa and Uncle Kurt were in the SPD, Aunt Hedwig KPD, Uncle Arno SA.⁷ Oh God.

#6

10/26/90

My last vacation day. My vacation was nice, but I'm looking forward to my work. I read: I don't feel like it anymore. *Love and Shadows* by Isabel Allende is a stirring book. She writes beautifully in general. She is THE writer for me right now.

10/27/90

Lea will probably be at rock bottom again today. But that's also shit with the PDS. Gysi is sly, but one can feel sorry for him now. Maybe they should just dissolve this party altogether and strengthen the DKP, I don't know.⁸

11/2/90

We now get 200 Deutschmarks (DM) more, retroactively starting in September. Beginning in January, everything will also be increased, rent, light and gas and the streetcars will be increased, but we still don't know by how much exactly. Uwe wanted to give me half of the stipend, he doesn't need it; I'll wait and see what expenses I have starting in January. Now I also created a savings bank book for myself and immediately deposited 2000 DM from my account. The account is now almost empty—my salary goes in it and all the expenses go out. At the moment I don't have an overall sense of the whole thing.

#7

11/6/90

I have today off. And what do I do—I listen to a Marius Müller Westernhagen CD for hours again. So, once Uwe moves out, I'll buy a CD player. That's really something for lazy people who don't want to run to the record player all the time to turn over a record or change it.

7 Editor's note: SPD, Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany); KPD, Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany); SA, Sturmabteilung (literally "Storm Detachment"), the original paramilitary unit of the NSDAP, Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party), the Nazi party, between 1920 and 1945.

8 Editor's note: PDS, Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (Party of Democratic Socialism), a democratic socialist party, the legal successor of the SED after 1990, active between 1990 and 2007. Its successor party is Die Linke (The Left). Gregor Gysi is one of the founders of the PDS and leaders of Die Linke, who was a member of the SED and belonged to its reformist wing before the reunification. DKP, Deutsche Kommunistische Partei (German Communist Party), was a small communist party founded in West Germany. After reunification, all these parties competed against each other.

Uwe will write his first exam on Friday. He's always worked diligently now, but he was away over the weekend. I think he's taking it easy now. We'll see how it turns out.

11/9/90

Democracy continues. Our television is being taken over by ZDF and ARD.⁹ We had so many beautiful programs of our own; it's nasty to have those taken away from us. If this continues, I'll only watch the 3rd program, if at all. But I don't want to get worked up anymore, the GDR is over, everything is broken. One day our grandchildren will ask us why we put up with all of this. I collect a lot of material from the GDR, and why it all came to this. Maybe it will be needed some day (I hope so).

#8

11/28/90

I am now beginning to understand what they mean by pluralism. There is chaos everywhere. That has nothing to do with freedom of speech or democracy anymore, with the chaos that is happening in Romania. Or that the Jews are supposed to be at fault for the misery in the Soviet Union. Where is this even supposed to lead? Hate and aggression everywhere. Have people learned nothing from history?

Why has it all collapsed—that I don't understand. Socialism lies shattered on the ground, perhaps it must be approached differently. But not by force. How else? Now everyone thinks only of themselves and not of society.

Translated by Lea Greenberg

9 Editor's note: ZDF stands for Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (Second German Television). ARD is the joint television network of the organization with the same name: Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Working Group of Public Broadcasters of the Federal Republic of Germany), which is a joint organization of Germany's (at the time, West Germany's) public service broadcasters.

Mihaela Miroiu and Laura Grünberg

Liberal Feminism on Eastern Europe in the Aftermath of Communism

AUTHOR Mihaela Miroiu

TITLE “Îeșirea din vrajă” [Breaking the Spell]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Revista de cercetări sociale* [Journal of Social Research], no. 2 (1994): 144–57.

LANGUAGE Romanian

AUTHOR Laura Grünberg

TITLE “Feminismul ca experiență personală” [Feminism as Personal Experience]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED Special issue “Femei și feminisme” [Women and Feminisms], coord. Alina Ledeanu, *Secolul 20* [20th Century], no. 7–9 (1996): 156–62.

LANGUAGE Romanian

ABOUT THE AUTHORS¹

Mihaela Miroiu (b. 1955, Hunedoara) grew up in the village until the age of six. Her grandmother and great-grandmother were role models of independent, strong women, who cared for the household almost entirely by themselves after their husbands were injured in the two world wars. As a child, she was raised Christian Orthodox by her grandparents, but today considers herself an ecumenical Christian and does not practice religion.

She moved to Hunedoara when she started school. There, she lived with her mother, a teacher, and her adoptive father, an officer in the army, who especially nurtured her trust in her own abilities. As a high school student, she also attended a fine arts school, led a literary circle, and was editor-in-chief of the school newspaper. She became interested in philosophy at the age of fifteen, inspired by her high school philosophy teacher.

In 1974, she enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest. In 1976, she married fellow student Adrian Miroiu, now a political scientist and supporter of her feminist endeavors. Together they have a son, Andrei. At the university, Mihaela Miroiu received training in the philosophy of science, logic, the history of philosophy, and sociology, and was also introduced to Western philosophy, particularly British analytical philosophy and French structuralism. When she graduated in 1978, the

¹ The biographies are based on email correspondence with Mihaela Miroiu (January 18, 2024) and Laura Grünberg (January 21, 2024).

Faculty of Philosophy had just been restructured and merged with the Faculty of History in 1977, with graduates mostly allocated teaching jobs in secondary education. Miroiu was a high school philosophy teacher in Bucharest until 1994. During this time, she was part of an informal group of friends, the Câr-Mâr Group,² which met twice per month and later formed the core of the first feminist studies' organization in Romania. Established together with Laura Grünberg, the AnA Society for Feminist Analyses (AnA. Societatea de analize feministe) continues to play an important role as a feminist NGO, together with the Filia Center for Curriculum Development and Gender Studies (Filia. Centrul de dezvoltare curriculară și Studii de gen), which Miroiu established in 2000 with Otilia Dragomir.

After 1990, while pursuing her PhD, Miroiu had research stays in the United States and United Kingdom, where she focused on moral and political philosophy and discovered feminist philosophy. In 1994, she earned her PhD in Philosophy from the University of Bucharest, under the supervision of philosopher Ludwig Grünberg, with a dissertation inspired by feminist philosophy and ecofeminism. Her early feminist intellectual formation was indebted to William Mander (Oxford University), Ursula Vogel (Manchester University), Ann Snitow (New York School for Social Research), and Mary Daly (Boston College), among others. Miroiu conducted research with Maria Bucur and Jeffrey Isaac (Indiana University) and Laura Grünberg (University of Bucharest). Her work focuses on feminist political theory and gender studies, topics on which Miroiu has published extensively and presented at numerous international conferences.

Starting in 1994, Miroiu has been professor and dean (1997–2001) at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest (Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative, SNSPA). She initiated the first course on feminist philosophy at the University of Bucharest (1994) and the first master's program in gender studies at SNSPA (1998). Starting in 2000, she also introduced feminist research into the political science doctoral program that she coordinated.

Miroiu took part in the successful lobby in parliament for parental leave, anti-discrimination legislation, equal opportunities, and legislation against domestic violence. In recognition, she was awarded the National Prize for the Contribution in Preventing and Combating Discrimination and Promoting Equal Opportunities (2005) by the National Council for Combating Discrimination, and she was featured in the "Women Inspiring Europe" calendar by the European Institute for Gender Equality (2011). Miroiu also received the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Association for Women in Slavic Studies (2010).

2 The expression "câr-mâr" refers to raising objections, quarreling, or bargaining.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · *Gândul umbrei. Abordări feministe în filozofia contemporană* [The Thought of the Shadow: Feminist Approaches in Contemporary Philosophy] (Bucharest: Alternative, 1995), second edition: *Gândul umbrei. Abordări feministe în filosofie* (Iași: Polirom, 2020); *Convenio. Despre natură, femei și morală* [Convenio: On Nature, Women, and Morals] (Bucharest: Alternative, 1996), second edition in 2002; *Societatea Retro* [The Backward-Looking Society] (Bucharest: Trei, 1999); with Otilia Dragomir, eds., *Lexicon feminist* [Feminist Lexicon] (Iași: Polirom, 2002); *Guidelines for Promoting Gender Equity in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe*, UNESCO European Center for Higher Education, Bucharest, 2003; *Drumul către autonomie. Teorii politice feministe* [The Road to Autonomy: Feminist Political Theories] (Iași: Polirom, 2004); *Neprețuitele femei* [Priceless Women] (Iași: Polirom, 2006); ed., *Ideologii politice actuale* [Contemporary Political Ideologies] (Iași: Polirom, 2012); *Cu mintea mea de femeie* [With My Woman Mind] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2017); with Maria Bucur, *Birth of Democratic Citizenship: Women and Power in Modern Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018); *Aripi și rădăcini* [Wings and Roots] (Iași: Polirom, 2022).

Laura Grünberg (b. 1961, Bucharest) was born into a family of philosophers. Her father, Ludwig Grünberg (1933–1995), was professor of philosophy at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest (Academia de Studii Economice) and published important contributions in the field of axiology. Her mother, Cornelia Grünberg, taught pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest. Her parents did not encourage a career in the social sciences and although Grünberg was interested in sociology, after graduating from high school, the sociology department at the University of Bucharest had been disbanded. Grünberg graduated in mathematics from the same university in 1984 and became a mathematics high school teacher. With husband Petru Lucaci, painter and professor at the National University of Arts in Bucharest, they have a son, Matei, born in 1989.

Between 1993–2001, Grünberg was program coordinator at the UNESCO European Center for Higher Education in Bucharest. During this time, she also pursued doctoral studies in sociology at the University of Bucharest under the supervision of sociologist Lazăr Vlăsceanu (1946–2024). She earned her PhD in 2001 with a dissertation in the field of feminist sociology. Grünberg was associate professor at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest, where she taught in the first master's program in gender studies, and associate professor at the University of Bucharest. Since 2008, she holds a permanent position as professor at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Bucharest.

Since 1993, Laura Grünberg has also been closely involved in NGO work. She was founding member and president (1993–2006, 2012–2018) of the AnA Society for Feminist Analyses, as well as editor in chief of the journal of gender and feminist studies *AnAlize* (1998–2008, 2012 to the present). Grünberg recounts her experience of building up and running a feminist NGO in *biONGrafie: AnA—istoria trăită a unui*

ONG de femei (biONGraphy: AnA—the Lived History of a Women’s NGO), written in 2008, at a critical moment in the NGO’s activity.

Grünberg’s research is in the field of gender studies, feminist sociology, sociology of the body, and sociology of education, topics on which she has published extensively. She has coordinated research projects and educational programs on women in healthcare, discrimination, gender sensitive public policies, and education, among others. One of the notable research reports resulting from these studies was the analysis of gender inequalities and public opinion on gender topics twenty years since 1989, *Barometrul de Gen. România, 2018* (The Gender Barometer: Romania, 2018).

Laura Grünberg is a dedicated writer of children’s and youth literature and founding member of the De Basm professional association for writers of children’s and youth literature (literally: “Of Fairytales,” but also an expression meaning fantastic), established in 2018, which carries out cultural and educational projects. One of these, *Nesupusele—100 de femei pentru 100 de ani de Românie modernă* (Unruly—100 Women for 100 Years of Modern Romania), resulted in an ongoing series of children’s stories about women in Romanian history, written by Grünberg together with fellow writers Adina Rosetti, Victoria Pătrașcu, Iulia Iordan, and Cristina Andone. In the series, Grünberg wrote, among others, about the nameless housewives in the modern history of Romania.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS • with Mihaela Miroiu, *Gen și educație* [Gender and Education] (Bucharest: AnA, 1997); “Women’s NGOs in Romania,” in *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*, eds. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 307–336; *(R)evoluții în sociologia feministă: Repere teoretice, contexte românești* [(R)evolutions in Feminist Sociology: Theoretical Frameworks, Romanian Contexts] (Iași: Polirom, 2002); ed., *Mass media despre sexe* [Mass Media about the Sexes] (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2005); *biONGrafie: AnA—istoria trăită a unui ONG de femei* [biONGraphy: AnA—the Lived History of a Women’s NGO] (Iași: Polirom, 2008); ed., *Introducere în sociologia corpului: Teme, perspective și experiențe întrupate* [Introduction to the Sociology of the Body: Embodied Themes, Perspectives, and Experiences] (Iași: Polirom, 2010); “Lived Feminism(s) in Postcommunist Romania,” in *Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminisms, and Neoliberalism*, eds. Grewal Inderpal and Bernal Victoria (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 248–65; with Diana Elena Neaga, eds., *Orașul (non)sexist: Inventar al discriminărilor urbane sensibil la gen* [The (Non)Sexist City: A Gender-Sensitive Inventory of Urban Discriminations] (Bucharest: ProUniversitaria, 2015) • CHILDREN’S AND YOUTH LITERATURE • *Istorie cu copii și Pârș, măță, frunză de gutuie* [Story with Children and Pârș, Cat, Quince Leaf] (Bucharest: Compania, 2007); *Spune-mi una cu* [Tell Me One About] (Bucharest: Meta, 2001); *Să creștem mici* [Let’s Grow Young] (Bucharest: Arthur, 2015); *Improvești: Povești cu lucruri mici, hazlii, firești* [Improstories: Stories of Small, Funny, Ordinary Things] (Bucharest: Arthur, 2019); *Îmbrățișătoarea* [The Hugger] (Bucharest: Univers, 2021).

CONTEXT

The mid-1990s were a period of disillusionment and economic insecurity for most women in Romania. Anticommunist intellectuals who had welcomed the 1989 revolution fully resented the continued political dominance of a social-democratic party they perceived to be continuators of Ceaușescu's dictatorship. Whereas new freedoms were celebrated, the social crisis that followed the end of Ceaușescu's dictatorship was difficult to grasp and theorize. The year 1994, when Miroiu published her text, saw high inflation and peak unemployment—phenomena absent before 1990. Two years later, when Grünberg wrote her contribution, an anticommunist coalition was voted into office. The Romanian Democratic Convention's win in 1996, after four years in opposition, ushered a short period of optimism, especially in the Bucharest-based networks of intellectuals of which Miroiu and Grünberg were a part. Yet the kind of economic woes that tested families' resilience and especially women's survival skills continued, with "the long 1990s" remembered by many Romanians as bitter, "lost years."³

Women intellectuals in Romania encountered Western feminists, feminist organizing, and especially North American feminist theorizing in this context of economic volatility and anticommunism (including a backlash against women's political visibility, alluded to by Miroiu when she writes about women's "Elena Ceaușescu complex"⁴). For both Miroiu and Grünberg, the discovery of feminism and the experience of the transition were intertwined. Miroiu described reading influential feminist theorists and classics as part of an accelerated making-up-for-time-lost during the repressive Ceaușescu regime. For Grünberg, feminist readings inspired self-reflection at a time of personal and societal upheaval, contributing to the processes of "unlearning" more generally characteristic of the transition from communism.

Friends before 1989, part of the informal intellectual circle *Câr Mâr*, both Miroiu and Grünberg joined anti-government protests at the beginning of the 1990s. They began reading feminist theory especially once Miroiu started researching her dissertation on the topic, in 1992.⁵ In 1993, with the support of Karin Berg, director of the UNESCO European Center for Higher Education in Bucharest, Grünberg founded AnA—Societatea de Analize Feministe (The AnA Society for Feminist Analyses). AnA focused on promoting feminist perspectives in research and cultural production, reflecting the interests of its core members—mostly young women academics.⁶ As

3 Massino, "'The Lost Years.'"

4 Elena Ceaușescu (1916–1989) was the wife of Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918–1989), General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party (1965–1989), a member of the *nomenklatura* in her own right, and an academician in the field of chemistry. Ridiculed for her controversial scientific credentials and widely portrayed as dictatorial, she remained the most well-known woman in Romanian politics into the post-socialist period.

5 Molocea, "Reconstrucția feminismului românesc în cadrul mișcării de femei," 37.

6 Molocea, "Reconstrucția feminismului românesc în cadrul mișcării de femei," 38.

intellectuals with a certain public visibility, who had “the feminist information,” they were often invited speakers at workshops organized by new women’s NGOs beginning to tackle “women in development” issues, with the support of organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).⁷

Feminism enabled women from AnA, or those sympathizing with the association’s aims, to make sense of the past and imagine the future in ways that countered the erasure of women from the post-socialist public sphere in Romania. Writing in 1997, Miroiu offered a Kantian liberal feminist counter-reading to consecrated historian of religions Mircea Eliade’s interpretation of the Romanian Master Manole “myth of creation.” According to the myth, master builder Manole walled in his dutiful wife Ana so that the walls of the Argeş Monastery he was working on remained standing. Miroiu argued that in Eliade’s interpretation, mythical Ana’s sacrifice passed for mundane and necessary, rather than consciously self-sacrificial for others’ benefit (“supererogatory”). In Miroiu’s reading, Ana is deprived of her capacity to consent and choose freely whether to sacrifice herself and is instead turned into a slave of duty. For Miroiu, Romanians who had lived in a totalitarian system and all those who were “slaves” of irrational power wielders, are “all Anas.”⁸

Building on these experiences and reflections, in the mid-2000s, Miroiu provided an influential, categorically anticommunist feminist reading of Romanian communism as “state patriarchy.” According to her, the state had preserved men’s patriarchal power within the family, while also “negatively feminizing” them by minimizing individual autonomy and making them dependent on the state.⁹ At the same time, by providing for women’s relative economic emancipation from men while leaving traditional gender roles within the family untouched, communism had in fact, in Miroiu’s analysis, “transformed women into servants to two masters,” bound to the “double work day.”¹⁰ For the post-1989 period, Miroiu articulated a liberal feminist counterpart to the “state patriarchy” ideology of the previous decades, which simultaneously took legitimation from understanding communism in terms of the absence of individual freedoms and strengthened anticommunism as an ideology of transition.

7 Molocea, “Reconstrucția feminismului românesc în cadrul mișcării de femei,” 27. On the longer-term trajectory of the feminist movement and feminist NGOs in postsocialist Romania, as compared to Belgium, see Ana, *The NGOization of Social Movements*.

8 Mihaela Miroiu, “Ana’s Land: The Right to Be Sacrificed,” in *Ana’s Land*, ed. Tanya Renne (New York: Routledge, 1997), 32.

9 Mihaela Miroiu, *Drumul către autonomie: Teorii politice feministe* [The Road to Autonomy: Feminist Political Theories] (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 212–13. See also a summary of this argument in Mihaela Miroiu, “Communism Was a State Patriarchy, not State Feminism,” *Aspasia* 1 (2007): 197–201; and an analysis based on women’s personal testimonies in Maria Bucur and Mihaela Miroiu, “Communism as State Patriarchy,” in *Birth of Democratic Citizenship: Women and Power in Modern Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 112–34.

10 Miroiu, *Drumul către autonomie*, 187–88.

Feminism was bound up with the promise of re-globalization in a country that had been among the most self-isolating in Eastern Europe. Yet feminism, as a practice and ideology into which women from Eastern Europe were socialized transnationally,¹¹ needed to be locally embedded, defended, and justified. Both Miroiu and Grünberg reflected at length on the condition of women from Eastern Europe and on the relationship between feminism in the East and in the West. Their reflections rehashed, in more general terms, a long-lasting debate on Romania's "modernization"—achieved either by importing Western models or drawing on pre-existing cultural resources—known as the "forms without substance" debate. At the same time, they are part of a broader, transnational, and long-lasting discussion about feminism in Eastern Europe, or the "East–West misunderstanding."¹² Miroiu described the position of Eastern European women in terms of multiple subordinations—as women, under patriarchy; and as Eastern Europeans, under conditions of unequal development and lagging behind the West. In terms of the articulation of feminism locally, the reference point for Miroiu was the interwar period, when, she argued, Romanian feminism was both well-established and contemporaneous with developments elsewhere. Miroiu rejected the existence of a "communist feminism," but acknowledged individual, singular attempts to put forward an emancipatory agenda from a feminist standpoint, such as those of Ecaterina Oproiu and Stana Buzatu (in this volume). By focusing on the issues of the double burden or women's place within the family, Miroiu argued, they "promoted the idea of women's emancipation *in* communism, and not *from* communism."¹³ According to her, under communism "a protofeminist political agenda' was confiscated by the state,"¹⁴ meaning that the ideas of gender equality and women's emancipation were increasingly subordinated to the nationalist and pronatalist interests of the communist regime. At the same time, Miroiu cautioned against the unproblematic return to the local feminist tradition of the interwar period, and emphasized the important developments brought by 1970s–80s radical feminism.

Grünberg was also preoccupied with the common, distrustful perception of feminism as a "Western import" among many. The issue, as she identified it, was first of all conceptual, with the lack of a common language between feminism in Eastern Europe and in the West. This was compounded by the investment in organizing over conceptual clarification in the transition period, which she was in a position to observe first-hand as someone closely involved in the early institutionalization of feminist and women's activities in the 1990s. At the same time, Grünberg confronts feminist theory with her personal experience as a woman, citizen, and mother, modelling a way to not simply adapt Western theory to the realities of women in Eastern

11 See Cîrstocă, "Gender as a Transnational Socialization Platform."

12 See Cîrstocă, *Learning Gender after the Cold War*, 20–23.

13 Miroiu, *Drumul către autonomie*, 199.

14 Miroiu, *Drumul către autonomie*, 189.

Europe, but to encourage new theorizing. This would be based on the recognition of commonalities (e.g., women's position as carers in the West as well as Eastern Europe) and the careful accounting for contextual differences, especially the context of transition. Whereas interest in feminism had been sporadic in Romanian journals and the cultural press in the 1990s,¹⁵ the journal *AnAlize*, established at the end of the decade, brought together feminist research and theorizing across fourteen printed issues, on topics such as feminism and theology, motherhood, gender and transition, work, among others. The new series has been published online since 2013.

The two source texts are characteristic for 1990s feminist theorizing, closely intertwined with making sense of the transition period. Towards the early 2000s, the landscape of women's rights and feminist organizing significantly diversified, as did the tactics of different groups and organizations. This included coalition building on issues such as domestic violence, gender discrimination, or reproductive rights, but also, increasingly, street protests.¹⁶ The latter also directly or indirectly challenged the liberal feminist paradigm of the 1990s, raising issues of social and economic justice from anti-establishment positions. Intersectional feminist approaches challenged racism, especially against the Roma, and the discrimination of LGBT persons leading to the consolidation of Roma feminist and queer theorizing, activism, and cultural production in the 2010s (see also Nicoleta Bițu in this volume). Mihaela Miroiu's response to these developments was mixed: she welcomed the challenges from within the feminist movement, and at the same time maintained that the bedrock of the movement remained the struggle for the liberal ideal of free will and equality, thus defending the academic and theoretical pursuits of the 1990s generation of feminists in Romania.¹⁷

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Alexandra Ghiț and Adela Hincu

* * *

Mihaela Miroiu Breaking the Spell

I'll start with a personal confession: in 1991, when I saw a "hectare" of feminist literature for the first time in my life at the Princeton University Library, my spontaneous reaction was something along the lines of: My god, Westerners allow themselves such fancies! This reaction dispelled after I studied the first book of feminist philosophy. Going through it page by page, I started to feel something curious and strange: it was like breaking out of a spell, like a rediscovery, a weird feeling that I'm only now approaching the space of authentic self-consciousness. Thank you, Moira Gatens!¹⁸

This beginning became my mode of existence when I'm free of institutions and obligations. For three years I've been trying to expand time, to recover the lost years, to banish the feeling that I'm not contemporaneous with my own time. So for three years I've also been coexisting in the framework of feminism—that is, the framework where I feel at home. However, the home is only partial. What makes it partial is that although there was now a name for my disquietude, dissatisfaction, and misfindings, although they gained explanations that had been "preserved in culture," this culture does not include other types of differences as well (although it is a culture of differences). Namely, it does not include the differences that tell our story, those who belong more strongly to the Not-A (non-Western) space, this

¹⁸ Moira Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

space where women are the “orient of the orient” and the “other of others,” to partially use the language of Sandra Harding.¹⁹ Therefore, my encounter with French, British, Australian, and American feminism was a revelation of the kind “you wouldn’t have looked for me if you hadn’t found me.”

I look back with pride and sadness: with pride for the way in which women in the West come out of anonymity and invisibility, of their “massness,” of the state of being a common noun, owning their proper nouns, persons, creative individualities—with pride for the beautiful continuity-discontinuity Wollstonecraft, Beauvoir, Irigaray, Daly. However, I look back with sadness at the half-century “syncope,” the void of meaning, the exiting from history of those in the East, considering that, in Romania for example, the first wave of feminism was, back in its day, fully fledged and contemporaneous.

[...] I’m not an expert on Romanian women (about whom we don’t even have enough statistical data yet). Any knowledge of them remains very close to the level of common sense, of untheorized observation. [...] [W]omen are missing from parliament and from the government; unemployment is on the rise primarily among women; the number of women in managerial positions is low; most of them endure the double work day; the number of abortions is worryingly high; most women fight to survive, not to live, their public image is predominantly pejorative; they have the Elena Ceaușescu complex (men have no Nicolae Ceaușescu complex); there is no women’s solidarity yet; they are not aware of being surrounded by a “language of disregard”; they manifest at most a spontaneous feminism; almost nobody reproves when they are treated as consumer products; they don’t seem to reject being defined functionally (as mothers, wives, etc.).

This is followed by a “however,” wrapped in other stereotypes, this time optimistic: associations appeared, women’s NGOs (but for some of them the leaders’ main concern is to announce: we are for women, but we’re not feminists!); societies for feminist studies also appeared, feminist approaches are being introduced at a few university departments; several articles have been published, a few translations. Formally speaking, there seems to be an opening for progress. I say this because if we only remain on the surface, we might end up in the well-known situation of forms without substance.²⁰ I have two situations in mind. The first:

19 Sandra Harding analyzes in detail these relationships in her book *Science in Feminism* (Open University Press, 1986). She starts from formulating this issue along the lines of the A–Not-A dichotomy, as theorized by Nancy Jay in “Gender and Dichotomy,” *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 1 (1981): 38–56.

20 Editor’s note: “Forms without substance” refers to a major theoretical debate which started in the second half of the nineteenth century about the modernization of Romania, specifically around the choice between modernizing based on existing local traditions or by importing institutional forms and cultural-civilizational models from Western Europe. Numerous authors weighed in on the debate through to the interwar period, and it continues to be one of the recurring points of contention in discussion regarding the place of Romanian culture in Europe.

there are non-feminist women's organizations, and second: feminism is regarded as a Western luxury, something exotic for refined women, or possibly Western feminisms are adopted *grosso modo* without thinking that "you can adorn yourself with another's feathers, but you can't fly with them" (L. Blaga).²¹

Who Will Clarify Our "Henides"

In this title, I use Weininger's term "Henide" semi-ironically. Weininger understood by Henide the confused mix of thought and emotion because of which women lack logic, self-reflection.²² The presence of "Henides" in women's minds would require the existence of a mediator between women and themselves, a mediator to "clarify the Henides," to put order in the confused mix in their minds. Because of this, women cannot find their place by themselves, but their place is found for them; they can't know by themselves what they are, rather this can be explained to them.

Many feminist studies show the analogy between the construction of femininity and Africanness, orientalism, etc. The construction of the model of the Easterner somehow parallels this. Seen from hegemonic positions, "the Oriental," "the Easterner," "the woman" have something of the "noble savage," are at the "zero level of knowledge." They are perfectly positioned to become mind experiments and anyway, to understand themselves, they need a mediator.²³ There is then a common position (suffering) of women and other categories of marginals: they are surrounded by prejudice, history's "great unnamed," systematically treated as "second rate people."

What happens however when you are "the Eastern of the Easterners," "the marginal of the marginals," the "anonymous of the anonymous"? How many levels of clarification of the "Henides" are needed? Or are the "Henides" just an invention meant to block you even more? And believing that they exist creates the vicious circle that you cannot escape? Concerned, Nietzsche wrote somewhere: "And the breaking of woman's magic spell is at work?"²⁴

21 Editor's note: Lucian Blaga (1895–1961) was one of the most prominent philosophers, poets, and playwrights from the interwar period. Marginalized from the second half of the 1940s, his work was gradually rediscovered after his death.

22 These reflections are found in his book, Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character*. Editor's note: Otto Weininger (1880–1903) was a philosopher who became best known after his suicide for *Geschlecht und Charakter: Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung* [Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles] (Vienna; Leipzig: Braumüller, 1903), infamous for its highly misogynistic treatment of women.

23 Gabriel Liiceanu pursued a broad analysis of this analogy in the study "Filosofia și paradigma feminină a auditoriului" [Philosophy and the feminine paradigm of the audience], *Cearta cu filosofia* [Quarrel with Philosophy] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992).

24 Nietzsche asks this question in a broader context in which he tries to argue against feminism as an emancipatory temptation. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dincolo de bine și de rău* [Beyond Good and Evil] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992). Editor's note: English translation from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 170.

I think there are two possibilities: 1) you are broken out of the spell; 2) you break away from the spell. The second, by itself, is quixotic; the first, by itself, is a more subtle form of colonization. Looking for an “or-or” solution rather than “and-and” ones seems to me a mere continuation of the classical “versus” in which we were taught to live. Looking for a solution that is “the only way” leads to what it has led before: totalitarian thinking, fundamentalism.

I believe the first step in clarifying the “Henides” is to expose them. “The dark continent of femininity” like the “dark continent of Easternness” are easy, defensive expressions. They protect us and indulge our prejudices, keep us in comfortable paradigms: in a comfortable captivity.

The Spell of Collectivism

“Society,” “the people,” “the collectivity,” “the nation,” “the homeland”—all these collective entities have been displayed for years to crush the small, insignificant individual. “The national being” had to prosper at the price of annihilating real beings. I am nothing, I am no one, my existence doesn’t matter—this was a chorus hummed daily as an indirect message by ostentatious propaganda. I don’t have rights, but duties, I am not distinct, but “the sum of social relations.” Traditionally, the collective entity “family” also existed to annihilate, especially in the case of women. Crushed under two collectivisms (that of society as a whole and that of family as a whole), women received doubly enslaving messages.

[...]

With each day, however, the infallible authority of collective entities (at a macrosocial level) suffers serious breaches. Slowly, people learn that the state is after all at their service, the same way that they learn to distinguish between public and private after their long training in the grotesque transparency of their private lives. The family, “the basic cell of society” (and not the “bastion of patriarchy”) is no longer under the microscope that systematically controlled it. Finally, it can convert into “bastion”—that is, an autonomous entity in which abuses and violence can develop under the umbrella of privacy. How not to defend it when we have just gained it? It is maybe the only certain “Über alles” we have left: since the other collective entities kind of lost their force.

[...]

The Spell of Equality and Power

[...]

Apparently, the situation of women in communist states was much better than in others: on the one hand, constitutional stipulations gave credit to this equality, on

the other hand, the principle of proportional representativity in the organs of power was formally respected (or respected as much as possible). Almost half of employees were women, zero wage discrimination, in “parliament” and government women reached almost 30%. The husband and wife were “life comrades,” as equal as possible.

In reality, citizens were all equal in the eyes of the party-state, but they equaled to zero. Women were accepted in power when power made no sense, it was just obedience to the dictatorship. And the “life-comrade” from the party slogan was a crypto-servant in her household.²⁵

[...]

The Spell of Elitism

[...]

At a time when, in the West, the movements to reveal and accept differences, to search for diversity, to democratize more, even to discuss the rights of non-human beings had started, we, “those from the other side of the world,” in order to still hang onto hope, had to hang onto ideas and ideas only. So we sanctified, canonized them, we made them into our protectors against the real world, against the concrete.

I believe this is where one of the explanations can be found for the difficulties of transition, on the one hand, and for sexism, on the other hand. Indeed, many intellectuals remain prisoners of esoteric formulas, of the notion that they are a world apart, poor but dignified, different, cut off from the “world below” with its “petty problems.”

[...]

An entire feminist literature argues that there is a close relationship between elitism and sexism. All the dichotomies: culture/nature, spirit/matter, transcendence/immanence, sacred/profane can be found in the dichotomies man/woman, masculine/feminine. Nevertheless, highly educated women don't seem to notice that elitism degrades women and the feminine, that elitism attaches negative evaluations to them.

[...]

The Spell of Cultural Mimetism

In what follows, I'll refer to several differences from the language and theories of Western feminisms, differences that, if not accounted for, might generate

25 I analyzed this more extensively in the article “Pseudofeminism și totalitarianism” [Pseudofeminism and Totalitarianism] that will be published in the journal *Thinking*, Montclair, N.J. Editor's note: The article was published as Mihaela Miroiu, “The Vicious Circle of Anonymity, or Pseudo-Feminism and Totalitarianism,” *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* 11, no. 3–4 (1994): 54–62.

pseudo-problems or we'd formulate them falsely, creating the impression of mimetism. Some differences stem from language, others from a different history, yet others from a different form of Christianity: the orthodox one.

The patriarchy?

Personally I consider this term to be debatable, and in the context of our culture, even obsolete.

[...]

The term patriarchy seems even more inadequate in the context of Eastern post-totalitarian states. *Pater familias*, the head of the household, the provider, the owner, the one who will enter the "fraternal social contract"²⁶ in public life, this is nonsense in a communist state.

Feminists belonging to socialist orientations have nothing to gloat over. The above situation didn't generate less sexism and did not create better conditions for women. It was nothing but a free pass for the double workday, for draining women's energies in both spheres: the public and the private. Communism led to the disappearance of the patriarchy as a form of family organization (and also of responsibility), replacing it instead with androcracy. Men no longer lead because they're men. The male status is self-foundational, a status that is its own justification (it's true, with the support of all the prejudice inherited from patriarchal culture).

The Marxist formula "existence determines consciousness" proved irrelevant in abolishing androcracy by granting equal economic status to both sexes. Economic determinism functioned in practice rather as a homogenizing factor for everyone's standard of living. By this, the party-state aimed at a homogenization extended as far as abolishing individuality, something that it pursued with the help of propaganda as well, which worked at systematically presenting faceless and nameless masses, images with blurred features.

[...] Not only women were defined "functionally,"²⁷ but the entire population. The existence of each person seemed justified only to the extent that that person served goals that were entirely exterior to their own interests and needs of self-expression. Even the idea of an *arché*, be it masculine or feminine, is questionable, for "the new man" practically had no gender.

[...]

26 See Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

27 The issue of the functional definition of women (as mothers, wives, daughters, lovers, rather than individuals) is analyzed at length by J. Straumanis, "Duties to Oneself: An Ethical Basis for Self-Liberation?" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (1984): 1-13; and in Carol C. Gould and Marx W. Wartofsky, eds., *Women and Philosophy: Towards a Philosophy of Liberation* (New York: Putnam, 1976).

The dualism

[...]

The Orthodox Church, as an institution, has practices no less discriminatory, less sexist, than the Western one. Moreover, being more conservative than Protestantism and even Catholicism, the chances to reduce discriminatory practices in this type of Church seem to me substantially diminished. However, Eastern Orthodoxy as a doctrine seems to me more fruitful for feminist thinking and especially interesting for ecofeminism. It contains a mysticism much removed from the somatophobia of Western churches, a mysticism in which the mundane is far from being treated as inferior.

[...]

I am part of a generation destined to make the transition from capitalism to communism in its youth and the other way around in adulthood.

I lived the first thirty-five years of my life under the mark of absurdity, of the complete lack of individual meaning that could be publicly expressed. The meaning, as much as it was possible, happened in the private sphere of small circles of spiritual kinship and the family. Beyond this sphere (one day a history of everyday life in communist totalitarianism will maybe be written), we didn't live, we survived, we didn't express ourselves, we were condemned to muteness, we were not people, but the "great unnamed": popular masses from cities and villages.

There is a great similarity between totalitarian structures, no matter their name: fascism, communism, patriarchy. [...]

Relinquishing massness in the sense of individualization, of personalization, seems in our case to mean a new return to the individualist values and structures abandoned half a century ago, in the context of the collectivist absurdity. This new return (eternal return?²⁸) cannot have us jump over our own shadow, however; it is not a return to an *origo* from 1944, although in a sense it starts from this landmark *origo*. (Moreover, was that *origo* truly an individualist one? I don't know how correct such an evaluation is.)

The return (too "eternal" in our case) is to a time that was not sacred, but profane (even though many believe it to be sacred in contrast to the absurdity of the past fifty years). That profane time was the time when, in the context of Romanian democracy, a broad and influential feminist movement had started, a movement that was destroyed by the machine that homogenized destinies (despite all appearance of equality between the sexes in the period of absurdity).

28 Editor's note: Reference to Romanian philosopher and historian of religion Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) and his theory of "eternal return," laid out in *Le mythe de l'éternel retour* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949); in English: *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper, 1959).

Even returning to this first feminist movement might function in its turn as a spell, if this return won't account for our own shadow and the extremely significant shifts that happened in post-1970s feminism in the sense of reevaluating differences, diversity.

Beginnings resettle painfully but also tonically, like a natural birth. It's important, however, not to fear the pain and the difficulties of growing such a movement so much that we shield ourselves with contraceptives (here in the sense of "spells") or with abortive temptations. Avoiding existence seems to be a comfortable strategy; but coming into existence is much more difficult. Feminism can be born spontaneously, out of frustrations and dissatisfaction, but it can also be born freely and consciously, as a choice, entirely specific.

Translated by Adela Hincu

Revised by Ioana Miruna-Voiculescu

* * *

Laura Grünberg
Feminism as Personal Experience

Feminism and the transition came into my life almost simultaneously. Each by itself and both of them together "formed" me and "de-formed" me more than I maybe realize.

[...]

The 30-year-old I am had to accept that history had me caught in a trap between generations. *The 30-year-old woman* I am was less able to hang on to the Balzacian myth of the woman à trente ans.²⁹ However, in feminism I found a viable basis for introspection, for rethinking and theorizing my own experiences. [...] I am convinced that the infusion of feminism, cleared of excesses over the past century, has contributed and continues to contribute not so much to learning as to unlearning, which I find important.

The economic, political, social, and moral crises of transition affected *the citizen in me*, baffled by the new kinds of social values, disappointed by the "course of events," distrustful of the architects of democracy (incited by feminism, I started counting them and realized the majority were men).

[...]

29 Editor's note: The reference is to Honoré de Balzac's novel *La femme de trente ans* [A Woman of Thirty], written between 1829–1842. It was translated into Romanian several times over the 19th and 20th centuries, including in the 1970s: *Femeia de treizeci de ani*, trad. Haralambie Grănescu (Bucharest: Minerva, 1971).

As an Eastern European woman, I was confronted with the drama of choosing between ten different detergents, but also with the lack of a common language between East and West especially in the sphere of feminism, where the import of concepts and of models of women's "emancipation" creates either confusion and distrust, or hostility. There are terms that are untranslatable or difficult to translate into Romanian—"gender," "empowerment of women," "gender subjectivity," "gender dimension of transitions," "embodied politics." There are also terms—such as modernity, transition, traditionalism, family—often found in feminist literature as well, which have different meanings and connotations in different geographical, political, historical, and cultural spaces. There is, on the other hand, an enthusiasm about organizing at the expense of conceptual clarification. The premises are therefore there for a dialogue of the deaf between import feminism and the paler Eastern kind, or between activism as such and feminist theory. We had no waves of feminism washing over us to irritate but also stir up mentalities. An "import"—feminism is treated with the same reluctance towards the effects of any import of Western models into the transition countries. It is said that the best way to stop a revolution is to give people something to lose. In this case the fate of the "family" is at stake, creating the premises of an antifeminist climate that precedes feminism, in which any attempt to broach the topic looks like an attack on family values. [...] As the well-known anthropologist Margaret Mead has shown, we are witnessing today a paradox of the family. Although many of its past functions (providing for food, shelter, recreation, medical and social assistance) are fulfilled outside of the family, the family is still alive. And it will also survive the feminist "harassment" that, to use postmodern language, merely attempts to deconstruct the family as a natural unit and to reconstruct it as a social unit (composed of a complex network of meanings and social relations under permanent negotiation and redefinition).

The woman and mother in me were redefined in the most particular way in the context of simultaneously interiorizing the rules/mechanisms of transition and feminist ideas.

[...]

I am convinced that the masculine/feminine schema is simplistic and inconclusive, that feminine/masculine mean different things in formal documents, everyday judgements, for different social classes in different historical, geographical, and cultural spaces. I observe how the qualities inside one group become defects for the members of other groups (inner/outer qualities). Applied to women, this realization makes me see how the independence valued in men becomes questionable in women, how the "natural" sensibility of women becomes ridiculous in men. I agree that the extreme forms of masculinity (materialized, for example, in rape, beatings, or wars) can harm others, whereas the extreme forms of femininity primarily harm women (in the form of self-imposed masochism or inhibition). I find fascinating the

way in which using “masculine” and “feminine” categories as cognitive organizers sometimes serves our thinking about cats—which we consider feminine regardless of sex; or odd numbers—considered feminine by the school of Pythagoras.

But the moment I live out my femininity, things seem different. I am aware of prescribed femininity, I live out the “obligation” to be feminine, even “more feminine” than usually when I try to pronounce the word feminist. I notice how the competition between women to be beautiful is the opposite of the competition inside the other species, I feel that I live in a society where the attributes of masculinity are “the norm,” and whatever has to do with femininity, in a traditional sense, is evaluated negatively (despite the cult of femininity, the admiration for the feminine woman). I feel that the myth of beauty prescribes behaviors and attitudes, but I don’t feel the need for this to be any different. I don’t see anything “bad” in being feminine. Or rather I accept the “bad” that I see. Of course, I don’t personally need to do otherwise. The cultural and political traps of femininity imposed by a patriarchal society and made visible by feminist readings, in my case, take the form of mere everyday challenges to femininity as lived on the street, in the office, at home. I continue to be at peace with the prescribed femininity that is disavowed with convincing argument by various theoreticians.

[...]

The mother of a boy in me found herself in a special position, as shortly after assuming the role of mother I also started dabbling in feminist literature.

[...]

As a mother I had to decipher the basic code of manners for my son, making sure that he would be accepted in the world, that people would say he was raised well. This code suffused with prejudice and stereotypical thinking (in which ideas related to his sexual identity have an important place) was the key to my son’s acceptance by others. There were gestures he was supposed to make, colors he was supposed to wear, thoughts he was not supposed to express because “it’s not proper,” because it’s not ok. Any deviation in appearance and any misconduct could label him as “badly raised” or, in any case, “different,” and of each such deviation, ever since Eve, it wouldn’t have been him but I, his mother, who was guilty. So, by educating him, I was protecting myself from the criticism of a society that invests more in differences than in similarities.

[...]

The Romanian transition means competitiveness, aggressiveness, exacerbated individualism, vertical hierarchies, a society built on values considered masculine. Formal equality between men and women is combined with an unequal start in the competition. The rules (in the elaboration of which they didn’t even participate) clearly put women at a disadvantage. Therefore, the transition is experienced differently (at least according to the statistics) by women and men—in terms

of access to power and decision-making, of unemployment, poverty, time budget, and social assistance. The transition therefore put my son, as a boy, less at a disadvantage than me, as a mother, wife, and employee. In these terms, in which my disadvantage is my child's advantage, any feminist position fades in the face of the magical maternal feeling.

No doubt, as I said at the beginning, feminism and transition combined multiplied my own dilemmas. As to the dilemma of women in the miraculous world of the West: how to reconcile the need to be a woman with the need to be not just a woman, how to measure their time, efforts, and energy in order to find the ideal formula for taking care of everyone while also taking care of themselves, this is also the dilemma of women in Romania. Just that ours is a *dilemma in transition*. That is, less clear, more burdened with prejudice, felt and rejected at the same time by individuals, ignored and nevertheless present in the public discourse of some. At the end of this transition, the dilemma will be overcome both in general and in particular ways. In general, the dilemma will mature through feminist books and studies by professionals, now in training, or through a more coherent women's movement. "Exiting" the dilemma will happen at the individual level. Some women will renegotiate the responsibilities within the family. Others will negotiate positions of power outside of it. Others will return or will stay inside the home, where they anyway already have power and can wield it. Some women will initiate a parental leave law or specific articles in the penal code against "domestic violence" or "sexual harassment," or will put pressure to promote more women on voting lists, while their efforts will be supported by some women and mocked by others. Women will teach "Women's Studies" modules at different university departments, after the existing model of many universities, not only in the West. A handful will seek personal ways to be both in and out. Nevertheless, I believe that few women (and few men!) will remain indifferent.

Translated by Adela Hincu

Revised by Ioana Miruna Voiculescu

Hana Havelková

A Liberal History of the Woman Question in the Czech Lands

TITLE “Liberální historie ženské otázky v českých zemích/Die liberale Geschichte der Frauenfrage in den tschechischen Ländern” [A Liberal History of the Woman Question in the Czech Lands]

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED *Existuje středoevropský model manželství a rodiny?/Gibt es ein Mitteleuropaisches Ehe- und Familienmodell?* [Is There a Central European Model of Marriage and Family?], ed. Hana Havelková (Prague: Divadelní ústav Praha–Rakouský kulturní institut v Praze–Nadace Gender studies, 1995), 19–30 (19–33 German). Excerpts 19–23, 26–29.

LANGUAGE Czech/German

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hana Havelková (née Hlavenková; 1949, Valtice–2020, Prague) was a sociologist, philosopher, and feminist theorist. She came from a middle-class family in southern Moravia. She was married to Miloš Havelka, professor of sociology at Charles University in Prague. They had two daughters: Barbara Havelková, an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Oxford, and Tereza Havelková, an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Musicology at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University.

Hana Havelková graduated in 1972 with a degree in sociology at the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University (now Masaryk University) in Brno, followed by an advanced degree in political philosophy. She continued onto postgraduate research, but to complete the degree she was repeatedly pressured to join the Communist Party. She resorted to a then acceptable gendered strategy to avoid undesirable political involvement: pregnancy—but at the cost of not finishing the CSc (Candidate of Science, roughly the equivalent of a present PhD). She completed it as an already internationally established scholar, when she hardly needed the degree to enhance her reputation. The institutional environment in the Czech Republic had changed since the early 1990s, when numerous people who could not pursue postgraduate studies for political reasons had the opportunity to have work of their dissident lives recognized through formal studies. By the early 2000s, Czech universities began to require a PhD for further employment. Needless to say, irrespective of their academic achievements, “resistance pregnancies” and other family reasons did not constitute grounds for an exemption from pursuing a regular postgraduate curriculum. Hana found herself in the situation where her doctoral examiners were sometimes her former students. She obtained the PhD from the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague in 2007.

Havelková worked as a researcher at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences from the 1970s until 1996, when she joined the then Institute for Liberal Education (Institut základů vzdělanosti, IZV) of Charles University, now the Faculty of Humanities, from which she retired in 2018. She taught gender studies in the “travelling course” organized by Jiřina Šiklová in the academic year 1994–95 for several Czech universities and later feminist theory at the Institute for Liberal Education. At the Faculty of Humanities, she was one of the co-founders of the Department of Gender Studies and its master’s degree program—the first and so far the only one in the Czech Republic—that received accreditation in 2004. She was a guest professor at the University of Innsbruck in 2003 and had research stays at the Universities of Oslo in 1993 and of Vienna in 2002.

In the early 1990s, Hana Havelková worked for the European UNESCO Center for Education in Human Rights, and from 1999 to 2006 chaired the Czech Helsinki Committee. She was among the founding circle of scholars and activists around the Curriculum Centre and Library for Gender Studies in Prague when it registered as an NGO in 1992 as the Gender Studies Centre (Nadace Gender Studies). This important hub and meeting place for feminist and gender scholars was established by the former dissident and sociologist Jiřina Šiklová with seed funding from the Network of East-West Women established by the committed American academic and activist Ann Snitow in 1991.¹ Hana was a long-standing member of the Board of Directors of the Centre and briefly its director in 1997. In the mid-1990s she was a member of the Interregional Seminar on Gender and Culture established by the founder of the program in gender studies at the new Central European University, Prof. Nancy Stepan. This circle of scholars brought together many researchers and educators developing gender studies in East Central and Southeastern Europe.

She was a member of the editorial boards of the *Czech Sociological Review*, *L’Homme* (Vienna), *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* (now Wiley-Blackwell) and of the “Editorial Matronate” of the Slovak-Czech feminist magazine *Aspekt*. Between 1992–1998 she was a committee member of the International Association of Women Philosophers (IAPh) and in 2002–2003 a member of the expert group of the European Commission ENWISE on the situation of women in academia in post-socialist countries. She also served on the Czech Government Council for the Equality of Men and Women.

Hana Havelková was a key Czech thinker on feminist theory and a prolific contributor to the East-West debates on the need and agenda of feminism in the post-socialist context in the 1990s. She also wrote about the gendered dimensions of the

1 For more information on the Network of East-West women see <https://www.neww.org/> (Accessed March 1, 2023), and Snitow, *Visitors*.

public and private spheres, the family, transformations of gender culture in state socialism, gender and the media, and on women's political participation.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · ed. *Lidská práva, ženy a společnost* [Human Rights, Women and Society] (Prague: Evropské středisko UNESCO pro výchovu k lidským právům, 1992); ed. *Existuje středoevropský model manželství a rodiny?/Gibt es ein Mitteleuropaisches Ehe- und Familienmodell?* [Is There a Central European Model of Marriage and Family?] (Prague: Divadelní ústav Praha–Rakouský kulturní institut v Praze–Nadace Gender Studies, 1995); with M. Blagojević, M. Bundule, A. Burkhardt, M. Calloni, E. Ergma, J. Glover, D. Groó, D. Mladenich, E.H. Oleksy, N. Sretenova, M.F. Tripsa, D. Velichová, and A. Zvinkliene, *Waste of Talents: Turning Private Struggles into a Public Issue. Women and Science in the Enwise Countries* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2003); with Libora Oates-Indruchová, eds. *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice* (London–New York: Routledge, 2014), in Czech: *Vyvlastněný hlas: Proměny genderové kultury české společnosti 1948–1989* (Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON), 2015); Sokolová, Věra, and Lubica Kobová, eds. *Odvaha nesouhlasit: feministické myšlení Hany Havelkové a jeho reflexe* [The Courage to Disagree: Hana Havelková's Feminist Thought and Its Reflection] (Prague: Fakulta humanitních studií Univerzity Karlovy, 2019) · MOST IMPORTANT TRANSLATION · Herta Nagl-Docekal, *Feministická filozofie: výsledky, problémy, perspektivy* [Feminist Philosophy: Achievements, Issues and Perspectives] (Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON), 2007).

Libora Oates-Indruchová

CONTEXT

Two new states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, came into existence on the territory of Czechoslovakia on January 1, 1993. Although the Bratislava publishers of the new feminist magazine *Aspekt* founded in the same year called it a Slovak-Czech magazine and invited Hana Havelková and Jiřina Šiklová from the Czech Republic into its editorial “matronate,” the border between the successor countries became gradually more and more distinct in the separate developments of gender and feminist research. The Czech government remained formally committed to the equality of men and women, but any notable new efforts in that area were to wait more or less until the EU accession process at the end of the millennium. The year 1995 was marked by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September. In contrast to their prominence at the previous three conferences, the countries of the former Eastern Bloc were relegated to a supporting role. From among the circle around the Prague Gender Studies Centre, Jiřina Šiklová managed to secure participation at the NGO Forum at Beijing.

Czech media, after the brief period of openness in the early 1990s, became largely hostile to feminist ideas, or at least closed to the kind of informative coverage of

feminist and gender issues like the five-part explanatory text by Jiřina Šmejkalová, excerpts of which we include in this volume. It can be argued that an important contributing factor to this turn, or even its trigger, were three articles written by the prominent Czech exile writer Josef Škvorecký warning against the “adventures” of American feminism, published in *Respekt*, a leading intellectual bi-monthly, between August and November 1992. Their targets were political correctness and sexual harassment. The latter was later belittled as *sexuální harašení* (the verb *harašit* means “to emit a rattling noise,” possibly a scary noise, and also means “losing one’s marbles”). Škvorecký is often mistakenly credited with the invention of the term in the three articles, but the term appeared only several months later in an article co-authored by two other exiles, Ota Ulč and Vladimír Stwora in the weekly *Mladý svět*, and again in 1994, also in *Mladý svět*, under the sole authorship of Ulč. If the word “feminist” appeared in the media at the time at all, then often with the attribute “militant.”

The hostility of the media contrasted with the lively activist scene. *Altos and Sopranos: A Pocket Handbook of Women’s Organizations*, published by the Prague Gender Studies Centre, lists interview-based profiles and full contact details of no less than 30 organizations in 1994. The Gender Studies Centre itself was instrumental in introducing gender studies courses to Czech universities. Jiřina Šiklová organized the first “travelling” course in the academic year 1994–95 that was team-taught at several Czech universities. The Centre organized an international conference “East-East Gender Studies Inspirations” in Liblice in May 1994. There, disparate topics were discussed, such as feminist responses to the Yugoslav war, or how and whether to translate “gender” into Slavic languages. In October of the same year, the Centre and another women’s organization, proFem,² co-organized the conference “Women and Socialism” in Příhonice u Prahy, at which Hana Havelková presented a strong argument in defense of the validity of the state socialist women’s experience for the feminist agenda in post-socialism. One other landmark initiative was the press conference on violence against women held at the occasion of the International Day against Violence against Women in 1995. Its importance lay in the fact that it managed to attract the media to give serious attention to the problem. At that time, the Czech Republic did not record statistics on domestic violence and cooperation with the police regarding trafficking in women developed only very slowly.

Havelková, alongside Jiřina Šiklová, Jiřina Šmejkalová, and several other Czech and Slovak scholars, began to engage in the East-West debates on the need for feminism in post-socialist East Central Europe. Havelková’s presentation at the symposium “Philosophy and Gender Difference in Czechoslovakia and Hungary,” held on

2 proFem was founded with seed money from the German Frauen Anstiftung in 1994 as a consultancy for women’s projects. Gradually, they focused their activities on violence against women and sexual and gender-based violence. For more details see <https://www.profem.cz/en/about-us> (Accessed March 1, 2023).

May 4, 1991, at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Vienna must have been the very first international scholarly feminist/gender event with Czechoslovak participation. Two features are remarkable in the published work of these Czech and Slovak scholars. First, despite the persistent rhetoric of feminism being an “import” from the West, a look at the reference lists of these articles reveals considerable drawing on Czech and Slovak sources and on non-Anglo-American sources—German, Austrian, and Scandinavian. Second, they not only explained why feminism was not popular among Czech women (which was a claim that could have been made only on the basis of the hostile media coverage, because no empirical research on the subject was available at the time), they also developed feminist theories from East Central European positions against the frameworks available in “Western” feminisms. In that, gender studies were quite unique among all the new scholarly disciplines that developed after 1989 in the Czech Republic. There was no comparable body of theoretical work published by Czech scholars internationally in the 1990s.

The drive of Havelková’s work published in Czech differed considerably from her work published abroad. When she wrote for a Czech audience, she explained the relevance of gender perspectives and the usefulness of Western feminist theories for the Czech context. The text “A Liberal History of the Woman Question in the Czech Lands” is an early example of this “educational” work. In it, she takes on the paradox of the prominence of the political agenda of the Czech women’s movement from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries and the lack of interest in gender issues by Czech politicians, media, and historians. She then proceeds to explain the paradox by a threefold “burial” of the democratic traditions pertaining to women’s equality: the appropriation of the history and agenda of the women’s movement by the Communist Party, disinterest by the Communist opposition in the woman question, considering it irrelevant, and the ideological use of women’s rights in the international arena during the Cold War by the countries of the Eastern Bloc. Havelková here foreshadows her later concept of the three-stage “expropriation” (*Enteignung, vyvlastnění*) in relation to the discussion of women’s and gender issues in the Czech Republic: apart from the creation of a single women’s organization subordinated to the Communist Party in 1950, the next two stages were the dissolution of the mass organization in 1952 and transfer of the agenda of “the woman question” to the care of “experts” in the 1960s.

The text, excerpts of which we present below, was published in the proceedings from the conference “Is There a Central European Model of Marriage and Family?” held in November 1994 in Prague. It is symptomatic of the public discourse of the times that the words “women” or “feminism” do not feature in the title. By 1994 “family” was a better currency for organizing an academic forum outside of the circles of “gender initiates.” However, the volume itself, edited by Havelková, includes texts by other active feminist researchers: the sociologist Marie Čermáková, the literary

scholar Blanka Svadbová, the Austrian feminist philosopher Herta Nagl-Docekal, and historian Edith Saurer.

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Libora Oates-Indruchová

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Hana Havelková

A Liberal History of the Woman Question in the Czech Lands

The Past Deliberately Forgotten

Few aspects of Czech (Czechoslovak) pre-communist history are affected by as much public indifference as the history of the woman question and the women's movement, despite the fact that two of its most remarkable representatives died in executioner's hands: one fascist, the other communist. Nor did the topic emerge in either 1968 or 1989, outside of the interest shown by a group of people associated with the Gender Studies Centre. However, the majority of society is still unfamiliar with the name of Františka Plamínková, the senator and chairperson of the Women's National Council, whom many sources claim was the most renowned Czech woman abroad during the interwar period, and who was executed by the fascists. During the period of the Prague Spring in 1968, and then

again after 1989, the public became acquainted with the fate of Milada Horáková, who was condemned to death in a political trial in 1950. However, her role as Plamínková's successor in the umbrella women's organization and as a lawyer who had worked all her life on legislation pertaining to women's rights remained suppressed.³ Similarly, during the wave of interest in Masaryk, when his work was discussed from every possible angle, his unique role in the process of changing attitudes toward questions of the relations between the sexes in Czech—and later Czechoslovak—society was somehow lost.

What is the reason for precisely this history having been so perfectly “buried”? I believe that at least three causes aligned here, two of which are of an ideological nature.

Communist authorities only recognized the women's movement which was part of the struggle of the proletariat and it therefore only maintained an awareness of prominent communist women, such as Jožka Jabůrková—but not for their specifically women's activism, but rather for their general political activism. Czech representatives of the pre-communist women's organization (Plamínková and Horáková) were, moreover, members of the “enemy” Czechoslovak National Social Party. And there was another motive as well: the communist regime incorporated women's emancipation into its political program and it even appropriated successes that had been achieved earlier. It did so by taking very concrete steps: by transferring the Women's National Council into its custody under another name (the Czechoslovak Women's Union); by taking over draft laws on the protection of women and children which had already been prepared and incorporating them into the communist constitution⁴; and by suppressing information about the past.

Paradoxically, however, the woman question also became unpopular in the anticommunist opposition, especially after 1968. In the period of “the Thaw”⁵, in the nineteen-sixties, it was still part of cultural discussions to some extent—for instance, Jan Patočka devoted extraordinary care to the first Czech edition of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, which was published in 1966. In the context of the development of French existentialism, Patočka evaluated de Beauvoir's work as the “most remarkable fruit of the turn to concrete life, to history and sociology,”⁶ and he considered the relationship between man and woman to be one of the most profound questions of humanity. His students are no longer attracted to this topic. The most famous one—Václav Havel—says that feminism “seems Dada” here.⁷

3 For more details, see Hendrychová, “Z historie ženského hnutí v Československu.”

4 See Pelantová, “Miladě Horákové, bojovnici za svobody.”

5 Editor's note: “The Thaw” is the term used for the period of cultural and political liberalization after Stalin's death in 1953, resulting from the policies of his successor, Nikita Khrushchev. The term can be used more broadly for phases of liberalization during state socialism in Eastern and Central Europe.

6 Patočka, “Francouzský existencialismus a Simone Beauvoirová,” 395.

7 Havel, *Do různých stran*, 79.

By that, he means that it's only a marginal game in the face of the real problems, which, during the communist era when he wrote this statement, were the struggle with history itself and the goal of ending the historical detour that we got ourselves into as people and as citizens, and not as men and women.

The distaste for this topic, however, had an even deeper ideological cause among the political opposition. In the Cold War period, the communist countries jockeyed for position over human rights by arguing from the standpoint of economic and social rights (including women's rights), while the democratic countries focused on political and civil rights. It's no coincidence that the communist countries made an example out of themselves by adopting international conventions on women's rights. They often proposed them and were among the first to ratify them. It is therefore no wonder that, under these circumstances, the warriors for political and civil rights saw the "woman question" as ammunition and defense of the other side, and as part of its alibi.

[...]

Today it is also quite evident that despite the very similar experience with the socialist model of women's emancipation in all the former communist countries, the picture of relations between the sexes is markedly different in each of them and it is thus appropriate to seek historically deeper determinants of this picture than communist history. Among other reasons, because general ideas about ourselves can generate new myths that don't correspond to reality.

Interest from an Unexpected Aide

Under the circumstances of this triple "burial," interest in the "feminist" aspects of our democratic past would probably be revived only over the long term and sporadically. Czech historians avoid the topic of the women's movement. There are already outstanding studies by historical demographers.⁸ However, the subjects of changes, figures in the women's movement and their specific activities, are also conspicuously suppressed in these reports. It is paradoxical that interest in the notable personalities of the Czech women's movement and in its specific outcomes arrives from outside. At present, works by American Slavists from the 1980s and 1990s are the most comprehensive, and factually and interpretationally the richest sources of knowledge of the Czech women's movement from the beginning of the nineteenth century (Freeze, Garver, David-Fox), but there is also a large-scale French study (Volet-Jeannert), and it is necessary to mention Skilling's work "T. G. Masaryk: A Radical Feminist" (1991) as well. (Another paradox is that German studies in this area, despite our greater geopolitical proximity, focus nearly exclusively

8 For example, Horská and Fialová, "Česká žena očima statistiky posledních sto let."

on Russia). For that matter, the historian Pavla Horská addresses this situation herself, when she says: “However, it cannot be said that contemporary Czech historiography’s interest in this famous period of the ‘woman question’ was spontaneous. Rather, it seems that Czech historians were pushed toward this subject by its general popularity in world historiography over the last twenty years.”⁹

The image presented by studies written in English (none of them have been translated into Czech yet) is almost suspiciously positive: the history of the Czech women’s movement is seen as a bright history worthy of admiration, and not only for the achievements of the women themselves, but also for the overall social climate which was very favorable to them at the time, and in comparison with the surrounding countries. It follows both directly and indirectly from this image that the women’s struggle in the Czech lands didn’t need to be escalated as militantly, because even the patriarchal oppression of women didn’t reach its most flagrant expressions here. This indicates pragmatism on the part of the women and of relative understanding on the part of the men. This image gives rise to the suspicion of idealization caused, perhaps, precisely by the fact that the image is, after all, being created from afar. Above all, however, it is determined by the fact that it was created mainly on the basis of data that expressed the extent to which women were given the possibility to enter the public sphere as well as the extent that women availed themselves of it. The studies then actually present a great deal of evidence of Czech women’s clear successes in education and in political and public life, but mainly of their indisputable visibility and influence. Let’s mention, for instance, that Czech feminists achieved the opening of the first girls’ high school in the Habsburg monarchy (the *Minerva gymnázium* in Prague), and they were also the first to enable women’s admission to universities within the monarchy. The fact that in 1908 there were already seven women’s periodicals being published in the Czech lands while many neighboring countries had not yet published even one, and that already in 1911 a woman had been elected as a deputy into the Bohemian Diet is also impressive. The leading women figures mainly came from the middle classes, and their feminism was liberalist; however, they did significantly engage in social and charitable fields, in organizing education and aid to women from poorer social strata. In addition, it is also necessary to mention the influence of the strong Social Democratic Party, which was in favor of women’s emancipation and open to women’s membership.

[...]

9 Horská and Pešková, “Rozhovor mezi filosofkou a historičkou o ženské otázce v Čechách,” 758.

The Presence of the Liberal Tradition in the Present

Working with the concept of “tradition” naturally bears the known theoretical risks of an artificial construction, the suppression of other or opposing lines and the like. However, when it comes to the history of the Czech woman question, it seems that at least one line is apparent, which is the line of an uninterrupted process of liberalizing women’s position in society. From this perspective, even the communist emancipation “from above” didn’t represent such a foreign and violent implant as it was perceived in countries where communism invaded a conservative and strongly religious environment. Therefore, we can also consider it, in a sense, to be a furthering of this “traditional” continuity.

The reaction to another historical turn, the revolution in 1989, brought conservative attitudes toward the “woman question” that seemed surprising in light of previous developments. They are not surprising in that they correspond to the society’s overall somewhat conservative reaction immediately following the revolution. However, I’ll take the liberty of expressing a few theses that establish a paradoxical link between this “non-traditional” attitude in the aforementioned sense in the Czech public to “gender” questions (intellectual debates in the mass media don’t deviate much from general public awareness) and precisely this liberal tradition.

First of all, I believe that its relatively long and successful history led to a significant internalization of awareness of the equality of the sexes, and that especially the formal equality of opportunity has been taken for granted in Czech society for a long time. As I have already stated, socialism essentially continued the pre-war emancipatory trend and, by encouraging women to participate in public life, it seemingly followed through with the demands of liberal feminism—all except for one crucial “detail.” The very meaning of equality of opportunity had become meaningless, that is, the basic freedom of an individual to enjoy these opportunities. So we have to deal with two processes here: with the process of deepening the self-evidence of women’s equal social status, and the simultaneous process of the devaluation of its inherent content, which unjustly discredits the conception of liberalist emancipation as such in people’s understanding. It’s partly a lack of information, and partly an ideological intent. The awareness of a historical continuity between the pre-communist and communist liberalization of women’s status was unpleasant in the post-November atmosphere because its ideological mood emphasized the anomalousness, foreignness, and implantedness of everything the communist regime had supported. This ideological-emotional animosity will probably fade over time. In the discourse on gender issues, which very often seeks its arguments by polemicizing with Western feminism (or rather, with what is known about it here), there is also another and very important note. It consists

in the fairly widespread perception that there have already been enough “revolutions” in gender relations here, and it expresses the justified position that a change in a relationship becomes meaningful only when this relationship is cultivated. Considering the long time that this kind of cultivation requires, we can thus diagnose in the field of the relations between the sexes a distaste for participating yet again in historicity, as the historian Dušan Třeštík writes:

...our time here in Central Europe is the time of history. Historicity is not necessarily a characteristic of time; in France political time is measured by an alternation of ‘republics’ that are always the same... but we live between individual, unrepeatable wars and revolutions of all kinds, and we’re constantly beginning on the burnt land of military and moral battles, nothing lasts as elsewhere in happier latitudes and longitudes, everything must be renewed and thus, above all, justified. Always over and over again. This is our history. It’s neither a flow nor a duration, but a chain of greater or lesser catastrophes (from a pessimist’s perspective) or continual construction (after these catastrophes—from an optimist’s perspective).¹⁰

This also explains the striking and remarkable fear of feminism in our society—namely, a fear that, in whatever way, another reversal of values is coming. There is widespread skepticism toward any “fundamental” or absolute solutions.

The bearers of cultivation should again be women. The humanizing potential of femininity, women’s experience, and a women’s perspective on the world, and emphasis on the differences between the sexes are what have the most appeal. I believe this position is also made possible by what I have described as a significant experience with liberal feminism, in the sense that masculine domination is no longer seen as the number one problem, and the basis, i.e., a more equal relationship, is more or less given, and it is only necessary to refine it. Many women are even unafraid to call for a degree of return of dignity to a man’s role—they’re already emancipated, and now they want an equal partner. It’s clearly no coincidence that the subject of men and fathers also appeared with urgency at the time when the Gender Studies Centre was founded (and it was decisive in the choice of its name); a study of only women’s issues was unanimously rejected. It’s probably also not coincidental that at international meetings of women, which are usually organized as East-West meetings, Czech women regularly “stand out” with their opinion that women’s issues are exaggerated, with their weak concern over the future, and especially with their worrying over men and insistence on the value of solidarity between the sexes. “That was the umpteenth time I’m hearing that from Czech women,” one participant told me, in amazement.

10 Třeštík, “Potřebujeme ‘trh pravd.’”

It is a question whether or not it is coincidental that after 1989 there hasn't yet been any serious and explosive problem that only concerns women which someone could turn into a political cause. The abortion law remained liberal, and so far there hasn't been higher unemployment among women than men, and there also isn't any significant moral pressure on women to return to the home. It's a question of whether the inconspicuous fruit of the history of nonconfrontational feminism isn't a kind of mutual will to reasonableness. I know that many women are politically loyal because that's exactly what they want to believe. However, a lowering of living standards is already beginning to threaten the subsistence of families with children, and especially single mothers, the overall unemployment will undoubtedly grow, and the battle of the sexes can soon become a reality in the labor market. The draft of the new family law is still unpublished. In other words, the true test of the proclaimed "solidarity of the sexes" or "mutual will to reasonableness" is yet to come for Czech society.

In this context, allow me to make a final remark. Czech society and Czech women have already been through a lot. In this contribution I have sought answers to the questions of whether this experience has been good for anything. I sought a certain hope in a past which many say is "glorious." I attempted to sketch out a possible way to recognize our history in the present. However, in doing so, I expose myself to the risk that I'm constructing a certain notion of a tradition that can function as a false ideology. However, in my view, the very act of posing questions (I'm unable to refrain from asking them) and offering at least working hypotheses is worthwhile. If there is any historical capital here, and if it has the potential of goodwill within it, it could act in the positive sense as something that binds both sexes to a certain kind of behavior. However, at the same time we all know that our era is a fertile ground for the creation of all kinds of myths. The existing will for solidarity between the sexes can become a dangerous myth in the moment when it begins to cover up real problems. The effort to suppress or ignore problems is always paid for by transferring their solutions to individuals, to individual women and individual men to an extent that they often cannot bear. I'm unsure whether we're already approaching such a moment—but it's the other side of my subject, which I had to leave aside this time.

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Translated by Melinda Reidinger

Lithuanian Women's Party

Party Platform for the 1996 Parliamentary Elections

AUTHOR Lietuvos moterų partija [Lithuanian Women's Party]

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The Lithuanian Women's Party (Lietuvos moterų partija) was registered on April 21, 1995, under the leadership of professor and former prime minister (1990–1991) Kazimira Prunskienė and Kaunas businesswoman Dalia Teišerskytė.¹ At the time of the registration, the party had 700 members.² By the second party congress in 1996, 193 delegates represented 30 local branches of the party, while the overall number of members reached 1,130.³ At the elections for the Seimas (i.e., parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania in 1996, Kazimira Prunskienė was the only member from the Women's Party elected, and at the municipal elections in 1997, fourteen party members made it into office. To attract more voters, the Lithuanian Women's Party reorganized into the New Democracy – Women's Party in 1998. In 2001, it merged with the Lithuanian Peasants' Party, creating the Farmers' and New People's Party, which was renamed the Union of Democratic Parties. Finally, it became the Union of Lithuanian Peasants and Greens in 2012.⁴

The first candidate on the electoral roll of the Lithuanian Women's Party for the 1996 Seimas elections,⁵ Kazimira Prunskienė (b. 1943), had a successful academic career: she taught at Vilnius University (1965–1986), earned a doctoral degree in economics from the Institute of Economics, Estonian Academy of Sciences (1986), held several leadership positions (e.g., deputy director of the Lithuanian Institute of Agricultural Economics, 1986–1988), and later she was also professor at Vilnius

1 "Lietuvos moterų partija jau įregistruota" [The Lithuanian Women's Party Already Registered], *Lietuvos rytas*, 22 April 1995.

2 "Lietuvos moterų partija jau įregistruota."

3 Artūras Račas, "Lietuvos moterų partija sieks plačios koalicijos" [Lithuanian Women's Party Seeks Broad Coalition], *Lietuvos rytas*, 26 February 1996.

4 *Lietuvos enciklopedija*, "Lietuvos moterų partija" [Lithuanian Women's Party], <https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/lietuvos-moteru-partija>.

5 Vyriausia rinkimų komisija, "Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo rinkimai '96" [1996 Parliamentary Elections for the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania], <https://www.vrk.lt/statiniai/puslapiai/n/rinkimai/seim96/part21.htm-1.htm>.

Gediminas Technical University (1996–2000).⁶ She was one of very few women in the independence initiative group Sąjūdis (Reform Movement) established in 1988.⁷ The Reform Movement originated from social clubs that emerged in Lithuania during the time of Perestroika, usually with political overtones. One of the most prominent of these clubs was the Lithuanian Persitvarkymo Sąjūdis (Reform Movement), which turned into the national movement for independence.⁸ Kazimira Prunskienė became the first prime minister of independent Lithuania on March 17, 1990.⁹ She held office for ten months, was a long-time member of the Seimas from 1996, and later Minister of Agriculture (2004–2008). She also participated in the presidential elections of 2004, losing to President Valdas Adamkus in a tough fight in the second round.¹⁰ Prunskienė continued her successful career as politician until 2009, but retreated from public life in 2012 due to health reasons.

Second on the Lithuanian Women's Party list in 1996 was Aldona Baranauskienė, who worked as deputy director of the Department of Public Utilities and Services under the Ministry of Construction and Urban Planning. Here, she actively participated in the creation of laws and by-laws related to issues of communal apartment management and household services for residents.¹¹ The other candidates on the election roll had university degrees, prominent careers, and played active roles in society, from economists and businesswomen to engineers and doctors.

The Women's Party was seen by its founders as the main solution to the difficulties that people were experiencing during the time of transition. It reflected the perspective of women who had taken positions of power in parliament, business, or academia about democratic processes and the results of transition. Thus, the 1996 program elaborated collectively during the Party's Congress is a very important political and historical document that defines the period after the transition from the Soviet state to a national state in terms of the development of gender politics and the approach to women's problems in 1990s Lithuania. In a speech from 1997, held in Vienna during the Vital Voices Conference, Kazimira Prunskienė, as chairwoman of the party, admitted that "the changes in the political and economic system and democratic

6 Lietuvos respublikos seimas [Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania], "Lietuvos Nepriklausomybės Akto signatarų biografijos" [Biographies of Signatories of the Lithuanian Independence Act], https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=37045&p_k=1&p_t=83498.

7 Jurėnienė and Purvaneckienė, "Women's Initiatives and the Reform Movement of Lithuania (1988–1989)," 157.

8 Lietuvos respublikos seimas, "Lietuvos Nepriklausomybės Akto signatarų biografijos."

9 Lietuvis sąjūdis [Reform Movement of Lithuania], <http://www.lietsajudis.lt/index.php/istorija>.

10 Rūta Pukenė, "Nuo Gintarinės ledi iki Šatrijos Raganos: kaip šiandien gyvena Kazimira Prunskienė" [From Amber Lady to Shatrija the Witch: How Kazimira Prunskienė Lives Today], *Delfi*, 23 January 2020, <https://www.delfi.lt/multimedija/archive/nuo-gintarines-ledi-iki-satrijos-raganos-kaip-siandien-gyvena-kazimira-prunskiene.d?id=83355169>.

11 Eiviltas Paraščiakas, "A. Baranauskienė—ketino tapti mokytoja, bet sėdo į statybų ministrės kėdę" [A. Baranauskienė—Intended to Become a Teacher, but Became the Minister of Construction], *Statybų naujienos.lt*, 25 March 2016, <https://www.statybunaujienos.lt/naujiena/A-Baranauskiene-ketino-tapti-mokytoja-bet-sedo-i-statybu-ministres-kede/>7304.

reforms have not automatically eliminated all forms of discrimination, nor have they created equal opportunities.”¹² The speech as well as the program testified to the gendered aspect of the new nationalist state, expressing disappointment with the existing political system, and with the consequences of transition in terms of economic instability and social insecurity.

During the first years of transformation in Lithuania, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, social policies were put aside while poverty and unemployment rose, and the standard of living dropped immensely. The Women's Party identified these social problems and aimed to introduce a fairer labor division between women and men, reduce feminized poverty, improve maternity conditions, eliminate violence against women and children, and create better conditions for women to have access to various resources like bank loans, social and material benefits, etc.¹³

The focus on women's issues was not something very explicitly expressed in the women's party program. The party members maintained that their policies addressed everyone and were not seeking to act against men. The party appears at first sight to have been more of a gateway for women to government politics, so that they could put the problems of family and children on the agenda. According to Kazimira Prunskienė, the Lithuanian Women's Party was the only party out of the twenty-four which participated in the 1996 elections where the majority of members were women. She maintained that only women are capable of seeing reality from women's eyes and feel it with a mother's heart.¹⁴ Thus, it was women who founded the party and wrote its program in 1996, and it was women's strategy to address the social issues that were treated in official state politics as secondary. The Women's Party drew attention to the ignorance of state politics towards women's issues, and at the same time existing social issues were considered a consequence of excluding women from national politics.

Agnė Bagdžiūnaitė

CONTEXT

The founding congress of the Lithuanian Women's Party was held on February 25, 1995. The program of the Women's Party stated that its foundation was a continuation of matriarchal culture, and a sign of its revival in Lithuania. The party members identified with the layer of matriarchal culture of the old Lithuanian past, mainly Neolithic times, which had been researched and described in the works of world-famous archaeologist and anthropologist Marija Gimbutienė.

12. Prunskienė, "The Role of Women in Democracy."

13. Lietuvos moterų partija, *Programa 1996 m. Seimo rinkimams*.

14. Prunskienė, "Suteikite galimybę moterims padėti jums ir Lietuvai."

During the second Lithuanian Women's Party Convention, the founder of the party, Kazimira Prunskienė, expressed the aim of the Women's Party to be in the coalition with the parties of the center or left of center, such as the Labor Party, the Liberal and Centre Union, the Social Democratic Party, and the Christian Democratic Union.¹⁵ Also, the Lithuanian Women's Party professed its opposition to the political games and aggressive competition for power in government which occurred at the time.¹⁶

Growing uncertainty in the face of major changes in the 1990s, and men's ignorance of women's issues in relation to social politics, were the catalysts for the establishment of the Women's Party in 1996. Its members maintained that women's exclusion from politics was not natural. They argued about the need to include women into the political sphere on the basis of democratic principles and by setting the main criteria for politicians' competence in the Lithuanian Women's Party program.

The members of the party contested the dominant discourse that politics were not for women and that women should not consider themselves good politicians. Women responded to the worsening conditions of living in Lithuania by demanding social security and stability for families. In the logic outlined by Amy Borovoy and Kristen Ghodsee in their analysis of "social feminism" in Japan and Bulgaria,¹⁷ the women of the Lithuanian Women's Party relinquished their own autonomy as career women and private persons in order to gain a voice in politics and work towards providing social security for all families in Lithuania. Such a strategy can be seen as coming from the tradition of "social feminism," also related to the Soviet past, which was very relevant to the members of Women's Party at the time. Thus, the Women's Party's role was double, as it represented women in parliament but also aimed to re-establish social politics.

The commitment to social security was not a prerogative in the national politics of Lithuania. Politicians in East Central Europe were advised by external experts to change social spending politics in order to stimulate economic growth, which was "seen by many as the only long-term remedy for the increasing problem of poverty."¹⁸ For women, this meant the push to leave the workplace and return to the household to fulfill the duties of wife and mother since industries were closing, the scarcity of jobs was high during the new economic reform, and cuts in social programs were enormous.¹⁹ The majority of men were reluctant towards women who wanted to keep working.²⁰ At the same time, women in Lithuania felt unwanted in politics, seeing the

15 Račas, "Lietuvos moterų partija sieks plačios koalicijos."

16 Prunskienė, "Suteikite galimybę."

17 Borovoy and Ghodsee, "Decentering Agency in Feminist Theory."

18 Gal, *The Politics of Gender after Socialism*, 65.

19 White, "Women in Changing Societies," 205.

20 White, "Women in Changing Societies," 205.

small number of women politicians in the Seimas. The Lithuanian Women's Party program from 1996 went against that lack of representation.

The family was very important to nationalist politics at the time, and it was used as a tool to control women's role in society. The Lithuanian Women's Party also used a nationalist rhetoric in their program, but in order to promote social spending and to reverse the patriarchal drive of nationalism. The party claimed that the main goal of national social politics should be to eliminate poverty, reduce social tensions, decrease mortality, and ensure a living income and better livelihood for families. They emphasized that from 1991–1996 the average income of Lithuanians had dropped three-fold.²¹ They also added that most of the families and pensioners in Lithuania received only a third of the income needed to sustain their minimum standard of living. According to the statistics provided by economist Vida Kanopienė, in 1992, 75 percent of Lithuanian society lived below the poverty line, compared to 15 percent in 1989.²²

While the party program upheld the independence of individuals in a free-market economy, and their right to have their own business or work in the system of wage labor, it also stressed that all families should be able to have a secure source of income and, later on, a decent pension. According to women in the party, there was a great need to create more jobs, not only for young people but also for those who were still able to work and who also required retraining programs in order to find a workplace in the new market economy. They also stressed that job training should support society to adapt to the new market conditions. Kanopienė showed that most women who were unemployed in 1994 had a high professional and educational status, but at the same time most of the (re-)training programs were not adjusted to women.²³

The Women's Party program did not focus specifically on women's employment issues, nor mentioned women, whereas families, pensioners, and people with disabilities were singled out as groups with special needs. By focusing on the family, the program aimed to show that women's unemployment was not only the problem of women, but it also affected the people who depended on them. Thus, the program emphasized that the family's welfare depended on social programs and social spending and that it was the state's duty to provide it.

In the translated excerpt about family and childcare, the program conveyed a deep concern for the economic changes that affected the family as the basic cell of society. The most pressing problem was that of abandoned children who, as the program asserted, should have been integrated into families, schools, and society, and should have been a first priority for the government in terms of funding. The program also

21 Lietuvos moterų partija, *Programa 1996 m. Seimo rinkimams*, 14.

22 Kanopienė, "Women and the Economy," 72.

23 Kanopienė, "Women and the Economy," 76.

pointed out that all children should have access to education regardless of their social, economic, or disability status. It stressed the economic factor in relation to children's rights, as the party wanted to establish a support program for young families and a special social fund for families with multiple children, families with single parents, and poor families. Support for children was supposed to include free food in all educational institutions, cover summer vacations, and help for the purchase of school supplies.²⁴ Considering that 75 percent of the population was living below the poverty line, the ambition of the Women's Party program was to eradicate feminized poverty. This was meant to be achieved through support for children, and subsidies for young families and pensioners. Subsidies for housing were also included in the program as a measure to reduce poverty for families.

The publication from which the excerpt was translated can be found at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania in Vilnius. According to it, the Women's Party program was printed for the Seimas elections. The last page also indicates that the person responsible for the publication was K. D. Prunskienė. The establishment of the Women's Party and its program remain forgotten facts in the feminist history of Lithuania. Since the Women's Party existed under this name for only three years, it is difficult to estimate the impact it had on the Lithuanian political scene.

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24 Lietuvos moterų partija, *Programa 1996 m. Seimo rinkimams*, 16.

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Agnė Bagdžiūnaitė

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Lithuanian Women's Party Party Platform for the 1996 Parliamentary Elections

Social Policy

The Lithuanian Women's Party focuses on the social responsibility of the state. In implementing the Lithuanian Women's Party platform, the Party seeks not to distribute a created product, but envisions it as a source of social well-being which must be expanded. The Women's Party considers one of its most important tasks to be the development of a dynamic social policy in response to the state's social responsibility without infringing on business activity.

The most important goal of the state's social policy is to eliminate poverty, reduce social stress, improve mortality rates, and ensure a reliable source of livelihood and a better standard of living for its people.

Individuals, families, and children must become the state's focus of concern.

Between 1991 and 1996, the average income in Lithuania decreased threefold. The majority of Lithuanian families, particularly large families, as well as pensioners, receive only a third of the income necessary for maintaining a minimal standard of living. Their meagre social welfare payments were established with unrealistic calculations about minimal requirements for subsistence. Consequently, this negatively impacts demographics: the population of Lithuania has stopped growing. Since 1990, birth rates have decreased by 28 percent, mortality rates have increased by 14 percent and the number of marriages has decreased by 40 percent.

The Women's Party will determine a realistic minimum subsistence on the basis of rates of inflation, and once it has been indexed and the salaries of budgetary and private company employees have been paid, pensions and other social welfare benefits will be calculated accordingly. The Party will ensure that young families receive loans for housing construction and other basic necessities.

The most effective way to manage a social crisis and a decreased standard of living is by creating favorable legal and economic conditions so that individuals can engage in private business or freelance work. Individuals can ensure their own social well-being as long as they are able to secure a reliable source of income and pension for themselves and their families. Healthy individuals do not wish to live off of unemployment assistance or other social benefits, but prefer instead to earn their own income and to acquire savings and wealth as long as the state and the criminal world are not constantly attempting to appropriate their legally acquired property and redistribute it.

It is vital to develop a new employment program that corresponds to the economic development program. Most importantly:

- Young people and adults of working age must be provided with jobs;
- The tax system must be reworked in order to make it profitable to increase production and services and increase the number of jobs;
- There must be incentives for developing agriculture and business in rural areas;
- Safety in the workplace must be legally protected;
- The enforcement of workplace safety laws must be strengthened; and
- Workers employed in dangerous jobs must be insured at the employer's expense.

In order to reduce unemployment, we must implement a more flexible system for retraining unemployed workers, the majority of whom are women and young people. We must create a realistic model for preparing workers who have lost their jobs at large industrial companies to work in different spheres of production, the service sector, or entrepreneurial ventures, and for educating university graduates on how to adapt to the conditions of the market economy without losing their fundamental qualifications.

It is worth adopting progressive pension and health insurance systems popular around the world in order to provide individuals with the opportunity to choose one that suits their needs. We must establish employment, pension, sickness, disability, and workers' compensation funds for accidents occurring at work. Social welfare assistance must be maintained by municipalities using their own funds as well as those received from state coffers.

Pensions for every citizen of Lithuania must be calculated according to one Pension Law. We are opposed to group and professional privileges (with exceptions

only for extreme situations, for example the victims of the aggressions of January 12–13 and their families, etc.).

There are 350,000 people with disabilities in Lithuania, among them 10,000 children. And their numbers increase from year to year.

The Social Integration of the Disability Law has been adopted in the Republic of Lithuania. This law establishes a system for redress; however, the process is very slow. In order for the disabled to hold rights equal to abled persons, they must be provided with the appropriate environment and jobs. Assistance to families caring for the disabled must also be procured.

It is critical that programs for improving the lives of the disabled and the elderly be established by assessing the unique needs of each of these groups.

Care for Families and Children

The changes occurring in Lithuania increasingly impact families, weakening the functioning of the very foundation of society. This is evidenced by the increase in divorces and decrease in marriages (approximately 40 percent over the course of five years). The rate of births is lower than it has ever been, while the number of single-parent households and unwed families is increasing. A particularly painful social problem is the high number of orphaned, homeless, and abandoned children.

The Lithuanian Women's Party invokes the constitutional provision according to which "the family is the foundation of society and the state."

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of the Council of Europe require that the state make the care for children a priority. More resources from state and local budgets must be allocated to integrate children who have lost parental care into families, schools, and society.
- The underlying principle of laws concerning children (along with other social issues) must be that decisions are to be administered as little as possible and the executors of these decisions must be as close as possible to the people affected by these laws. Responsibilities, especially for social work, must be delegated to the closest local institutions.
- Children need to be made aware of their rights and responsibilities. To that end, schools must acquaint children with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Special attention must be given to violence against children, and to sexual, moral, and physical abuse, as well as non-statutory relationships in the military.
- Based on the provisions of the Conventions of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, children cannot be incarcerated in detention centers or prisons, except in extreme situations.

- Society must not punish juvenile offenders but rather provide them with opportunities for a different life. This will reduce the likelihood of recidivism.
- A special police force to deal with children and youth must be established.
- Special family (children) and labor courts must be established.
- When drafting laws regarding education, there must be provisions for opportunities and principles that ensure that education is accessible for all children without excluding those with social and economic problems or disabilities.
- A social support fund must be established to provide assistance to families, particularly to children from large families, single-parent homes, and dysfunctional, at-risk families. This fund must pay for meals at all educational institutions at every educational level, as well as for summer vacation expenses. It should also provide assistance in purchasing school supplies.
- A program providing support for young families must be established and implemented.
- The spread of alcoholism and drug addiction must be curbed.
- Public information measures must be used to limit the broadcasting of programs with violent and sexually graphic content which are detrimental to children's psychological development.

Humanitarianism and social and civic solidarity, a sense of responsibility for the future of the nation and the prevention of violence against children—these must all be expressed in concrete, legal, and material terms and through the establishment of state and private individual-sponsored institutions and in the planning of campaigns and projects for the care of children.

Housing Program

A human being's right to housing is an integral part of the universal recognition of human rights. The housing situation in Lithuania is not satisfactory. Nearly ten thousand families do not have adequate housing and are waiting in municipal queues for state assistance in order to improve their housing situation. State support, however, would barely meet their needs, and acquiring decent housing in the housing market remains an impossible dream for many people, particularly young families.

We will continue to fight until housing is recognized as an integral part of the country's social and economic policies so that the majority are able to acquire housing on the market, while those who are socially and economically vulnerable or incapable are provided with state support.

State support is more effective after switching to differentiated support programs, with priority given to the most socially vulnerable groups, namely, orphans, the disabled, and young families.

Expanding construction of local (municipal) apartments is essential.

We seek to create long-term housing credits and a mortgage infrastructure by re-orienting the country's financial markets. We will expand cooperation with international financial institutions in order to secure long-term loans to implement our housing programs. It is important to improve the condition of the current stock of houses and apartments and to improve conditions for their renovation, to reduce energy consumption and maintenance expenses, to encourage residents to invest in renovating their homes through tax incentives and subsidies.

Incentives for increased payments for housing and communal services must be created. We will attempt to increase subsidies to families unable to pay their bills, not only for heating and hot water, but also to subsidize expenses related to maintaining standard housing.

Translated by Jura Avizienis

Nicoleta Bițu

The Romani Women's Movement in Romania

AUTHOR Nicoleta Bițu

TITLE "The Situation of Roma/Gypsy Women in Europe"

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LANGUAGE English

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicoleta Bițu (b. 1970, Constanța County) is a Romani feminist. She grew up on the seashore, in Constanța, in a well-off neighborhood where her father had been allocated an apartment as a police officer. As Nicoleta explained in an interview for the Roma Education Fund, the fact that she internalized so deeply the racism she faced in childhood, when children in her neighborhood would not play with her and called her "the gypsy," led her to become an activist for the rights of the Roma.¹ She was raised in a family of activists, and the way her parents showed their Roma dignity in the public space can be considered a manifesto in itself during communism. They always assured her that there was nothing wrong with being a "gypsy," and that it was those who bullied her because of her ethnicity who were in the wrong. Connection with the extended families of both her parents contributed to the constant manifestation of her Roma cultural identity during childhood and adolescence. Her father came from a Kalderash community,² and her mother was from a family of Roma musicians.

Nicoleta Bițu started her activist work for Roma rights in 1991, when she was 21, working as a local mediator in Mihai Kogalniceanu, a Roma community near her hometown that was affected by interethnic conflicts between Roma and non-Roma.³ In 1992, she came to Bucharest, following the advice of Nicolae Gheorghe (1946–2013),

1 Nicoleta Bițu, "It's Too Easy to Give Up," interview in the series "Rising to the Top—Stories from the Roma Education Movement," *Roma Education Fund*, 2018, https://www.romaeducationfund.org/video_post/rising-to-the-top-nicoleta-bitu-its-too-easy-to-give-up.

2 The Kalderash Roma are a subgroup of the Romani people. Traditionally, they were coppersmith and metal workers. They are notable for their rigorous preservation of their mother tongue and traditional Romani culture.

3 After the 1989 regime change and until January 1997, there were 67 interethnic conflicts in Romania. One of the worst happened in Hădăreni in 1993, when the houses of Roma were burnt down by Hungarians and Romanians.

one of the most important activists for Roma rights and founding member of the Roma civil society movement, who later became her husband. She graduated from the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest, as part of the first generation who benefited from affirmative measures for Roma students. She continued to be active in the field of Roma rights, bringing a feminist perspective to the Roma civil society movement in Romania. Bițu was one of the first to discuss the concept of intersectionality concerning discrimination against Romani women. As a member of the Gender Expert Group of the UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson for the preparation of the UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa (2001), she collaborated with American civil rights advocate and critical race theory scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined and theorized the term intersectionality. For the first time, the Durban Declaration included the idea “that racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance manifest themselves differently when it comes to women and girls,” and recognized “the need to integrate a gender perspective in policies, strategies, and action programs directed against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance in order to address multiple forms of discrimination.”⁴ Although Nicoleta did not participate in this congress, a group of Romani activists from Romania did.

Nicoleta Bițu became a recognized expert in the field of human and women's rights, working for over thirty years at the forefront of the European mobilization of Romani women activists and of advocacy for the rights of Roma. She was one of the founding members of the Romani CRISS (Centrul Romilor pentru Intervenție Socială și Studii, the Romani Center for Social Intervention and Studies), where she worked from 1993 until 2010. She also worked as a trainer and facilitator for the regional workshop of Open Society Institute Network Women Program and European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) in 2004, and as a senior policy consultant for the Joint Roma Women Initiative, Network Women Program, and Roma Information Office of the Open Society Institute (2005–2007). In 2011, she was executive director of the Romano ButiQ Association, where she contributed to the first private initiative of a Museum of Roma Culture in Romania. Bițu was president of the Democratic Federation of Roma from Romania; chair and academic advisor of the digital archive RomArchive, which aims to make visible the arts and cultures of Roma and their contribution to European cultural history; and one of the founding members and member of the first board of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC).

Bițu was a self-taught feminist, starting her PhD when she was forty years old. After earning a doctoral degree in political science from the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (Școala Națională de Studii Politice și

4 “World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance: Declaration,” 13, <https://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf>.

Administrative, SNSPA) in Bucharest, she was lecturer at the same university between 2015–2017, teaching two classes for the MA in Romani Studies: one on the post-communist history of the Romani social movement and the other on intersectionality in the case of Romani women, i.e. the intersectionality of ethnicity, class, and gender.

Nicoleta Bițu published mainly in the field of feminist studies. She draws inspiration for her Roma feminism from the African American feminist studies developed by authors such as bell hooks and Angela Davis, from Maya Angelou's poems and the poetry of the Polish Roma poet Bronisława Wajs Papusza,⁵ and from Kimberlé Crenshaw, whom Bițu credits for having opened a new world for her regarding the Roma feminist approach. Other sources of inspiration were the resilience of Roma women from the communities affected by conflict where she worked, who demonstrated the power to move forward and ensure the continuity of everyday life in crisis situations. As she confessed in an interview conducted for this biographical introduction, the thought of these women and their brave attitude gave her the strength to carry on during many difficult times in her life.

Recently, Nicoleta Bițu was a source of inspiration herself, becoming the protagonist of the children's book *Nico's Bell*, which is based on her life story. The book is written by Mirela Busuioc, Albert Morteau, and Georgiana Vătală, three young Roma who interviewed her and built the story in a series of creative writing workshops.⁶

Since January 2020, Nicoleta Bițu has been working as Roma mediator with one of the biggest homelessness charities, Roma Rough Sleeping Team, financially supported by the City of London, helping Roma from all over Europe who are homeless in London to improve their living conditions. Even if she is no longer active in the Roma civil society movement, she continues to work with and for Roma, which she considers her life's purpose.

A mother of twin girls, who are now adults, Bițu is the widow of international activist for Roma rights Nicolae Gheorghe, alongside whom she contributed to the reconstruction of Roma cultural identity and Roma activism. Nicoleta is a pioneer regarding Roma feminism in Romania and at the international level. As her *RomArchive* profile succinctly puts it, "her work has provoked the Romani feminist movements to think and act based on the universality of human rights when it comes to Romani women."⁷

5 Bronisława Wajs Papusza (1908–1987) was a Roma writer from Poland and survivor of the Holocaust; her poems speak about that lesser-known episode of Roma history and about the difficulties faced by traditional Roma women.

6 The book is part of the Roma S/Heroes project, carried out by the Association "Cu Alte Cuvinte" (In other words), which uses stories in education for diversity; it was co-financed by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund.

7 "Nicoleta Bițu," *RomArchive*, <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/collection/p/nicoleta-bitu>.

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS · with Nicolae Gheorghe, J. Tanaka, and S. Ștefănescu, "Policy Making on Roma in Central and Eastern European Countries: Inventory, Challenges, Commitments, Good Practices, and Weaknesses," *International Expert Symposium on Roma Questions*, March 28–29, 1999; "Romani Women in the European Union: Realities and Challenges," OSI Network Women Program, Romani Women Initiative, presentation at the Hearing of the European Parliament Femme Committee, Situation of Roma Women in the EU, November 23, 2005; with Enikő Vincze, "Personal Encounters and Parallel Paths toward Romani Feminism," *Signs* 38, no. 1 (2011): 44–46; "Romani Women and Feminism," *Political Perspectives Journal* 5, no. 2 (2012): 133–42; ed., *Nicolae Gheorghe—A Life Dedicated to Roma: Collection of Texts, Articles, and Interviews* (Bucharest: Roma National Cultural Centre–Romao Kher, 2016); with Debra Schultz, "Missed Opportunity or Building Blocks of a Movement? History and Lessons from the Roma Women's Initiative's Efforts to Organize European Romani Women's Activism," in *The Romani Women's Movement, Struggles and Debates in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Angéla Kóczé, Violetta Zentai, Jelena Jovanović, and Enikő Vincze (Routledge: London, 2018), 27–50.

Luiza Medeleanu

CONTEXT

The roots of the Roma feminist movement in Romania date back to the interwar period,⁸ when Roma people started to make their voices heard through political organizing and civic activism. The two most important Roma civic and political organizations at the time were the General Association of the Gypsies from Romania (Asociația Generală a Țiganilor din România), established in 1933 by Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu,⁹ and the General Union of Roma from Romania (Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România), established in 1933 by Gheorghe A. Lăzărescu-Lăzurică.¹⁰ The General Union appointed some Romani women in key positions; and at the Union's 1933 congress, the proposal was made to establish a women's branch, and equal leadership rights were requested for literate Roma women.¹¹ Also in 1933, Roma activist Florica Constantinescu established the first kindergarten for Romani children, which, despite enrolling 68 children in the first year, closed down because of lack of funding.¹²

8 Matei, "Women's Participation in the Interwar Roma Movement in Romania."

9 Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu (1883–1941) was a member of the orthodox clergy and missionary. He published extensively in the Romanian press, most notably in support of cremation, and several books, including one about the Roma: *Les Tsiganes: histoire, ethnographie, linguistique, grammaire, dictionnaire* (Paris: Payot, 1930).

10 Gheorghe A. Lăzărescu-Lăzurică (1892–?) was a Roma journalist and writer active in the mobilization and organization of the Roma in the interwar period.

11 Klímová-Alexander, "The Development and Institutionalization of Romani Representation and Administration."; Kóczé, "The Building Blocks of the Romani Women's Movement in Europe."

12 Negoï and Necula, "The Roma Movement in Romania."

Established in 1936 by Apostol Matei, Nicolae Gheorghe Lache, and Gheorghe D. Ciobanu, the Bucharest-based association The Reawakening of Roma Men and Roma Women in Romania (Redeșteptarea romilor și romițelor din România) had as its objectives to organize festivals, celebrations, conferences, and concerts dedicated to Roma culture, to print a magazine about Roma folklore, to organize exhibitions of products of Roma men and Roma women, and to support Roma crafts and the education of Roma children. The association also owned a newspaper entitled *Gazeta Romilor* (The Roma Gazette).¹³

This stream of emancipation of the Roma was stopped due to the dictatorial regime imposed by King Carol II beginning in 1938, under which all political parties and civic associations with a political profile, including the civic Roma associations, were outlawed. Starting in 1941, Romania was involved in the Second World War and the Roma became victims of the Holocaust: more than 25,000 Roma were deported from Romania to Transnistria, and 11,000 died there.¹⁴ During this period, we cannot speak about a Roma movement, let alone a feminist one. Roma women were subjected to sterilization and other unethical human experimentation, to rapes and persecution, but they still practiced different forms of resistance. For example, several Roma women submitted petitions to the Ministry of Internal Affairs against their own deportation and the deportation of their families. In September 1942, Rada Panait, a Roma women from Buzău, reported to the local authorities that she and her family were put on the deportation lists, although she was the owner of the building in which she lived with her five children.¹⁵ Antoaneta Georgescu sent a petition in October 1942 to the Minister of the Interior stating that she and her sister, Eugenia, had been placed on the lists for deportation to Transnistria while they were at work (she worked in tailoring, her sister in a restaurant). She argued against the deportation by stating that her brother and brother-in-law were fighting on the front in the 38th Infantry Regiment.¹⁶ Through such acts, Romani women from Romania did not remain passive, but stood against injustice and oppression.

After 1945, there were several attempts to resuscitate the General Union of Roma,¹⁷ but under the communist regime Roma civic activism was almost nonexistent. Despite efforts to ensure the status of “cohabitating nationality” for Roma, this was denied in the late 1940s, leading to the systematic exclusion of Roma from policies towards ethnic minorities (including representation) until the end of the 1970s, when the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party initiated

13 Furtună, Grigore, and Neacșu, *De ce nu plâng...*, 110.

14 International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, *Final Report*, ed. Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, and Mihail E. Ionescu (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 236.

15 Buzau County Archive, Buzau Legion of Gendarmes Fond, p. 192.

16 Buzau County Archive, Buzau Legion of Gendarmes Fond, p. 247.

17 Petre, “Romii.”

measures for the social integration of the Roma population, which were carried out with administrative brutality into the 1980s.¹⁸ Among efforts to denounce the communist regime's abusive treatment of Roma at this time, in 1982 the Roma sociologists Nicolae Gheorghe and Vasile Burtea sent letters to Radio Free Europe under pseudonyms. Together with the Roma leader Ion Cioabă, Gheorghe also contributed to remobilizing the Roma in the 1980s, for example by organizing the first Romani festival and by establishing international connections for the Roma movement in Romania.¹⁹

Concerning Romani women during the communist period, they did not have the opportunity to be constituted in associations, yet it was Romani women who ensured the preservation and continuity of Roma cultural identity. Extended Roma families gathered for holidays, weddings, baptisms, funerals, and other family events participated in Gypsy dances,²⁰ spoke the Romani language, listened to Roma music, and still respected Roma traditions and values. Focusing on such aspects of family life, and drawing attention to the importance of everyday life and individual and family stories for reconstructing the history of the Roma after the Second World War, the exhibition *Urban_Roma* by Roma feminist Crina Mureșanu presents photos accompanied by life stories of Roma women from the communist period, from the artist's family, as well as those donated by other Roma families.²¹ My own mother (L. M.), while attending Gypsy dances with her parents and respecting the marital rituals of sedentary Roma, was a student at the Pedagogical High School in Buzau, fighting her teacher's prejudices against Roma and trying to become a teacher as well.

Among well-known Romani women active in the communist period is the Romani-language poet from the Kalderash group, Luminița Cioabă. The daughter of the Roma Kalderash leader, Ion Cioabă, she opposed marriage at an early age (a common practice among the Kalderash Roma) in order to complete her studies. She graduated from the Faculty of Philology in Sibiu, becoming a nationally and internationally recognized poet, and member of the Romanian Writers' Union.

After 1989, the Roma were officially recognized as a national minority.²² Various Roma organizations appeared, while interethnic conflicts between the Roma and

18 Achim, "The Gypsies during the Communist Regime," in *The Roma in Romanian History*, 189–202.

19 Negoai and Necula, "The Roma Movement in Romania." See also Marin, ed., *Romii și regimul comunist din România*.

20 Gypsy dances were specific to Roma assimilated to the dominant culture, such as the Kaldarash Roma, who no longer spoke the Romani language and no longer practiced certain Romani traditions. By organizing these gatherings, the Roma aimed to create safe spaces where young people could meet and interact with each other in order to get married, but also to get to know each other and strengthen ethnic consciousness. These dances usually took place on various religious holidays.

21 See the exhibition's website at: <https://urbanroma.wordpress.com>; and Crina Marina Morteianu, "Urban_Roma—Jurnal vizual (Urban_Roma—Visual Diary)," *Nevi Sara Kali, Roma Women's Journal*, no. 1 (2009): 60–68.

22 Petre, *Cronologia minorității rome 1989–2009*.

non-Roma grew worse. Romani women like Nicoleta Bițu worked to mediate conflicts in these affected communities. The Roma civic movement numbered prominent women such as Mariea Ionescu,²³ Delia Grigore,²⁴ and Nora Costache.²⁵

In 1996, the Association of Roma Women from Romania (Asociația Femeilor Rome din România, AFRR) was founded in Bucharest by Roma activist Violeta Dumitru. AFRR was a non-governmental organization whose main purpose was human rights protection and the social inclusion of women. It aimed to integrate Roma women into the labor market, to support the education, health, and housing of Roma women facing discrimination, exclusion, and domestic violence, and to develop mechanisms promoting equal opportunities.²⁶

Another Roma organization initiated and led by a Roma woman was the Gypsy Women's Association "For Our Children" (Asociația Femeilor Țigănci "Pentru copiii noștri") founded in 1997 in Timișoara by Letiția Mark, lecturer at the Department of Classical Languages, West University of Timișoara, and an important figure for the beginnings of Romani feminism in Romania and at the international level.²⁷ The main objective of this association was to establish an educational center for Roma children, but it also worked towards the inclusion of Roma women and youth in the labor market, reducing discrimination against Roma women in Romania, and advocacy for Romani language education. The association published the trailblazing Romani feminist journal *Nevi Sara Kali / New Sara Kali*, financed through the European Social Fund, in which the selected text for this anthology first appeared. With Letiția Mark

23 Mariea Ionescu (1959–2023) was a jurist and a doctor in sociology. She was part of the Roma movement from its beginnings, working since 1992 alongside her brother, Vasile Ionescu, one of the founding members of the movement. In 1999, she founded the Association for Community Development "Together" (Agenția de Dezvoltare Comunitară "Împreună"). She worked as a civil servant within the National Office for Roma (2001–2005), and was president (2005–2007) then counselor of the National Agency for Roma (until 2019). She participated in drafting legislation on combating all forms of discrimination and made a valuable contribution to the development of public policies for the Roma minority in Romania.

24 Delia Grigore (b. 1972) is an activist for Roma culture, ethnologist, teacher, and writer. She has been active in the Roma movement for almost thirty years, in the last twenty-two years as president of the Roma Center "Amare Rromentza." Grigore has taught for over twenty years in the Department of Romani Language and Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest. She published mainly on Roma traditional culture and on contemporary Roma identity. Between 2018–2022, she coordinated five volumes of the Romani literary creation. Since 2022, Grigore is member of the National Network of Roma Writers and of the National Center for Roma Culture—Romano Kher.

25 Nora Costache (b. 1967) has worked since 1991 within Roma non-governmental organizations such as Aven Amentza, Romani CRISS, Societatea Tânara Generație a Rromilor, and Partida Romilor "Pro Europa." She was involved in projects in the field of interethnic conflict prevention, school dropout prevention, and mediation programs. She contributed to the promotion of the Roma minority, the inclusion of the Romani language as a working language in the actions/conferences organized by these institutions, and the fight against discrimination nationally and internationally. She is a member of the European Roma and Travellers Forum, and founding member of the International Roma Women's Network.

26 "Asociația Femeilor Rome din România," *Romaterno.eu*, <http://www.romaterno.eu/index.php/ro/partners/8-roma-women-association-in-romania>.

27 Letiția Mark attended the key international conferences and meetings on Roma in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Together with Agnes Daróczy and Miranda Vuolasranta, she led the International Romani Women's Network (IRWN), founded in February 2003 with the support of the Council of Europe.

and Enikő Magyari-Vincze as founding editors, three issues were published in 2009, 2010, and 2011, in trilingual editions (English/Romanian/Romanes).

Despite these initiatives, the Roma civic movement lacked a feminist perspective. It rather had a primordial anti-racist stance, of solidarity with the Roma people, not bringing gender discrepancies to the surface, or approaching them in a very nuanced way. As Nicoleta Bițu stated in the interview conducted for this text, at the beginning of the Roma movement in the 1990s some of the men perpetuated patriarchal and even misogynistic behavior. Coming from an activist family and feeling strongly against injustice, Nicoleta Bițu became very concerned about the condition of the women in the civic movement and the gender relations within it. She struggled to find the appropriate language to articulate a feminist perspective which would acknowledge the suffering of Roma women without denigrating them or fueling the racism of non-Roma regarding Roma culture. Moreover, she was a Roma woman who came from a traditional family, and she did not want to lose her identity or have her dedication to the Roma contested by appropriating a feminist perspective that did not represent her.

Nicoleta was already active in the Roma movement for nine years when she wrote the text published here, which is, in fact, a report about the situation of Romani women in Europe, presented at a meeting of the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies of the Council of Europe in 1999. The meeting was preceded by several initiatives at the European level: the First Gypsy Congress of the European Union in 1994; the Council of Europe Hearing of Roma/Gypsy Women in 1995; and the First International Conference of Romani Women, organized by the Roma Participation Program of the Open Society Foundations in 1998, in Budapest.²⁸ Present at the latter, Bițu met Azbija Memedova, then leader of the Roma Center of Skopje, and together with her and with activist Enisa Eminova, they established and led collaboratively the informal network Romani Women's Initiative until 2006, with the support of Debra Schultz, founding Director of the OSF Women's Program. As Bițu recalls her intentions at the time, "I didn't envisage a separation of the Romani movement into men and women through organizations, my vision was to seek an equal place at decision-making tables across the Romani movement for women and other discriminated groups within, such as LGBT."²⁹ It was also in 1998 that she was introduced by Schultz to feminist scholarship, and found in bell hooks's *Ain't I a Woman* "the key to understanding our history and the position of Romani women."³⁰

In her 1999 report to the Council of Europe, Bițu raised the diversity and complexity of the problems faced by Roma women and pointed to the lack of awareness

28 Kóczé, "The Building Blocks of the Romani Women's Movement in Europe."

29 Bițu and Schultz, "Missed Opportunity or Building Blocks of a Movement?," 32.

30 Bițu and Schultz, "Missed Opportunity or Building Blocks of a Movement?," 32.

of international organizations in this regard. Moreover, she touched for the first time on sensitive topics which Roma women from East Central Europe faced, such as the conflict between tradition and women's rights, trafficking of persons, and the position of Roma women activists within the Roma civic movement. The adoption of the report by the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies of the Council of Europe is recognized as "a milestone in the Romani Women's Movement."³¹

However, this approach was also harshly criticized by a part of the Roma civic movement. Nicoleta Bițu was called a traitor to the nation by some of the leaders of the European Romani Movement, by both Roma male activists and conservative female activists, and she was accused of contributing to the division and fragmentation of the Roma movement, as she confessed in the interview conducted for this text. Nevertheless, she continued her activity in the field of Romani feminism, developing her discourse and bringing into discussion new concepts and perspectives regarding the experiences of Roma women, such as intersectionality. For her, as a pioneer Roma feminist, it was important to create safe spaces where Roma women could talk freely and honestly about the reality of their lives, protected from non-Roma racism on the one hand and from patriarchal Roma society, on the other.

Currently, in Romania, the Roma feminist cause is advanced by associations such as E-Romnja, founded in 2012 and led by Roma feminist Carmen Gheorghe; or Giuvlipen (meaning feminism in Romani language), the first independent Roma feminist theater company in Romania, established in 2014 by actresses Mihaela Drăgan and Zita Moldovan. Roma actress and director Alina Șerban also addresses feminist themes in the films and plays in which she performs.

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31 Kóczé, "The Building Blocks of the Romani Women's Movement in Europe."

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Luiza Medeleanu

* * *

Nicoleta Bițu

The Situation of Roma/Gypsy Women in Europe³²

The "Report on the Situation of Roma/Gypsy Women in Europe" is among the first ones dedicated to Roma women. It was elaborated in 1999 as a reply to the request of the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies formulated at its 7th meeting in Strasbourg. The use of the term "Roma/Gypsies" was imposed by the official language of the Council of Europe at that time. The Report did not want to bring into discussion anything extraordinary in the discussion about Roma at European level, but for the beginning

32 Editor's note: The original English-language text has been lightly edited for clarity.

it aimed to identify existing information and initiatives related to Roma women. On the other hand, it questioned for the first time some sensitive issues, such as the conflict between culture/tradition and women's rights, trafficking in persons, and the position of Roma women activists within the Roma civic movement. At the end, the Report constituted the base of almost nine years of work which followed, its chapters followed closely within individual and group projects ongoing at the European level. But most importantly, the Report created the fundamentals of a whole mental and ideological mobilization that resulted in the introduction of social policies for Roma and for women and of matters regarding women's rights, gender equality, and multiple discrimination on the agendas of international organizations.

The Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies decided at its 7th meeting (Strasbourg, March 29–30, 1999) to put the issue of the situation of Roma/Gypsy women in Europe on the agenda of its next meeting, and to request a consultant to prepare a short introductory report to this issue.

The main objectives of the present report are as follows:

- To review the activities carried on in the field of Roma/Gypsy women rights and their results;
- To analyze the existing instruments and mechanisms to address this issue at national and international levels;
- To give information to the Specialist Group about initiatives taken by Roma women's nongovernmental organizations; and
- To raise some taboo questions for the everyday life of Roma/Gypsy women.

In the history of the Roma/Gypsy people in Europe, discriminations against them were expressed in different ways. Since 1989, and even before, the Roma/Gypsies organized themselves increasingly in order to defend their rights and fight against pogroms. This mobilization brought many results:

- It brought the human rights violations facing the Roma/Gypsies to the attention of the international community;
- Specific provisions were made and there was a general recognition of the specific position of the Roma/Gypsy people; and
- There started to be a mobilization of a social category of Roma/Gypsy women in the human rights activist movement accompanied by an effort to define their identity and their social role.

Recently, a new context appeared in which Member States took their responsibilities and started to elaborate state policies in favor of the Roma/Gypsy minority;

in Central and Eastern European countries, mob violence against Roma came to an end, but the conflict in Kosovo came as a new form of violence against Roma.

At the same time, it is becoming more and more difficult to assess the human rights violations of Roma/Gypsies and it requires more and more specialized skills on behalf of Romani activists. In fact, the usual presentation of the situation of Roma/Gypsies is not sufficient anymore to cover in detail all aspects of the discriminations and human rights violations which Roma/Gypsies face. This is even more true when talking about Romani women's rights. Hopefully a new generation of skilled and well-trained young activists is emerging on the international scene.

[...]

The Civil Society of Romani Women and Their Participation in Political Life

[...]

Roma/Gypsy activists are faced with the values of their families, values which are sometimes related to the social group to which the family belongs or to other rules of the culture; at the same time, they are faced with the patriarchal values of the majority society, especially in Central and Eastern European countries and with the attitude of male Romani activists. Moreover, the women who choose to take responsibility in public life are looking for an identity which can give them the feeling of belonging to something, as they find themselves between two cultures and two worlds. Therefore, they are in the phase of leadership learning and training. Another characteristic of the Roma/Gypsy civil society is the attitude single activist women are faced with at a certain age: in fact, they have to work three times harder than the others in order to gain respect from the males. This is even worse when women are single and do not have children. Married women often consider the single women as being a threat to them and to their husbands as they deal with the men on an equal footing. The problems faced by Roma/Gypsy women's organizations are very much related to the lack of access to information at the international level, especially concerning the existing international remedies in case of violations of women's human rights. This lack of information is worsened by a general lack of knowledge of the English language.

The Sensitive Issues for Roma/Gypsy Women

[...]

Most of the problems Roma/Gypsy women are faced with are sensitive and unexpressed, be they activists, wives, and mothers, or *bori* (daughter-in-law) in a local community. In addition to that, they spend their whole life between the two worlds, *gadjé* and Romani. Romani women have to respect firstly the rules of the traditional

culture according to which they were educated since their childhood; in this context, their social role is very precisely defined. At the same time, when they reach school age, they are confronted either with their own communities (if they live in a traditional one) or with the prejudices of the other children, created by the majority parents. When a woman breaks the roles and does not respect the rules of the family, her extended family does not respect her anymore and her parents are also less respected by the community.

She also has to face institutional racism when she becomes a mother and later on, because she is the one who keeps contact with the school, with health and social services. At the same time, she is sometimes faced with domestic violence exerted by the husband as a result of unemployment and alcoholism. Moreover, domestic violence sometimes occurs in the family especially when the man wants to prove his social virility and his power as the head of the family. Domestic violence is either a cultural habit or the result of a bad social and economic situation. Some women accept their condition and are faced with it during their whole lives.

Nonetheless, the reason for this attitude is often the lack of state remedies in case of domestic violence and also the image created by the police, which spreads the idea that Roma women are beaten by their husbands in the Romani communities. It is difficult to prove violence and to encourage the victims to discuss openly about this issue, which does not affect only women, but also in the long run the children who witness it.

[...]

Trafficking of persons, drug abuse, and prostitution are phenomena resulting from the economic situation of the women. The smuggling of persons intensified after the failure of communism and the Roma/Gypsy women became an exotic "raw material." Trafficking is not always associated with prostitution. It can also be associated with begging on the streets for an income. We should nevertheless bear in mind that measures to combat trafficking should not become a pretext to prevent other migratory movements as it is a different phenomenon.

One characteristic reaction of the Roma/Gypsy community concerning prostitution is to remain silent. When the issue of prostitution or drug abuse is discussed, in private, it is usually said that "these persons do not belong to our group." Maybe the emerging women's movement will have to face this gruesome reality. Drug abuse is happening among Roma/Gypsy communities in general and women are affected as consumers or as mothers of drug consumers. Recently, Gypsy women from the Saint-Jacques district in Perpignan (France) demonstrated in the streets against drug consumption, shouting "enough," following the death of one woman from their group. There is a need to address the root causes for these problems, to tackle taboo questions and start to work on small pilot projects with open-minded women who are brave enough to do it.

[...]

Proposals for Solutions

In view of the present report, the author proposes the following solutions to be put in practice:

- To create a European working group for the rights of Roma/Gypsy women;
- To carry out an in-depth study on the situation of Roma/Gypsy women, putting emphasis on the violations of their rights;
- To integrate this issue into the national policies of the Member States and on the agenda of the Committee for Gender Equality of the Council of Europe;
- To organize round tables with government officials in charge of Roma issues and with male activists to discuss gender equality issues;
- To explore the possibilities to create small post-conflict therapy centers;
- To include a gender equality component in the training courses for young Roma/Gypsy leaders;
- To organize series of seminars on drugs, domestic violence, and prostitution; and
- To set up a partnership among international organizations for the creation of small credit lines for the victims of conflicts and women with special needs, taking into account the positive experiences carried out by different organizations with women in developing countries.

Contributors

EDITORS

Adela Hîncu (Institute of Contemporary History, Ljubljana) is an intellectual historian of state socialism and postsocialism, writing on Marxist social thought, feminism, and social sciences and policy in Romania and East Central Europe after the Second World War.

Zsófia Lóránd (University of Vienna) is an intellectual historian of feminism in East Central Europe, working primarily on Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the GDR.

Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) focuses on war-related memory politics, as well as women in science in the region of Yugoslavia, during socialism and today.

Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz (Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Sciences) focuses on women's and gender history and the history of popular culture under state socialism, especially in Poland.

AUTHORS OF BIOGRAPHIES AND CONTEXTUALIZATIONS

Galina Babak received her PhD in Slavic literatures from Charles University, Prague. Her research interest is directed towards the project of "Soviet modernization" of the 1920s–1930s in Ukraine, and the political and cultural history of the 20th century.

Agnė Bagdžiūnaitė is a curator and researcher grounding her practice and research on people's history, feminist ethnographic methodology, and social reproduction theory.

Ivana Bago is an art historian, writer and curator whose research focuses on the relation between art and politics in the twentieth century in Yugoslavia.

Sarina Bakić is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo. Her main research fields are sociology of culture and arts, aesthetics and politics, and various phenomena of mass culture.

Lucija Bakšić (Graduate School for Global Intellectual History, Humboldt University Berlin) is currently writing her dissertation on individual psychology in interwar Yugoslavia.

Simone A. Bellezza (University of Naples Federico II) studies nationalism and national belongings, focusing on the Ukrainian case. He is currently working on the Ukrainian diaspora during the Cold War.

Bojan Bilić (University of Vienna) is a political sociologist doing research on a range of grassroots responses to nationalism, patriarchy, and authoritarianism in Yugoslavia and the post-Yugoslav space.

Una Blagojević is a doctoral candidate at the Central European University, focusing on the intellectual history of Marxist humanism in socialist Yugoslavia. Her interests include social, cultural, and gender histories of East Central Europe.

Chiara Bonfiglioli (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) focuses on transnational women's and gender history. Her current ERC Consolidator project, titled WO-NAM, explores women's participation in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Anna Borgos (Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience and Psychology, Budapest) is a psychologist and gender researcher, writing on Hungarian women's history, the history of sexuality, and LGBT issues.

Marcus Böick (University of Cambridge) is a historian of Modern Germany and Europe, focusing his research on postsocialism in East Germany, private security, and the history of privatizations.

Lea Börgerding holds a PhD in Global History from Free University in Berlin, where she also worked as a post-doctoral fellow before transitioning to a foreign policy position in the German parliament. Her research focuses on women's internationalism during the Cold War and the East German Democratic Women's League.

Jana Cviková (ASPEKT; Institute of World Literature, Slovak Academy of Sciences) is a pioneer of feminism in Slovakia after 1989, co-founder of the feminist journal *Aspekt* and the NGO ASPEKT. Editor and publisher, translator from German, literary critic.

Ervina Dabižinović (ANIMA Center for Women's and Peace Education in Kotor, Montenegro) holds a PhD in Gender Studies, and publishes both research articles and newspaper columns regularly.

Krassimira Daskalova is a professor of modern European cultural history at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, in Bulgaria. She published extensively on various aspects of women's/gender history and history of the book and reading in Bulgaria, the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

Zlatan Tunjić (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg) is a literary scholar and PhD student from Berlin. His fields of interest include literary theory, gender and cultural studies, and Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav women's authorship.

Cristina Diac (The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, Romanian Academy) is a historian of the European left, writing on the transnational dimension of communist networks.

Corina Doboş (The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, Romanian Academy) is a historian of the 20th century, working on the history of population thought, population policies, demoeconomics, welfare, and biopolitics in Romania and East Central Europe.

Dóra Fedeles-Czeferner (Research Centre for the Humanities, Department of Interwar History, Budapest) focuses on women's history and press history in the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, especially in Hungary and Austria.

Melissa Feinberg (Rutgers University) focuses on gender and politics in East-Central Europe from the interwar period to the end of state socialism.

Jane Freeland (Queen Mary University of London) is an historian of feminism and gender in modern Germany, currently working on a history of reproductive justice in Europe.

Alexandra Ghiț (CEU Vienna) researches social democratic women's networks in Eastern Europe as well as women's welfare and labor activism in Romania, from the 1890s to the 1990s.

Kristen Ghodsee (University of Pennsylvania) is an ethnographer interested in Marxism, feminism, Utopianism, the historical legacies of state socialism, and the study of everyday life in Eastern Europe.

Isidora Grubački (Institute of Contemporary History, Ljubljana) researches intellectual and political history of feminism in the interwar period, with a focus on Yugoslavia from a transnational perspective.

Olena Gulenok is a sociologist, currently studying war experiences of non-combatants in Ukraine.

Linda Gusia is a feminist scholar and sociologist, head of the Department of Sociology at University of Prishtina, working on gender, feminism, activism, space, memory, and violence. Her book *Women in The Movement-Women's Activism during the 1990s in Kosovo* was published in Albanian in 2023.

Cody James Inglis (Central European University) is an intellectual historian dealing with radical democratic, socialist, and republican thought in modern Central and Southeastern Europe.

Uladzislau Ivanou (European Humanities University, Vilnius) is a political scientist and gender researcher, who specializes in political feminism, queer studies, and Belarusian studies.

Agata Jakubowska (University of Warsaw) is an art historian who focuses on women artists active in Eastern Europe (particularly in Poland), currently working on the transnational history of all-women exhibitions.

Iva Jelušić is a historian of women's and gender history focusing on war-related memory politics and the history of feminism in the state socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, especially in Yugoslavia.

Natalia Jarska (Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences) works on women's and gender history in postwar Poland, in comparative and transnational perspectives.

Luciana Jinga is a researcher at the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania and lecturer at the University of Bucharest. A historian of state

socialism and postsocialism, she writes on women's history, feminism, disability, and humanitarian assistance in Romania and Eastern Europe after the Second World War. **Dobrochna Kałwa** (University of Warsaw) is a historian working on gender history of 19th and 20th century East Central Europe, oral history, memory of communism, theory of history, and collective memory of women's movements in Poland.

Zīta Kārkla (Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art at the University of Latvia) is a literary scholar focusing on women writers and feminism.

Zsuzsanna Kádár B. (John Wesley Theological College, Budapest) works on women's history in Hungary. She is the founder and leader of the College's research group on women's databases.

Liisi Keedus is a professor of political philosophy at the University of Tallinn. A historian of modern political thought, she has worked on twentieth century German-Jewish political thinkers, Weimar social, legal, and humanist thought, historicism, as well as on the history of political ideas in Central and Eastern Europe.

Barbara Klich-Kluczewska (Jagiellonian University) is a cultural historian of postwar East Central Europe, especially the history of family, history of sexuality, biopolitics, and gender history.

Angéla Kóczé (Central European University) is a sociologist. She focuses on gender, racial/ethnic, and class inequalities, specifically on the historically situated intersected manifestation of epistemic and structural injustice of Roma in East Central Europe.

Elife (Eli) Krasniqi is an anthropologist, historian, and writer. Her current research deals with African Black presence in the Balkans, the descendants of Ottoman domestic slaves.

Vjollca Krasniqi (University of Prishtina) is a sociologist. She has written on political, social, and gender developments in the Balkans, transnationalism, war, and human rights. Currently, she is working on gender, memory, and transitional justice in Kosovo.

Réka Krizmanics (Bielefeld University) explores globalizing state socialist Eastern Europe through a gender lens by researching encounters and solidarities between women in Eastern Europe and in the Global South.

Emese Kürti (Central European Research Institute for Art History, Budapest) is an art historian and researcher focusing on the neo-avant-garde practices in socialist Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia.

Marie Lániková is a sociologist focusing on women's organizations, feminism, and expertise in socialist Czechoslovakia, currently working on research about the Czechoslovak Women's Union, women's agency, and expertise.

Katherine Lebow (University of Oxford) is a historian of 20th century Poland and Eastern Europe with particular interests in class and ethnicity, the body and sexuality, violence and carcerality, and narrative and testimony.

Dalia Leinarte is senior researcher at Vytautas Magnus University, and member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Nita Luci (University of Prishtina) is an anthropologist and feminist academic focusing on gender, political movements, the state, memory, and art. In 2013, she co-founded the University Program for Gender Studies and is currently serving as Kosovo's Ambassador to Norway.

Ana Maskalan (Institute for Social Research in Zagreb) is a feminist critical philosopher focusing on women's bodies and identity in socialist Yugoslavia and countries established after its disintegration (with an emphasis on Croatia).

Luiza Medeleanu (University of Bucharest) is completing a PhD in Cultural Studies at the Center of Excellence in Image Studies and teaches Romani Culture and Literature at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures. Her research focuses on the image of Roma in telenovelas.

Valentina Mitkova (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski) focuses on women's and gender history, women authors, and women's periodical press in Bulgaria and in the Balkans.

Nermina Mujagić is a full professor of political science at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo. Her research is placed at the intersection of topics relating to political conflicts and mythology, cultural studies, and media studies.

Katarzyna Nadana-Sokołowska (Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences) specializes in the literary and autobiographical work of Polish women writers, also from a comparative perspective.

Rasa Navickaitė (University of Vienna) is a gender historian with research interests in marginalized sexualities and gender identities, the history of Eastern Europe in a transnational perspective, feminist and queer theory, and postcolonial theory.

Nataša Nelević, a graduate in literary theory, is a feminist activist, writer, theater critic, and documentary film director living in Montenegro.

Libora Oates-Indruchová is professor of sociology of gender at the University of Graz. She researches gender cultures of state socialism, censorship, and everyday creativity, with the main focus on the Czech Republic.

Almira Ousmanova (European Humanities University) is a feminist scholar focusing on gender representations in visual culture and contemporary art, feminist philosophy, gender, and the politics of knowledge in the postsocialist context.

Jānis Ozoliņš is a researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art, University of Latvia, and Assistant Professor at the Art Academy of Latvia, focusing on narratology, gender and sexuality studies, and Soviet literary and film studies.

Nevila Pahumi is a reference librarian for Modern Greek and Albanian at the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Her scholarship focuses on women's emergence in the public sphere in late and post-Ottoman Albania, as well as on Greek-Albanian relations vis-a-vis American Protestantism.

Ivana Pantelić (Institute of Contemporary History, Belgrade, Serbia) is a historian. Her field of research is social history, especially the history of women's emancipation in Serbia and Yugoslavia.

Andrea Pető (Central European University, Vienna, and CEU Democracy Institute, Budapest) is a historian working on gender, political violence, oral history, and the Holocaust.

Jasna Podreka (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Sociology) focuses on gender-based violence, violence against women, domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and sexual violence in academia, and femicide.

Manca G. Renko (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and ERC project HERESSEE, University of Vienna) is an intellectual historian, focusing on gender and transnational history.

Alexandria Ruble (University of Idaho) is a historian of feminism in East Central Europe, currently working on conceptions of women's rights in the GDR and the FRG during the first two decades of the Cold War.

Monika Rudaś-Grodzka (Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences) specializes in the literary and autobiographical work of Polish women writers.

Carol Silverman, Professor of Folklore/Anthropology, has done research with Roma for over 40 years in the Balkans, Western Europe, and the United States, on politics, music, human rights, gender, migration, and issues of representation.

Leda Sutlović is a political scientist, writing on gender politics and (post)socialist transformations, the feminist movement, civil initiatives, protests, and state-society relations, in Croatia and the post-Yugoslav space.

Fanni Svégel (Eötvös Loránd University) is an ethnographer, writing on the history of reproductive decision-making and violence against women in 20th-century Hungary.

Andrea Tompa is a Hungarian writer and academic in theater studies; her novels focus on the histories of minorities, gender issues, problems of oppressions, immigration, and art.

Jasmina Tumbas (University at Buffalo) is an art historian focusing on queer and feminist histories and theories of performance, conceptual art, and art and activism in Eastern Europe, especially in the Yugoslav region.

Ileana Tureanu is a practicing architect, publisher and coordinator of *ARHITECTURA* magazine, and curator of international exhibitions focused on the role of exceptional women in Romanian architecture.

Antonina Tymchenko (Kharkiv I.P. Kotlyarevsky National University of Arts, National Writers' Union of Ukraine) studies the Ukrainian poetry of the Red Renaissance and later times, particularly poetry by authors from the city of Kharkiv.

Kārlis Vērdiņš is senior researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art at the University of Latvia, and Assistant Professor at the Art Academy of Latvia. She focuses on comparative literature, modernist studies, and queer studies.

Georgiana Vräjitoru is a film critic and curator based in Bucharest, Romania. She is selecting and writing about films made by women from all over the world for the F-SIDES film club.

Boryana Yankova holds an MA in cultural history and an MA in history of the book and reading. Her interests are in the interrelations between the fields of book history and gender history.

Adriana Zaharijević (Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade) is a political philosopher and a feminist scholar.

Vita Zelče is a professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Latvia. She focuses on the history of Soviet Latvia, women's history, as well as history of media and communication.

TRANSLATORS

Jura Avizienis is a Lithuanian-English translator. She lives in Chicago.

Jelena Babšek Labudović is a law graduate and translator from Serbo-Croatian into English whose work ranges from public policy to journalism, creative writing to theater. Some of her long-term clients include the iconic Belgrade radio station B92 and the theater festival Bitef.

Benjamin Cope works at the Ukrainian House in Warsaw. He lectured in critical urbanism, visual and cultural studies, and gender studies at the European Humanities University in Minsk and Vilnius, and has a PhD in Modern Languages and Literature.

Lukas Debeljak is a poet and translator. He has published two collections of poetry and his writing has been translated into numerous languages. He translates contemporary Slovenian fiction, poetry, and theory.

Lea H. Greenberg is a translator, editor, and literary scholar. She holds a PhD in German studies, and her research focuses on Jewish culture and the intersections of gender and language politics.

Uladzislau Harbacki is a pseudonym. See Uladzislau Ivanoŭ in Authors list.

Ieva Lešinska-Gaber is a writer and translator who lives in Riga after many years spent in the USA, Sweden, and Germany. She translates Latvian literature into English and Anglo-American poetry and prose into Latvian.

Yuliia Maksymeiko is a poet and literary translator who worked on the Ukrainian versions of *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert and *Remember* by Lisa Genova and loaned her voice to a couple of educational series for UtbildningsRadio in Sweden.

Melinda Reidinger is a cultural anthropologist and translator of literary and scholarly works. Her interdisciplinary book *The White Deer* (Ritona, 2023) reflects her broad interests and commitment to ecological issues.

Helis Rõuk works as a teacher of English at Tallinn University since 2015. Her main interest lies in second language acquisition and English for specific purposes (ESP).

Piro Rexhepi is the Alexander Nash Fellow in Albanian Studies at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College of London.

Wolf Rubinčyk is a translator and blogger from Minsk. He studied politics at the European Humanities University (Minsk, Belarus), and authored several academic and popular books.

Beáta Sándor studied literature, gender studies, and law, and has been working in various civil society and human rights organizations in Hungary as well as an occasional translator.

Julia Sherwood grew up in Bratislava, Slovakia, and took up literary translation after working for Amnesty International for over twenty years. **Peter Sherwood** taught Hungarian at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London and at the University of North Carolina. They are based in London and translate from and into English, Slovak, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, and Russian.

Anna Topolska is a cultural historian of modern Eastern Europe and a Polish-English translator. She holds a PhD from the Adam Mickiewicz University and an MA degree from the University of Michigan.

Vuk Tošić is a literary and academic translator and language editor, whose professional interests include law, social sciences, and humanities.

Ioana Miruna Voiculescu is a freelance translator and copyeditor, working with Romanian, English, and French. With a background in both philology and social sciences, in the past ten years, she has been specializing in academic and literary translation.

Suzana Vuljevic is an intellectual historian of southeast Europe and a translator whose work focuses on pan-Balkan ideas and initiatives, interwar internationalism, discourses of Europe, and women's movements in the region.

Boryana Yankova – see list of Authors.

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Zsófia Lóránd (University of Vienna) is an intellectual historian of feminism in East Central Europe, working primarily on Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the GDR.

Adela Hincu (Institute of Contemporary History, Ljubljana) researches the history of social sciences, Marxist social thought, and women’s intellectual history in Romania and East Central Europe after the Second World War.

Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) focuses on war-related memory politics, as well as women in science in the region of Yugoslavia, during socialism and today.

Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz (Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Sciences) focuses on women’s and gender history and the history of popular culture under state socialism, especially in Poland.

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