Jana Kocevska

INVISIBLE ARCHIVES

Makedonka

Organ of the WAF (1944–1952), articulated memories and critical review

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Македонка



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НАЦИОНАЛИЗМОТ И КУЛТУРАТА

INVISIBLE ARCHIVES:

MAKEDONKA

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Skopje,
2025

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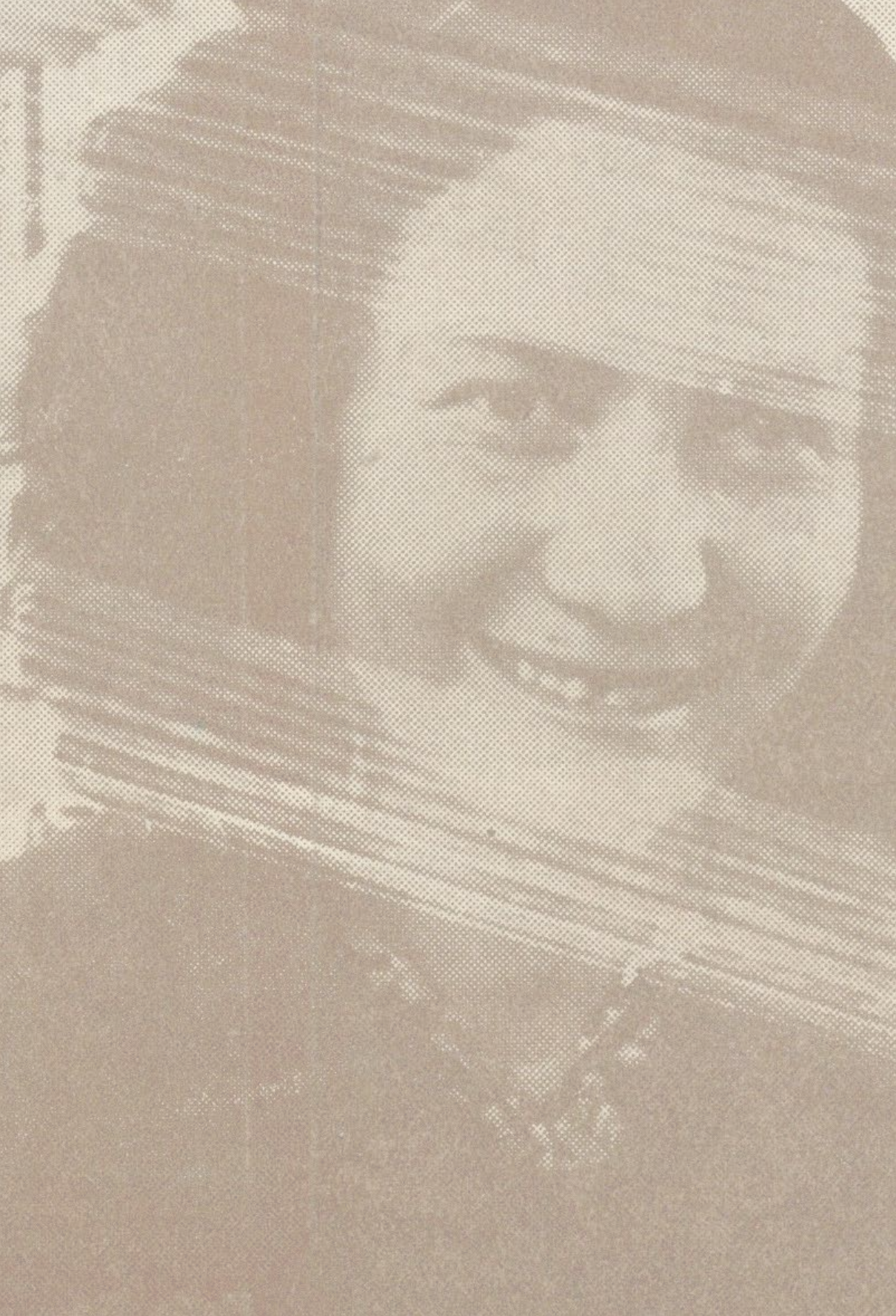
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Македонка



Jana Kocevska

INTRODUCTION

More insightful perspectives: Revisiting *Makedonka* — on building archives, their importance and use in the contemporary context

For a scientific engagement
in humanities, the most important
thing is to have a honed sense
of social injustice.

Ler Sofronić, Nada

1. Towards the Invisible Archives and two years of digitized *Makedonka* – organ of WAF (1944-1952)

The publication of this collection marks the 80th anniversary of the first issue of the magazine *Makedonka* in November 1944. That same year, on the 15th of December, the first constitutive conference of WAF of Macedonia was held in Skopje.[1] These important anniversaries

1 The Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia was formally founded in 1942, at the First Conference of WAF in Bosanski Petrovac (6-8 December 1942), together with the Women's Antifascist Fronts of all the other countries of Yugoslavia. Owing to the bad weather conditions, however, the delegates from Macedonia failed to arrive at the conference on time. At this time, a women's network that helped the movement had already been established on the territory of present-day Macedonia. The strategies of the Communist Party of Macedonia and the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia regarding women were to include them in the struggle by forming commissions for work with women, as part of the local committees of the party, whose members were women activists, that is, women communists, who started mobilizing other women to join the movement even before the beginning of the war. Later, they started forming WAF committees. The first was established in Kavadarci in the spring of 1943, and gradually, an entire network of WAF committees was formed in Macedonia. The first constitutive conference of WAF of Macedonia was held on 15 December 1944 in Skopje, while, the regional conference was held a day earlier, on 14 December. The two events were held in the cinema Urania [the original name of the cinema Kultura, built in 1938 by Nikifor Kostich and Dicha Filota (Georgievski,

encouraged us to revisit the project Invisible Archives and initiate a new collection of academic papers that focus on the magazine *Makedonka:* Organ of WAF as their primary source.

It is not necessary to recall the specificities and historical details concerning the establishment of *Makedonka* in this introductory text. Its identity was elaborated in detail in the introductory text of the Collection from 2022, "Invisible Archives: *Makedonka:* Organ of WAF (1944-1952), historical experiences and cultural memory", where the particulars about the motives behind the engagement with printed media were identified, as well as the overall context in which this magazine was born (on this, see more in Hadjievska and Kocevska, 2022, 27-58). Two years have passed since the publication of the first collection of papers in 2022, which anniversary also marks the moment when, following the initiative of the CINIK team, the magazine was digitized in the National Library of Serbia, which in turn allowed for a broad public access, immediately after the completion of the project in 2022. However, what the change was that these two initiatives brought and what their contribution was in academic, but also broader, sense are the questions that we would like to consider in the introduction to this publication.

Starting with the pandemic 2021, the project Invisible Archives approached the discovery of possible library and archival materials as a potential source for research of the gender perspectives

2013)]. The events at the conferences were very buoyantly reported in the second issue of *Makedonka*, accompanied by photographs and textual transcriptions of the speeches. The delegates from the other Macedonian towns and from Serbia were accommodated in family homes throughout Skopje, and only the delegates from the Shtip area failed to arrive. The auditorium of the cinema was decorated with political slogans, flags and photographs of Tito, Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. It filled with delegates who were "women workers, housewives, and intellectuals, partisans, old and young" and where "the colorful rural folk dresses stood out among the urban apparel... [while] the Miyak folk dresses were the most noticeable." The conference began with the screening of the Soviet film The District Secretary (Секретарь райкома, р. Иван Пиријев 1942), and immediately after the anthems Hey, Slavs and Rise, Dawn of Freedom were sang. The conference was opened by comrade Mara Naceva. This constitutive session elected the Governing Board of WAF, Executive Board and WAF's Plenum, while the magazine *Makedonka* became an organ of WAF – the first women's magazine in Macedonian, whose first issue had already been published at the time of the conference.

in our national historiography, an aspect that academia in this country keeps failing to take into account as a relevant research direction. Encouraged by this idea to rediscover these sources and offer alternative research endeavours, the team of CINIK selected several archival sources that allowed for a further and more insightful research of the matter with focus on the aforementioned interest. This minor action initiated a series of questions about the state in which these materials were, the manner in which they were preserved, the institutional care and their academic and research potential, etc. In the first published collection, one of the papers, authored by Biljana Kotevska, reviewed the public policies and how sensitive they were as regards gender equality, and more concretely in the development of historiography in the country. Although in her analysis Kotevska argued that a solid legal framework existed that could serve as a foundation for the planning and implementation of new policies through which action can be taken for positioning of gender equality and gender visibility as key priorities in the development of historiography, no initiative has been taken to produce a strategy concerning these possible directions, and even less initiative has been taken in direction of their implementation, and there is still no willingness among the institutions to affect any changes in this sense. Despite the recommendations submitted by Kotevska to contribute towards the future steps in favour of changes the policies aimed at achieving gender equality in historiography, no actions in this direction have been taken by the responsible institutions (Kotevska, 2021, 159-160).

According to Kotevska, this development in historiography should be anteceded by the first step, that is, an academic treatment of gender equality including the field of librarianship and archiving, which is the exact aim of the actions undertaken of CINIK, within their capacities. In order to contribute towards making these library and archival materials more open to the public and available for use in all contemporary scientific and methodological practices, the project started initiatives for digitization of the library materials, as well for an easier access to them, including some newly produced

research boosted by these materials through a special cyber-corner (nevidliviarhivi.mk), all in favour of attracting a broader scope of readers, not only the expert community. This new theoretical-methodological hermeneutic framework through which these sources will contribute towards a new, that is, different reading of particular historical periods and contexts also offers a significant shift in the creation and production of knowledge, and opens new possibilities for creation of feminist narratives in Macedonian contemporary historiography.

From the moment of the publication of the first collection dedicated to the magazine *Makedonka* in October 2022 until the present day, a series of events occurred that helped increase the visibility of both the project and the magazine. Soon after the completion of the project, the digitized format of *Makedonka* was published on the Internet page of the National Library of Serbia, following an initiative of the library itself, which, for us as initiators, was a truly important gesture. Later on, the digitized magazine could be accessed on the Internet page of the project as well. On 6 December 2022, the 80th anniversary of WAF of Yugoslavia was celebrated in Bihać and Bosanski Petrovac in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This event was attended by representatives of civic society organisations, politicians, activists and other, all coming from the former Yugoslav republics. This set of events opened the opportunity to distribute the collection among the participants in the commemoration coming from all these countries. The following year, a feminist initiative in the region expressed their interest in the collection and in the Invisible Archive project in general, as well as the feminist festival *VoxFeminae* in Zagreb, where the edition was promoted in May 2023, and a public discussion was organized by the feminist festival *Mesto Žensk* in Ljubljana in October the same year, where the audience had a chance to see a segment of Hristina Ivansoka's exhibition as part of the group exhibition entitled *Archaeology of Resistance: a corrective for the future* as part of the program of the 29th edition of the festival. A visit to Belgrade

happened the following year, on 14 February 2024, where this collective exhibition was invited, and Ivanoska could present her work again. These events took place in the Gallery *Podroom,* within the Cultural Centre in Belgrade, where the collection of papers was promoted in 2022.

All this leads us to the conclusion that this project was recognized as interesting – not only in the countries of former Yugoslavia, but at home as well – mostly by the representatives of the independent cultural sector and the general public, judging by the reactions after its completion. This fact encouraged us to continue promoting the urgency with which important archival material of this type should be approached and treated and then institutionally utilized in order to break the silence of the institutions as regards these contemporary practices.

2. Methodology and theoretical framework

The interdisciplinary method and research approach that the project Invisible Archives started applying in 2021 has not been changed during the entire work on the project, including this year's methodological framework. This time too, the findings of the produced expert papers have retained their critical approach to research work, taking into account the context and political and ideological milieu of the period when this source was published. Working on this collection of papers, with *Makedonka* as the main research source again, we had the opportunity to extend and deepen our research perspectives to become more insightful and to add to the creation of new critical texts that will enrich the knowledge of the feminist literature produced locally. In this sense, the feminist research framework enabled us to take a critical view of postwar Yugoslavia, with a special focus on Macedonia, when radical changes occurred in the social order of the countries of the federation.

Undoubtedly, this radical change was enabled by a change in the legal regulations (many of them in favour of women), and by the new strategies on a federal level. Women's right to vote was especially important as it was provided for the women of all the nations of the federation and as women were thus integrated in the social-political and economic public domain. In parallel with these processes, an intensive emancipatory agenda was taking place, as a constitutive part of the processes of implementation of the aforementioned changes. With a special focus on the socialist social order, which, although criticized at all times because of its assimilation of women in the general interest of the state and party through the processes of emancipation, played an undoubtedly important role, laying the foundations of equality among all citizens (for more on this, see Despot, 1987). The later socialist period of self-management is

rather specific and especially important regarding the positioning of the Yugoslav feminists active in the late nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties, as noted by Zaharijević, a period which, according to Blaženka Despot, presented an alternative model to the bourgeois and even etatist production, because it created a new model of socialism qualitatively, founded upon non-authoritarian relationships. And of course, as she adds herself, the relationships within this social order must be constantly re-examined and reviewed, which reminds us that the women's question cannot be viewed only through the lens of the class problem of the proletariat (Zaharijević, 2015).

Although on a federal level, the contexts of the separate countries within the federation shared the same features to a certain degree, and consequently some specificities of the problems that were discovered in the theoretical analysis of these sources, were also be included in the analysis of *Makedonka* as a source, there still existed a methodological and research gap in the production of critical texts focusing on this historical period in Macedonia, both in the nineteen eighties and today – with the exception of a few researchers and theoreticians who have contributed significantly. The differences between the other Yugoslav countries and the local context in which *Makedonka* was produced depended a lot on what each country inherited after World War Two regarding their social situations, as well as their significantly different technological and industrial development, the percentage of literate population, including the social welfare of the citizens, their religious specificities, etc. Still, Macedonia could be defined as a separate entity and in this source we can find these determined specificities. In this sense, the continuation of the project Invisible Archives into this year aimed to contribute to the development of the interdisciplinary research practices that were to gain a better insight into the specificities of the local context through women's periodicals.

The work on this collection of academic papers, however, did not end with the printing of the publication. This year, we wish

to make the more detailed use of the source easier, now that the magazine *Makedonka* is digitized. Following the practice we started while working with digitized sources in the National and University Library St. Clement of Ohrid in Skopje, the magazines *Illustration Ilinden, Smena* and *Luč,* on which occasion a bibliography was compiled that included the excerpted parts relevant to the topic, that is, concerning the visibility of women in those magazines, was prepared by Marina Mijakovska. This year, we made efforts to enable an easy access for your working with the magazine, and we invite you to dive digitally in it in your new endeavours to research it, with a simplified approach via the bibliography of the magazine *Makedonka* – Organ of WAF (1944-1952), compiled by Eleni Novakovska, and available on the Internet page of the project Invisible Archives, which will also be available in a printed format soon. As initiators of this project, we encourage an interdisciplinary approach – we do not wish to limit our research process only to academia, as we believe that the potential for work with research sources such as *Makedonka* has a much broader appeal.

In accordance with the approach adopted in the first collection, the visual aspect is preserved, primarily for the sake of research continuity, and in order to have it complement the process started in 2022. The powerful aesthetics of this magazine did not leave its readers indifferent. It was carefully crafted by its editorial board and for this reason we continued our earlier practice to precede every paper with one selected front page of the magazine out of the total of 66, which in a way is related with the topic researched in the text that follows. Finally, some of the photographs and illustrations published on the pages inside the magazine are also included to support the findings of the academic papers published in this collection.

Challenging the existing body of knowledge in the local historiographical texts again, the papers in this collection only build on the previous endeavours to contribute critical reviews on various topics related to the magazine *Makedonka.* The authors of

the academic papers come from different social and humanistic disciplines, and in this collection, they analyse the context of the period in which this magazine influenced subjective worldviews and when the processes of mass emancipation occurred in parallel, while one of the papers offers a critical review of the project Invisible Archives, from its beginnings, but with a special focus on the collection of papers preceding this one.

2.1. Deepening the research focus through the key findings of the Collection

Makedonka is about to open new possibilities as a source for many potential academic papers owing to the multi-layered meaning of its reading of the context of the socialist past. The decision to start working on a second edition of academic papers started from the need for more insightful research of this source in order to assemble exciting finds opened to analysis by both humanities and social sciences. The authors in this collection gleaned some key findings and arrived at some interesting observations of the material that the magazine offers, especially regarding the political subjectivization of women through the magazine and through other 'top down' activities instructed by the centres of power whose aim was to influence the creation of the new socialist human, which, in fact, was a changeable category within the timeframe of the magazine, published for almost a decade.

The first text in the collection was written by our dear collaborator from the very beginnings of the project in 2021, the professor and literary theorist whose special interest are women's and feminist periodicals, Ana Kolarić. Her article examines the relationship between the 'invisible' women's archives, their digitization and research-based activism, and in this sense, she offers a critical review of the first two years of the project Invisible Archives, focusing more on the produced contents from the publication that preceded this collection. In her text, she clarifies

the connection that links the categories of science, activism and knowledge, in which various actors are involved, such as institutions, activists, researchers, and then she examines their role in the important transformative process that contributes towards increased visibility of marginalized groups in academia. She points out that this change started as early as the nineteen seventies with the institutionalization of women's studies, when they were first introduced into the American universities, and soon after into the universities in Western Europe, and then it proceeded to establish women's archives that were digitized later, during the first decade of the new millennium. This proved as a good way not only of preserving this kind of material but also of making it broadly accessible to anyone anywhere, not only to researchers and experts. Kolarić subsumes the project Invisible Archives under the syntagm research-based activism/activist research, analysing not only its importance for the enrichment and transformation of historiography, but also its relevance for the contemporary social-political context, which is a very important aspect of her analysis and captures the essence of this project.

The historian Petar Todorov writes about the role of the magazine *Makedonka* in the political emancipation of its readership as regards history, or more precisely, as regards the historical events through which the *new* national historical narrative was constructed after the war. Todorov explains this emancipatory approach of the editorial team of the magazine, analysing *Makedonka* as a forum used in the creation of this new narrative about the past, strongly influenced by the ideological struggle of the Communist Party of Macedonia and Yugoslavia and the struggle for creation of a Macedonian state. The focus of this text is on the content of the articles in *Makedonka* that discuss historical questions concerned with the distant non-nationalist past, and especially with topics from the national history and the history of the revolution in socialist Yugoslavia, Europe and the Soviet Union. Through a discursive analysis of the content, this chapter offers an insight into the manners in which this historical narrative and memory of the

past were constructed, or more precisely, in what manner the texts dedicated to history contributed to the political emancipation, but with a freshly introduced aspect – the inclusion of women in the narratives of national history. Through this lens, the author reads the subtext of the articles published in the magazine, that is to say, he gleans the notions they create, or the messages they send to the readership.

In her paper, the anthropologist and ethnologist Ana Ashtalkovska Gajtanoska offers a cross-section of the content associated with the emancipatory practices of the *new* political order aimed at the Muslim women in Yugoslavia and in Macedonia, with a special focus on the introduction of policies concerning the veil, that is to say, the policies that imposed the rejection of the veil ("zar" and "feredze") by the women from this community all over Yugoslavia. By offering an interesting and detailed review of all the texts that referred to this *new* policy, Ashtalkovska Gajtanoska brings us closer to the everyday challenges that Muslim women in Yugoslavia had to face and the expectances that they should adapt doubly (in the public and in the private sphere) to the novelties that WAF, as the largest political women's organisation made great efforts to implement in their political activity. In a context in which radical changes occurred in the status of women through the provision of legal protection of many various aspects of gender equality, Muslim women (a specific group of women from the Turkish, Albanian and Roma ethnic community) were "saved and liberated from the darkness" of their earlier lives, when they had to cover themselves with a veil – an element of their religious affiliation that worked as the most important marker of these women's identity and as the greatest obstacle for all further actions of WAF towards their "liberation" or "salvation", and in this sense, they were considered the "most backward" women in Macedonia, as we can observe on the pages of *Makedonka*. These women deviated from the notion of the new socialist woman that was being created at the time most extremely, and the author presents the emancipatory strategies used by the magazine to make these

women be like the "rest" and examines them through the lens of the Orientalist discourse. The text follows Svetlana Slapšak's line and does not dispute the progressiveness of the strategies for emancipation of Muslim women, but intends instead to illustrate the ways in which women in this case remained excluded from the process of decision-making yet again. The Muslim woman was simply removed from "the authority of her father, brother, husband and imam, as a symbolic representative of the collective, only to be placed under the authority of the state and its ideology, together with all other women."

Slavcho Dimitrov – theoretician, curator and activist – analyses the political subjectivization of women in the postwar period through its discursive and affective articulation on the pages of the magazine *Makedonka,* Organ of WAF in Macedonia. He takes into account the historical and contextual specificity of this political subjectivization through WAF without evaluating it and criticizing it from the position of contemporary political movements and that of the political gender subjectivization of modern feminism/s, such as the strategies of gender/sex difference, diversity, autonomous organisation and advocacy of particular (women's) interests, differentiated citizenry, deconstruction of the female subject, or advocacy of sex specific values as a starting point for criticism of the masculinist understanding of the political. He examines the political subjectivization of women through the activities of WAF, mediated through the new and historically specific conjunction and the creation of a new hegemonic relationship or a new historical block with a radically democratic prefix, where the interests of women entered a chain of equivalence with other democratic and antifascist struggles and demands and with other different subject positions and actors. Thence, he analyses this political subjectivization where women's identity and interests was taken up by and articulated through identification with the subject-position of the working people, of the citizens of the socialist republic, the united people's front or the revolutionary subject, represented

and condensed through a series of signifiers and symbols that functioned as an object of affective investment where Marshal Tito occupied the central position. In his text, Dimitrov identifies the concrete discursive, affective and antagonistic strategies through which this articulation of the women's political subject took place. Although the articulation of the women's political subject through the universal people-democratic signifier and the hegemonic representatives supported the notion of gender difference and the specifics of women's interests, the text argues that, with the histories of patriarchal oppression in mind, this political subjectivization nonetheless abounded with contradictions. Among them, the most obvious was the gradual erasing of the gender differentiations and interests, of the pluralism of positions and demands, all in the name of the hegemonic policies of the Communist Party, class politics and monolithic identification of 'the people', that is to say, when the people-democratic hegemonic project transformed into a populist-authoritarian democracy with a patriarchal prefix. Moreover, as Dimitrov argues, if any political subjectivization includes a significant level of self-alienation, in the sense of becoming the 'other', as opposed to the already existing and traditionally determined roles, capacities and spaces regulated by the dominant (past) regime and social system, in that case, the political subjectivization of women through WAF can be seen as an unfinished project at best [not only because of its premature (self)abolition], but in a more practical sense, it was a failed process of subjectivization because it took over and reproduced the traditional prewar models of gender binarity and division of labour and possibilities, despite the initial radical political actions in the realization of the premise of equality and the activities in the fields traditionally marked as male. Thus, argues Dimitrov, the revolutionary subject became an agent of passive revolution, of restoration of the common sense categories through reform.

The interdisciplinary nature of the project and its collaboration with related initiatives and organisations are the essential

foundations for the development of its concept, and in this sense, the project continued the collaboration with the Festival for Feminist Culture and Action FIRSTBORN GIRL, and the artist Hristina Ivanoska, who prepared another solo exhibition as part of this project entitled *Giants and Snowflakes*, referring to the eponymous poem from the poetry collection *Aegean Gunpowder Fairytale* by Slavko Janevski published in 1950. The poem was published in the 64th issue of *Makedonka* in 1950.

The exhibition is divided into three segments. The first and second focus on the commitments and achievements, but also on the challenges and limitations that WAF had to face in Macedonia, as represented in the content, but also through aesthetic and visual dimension of *Makedonka,* Organ of WAF. If in the first segment, the artist attempts a construction and deconstruction of the language and writing, in the second segment she unfolds the front pages of the magazine and intervenes in them in order to create a mélange of the past and present "with what it was and what now is'. This then works as an introduction to third segment focused on the future. By organising these three temporal conceptual units, she reminds us to be aware that we must not reduce the memory of WAF and *Makedonka* to a sentimental lament, but that, when going through that accumulated content and knowledge, we should come out with ideas about the unpredictable future. In this sense, Ivanoska in the third segment of the exhibition talks to us about future constructs and alliances with cyborgs, chimeras and hybrids, beginning the story with a mystical anthropomorphic mythical creature from Macedonian folk culture – the fairy. Ivanoska asks herself how we can contemplate the fairies from our folkloric oral legacy from today's point of view, imagining them more like cyborgs of the future, bearing in mind Haraway's observation[2] that "the cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed." In Ivanoska's concept, the cyborg is not a

2 The artist is inspired by the works of the theoretician Donna Haraway: *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) and *Staying with the Trouble* (2016).

result of a symbiosis between humans and machines, but it marks the urgency instead with which inter-species relationships should be established founded upon collectiveness and care, so essential for our future survival.

Some of Ivanoska's exploratory process is presented in this collection. Page by page, parts of the imaginary landscape "Flesh into Blossom" unfold, whose title has its origins in Audre Lorde's erotic poem Recreation. Made with pigments and brush, it is a guide into the intimacy of the ritual beautifying and application of powder and blush on a cheek, an act complemented by excerpts from women's erotic poetry and prose, selected by the artists to remind us that the image of the woman-hero, mother, caregiver, worker, educator, eulogized on the pages of *Makedonka* remains incomplete when the voice of the woman as a sensual, sexual, yearning and complex being is absent.

3. Why building archives, preserving them and why are they important for the present and the future? What does Makedonka mean to us in the present-day context?

Archives are often not objective, structured in favour of a concrete dominant subject of power that sets up this container of knowledge and history of a given time. They are a careful selection of material that pretends to represent the *true* or desired image of the past time, and by being that, they play the key role in the construction of historical narratives. Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to approach the knowledge offered by sources and archival data with care, leaving some space for the context in which they were collected and selected, and the motive behind the selection of the material in the archival collection, that is to say, we must ask ourselves why was a certain material in the focus of the archival interest. The socialist past of Macedonia was undoubtedly a period where a serious progress was made in the collection of archival materials, laying a solid foundational structure and introducing institutional care in their preservation and keeping. *Makedonka* is only one of the media in postwar Macedonia that kept reminding their readers of the new beginning and the creation of the new socialist human, thus supporting the ideological direction of the development of the society. The archives that *keep* this period from the more recent history of the state – with some of its contemporaries still alive – were undoubtedly modelled and edited directly by the centres of power. Still, we have to admit that in the early postwar years, they still operated with the enthusiasm of the wartime resistance, of the liberation movement, and in the spirit of the partisans. All this does not make them less valuable. Nor it makes them objects of nostalgia for the past times. But as we are losing those that gathered and constructed these archives

and those that are part of them, and this in combination with the unethical treatment of various researchers, historians, archivists and politician, and of the employees and managers of the archives that have perpetuated their negligence to the extent of an eventual loss of these materials – which is the case with the magazine in the focus of this collection – the resulting situation is that of oblivion and lost collective memory, which in turn scuppers the general academic potential for production of new knowledge and findings, for opening new perspectives that will keep teaching us how to deal with the challenges of the future. These utopian prospects, however, are less and less tangible, and despite the marginal attempts for preservation and reopening of these drawers of knowledge, the onset of the new times seems to have transformed the collection and keeping of archives into an activity that goes against the grain, against their new ideological routes.

Furthermore, an important aspect in the analysis of the archival materials must be the feminist reading of these sources, an approach adopted only rarely here, which is most likely owing to the understanding of women's history as something irrelevant for the grander national historical narratives. The first rupture in this trend of neglect of women's history happened in the socialist period, and women's coming out into the public sphere was indeed emphasized. Lydia Sklevicky argues that this was owing to the fact that, at this point, women managed to become relevant historical subjects only because they entered the typically male spheres of action, such as politics, managerial roles, the economy, etc. Unfortunately, even after this revolutionary recognition of female subject as a relevant political and social factor in socialism, the notion persisted "that the patriarchal world is a world of strong men, a world without women [but] the misconception of this premise was disproved by many anthropological gender studies that attested irrefutably that even in the most rigid patriarchal orders outwardly, there existed a well-structured female subculture that commanded a significant amount of power that did not need to

be recognized publicly" (Sklevicky, 1996). Sklevicky points out that until the very moment of the final dissolution of Yugoslavia, entire "generations of women and men were socialized in the course of their educational process to believe that there were no women in the history of their nations [and] they were socialized in the spirit of the *myth of the all-encompassing patriarchate.* And it is here that we perceive that it is necessary to persist in the scientific approach to the analysis of women's participation in history and in bringing to light the important aspects of solidarity, joint organisation and feminist practices among women, through feminist reading of the sources and archives. From this perspective, *Makedonka* is a very important source because it is a medium where some women could write for the first time, and consequently, we can read, for the first time as well, the female voice on social problems, despite the fact that the magazine's emancipatory rhetoric was 'top-down'.

Aware of the situation in traditional academia and in the archives in charge of the archival sources, and from a position of an independent civil initiative, with this project, we attempted a 'redefinition' of the archives in the sense that would imply a more dynamic engagement with the archival materials. In our line of work, this involves a more involved and interdisciplinary approach to the work at hand, through which we establish correlations between the archival material and the past, the archival material and the present, but also the future, and this then enables us to move the given chronological limitations. This approach to our work with the archives offers a plethora of insights how to live with them and how to use them in some future times.

Taking into account the context of the present, we are witnesses to the ease with which changes can occur in the political discourse, and in the strategic polices regarding the status of women and the status of all other minorities in a given country. In her text, Ana Kolarić touches on several such examples from neighboring Serbia, but the developments in the last two decades leave no room for doubt that the radical changes in the attempts to introduce or

erase the gender aspects are becoming alarming – a dynamics that is exhausting to follow. The most recent erasing of gender in the strategic documents of various structural instances has disabled the starting point for creation of policies for improvements and strengthening of the status of women and other gender minorities. It has also disabled the introduction of measures for prevention of gender discrimination and violence (Miceva, 2023). The most recent example of one such erasing of the gender aspects from legal acts is the decision of the Ministry of Education and Science to remove gender equality form the draft of the law, replacing it with "equal opportunities".[3] This political turmoil necessitates engaged action in arts, sciences and academia as a counterpoint to these harmful patriarchal narratives and social and political practices.

3 For more detail see the Gender Equality Platform: „Реакција за предлог законот за изменување и дополнување на Законот за основно образование и Предлог законот за средно образование", https://rodovaplatforma.mk/blog/2024/11/01.

Acknowledgements:

Although the thematic format adopted when this collection was initiated was open, the papers produced managed to create a whole in which the findings interconnect and intersect. Choosing their research focus freely, the authors produced a new body associated with the context of the socialist past, which is yet to start new dialogues, academic and other debates, and we are very grateful to them for that.

In the realization of this project, CINIK managed to establish its appreciated cooperation with the Museum of Republic of North Macedonia, which hosted the closing events again and whose aim is to offer initial communication about the completed work to the public. Our cooperation with the National Library of Serbia is especially important, since they are the guardians of the complete collection of issues of the magazine *Makedonka* and we wish to express our gratitude to them for their promptness and professional approach in the preparation of the collection this year. We would also like to express our gratitude for their patience and sincere dedication to Dejan Vasilevski who was the language editor of this edition and to Marija Jones who translated this collection into English and through which translation these texts will find their readership beyond the borders of this country. Our gratitude extends to the design studio KOMA for the commendable representation of the visual elements of the magazine, brilliantly adjusted to the concept of the collection.

The project was realized as a result of the longstanding cooperation with the Heinrich Böll foundation and their office in Sarajevo and we are grateful to them for recognizing the work initiated by CINIK. For a third year in a row, Invisible Archives was supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia and we hope that the state budget will continue to provide the modest financial support for the independent civil

society sector in future. This introduction is written in first person plural, but there is only one name signed under it. The reason for that is the communality of this process, established as a guiding principle with the first project of the Invisible Archives in 2021. Most of the theoretical and methodological framework was established then, and the major directions in our thinking, but also the enthusiasm and commitment from that time, I believe, are evident in this edition too. The foundations of that framework would not have been as good as they are if not for the efforts and expertise of the chief initiator of this project – Ivana Hadjievska. The communality of all projects of CINIK is the value upon which the work of the entire Centre rests and our gratitude for that goes to the team that founded CINIK.



Македонка





Ana Kolarić[1]

CRITICAL REVIEW

„Invisible Archives" and (Research-Based) Activism: New Resources for the Research and Teaching

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Introduction

This text is dedicated to the link between the archives of marginalized/forgotten histories and their actors, the digitization of this material and research-based activism. As early as the nineteen seventies, in parallel with the institutionalization of Women's Studies (at the American universities first, and in the Western European countries later), women's archives were formed and modes were discovered to make them as visible and accessible as possible, both to researchers and to the public in general. At first, women's archives most commonly testified to the work of women's organizations or the life and work of notable/great women; later, with the application of more sensitive research methods such as oral history, archives dedicated to ordinary women and their everyday life were formed. The key goal of women's archives is to document women's activities by collecting and keeping all available documents ([digitized] literary works, magazines, letters, memoirs...). These documents are at the same time personal/individual memories and historical documents about women's work in the past. From 2000s onwards, various archival materials, and especially magazines, have been digitized extensively. Digitization proved to be not only the best mode of preserving those materials from decay, but also of having this relatively bulky and often scattered material saved in a virtual place, accessible to everyone everywhere: researchers, teachers, students, but also the general public. Of course, the criteria on the basis of which it is decided what materials will be digitized are plentiful (depending on that which institution does the digitization and with what means).

This text is inspired by the project Invisible Archives, which is led and realized by Jana Kocevska and Ivana Hadjievska as one of the activities of the Centre for Research of Nationalism and Culture, or CINIK. This project is closely related with women's history in two ways at least: the project is based on the ideas derived from women's/feminist historiography; the materials digitized and studied in this project testify to the marginalized or almost completely forgotten women's history, as well as to feminist history. To date, as part of this project two publications were produced and the magazine *Makedonka* was digitized. *Makedonka* (1944-1952) *Organ of the Women's Antifascist Front of Macedonia* was the first magazine in Macedonian dedicated to women and to the conversation about their problems, published immediately after World War Two.

In the first part of the text, I will offer a broader theoretical and methodological framework for the understanding of 1) the nature of the relationship between scientific and activist knowledge; 2) the concept of the project Invisible Archives; and 3) the concrete problems addressed by the researchers within this project. I will focus specially on the terms 'research-based activism' and 'activist research': What is the connection among research, knowledge and activism? Is there a link between researchers/academic workers and the institutions for higher education, on one hand, and activist and non-governmental organizations, on the other? Are these relationships between these seemingly distant and unrelated actors the crucial prerequisites for production of knowledge that will have a transformative power, that is, knowledge that can be applied in the understanding, but also in the resolution, of the existing social problems? If activist research concerns itself primarily with marginalized and oppressed social groups, that is, with recognition and prevention of social injustice, and from the point of view of social sciences (history above all) and humanities, can the research of a magazine material, with a special focus on women, be activist research, and in what ways?

In the second part of the text, I will describe the activities of the project Invisible Archives to date and I will establish a connection among this project and other similar projects in the region. I will also discuss, in greater detail, the collection dedicated to *Makedonka: Organ of the Woman's Antifascist Front of Macedonia (1944-1952), historical experiences and cultural memory,* published in 2022 in Macedonian and English.

The conclusion suggests that a research whose aim is to discover and interpret texts form the past, focuses on women and their problems (that is, texts that for various reasons have been marginalized or remained unknown, both for the expert and general public) can be an activist research in two respects: academically (as an epistemologically, ethically and politically aware and engaged intervention in the existing programs of the faculties for social sciences or humanities) and educationally (as an epistemologically, ethically and politically aware and engaged intervention in the public space, with an idea to make certain knowledge visible and mediate it to the broader public, let us say, as part of debates, round tables, informal workshops with an educational character, but also with popular science articles, interviews, etc.).

1. History, memory, activism

In the famous text "Secrecy, Archives and the Public Interest",[1] published in 1977, Howard Zinn, an American historian, public intellectual and social activist argued that knowledge was not neutral, but dominated by the persons with the most power and wealth in the society and that it served their interests (Zinn 1977, 18). He stressed that the actual person working in or with archives "tends to be scrupulous about his neutrality, and to see his job as a technical job, free from the nasty world of political interest: a job of collecting, sorting, preserving, making available, the records of the society" (Ibid. 20). Contrary to this, Zinn believed that this neutrality was false and that the archivist, just like all other researchers and scholars, "tends to perpetuate the political and economic status quo simply by going about his ordinary business" (Ibid., 20). Moreover, according to Zinn, to desert this default and allegedly neutral position would not be, as many scholars fear, "the politicizing of a neutral craft, but the humanizing of an inevitably political craft" (Ibid., 20).[2] Zinn catalogues the dominant trends and tendencies in archivistics at the time, and he said the following:

> "we learn most about the rich, not the poor; the successful, not the failures; the old, not the young; the politically active, not the politically alienated; men, not women; white, not black; free people rather than prisoners; civilians rather than soldiers; officers rather than enlisted men" and "despite the recent

1 A version of this text was published as early as 1971, a year after the annual conference of the Society of American Archivists, where Zinn read the paper entitled "The American Archivist and Radical Reform".

2 Zinn's observation seems relevant today, when often those that falsify scientific facts and the truth out of political and economic interests refer to objectivity and neutrality. A more recent example were the alleged public debates about the extraction of lythium in Serbia, where only suitable and obedient scholars could participate.

development of oral history, the written word still dominates, and this tends to emphasize the top layers, the most literate elements in the population" (Ibid., 21).

Of course, he was aware that good practices existed, that is to say, pioneering efforts to document the lives of the so-called ordinary people, such as the history of Afro-Americans, and the history of workers and workers' movements. Along those lines, Zinns suggested that archivists did the two following things: 1) "that they engage in a campaign to open all government documents to the public"; 2) "that they take the trouble to compile a whole new world of documentary material, about the lives, desires, needs, of ordinary people" (Ibid. 25). These suggestions are important for the establishing and sustaining of true democracy in the society, and this, according to Zinn, is a process in which historians and archivists should also participate.

In the text entitled „The Archivist as Activist", written in 1977 too, Patrick M. Quinn recalled a panel organized as part of the annual conference of the Society of American Archivists in 1971, which he attended together with Howard Zinn. In the text he speaks about Zinn's conclusions with great respect, as well as about his two proposals for the archivists – to have all government documents open to the public and to collect materials about the so-called ordinary people more extensively. Quinn realized that, only six years later, at the time of the writing of his text, Zinn's proposals proved prophetic, that is, archivistics developed in the very direction he had suggested. In this context, Quinn cited several examples of good practices, including the W. E. B. DuBois Papers Project[3] and the Women's History Sources Survey (Quinn 1977, 29).[4] Quinn's approach to the relationship between archivistics and activism is

3 For more information, see: https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/collection/mums312 i https://edsitement.neh.gov/media-resources/web-du-bois-papers (accessed on 10. 10. 2024).

4 See, for example, https://www.gale.com/womens-history and https://guides.library.ucdavis.edu/womens-history/primary_sources. This digital databases and archives are not cited in P. Quinn's text. I refer to them as some of the sources that are easilly accessible today.

interesting. As experts in the theory and practice of Archivistics, archivists face various choices and decisions on a daily basis:

> "Nonetheless, as archivists we are constantly faced with choices and decisions involving a broad range of issues of concern to all of us. A number of these are relatively trivial and mundane; others are paramount in their importance and urgency. While some fall clearly within the archival domain, many tend to reside in the grey area that spans our dual roles as archivists and private citizens." (Ibid. 31)

In other words, if the active and responsible choice and decision making regarding the material to which we have access we call activism, then Quinn has no problem with it "If that is what activism is all about, then let us have more of it" (Ibid. 35). It is a completely different question whether this activism will always be on the side of the marginalized and disempowered individuals and groups in the society, and progressive policies as well. Both Zinn and Quinn definitely advocated this.

Women's archives, which are the focus of this text, have come into being as a consequence of the insufficient visibility of women and their work, in the traditional repositories. As explained earlier, the first women's archives usually testified to the life and work of well-known women, who participated actively in public life. In time, women's archives began including documents about groups that were not visible even to women activists. In their condensed but informative review of the literature about the development of women's rights, Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Kären M. Mason say that the nineteen sixties and seventies were focused on the identification of the few women's collections, on the emphasis of the importance of the role of women in archivistics, as well as on the demand to have more women in that role and on the rethinking of the procedures for collecting and describing archival material so that this field could include women and their history (Zanish-Belcher, Mason 2007, 345). In the field of women's and social history, the nineteen eighties were marked by redirection of the attention from „great women" to writing history from the bottom up, which undoubtedly

affected women's archives as well: if the archives did not include adequate sources, historians conducted researches in the area of oral history (Ibid. 346). In the nineteen nineties, archivistics looked both backward and forward, as Belcher and Mason explain: on one hand, papers were published dedicated to the establishment of the first women's archives, while on the other, the different ways in which the technological revolution affected archivistics were researched, especially the globally available Internet. Today we are witnesses of the powerful impact and concrete results of the digital revolution in the area of women's archives: from extensive digitization of materials to virtual linking of various repositories that would have been impossible in the physical world.

In order to explain who and for what reasons is usually excluded from historical materials, Belcher and Mason refer to the conclusions that Eve Mosley arrived at as early as the nineteen eighties (Mosley 1973; Mosley 1980). For Mosley class was the fundamental criteria for inclusion or exclusion: it was easier to collect the documents of educated women, of whatever race or ethnic origin, than the documents of uneducated women of any race or ethnic origin. In this sense, we can say that literacy and education level were for a long time the determining factors regarding the presence of some or absence of other women in the women's archives. Still, Belcher and Mason offer their own contribution to this subject by interpreting the notion of 'representation, and consequently 'underrepresentation' primarily contextually. For instance, women scientists who were not stars in their field of science were (under) represented in the main/well-known archives, in a similar way, for instance, as local Afro-American women activists (Zanish-Belcher, Mason 2007, 348). They proceed to say that "women's archives today may have a feminist bias and may fail to document groups that do not share these values or who actively oppose these values, such as right-wing organizations or right-to-life groups" (Ibid. 348). Hence, to be able to understand and explain their decision as regards the collection of certain material, archivists must be aware of their preconceptions.

Finally, Belcher and Mason also consider these two, only seemingly, technical and practical issues concerning women's archives: how to acquire relevant documents and for whom are these archives collected? Earlier, when women's archives collected and kept documents primarily about women's organizations and great women, to address a potential donor was simple: a letter would be sent in the name of the repository to the donor who was usually known (heirs and family). But when women's archives, following the example of social history from the nineteen eighties, turned towards documenting the everyday life of ordinary people, the collection of material became much more demanding because there were no obvious donors. Belcher and Mason refer to some of the ways of making the archivist's interest in a certain group, problem, topic known: archivists attending public events held in places where the local community gathers, announcements in the newspapers and other media, distribution of printed material such as book markers and brochures, the most efficient method being 'word of mouth' (Zanish-Belcher, Mason 2007, 351-352).

Belcher and Mason are optimist as regards the potential users of women's archives: on one hand, women's archives are the most attractive for researchers, scholars and students, partly because many of these archives exist and work within universities and campuses; on the other hand, digitized archival materials and the accessibility of women's archives on the net, in the virtual world, attract not only many more researchers,[5] but also the ordinary citizens.[6] In this sense, the free access to women's archives on the net is also a form of democratization of knowledge (the sources are accessible to everyone everywhere). Moreover, these digitized materials and the free access to them make the archives visible

5 For instance, researchers that do not live and work in America or England, but in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, for instance, can now use archival materials that used to be much less accessible to them physically or not accessible at all.

6 Belcher and Mason argue that "[d]igital content not only dissolves the walls of the archives, it also expands the very concept of use. (...) Genealogists searching for an ancestor, women looking for a recipe their mother baked, and people trying to reconnect with old friends or extended family membershave been delighted to find all of these things through our Web sites" (2007, 354-355).

to the traditional researchers and scholars that used to ignore women's archives and never took this material into consideration in their analyses (Zanish-Belcher, Mason 2007, 355). This does not imply that these researchers would all of a sudden take women's archives into consideration only because they are accessible. At least they will not be able to deny that they exist and that they are easily accessible. In other words, the decision not to use them would be a direct consequence of their concrete convictions and the measure of their knowledge/ignorance. One thing is certain: "[w]omen's archives are both physical and symbolical spaces where women's experiences are valued and preserved" (Ibid. 356) and are a precious source for the research and teaching in the fields of feminist thought, women's history and the history of women's everyday life.

Taking into consideration Zinn's conclusions and proposals, discussed earlier, as well as the tendencies within archivistics itself in the last few decades, Vladan Vukliš and Anne Gilliard discuss the different forms of archival activism (Vukliš, Gilliland 2017).[7] For the purposes of this text dedicated to the project Invisible Archives, the most interesting form of archival activism is autonomous archiving – autonomous civil self-documentation projects (community archives), which "are often created as a response to the failure of "mainstream" archives to document the realities of that community, to protect the records deemed important by its members, or to provide them with necessary access to already collected records" (ibid. 193). However, Vukliš and Gilliland at the same time emphasize that "the distinctions between community archiving and archival profession are not necessarily unbridgeable divides", that is to say, it is not only possible, but it is also desirable to have institutionally independent archivists participate in activist projects and movements and be their relevant support (ibid. 195). Moreover, there are some other forms of cooperation that will be important later in this text. For instance, the situations in which

7 The article is published in English, see Vukliš, Gilliland 2016.

the financial and/or technical support to the nongovernmental organizations to digitize certain material comes from the Ministry of culture/education/science, albeit these respective ministries would most likely never have taken the initiative to select or approve of that very material as a priority in the annual plans and programs for digitization within the national/university libraries.

Vukliš and Gilliland define research-based activism also as a use of archival material in the excavation of suppressed histories, thus making them relevant: "Besides well-known examples from post-conflict societies, where access to records addresses past crimes, "research activism" also entails reconstructing "people's history" through the "mainstream" record" (ibid., 197). They cite two impressive examples of intrinsic connection among history, memory and activism through archival material: 1) the digitization of the material of the Women's Antifascist Front (WAF), initiated in 2015 by the nongovernmental organization "Crvena" from Sarajevo, with the aim to "represent, affirm and revive the emancipatory legacy of the anti-fascist struggle of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina"; 2) a group of students and professors from the University of Banja Luka used the records of the regional organizations of WAF, kept in the Archives of Republika Srpska, to present the history of women's struggle from a feminist angle; that initiative resulted with the exhibition "Establishing the lost connection: WAF in Bosanska Krajina" in 2016 (Vukliš, Gilliland 2017, 197). These two examples illustrate the dual role that research-based activism can have: on one hand, it is focused on the past and aims to reconstruct marginalized/suppressed/forgotten history through official records: on the other hand, there is an awareness that foundational narratives are adopted from the past on the basis of which both the present and future can be discussed. In other words, the activist aspect of these researches of the past we can locate in the active role that they can assume not only as regards the present and future situation in science but also in the society as a whole.

The explicit connection among research, knowledge and society is discussed in the texts about activist research: this kind of research does not include only persons that are 'activists', albeit they can be of central importance, nor it implies that the researchers/scholars involved in it will become 'activists' in the common sense of the word (Hale 2001, 13). The emphasis in most of these texts is on the open political quality of the research and on the specific methodological questions and problems related to it. Charles Hale cites the basic aspects of the activist research as follows:

> "a) helps us better to understand the root causes of inequality, oppression, violence and related conditions of human suffering; b) is carried out, at each phase from conception through dissemination, in direct cooperation with an organized collective of people who themselves are subject to these conditions; c) is used, together with the people in question, to formulate strategies for transforming these conditions and to achieve the power necessary to make these strategies effective." (ibid. 13)

The impression is that research-based activism and activist research, and even archival activism, can be, under certain circumstances, brought into correlation: when they concern themselves with the recent past (such as the archival research of the planned, systemic, organized and politically motivated rapes of women, but also of men, on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the armed conflict in the nineteen nineties), or with the present (such as the research of the ways in which the excavation of certain ores, pollution of the environment and the living standards of the population on a certain territory are connected, that is, when it is possible to identify individuals or groups that should feel the effects of the research on their own skin, for instance, after the introduction of new strategies, regulations or laws (legal, educational, cultural, ecological...). What we have to bear in mind when we deal with researches of texts from the distant past is

the fact that, although the effect of a certain research might be political, educational and symbolic, the research itself does not necessarily need to include participation of concrete persons, and the conclusions of the research do not necessarily need to lead to formulation or implementation of some new strategy, regulation or law.[8]

Hale lays emphasis on one aspect of the activist research that should apply, we believe, to our research as well, but also work as a pedagogical *credo,* because it concerns above all the responsible approach and engagement with the academic and social problems. Despite the tendency to view academic expertise and authority as products of objective, neutral, disinterested knowledge, "the practice of activist research asks us to identify our deepest ethical-political convictions, and to let them drive the formulation of our research objectives" (Hale 2001, 14). It is highly likely that the coordinators of the project Invisible Archives, Jana Kocevska and Ivana Hadjievska, started from their own political and ethical convictions in their conception and realization of their academic-educational and activist project. In the remainder of this text I will examine their theoretical and methodological premises, but also the concrete results of the project.

8 Miguel A. Martinez makes a clear distinction between the activist research in sociology and critical or public sociology. According to him, the activist research should be seen as "collective processes of cooperation between academic researchers and non-academics while producing sociological knowledge and inciting actions aiming to change social problems, usually for the sake of the non-academic social groups involved." And also: "This does not mean that critical academics and public sociologists always practice AvR. They can simply perform conventional, non-participatory ways of producing scientific knowledge and disseminating their insights via mainstream media." Seer Martinez 2024.

2. Women's history, periodicals, digitization

Let us start with the context in which the project Invisible Archives came about. Jana Kocevska and Ivana Hadjievska started his project under the auspices of the nongovernmental organization – Center for Research of Nationalism and Culture (CINIK). It is interesting that the mission and the goals of this Center are very similar to the premises of activist research:

"The *Center for Research of Nationalism and Culture* has been founded in order to provide additional intellectual space and expertise in the field of nationalism studies, in a society where this field lacks scientific attention and institutional support. (...) We understand nationalism as a cultural construct, a phenomenon closely related to culture. (...) We tend to focus on the manifestation of nationalism 'on the ground', at the grass-roots level of society. We are also interested in exploring how cultural practices relate to particular state policies which target individual and group identities and how states control their relationships with reliance on internal cultural policies. We acknowledge that conflicts based on one's 'otherness' very often appear through a particular view on history, which can sometimes be misleading and even manipulated by the structures in power. Combining political science, anthropology, history and sociology we aim to understand the culture of nationalism in the region and to process our findings to public display with a final goal to raise awareness on the root-cause of phenomena such as stereotypes, prejudices, hatred and discrimination."[9]

In other words, 1) because a certain problem and a certain field – nationalism and studies of nationalism – have not received adequate/sufficient attention in the research of the official

9 See: https://cinikskopje.wordpress.com/ (accessed on: 15. 10. 2024).

institutions, individuals with a background in academic research in the fields of social sciences and humanities research this problem under the auspices of a nongovernmental organization; these individuals are interested in 2) the situation „in the field", that is, in the manifestation of a certain problem within a local community and 3) the way in which the particular and concrete policies of the state treat – or more commonly, perpetuate – this problem, maintaining/supporting the status quo in the society.

The necessity of the project Invisible Archives can be explained in a similar manner: 1) the bad state of the affairs in the institutional archives, and especially the insufficient knowledge and care for women's cultural legacy and historiography impelled the historian Ivana Hadjievska and anthropologist/ethnologist Jana Kocevska to make certain archives more accessible to the public and researchers by 2) writing extensively about them, involving other interested researchers in their project and 3) digitizing the material in question. To date, as part of this project, CINIK has produced two publications - *Women in the periodicals from Vardar Macedonia between the two world wars* (2021) and *Makedonka: Organ of the WAF [1944-1952], historical experiences and cultural memory* (2022), and digitized the magazine *Makedonka*.[10] Both publications are available online, in Macedonian and in English,[11] which is a pioneering undertaking of this kind in the region: not only the researches from the region have an easy access to this material and use it, but it is also available to researchers outside the region (the departments focused on studies of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, or the Slavistic departments whose interest is primarily in Slavic languages and literature). Therefore, these publications encourage researchers to undertake new comparative researchers. In this sense, the translations into English should not be viewed as a 'small culture' consenting to the rules of the 'dominant' culture, but as an invitation to a dialogue

10 All issues of the magazine *Makedonka* are avalible on the internet address: https://nevidliviarhivi.mk/magazines/.

11 See https://nevidliviarhivi.mk/pdf-category/texts/.

extended to the broader academic research community, carefully considered and planned in advance.[12]

The aim of the project is to research the history of Macedonian women "through the complex kaleidoscope of periodicals – understood primarily as a source that archives human social activities that are not always part of the official, anthologized and institutional narratives, but were crucial for the creation of the modern patterns in culture and politics" (Hadjievska, Kocevska 2022, 38). Therefore, Hadjievska and Kocevska deliberately chose magazine material as the main source in their research,[13] and they describe it precisely as an *archive* of social activities. In principle, these activities took place in all segments of human life – politics, education, health and culture, while in women's magazines they were additionally coloured with the 'female experience'[14] and in certain cases by the feminist perspective of the editors and authors. In this sense, women's magazines from the first half of the twentieth century can truly be recognized as women's archives of a certain kind because they published well known and unknown women authors, and marginalized and forgotten women authors, and women authors who wrote under a pseudonym and those that did not sign their name; they established women's intellectual

12 This does not imply that there are no power relationships within the fields of social sciences and humanities. Earlier, these power relationships were perceived as a clear opposition between the 'centers' where knowledge was produced and the 'semi-peripheries' and peripheries, where this knowledge was taken over, reproduced, and at best 'culturally translated'. Things are very different today, that is, there is awareness that knowledge is produced in the semi-peripheries and peripheries as well. The problem is to what extent and how that knowledge is shared beyond the local community. Hadjievska and Kocevska have attempted precisely that, and time will show the effects of their attempt. And of course, in this context, I do not use the terms semi-periphery and periphery in a pejorative sense, but as terminological 'shortcuts' for generally known, although often stereotypical and/or interest-based divisions.

13 From a historical point of view, women's and feminist magazines were a mobilizing force that gathered activists together and influenced the creation of new supporters of the women's movement. Women's and feminist periodicals are at the same time historical documents (*description* of a time) and critical/theoretical expression (*interpretation* of a time). They testify to the continuity – as well as to the discontinuity – of the feminist thought.

14 This term should not be read in its essentialist sense, that is to say, female experience is not given or predetermined in advance (biologically), it is not truthful and authentic, but it should be perceived as socially constructed.

networks, both on a national and trans-national level through reports from congresses and meetings, translation, correspondence; some theoretical notions were invented and developed, such as the *new woman,* that were important in a political, educational and cultural sense; there amassed an extensive material for writing of histories of literature and histories of literary criticism that differ from those that are dominant in the school and academic curricula and in the public in general; etc.

Although they are primarily interested in women's/feminist magazines, which is evident in their decision to digitize the first women's magazine in Macedonian – *Makedonka,* Hadjievska and Kocevska were aware that they have to take into account all those other magazines that wrote about women and their problems and/or where women were (albeit rarely) contributors.[15] Hence their first publication was dedicated to the representation of women in the periodicals of Vardar Macedonia between the two world wars and the following magazines were considered: "Luč. Mesečni časopis za kulturna, ekonomska i socijalna pitanja" (A monthly dedicated to cultural, economic and social issues), "Smena" and "Илюстрация Илиндень". In her introduction, Nada Boškovska says the following:

> "It is not surprising that the researchers found few texts written by women. The great upheavals of urbanization, literacy, and legal equality did not occur until the socialist period and did not come to fruition until the 1960s. In the period between the world wars, Yugoslav Macedonia remained

15 With this in mind we should not forget the warning that Slobodanka Peković summarized as follows: "I am still wary when using the term *feminism* as a determinant. I think that it narrows the research field. Feminism was an important movement from the beginning of the 20th century. It is still important today because, regardless of all political and legal proclamations, the stereotypes about the place, abilities and possibilities for women are still very much present. Feminist studies of periodicals, or studies of feminist periodicals, are terms that cannot be avoided when working on women's periodicals. But we must not limit ourselves to this kind of study only, since we would have to omit the magazines that were proto-feminist, feminophile or only women's magazines. All magazines that enabled women's expression, that encouraged or approved their activities and achievements are equally important. Even the magazines on the opposite side, the magazines that were expressly against feminism, against women's engagement outside the house, are important because they were the other, dark side of the mirror that reflected the level of human – women's rights, that is, the rights of the minorities." See Petković 2016.

> a neglected province in which the state not only failed to invest, but rather exploited, for example by paying far too low prices for tobacco, an important and for the state lucrative crop. (...) Poverty was striking, health care was almost non-existent, and infant mortality and malaria were rampant. The illiteracy rate was almost 84% in 1921 and was only slightly reduced to 70% by 1939; among women, it was even higher. The thin layer of intellectuals included only a few women, who are hardly tangible. It will still require intensive archival study to locate them." (Boškovska 2021, 14-15)

As I have stressed several times before, and as one can see from the quotation, literacy and education were the chief prerequisites for women's participation in public life. This also affects contemporary research of women's history and feminist thought: long-lasting and tireless efforts are necessary when working with the archives in order to find any kind of testimony about the few educated women in the interwar period that had managed to leave some written evidence behind. Boškovska reminds the readers of the collection that this kind of research in the first cycle of the project Invisible Archives was interrupted and thwarted by the COVID-19 pandemics, and while it lasted, all institutions were closed, and researchers could access only digitized materials. Fortunately, in the second cycle, it was possible to research the magazine *Makedonka,* the first women's magazine in Macedonian. I will offer a summary of the texts published in the collection and in the conclusion, in the spirit of research-based activism and activist research, I will establish a link between these texts and the contemporary context and current problems.

The collection *Makedonka: Organ of the WAF [1944-1952], historical experiences and cultural memory* consists of a Preface, an Introduction by the editors, five research papers and an Afterward. This concept was not random: The Preface and Afterward position the collection in the broader regional context, both in the socialist past (main link are WAF and its activities) and in the present (it draws attention to the network of researchers interested in women's and

feminist periodicals, and to some more recent digitization projects); the Introduction of the editors describes the project's work in general, and more narrowly, the work on the magazine *Makedonka;* while the individual research papers focus on concrete topics and problems from the magazine. Both in the collection as a whole and within all individual texts we can observe this constant linking of the past and present, that is, this emphasis on the role that the past can play in the constitution of our present as it is, or of a different one. Or, as Hadjievska and Kocevska formulate it with precision, "a devastating consequence of the oblivion in this case is the loss of all connection between the values of political, culturological and economic nature of WAF and the contemporary concepts of gender equality" (Hadjievska, Kocevska 2022, 56).

Two histories interweave in the magazine *Makedonka:* women's and socialist history. The emancipation of women was practically a state project (top down) and hence closely associated with the overall – political, educational and cultural – reconstruction of the society after the Second World War. Its goal was "to create a 'new socialist woman', politically emancipated, so that she could participate fully in the new socialist society" (Hadjievska, Kocevska 2022, 34). If we look at this from the point of view of the nineteen nineties and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and of the individual state projects of national renewal, it is no wonder that this (shared) socialist legacy was easily „forgotten", and together with it the antifascist history of the Second World War and the immediate postwar period. Along these lines, in an interview, Hadjievska and Kocevska say the following: „the memory of the magazine survived only in the mnemonic circles such as the organizations that originated from the Union of the Associations of Fighters from the National Liberation Struggle as guardians of the antifascist tradition, or in the academic circles in the works of individual researchers (Hadjievska, Kocevska 2022). The changes in the title of the magazine, and consequently its program policy, reflect the changes in the attitude towards the idea of women's emancipation

in the second half of the twentieth century rather convincingly, which Hadjievska and Kocevska summarize as a journey from „the revolutionary postwar ideas about the new socialist society to the reactionism of the post-Yugoslav society marked by turbo-nationalism and re-patriarchalization" (*Makedonka* from 1944 until 1952; *Enlightened Woman* – Organ of the Women's Societies of Macedonia from 1953; *Woman* from 1990; *New Woman* from 1997 until 2005; and from 2005 onwards, it was published briefly under the title *Handsome*) (Ibid.). This short quotation draws our attention to another important thing: just as the Yugoslav antifascist legacy is the history that the region proudly or unwillingly shares, so does it share the nationalism, chauvinism and repatriarchalization of its more recent history, equally proudly or unwillingly.

The editors of the project cite several regional projects that they found important, mostly methodologically: 1) the digitization of the materials of the Women's Antifascist Front (WAF) – non-governmental organization from Sarajevo "Crvena";[16] 2) the individual cultural and artistic initiative Adela Jušić (use of sources, testimonies, biographies and magazines associated with the work of WAF); 3) "Women's Movement 2020";[17] 4) the database and the electronic magazine *Književnstvo*.[18] In North Macedonia, the independent cultural scene has undertaken the role of the guardian of the cultural memory of the antifascist women's movement, or more precisely the feminist festival FIRSTBORN GIRL organized by the collective Tiiiit! Inc. from Skopje (Jana Kocevska was one of the founders of this collective).

As far as the accessibility of the material is concerned, most of the issues of the magazine *Makedonka* can be found in the National and University Library in Skopje, while the National Library of Serbia in Belgrade has all the issues of the magazines, and Hadjievska and Kocevska scanned them there for the purposes of

16 See: https://afzarhiv.org/items/show/481 (accessed on 18. 10. 2024).

17 See: https://www.zenskipokret.org/ (accessed on 18. 10. 2024).

18 See: http://www.knjizenstvo.rs/#gsc.tab=0 (accessed on 18. 10. 2024).

the research. In other words, the papers published in the collection dedicated to the magazine *Makedonka* have all started from this scanned material, later posted on the internet page of the National Library of Serbia,[19] as well as on the page of the project Invisible Archives. We should also add that the project in all its stages has been financially supported by Heinrich Böll Stiftung (Sarajevo) and the Ministry of Culture of North Macedonia. Similarly, the digitization of the magazine *Women's Movement* was supported by the Ministry of Culture of Serbia. As we have already said in the first part of this text, the readiness of the public institutions to support initiatives of this kind is rather interesting, since they are not viewed as a priority in the fields of education and culture.

Ivana Pantelić, a historian at the Institute for Recent History of Serbia in Belgrade, has researched the history of antifascism for many years from the perspective of women's movement primarily (see Pantelić 2011), in her Preface offers a brief review of the establishment, work and dissolution of WAF and its branches, thus delineating the broader context for more concrete analyses of the magazine *Makedonka*.

In their introductory text, the editors of the collection, Ivana Hadjievska and Jana Kocevska, talk about the motivation and purposes of their research, describing the broader context. They also refer to similar projects in the region, present their own methodological premises and the obstacles they had to face, as discussed earlier in this text. Furthermore, they also offer an informative ID of the magazine *Makedonka,* emphasizing that mostly women worked for the magazine (as editors and contributors), but also some men (usually as technical editors, photographers, but also some established male writers were contributors). The magazine was a monthly, but it was published as a double issue on many occasions. It is important to stress that the languages of minorities, such as Turkish and Albanian, were also

19 See: https://digitalna.nb.rs/view/URN:NB:RS:ND_4CF06BD702E6089481F093226CC82C09 (accessed on 29. 10. 2024).

included in the magazine. As far as the program of the magazine is concerned, Hadjievska and Kocevska list the most regular segments and rubrics, as well as those that appeared in the magazine only occasionally. They explain the four theme units, as discussed by the papers published in the collection, the political history, the social, educational and linguistic-semantic aspects of the material published in the magazine.

In the text dedicated to political history, 'Political advancement of women': forms of political participation of women in socialist Macedonia", Ivana Hadjievska follows the use of the syntagm 'political emancipation of women' in the magazine and delineates three chronological-political stages: 1) the heroic stage; 2) the shock-worker's stage and 3) the stage of the gradual dissolution of WAF. The 'heroic' stage relied on the participation of women in the partisan movement and antifascism was perceived as the fundamental prerequisite for the growth of the politically aware woman. The 'shock worker's' stage, from 1947 onwards, relied on the mass participation of women in the voluntary work actions, as well as on the engagement of women in certain sectors of industrial production. The third stage was characterized by the challenges and difficulties 'in fieldwork' and the reorganization of WAF itself. Hadjievska writes about the resistance to the literacy courses, especially in the rural areas, that forced some of the WAF branches to organize theoretical classes dedicated to the political emancipation of women. Hadjievska's text points out that the passage from the first into the second stage was marked by a change in the narrative about the socialist woman: she transformed from a revolutionary into a productive/producing subject, that is, she became a worker that drove a tractor, worked in a factory, etc. These women shock-workers had a serious problem with childcare, that is to say, with the issue of nurseries and kindergartens. The third stage was characterized by self-reflection and self-criticism: instead of the narrow focus on literacy and cultural-educational programs, the focus was on women's emancipation through familiarization

with and uses of the concrete laws, that is, laws that regulated women's rights in the society. In her conclusion, Hadjievska claims that the policies of WAF in Macedonia corresponded fully with the communist ideology (that is to say, the 'women's question" was supposedly resolved with the victory of the working class) and that *Makedonka,* a political women's magazine cannot be defined as a feminist magazine. But at the same time, she points at the fact that the activities of the editors and contributors of this magazine testify to their pro-feminist proclivities, and the best example of this were the texts written by one of the magazine's editors – Veselinka Malinska. Moreover, in her conclusion, Hadjievska suggests that in foreseeable future, the political careers, that is, the intellectual biographies of the key contributors of the magazine should also be researched. In other words, Hadjievska points out the complexity of the editorial policies and authorial positions in the magazine that were coloured by and bound in advance by the policies of WAF.

The inherent contradictions of the process of women's emancipation in the period between 1944 and 1952, caused by the continuation of the stereotypical female roles on a deeper level are the subject of the encouraging and provocative paper by Jana Kocevska dedicated to social welfare and healthcare. This text also reviews the feminist potential of women's activities and initiatives about which the magazine *Makedonka* wrote in its issues and examines the one-dimensional representation of women in this magazines as mothers, caregivers and educators of children, especially in relation to the double burden that women had to bear/endure in socialism (fulltime work and housework). In other words, Kocevska analyses the aspects of social welfare and healthcare that were evidently emancipatory and in favour of women in the new socialist society, and in parallel, she focuses her attention on the unsuccessful attempts of women to free themselves truly from the hetero-patriarchal logic. She identifies three types of texts: 1) texts-reports about the current situation, often making comparisons to the past; 2) educational and emancipatory texts written as advice (to

mothers, housewives...); 3) texts that extol the successes of socialist women who enjoyed the benefits of the new time (Kocevska 2022, 110).

Kocevska interprets the numerous texts from the magazine whose authors' convictions were seemingly progressive (modern) and in their writing they criticized the backward behaviours inherited from the past. Such were the texts by the medical experts dedicated to the bad situation with childbirth, hygiene maintenance and raising children in the rural areas. And indeed, the situation was bad. It suffices to say that the high childbirth mortality rates, as well as the high infant mortality rate were caused by infections and curable illnesses in many cases. However, instead of focusing on women's dismal life conditions, poverty, arduous physical work, etc., for which the state was to be held responsible, these experts – mostly men – engaged with the 'backward' practices of rural women and held them responsible for the bad situation.

It is logical that in the post-war society that struggled to rebuild the country after the great destruction focused on children and reproductive policies. Women were expected to contribute to the creation of the socialist society in every possible way, primarily as mothers. This led to the establishment of a specific motherhood culture that implied that all young parents, and above all mothers, needed to forget about the stories about parenthood from the past (superstitions mostly) and to follow the advice of the contemporary experts (doctors, pedagogues...) instead. During the Five-year plan for reconstruction, and especially as regards the strategies in the fields of social welfare and healthcare, there occurred an incredible development and progress: new maternity wards and kindergartens were opened (for instance, there were 116 kindergartens in 1939, while in 1949, their number increased to 325), and the number of employees in these branches grew accordingly (nurses, midwives, paediatric nurses, paediatricians, dentists, kindergarten teachers...). Owing to the insufficient feminist awareness, however, the gender labour division persisted, in which the so-called labour of love, that

is, women's invisible labour remained unrecognized and unpaid. Kocevska observes that something similar is still a problem in the contemporary societies as well, especially in times of major social and economic crises, but also during unexpected global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic when the feminization of housework and caregiving was more than obvious.

The magazine *Makedonka* was an official information medium that addressed all the events and issues in social welfare and healthcare concerning women. It also played an active advisory role: how to prepare food and how to keep it safe, how to take care of hygiene and health, etc. According to Kocevska, it was this aspect of the magazine, its directly addressing its readership as regards their everyday problems, that was the most precious and most effective in the establishment of both the women's community and the feeling of belonging to the new socialist society (Kocevska 2022, 138).

Darko Leitner-Stojanov uses the term education when discussing the texts published in *Makedonka* dedicated to the organization of "literacy courses for adults, to the teaching process in the schools, to the political decisions and activities in the field of education, as well as referring to texts that reported the practical experiences of WAF's work on the ground and to popular science texts and published open calls for enrolment in high schools, etc." (Leitne-Stojanov 2022, 154). He is interested in the manner in which this magazine reported about the educational processes and how it contributed to their development. According to Leitner-Stojanov, in the educational narrative of *Makedonka,* we should pay attention to two important reference points, and they are emancipation and freedom. In other words, women's literacy and education were the prerequisites for their emancipation.

Principal topics in the texts dedicated to education were the organization of adult literacy courses ('the battle against illiteracy'), adult professional training, how to keep children in education, and, directly associated with it, how to develop parents' awareness

about the importance of the educational process and childcare (Leitner-Stojanov 2022, 160). Not only did *Makedonka* inform its readers about all aforementioned issues, but it also persuaded and mobilized them to join the educational process. The obstacles were manifold: women did not find education important, parents and husbands prevented their daughters' and wives' education, etc.

Leitner-Stojanov emphasizes the relationship between literacy and women's education on one hand, and literacy and political mobilization on the other: "the educated and culturally advanced woman was not only a good worker and citizen, but also a good socialist" (2022, 178). In other words, in order to understand the link between emancipation and political mobilization, one has to take into account the ideological background of the educational policies in postwar socialist Yugoslavia. Leitner-Stojanov concludes that the educational campaigns during *Makedonka's* lifespan were focused on developing a communist society through merged education and propaganda (ibid. 183).[20]

In the text about the narrative strategies in the creation of women's characters in the literary contributions published in *Makedonka,* Manja Veličkovska draws attention primarily to the strong link between literature and politics/propaganda in this magazine and supports this with an analysis of a sample consisting of: 134 literary contributions, out of which 19.1% were written by women, 71.9% were written by men, and the rest was oral literature. Her text analyses 1) the female characters in different 'arenas' of armed struggle and 2) the female characters through their opposition to different hegemonies (Veličkovska 2022, 190-191). The first group comprises of literary contributions that thematize the parting of loved ones on the eve of departure to war (mostly sons leaving mothers, boyfriends leaving girlfriends, and brothers leaving sisters); the heterotopies such as home, camp and forest;

20 The campaign for women's emancipation is a similar example. The focus on women's education at the beginning of the 20th century on the territory of present-day Vojvodina was on the improvement of women as better mothers, wives and daughters, that is, as better Serbian women in the desired national state. See Kolarić 2017.

the death of women on the battlefields; and the memory of the dead women partisans. With numerous examples, Veličkovska illustrates the commonplaces also present in the other national literatures from that period: a fearless, self-sacrificing and vengeful mother, as well as a mother that waits for the son to come back from war; identification of the women killed in battle with the nation/body of the nation, etc. The other group of texts comprises of literary contributions in which the female characters (mothers, daughters, sisters...) question the patriarchal concepts of marriage and family (they criticize, for instance, women that have handed over their inheritance to men), religion and state authorities (they criticize women wearing the veil in the Muslim communities), as well as class inequality.

The contemporary artist Hristina Ivanoska engaged with the visual dimension of the magazine *Makedonka.* The title of her research was at the same time the title of her solo exhibition - "Document Missing: 'Makedonka' – emancipation, meaning and desire", and they were both inspired by the first issue of *Makedonka,* as well as by the transcribed and archived oral testimonies of persons that participated in the liberation and emancipation movements.

In her Epilogue, Jelena Milinković from the Institute for Literature and Arts in Belgrade summarizes the main characteristics of women's periodicals in the first half of the twentieth century, and above all of the periodicals published in the interwar period and immediately after the end of World War Two. She draws an obvious parallel between the magazine *Makedonka* and the magazine *Žena Danas,* published in Belgrade: both in their visual quality and in their programs, these two magazines share many common elements. Beside this, Milinković draws attention to their shared similarities with the pioneers' press that originated in the National Liberation Struggle and its aim was to create a new children's/ pioneers' culture. From the perspective of a person that initiated and realized the project The Women's Movement 2020 in Serbia, Milinković emphasizes the importance of the project Invisible

Archives regionally and expresses her wish to see the material used in this project digitized in the foreseeable future. This happened much sooner than expected and mostly owing to the research and activist effort applied by Ivana Hadjievska and Jana Kocevska.

Conclusion

In this text, I tried to draw attention to the link among history, archives and digitization, primarily from a feminist perspective. Moreover, I was interested whether we can in any way talk about research-based/archival activism and whether we can understand Invisible Archives from that point of view. Locally and regionally, the importance of this project is indisputable. Invisible Archives successfully reconstructs women's history, that is, one of its segments, primarily from the socialist period, shedding light on the majority of theoretical, methodological, as well as ethical issues and problems in this process. The project's results (both publications and the magazine *Makedonka*) are available online and they participate in the creation of one – open and visible – women's archive.

I should emphasize, as the authors of the individual texts have already done, that all research in the collection dedicated to the magazine *Makedonka* engaged with problems that are still present in the region today, both in general, and from a feminist point of view: the political emancipation and participation of women in the political life, social welfare and healthcare, education, culture and literature. I would like to refer to some of these problems, adhering to the context that I understand the best.

Regarding women's political emancipation and women's rights, it is worth mentioning that in June 2024, the Constitutional Court of Serbia suspended the Law on Gender Equality, reacting to the most prominent criticisms of this law that can be summarized as follows: gender is not a constitutional category, but sex is; the standard Serbian language does not recognize gender dimensions.[21] The

21 See: https://www.otvorenavratapravosudja.rs/teme/ustavno-pravo/privremeno-obustavljena-primena-zakona-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti (accessed on 21. 10. 2024).

chief critics of this law were the Serbian Orthodox Church, Matica Srpska and many public intellectuals that support the positions of these two institutions. And albeit it is possible to polemicize about some of the legal provisions of the Law on Gender Equality (such as, for instance, the obligatory use of gender sensitive language in the official institutions and in public life, or the fines if such language is not used), what I find worrying is the determined refusal of the – conservative 'nationally aware' – institutions mentioned above to accept the fact that gender inequality still exists in the society. The potent conservatism and ignorant 'arguments', often promulgated by university professors, come at a moment when violence against women in Serbia is on the rise, often lethal, especially within the civil unions and families.

The idea of social welfare and healthcare is often on the mind of many citizens, especially in these times when, instead of the former public care for their welfare and health, people have to deal with privatization of the work previously performed by state-owned institutions and parallel health systems (public and private) where the health workers are mostly the same (public health workers increase their meagre earnings from the public health system with work in the private system, but this also increases their working hours and responsibilities), or parallel childcare systems (nurseries and kindergartens), where the publicly owned kindergartens suffer from insufficient capacities, and parents are forced to pay, at least partially, for private nurseries and kindergartens for their children, or to take them to facilities that do not necessarily meet all safety and quality criteria, while all these nurseries and kindergartens employ insufficient number of teachers and caregivers. Both the employees and the children in their charge suffer because of this, and accidents and incidents occur that could be avoided if their working conditions were adequate.[22] Both these trends can be seen

22 See, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-zdravstvo/29141888.html; https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/vaspitacica-priznala-da-je-ostavila-decu-samu-kada-je-decak-progutao-zir-i-preminuo/ (accessed on 21. 10. 2024)

as state projects of privatization of the public sector, especially of the educational and health sector, to the detriment of all involved in these systems, children, of course, being the most vulnerable group.

The situation with our education, and respectively with our culture/literature is rather worrying as well: the widespread peer violence and aggression against the educators, perpetrated either by pupils or their parents, as well as the functional illiteracy of large numbers of students (and citizens consequently), and the ever more expensive and less accessible higher education (not only because of the tuition fees, but also due to the ever more expensive life in the cities). If we keep in mind this state of affairs, the introduction of the obligatory textbook in which the love for the homeland is being preached - 'The Treasury – a national reader' in the primary and secondary schools seems extremely inappropriate.[23]

If one takes into account some of the problems listed above, and I believe that Serbia is no exception in that respect, it becomes even clearer how relevant the research papers from the collection dedicated to the magazine *Makedonka* are to the present times: without the knowledge of women's history, especially of the socialist period in which emancipation, enlightenment and the idea of public good were the driving elements, we would find it difficult to understand our contemporary context and the price of inclusion – but not equal participation – in the capitalist society. Of course, I do not intend to promote an uncritical idealization and romanticizing of Yugoslav socialism here, but I strongly suggest that it is worth reminding ourselves of the good practices of this period and reconsider its principal ideological aim to achieve a better standard of living for an ever greater number of citizens.

23 See: https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/nacionalna-citanka-srbija-casovi-rodoljublja/33146259.html (accessed on 21. 10. 2024).

ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΚΑ







Petar Todorov

HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Narratives about the past: on history and historical memory in *Makedonka*

Introduction

> "On 2 August – Ilinden 1903, a storm gathered over the Macedonian land. The slaves rose and started an angry battle against age-old their tyrant – the Sultan. In the terrible whirlwind of the battle, Srebra felt that she harboured the wings of a fearless she-eagle inside herself. Amidst explosions of bombs and shooting of rifles, the fiery red silk of her hair waved like a flag. Thus, the tame dove turned into a brave she-eagle in the cruel mountain storm."

This excerpt from a text entitled "Srebra the Komitadji" was written by the writer and historian Gjorgji Abadjiev and was published in the penultimate issue of the magazine *Makedonka* in 1951.[1] The narrative of the text represents Srebra as a victim of the "Turkish slavery" and Djeljo Redjep's cruelty, and she joins the company of Gjorgji Sugarev in order to fight. She forms women's groups with the aid of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization that are supposed sew clothes and take care of the food provisions. As an official organ of the Women's Antifascist Front (WAF), the magazine *Makedonka* published a significant number of texts with the same or similar content, dedicated to history and the active participation of women in that history, especially their participation in the historic events of the more recent past of the Macedonian people, that is to say, in the revolutionary and national liberation struggle of the Macedonian people, but

1 Georgi Abadjiev, "Srebra the Komitadji", (Георги Абациев, „Сребра комитката") Year 7, No. 81-82 (1951), pp. 1-2.

it also covered the past of the prewar international socialist or women's movements of the 20th century.

From the analyses, which the project "Invisible Archives 2.0" had undertaken to date, we can perceive the important role of *Makedonka* in the demystification of the Macedonian women as faceless and nameless parts of history, but also its importance for the research and study of the socialist period and regime in the first postwar years (Hadjievska and Kocevska, 2022). In this manner, through the editorial policy of *Makedonka,* or more precisely, through the policy of WAF, and consequently, the policies of the Communist Party of Macedonia, we can follow the creation of the new historical narrative and the new historical memory, whose aim was to secure women a place and a new role in the previously predominantly patriarchal society and previously predominantly and exclusively 'male' history. Just as the researchers in this project "Invisible Archives 2.0" have concluded, this emancipatory policy and role that *Makedonka* played was implemented from several different positions: political emancipation and advancement, educational policies, social and health care policies, as well as the literary aspects of all these positions (Hadjievska and Kocevska 2022).

To complement and elaborate these earlier researches, this text will make an attempt to analyse the historical narrative in *Makedonka*. It is a discursive analysis of the content in *Makedonka* that talked about the past. Or more precisely, the main research focus is on the manners in which these new historical narratives and historical memory were constructed. This text will examine the narrative strategies of history in the new socialist and feminist context and in what way the texts about the past contributed to the policy of emancipation and inclusion of women in history, that is, the place women attained in this new history. The manner in which the texts about the past and their messages fit in the general political discourse of the postwar years is the other important question that this text discusses.

As far as these two issues are concerned, the content of *Makedonka can be divided into two categories*. The texts about the more distant past are in the first, while in the second category are the texts that treated historical subjects but were also used for ideological legitimization of the new socialist regime. The texts from the second category cover three main themes in their writing of history. The first is the history of Macedonia, that is, of the Macedonian National Liberation struggle and the Ilinden period. These texts published in *Makedonka* mainly refer to Ilinden period and women's participation in it, as well as to Goce Delchev, representing him as the ultimate symbol of the struggle of Macedonians against the Ottoman Empire, and idealizing him and elevating him to the status of the national leader. In addition to the liberation struggle during the Ilinden period, the texts in *Makedonka* pay particular attention to the history of the National Liberation Struggle against fascism. In the case of the antifascist struggle, like many other publications and magazines from that period, *Makedonka* took upon itself to write the history of the National Liberations Struggle, and by doing so, to preserve the remembrance of the struggle, as well as of the sacrifices of the members of the partisan movement and the Communist Party of Macedonia in the creation of the Macedonian state. This instrumentalization of the texts for the political purposes of the new regime was also achieved through construed representations of the roles that the neighbouring states played in the history of Macedonia. Thus, in the context of the Ilinden period and the WW2 National Liberations Struggle, but also in the context of the Resolution of the Cominform against socialist Yugoslavia (Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia), the texts outlined the roles of the neighbouring states (Bulgaria and Greece). The third theme was that of the ideological struggle of the communists and women's rights, that is, the October Revolution and the international women's struggle for equality and the celebration of 8 March.

The authors of the commemorative texts and the texts that relayed the past in the magazine were mainly men. They were writers and literary workers, but also historians. Among them was Angel Dinev, a publicist and historian, and a member of the Macedonian revolutionary and partisan movement. The first directors of the Institute of National History founded in 1947, Mitko Zafirov(ski) and Gjorgji Abadjiev, but also some distinguished members of the Communist Party of Macedonia, such as Blagoja Popovski, also wrote for the magazine. Undoubtedly, just like the activities of WAF depended on the instructions issued by the Communist Party and the Popular Front, both led by men, the texts in this magazine, whose aim was the emancipation of women and providing space for women's voice in the society, were written mostly by men. Thus, all those that will manage to hold a printed copy of the magazine, or will read the electronic version of *Makedonka,* should not be surprised by the expressions such as "the brothers from Pirin Macedonia", or, "the brothers from Aegean Macedonia", used in an informative context, that is, to inform the readership of *Makedonka* about the status of the Macedonian men and women in the neighbouring states during the Civil War in Greece and in Bulgaria after the passing of the resolution of the Cominform.[2] There are only a few texts written and signed by women. The unsigned texts were in fact texts written by the editorial board of the magazine that included Veselinka Malinska, Vera Nikolova and Blagojka Demnieva.

2 *Five Years of Our Republic, (Пет години на нашата република)*, Year 5, No. 56 (1949), p. 2. The use of the expressions "the brothers in Pirin Macedonia" and "the brothers in Aegean Macedonia" is an editorial published when editor in chief was Vera Nikolova.

1. History of the more distant past

The texts treating the more distant past were not numerous. They were primarily of an informative and educational character, such as the text entitled "From Skopje's Past", which, as the title suggests, retold the history of the city of Skopje. This is a very brief overview of the city's history form the Antiquity to the middle of the 20th century.[3] As a result of the ideological connections of socialist Yugoslavia and the role that the Soviet Union (SSSR) played and the reputation it enjoyed among the Macedonian and Yugoslav communists, *Makedonka* published a text on the 800th anniversary of the date when Moscow was founded. In this short text of only half a page, the most important historical events in the history of the city were listed, from its first mention in historical sources to its inauguration as the capital city of the USSR.[4] A similar informative text was published about the meaning of the term *partisan* that explained how the term came into being, what its importance was and offered examples from the Antiquity, Middle Ages, and the modern period. Still, unlike the texts about the past of Skopje and Moscow, this text followed the ideological line of the Yugoslav socialist regime, which was being established at that time and needed to be legitimized by the society. Starting from this, but also from the significance of the Yugoslav partisan movement for the antifascist struggle in Europe, the text focused on the Yugoslav partisans the most, whose movement was identified as the most important in Europe:

3 A. Uroshevic, "From the Past of Skopje" („Од минатото на Скопје"), Year 6, No. 70-71 (September-October 1950), pp. 8-9.

4 *800 Years of Moscow (800 години на Москва)*, Year 4, No. 35 (September 1947), p. 11.

> "... following the example of our partisans, the patriots in the other enslaved European countries began fighting against Germany."[5]

The texts about Skopje and Moscow did not contain any ideological and political formulations about different historical periods and political formations (states, kingdoms or empires). This was a rare exception in the usual practice of *Makedonka,* but also in the practice of writing history in the postwar period in general, which was strongly influenced by the Marxist understanding of the past.

However, ideology loaded texts about the more distant past were written for *Makedonka.* They were usually published on the occasion of a holiday or an event, and with them *Makedonka* fulfilled its role in the celebration of important dates for the history of Macedonia and Macedonian nation, but also for the revolution and the constitution of the socialist government. The narratives in these texts were adjusted to the ideology and the context of the time. One such example is the text entitled "The First Slavic Educators" dedicated to the Slavic educators St. Cyril and St. Methodius. The text was published on 24 May, the day of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, and on 3 May, when in 1945, the federal government of Macedonia passed the resolution about the Macedonian alphabet. Despite the selective information about the lives and work of the St. Cyril and St. Methodius, their historical role was introduced into the context of the antifascist struggle during World War Two via the same date when Nazi Germany capitulated. The entire issue of the magazine was dedicated to this event and to the victory over fascism in Europe:

> "... slowly and simultaneously the first beginnings of literary creation among Slavic peoples developed, establishing the firm interconnections of the Slavic cultural unity. All this sprouted and developed on the healthy foundations, established by the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius... The victory over fascist

5 *Partisan (Партизан)*, Year 1, No. 2 (December 1944), p. 28.

Germany saved the culture and life, of the Slavic peoples above all, because the bloodthirsty plan of the Hitlerites was to exterminate the Slavs...

... and by doing that [the Slavs] preserved their culture in whose foundations is the work of Cyril and Methodius, and opened new perspectives for a flourishing development of the all-Slavic culture..."[6]

6 Blazho Koneski, "The first Slavic Educators" („Првите славјански просветители"), Year 2, No. 7, (May 1945), p. 4.

2. The history of the Ilinden period

Much more historical content can be traced dedicated to the second theme, that is, the Ilinden period. Ilinden and its central personages (Goce Delchev, Jane Sandanski and others) were always mentioned in the context of the WW2 National Liberations Struggle and served to legitimize this struggle and build continuity with the earlier struggle of the Macedonian people for their own state. At the very beginning of the publication of *Makedonka* in 1945, the editorial board decided to publish the contents of the Manifests of Ilinden and ASNOM in a text entitled "Ilinden 1903-1944".[7] It included the Manifest of the Krushevo Republic from the dramatic text from 1923, whose author was Nikola Kirov Majski. This text had no commentaries, it was just a parallel presentation of the two texts of the manifests.

The first authorial text dedicated to the history of the Ilinden period was published the following year in May to mark the anniversary of Goce Delchev's death. His death and work were compared and introduced into the context of the WW2 National Liberation Struggle and the creation of socialist Yugoslavia – the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia:

> "...the Macedonians in the People's Republic of Macedonia could not repay their debt to Goce, Sandanski and other fighters for freedom of the Macedonian people in a better way than by their consistent and determined battle for freedom of the Macedonian people, or with the creation of Peoples' Republic of Macedonia as part of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia. A better memorial for the great sons of our nation we could not have erected.

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7 *Ilinden 1903-1944 (Илинден 1903-1944)*, Year 2, No. 8-9 (June-July 1945), pp. 8-9.

... Thus they [Macedonian people] believe that, under his [Josip Broz Tito] leadership and in a brotherly union with the other Yugoslav peoples, they will realize the ideal of Goce, Sandanski and all of our other fighters..."[8]



Пренос на телните остатоци на

Гоце Делчев

во слободна Македонија

На 11 октомври-денот на народото востание - остатоците на телото на великиот син на Македонија - Гоце Делчев се сложени за век во земја во која тој расна, живееше и за која го даде свој скап живот.

Не случајно денот на погребението се паѓа во ден на наголем - општонароден празник, денот на кон пред пет години македонскиот народ стана одлучно во борба за да си ја конечно извојуе слободата. 11 октомври 1941 год. ги реализира идеалите на Гоце Делчев, бидејќи тој работеше несебично и постојано за општо народно востание во Македонија кое да се повреже со прогресивните сили на други братски народи.

Илинденската организација во Бугарија, која до сега ги чуваше коските на Гоце Делчев, ги предаде на нашата Народна Република Македонија. На 6 октомври, коските на големиот револуционер без предавени на делегацијата на нашата народна влада.

Саркофагот со моштите пренесени низ Пиринска Македонија испраќан од целиот народ со длабоко почитание, за да биде пренесен во слободната земја и сахранен во Скопје во дворот на црквата Св. Спас.

По тој случај се откри во паркот паметник на Гоце Делчев, виден спомен и признание на македонскиот народ кон својот велик правборец и најсветлата фигура во минатото.

Texts dedicated to Goce Delchev were published on the occasion of his death in the following issues as well. In 1946, a text about Goce Delchev was published on the occasion of the transfer of his remains from Sofia to Skopje in October that year. The connection between the struggle and ideals of Goce Delchev and the WW2 National Liberation Struggle remained the central message that these texts aimed to convey to the readers, and especially to the women readers. Depending on the political context, the texts contained messages that reflected the political decisions and plans of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia at the time. One such decision was the introduction of the Five-year plan for development of Yugoslavia:

> "Today, when we remember Goce, Sandanski, and the other fighters with a clear heart and pride, we can say that our people can repay their debt and will continue repaying their debt to our great Goce only through their brotherly companionship with our other peoples and with a planned construction of our country."[9]

8 Blagoj Popovski, "Goce Delchev" („Гоце Делчев"), Year 3, No. 19 (May 1946), p. 13.

9 *The transfer of Goce Delchev remains to free Macedonia (Пренос на телните остатоци на Гоце Делчев во слободна Македонија)*, year 3, No. 24 (October 1946), p. 2.

The same messages we find in other issues where the Ilinden from 1903 was seen as equally important to that of the Ilinden from 1944, when the First Session of the Antifascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia was held in the monastery St. Prohor of Pchinja, and the history and events from the past, as transposed by *Makedonka,* served to legitimize the new government in Macedonia and in socialist Yugoslavia, which through the struggle of the "working class of Macedonia" embodied in the Communist Party of Macedonia as a new power that brought "the brotherhood and unity of the peoples of Macedonia and Yugoslavia" to fruition:

> "... Macedonian people celebrate Ilinden today and promise that they will guard the brotherhood and unity of the peoples of Yugoslavia, and the federative constitution of Yugoslavia like the apple of their eye, because they know that the unity of this and such Yugoslavia – Tito's Yugoslavia – guarantees the freedom of the Macedonian people."[10]

These messages and instrumentalization of history should be interpreted within the social-political context of the first postwar years. Despite their declared attitudes and politics of continuity of the struggle of the Macedonian communists with that of the Ilinden rebels, the new government met its political opposition in the face of VMRO of Vancho Mihajlov (Mihajlovists), an organization that was against the idea of Macedonia as part of Yugoslavia and accused the new government of "Serbization" of Macedonia. The examples presented here demonstrate the importance of Ilinden in the rhetoric of the new regime. We should also say that some studies dedicated to Ilinden and the construction of the narratives about the Ilinden period after the war refer to 1948 as an important moment for the leadership of socialist Yugoslavia and Macedonia, in which they linked the two Ilindens, fearing Bulgarian infiltration after the split between Tito and Stalin. Still, these, and other examples outside *Makedonka,* indicate that this approach was present from

10 Vera Nikolova, "Ilinden" („Илинден"), year 3, No. 21-22 (July-August 1946), p. 17.

the very start of the formation of the partisan movement and establishment of Macedonia, even in the years when they had a good relationship with their ideological allies from the Fatherland Front (*Отечествен фронт*) in Bulgaria. However, the manner in which politics and the Cominform resolution directly influenced in the editorial policy of *Makedonka* was by changing the rhetoric about the role and the character of the influence that Bulgaria had on the history of Macedonia.

These changes were the second important moment in these texts referring to the Ilinden period, that is to say, the changes that occurred in the terminology and qualifications used to define certain states during the Ilinden period, as I will attempt to show, during WW2 and the National liberation Struggle. Starting from the Marxist ideology and understanding of the past through its ideological lens, but also from the understanding of history that often described the Ottoman presence and rule in the Balkans at the time as the "Turkish slavery", while the neighbouring states as warmongering and striving to create Great Bulgaria or Great Serbia states. So, in the first years after the war, all the way to the end of 1946, the following terms were used for Bulgaria in the texts published in *Makedonka:* "Great Bulgarian aggressors", "Great Bulgarian imperialism", etc. In the period that followed, and before the Resolution of the Cominform, these terms disappeared from the pages of *Makedonka.* And this was not the case only with the texts dedicated to the past, but also with those that discussed the political events of that period. During this time, the texts about the past laid emphasis on the social aspect of the struggle of Goce Delchev and the other fighters from the Ilinden period, which, according to the authors, was against the "Turkish aghas[11] and wealthy Macedonians" as well as against "despotism".[12] The terms

11 A term of Mongolian origin meaning big brother, chief, master. In the course of history, it had several meanings and uses, including commander in the janissary army (Dictionaire de l'Empire Ottoman, volume 1 | A-J, eds., François Georgeon, Nicolas Vatin, Gilles Veinstein, CNRS, 2015, p. 70)

12 *Goce Delchev (Гоце Делчев)*, Year 4, No. 30-31, (April-May 1947), p. 17.

like “great Bulgarian aggressors” and similar re appeared in 1948, that is, after the Resolution of the Cominform and the consequent deterioration in the relationship between Yugoslavia and the countries from the Eastern Block. As far as the other neighbours, Serbia and Greece, are concerned, we come across the terms “great Serbian” and “great Greek” imperialism and/or politics. For Greece, these terms were used regularly in the texts published in *Makedonka* that discussed current political events. The reasons for this can be located in the Civil War in Greece and the treatment that the Macedonian population received by the Greek state, but it was also owing to the ideological differences in the social systems of the two states.

The third important moment regarding the Ilinden period was the primary goal of the magazine, as identified in the previous researches of *Makedonka,* and it coincided with the approach that strived to establish continuity between the two Ilindens. This was the emancipatory role of *Makedonka* and its attempt to conquer space for women in history. In the context of this research, but also in the contexts of the researches preceding this one, it should be noted that other instances wrote about the participation of women in the Ilinden Uprising even before *Makedonka* did, but in a completely different social and political context than that of *Makedonka*’s. These were the magazines *Illustration Ilinden (Илюстрация Илинден), Luč and Smena* (Hadjievska, 2021).[13] The example of Srebra, cited at the beginning of this text was one of the many that constituted the policy of political emancipation of women and their advancement and active participation in the political processes, and through which, as one of the chief researchers in the project “Invisible Archives 2.0”, Ivana Hadjievska has observed, women “became part of history”. The texts about

13 These were all magazines with a different ideological purpose. According to Ivana Hadjievska, the reporting about women in *Illustration Ilinden* was associated with their recognition as part of the recent collective past and was to be used for mobilization and cohesion among the members of their group consisting mainly of men. While *Luč and Smena* mention women more in the context of the current modernizing processes in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Srebra and the other women 'komitadji' from the Ilinden period and about the women fighters from WW2 and the National Liberation Struggle served to affirm women's participation in the "people's socialist revolution", which in 1944 resulted with the creation of the Macedonian republic. In her analysis of the magazine's content from a political standpoint, Hadjievska rightly observes that in the editorial policy of *Makedonka* women were also a constitutive part of the policies and memories, and of the construction of the new Macedonian ethno-national historical narrative, which, among else, established the continuity between the Ilinden period and WW2 and the National Liberations Struggle (Hadjievska, 2022), as is evident in the examples cited in this contribution to the research of *Makedonka*. The texts that discussed this issue described the activities and roles that women, as mothers, 'komitadji' and fighters had to play during the Ilinden period and WW2. In these texts women are actively involved in the battles or help the units in the rear:

> "The Macedonian revolutionary organization, as a nation-wide organization, did not rely only on men from the villages and towns. From the very start, when the organization was formed, women participated actively as well. Their role in the uprising was significant, whether through intensification of their work in the fields, where they replaced their partners, whether as couriers, which job they performed more successfully than men, or as providers of aid to the rebels, good accomplices or active participants in the uprising, as organizers of the uprising, or as good and brave soldiers."[14]

14 Lj. Levkova, "Women in the Macedonia national-liberation movements during and before the Ilinden Uprising" (Љ. Левкова, „Жените во македонското национално-ослободително движење во пред Илинденското востание"), Year 5, No. 45, (May 1948), p. 3.



Another similar example we can find in the text entitled "Women in the Ilinden epopee", by Angel Dinev. About a dozen women who participated in the battles against the Ottoman rule in the period before and after the Ilinden Uprising were mentioned in it. Just as in the examples discussed earlier, in its conclusion, the text linked the struggle during the Ilinden period with that in World War Two:

> "All these features of the character of the Macedonian woman in the liberation struggle against the Turks were demonstrated in the struggle against the fascists and new enslavers of Macedonia as well – the Great Bulgarian aggressors against whom our mothers and daughters fought and died for the freedom that we now enjoy in the People's Republic of Macedonia as part of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia."[15]

This new approach to the place of women was present everywhere in the new society that was being built, and in the policies of the Communist Party of Macedonia. In the dossiers

15 Angel Dinev, "Women in the Ilinden Epopee" (Ангел Динев, „Жените во Илинденската епопеја"), Year 7, No. 69, (May 1950), pp. 1-2.

for Ilinden pensions that the new authorities awarded to the participants in the Ilinden Uprising, women applicants cited in their applications that they were part of the struggle and the activities of the revolutionary organization as couriers and accomplices, or that they prepared food, etc., for the rebels. The example of Pashka, or Paraskeva Kostova-Bojadjieva-Lape, demonstrates this new policy and change most explicitly. In her application for an Ilinden pension, which she submitted to the Bulgarian authorities in 1943, she wrote only that she was a wife of an Ilinden rebel, unlike in her application for an Ilinden pension submitted to the Macedonian authorities in 1948, where she added that she herself had participated in the struggle because she helped the 'komitadji', by cooking food for them, washing their clothes, and carrying letter (Македоно-одрински свидетелства, 2022, 331-332; Илинденски сведоштва, 2016, 600).

3. The history of the National Liberation Struggle (1941-1945)

In the texts about the National Liberations Struggle we come across the same or similar approaches and rhetorical examples as in those dedicated to the Ilinden period. These examples also include the changes in the terms used for the neighbouring countries, especially Bulgaria, particularly evident in the texts about the history of the National Liberation Struggle and the texts referring to the current political events and speeches held by Josip Broz Tito or Lazar Kolishevski, in which they referred to the past and the struggle of the Ilinden rebels and partisans. *Makedonka,* and many other magazines and institutions were forums where writers, historians, participants in the National Liberation Struggle wrote the history of the Revolution, of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, of the Communist Party of Macedonia and the National Liberation Struggle. In addition to the focus on women and their role and contribution to the National Liberation Struggle, as presented by Manja Velichkovska in her research of the female characters in the literary contributions to *Makedonka,* where they were most commonly "mothers, wives and fighters on the battlefield" (Velichkovska, 2022, 191), in many of the texts we find descriptions of the battles that the partisan units waged against the Bulgarian, Italian and German armies, as well as of individual events in honour of the sacrifice of the partisans that were later proclaimed People's Heroes. These texts were more commonly published during the first years of *Makedonka.* The character of the descriptions of the partisan battles and their sacrifices is heroic and includes mythical elements. From this period, we would like to refer to the text entitled "11 October approaches – the most decisive day for the Macedonian people". This text promotes an interpretation of the past, that is, of the beginning of the uprising and the role

of the leadership of the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia, as it was called then, that would later become predominant in Macedonian national historiography until 1990.

> "As early as the very beginning of the occupation, the enemy insisted on separating, isolating Macedonian people from the other Yugoslav peoples. The enemy attempted the same with the other peoples as well (Croatians, Slovenians, etc.), but in Macedonia they had their grounds specially prepared. Using the traitors of our people, the enemy insisted on persuading our people that their destiny had always been linked with that of Bulgaria, that we are Bulgarians. Even people who had boasted as true liberators of the people joined this camp of traitors. And as such, they ended up defending the side of the occupying forces and tried to separate Macedonian people from all other Yugoslav peoples with the Great Wall of China."[16]

This text also communicated some basic information about the development of the Macedonian partisan movement, and promoted the date of 11 October and the beginning of the uprising as the key event without which the constitution of the Macedonian republic as part of Yugoslavia on 2 August 1944 would not have happened. A year later, to mark 11 October again, *Makedonka* published a new text dedicated to this event on its front page. Like in the previous example, the emphasis was on the struggle of Macedonian people together with the other Yugoslav peoples and on the importance of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which, according to this text:

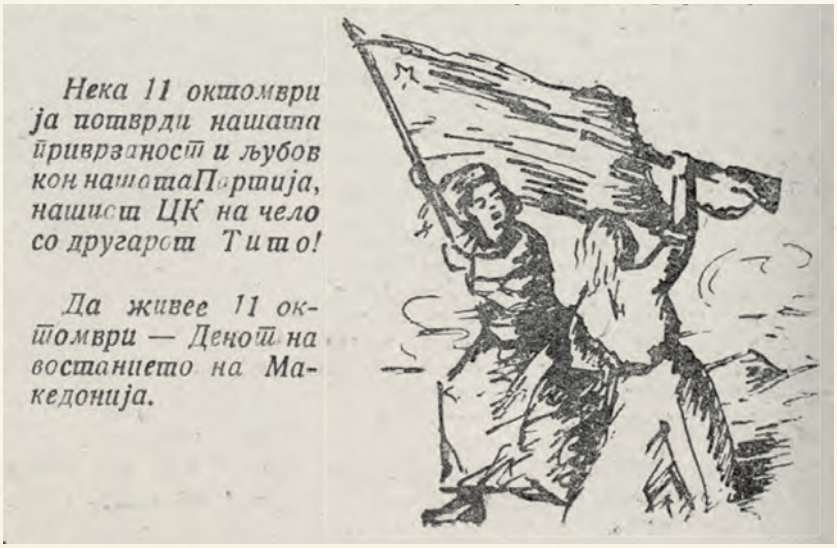
> "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia played a decisive role in the liberation struggle of our people, as they were the only party that had a true and correct attitude towards the national question, and they were supported by the democratic masses of our peoples."[17]

16 *October 11 is approaching, the most decisive day of the Macedonian people* (Се ближи 11 октомври најрешителниот ден на македонскиот народ), Year 2, No. 10-11, (August-September 1945), pp. 4-5.

17 *October 11th* (11 октомври), Year 3, No. 24, (October 1946), p. 1.

Another example that corroborates the similarities in the rhetoric of the texts dedicated to Ilinden and Goce Delchev and those dedicated to the National Liberation Struggle is the fact that the celebration of 11 October was often associated with the current political challenges and problems of socialist Yugoslavia:

> "...Macedonian people have been alerted against the behind-the-scenes games of the worldwide reactionaries led by the Anglo-American block as regards the achievement of proper and eternal peace. Together with the other Yugoslav peoples, they demand from the peace conference to set Trieste and Friuli free so that they can join Yugoslavia."[18]



The following year, 11 October was mentioned in a short text that reminded the readers of the importance of this event and its celebration in the Republic. It is conspicuous that all three remembrances of this date avoid mentioning Bulgaria and its WW2 politics and treatment of the Macedonian people. The place and role of Bulgaria as a negative factor returned in the texts dedicated to 11 October only after the Resolution of the Cominform.

18 Ibid.

> "On 11 October, when our people heard the first rifle of revenge, the "freedom" dressed in German or Bulgarian uniforms seemed even darker, harder – unbearable."[19]

The new political context resulted with new messages about the meaning of 11 October.

> "Today, more than any other time, we will close ranks and build socialism in our country and 11 October – our great holiday, we will celebrate with new victories in our work. That will be our response to the baseless accusations of the Cominform."[20]

These messages recur in the issues of the magazine that followed and in the texts dedicated to 11 October and the history of this important event for the establishment of the Macedonian republic. In the texts and speeches dedicated to World War Two published by *Makedonka,* we can observe ever more extensive referring to Bulgaria in a negative context. Thus, after the first stage that lasted up until the beginning of 1946, the terms and interpretations in which Bulgaria and its politics during World War Two was defined as the "Bulgarian fascists", "Great Bulgarian imperialists", "bourgeois nationalism", "anti-Marxists", "Great Bulgarian occupation apparatus", etc. were more and more common. During a period of a year and a half, up until 1948, these phrases gradually disappeared from the texts published of *Makedonka,* only to return after 1948 and after the split between Tito and Stalin. It appears that the policy of good-neighbourly relations before and shortly after the signing of the Bled Agreement in 1947 influenced the editorial policy of *Makedonka,* as well as the interpretation of the role that Bulgaria played in the history of Macedonia.

19 *11 октомври,* Year 5, No. 46-47, (August-September 1948), p. 1.
20 Ibid.

4. History of the communist movement and 8 March

The third and last theme is associated with the communist movement (October Revolution) and the international movement and struggle for women's rights (8 March), and with the newly written women's history. Just like with the previous themes, we can observe certain similarities in the treatment. As far as the history of the October Revolution is concerned, the main purpose of the content published by *Makedonka* was to commemorate the event that was marked on 7 November every year. The texts discussed the causes for the revolution and its main events. What all these texts had in common, and which is completely absent from the narratives about the October Revolution today, is the emphasis on our belonging to the Slavic ethnicity in the context of the antifascist struggle:

> "7 November is a holiday of all Slavic peoples. We have proven that we are not the waste that Hitler wished to trample with his feet but nations with their own future, their own path and leaders to guide them along that path.
>
> 7 November is a holiday for the Yugoslav peoples and the Macedonian people as well, because they fought against the fascistic plague through the fatherland war and by doing so they helped the Red Army..."[21]

This type of description that glorified the October Revolution and the history of the communist movement, we come across in other texts as well, published every year in the October or November issue of *Makedonka.* As evident from the last sentence of the excerpt above, the Red Army was regularly glorified. These

21 *28th Anniversary, (28 годишнина),* Year 2, No. 12-13, (October-November 1945), p. 3.

descriptions recurred in the texts that followed, published on the anniversaries of the October Revolution.[22] After the breach in the relationship between USSR and socialist Yugoslavia, there was no more room for the October Revolution and Red Army on the pages of *Makedonka,* nor for Stalin or the Soviet political leadership. Their place was filled with texts that condemned the Soviet politics against Yugoslavia, but also with more texts about the Yugoslav People's Army, that was given the role of a guardian of the state and defender against the attacks of the USSR and their allies that were quite common at the time.[23] The last text dedicated to the October Revolution was published in 1948 at the time of the publication of the Resolution of the Cominform. This text, however, was nothing like those published earlier. There were no mythical elements in the descriptions of the role of the Red Army or of the historical events during the revolution. The focus was on the positive role of Marxism-Leninism and on the brotherhood of the Soviet peoples, as factors that enabled them to win over fascistic Germany. This text was followed by a text that talked about the brotherhood of the Yugoslav peoples.[24]

As far as the texts about the history of 8 March as a day that marks the economic, political and social equality of women are concerned, they had the same role as those about the October Revolution, that is to say, they were commemorative texts that highlighted the benefits of the struggle and the importance of 8 March. This theme is particularly interesting in the analysis of the content of *Makedonka,* because while writing about this history, the Communist Party of Macedonia and WAF tried to implement their emancipatory policies as well. Texts dedicated to 8 March

22 *30th Anniversary of the October Revolution (30 годишнина на Октомвриската Революција),* Year 4. No. 36-37, (October-November 1947), p. 8

23 Lieutenant-colonel Milica Chulafic, "The twenty-second of December – the day of the Yugoslav army" „Дваесет и втори декември – ден на југословенската армија", Year 6, No. 61, (1949), pp. 5-6.

24 *The friendship of Soviet peoples: on the occasion of the 31st anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution (Пријателство на советските народи: по случај на 31 годишнината од Октомвриската социјалистичка револуција)*, Year 5, No. 48, (December 1948), p. 3.

were published as early as the first issues of the magazine. In these texts we come across historical data about the first attempts to celebrate 8 March, about the status of women before 1944 and about the liberation of Macedonia. Just like in the previous examples, the first women fighters for women's rights, such as Clara Zetkin, and the organizations that fought for these rights, were duly given the credits for 8 March, but also the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the political leadership of Yugoslavia.[25] In the issues that followed, the texts dedicated to 8 March focused on the celebrations in different Macedonian towns. While in the years during and after the resolution of the Cominform, the texts relayed the challenges and struggles of Yugoslav women under the attacks of the "aggressive politics of the Soviet Union".[26]

25 *The first 8 March in freedom, (Прв 8 март во слобода),* Year 2, No. 5-6. (March-April 1945), p. 7; *Why do we celebrate 8 March as the international women's day (Како настанал меѓународниот женски ден 8 март),* Year 2, No. 5-6, (March-April 1945), p. 24.

26 *The struggle for just peace and readiness to defend the independence of our country is the 8 March pledge of all Yugoslav women (Борба за праведен мир и готовност да се брани независноста на нашата земја, е осмомартовскиот завет на сите југословенски жени),* Year 7, No. 76, (March 1951), pp. 1-2.

Conclusion

The content of *Makedonka* reviewed here and its approach to the issues from the past demonstrate two important things. The first is that women's story about history in *Makedonka* was not immune to the political events and processes. The texts that discussed the past, and especially the political history of Macedonian people, were instrumentalized for ideological and political legitimization of the regime, depending on the political context and social-economic situation and needs. The second important thing is the emancipatory role, that is, the magazine's approach to writing history that allowed women to win their place in history. *Makedonka* is just one of the several forums at the time, through which the regime implemented its politics and created new perceptions of the past, that is to say, a new historical narrative was written.

From the analysis of the content dedicated to the past we can conclude that these texts also promoted a rather divided view of the past, seen through a black-and-white lens. Nationalism was interpreted through the lens of Marxism and was often criticized in the texts, but it was nevertheless very present in the Macedonian ethno-national context and narrative of the past. If in the first issues of the magazine it was the revolutionary narrative and the struggle against the enemy, Germany and Bulgaria that was predominant, in the following years, these perceptions were no longer present in the content dedicated to the past, only to return in the Cominform context about Bulgaria. In this manner, these texts promoted a nationalist approach in the interpretations of the past and incited divisions, both ideological and ethnic, depending on the political situation and the current policies of the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Communist Party of Macedonia. This "alliance" between Marxism and nationalism in the historical narrative in socialist Macedonia, but also throughout

the entire Eastern Block, did not break until the end of the nineteen eighties.

Despite these characteristics of the historical content of *Makedonka,* it is necessary to recognize the undeniable participation of this magazine in the promotion of views of the past that included women. Of course, the magazine's approaches were far from serious, academic and methodologically sound, but it was sufficient to deconstruct the exclusively male approach to writing about the past.


Македонка





Ana Ashtalkovska Gajtanoska

RELIGIUOS PERSPECTIVES

"WITHOUT A VEIL INTO A NEW LIFE": Strategies for emancipation of "Muslim women" on the pages of *Makedonka*

Introduction

The establishment of the People's Republic of Macedonia led to enormous positive changes in the status of women. They were achieved through provision of legal protection for various aspects of their equality. The Women's Antifascist Front (WAF) as the largest women's political organization is at the forefront of the changes that affected all women in socialist Macedonia, who in the broader Yugoslav context were seen as belonging to the *most backward* category of women. Consequently, WAF had to make great efforts first to teach various groups of women about their newly acquired rights in an environment with deeply rooted traditional norms and ways of life.

In this context, a specific group of women is particularly interesting, identified with the term "Muslim women" in the magazine *Makedonka*. This group consisted of women from various ethnic communities, united under this term because of their shared religious affiliation as the most important identity marker, but also as the greatest obstacle for the *liberation of Muslim women*. This enables us to examine the emancipatory strategies for Muslim women through the lens of the Orientalist discourse. Through the strategies of emancipation, they were supposed to become like *other women,* because they demonstrated extreme deviations from the notion of the *socialist woman* that was being created at the time.

The strategies used in the emancipation of the Muslim women such as literacy, political and cultural *advancement,* inclusion in the labour market, etc., were always marred by difficulties and failed to achieve the

envisaged success. WAF and the other organizations of the front focused on campaigning for the removal of the veil, which was treated as the fundamental practical obstacle to the realization of all the other goals of the emancipation of Muslim women. The veil as a religious identifier of Muslim women was eventually prohibited when a law was passed in 1951.

The magazine *Makedonka* is a precious source that offers an insight in the activities aimed at the emancipation of Muslim women, which were all top-down initiatives of the political power centres. At the same time, the narratives around these activities realized in the context of intensive agitation and propaganda reveal the status and treatment of Muslim women, as well as the stereotypical notions about them in the first years of the existence of the People's Republic of Macedonia. This text follows Svetlana Slapšak's line and does not dispute the progressiveness of the strategies for emancipation of Muslim women. It intends instead to illustrate the ways in which they remained excluded from the decision making process. Muslim women had simply been removed "from the power of her father, brother, husband and imam as symbolic representatives of the collective only to be placed under the power of the state and its ideology, together with all other women" (Slapšak, 2003).

1. On the subject and context

A group of women was set apart in the magazine *Makedonka* to which WAF and the other organizations of the front, as well as the party and the state evidently felt the need to pay special attention. This group was most commonly named *Muslim women.* It consisted of Turkish and Albanian women predominantly as those were the two most numerous ethnic communities that practiced Islam. The term *Torbesh(k)i*[1] was mentioned only several times. As we can see, the group of Muslim women included different women in ethnic and linguistic sense, and the reason behind their being lumped together was their shared religious affiliation. This was a legacy of the millet system,[2] which considered religion, not ethnicity or language, the key factor of identification (Poulton, 2000, 46). And in the case of Muslims, Islam remained the most important identification signifier, while the different linguistic and ethnic affiliations within this group would become important only later in history (on the fluctuating identity of the various communities within the Muslim group in Macedonia from the Yugoslav period, see Akan Ellis, 2003). The other mandatory term for Muslim women, that is, Turkish and Albanian women, among the other communities it subsumed (Vlachs, Tsigani,[3] Jews...), and it referred mostly to them, was *national minorities.* The third key term, closely

1 *Torbeshi* is a popular term used to name yet another numerous community that speaks Macedonian and practices Islam. Throughout history, this term changed its meanings, and in certain circumstances, it was considered offensive.

2 The millet system divided the large population in accordance with their religious affiliation and caused significant differences, the Muslim being the privileged class, and the rest were obliged to pay various taxes to the Empire because they belonged to the category of non-Muslims, that is to say, *rayah* (Arko, 2009, 191).

3 The terms used for the various ethnic communities are cited in this text in the same form as they were used in the magazine. Instead of the terms *Shqiptare women, Tsigani women*, and to a certain extent the term *Torbeshki*, which are considered offensive today, we use the terms Albanian women, Roma women and the long, but more correct term – Macedonian speaking Muslims.

related to Muslim women, which is the focus of this research is the *veil* – a typical face and body cover treated as a significant religious symbol always associated with Muslim women.

These key words occupy and important place in the magazine *Makedonka*. We have selected 204 texts that mention *Muslim women, national minorities* (Turkish and Albanian women) and *the veil* ("zar" and "feredje"). In some of them, they were mentioned only in passing, while in some, they were used directly in the context of women's emancipation and the strategies for their integration in the *new* socialist society.

The magazine *Makedonka* is our main source for the research and consequently the timeframe of the research matches the period during which the magazine was published – 83 issues from 1944 until 1952. This was a period of radical social changes, especially concerning the status of women in Macedonia. The first years of the implementation of the socialist policies that concerned women's emancipation were particularly intensive. Women's rights were passed into law for the first time with the Constitution and the laws of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, making women equal economic, social and political agents in the *new* socialist state (Bonfiglioli, 2012).

These attainments were supposed to be implemented in very specific and complex circumstances. The majority of the population were peasants, traditionally restricted within their local and regional communities, where they resolved all of their important questions. They were guided mainly by the patrilocal principles of the traditional village communities, according to which women were resigned to the private sphere, and the public sphere of action was reserved for men; illiteracy dominated and extensive agriculture that could barely provide survival; the war and post-war circumstances only added to the existential difficulties, etc. The situation on the ground was such that the activists had to start from scratch. The political circumstances were an equally great challenge. The territory of Macedonia suffered in many tumultuous

political ordeals and wars in the first half of the 20th century, and all of a sudden, there emerged a possibility for establishment of a separate republic. Its multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural and multi-confessional characteristics were a solid ground for the training and practice of the new socialist ideals. The national diversity of Yugoslavia was a serious challenge, and *Comrade* Tito stressed in one of his speeches that it was not easy to achieve the grandiose deed of establishing brotherhood and unity in such circumstances: "It is easier where there is only one nationality, because there is no 'national question'."[4] The Macedonian context was very specific and critics proclaimed it one of the 'weak spots' of Yugoslavia as regards the question of national minorities.[5] The propagandist texts in *Makedonka* denied this, and yet these characteristics of the People's Republic of Macedonia made it one of the *most backward* republics of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, together with the other Yugoslav republics that remained the longest under the rule and influence of the Ottoman Empire. The Muslims that lived in these parts underwent radical change in their status in the first half of the 20th century. Their privileged social position as the affiliates of Islam in the millet system of the Ottoman Empire turned into its opposite. As the Empire grew weaker and kept withdrawing from the Balkans, in the newly developed political circumstances, Muslims became a symbol of *backwardness* and *underdevelopment*. This profound changes in their self-perception, but also in the way others treated Muslims – as an endangered minority, contributed towards their further withdrawal into the realm of their own families, local and regional communities, or, towards their moving away (on their emigration, see Akan Ellis, 2003, 41-63; Светиева, 2009, 38-68). The Muslims in the recently created national states in the Balkans in the first half of the 20th century were treated as an unwanted remainder

4 From Comrade Tito's speech at a political rally in Skopje, (Од говорот на другарот Тито на величествениот митинг во Скопје), Year 5. No. 57 (1949), p.5.

5 From Lazar Kolishevski's speech, held at the 3rd Congress of the People's Front of Yugoslavia, (Од говорот на другарот Лазо Колишевски одржан на III-от конгрес на Народниот фронт на Југославија) Year 5, No. 53-54 (1949), p. 5.

of the centuries long *Turkish slavery* (more on the history of the establishment of this status, see Greble 2021). In the interwar period in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Metohija and Macedonia were considered the most underdeveloped and *most backward* regions by the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian elites, because Islam was widespread in them. These Orientalist conceptions of Islam were largely adopted by the communist elites as well (Bonfiglioli, 2012) and this is evident in the texts published in *Makedonka* concerning Muslim women.

In the period following 1953, some 187 000 Muslims emigrated from Yugoslavia to Turkey, which was the second largest number of emigrants after Bulgaria. Different reasons forced Muslims to leave during this period, primarily, the economic losses caused by the nationalization of property in the first years after the liberation. Many Muslims had already lost large chunks of their land in the agricultural reforms of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. For many, communism was not attractive from a religious point of view: Islamic schools were closed, Islamic leaders that did not follow the orders of the authorities were persecuted, the villagers were treated roughly by the police, but the hair that broke the camel's back was the prohibition of the veil ("zar" and "feredje") (Akan Ellis, 2003, 50, 51, 54). In fact, secularism was never religiously neutral. Constructions pertaining to all aspects of people's lives were developed in a specific Christian context after all. Even during the atheistic period in socialism, different standards were applied to Islam, and it was considered a fundamentally different religion (Greble, 2021, 258).

2. WAF and the magazine *Makedonka* – building unity in diversity

> "What a change, an extraordinary and great change has happened to Macedonian peasant women, those most backward, and most enslaved" [6]

We have chosen this quotation because of the intensity with which it expressed the social changes that ensued after the end of the Second World War. The radical social changes, especially in the status of women, must have seemed such to the public, extraordinary and great, especially to those women whom the magazine *Makedonka* identified as the *most backward* – women in the villages and Muslim women. And it is for the sake of these women that WAF had to make the greatest efforts to teach them how to avail themselves of their new rights (for more detail on the political subjectivization through WAF and *Makedonka,* see Dimitrov in this book).

One of the most important tasks of WAF, promoted as such as early as the first issues of the magazine, was to develop and reinforce the unity of all women in Macedonia. This involved developing and sustaining unity among many different groups of women, a large majority of peasant women, women workers, women intellectuals, housewives, but also politically indoctrinated women and religiously and ethnically different. An important uniting factor was that they had to be "patriotic".[7]

Despite the great optimism and enthusiasm in the realization of this important task, to create and sustain this 'brotherhood and unity' demanded a long-term and well planned work as women in

6 Our Journey, (Нашиот пат), Year 1. No. 1 (November 1944), p. 2

7 'Let us strengthen the Women's Antifascist Front of Macedonia' (Да го зајакниме Антифашискиот фронт на жените во Македонија), Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 9.

Macedonia, and especially Muslim women, had not been included in the political life before 1941. The majority of Macedonian women did not participate in the liberation struggle either. Hence, what was needed was a mass undertaking to enable women to understand the political circumstances, but also to be able to take active part in the political life of the fatherland.[8]

From the very start, the initial enthusiasm of WAF activists had to face many a difficulty in the fieldwork undertook among Muslim women, and thus, almost every text until the last issue of the magazine that was dedicated to the activities of WAF identified the following necessities: greater participation of Muslim women, their joining WAF in greater numbers, and more extensive work on their political and cultural and educational *advancement*.[9]

The difficulties the activists faced when approaching Muslim women were regularly highlighted in all later issues of the magazine as a previously identified problem in the texts describing the successes and weaknesses in the work of WAF. These self-critical reviews of the organization's work are very informative compared to the texts with the opposite narratives that promulgated exaggerated optimistic messages about the active participation of Muslim women in socialist Macedonia.

Through this conflict of ideals and reality that we can observe in the texts published in *Makedonka*, we will examine the strategies for emancipation of Muslim women.

2.1. Political *advancement*

Political *advancement* as the central goal was very closely intertwined with all other strategies for women's emancipation, with

8 Veselinka Malinska, The protection of the brotherhood and unity of our peoples demands from us more political education, (Веселинка Малинска, Пазењето на братството и единството на нашите народи тражи од нас поголемо политичко просветување) Year 2, No. 3-4 (January-February 1945), p. 2.

9 The first 8 March in Freedom (Прв 8 Март во слобода), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945) p. 7; On the Eve the First Congress of WAF for Macedonia, (Пред првиот конгрес на АФЖ за Македонија), Year 3, No. 19 (May 1946), p. 7.

the literacy courses and the cultural and educational *advancement* the most, as well as with women's economic independence (for more, see Hadjievska, 2022).

The same ambivalence in their messages is evident in the texts dedicated to the political *advancement* of Muslim women. On one hand, following the policy of the magazine, it was important to create the image of Muslim women as being active, "awakened", interested in different things, willing to learn and participate in public life.[10] On the other hand, the real difficulties that the WAF activists had to face in their approach and work with Muslim women suggested that these idealized representations could be valid only for a limited number of Muslim women,[11] while the majority of them were taken aback in more ways than one by the mass mobilization for their "active participation".

The texts from the first group served to promote the political capacities and political awareness that were already developing among Muslim women in the new circumstances.[12] On the pages of *Makedonka,* numerous reports were published that reflected these intentions: Muslim women visiting the sick soldiers and looking after them;[13] Muslim women demonstrating social responsibility, which was an important point in the context of their political *advancement;*[14] Muslim women regularly mentioned in the news as participants in various competitions (8 March, 1 May competitions),

10 Kevser Shukri *Macedonian Muslim women are awakening'*, (Кефсер Шукри, Македонската муслиманка се разбудуе) Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 20.

11 "This is not the case with those Muslim women that are now actively participating in WAF as activists or block secretaries, etc. We are referring to the mass advancement of Muslim women", L.S., "The First Congress of WAF of Yugoslavia (Л. С., Првиот конгрес на антифашискиот фронт на жените од Југославија), Year 2, No. 809 (June-July, 1945), p. 4.

12 Kevser Shukri Macedonian Muslim women are awakening', (Кефсер Шукри, Македонската муслиманка се разбудуе) Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 20.

13 The Muslim women from Kochani visited the sick soldiers, (Муслиманските жени од Кочани ги посетија болните војници), Year 3, No. 15-16 (January-February 1946), p. 16; Marija Mateska , A WAF Committee of Albanian women was formed in the village of Srbinovo, Gostivar region, (Марија Матеска, Во село Србиново-гостиварско формиран е одбор на АФЖ од Албанки),Year 3, No. 19 (May 1946), p. 6.

14 The Activities of Our Women, (Од активноста на нашите жени), Year 3, No. 26 (December 1946), p. 7.

as well as in the rallies organized on various occasions;[15] Muslim women understanding the necessity of voluntary and selfless work, and in solidarity with Macedonian women, joining the reconstruction of the state;[16] etc.

Most obviously, this mass political *advancement* was present in the numerous texts dedicated to the various election processes and the participation of Muslim women in them. The recently acquired women's right to vote was an exceptionally important turning point as regards their status, especially if we take into account the traditional context in which Muslim women lived, reduced to the private sphere, with no participation in the public life. This was excellently illustrated by the words of a Muslim woman, who declared during the elections for the People's Committees that she experienced this turning point as a dream: "To be honest, this still feels like a dream. But I am starting to believe that it is true."[17]

The numerous reports from the polling stations throughout the republic reflected the hard work, mass mobilization, and the obviously successful recruitment, campaigning and "propagandist-explanatory work" that WAF undertook among Muslim women in the field, and even "the Arnaut[18] women from the most remote villages voted."[19] Regular conferences were organized where the WAF activists talked to the attending women about the national liberation struggle and its sacrifices, about the liberty that was

15 Celebrating 8 March in our towns and villages, (Прославата на 8 март во нашите градои и села) Year 4, No. 29 (March 1947), p. 10.

16 Vera Popovska, The Activities of Our Organizations, (Вера Поповска, Активноста на нашите организации), Year 3, No. 20 (June 1946), p. 4; The Activities of WAF, (Од активноста на АФЖ), Year 3, No. 24 (October 1946), p. 4; Lj. Apostolov, We are building a new life, (Љ. Апостолов, Градиме нов живот) Year 5, No. 43 (April 1948), p. 3; With what results the women of Gostivar will welcome May the First, (Со какви резултати жените од Гостивар и околијата го дочекуат празникот 1 мај), Year 5, No. 42 (April 1948). P. 8; News brief, (Кратки вести), year 5, No. 42 (April 1948), p. 9.

17 Rada Galeva, "Good Luck and for Many Years to Come!", (Рада Галева, „Нека е срећно и за многу години!"), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 3.

18 A Turkish ethnonym used to denote Albanians. During the Ottoman era, the name was used for ethnic Albanians regardless of their religious affiliations, just like it is today.

19 Lenche Jovanova, First Free Elections in Macedonia, (Ленче Јованова, Првите слободни избори во Македонија), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), pp. 1-2.

won, Tito, and equality of all peoples.[20] These meetings with Muslim women were particularly common in the period before the elections. At these conferences women were familiarized with the voting procedure, but they were also practically instructed how and for whom to vote.[21]



The voting of Muslim women required special organization. Because of their practice to wear a veil and their limited movements in public places, separate polling stations were provided for them. In other situations, special times were determined and at those times, the polling station was reserved for the Muslim women only. The texts in *Makedonka* report that Muslim women came in great numbers to vote, waiting in a queue even before the official opening of the polling stations, thus exhibiting their great enthusiasm to exercise their newly acquired right to vote. These texts that were supposed to inform, to report about the process of voting in

20 Femiya Asanova, "Come again to learn something...", (Фемија Асанова, „Пак дојди да не научиш нешто..."),Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 12; Ruzha Leshoska, Throughout the Fatherland, (Ружа Лешоска, Низ нашата татковина), Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 18; Jordanka Graorkova, Throughout the Fatherland, (Јорданка Граоркова, Низ нашата татковина), Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 18.

21 Vaska Kostova. 11 November is our greatest holiday, What were the elections like, memos, (Васка Костова, 11 Ноември наш најголем празник, Како минаа изборите, дописи), No. 14 (December 1945), p. 10.

various places throughout Macedonia, still abounded in suggestive messages about what the right choice was for Muslim women and about their developed political awareness. Almost all texts about the voting of Muslim women introduce the context of brotherhood and unity as well, the ideal that had been achieved with this mass participation of the Muslim women and their right choice.[22]



The exceptionally high turnout of Muslim women voters and the equally high percentage of votes given to the Popular Front were a result of the successful and tenacious political and cultural and educational activism among Turkish and Albanian women on the part of WAF. "During the elections, women's turnout was almost 100% and 99% of the women who voted, supported the candidates of the Popular Front."[23]

Regardless of the great success in the mobilization of Muslim women for the elections, their political *advancement* remained

22 The Governing Board of WAF for Macedonia, DECLARATION of the Governing Board of WAF from Macedonia on the occasion of the elections for the People's Committees, (Главен одбор на АФЖ на Македонија, ПРОГЛАС на Главниот одбор на АФЖ на Македонија по повод изборите за народни одбори), Year 4, No. 29 (December 1947), p. 1; Vera Aceva, 'Our women will do everything to make 1947 a year of even greater achievements for our country', (Вера Ацева, Нашата жена ќе стори се да 1947 година биди година на поголеми постигенија во изградбата на нашата земја), Year 4, No. 27 (January 1947), p. 6.

23 The participation of women in the elections for the People's Committees (Участвието на жените во изборите за народните одбори), Year 4, No. 30-31 (April-May 1947), p. 7; Lenche Jovanova, The First Free Elections in Macedonia (Ленче, Јованова. Првите слободни избори во Македонија), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), pp. 1-2; Rada Galeva, "Good Luck and for Many Years to Come", Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 3; B. Todorovska, Elections in Radovish (В. Тодоровска. „Изборите во Радовиш"), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 4: L.J. Ill Nadjide Abbas Aydar invited the election commission to come to her home so that she could vote (Л.Ј. „Болната Наџиде Абаз Ајдар ја повика комисијата дома како би можела и она да гласа"), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 6; S. Veskova, Elections in Kochani (С. Вескова. „Изборите во Кочани"), Year, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 4; Shukri Ramo, Turkish women will vote too (Рамо, Шукри. „И туркинјата ке гласа"), Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 8; We are going to vote for Tito... for a Republic (Ние ќе гласаме за Тито... за Република), Year 2, No.12-13 (October-November 1945). Pp. 9-11.

an important problem for WAF. The organization made efforts to approach them through various forms of work. For these women, who were the *most backward* politically, "most diverse and supple forms'[24] of work needed to be employed. The observations that WAF underperformed in the raising of the ideological-political level of women persisted, as well as in the recruiting and training of agitation cadre coming from the minorities.[25] The difficulties in the work with the minorities' women remained a problem on the pages of *Makedonka* to its last issue, since most of them were still not "activized".[26]

2.2. Cultural and educational *advancement* of Muslim women

> "... The best attendee of the course, the thirty-year-old woman Ayshe Riza began explaining: We were in great trouble. We did not know what was going on around us. Now, when I know how to read and write (...) She smiled and continued – now I know what the building of the new life involves: a new and beautiful cooperative home in the village with the cooperation collective inside it, a room for conferences and many other rooms. Reading helps me a lot."[27]

This excerpt from a report about the village of Kremenica, as well as many similar reports published in *Makedonka,* highlight the importance of the cultural and educational advancement for Muslim women and emphasize its correlation to their political

24 From the Resolution on the future core tasks of the Communist Party of Macedonia WAF, (Од Резолуцијата на основните наредни задачи на КП на Македонија АФЖ), Year 5, No. 49-50 (November 1948), p. 1.

25 Plenary meeting of the Governing Board of WAF of Macedonia, (Пленарен состанок на Главниот одбор на АФЖ на Македонија) Year 5, No. 51 (1949), p. 1.

26 Conclusions of the Seventh Plenum of the Governing Board of the Women's Antifascist Front of Women of Macedonia, (Заклучоци од Седмиот пленум на Главниот одбор на Антифашистичкиот фронт на жените од Македонија), Year 8, No. 83 (December 1952), p. 5.

27 Lj. Apostolov, We are building a new life, (Љ. Апостолов, Градиме нов живот), Year 5, No. 42 (April 1948), p.3.

advancement. This suggests that, in order to understand what was going on around them (such as what a cooperative home was and why they had to work on its construction, what the five-year plan was and many other issues), they first had to learn to read and write.

An exceptionally significant task for WAF was the organization of analphabetic courses for illiterate women who were the majority among all ethnic communities in Macedonia, and especially among Muslim women. Working on the literacy of the masses was considered a core task in the provision of the future development of the socialist community on which all other *advancements* of people depended (for more, see Leitner-Stojanov, 2022). These literacy courses were often accompanied by reading groups, which were seen as a good opportunity for political *advancement* of Muslim women.[28]

Makedonka abounds in information that demonstrates the care of the people's government for the cultural and educational *advancement* of women and the activities of WAF in various villages and town throughout Macedonia. These informative texts reported about the new analphabetic courses, about the successes of the attendees and the activists who ran the courses, about the numbers of Muslim women that were now literate or about the numbers of new attendees, as well as about the new cultural homes opened in the areas inhabited by the minorities, etc.[29]

These new experiences, such as that of Ayshe Riza, served to epitomize the desired, ideal result of the work of WAF on the

28 Our Tasks, (Нашите задачи),Year 3, No. 15-16 (January-February 1946), pp. 1-2.

29 The Battle against Illiteracy, (Борба против неписменоста),Year 4, No. 27 (January 1947), p. 10; Visiting the WAF organizations, (Низ организациите на АФЖ),Year 4, No. 27 (January 1947), p. 13; During the 8 March competition, (Во текот на осмомартовското натпреварување), No. 28 (February 1947), p-. 8-9; Visiting the WAF organizations, (Низ организациите на АФЖ), Year 4, No. 36-37 (October-November 1947), pp. 4-5; What are the results of the women from Gostivar and its surroundings in the ever of A May, (Со какви резултати жените од Гостивар и околијата го дочекуат празникот 1 мај), Year 5, No. 42 (April 1948), p. 8; I organized 8 analphabetic courses with 210 Turkish women all by myself, (Јас самоиницијативно организирав осум аналфабетски курса со 210 неписмени жени Турчинки), Year 4, No. 38 (December 1947), p. 7; News brief about the Analphabetic Campaign, (Кратки вести од аналфабетската кампања), Year 4, No. 38 (December 1947), p. 7.

literacy of Muslim women. Their work with illiterate women had its challenges, especially as regards recruiting, regular attendance, discipline, etc., but the literacy courses for Muslim women required even greater efforts and different strategies. Their work with the *most backward, most conservative* women incorporated some new obstacles beside the regular difficulties that WAF had to face.[30] One of the problems with which the activists of WAF had to deal was their not knowing the languages of the minorities (mainly Turkish and Albanian), which indicated their other problem – the deficiency of minority activists that could maintain the relationship with the Turkish and Albanian women.[31] The lack of cadre to run the analphabetic courses for the minorities only exacerbated this problem.[32] The self-critical texts that reported the problems and oversights in WAF's work demonstrated that nowhere near enough women were included in their activities, especially in the "Shqiptare and Turkish villages were almost no women were included." New forms of work had to be tried all the time, such as, starting small neighbourhood courses where, among else, women's hygiene and childcare were discussed, and some "cooking instructions" were given, etc.[33] WAF even organized individual analphabetic courses for some Muslim women.[34]

The self-critical texts identified the problem with the non-existing statistical data about the illiterate Muslim women, which was of great importance in the designing of plans with a more

30 Kiro H. Vasilev, For an organized and planned battle against illiteracy, (Киро Х. Василев, За организована и планска борба против неписменоста), Year 3, No. 15-16 (January-February 1946), p. 6.

31 Desa Miljovska, Several conclusions from our work on organizing analphabetic courses to date, (Деса Миљовска, Неколку заклучениј од досегашната работа за организирање од аналфабетски курсеви), Year 3, No. 19 (May 1946), p. 8.

32 D. Miljovska, Let us continue with the literacy courses for illiterates, (Д. Миљовска, Да продолжиме со описменуење на неписмените), Year 4, No. 30-31 (April-May 1947), p. 16.

33 Rada Galeva, Let us prepare for the new campaign against illiteracy, (Рада Галева, Да се подготвиме за новата кампања против неписменоста), Year 2, No. 23 (September 1946), p. 7.

34 The Battle against Illiteracy, (Борба против неписменоста), Year 4, No. 27 (January 1947), p. 10.

suitable approach.[35] Despite the expressed need for more detail in the planning of more successful and better organized work, and despite their understanding for the "prejudices of Muslim women", the activities of WAF were not founded upon uniform principles and largely depended on the enthusiasm of the individuals involved in the committees. For instance, in Ohrid, owing to WAF's insufficient campaigning and weak attempts at convincing, the men from the minorities obstructed the literacy courses for women, and the situation in the Berovo district was similar. In these places, both the individuals and committees of WAF did not make the effort to resolve their problems with the cadre that was supposed to run these courses and they were relegated to pupils from the third or fourth grade. This "careless behaviour" of the committees replicated the more general organizational problems of WAF in its work on the literacy among the minorities, which resulted in imbalance in the numbers of Muslim women who attended these courses and became literate in different districts.[36] The insufficient planning and organization in WAF's work were the main problems that resulted in continued non-inclusion of minorities women in particular in the activities of WAF.[37]

The problem with the approach and recruitment persisted and it was necessary to find new ways of convincing Muslim women that literacy was very important. Within the committees, working groups ('actives') were formed whose task was to gather and convince women, to assure their regular attendance and care for their children, as well as to analyse the work at the courses and its weaknesses, and subsequently offer solutions. WAF had to adapt and utilize the traditional gatherings of Muslim women, such

35 True equality – means overcoming illiteracy above all, (Вистинска равноправност – значи преди се премавнување на неписменоста), Year 3, No. 26 (December 1946), p. 1.

36 The oversights in the organization of the analphabetic campaign of WAF to date, (Досегашните пропусти на организацијата на АФЖ во аналфабетската кампања), Year 5, No. 39 (January 1948), p. 2.

37 Let us prepare for the Second Congress, (Да се приготвиме за вториот конгрес), Year 5, No. 43 (May 1948), p. 1.

as the neighbourhood meetings.[38] Thus, WAF began the practice of informal gatherings for the minorities women as a form of work with which they were familiar. Women came to these gatherings with their handwork, and listened to the lectures. Entertainment that included performances by children from the Pioneer Movement followed, or coffee and tea was served, turning these gatherings into merrymaking. To this traditional form of gatherings of Muslim women, WAF added content and ideology.[39] This new form of work was promoted in the last issue of the magazine as appropriate for the minorities' women. The atmosphere of the informal gatherings was much more relaxed and included less aggressive political and ideological education for the women who found it tiresome to follow otherwise, and more attractive and more popular contents were shared instead.

In time, WAF accepted some strategies that it used to find inappropriate in the past. The Pioneer Movement organizations were now invited as an important factor in the battle against illiteracy.[40] The position of coordinators of the courses were sometimes occupied by ten-year-olds – all four of them girls who were supposed to teach their mothers, aunts, sisters, following the example of the village of Topolnica. These examples display the flexibility of WAF and that of the dedicated and ambitious individuals in their search to find the suitable solutions for the problems that occurred in the cultural and educational *advancement* of Muslim women. The text entitled "Let us utilize the experience from last year's analphabetic campaign – Four pioneer girls in the roles of coordinators" was

38 The literacy of the minorities' women is an important task for our organization, (Описменувањето на жените од малцинствата важна задача пред нашата организација), Year 5, No. 61 (1949), p. 7.

39 An Hour for Women, a new form of work in the organization of WAF, (Час за жената, Нова форма за работа во организацијата на АФЖ), Year 6, No. 65 (April 1950), p. 12; The Activities of Our Organizations – the informal gatherings are the main form of work with women in Shtip, (Од активноста на нашите организации. Седенките – главна форма за работа со жените во Штип), Year 8, No. 83 (December 1952), p. 18.

40 Slavka Fidanova, Let us reinforce our struggle against illiteracy, (Славка Фиданова, Да е засилиме борбата против неписменоста), Year 5, No. 46-47 (August 1948), p. 6.

written with precisely that in mind. The role of a dedicated and ambitious individual who wished to break the prejudices of the population by insisting on the necessity of women being literate and mobilizing the organizations to help in the realization of this goal was fulfilled by a Muslim man – the teacher Asan Ibraimov.[41]

The problems with the cultural and educational *advancement* of Muslim women had the potential to be transferred onto their children later, and this produced a vicious cycle in which illiteracy remained an obstacle that reproduced itself further. The parents, and especially the mothers, had to learn that they were responsible for the education of their children. For this reason, parent-teacher councils were organized, where mothers of the children whose education was obligatory were invited and mass campaigns were organized to increase the attendance of the Albanian minority mothers in particular.[42] Another problem that was identified in some places, such as the village of Zhitoshe, was that only the boys attended school, while the girls remained illiterate and "blind" because of the *backwardness* of their parents. WAF and the education department tried to convince the parents to let their female children attend school as well.[43]

2.3. Inclusion in the economy

The strategies for emancipation of Muslim women were interdependent, and for this reason, it was necessary to work on them all equally at once. To illustrate the connection between the

41 Nevena Teohareva, Let us utilize the experience from last year's analphabetic campaign – Four pioneer girls in the roles of coordinators, (Невена Теохарева, Да го искористиме искуството од миналогодишната аналфабетската кампања. Четири пионерки – раководителки), Year 5, No. 60 (1949), pp. 5-6.

42 The results achieved in the pre-Congress competition of the organizations of WAF, (Постигнати резултати во претконгресното натпреварување од организациите на АФЖ), Year 5, No, 49-50 (November 1948), p. 6.

43 The activist Gena Damche from Krushevo taught 48 Shqiptare girls how to read and write, (Активистката Гена Дамче од Крушево описмени 48 младинки-Шиптарки Активистката Гена Дамче од Крушево описмени 48 младинки-Шиптарки), No. 55 (1949), p. 10.

political and economic *advancement* we can cite texts dedicated to the promotion of the economic policies of the state. On one hand was the need to promote the image of Muslims as aware of and also experiencing the benefits of the economic policies of the people's government. Such was the example with the Albanians from the Tetovo and Gostivar region, who, in addition to the "obligatory wheat", had given away their free or their "entire surpluses" of wheat to the state and with great exhilaration to bot. They set off to deliver the surpluses to the state with carts decorated with flags and photographs of Tito, with banners with messages written, in all fairness, "with bad lettering but with meaningful words", accompanied by zurnas and drums. "We will give our wheat for the worker, so that we can get our machines, tools and clothes"; "We are giving our surplus of wheat to the state of our own free will and with songs."[44] Similarly aimed were the texts about the inclusion of Muslims, and especially Muslim women in the village 'zadrugas'[45] and the positive benefits of this inclusion for them. On the other hand, we have texts that reflected the resistance of the minorities against the zadrugas. It is interesting to know that in many of these stories it was the women that were prominent opponents of the zadruga. The women from "kulak" families from the border region with Albania spread false news to cause damage to the zadruga. They said that the members of the Lazaropale zadruga were starving. For this reason, WAF organized visits to the "Shqiptare" women in the border villages near Lazaropole to see for themselves this new and "better" zadruga life in order to give worthy answers when they return to all of those that insulted the zadruga.[46] The greatest problem of the zadrugas in the minorities' villages was the inclusion of women in their work. Special brigades

44 M. Torteski, Throughout Macedonia, people are more than happy to give away the wheat surplus to the people's government, (М. Тортески, Низ цела Македонија народот со водушевление ги предава на народната власт житните вишкови), Year 2, No. 23 (September 1946), p. 6.

45 Zadruga refers to a type of rural community historically common among South Slavs. However, the term has been used by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia to designate their attempt at collective farming after World War II.

46 News from the Zadrugas, (Вести од задругите), No, 53-54 (1949), p. 14.

were formed comprising only women, and at the same time, they served as a good starting point for their educational and political *advancements*. In the positive examples promoted in the texts published in *Makedonka,* women and girls worked under their veils on special separate fields and in special separate female brigades.[47]

The initiatives for inclusion of Muslim women in the production intensified with the announcement of the Five-year plan for modernization, industrialization and electrification of the state in 1947.[48] In the post-war circumstances, the Five-year plan required quick action and needed mass mobilization of the working population. Of course, this included Muslim women as well, since it was equally important to get them to join the labour market and participate in the reconstruction of the fatherland.

Women's economic activity was a very important prerequisite for them to enjoy their equality, but the campaign for inclusion of Muslim women in the economy did not go very well. For the Muslim women who *covered* their face and body with a veil and who went out in public only when necessary, going to work was a complicated feat. Therefore, WAF had to search yet again for new ways how to include Muslim women in the economy more successfully. They campaigned among Muslim women to make them engage with handicrafts, and organized sewing and tailoring courses, etc., that trained Muslim women to work from home.[49] Homemade handicrafts were promoted as a useful solution for the employment of Muslim women until the last issue of the magazine, which informed that in Shtip, a department for homemade handicrafts was

47 News from the Zadrugas (Вести од задругите), No, 53-54 (1949), p. 14; Pande Popovski, Let them all follow our path. In the minority village of Kozjak – Ohrid district, the first female youth brigade was formed, (Панде Поповски, Нека сите тргнат по нашиот пат. Во малцинското село Козјак – Охридско во задругата е формирана прва женска младинска бригада), Year 5, No. 56 (1949), p. 14.

48 Reports from the organizations of WAF, (Дописи од организациите на АФЖ), No. 35 (September 1947), p. 12.

49 Women in Macedonia in the 1 May competition, (Жените во Македонија во првомајското натпреварување), Year 3, No. 17-18 (March-April 1946), pp. 6-7; R. Gjorgjovska, Women's workshops for handicrafts, (Р. Ѓорговска, Женски работилници за домашна изработка...), No. 35, (September 1947), p. 6.

formed and employed 32 Turkish women to work on female blouses with folk embroidery. In this manner, women were employed and could work from home and earn money.[50] The Governing Board of WAF initiated the creation of "actives" for homemade handicrafts as a sector within the agricultural zadrugas in the *passive* regions where minorities' women lived.[51] These adaptations in their search for specific ways in which to include Muslim women in the labour market transpired in circumstances of aggressive promotion of work and industriousness, of effort and labour, of exceeding the production norms with very high percentages, of women *shock workers,* of workers' competitions - who was going to do more and better, etc. This atmosphere drove Muslim women in a position of women maladjusted to the *new* socialist needs.

The ideal situation necessitated synchronized implementation of the various strategies for emancipation of Muslim women as they complemented each other and intertwined with each other. The ideal was to have the effects of these strategies become visible so as to have even older women who were prepared to change their life and worldview completely, like in the story about *comrade* Mara, who suggested that a weaving plant was opened where Turkish women could work. By working, they would get out of their "darkness" and get education at the same time. She faced great troubles while convincing Turkish women to work. She went from house to house and talked to them. On Wednesdays and Fridays they held meetings where they read newspapers in Macedonian and Turkish, explaining the current political events, the lies of the Cominform were condemned as well as the breach of the trade agreements. Some progress was registered in the cultural and educational *advancement* of women workers as well. The organization also distributed cinema tickets. The seventy-year-old

50 The Problem of Women's Employment, a useful initiative, (Проблемот на запослување на жените. Корисна иницијатива), Year 8, No. 83 (December 1952), p. 19.

51 M. Ancheva, Actives for Homemade Handicrafts – a sector in the agricultural zadrugas, (М. Анчева, Активите по домашна ракотворба – сектор во земјоделските задруги), No. 53-54 (1949). P. 11.

woman Firsat Huslin refused to go to the cinema at first, but later became the most regular visitor of the shows, which she enjoyed greatly.[52]

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Muslim women were in the focus of WAF on the pages of *Makedonka* continually. The predominant interpretations in the magazine are those that corresponded with the ideals of brotherhood and unity, but there were interpretations that were aimed at reflecting how much the people's government cared for the minorities. These commitments of the government and WAF were manifested in different manners. Starting with No. 17-18, and all the way to No. 23, in 1946, two pages in Albanian and two pages in Turkish were published to meet the needs of the political, cultural and educational *advancement* of the Turkish and Albanian women. In the issue No. 23 from 1946, *Makedonka* announced that a Turkish newspaper called *Birlik* and an Albanian newspaper *Flaka e Vëllazërimit* will soon be published in the country.[53] The state made efforts to provide the right circumstances for *advancement* of the minorities in a cultural and educational sense. In 1948, there were 160 Albanian, 84 Turkish and 10 Serbian schools. Schoolbooks were published, as well as literature and newspapers, in the languages of the minorities and cultural-educational associations were also founded.[54] In 1950, the national minorities' theatre was opened and two books were published in Albanian and Turkish, written by young Albanian and Turkish writers. These were politically engaged works of literature in line with the ideology and politics of the government.[55] The recently instituted mother and children

52 Zlata Mihajlovich, 2000 blankets for the construction workers..., (Злата Михајловиќ, 2000 кебиња за градежните работници...), No. 55 (1949), pp. 14-15.

53 From the editor, about the Albanian and Turkish page, (Од редакцијата, За албанската и турската страница), Year 3, No. 24 (October 1946), p. 12.

54 From Lazar Kolishevski's speech, (Од рефератот на другарот Лазо Колишевски), Year 5, No. 49-50 (November 1948), p. 4.

55 Cultural Chronicles: Two important news from the cultural life of our national minorities, (Културна хроника: Две значајни новини во културниот живот на националните малцинства кај нас), Year 6, No. 64 (March 1950), p. 17.

care encompassed the Muslim women as well. In 1949, the City Maternity Hospital was opened, primarily for the mothers coming from the national minorities.[56] When restaurants for children were opened, the minorities' children were not neglected either.[57]

The WAF activists tried many different ways of reaching Muslim women, especially those in the oppressive rural environments, and to inspire them to become active in the reconstruction of the *new* socialist state, but also in the creation of the *new socialist woman*. They insisted on the establishment of WAF committees in every town and village, with a special focus on the most remote and cut off villages. WAF made efforts to have Muslim women join the organization and thus facilitate the establishment and maintenance of the activities among these women.[58] This commitment remained a constant on the pages of the magazine and is in line with the party directions that followed the ideology of brotherhood and unity among all nationalities. The people's government committed itself to guard these values like the "pupil in the eye".[59] The attention paid to the integration of the national minorities only became more focused and minority commissions were formed as part of the WAF committees wherever national minorities lived to take more specialized care for their educational and political *advancement*.[60]

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56 N. Kacavoglu, They are happy and joyous..., (Н. Кацаволу, Тие се радостни, срек'ни...), Year 6, No. 67 (June 1950), p. 5.

57 They are our greatest care, (Тие се наша најголема грижа), No. 58 (1949), pp. 12-13.

58 Women in Macedonia are preparing for their First Congress, (Жените на Македонија се готват за својот прв конгрес), Year 3, No. 20 (June 1948), pp. 2-3; Let us participate actively in the election of the new governing bodies of WAF, (Активно да учествуеме во избирањето на новите раководства на АФЖ), Year 5, No. 42 (April 1948), p. 1; The Second Congress of the Popular Front – a new contribution to the struggle for developing socialism in our country, (Вториот конгрес на Народниот фронт – нов допринос во борбата за изградба на социјализмот кај нас), Year 5, No. 43 (May 1948), p. 2.

59 L.J. The First Macedonian People's Government was formed, (Л. Ј., Се образува I-та Македонска Народна Влада), Year 2, No. 7 (May 1945), p. 2.

60 The activities of the WAF organization, in honour of the International Women's Day – 8 March, (Дејноста на организациите на АФЖ, во чест на мег'ународниот ден на жената – 8 март), Year 5, No. 51 (1949); The activities of our organizations, (Од активноста на нашите организации), No. 53-54 (1949), p. 9.

In order to fulfil the task that WAF had set, women had to be first attracted to the organization and then enabled to realize them, but at the same time, they had to be educated to demonstrate their loyalty to the new government. This required their political education, that is to say, indoctrination (Sklevicky, 1996, 118).



3. WITHOUT A VAIL INTO A NEW LIFE

"Long live the movement for the abolition of the veil!
Long live our People's Government!
Long live the Women's Antifascist Front!"[61]

The veil is the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about Muslim women, as it is an important religious signifier. This term refers to the covers for the face and body that have neither remained a static symbol throughout history, nor have a uniform appearance for all Muslim women. Although the texts in *Makedonka* most commonly referred to a "black veil", in Macedonia and all over the Balkans, there were many variations in shape, material, and colour, as well as in the terms used for this cover (see Vidinić, 2013, 35-40; Димовска, 2013, 41-54).[62]

The first action against the veil in Macedonia was organized and led by a socialist organization from Skopje, initiated by Rosa Plaveva and Nakiye Bayram. It mobilized 40 Muslim women to protest against the veil in 1908. This might suggest that the connection between socialist feminism and the demands to reject the veil had deeper roots after all (Jančar-Webster, 1990, 33, compare with Hadžiristić, 2017, 188, Footnote 4; Hadjievska, 2021, 61, 62). The second action against the veil took place in the People's Republic of Macedonia, with the greatest intensity in the period between 1947 and 1951.

61 "The removal of the veil is the first step we, the Turkish and Shqiptare women, need to do so that we can avail ourselves of our newly acquired rights" („Сметнуењето на ферецето е првиот чекор што треба да го направиме ние Турчинките и Шиптарките, за да можеме навистина да ги ползуеме здобиените права"), Year 4, No. 30-31 (April-May 1947), pp. 10-11.

62 The Muslim Albanian women from the village of Upper Nerezi were "covered with pure white sheets", L.J., "Ill Andjide Abbas Aydar invited the commission home so that she could vote (Л.Ј. „Болната Наджиде Абаз Ајдар ја повика комисијата дома како би можела и она да гласа"), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 6.

In the first issues of the magazine, the texts showed a much greater understanding for these covers of Muslim women. The veil was not treated as an obstacle, and it was not discussed as a religious symbol that epitomized the *backwardness* and *closed-mindedness* of Muslim women. These texts claimed that the veil did not prevent Muslim women from participating in the struggle, did not stop them from going to cast their vote, from joining the protests against the king, or speaking at political rallies, etc.[63] The presentation of Muslim women in the first issues painted them as women wishing to join the public life. In this process, they were bothered more by the "petty bourgeois and patriarchal attitudes and conservatism" of their environment rather than by their veil.[64]

The campaign for removal of the veil was not on the agenda of WAF at this time. Its legal prohibition was not discussed. In a text by Lenche Jovanova dedicated to the women in Albania, the emphasis was on the ineffectiveness of such measures. It claimed that the law that imposed *uncovering* in Albania was passed in 1937 and only worsened the status of women instead of improving it. People were not ready to accept the provisions of this law and did not allow their wives to leave their houses *uncovered,* and consequently, women could no longer go out.[65]

Up until 1947, there were no signs on the pages of *Makedonka* that Muslim women would become the target group of an intensive campaign for removal of the veil, which in the end resulted with a prohibition of these coverings. Except for one example, in the issue No. 3-4 from 1945, in an interesting report about the village women from Umovo by the author Divna. "...Fearfully they ask about the veil. 'We have heard that they will remove it?!' one of them asked.

63 Lenche Arsova, Let us help our Muslim comrade (Ленче, Арсова. „Да помогнеме на нашата другарка муслиманка"), Year 2, No. 3-4 (January-February 1945), p. 11; B. Todorovska, The sources in Radovish (Б. Тодоровска. „Изборите во Радовиш"), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 4.

64 Shukri Ramo, Turkish women will vote too (Шукри, Рамо. „И туркинјата ке гласа"), Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 8.

65 Lenche Jovanovska, Albanian women are walking down the new road, (Ленче Јовановска, Албанската жена чекори по новиот пат), Year 2, No. 3-4 (January-February 1945), pp. 25-26.

'We don't wish to meddle in your law.' We respect it', we calmed them down. 'Whoever wants to, they can take off the veil, those that don't want to – they won't have to. It depends on you.'"[66]

And despite these appeasements that there would be no meddling in their law and that the decisions about the veil would be individual all of a sudden in *Makedonka* No. 30-31 from 1947 a concerted campaign began for the removal of the veil. The campaign started with a report about the conference of the "Turkish and Shqiptare women" from Skopje, where, beside the discussions about the Five-year plan, most attention was paid to the veil. The teacher Nakiye Ferid held a speech in which she said that the veil was "a black curtain in front of the eyes" and the greatest obstacle to Muslim women's integration in the society and their enjoying their rights. With life bubbling around them, they were locked up in darkness. Therefore, the rejection of the veil was the first step that they would have to do. At the conferences organized for this purpose, distinguished Muslim women addressed the attending in order to portray the campaign against the veil as authentic. The conference in Skopje sent an appeal to the "Turkish and Shqiptare women" of the People's Republic of Macedonia, calling them to become active and raise their voice in order to achieve unity in their demands to the authorities to pass a law for rejection of the veil. The conference sent a letter to the Marshal of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, *Comrade* Tito: "... we beg you to help us, and support our wish in the parliament to have the law on the rejection of the veil passed as soon as possible..." They asked *Comrade* Lazar Kolishevski for support in the same manner, as well as the Governing Board of WAF of Macedonia.

The inspiration for this conference was the movement for rejection of the veil of the Muslim women from Kosovo and Metohija with the same motives: by "throwing away" the veil they were going to stop being different than other women, they were going to reveal their faces to be able to participate in the public life, because, except

66 Divna, The peasant women from Umovo gave 70 pairs of socks, (Дивна, Селанките од Умова дадоа 70 рала чорапи),Year 2, No. 3-4 (January-February 1945), p. 13

for a small number of women involved in the government, to most of Muslim women this was unavailable. Since they often encountered resistance among men and older people, Muslim women from Peja sent a telegram to the People's Parliament demanding from the government to pass a law. The Parliament passed a resolution saying that, to prevent someone from *rejecting* the veil was an attack on the individual civil liberty and that it would be penalized as a violation of guaranteed rights. This resolution sent an important message to Muslim women – women could wear the veil freely and they were not forced to *reject* it. Nonetheless, the resolution offered a moral support to the Muslim women that wished to *reject* the veil[67] (for more on the messages about the veil in Kosovo in the WAF press, see Stojaković, 2021)

The most active organizations in this campaign that contributed the most to the battle against the veil were WAF and the Popular Front.[68] The people's government involved the representatives of the Islamic religious community in this campaign against the veil as well, and at a specially organized conference, they passed a resolution saying that Islam did not compel women to wear the veil and that the rejection of the veil was not in breach with the rules of the Quran.[69] The representatives of the Islamic faith were engaged by the government to convince the population that the acts initiated by the state were not in breach with their religion, which was and still is an important aspect of their identity in these parts of the world. Thus, the Islamic religion, burdened with the image

67 "The removal of the veil is the first step we, the Turkish and Shqiptare women, need to do so that we can avail ourselves of our newly acquired rights", („Сметнувањето на ферецето е првиот чекор што треба да го направиме ние Турчинките и Шиптарките, за да можеме навистина да ги ползуеме здобиените права"), Year 4, No. 30-31 (April-May 1947), pp. 10-11; Karamakova, 8 March – the International Women's Day of Struggle. 8 March competition in our organizations. The results achieved by the WAF organization in Shtip, (Карамакова, 8 март мег'ународниот борбен ден на жените. Осмомартовското натпреварување во нашите организации. Постигнати резултати во штипската организација на АФЖ), No. 40-41 (February-March 1948), p. 12.

68 Action for removal of the veil. A great success of the WAF organization on Debar, (Акција за симнување на ферецето. Голем успех на организацијата на АФЖ во Дебар), Year 4, No. 36-37 (October-November 1947), p. 7.

69 Action for removal of the veil. A great success of the WAF organization on Debar (Акција за симнување на ферецето. Голем успех на организацијата на АФЖ во Дебар), Year 4, No. 36-37 (October-November 1947), p. 7.

of an undesirable remnant of the Ottoman rule, and consequently a symbol of conservatism, could now become progressive and active in its support for the policies of the state. In atheist and secular Yugoslavia, the representatives of the Islamic religious community embodied the progressive Islamic trends, while the conservatives regularly opposed the campaign for rejection of the veil. The texts in *Makedonka* often included characters of imams and dervishes to embody the *backward powers* opposing the progress, and consequently, socialism. In the words of Hadžiristić, it was indeed incredible that in an atheist and secular state, the revealing of Muslim women was not observed in the context of liberation from religion, that is, liberation from Islam (Hadžiristić, 2017, 195). Quite the contrary, conferences were organized where the representatives of the Islamic religious community elaborated their positive and supporting attitude towards the government's campaign for rejection of the veil. WAF also organized conferences in all the places where they had already had meetings with the representatives of the Islamic religious community, and at these conferences, they offered the attending women explanations of the conclusions of the religious representatives. Thus they kept the focus of Muslim women on the veil as an important issue. These conferences and meetings with Muslim women organized by WAF were seen as an opportunity for a mass manifest *uncovering* of women ready to make that step at that moment. There were regular reports about the number of women from different places all over Macedonia that removed their veil collectively at such meetings.[70]

Although the veil was the foremost sign of the Islamic affiliation of these women, the campaign for rejection of the veil attempted to overturn these theses. Several texts were published with "correct" religious interpretations, written by Macedonian women authors. Their tone was patronizing as regards this aspect of the life of Muslim women that they found especially important. They said

70 News brief, (Кратки вести), Year 4. No. 38 (December 1947), p. 12; Action for removal of the veil. A great success of the WAF organization on Debar, (Акција за симнување на ферецето. Голем успех на организацијата на АФЖ во Дебар), Year 4, No. 36-37 (October-November 1947), p. 7.

that the veil was imposed as a result of invented Islamic rules. That this was a falsified and wrong reading of the religious teachings of Mohamed, that is to say, religious rules were perverted in the case of the obligatory covering of women.[71] Consequently, the statement that in Yugoslavia, Muslims would be accepted and recognized by the socialist project as part of the society was legitimate. But, this had its price. All Islamic institutions and culture had to be radically restructured in order to meet the socialist norms of modernity (Greble, 2021, 253).

In 1950, the engagement of WAF in the battle against the veil only intensified and this had again become an important task for the organization.[72] During this period, a law that prohibited the veil ("zar" and "feredje") was passed in Bosnia and Herzegovina thus pushing this topic back into the limelight. *Makedonka* presented the mass participation of the local "Turkish and Shqiptare women" in the battle, which led to more conferences being organized everywhere: in factories, workers' zadrugas, blocks, villages and towns. They passed resolutions and collected signatures for the petition to the Presidium of the People's Parliament to pass a law that prohibited the wearing of the veil ("zar" and "feredje").[73] The President of the Governing Board of WAF, Vida Tomšič, welcomed the law passed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and hoped that similar laws would soon be passed in Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia, which would open the path towards equality and useful work to thousands of *backward* women in Yugoslavia.[74]

71 V.J. Muslim women fight for liberation from the dark, (В. Ј., Муслиманската жена се бори за ослободувањето од мракот), No. 33-34 (July-August 1947), p. 6.

72 Let us activate the new committees of WAF, (Да ги заактивизираме новите одбори на АФЖ), Year 6. No. 69 (August 1950), p. 5; Before the Third Congress of the Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia, (Пред третиот конгрес на Антифашистичкиот фронт на жените од Југославија), Year 6, No. 70-71 (September-October 1950), p. 1.

73 All over our republic, the movement for removal of the veil intensifies, (Ширум целата наша република се засилува движењето за симнување на ферецето), Year 6, No. 70-71 (September-October 1950), p. 4.

74 The participation of masses of women in the political, economic and social life of our country grows on a daily basis, (Секојдневно расте учеството на најширокиите женски маси во нашата земја во политичкиот, стопанскиот и општествениот живот), Year 6, No. 72 (November 1950), p. 12.

In January 1951, *Makedonka* published the Law on the Prohibition of wearing the veil ("zar" and "feredje"). Article 1 said that the law was passed following the general request of the broad masses "to remove the centuries-long symbol of submission and cultural backwardness of Muslim women and to provide full equality and broad participation in the social, cultural and economic life of the country...". Article 2 forbade forcing or persuading women to wear the veil ("zar" and "feredje"). Article 3 said that the women that continued to wear the veil or the persons demanding from the women in their home to wear the veil will be penalized with up to three months in prison, or with a fine of 20 000 dinars, while Article 4 said that all that forced, threatened or blackmailed women or abused their religious feelings by "taking advantage of prejudices and backwardness" or engaged in propaganda in favour of the veil would be penalized as perpetrators of criminal acts with imprisonment, "correctional work", or a fine of up to 50 000 dinars.[75]

Muslim women awaited 12 February with mixed feelings. In the text entitled "Without a Veil into a New Life", the author reported that in Gazi Baba, Topaana, and Chair everything looked the same, as if nothing had changed, but the most revolutionary development transpired there, not experienced ever before. A new life was beginning, without veils and *hiding*. Many young girls and married women waited for the date with joy in their hearts, but many women had to engage in a persistent conflict with their husbands, who did not let them leave the house. There was another kind of men as well, those who tried to persuade their wives that they should not differ from other women. It was obvious that in these places, in these communities and among their women, a storm of feelings was raging: fear, zeal against women, scaremongering".[76]

75 The Law on Prohibition of Wearing the Veil, ("zar" and "feredje"), (Закон за забрана носење зар и фереџе), Year 7, No. 74 (January 1951), p. 2.

76 Without a Veil into a New Life, (Без фереџе во нов живот), Year 7, No. 75 (February 1951), pp. 2-3.

3.1. Dramas and metaphors about the veil

Steal a look, you dear sister,
Can you see, a happy hour has come,
You've thrown the veil away,
And now, you move forward with us[77]

Beside the calmer texts dedicated to the campaign for rejection of the veil, including the reporting on the campaign, in a propagandist manner, of course, there were also texts that included dramatic qualifications of the veil-wearing custom, and explaining what its rejection would mean. In fact, these texts echoed the Orientalist discourse in the treatment of this issue throughout the pages of *Makedonka*. Muslim women that would *reject* the veil were heartily welcomed to the group of progressive *socialist women* that moved forward together. The most illustrative example was the engaged poetry dedicated to the theme of the veil. The form of the poems published in the magazine *Makedonka* and the specific occasions on which they were published reflected this Orientalist discourse the best. The poem written by Vancho Nikoleski was entitled "That veil that cursed veil" began and finished with the following stanza:

"That veil, that cursed veil
I have no words to curse it,
I curse you, I curse you fiercely,
With a curse stronger than fire,
With a curse heavier than a rock,
With a curse more terrifying than death!"[78]

77 Ljubica Karadžić – Krčinska, "Light", (Љубица Карацик' – Крчинска, „Виделo"), Year 5, No. 39 (January 1948), p. 2.

78 Vancho Nikoleski, "That veil, that cursed veil", (Ванчо Николески, „Фереџе пусто фереџе"), Year 5, No. 39 (January 1948), p. 9.

This literary hatred of the veil revealed new potentials for interpretation when viewed in the context of the ethnic and religious affiliation of the authors, and in addition to this, if we take into account that the authors of two engaged poems against the veil that were popular then at the time men (Vancho Nikoleski and L. Karovski) (for more on the literary interpretations, see Velichkovska, 2022, 216-219). The text entitled "Memory of Ganimet" celebrated the removal of the veil. A new life was born and bubbling, young people freed themselves from the centuries-long slavery and "in all its beauty they celebrate the victory over the symbol of slavery now torn apart and thrown in the mud after it has strained and enslaved the soul and the body, darkening the days of youth." It was a about a celebration of freedom, that had not been experienced before. This bright and joyful present was juxtaposed with the story of Ganimet, who, imprisoned in a camp during the war, kept complaining how much she hated the veil, but failed to live to see the liberation. Ganimet with her progressive opinions, a sister of a communist partisan, had to die. Under the gallows the executioner threw the black veil over her head, which veil prolonged her death throes for another fifteen minutes. Ganimet, however, would have enjoyed this new present and would have been very happy for the liberation of her sisters.[79]

The text entitled "Muslim women fight for liberation from the dark" included even more extreme negative qualifications of the practice of covering among Muslim women and indicated the absence of tact, but also the absence of understanding in the approach to this issue. In the story, Muslim women are marked with this "gross" symbol of a spiritual, *dark slavery,* a symbol of submission, "dark bigotry", *obsolescence* and *backwardness.* By remaining veiled, Muslim women also remain *tied* and *tripped* by a *backward custom.* Their comrades from the other nationalities, including Macedonian women, wholeheartedly and sisterly offer their assistance to the Muslim women *to open their eyes,* to recognize

79 Mamory of Ganimet, (Спомен на Ганимет) Year 7, No. 76 (March 1951), p. 7.

the lies and religious falsifying, to discover the truth, *to come out of the darkness.* This mission of WAF, expressed like this in the texts published in *Makedonka*, was in fact only continuing to separate Muslim women from their "sisters" of other nationalities who were not wearing veils. On one hand, there were Muslim women that did not know the truth, while on the other, there were women, who were usually non-Muslim, that knew the truth, and with whose help Muslim women were supposed "to open their eyes wide and see and rejoice with all of us in the sun and freedom, in the light and beauty of the new, free, joyful creative life". The *uncovering* of Muslim women was supposed to represent an act of trust, trust they were to acquire in the new government that provided equality and sincere brotherhood and unity. For this purpose, the interpretation used the traditional practices or "old customs" according to which, allegedly, Muslim women could *uncover* in front of a good friend of the family with a different religious affiliation.[80] Those Muslim women that felt unqualified trust could this time manifest it in a much broader environment and outside the family, in public, by rejecting the veil. While those that hesitated most likely had problems with the concepts of equality and brotherhood and unity.

The tone of these texts published at the beginning of the concerted campaign for rejection of the veil, when most of the Muslim women still wore the veil, was aggressive, condescending and disrespectful, as well as stereotypical and derived from the Orientalist discourse. The most common associations as regards the veil pointed towards its harmfulness and identified it as a *medieval dark mark, backward remnant from centuries ago, remnant of dark slavery, our yoke, a chain that restrained our powers;*[81] *symbol*

80 V.J. Muslim women fight for liberation from the dark, (В. Ј., Муслиманската жена се бори за ослободуењето од мракот), No. 33-34 (July-August 1947), p. 6.

81 "The removal of the veil is the first step we, the Turkish and Shqiptare women, need to do so that we can avail ourselves of our newly acquired rights", („Сметнуењето на ферецето е првиот чекор што треба да го направиме ние Турчинките и Шиптарките, за да можеме навистина да ги ползуеме здобиените права"), Year 4, No. 30-31 (April-May 1947), pp. 10-11.

of the backward thinking that hinders and forestalls women;[82] *heavy clamps, heavy fetters, merciless darkness,*[83] etc. The rejection of the veil was accompanied with contradicting expressions such as *awakening, becoming aware, liberations,* the most common being *opening of the eyes,* letting the *light* in, that is *starting to see.*

In *Makedonka,* there were many reports about some public and at times very dramatic, *uncovering* of Muslim women. At the beginning of the campaign for rejection of the veil, the reports from WAF in Debar relay the positive effects of the new campaign. "The Shqiptare women from Debar" followed the example of the women from Kosovo and Skopje with joy. At the conferences organized by WAF, more than 200 women *uncovered* and then walked around the city "to manifest", carrying in front of them the veils they had *rejected.* That was a day filled with joy, dancing and merrymaking.[84] These mass events of *uncovering* sometimes resemble performances. Some texts offer powerful depictions that were supposed to reflect the growing hatred of their covering veil among Muslim women. These obviously organized performances of *throwing off* the veil happened on various holidays and these dramas were greeted with applause by the attending: the young Muslim girl Melea Ibrim Amedova from Prilep removed the veil at the academy dedicated to 8 March. While reciting L. Karovski's poem about the veil, she decided to use the day that celebrated the struggle of women to free themselves from the all traces of their centuries-long slavery. She tore apart and trampled her veil."[85] The public ceremonial *uncovering*

82 WAF – Debar, 250 Muslim women from Debar removed the veil, (АФЖ – Дебар, 250 муслиманки од Дебар го сметнаа ферецето), Year 4, No. 32 (June 1947), p. 6.

83 To all Albanian and Muslim women in Macedonia, (До сите албанки и муслиманки во Македонија), No. 33-34 (July-August 1947), p. 10; The Third Congress of the People's Youth of Macedonia. A working agreement of our youth, (III-иот конгрес на Народната младина на Македонија. Работен договор на нашата младина), No. 33-34 (July-August 1947), p. 9.

84 WAF – Debar, 250 Muslim women from Debar removed the veil, (АФЖ – Дебар, 250 муслиманки од Дебар го сметнаа ферецето), Year 4, No. 32 (June 1947), p. 6.

85 8 March – the International Women's Day of Struggle. 8 March competition in our organizations. The results achieved by the city teams of WAF Bitola, (8 март меѓународниот борбен ден на жените. Осмомартовското натпреварување во нашите организации. Резултатите од градските екипи на АФЖ од Битола), No. 40-41 (February-March 1948), p. 12.

of women epitomized the new norms of the socialist state via the bodies of these women who rid themselves of their *backwardness* and stepped into the future (Hadžiristić, 2017, 194).



Immediately after the introduction of the Law on the Prohibition of wearing the Veil, the Governing Board of WAF published that, together with "Putnik", they would organize a one-week excursion through Yugoslavia for the women that rejected the veil. The journey was planned for some 600-700 "Turkish and Shqiptare women", who could invite their husbands too. They were going to visit the greatest Yugoslav cities, Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana and the summer resort Opatija.[86] 324 "Shqiptare, Turkish and Macedonian women" from the most remote villages from all parts of Macedonia went on this journey. The text "On a Faraway Journey" reported the experiences of the Muslim women that went on this journey. The women gathered, all dressed up in their sirwals, multi-coloured waistcoats, dresses and scarves on their heads and set off on their journey. They were first shocked by the train, because they knew only of horses and donkeys as modes

86 Without a Veil throughout Yugoslavia, (Без фереџе низ Југославија), Year 7, No. 75 (February 1951), p. 17.

of transport. In Skopje, they admired the river, large houses, and nice streets with no mud to get ones' feet dirty and sticky as they would when walking down the village paths. The high-rises in the cities of Yugoslavia were also a source of great amazement. Muslim women were described in the text as "not your everyday people", women who were brave to *uncover* their faces, to get rid of the "black curtain" in order to be able to see the beauties of their country. Throughout the republics, the local population met these Muslim women with celebrations. With music and flowers, people welcomed the Muslim women and their *liberation* from the veil. This served as an affirmation of the brotherhood and unity of Yugoslavia and a surprise for the Muslims, but it also proved how much other peoples of Yugoslavia loved them.[87]

Regardless of these idealized reports about the experiences of Muslim women, the travels were organized not only as a reward for the *uncovered* women, but also as an opportunity to remove these women briefly form their communities where they were sometimes condemned (Hadžiristić, 2017, 194). The text in *Makedonka* that reported about the impressions that these Muslim women had of the journey only exoticized them additionally – like 'not your everyday people' that wondered at the world, but also caused wonder themselves.

3.2. Promotion of positive experiences

At the beginning of the campaign for rejection of the veil, the women who were the bravest and defiant enough to do that were considered the "most aware" among Muslim women. The divisions between "aware" and "unaware" Muslim women, identified as such on the basis of their preparedness to *reject* the veil exerted great pressure on the community, because no one wished to be identified as unaware, backward, a slave. In support of this campaign that disparaged at the same time as it tried to help were also the

87 On a Faraway Journey... (На далечен пат...), Year 7, No. 77 (April 1951), pp. 1-4.

separate success stories of individual women publicized with their names and surnames and sometimes with a photograph showing that they had removed the veil. The *uncovered* women participated in the strategies of WAF and became activists, who, visiting the villages where Muslim women lived, had to help those still under the veil to understand what it meant to be free.[88]

In the portraits of these "ordinary" Muslim women, who decided to *uncover,* the stress is on the positive change among these women, who liberated themselves and became different and more active. They got employed and enjoyed the equality that the society offered.[89] They persisted in their intentions even when they were condemned and rejected by their environment, sharing their experience in order to persuade other women that the law in fact protected Muslim women despite all the disapproval of their environment.[90]

The life stories of the Muslim women who succeeded to become part of the government or, to hold important and respected social positions included greater sacrifice and more explicit opposition against the traditional norms, but also against the familial authorities that imposed those norms. Commonly, it was the fathers and husbands who were cited as the highest authorities. These Muslim women occupied different positions in WAF and assisted or led the various activities that the organizations of the front undertook for emancipation of Muslim women.[91] They were people's deputies in the "People's Parliament" of the Federative

88 The organizations of WAF in the elections for the committees of the Front, (Организациите на АФЖ во изборите за фронтовските одбори), No. 40-41 (February-March 1948), p. 7.

89 We will vote for Tito... for a Republic, (Ние ке гласаме за Тито... за Република), Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), pp. 9-11; WAF – Debar, 250 Muslim women from Debar removed the veil, (АФЖ – Дебар, 250 муслиманки од Дебар го сметнаа ферецето), Year 4, No. 32 (June 1947), p. 6.

90 On a Faraway Journey... (На далечен пат...), Year 7, No. 77 (April 1951), pp. 1-4.

91 Lj. A., The committee member Enisa Dayovska, (Љ. А., Одборничката Ениса Дајовска), Year 6, No. 63 (February 1950), p. 9; Ruhie Veli (Рухие Вели), Year 5, No. 53 (1949), p. 6. Before the elections for the People's Committees, Fariye Ibrahimova – education commissioner, (Пред изборите за народни одбори. Фарие Ибраимова – повереник на просветата), Year 5, No. 61 (1949), p. 4; Saide Taip, Year 6. No. 64 (March 1950), p. 8.

People's Republic of Yugoslavia like Kerima Mucha, who managed to reach that far because of her activity during the war. When Debar was first liberated, she *threw away* the black veil and became a member of the party. She opposed her conservative father, who expelled her from her home. She was always on the right side, like a faithful daughter of the "Shqiptare minority", condemning the criminal policy of the Cominform and Enver's clique in Tirana, and fighting for the true policies of Tito's party.[92] Edayet Ramadan was a 23-old teacher from Shtip that had worked on the educational advancement of the Turkish people for seven years. She never wore the veil, and because of her progressive opinion she had conflicts with her family. The desire to be a free citizen drove her to break the fetters, including the relationship with her husband who showed no understanding for her. She was a member of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and was elected a candidate for a People's Deputy by the electors.[93]

On the pages of *Makedonka,* the texts often addressed Muslim women in singular, "the Muslim woman", "the comrade Muslim woman", etc. in an effort to present a positive image, or, its opposite, through generalizations. Despite these tendencies, it is important to emphasize that women's experience of gender (in)equality and social mobility in socialism depended significantly on the different life paths of these women (different degrees of education, different classes, different family policies, etc.), that is, on the many factors that could determine the degree to which women could avail themselves of the new possibilities for advancement in the new circumstances (Bonfiglioli, 2018, 22-23). The different life paths of women could occasionally depend on random turning points, or on what is popularly called strokes of luck. The positive examples promoted by *Makedonka* were those who followed the recommendations how to become a good socialist Muslim woman consistently and were still

92 M.K., Kerima Mucha, a Shqiptare woman and People's Deputy, (М. К., Керима Муча, Шиптарка народен пратеник), Year 6, No. 64 (March 1950), pp. 2-3.

93 Edayet Ramadan, a candidate for a People's Deputy, (Едајет Рамадан – кандидат за народни одборник), Year 8, No. 83 (December 1952), p. 11.

only a minority, while the majority of different Muslim women had to face radical changes and adapt to them promptly, but for which changes they were evidently unprepared.

3.3. The connection between the veil and the other strategies for emancipation of Muslim women

Since the organizations of WAF faced resistance continually, or inertia on the part of Muslim women, the campaign for rejection of the veil emerged as one of the most important tasks of WAF, starting from 1947, and all the way to 1951 when the Law was passed. The hypothesis was that Muslim women, once they rejected the veil, would be able to go out in public unburdened. The campaign for rejection of the veil also reignited the hopes about better participation of Muslim women in the illiteracy courses, which floundered at first. Therefore, the activities for eradication of illiteracy implied a simultaneous reinforcement of the battle for rejection of the veil.[94] That the veil and the cultural and educational *advancement* did not go together demonstrated the text entitled "Fatime Aki Hodjova". Fatime was a young girl that did not behave as Muslim women usually did. For instance, she did not run away from the unknown guests in the village, as Muslim women usually do. Fatime was also open and talkative and spent time with the Macedonian girls from the Macedonian-Turkish village of Zrnovci. She organized two illiteracy courses in the village and the local committee sent her to Skopje to attend a teachers' course. Judging by all her characteristics, Fatime was a positive example of the desirable type of a young Muslim woman in the socialist republic. When her students finished the illiteracy courses successfully, to show their appreciation because "she opened their eyes" they decided to bring her a present:

94 Kiro Hadji Vasilev, Liquidation of illiteracy – one of the most important tasks of the five-year plan. In the school year of 1947/48, 80 000 men and women are to attend illiteracy courses, (Киро Хаџи Василев, Ликвидација на неписменоста – една од најважните задачи во петгодишниот план. Во школската 1947/48 год. во Македонија треба да се описменат 80.000 лугје и жени), No. 35 (September 1947), pp. 3-4.

"...she started unwrapping the paper, and in the dark, something darker than night fell into her lap. – A veil?!!"

Fatime was of course shocked by their present, as all young progressive Turkish youths would have been. She regretted her efforts and realized that knowing the letters was not sufficient for their awakening, but that great battles against the veil were to ensue, against the "blindness of our backward people". Offended, she refused the veil, and when her students realized how inappropriate their present was, they apologized:

"Fatime, forgive us! We were not aware... you might be right..."[95]

Muslim women still had difficulties to establish the connection between the strategies promoted by WAF and the authorities and the possible meaning of the phrase *emancipated Muslim woman.*

In the texts in *Makedonka,* we come across interpretations that represented the ideal situation in which the strategies for emancipation of Muslim women proceeded in a synchronized manner, complementing and intertwining with each other, resulting with a rejection of the veil: "Two of them left the (illiteracy A.N.) course with their veils removed. Fatime Lemanova was illiterate, she was enrolled by the organization, they taught her how to read and write, they turned her into an activist that rejected the veil and she now works as a cleaner in an institution."[96]

Still, there occurred some ironic situations while the battle against illiteracy was in full swing. For instance, in the village of Gorno Vranovci a "mistake" occurred when amidst the intensive battle for removal of the veil, 32 young students who were subject to the obligatory primary education *covered* themselves.[97] When

95 P. Popovski, "Fatime Aki-Hodzova", (П. Поповски, „Фатиме Аки-оцова"), Year 5, No. 45 (July 1948), pp. 9-10.

96 Let us bolster the work of the action groups in the battle against illiteracy. "WE WILL LIQUIDATE ILLITERACY...", (Да ја засилиме работата на активите за борба против неписменоста. „ЌЕ ЈА ЛИКВИДИРАМЕ НЕПИСМЕНОСТА..."), Year 5, No. 61 (1949), p. 10.

97 Bl. Kondarko, "The seven-year primary schools are replaced with eight-year primary schools, (Бл. Кондарко, Досегашните седмолетки ги заменија осмолетките), Year 6, No. 73 (December 1950), pp. 6-7.

the Law on the Prohibition of wearing the veil was passed, WAF recommended intensification of the work with Muslim women on their cultural and educational *advancement,* because the act for uncovering cannot solve the consequences of their centuries-long slavery. A long-term and hard work with the Muslim women was needed.[98]

The competitive spirit of the campaign for rejection of the veil recommended by WAF followed the concept applied in the exceeding of the norms in the economic production. In this context was the connection with the campaign for introduction of women into the labour market and the mentioning of the veil in the context of the five-year plan in the economic activity, with whose removal Muslim women were to become independent and their working power was to flourish, thus becoming useful part of the society in the process of its reconstruction. The Muslim woman *uncovering* herself on a building site, for instance, should do that openly.[99] This was recommended by the "exact interpretation" of the Islamic rules as well: a Muslim woman should be dressed appropriately, and the face and parts of the body with which she needs to work should be uncovered.[100] The commitment of WAF to include Muslim women in the production and engage them with homemade handiwork remained an important task throughout the entire period. The line that these commitments follow implied that their inclusion in the production would help towards their "advancement", and that, in turn, would result in rejection of the veil.[101] In the issue No. 75 from February 1951, Kadriya Muharem was on the front page because she was proclaimed the best shock worker in her textile plant "Progress"

98 The work on the political and cultural and educational advancement of Turkish and Shqiptare women is a task for our organization (Работата за политичко и културно-просветно издигање на турчинките и шиптарките е задача на нашата организација), Year 7, No. 78 (May 1951), p. 2.

99 V.J. Muslim women fight for liberation from the dark (В. Ј., Муслиманската жена се бори за ослободување од мракот), Year 4, No. 33-34 (July-August 1947), p. 6.

100 Ibid

101 Conclusions of the Plenary Meeting, (Заклучоци од пленарниот состанок), Year 5, No. 51 (1949), p. 3.

12 times, with an emphasis on the fact that she was among the first women who rejected the veil.[102]

Amidst this omnipresent competitive spirit of the socialist society, the rejection of the veil was also treated as an utterly practical and simple act, for which it was important to happen en masse and reach high numbers, that is, it was already measured with the number of women who simply rejected the veil:

> "The village of Stoiche has announced that it would compete with the neighbouring villages in the following: which village is going to have the most working hours completed, which village will have more reading classes, which village is going to teach more Muslim and Albanian women how to read and write, and which committee will succeed to convince more of them to reject the veil, and subscribe to Makedonka in Gostivar."[103]

The success in the work of the WAF committees was measured with the number of *uncovered* women. If their numbers were high, they deserved praise, while low numbers indicated that WAF's work was not good enough.[104]

3.4. The effect of the Law on prohibition on wearing the veil ("zar" and "feredje")

The texts about the veil published in *Makedonka* in the period when the law was passed generally tried to portray the excitement of women because of their *uncovering* as something positive. In the text entitled "Rebirth" one such exciting atmosphere at a gathering at

102 Front page (Насловна страница), Year 7, No. 75 (February 1951).

103 News brief. Preparations for 8 March in the Gostivar region, (Кратки вести. Припреми за 8 март во Гостиварско), No 40-41 (February-March 1948), p. 22; Action for removal of the veil, A great success of the organization of WAF in Debar, (Акција за симнување на ферето. Голем успех на организацијата на АФЖ во Дебар), Year 4, No. 36-37 (October-November 1947), p. 7.

104 Ibid

Akile's was described. The women from the neighbourhood gathered and brought their old clothes and cloths, as well as their veils, so that the seamstress Bogdana could retailor them. One woman was excited that she was going to go to the cinema for the first time, with her husband and with her head bared. They were exceedingly happy and looking forward to the light, air and life. Even the old woman Zakir-baba, for whom the author showed some understanding, that is, for her finding it hard to break with something she had been carting around for so many years, handed her veil to Bogdana with determination: "here it is... cut mine up too, what's the use of it...?" But still, the women at the gathering were taken aback by what Meyram did. She ran away from her husband's house, leaving her children, and returned to her father's house. Her husband Adem, who worked for the authorities, wished to *uncover* his wife even before the law, but she refused persistently, and they always argued about this. The women at the gathering guessed that Meyram's father, Liman-Hodja "must have overawed her". He campaigned against the removal of the veil and tried to convince other men too, but women stopped believing his stories that those who dared reject the veil would be judged by Mohamed. And then, Meyram herself arrives at the gathering, with eyes swollen from tears. She had realized that she was wrong and that her father lied to her: "Don't be angry with me... it's not my fault." Meyram exempted herself from all responsibility, and between her father's old perspective, and her



„Од ферецињата се раг'аа убави блузи, цели фустани."

husband's new perspective, who was a man that worked for the new government, she had finally chosen the right one.[105]

Despite the intentions of WAF to promote the positive experiences with the legal requirement to remove the veil through *Makedonka,* still, in between the lines, and sometimes even more directly, the difficulties which this law had to face came to light. While the other activities concerning the emancipation of Muslim women were mostly acceptable to them, the Law on the prohibition of wearing the veil ("zar" and "feredje") provoked opposing reactions. It was experienced as a condemnation of the traditions of the community and Muslim women interpreted it as a pointed attack against their community. In fact, it only widened the gap between Muslim women and the WAF activists coming from the majority ethnic communities (Bonfiglioli, 2018, 26). The Law was enforced, and yet, many women did not remove the veil to the last day. "The Shqiptare and Turkish women" from Struga appealed to all women that still wore the veil not to wait for the last day, but to reject the veil as soon as possible and start fighting against those that wished to hamper them in this joyous mission because they were enemies of women, and of the entire nation and "we are not going to spare them". Their appeal was signed with "*the uncovered* women of Struga".[106]

WAF called attention to the fact that there were still towns and districts where the *uncovering* had not caused any changes in the lives of Muslim women. A large number of women from the villages did not leave their homes at all, only when it was utterly necessary, and they covered their head with a scarf then. They were offered the recommendation to retailor their dresses and suits, because there were women improperly dressed: wearing long dresses, their husbands' suits, and black scarves. In short, with this category of Muslim women where no positive changes were evident they had to

105 Rebirth, (Прероdба), Year 7, No. 75 (February 1951), pp. 4-5.

106 Let us reject the veil as soon as possible..., (Ден побргу да го отфрлиме ферецето...), Year 7, No. 75 (February 1951), p. 3.

continue working equally hard and persistently and on all aspects of their lives, literally, just like in the beginning. This was necessary in order to erase the difference between the minorities' women and other women, the difference that was still setting Muslim women apart.[107] And this difference was obviously very difficult to erase.

The badly dressed women, those that looked *indecent* because they had to wear their husbands' suits, might have just been an indication of some of these women's poverty, because they had literally nothing else to wear except for the veil that covered everything. Beside this story, *Makedonka* published another one about the Muslim women in the village Umovo, who had worn their tattered shirts under the veil, dressed poorly and barefoot.[108] On the other hand, some presumed that women used the class and poverty excuse to justify themselves for avoiding the changes they opposed (Bonfiglioli, 2018, 18).

In her text "Transition in *terlik*[109]", Svetieva says that "the black figures of women in their *terliks* are among the most exotic appearances that one can come across in the streets and allies of the village of Melnica even today" (Svetieva, 2001, 187). The text intends to say that this covering seems to be worn by inertia, in order to emphasize the religious affiliation and hide women from strangers, while under it, at weddings for instance, they often wear "skirts with slits, tight trousers, mini-skirts, décolletés, etc." (Svetieva, 2001, 189). These are the conclusions the author arrived at after her research in Melnica, Veles region, in 1999. The women of Yörüks in Macedonia wore this covering until the nineteen seventies, and "it is still used today when performing wedding customs. They still cover themselves when going to town" (Димовска, 2013, 43). In addition to these examples where women somehow avoided the pressure of

107 The work on the political and cultural and educational advancement of Turkish and Shqiptare women is a task for our organization (Работата за политичко и културно-просветно издигање на турчинките и шиптарките е задача на нашата организација), Year 7, No. 78 (May 1951), p. 2.

108 Divna, The peasant women from Umovo gave 70 pairs of socks, (Дивна, Селанките од Умово дадоа 70 рала чорапи), Year 2, No. 3-4 (January-February 1945), p. 13

109 A type of covering clothing

the law and the campaigns for *new* standards for Muslim women, Dimovska also observes that Muslim women also found ways to adapt and respect the law while still covering themselves. She says that Muslim women uncovered their face in public, but continued using clothes that covered their bodies and heads (Димовска, 2013, 41). The field research carried out by Dimovska captures the confusion people felt faced with these rushed solutions for rejection of the veil. Older women did not leave their homes, while younger women were of divided opinions. Her collocutors brought to light an atmosphere of compulsion and threats: men were summoned to police stations for interviews, they were threatened with dismissal from work, and even weapons were waved at them, while women were gathered in the *Sokolana*[110] and forced with executive orders to remove their veils on the spot, etc. (Димовска, 2013, 49).

"That veil, that cursed veil,
I curse you, I curse you fiercely,
A curse heavier than stone.
A curse scarier than a chain,
Customs, those cursed customs.
Customs as black chains,
Throw away that cursed veil,
To come out of the dark."

This is a variation of Vancho Nikoleski's poem, as my young collocutor has remembered it from the stories his grandmother told him. When she was seven or eight-years-old, the concerted campaign for rejection of the veil began. Her father was a "communist", and as his daughter, she was selected to learn the poem by heart and recite it at a conference organized for the women in her village. She was instructed to come to the conference without a scarf, her braids showing, because the veil was "to be rejected completely". While she was reciting the poem in front of the attending women, she noticed that "women were crying, these people will deny us our

110 Sports hall typical for Yugoslavia during the 1930's

faith, they will turn us in to Giaours[111], it's a done deal, there is no life for us here anymore. That kind of fear." When the conference was over, the women from the village cursed her with terrible curses, and when she returned home her mother gave her a good thrashing. Her aunt had a conservative husband who did not allow her to reject the veil. Because of the veil, she ended up pregnant in prison in Tetovo, where she delivered her child.[112]

In 1952, British observers reported about armed resistance against the campaign for *uncovering* women in Macedonia and about similar situations in Bosnia (Greble, 2021, 253). The prohibition of the veil is described as the straw that broke the camel's back, that is, as the last in the series of mistakes made by the government, which mistake motivated Muslims from Macedonia to immigrate to Turkey. "They gathered us all in a building of a high school and said to us "now, uncover your faces". They said that we would be punished if refused. I felt as if I were naked. We went there with our faces covered and left with our faces uncovered. We cried on our way home. From that day onward, my mother did not leave the house, never during the day. She went out only after dark so that no one could see her face. It was humiliating" (Akan Ellis, 2003, 54; also see Светиева, 2009).

In the texts in *Makedonka* that informed about the difficulties that the implementation of the law prohibiting the veil had run into there were no such interpretations that would relay the shock, confusion, fear, suffering, compulsion, threats and consequences that the law and the campaigns for rejection of the veil caused for many women. In them, the deviations from the expected results were treated much more practically – like a motivation for even more persistent hard work with the *backward* Muslim women.

111 A non-Muslim, especially a Christian.

112 My own field research, Skopje, 9. 06. 2022, anonymous collocutor.

4. The Orientalist discourse – *"the old regimes"* and the new opportunities

> "As far as backwardness is concerned, in our country, it is primarily Muslim women that are backward"[113]

The standards adopted in the campaigns for the building of the *new socialist state* and the *new socialist citizens* were rather high for the context in which they were promoted. The tumultuous historical and political circumstances in the Balkans in the first half of the 20th century, with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the change in the status of Muslims made them especially suitable to be framed within the Orientalist discourse. Although, when we discuss the Muslims in the Yugoslav context, we should point out that they were a heterogeneous group, their presence generalized in a manner associated directly with the Ottoman rule (or with the more extreme qualification *the Turkish slavery*) was regularly seen as negative. Owing to their different legacy, "in the symbolic geography of former Yugoslavia", "the north" and "the west" were associated with positive connotations, while "the south" and "the east" with negative connotations" (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, according to Bakić-Hayden, 1995, 924, Footnote 31). Throughout *Makedonka,* and especially in the texts with political content, we often come across interpretations about the *Macedonian woman* as the *most backward* in socialist Yugoslavia, but to whom the new state offered great opportunities. *Muslim women,* however, were regarded in contexts that were even more extreme, that is, they were seen as *more backward* than *the most backward.* The principle of "Nesting Orientalism" indicates that the labelling of something as *otherness* is used and manipulated by those that were themselves

113 We will vote for Tito...for a Republic (Ние ке гласаме за Тито... за Република), Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), pp. 9-11.

marked as *other* in the Orientalist discourse (Bakić-Hayden, 1995, 922; also see Hadžiristić, 2017, 198). People have the tendency to transfer the negative qualifications they were imparted to others and it is a principle through which they deliver themselves from the uneasiness caused by the imparted qualifications. This "Nesting Orientalism" is a characteristic of the rhetoric of *Makedonka,* and WAF as well, in their strategies for emancipation of Muslim women in Macedonia.

Although all women in the new socialist Macedonia belonged to the category of Macedonian women, the religious affiliation still subtracted Muslim women as *other* and as different women requiring political work that was different than that done with the Macedonian women.[114] Their *backwardness* was always emphasized in all aspects of life that were important according to the *new* socialist norms. The changes in the status, as a lived through experience, happened within a single lifespan, as part of the life stories of individual Muslim women, who, for instance, lived through all the "regimes" in the first half of the 20th century. Therefore, *Makedonka* persisted on that comparison between the *old regimes* and the *new* opportunities that socialist Macedonia had to offer (for more on the approaches of *Makedonka* to the past, see Todorov in this collection). Many of the propagandist texts in *Makedonka* laid emphasis on the horrors of the *old regimes,* depicting the "slavery" of Muslim women in the past: "We have lived like animals before"; We have lived like cattle until now."[115] "No one has ever called them to tell them that there is life for them too, no one has been interested in their position before, no one has been interested in their children and their future"; "No one before has gathered us – Torbeshi women to talk to us about

114 The participation of our women in the reconstruction of the country, (Участието на нашите жени во обновата и изградбата на земјата), Year 3, No. 17-18 (March-April 1946), p. 1.

115 Lenche Jovanova, The first free elections in Macedonia, (Ленче Јованова, Првите слободни избори во Македонија), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945, pp. 1-2; Femiye Asanova, "Come again to teach us something...", (Фемија Асанова, „Пак дојди да не научиш нешто..."), Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 12.

things."[116] That phrase that was repeated often was "no one before" and served to show the changes in the treatment of Muslim women in the new circumstances. These phrases, however, can be seen as an adoption of the strategy promoted by the power centres on the part of the minority and marginalized groups, indicating that they were doing things only to please and adjust, as some kind of mimicry, which was a prerequisite for a peaceful survival in changeable and extreme circumstances. The expressiveness of the statements of the Muslim women who said that in the *old regimes* they were not treated as human beings, but like *cattle,* like *animals* was used for this purpose. Muslim women were the *most disempowered, tormented* women who lived their lives in *darkness, ignorance, slavery,* but in the new circumstances, they were slowly *awakening, becoming aware, acknowledging.*[117] The Orientalist discourse was used by the socialist authorities when addressing Muslim women, indicating that they needed to be *enlightened, become aware, awaken* and *liberate* themselves. In short, they needed to be saved (Hadžiristić, 2017, 197).

When equality was secured on all levels, Muslim women needed assistance to *advance* in every aspect of their life: "We, who have had the opportunity to learn something, we should share it with those who could not come near a classroom's door", "we should give them a chance to advance politically themselves"; "let us get even closer to our Muslim sisters and find a way to help them become conscious, and informed citizens of our fatherland".[118] These messages belong to the Orientalist discourse through which WAF approached its efforts to implement the socialist policies among *the most backward* women in Macedonia. "Our Muslim women",

116 Jordanka Graorkova, Throughout the Fatherland, (Јорданка Граоркова, Низ нашата татковина), Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 18; Divna, The peasant women from Umovo gave 70 pairs of socks, (Дивна, Селанките од Умово дадоа 70 рала чорапи), Year 2, No. 3-4 (January-February 1945), p. 13.

117 Kevser Shukri *Macedonian Muslim women are awakening',* (Кефсер Шукри, Македонската муслиманка се разбудуе), Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 20.

118 Lenche Arsova, Let us help our Muslim comrade, (Ленче Арсова, Да помогнеме на нашата другарка муслиманка), Year 2, No. 3-4 (January-February 1945), p. 11.

"Muslim sisters", "Muslim comrades" were the terms that were supposed to reflect the equality and the brotherhood and unity and the readiness of the state to integrate all women, including Muslim women. At the same time, the formulations cited above betray the superior position of the helpers, like those who are in the know, unlike Muslim women, who were rightly given the inferior position. This only limited their opportunities to become active agents in their own emancipation. Despite WAF's intentions to involve as many Muslim women as possible, the majority of its activists were Macedonian and non-Muslim women, who were there to "open their eyes" and to offer the directions in their realization. With these positions, the battle acquired a different dimension when Christian women assumed all of the responsibility, but also the great burden to *liberate* Muslim women, even though they called them their "sisters" (Hadžiristić, 2017, 198).

The texts that relate the difficulties that WAF had to face in their work with Muslim women revealed that the socialist standards were unreachable for many of them. On the other hand, *Makedonka* published texts that offered Muslim women a model to follow. They were supposed to be literate, culturally *advanced,* politically active, employed and even a *shock worker, uncovered,* integrated in the socialist society like all the other women. These kinds of women were positive examples, proving that Muslim women could be useful at home, but also useful for the community.[119] The *politically aware and progressive* Muslim women thus served as a motivating factor in the traditional environment to which they belonged, that is, they were seen as superior individuals within their group, following the socialist directions and availing themselves of the benefits.

This gradation of *unaware, aware* and *most aware Muslim women,* their exoticization as "not your everyday people", their regular positioning as the *most backward* in the society, all this reinforced their status as different and *other.* This ironic situation

119 N.T., "Shqiptare women become active", Н. Т., („Шиптарките се активизират"), Year 5, No. 52 (1949), p. 11.

indicates that the strategies for emancipation of Muslim women, led by WAF in their attempts to integrate them, actually maintained and reinforced the existing distance.

The context of rejection of the veil most illustratively embodies the principles of "Nesting Orientalism", through which the government tried to solve this issue. When the campaign against the veil was in full swing, the veil was suddenly transformed into a symbol of all the *deficiencies* of Muslim women: illiteracy, economic inactivity, restriction to the private sphere, strict patriarchal principles, and undeveloped political awareness. At the same time it was a symbol of their different ethnic, religious affiliation and colonial past. Although these were characteristics typical for some Christian women as well, they were primarily attributed to Muslim women. Therefore, the "rejection of the veil by the Muslim women had the symbolic power of liberation from these undesired characteristics of the previous system" (Hadžiristić, 2017, 185, 187). By uncovering themselves, Muslim women were to start resembling *progressive* women by wearing "clothes like those worn by the other women in the district".[120]

120 All over our republic, the movement for removal of the veil intensifies (Ширум целата наша република се засилува движењето за симнување на ферецето), Year 6, No. 70-71 (September-October 1950), p. 4.



Фередето жако тежок остаток на
темното минало ја притискуваше же
ната Шиптарка и Турчинка, ја спре
чуваше да ги завземе оние места ко
и' ги дава нашата општествена
ставрност

Со донесувањето законот за забрана бо-
сење зар и фереџе, илјади и илјади Шип-
тарки и Турчинки, широм нашата република
одново се преродија, ослободувајќи се
од ропство. Просветното и политичко из-
дигнување ќе ги избрише остатоците од
темното минало и ќе овозможи да станат
тие вистински рамноправни граѓани на
нашата земја

Без фереџе во нов, поврек'ен живот...

Conclusion

The contexts in which Muslim women were referred to in *Makedonka* can be subsumed in two general extremes. They are women for whom the state had finally opened its embrace calling them to integrate in the *new* socialist society, by availing themselves of all opportunities that it offered them so *generously* under the slogan of brotherhood and unity. On the other hand, the Orientalist discourse, through which it was persisted on the emancipation of Muslim women, actually kept them in the position of *others* constantly, since their deviations from the image of the *new socialist woman* were most visibly manifested.

The practical efforts and ideals behind the activities aimed at Muslim women were undoubtedly progressive in their essence: they were offered education in their mother tongue, space in the media for expression, equality with men in all aspects of life (economic, social, political), and finally, they were given the opportunity to experience public life, outside the private sphere to which they were traditionally relegated. On the other hand, all these opportunities required special attention, education and training of Muslim women, which obviously moved too fast and were too intensive. Sklevicky says that the organizational set up of WAF followed what she calls the *educational model*. The assumption was that the circumstances of the *new society* would spontaneously transform all women and stimulate them to take part in the revolutionary change (see Sklevicky, 1996, 119). In this sense, the intervention as regards Muslim women was not sensitive to the differences within the group in the first place, that is to say, a unified Muslim woman type did not exist, but a multitude of different women requiring different approaches and understanding of their circumstances. For more positive effects, the action should have been taken starting from that position of understanding of the specific circumstances. Quite the contrary, though, WAF undertook actions whose aim

was to adjust these women to the system, because "the system was never questioned, it was the individual that was wrong" (Sklevicky, 1996, 132). Hadžiristić points out that the strategies for emancipation of Muslim women, especially the campaign for rejection of the veil, showed evidence of pronounced negligence and insufficient negotiation with the community they concerned. Perhaps the most important shortcoming was that they did not focus on the circumstances in which Muslim women lived, that is, their family structure and the other obstructions of the traditional system of values that disabled their full equality. The strategies for emancipation of Muslim women worked only on the surface, based on the assumption that they would automatically change the deeper structures of the everyday life as well. By saying this, we do not wish to imply that we reject the significant achievements of WAF as regards women's rights, but only that "Muslim women themselves (or at least those that were not socialists) were not treated as active agents in their own emancipation" (Hadžiristić, 2017, 201). Among all those different groups of women to whom WAF was committed in their work, the treatment of Muslim women was perhaps the most obvious example of the gap between the socialist ideals and the social reality (Bonfiglioli, 2018, 28). In the case of Muslim women, the ideals about what the *socialist woman* should be were so far removed from the reality in the field, and owing to the applied strategies for emancipation of Muslim women and especially to the Law on the prohibition of wearing the veil, in certain situations they had an effect that was opposite to the intended. The project "Invisible Archives" and the accessibility (digitization) of the magazine *Makedonka* has given us an important insight into the challenges that Muslim women had to face in the People's Republic of Macedonia, which is an important indicator when discussing the history of women that have remained marginalized to the present day (for more on the project "Invisible Archives" and on research activism, see Kolarić in this book).

The interpretations in *Makedonka* echo a model that is a common occurrence when Muslim women and their emancipation are concerned. Commonly, Muslim women are represented as entirely dependent on the authorities within the family (on the father or the husband) and this position did not receive enough attention in the texts published in *Makedonka.* In order to have Muslim women participate in the strategies for emancipation of WAF, they always had to be permitted to do so, and sometimes even motivated or persuaded, by the male authorities in the family, who in such cases were actually the ones that made the decisions and were responsible for them. This implies that the position of Muslim women did not change significantly in the age of *new* socialist opportunities in comparison to the *old regimes.* The decision about the emancipation of Muslim women was made by the authorities (the state) with agreement (or under the pressure) of the male authorities in the family. Muslim women remained passive and depended on decisions of others.


Македонка





Slavcho Dimitrov

POLITICAL CONTRADICTIONS

Political subjectivization of women through WAF and *Makedonka*: Emancipation, contradictions, and affects

Introduction

The inception and the entire course of this research, of this text, occurred in amidst turbulent intersections of different powers, both locally and regionally, and globally, that constitute the present, experienced through the emotions as the dense present, inhabited by new authoritarian and fascist tendencies and threats. Starting from the reappearance of the conservative, nationalist, misogynist, ethnocentric, homophobic cruel optimisms in our Macedonian reality, and continuing with the global Islamophobia and racism, the genocide of the Palestinians and the complicit silence of the European Union, Donald Trump being reelected the President of the USA, and ending with the new capitalist colonization and extractions of/in the countries of former Yugoslavia and the global anti-gender mobilizations with fascistic wet dreams, I found motivation for this research in the necessity to find ways out of the prison of the present and desires and visions for the future with undetermined and open potentiality beyond the destructive logic of the world of capitalist realism, nationalism, sexism, homophobia and colonialism. That is to say, I wished to try and reach the potentials of the "no-longer-conscious" as a methodology of critical hermeneutics and reparative reading that mobilizes the performative power of the unfinished past (Muñoz, 2019), to serve the utopian "not-yet-here" and reflect the affective dynamism and necessity of hope (Bloch, 1996). In the spirit of Mark Fisher, I wished to awaken the ghosts of lost futures, the spirits of the failed promises and unfinished utopias as anticipating illuminations of other possible worlds (Fisher, 2014).

In this text, I try to analyse the form of political subjectivization of women in the post-war period and its discursive, ideological, material and affective articulation through the magazine *Makedonka* – the organ of WAF of Macedonia. Our methodological framework approaches the issue of subjectivization and the issue of the subject, as embodied, situated and constituted in the intersection of the lived through multitude of different positions and social relations, always mediated by different discursive formations, material practices, corporeal and affective configurations and ideological and desire mechanisms (Blackman et al., 2008). The subject within this framework is not necessarily finished, linear, total, transparent, determined, transcendent and timeless, but is contingent, historically open and susceptible to various political productions and practices of articulation instead (Mouffe, 1992; Scott, 1999; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Mari Smith, 2003, Hall, 2021). Although this methodological framework approaches the subject via the poststructuralist and post-Marxist theories, still, with this approach we make an attempt to retain and consider the possibility and the practical conditions for realization of the subject as a process of (self)transformation, as a political actor, agent of emancipatory politics and self-determining doer, whose opportunities, positioning, self-knowledge, interpretations and practices are co-constituted and dependent on the historical horizon of discursive, material and infrastructural possibilities (Negri, 1991; Weeks, 1998). That is to say, I wished to maintain the tension between the dynamism of subjectus/subjectum that Balibar talked about (Balibar, 2014; Montag and Elsayed, 2017), or the dual meaning of the notion that certain languages offer, including English and French, through which the process of becoming an agent, self-determining and self-conscious actor is predetermined by the material-discursive field and powers that subordinate the individual and make the subjectivization possible.

More importantly, when we say political subjectivization, we mean the practices of collective subjectivization exclusively,

as the only way in which the individuals understand, articulate and transform their structural positions of subordination in relationships of oppression and through antagonization of the social field, they create the conditions for (self)transformation, as well as performative enactment and materialization of new worlds (Frye, 1983; Weeks, 1998; Honig, 1992; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Dean, 2016).

In my approach, I will try to take into account the historical and contextual specificity of the political subjectivization through WAF and *Makedonka,* without assessing, evaluating and criticizing it via the framework of our contemporary political movements and political gender subjectivization of contemporary feminism/and, for instance, the strategies of gender/sexual difference, diversity, autonomous organization and advocacy of particular (women's) interests, differentiated citizenship, deconstruction of the female subject or advocacy of sexually specific values as a starting point for criticism of the masculinist understanding of the political (Mouffe, 1992; Dietz, 2003; Benhabib et al., 2007).

I explore the political subjectivization of women through the activities of WAF, first as a process of verification of equality and a process that demonstrates a wrong in the way the common world is organized with its divisions into hierarchies of capacities, beings, possibilities, time and space. In the spirit of Jacques Rancière, the political subjectivization of women in post-war Yugoslavia, as represented in the magazine *Makedonka,* will be analysed as a clash, shock, meeting and juxtaposition of a world within the world, as a political relationship that is simultaneously founded upon the negation and affirmation of equality. Within this framework, we will try to read the intervals of subjectivization, processes of disidentification, as well as the space intervals that they occupied or were offered in the discourses and representations of this women's magazine.

Additionally, I will approach political subjectivization as mediated through a new and historically specific conjuncture and

creation of hegemonic relation, or a new historical block with a radically democratic sign, where the interests of women enter a chain of equivalence with other democratic and antifascist struggles and demands, and different subject positions and actors in the society. This political subjectivization, therefore, I analyse in the occupation and articulation of the women's identity and interests through identification with the subject-position of the working people, the citizen of the socialist republic, the united popular front, or the revolutionary subject, represented and condensed through a series of signifiers and symbols that are an object of desire and affective investment. In the text, I will try to point out the concrete discursive, affective and antagonistic strategies through which this articulation of the women's political subject occurred. Although the articulation of the women's political subject through the universal popular-democratic signifiers and hegemonic representatives declaratively supported the gender difference and specificity of women's interests, taking into account the histories of patriarchal oppression, still, as we will argue in the text, this political subjectivization was replete with contradictions. Among them, the most visible is the gradual erasure of the gender differentiations and interests, of the pluralism of positions and demands, and all this in the name of the hegemonic politics of the Communist Party, class politics and the monolithic identification of the people, that is, through the transition of the popular-democratic hegemonic project into a populist-authoritarian democracy with a patriarchal attribute.

In the last section of the text, I will argue that, if the process of political subjectivization implies a significant degree of self-alienation, in the sense of becoming - other in relation to the already existing, common sense and traditionally determined roles, capacities and spaces regulated by the dominant (past) regime and social system, in that case, the political subjectivization of women through WAF remains, at best, an unfinished and contradictory project [not only because of the premature (self)abolishing]. In

critical manner, this was a failed process of subjectivization because it took over and reproduced the traditional pre-war models of the gender binary and division of labour and possibilities, and despite the initial radically political actions such as the performance of the presupposition of equality and the actions in the fields traditionally marked as male. Thus, the revolutionary subject became an agent of passive revolution, restoring the common sense categories through reform.

1. Political subjectivization as verification of equality

The first issue of *Makedonka* from November 1944, brought onto the stage – with the performative power of enunciation, like a birth, like an appearance of a world within the existing world of inequality – the political subjectivization of women in Yugoslavia and Macedonia. As an act that expresses and operates as a polemical verification of equality, like a disagreement and othering of the subordinated and oppressed structural position of women and the presumed capacities for being, working, acting and thinking that accompany that position. The editor in chief of *Makedonka,* Veselinka Malinska wrote the following:

> "Through the national liberation struggle of today, the Macedonian woman has grown into a new type of woman. The National Liberation Struggle has awakened women's capacities to live, work and build. Their versatile participation, although there were not many women in the movement until recently, and their successes in all fields of struggle speak volumes about this new, socially and politically equal "Macedonian woman". The transformation of the Macedonian peasant women has been especially important and incredible, the women that were the most backward and most enslaved. It was until yesterday so to speak that they could not even come up in front of their men when they were talking, and today, in these same villages, women sit and confer as equal members of the national liberation committees."[1]

In order to understand the radicalness and historical importance of the political subjectivization of women in Yugoslavia through WAF and its organ *Makedonka,* as juxtaposition, shock, entry, emergence, and a quake of a world within the world, we suggest we approach it through the political philosophy of Jacques

1 "Our Journey" („Нашиот пат"), *Македонка*, Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 2.

Rancière concerning the specific political relation as a relation of political subjectivization, as a meeting of two sets of relations (Rancière, 1991, 1992, 1999, 2004, 2010).

The first set of relationships are the petrified and sedimented relationships between identified sides, groups and interests, with allocated places and times of living and working and appropriate capacities and qualifications, as well as regulated perceptions, sensibilities and affective dispositions regarding the group and its place and occupation. This sum of relationships is the *logic of the police* or a police-like distribution of the sensible. This order determines what the true *logos* is through which the human being is defined and divided into a political animal, on one hand, and those whose speech is a sheer manifestation of noise, sounds, pain and pleasure, or "equating women with lunatics as the Great Serbian laws did"[2] on the other hand. The second set of relationships is derived from the cracks and intervals, from the voids and tensions in the relationship between the police order of social-political domination and manifests and demonstrates equality that is either embedded in the legal documents or is presupposed as a fact that makes the political community and political power possible in the first place, as a kind of apriorism. The *verification of equality* demonstrates and shatters this initial division of speech and time and is a manifestation of new, reconfigured and redistributed relationships and mediation in/of the body, its parts, organs and capacities and its relationships with other bodies, with sense, common objects and resources in the common and in the public space, its capacity to use speech and demonstrate sense, its capacity for articulation of significant sentences and things.

Through this reconfigured set of relationships, women who are *the part that has no part (le part sans-part)* in the dominant logic of counting in the pre-war period, are being torn away from their status of minority, "proving that they truly belong to society, that they truly communicate with all in a common space" and demonstrate a

2 Ibid.

capacity, "which is also a demonstration of community." (Rancière, 2021, 49) This emancipated set of relationships, founded upon equality, brings the emancipated woman out on the stage, as a human being "who walks and talks, moving around and conversing, putting meaning into circulation and promoting the movement of emancipation." (ibid., 86) Just as thirty-year-old Amdiya Pasha born in Kachanik said:

> "Until our full liberation, that is, with the arrival of our partisans, we were imprisoned, we were deadened, and no one believed that we would ever wake up. But it was not so. There, it's been a year since we were first liberated. For a whole year we have felt like altogether different women. We now view the world differently. For 25 years I lived like a prisoner, I did not know 4 streets in Skopje. It's been a year since I opened up and I move around opened."[3]

The political *logic of disagreement* through which the political subject is constituted problematizes the definitive and natural limits of the logos and also what is understood and listened to as reasonable speech, as well as a consecutive division of the sensible among those that speak, think and are visible, like those that have the capacity to be present on the common stage and those whose words are deprived of audibility and are reduced to sheer animal noise, and whose bodies, movements, desires, needs and affects are considered invisible, that is, between those who act and think and those with no part. The target of the disagreement through which political subjectivization is processed is the question "what it means to be a being that uses words to argue," that is, through the process of subjectivization the part that has no part, or women, affirm themselves as "as speaking beings sharing the same properties as those who deny them these" (Rancière, 1999, xii-25) and demonstrate equality and universality introducing themselves as "speaking beings universally belong(ing) to the linguistic community." (Ibid., 57)

3 "We will vote for Tito... for the Republic" („Ние ќе гласаме за Тито... за Републиката"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 10.

The fact of the publication of the magazine *Makedonka* by WAF in the period between 1944 and 1952, as well as the writing of texts, leading debates, articulating political argumentation, establishing political frameworks through written resolutions, contemplating the existing policies, publishing texts with scientific and medical contents that introduced a break with the superstitious prejudices and ignorance, printing poems, short stories, excerpts from novels and various other literary texts, adopting and disseminating resolutions, as well as the distribution of the magazine to an enormous number of women who, as it was presumed, following the logic of subordination, had no capacity, time and place to read, think and judge) – represents the basic verification of the equality of their intelligence and thinking and speaking capacity, like some initiation of the political subjectivization of women in Macedonia and staging, in the public life, of the disagreement with the divisions of the political in the human being as well. In this sense, Lydia Sklevicky's observation is correct when saying that "to write for women's magazines and to propagate their reading meant a call for creation of a new, activist identity" (Sklevicky, 1996, 30).

The disagreement of the political subjectivization, as we can see from the call of the Governing Board of WAF to all Macedonian women to participate actively in the elections for the Constitutional Assembly in 1945, exhibits the mistake and injustice with which women "in poverty and misery cannot stand firmly on their two feet, or have will or time for cultural advancement, or undertake political work, but remain weak and powerless to fight" and "were not considered human or in possession of a 'soul', the aim being to have them tied firmly to what suited the uncultured and backward obscurantism better, and even in the new times, to remain in the same enslaved unenviable position, to remain a slave to the husband, children and kitchen and thus remain ignorant and uncultured."[4]

4 Kiro Georgiev-Dejan. "The democratic laws as a guarantee for the women's rights (Киро Георгиев-Дејан. „Демократските закони – гаранција за правата на жените"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 5.

Of additional, and exceptionally important, significance in the processes of collective political subjectivization and development of the capacities for independent and political action, judgement, decision-making and managing among women, bearing in mind the high percentage (more than 80%)[5] of illiterate women (Божиновиќ, 1958; Gudac-Dodić, 2021), are primarily the continual analphabetic courses in the rural and urban environments, organized by the WAF activists, and then the cultural and general and ideological and political education through various courses and reading groups (Pantelić, 2011, for more detail on the educational processes, see Darko Leitner-Stojanov, 2022). If literacy and education were established as the necessary prerequisites for achieving equality and political self-management, by attending these courses, women from various backgrounds, ethnic communities and economic groups, acquired knowledge about: the different agencies of the political order, the Constitution and the laws, the aims of the National Liberation Struggle and the meaning of the national liberation committees and government, the ideological orientation of socialism, the current social and political reforms and processes in the industrialization (such as the agricultural reforms and collectivization, the Five-year plan for industrialization and electrification from 1947, the elements of self-management, etc.), the current political events in the world, the relationship between women and fascism, women's experiences in the USSR, the organizational issues and tasks of WAF, etc. It is without a doubt, especially when taking into account the assortment of subjects and problems that were elaborated at these courses, that their function was largely determined by the ideological and hegemonic policies of the National Liberation Front and the Communist Party. This remark, however, cannot reduce the emancipatory importance and investment in the process of making women independent and their political subjectivization, that is, their being perceived as equal subjects/citizens in the common life

5 Bogdanova. N. "The status of women in old Yugoslavia" (Н. Богданова. „Положбата на жените во стара Југославија"), *Македонка*, Year 5, No. 51 (January 1949), p. 6.

and management of the community, that the political education and the cultural and educational work of WAF with women brought about.

It is particularly important that, appropriating equality as the "nothing that is all" (Rancière, 1999), the political subject does not create or discover another, more true identity hidden behind the subordination of the police order. If any identification is involved in this process that brings the political subject out on the shared scene, it is the identification of its name with the name of the community, the community of all that share freedom and equality as a common virtues and unqualified quality. This paradoxical process of identification through subjectivization is precisely the process of disidentification with the parts and identities that have been distributed and dissociation within one's own body and the capacities attributed to it and considered natural, and hence also a process of *becoming-other*. The multitude of examples that the magazine offered throughout the years of the many women who harnessed their bodies in effort and labour, at places and in working positions that were traditionally considered male, and as inappropriate and unnatural for the female body and its presumed abilities, testify undoubtedly to the process of disidentification with the given bodies, places and capacities. The mass participation of women in the processes of reconstruction of the country in the post-war period, the active participation in the shock-brigades and actions, in the construction of buildings, bridges, roads, railway and other infrastructural materialities, all carefully and dedicatedly documented through photographs, personal statements and descriptions in *Makedonka,* all this brought on stage – for its readership, but also for us – a new and different woman.

This new woman tore apart and reconfigured her body and its powers and relationships with others, as well as her sedimented position in the society. We see the bodies, whose alleged destiny was to sit imprisoned in the home, now out on the streets, engaged as workers in factories, straining above the ploughed terrains in

a joint effort with other citizens, or packed close in the workers' and social choreographies with other bodies, not as isolated and obedient bodies of the pink ghetto. The hand whose alleged natural destiny was to cook and nurture the bodies of the youngest and gratify her husband's needs, now acquired a new function and opportunities, visible in the interaction of that same female hand with the machines and other technological prosthetics in the processes of production, in the power with which it established the material infrastructures and conditions for the common life in the construction of the new state. Or, if we refer to the war period, "we see her, grenade in hand, or a machine gun, we see her storming bunkers with her bare hands. In one word, she is equal to our heroic and glorious man fighter."[6]

In this displacement of female body from their spaces and places of subordination, political subjectivization emerges in the gap between what is assumed *to be* and the potential *to be different* through verification of equality, the gap between the identity imposed on women as a part without a share and the specific wrong number of interests, characteristics, qualities, capacities, affectivity and dispositions that are ascribed to them, on one hand, and their participation in working, acting, speaking, existing, different feeling, on the other hand.

The subjectivization is equal to "a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience" (Rancière, 1999, 35). Thus, one body is detached from its alleged naturalness and ethos, as a way of being, and from the appropriate manners of speech and time organizations, and through the subjectivization becomes something else, more than what it is supposed to be. Or as Kevser Shukri put it in a text talking about the "awakening of the Macedonian Muslim": "You look at that image in front of you and all of a sudden you remember the old Macedonian

6 Kiro Georgiev-Dejan. "The democratic laws as a guarantee for the women's rights (Киро Георгиев-Дејан. „Демократските закони – гаранција за правата на жените"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 5.

woman – the slave woman, and what a difference! Demolishing all those slave barriers, our woman, in a firm community with all other Yugoslav women, knows what she is fighting for and is aware of her place in our free life."[7] Similarly, the Albanian woman Hayriye Kokobobo, in her speech at the 8 March rally in Skopje in 1945, about which *Makedonka* reported extensively, said the following: "Albanian women were considered the most backward. The National liberation Struggle transformed them into different women (...). Today, they are equal citizens in Macedonia with all their sisters..."[8]

Political subjectivization, therefore, becomes the invention of the *other* through disidentification and testifies to the power of heterology, the power of heteron (Rancière, 2010). That is the otherness derived from the gaps of the police distribution of the sensible, as reordering of the already existing parts, capacities, visibility, words and meanings, as production of new fictions of "as if" (being always already equal), that breaks the rules and regimes of correspondence, appropriateness and naturalness. The political subject is the processuality of being *in between,* "between several names, statuses, and identities; between humanity and inhumanity, citizenship and its denial; between the status of a man of tools and the status of speaking and thinking being" (Rancière, 1992, 61). That is, between "the woman [that] was not recognized as a lawful citizen", whose life is marked by "her social disenfranchisement (...) fettered with steel chains by outmoded and backward customs and religious superstitions (...) forced to remain imprisoned at home, without the right to educate herself and progress towards a brighter and more just life"[9] and the new type of woman, the woman as an equal citizen that participates actively in the social, political, economic and cultural life of the newly formed socialist, democratic and federative Yugoslavia.

7 Kevser Shukri, The Macedonian Muslim woman awakens (Кефсер Шукри, Македонската муслиманка се разбудуе), Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 20.

8 "8 March 1945 in Macedonia" („8 март 1945 во Македонија"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 9.

9 Kiro Georgiev-Dejan. "The democratic laws as a guarantee for the women's rights (Киро Георгиев-Дејан. „Демократските закони – гаранција за правата на жените"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 5.

Political subjectivization in the texts published by *Makedonka* and the speeches of various members of WAF is verified not only as a fact and presupposition of the subject of the rights, which women have had recognized for the first time as a result of their struggle and active participation in the war, but also as much more, as a process and a goal that demand continual demonstration of disagreement, dissensus, civil activity and transformation of the subordinates status. That is, as equal citizens and a collective political subject who is a right-holder with constitutional and legal guarantees, the women in the texts published in *Makedonka* and in the speeches of the WAF activists embody that hyperbolic tension and agitation specific for the modern citizenry, as discussed by Ètienne Balibar, the tension between the constituted and constitutive moment, between the rebellion and institutionality, between the utopian infinite negativity and the positivity of the institutional limitations (Balibar, 2014). That is, "permanent insurrection against the barriers to the realization of merely formal rights" (Montag and Elsayed, 2014, 8). In the first issue of *Makedonka* we can read the following:

> "The right that our women won in struggle, they must now ensure with their mass and active and brave participation in the general state, economic, political, social and cultural life. Their participation in the National Liberation Committees must not be only for the sake of formally appending the equality of women, or only a passive observation of the state of affairs on the part of the women. Women will have to free themselves of that psychology, lack of independence an initiative, developed during their centuries-long slavery. In the educational field and in the social, health and postal and telephony and some other services, women can, and will have to participate most actively in their setting up, management and achievements. The Macedonian woman should become a brave builder of our state and that includes her assuring all the benefits of the struggle that provide a happy and joyful life for her children and herself."[10]

10 Veselinka Malinska, "Let us reinforce the Women's Antifascist Front in Macedonia", (Веселинка Малинска. „Да го зајакнеме Антифашистичкиот фронт на жените во Македонија"), *Македонка*, Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 10.

This and some other similar statements throughout the many issues of *Makedonka,* testify that the issue of political subjectivization did not imply a reductive, passive and legalist attitude toward equality, which would then petrify it into an abstract right. Quite the contrary, it was an essential and continuous demonstration of equality as a foundation of the life of the political subject. This demonstration encompassed and intersected all the segments of the common life, and especially the political life, as well as the active participation in the creation of the political life conditions and in the reconstruction the state.

Undoubtedly, this insistence had in its background the awareness that the legal regulation of equality was not a sufficient prerequisite for this equal life, because the new society was still largely determined by "one harmful opinion typical of not only a great number of men, but also of many women, that they do not need to go to work and that they should remain dedicated solely to their household, children and husbands".[11] This situation was corroborated (although this was rarely or almost never discussed on the pages of *Makedonka,* a problem that we will address later in the text) by the many reports of the local sections of WAF. They referred to the persistence of the patriarchal attitudes and exploitation of women, both in the families, and in the agricultural and industrial work, especially in the rural areas in Macedonia (Bonfiglioli), but also to the "backward and incompetent views" that many of the Party members also entertained (Sklevicky, 1996, 36: Woodward, 1985, 229).

Additionally, from the speeches and texts in *Makedonka* we learn that inequality did not imply exclusively that the relevant legal mechanisms that guarantee and protect equality were absent, although they, their being absent, but implied, were all the minimal prerequisites for its verification. Moreover, as Rancière

11 The 7th Plenum of the Governing Board of WAF of Macedonia: Our work and our tasks" („VII пленум на Главниот одбор на АФЖ на Македонија: Нашата работа и нашите задачи"), *Македонка*, Year 8, No. 83, (December 1952), p. 4.

insists, human rights are "the rights of those who make something of that inscription, who decide not only to "use" their rights but also to build such and such a case for the verification of the power of the inscription" (Rancière, 2004, 303), that is, that the power of the rights "lies in the back-and-forth movement between the first inscription of the right and the dissensual stage on which it is put to test" (ibid., 305). Bearing this in mind, we become aware of the processuality and unfinishability of the political subjectivization of women, especially when, 80 years after the first issue of the magazine, we read that:

> "Without that daily and systematic activization [of women], we will not be able to achieve our goal, because only with their daily active participation in the political life, with their daily and systematic conquering of the positions of active socialist citizens, we can expect them to grow properly and occupy the places that belong to them."[12]

12 "Women's participation in the committees of people's government" („Учеството на жените во одборите на народната власт"), *Македонка*, Year 8, No. 83, (December 1952), p. 10.

2. Women, hegemony and the construction of the popular subject

In the text so far and with the argument I was developing, I tried to represent the aspect of political subjectivization as verification of equality and as a process of self-othering, that is, as a transformation of the existing relationships of subordination into relationships of oppression through the mobilization of the democratic premise of equality and freedom for all (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). We would like to turn now to the understanding of the discursive mediations and relationships with the other social and political forces in the society in crisis, through which the subjectivization of women was *articulated*. That is, we would like to take into account the discursive exterior that mediated the subjectivization of women and through which women as a subordinated group understood their structural position of subordination via specific systems of narrations, defined the lines of blockade of the imagined identity self-fulfillment and antagonism, gave meaning to the world and common life, understood the political struggle and their own interests, and built relationships with the other historical forces in the society (Mouffe, 1992; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Papadopoulos, 2008; Hall, 2021). This perspective is exceptionally important if we take into account the specific historical context marked by a deep organic crisis of the entire society and its dislocating effects upon the different formerly existing identities, and consequently their openness to different material-discursive projects and powers of articulation, working to "to deepen the identity crisis by further undermining the crumbling traditional regime, to construct a new framework for identification, and to represent that framework as if it exhausted the terrain of legitimate discourse" (Mari Smith, 2003, 165).

Bearing this in mind, my argument is that political subjectivization as verification of equality and (self)transformation does not occur following an autonomous and identity line, that is, of women *as* women, but by building "chains of equivalence" with other subordinated groups and classes of society, as part of the broader hegemonic project of construction of the people and a new collective will/subject. That is, this was a construction of a new historical block under the moral, social, political, economic and cultural leadership of the Communist party and the narrative about class and socialism, as discursive frameworks for understanding equality and liberty, and within the framework of the broader of the People's Liberation Front. The political subjectivization of women, therefore, was "associated with the overall achievement of the Macedonian people as a whole",[13] and "the preservation of the liberty of our people includes a humane and equal life for women, that is, a peaceful, happy and joyful life for our children."[14] Or, as we can read, during the war, Yugoslav women:

> "...understood that their path had already been traced and that their rights would be won only when all our peoples and all our social strata acquired the rights to a better, brighter, more human life. They understood that only through a popular uprising and armed struggle against the occupying forces they would gain those rights. With every battle, with every storming of bunkers, with every saving of a wounded fighter, with every new sabotage of the enemy's positions, our women, and our brothers and fathers, our comrades earned the rights to a free and happy life for all our people, for our women and children."[15]

If during the National Liberation Struggle against occupying forces of the Fascists, as Vida Tomšič claimed, women became subjects of their own liberation, by sensing "in practice that the path to full women's equality was the path of taking action and

13 "Our Journey" („Нашиот пат"), *Македонка*, Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 2.

14 Ibid., p. 3.

15 Desa Miljovska, "How we earned the right to vote" (Деса Миљовска. „Како го спечаливме правото на глас"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 7.

participating in the joint struggle with the people as a whole, for the overall national liberation and democratic revolutionary program" (Tomšič in Pejanović, 1984, 126), this strategy would be of great importance for the post-war period as well, in the process of the political subjectivization of women (Pejanović, 1984, 126).

The democratic and political subjectivization of women, as we shall see, did not follow the *logic of isolated autonomous and particular struggle* (or what in today's political jargon we would label as "identity politics" or "politics of difference") that drew a limited antagonistic line (against the patriarchate, the historical role and embodiment of masculinity, pointing at the female values as a basis for re-evaluations and re-composition of the main political categories and practice, etc.), but it was self-constituting through the *popular* (or popular-democratic, which as we shall see later, turns into an populist-authoritarian or etatist-authoritarian) *subject-position* "dividing the political space into two antagonistic camps" and effectuates equivalence of multitudinous democratic positions and struggles (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, 131-137). As Tijana Okić puts it, women "turning their back to tradition that disabled their powers (...) became the very thing that was needed for the freedom of the people and revolution (Okić, 2016, 165).

In order to elaborate this argument, we need several additional clarifications concerning the methodological framework and concepts through which we approach the problem, especially the concept of hegemony and hegemonic relationship, as inherent to the constitution of the community, the people or any other political and therefore collective subject or collective will. The hegemonic relationship implies that a certain representation, symbol, a universalizing, while particular, content or a political will is elevated and equated with the political space and community in their entirety. That is, it involves establishing and articulating the social order and totality through certain contents that embody the universalizing function of integrating the community and representing the people. Antonio Gramsci used the concept of

hegemony to indicate a double perspective, based on Machiavelli's Centaur – half-animal and half-human, as a mixed form of rule, incorporating agreement and force, limitation and spontaneity. For Gramsci, hegemony is an intellectual and moral leadership implemented by a social group or class that diffuses a mixture of values and ideas throughout the civil society and state, that are then shared by and pass through different social sectors and thus articulated the collective people's will or political subject. In the case of hegemony, large masses of the population offer their acceptance of the ruling and dominant group and their concurrence with the direction that this group gives to the transformation and organization of social life (Gramsci, 1971, 12). Laclau and Mouffe borrow the Lacanian concept of "anchoring point" or main signifier, "nodal points" in their terminology in order to denote the element that assumes the function of universalizing and structuring within the discursive field of the game of differences.

With hegemony, Gramsci developed a political strategy that would create a new historical block of different social forces in such a manner that one of the subaltern groups in the society, as a result of the specific historical and contextual prestige that it enjoyed among the groups, assumed the role of a hegemonic and dominant group and established its "autonomy against the enemies that they had to defeat" and gained "support from the groups that actively and passively helped them" (ibid., 53). Other than the restructuring of the economy and creation of new technologies, the most important thing in Gramsci's conception of hegemony is the ethical-political re-articulation of the senso commune/common sense or of "the general concept of life, philosophy" (ibid., 104), a worldview or an ideology as a cement for the new hegemony as material practice embodied in institutions and apparatuses, which was supposed to direct and constitute social activity into radical changes. The hegemonic power thus becomes the bringer of new culture. The radical transformation of the concept of hegemony in Gramsci's work is achieved through his insistence that the articulation of

the new hegemonic people's will includes creation of solidarity and unity not only among the members of the same professional group on a corporative-economic level, but also on a universal plane, with the other subordinate groups and in such a manner that will exceed the limited and corporative interests of the hegemonic group.

The political logic as hegemonic "re-composition" is a "response to the dislocation of the structure" (Laclau, 2000, 40-44), as an event that undermines the repetitive logic of the predominant and sedimented social divisions, and it opens the subject and social structure toward its contingent limits and destroys the way of being of the subject. Through the effects of dislocation, as an experience of crisis – which was particularly radicalized in the context of the National Liberation Struggle and the post-war situation, as a result of both the damage inflicted upon the country and the geopolitical and local dynamics of the relationships between different historical forces – the positions of the subject were questioned and opened toward controversial forms of discourses and identifications as alternative forms of organization of experience. In this context, with this viewpoint, the hegemonic relationship understands that "politics is not a power game between already fully constituted subjects; political struggles are primarily struggles to produce subjects" (Mari Smith, 2003, 68).

In the processes of hegemony, to establish the logic of the political and political subjectivization, Laclau and Mouffe posit four structural elements, through which I will follow the process of subjectivization of women through WAF and the material offered by *Makedonka*. The first structural element is associated with the instable and tense compromise between the *logics of difference and equivalence* or the specificity and universality, elaborated in Laclau and Mouffe's work as the core of the grammar and discursive ontology and the rhetoric tropological movements that lead to the establishment of relationships of equivalence and splitting of the specificities or the requirements of the society in the process of production of the people's subject. The second element in the

political logic is the *dichotomization of the society's space into two camps,* which are derived from and enable the relationships of equivalence, that is, of identification of the oppressive system and the "general crime" in the society symbolized as the thing that blocks certain identities and social groups in the society from coinciding with themselves and achieving fullness. This is precisely the *logic of antagonism.* The third element is associated with the problem of representation, the *generalization of the relationships of representation* or elevation of the universal people's denotation through symbols, master signifiers or tendentiously empty signifiers. Linked with this last structural characteristic is the *fantasmatic logic of radical affective investment* in the impossible object that signifies the fullness of the society.

2.1. Chains of equivalence and unification into a collective political subject

The first step towards establishing equivalence among the different struggles and experiences of oppression is on the plane of equalization and unification of the different structural oppressive positions of women into a single antagonized women's political subject, clearly visible through the interpellation and summoning of the different women's subject positions to join different actions and mobilizations organized by WAF in the post-war period.[16] This drew an equivalence among the experiences of women from different ethnic minorities and nationalities (Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Roma women, etc.), women workers, peasant women, housewives, women clerks, women intellectuals and women with different political affiliations and convictions, with a clearly drawn antagonistic boundary, as a constitutive exterior that mediates the unity of these women's collective political subject position, and opposed to it were all the fascist elements from the past and from

16 The Governing Board of WAF, "Mothers, women and sisters of Macedonia, workers, peasants, housewives, clerks!" - Главен одбор на АФЖ („Мајки, жени и сестри од Македонија, работнички, селанки, домаќинки, чиновнички!"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), pp. 1-2.

the present of the post-war period. As we can read in the first issue of *Makedonka:*

> "undoubtedly we must achieve the unity of all women in Macedonia, regardless of their political view, faith and nationality, regardless of the fact whether they used to be Serbophiles, Bulgarophiles, Graecophiles, the unity of all Orthodox Macedonian women and Muslim Albanian and Turkish women and Vlach women, all peasant women, women workers, women intellectuals and housewives – all honest patriot women that wish to help the struggle, all women that have not soiled their hands with people's blood (...) the broader and firmer the unity among women, the stronger and more powerful will the National Liberation Front, the more secure will the full achievement and preservation of the benefits of our present struggle be (...). At the same time, however, while building this unity among Macedonian women, we will fight against every attempt of some speculating women with a dark political past to cause dismay inside our front and smash and shatter our unity."[17]

Further on, when referring to the experiences of oppression in monarchist Yugoslavia, the texts published in *Makedonka* established a chain of equivalence among the differential and democratic demands of women and their suffering with their experiences and demands of various segments of the population, thus construing a people's request or an amalgamation into a collective political subject. When women's demands enter into an equivalent relationship with the other existing demands in a given society, they relinquish some of their specificity and by doing so, some of their differential position, because they thrust into the foreground all that these different demands and struggles have in common, and that is precisely the prerequisite for the construction of the hegemonic link and for the institution of the people as the new subject of politics.

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17 Veselinka, Malinska. "Let us reinforce the Women's Antifascist Front in Macedonia", (Веселинка, Малинска. „Да го зајакнеме Антифашистичкиот фронт на жените во Македонија"), Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 9.

The social injustice that afflicts women is not only a discursive framework through which they articulate their demands and struggle, an interpretation of the experience of subordination and of the blockade of their own realization and fullness (as a social, class perspective and a narrative of subordination), but also an injustice "that inflicted the working people in general, while all the obstacles that women had to face "were placed there with an intention to submit them, firstly, to even greater exploitation together with the fellow workers and peasants, and secondly, to deprive them of all available strength with which they could help their fellow workers, who fought for their rights in difficult circumstances."[18] Consequently, the equivalences are a result of a blocked being, the shortages that are intertwined with the different elements and demands, and not a positive characteristic embedded in the core of it and requiring their uniting operation.

Unlike the pre-war narratives, strategies and discursive articulations of the women's question, or what the members of WAF characterized as "feminist illusions about women's rights" because of their autonomist, isolated and insufficiently class conscious movement, in the post-war context they were subsumed by the universal issue of democracy and equality for all. That is, "the democracy question is inseparable from the true, not just formal women's equality, and this equality of women cannot be achieved if there is not true democracy in the country."[19]

However, despite the equivalential logic of constituting a popular democratic front, through the texts published in *Makedonka* we can often follow the causal logic used as a basis to equalize the histories of oppression. In this manner, the injustice and exploitation of women, their being kept in the dark of illiteracy brings about injustice towards young people in the society as well,

18 Kiro Georgiev-Dejan. "The democratic laws as a guarantee for the women's rights (Киро Георгиев-Дејан. „Демократските закони – гаранција за правата на жените"), *Македонка,* Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 5.

19 "The importance of achieving a democratic union of women from all over the world" („Значението на остварувањето на демократскиот сојуз на жените од целиот свет"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 14 (December 1945), p. 3.

on the basis of the premise that the mother plays a key role in the education of her children, and consequently, "in her exclusion the intention was to exclude our youth as well, to have it badly educated and not in the spirit of progress, advancement and struggle against the dark."[20] The most pronounced example of this tendency of the logic of equivalence to become causal logic that strives to subsume the different democratic demands under the logic of one struggle, or the source/logic of oppression is the field of the relationship between class and gender, where the equivalence is reduced to an unavoidable effect of the generalization and unification caused by the all-encompassing explanatory factor of class.

2.2. Antagonism, divisions and subjectivization

Following the grammar of political hegemony and subjectivization of Laclau and Mouffe, the logic of equivalence undermines the differential logics of the established social orders, and the equivalent chain is established as a radical negativity beyond any objective determinants or positive and essential identitary foundations. However, this operation becomes possible only through drawing a border, a division within the social totality and demarcation of a radical exterior as a source that prevents the full realization of the differential identity. Through the dichotomic construction of the social as mediation that discursively denotes the presence of an oppressive regime or the embodiment of the general crime according to Marx, this antagonism enables the constitution of the popular front, or the general sacrifice, as equivalence to the plurality of demands and the system of differences (Marchart, 2018, 25). The new people's subject and hegemonic block (the National Liberation Front), established in this manner effectuated a certain closing and articulation of heterogeneous elements into a meaningful whole, that is, a new discursive soil, while re-instituting society across the lines of division.

20 Kiro Georgiev-Dejan. "The democratic laws as a guarantee for the women's rights (Киро Георгиев-Дејан. „Демократските закони – гаранција за правата на жените"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 5.

The key demarcation line that marks this antagonism and the excluded exterior through which the new political subject is constituted is the Fascists' occupation, as a condensation of all the values and experiences associated with the fascistic ideology and practice, including nationalism, chauvinism, and greater state aspirations. In opposition to this is the ideal of brotherhood and unity. Patriarchate, imperialism, racism, but also "old Yugoslavia",[21] that is, the "monarcho-fascists of King Peter and his entourage", who were at the same time the "deniers of women's right to active participation in the cultural, educational and political life, and the right to elect and be elected"[22] were the reason behind the mass illiteracy of women and they were all representatives of political unitarism, capitalism and bourgeoisie (Jović, 2004), and in opposition to them the new political identity of women citizens was constituted. Bearing in mind the losses and the devastation of the life of about 1.700.000 people that were murdered (out of which 9.000 were communists) during the occupation, the 530.000 displaced people, the 320.000 that survived the horrors of the camps, the infrastructural damages and destruction of about half a million buildings that affected the lives of all citizens, it is clear why fascism was the key political evil against which the people unified as an antifascist subject, and consequently why the women's political subject articulated as antifascist. Fascism was the "greatest enemy of women's liberty".[23] Political subjectivization, additionally, required an active, constant and alert battle against the remnants of the fascistic elements in the fragile legitimacy of the new authorities and the new state, and those people, just as Tito pointed out in his address at the First Congress of WAF, held in Belgrade from 17 to 19 June 1945:

21 N. Bogdanova, "The status of women in old Yugoslavia" (Н. Богданова. „Положбата на жените во стара Југославија"), Year 5, No. 51 (January 1949), p. 6.

22 Shukri Ramo, "Turkish women will vote as well" (Шукри Рамо. „И Туркињата ќе гласа", *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 8.

23 "Why do we celebrate 8 March as the international women's day" („Како настанал мегјународниот женски ден 8 март"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 24.

> "... should be disposed of mercilessly, they cannot be part of the people's government. They are bearers of hatred and enemies of the legacies we have earned through battle. They need to be expelled. And you women are now everywhere. And I appeal to you to be alert. And to help reinforce our government in such ways that you will dispose of all that obstruct the reinforcement of the new government (...). Fight against everyone that spread hatred against any of our peoples."[24]

The dedication to continuous antagonizing in the social field and detection of potentially dangerous antagonistic elements that lurk as a (always already) present risk of transformation and re-signification of the different unsatisfied demands and struggles understood as "floating signifiers" and threaten the hegemonic leadership and constitution of the people indicates, symptomatically, a specific, but suppressed, awareness among the activists of both WAF and the Communist Party. Namely, that the decision about constituting a delineated system of signification, a collectively meaningful way of life, is always arrived at through the power of antagonism and exclusion, or suppression of the other existing possibilities that remain forgotten and sedimented as a social logic of routinization. As such, while representing the "us/them" difference, antagonism testifies, on one hand, that the articulation of the collective "us" is ontologically linked with its "constitutive external", which as a haunting ghost penetrates its deepest being, and on the other hand, that things can always be different and that antagonism is a possibility always present on the horizon (Mouffe, 2013, 5). Along this line we can understand the equivalence established between the so called bourgeois feminism or the "feminist sectarianism", the monarchist past of Yugoslavia and capitalism, all relegated to the opposite camp on the antagonistic line, as a condition for constituting women into socialist citizens dedicated to the common good and new state. That is, the need, symptomatic, for a constant exclusion of any possibility

24 L.S., "The First Congress of WAF of Yugoslavia (Л. С., Првиот конгрес на антифашискиот фронт на жените од Југославија), Year 2, No. 8-9 (June-July, 1945), p. 2.

for the women's struggle to gain a different meaning than that acquired through the current delineation of the antagonistic front and consequent political subjectivization, as an awareness of the instability of the borders and the unfixed character of the political identities and articulated subject-positions.

The fascistic ideology and the values and signifiers of the monarchist political regime of old Yugoslavia are especially highlighted in the texts published in *Makedonka* in the first two years after the liberation of the country, because the subject-positions that carry histories of experience of violence and oppression under these two regimes were multitudinous and enabled an extremely broad mass mobilization and equivalence among the different demands and struggles within the National Liberation Front. In the period when the government of the National Liberation Front, and especially of the Communist Party, reinforced itself and was more secure, there was an evident radicalization of the antagonistic line as regards the Western imperialist powers and capitalism, in the interest of the socialist political ideology as an identification matrix for political subjectivization. In the second half of 1948, that is, after the notorious resolution of the Cominform in Bucharest and the split between Tito and Stalin, the antagonistic line was shifted yet again and brought about the identification with a special and unique type of socialism, marked by self-management, non-alignment, confederate federalism and reinforced support for Tito (visible especially through the domination of visual materials, speeches and texts about Tito in *Makedonka,* in the second half of 1948 and afterwards), and against the bureaucratism, strong state interventionism and centralized political structure of the USSR (Jović, 2004: Ramet, 2006).

2.3. "The sole coordinator of the working masses of our country"

The community created through equivalence and an implicated antagonistic line is a pure idea about communitary fullness that is absent and cannot have a signifier, concept, word or body as such. That is, in order to be an equivalence, and not yet another difference among many differences, it must go through and is mediated through certain particularity, borrowing the ideas, values, complaints and visions of a certain group and thus become a contaminated universality. One difference from the chain of equivalences is elevated to the level of dignity, representing the universal community, while loosening its differentially denoted contents in order to broaden its representative function and make it as broad as possible throughout the society and to transform them into empty signifiers. The empty signifiers (such as freedom, democracy, justice, equality, peace, order, etc.) open the possibility to broaden the representation, in a manner which, while catalysing the hegemonic universalization of certain particularity, they become a surface on which to inscribe as many unsatisfied demands as possible (Laclau, 2005). This is the third structural characteristic of the hegemonic relationship, the "state of hegemony", which I will address now.

The particularity in the equivalence chain that took over the role of universal representation of the interests and demands of the different social sectors and groups during, and especially after, the National Liberation Struggle, was the Communist Party and the corporative interests of the working class and working people, which the party initially represented. Women's struggle in general and, specifically, the struggle of the different structural and subject-positions of women, such as those of peasant women, women clerks, women workers, of Macedonian, Turkish, Albanian, Vlach, Roma women, of Christian and Muslim women, was represented and expressed through the commitments and battles led by the

Communist Party as the "sole coordinator of the working classes of our country."[25]

Of course, this function that the Communist Party assumed as a hegemonic subject was derived, on one hand, from the prestige it enjoyed, no doubt deservedly, as a result of its victory over the occupying forces of the Fascists. But on the other hand, it was also a result of the broadening of its narrow corporative interests and partial demands in direction of inclusion and compromises, both in their program and in their politics, with as many democratic demands and struggles as possible against oppression and exploitation (the demands for independence and sovereignty of the peoples, such as the Macedonian people, their recognition and respect for the differences and rights of the nationalities, the suffering of the rural population, the religious minorities, and in the first years, the demands of various political party subjects). "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia is the only party in Yugoslavia that recognized and recognizes all women's rights... Knowing all this, in 1941, women joined the battle against the fascistic beasts and their helpers in great numbers not only to liberate our fatherland, but also to liberate themselves, to become equal members of the society, to free themselves from the centuries-long slavery, to break all the fetters that chained them and to take firm steps into the bright and happy future."[26]

The Communist Party in its hegemonic and socially, culturally, politically and economically leading role (re)articulated the interests of women in a manner that juxtaposed the self-understanding of women and the understanding of their oppression and struggle, as well as the key signifiers around which it gravitated (such as equality, human rights, equal rights, democracy, freedom, social justice, happy life, safety, people's freedom, etc.) in sharp difference from the pre-war civil feminism and the subject-positions it opened.

25 "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia – the sole coordinator of the working masses of our country", („КПЈ – Единствен раководител на работните маси од нашата земја"), *Македонка*, year 5, No. 52 (1949), p. 1.

26 Kiro Georgiev-Dejan. "The democratic laws as a guarantee for the women's rights (Киро Георгиев-Дејан. „Демократските закони – гаранција за правата на жените"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), p. 5.

That is, as interpreted by the Party and WAF: against "the fascistic bourgeois tendencies of the women's movement". While at the same time, the new woman had to identify with the workers' and communist women's movement from the past exclusively.

> "Unlike the idealization of women's status in the capitalist society by the reactionary civil parties, unlike the feminist movement that searches for solutions of the women's question within the bourgeois system, through women's independent struggle for their rights, against men, the Communist Party approaches the women's question on the basis of the scientific discoveries of Marx and Engels and has ascertained that the subordinated position of women is linked (...) with the class society and that the path for resolution of the women's question, that is, for the achievement of more detailed equality and equal rights for women in all areas of our social life, is the path of revolutionary struggle against the class system."[27]

Of key importance for the understanding of the hegemonic role of the Party and the political subjectivization of women as operational citizens in the new hegemonic project and the construction of a new historical block is that, through continued social activity, cultural influence, ideological articulation and intensive interventions in various domains of the social field, the Party and the National Liberation Front produced consensus, visible in the resolution of WAF and the texts published in *Makedonka,* that is, they "educated them as regards their class consciousness, taught them in the spirit of true proletarian internationalism: they inculcated in them love for the Soviet Union; through various actions they taught women to hate capitalism, and through the example of their heroic fighters, they taught them perseverance and steadfastness and heroism."[28] It is important to stress that this argument that I glean from reading *Makedonka* does not imply unambiguous consensus, nor it excludes the dimension of coercion and repression that the Party used as early as the first post-war years, including the first elections for the Constitutive Assembly

27 N. Bogdanova. "The status of women in old Yugoslavia" (Н. Богданова. „Положбата на жените во стара Југославија"), Year 5, No. 51 (January 1949), p. 6-7.

28 Ibid. p. 7.

in 1945, and especially after the resolution of the Cominform and the split with Stalin and the Soviet Union (Ramet, 2006). However, the mass support and consent that the Party won was undeniable, as well as the fact that it induced historical reorganization and re-articulation of the common sense categories and concepts of the world. Through their alignment with the ideological platform and interventions of the Party, women's interests attached themselves constitutively to the general commitments of the National Liberation Front and the Party, especially to the struggle against fascism and against capitalism, or the class war, that is, the war for liberation of the working people, for reconstruction of the state, establishment of socialism and implementation of different reforms and laws inaugurated by the Front, that is, the Communist Party.

> "Today, when we are building socialism in our country, in which our women are profoundly interested, the entire activity and work of Women's Antifascist Front takes place under the leadership of our Party, a leadership that has led our women into the bright and happy future of the socialist society."[29]

As a hegemonic subject, the Party "secured social authority sufficiently deep to conform society into a new historic project" (Hall, 2021, 13), including the activities and interests of women and WAF, representing the interests and struggles of the Party as interests and struggles of women. Consequently, "owing to the laws passed by today's people's government", women workers had the same salary as their male comrades, acquiring relative economic independence and radically improving their living conditions. For the housewives, as a result of the initiatives to open more kindergartens and children's homes, "new perspectives have opened in the sense that you can now think of your own cultural and educational advancement". Women from the ethnic minorities could see and have their living circumstances improved, taking into

29 "30th Anniversary of our Party: CPY – The Sole Leader of the Working Tables of our Country" („30-годишнина на нашата Партија: КПЈ – Единствен раководител на работните маси од нашата земја"), *Македонка*, Year 5, No. 52 (1949), p. 1.

account the fact that the "National Liberation Front was the greatest advocate of the national rights of our minorities and the greatest enemy of chauvinism", while the policies and laws initiated by the National Liberation Front and WAF that secured constitutionally guaranteed rights to vote, to elect and to be elected, that is, that enabled women to participate in power, had transformed them into "factors that will offer opinions, make decisions and resolution, together with the others, for improvement of their lives and the lives of their children."[30]

The messages and polemics that the Party sent and led and the implementation of the resolutions of the Party Congresses were:

> "...a contribution towards the better life of our fatherland, a contribution towards a brighter childhood and safer future of our children. The implementation of every resolution, the realization of every appeal that the Party, under the leadership of our Central Committee and comrade Tito, made to the people, and also sent to women, has always been a step forward in our journey to the victory of socialism in our country, and every new victory has been deeply felt by us as women, and especially as mothers, because each one of them meant a new step in the realization of a better life for our working masses, because each one of them meant a new opportunity for our children, for a happier childhood, for education, health care, safe future, because each victory has led us out of the darkness of yore, out of slavery, further on, into a bright new life, the life of the equal human. Hence the unbreakable bond between the masses and millions of women and our Central Committee with comrade Tito, hence this never before witnessed élan, this huge effort they have invested in the building of socialism, which is so victoriously progressing in our country."[31]

30 "The Governing Board of WAF - Mothers, women and sisters of Macedonia, workers, peasants, housewives, clerks!" („Главен одбор на АФЖ. „Мајки, жени и сестри од Македонија, работнички, селанки, домаќинки, чиновнички!"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 12-13 (October-November 1945), pp. 1-2.

31 "A letter from the Plenum of the Governing Board of WAF to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia" („Писмо од Пленумот на Централниот одбор на АФЖ до ЦК КПЈ"), *Македонка*, Year 5, No. 46-47 (August-September 1948), p. 3.

The articulation, adjustment and amalgamation of the interests of WAF with the policies of the National Liberation Front and the Communist Party are visible from the very start, that is, as early as the establishment of WAF of Macedonia and the first issues of *Makedonka*. Although in the first year, the emphasis in the discourse of *Makedonka* was on the leading role of the Popular Front, that is to say, the ideological stance was evidently more neutral, which we can understand as a tactical determinant whose aim was to attract as many people as possible to join the Popular Front and support the Popular Front option at the elections. And yet, in these initial years, the concordance and equalization of women's interests with the interests of the class war and the Communist Party was quite clear. An unambiguous, explicit and intensive amalgamation with the hegemonic leadership of the Party and the Front can be observed from 1948 onwards, especially as a result of the geopolitical instability, turmoil and threats to the legitimacy of the Popular Front and Tito after the split with Stalin, and even more after 1950, the year of the Third Congress of WAF of Yugoslavia, held in Zagreb on 28 and 29 October. The Congress raised the question of complete amalgamation and merger, that is to say, it was discussed whether WAF should just enter and join the Popular Front. As Lydia Sklevicky observes in her analyses of the statute of WAF of Yugoslavia, from 1948 onwards, the organization was only a sector in the work of the Popular Front and the Communist Party, completely deserting the tradition of the pre-war women's movement and retreating from any kind of criticism of the policies of the Party (Sklevicky, 1996, 132).

Still, our reading of *Makedonka* has registered this tendency from the very beginning, within the Macedonian section of WAF at least. The goals and tasks that WAF of Macedonia set for itself corresponded in continuity with the current policies, reforms and state needs as required by the Popular Front and the Communist Party, as well as with the decrees and resolutions of the Party. As early as the First Congress of WAF of Macedonia, in 1945, the

tasks that the organization had to fulfil included the reinforcement of the people's government, literacy for women, preservation of brotherhood and unity, reconstruction of the country, education of children, increased membership of WAF and the Popular front, etc.[32] Starting with 1947, and after the introduction of the Five-year plan for electrification and industrialization of the country, the tasks of the organizations included professional trainings for as many women and girls as possible so that they could work on the planned building of the state, for which purpose various courses were organized,[33] mobilization was introduced and membership increase, the literacy courses continued, especially for the rural women and ethnic minority women, political education was introduced for *advancement,*[34] etc. After the clash with Communist International and Stalin, that is, in 1948, the organization was more focused on the education of children as future citizens and builders of socialism, on the political education, mass mobilization, especially of the ethnic minority women and peasant women, for the purposes of the implementation of the agricultural reform and collectivization through development of cooperatives,[35] and on the building of socialism, as the most important task.[36]

2.4. Affective investments and corporeal performances

The part that is missing in the earlier discussions is the problem of the *affective investments* – the thing that gives power, energy and direction to political practices and enables the identifications with

32 L.S., "The First Congress of WAF of Yugoslavia (Л. С., Првиот конгрес на антифашискиот фронт на жените од Југославија), *Македонка,* Year 2, No. 8-9 (June-July, 1945), pp. 1-2.

33 L. Čalovska, "The planned economy and our tasks"(Л. Чаловска. „Планското стопанство и нашите задачи"), *Македонка*, Year 4, No. 28 (February 1947), p. 2.

34 "Plenary meeting of the Governing Board of WAF of Macedonia („Пленарен состанок на Гл. одбор на АФЖ од Македонија"), *Македонка*, Year 4, No. 38 (December 1947), p. 2.

35 "Let us fulfil the tasks of the Second Congress" („Да ги извршиме задачите од вториот конгрес"), *Македонка*, Year 5, No. 45 (July 1948), pp. 4-5.

36 Plenary meeting of the Governing Board of WAF of Macedonia (Пленарен состанок на Главниот одбор на АФЖ од Македонија), Year 5, No. 51 (1949), p. 1.

empty signifiers in the name of the hegemonic powers. This logic is the *fantasmatic logic* (Glinos and Howart, 2007) and the order of affect to which it belongs. As Laclau argues, "something belonging to the order of affect has a primary role in discursively constructing the social. Freud already knew it; the social link is a libidinal link" (Laclau, 2004, 326). Through the affect, empty signifiers and hegemonic forces (including their demands, complaints and values) the imaginary promise is offered for "recapturing our lost/impossible enjoyment which provides the fantasy support for many of our political projects and choices" (Stavrakakis, 2005, 73). Political transformation, and de-articulation of the hegemonic forms of identification, is possible only through inscription of the social agents into different hegemonic group practices that mobilize and articulate affects. In other words, it is not enough to construe politically oppositional and antagonistic identities. What is needed is an aesthetic intervention of several affects in different social practices and spheres, with an aim to resolve the complex processes of identification, to invent new ways of interpellation and to "transform people's consciousness by acting on their sensation" (Mouffe, 2013, 97). Political articulation and hegemony, consequently, cannot be reduced just to provision of surfaces for inscription and radical investment, but also a broader and complex practice of creating and articulating affective-discursive arrangements and formations, or "different regime of desires and affects through inscription in discursive/affective practices" (Mouffe, 2018, 84). Therefore, it is important for our argument to understand what the ideologically sanctioned collective choreographies were, as well as the manners in which these ritualized practices that orientated the bodies into certain directions repeated, attracting the bodies to follow the lines of different signifiers during the performance over the "skin of the community" (Ahmed, 2004; Ahmed 2014).

Through various rhetorical and narrative strategies, the texts published in *Makedonka* created a contingent of signifiers, objects and practices that were evaluated as sources of happiness, satisfaction. Better life conditions and guarantors of happy and safe

future, protectors of life and women and their children, lines through which the unity of the people and stability of the state were provided. Through these processes of attributions they became an object of affective and libidinal investment, centres of gravity toward which the desires, aspirations, movements and acts of the citizens were directed, while through their identification with them, the political subjectivization of 'the people', and of women specifically, was mediated. This list of signifiers included the images of a fighting and working women; mothers that sacrificed themselves and sent her sons to war to liberate the country; mothers that mourned but were also determined to sublimate their loss into something greater, such as the future of the state and the happy and free life for the people; ideals about new Yugoslavia; brotherhood and unity; the Yugoslav army – "the faithful guardian of the independence, freedom and peace";[37] labour and work; disciplined, well-mannered children and youth dedicated to studying; motherhood as a determining role for women and children; and, of course, the Party and the body of the leader, Marshal Tito.

In addition to the politically instructive and analytical texts that explicitly pointed at these objects and practices as exceptionally valuable and dignified, as necessary prerequisites for a happy and safe life, the literary contributions in *Makedonka* were an exceptional example that enabled us to follow the production of objects that magnetized the affective investment, through the created sentimental or combative narratives and lyrical metaphors for the suffering, pain, perseverance, determination, enthusiasm, happiness, interest, etc. – affects around which various characters, such as children and women-heroes, as well as attributes circulated like signs. The many journalistic contributions that reported from the field, throughout the republic, also pointed toward the objects worthy of investment, but also toward the determination, perseverance, consistency and sacrifice needed to reach them and

37 "Marshal Tito's speech at the Second Congress of WAF of Yugoslavia", („Говор на Маршал Тито на II-от конгрес на АФЖ од Југославија"), *Македонка*, Year 5, No. 40-41 (February-March 1948), p. 3.

sustain them. For instance, in the report entitled "We are the joy of our parents – Gjorgji and Dobrila Lazarevski's family and their triplets",[38] we read about the hard, but at the same time, happy life with triplets and about the solidarity of the community, while the text promoted a motivational and affirmative view of maternity, even in exceptional and unusual situations in which poor parents had to raise families with many children.

The visual material in the magazine was an additional and exceptionally powerful source for organization of the affective investments and creation of affective infrastructures. Especially after 1950, the pictures of babies, little children and mothers dominated, representing them in caring and nurturing relationships, as signposts for orientation performed by the emotions and the worlds they gathered, as well as the acts they demanded for their effectiveness. Thus, in addition to the pictures of breastfeeding mothers, nurses caring about children and caregivers in kindergartens, or of children smiling, playing, running, eating and drinking, drawing and studying, we have statements such as the following: "Mum is happy that I am taken care of during the hours when she is at work", "Every game with my friends in the kindergarten is a real joy for me", in the seasonal kindergarten I received many toys, which we have seen for the first time",[39] "we are the joy of our parents",[40] etc. Or, we can read short texts where the character of the mothers says: "The word love is nowhere near enough to express how much I love you, my son. (...) All my desires and hopes, all the fluttering and yearning, like a multitude of crystal floods pour into one and only life goal: for you to live, to live..."[41]

These combinations of images and statements not only pointed out the objects for women's investment, but they also represented

38 "We are our parents joy" („Ние сме радост на родителите"), *Македонка*, Year 7, No. 79 (June 1951), p. 15.

39 "Mum is happy that I am looked after while she is at work" („Мама е срек'на што сум јас збринато во часовите кога е таја на работа"), *Македонка*, Year 7, No. 76 (March 1951), p. 17.

40 "We are our parents joy" („Ние сме радост на родителите"), *Македонка*, Year 7, No. 79 (June 1951), p. 15.

41 *Makedonka,* Year 7, No. 79 (June 1951), p. 1.

them as an outcome of the good policies of the hegemonic agent, the National Liberation Front and the Communist Party, thus motivating a continued investment and dedication to their policies.

Of course, in accordance with one of the key supporting pillars of the socialist ideology and the building of the new socialist man, woman and citizen, labour and work occupied the central space in the map of meaning and the affective anchors around which the bodies of women and citizens in general were materialized and orientated accordingly, that is, through which the identification canvas of the process of subjectivization was outlined. The front pages, but also the pages inside *Makedonka* were replete with images, models and examples of women whose bodies were harnessed, in a proud, dignified or happy manner, or contemplatively, instead, in the performance of different working tasks and in different production processes, both agricultural and industrial. Women with shovels, women that sewed, dug, built, reaped, or were involved in industrial production, were always represented as indefatigable and with a smile on their faces or deeply engrossed in the completion of their task. In all sectors of work on the reconstruction of the country and in the factories, "women demonstrate strong will and love for work", "with songs and joy, they strive to increase production", because, unlike the pre-war experience of capitalist exploitation, "today, after the complete capitulation of the greatest enemy of the working people," women workers work "with evident enthusiasm and joy. When you enter, you can read the satisfaction with their work on their faces."[42]

Labour and work became one of the major anchors around which life was organized and gained meaning, especially when labour was seen from a socialist point of view as de-alienated, appropriated collective labour of social production. "Work has stopped being a necessity, it has become a need, a purpose of life, it pulls forward, it has become part of yourself and if you give it up you are no longer you. It is that qualitative change along the line

42 Gorica Daskalova. "New life has started in our factories" (Горица Даскалова. „Во нашите фабрики настапи нов живот"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 7 (May 1945), p. 5.

that begins with: I work because I need to eat – and ends with: I work because work is the meaning of my life."[43]



Additionally, on the pages of *Makedonka,* we come across many reports that gave a detailed description of the efforts of the sweaty bodies, their coordinated action, tiredness, but also determination and satisfaction and happiness derived from the individual and collective contribution to the better future of their country. The workers and shock workers' actions became a material, practical and performative gesture, like corporeal techniques that developed habits and practical knowledge, through which the socialist community was materialized in a choreographed form and the new socialist subject was shaped. Youths and women participated in these actions with a song, smile and joy, because the "brotherhood and unity of the youth of entire Yugoslavia is the holiest thing for them"[44] and they proudly exceeded the set production or work norms, but also, which is much more important, these performances at the same time worked as means with which "new people are being forged, tempered and many people leave these actions with a new understanding of work. A collective is created that is proud of its work, of what workers' hands have created. It is here that the

43 V. "Why I like my profession" (В. „Зошто ја сакам својата професија"), *Македонка*, Year 8, No. 83 (December 1952), p. 9.

44 "The youth in Macedonia celebrated the world youth week", (Младината на Македонија ја прослави светската младинска недела"), *Македонка*, Year 2, No. 5-6 (March-April 1945), p. 25.

brotherhood and unity of our work is created, tempered and reinforced even more."[45] That is to say, through these work actions and with the collective and coordinated bodily effort "the new moral character is being formed"[46] of both youths and women. Even their free time, the time to rest and take a break, was a productive time during which the politically aware, culturally educated, literate, socialist men and women citizens.

The introduction and delineation of the borders of the community and the political subjectivization were performed, most impressively, through the collective contributions of 'the people', and women specifically, in their love aimed at the Marshal as an embodiment of the common ideal. The socialist community was united through the loving and collective orientation towards the desired object as a holder of the promise of happiness and better life, as a source and builder of the utopian future. The vertical transferal of the love for the leader became a constitutive power for identification of the women citizens and the collective. Their coming in contact with the leader as an object of love and source of joy and happiness was mediated by the ample, countless and constant circulation of Tito as a sign[47] that drew a whole chain of meanings behind itself, and a relationship of equivalence and association was established between Tito's body and name and the paradigmatic set of signs that circled around him, such as: freedom, liberation, revolution, socialism, party, state, good life, welfare, brighter future, determination, independence, heroism, brotherhood and

45 "Through the work on the youth railway new people are forged", („Низ работата на младинската пруга се коваат нови лугје"), *Македонка*, Year 3, No. 24 (October 1946), p. 3.

46 Draga Čalovska, "The youth railway line Šamac –Sarajevo will be the new work school for our youth" (Драга Чаловска. „Младинската пруга Шамац-Сараево ќе биде ново работно училиште на нашата младина"), *Македонка*, year 4, No. 29 (March 1947), p. 5.

47 After 1948, and especially from 1950 onwards, the iconography, speeches by and about Tito were very present, both on the front pages of *Makedonka*, and inside the magazine. As an illustration, in No. 62, 1950, the magazine began with seven pages dedicated to Tito's New Year's Eve speech, which amounted to almost a third of the full content, while in No. 72, 1950, Tito's speech at the Third Congress of WAF of Yugoslavia occupied ten pages, almost a half of the content of the magazine.

unity, anti-Stalinism, the antifascist struggle, non-alignment, the struggle, etc. As a chief signifier in this chain of equivalences, Tito himself eventually became an equivalent of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav community. The activation of these emotions was made possible through 'sticking' (Ahmed, 2004) certain signs onto his body, which transformed Tito into a 'sticky object', and the contact with him worked as a magnetizer of a set of emotions marked by love, joy, satisfaction, enthusiasm, excitement, etc. Uniting around the good, just, useful, happy object, the community itself performed its own identity and orientated itself toward a complex of contents, values and signs that circled around Tito as a signifier, tracing the common future path and direction.

> "To speak about comrade Tito – our teacher and leader – is to speak about the great victories of our peoples and our Party, it is to speak about the temptations, suffering, sacrifices and efforts and about the magnificent battle fought by our peoples (...) our people as a whole, Tito is their glory, Tito is their present and future."[48]

48 "Marshal Tito – the leader of our party" ("Маршал Тито-Раководител на нашата партија", *Македонка*, Year 5, No. 53-54 (1949), p. 3.

3. Contradictions and the failure of the political subjectivization

In this last section of our text, I would like to focus on the persisting contradictions accompanying the process of political subjectivization of women, through WAF and *Makedonka* from the very beginnings and until the magazine's discontinuation (and the dissolution of WAF), the end that slowly led to the undermining, and perhaps to the eventual failure of this process. In this sense, our text follows the dynamics of the process, from the initial enthusiasm and revolutionary, radical and emancipatory potential and practice to the re-traditionalization and (re)establishing of the police (or depoliticizing) logic and suppression of women's emancipation in the name of the orthodox eschatological leftist positions and totality. The problems that I will point out in this section follow the framework of the two previous sections and forms of politicization, identifying the tensions, aporias and inconsistencies within them.

Firstly, I will focus on the aspect of verification of equality as a process of political subjectivization that entails gestures and strategies of de-identification and self-othering. Political subjectivization as de-identification and implementation of the logic of the other is a threefold othering, argues Rancière. Initially, it is the otherness in relation to the "true" place, occupation, capacity and identity given by the police order. On the other hand, by dividing of the community and exposing the wrongdoing/injustice through the verification of equality, a scene is set for a "polemic common" as a conflictual and antagonistic demonstration that "always supposes an other, even if that other refuses evidence or argument" (Rancière, 1992, 62). And finally, political subjectivization includes an "impossible identification" as the community's identification with all that cannot be reduced to a common property, nor to a shared essence, but it represents the pure equality of the capacities

of all, of humankind itself. In the review that will follow, we will see how these three aspects are seriously undermined and replete with contradictions.

The political subjectivization of women was undermined from the very beginnings of WAF in Macedonia, especially after the Second and Third Congress of WAF of Yugoslavia, that is to say, after 1948 and 1950, by the insistence on the sustaining and reproduction of the traditional values, capacities, status and characteristics of women. Since 1944, women in the texts in *Makedonka* have been interpellated with their structural positions within the traditional heteronormative community, as mothers and sisters, whose heroism was emphasized primarily in their dedication to nurturing and upbringing children and in their sacrifice when sending their sons to the National Liberation Struggle. Their value was recognized and respected through mobilization of the traditional women's capacities, especially the affective ones, and their reproductive labour, for the needs of the army, war, and the partisans (food, care, collection of aid, washing, care for the orphans of the fallen fighters, etc.) and for the reconstruction of the country. In her address to the attendees of the first main conference of WAF of Macedonia, Natalija Jocić, a member of the Governing Board of WAF of Serbia, said the following: "You women of Macedonia (...) gave birth and raised the heroes of the present great struggle, the champions of Macedonia."[49] A significant number of the literary contributions from the first years of *Makedonka,* as well as the stories about women's experiences in the USSR and Yugoslavia only reinforced the reproductive function made operational in the protection and defence of the state (Velichkovska, 2022). Additionally, and specially indicative, is the presence of rubrics in all of the issues of *Makedonka* dedicated to childcare, advice and instructions for sewing, housekeeping, cooking, hygiene and fashion.

49 "Main conference of the Women's Antifascist Front from Macedonia" („Главна конференција на Антифашистичкиот фронт на жените од Македонија"), *Македонка*, Year 1, No. 2 (December 1944), p. 12.

After 1948, when the upbringing and education of children became one of the priorities of WAF, even the emancipatory benefits and progress in the field of women's social rights, especially their employment in the industrial production and their being appointed in positions traditionally perceived as male, were instrumentalized and subordinated to the motherly role and the reproductive labour, instead of being a goal in themselves and means to the economic independence of women. Thus, women as productive subjects and labourers became "mothers-labourers", as a prerequisite for their optimal fulfilment of the function of "mother-educator", because "when children have a constant living example of useful and honest labour before their eyes embodied in their mothers and which benefits not only the family, but also the state, they will acquire useful habits in their childhood as well as the knowledge of a person raised in a true communist spirit."[50] Similar tendencies for instrumentalization of the political subjectivization, effectuated through the verification of equality as a means instead of a goal in itself, can be observed in the ambivalence with which women subjugated it to the current needs and political urgencies and reforms of the Communist Party and the National Liberation Front, such as the elections, agricultural reform, or the split that followed the Cominform resolution (more on this later in the text).

Also illustrative in this direction of reproducing the gender division of labour and cementing the position and interests of women within/for the pink ghetto is the following example from *Makedonka* in 1950. The Governing Board of WAF arranged a counselling session with architects from Skopje regarding the building of new housing. "Feeling that this problem was very close to their concerns, our activists had a lively discussion about the manner in which the new settlements were being built, about the layout of the main rooms in the homes, and they spent most of their time on the possible plans for the kitchens, pantries, bathrooms and

50 N. F. Lihacheva, "Mother" (Н. Ф. Лихачева, „Мајка"), *Македонка*, Year 5, No. 44 (June 1948), p. 8.

other utility rooms that every home needs. The discussion about the utility rooms for washing and drying clothes was also lively."[51]

Nothing expressed this contradiction in the political subjectivization of women and their re-traditionalization and reduction to allegedly natural women's roles and their association with the reproductive function better than Tito's speech at the Sixth Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in which, having declared that the un-socialist views "about the ability and role of women in the society, that is, the understanding that women are created to stay in the kitchen, raise children and do housework" were dated and now abandoned, he went on to say that "it is true that in our socialist community women have one of the most important tasks – to give and raise new generations for the society." This statement came only two years after Tito's speech at the Second Congress of WAF of Yugoslavia, when he pointed out that one of the greatest tasks for women was "to care for the children, the new generations", as well as to raise their children properly "in the spirit of new Yugoslavia."[52]

Without a doubt, women succeeded, through their own struggle, to win and effectuate radical and substantial reforms of the legislation and policies, especially concerning the married life, regulation of parenthood, status and care for extramarital children, equality in marriage and making decisions at work and outside the home, inheritance, socialization of the reproductive lab or in the sense of alleviation of the burden that women had to bear and opening of new possibilities for economic independence through the establishment of household services, nurseries and kindergartens, etc. In this situation, where the reproductive labour of women was recognized and acknowledged specifically, it was, nonetheless,

51 A counselling with the architects from Skopje was organized by the Governing Board of WAF, („По иницијатива на Главниот одбор на АФЖ се одржа советување со архитектите во Скопје"), *Македонка*, Year 6, No. 70-71 (September-October 1950), p. 12.

52 Marshal Tito's speech at the Second Congress of WAF of Yugoslavia (Говор на Маршал Тито на II-от конгрес на АФЖ од Југославија), Year 5, No. 40-41 (February-March 1948), p. 1.

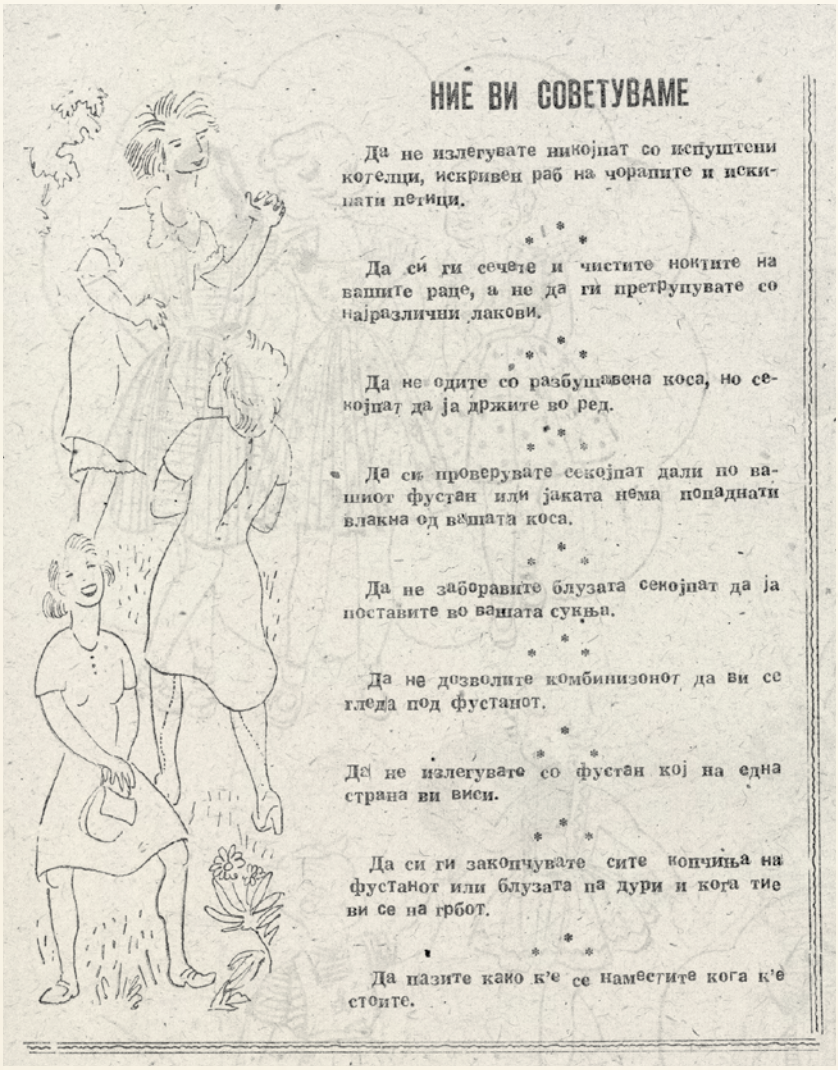
still seen as something outside the broader critical analysis of capitalism, that is, its key role as a social factory for reproduction of capital and exploitation was negated and the reproductive labour remained petrified in its dichotomous framework and distribution, and women remained chained to it without any problematization. For instance, in a text that seemingly echoed some of the arguments of Marxist feminism, the author celebrated the developments in the regulation of marriage in socialism, indicating that "women had not only their participation in the production recognized, but also their labour in the household, as well as their nurturing and upbringing work", for what, if I can refer to this ironically, "even the women who were not economically active outside the home, now have a recognized share in the property earned during shared family life."[53] This argument not only forces the question "Can the women who are bad housewives or disobedient wives or daughters enjoy these rights?", but also, which is more important, it points toward the fact that, despite the recognition of the reproductive labour, women were not liberated from it. Quite the contrary, it remained/became their destiny and essence!

The contradiction or the failure in the transformation through political subjectivization, or the first level of othering that I discussed earlier, was most paradigmatically substantiated near the end of *Makedonka,* when the last issues focused drastically on the motherly role of women and their care for the home (more than 60% of the contents of the magazine were focused on this set of questions), on one hand, and they were turned into a means with which women were transformed into executors of the gender police and normalization, on the other hand.[54] WAF advised their readers "not to leave the house with a run in their stockings, or with rims awry and heels torn", or "not to go out with their hair dishevelled, to keep it always tidy", or "never to forget to have their blouse inside

53 "The status of women in marriage in the past and now", („Положбата на жена во бракот во минатото и сега"), *Македонка*, Year 7, No. 78 (May 1951), p. 6.

54 For more on the contradictions, moralizing and other problematic aspects of the "culture of motherhood" in *Makedonka*, see Kocevska, 2002.

their skirt", or "not to let their slip be longer than the rim of their dress" and "to be careful what they look like when standing"[55]



НИЕ ВИ СОВЕТУВАМЕ

Да не излегувате никојпат со испуштени котелци, искривен раб на чорапите и искинати петици.

* * *

Да си ги сечете и чистите ноктите на вашите раце, а не да ги претрупувате со најразлични лакови.

* * *

Да не одите со разбушавена коса, но секојпат да ја држите во ред.

* * *

Да си проверувате секојпат дали по вашиот фустан или јаката нема попаднати влакна од вашата коса.

* * *

Да не заборавите блузата секојпат да ја поставите во вашата сукња.

* * *

Да не дозволите комбинизонот да ви се гледа под фустанот.

* * *

Да не излегувате со фустан кој на една страна ви виси.

* * *

Да си ги закопчувате сите копчиња на фустанот или блузата па дури и кога тие ви се на грбот.

* * *

Да пазите како к'е се наместите кога к'е стоите.

55 "We advise you" („Ние ви советуваме"), *Македонка*, Year 7, No. 80 (July 1951), p. 10.

Along with the supervision and discipline over their own bodies, behaviours, aspirations and desires, women were also instructed through *Makedonka* how to become better agents of the discipline and biopolitical regulation of the bodies, upbringing, behaviour, aspirations and socialization of their own children, a care of which, judging by the contents of the magazine and its readership, men, that is, husbands and fathers, were completely relieved.[56] Special attention was paid, and in imperative linguistic form, to the regulation of the contents that children could read and come in contact with: "to avoid books in which sexual relations are presented in an open and vulgar manner, because they can ignite their fantasy prematurely and cause sexual excitement."[57] Paradoxically enough, from **agents of political subjectivization,** in time, women were transformed **agents of subjection of their own bodies and the bodies of the young.**

The analyses of the other researchers of WAF indicate that the problem of the so called double burden used to signify the wear and tear of women's bodies through their exposure to work both in the home and in the production – which in our case would be more correct to describe as **multiple burden,** because, in addition to the reproductive labour and their work outside their homes, women were equally and continuously expected to be politically active, to participate actively in decision making, in the activities of WAF and in self-management, to such an extent that the free and unproductive time for socializing almost completely disappeared from the horizon of freedom for post-war Macedonian women. Women often discussed this and complained about it within various discussion forums of WAF, and on different organizational levels. However, in the magazine, these problems were never brought to

56 See: D.S. Makarenko. "Discipline" (Д. С. Макаренко. „Дисциплина"), Македонка, Year 5, No. 52 (1949), p. 16; New Year's speech of the Marshal of Yugoslavia („Новогодишниот говор на маршалот на Југославија"), *Македонка*, Year 6, No. 62 (January 1950), p. 1; Македонка, Year 7, No. 81-82 (August-September 1951).

57 B.P. and Č.P. "Children's upbringing in the period of sexual maturation", (Б. П. и Ч. П. „Воспитувањето на децата во периодот на полното созревање"), *Македонка*, Year 8, No. 83 (December 1952), p. 20.

the attention of the readership, and they were never discussed as a cause for disagreements and antagonism.

If the second dimension of othering in the process of political subjectivization necessitated juxtaposition with the other to whom the experience of injustice is presented and equality is verified, this dimension seems to have disappeared through the years of the publication of the magazine. The Party and the National Liberation Front, as well as the state and the administrative bodies and institutions almost never antagonized, nor challenged each other. In the rare cases in which the real effects of patriarchate were identified, such as the still unsatisfactory participation of women in key positions and in decision-making bodies or in the management of production,[58] as well as the devaluing attitudes and prejudices against the women who were members of the party, it was women and their insufficient activity that were most commonly blamed as responsible, as was the absence of will and determination, women's insufficient dedication to their own improvement, to getting qualifications for highly paid jobs and political activism, or, in some cases, these problems were identified as random, individual and subjective attitudes and practices of some members of the Party. This position, however, erased the systemic effects in both cases, and the structural organization and perseverance of the histories of oppression, inequality and violence, that is, the critical understanding and antagonizing of the patriarchate. At "best", they were perceived as an effect of the insufficient development of the productive powers and of the material and economic circumstances, which, according to the good old teleological Marxist orthodoxy, the progress of history will resolve the patriarchal remnants or oppression automatically. Still, the predominant argument was that

58 "The status and role of women in new Yugoslavia (an excerpt from comrade Tito's speech)" („Положајот и улогата на жената во нова Југославија (дел од рефератот на другарот Тито)"), Македонка, Year 8, No. 83 (December 1952), p. 1 and "THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE COMMITTEES OF THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT" („УЧЕСТВОТО НА ЖЕНИТЕ ВО ОДБОРИТЕ НА НАРОДНАТА ВЛАСТ"), *Македонка*, Year 8, No. 83 (December 1952), p. 10.

"the backwardness of women regardless of the objective reasons"[59] was primarily to blame. In all issues of *Makedonka,* patriarchate was almost never mentioned as a social and political and historical category for analysis and political conflict. In the very few examples where we come across the word, it was mentioned either in the context of the past or in the context of the experience of pre-war Albanian women, or that of post-war Turkish women, or that of Muslim women in general, who "are liberating from the darkness" in socialism by removing the veil (discussed in greater detail by Ana Ashtalkovska Gajtanoska in this book).

Similarly, nowhere in *Makedonka* we can read anything about women's sexuality or about female pleasure, except for those cases where it was linked with reproduction and care for women's reproductive health exclusively, as a prerequisite for production and nurturing of healthy generations and active agents of socialism. Apart from when they work, vote or attend rallies and conferences with other bodies, the bodies of women were almost completely absent from the magazine. With our earlier elaborations in mind, concerning the naturalization of the reproductive labour of women and its reduction to the private sphere, this absence does not surprise us, that is, this erasure of the political history of women's bodies, sexuality and pleasure. Even decades after the publication of *Makedonka,* the absence of women's pleasure and sexual autonomy from marriage and out of it is still a persistent problem in the Yugoslav society (Томић, 2019). Despite the fact that the reproductive rights have been a problem and a subject of discussion in the Yugoslav society, especially from 1951 onwards, when changes were made in the Criminal Code and relative decriminalization of abortion was introduced, we cannot read a single text dedicated to this issue. Since the shame of abortion was omnipresent, many girls and women were forced to have abortions somewhere else than their places of residence, while illegal abortions and the great number of fatalities with which they resulted were a reality for

59 Ibid. p.10.

many women in the late nineteen forties and early nineteen fifties (ibid.). And yet, we cannot read a single sentence about this in the magazine. The reports of the local section of WAF showed that the patriarchal relationships, exploitation and old attitudes of their yesterday's fellow combatants persevered, but we cannot read a single page dedicated to these problems in *Makedonka* (instead of the seven or ten-pages-long excerpts from Tito's speeches in some of the issues of the magazine).

If one of the key aspects of hegemonic articulation and political subjectivization, as Gramsci points out, is to dive deep into re-articulation of the existing common sense categories, beliefs and conceptions of the world, all with an aim to excavate a multitude of contradictory and emancipatory meanings and their practices, the common sense categories about gender, sexuality and family as experiential determinants of the structural position of women and men survived perseveringly in the new hegemonic project. Just as the socialist feminist Kathi Weeks says, political subjectivization and the construction of a collective subject is a transformative practice, achievement (not an automatic consequentiality from a structural position and experience) and a collective political practice through which a new stance is produced that reinterprets and reconstructs the lives, desires, dreams, aspirations, affects and bodies of women (not only their consciousness), starting from the work practices that are historically specific to women (Weeks, 2018). This practice, however, includes selective revalorizations of the specific practices and capacities and their antagonizations, not their bare reproduction. Our earlier analysis indicated that, in this sense as well, the political subjectivization of women via *Makedonka* was replete with contradictions, and even fails eventually.

Some researchers (Sklevicky, 1996; Jancar-Webster, 1990) locate these contradictions and failure in the lost autonomy and full organizational integration of the activities and strategies of WAF within the National Liberation Front and the Communist Party, introducing these two forms of subjectivization into a dichotomous

relationship, where only the first one was characterized as emancipatory. The problem with this perception and approach is that this dichotomous framework does not conform to the specific historical circumstances, as conditions for a radical crisis and new open possibilities for hegemonization of the society. This perspective also excludes the dialectic, tense and dynamic relationship between particularity/universality or autonomy/hegemony, as a prerequisite for radical democracy and political subjectivization. At the same time, it assumes that an autonomous and particular action leads automatically to progressive, successful and democratic politicization and subjectivization. In this sense, this thesis assumes that there exists some sleeping and undiscovered women's interest that is outside the practices of political articulation and frameworks and reduces political subjectivization to identity logic. The effect of this assumption is that it erases the multitude of subjective and structural positions in which women participate in the field of multitudinous relationships of power and relationships in which gender relations are only one dimension and possible framework for identification. Additionally, it excludes the interesting dimension of women in the processes of mobilization for the common good, for reconstruction of the state, for struggle for the freedom of the people, for advocacy of equality and freedom for all citizens, critique of capitalism, imperialism, fascism and struggle against class exploitation, etc. – aspects that, as I pointed out in the second section of this text, are integral to the political subjectivization of women as citizens of a socialist state and worked as a basis for "construction of a common political identity that would create the conditions for the establishment of a new hegemony articulated through new egalitarian social relations, practices and institutions" (Mouffe, 1992, 381). Finally, the thesis that, initially, WAF acted autonomously is difficult to defend and sources only rarely support this argument. At least, in the case of *Makedonka* and the Macedonian WAF, the integration of the organization within the National Liberation Front and its leadership under the hegemonic role of the Communist Party was

unambiguous from the very beginnings, as corroborated by many statements and texts published in the first issues of *Makedonka*.

Our argument is that the problem emerged, on one hand, because of the gradual, but also complete exclusion and neutralization of the specific gender dimension and aims of the battle that would direct it towards "transformation of all the discourses, practices and social relations where the category "woman" is constructed in a way that implies subordination" (ibid. 382), although, WAF was certainly not unaware of the perseverance of the patriarchate, as I have already indicated earlier. The key contradiction regarding this problem is in the fact that, despite the indefatigable insistence and reduction of the policies of WAF to the maxim that "the women's question does not exist, only questions that women resolve exist" (Sklevicky, 1996, 133), the domains of action, intervention and activities of WAF clearly testify to the fact that specific women's issues nonetheless existed. These women's issues were reduced to natural, non-political and non-historical phenomena and practices, excluded from the political antagonization, and articulation as oppressive models and their transformation. An illustrative example of this contradiction is the statement from 1951, published in *Makedonka,* according to which the democratization of WAF and the intensification of the activities among the masses of women should be founded upon "those questions that interest them and that are specific women's questions", such as "women should know the basic stuff about how to look after their homes, how to nurture children, how to maintain hygiene in their houses, questions related to extramarital children, pupils' success, children's homes, distribution of the MDF presents, problems concerning health education, etc."[60]

The second key problem, I believe, is the reduction of the social and political system to a new totality by the National liberation Front and the Communist Party that essentialized the necessity

60 "The struggle for just peace and the readiness to defend the independence of our country is the 8 March pledge of all women of Yugoslavia" („Борба за праведен мир и готовност да се брани независноста на нашата земја, е осмомартовски завет на сите жени од Југославија"), *Македонка*, Year 7, No. 76 (March 1951), p. 2.

for foundations for the social and political, in this case expressed through the class interest and their identification of the people as working people exclusively and as the only revolutionary subject, erasing the aspects of political contingency and plurality and multitudinous interests. That is to say, the hegemonic logic of the national-liberation struggle of the National Liberation Front and the Communist Party undermined its own opportunity, because the uniting effect or the source of the equivalence relationship reduced them to a positive identity, whereby the equivalence relationship was transformed into something a priori necessary and consequently impossible, while eliminating the differential moments and collapsing them into an identity. The political identity became an unmediated essence and presumed the unity of the differential moments, waking it from its sleeping, embryonic state. By erasing that necessary tension between the particular/differential moments of the universal, the Communist Party eliminated the basic democratic and hegemonic logic according to which the "universal emerges out of the particular not as some principle underlying and explaining the particular, but as an incomplete horizon suturing a dislocated particular identity". That is to say, the universal emerges as a symbol of the fullness that is missing, while simultaneously "the particular exists only in the contradictory movement of asserting at the same time a differential identity and cancelling it through its subsumption in the non-differential medium" (Laclau, 1996, 28).

Finally, it is about the failure with regards to the central political investment, as Tijana Okić argues, that is, "the issue of the political strategies regarding the goals of the revolution and the meaning of the emancipation: the conflict between the economic emancipation and the abolition (communist abolition) of family, class and state" (Okić, 2016, 163) and, consequently, the multitudinous interweaving of gender equality through various social, political, economic, cultural and psychological fields. Or, in other words, if the National Liberation Front and the Communist

Party had the will and political determination for radical transformation of the society, including the abolition of capitalism, for a sovereign conflict with the greatest powers in the geopolitical space and radical restructuring of the economic production, when gender and sexual revolution was concerned, we can conclude that for the Communist Party "women belonged either to the bourgeois class or to the proletariat, or, in other words, to the men of these two classes" (Wittig, 1992, 17).

As a conclusion, and insisting on our responsibility, we would like to cite the words of an unknown woman published in one of the early issues of *Makedonka:*

> "Upon hearing that the conversation is about them, one comrade with a battered look, asked: "Comrade, is the new government going to stop men from drinking and beating up their wives when drunk?" And it was explained to her that the new and free Macedonia will not forbid comrades their drink but that the life conditions it will create will be such that they will no longer have a reason to drink, no troubles to drive them to drink, as it has been until now. The new life will bring joy to everyone."[61]

61 "Women in Skopska Crna Gora" („Жената во Скопска Црна Гора"), *Македонка*, Year 1, No. 1 (November 1944), p. 11.

БРОЈ
83

ВО ОВОЈ БРОЈ:

го: ДЕЛ ОД РЕФЕРАТОТ НА VI КОНГРЕС НА КПЈ.

Малеска: ВПЕЧАТОЦИ ОД КОНГРЕСОТ

ра Ацева: ДЕЛ ОД РЕФЕРАТОТ НА VII ПЛЕНУМ НА А.Ф.Ж. НА МАКЕДОНИЈА

еф. Х. Поленаковиќ: ЛИКОТ НА МАЈКАТА ВО „СЕРДАРОТ" ОД Г. ПРЛИЧЕВ

Малинска: ЗА НОВИОТ ЛИК НА СЕМЕЈСТВОТО КАЈ НАС

Миловска: ВОСПИТУВАЊЕТО НА ДЕЦАТА — ГРИЖА НА ОПШТЕСТВОТО

П. и Ч. П.: ВОСПИТУВАЊЕТО НА ДЕЦАТА ВО ПЕРИОДОТ НА ПОЛНОТО СОЗРЕВАЊЕ

ред изборите за Н.О.; Од активноста на нашите организации; Кинески прилог; Мода; Прилог сиети за жената и друго.

ЦЕНА
20
ДИН.



ПОБЕДА

А. Аугустинчи

Македонка



Hristina Ivanoska

ARTISTIC RESEARCH

"Flesh into Blossom"

Recreation

Coming together
it is easier to work
after our bodies
meet
paper and pen
neither care nor profit
whether we write or not
but as your body moves
under my hands
charged and waiting
we cut the leash
you create me against your thighs
hilly with images
moving through our word countries
my body
writes into your flesh
the poem
you make of me.

Touching you I catch midnight
as moon fires set in my throat
I love you flesh into blossom
I made you
and take you made
into me.

"Recreation" is a poem by Audre Lorde, a Caribbean-American writer, feminist, lesbian and activist, downloaded from https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42579/recreation. The translation of this poem into Macedonian by Gracija Atanasovska was published in the Macedonian edition of this collection. This translation was created during the translation workshop entitled The Empowering Erotic in Audre Lorde's Poetry and was later published by Meduza - a feminist platform for girls, women, gender and sexual minorities: https://meduza.mk/fem-101/preveduvachka-rabotilnitsa-osnazhuvachkoto-erotsko-vo-poezi%d1%98ata-na-odri-lord/



He sat at some distance from her, somewhere in front of her, she looked at his back and one of his hands holding a rod of some sort, he asked her, whom do you have at your house, and she said, no one is waiting for me today, I had someone, she said afterwards, big love, they said, but everything transpired and ended with such a banal ending, that love, I mean, but I'm sad because of the defeat, what defeat, he said, that's no defeat at all, try to learn something, to extract some morals, from your relations with people, and then, when you believe that you are defeated totally, there is no defeat at all, as if life were a fable, she thought later, not listening to him anymore, and the morals at the end, and everything will be understood, and easier, and more bearable.

He took her under him on the grass, roughly, as if wishing to draw from her windpipe the last atom of the already stifled air, from the chest that threatened to burst her bra open, he must have forgotten that he was wearing a formal suit and that his knees were sinking into the grass, he was most likely dazed by the smell of the acacia swinging above them, and she felt, that was the abyss of eternity that called her, that need inside her, she knew, he was hers in that bated breath of the universe, belonging to her only, on this mountain, and he needed to recover, to take a breath and the short interruption in the mad game tied him up with a whisper, torn out of the blood itself, "my dear sunshine", just that, in fact, it was his belonging that enslaved her, and the whisper remained in the entrails, scorching hot and destructive, and she thought, this whisper, the sun must have descended from its zenith, dazed by the acacia smell, and I know, it remained inside me like a fruit, to live and grow feeding with my blood, back to the zenith, again...

The legs, on the way down, could barely stay stable, the knees kept stumbling like drunkards, and the arms spoke in their own tongue, it was obvious, the end is here, what can we do, but he postponed the death of the moment with another mad robbery of her sweetly wounded lips, she knew, he is trying to take something away from the unseen views that are on the other side of the mountain, and when he pushed her away from his chest, a glittering thread, barely visible, like a cobweb, flashed for a moment between his and her mouth, and was torn apart afterwards.

A fragment from the short story "Mountain" by Radmila Trifunovska, a Macedonian journalist, poet and writer, published in her collection of short stories *A Woman and a War* (Makedonska kniga, Skopje, 1968). Translated from Macedonian in English by Marija Jones.



The window shades have always been pulled down in your house in the summer. They seemed exciting, those darkened rooms that defended themselves from the unbearable summer heat. There sits crumpled the trapped cold that disobeys the summer and creates tension in the air, which the body cannot resist.

We hustled into the house with our heated bodies. As soon as you close the door, you cuddle up without a word and drag your hand under my dress by penetrating inside the wet space of my body, licking and biting, almost silent until an unexpected noise stops this summer play.

Would you happen to remember?

A fragment from my text "Document Missing: Performance No. 6 (Daughter)" performed for the first time within the exhibition "Ecstatic Bodies: Archive of Performative Queer Bodies in Macedonia" curated by Slavcho Dimitrov and Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovska, in the frame of "Skopje Pride Weekend", Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje, 2022. Translated from Macedonian in English: Hristina Ivanoska, Yane Calovski.



The clitoris is that piece of grit lodged deep in the shoe of sexual fantasy. (...) Hidden through the ages, nameless, devoid of artistic representation, absent from medical treatises, often unknown even to women themselves, for centuries the clitoris was but a scruple, in the original sense of the term: that seed irritating every step and tormenting the mind. (...) Clitoris. The secret nub that remains, resists, unsettles the conscience and wounds the heel, the only organ whose sole purpose is pleasure – that is, the only one with "no use." None at all, the immense niente, the all or nothing of female pleasure. (...) Fast-forward to the twenty-first century. A gynecologist is explaining to a dumb-struck male audience how the clitoris responds to a penis, dildo, fingers or tongue during love-making, describing how it moves and the form it takes during penetration or stroking. She describes how the clitoris is the vagina's accomplice, its partner. But also how it plays solo. How the clitoris enjoys a dual erotic orientation: swaying along with the movements of the vagina during penetration, but also stiffening and standing up like a crest. Sometimes both, other times just one. Opting for neither one, the clitoris confounds dichotomies. (...) The early beginnings of recognizing the clitoris did nothing but mask it further by equating it with the penis.... (...) As the scar of castration, the clitoris would be women's disabled penis. Again, but in his own unique way, Freud is a prisoner of the unisex model. (...) from antiquity up to the eighteenth century, the dominant conception was that of a single sex in which the anatomical differences between men and women were viewed as insignificant. According to this model, there was but a single sex organ: female sexual organs were found inside the body, while male sexual organs were outside of it. The late anatomical discovery of the clitoris did nothing to disarm this schema. (...) Even construed as a maimed penis, the clitoris has always been associated with excessive pleasure. It is of no use whatsoever to reproduction. Erased, but lascivious. Legend tells of certain gorgons endowed with a voluminous clitoris, condemned to masturbate in perpetuity. Ablation of the clitoris, or clitoridectomy, was seen as a therapeutic means of castrating a woman a second time by calming her passions. It's a radical solution to infinite pleasure. (...) Absence, ablation, mutilation, denial. Can the clitoris exist in our minds, bodies and unconscious in any other mode than the negative?

An excerpt from the text "Erasures" published in the book *Pleasure Erased: The Clitoris Unthought* by Catherine Malabou, a French philosopher. Translated from French in English by Carolyn Shread (Polity Press, 2022).



But can life go on in such violence, however sweet it may be? Does one not die from dying, or die from not dying? How to decide at a time of earth shattering jouissance and pain? (...) I am to you as you are to me, mine is yours and yours mine, I know you as you know me, you take pleasure with me as with you I take pleasure in the rejoicing of this reciprocal living-and identifying-together. In this cauldron of identification will melt, mingle, and melt again these reversing matrices of our last embraces. (...) thus, am I (to) your resemblance as you are mine. We are both singular and plural, one and ones, provided that nothing tarnishes the mirrors that fuse in the purity of their exchange. Provided that one, furthermore, does not exceed the other in size and quality. For then the other would be absorbed in the One (as) to infinity. (...) In this way, you see me and I see you, finally I see myself seeing you in this fathomless wound which is source of our wondering comprehension and exhilaration. And to know myself I scarcely need a "soul," I have only to gaze upon the gaping space in your loving body. (...) Now I know it/myself and by I love it/myself and by loving I desire it/myself. (...) I know, now, that both height and depth spawn-and slit-each other in(de)finitely. And that the one is in the other, and the other in me, matters little since it is in me that they are created in rapture. (...) Never the same, always new. Never repeated or repeatable in their transports of joy which can never be counted or determined by measurement. (...) Mystery, me-hysteria, without determinable end or beginning. (...) Thus (re)assured of the complicity of this all-powerful partner, they / she play(s) at courtship, kneeling in self-abasement at one moment, adorning themselves with gold and diamonds the next, touching, smelling, listening, seeing, embrac(s)ing each other, devouring, penetrating, entering, consuming, melting each other.

An excerpt from the text „La Mystérique", published in the book *Speculum of the Other Woman* by Luce Irigaray, a Belgian-French feminist, philosopher, psychoanalyst and theoretician of culture. Translated from French in English by Gillian G. Gill (Cornell University Press. 1985).

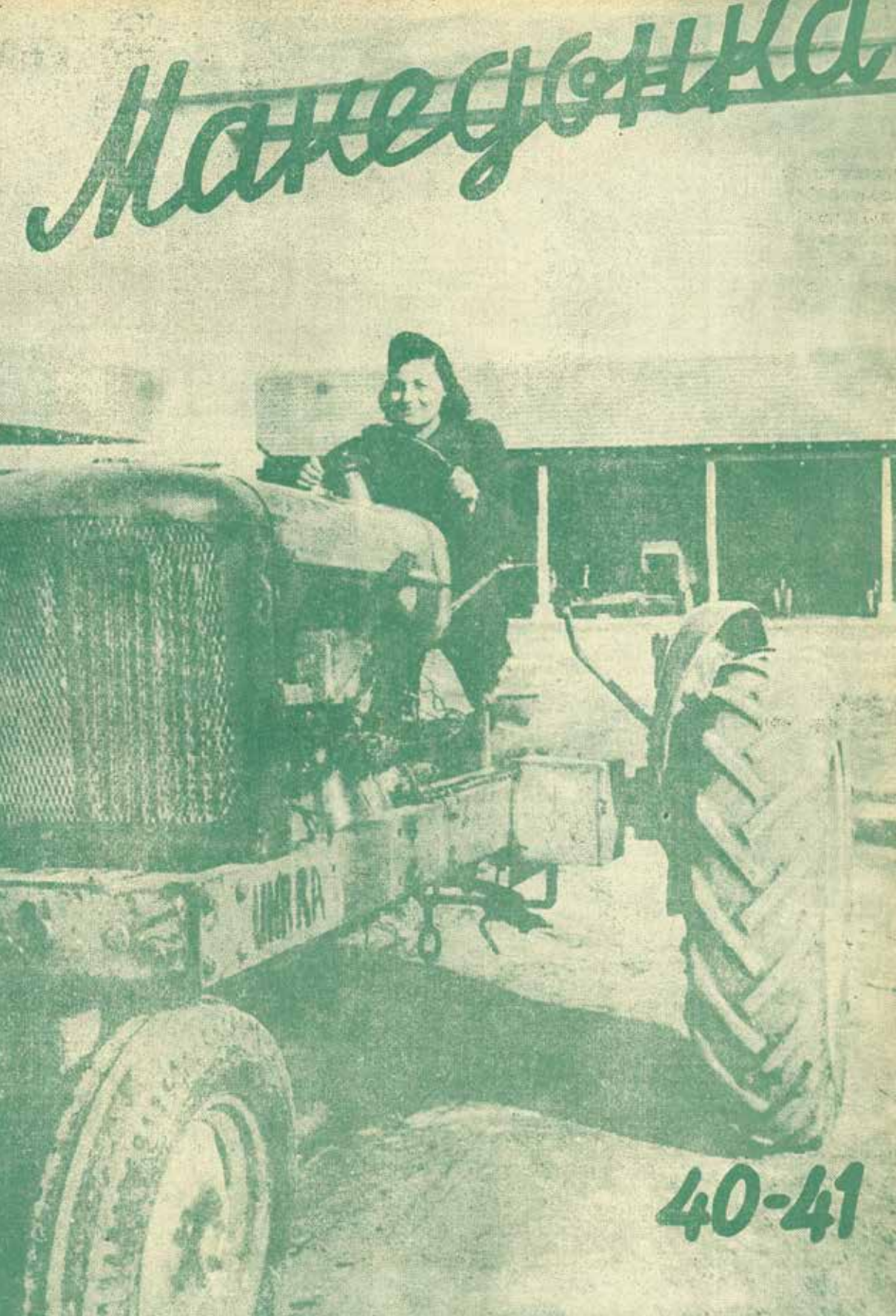


Let us replace the landscape of war or the landscape of the country's postwar reconstruction with the imaginary landscape of budding nuances of pink where the pigment is applied directly onto the foundation, like when one powders one's cheek, with a rounded soft brush. Let us read about a woman caressing another woman, about a woman abandoning herself to the brief moment of passionate pleasure, so that she can relive it inside herself for a long time afterwards, about a woman whose body blushes when it reaches its peak, and about a women who knows how to give herself away to her lover at the moment of passion, fully and unreservedly, how to burn away in him and with him.

The selection of these fragments is intimate, and it was edited following a personal concept. Some of the authors, such as Luce Irigaray and Catherine Malabou, have influenced my artistic and research practice considerably and have inspired me in the creation of new works. Several months ago, I discovered Radmila Trifunovska's prose by chance and her subtle female rebelliousness excited me and I wished to share it. I used a fragment of a verse from Audre Lorde's poem "Recreation" as a title for this imaginary landscape of yearning spread all over the pages like flesh into blossom. I created it for the 32. Nadežda Petrović memorial held in Čačak this year, having approached it with painterly fervor. And a brief homage to the potent possible in the unbearably long and hot Skopje summers.

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40-41

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CRITICAL REVIEW

(Ana Kolarić)

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(Slavcho Dimitrov)

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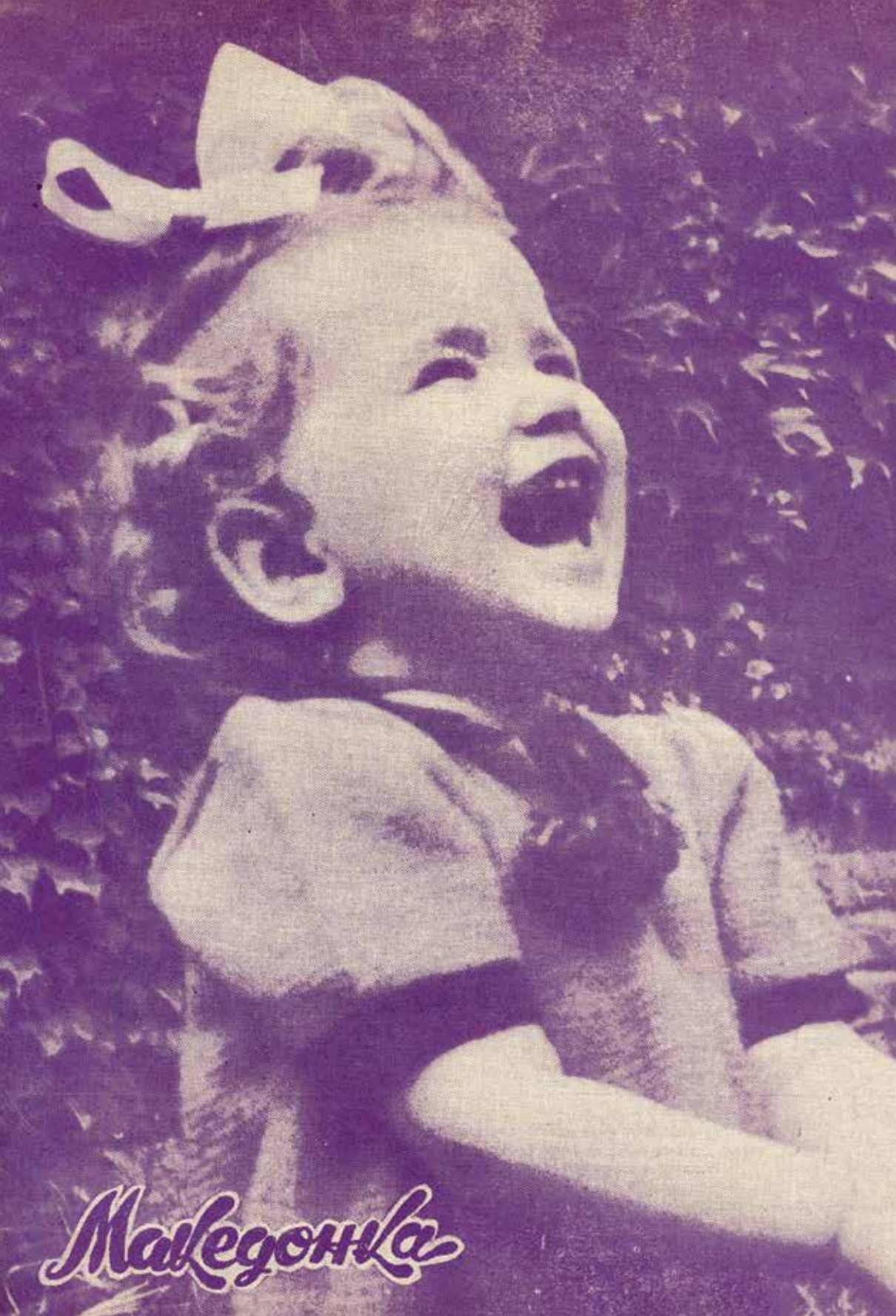
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AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES


Malegonla
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Ana Ashtalkovska Gajtanoska is a full professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University), Skopje, where she teaches Anthropology of Ethnicity, Methodology of Ethnological and Anthropological Research, Interpretations of the Balkans, Ethnology of the Albanians in Macedonia, Ethnological and Anthropological theories and other subjects. Her PhD thesis is entitled "Anthropology of intimacy in Macedonian folk culture" and it engages with the methodological issues in the research of intimate subjects. More recently, her main interest has been the history of the so-called 'national disciplines' in the Macedonian context, such as folkloristics, ethnology, anthropology and their evolution from the ethno-centric into the humanistic approach in the study of different communities.

Ana Kolarić is an associate professor at the Department for Comparative Literature and Literary Theory at the Philological Faculty of the University in Belgrade. Her research interests are Anglo-American Modernism, history of literary criticism, feminist theory and criticism, (women's) intellectual history, studies of periodicals and feminist pedagogy. She has participated in many research projects and intellectual networks, and of recently, in the bilateral research project 'Gender and intellectual history in the Serbian and Slovenian periodicals in the 20th century' (2023-2025), as a coordinator, and in *COST Action 22121: Rising nationalisms, shifting geopolitics and the future of European higher education/research openness (2023-2027)*. She has published many research papers and two monographs. The first is *Rod, modernost i emancipacija. Uredničke politike u časopisima Žena (1911-1914) i The Freewoman (1911-1912)* (Beograd: Fabrika knjiga, 2017), and the second published in 2021, *Periodika u feminističkoj učionici. Časopis Ženski pokret (1920-1938) i studije književnosti.*

Jana Kocevska graduated from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Skopje. She is one of the founder of Tiiiit!Inc. an association that actively supports women's activities and one of the founders of the feminist festival FIRST UP, FEMALE. She is also one of the founders of CINIK (ЦИНИК – Центарот за истражување на национализмот и културата) the Center for Research of Nationalism and Culture). In the last decade, she has been active on the independent cultural scene, participating in several important events and festivals including the Skopje Pride Weekend and CRIC festival of critical culture in Skopje, organized by Kontrapunkt. At the moment, she is the president of the Governing Board of SCS – Jadro, a hybrid institution in the field of culture. She is interested in feminist practices in the fields of culture and arts, as well as in the gender perspective of the quotidian.

Petar Todorov studied history at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, completed his postgraduate studies at EHESS in Paris in 2006, and defended his PhD thesis at Ss. Syril and Methodius University in Skopje in 2013. His research interests are the social and urban history of the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans in 19th and 20th century. Other than this, he is also interested in the issues concerning history education and the (ab)use of history in contemporary societies. He has been a visiting scholar at the University of Vienna, the American Research Center in Sofia, 'Georg Eckert Institute' in Braunschweig. From 2014 to 2016, he was a visiting professor of Balkan history at the Istanbul Şehir University. From 2021 to 2024, he was a member of the Governing Board of The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe of the Council of Europe. He has been employed by the Institute of National History in Skopje since 2009.

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Hristina Ivanoska (1974), in her artistic-research practice, she focuses on the issues of suppression, control and construction of collective memory with regard to women's strategies and politics of resistance. She creates objects, texts, drawings, videos, performances and installations and her work is often interdisciplinary. She engages in critical examination of the experiences of present-day's social and political systems and the way they are related to theory and history. Handiwork like embroidery, weaving, pottery and patchwork or fabric mosaic are important to her as media with political and social value through which individual struggles and limitations can be expressed. Her works have been exhibited in many important institutional and independent spaces in the country and abroad. At the moment, Ivanoska is a doctoral candidate of the program for research in artistic practice at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

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If one takes into account some of the problems listed above, it becomes even clearer how relevant the research papers from the collection dedicated to the magazine *Makedonka* are to the present times: without the knowledge of women's history, especially of the socialist period in which emancipation, enlightenment and the idea of public good were the driving elements, we would find it difficult to understand our contemporary context and the price of inclusion – but not equal participation – in the capitalist society. Of course, I do not intend to promote an uncritical idealization and romanticizing of Yugoslav socialism here, but I strongly suggest that it is worth reminding ourselves of the good practices of this period and reconsider its principal ideological aim to achieve a better standard of living for an ever greater number of citizens.

Ana Kolarić

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