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Social Democratic Reflections on Women's Activism in the Labor Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina During the First World War

Abstract: This article seeks to provide an insight into the perception of female activism, the symbolic role of women and their future in the labor movement during the First World War, i.e. to show the imagined space that party and trade union bodies intended for women. The newspaper of the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDP BiH), *Glas slobode* (Voice of Freedom), will be used to analyze the category of gender and its representation in one of the sections of the international social democratic movement.

Keywords: *Glas slobode*, Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina, women's labor activism, visibility of women, mobilization, women's roles

Within the given topic I will consider three imaginary circles that could be seen as "war ellipses". First of all, war as a global phenomenon, started by militant and male decisions. The second ellipse within which, parallel to the battles at the front, took place the political preparation for the post-war world, the struggle for the necessary human resources as well as for a party body¹ in which women's labor activism would get its role and be recognized in these circumstances. The third ellipse implies a "trench struggle" within the party itself for the positioning of gender and the future establishment of gender roles.

1 Senadin Musabegović, *Rat – konstitucija totalitarnog tijela*, (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 2008), 155-158.

The Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina was founded in 1909 in an Austro-Hungarian barracks “on the periphery” of Europe as the youngest social democratic party in the Monarchy. Since it was the first political party to demand women’s suffrage (“the general, equal and direct right to vote and be elected by secret ballot”), i.e. basic political equality, we must ask ourselves whether and to what extent this postulate has changed and how it was applied in political practice. It should be emphasized that after the introduction of emergency measures on July 26, 1914, the work of all societies was banned, including the newspaper *Glas slobode*,² which ceased publication in October 1914 and was then renewed on June 30, 1917. We have considered all texts from this period that in any way refer to the activism of working women or to the “women’s question” in general. Therefore, the analysis includes all published war issues (74 in 1914, 39 in 1917 and 103 in 1918, where each issue consists of four pages).

Moreover, apart from the initial intention to investigate the “voice of women workers” or female party members, the research results did not allow this, although they provided information about the socio-political context and the space provided for their action. It also an insight into the stratified party structure and attitudes that formed the models of their actions. In this framework, the question raised concerns the promotion of the *permitted visibility* of women’s work activism and its dynamics in the context of war and military spirit. Contrary to research expectations - considering the basic meta-ideology of pluralism, the program orientation established in the founding document from 1909 and the projected organization of political life that had its roots in the principles of the Second International, and at the moment when the male population was massively mobilized in the summer of 1914³ - female workers remained outside the editorial board of *Glas slobode*, i.e. they were invis-

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- 2 The first issue of *Glas slobode* was published on 29 April 1909 in Sarajevo. After a break during wartime, it was continually published until July 1929, both in Latin and in Cyrillic script. The journal owners and editors have changed, though this role most often belonged to Sreten Jakšić, one of the most prominent leaders of the SDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Đorđe Pejanović, *Štampa Bosne i Hercegovine 1850–1941*, (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1949), 67–68). More on Jakšić in: *Prepiska srpskih socijalista u toku Prvog svetskog rata*, ur. V. Lapčević, T. Milenković, (Beograd: IRO „Narodna knjiga“, Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1979), 53.
- 3 During the First World War 291,498 men were mobilized in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. 16.34% of the population. Zijad Šehić, „Bosanskohercegovački zemaljski pripadnici u vojnoj organizaciji Habsburške monarhije 1878–1918.“, *Historijski vidici*, I, 32, ur. Sonja Dujmović, (Sarajevo: Forum Bosne, 2005), 79.

ble despite their presence in economic and social production.⁴ Women's political activism was not only ignored in terms of its potential determination, but female workers were not engaged and unexpectedly - neither were they mobilized as auxiliary medical staff, nor were they mentioned in the party press. During the First World War, the editorial board of *Glas slobode* was made up of its founders, who not only led the policy of the SDP and its magazine in peacetime, but also of the trade union in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which represented a kind of institutionalization of ideas about the unity of political theory and practice. One could clearly imagine that the entire political and organizational plan of the party was conceived at some bar table, among a small group of leaders who decided on all party and trade union matters. In addition, ignoring women's labor activism negated the principles of the Second International⁵ and the program according to which the social democratic press was supposed to lead the "principled and tactical view of the party",⁶ adhering to the decisions of international congresses.

The issues published between the assassination on 28 June 1914 and even after the official declaration of war, reflect a kind of editorial confusion due to which women workers were invited to buy "workers' soap",⁷ while "comrades" were asked to subscribe to the magazine and offer their contributions.⁸ In this way, the experience of female workers from a position of power was mediated and their "desire" to objectify their activism was expressed. Preoccupied with reporting on the actions of the participants in the war and the situation on the fronts, the editorial board, in accordance with the extremely serious political and war circumstances, only conveyed the government's announcements about the increasing need for female staff (tram drivers, conductors and seamstresses) until the journal stopped being published on 8 October 1914, without motivating and mobilizing women's social or party membership. At the time, they failed to seize the opportunity to encourage women's activism in an at-

4 Lydia Sklevicky, „Karakteristike organiziranog djelovanja žena u Jugoslaviji u razdoblju do drugog svetskog rata (I)“, *Polja* 43–45/1984, 415, <https://polja.rs/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Polja-308-43-45.pdf> (accessed on July 1, 2021)

5 SDS BiH became a member of the Second International at the session of the International Socialist Bureau in Zurich in 1911.

6 Enver Redžić, *Austromarksizam i jugoslavensko pitanje*, (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1977), 315, 325.

7 „Radnički sapun“, *Glas slobode*, 2/15. 7. 1914.

8 “Drugovi i drugarice”, *Glas slobode*, 5/18. 7. 1914; 9/22. 7. 1914.

tempt to reverse the significant pre-war decline in party membership⁹ caused by the impact of the Balkan wars.¹⁰

It has been neglected that the female participants at the assembly of workers held on August 27, 1905 (out of 350 workers, 50 were women)¹¹ became the founders of the organized labor movement.¹² Although they did not organizationally influence the extent of their own engagement, the female workers of the Tobacco Factory in Sarajevo were the main initiators of the general strike on 2 May 1906,¹³ which spread throughout the country, provoking reactions from the authorities. The engagement of working women is also confirmed by the fact that two of them participated in the adoption of the Hainfeld Program (June 28–29, 1909), that included a request to ban night work for women and children,¹⁴ which was incorporated into the SDP program.¹⁵ Through short public lectures organized by trade unions, especially after 1912, female workers received “class education” and “encouragement in the experience of organized action and the acquisition of knowledge as an opportunity to participate in social power.”¹⁶ However, despite the proverbial politicization of their activism, working women remained far from the focus of *Glas slobode*, which decided to deal with workers’ social problems and other organizational issues (probably influenced by the three conferences of the Austrian Social Democratic Party held in 1915 and 1916)¹⁷ when the journal continued to be published on 30 June 1917.

Dissatisfaction with wages due to the rising costs of workers in the tobacco factory in Sarajevo (“pre-war wages - war food”), but also in the entire

9 Vlado Strugar, *Jugoslavenske socijaldemokratske stranke 1914–1918*, (Zagreb: JAZU, 1963), 115.

10 In the middle of 1912, SDP BiH had the most female members (130) who made up 5.3% of the total membership. By the 5th Congress, the number of women had dropped to 68 (3.5%), and they were distributed in four branches: Sarajevo 90, Tuzla 20, Mostar 18, and Breza 2. Ilija Hadžibegović, „Širenje i dostignuća socijalističkog radničkog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini (1909–1914)“, *Istorija saveza komunista Bosne i Hercegovine*. I, (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju u Sarajevu NIŠRO „Oslobođenje“, OOUR izdavačka djelatnost, 1990), 45.

11 *Ibid*, 23, 40.

12 In a country with 1.8 million inhabitants in 1910, 5.4% were mostly unqualified workers, a half from which were seasonal workers. Only 10% of the workers were politically and union organized. Female workers made up 7.3% of the total number of workers.

13 Redžić, *Austromarksizam i jugoslavensko pitanje*. 34.

14 Hadžibegović, „Širenje i dostignuća socijalističkog radničkog pokreta“, 41.

15 Sonja Dujmović, „Na šta (da) pomislim kada kažem 8. mart“, <https://feministika.ba/na-sta-da-pomislim-kada-kazem-8-mart/> (accessed on March 9, 2023)

16 Sklevicky, „Karakteristike organiziranog djelovanja žena u Jugoslaviji“, 415.

17 Redžić, *Austromarksizam i jugoslavensko pitanje*. 172.

tobacco industry, became the leitmotif of *Glas slobode* to follow women's labor activism until the end of the war, which opened up space for constant criticism of the government.¹⁸ At the same time, this news was always on the last page of the worker's diary, most often with a call for adherence to the union-party structure and a reminder that "only in the struggle of women under the banner of social democracy one can see the possibility of success for women to improve their position and achieve equality".¹⁹

In the same way, in its second issue, the renewed magazine dealt with women workers who, already in the third year of the war, felt the painful experience of being separated from the traditional family environment and values. They are pushed into the public space and the labor market at the worst possible moment of the primary and most primitive growing capitalist exploitation, with the aim of securing their basic existence - again through advertising.²⁰ They were addressed as the main household economists and the biggest consumers.

This was a completely tactless "address". In the same issue, it was announced that "in the shortest possible time, conclusions will be drawn on the new form of women's socialist organization", that is, that the Main Committee will make a decision on this issue "of great importance". This testifies to the unwillingness of the party leadership to take a stand and face the evident and disturbing economic and social presence of the "women's question". The first serious mention of "proletarian women" dates from October 1917, in the context of the difficult social position of women. The anonymous author stated that the assumption of positions on the labor market by women workers who "feel too heavy burden of their backwardness and lack of information" is the result of the fact that "female labor was far cheaper, and without a doubt that women today are a much calmer and more conservative element". The author further adds: "These motives will be very important in the future as well, and post-war opportunities will benefit them. These post-war opportunities, from which everyone expects something for themselves, unfortunately will not develop in the way these beautiful women want... This new position of women, which is predicted, as we see, will not be a consequence of normal economic development, but will bring war".

18 From 1880 to 1910, the profit from the tobacco industry increased from 3.5 to 19.5 million crowns, making it the most important item of the provincial budget (Hadžibegović, *Postanak radničke klase*, 82).

19 „Proslava Ženskog dana“, *Glas slobode*, 14/27. 3. 1918.

20 „Radnici i radnice! Trošite radničke šibice i cigar-papire!“, *Glas slobode*, 7. 7. 1917, 3.

Although these abnormal circumstances and the war led to the emancipation of women, they were called upon to struggle in the following way: “With collegial solidarity with her brothers, sons and husbands, her awareness and defiant proletarian struggle, a woman can win for herself a worthy position in society. Even more: it could change this unjust order and raise the society of the future - equality and justice! They owe it to themselves, their brothers, their husbands and their children!” On the other hand, it is promised that workers will “come to the aid of beautiful women first”.²¹

The patronizing attitude, the language that was used and the appeal for solidarity and responsibility towards the community (in this case by blood relation) - are just some of the signs that show the ambivalent attitude of the party elite towards the actualization of the status of women in society and (un)conscious retreat from unexpected consequences. The solidarity of female workers was called for when it was necessary to collect voluntary financial contributions for the journal (on that occasion, the names of the female workers who collected money were listed in a permanent column that invited others to emulate them),²² when it was necessary to re-establish the trade union and party organization that was shut down due to the war, to mobilize the lost membership that had to be prepared for the “struggle for peace, a real solution to current issues and for socialism”.²³ However, women’s labor activism was not specifically evoked. Their engagement was understood as part of the general renewal movement, which testifies to the ability of the working elite to use free labor and the energy of “conscious comrades” to accomplish practical tasks. In this way, the female activists, though belatedly, received their due gratitude for preserving the continuity of trade union and party activities during the war. On the occasion of the anniversary of the re-release of the journal, female activists were also mentioned: “We are glad to note that our comrades in the movement fulfill all their duties, especially the agitation for *Glas slobode*, with the greatest effort and dedication. The *Glas slobode* is their newspaper and the protector of their interests...”²⁴ Their rights were not even mentioned. This attitude, characteristic of the nineteenth-century theory of civic responsibility, seemed like an empty lecture in wartime circumstances. The war is the reason that explains the new revolutionary capacity of women in all countries, because

21 „Proleterskoj ženi“, *Glas slobode*, 6. 10. 1917.

22 „Dobrovoljni prilozci za Glas slobode“, *Glas slobode*, 21. 12. 1917. / 2. 1. 1918; *Ibid.*, 13/26. 1. 1918, etc.

23 „Drugovi! Radnici i radnice! Tuzlanska sirotinjo!“, *Glas slobode*, 11/24. 11. 1917.

24 „Naše drugarice i Glas slobode“, *Glas slobode*, 20. 6. / 3. 7. 1918.

“women workers were exploited and oppressed as a class and as a gender, and because the war threw them into the worst misery, which was harder to bear than the men endured serving in the army”.²⁵

Proletarian women were directly addressed only at the beginning of 1918, on the occasion of the decision to restore the pre-war women's trade union organizations and the Social Democratic Women's Agitation/Reserve Committee, whose work was supposed to be coordinated for the sake of easier agitation and the education of female workers: “During the war, women's participation in the economy doubled and tripled, so they also became a factor that the economy should consider. Based on the role of women in the economy, both labor organizations and the Socialist Party must devote much more time to organizing women than before the war”.²⁶

There were no women's newspapers in Bosnia and Herzegovina at that time, neither socialist nor conservative, which was an exception within the Monarchy because Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have Mrs. Adelheid Popp (Viennese *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*),²⁷ nor Mrs. Horti (*Háztartás. A magyar asszonyok közlönye Household. The Gazette of Hungarian Women*).²⁸ Therefore, the help of the editorial board was announced in the form of opening a space for the Women's Movement column intended for “articles about the women's movement and women's interests”, but no text signed by a woman was submitted. As it was claimed, this was a response to the repeated applications of female workers for membership in the party, so the Main Committee of the SDP BiH announced that it would “allow female comrades to organize themselves”.²⁹ Considering that there were no independent organizations within the labor movement, and that the “women's question” was seen exclusively as a part of class issues, the public promotion of “class-conscious” female workers' demands was only a way to mobilize them. The opinions expressed in *Glas slobode* were not feminine since it was not a platform for the articulation of working women's interests or ideas. Of course, unless it was obtained by the desired act of activism according to

25 „Ženski socijalistički pokret za vrijeme rata“, *Glas slobode*, 13. 12. 1917. / 12. 1. 1918.

26 „Ženski pokret. Agitacioni rad među ženama“, *Glas slobode*, 21. 12. 1917. / 2. 1. 1918.

27 Adelheid Popp (1869–1939) was among the first agitators of social democracy in Austria who advocated social and political rights of women. Starting from 1892, she was the editor-in-chief of the journal, but was also arrested for her views and writings. She was the author of *Die Jugendgeschichte einer Arbeiterin* (Autobiography of a working woman). After the First World War she served as a member of parliament.

28 Mrs. Horthy, the wife of Hungarian Admiral Miklós Horthy, editor of a conservative women's paper.

29 „Ženska socijalistička organizacija“, *Glas slobode*, 7. 7. 1917, 3.

those who dominated. The agitation proved to be very successful, so *Glas slobode* was soon able to announce that the party in Sarajevo had more than 1,000 female members, while there were over 800 in the Association of Factory Women Workers. In addition, the Women's Socialist Agitation Committee successfully organized Women's Day on 24 March 1918.³⁰ The previous proclamation, emphasized by the "tailored" with the whiteness of censorship,³¹ which called for the unity of female workers under the auspices of SDP as an essential part of the Party's propaganda and political efforts ("The Women's day ... will make the socialist movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina even larger in number and stronger in consciousness"),³² while special attention was paid to the support of Muslim women.³³ Women's Day gathered around 2,000 female workers wearing red ribbons, who agitated for *Glas slobode* before noon. In the afternoon, an assembly was held where the Resolution was passed, while the evening celebration was full of enthusiastic speeches by the organizers who praised women who "joined the determined struggle for socialism in our country... and remained faithful to the principles of the International"³⁴

The entire organization was established by the decision of the Main Board of the SDP BiH (dated 26 December 1917), and the SDP BiH resolution from 3 February 1918, which concerns practical tasks – "gaining and preparing the masses for the struggle for peace and socialism". The most important task was placed on socialist printed propaganda, which was confirmed by the *Resolution about Glas slobode*.³⁵

At that time, women's spontaneous protests against high prices, support for soldiers' families and demands for the return of husbands from the

30 „Ženski pokret. Ženski dan“, *Glas slobode*, 24. 2. / 9. 3. 1918.

31 „Ženama socijaldemokratima širom Bosne i Hercegovine. Drugarice i sestre!“, *Glas slobode*, 3/16. 3. 1918.

32 „Žene i socijalizam“, *Glas slobode*, 10/23. 3. 1918.

33 "It was for the first time in history of our region that Muslim women came to a public meeting": „Muslimanke u socijalističkim organizacijama“, *Glas slobode*, 24. 2. / 9. 3. 1918, 2; Strugar, *Jugoslavenske socijademokratske stranke*, 147–149. Support for the present Muslim women "who will find a friend [...] and help in the socialist organization", came during the formation of the "committee for the suppression of immorality" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, initiated by the Muslim religious and political elite. The action was supported by the provincial government, which ordered an investigation of the March assembly. Adnan Jahić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje u Bosni i Hercegovini (1908–1950)*, (Zagreb: Bošnjačka nacionalna zajednica za grad Zagreb i Zagrebačku županiju, Zagreb, Naučnoistraživački institut „Ibn Sina“, Sarajevo, Gradski ured za obrazovanje, kulturu i sport Grada Zagreba, Zagreb, 2018), 148–161.

34 „Proslava ženskog dana“, *Glas slobode*, 14/27. 3. 1918.

35 „Sa zemaljske konferencije“, *Glas slobode*, 24. 1. / 6. 2. 1918, 1.

front became more frequent and louder during 1918. As in other countries of the world,³⁶ some of the participants of these demonstrations were arrested.³⁷ However, *Glas slobode* did not record this kind of female activism at all, despite the duty of the Social Democratic Women's Agitation Committee and the reserve committee to attract discontented women to the party. Tobacco industry workers and soldiers' wives were, at their request, under the auspices of the Main Board of the SDP BiH, whose members led the delegations of women³⁸ dissatisfied with salaries and allowances for the families of reservists.³⁹ *Glas slobode* reported in detail on the party's leadership and its patronizing activities regarding unprotected women. The names of the party leaders are listed, but not their female colleagues who were also in charge of negotiations with the government representatives. Operational activities⁴⁰ that preceded the delegations, were undertaken by women's organizations with the support of the party leadership⁴¹ Emphasizing concern for the exploited and repressed, *Glas slobode* also provides data on individual cases of unprotected women, such as "Mother's Plea", "Abandoned by the World", etc.⁴²

Therefore, the organizational and operational activities of mobilizing the disenfranchised female population fell on the burden of party women. They successfully performed this task as organizers and speakers, effectively popularizing social democratic ideology. For example, unaware that this may harm the illusion of equal political representation, *Glas slobode* states patronizingly: "The general impression during the celebration was: surprise at the ability our comrades showed in the performance of their duties. At certain moments, this

36 Karen Hunt, "The Politics of Food and Women's Neighborhood Activism in First World War Britain", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, Spring 2010, Volume 77, Issue 1, 8–26, passim, accessed on 22 February 2022, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0147547909990226>

37 Strugar, *Jugoslavenske socijaldemokratske stranke*, 47–48.

38 „Vojničke žene iz Sarajeva, Vareša“, *Glas slobode*, 15. 9. 1917; „Izaslanstvo radnica duhanske fabrike kod zemaljske vlade“, *Glas slobode*, 13. 10. 1917.

39 The amount of support between 60 heller and 2 crowns per day was determined in 1916, according to the number of children and family members. There was no further increase in Bosnia and Herzegovina, "although during that time it was raised twice in Austria and Hungary". „Kada će povisti potpore vojničkim ženama?“, *Glas slobode*, 15. 9. 1917; „Veliki sastanak žena“, *Glas slobode*, 14/27. 3. 1918.

40 „Ženski pokret. Odbor rezervističkih žena“, *Glas slobode*, 3/16. 1. 1918.

41 „Ženski pokret. Odgovor vlade izaslanstvu odbora rezervističkih žena“, *Glas slobode*, 15. 8. / 7. 9. 1918.

42 "Molba jedne majke", *Glas slobode*, 3/16. 1918; „Građanin“, *Glas slobode*, 28. 2. / 13. 3. 1918.

surprise turned into real astonishment”.⁴³ It should be emphasized that this was the only time that the names of female workers, members of the party, were mentioned in the paper in connection with social democratic activities (one of them will become the wife of one of the party leaders). This showed that female activism in the leadership of the SDP BiH was not perceived as an equal subject of social management and decision-making, but rather as a theatrical promotion of its own progressiveness. In this regard, the treatment of workers as a homogeneous category has become questionable, especially when it comes to gender policies implemented by its elites. If we ask the question - on whom did women’s social democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina rely and which women did they deal with - the answer would be that their call was not only aimed at female workers, but that their target group was the entire female population (“women and girls, all our friends and sisters”). The SDP BiH, especially in the last year of the war, strategically focused its potential voter base on female power, already divided by class, organization and ideology, but also strove to connect women activism with its own social democratic ideology. In this way, it tried to create an army of women from all social strata, whose activities would break traditionally established stereotypes about gender roles in society, even within the party membership itself. In this sense, *Glas slobode* secretly promoted the women’s illustrated magazine *Ženski svijet* (Women’s World) from Zagreb, announcing a monthly edition “for the cultural, social and political interests of women”. Its editor Zofka Kveder-Demetrović,⁴⁴ the wife of one of the leading social democrats in Croatia, was looking for authors who would write about “women’s issues from a social democratic point of view, so that this magazine would not go unnoticed among our comrades”.⁴⁵ The regular monthly recommendation of *Ženski svijet*, which published a detailed report with contents of the latest issue, including the names of the authors and the titles of their articles, testifies that this was not accidental.⁴⁶ “Opposed” class values underpinned information about “bourgeois art”, such as classical music concerts. This indicates a vacillation between the recommendations for the class path of conscious women workers, the attractive mobilization of their energy and the lack of a clear definition of the “women’s issue”. A cursory analy-

43 „Proslava ženskog dana“, *Glas slobode*, 14/27. 3. 1918.

44 Katja Mihurko Poniž, „Zofka Kveder as a Cultural Transmitter“, <http://www.knjizenstvo.rs/en/journals/2020/womens-writing-and-culture/zofka-kveder-as-a-cultural-transmitter#gsc.tab=0> (accessed on 19 May 2023)

45 „Ženski svijet“, *Glas slobode*, 4. 8. 1917.

46 „Ženski svijet“, *Glas slobode*, 15. 9. 1917; 13. 10. 1917; 25. 12. 1917. / 2. 1. 1918.

sis shows that the terms *woman*, *women* and *female* were used four times more than the terms *woman worker* or *women workers*.

However, as far as women engaged in intellectual fields and education were concerned, this support was lacking. As an alarm of imminent danger, potential criticism turned into ironic disdain, and the demeaning tone of criticism and underestimation of their work was surprisingly undisguised.⁴⁷ The explanation would be that there was mistrust towards intellectuals, especially educated women, a few of whom belonged to the SDP BiH. Most of the “leaders” and personnel structure of the party were craftsmen, who had completed ideological and political courses.⁴⁸

Women could find their role models elsewhere, far from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their activities and experience were idealized, not glorified. These were mostly Russian women who “not only actively participated in the fate of their husbands and brothers, but were themselves true to their beliefs and principles because they [...] aspired to be useful members of society”.⁴⁹ The patriarchal hierarchical matrix they described made Russian women's activism even more acceptable.⁵⁰ The example of the increasing presence of Turkish women in public life and their participation in the overthrow of the last Sultan Abdul Hamid, served as an example of emancipation, even before the war.⁵¹ However, the greatest focus has been placed on social changes that Turkish women gradually accepted, which were brought about by men, allowing women to enter the public space and engage politically. However, the greatest admiration was caused by the German social democratic women and their successfully implemented activism,⁵² but also by all the members of the German women's movement whose leadership remained on the left side, thus representing the most determined opposition against the parliamentary majority that supported war loans.⁵³

Female role models stood out from this community based on their activism and sacrifice for the idea of social democracy. In the first place, the

47 „Zapisi na brzu ruku“, *Glas slobode*, 31. 3. / 13. 4. 1918.

48 Hadžibegović, „Širenje i dostignuća socijalističkog radničkog pokreta“, 61.

49 „Ruska žena“, *Glas slobode*, 12/25. 12. 1918. The text is a part of a feuilleton. See more: „Žene i djevojke u ruskoj revoluciji“, 20. 2. / 5. 3. 1914.

50 *Glas slobode*, 20. 2. / 5. 3. 1914.

51 „Pokret turskih žena. Mali feljton“, *Glas slobode*, 3/16. 1. 1914; „Pokret žena u Turskoj“, 6/19. 2. 1914; „Turske žene“, *Glas slobode*, 10/23. 3. 1918.

52 „Sudjelovanje žena u njemačkim radničkim i vojničkim vijećima“, *Glas slobode*, 7/20. 11. 1918.

53 „Ženski socijalistički pokret za vrijeme rata“, *Glas slobode*, 30. 12. 1917. / 12. 1. 1918.

political fate of Rosa Luxemburg, her arrest, defense speech in court and her conviction were closely followed. The paper then apostrophized the personality of “comrade Zetkin, who is the pride of the entire International”. Her importance was all the greater because she already supported the first Women’s Day celebration in Sarajevo in 1914 by telegram on behalf of the International Organization of Socialist Women.⁵⁴ Four years later, during the second celebration of Women’s Day, the assembly of women responded to her telegram, expressing solidarity with the Women’s International.⁵⁵ This motivated Clara Zetkin to write in the Leipzig opposition *People’s Paper* that “women social democrats of all countries know how to appreciate the brave determination, endurance, enthusiasm and commitment with which our sisters from Bosnia and Herzegovina work for the idea of socialism...”⁵⁶ Angelina Balabanoff, secretary of the Zimmerwald International Conference,⁵⁷ was also on the list of role models, but her words on the pages of *Glas slobode* were censored⁵⁸ while her revolutionary commitment was presented as Russian.⁵⁹ Luise Zietz,⁶⁰ the “female Babel”, and Gabriela Proit were also mentioned once.

There were no exemplary social democratic activists from neighboring countries on the pages of *Glas slobode*, despite the good relations and wartime correspondence between the respective party leaders.⁶¹ The reason for this should perhaps be sought in the patronage of their own party colleagues who shared the same beliefs, mentality and patriarchal closed-mindedness, from which even socialist ideas could not be a sufficient guide in that space and time. This analysis shows that the social democrats did not (re)define the status of women during the war. It has been shown more than once that it is not useful, at least not on the basis of historiographic research, to create assumptions based on theoretical and programmatic sense, nor is it good to project concep-

54 „Ženski dan“, *Glas slobode*, 24. 2. / 9. 3. 1914.

55 „Proslava ženskog dana“, *Glas slobode*, 14/27. 3. 1918.

56 „Klara Zetkin o našem ženskom pokretu“, *Glas slobode*, 14/27. 4. 1918; Dujmović, „Na šta (da) pomislim kada kažem 8. mart“.

57 For more on Balabanoff, see: *Prepiska srpskih socijalista u toku Prvog svetskog rata*, 237.

58 „Cimervaldska internacionala“, *Glas slobode*, 8/21. 9. 1918.

59 In 1917, the SDP BiH chose the revolutionary option of the Zimmerwald Conference.

60 Luise Zietz (1865–1922), the first woman named as a member of the executive council of the Social Democratic Party of Germany in 1908, after which she initiated the creation of the women’s movement within her party.

61 Matko Globačnik, *Hrvatska socijaldemokracija u Prvome svjetskom ratu*, (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2018), 22–25.

tual subjects of historical reality.⁶² Therefore, the party and trade union elites, represented by the same people, with models and ideas taken from the theory of socialism, were not mature enough to fundamentally change the status of women shaped by patriarchal tradition. It has been more or less promoted and revitalized over and over again, persisting in the traditional gender roles of patriarchal society and the subordinate position of women.

This was also confirmed by the language used to address women and activist workers. The manner of addressing female workers and their party comrades was not only a reflection of editorial position, but also of the entire society, its deeply rooted matrices with severe gender disqualifications that related to the female population ("women as tram drivers"). Women are referred to as "mankind's reserve", "male surrogates", etc. They even avoided calling female workers, instead addressing women and girls, sisters and mothers of workers, and then only female workers. This language was not neutral: its negative connotation was a result of the social system, implying a lower qualification and social value for both women and female workers. Such language, which turned them into outsiders from the community in which they were supposed to feel safe and supported ("with our brothers"), had deeper social roots and a much wider reach.⁶³ At the same time, by using the kinship terminology, female workers were invited to accept their "extended" family and perform the same role as in their own, including their characteristic traditional roles.⁶⁴ This meant that the only social democratic paper did not encourage the representation of women workers in the political and public space, so as not to threaten the position of the male part of the working class and ultimately question politics and socio-economic currents dominated by male power. Thus, this newspaper more or less covertly relativized the merits of the party female comrades, their activism and abilities. It states that women in the capitalist system performed all men's duties, and that the war additionally "broke many social norms, so the social economy was turned upside down: workers were torn from economic

62 Mišel Fuko, „Treba braniti društvo“, *Predavanja (kratak sadržaj) 1970–1982*, (Novi Sad: Bratstvo jedinstvo, 1990), 71.

63 Veronika Helfert, "Schwestern im „Bund der Brüder“? Zum Verschwinden (und Wiederfinden) der Frauen in der österreichischen Rätebewegung“, *Die Rätebewegung in Österreich. Von sozialer Notwehr zur konkreten Utopie*, eds. Anna Leder, Mario Memoli, Andreas Pavlic, (Wien: Mandelbaum, 2019), 108, https://www.academia.edu/43124585/Schwestern_im_Bund_der_Br%C3%BCder_Zum_Verschwinden_und_Wiederfinden_der_Frauen_in_der_%C3%B6sterreichischen_R%C3%A4tebewegung (accessed on 1 March 2022).

64 Renata Jambrešić Kirin, *Dom i svijet*, (Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije), 2008, 21, 138.

life, and their heavy tasks were taken over by ‘weak female hands’”. It was also evident that “the woman will not return to her old place”.⁶⁵

However, according to them, “a woman has not stopped being a housewife and will never stop being a mother”.⁶⁶ The editorial board of *Glas slobode* supported its position with the text of Mathilde Wurm,⁶⁷ a German social democratic activist and associate of Clara Zetkin, in which she stated: “While the planet is bleeding, the cry is heard worldwide: More children! Women, be mothers! It is your duty to give the people more children to fill the terrible void created by this terrible war!”⁶⁸

The heavy burden of women/mothers/housewives was the basis for seeking women’s rights and placing the “institution of motherhood” and “natural” maternal love in the center, on the pedestal of the scale of roles assigned to women in post-war society. Outside of the program, but with deep conviction, the call for their responsibility was ideologically motivated. Therefore, the social democrats’ concern for the position of female workers, their party comrades and the fight for equality, as well as their support for its emancipatory potential, are very questionable. On the contrary, the subordination of female workers’ and women’s activism was the dominant message supported by the so-called “natural gender regime”, while the strategy of masculinization in the party ranks reached full momentum.

Evidently, “the biopolitics of the patriarchy was absolute in its sovereign power” and was a comprehensive topic in the SDP BiH newspaper. Politics retreated back into biopolitics/biophilia with a matrix of exclusive inclusivity⁶⁹ because, due to its deep-seated nature, it did not open the possibility of another choice. A woman’s biological capacity (“in the nature of things”) was used for control and direction as a social necessity, even a requirement. This reproductive function placed women in the position of a social regenerator while her natural “advantage” should only be complementary to male dominance and its representation, thereby avoiding potential competition and her entry into the

65 „Proleterskoj ženi“, *Glas slobode*, 6. 10. 1917.

66 „Žena i socijalizam“, *Glas slobode*, 10/23. 3. 1918.

67 Mathilde Wurm (1874–1935), an activist of the German Social Democratic Party, journalist and an advocate of women’s education and their political rights. She was a close collaborator of Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg.

68 „Žena kao čovjek, djeca kao novi naraštaj“, *Glas slobode*, 18/31. 8. 1918.

69 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer. Suverena moć i goli život*, (Zagreb: Multimedijalni institut, 2006), passim.

labor market.⁷⁰ In doing so, they used a vocabulary that would awaken the female sensibility towards the youth. It would “enhance welfare and love”, such as that towards wounded and disabled warriors, offering care and comfort as a duty to preserve their traditional socio-cultural identity dominated by compassion and sacrifice, while the subtext offered a return to the “sanctity of home”. This was also an announcement that the role given to them by patriarchy and tradition would be petrified, and that the impetus for the inclusion of women in economic and political structures was recognized as a threatening element for the masculine identity of the working class. Therefore, the social democrats did not stand for the essentialist concept of gender equality, nor did they hide the vitality of the patriarchal matrix that was part of the dominant patriarchal cultural heritage that had to be gradually “encountered” in the struggle for a socialist society of equals.

The question that also arises is - which matrices and symbolic female roles were emphasized and did women workers⁷¹ have more important social and political roles? Although their basic perception of women remained within the maternal representation, the image of a woman or worker, a soldier, a housewife or a sister, this apparent energy of women's labor activism could not break the “capacity of women for public action” in wartime circumstances and influence the social democratic patrons of international women's activism scenes. That is why they “generously” supported the (re-)establishment of women's organizations within the party. At the same time, one of the most important arguments should not be forgotten, that owing to women's votes, the Party became stronger and could potentially become one of the factors in the distribution of social power (“larger in number and stronger in consciousness”).

To “soften” this attitude, they used matrixes in the form of invitations and sporadic text like the one about Dimitrije Tucović, a prominent socialist and the “founder of the women's social democratic movement” in neighboring Serbia,⁷² whose author was the wife of a well-known socialist worker. *Glas*

70 An additional effect was created by disturbing messages: “To save the next generations from degeneration and decay, to preserve their strength. Today, women's forced labor for profit represents a serious danger for children [...] the death of proletarian children testifies to this”: „Žensko pitanje“, *Glas slobode*, 15/28. 1. 1914.

71 „Žene i socijalizam“, *Glas slobode*, 10/23. 3. 1918.

72 Along with Dušan Popović, Dimitrije Tucović was the translator of A. Bebel's work *The Woman and Socialism*, published in 1909. He was a participant in the Second International Conference of Social Democrat Women, held in Copenhagen in August 1910. He had also reported on this event for the Belgrade newspaper *Radničke novine* (Worker's paper). More in: Dimitrije Tucović, „Oslobođenje žene“, *Sabrana djela*, knj. III, 560. Tucović's alleged progressive vision of the women's role in political life are discussed in his articles:

slobode reprinted her point of view “that women’s groups ... constitute the liveliest and most radical element and that they should be brought into the party, wherever they are represented, with greater numbers, enthusiasm and revolutionary spirit”, as well as the recommendation that “it is high time to pay more systematic attention to the socialist agitation and propaganda among women.”⁷³

Therefore, the next question is whether social democracy promised the working woman and all women, a changed, liberal image of the future? Social democracy in the texts of *Glas slobode* did not offer illusions to the workers, but a struggle with an uncertain outcome. While in the present the struggle for economic protection was somewhat theoretically and practically possible, though still insufficient, the perfect picture of the future for women was in utopian socialism that would solve their economic deprivation and political disenfranchisement.⁷⁴ The recommendation was that, until the complete transformation of society, women should engage in “small work” and “spiritual emancipation” as “the highest point of moral action, which was again the greatest guarantee for her final material liberation in the future”. In essence, the message was that women should subordinate the present to the future, to be faced only with struggle, duty, sacrifice, voluntary solidarity, which rather discouraged potential members and activists. Even A. Bebel’s words that “the future belongs to socialism, which means to working women above all”, and that the goal of social democracy and women should be common, did not offer consolation.⁷⁵ However, from this linguistic construction we can conclude that women were excluded from the collective and proletarian “we”. This was also confirmed by the following opinion: “The proletariat is therefore a friend and helper of the cause and movement for the liberation of all the oppressed. Therefore, in her struggle, a woman could count on the support of the proletariat and only the proletariat as a social class aiming at social transformation.”⁷⁶ The final message was that a woman, especially a working woman, should work on her own transformation and the transformation of the whole society in order to free herself.

„Izvod iz diskusije na Prvoj konferenciji poverenika Sekretarijata ženskog socijalističkog pokreta, održanoj 19. Septembra (2. oktobra) 1910. godine u Beogradu“, *Ibid.*, knj. IV, 7, „Julija Bebel“, *Ibid.*, 100–101, „Pokret žena socijaldemokrata“, *Ibid.*, 487–489, „Izvod iz diskusije na sednici Sekretarijata socijalističkog ženskog pokreta održanoj 5 (18) maja 1911. u Beogradu, knj. V, 7, „Radnička porodica i organizovana klasna borba“, *Ibid.*, knj. IX, 559–561.

73 Milica Đurić, „Dimitrije Tucović i ženski pokret“, *Glas slobode*, 22. 12. 1917. / 5. 1. 1918, 2–3.

74 „Žensko pitanje“, *Glas slobode*, 15/28. 1. 1914.

75 T. Milojević, „Oslobođenje žene“, *Glas slobode*, 14/27. 3. 1918, 5.

76 *Ibid.*

On the other hand, they were not allowed to cooperate with other feminist and “elitist” movements, “since it is known that the bourgeois woman was the biggest parasite in the world”⁷⁷ because “everything can be talked about, except about the equal rights to live under the bourgeois ‘democratism’”. This attitude was essentially contradictory to the earlier invitations for class pluralism and gathering of all women, and the acceptance of legitimist rights and parliamentarism as a means of struggle, whereby it was expected that capitalism would fall through an evolutionary process.⁷⁸ However, an explanation could be found in the fact that since 1917, on the waves of the October Revolution sentiments, the voices of returnees from the Eastern Front, the approach to the Zimmerwald left and the struggle for unification of Yugoslav labor movement, the SDS BiH stood out for its revolutionary orientation and distanced itself from similar ideological models in the Monarchy.⁷⁹

It is obvious that among the social democrats there was a certain kind of “male panic in the ranks”, a kind of “masculinity crisis”, which was not only a feature of the social democracy in Bosnian and Herzegovina.⁸⁰ They warned the public that “when the husbands return home from the trenches, they will not find the wives they left behind”. This unexpected step of female activism and “utopian energy”, readiness, endurance and determination to fight for one’s life, but also to manifest their readiness to fight for one’s rights, disturbed the “comrades”.⁸¹ Therefore, they demanded that “the social democratic women’s movement should never be a sign of a women’s movement, but a sign of a general social democratic proletarian movement. This movement should be freed from all particular and special ideas, and we should all be interested only in tactics and practice. Any other observation is destructive and leads to wilderness in proletarian families above of all!”⁸²

Taming women’s activism, “comrades” warned of the danger to the primary and most important community, its physical and moral health, and even its very existence. The stated reasons, even declaratively, were the motive

77 „U čemu je oslobođenje žene“, *Glas slobode*, 5/18. 5. 1918.

78 Nikola Babić, *Rat, revolucija i jugoslovensko pitanje u politici Socijaldemokratske stranke Bosne i Hercegovine*, (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1974), 82, 146.

79 Ibrahim Karabegović, *Reformistički pravac u radničkom pokretu Bosne i Hercegovine 1919–1941*, (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1979), 29; Globačnik, *Hrvatska socijaldemokracija*, 42, 45, 52, 56.

80 Matthew Kovac, “‘Red Amazons’? Gendering Violence and Revolution in the Long First World War, 1914–23“, *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 4/2019, 69–82, <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol20/iss4/6> (accessed on 22 February 2022).

81 Emmy Freundlich, „Novi naraštaj žena.“ *Glas slobode*, 17/30. 3. 1918, 4.

82 *Ibid.*

for the belated return to the request for women's suffrage, which is why politics and parliamentarians could truly devote themselves to improving the position of women in society. Of course, again with the argumentation of biological and socio-cultural reproduction of society.⁸³ We should not lose sight of the fact that they wanted to preserve or regain a privileged position in the changed socio-economic conditions.⁸⁴ In this case, the "bourgeois" right of a woman was not questioned, moreover, she became a potentially important number that could help SDP BiH to break into the political scene.

Summary

Based on the analysis of the normative standing points of the SDP BiH program, it is evident that the female labor activism was unconditionally supported. In practice, the visibility and involvement of women were underestimated, while the articulation of the interests of working women was also neglected. The merits for the continued activity of the trade union and the party in wartime circumstances were not emphasized enough nor were they declared an obligation. The language used by this newspaper to address the female workforce was full of stereotypes and deep-rooted patriarchal matrices with severe gender disqualification. Support for the re-establishment of women's organization was more declarative than substantive, while women's right to vote was mentioned too late. As pointed in the newspaper, the status of women gained during the patriarchy would be petrified since the momentum for their inclusion in economic and political structures was seen as a dangerous element for the working class' male identity. On their way to utopian socialism, and the complete transformation of society, women should have devoted themselves to their own education and "small work", being a constant support for their party comrades. The subordination of women's labor activism was the dominant message that female activists of the SDP and trade unions in Bosnia and Herzegovina received during the First World War.

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83 „Žena kao čovjek, djeca kao novi naraštaj“, *Glas slobode*, 18/31. 8. 1918.

84 Fuko, „Treba braniti društvo,“ 74.

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Резиме

Соња М. Дујмовић

СОЦИЈАЛДЕМОКРАТСКЕ РЕФЛЕКСИЈЕ О ЖЕНСКОМ АКТИВИЗМУ У РАДНИЧКОМ ПОКРЕТУ У БОСНИ И ХЕРЦЕГОВИНИ ТОКОМ ПРВОГ СВЕТСКОГ РАТА

Апстракт: Овај рад покушава дати увид у перцепцију женског активизма, симболичну улогу жене и слику њене будућности у радничком покрету током Првог светског рата, односно, приказати замишљени простор који су женама наменили партијски и синдикални органи. За анализу категорије рода и њеног представљања у једној од секција међународног социјалдемократског покрета послужиће лист Социјалдемократске партије Босне и Херцеговине *Глас слободе*.

Кључне речи: *Глас слободе*, Социјалдемократска странка Босне и Херцеговине, активизам радница, видљивост жена, мобилизација, улоге жене

На основу нормативних полазишта програма СДС БиХ – да је женски активизам био подржан безусловно – ова анализа показује илузију знања. Видљивост жена и радница, као и њиховог активизма вођена је, односно контролисана, „великодушном“ партијском елитом што је условило њену бледу презентацију. Женски ангажман се минимизира и потцењује, не постоји осигурана артикулација женских интереса, он се контролисано усмерава на практичне, оперативне задатке у мобилисању женске популације. Заслуге радница за континуирано деловање и добробит синдиката и странке у ратним околностима се недовољно истичу и проглашавају дужношћу, док се солидарност радница подразумева. Језик којим се лист обраћа женској радној снази обилује стереотипима и укоренењем патријархалним матрицама са тешком родном дисквалификацијом женске популације. Подршка обнови женских организација долази касно и више је декларативна, него суштинска. Упркос програмској оријентацији и визији улоге странке у будућем креирању друштвеног живота и њеној партиципацији, женско право гласа се касно помиње. Све је указивало на то да ће се статус и улога жене из патријархално-традиционалног миљеа петрификовати, док је подстрек укључивању жене у

економске и политичке структуре виђен као претња мушком идентитету радничке класе. Деморалишуће делује и будућност која је намењивана радницама. На путу до утопијског социјализма и потпуне трансформације друштва, требало је да се баве властитим просвећивањем, „ситним радом” и буду стална подршка својим партијским друговима. Субординација женског активизма је доминантна порука коју су примале активисткиње Социјалдемократске странке и синдиката у Босни и Херцеговини током Првог светског рата, што је упућивало на амбивалентан однос партијске елите према надолазећој актуелизацији женског статуса у друштву.