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Soviet Influences on Yugoslav Gender Policies, 1945-1955

UCL

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I, Ivan Simić confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores Soviet influences on Yugoslav gender policies, examining how Yugoslav communists interpreted, adapted and used Soviet ideas to change Yugoslav society. The project sheds new light on the role of Soviet models in producing Yugoslav family and reproductive laws, and in framing the understandings of gender which affected key policies such as the collectivisation of agriculture, labour policies, policies towards Muslim populations, and policies concerning youth sexuality. Through a gender analysis of all these policies, this thesis points to the difficulties of applying Soviet solutions in Yugoslavia. Deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes undermined Yugoslav communists' ability to challenge gender norms, causing many disputes and struggles within the Communist Party over the meanings and application of Soviet gender models. Yet, Soviet models informed how Yugoslav communists approached gender-related issues for many years, even after the conflict erupted between these two countries.

This project contributes to existing scholarship in three key areas. First, it seeks to provide new insights into Yugoslav-Soviet relations, including into the circulation of policies and cultural representations, as well as the broader repercussions of the Yugoslav-Soviet break. Second, it offers a new perspective on the origins, development and implementation of gender policies in Yugoslavia. In examining both abstract models and practices, it further focuses upon the under-researched gap between ideology and practice so as to reveal the power of cultural patterns in shaping daily lives over official policies and ideologies. Finally, it seeks not only to shed light on the neglected history of women, but to contribute to the literature on Yugoslav gender history, especially during the first decade after the Second World War when the roots of many cultural models and practices were formed with long-lasting consequences.

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## Soviet Influences on Yugoslav Gender Policies, 1945-1955

When Ivka Dugorepac, a textile worker in Zagreb, tried to work on sixteen machines simultaneously, her actions were based on Soviet textile workers as role models. A comrade from her factory had just returned from the Soviet Union and told Ivka about Soviet workers' efforts to work on ever more machines. Ivka wanted to follow their example, and with Soviet workers in mind, Ivka succeeded. She increased the factory's production norms, invented new methods of work, and educated other workers. Ivka became a *multiple shock-worker*.<sup>1</sup> Newspapers described her mastery over sixteen machines using military metaphors, describing it as a battle in which she had won a significant victory. Over a short period, an experienced textile worker from a poor family background became a Yugoslav heroine of labour, even receiving the most prestigious state medal for her work. She became a celebrity featuring in newspapers and magazines; the Party's political organisations and Unions invited her to talk at conferences and meetings; other textile workers visited her factory to learn from her methods. As an exemplary worker, she became a member of the Communist Party. Receiving monetary rewards thanks to her status as a shock-worker, Ivka Dugorepac lived a socialist dream.<sup>2</sup>

The Soviet model played a crucial role in this case. The career path of Ivka Dugorepac was all too familiar to the Soviet textile shock-workers of the 1930s. Mariya Volkova (Мария Михайловна Волкова), her comrades from a textile factory, and many other Soviet heroines of work were known of in postwar Yugoslavia.<sup>3</sup> For years, Yugoslav newspapers and magazines published articles on notable Soviet workers and peasants, who had broken world records in productivity. In such texts, Soviet women were not only fantastic workers, but they were loved by the people as they were elected

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<sup>1</sup> Shock-work was the Stalinist invention of the early 1930s. It referred to surpassing the work norms, increasing productivity and inventing new methods of work. It was closely related to Stakhanovism, named after famous miner Alexei Stakhanov. In Yugoslavia, communists introduced Russian word *udarnik* to designate these shock-workers as early as in June 1933, when a Slovenian branch of the Party published its magazine *Mladi udarnik* [Young Shock-worker].

<sup>2</sup> Ivanka Balta, "Najbolja tkalja Jugoslavije [The Best Weaver in Yugoslavia]," *Radnica* 4 (April 1949): 12–14; S Zvizdić, "Najveće priznanje [The Highest Accolade]," *Žena danas* 59 (April 1949): 10–11.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Kurockiv, "Marija Volkova i njena brigada [Mariya Volkova and her Brigade]," *Žena danas* 58 (January 1949): 21–22; Many other Soviet textile workers were mentioned in an important brochure published for Yugoslav activists: Nina Popova, *Žena u Sovjetskom Savezu [A Woman in the Soviet Union]* (Belgrade: Glavni odbor AFŽ-a Srbije, 1947).

to responsible political posts. Yet they remained humble.<sup>4</sup> Translations of texts about the Soviet heroes served as a model in shaping the new Yugoslav society. Yugoslav workers had to resemble the Soviet shock-workers; Yugoslav peasants had to be as successful as Soviet collective farmers, whilst gender relations amongst all of them had to follow the Soviet model.

When the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict erupted over Yugoslav foreign policy in 1948, it caused disbelief, disillusionment, and fear amongst many communists.<sup>5</sup> After decades of looking towards the Soviet Union as a socialist paradise which provided a model for every sphere of society, Yugoslav leadership had to find their own way. Making such a leap was achieved more quickly in the realms of politics and the economy, rather than in changing the fundamental principles upon which society was organised. For example, even after texts that glorified the Soviet Union had vanished from the Yugoslav press in mid-1949, Yugoslav leadership continued to use Soviet patterns in framing gender policies. Notably, Ivka Dugorepac became a socialist celebrity following the conflict of 1948. The shift from Stalinism<sup>6</sup> to a unique Yugoslav path was neither sharp nor straightforward. On the contrary, distancing society from Stalinism was a slow process, and often not genuinely carried out. Why did Yugoslav communists rely on Soviet models, and how did they interpret these models? How did Yugoslav communists imagine gender equality? What kind of policies did they apply in order to construct such a socialist utopia? How gender came to signify power relations in Yugoslav society? How did Soviet ideas mutate so as to fit Yugoslav context? More intriguing still: what happened to Soviet models after the conflict with the Soviet Union? How genuine was Yugoslav communists' detachment from Stalinism, and how was this detachment

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<sup>4</sup> O Aleksandrov, "Sovjetska tkalja Matryona Kuzminišna [A Soviet Weaver Matryona Kuzminishna]," *Radnica* 2 (September 1948): 15.

<sup>5</sup> The Yugoslav-Soviet conflict was researched for decades. For the political analysis, see: Ivo Banac, *With Stalin against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Leonid Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Split," in *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: Challenges to Communist Rule*, ed. Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 17–36; Jeronim Perović, "The Tito-Stalin Split: A Reassessment in Light of New Evidence" 9, no. 2 (2007): 32–63.

<sup>6</sup> By Stalinism I mean a complex set of political and economic policies, as well as values and cultural practices developed during Stalin's reign. See: Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995). On how Yugoslav Communist Party was stalinised, see chapter 1.



reflected in gender policies? Finally, what were the long-term consequences of the Yugoslav gender experiment?

Taking as its focus all policies that were conceived with the intention of altering gender norms in early Yugoslav socialism, this thesis explores the transfer of cultural models from one political entity to another, and aims to contribute to theoretical and methodological debates within the transnational history of gender and sexuality. By uncovering complex relationships between individuals within the Yugoslav and Soviet communist parties, their education, worldviews, personal contacts, as well as their methods of governance, this work offers insights into the mechanics of transfer of cultural policies. It also reveals a compelling story of a struggle to enforce gender equality on communist terms. Additionally, a focus on Yugoslav gender policies illuminates and contributes to debates over Stalinist gender relations and policies, the centre-periphery dichotomy, and to debates over violence and modernisation projects in Eastern Europe.

### **Research Scope and Methods**

The focus of this dissertation is on Yugoslav gender policies during the first decade after the Second World War. This periodization requires further explanation as several chapters will turn to consider the wartime interval and go even further back in the past. The year 1945 was a breakpoint in Yugoslav history: The Communist Party, which led the Partisan resistance, liberated Yugoslavia aided by the Soviet army, obliterated all the remaining political opposition, abolished the monarchy, and initiated a series of policies aimed at radically changing society. However, it is crucial to trace the origins of the models used in the Communist Party's policies. As argued in this dissertation, Soviet ideas about gender were well established before the war amongst the communist leaders. Furthermore, the Party initiated some major changes during the war. For instance, the Party organised its own local governing institutions called the People's Councils<sup>7</sup> in the liberated areas, where men and women voted and could be elected equally. The importance of the Partisan war experience, where women fought alongside men, cannot be overemphasised. Consequently, this thesis will turn to the interwar and war periods in

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<sup>7</sup> On the organisation of the People's Councils, military influences from the Soviet Union on the Partisan warfare, and experience of the communist fighters from the Spanish Civil War, see: Aleksej J. Timofejev, *Rusi i Drugi svetski rat u Jugoslaviji: uticaj SSSR-a i ruskih emigranata na događaje u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2011).

conducting an analysis of the origins of ideas, whilst only considering the postwar period when analysing policies and their implementation in practice.

The thesis ends with a discussion of events in 1955, but in several places it will explore processes which took place in later years as well. Scholars of early Yugoslav socialism typically end their studies in 1953, the year when Stalin died. However, numerous policies initiated before that year were not abandoned. Policies were changed and adapted, as for example in the case of collective farming, where a longer periodization permits an examination of how these policies affected gender relations. Similarly, a 1945-1953 periodization does not adequately capture changes in dominant views regarding youth sexuality. On the contrary, I propose that a large conference held in Zagreb in November 1955 is to be seen as the critical point when Stalinist notions of youth sexuality and family planning were challenged. This was not an abrupt discontinuity with the earlier cultural processes, but many cultural policies, the attitude towards social intervention, and the issues that dominated the public sphere started to differ more as compared to the initial post-war time. This dissertation also has its own sub-periodization, sketching two periods of early Yugoslav socialism: 1944-1950, and 1950-1955. I see the first period as a revolutionary period of Yugoslav socialism that was followed with a more moderate, institutionalised period focused on socialist state-building. In the second period, for example, regular schools replaced the massive crash-courses, federal curricula were developed for all levels of schooling, more state institutions emerged, and the so-called economic self-management replaced Soviet-style industrialisation. However, this does not mean that the 'second period' was not revolutionary and violent – veils were removed from public space after an aggressive veil lifting campaign, collectivisation was still ongoing, whilst the Party's Youth Organisation sought to police youth sexuality. However, there was a change in tone regarding the further evolution of Yugoslav socialism, which affected gender policies as well.

As part of the research for this thesis, I have explored primary sources from several archives in the former Yugoslavia, and library archives in the UK and the US. My sources include meeting minutes, reports, directives, laws, the internal correspondence of state and Party institutions, pamphlets, booklets, magazines, newspapers, posters, films, Yugoslav translations of Soviet documents, etc. The majority of these sources were retrieved from the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade. The centralised nature of the early Yugoslav postwar state resulted in all state and Party institutions being based in Belgrade,

whilst local branches regularly reported to the centre. The Archives of Yugoslavia collected a vast amount of documents from all of them. To have full insight, I have also explored the Croatian State Archive in Zagreb, which confirmed that even local topics from remote parts of socialist Croatia found their way to the federal collections of the Archives of Yugoslavia. In addition, collections from the UCL and Yale libraries provided important contributions, consisting of foreign press coverage and statistical data.

The Communist Party of Yugoslavia - namely its officials and activists - produced the majority of the documents used in this work. Depending on the document purpose, I have applied different methodologies as regards content analysis. For example, posters, magazines, and newspapers are particularly useful in analysing how communists represented ideal gender relations, norms, and behaviours. Translations of Soviet pamphlets, documents, and newspaper articles provide important information regarding the understanding of the Soviet model. Model in this sense means the set of ideas, meanings and representations framed within one, more or less, coherent narrative. The complexity of that narrative depended on the information that Yugoslav communists possessed regarding Soviet practices, and their own interpretation of that information. Therefore, the Soviet model did not necessarily correspond with Soviet practices per se, but rather with the representations and understandings of these practices. Internal reports, meeting minutes, and directives expose methods, and struggles undertaken to impose those imagined standards. I have dismissed no source as irrelevant, even those that ostensibly had nothing to do with gender. However, their content often articulated a broader cultural system, of which gender was always an intrinsic part.<sup>8</sup>

Such approach to the sources is informed by my view on gender. I understand gender as a social, historical, and political construct, and I construe gender as a non-essentialised analytical category, taking an anti-essentialist stance towards normative sexuality and gender relations.<sup>9</sup> Gender is assumed to be an integral part of the status and social position of any subject. It is a social phenomenon which relates to the discursive

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<sup>8</sup> For further discussion on my understanding of culture, particularly in the context of cultural transfer, see chapter one.

<sup>9</sup> Here I draw on numerous theorists of gender, particularly on Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994) who sees gender as a product of socialisation subject to human agency, organisation, and interpretation.

articulation of sexual difference and relations between the sexes.<sup>10</sup> Gender identities and relations are understood as changing over time, and not as universal, timeless identities concerning what it means to be a man or a woman. If there were coherent gender norms, following the work of Judith Butler, I see them as discursively produced by a heterosexual matrix and regulatory practices.<sup>11</sup> Applied to this thesis, gender identities promoted by the Party were not universal even when the Party tried to assert its hegemony and to erase particular individual differences. Rather, individual gender identities were constructed in relation to ethnic, class, religious, sexual and other discursively constructed identities. This also informs the structure of the thesis, providing a separate, but interconnected analysis of policies towards workers, peasants, religious minorities, and youth, therefore insisting on the intersectionality of these identities.

In approaching my sources, besides analysing the content, I have also sought to uncover the rationale behind the language, structure, and purpose of each document. Implicitly informed by a number of Foucault's insights in his study of sexuality, power, and discourses,<sup>12</sup> this dissertation also closely relates to many ideas used in cultural studies, with the Birmingham Cultural Studies' school heavily influencing my approach.<sup>13</sup> Many of the sources I have used - such as communist newspapers, magazines, booklets, pamphlets, and textbooks - may be considered media in a narrow sense. They were the Party's tools that produced and constructed meanings. To understand the messages disseminated through these media, following Stuart Hall's discursive approach,

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler and Elizabeth Weed, eds., *The Question of Gender: Joan W. Scott's Critical Feminism*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 3; Miguel A. Cabrera, "Language, Experience, and Identity: Joan W. Scott's Theoretical Challenge to Historical Studies," in *The Question of Gender: Joan W. Scott's Critical Feminism*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 43.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519; and particularly: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Some of the main works considered are: Stuart Hall, ed., *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* (London; Birmingham: Hutchinson; Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1980); Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: soap opera and the melodramatic imagination* (London; New York, NY: Methuen, 1985); Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1991); For Active Audience Theory see: David Morley, "Active Audience Theory: Pendulums and Pitfalls," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (December 1993): 13-19; John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

I will look in the effects and consequences of these meanings – specifically, how they regulated gender relations and gender policies.<sup>14</sup>

Besides attempting to understand how discourses regarding gender functioned, one crucial question was how ‘audiences’ received the messages disseminated by the regime. Two important ideas developed within the cultural studies influenced scholarship on communism as well. First, rejecting the assumption that media can instil any message into passive populations. This was once dominant presumption in theories of totalitarianism, informing many studies on Stalinism. During the Cold War, the image of oppressive Soviet Union and its passive population was contrasted with the image of liberal West and its active citizens. Instead, the premise is that people ascribe values to the messages they receive and products they consume according to their own interpretations and appropriations. This idea had far-reaching consequences in understanding of the Soviet history, even in revisiting Stalinism.<sup>15</sup> Second important observation is related to the question of possible interpretations of disseminated messages. As Stuart Hall and others have argued, a message is not open to any interpretation or use, for interpretations are limited by a complex structure of social relations. Even the production of a message is limited by the need for it to be decoded into meaningful discourses that can be understood and used. Of course, this does not mean that those who produced a message understood it in the same way as those who received it, allowing for different interpretations and some autonomy on the part of those receiving the messages.<sup>16</sup> Applied in recent cultural history of the Soviet Union, Karen Petrone, for instance, argued that attempts to use propaganda as a totalising force that created a compliant population were never fully successful. She explained that Soviet ideologists ‘created powerful categories with which to describe the world and did their best to forbid the expression of alternative discourses,’<sup>17</sup> but they could not control how these

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<sup>14</sup> Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Culture, Media, and Identities (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 5–6; For reflections of such approach in history, see: Victoria E Bonnell and Lynn Avery Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Gabrielle M Spiegel, ed., *New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> For detailed discussion on how historiography on Stalinism benefited from cultural turn, see: Fitzpatrick, *Stalinism: New Directions*.

<sup>16</sup> Stuart Hall, “Encoding/decoding,” in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, ed. Stuart Hall et al. (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1980), 107–17.

<sup>17</sup> Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 2.

discourses were used by others and how different groups read material that the Communist Party provided. Instead, she has pointed out the contradictions and multiple meanings present in official discourse.

Following from the above, I turn to an in-depth analysis of the sources to understand the reception of ideas and messages promoted by the Party, and to suggest possible interpretations regarding the reception of gender policies. As Victoria Bonnell suggests, historians can identify ‘the repertoire of references available in contemporary culture to suggest some possible interpretations.’<sup>18</sup> Sources such as the reports from many activists and the internal inquiries of higher ranking communists are useful in such endeavour. I also rely on documents that officials collected in order to obtain feedback from the field to make policies and propaganda more efficient. As concerns various groups amongst the population, particularly valuable are Bourdieu’s insights concerning cultural capital – the ability to read and understand cultural codes, noting that this ability is not distributed equally amongst social classes.<sup>19</sup> Even communist officials and activists were aware that different people might receive the message differently, therefore crafting different policies according to social groups defined by class and gender. Of course, what the Party considered being unified groups amongst the population were in fact very diverse, with differences in education, material status, ethnicity, gender, religion, political views, and personal preferences. Nevertheless, this thesis will argue that unifying assumptions about gender promoted by the Party officials affected people, and that gender under socialism was a fundamental site of ideological intervention. Turning once again to the similar studies in the Soviet context, as Choi Chatterjee puts it, ‘in the interplay of languages and discursive practices, new identities were created.’<sup>20</sup> However, my approach is somewhat broader as besides disseminated ideas and images, this thesis aims to explore how policies contributed to the creation/alteration of identities and modes of thinking.

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<sup>18</sup> Victoria E Bonnell, *Iconography of Power : Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>19</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

<sup>20</sup> Choi Chatterjee, *Celebrating Women: Gender, Festival Culture, and Bolshevik Ideology, 1910-1939* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 7.

Finally, as this thesis will mostly deal with official policies and disseminated discourses, it is important not to presume that the Communist Party was a unified force on the one side, and people affected by the policies on the other. This project contributes an account of how agency can be understood as located both within the Party and in the population. Some basic presumptions can be made following Malgorzata Fidelis' study of Poland.<sup>21</sup> She argues that there was no such thing as universal women's agency in socialism, nor that there was some kind of 'female consciousness' resistant to historical forces. She also opposes the idea of a natural opposition between a production-oriented regime and a family-oriented woman, arguing that there was no universal, family-oriented 'female consciousness' that could have been challenged by socialist industrialisation and women's entrance into the workforce.<sup>22</sup> Drawing on her work, I see women's agency as diverse and women's solidarity as fragmented. In analysing women's agency, I look at women as active participants in society who were constantly producing and negotiating messages. Gender policies were not simply given, but interpreted and disputed even within the Party.

### **Scholarship on Yugoslav Gender Policies**

Research on gender within Yugoslav historiography has followed two scholarly traditions: an older tradition that examined the history of women,<sup>23</sup> and a recent one that has incorporated some aspects of understanding gender more broadly. Women featured heavily in narratives about the Second World War, whilst the uniqueness of the Partisan

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<sup>21</sup> Malgorzata Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> The first inquiries were made during the 1980s by Yugoslav feminists with a background in sociology. See: Lydia Sklevicki, "Karakteristike organiziranog djelovanja žena u Jugoslaviji u razdoblju do Drugog svjetskog rata," *Polja : časopis za kulturu, umetnost i društvena pitanja* 30, no. 308 (October 1984): 415–17; Lydia Sklevicki, "More Horses Than Women: On the Difficulties of Founding Women's History in Yugoslavia," *Gender & History* 1, no. 1 (March 1989): 68–73; Marina Blagojević, "Nejednakosti između polova i društvena struktura," *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta. Serija B, Društvene nauke*, no. 15 (1988): 387–405; Maja Korać, *Zatočenice pola : društveni identitet mladih žena na selu između tradicionalne kulture i savremenih vrednosti* (Belgrade: Institut za sociološka istraživanja, 1991); Anđelka Milić, *Žene, politika, porodica* (Belgrade: Institut za političke studije, 1994); There were also other works such as: Dimitar Mirčev, ed., *Žena u samoupravnom društvu: bibliografija radova : 1970-1983* (Ljubljana: Jugoslovenski centar za teoriju i praksu samoupravljanja "Edvard Kardelj," 1983); Tanja Rener, "Yugoslav Women in Politics: Selected Issues," *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 6, no. 3 (1985): 347–54; Slobodanka Nedović, "Neka pitanja emancipacije žene u Jugoslaviji," *Socijalna politika* 42 (November 1987); Žarana Papić, *Sociologija i feminizam: savremeni pokret i misao o oslobođenju žena i njegov uticaj na sociologiju* (Belgrade: Istraživačko-izdavački centar SSO Srbije, 1989).

movement that mobilised many women has received a great deal of attention. Barbara Jancar-Webster, Barbara N. Wiesinger and Lydia Sklevicky analysed women's participation in the Partisan units and I draw on these findings relating to the war period.<sup>24</sup> Recently Jelena Batinić has revisited the topic, demonstrating the unique combination of traditional values and culture with revolutionary ideals within the Partisan units. Amongst other issues, she also examined sexual practices within the movement, showing how traditional values gendered a Partisan puritanism. As a result, many women were punished for sexual transgressions.<sup>25</sup> I will follow over the postwar period her insights into sexual abstinence, the division of labour and notions of gender within the Party. This thesis will also offer a new interpretation of the origins and models of the Party's women section, arguing that the organisation was established solely on the Soviet model.

Despite the surge of studies of the postwar era, they have been less successful, with a significant gap in scholarship regarding the complexity of gender policies in early Yugoslav socialism. The main concern is that many studies are often geographically fragmented and failed to connect their local observations to the broader Yugoslav situation.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes it causes real confusion with an artificial separation between certain areas in early Yugoslav socialism, but it corresponds with the post-Yugoslav political situation and author's respective institutions. Despite their limits, some of these studies still provide valuable foundations for further gender analysis. For example, concerning the formation of women's socialist identities in the first years after the war, Ivana Pantelić examined how Serbian Partisan women reinvented their identities in the postwar times,<sup>27</sup> whilst Renata Jabrešić Kirin has analysed representations of women's identity in the Croatian press. Jabrešić Kirin examined the shift in representation of

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<sup>24</sup> Barbara Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945* (Denver, CO: Arden Press, 1990); Sklevicky, "More Horses Than Women"; Barbara N. Wiesinger, "Rat partizanki – žene u oružanom otporu u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945.," *Historijska traganja*, no. 4 (2009): 201–26.

<sup>25</sup> Jelena Batinić, *Women and Partisan Resistance in Yugoslavia during World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> For example, Dean Vuletić explored the laws regarding homosexuality in Croatia, although the Yugoslav penal code outlawed homosexuality, being the crucial moment in early Yugoslav socialism. See: Dean Vuletić, "Law, Politics and Homosexuality in Croatia, 1945-1952," in *Doing Gender-Doing the Balkans: Dynamics and Persistence of Gender Relations in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić, Simone Rajlić, and Christian Voss (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2012), 197–208. This will be further explored in the last chapter of the thesis. Studies such as: Vera Gudac-Dodić, *Žena u socijalizmu : položaj žene u Srbiji u drugoj polovini 20. veka* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2006); and: Ivana Pantelić, *Partizanke kao građanke : društvena emancipacija partizanki u Srbiji, 1945-1953* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2011) were written within the similar paradigm.

<sup>27</sup> Pantelić, *Partizanke kao građanke : društvena emancipacija partizanki u Srbiji, 1945-1953*.



women in the media from the Soviet shock-worker to sexual objects during the fifties. She suggested that this change resulted from the departure from Soviet ideals after the Yugoslav conflict with the Soviet Union in 1948, and of a Yugoslav opening towards the West.<sup>28</sup> The same issue lies at the heart of Antić and Vidmar's discussion in their Slovenian case study. They argue that after the conflict with the Soviet Union, a Yugoslav image of women as being concerned with family replaced the previous image of women's collective identity based on their involvement in the paid work force.<sup>29</sup> Both studies, however, disregard a variety of identities offered by the regime, that were not necessary mutually exclusive. Furthermore, both studies imply that women were passive victims of a regime that was only interested in making use of a female workforce and women's reproductive power. Jambrešić Kirin argues further that in the 1950s, the communist project found a 'common interest' with existing patriarchal structures, in renewing a discourse of femininity and of an appropriate separate home sphere for women.<sup>30</sup> This dissertation confirms some of these findings, but by placing Yugoslav gender policies into a broader perspective, both spatially and chronologically, it shows that the Yugoslav communist project was not one-dimensional, that communists' interests were fragmented, and that postwar gender policies could not be reduced to intentional efforts to reinforce patriarchy. Chiara Bonfiglioli argued for political and social agency of women within the Party's women's section, also observing the importance of the Soviet model.<sup>31</sup> However, she ignored the limits to agency that such a model imposed, both theoretically and practically, which was criticised by Nanette Funk. Funk argued that women's sections of communist parties across Eastern Europe were transmission belts of the parties, at times showing some autonomy, but at times actively preventing women's agency.<sup>32</sup> This dissertation

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<sup>28</sup> Renata Jambrešić Kirin, *Dom i svijet: o ženskoj kulturi pamćenja* (Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije, 2008); Renata Jambrešić Kirin, "Rodni aspekti socijalističke politike pamćenja Drugoga svjetskog rata," in *Kultura sjećanja: 1945. povijesni lomovi i savladavanje prošlosti*, ed. Sulejman Bosto and Tihomir Cipek (Zagreb: Disput, 2009), 59–81; Renata Jambrešić Kirin, "Žene u formativnom socijalizmu," in *Refleksije vremena: 1945.-1955.*, ed. Jasmina Bavoljak (Zagreb: Galerija Klovičevi dvori, 2012), 182–201.

<sup>29</sup> Milica G. Antić and Ksenija H. Vidmar, "The Construction of Women's Identity in Socialism: The Case of Slovenia," in *Gender and Identity: Theories from And/or on Southeastern Europe*, ed. Jelisaвета Blagojević, Katerina Kolozova, and Svetlana Slapšak (Belgrade: Women's Studies and Gender Research Center, 2006), 292.

<sup>30</sup> Jambrešić Kirin, "Žene u formativnom socijalizmu," 202.

<sup>31</sup> Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Women's Political and Social Activism in the Early Cold War Era: The Case of Yugoslavia," *Aspasia* 8, no. 1 (January 2014): 1–25.

<sup>32</sup> N. Funk, "A Very Tangled Knot: Official State Socialist Women's Organizations, Women's Agency and Feminism in Eastern European State Socialism," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 21, no. 4 (November 2014): 345.

contributes in that direction, demonstrating that women's agency was additionally hindered by the very existence of the women's section, its relation to the Party and state structures, and ideological explanations behind it. Nevertheless, agency in this work is used as a conceptual category, and not as a concluding argument.

Gender was explored implicitly in other studies as well. An anthropologist Ildiko Erdei's article on the Yugoslav pioneer organisation showed that the Party enacted a radical policy, in accordance with the Soviet model, to create a 'new socialist people' in which the state took responsibility for early socialisation apart from the family. The communist regime provided new meanings of what it meant to be a child and sought to redefine the role of the family.<sup>33</sup> These findings have contributed to my consideration of gender policies towards youth, and the socialist family. This thesis has also benefited from the works of sociologists who have studied problems of gender inequality relating to employment and education.<sup>34</sup> Marina Blagojević, for example, has argued that Yugoslav socialist policies created unfavourable employment opportunities for women, and encouraged the feminisation of certain professions. These findings inspired me to examine this case further, and to search for the possible roots of this process in chapter three. Similarly, Sabrina Ramet has shown that the political advancement of women was unfavourable, excluding women from decision-making processes. She also investigated the ideology behind the socialist program for gender equality and concluded that the communist regime was unwilling to alter its ideological explanations even when it was confronted with fresh criticism and clear data.<sup>35</sup> My chapter two will offer a new interpretation of how this exclusion occurred, and how it was related to the structural organisation of the Party and the state.

Concerning living conditions in the Yugoslav countryside, Momčilo Isić and Ivana Dobrivojević noted the hard living and working conditions of Yugoslav peasants,

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<sup>33</sup> Ildiko Erdei, "'The Happy Child' as an Icon of Socialist Transformation: Yugoslavia's Pioneer Organization," in *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, ed. John R. Lampe and Mark Mazower (Budapest; New York, NY: Central European University Press, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Marina Blagojević, *Žene izvan kruga : profesija i porodica* (Belgrade: Institut za sociološka istraživanja, 1991); Marina Blagojević, "Obrazovanje žena - proizvodnja marginalnosti?," *Žena : znanstveni časopis za društvena i kulturna pitanja žene i porodice* 47, no. 3 (1989): 3–17; Milić, *Žene, politika, porodica*.

<sup>35</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, "In Tito's Time," in *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans : Women, Society, and Politics in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1998), 89–105.

emphasising the high mortality rate of pregnant women and infants.<sup>36</sup> This prompted me to revisit the idea of ‘modernisation’ promoted by the Communist Party in the countryside and examine how the Party challenged existing family structures and deeply rooted traditions. Regarding gender relations in the countryside, I will follow on Natalija Herbst’s article about peasant women in one cooperative of weavers of the 1950s,<sup>37</sup> investigating further the Party’s policies of collectivisation and its impacts on gender relations. Similarly, studies on socialist policies towards religious minorities, such as those by Xavier Bougarel and Fikret Karčić, offer important background as concerns the history of Muslim communities in Yugoslavia,<sup>38</sup> whilst Violeta Achkoska has provided initial insights into gender policies and their effects in Macedonia.<sup>39</sup> Following on from these studies, this work will examine gender policies towards Muslim communities and place them in the context of broader policies, which have not been considered before. This is particularly the case regarding conceptual views concerning Muslim women and veils, and the circulation of ideas between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

### Thesis Structure

Each chapter is a story of high hopes and enthusiasm that the communists held in wanting to change gender relations. Each case shows how these high hopes turned into struggles or failures. To examine how gender featured in major social interventions, this

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<sup>36</sup> Momčilo Isić, “Privatnost na selu,” in *Privatni život kod Srba u dvadesetom veku*, ed. Milan D Ristović (Belgrade: Clio, 2007), 379–409; Ivana Dobrivojević, “Kultura življenja u Jugoslaviji,” *Tokovi istorije* 1–2 (2008): 263–248; Ivana Dobrivojević, “Od ruralnog kao urbanom : modernizacija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine u FNRJ 1945-1955,” *Identitet Bosne i Hercegovine kroz historiju : zbornik radova* 2 (2011): 7–26.

<sup>37</sup> Natalija Herbst, “Women in Socialist Yugoslavia in the 1950s. The Example of Rajka Borojević and the Dragačevo Women’s Cooperative,” in *Doing Gender, Doing the Balkans: Dynamics and Persistence of Gender Relations in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić, Simone Rajilić, and Christian Voss (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Xavier Bougarel, “Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy? Islamic Reformism and Revivalism in Inter-War Bosnia-Herzegovina,” in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, ed. Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (London: Hurst, 2008), 313–43; Xavier Bougarel, “Bosnian Muslims and the Yugoslav Idea,” in *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992*, ed. Dejan Djokić (London: Hurst, 2003), 100–114; Fikret Karčić, “The Reform of Shari’a Courts and Islamic Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, ed. Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (London: Hurst, 2008), 253–70; Other important studies that have contributed are: Andreja Mesarić, “Wearing Hijab in Sarajevo: Dress Practices and the Islamic Revival in Post-War Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 22, no. 2 (September 1, 2013): 12–34; Armina Omerika, *Islam in Bosnien-Herzegowina Und Die Netzwerke Der Jungmuslime (1918-1983)*, *Balkanologische Veröffentlichungen*, Band 54 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Violeta Achkoska, “Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War,” in *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe : Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*, ed. Slobodan Naumovic and Miroslav Jovanovic (Münster: Lit, 2004).

thesis is organised thematically. It begins by analysing how and why Yugoslav communists relied on the Soviet model in framing gender policies. By scrutinising the linkages, networks and actors, the first chapter looks at the Communist Party's gender programme from a transnational historical perspective. It explains what kind of policies for changing gender relations Yugoslav communists learned in Moscow, arguing that the experiences of their formative years took place during the heights of Stalinism. The chapter revisits the scholarly debate over the communists' activities in various Yugoslav feminist associations, arguing that there were no real alternatives to the Soviet model for the communists. Following on from that, the chapter explores the mechanics of the transfer of Soviet models to Yugoslavia, both during and after the Second World War. Finally, the chapter delineates the complex relationship between Soviet and Yugoslav communist women, and Yugoslav communists' bitterness after the conflict of 1948.

The next chapter explores how Yugoslav gender policies were shaped at the highest political levels. By examining the origins of the Party's women section, it offers new insights into the reasons behind the Party's decision to form a separate women's organisation during the Second World War. This organisation had long-term consequences for political restructuring, whilst communist women participants were powerless to challenge a political hierarchy dominated by men. Despite the massive participation of women during the war, they remained marginalised in political processes. I argue that the Party established political structures that prevented any significant opposition from forming whilst the most important women politicians were tied closely to the Party. However, the work of these women on the legal transformation of the country and on reproductive policies had a significant impact. The second part of the chapter examines this transformation and compares it to the Soviet model. By looking at policies and laws concerning gender equality, marriage, divorce, alimony, and abortion, this chapter illustrates how Soviet models were domesticated and adapted to Yugoslav practice.

The next chapter on gender policies towards workers advances an argument that reproductive policies and assumptions concerning gender played an important role in formulating labour policies towards employed women and men. Based on the Soviet model, these policies promised to transform the Yugoslav working class. The Party removed obstacles to women's employment, education and advancement, whilst rapid industrialisation opened new opportunities for women to have careers in industries

considered inappropriate before the war. However, when the Party moved from rapid industrialisation to the more sustainable economic policies of Yugoslav self-management, many women lost their jobs, whilst the factory managers and skilled workers instigated the process of removing women from the most prestigious and well-paid occupations. By examining the shop-floor atmosphere, the attitudes of union leaders, factory managers and ruling boards, this chapter exposes gender tensions present after women had gained industrial jobs. Finally, by looking at the Party's reactions to discrimination, abuse and a lack of support, this chapter offers new explanations as to why women remained underpaid, underrepresented in the ruling boards, and less educated workers.

The fourth chapter shifts attention to the countryside, where the Party launched a very aggressive collectivisation project. This chapter argues that leading communist women saw collectivisation as a chance to change gender relations in the countryside, investing a lot of efforts in changing cultural norms and habits. Despite tremendous, but paternalistic efforts, gender relations remained largely intact. Women's work was undervalued, and they remained excluded from any power sharing in the collective farms. Instead of creating a socialist utopia in which peasant women had equal rights and collective services helped mothers, collectivisation caused turmoil and resistance. The Party abandoned collectivisation for economic and social reasons, but they also gave up on aggressive methods of changing social relations in the Yugoslav countryside. High hopes based on the imagined Soviet model failed to materialise once again.

In the following chapter, the discussion will move to consider the veil lifting campaign, which targeted Muslim communities. The campaign to lift Muslim women's veils occurred at the same time as collectivisation, but was more successful. This chapter examines Yugoslav communists' views on Muslim women, traces the international origins of the campaign, and places veil lifting in the context of broader policies directed at Muslim communities. The chapter contributes to the debate over the positioning of official Muslim institutions and leaders, explaining the strategies that the Party used to obtain their support. The Party targeted the most vulnerable group of people, often from the areas where the communists had little support. These women were outsiders, and their bodies and dresses were an area over which Party activists could exercise all their power. At the same time, Muslim women were the only group who were always identified with their religion – such a practice did not apply to Christians. Many communists genuinely believed that the aim of the policy was to bring socialism to Muslim women, but I argue

that policies towards Muslim women were a means of exerting an additional influence over previously closed communities.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I consider gender policies towards young people for several reasons. The Party, and Josip Broz Tito himself, saw young people as the most important group in the country. Policies towards them often surpassed religious or class notions, being an area in which unified gender identities were created. Through gender policies towards youth, one could analyse the Party's imagined ideal gender relations, and challenges to impose those ideals in practice. One could also observe changes following the Yugoslav-Soviet break, and struggles of the rank and file to police youth sexuality in Stalinist terms. This chapter therefore starts by examining the projection of ideal gender relations using the Youth Work Actions as a case study if only to show how these ideals collapsed once these projects were abandoned. From the 1950s, young people enjoyed Western music, films, and comics, and - much to the Party's disapproval - were having active sexual lives. High Stalinist ideals were met with fierce resistance, causing concerns regarding youth sexuality amongst the youth leaders. By examining such concerns, this chapter delineates the youth sex culture, and delimits crucial moments when Stalinist gender policies were met with challenges. Ultimately, the chapter explains the slow and painful increasing detachment from Stalinism, which was often not entirely straightforward.

### **Terminology and Abbreviations**

All translations from languages used in Yugoslavia are mine unless otherwise stated. I have tried to preserve *the spirit of the language*, particularly relating to sensitive gender-related structures. Ex-Yugoslav languages have three grammatical genders for nouns, and their usage often uncovered gender-related hierarchies. Several sociolinguists have explored the use of gender-sensitive language through the gender forms of nouns.<sup>40</sup> Jelena Filipović, for example, has argued that the use of gender-sensitive language is an important indicator of gender relations.<sup>41</sup> Following on from this, I have tried to preserve

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<sup>40</sup> Jelena Filipović, "Rodno osetljive jezičke politike: teorijske postavke i metodološki postupci," *Analitičko-filološkog fakulteta*, no. 21 (2009): 109–27; Ana Kuzmanović Jovanović, *Jezik i rod: diskurzivna konstrukcija rodne ideologije* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2013); Ranko Bugarski, "Pol i rod u jeziku," in *Jezik i kultura* (Belgrade: Biblioteka XX vek, 2005), 53–65; Svenka Savić, "Suggestions For Using Gender Sensitive Language In The Armed Forces: Women And Military Ranks," *Western Balkans Security Observer*, no. 19 (2011): 46–57.

<sup>41</sup> Jelena Filipović, *Moć reči: ogledi iz kritičke sociolingvistike* (Belgrade: Zadužbina Andrejević : Filološki

gender in my translations by adding women/female to nouns such as comrade, worker, peasant, Party member if they were used in the original. All these nouns in ex-Yugoslav languages had gendered forms, and through the analysis, I will show where the communists used gender-sensitive language and where they omitted it. Often, my conclusions follow Filipović's, that the lack of gender-sensitive language in specific cases shows the exclusion of women and the fortification of a male-dominated gender hierarchy.

Regarding the use of abbreviations, Yugoslav communists were no different to other communists in Eastern Europe, and used abbreviations extensively. These abbreviations referred to the Party or state institutions. Whilst I have translated the names of all these institutions, I have used their Yugoslav abbreviation forms. For example, I will talk about the Antifascist Front of Women, but I will use the abbreviation AFŽ, which follows from the Yugoslav original *Antifašistički front žena*, allowing for easier referencing. However, I will not use short abbreviations such as NO or NF, to avoid confusion. For the same reason, I will use the term *Youth Organisation* instead of its direct translation, particularly as the organisation changed the name several times.

Used abbreviations in the text or in the sources:

AFŽ – Antifašistički front žena – The Antifascist Women's Front

AVNOJ – Antifašističko Veće Narodnog Oslobođenja Jugoslavije – The Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia

IVZ – Islamska verska zajednica – Islamic Religious Community of Yugoslavia

NF – Narodni front – People's Front (NF will be used only if it exists in the sources, in the main text I will use People's Front)

NO – Narodna omladina – People's Youth (NO will be used only if it exists in the sources, in the main text I will use Youth Organisation)

SKJ – Savez komunista Jugoslavije – The League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ will be used only if it exists in the sources, in the main text I will use the Communist Party)

SKOJ – Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije – The League of the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia

SSRNJ – Savez socijalističkog radnog naroda – The Alliance of the Socialist Working People

SŽDJ – Savez ženskih društava Jugoslavije – The Alliance of Women Societies of Yugoslavia

USAOJ – Ujedinjeni savez antifašističke omladine Jugoslavije – The United Alliance of the Antifascist Youth of Yugoslavia (USAOJ will be used only in the sources if that is how the document was titled)



## Chapter 1: The Transfer of Soviet Models

‘Women! Women-workers and women-peasants! Follow the example of the Soviet Union! Fight for your liberation under the flag of the Communist Party!’<sup>1</sup>

Yugoslav Communists’ newspaper *Proleter*, January 1933.

‘Your heroism excited our heroism! Hear us, Soviet women!’<sup>2</sup>

A magazine for women, *Žena u borbi*, June 1943.

‘From the papers of the Soviet delegates at the Congress, and in friendly talks with them, our women-antifascists learned the methods of Soviet women’s work – and of the tasks we have in this postwar period.’<sup>3</sup>

A booklet *Soviet Woman – Our Sister and our Role Model*, autumn 1945.

The interpretation of Soviet models played a crucial role in the formulation and application of postwar Yugoslav gender policies. Inspired by the Soviet Union, Yugoslav communists often used Soviet texts as practical guidelines for how to change their own society. Many Yugoslav communists had been educated in the Soviet Union whilst during the war they disseminated Soviet teachings to recruited Partisan fighters. This chapter explores the rationale behind this reliance upon Soviet models, the mechanics of cultural policy transfer, and the main agents involved in this process. In exploring the Party’s pre-war activities, I argue that the Yugoslav communists’ pre-war experiences, during which they participated in Yugoslav feminist societies, was neither genuine, nor an acceptable alternative to the Soviet model. Yugoslav communists wanted a socialist revolution to make the so-called woman question obsolete, and not to modify the existing capitalist system. The Soviet Union offered models and legitimisation to reorganise society as a whole, in which gender policies were an integral part. I argue that Soviet gender policies, reshaped over the course of Stalin’s rule, found their way to Yugoslavia both through the communist press, and through direct contact between Yugoslav and Soviet communists,

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<sup>1</sup> “Jedini put potpunog oslobodjenja žene [The Only Road to Full Liberation of Women],” *Proleter*, no. 1 (January 1933): 11–12.

<sup>2</sup> Marija Kreačić, “Sestrama ste nas nazvale [We Became Your Sisters],” *Žena u borbi*, no. 1 (June 1943): 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Sovjetska žena - naša sestra i naš uzor [Soviet Woman - Our Sister and Our Role Model]* (Belgrade: Centralni odbor AFŽ Jugoslavije, 1945), 9.

particularly through Soviet schools for international revolutionaries. The Party's first programme for gender policies, written before the Second World War, reflected Stalinist notions about gender and envisioned the application of the Soviet solutions in Yugoslav practice.

For the purposes of this analysis, I will briefly outline how I use the concept of culture, and then discuss a possible method for tracking cultural transfer from one political entity to another. Culture is referred to as a process through which certain meanings are created, rather than as a material thing and/or a coherent unit. Such an understanding of culture is derived from the influence of British Cultural Studies, particularly Raymond Williams' foundational work. Williams broadened a commonly held restricted view of culture from 'works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' to culture as 'a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, or a group,'<sup>4</sup> thus permitting the emergence of numerous new approaches to the study of culture. Following on that, the definition of culture informing this thesis derives from James Clifford's ideas that culture may be seen as a set of relations and discursive practices.<sup>5</sup> On this view, one might emphasise the incoherence of culture, its fragmentation, and therefore the tensions and contradictions that exist within what we might refer to as 'the cultural'. Culture is not considered being a static, fixed or closed system, nor a series of material artefacts or static symbols. Instead, culture is understood as a dynamic category, a creative force, or as Homi Bhabha puts it, culture results from dynamic social relations, with their historical and sociological specificities.<sup>6</sup>

The transfer of ideology, institutions or policies from the centre to the periphery has been theorised by various authors, most often situated within a transnational history paradigm, which constitutes a theoretical framework for exploring the Yugoslav-Soviet case. The Soviet Union was the only socialist country in the interwar period, a beacon for Yugoslav communists, who were a minor, peripheral movement. Yugoslav Communist Party was less important to the Soviet leadership as compared to, for example, German

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<sup>4</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana/Croom Helm, 1976), 80.

<sup>5</sup> James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) These views are compatible with the long tradition of British cultural studies and works of Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, etc. .

<sup>6</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Classics (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).

Communist Party. Furthermore, for many years Yugoslav Communist Party remained just a dependent section of the Comintern.<sup>7</sup> As transnational history usually tackles ‘specific movements, transits, and circulations that crossed or transcended one or more national borders,’<sup>8</sup> it can focus on interconnections, but also recognises the power of some entities over others. Gender historians have embraced transnational history, finding such interconnection to be a central analytic in research on sexuality, gender roles, and gender policies.<sup>9</sup> As Dagmar Herzog described it, the transnational history approach is of particular value because it considers a combination of factors that determine changes in sexual cultures.<sup>10</sup> In my case that means moving beyond Yugoslav borders to uncover background and models for Yugoslav gender policies. Such considerations are now possible thanks to the emergence of scholarship which has provided a significant amount of both theoretical and empirical work on gender-related topics in the Soviet Union.

Building on this, a method for tracking the transfer of ideas within the transnational history paradigm offered by Diana Mishkova’s study is of particular importance for my work because she looks at how ideas and institutions were transferred and reshaped in the Balkans. Whilst Mishkova focuses on nineteenth-century Western influences, her approach underlines agency, the reinterpretation of models, and the changes that occur during the process of transfer: each of these points applies to other contexts as well. She conceives cultural transfer as a ‘complex process of socially differentiated (re)constructing the significance, or meanings, of institutions and norms in a different context’.<sup>11</sup> Mishkova insists, therefore, that the study of transfer must be twofold: first, it must explore the reception, transformation or rejection of models in an approach that underlines the political agency of the periphery; and second, it must analyse

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<sup>7</sup> That Yugoslav Communist Party carried less importance to the Soviet leadership was reflected in: *Istorija Svesavezne Komunističke Partije (Boljševika) [History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)]* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1947) and in many other crucial Stalinist works where German Communist Party was discussed, but Yugoslav Party omitted.

<sup>8</sup> Joanne Meyerowitz, “Transnational Sex and U.S. History,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1273.

<sup>9</sup> The American Historical Review, Vol. 114, No. 5 was dedicated to the transnational history of sexuality. See: Margot Canaday, “Thinking Sex in the Transnational Turn: An Introduction,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1250–57.

<sup>10</sup> For her theoretical observations regarding gender and transnational history, see: Dagmar Herzog, “Syncopated Sex: Transforming European Sexual Cultures,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1287–1308.

<sup>11</sup> D. Mishkova, “Liberalism and Tradition in the Nineteenth-Century Balkans: Toward History and Methodology of Political Transfer,” *East European Politics & Societies* 26, no. 4 (September 6, 2012): 673.

how the social and political environment changed as a result of the transfer. Mishkova's methods promise to offer new understandings of how ideas, practices and institutions mutate during the process of transfer and must then undergo legitimisation and domestication in their new surroundings.<sup>12</sup> Adapting Mishkova's approach, this chapter will investigate the main channels and agents of transfer, whilst the following chapters will show how ideas transferred were altered and applied.

Scholars have noted Soviet influences on Yugoslavia in many crucial aspects of politics and economy, for example regarding collectivisation and industrialisation processes.<sup>13</sup> Concerning cultural politics, however, only few have analysed the particularities and circumstances of their transfer and application, often reducing culture to art and material artefacts. The focus has been more on political issues and general state policies of the production of art. For example, several authors have considered the number of films and books that Yugoslavia imported from the Soviet Union, and the priorities set by Yugoslav agitprop regarding socialist realism as an artistic style.<sup>14</sup> The same authors also illustrated the decrease in number of these imports following the Yugoslav conflict with the Soviet Union in 1948. Likewise, Goran Miloradović argues that in the first postwar years of Yugoslav socialism, the state only permitted art that imitated Soviet templates, assigning Yugoslav art the role of educating *a new man*. Miloradović's research tackles the reception of sovietised art by examining guestbooks, uncovering the dissatisfaction of Yugoslav audiences with this new style of painting. Miloradović,

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<sup>12</sup> See: Mishkova, "Liberalism and Tradition in the Nineteenth-Century Balkans."

<sup>13</sup> These works will be discussed in related chapters. A few examples include: Timofejev, *Rusi i Drugi svetski rat u Jugoslaviji*; Melissa K. Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists: Politics and Ideology in the Yugoslav Countryside, 1941-1953* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998); Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia: From World War II to Non-Alignment* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Belgrade: Nolit, 1988); Ljubodrag Dimić, *Agitprop Kultura: Agitpropovska Faza Kulturne Politike U Srbiji: 1945-1952*. (Belgrade: Rad, 1988); Branka Donkić, "Sovjetizacija i desovjetizacija jugoslovenske kulturne politike," in *Zbornik radova sa međunarodnog okruglog stola Tito - Staljin*, ed. Miladin Milošević (109-123, 2007); Branka Donkić, "Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1945-1952," in *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1945-1952: zbornik dokumenata*, ed. Branka Donkić, Milic F Petrovic, and Ivan Hofman, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Belgrade: Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2009), 16-41; Predrag Marković, "U potrazi za novim putem: Jugoslovenski eksperiment u društvu i kulturi posle 1948. godine," in *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski sukob 1948. godine: zbornik radova sa naučnog skupa*, ed. Petar Kačavenda (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1999), 211-22; Goran Miloradović, "U traganju za 'novim čovekom': vrhunac kulturne saradnje Jugoslavije i Sovjetskog Saveza 1944-1948," in *Oslobođenje Beograda 1944: zbornik radova*, ed. Aleksandar Životić (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2010), 419-36; Whilst material culture is a valuable field of research, it requires a different theoretical positioning. See: Leora Auslander et al., "AHR Conversation: Historians and the Study of Material Culture," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1354-1404.

however, does not attribute agency to Yugoslav artists in this initial period, and fails to observe how the Soviet style of socialist realism was domesticated in its new surroundings. At the same time, he only focuses on art, neglecting broader sets of cultural patterns. Having said that, there is a gap in scholarship regarding cultural policies of Yugoslav state socialism, which would consider culture more broadly, and explore cultural influences beyond narrow Yugoslav context.

Other studies that have explored cultural influences from Russia have dealt exclusively with pre-socialist times. Miroslav Jovanović examined Russian emigration in interwar Yugoslavia and its intellectual influences, whilst Ljubodrag Dimić also explored Russian influences on interwar Yugoslav culture, nevertheless implying a very restricted understanding of culture.<sup>15</sup> Most recently Klaus Buchenau has tracked pre-war Russian cultural influences, arguing that - in a long tradition of Russian intellectual influences - many Western ideas were first altered and then transferred to the Balkans via Russia.<sup>16</sup> This is a crucial contribution to scholarship, because most other literature examines western influences on Yugoslavia increasing after the conflict with the Soviet Union in 1948,<sup>17</sup> but omits influences from Russia and the Soviet Union. Such scholarship builds on a series of studies describing Western influences on the Serbian modernisation process from the 19th century onwards.<sup>18</sup> Klaus Buchenau, on the other hand, has shown that this process was more complex, tracking crucial points in which Western influence reached Serbia via Russia, in so doing demonstrating how many ideas were domesticated.

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<sup>15</sup> Miroslav Jovanović, *Ruska emigracija na Balkanu 1920-1940* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2006); Ljubodrag Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji, 1918-1941*, vol. 3 (Belgrade: Stubovi kulture, 1996), 135–86.

<sup>16</sup> Klaus Buchenau, *Auf Russischen Spuren: Orthodoxe Antiwestler in Serbien, 1850-1945*, 1. Aufl, *Balkanologische Veröffentlichungen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011); and: Mishkova, “Liberalism and Tradition in the Nineteenth-Century Balkans,” 679.

<sup>17</sup> Marković, “U potrazi za novim putem: Jugoslovenski eksperiment u društvu i kulturi posle 1948. godine”; Zoran Janjetović, “Miki Maus u socijalističkoj zemlji, ili jugoslovenska omladina gleda kroz zapadni prozor,” *Tokovi istorije* 3 (2009): 162–76; Radina Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam: amerikanizacija jugoslovenske popularne kulture šezdesetih godina XX veka* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Latinka Perović, ed., *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20. veka: Položaj žena kao merilo modernizacije* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 1998); Dubravka Stojanović, *Kaldra i asfalt: urbanizacija i evropeizacija Beograda 1890-1914* (Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2008); Ljubinka Trgovčević, *Planirana elita: o studentima iz Srbije na evropskim univerzitetima u 19. veku* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2003).

## Alternatives to Soviet Models - Communists' Pre-War Experiences

The examination of the transfer of Soviet models starts with the interwar period when the main agents of transfer were influenced by the ideas dominant from the Soviet Union. Moreover, Yugoslav communists' pre-war reliance on Soviet models has been less explored, particularly regarding gender issues. The Communist Party was made illegal and prosecuted from 1921 onwards, just two years after its formation and following rather successful elections. The Party operated underground during next twenty years, in which Yugoslav communists became more dependent on Soviet aid and advice.<sup>19</sup> Being trained in Moscow, or simply being known as a communist, was dangerous in interwar Yugoslavia. The majority of the communists were interrogated, tortured, and imprisoned numerous times by the police. Many women were also brutally tortured so as to disclose the names of other Party members. For example, one of the leading communist woman of that time Anka Butorac barely survived days of beatings and interrogations, before the Party sent her to the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> In such a conspiratorial atmosphere, few Party members could contribute to a theoretical discussion of Marxism. Many focused on translating and spreading Soviet books, pamphlets and brochures. In the communist underground press, interwar Yugoslav state with its institutions, legislation and practices, became the main enemy against which their communist identity and policies were defined.<sup>21</sup> The Party sought for solutions that were different, disseminating utopian stories about the Soviet Union in their own press, presenting it as a state in which women were equal, workers were liberated and people lived happy lives.<sup>22</sup>

The lack of domestic intellectual debate on gender issues amongst the communists contributed to reliance on the Soviet ideas. The first generation of Yugoslav communists, including their leaders Sima Marković and Filip Filipović never discussed gender

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<sup>19</sup> Ivo Banac, "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Period of Legality, 1919-21," in *The Effects of World War I: The Class War after the Great War: The Rise of Communist Parties in East Central Europe, 1918-1921*, ed. Ivo Banac, 4 (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983), 188–230.

<sup>20</sup> "Izjava drugarice Butorac o zverstvima Zagrebačke policije [Statement from She-comrade Butorac about Brutality of the Zagreb Police]," *Proleter*, no. 17 (December 1930): 7.

<sup>21</sup> On the Yugoslav Communist Party's policies towards inter-war Yugoslav state, see: Ben Fowkes, "To Make the Nation or to Break It: Communist Dilemmas in Two Interwar Multinational States," in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917-53*, ed. Norman Laporte, Kevin Morgan, and Matthew Worley (Houndmills; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 206–25; On the Party's views towards national question and Yugoslavism: Andrew Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 130–32.

<sup>22</sup> "Jedini put potpunog oslobodjenja žene."

relations, patriarchy, or position of women. This silence was reflected in their own writings, but also in the Party newspaper *Proleter* of the 1920s.<sup>23</sup> However, many Yugoslav communists of this older generation did not survive Stalin's purges, those perishing including the leadership of the Party. Only two out of a total of eight of the Party's secretaries survived. Hundreds of other Yugoslav communists disappeared even before the war started.<sup>24</sup> These purges caused a generational shift in the Party in the mid-1930s. Tito was sent back from the Soviet Union to reorganise the Party whilst a new generation of communist was very young. For example, amongst communist women in 1936, Mitra Mitrović was only twenty-four years old, Vanda Novosel was twenty-one, Milka Minić was twenty-one, Herta Haas was twenty-two, Vida Tomšič was twenty-three, etc. Men in the Party were not much older either. If the first generation was *Bolshevised* during the 1920s in terms of organisational practices,<sup>25</sup> this generation was *Stalinised*. As Brigitte Studer has pointed out, that stalinisation was reflected through a system of rules, codes, conventions and cognitive structures which when combined taught one to speak and see Stalinist version of Bolshevism.<sup>26</sup> Similar to other international revolutionaries in Europe, Yugoslav communists were disciplined and used as key instruments in promoting Stalinist politics whilst individual deviations from the official party line were not tolerated. Many of them will survive the war and be the crucial agents in changing society on Soviet terms.<sup>27</sup>

Generational changes in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, combined with broader Soviet politics, informed how the Party approached the so-called *woman's question* – comprised of the ineligibility of women to vote, discriminating family

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Filipović published an article on Yugoslav peasantry in 1935, never mentioning gender relations or women. See: Filip Filipović, "Položaj seljaštva u Jugoslaviji [The Position of Peasantry in Yugoslavia]," in *Sabrana dela [Selected Works]*, vol. 14, 14 vols. (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1989), 113–33.

<sup>24</sup> Ivan Očak, "Staljinški obračun s jugoslavenskim partijskim rukovodstvom u SSSR-u," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, no. 21 (1988): 81–106.

<sup>25</sup> As argued by: Kosta Nikolić, *Boljševizacija Komunističke Partije Jugoslavije 1919 - 1929* (Belgrade: Institut za Savremenu Istoriju, 1994).

<sup>26</sup> Brigitte Studer, "Stalinization : Balance Sheet of a Complex Notion," in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917-53*, ed. Norman Laporte, Kevin Morgan, and Matthew Worley (Houndmills; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 45–65.

<sup>27</sup> According to the historian Hermann Weber, the 1930s were a period during which all European communist parties were under heavy pressure from the Comintern. Many communist parties in Europe became fully Stalinised. See his article on the KPD: Hermann Weber, "The Stalinization of the KPD: Old and New Views," in *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917-53*, ed. Norman Laporte, Kevin Morgan, and Matthew Worley (Houndmills; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 22–44.

legislation, the gender pay gap, the closure of many professions to women, etc.<sup>28</sup> The only alternatives to the Soviet solution of the *woman's question* (i.e. communist revolution) were raised by interwar Yugoslav feminists and their organisations. They fought for legal changes and the opening of certain professions to women, whilst more radical feminists organised strikes in factories. However, women's organisations were not a unified front with the same goals and methods. Conservative Catholic and Orthodox women's religious societies represented about a third of all organised women's groups during the interwar period, and they focused mostly on teaching domestic skills.<sup>29</sup> As early as 1928, at the Fourth Communist Party Congress in Dresden, these societies were marked as hostile tools in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The Party was afraid of their popularity, and developed a plan to denounce feminist groups, and to separate the 'female masses' from them.<sup>30</sup> In subsequent years the Party's central newspaper *Proleter* published numerous articles attacking the feminist societies, accusing them of separating women from general class struggle.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, these societies provided a forum in which women could articulate their interests and try to improve their position, and due to their popularity the Party could not ignore them - particularly as the Party was powerless to abolish them or draw these women in its ranks.<sup>32</sup>

There was a change of attitude as regards these societies following the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in August 1935 when Georgi Dimitrov deemed harmful communists' attempts to abolish the women's organisations as part of the struggle against 'women's separatism'.<sup>33</sup> Dutifully following the Comintern directive, Yugoslav communists changed their strategy, instructing its members - and at that time there was already a handful of women amongst them - to infiltrate those women's societies they considered more progressive.<sup>34</sup> Following orders, the Party's university students were

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<sup>28</sup> This issue was always considered to be of less importance to Yugoslav politicians than, for example, the national question, or economic troubles.

<sup>29</sup> See: Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 34.

<sup>30</sup> Ubavka Vujošević and Žarko Protić, eds., *Izvori za istoriju SKJ: Klasna borba [Sources for the History of SKJ: Class Struggle]* (Belgrade: Komunist, 1984), 591.

<sup>31</sup> Jelena Nikolić, "Radne žene i Prvi Maj 1932. [Working Women and Mayday 1932]," *Proleter*, no. 24 (April 1932): 3.

<sup>32</sup> Eager to avoid feminism and separation of women, the Party only approved the work of women's committees within the unions, and planned to make its own committee for women attached to the Central Committee in 1928: Vujošević and Protić, *Izvori za istoriju SKJ: Klasna borba*, 592.

<sup>33</sup> This was discussed within the broader idea of the Popular Front against fascism. Georgi Dimitrov, "The United Front and Women," in *Selected Works*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1972), 61.

<sup>34</sup> Ivo-Lola Ribar, "Novi zadaci komunista u omladinskom pokretu [New Tasks for the Communists in the



mostly successful in this endeavour. Led by Mitra Mitrović, Milka Kufrin, Neda Božinović and several other communists who would come to hold significant roles during and after the war, they infiltrated the youth section of the Alliance of the Women's Movement, as well as the Yugoslav Association of University-Educated Women. They also influenced the publication of the magazine *Žena danas*, gaining a medium which would later become the official magazine of the Party's women's section.<sup>35</sup> The communists nourished their connections within women's organisations and unions for years, yet their failure to obtain suffrage rights for women, and internal quarrels between communists and feminists, strengthened the idea that women's rights cannot be separated from socialist revolution. Unsurprisingly, only women who were admitted to the Party or its Youth section before the war had leading positions after 1945.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, this experience of working with various feminist groups in interwar Yugoslavia was not negligible. As Jancar-Webster shows, women's organisations were urban-oriented, but had an agenda of improving the lives of the rural population through organising self-help programmes that included courses on literacy, hygiene and home economics. This all resembled the Party's women's section efforts during and after the war, particularly as female village teachers were the main force behind the Party's campaigns.<sup>37</sup> The difference between feminist campaigns in the countryside, and later communist campaigns was in their scale and final aim: The feminist societies wanted to improve the lives of peasant women in sporadic actions, whilst for communists, mass campaigns had an aspect of 'elevating' the consciousness of peasant women on the road to the socialist transformation of the countryside, as demonstrated in chapter four.<sup>38</sup>

The first detailed Party statement on gender policies, whose core would remain unchanged over the next few decades, was made in 1940 at the Party's conference in

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Youth Movement],” *Proleter*, no. 13 (December 1937): 5–6.

<sup>35</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 35.

<sup>36</sup> Disagreements also erupted on generational lines, as communist women were very young as compared to leading feminists. “Omladinska produžnica ženskog pokreta [The Youth Branch of the Women's Movement],” 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 10, The Archives of Yugoslavia; Biographies of almost all leading communists were collected in: Petar Kačavenda and Dušan Živković, eds., *Narodni Heroji Jugoslavije* (Belgrade; Podgorica: Partizanska knjiga; Narodna knjiga; Pobjeda, 1982).

<sup>37</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 36.

<sup>38</sup> What Yugoslav communists meant by socialist consciousness was often very vague. Usually it referred to the basic understanding of Marxism-Leninism and the Party's policies. Edvard Kardelj, “Za borbeni savez radnika i seljaka [For a Fighting Alliance between Workers and Peasants],” *Proleter*, no. 5–6 (July 1940): 3–7; Similarly vague after the war: “Teoretsko uzdizanje važan uslov naših pobeda [Theoretical Elevation is an Important Prerequisite for Our Victories],” *Radnica* 12 (December 1949): 1–2.

Zagreb. Vida Tomšič and Spasenija Babović were the first women admitted to the Central Committee, with Tomšič presenting the gender programme. She condemned liberal feminism, claiming that feminism separates women from the working class, and turns women against men rather than against the ruling system. Instead, the political struggle for women's rights had to be part of the workers' struggle for a new people's government of workers and peasants. The Soviet Union was declared the sole model for organising future society. As Tomšič explained, in the Soviet Union women were fully equal to men, had equal salaries, could enrol in any school, and become whatever they wanted, whilst they had an equal role as men in public life. She emphasised the maternal care that the Soviet Union provided, claiming that the Soviet Union was the only country in the world where it was joyful to be a mother, and urged Yugoslavs to demand the same rights.<sup>39</sup>

Barbara Jancar-Webster rightly argues that these ideas were not novel in Yugoslav interwar society, as several women's societies propagated them, just without mentioning the Soviet Union.<sup>40</sup> However, this was the key difference. Vida Tomšič's programme envisioned the solution to women's equality as coming through revolution, and the transformation of society as a whole. Only the Soviet Union could serve as model, as Yugoslav communists believed that the gender regime ought to resemble that of the Soviet Union, a goal which had been impossible within the interwar state. If some of the communist political demands appeared similar to the political objectives of feminist activists, the way these ideas were to be implemented in practice was solely based on imagined Soviet terms. Vida Tomšič and the Party established the Soviet Union as the only legitimate source of ideas, whilst the interpretation of these ideas would guide Yugoslav policies in the following decade.

Contact between the Yugoslav communists and the Soviet Union before the war was limited, however, the Party's magazine *Proleter* regularly published news from the Soviet Union. More importantly, some of the pre-war Yugoslav communists had significant experiences of time spent in the Soviet Union, where they received a formal education in Marxism, and observed gender relations and official policies. Many of them were trained at the Soviet International Lenin School, designed for foreign

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<sup>39</sup> Vida Tomšič, "Referat na V Zemałjskoj konferenciji [Report at the Fifth Conference]," 1940, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 10, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>40</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 37.

revolutionaries. Amongst the Yugoslav disciples there were a few women who later had prominent roles in the Yugoslav women's organisation and the Party. For example, Anka Butorac was sent to Moscow in 1930 as one of the most active Yugoslav communist women, and spent six years training there before returning to Yugoslavia.<sup>41</sup> Spasenija Babović - later the president of the AFŽ and a government minister - was also trained there, where she met Tito and other leading communists. Together with other trainees, including Zdenka Kidrič, Spasenija Babović survived the war and was able to apply her experiences gained in Moscow to her many important duties in the Party and the state apparatus.<sup>42</sup>

### **Stalinist Gender Policies**

At this point, it is important to revisit gender policies that inspired leading Yugoslav communists during the 1930s, either through numerous publications or from their stay in the Soviet Union. It is hard to imagine that the nuances of Soviet gender policies were known to Yugoslav communists, or that they observed how these policies were implemented in practice. Instead, I will focus on the main features of Soviet gender policies, particularly on changes during Stalin's time. As Yugoslav communists read the Soviet press and literature, it will be argued that the Soviet gender regime mattered, particularly as it was used as a legitimising device. The character of Stalinist policies is still the subject of ongoing scholarly debate as the shift from the social history of women to approaches that emphasise gender as an analytic category have re-examined several important paradigms that dominated the field. One such paradigm, influential in studies on Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia as well, is the paradigm of the Great Retreat in gender policies with Stalin's ascent to power.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, I will briefly focus on that debate

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<sup>41</sup> She did not survive the war. "Narodni heroj Anka Butorac [People's Hero Anka Butorac]," *Radnica* 2 (February 1950): 4.

<sup>42</sup> The importance of Moscow for Yugoslav revolutionaries can be seen in Spasenija Babović's decision to send her three year old son there. He returned to Yugoslavia eleven years later, at the end of the war. Stanko Mladenović, *Spasenija Čana Babović*, Revolucionari Šumadije (Belgrade; Kragujevac: Rad; Svetlost, 1980).

<sup>43</sup> It was established soon after the Second World War by Nicholas Timasheff. The book was first published in 1946: Nicholas S. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat; the Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia*, World Affairs: National and International Viewpoints (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1972); Wendy Z Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Susan E. Reid, "All Stalin's Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 57, no. 1 (1998): 133–73.

considering it crucial for later analysis of Stalinist gender policies transferred to Yugoslavia.

This Great Retreat paradigm was mostly advocated by social historians including notable authors such as Wendy Goldman and Susan E. Reid. Goldman explored the emancipatory Soviet legislature after the revolution, which consisted of the legalisation of abortion, the acceptance of previously illegitimate children and their rights, as well as easier procedures for divorce and the equalisation of the position of women in family relations in both urban and rural areas. Alongside the new legal structures, many activists imagined how a new ‘everyday life’ (*новый быт*) would replace the old one. Partners were expected to be truly equal and to become active participants in the socialist project. Socialist gender relations would enter households and domestic labour would be transferred to the public sphere. Goldman showed that reproductive policies were based on four principles: free union, women’s emancipation through wage labour, the socialisation of housework, and the withering away of the bourgeois family. Through her extensive research she has argued that all these policies failed to live up to their promises. The idea of free union was never established, especially as concerns men’s responsibility and respect for the new socialist women’s activities. Women’s participation in wage labour became even more prominent at the end of the first five-year plan when many progressive laws were abandoned. Housework was never socialised to the promised extent, whilst the family survived.<sup>44</sup>

With Stalin’s ascent to power and the advent of industrialisation, the Party’s policy towards women, the family, and reproduction consists of a retreat from their previous revolutionary moment. Family life was promoted once again, women were encouraged to be mothers above all else, sexual freedoms were restrained, and eventually abortion was banned. Normative distinctions between masculinity and femininity sharpened whilst the government applied harsh measures against prostitution and ‘deviant’ sexual behaviours. Combined, these were the core of Stalinist gender policies.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*; Wendy Z Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin’s Russia* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> All these policies have been widely researched and documented. See: Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 97–113; Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*; Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin’s Russia*.

Such a retreat was caused by the Stalin regime's drive to consolidate a political system, together with concerns about a high rate of abortions and a low birth-rate. In addition, the massive industrialisation brought on by the first five-year plan, the inability of the state to provide the promised services that were supposed to replace the bourgeois family, and debate and pressure 'from below' by women seeking stability of divorce policies and the family also contributed.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, several works, most notably those of Elizabeth A. Wood and David L. Hoffmann, have challenged this idea of a retreat.<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth A. Wood brings gender as an organising principle of Soviet society to the fore, arguing that the Party always reserved a special role for women as mothers of the Republic, besides combining productive labour and supporting the Red Army during the civil war: 'they were to tend to the Red Army soldiers with caring hands and kind hearts.'<sup>48</sup> In her view, the idea of a woman whose primary role is motherhood and care was not purely a Stalinist invention or a Stalinist return to pre-revolutionary traditions. Only a small minority of Soviet leaders had any interest in gender issues, and these leaders had huge problems once they tried to change old prejudices. Furthermore, opposition to many progressive actions concerning women was not only found amongst ordinary workers and peasants, but also amongst some of the Party leaders. Wood analysed anxieties created by new marriage and family policies, showing that many Bolsheviks were not clear on how the new relations would emerge. For instance, Wood explains the logic behind allowing abortion in the first place. Bolsheviks believed that it was a 'necessary evil' so as to prevent underground abortions from taking place. They believed that this policy should only remain until the government could provide a decent life for mothers and children. Once communism had been fully built, its workers would not need abortions. Therefore, abortion was never considered being a woman's right, but more likely a product of

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<sup>46</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 296–336.

<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Elena Shulman also challenges this paradigm and illustrates the new opportunities brought to women in the Soviet Far East: Elena Shulman, *Stalinism on the Frontier of Empire: Women and State Formation in the Soviet Far East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 4.

economic necessity – a remnant of the old, pre-revolutionary world.<sup>49</sup> Such view had a profound effect on Yugoslav case, examined in the following chapter.

As concerns Stalinist pro-natalist policies, Wood made the argument that, due to many economic problems, policy makers were not troubled by human losses; thus the pro-natalist policies were not as quickly implemented as they were in many other European countries.<sup>50</sup> Building on this, David L. Hoffmann argues that Stalinist policies towards reproduction did not result in retraditionalisation. Although the Stalinist state favoured the family as a unit capable of increasing the birth-rate and producing healthy citizens, this was a ‘modernist’ idea alien to the Tsarist regime and yet common across Western Europe in the twentieth century. One significant difference was that over the period of Stalin’s rule parental obligations were enforced, and norms for sexual behaviour and family organisation were officially prescribed. The regime no longer permitted scholarly debate or public discussion about sex whilst sexual behaviour was to be enforced by police measures rather than by education. However, the family was not supposed to be private; instead, it was proclaimed an instrument in the Party’s policies to instil collectivist values in children and improve social discipline. Stalinist family policies thus never intended to result in a return to pre-revolutionary family models. In Stalinist terms, the Soviet household was not the property of a family patriarch, or protected from the state’s interventions.<sup>51</sup> As Hoffmann shows, new policies were not driven by public opinion, although many were in favour of these policies, but instead by the state’s interest in population growth and social control. Although the Soviet case has its specificities, Hoffmann shows that it was part of a broader European trend towards the state management of reproduction in which the state’s desire to increase the population was favoured over individual reproductive rights.<sup>52</sup> Both Wood’s and Hoffmann’s arguments show that, even if Stalinist policies constituted a retreat from some of the revolutionary ideas of the 1920s, they were not necessarily ‘conservative’ either in intention or effect.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 106–11; Hoffmann also argues that the top Communist male officials were never very enthusiastic as concerns gender equality. David L. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 89.

<sup>50</sup> Wood also shows, however, that medical experts “viewed abortion as undesirable because of its effects on population growth, on individual and collective health.” Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 107.

<sup>51</sup> Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses*, 89.

<sup>52</sup> See: David L Hoffmann, “Mothers in the Motherland: Stalinist Pronatalism in Its Pan-European Context,” *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 1 (October 1, 2000): 35–54; or: Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses*, 87–117.

The discussion over the Great Retreat in Soviet gender policies has been influential in shaping the analysis of postwar Eastern Europe as well. Several authors have argued that it was this conservative version of gender policies that affected Eastern European countries following the war.<sup>53</sup> However, even if one accepts that there was a retreat in gender policies in the Soviet Union, the interpretation of Stalinist gender practices was used as a tool in transforming Yugoslav society that was still very conservative. The character of Soviet policies as understood by Yugoslav communist leadership was crucial. In that sense, their interpretation of Stalinist social policies created new opportunities for women to work and reinvent new identities, whilst the implications of Stalinist gender politics were very broad – from new labour policies to family relations both in urban and rural areas.

### **Teaching Soviet Ideas during the War**

Once the Second World War started, many of the most committed Yugoslav communists had clear ideas concerning desirable gender roles and gender policies, for which the Soviet Union was presented as the prime model. However, during the war, the Party lost the majority of its 12,000 pre-war members, but at the same time it gained 130,000 new, mostly young and uneducated people. The vast majority were peasants, who joined the Partisans after fleeing Ustashe and German terror, and did not have an awareness of even basic Marxist concepts. Therefore, the Party used every opportunity to spread its ideas, be it through direct political agitating or through subtler educational courses. These educational courses actually covered very similar topics to those organised by the pre-war women's groups, dealing with illiteracy, hygiene, and home economics for women. The key difference was that the Party's versions included ideological education. For instance, alphabet books created during the war covered the Party's major terms, and taught trainees about Tito, the Party and its massive organisations, as well as about the Soviet Union.<sup>54</sup>

The basic concepts behind the Party's teaching were defined by ideological education in the Soviet Union, which consisted of dialectical materialism read within *The*

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<sup>53</sup> On the retreat paradigm in Eastern Europe, see: Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender, and Women's Movements in East Central Europe* (London, New York, NY: Verso, 1993); Sharon L Wolchik and Alfred G Meyer, eds., *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985).

<sup>54</sup> "O našem zboru [About Our Gathering]," 1942, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 10, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

*History of the C.P.S.U. (b)*. This was the main book that set the paradigm through which all other questions were discussed, whilst the fourth chapter of this book - written by Stalin - was considered being a sacred text.<sup>55</sup> Stalin was regarded as a scholar of the highest calibre, on a par with Marx, Engels and Lenin. *The History of the C.P.S.U. (b)* was also considered a scholarly text, whose theories were proven in practice, and a text which set the standard for other communists to follow. Of course, this book was considered too advanced for newly recruited Partisans, and so their ideological education took place through magazines, pamphlets and brochures which often comprised translated Soviet texts supplemented with texts by Yugoslav authors. Soviet literature and a book entitled *How the Steel Was Tempered* by Nikolai Ostrovsky was also popular. Carefully planned, all these texts provided meanings, ideas, directives and information about the rapidly changing world.<sup>56</sup>

The education of recruited women, and of women in the liberated areas, was rather specific as it was often delegated to the newly established women's section called the Antifascist Women's Front (Antifašistički front žena - AFŽ). There is still a certain amount of scholarly disagreement over the reasons why the Party established the AFŽ. Jancar-Webster suggested that the Party created the AFŽ simply to ensure that women would offer their political and military support. She argued that the 'liberation' of women was a tool which served the regime's authoritarian purposes.<sup>57</sup> Other authors such as Lydia Sklevicky, Neda Božinović, and Jelena Batinić argued that the AFŽ was a continuation of the pre-war tradition of organised feminist societies, insisting on the AFŽ's role in emancipating women.<sup>58</sup> However, it was not only that young communist women joined feminist societies so as to avoid the illegal status of the Party and under

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<sup>55</sup> Years after the war, the Partisans remembered friends who sacrificed their lives to protect this book. Miladin Oljača, "Partijska literatura [The Party's Literature]," *Žena danas* 59 (April 1949): 25–26.

<sup>56</sup> Numerous lives were lost in protecting printing machines during the four years of guerrilla warfare. K Otmar, "Uoči dvogodišnjice domovinskog rata [Shortly Before the Two Years of the Fatherland War]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 1 (June 1943): 8–9; Partisan fighter Dragojlo Dudić wrote in his diary that Partisans used every moment of peace and quiet to read Soviet literature. Dragojlo Dudić, *Dnevnik 1941 [Diary 1941]* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1957).

<sup>57</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*; Barbara Jancar-Webster, "Women in the Yugoslav National Liberation Movement," in *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans: Women, Society, and Politics in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1998), 67–87.

<sup>58</sup> Lydia Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi* (Zagreb: Druga; Ženska infoteka, 1996), 81; Neda Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku* (Belgrade: Devedesetčetvrta, 1996); Batinić, *Women and Partisan Resistance in Yugoslavia during World War II*, 89–102.



the Comintern's directive, but the differences between the AFŽ and any of the pre-war societies were so sharp in terms of objectives, organisational structure, and methods of work, that it is hard to argue for continuity. I argue that the AFŽ, its structure, relation to the Party and goals were different from anything that had ever existed in Yugoslavia, and only resembled the Soviet *Zhenotdel*.<sup>59</sup>

The Bolshevik Party established the Zhenotdel in August 1919, with the aim of ensuring support during the civil war through organising supplies, and addressing problems experienced by women workers and peasants. Similarly, the AFŽ emerged in a time of war, had a very similar organisational form to the Party, and ultimately, the same views about women's role in society. These include their dependence on the Party's largess, and attention paid to women's supposedly negative qualities such as backwardness. Equally, women were co-opted to serve as a force for discipline in the regime, whilst the activists, as Wood puts it, acted as 'dutiful daughters,'<sup>60</sup> and not as independent feminists. Their activities both during the war and in peacetime are also comparable, and included organising educational activities for women, drafting legislation, and providing an important centre for ideas and activities promoting women's interests.<sup>61</sup> For the above reasons, I argue that the formation of the AFŽ was not inspired by any feminist association, but to address the Party's need for women's support during the war, thus organising a women's section closely tied to its structure.

The Zhenotdel ceased to exist in 1930 when the Bolshevik Central Committee merged it with other sections within the Party. Lazar Kaganovich explained that the Zhenotdel had achieved its purpose of emancipating women. For this reason, a debate took place within the Partisan movement over the purpose of a separate organisation for women. Some argued that women were already equal in the Partisan units. Nevertheless, the Yugoslav Communist Party leading ideologist Milovan Djilas argued for the AFŽ's existence in 1943, adding that the AFŽ will continue to exist after the war, but implied that its purpose will end once the Party considers women to be equal in a classless society.<sup>62</sup> Considered together, Djilas' arguments in 1943 did not break with the Soviet

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<sup>59</sup> Barbara Evans Clements, "The Utopianism of the Zhenotdel," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 3 (October 1, 1992): 485–96.

<sup>60</sup> Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 212–13.

<sup>61</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 338.

<sup>62</sup> Milovan Djilas, "Izgleđi na razvoj Antifašističke fronte žena [Perspectives for the Development of the

experience of the Zhenotdel. The Zhenotdel existed in an immediate post-revolutionary period when there was a need for a stronger emancipatory project amongst women, but it was abolished once the Soviet Union had reached a stage of socialism in which women and men were, supposedly, fully equal. Djilas explained that after the war the AFŽ would have to reform itself into being an organisation that would integrate all women into political and economic life. Just as in the Soviet Union, the crucial idea was not to allow a separation of the *woman's question* from other social issues. Gender equality had to be one part of general equality promoted. In fact, Djilas used the same arguments ten years later when his speech marked the end of the AFŽ.<sup>63</sup>

The only difference with the Soviet case was that many notable Soviet women chose not to work in the Zhenotdel. Yugoslav communist women, on the other hand, defended the AFŽ, not only during the war but many years later. Even when they worked on other posts within the government, many prominent women still had strong connections with the AFŽ. They attended internal meetings in order to help in their fields of expertise and genuinely supported the AFŽ initiatives. Many of the most influential women in the Party knew each other before the war, whilst the war experience and the roles they had in the Partisan movement made them close friends. From the sources available, it seems that they expressed their mutual bonds through their work in the AFŽ. Even in official correspondence, they enquired about each other's personal life and addressed one another freely.<sup>64</sup> The mutual support these Party women offered one another was visible during an early 1943 debate on the role of the AFŽ, and when the Party abolished the organisation a decade later.

The Party's Central Committee took part in this 1943 debate about the purpose of the AFŽ. They rebuked the AFŽ women for being more loyal to the AFŽ than to the Party, stating that there was a feeling in the AFŽ of separation from the Party's overall struggle.<sup>65</sup> Some of the earlier-mentioned scholars have used this criticism as primary proof of continuity present with the pre-war feminist associations, and of the AFŽ's

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Antifascist Women's Front],” *Žena u borbi*, no. 3–4 (September 1943): 3–6.

<sup>63</sup> Milovan Djilas, “Govor na IV Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Fourth AFŽ Congress],” 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 5, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>64</sup> These letters are available in the Archives of Yugoslavia, Collection 141 - AFŽ, particularly in the boxes 35 and 37.

<sup>65</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 145.

independence. However, as Jelena Batinić noted, that there is no evidence that anyone in the AFŽ ever wanted such a separation.<sup>66</sup> Anxiety about the AFŽ's independence has emerged possibly because of poor communications in the occupied areas, and the fact that in many rural areas it was simply easier for women to form an attachment to a female organisation. The leading women in the AFŽ quickly took action to address the Party's concerns. Djilas' positive comments on the AFŽ's future came in the late summer of 1943, after the Party had fixed the AFŽ inner structure to resemble the People's Councils. The misunderstanding was solved, and the AFŽ remained one of the Party's sections.<sup>67</sup>

Both the Party and the AFŽ disseminated ideal representations of Soviet women and the Soviet welfare state from the early days of the war onwards. As early as the summer of 1941, the Partisans spread pamphlets and talked to peasants about the comprehensive welfare systems that the Soviet state provides.<sup>68</sup> Partisan women and later AFŽ agitators talked about the better living conditions in the Soviet countryside, they promised tractors, kindergartens and maternity wards, and impressed peasants when they talked about their own struggle against the occupiers.<sup>69</sup> They also talked about the need for other women to join the war efforts, to fight together with men and to liberate the country in the same way as Soviet women had supposedly done. Soviet women were always depicted as brave, and defiant in the face of the Nazis, but also tireless in their work for the front. No less was asked from Yugoslavs.<sup>70</sup>

The first publication of the AFŽ was a small brochure of the AFŽ delegate speeches at the first AFŽ meeting in December 1942. However, the significant part of this brochure was an additional text about Soviet women and their war struggle, presenting a projection of what the Party leadership expected of Yugoslav women, and what women could expect in return after the war. The brochure praised Soviet women for their war efforts, emphasising learning the skills necessary to enter 'male professions' and help the rearguard with food, supplies and shelter. In return, the Soviet Bolshevik

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<sup>66</sup> Batinić, *Women and Partisan Resistance in Yugoslavia during World War II*, 115–22.

<sup>67</sup> Mitra Mitrović, "O antifašističkom frontu žena [About the Antifascist Front of Women]," 1943, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 10, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>68</sup> Dudić, *Dnevnik 1941*, 21–22.

<sup>69</sup> "Sa okružne konferencije AFŽ-a [From the Regional Conference of the AFŽ]," August 1, 1943, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 35, The Archives of Yugoslavia; Dudić, *Dnevnik 1941*, 37.

<sup>70</sup> "Rezolucija sa I konferencije antifašističkog fronta žena kotara Veljun [Resolution from the First Conference of the Antifascist Women's Front of the District Veljun]," December 12, 1942, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 35, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

Party was famous for liberating women from their slavery and exploitation, and for opening up as many opportunities as possible for their professional advancement. The Soviets also guaranteed respect for mothers, and placed women and men on an equal footing in a socialist welfare state. In fact, the Party itself solved all problems relating to women: their literacy level, equality in relation to their husbands, the establishment of free services for children, and generous maternity leave.<sup>71</sup> A little whilst later, as the Yugoslav Communist Party established numerous new magazines designed for women, such promises were repeated regularly.

Considering how the Yugoslav press wrote about the Soviet Union there is no evidence of any ideological disparity between Yugoslav communist women and their Soviet counterparts. As Yugoslav communists eagerly translated Soviet newspaper texts and published them in their magazines, Stalinist policies became the official ones. For example, Stalinist pro-natalist policy had already found its way into the Partisan press during the war. In an attempt to challenge rumours that Bolshevism destroyed traditional family structures, the AFŽ press insisted that the family is the backbone of the Soviet Union, a country where parents love their children more than anything.<sup>72</sup> The AFŽ's magazine also reported that the Soviet Union had introduced an honorary title of 'Mother Heroine', and medals such as 'the Order of Maternal Glory' and 'the Maternity Medal', just a few days after these were announced in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*. The AFŽ's article proudly emphasised that in the Soviet Union care for mothers and children, and the strengthening of the family were always one of the most important tasks.<sup>73</sup> The Yugoslav version of the article was entitled 'Let's Glorify the Woman-Mother', adding that being a mother is the biggest source of joy one can come to achieve, and that 'a woman who did not discover the happiness of motherhood, did not understand the importance of her duty – the duty to have children who will continue to build the socialist life, who will be the bearers of new ideas and morality'.<sup>74</sup> Such writings demonstrate that Yugoslav communists never considered motherhood to be less important than, for

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<sup>71</sup> The brochure also praised Soviet industry and the *kolkhoz* system, as well as shock-workers' enthusiasm which became the cornerstone of Yugoslav policies after the war. "Referati sa Prve zemaljske konferencije A.F.Ž. i Sovjetske žene u Otadžbinskom ratu [Papers from the First AFŽ Conference and Soviet Women in the Fatherland War]," December 1942, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 10, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>72</sup> "Porodica je kičma Sovjetskog Saveza [Family is the Backbone of the Soviet Union]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 8 (April 1944): 12.

<sup>73</sup> "Veličajmo ženu-majku [Let's Glorify the Woman-Mother]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 9 (August 1944): 16–17.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

instance, warfare or postwar reconstruction, as it was argued previously in the literature.<sup>75</sup> Over the next few years, similar texts appeared in every issue and their consequences on Yugoslav reproductive policies are examined in the following chapter. Furthermore, as the war drew to an end, articles on the Soviet Union became more prominent in all Party magazines.<sup>76</sup>

In September 1944, the Yugoslav communists enjoyed uninterrupted contact with the Red Army, who helped them liberate the country, and secure power.<sup>77</sup> Of all the Eastern European communist parties, the Yugoslav communists were the fastest to obliterate the opposition and to establish full control over the government. At the end of 1945, they remained the only political force in the country, whilst a Soviet presence was established through military and civil advisors. However, despite the Soviet presence in Yugoslavia, the pressure to implement Soviet standards did not come from the Red Army, but rather emerged from internal requirements.

### **Postwar Soviet Mentorship**

After the war, many Yugoslav women politicians intended to nourish a close relationship with the most notable Soviet women, hoping that their experiences would help Yugoslav communists in framing their own gender policies. Already Stalinised, Yugoslav communists wanted Soviet women to be their mentors, whilst there was no similar strong women's organisation in the USSR after the dissolution of the Zhenotdel in 1930. The Antifascist Committee of Soviet Women (Антифашистский комитет советских женщин) - established in September 1941 - was an organisation that most closely resembled the AFŽ, but its field of work was limited to the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). Yet, Yugoslav communist women wanted to get Soviet women on their side, either through the WIDF or via direct contacts. This provided

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<sup>75</sup> See: Jambrešić Kirin, "Žene u formativnom socijalizmu"; Antić and Vidmar, "The Construction of Women's Identity in Socialism: The Case of Slovenia"; Ivana Pantelić, "Osvajanje neosvojivog: politička emancipacija žena u posleratnoj Jugoslaviji 1945-1953," *Istorija 20. veka*, no. 3 (2012): 139–54.

<sup>76</sup> Until the conflict with the Soviet Union in the summer of 1948, 16.6% of all texts published in the AFŽ's main magazine *Žena danas* were devoted to the Soviet Union. "Pregled koliko je kroz centralni i republikanske ženske listove pisano o SSSR, narodnim demokratijama, kolonijalnim i zavisnim zemljama od oslobođenja do danas [Inspection of the Amount of Writing About the USSR, People Democracies, Colonial and Dependent Countries in Central and Republican Women Magazines from the Liberation Until Today]," 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 16, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>77</sup> Women's magazines described very emotional meetings with Russian soldiers: Draga Kaifeš, "Vidjeli smo sovjetsku delegaciju [We Saw the Soviet Delegation]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 8 (April 1944): 11.

Yugoslav communist women with strong legitimacy for their own policies, and the chance to travel abroad to participate in the international organisations led by the Soviet Union.

Soviet women were the most honoured guests at the AFŽ's first postwar Congress. Many speeches were interrupted by the audience with their loud chanting of Tito, the Army, Stalin, the Soviet Union, and Soviet women.<sup>78</sup> When the Soviet delegation finally entered the hall, the speech of a Czechoslovakian delegate was interrupted (and quickly forgotten). The Soviet delegates were immediately brought to the stage, promising closer cooperation and help. The Yugoslavs then showered the Soviet delegation with gifts whilst some meetings became very emotional. For example, one disabled woman, wounded in the war, offered hugs and love as a gift as she possessed nothing else. Peasants from remote areas of the country said they had only come to the congress to see Tito and the Soviet women. Actually, during this congress many Yugoslav women saw Soviet women for the first time.<sup>79</sup>

The leading AFŽ officials, Vida Tomšič, Spasenija Babović, Mitra Mitrović and others, defined how Soviet models were going to fit in with Yugoslav practice. Vida Tomšič reminded the audience that the Soviet Woman was 'a great role model' during the war, and a model they should follow during peacetime. More precisely, Soviet women supposedly played an important role in the reconstruction of the destroyed country, and so should Yugoslavs, whilst as regards legislature, Yugoslavs should implement Soviet policies for childcare, and the protection of mothers and female workers. Her speech confirmed the programme she set out at the Party conference before the war. The difference was that now she had Soviet women able to give advice and share their experiences on how to implement these ideas in a practical fashion.<sup>80</sup> These speeches at the congress were published together with a brochure about Soviet women, adequately entitled *Soviet Woman, Our Sister and Our Role Model*.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Spasenija Babović, "Govor na I Kongresu [Speech at the First AFŽ Congress]," June 18, 1945, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>79</sup> Ruža Kumić, "Govor na I Kongresu [Speech at the First AFŽ Congress]," June 19, 1945, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>80</sup> Vida Tomšič, "Socijalno staranje kao jedan od najvažnijih zadataka antifašističkog fronta žena u obnovi zemlje [Social Care as One of The Most Important Tasks of the Antifascist Women's Front During the Reconstruction of the Country]," June 19, 1945, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>81</sup> *Sovjetska žena - naša sestra i naš uzor*.

The transformation of Yugoslav society was planned in terms of a top-down approach, trickling down through the structures of the Communist Party. The policies were planned within a very narrow circle of people, whilst the rest had to follow, and learn from the translated Soviet texts how these ideas might be put into practice. In the process, any experiences the top-level leadership had had in the Soviet Union before the war was valued, whilst at the same time they encouraged more people to be trained there. Many more were sent to visit the Soviet Union, where they sojourned at special schools and received training, preparing them for careers as the next generation of Party officials. Different delegations visited Soviet industrial centres and some of the most developed collective farms, returning home with amazing stories of Soviet success.<sup>82</sup> Whenever an official travelled to the Soviet Union, he was expected to bring back more books and brochures. They asked Soviet officials to help them, but this was difficult as they also had to refill the libraries in the western parts of the Soviet Union destroyed in the war.<sup>83</sup>

The AFŽ made use of its involvement in the Women's International Democratic Federation to remain in regular contact with Soviet women. By investing a lot of effort and money in this organisation, it was a forum where Yugoslav communists could show the rest of the 'advanced world' that Yugoslav women were only behind the Soviets in their socialism. Yugoslav communists enthusiastically supported every initiative proposed by the Soviet delegation, and often published flattering articles about Nina Popova, the head of the Soviet delegation. They also translated many of Popova's articles and brochures for the Yugoslav press.<sup>84</sup> These texts were distributed amongst the activists to study them and use them as guidelines in practice.

The teaching of Soviet models to the Yugoslav cadre was also completed through the Party's special school for ideological education. These schools were envisioned with the purpose of educating new cadres on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. In practice, it meant that students learned texts written by Stalin, Lenin, Dimitrov, and Yugoslav officials in courses that lasted from three months to a full year depending on the level and

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<sup>82</sup> Slavko Komar, "Govor na II Plenumu CO USAOJ-a [Speech at the Second Plenum of the Central Committee of the United Alliance of the Antifascist Youth of Yugoslavia]," August 5, 1945, Collection 114 - SSOJ, Box 27, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>83</sup> Boris Zihelr, "Pismo Milovanu Đilasu [Letter to Milovan Djilas]," September 9, 1945, Collection 507, CK SKJ, Ideološka komisija (VIII), box 31, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>84</sup> Popova, *Žena u Sovjetskom Savezu*.

complexity. Yet, at all levels of studies, Stalin was the predominant figure, as in every lecture there was at least some material either from, or about, him. The Party's agitprop was tasked with translating as many Soviet texts as possible. One separate course subject was on the history of the Soviet Bolshevik Party, where students read about the organisation of the Soviet Party, their strategies as regards peasants and collectivisation, industrialisation, the Soviet constitution, Soviet cadres, their education, the leadership, agitation, the unions, youth initiatives, etc. In addition, there was a unit on the Yugoslav Party and women, where students read about the Party's directives for special work by and for women, as well as materials from the AFŽ congresses. The importance of this teaching unit on women lay in the fact that it was taught together with other units, consisting of materials taken from the Soviet Union.<sup>85</sup>

These schools and the texts that the Party disseminated through the press were very important for Yugoslav gender policies, as they offered models that were established in the Soviet Union, mostly in Stalin's time. They set the framework through which Party cadres learned to think about gender issues, and offered available solutions for the country's 'backwardness' in gender relations. The whole idea of this school was to train cadres to deal with real life problems, but to approach them through specific ideological lenses of Stalinism. It was not until the late 1970s that there was a new wave of feminism, with a new generation able to detach itself from many of the basic principles acquired in this early period. As Jancar-Webster argued, Vida Tomšič and Mitra Mitrović's generation could not relate to this movement and its ideas, particularly if this meant some level of detachment from state socialism.<sup>86</sup>

### **Bitterness over the Soviet Women**

The women members of the Yugoslav leadership nourished a close relationship with Soviet women and remained faithful to Soviet models for official gender policies until the peak of the Tito-Stalin conflict in 1949. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, these models often remained unchanged, even when Yugoslav rhetoric towards the Soviet Union became hostile. The leading communist women did not alter these

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<sup>85</sup> "Organizacija i program nižih partijskih škola [Organisation and Programme of the Lower Party Schools]," December 3, 1945, Collection 507, CK SKJ, Ideološka komisija (VIII), box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>86</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*.



policies, despite being very disappointed with their Soviet counterparts who followed official state policy towards Yugoslavia, condemning Tito's regime and isolating the AFŽ on all occasions. The Soviets stopped sending their publications, cut correspondence and eventually expelled the Yugoslav organisation from the WIDF.<sup>87</sup>

The high expectations that leading Yugoslav communist women had of Soviet women constituted one of the main reasons for the bitterness which emerged, whilst a second reason was the isolation from the international Communist community that the Soviet Union had imposed on them. Yugoslav women were first discriminated against at the WIDF congress, in late 1948, when the Hungarian hosts removed the Yugoslav flag, distributed pamphlets against Tito and decreased the number of Yugoslav delegates. The following year, the AFŽ was finally expelled from the WIDF, severing all ties with Soviet women. The bitter AFŽ activists organised protests in many locations throughout Yugoslavia and had the daunting task of explaining to its membership that the Soviet Union and WIDF had abandoned socialism and any sense of fairness. The sense of betrayal was overwhelming after years of looking at Soviet women as the prime role models.<sup>88</sup>

Even many years later, in 1955 when the AFŽ no longer existed, and when the process of political reconciliation between Tito and Khrushchev began, leading Yugoslav communist women were still resentful as concerns the previous disputes. Bosa Cvetić, at that point president of the Alliance of Women Societies<sup>89</sup> was invited to Moscow, where she was warmly greeted by Nina Popova and showered with gifts, hugs, and kisses. Nevertheless, she remained cold-hearted. Bosa Cvetić received the best seats at the meetings and, although Soviets supposedly admitted having made mistakes towards Yugoslavia, she was very critical of what she saw there. She criticised Soviet pro-natalist policies, what she regarded as their false solutions regarding the *woman's question*, and the poor situation present in kindergartens, pioneer resorts, and maternity hospitals. At

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<sup>87</sup> As concerns high politics, several authors have argued that Tito always tried to be respectfully embraced by Moscow following Stalin's death and the reconciliation with Khrushchev. For example see: James Gow, "The People's Prince - Tito and Tito's Yugoslavia: Legitimation, Legend, and Linchpin," in *State-Society Relations in Yugoslavia, 1945 - 1992*, ed. Melissa K. Bokovoy, Jill A. Irvine, and Carol S. Lilly (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 35–60.

<sup>88</sup> "Na sva pitanja mi možemo smelo odgovoriti [We Can Bravely Answer to All Questions]," *Radnica* 10 (October 1950): 4.

<sup>89</sup> the Alliance of Women's Societies – Savez ženskih društava (SŽD)

their internal meeting, Bosa Cvetić warned Yugoslavs travelling to the East to be careful, demonstrating how Yugoslav communists had become emancipated from Soviet tutorship in 1955.<sup>90</sup>

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Soviet ideas were, indeed, very important to Yugoslav communists before, during and after the war, as the interpretation of these ideas provided a framework upon which the unique Yugoslav experiences were formed. That experience was particularly enhanced during the war once the young Yugoslav communists had had to fight for freedom and an imagined ideal society. Vida Tomšič's programme, drafted in 1940, and numerous Soviet texts provided a guideline, but Yugoslavs were also defined by their unique experience of warfare, and educational work with hundreds of thousands of Yugoslav women in the rearguard.

The programme that the Yugoslav communist party set out as regards the *woman's question* in 1940, was only slightly changed over the next several decades. Building upon their interpretation of Soviet gender policies mostly from the 1930s, Yugoslav communists promised Yugoslav women political equality, equal pay for equal work, and the promotion of motherhood through various state financed services such as kindergartens, crèches, and maternity units. At the same time, they rejected feminism and insisted that equality could only be reached through an all-encompassing socialist revolution. Simultaneously, they increased their propaganda efforts so to persuade Yugoslav women that only the Soviet Union could provide a model for such changes.

During the war, and in the first four years after, Yugoslav communists used all available means to promote the Soviet model. The leadership also maintained close relationships with Soviet women, seeing them as the role models for themselves and their own society. The high expectations present in this relationship became a source of immense bitterness once the AFŽ had been abandoned by Soviet women due to the Tito-Stalin conflict. From that period onwards the Yugoslav leadership changed their rhetoric,

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<sup>90</sup> "Zapisnik sa sastanka Upravnog odbora Ženskih društava Jugoslavije [Minutes from the Meeting of the Ruling Board of the Alliance of Women Societies of Yugoslavia]," September 2, 1955, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

but - as will be demonstrated in the following chapters - many of the Stalinist gender policies remained unaltered.

## Chapter 2: Framing Gender Policies

‘Women in the U.S.S.R. are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life. The possibility of exercising these rights is ensured to women by granting them an equal right with men to work, payment for work, rest and leisure, social insurance and education, and by state protection of the interests of mother and child, prematernity and maternity leave with full pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens.’

Article 122 of the Soviet 1936 Constitution

‘Women are equal to men in all spheres of state, economic, social and political life. For completing the same work, women are ensured the same pay as men and enjoy special insurance when employed. The state particularly protects the interests of mother and child by providing maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens, and by offering prematernity and maternity leave with full pay.’

Article 22 of the Yugoslav 1946 Constitution

Once the war ended, the adaptation of the Soviet constitution and laws to Yugoslav practice was the most important way that Soviet models informed formulation and application of postwar Yugoslav gender policies. For Yugoslav communists, this legal transformation was a tool to transform a society which they considered very patriarchal and conservative. However, changing the existing social and political environment was neither simple nor straightforward, as Soviet models had to be domesticated in their new surroundings, and despite the Party’s political power, many new policies were not easily accepted. This chapter examines two connected issues, in order to establish how gender policies were framed at the state level. First, it looks at the gendering of the political sphere within the Party, pointing to the mechanisms through which communist women were excluded from political and economic decision making. As this chapter will argue, the Party’s leadership ascribed specific meanings to women’s political activities, insisting that communist women tackle social issues. As a result, women remained underrepresented in all governing institutions. However, in being forced to deal with supposedly non-political issues, highly regarded communist women were

active in designing and applying the Party's family and reproductive policies. These policies are the focus of the second part of this chapter. In just a year after the war, the Party established a new legal framework, with laws on gender equality, marriage, divorce, and abortion that were almost exact translations of the Soviet codes. These laws challenged existing marital relations and reproductive norms, causing anxieties and resistance. As this chapter shows, Yugoslav communist women, gathered in the AFŽ, invested a lot of effort in applying these laws in practice, and in preventing changes following pressure from the media and the Party's rank and file.

### **War Experience: Reshaping the Political Sphere**

Some of the important features of how the Yugoslav Communist Party planned to reshape the postwar society were established prior to the Second World War, whilst the war allowed them to implement some of their ideas early on. The Communist Party, even though illegal, was one of a small number of political organisations active in the interwar Yugoslavian state which had a programme for the inclusion of women in its ranks. As examined in the previous chapter, the Party drafted a programme for gender policies as early as 1940, promising political and economic rights. This programme proved to be useful when the war started a year later. Contrary to the rival Chetnik movement that held very traditional views concerning the role of women in society,<sup>91</sup> in the communist led Partisan movement women fought alongside men on the front, and organised the military rear so as to provide necessary support for the war efforts. This was a unique phenomenon during the Second World War. Barbara Jancar-Webster estimated that altogether around 100,000 women participated in the Partisan war efforts as soldiers. Approximately 25,000 women were killed and 40,000 wounded whilst more than 2,000 achieved officer's rank. The majority of these fighters, women and men alike, were very young, often younger than eighteen, and from a rural background.<sup>92</sup> The massive extent of women's participation made the Yugoslav case specific when compared to Eastern Europe and offered an opportunity to the Party to apply its gender policies even during the war.

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<sup>91</sup> See: Žarko Jovanović, "Žene Srbije u ratu 1941-1945," in *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20. veka: Položaj žena kao merilo modernizacije*, ed. Latinka Perović, vol. 2 (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 1998).

<sup>92</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 48–49.

The inclusion of women in the Partisan war efforts was a novelty, given the exclusion of women from the interwar Yugoslav political sphere. Women were granted voting rights as early as February 1942 in the so-called *Foča Ordinance*, which established the legal foundations for the liberated territories and put together local governments called People's Councils.<sup>93</sup> As more women joined the Partisan movement and helped with the rearguard, the Party established the AFŽ in November 1942, assigned with the task of mobilising more women for participation in the Partisan army, and with organising the war rations. However, the AFŽ also had a political agenda from the very beginning: to ensure women's participation in 'proper' work, by which they were referring to political support and women's participation in the newly established Partisan institutions.<sup>94</sup> At the first AFŽ conference in the Bosnian town of Bihać in December 1942, Tito promised Yugoslav women political equality that 'could not be taken away' from them.<sup>95</sup> This was Tito's first talk to women delegates, and it set a precedent for a model which he repeated many times over the next ten years. He addressed Yugoslav women as a group at the AFŽ congress, gave them tasks, and legitimacy for their activities. The only time he did not visit the AFŽ Congress was in 1953 when the organisation was abolished.<sup>96</sup>

Jancar-Webster has correctly argued that women entered the Partisan movement solely on men's terms, but notable communist women actively negotiated the Party's policies. Mitra Mitrović wrote in late 1942 that the Party would not allow any opposition to women's work in the People's Councils, nor would the Party permit women's presence to be solely a formality.<sup>97</sup> In 1943, Anka Berus warned that women were second-class members in the People's Councils, and insisted on urgent changes being made to such practices. She argued that many men saw women's participation as a sign of respect for their war efforts and were unwilling to give women any kind of chance to administer local government institutions. Berus wrote that this was a consequence of a lack of genuine

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<sup>93</sup> The Foča Ordinance was written by Moša Pijade. Ibid., 119.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 124–25.

<sup>95</sup> "Referati sa Prve zemaljske konferencije A.F.Ž. i Sovjetske žene u Otadžbinskom ratu."

<sup>96</sup> His speeches were reprinted numerous times, and he was often quoted by other politicians. See: Vida Tomšič, "Pod rukovodstvom KPJ žene Jugoslavije postale su ravnopravni ljudi, aktivni graditelji socijalizma [Under the Leadership of the Communist Party, Women of Yugoslavia Became Equal People, Active Builders of Socialism]," *Žena danas* 59 (April 1949): 1–5.

<sup>97</sup> Mitra Mitrović, "Uloga Antifašističkog fronta žena u oslobodilačkom ratu [The Role of the Antifascist Front of Women in the Liberation War]," *Proleter*, no. 16 (December 1942): 27–30.

belief in gender equality. This stance was very radical, particularly as she called for an immediate stop to such views, and for an increase in the education of peasant women to ‘increase their political consciousness.’<sup>98</sup> The importance of such radical policies for Yugoslav society cannot be overestimated. This was the first time that Yugoslav women could vote, the first time they had been elected to various political posts, and the first time there was a call for real power sharing with men, who were usually older than the participating women.<sup>99</sup>

Berus’ comments also reveal a tension that existed within the Partisan movement, and in the institutions of the liberated territories. Several authors have pointed to the presence of discrimination as many men were reluctant to accept women as fighters.<sup>100</sup> Usually, women had to do more than men in order to earn respect in the units. In the councils, older men expected to have the final word, reflecting the traditional patriarchal order. However, it is important to emphasise that the Party leadership always condemned such stances.<sup>101</sup> Anka Berus voiced her criticism in the Party’s magazine, whilst other officials - such as Milovan Djilas and Josip Broz Tito - never underestimated the role of the Partisan women. At the same time, one should bear in mind that the majority of the Partisans were not Party members before the war. In such a context, the struggle for equal participation of women in local governments could hardly be perceived as relating to official Party policy, or even intentional negligence, but rather because the majority of Partisans stemmed from rural and patriarchal backgrounds. The specificities of the Partisans’ strong rural background had long-lasting consequences that were particularly visible during the following decade as regards collectivisation, and the creation of the new postwar working class, which are analysed in the following chapters. Nevertheless, the comments made by these two leading communist women were more than a reaction to gender discrimination within the People’s Councils – they were a proactive stance resulting from changing gender relations.

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<sup>98</sup> Anka Berus, “O organizaciji [On the Organisation],” *Žena u borbi*, no. 1 (June 1943): 7.

<sup>99</sup> In her war memoirs, Mitra Mitrović wrote that in many villages women and old men were the only people left for inclusion in the councils. See Mitra Mitrović, *Ratno Putovanje [War Journey]* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1953), 157–58.

<sup>100</sup> Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*; Wiesinger, “Rat partizanki – žene u oružanom otporu u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945.”

<sup>101</sup> Mitrović, *Ratno Putovanje*, 105.

Women's experience of war was immensely important. Scholars, however, disagree over the level of radicalism present concerning gender changes within the Partisan army. For example, the structure of the Partisan units has caused a lot of debate. Jancar-Webster showed that 42% of women served as soldiers, and 40% as medical corpsmen, emphasising that being a Partisan nurse was a very prestigious occupation, mostly due to the immense danger they were in.<sup>102</sup> Stories about brave Partisan nurses were mythologised even during the war.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, Lydia Sklevicky argues that according to the Partisan worldview, being anything else other than a fighter with a gun, or a political commissar, bore significantly less prestige – thus demonstrating the discrimination of women within the army.<sup>104</sup> A recent study by Jelena Batinić has shown that the division of labour and regulations regarding sexual conduct prove the power of patriarchal norms, and the fixed ideas about gender which featured in the movement. The Partisans considered certain chores to be for women only whilst the Party monitored women's sexual life with greater scrutiny. Besides fighting or nursing, women often performed traditional chores such as cooking, laundering, washing, sewing, etc. If men were assigned to these duties, it was seen as humiliating and as an attack on their masculinity.<sup>105</sup> Jancar-Webster's statistical data also shows that it was harder for women to advance in the military hierarchy and in the Party. Women were never military planners, they mostly had supporting roles in battles, and did not create policy. However, the Partisans managed to win over many peasant women, who then provided significant supplies for the front.<sup>106</sup> Despite the subordinated position of women within the Partisan movement in terms of decision-making and the division of labour, women's participation during the war was still radically novel. Many of them left their homes for the first time, engaging in roles unimaginable before the war. Some of them were active in fighting roles whilst others provided for the front or worked as nurses. Of equal importance is the fact that many of them learned to read and write, and discovered Marxist ideas that promised

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<sup>102</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 83.

<sup>103</sup> Stories about brave Partisan nurses who refused to retreat when faced with Germans were reprinted numerous times. See: Ljubima Perović, "Njih sedam: sećanje iz narodnooslobodilačke borbe [Seven of Them: The Recollection from the People's Liberation Struggle]," *Žena danas* 72 (June 1950): 3–4.

<sup>104</sup> Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*, 43.

<sup>105</sup> Batinić, *Women and Partisan Resistance in Yugoslavia during World War II*, 5, 148–51.

<sup>106</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 90–94.



to transform their position and the entire social structure of the pre-war society. This was inevitably a significant challenge for many men as well.<sup>107</sup>

As it became clear that the war was gradually ending, two important processes affected the gendering of politics. The Partisan guerrilla units transformed into the regular army, moving many women to medical services from direct military roles; and the Party's press started to disseminate texts emphasising that men could never be as good in providing care for other people as women could. By that time, texts were circulating which indicated that women would have to engage with tackling social and health-related problems.<sup>108</sup> However, this did not mean that ex-Partisan women would occupy a subordinated role in relation to the rest of society. The Party was preparing to take a leading role in an aggressive struggle against traditional ways of living, including 'backward' social conditions and health problems. Women were understood as being the principal disciplining force; a force that would target millions of people. Furthermore, contrary to practices in many other countries affected by the war, Yugoslav women did not return to their prewar homes. Instead, as Jelena Batinić has shown, the majority of women soldiers moved to the cities, and found jobs in administrative positions and social organisations.<sup>109</sup>

Tito's views were of the utmost importance in defining appropriate gender roles, both during and after the war. He was often the person who assigned priorities to Yugoslav women, addressing them as a group. At the first AFŽ postwar Congress in the summer of 1945, he briefly expressed his gratitude towards 'women-fighters,' and announced that the most important task for women during peacetime was to educate children. Women's entry into industry and reconstruction was only secondary.<sup>110</sup> At every further Congress, Tito delegated tasks which had the purpose of supporting certain broader Party policies: the first tasks aimed to accommodate Yugoslavia's needs for rapid

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<sup>107</sup> There were numerous cases in which men's pre-war position was challenged by female partisans, such as challenges taking place as early as in the summer of 1941. For example, a pre-war teacher protested because a woman was placed in a higher position at a field hospital. Dudić, *Dnevnik 1941*.

<sup>108</sup> Grujica Žarković, "Borba za narodno zdravlje - važan zadatak žena [Struggle for the People's Health - an Important Task for Women]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 8 (April 1944): 16–17.

<sup>109</sup> Batinić, *Women and Partisan Resistance in Yugoslavia during World War II*, 223.

<sup>110</sup> Josip Broz Tito, "Govor na I Kongresu AFŽ Jugoslavije [Speech at the First Congress of the AFŽ Yugoslavia]," 1945, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia; These views were repeated in the telegrams he sent to the AFŽ organisations at the level of the republics. Josip Broz Tito, "Telegram Prvom kongresu AFŽ-a Hrvatske [Telegram to the First Congress of the AFŽ of Croatia]," July 21, 1945, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 35, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

industrialisation in 1947; the second aimed to ensure support for the conflict with the USSR; and the final tasks attempted to encourage the socialist transformation of the countryside in 1950. In all of these endeavours women were understood to be an auxiliary force whose support the Party demanded as a group. Social care, mothering practices, and the education of children remained unchanged.

Tito defined the limits of women's work outside the home. For example, at the AFŽ Congress in 1950 he reminded the delegates that motherhood also counts as 'socially useful work'.<sup>111</sup> By challenging views that all women should be employed, or at least participate in some of the massive volunteer projects, Tito stated that mothers with multiple children were also working on building socialism.<sup>112</sup> Tito did not hesitate to remind the local AFŽ activists that they should not forget the 'duties that they have towards the home and family.'<sup>113</sup> The majority of these activists worked and were active in several other positions including the local Party cell and/or local government. Tito's discussion with this local AFŽ organisation may also be considered a warning. These women, who were considering an active public life, must not neglect their 'traditional' women's roles of being mothers and homemakers.

Tito's speeches at these congresses still permitted a certain amount of negotiation over their meanings. For example, at the first Congress in 1945, he did mention the importance of women's work outside the home which allowed the AFŽ to disseminate this message in their numerous magazines. Tito's words were probably the most powerful tools the activists had in their daily activities. As he was unquestionably positioned at the top of the state and the Party hierarchy, he was the ultimate card in every dispute. For example, activists could pressurise factory managers into improving services for employed mothers by citing Tito's speech stating that communists should do everything possible to help mothers. This also applied to relatively banal issues such as forcing tram drivers to designate one entrance for pregnant women. More importantly, they could mobilise women to take part in different volunteer work projects, for instance, through

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<sup>111</sup> Josip Broz Tito, "Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Third AFŽ Congress]," 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> "Iz razgovora sa delegacijom Antifašističkog fronta žena iz okoline Krajine [From the Conversation with the Delegation of the Antifascist Front of Women from the Kraina Region]," August 22, 1946, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

Tito's comment that the AFŽ should see that all women are included in the social life of the new state. In that sense, everything that Tito said was a powerful tool for the activists in the AFŽ, facing conservative attitudes and sometimes hostile Party members.<sup>114</sup>

### **Politics Is for Men: The AFŽ Paradox**

As the war was ending, it became apparent that even the most powerful communist women were isolated from participation in higher level politics and economic decision making. I argue that the very existence of the AFŽ contributed to such isolation. The monopoly of the Communist Party, and the structural organisation of the postwar Yugoslav society that they had established, required its citizens to be members of mass organisations in order to be politically and socially active.<sup>115</sup> Since there was only one Party, and one political organisation called the People's Front (ruled by the Party), all public activities were channelled there. Furthermore, citizens were perceived only as groups – women, workers, peasants, youth, etc. – and their activities had to be collective in an organisation appropriate to their status. Through participation in one or more of such organisations, the vast majority of the population was tied to the Party. The real political power, however, led to the Central Committee of the Communist Party on one level, then moving upwards - the Politburo, with Tito and his inner circle at the very top.<sup>116</sup>

In viewing citizens as groups of people, women who wanted to be politically and socially active could only be so through the AFŽ, or directly through the Party. However, if they were active in their local Party cell, they were often sent to work on the AFŽ's initiatives. The existence of such an organisation led to women being constituted as a separate group and a separate case, always considered to have a 'lower level of socialist consciousness' compared to men.<sup>117</sup> There was no separate organisation for men as men

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<sup>114</sup> Tito, "Govor na I Kongresu AFŽ Jugoslavije"; "Godišnji izveštaj Glavnog odbora AFŽ Srbije za 1949. godinu [Annual Report of the Head Committee of the AFŽ Serbia for 1949]," March 27, 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>115</sup> This system could be describe as the Party monism, as introduced and defined by: Vojislav Koštunica and Kosta Čavoški, *Party Pluralism or Monism: Social Movements and the Political System in Yugoslavia, 1944-1949* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1985).

<sup>116</sup> The AFŽ's organisational structure was copied from the Party, with its own Central Committee (Centralni odbor) at federal level, and Head Committees (Glavni odbori) at the level of the republics. The AFŽ was part of the People's Front, but only directly answered to the Party. All members were women, whilst men were occasionally invited to the AFŽ meetings and to congresses as experts.

<sup>117</sup> The idea that women had a lower level of socialist consciousness was internalised by the activists. For example: Ljiljana Čalovska, "Referat na I plenarnom sastanku AFŽ Makedonije [Report at the First Plenary Meeting of the AFŽ Macedonia]," April 9, 1946, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 36, The Archives of Yugoslavia. The importance of such discourse will be particularly examined regarding peasant and Muslim women in

were default citizens. For example, Tito would address female delegates and thank them for helping with the construction of socialism.<sup>118</sup> Likewise, articles and reports discussed the role of women in different fields of social life.<sup>119</sup> Such texts and public speeches would sound absurd if directed at men because men were not a separate group of people.

Although the AFŽ was for many women an important organisation, and they were extremely dissatisfied when the Party abolished it, the AFŽ's existence created a specific paradox. The AFŽ leaders always complained that only a small number of women were elected in the local governments, on the ruling boards of collective farms, and on workers' councils in factories. However, their criticism was often not sharp enough, simply because all leading women in the AFŽ were part of the Party hierarchy. The AFŽ played an inside role in the Party's politics, but was isolated due to their relative independence, and due to women's status as a separate group. By dutifully following all of the Party's policies that often relegated the AFŽ to a status of being a charity-like organisation, the AFŽ could not take a stronger political stance, let alone try to shake up the male political hierarchy.

The AFŽ leadership was often powerless to facilitate women's interests in politics in order to promote more women politicians. During the Yugoslav postwar elections, there was no voting gender gap. Women voted overwhelmingly for the Constitutional Assembly in 1945, and later for the federal parliament. However, only twenty-two women out of a total of 537 MPs were elected in the first elections.<sup>120</sup> These women were all notable pre-war AFŽ and Party members, including Vida Tomšič, Spasenija Babović, Mitra Mitrović and others who had dominated the entire postwar decade.<sup>121</sup> In the federal

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the following chapters. .

<sup>118</sup> Tito, "Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ."

<sup>119</sup> Mitra Mitrović, "Uloga i mesto seljanke u rekonstrukciji naše poljoprivrede [The Role and Place of a Peasant Woman in the Reconstruction of Our Agriculture]," *Žena danas* 51 (December 1947): 7–9; Vida Tomšič, "Uloga žena u socijalističkog izgradnji [The Role of Women in the Construction of Socialism]," *Žena danas*, no. 93 (March 1952): 1, 7; Krsto Crvenkovski, "Društveni položaj žene u NRM i rad partiskih i masovnih organizacija [Social Position of Women in the NRM and the Activity of the Party and Mass Organisations]," April 4, 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>120</sup> Yet, 4.09% of women MPs in Yugoslavia was more than 3.8% elected in the UK elections in the same year. However, in the Soviet Union there were 16.5% of women deputies in the Supreme Soviet, increasing to 25.8% in 1954. Carol Nechemias, "Women's Participation: From Lenin to Gorbachev," in *Russian Women in Politics and Society*, ed. Wilma Rule and Norma C. Noonan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 20.

<sup>121</sup> Pantelić, "Osvajanje neosvojivog: politička emancipacija žena u posleratnoj Jugoslaviji 1945-1953," 141.

government there were no women and there was only one woman minister in each of the Republics of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. There were no women in the politburo either. Ironically, Sreten Žujović was the head of the Committee for Women that answered to the politburo, demonstrating the weakness of the key AFŽ leaders in reconfiguring the political hierarchy. By 1953, only 17% of Party members were women.<sup>122</sup> That number was similar to the Soviet Union,<sup>123</sup> however, in Yugoslavia only thirty women were elected to positions in the federal parliament in 1950, and there was a sharp decrease in the number of women participating in local governments, whilst in the Soviet Union these numbers surged.<sup>124</sup> The AFŽ offered valuable support to many women in various fields of social life, but tied to the Party, they were never able to challenge these trends. The leadership of the AFŽ was aware that their own political positions depended on the Party. The case of Mitra Mitrović, which I will now discuss, is the best example as it shows how gender relations and gender hierarchies operated at the top of the Yugoslav leadership.

Mitra Mitrović was a pre-war communist, married to Milovan Djilas, the most important Party ideologist. During the war, she held a variety of important roles, both within the Party and the AFŽ. She was one of the editors of *Borba*, the Party's most important newspaper; a delegate of AVNOJ; elected to the AFŽ's Central Committee, and after the war she became a minister in the Serbian Republic's government. As such, she opened the Second AFŽ Congress in 1947, and wrote many important articles published in both general Party journals, and those devoted to women. She was a federal and republican parliament member elected several times. Despite all this, her political demise was inseparably connected with the demise of Milovan Djilas. Even though she divorced Djilas several years prior to his famous articles that brought him into conflict with Tito and the Central Committee, Mitra's political career abruptly finished then as well. Indeed, she supported Djilas's views at first, as did many other notable communists. Djilas started publishing provocative articles in the autumn of 1953, arguing for the further democratisation of the Party, and there was no sign that Tito disliked these articles. However, in January 1954, Mitra Mitrović was removed from all of her political

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<sup>122</sup> Aleksandar Ranković, "Govor na Četvrtom plenumu CK SKJ [Speech at the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia]," *Komunist*, no. 4 (April 1954): 263–91.

<sup>123</sup> Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, 210.

<sup>124</sup> In the Soviet Union, the number of women was higher in local Soviets than in the federal parliament, see: Nechemias, "Women's Participation: From Lenin to Gorbachev," 20.

positions, and had to defend herself at the Third Plenum of the Party's Central Committee together with Djilas. The treatment of Mitra at the Plenum speaks volumes about the role of female politicians. Before the Plenum, Tito talked in person with everyone who might support Djilas, except with Mitra.<sup>125</sup> At the Plenum, Tito interrupted her several times. Whilst presiding, Tito did not even notice that Mitra had not finished her speech, giving the floor to another delegate. When she protested, Tito simply added, 'Ah, you have not finished, go on then.'<sup>126</sup> Spasenija Babović was not active on any other issue and only reacted to Mitra's speech in order to interrupt her on several occasions. As a result, Babović again isolated herself as dealing with a female politician, rather than being focused on the general political issues under discussion. Despite her political career, Mitra Mitrović lost all her positions in the Party, the government and the newly formed SŽDJ. Her old comrades isolated her, and although she approached some of them to find her some socially meaningful work, they rejected her.<sup>127</sup>

Mitra Mitrović was an active communist for over twenty years. She was well educated, holding many important political positions, but the fact that she shared the fate of her ex-husband indicates how dependent a woman's political career was on the careers of men with whom she was associated. Similar cases occurred at the lower levels of the Party as well. For example, if a husband was accused of supporting Stalin during the Informburo crisis, his wife was found guilty as well.<sup>128</sup> Mitra Mitrović was just one of many other notable communists married to leading Party men. Pepca Kardelj, Lepa Pijade, Olga Humo, Jara Ribnikar, Branka Savić, Spasenija Babović and Vida Tomšič were all married to notable Party members, and all held important positions within the state and the Party apparatus. However, only Babović's and Tomšič's political careers were not tied to their husbands, as they were widows after the war. All others worked in similar sectors to their more prominent husbands. Furthermore, the Party often moved women from one place and assignment to another, in so doing following their husband's careers.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Milovan Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1991), 372–73.

<sup>126</sup> Mitra Mitrović, "Govor na Trećem plenumu CK SKJ [Speech at the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia]," *Komunist*, no. 1–2 (February 1954): 61–64.

<sup>127</sup> Later she got a job in a federal committee for schooling reforms.

<sup>128</sup> "Pitanje oblasnih sekretarijata i stalnosti kadrova [The Question of Area Secretaries and Permanence of the Cadres]," May 15, 1949, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>129</sup> For example, the war hero Savka Javorina always followed her husband: Kačavenda and Živković,

At the local level, it was even harder for women to be politically active. The resistance came from below. Marital status, sexual prudence, ex-husbands, and most of all, gender, exclusively limited women's political agency. Even in a trite situation such as where women and men were asked to prove political loyalty to a Party initiative, women were discriminated and barred from participation. To give a few examples to illustrate the co-existence of traditional values alongside the 'modernising' claims of the Party: when the People's Front started a campaign of collecting signatures to support the Soviet proposal to the United Nations to ban nuclear weapons, men in villages would often drop women's signatures. Similar problems occurred when the local AFŽ groups in Croatia protested against men who insisted that they did not need women participating in local governments.<sup>130</sup> A leading activist in Slovenia noted that politically 'conscious' men often acted in the same manner towards their wives as 'the most backward peasants'. The AFŽ reported numerous cases where Party members agitated against their own wives during local elections. One activist quoted a communist member who proclaimed that 'women should stay at home and not interfere in politics.'<sup>131</sup> Many local communists publicly said that they were not going to listen to a woman even if she was elected.<sup>132</sup> In some places there was a huge social pressure placed on female candidates, which forced one woman to run away when she discovered she had been nominated, afraid that people would elect her. Only the communists in bigger cities accepted women as candidates more readily. Women in the countryside were elected only when the AFŽ organised an office that worked hard to encourage other women to vote for female candidates. The existence of such initiatives demonstrates resilience and strong desire to fight for promised equality on parts of peasant women.<sup>133</sup>

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*Narodni Heroji Jugoslavije*, 322.

<sup>130</sup> "Godišnji izvještaj o radu Glavnog odbora i organizacije AFŽ-a u Hrvatskoj [Annual Report on the Activities of the Head Committee and Organisation of the AFŽ in Croatia]," January 14, 1949, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>131</sup> "Predizborna kampanja za odredjivanje ženskih kandidata za Narodne odbore u NR Sloveniji [Election Campaign for the Selection of Female Candidates for the People's Councils in Slovenia]," 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 12, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>132</sup> As one of them exclaimed, "Što će suknja da nam zapoveda [a skirt will not command us]": "Stenografski zapisnik sastanka Komisije za rad među ženama održanog u Glavnom odboru Socijalističkog saveza radnog naroda Hrvatske [Proceedings from the Committee for Work Amongst Women held in the Head Committee of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Croatia]," March 12, 1953, Collection 142, SSRN, Box 111, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>133</sup> Bosa Cvetić, "Žena na selu i njena društvena aktivnost [Woman in the Countryside and her Social Activity]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 5, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

After a sharp decline in the number of elected women in the local and federal governments, Tito was still willing to bring Vida Tomšič's criticism before the most important Party forum. At the Party's Fourth Plenum, Ranković and Tito articulated the issue of the decreasing number of female politicians.<sup>134</sup> They well knew that in 1954, the local Party units expelled more women than they accepted new members, whilst during the elections for the People's Councils, the criteria for women were often harsher than for men. Woman's personal lives played a crucial role, particularly if a woman had had children born out of wedlock. Their criticism of such practices was important as the Unions and the Front leaders were often unwilling to engage in any issue regarding gender equality had they not received a strong directive from the top of the leadership.<sup>135</sup> However, the situation improved only later in the 1950s and 1960s, when the AFŽ was long gone, and many of the old activists had become side-lined.

Even within such political structures that limited any opposition, the existence of the AFŽ was uncertain. The organisation constantly struggled to keep its partial autonomy to the People's Front. First, the AFŽ lost a great deal of its financial autonomy when the Party decided that AFŽ members pay the membership fee to the Front and not to the AFŽ. Despite this, due to the thousands of volunteers and paid secretaries, and offices present in almost every village, the AFŽ kept their activities running at a high level throughout the 1940s. The big blow came in 1950 when the Party fired all the AFŽ's professional activists, insisting on volunteering. At the same time, the AFŽ became a section of the Front, instead of being a massive organisation within the Front, thus further limiting its autonomy.<sup>136</sup> Finally, in 1953 the Party completely abolished the AFŽ. It was replaced with the SŽDJ, which was more of a forum to coordinate thousands of local groups that had full autonomy. The SŽDJ was not part of the People's Front (now renamed as the Socialist Alliance of the Working People<sup>137</sup>) and had very limited scope.

The abolition of the AFŽ requires further explanation. I argue that the organisation was abolished for two reasons. First, it created too many enemies amongst men. The

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<sup>134</sup> Ranković, "Govor na Četvrtom plenumu CK SKJ"; "Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ [Minutes of the Committee for Work Amongst Women of the Federal Council of the SSRNJ]," May 22, 1954, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 7, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>135</sup> "Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ."

<sup>136</sup> "Informacija o radu organizacije AFŽ-a [Information about the Activities of the AFŽ organisation]," September 14, 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>137</sup> Socijalistički savez radnog naroda - SSRN



second reason was that it was open to continual criticism that a separate female organisation should not be permitted on ideological grounds. As concerns their enemies, there were constant disputes between their members and male activists in the Front. In many traditional environments, the local AFŽ offices provided valuable support to women who were trying to be good communists, to exercise their rights, and to participate in social and political life. Once these AFŽ offices merged with the People's Front, and the local AFŽ leaders lost their salary, the local Front activists often retaliated against the women who dared to challenge the gender hierarchy. Men had barred them from political meetings, shut down previous activities they were involved in, and mocked the existence and purpose of the AFŽ. Numerous reports claimed that male activists understood the merger as signifying the closure of the AFŽ, thus abolishing many AFŽ activities immediately. Not a single AFŽ activist reported a positive experience from the joint work completed after merging with the Front,<sup>138</sup> unmasking the struggle at the level of local communities. The AFŽ offices could provide protection and support as long as the local organisations were perceived to be on good terms with the central power – the Party. By closing down the AFŽ offices, peasant women often lost the only space they had for social gatherings. Rendered invisible within the Front's general activities, many women gave up on their previous work, and tried to find a job elsewhere.<sup>139</sup>

However, not all women accepted being side-lined without resistance, and the merger of 1950 marked the beginning of harsher criticism of men by the AFŽ activists. The activists accused men, even communists, of discriminating against women, of undermining women's political abilities, of preventing their family members from participating in politics, and more generally, of having 'backward' and 'primitive' views about women. The AFŽ activists started to protest, stating that it was impossible to work with men; that men did not care about the issues that interested women, and that their work was constantly being undervalued. Such views were unthinkable in the first postwar

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<sup>138</sup> Vida Tomšič, "Kako treba raditi u našoj organizaciji [How One Should Work in Our Organisation]," *Žena danas* 73 (July 1950): 4–5; "Izveštaj ekipe Glavnog odbora AFŽ Srbija sa obilaska beogradske organizacije [Report from a Team of the Head Committee of the AFŽ Serbia after Visiting Belgrade Organisation]," 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia; Even in Belgrade, a local Front leader of one Raion called the AFŽ activists "bagra [scum]". He was removed from his office: "Izveštaj sa I rajona [Report from the First Raion]," April 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>139</sup> Also compare examples provided by: Pantelić, "Osvajanje neosvojivog: politička emancipacija žena u posleratnoj Jugoslaviji 1945-1953," 151.

years when the dominant idea present was that the revolution had resolved the issue of gender discrimination. Criticism from women activists also constituted a last attempt to save the AFŽ from abolition by demonstrating a desperate need for a separate female organisation. Interestingly, this attempt came from the lower rank and file, often from the most rural areas. The AFŽ leadership, however, could only negotiate the founding of the Alliance of Women Societies, and to transfer its most notable members to other state institutions.<sup>140</sup>

Ideological reasoning was employed when the Party abolished the AFŽ although the process was not entirely smooth. The AFŽ's Fourth Congress was the first congress at which Tito did not appear, and only after the loud insistence of the delegates to hear from Tito, he agreed to receive a small congress delegation in his office. The delegates who interrupted the Congress chanting Tito's name were ordinary AFŽ activists - yet another sign of defiance. At the Congress hall however, Milovan Djilas explained that any political separation of men and women in their political activities was an obstacle to building socialism. He never mentioned women's dissatisfaction. Instead, he used the same arguments as Kaganovich in the case of *Zhenotdel*. Djilas insisted on having decentralised women's societies for questions that are specifically 'female', but that in 'pure political work women should not be separated from men'.<sup>141</sup> Vida Tomšič dutifully agreed with the Party's decision, and insisted on getting involved in joint work alongside men so as to change the 'low and - for socialism - unworthy relationships amongst people'.<sup>142</sup> She also emphasised other issues such as the low number of female politicians, their overburden with the demands of maternity, and the decrease in the female workforce. Given that many in the Socialist Alliance were in favour of the liquidation of

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<sup>140</sup> On Vida Tomšič negotiations with Blagoje Nešković regarding AFŽ offices, staff, role of the AFŽ, etc. "Zapisnik, stenografske beleške i zaključci sa sednice Sekretarijata IO [Minutes, Proceedings and Conclusions of the Meeting of the Secretariat of the Executive Committee]," June 29, 1950, Collection 142, SSRN, Box 20, The Archives of Yugoslavia; On dissatisfaction: "Dopis Glavnom odboru AFŽ Slovenije [Report to the Head Committee of the AFŽ Slovenia]," January 25, 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia; "Informacija o političkom radu među ženama [Information about the Political Work amongst Women]," 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia; "Pribelješke sa sastanka sreskih i izvršnih odbora NF-a [Notes from the Meetings of the County and Executive Councils of the People's Front]," May 5, 1952, Collection 142, SSRN, Box 35, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>141</sup> Djilas, "Govor na IV Kongresu AFŽ."

<sup>142</sup> Vida Tomšič, "Mesto i uloga ženskih organizacija u današnjoj etapi razvitka socijalističkih društvenih odnosa [The Place and the Role of Women Organisations during the Contemporary Stage of the Development of Socialist Social Relations]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 5, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

any separate form of women's work, Vida Tomšič salvaged what she could by establishing the SŽDJ.<sup>143</sup>

### **Abandoning Political Work – Creating the Socialist Household**

After the abolition of the AFŽ, the primary focus of new Alliance of Women Societies was on issues concerning household economics, called *domaćinstvo*. In South Slavic languages, *domaćinstvo* means household, but during the socialist Yugoslavia, it became a catch-all term denoting proper hygiene, nutrition, cooking, needlework, cleanliness and the furnishing of the household. Making improvements to the socialist household became a new fashionable area in which many women, and a few men, participated. An involvement in *domaćinstvo* also marked a generational shift amongst female politicians. Old communists who had built their careers in pre-war prisons and in fighting during the war were pushed towards engaging with social issues, opening a space for a new generation of women who came to hold high political positions from the 1960s onwards, but who had no relations with the AFŽ.<sup>144</sup> However, the AFŽ membership was still trying to undertake meaningful work as concerns the socialist transformation of the country. Faced with restrictions on political work for many women, thousands of the old AFŽ activists became involved in the newly formed societies that focused on women's living standards and children, under the umbrella of the SŽDJ.<sup>145</sup>

The Yugoslav understanding of *domaćinstvo* was very similar to the Soviet idea of *новый быт* (in Russian 'byt' means 'living' in the most basic sense), that developed in the early 1920s.<sup>146</sup> Like *новый быт*, the improvement of *domaćinstvo* entailed the cultural transformation of the country, with issues concerning individual behaviour being central. The premise was that women could not undertake the same amount of work

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<sup>143</sup> "Stenografski zapisnik od proširenog sastanka Izvršnog odbora AFŽ Jugoslavije [Proceedings from the Extended Meeting of the Executive Council of the AFŽ Yugoslavia]," May 9, 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 8, The Archives of Yugoslavia; Her first idea was to establish an organisation Savez žena Jugoslavije (The Alliance of Yugoslav Women), but it seems that she was unable to negotiate that name, as it implied political work of, and among women: "Intervju sa drugaricom Vidom Tomšič [Interview with She-comrade Vida Tomšič]," May 12, 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 16, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>144</sup> Most notable communists left the SŽDJ if they were able to find a permanent job in a more prestigious state institution. Some, including Vida Tomšič and Spasenija Babović moved to other positions (although they still occasionally attended SŽDJ meetings).

<sup>145</sup> "Godišnji izvještaj o radu Glavnog odbora i organizacije AFŽ-a u Hrvatskoj."

<sup>146</sup> The literature on this issue in the Soviet Union is vast. For the latest trends in studies of Soviet everyday life, see: Choi Chatterjee et al., eds., *Everyday Life in Russia Past and Present*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014).

outside the home due to the difficulties of daily chores, and that women were more oriented towards their children and home. To some extent, even the solution offered by Soviet communists was the same: after the state had failed to develop enough communal services, they attempted to provide individual households with a technological fix.<sup>147</sup> In this case, it does not mean that Yugoslav communists drew on Soviet experiences directly. Instead, having similar assumptions about gender, and following the failure of the state to provide promised communal services, they developed similar solutions. This marked a crucial moment as the Yugoslav state prepared to move from austerity and economic sacrifices of developing heavy industry, towards an economy that increasingly invested in consumption. The SŽDJ managed to allocate significant federal resources for their Institute for *domaćinstvo*, and for many conferences regarding the construction of the socialist household. They never gave up on community level services, but as housing companies and tenants themselves were not always enthusiastic about them, the SŽDJ insisted on the technological modernisation of kitchens. Spasenija Babović travelled to Western Europe to examine kitchens in Germany, Austria and Sweden, places where she admired the modern kitchens and communal facilities. She reported to the SŽDJ that they had to acquire the same technology, but for socialist women who would be educated in *domaćinstvo*, as ‘backward’ Western women did not use these kitchen conveniences properly.<sup>148</sup> Technological improvements associated with food processing and kitchen appliances were viewed as particularly important, and the AFŽ organised activist meetings as early as 1950 with architects who sought to find solutions for developing the most effective kitchen, thus demonstrating how Yugoslav gender policies came to assume this final form.<sup>149</sup> The activists proclaimed that a mother should be able to watch children playing in the living room whilst cooking lunch for the family. A kitchen had to be cosy, so that a woman would enjoy her time there. The father’s role in the household simply consisted of reading newspapers and working on his own socialist ascendancy.<sup>150</sup> In a

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<sup>147</sup> For the 1920s, see: Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 198–200; For reemergence of the same idea in the Khrushchev era, see: Melanie Ilić, Susan Emily Reid, and Lynne Attwood, eds., *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, Studies in Russian and East European History and Society (Houndmills; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 12.

<sup>148</sup> “Zapisnik sa sastanka Saveza ženskih društava Jugoslavije [Minutes from the Meeting of the Alliance of Women Societies of Yugoslavia],” June 4, 1955, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>149</sup> “Za nas radne žene i majke savetovanje sa arhitektama [Consultations with Architects for us Employed Women and Mothers],” *Žena danas* 72 (June 1950): 11.

<sup>150</sup> “Novi radnički stanovi [New Apartments for Workers],” *Radnica* 2 (February 1949): 20; Miodrag Topold, “Lekar arhitektama [A Physician to the Architects],” *Žena danas* 75 (September 1950): 9–10.

short period, the very term *domaćinstvo* encompassed even more notions, including attempts to increase women's efficiency in doing domestic chores, and it was broadened to refer to schools and classes devoted to household economics.

Educating people in *domaćinstvo* took various forms. The old AFŽ courses were transformed into special adult schools for *domaćinstvo* whose programs lasted one or two years depending on the republic. These schools were only attended by women, they did not lead to a degree, and they were experimental. *Domaćinstvo* then became a mandatory subject in elementary schools, with the curriculum planned for both boys and girls.<sup>151</sup> In a policy designed to prepare future employed mothers to combine work in industry with domestic work, girls learned how to prepare a diverse array of dishes, how to nurse a newborn, how to organise their daily chores, how to save money, and how to patch and rework cloths. As one article stated, a girl 'has to learn to be happier and more cheerful in her home, to make life better for herself and for the other members of her family.'<sup>152</sup> Boys were often simply educated to be 'cultured' workers.<sup>153</sup>

Despite being criticised at high-level meetings by old AFŽ activists, such divisions remained. The female teachers of *domaćinstvo* were incapable, if not unwilling, to interfere with the existing gendered division of labour. They were often poorly educated, and from a conservative rural background. During their training as teachers of *domaćinstvo*, many could not follow the lectures, nor apply any theory in practice.<sup>154</sup> Vida Tomšič delivered a speech to a group of teachers of *domaćinstvo* in Slovenia, urging them to read Engels' book the *Origin of the Family*, and insisted that training in *domaćinstvo* should teach children about proper socialist relations in the family which was not

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<sup>151</sup> Ruža Tadić, "Vanškolski rad na domaćinskom prosvjećivanju - Vojvodina [Work Beyond Schools on Household Enlightenment - Vojvodina]," June 28, 1954, Fond 354 SŽDJ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>152</sup> "Domaćički tečajevi - pomoć našim ženama [Household Economics Courses - Help to our Women]," *Radnica* 12 (December 1950): 11.

<sup>153</sup> "Pismo Odboru za prosvetu Savezne narodne skupštine. Komisiji za reformu školstva. [Letter to the Committee for Education of the Federal People's Parliament. Committee for the Reform of Education]," July 24, 1954, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia; "Zapisnik i stenografske beleške sa savetovanja SŽDJ [Minutes and Proceedings of the Meeting of the SŽDJ]," June 28, 1954, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>154</sup> Teachers conducting classes in *domaćinstvo* were educated in separate schools that had only female students. "Uspeh i kretanje učenika i studenata u školama 1951/52 - 1952/53 [The Results and Placement of Pupils and Students in Schools in 1951/52 - 1952/53]," *Statistički bilten*, no. 27 (July 1954): 13; Their work was questioned at: "Zapisnik sa sastanka Upravnog odbora Ženskih društava Jugoslavije [Minutes from the Meeting of the Ruling Board of the Alliance of Women Societies of Yugoslavia]," November 6, 1954, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 1, Archive of Yugoslavia.

facilitated by the *domaćinstvo* teachers in this initial period.<sup>155</sup> For many teachers, the idea that men would assume any role in helping with domestic chores was unimaginable.<sup>156</sup>

The Party's publications designed for women also changed. From the early 1950s, *Žena danas* introduced fashion items on its back cover, and printed more articles that provided advice to 'housewives' on topics such as how to sew their clothes, or make alterations. The change came after the Party's Central Committee criticised the magazine for being dull.<sup>157</sup> Over the following years, the AFŽ's central magazine focused on social issues, child rearing and offering advice to housewives whilst ideological Marxist texts became rarer. Often readers requested such texts, whilst the AFŽ had no choice but to comply, due to decreased subsidies from the Party. Vida Tomšič, who was aware that the magazine 'suffer[ed] from petty bourgeois-ness,' nevertheless hoped that such texts about fashion would at least have an effect on women from the countryside in changing their lifestyle.<sup>158</sup>

Vida Tomšič continued her work throughout the 1950s, using her vast experience and connections. She protected the SŽDJ when it came under fire for the same reason as the AFŽ a decade earlier – the argument given was that there was no need for a separate women's organisation, particularly as there was a committee for women within the Socialist Alliance. Tomšič argued that the SŽDJ was useful in solving practical problems, and in focusing on *domaćinstvo*, whilst the Socialist Alliance and Committee for Women would continue to work on political problems. The strategy she pursued was to criticise the male leadership of the Socialist Alliance for not doing enough for women whilst at

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<sup>155</sup> Tomšič was also aware that the term *domaćinstvo* was not the best as many people only connected it with girls. She compared it with the term home economics, which she heard when she visited the U.S: Vida Tomšič, "Govor na sastanku učiteljica domaćinstva u okviru Zavoda za unapređenje domaćinstva u Ljubljani [Speech at Meeting of Household Economics Teachers at the Institute for the Advancement of Household in Ljubljana]," January 27, 1955, Collection 142, SSRN, Box 90, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>156</sup> Only the new textbooks for *domaćinstvo* published in the early 1960s envisioned some sharing of domestic chores, but even in these books, men were still only doing heavy lifting and chopping wood. See: Marija Husag, *Domaćinstvo: priručnik za učenike VIII razreda osnovne škole [Household Economics: Textbook for Students of VIII Grade of Elementary Schools]* (Belgrade: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika Narodne republike Srbije, 1961); Marija Husag, *Domaćinstvo: priručnik za učenike VI razreda osnovne škole [Household Economics: Textbook for Students of VI Grade of Elementary Schools]* (Belgrade: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika Narodne republike Srbije, 1962).

<sup>157</sup> "Pregled časopisa 'Žena danas' organa AFŽ Jugoslavije [Inspection of the Magazine 'Žena danas' an Organ of the AFŽ Yugoslavia]," September 1949, Collection 507, CK SKJ, Ideološka komisija (VIII), box 26, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>158</sup> "Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ."

the same time she had access to Tito.<sup>159</sup> This connection allowed her to put the position of women back on the agenda at one of the Brioni plenums in April 1957. All major political leaders were present, and they discussed the insufficient numbers of women employed in industry, the lack of services, and lack of women who had political posts. Tomšič was able to reiterate her view that the Party must facilitate a new morality, in which old patriarchal relations would be replaced with socialist ones. She persuaded Edvard Kardelj to consider new policies regarding services for employed mothers, as he promised that the newly established communes would manage self-organising kindergartens, communal kitchens, and laundry facilities, setting a model for the next decade of housing construction. In placing a small number of female politicians to the fore of Party discussion at the highest level, this plenum forced the lower level Party institutions to promote women to a greater degree over the next few years. The Brioni plenum also put an end to a decrease in female employment, which will be discussed in the next chapter.<sup>160</sup>

### **Crafting Family and Reproductive Policies**

Although excluded from political and economic decision-making, the most prominent communist women had a lot of power in shaping the state's family and reproductive policies. Their work followed ideas about women articulated at the highest political levels. Tito inseparably tied womanhood with maternity, and just as the majority of communists considered that being a man or a woman was biologically determined, and a woman had specific functions and duties towards society. In return, they vowed to help these women by providing special protection and services for mothers and children. This basic idea, promised before the war, underpinned new legislation, affecting various domains – from labour policy to family relations.

The Soviet Constitution of 1936 was the direct template for the Yugoslav Constitution of 1946 as many leading communists believed that the Soviet Constitution was the most progressive piece of legislation ever written.<sup>161</sup> Of thirty articles that defined

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<sup>159</sup> “O nekim problemima porodice [On Some Problems of the Family],” January 18, 1957, Collection 142, SSRN, Box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>160</sup> Dobrivoje Radosavljević, “Referat ‘Dalji rad na poboljšanju društvenog položaja žena’ [Report ‘Further Work on the Improvement of the Social Position of Women],” April 18, 1957, Collection 142, SSRN, box 17, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>161</sup> This stance was expressed when the Soviets adopted 1936 Constitution, and repeated numerous times, both before and during the war. The Soviet Constitution was described as embodiment of all ideals about

the new social order and citizens' rights, 60% were direct translations, whilst an additional 20% were based on other Soviet legislation. Only 20% had no connection with Soviet legislation and reflected Yugoslav conditions.<sup>162</sup> This particular policy transfer from the Soviet centre to the Yugoslav periphery determined Yugoslav policies towards gender and the family. For example, articles in the Constitution that were direct Soviet replicas included those regarding marriage, the equality of women, and the protection of motherhood and children. Article 24 of the Yugoslav Constitution which defined women's rights, was a direct translation of Article 122 of the Soviet Constitution. It guaranteed the political, economic, and social equality of women and men. For the first time in Yugoslav legislation, women were granted the right to vote, to attend all schools, and to work without discrimination. The Constitution also promised care for mothers and workers, especially during pregnancy. The same article specified that the state was obliged to introduce services such as kindergartens, nurseries, and maternity wards.<sup>163</sup>

The direct translation of crucial parts of the Soviet Constitution also resulted in Yugoslavia embracing Stalinist reproductive policy, rendering Soviet influences visible long after the conflict between the two countries in 1948. However, over the period in which Soviet norms became part of Yugoslav legislation, they were a progressive force that worked to change what was very conservative legislation, inherited from the nineteenth century. For example, in Serbia, women's positions were sanctioned by the Civil Law of 1844. This old law practically stated that a woman was the private property of her husband. He was declared to be the head of the family who would thus represent a woman and decide where she would live. She was obliged to obey his orders, to serve him, and to take care of the children and the house. Women could not inherit property, and even investigations of paternity were specifically forbidden. In article 920, women were placed on an equal footing with minors, and alongside 'persons without mind, court

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happiness, freedom and welfare. See, for example: Rodoljub Čolaković, "Novi Sovjetski ustav [New Soviet Constitution]," *Proleter*, no. 1 (January 1937): 1; "Plodovi Oktobra [Benefits of the October]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 5–6 (November 1943): 14–15.

<sup>162</sup> Detailed comparative analysis of the Yugoslav-Soviet case has been undertaken by Miroslav Jovanović, "Preslikana ili samobitna društvena izgradnja: komparativna analiza ustava FNRJ (1946) i 'Staljinskog' ustava SSSR-a (1936)," *Tokovi istorije* 1–2 (2008): 280–90.

<sup>163</sup> Ana Prokop, *Ravnopravnost žene, brak i porodica: po Ustavu Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije [Equality of Women, Marriage and Family: According to the Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia]* (Zagreb: Antifašistički front žena Hrvatske, 1946); Jovanović, "Preslikana ili samobitna društvena izgradnja: komparativna analiza ustava FNRJ (1946) i 'Staljinskog' ustava SSSR-a (1936)."



declared spendthrifts, scoundrels, and indebted bankrupt persons'.<sup>164</sup> Throughout the rest of the interwar Yugoslavia, Austrian and Hungarian civil laws were in place for territories that belonged to the Austrian and Hungarian parts of the Habsburg Empire before 1919, and Sharia law for the Muslim population. Austrian civil law was even older and served as a model for Serbian civil law, but it nevertheless had slightly improved provisions for women regarding inheritance, marital rights, and labour protection. When compared with these laws, Soviet legislation constituted a radical change, setting a huge challenge for Yugoslav communists to implement the legislation.<sup>165</sup>

A new law on marital relations was introduced in 1946, shortly after the Constitution was implemented. Marriage between a man and a woman was declared the foundation of family, under the protection of the state, replacing the church. The law proclaimed the equality of men and women in marriage, made civil marriage mandatory and the only legitimate kind, and cases of a marital nature were transferred from religious to state courts. Double standards regarding morality became illegal, and many gender differences in law were eliminated: whatever men were legally permitted to do, women were too.<sup>166</sup> Properties and incomes earned during marriage were considered joint, regardless of whether a partner was employed or not. Domestic chores were valued as income as were all other activities that helped to increase the value of jointly owned property.<sup>167</sup> Many prominent communists applauded this as a crucial step towards gender equality in Yugoslavia. However, it was up to the court's discretion to determine the value of a woman's contribution to the household, and to enforce household divisions. As noted by Lydia Sklevicky, legislators wanted to protect unemployed women, considering it

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<sup>164</sup> Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*, 90; Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku*, 29.

<sup>165</sup> Karl Kaser, *Porodica i srodstvo na Balkanu: analiza jedne kulture koja nestaje* (Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2002); As Erlich observed, even in the old Austrian parts where women could inherit property, it was common practice that the daughter would resign her portion of the inheritance. Vera St Erlich, *Family in Transition: A Study of 300 Yugoslav Villages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 214.

<sup>166</sup> The only difference was that a man's family name was favoured, allowing women to keep their own last name, but not allowing a man to take a woman's last name. Also, if a woman decided to keep her last name, children would automatically take the husband's family name. "Osnovni zakon o braku [The Basic Marital Law]," *Službeni list Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije [The Official Gazette of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia]*, no. 29 (April 9, 1946); Sexual assault in marriage was nevertheless not recognised as a criminal offence. Moreover, in later Penal code it was specifically stated that sexual assault related to cases in which people were not married. "Krivični zakonik [Penal Code]," *Službeni list Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije [The Official Gazette of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia]*, no. 13 (March 9, 1951).

<sup>167</sup> Vera Gudac-Dodić, "Divorce in Serbia," *Tokovi istorije* 1–2 (2008): 138.

natural that more women would stay at home, working in the ‘domestic sphere’ to support their employed husbands.<sup>168</sup> The rationale was that, in the case of a divorce, the woman would receive some property or money, whilst the husband would pay alimony for her and their children.<sup>169</sup>

Before the war, the Orthodox ecclesiastical courts could grant divorces under certain conditions, whilst for the Catholic population marriage was indissoluble. Only Hungarian civil law allowed divorce. Historians generally argue that the most common reason for divorce in the interwar Yugoslavia was the inability of a couple to have children.<sup>170</sup> However, there is still a gap in the scholarship regarding a comparison of divorce cases in practice across the different legislative traditions present in the interwar Yugoslavia.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, divorces were not easily obtained, particularly for the poor who could not travel to Vojvodina and Slavonia where Hungarian civil law was in force, making changes brought about by the new legislation fundamental. The new legislation introduced after the war simplified the divorce procedure and permitted divorce if marital relations are so impaired that living together has become unbearable for the spouse. Divorce was granted on a variety of grounds, including abuse, threats, mental illness, adultery, criminal offences conducted against the state, etc. The court had to decide who the ‘guilty party’ was in each case, and a person who was found to be not ‘guilty’ was eligible to have gifts returned to them, whilst joint property was divided up according to contributions made.<sup>172</sup>

The divorce legislation was inspired by the Soviet Union,<sup>173</sup> but there was less pressure for people to remain married. For example, in the 1930s the Soviet Union introduced fees, and a divorce was generally harder to obtain than in the 1920s, whereas a divorce was free of charge in Yugoslavia. In contrast to the Soviet Union, notes of having had a divorce were not written in people’s ID cards. On the other hand, the

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<sup>168</sup> Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*, 91.

<sup>169</sup> Gudac-Dodić, “Divorce in Serbia,” 139.

<sup>170</sup> See: Gudac-Dodić, “Divorce in Serbia.”

<sup>171</sup> For an overview of different legal practices, see Olga Cvejić-Jančić, “Brak i razvod između prošlosti i budućnosti,” *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta* 43, no. 2 (2009): 63–88; Udjejna Habul, “Institut razvoda braka u historiji Bosne i Hercegovine,” *Godišnjak Fakulteta političkih nauka*, no. 1 (2006): 457–71; Branka Resetar and Josip Berdica, “Divorce in Croatia: The Principles of No-Fault Divorce, Parental Responsibility, Parental Education, and Children’s Rights,” *Family Court Review* 51, no. 4 (2013): 568.

<sup>172</sup> “Osnovni zakon o braku.”

<sup>173</sup> See: Prokop, *Ravnopravnost žene, brak i porodica: po Ustavu Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije*, 10.

enforcement of parental obligations was also less strict than in the Soviet Union where a man could be imprisoned for up to two years for not paying alimony, compared to receiving a monetary fine or one year imprisonment in Yugoslavia. Reports nevertheless show that not many Yugoslav citizens were imprisoned for this reason, although a good number avoided paying alimony, justifying their actions by claiming to be in poverty. The resistance to alimony payments, division of property, and recognition of domestic chores as labour are the good examples of how Soviet legislation, ideas, practices, and institutions still had to undergo legitimisation and domestication both in rural and urban areas.<sup>174</sup>

In the countryside, where women were not only unprotected by the old law, but also subject to immense social shame upon divorce, the situation was more difficult. I argue that the Party's inability to implement the new divorce legislation indicates the precise limit of their power to reshape gender relations. From the court cases it is clear that it was very hard for a woman to get her domestic chores recognised as valuable labour, to have the dowry returned, to gain financial support, and to receive a fair division of property. Men would usually force a woman to leave and refuse to return the dowry and to split the property. A woman's situation could become even more complicated if her parents would not allow her to return to their home because of the associated shame. Additionally, it was not uncommon for a father's family to try to gain custody of the children, so as to avoid paying alimony and to make use of them as a workforce.<sup>175</sup> Courts would typically decide in a woman's favour, but enforcing the decision was difficult. Some women who brought their case to court learned that the land was owned by the oldest family member, and not by their husbands, leaving them with no support. The social structure in the countryside meant that a divorced woman would have a hard time surviving even if she received some arable land. Unsurprisingly, the AFŽ activists

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<sup>174</sup> "Krivični zakonik"; For practice, see: "Imovinski odnosi u Braku - NR Srbija [Property Relations in Marriage - NR Serbia]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 4, The Archives of Yugoslavia; For the Soviet case: Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 332.

<sup>175</sup> This was a much older practice observed by ethnographers before the war: male children, considered to be valuable family assets, were not given up lightly by the father's family. See Olive Lodge, *Peasant Life in Jugoslavia* (London: Seely, Service, 1942), 198; On the other hand, Bosa Cvetić has argued that there were a lot of female children who were not even registered as having been born, in order to exclude them from inheritance, demonstrating wider failures in bringing socialist relations to the countryside. Cvetić, "Žena na selu i njena društvena aktivnost."

claimed that many women who endured domestic violence were afraid to initiate divorce proceedings.<sup>176</sup>

The situation was slightly better in the cities, but even in the state capital enforcement of alimony payments was very difficult, as demonstrated by the AFŽ's legal aid office, whose work was dominated by alimony cases.<sup>177</sup> The practices explored by Vera Gudac-Dodić show that in the majority of cases women won the right to alimony and custody over children, but illustrates that even in the 1960s, 65% of men did not pay alimony. Many did not pay due to unemployment or simply because they were not asked to by other state institutions.<sup>178</sup> Courts could also decide how much a spouse was supposed to pay, therein highlighting local differences. Places that were more conservative usually had lower alimonies on average, along with a higher level of resistance from divorced men. Serious problems emerged with enforcing alimony payments as early as the beginning of the 1950s, leading the AFŽ to consider a more radical approach. A judge and lawyer close to the AFŽ suggested making changes to the legislation that would include the seizure of a husband's property, or that the courts' rulings on alimony be based on the potential ability of a man to earn, and not on his actual salary.<sup>179</sup> These suggestions were not accepted, but highlighted the desperation of the AFŽ as concerns the implementation of the new legislation, and in overcoming cultural norms regarding divorce and parental responsibilities.

### **Anxieties over Divorce**

Attempts to enforce new legislation in practice resulted in a great deal of anxiety and caused a debate about the institution of marriage and the family in general. After women were allowed to initiate divorce proceedings for the first time, an increase in the

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<sup>176</sup> Many women who had divorced later remarried, often to another divorced person. Unfortunately it is impossible to obtain data from the countryside and the cities separately on this issue: *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955 [Statistical Annual of the FNRJ 1955]* (Belgrade: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1955), 78.

<sup>177</sup> "Stenografske beleške sastanka izvršnog odbora Centralnog odbora Antifašističkog fronta žena Jugoslavije [Proceedings from the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Antifascist Women's Front of Yugoslavia]," February 2, 1951, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 8, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>178</sup> Gudac-Dodić, "Divorce in Serbia," 140; Another problem was that divorced women did not have any rights with regard to the apartment that the family received from the state. The apartments were most often registered to men, and the legislation did not envision it being shared. Only in 1956 did Tomšič bring this problem to public attention. Vida Tomšič, "Da žena ne bude rob kuće [So That a Woman Is Not a Slave of the House]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 8 (August 1956): 2.

<sup>179</sup> "Šta se vidi iz prakse dosuđivanja i plaćanja alimentacija [What is Observed from the Practice of Imposing the Alimony Payments]," *Žena danas* 80 (February 1951): 14.

divorce rate provoked public outcry. The divorce rate did increase after the war, from around 6,000 to 7,000 divorces throughout the entire country in the late 1930s to almost 25,000 in 1948.<sup>180</sup> However, the perception of a loosening of patriarchal norms in cities was crucial - even more so than an actual increase in the divorce rate (which decreased after its peak in 1948). By the 1930s, the divorce rate in Belgrade was twice as high as the national average,<sup>181</sup> whilst the massive migrations of the postwar years contributed to an already established image of moral deterioration. Those who had only recently arrived in the cities often struggled with the idea of a premarital love life or divorce. Protests usually came from the lower Party rank and file and from the police, whilst the Yugoslav leadership was not particularly vocal on this issue. Many of them were divorced themselves, including Josip Broz Tito and Milovan Djilas. It was up to the most prominent members of the AFŽ to tackle the issue of divorce and to handle public opinion, uncovering the extent to which Yugoslav society was patriarchal, and how threatening the new legislation was to its norms.

Within the AFŽ there were at least two different views on how the state should deal with the increasing divorce rate. Amongst the leadership, the dominant view was that divorce was not desirable, but that it was sometimes unavoidable and the best solution for spouses. Their main concerns were the potential impact on children, and whether a woman would be able to sustain herself. They never suggested stricter laws or punishments. Instead, in their text and speeches Vida Tomšič, Bosa Cvetić, and Mitra Mitrović often used Marxist theory as a strategy for opposing those who were concerned about the divorce rate, and insisted on a Marxist approach in the education of both young people and adults. Often citing Engels, they also used Marxism to rebuke those who discriminated against divorced women, both those working in factories and those living in the countryside.<sup>182</sup>

Amongst the lower cadres, however, a significant number of people disapproved of divorce entirely, and wanted the government to do more regarding the divorce rate. Activists all over the country voiced their concerns, whilst one AFŽ committee in Zagreb even suggested that the government should criminalise adultery as a means to strengthen

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<sup>180</sup> *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*, 67.

<sup>181</sup> Gudac-Dodić, "Divorce in Serbia," 141.

<sup>182</sup> For example: Tomšič, "Uloga žena u socijalističkog izgradnji."

already-existing marriages. The committee stated that those who performed adultery ‘should be subject to fair retaliation from society,’ describing divorce as a social evil that harms women and children, demonstrating frustrations and anger.<sup>183</sup> There were also calls to increase the age of legal marriage, and to prohibit all extramarital relationships. The Central Committee of the AFŽ refused these suggestions, which nevertheless showed that many activists wanted the state to take a firmer stance.<sup>184</sup> The reason for these concerns amongst AFŽ activists often related to the inability of the courts to protect women and the fact that significantly more men than women initiated divorce procedures. However, it also indicates a deep uneasiness with the new laws, even amongst those who supported the Party.<sup>185</sup>

Another important aspect worthy of consideration is the challenges the new legislation brought to patriarchal settings. In particular, children were noticeably at the centre of the debates over divorce which took place, despite the fact that 58% of divorced people in 1953 had no children at all.<sup>186</sup> Furthermore, the new Yugoslav laws equally recognised the rights of all children irrespective of the marital status of their parents. Nevertheless, the opinion prevailed that children suffered because of divorce. As one report prepared for the AFŽ Congress explained: ‘those children suffer an undeserved injustice; it does not solve the problem, but rather increases crime rates and causes those children, in most cases, to become abnormal persons, harmful for society, or unhappy creatures.’<sup>187</sup> This argument was often repeated across Yugoslavia. Negative views concerning divorce were deeply rooted in society, but were also part of a specialist discourse spanning many different fields, with the term *deficient family* used for those in which children lived with only one parent. This was conveniently used to explain a variety of social problems – prostitution, the youth crime rate, alcoholism, and poor grades in

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<sup>183</sup> “Komisija za izmjenu nekih zakonskih propisa, Gradska organizacija Zagreb AFŽ [Committee for Changing of Some Laws, City Organisation of the Zagreb AFŽ],” 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 4, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>184</sup> Neda Božinović, “Izveštaj o radu komisije za porodične odnose na selu [The Report of the Committee for Family Relations in the Countryside],” 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 5, The Archives of Yugoslavia; “Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ.”

<sup>185</sup> “Zapisnik sa sastanka okružnih tajnica AFŽ-a u Glavnom odboru AFŽ-a za Hrvatsku [Minutes from the Meeting of Regional Secretaries of the AFŽ in the Head Committee of the AFŽ for Croatia],” June 13, 1946, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 35, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>186</sup> It also seems that many divorces occurred *because* the couple had no children. The data shows that 51% of dissolved marriages were dissolved after five or more years: *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*, 78.

<sup>187</sup> “O radu među ženama na selu [On Work Amongst Women in the Countryside],” 1953, 12, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 4, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

schools.<sup>188</sup> Concerns were repeated in the press and in numerous forums, arguing that with the supposed disintegration of the patriarchal family, the higher employment rate for women, and the higher divorce rate, more children would be neglected and fall prey to ‘negative influences’. This angst resembles debates which took place in the Soviet Union during the late 1920s, when similar arguments were used to impose stricter laws regarding divorce. Just as in Yugoslavia, it was women from the rank and file who opposed easier divorce practices, and called for greater responsibility towards children.<sup>189</sup>

In Yugoslavia, many newly established charities for children also advocated harsher state measures. It led to a paradoxical situation in which the lower-ranked women of the Party, and even non-Party women, asked for increased state intervention and firmer rule, whilst the leading female communists tried to counter these ideas by calling for more Marxist education. Marxist standards were supposed to bring complete equality and respect in marriage after which the divorce rate would naturally decrease. Following this, Branka Savić rejected all suggestions for administrative measures, and urged societies for children not to pressurise local courts regarding divorce cases.<sup>190</sup> In contrast with the Soviet case, Savić, Vida Tomšič, and other notable communists in Yugoslavia held enough power within the state apparatus to prevent changes that would make the divorce procedure more complicated and expensive.

The debate over divorce in the early 1950s was widespread, but behind the unease concerning the wellbeing of children, there often lurked the more profound fear of women’s emancipation. This was particularly visible when the press blamed women for divorce more often than men, regardless of decisions made by the courts. Leading communists reflected on public opinion, as for example, Savić noted that if a woman had an extramarital affair she would be labelled a prostitute and could easily lose her children during the divorce process, whilst for many men extramarital affairs were often

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<sup>188</sup> Branka Savić, *Uloga porodice u vaspitanju dece [The Role of Family in Education of Children]* (Belgrade: Savet društava i organizacija za vaspitanje i staranje o deci NRS, 1954); Milica Petrović, “Alkoholizam i porodica [Alcoholism and Family],” in *Alkoholizam i društvo: zbornik radova*, ed. Milorad Dragić et al. (Belgrade: Rad, 1961), 183–89.

<sup>189</sup> As Goldman demonstrates, the negative impact of divorce on children was a recurrent theme in the Soviet Union, whilst many women supported stricter laws because they were concerned about these children’s survival and maintenance, particularly in the countryside. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 244.

<sup>190</sup> “Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ.”

overlooked.<sup>191</sup> Many men blamed women's work outside the home for the disintegration of family units, and such views could even be heard in factories and at local Union meetings.<sup>192</sup> Even local magazines for women disseminated texts arguing that it was up to a woman to protect her marriage, regardless of whether her husband had cheated, beaten her, or was addicted to alcohol.<sup>193</sup>

As concerns regarding divorce rate grew, Vida Tomšič addressed this issue at the Fourth Plenum of the Party's Central Committee in 1953, demonstrating the seriousness of the problem. It illustrates the struggle to impose socialist norms regarding the family, for which Tomšič warned others that the communists would not allow the 'return of women to the home and to a subordinate position.' She urged newspapers not to publish 'reactionary stances', and insisted that the high rate of crime amongst young people was not connected with divorce. This speech was also published in *Komunist* - the most important Party journal, which gave it an official character.<sup>194</sup> Tomšič tackled the issue of divorce on several further occasions, pointing to domestic violence, alcoholism, and inequalities in marital relationships. She insisted that divorce was often not a negative process, but could also be a positive solution for incompatible spouses.<sup>195</sup> Her efforts influenced the official Party and government agenda, ensuring that subsequent legislation did not introduce stricter rules for divorce. Tomšič was able to control the state's policies on this issue, but her views were ineffective when it came to the general population, particularly in the countryside. This ineffectiveness further demonstrated the limits of the Party's control over public feeling and daily practices.

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<sup>191</sup> "Zapisnik sa sastanka Komisije za rad među ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ [Minutes from the Meeting of the Committee for Work Amongst Women of the Federal Council of the SSRNJ]," February 3, 1955, Collection 142, SSRN, Box 90, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>192</sup> This was often reported in Slovenia. "Zapisnik sa sastanka Upravnog odbora Ženskih društava Jugoslavije [Minutes from the Meeting of the Ruling Board of the Alliance of Women Societies of Yugoslavia]," March 6, 1954, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>193</sup> An activist and educator from Croatia, Zora Ruklić, was particularly prone blaming women for divorce, and in spreading divorce concerns. See: Zora Ruklić, "Skladan brak i odgoj djece [Harmonious Marriage and Upbringing of Children]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 1 (January 1955): 9; Zora Ruklić, "Žena kao majka i bračni drug [A Woman as a Mother and as a Spouse]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 3 (March 1955): 16–17.

<sup>194</sup> Vida Tomšič, "Govor na Četvrtom plenumu CK SKJ [Speech at the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia]," *Komunist*, no. 4 (April 1954): 329–34.

<sup>195</sup> Vida Tomšič, "Porodica kao faktor vaspitanja [The Role of Family in Education]," December 14, 1955, Collection 114 – SSOJ, box 73, The Archives of Yugoslavia.



## Legislation and Debates over Abortion

The Party's policies regarding abortion were slightly different to the Soviet Union, showing how the Party transferred Soviet models but also adapted them to the Yugoslav context. The legislation on abortion in the Soviet Union became very prohibitive after what had been relatively permissive legislation during the early 1920s. Stalin's regime prohibited abortion in 1936, except in cases where a woman's health was endangered, with both women and doctors facing imprisonment.<sup>196</sup> Here it is important to note that even when abortion was made legal in the Soviet Union, communists did not recognise abortion as a woman's right, but as a tool that the state permits to be used until there is no further need for abortion.<sup>197</sup> Many Yugoslav pre-war communists shared that view. Before they took power, communists argued for legalising abortion in the capitalist state, but insisted that women would not need abortion in socialism due to the state providing care for mothers and children.<sup>198</sup> An entire generation of Yugoslav communists held these views from the mid-1930s onwards, not changing them even after the conflict with the Soviet Union. The ideological view regarding abortion in both communist parties was always the same – abortion was the 'people's evil,' a misfortune whose roots lay in poverty and in unfavourable social conditions, with such views guiding their policies.<sup>199</sup>

Unsafe abortion practices were equally widespread in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, particularly in the countryside. Peasant women often made use of abortion as a form of regular contraception. Alleged folk healers performed such abortions in very unsanitary conditions, with each area having its own local traditional procedures for abortion.<sup>200</sup> These folk healers in the Soviet Union were referred to as *babki*,<sup>201</sup> and just as in Yugoslavia, the regime considered them to be one of the main enemies of the new social order. In Yugoslavia, these women were usually older healers from the villages (often called *vračare*), who offered a whole range of various social functions, including fortune telling and general healing. Their services were in high demand. When abortion

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<sup>196</sup> Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, 331.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>198</sup> Batinić, *Women and Partisan Resistance in Yugoslavia during World War II*, 206.

<sup>199</sup> Franjo Durst, "Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Third AFŽ Congress]," 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>200</sup> "Materijal za referat IV Kongresa AFŽ Jugoslavije [Material for the Report of the Fourth AFŽ Congress]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 4, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>201</sup> See: David L. Ransel, *Village Mothers: Three Generations of Change in Russia and Tataria*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000).

became an obsession of the Yugoslav Party's health activists in the 1950s, they noted that in some areas almost all women had had three or four abortions over the course of their lifetime.<sup>202</sup>

Only in 1951 did the Penal Code sanction abortion in Yugoslavia. However, abortion was no foreign occurrence to communists. Jelena Batinić argued that in the Partisan movement abortion was common, often due to members' absolute dedication to the Party and military struggle.<sup>203</sup> After the war, the issue of abortion was left in legal limbo, as the old pre-war legislation punished women and so the communists did not use it. Abortion was widespread, but hidden from the public gaze. The authorities tolerated abortion in cases where medical explanations were sound enough to justify it – for example, if a woman had tuberculosis, or to counter the very high number of abortions performed by traditional means without supervision in the countryside. However, abortion was widely discussed behind closed doors. In late 1948, the Party asked doctors for their opinions on abortion, and over the next two years, many doctors sent internal reports. Several years later, Dr Franc Novak revealed that all gynaecologists had suggested a ban on abortion.<sup>204</sup>

The first public debate on abortion took place in the federal parliament when a new penal code was discussed. Abortion was one of the most frequently discussed issues, particularly as the first draft replicated the Soviet legislation that punished women. Opinions within the parliamentary legal committee were divided, but eventually they removed a stipulation that punished women.<sup>205</sup> This was the main difference to the Soviet case: all other provisions were very similar. For example, according to the Yugoslav penal code of 1951, a person who helps a woman conduct an abortion with her permission could face up to three months in prison. Abortion was legal in cases where it was needed 'in order to remove dangers to the life or health of a pregnant woman, or in other justified

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<sup>202</sup> This was also claimed by Halpern when he conducted his anthropological field work in Serbian villages. See: Joel Martin Halpern, *Srpsko selo: društvene i kulturne promene u seoskoj zajednici (1952-1987)* (Belgrade: Srpski genealoški centar, 2006), 187.

<sup>203</sup> See: Batinić, *Women and Partisan Resistance in Yugoslavia during World War II*, 157.

<sup>204</sup> Franc Novak, "Abortus i kontracepcija [Abortion and Contraception]," *Žena u borbi*, no. 1 (January 1956): 12–13. Franc Novak was not only an influential doctor, but also a Partisan fighter, the Party member, and a second husband to Vida Tomšič.

<sup>205</sup> "O pitanju pobačaja [On the Question of Abortion]," *Žena danas*, no. 82 (April 1951): 11; In the parliament, Jože Potrč argued that to punish women would mean to impose bourgeois morality and double standards. Vida Tomšič, "Da li je legalizacija pobačaja prihvatljivo rešenje [Is Legalisation of Abortion an Acceptable Solution]," *Borba*, January 17, 1954.

cases.<sup>206</sup> Although women were not punished, abortion was not welcomed and the basic premises completely resembled the Soviet legislation of 1936. Even the procedure permitting an abortion to be conducted was the same. Both legal codes insisted on a medical committee consisting of three members in a clinic where permission could be granted.<sup>207</sup> The committee was obliged to gather extensive information about the woman, including her age, occupation, marital status, number of deliveries, number of living children, address, and finally her diagnosis. Both Yugoslav and Soviet laws targeted persons who helped women conduct abortions outside the clinic, leaving doctors in charge of policing them. Resembling Soviet practices during the time when Stalinism was at its strictest, Yugoslav doctors also had to play a role in interrogating vulnerable patients.<sup>208</sup>

The law encompassed dominant medical views concerning the harmfulness of abortion to woman's body, and of disability. Besides allowing abortion on the ground of a possible threat to the mother's health, it was also permitted if a child might be born with severe physical or mental 'deficiencies'. A medical explanation was required even when the abortion was to take place on social grounds. A statement had to be made to the effect that delivery may endanger the woman's health due to her 'specifically hard material, personal or family circumstances.'<sup>209</sup> According to Novak, gynaecologists also supported the narrowest interpretation of these social circumstances when the law was passed. In legal terms, a medicalised discourse dominated and abortion was never considered being a woman's choice.<sup>210</sup>

Over the next few years opposition to abortion grew, dividing the medical community. On one side of the debate there were doctors close to the Party such as Novak, Angelina Mojić, Ruža Šegedin, and Jože Potrč supporting the law as it was. However, it

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<sup>206</sup> "Krivični zakonik."

<sup>207</sup> If a woman needed urgent abortion due to health issues, she could obtain abortion without the committee, but the doctor had to report to the nearby hospital after. "Uredba o postupku za vršenje dozvoljenog pobačaja [The Law on the Procedure for Performing Allowed Abortion]," *Službeni list Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije [The Official Gazette of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia]*, no. 4 (January 19, 1952).

<sup>208</sup> For the Soviet case: Chris Burton, "Minzdrav, Soviet Doctors, and the Policing of Reproduction in the Late Stalinist Years," *Russian History* 27, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 197–221; Mie Nakachi, "'Abortion Is Killing Us': Women's Medicine and the Postwar Dilemmas of Soviet Doctors, 1944-1946," in *Soviet Medicine: Culture, Practice, and Science*, ed. Frances Lee Bernstein, Chris Burton, and Dan Healey (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 195–213.

<sup>209</sup> "Uredba o postupku za vršenje dozvoljenog pobačaja."

<sup>210</sup> Novak, "Abortus i kontracepcija," January 1956.

seems that the majority of gynaecologists were on the other side demanding changes to the law. In October 1953 a large gynaecologist congress took place, where they argued for the exclusion of social grounds for abortion, and the introduction of penalties for women. Several doctors voiced their opinions in favour of criminalisation in popular newspapers such as *Politika* and *Večernje novosti*; the moment when the debate became polarised. Opposite voices called for the full legalisation of abortion, citing the cases of two young women who had died due to their abortions having been unsupervised. Eventually, Vida Tomšič opted for the middle ground, keeping the law as it was, but calling for more flexibility in women's favour regarding social grounds for abortion.<sup>211</sup> In contrast with the Soviet Union, the issue of the birth-rate was not a significant argument against abortion as seems that Yugoslav communists were more concerned with reducing the very high infant mortality rate.

In practice, it was easier for women from the countryside to claim possible negative health impacts and the social grounds necessary to obtain a safe abortion. However, women from the cities also developed methods in order to get medical help for abortions when they perceived them necessary. According to Novak, many women induced the abortion at home, and then underwent a safe and legal procedure at the clinic.<sup>212</sup> In this way, both doctors and women were protected. Abortion was so widespread that according to Tomšič's lowest estimates there were 100,000 abortions every year. However, this legislation remained unchanged over the subsequent decades, with only minor changes made in 1960 that forced the medical committee to inform women about methods of contraception and counselling centres for the prevention of pregnancy.<sup>213</sup> Women and doctors continued to negotiate the law whilst the state turned a blind eye.

The Party tried to counter unsafe abortions by ordering the AFŽ to work more on organising counselling centres and on improving peasant women's level of education. Doctors and nurses held numerous lectures about the harmful effects of abortion, and

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<sup>211</sup> One of her arguments was that it would be unfair to punish women, and not to punish men. Tomšič, "Da li je legalizacija pobačaja prihvatljivo rešenje."

<sup>212</sup> Novak, "Abortus i kontracepcija," January 1956.

<sup>213</sup> "Uredba o uslovima i postupku za dozvoljavanje pobačaja [The Law on the Conditions and Procedure for Allowing Abortion]," *Službeni list Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije [The Official Gazette of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia]*, no. 9 (March 2, 1960).

many villages opened health centres for the first time.<sup>214</sup> This educational approach, however, should not be overemphasised. Many women were bullied and publicly shamed for having an abortion. From the reports, it seems that abuse was more common in the cities and factories, whereas in the countryside it was more hidden. In the cities, however, local Party cells sometimes reprimanded women for abortions, humiliating them at the meetings.<sup>215</sup>

The fact that Yugoslavia introduced less strict legislation on abortion and divorce than the Soviet Union demonstrates the agency of the Yugoslav leadership as regards the domestication of Soviet policies. Whilst Soviet legislation was *the* model for the Party in Yugoslavia, leaders of the AFŽ had enough power to negotiate, introducing greater protection for the women who were targeted by these policies. It was the AFŽ's choice, and the result of their work and connections to ensure that women were not penalised for abortions, which instead led to the targeting of illegal abortionists. At the same time, they were able to put forward the argument that punishing women would not decrease the number of dangerous abortions performed outside the clinics.<sup>216</sup> Moreover, the Yugoslav law on abortion allowed more space for interpretations in favour of women who wanted to undergo the procedure, as they could argue on the basis of their unfavourable social situation. This illustrates the agency of Yugoslav communist women, and shows that during the process in which certain practices were domesticated, changes and mutations of original models took place. As with divorce, less conservative legislation was adopted and the Party generally advocated an educational approach.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> "Izveštaj o službenom putovanju u Apatin po pitanju domaćičko-prosvetnih kurseva i Novi Sad po pitanju dnevnih dečijih izletišta na Dunavu [Report on the Business Trip to Apatin Regarding the Household-enlightenment Courses and to Novi Sad Regarding Daily Excursions for Children at Danube]," May 9, 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>215</sup> Lydia Sklevicky described how some women were expelled from the Party for having an abortion immediately after the war. She did not provide the details of her source, but her remark could be supported by other sources which indicate that some women were expelled from factories after having an abortion. This suggests that at least some male Union and Party members knew about these decisions. Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*, 289; Krsto Crvenkovski reflected on these expulsions in his report sent to Vida Tomšič, see: Crvenkovski, "Društveni položaj žene u NRM i rad partiskih i masovnih organizacija."

<sup>216</sup> And they also countered all attempts in that direction: "Zapisnik sa proširenog sastanka sekretarijata [Minutes from the Extended Meeting of the Secretariat]," October 1955, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>217</sup> A M, "O štetnim posledicama pobačaja [On Harmful Consequences of Abortion]," *Žena danas*, no. 94–95 (May 1952): 15; "Zapisnik sa proširenog sastanka sekretarijata."

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This chapter has delineated two important processes that marked postwar gender policies at the state level: the gendering of the political sphere which resulted in the exclusion of women; and working on designing new laws and policies towards the family and reproduction. Initially, women took part in war efforts led by the Communist Party, which in turn granted women full political rights. However, the Party and its leader Josip Broz Tito eventually imposed limits to that inclusion, insisting that women should focus on social work and caring responsibilities. The AFŽ and its leadership were powerless to challenge the male political hierarchy whilst the very existence of a separate organisation for women meant that women were always isolated as a special case. Trapped within the Party structure, the most powerful women could only exercise their power over other women, limited to the lower levels of the Party hierarchy. Nevertheless, whilst being allowed and encouraged to work on family and reproductive policies, the AFŽ's work left long-lasting traces.

Crucial legislation regarding marital relations and reproductive policies replicated Soviet codes from Stalin's time. These laws, once introduced to Yugoslavia, replaced earlier legislation that discriminated and disempowered women. New laws on marital relations, divorce, and inheritance demonstrate the intention of the Communist Party to establish what they considered to be gender equality. Leading communist women invested a lot of effort in securing the application of these laws, but also in explaining them and preventing the passing of legislation that was more conservative. However, the implementation of the new legislation was met with resistance and caused anxieties. The issue of divorce was one such field where new Soviet-inspired legislation clashed with existing cultural norms, in which divorce was shameful and parental responsibilities were hard to enforce. Despite immense pressure from the media and the rank and file, divorce remained relatively easy to obtain. The issue of abortion was similar although medical doctors held and voiced more conservative views in this case. Both examples provide good illustrations of the extent to which the Party negotiated Soviet models, adapted them to the Yugoslav environment, and how the AFŽ secured some important victories for Yugoslav women.

### **Chapter 3: ‘Equal but...’ – The Impact of Gender on Labour Policies**

‘An increase in productivity was noticed in the factory, so Matilda was commended and awarded by the Ministry of Industry. However, she was not satisfied. She read newspapers, listened to the lectures, and learned about the heroines of labour in the Soviet Union. Her biggest desire was that her work become like theirs.’<sup>1</sup>

A magazine for women, *Žena danas*, May-June 1947.

Ideas regarding gender amongst the Communist Party’s leadership were crucial in designing labour policies for workers. Besides the prevailing idea that women should work alongside men, notions of motherhood and women’s weaker physical strength - supposedly inherent to all women - informed these policies. However, in the observed period they were applied in various ways, in accordance with the economic and political situation. During the postwar reconstruction and rapid industrialisation, the Party encouraged women to enter the workforce and opened up numerous career opportunities for many, in addition to removing legal obstacles which had made it more difficult for women to obtain skills and professional qualifications. Through official documents, programmes, and speeches by the leadership, the Party disseminated the message that men and women were equally desirable workers. Many women seized this opportunity to enter professions, including those in heavy industry, for which they were widely praised in the communist press. However, the Party maintained a very patronising attitude towards women’s employment, resulting in policies that targeted women separately and excluded them from jobs deemed harmful to their reproductive health. This chapter examines the rationale behind these decisions and their consequences following changes in the Party’s economic policy over a period stretching from revolutionary euphoria to Yugoslav self-management. As a result of the economic crisis caused by the Yugoslav split with the Soviet Union, many women were dismissed from industrial jobs, whilst media representations of the working class changed at this point, rendering it more masculine. Finally, this chapter reveals that there was significant shop floor resistance to female employment throughout this entire period, which the Party’s managers and union

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<sup>1</sup> Jana Koh, “Udarnica Matilda Baruh [A Shock-worker Matilda Baruh],” *Žena danas* 48 (June 1947): 6–8.

officials failed to address. In the early 1950s, the Party's failure to bring about the promised full equality for female workers became evident. Women remained underpaid, underrepresented, and undereducated compared to their male counterparts.

### **New Opportunities for the Working-Class Women**

Yugoslav communists understood the category working class very broadly. Besides workers directly involved in manufacturing, the category of 'worker' also included those employed in administration, government, sales, service, etc.<sup>2</sup> On some occasions, they even considered everyone bar the population involved in agriculture to be workers. This idea came from the Soviet Union, where Stalin insisted that after the revolution there were only two classes: workers and peasants.<sup>3</sup> However, even according to this broad definition, the Yugoslav working class following the Second World War was a small minority compared to the two-thirds of the population engaged in agriculture, and the war losses depleted the working class on the shop floor. As Vladimir Unkovski-Korica argued, new workers arrived from more fragmented groups, typically recruited from the countryside, often with autonomous views and interests different from those of the state and the Party.<sup>4</sup> This argument is important for understanding the opportunities (and the obstacles) that the Communist Party had in shaping its own working class. Many newly employed workers were from the countryside, had no experience of industrial labour, yet were loyal to the Party that had brought them to the cities.<sup>5</sup> However, the Party frequently had troubles in implementing its modernising policies amongst this group. Policies which threatened to change established cultural patterns and gender relations strained the loyalty of new workers who were caught between their traditional habits and the communist modernisation project. This is also important for thinking through the gender conflict that emerged shortly after.

Men comprised the majority of those employed in industry and services before, during, and after the war. However, women's employment was not a novelty

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, industrial proletariat was considered to be the most advanced and revolutionary. See: *Istorija Svesavezne Komunističke Partije (Boljševika)*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> This also reflected the first article of the Soviet constitution of 1936: Iosif Vissarionovič Stalin, *Pitanja Lenjinizma [Concerning Questions of Leninism]*, 2nd ed. (Zagreb: Biblioteka Pitanja, 1981), 574. Stalin's interpretation of Lenin's main works was printed in Yugoslavia in 120,000 copies already in 1946.

<sup>4</sup> Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*, 25.

<sup>5</sup> This was the first major topic of sociological inquiry in post-war Yugoslavia, as the Party was looking for a method of integrating peasants into the working class. See one of the earliest studies: Cvetko Kostić, *Seljaci industriski radnici [Peasants as Industrial Workers]* (Belgrade: Rad, 1955).



characteristic of postwar socialist transformation. The significant surge in women's employment during the 1930s was a consequence of the economic crisis, particularly as women were less skilled and poorer paid than men. By 1939, women comprised 28% of all non-agriculture workers. However, the working class was perceived as male and masculine, with only 5% of Trade Union members being women before the war.<sup>6</sup> As several scholars have shown,<sup>7</sup> women's advancement in pre-war Yugoslavia was next to impossible, impeded both by legal obstacles and by dominant views on female labour. Many technical schools had a policy of not admitting women whilst those who had degrees from abroad struggled to get them recognised by the state. After the war, there were only six women with a degree in mechanical engineering, compared to 1568 men.<sup>8</sup> Women's work was seen as auxiliary and temporary: a suitable choice when men did not earn enough to be the sole breadwinners. Female workers were usually very young, and were either dismissed after getting married, or had their salaries reduced if they kept their jobs. At the same time, more women than men lacked basic literacy.<sup>9</sup>

Yugoslav communists vowed to change this situation through following Soviet ideas. They interpreted the core of Marxist ideology through a Stalinist lens. There is an ongoing scholarly debate taking place over Stalinist labour policies, mostly regarding industrialisation, protective labour policies and the gendered division of labour.<sup>10</sup> However, for the Yugoslav case what mattered was how Yugoslav communists perceived these policies, transformed them and applied them in accordance with their own needs. As regards women's employment, the AFŽ translated, published and widely circulated various Soviet texts, whilst Nina Popova's booklet served as a textbook. According to Popova, Lenin showed the path, whilst the 'great Stalin' put into practice a wide array of ideas leading to women's emancipation, allowing women to gain new skills, professions, and more political positions than ever before.<sup>11</sup> The idea was that women's participation in production and paid employment would improve the status of women in general,

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<sup>6</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 17; Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku*; Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*.

<sup>8</sup> "Stanovništvo [Population]," *Statistički Bilten [Statistical Bulletin]*, no. 1 (July 1950): 18.

<sup>9</sup> 34% of women were completely illiterate, compared to 15% of men. *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia*; Melanie Ilič, *Women Workers in the Soviet Interwar Economy: From Protection to Equality*, *Studies in Russian and East European History and Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland*.

<sup>11</sup> At that time, Nina Popova held numerous important roles within the Soviet apparatus, whilst being the most important Soviet author regarding women. Popova, *Žena u Sovjetskom Savezu*, 19.

something the socialist state should encourage. At the level of policy-making, an absolute uniformity was present in the approaches taken by the Soviet and Yugoslav communist parties. Yugoslav communists accepted that employment would allow women to realise their full potential, that it set women free from forced and economically motivated marriages, and gave them more independence from men.<sup>12</sup> In addition to this ideological underpinning, employment policies were also similar. Both Parties promised equal pay for equal work, and at least similar employment opportunities as for men. Employment did not relieve women of often being the sole caregivers and, as Nina Popova explained, their roles as mothers were still considered as one of ‘the most important tasks for Soviet women’.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, both Parties promised services such as kindergartens, communal dining halls and laundry to help them. For the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, full women’s employment was also desirable for a very practical reason: a brute workforce was urgently needed given the lack of mechanisation.

The effects of the Second World War on the Yugoslav economy were disastrous. The country’s infrastructure was ruined, most industry was destroyed, whilst agricultural production dropped to a minimal level sufficient to avoid famine. The initial objective of the Party was to secure the provision of basic supplies for the population and the army. By the end of 1946, after a huge self-sacrifice on the part of the population, including participation in a large amount of unpaid labour, the country had mostly returned industrial production to pre-war levels. The Party was eager to push for further industrialisation. Yugoslav communists believed that with a planned economy they could accelerate growth according to the Soviet theory of economic modernisation. To make this possible, in 1946, they initiated a process of confiscation and nationalisation, so that the state owned the majority of Yugoslavia’s industries. They intended to focus on developing heavy industry, which would carry the rest of the economy forward. A short whilst later, the Yugoslav economy came to be based on a state-owned and centralised system of management encompassing the spheres of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> B Bašin, “Uloga žene u proizvodnji [The Role of Woman in Production],” *Radnica* 1 (August 1948): 2–3.

<sup>13</sup> Popova, *Žena u Sovjetskom Savezu*, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*; Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*; Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito’s Yugoslavia*; Bogomil Bogo Ferfila, *The Economics and Politics of*

Industrialisation with a cult of physical work, collectivism, and anti-capitalism lay at the core of the Soviet idea of modernisation as applied in Yugoslavia. The first Yugoslav five-year economic plan, announced in 1947, incorporated these ideas into a plan designed to profoundly change the economy. The basic ideas behind the Plan included overcoming economic backwardness, developing the army's capacities, promoting a state-led economy and changing economic relations persisting from the previous period, and increasing workers' welfare. It predicted an increase in the pre-war GDP by 93%, and an increase of more than 100% in the production output. Besides the reconstruction of old factories and the rationalisation of their production through the application of the latest science, the plan was to develop completely new industries. Consequently, the plan was excessive in its optimism, requiring sacrifices to be made by the whole society. Without proper mechanisation and lacking industrial capacity, the Party had to make use of its human resources. Even official documents used terms such as 'heroism' and 'self-sacrifice' when describing the methods to be employed in order to carry out the Plan.<sup>15</sup>

Following the announcement of the five-year plan, the Party needed a female workforce more than ever. The Plan envisioned that the workforce would double and there were general concerns that there would be a severe shortage of available men. To fill the gaps, the Party had to instruct its activists to ensure the significant inclusion of women in industry as well. Whilst women gained certain positions in industry and the administration before this announcement was made, the Plan opened up a full range of opportunities. It marked the beginning of a period that lasted until approximately 1950 and saw a surge in female employment. The state desperately lacked skilled workers, particularly as thousands of skilled male workers had died during the war. All technical schools had to open up admission to women, and women enrolled to learn skills necessary metallurgy, the metal industry, the electrical industry, and many others.<sup>16</sup> The AFŽ offices were happy to produce lists of occupations for which a female workforce could

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*the Socialist Debacle: The Yugoslav Case.* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> *Petogodišnji plan razvitka narodne privrede Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije u godinama 1947-1951: sa govorima maršala Tita, Andrije Hebranga, Borisa Kidriča, Vicka Krstulovića [The Five-Year Plan for the Development of the People's Economy of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in years 1947-1951: With Speeches of Marshal Tito, Andrija Hebrang, Boris Kidrič, Vicko Krstulović]* (Belgrade: Borba, 1947), 41–42.

<sup>16</sup> *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*, 303–26.

successfully replace a male one. Many of these professions were highly skilled and had been completely closed to women before. For example, Cana Babović, then the minister of labour in Serbia, proclaimed that women would need to take on new jobs in metallurgy, carpentry, and even precision mechanics, demonstrating a strong belief that women would be able to master all these skills.<sup>17</sup> However, clear differences in views on women's labour are visible in the official directive that the Federal Ministry of Labour sent somewhat later. The Federal labour minister Vicko Krstulović instructed the Unions<sup>18</sup>, the AFŽ, and the local governments to replace the male workforce in places such as shops, restaurants and collective farms with women, whilst men would be sent to distant construction sites. He never mentioned these highly skilled jobs.<sup>19</sup>

Views about gender equality were embedded in the text of the Plan, particularly regarding women's labour: notions that women were weaker, more vulnerable, and more expensive workers, who were not supposed to do heavy jobs. For instance, the Plan instructed communists to pay attention to improving workers' housing and serveries and this was emphasised with respect to female workers. Seeing these provisions as necessary so as to improve the gender balance of the workforce, the Plan makers delineated policies concerning women workers over the next several years.<sup>20</sup> The Ministry of Labour insisted that women's accommodation be of a higher quality than men's, with better washing facilities and beds. Accordingly, women were understood as requiring better working conditions due to their *nature*, and were considered a less mobile workforce. Such views played in women's favour when the workforce was expanding, but they backfired when the economy contracted.<sup>21</sup>

By the end of the wave of rapid industrialisation in 1950, women held 30% of all industrial jobs. The number of women in industry grew faster than the number of men, despite the massive migration of men from the countryside. This trend resembled the

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<sup>17</sup> "Sastanak plenuma Glavnog odbora AFŽ Srbije [Meeting of the Plenum of the Head Committee of the AFŽ Serbia]," April 5, 1947, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 36, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>18</sup> The Alliance of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia (Savez Sindikata Jugoslavije – SSJ). I will capitalize the word *Unions* when referring to this organisation. As with the AFŽ, the Unions was also part of the People's Front, and was created by the Party.

<sup>19</sup> "Raspis o uključenju žena u privredu [Call for the Inclusion of Women in Industry]," January 21, 1949, Collection 25, Ministarstvo rada vlade FNRJ, box 153, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>20</sup> *Petogodišnji plan razvitka narodne privrede Federativne Narode Republike Jugoslavije u godinama 1947-1951*, 65.

<sup>21</sup> "Raspis o uključenju žena u privredu."

Soviet experience, including the industrialisation of the 1930s.<sup>22</sup> Just as in the Soviet Union, the majority of Yugoslav women worked in the tobacco, food processing, and textile industries. However, a significant number found employment in heavy industry such as steel production, ironworks, mining, and arms.<sup>23</sup> Remarkably, many women found jobs in these fields on their own initiative. For example, a high-ranking official of the AFŽ named Mara Naceva was opposed to women working in the mines, arguing that even in the Soviet Union women only worked there when men were away during the war. She also suggested that there was no need for women to prove their equality by working in such heavy jobs. Nevertheless, at a meeting with AFŽ mining industry representatives, Naceva learned that some women loved their jobs and the status that followed.<sup>24</sup>

The Party formulated its maternal welfare provisions on the Soviet model as well. Insisting that being a mother was a duty on an equal footing with being a worker, the Party brought in a series of legislative measures designed to help women combine motherhood with a career. The solutions planned were the same as in the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup> Kindergartens and crèches were only some of the services offered, for as early as in 1946, the AFŽ had persuaded the government to announce a directive stating that every firm was obliged to allow regular breaks for breastfeeding. If a child was not at the factory's crèches, women could use their nursing break to go home to breastfeed, without having their salary reduced.<sup>26</sup> The state increased the time permitted for breastfeeding when the industrialisation period peaked, allowing women to leave work and go home for two hours. This placed additional pressure on the directors to make sure crèches were available next to factories.<sup>27</sup> Maternity leave was also increased and, by 1948, women

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<sup>22</sup> In the Soviet Union the rate of women employment grew faster than the rate for men. See: Ilić, *Women Workers in the Soviet Interwar Economy*, 36.

<sup>23</sup> "Naše najbolje radnice [Our Best She-Workers]," *Radnica* 3 (March 1950): 6–8; On the structure of Soviet workforce: Ilić, *Women Workers in the Soviet Interwar Economy*, 175.

<sup>24</sup> "Zapisnik sa sastanka sa predstavnicama organizacije AFŽ-a rudničkih bazena i industrijskih centara [Minutes from the Meeting with the Representatives of the AFŽ Organisation in Mining and Industrial Centres]," December 8, 1947, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 35, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>25</sup> That the Soviet Union would serve as a model was announced in the press many times. See, for example: "Socijalno – pravni položaj žene u SSSR [Social and Legal Position of Woman in the USSR]," *Žena danas* 36 (November 1945): 6–7; H. Hristova, "Na straži zakona [On the Legal Watch]," *Žena danas* 44–45 (August 1946): 29; For the analysis of the Soviet legislation, see: Ilić, *Women Workers in the Soviet Interwar Economy*, 62–63.

<sup>26</sup> "Donesena je uredba o dečjim jaslama i vrtićima [The Law on Child Crèches and Kindergartens is Announced]," *Radnica* 3 (October 1948): 6.

<sup>27</sup> Danica Nikolić, "Zaštita trudnih žena i majki dojilja u radnom odnosu [Protection of the Employed Pregnant Women and Employed Mothers who are Breastfeeding]," *Radnica* 6 (June 1949): 17–18.

could take ninety days, and extend it with regular holidays afterwards.<sup>28</sup> Overtime and night-shifts were forbidden for women who were four months pregnant or more, and for eight months following childbirth.<sup>29</sup> There were some slight differences between Yugoslav and Soviet practices. For example, Yugoslav maternity leave was shorter compared to the Soviet leave offered – a total of 56 days before and 56 days after delivery. On the other hand, there were fewer restrictions to use the leave, such as restrictions pertaining to the minimum length of one's previous employment. All these provisions were more generous than those available during the interwar Yugoslavia. Coupled with the increase in employment rates, these measures seemed to bring about the promised equality to women.<sup>30</sup>

As the leading communists also imagined that the Plan is a social modernising force, Babović declared at the Second AFŽ Congress that participation in industrial work crucially increased the 'everyday consciousness of women.' Just as in the Soviet Union, she claimed that thanks to industrialisation and employment Yugoslav women gained a new socialist character.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, the Party made use of its media to disseminate a new image of an employed woman, capable of mastering crafts and skills previously reserved for men. The AFŽ's press, of course, played a pivotal role here. Once again, notable Soviet workers were the role models offered. Countless articles praised Soviet textile workers who invented new working methods, surpassed the required norms, became shock-workers, and were exemplary citizens in all areas of their public and private life.<sup>32</sup> As with their counterparts, the press also promoted Yugoslav women, who were not considered to be lagging behind. There were usually two genres of such texts, and both were used to increase the self-confidence of women, so as to encourage them to enter new industries, and to instruct men to accept them. The first genre concerned unknown young women who entered a new industry despite doubts, prejudices, or even

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<sup>28</sup> "Iz uredbe o zaštiti trudnih žena i majki - dojilja u radnom odnosu [About the Law on Protection of Employed Pregnant Women and Mothers who are Breastfeeding]," 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>29</sup> "Uredba o zaštiti trudnih žena i majki - dojilja u radnom (službeničkom) odnosu [The Law on the Protection of Employed Pregnant Women and Mothers Who Are Breastfeeding]," 1949, Collection 25, Ministarstvo rada vlade FNRJ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>30</sup> Z Ilić, "Mom detetu biće lepše nego što je meni bilo [My Child Will Have a Nicer Life than I Had]," *Radnica 2* (September 1948): 12–13.

<sup>31</sup> Spasenija Babović, "Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Second AFŽ Congress]," 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 2, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>32</sup> Aleksandrov, "Sovjetska tkalja Matrjona Kuzminišna."

being faced with obstacles from their surroundings. For example, a ‘simple housewife’ might become a stonemason, fighting prejudices about her work from her neighbours’ criticisms, saying that she has abandoned her children to grandparents or kindergartens, and sometimes faced with other (male) workers who did not believe in her skills. At the end of the text, she would overcome all these obstacles, become an exemplary worker, and be rewarded for her success.<sup>33</sup> In such magazines, these women typically appeared in trousers, holding hammers and bricks in their hands, proud to show that they were equally competent workers as men. However, the appearance of these women in the magazines was usually collective. If they were featured individually, they featured only once, and remained mostly unknown.<sup>34</sup>

The second genre of text was in the service of creating Yugoslav ‘heroes of labour’, following the same established practice in the Soviet press. Male shock-workers dominated the press, with a coal miner named Alija Sirotanović probably the most famous amongst them.<sup>35</sup> However, the AFŽ also promoted several women in the press, and called them to meetings, conferences, New Year celebrations, and other festivities. This was part of an attempt to create celebrities, whose examples would encourage others to follow in their path. Ivka Dugorepac, Sonja Erbežnik and Matilda Baruh, who were all awarded on numerous occasions for being multiple shock-workers, were probably the most well-known among them. These women received monetary awards, free holidays in the workers’ resorts, held press conferences, and visited other factories where they demonstrated their methods of work. The peak in their activities came after the Tito-Stalin split. Clearly copying Stalin’s earlier, frequently repeated practices as concerns his own shock-workers, Tito congratulated Sonja Erbežnik for fulfilling the five-year plan two years before the deadline on the cover page of *Borba*.<sup>36</sup> In 1949, the press continued to claim that Yugoslav shock-workers were learning from their Soviet mentors, but such

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<sup>33</sup> L Aljinović, “Na poslovima koji ranije nisu bili za žene [On the Jobs That Were Previously Closed for Women],” *Radnica* 2 (September 1948): 13–14.

<sup>34</sup> V P, “Prve žene - građevinske poslovođe [First Women - Construction Formen],” *Radnica* 4 (November 1948): 15.

<sup>35</sup> “Istaknuti udarnik Alija Sirotanović postigao najveći učinak u istoriji rudnika [A Notable Shock-Worker Alija Sirotanović Made the Highest Record in the Mine’s History],” *Borba*, February 20, 1949; Alija Sirotanović was, of course, modeled on the Soviet shock-worker Alexey Grigoryevich Stakhanov. However, every other Eastern European country created its own Stakhanov, so Yugoslavia was no exception. See: Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944 - 56* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 311.

<sup>36</sup> “Pismo Maršala Tita tekstilnoj radnici Sonji Erbežnik [Letter from Marshal Tito to a Textile Worker Sonja Erbežnik],” *Borba*, October 3, 1949.

texts soon disappeared. News reports about Soviet textile workers were simply replaced with their Yugoslav versions.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, from the scattered sources and rare hints made at the internal Party meetings, it is also possible to conclude that not all women welcomed the idea of being *the new socialist women* enthusiastic about shock-work. Although it promised prestige and material benefits, it also emphasised heavy work and an uninterrupted focus on work. Some workers were concerned that the movement demanding higher productivity would place more pressure on them. For example, in Slovenia textile workers in one factory threatened everyone who planned to work on more machines, telling them that they would be drowned in the river Sava. In Maribor, one woman barely escaped a beating after agreeing to increase her productivity. There was no widespread violence as in the Soviet Union, although the local AFŽ units sometimes had to intervene to appease women's protests over long working hours, and over working on Sunday to fulfil the Plan.<sup>38</sup>

Having said that, in the five years after the war, women occupied more visible and important roles in Yugoslav industries than ever before. Besides manual jobs previously reserved for men, some women became skilled workers, young engineers, and industrial scientists. The press and the Party's officials praised these women for their efforts to increase their productivity, introduce new methods, and reduce waste. Within a system that considered labour and a good work ethic as the highest values, these women could feel acknowledged, gain awards and benefits, and feel equal to men who previously held these positions. They became ideal models in the press, considered to be examples for all of society.<sup>39</sup>

### **Male Working Class Resistance**

The Party's attempt to establish a system that would guarantee the absolute subordination of lower-level organs of authority to the Party leadership was mostly effective in the sphere of politics and the economy. However, resistance to any changes

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<sup>37</sup> For example, articles such as D M, "Heroji socijalističkog rada u Sovjetskom Savezu [Heroes of the Socialist Labour in the Soviet Union]," *Borba*, February 10, 1949; were replaced with articles such as Balta, "Najbolja tkalja Jugoslavije"; Ivanka Balta, "Sonja Erbežnik," *Radnica* 11 (November 1949): 8–9.

<sup>38</sup> It seems that resistance to shock-work in the Soviet Union was more widespread and violent. See for example: Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Andrej K. Sokolov, eds., *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents*, Annals of Communism Series (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), 33–34.

<sup>39</sup> V Popović, "Prvoborac za veću produktivnost rada [A Fighter for a Higher Productivity of Labour]," *Radnica* 3 (October 1948): 8–9; "Naše najbolje radnice."



in cultural norms was high.<sup>40</sup> Changes in gender relations were particularly sensitive. Shortly after a surge in female employment, male workers, local managers, union officials, and even the Party's rank and file resisted the inclusion of women in prestigious industrial jobs. It was up to the workers' Unions to address this problem. Just as in the Soviet Union, they had the task of working with the women (and men) once they had joined an industry. The Unions had to protect workers' rights, train them to obtain professional qualifications and, of no lesser importance, teach them socialist values. For this reason, the Unions were called the 'schools of socialism,' through which workers would be 'elevated' politically and culturally, enabling the Party to generate as much support as possible.<sup>41</sup>

Male communists who had been active from before the war held the ruling positions in the Unions following the war, despite the fact that there were notable women in the Party who had working-class careers. Cana Babović had been a pre-war communist and a union activist for decades, but that only qualified her to become the minister of labour for Serbia in 1946. Pepca Kardelj - the wife of Edvard Kardelj, one of the most powerful Yugoslav politicians - was active in the Unions, but she also held numerous other posts within the governments. Yet she was an important connection, linking the AFŽ to top-level decision making regarding workers. These women, however, showed how little the most powerful female communists could do once the situation had deteriorated for employed women. The professional union officials (*sindikalni funkcioneri*) were also predominantly male, although the number of women in the Unions increased as membership was often obtained with employment.<sup>42</sup> Being a Union official usually conferred no real power nor ability as regards decision-making, but these posts were important as they were paid and carried social prestige. On some occasions, union

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<sup>40</sup> The discussions at the Party's Central Committee meetings are a good example of how the system was designed to be very centralised. Tito and a small group around him decided on all major decisions: Branko Petranović, Ranko Končar, and Radovan Radonjić, eds., "Drugi Plenum CK KPJ," in *Izvori Za Istoriju SKJ: Sednice Centralnog Komiteta KPJ (1948-1952)* (Belgrade: Komunist, 1985), 5–287.

<sup>41</sup> Of course, this was a Soviet invention. Stalin had called the Unions to be "the schools of communism", and a connection between advanced and backward workers. See: Stalin, *Pitanja Lenjinizma*, 134; In Yugoslavia, they used the same phrasing: Pavle Radoman, "O uzdizanju žena na rukovodeća mesta u sindikalnim organizacijama [On the Promotion of Women into the Ruling Posts in the Union Branches]," *Radnica* 1 (August 1948): 5–6.

<sup>42</sup> In June 1948, 19% of union officials were women, and that number was not increasing. In the Central Committee (*Centralni odbor*) of the Unions there were nine women and sixty-seven men. Đura Salaj, "Delatnost sindikata Jugoslavije [Activity of the Unions of Yugoslavia]," *Radnica* 4 (November 1948): 2–4.

officials could point to infringements in procedures and in workers' rights at the local factories and firms.

The most important failure of the Unions was over women's qualifications as social inequality was also reproduced via institutionalised settings. During the entire socialist period, the wage gap between skilled and unskilled labour was particularly high, and the gender pay gap depended on that wage gap. Additionally, and of no less importance, in the system that promoted the working class as the vanguard of society, becoming a skilled worker was a significant climb in the socialist hierarchy. Nevertheless women remained a relatively unqualified workforce. As there were few women working as Union officials, complaints came from the AFŽ. Their activists noted that, in many factories, the managers sent more men than women on additional courses, and they also noticed that men were progressing faster in moving from unskilled to skilled work. For example, in the national railway transport industry there were almost 22,000 employed women. Half of them worked as clerks, but out of 12,300 female workers, only 184 were skilled, and 760 semi-skilled. Out of 55,000 newly trained workers in the entire transport industry, only 9% were women.<sup>43</sup> The qualification system was rigid and depended on gaining official diplomas. As a result, many women remained classified as unskilled even if they became shock-workers renowned for their productivity. Many of them were praised, became national heroes, won medals for their work, but if they had no official qualifications permitting them to translate such praise and high productivity into a skilled workers' pay grade, any financial benefits they received were only fleeting. Some worked in one industry for decades, even in skilled positions, but earned less without the necessary training and qualifications.<sup>44</sup> By 1949, it was already apparent that there were serious problems in the structure of the workforce, and that the Unions were not facilitating the promised improvements.<sup>45</sup>

When the AFŽ activists discussed this problem, they usually cited the insufficient number of public services available to help employed mothers. They knew that additional training required a substantial time commitment, whilst there was never any notion

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<sup>43</sup> "Žene železničari [Women-railwaymen]," *Radnica* 9 (September 1949): 11.

<sup>44</sup> The salary of an unskilled worker in industry was usually half that of those qualified as skilled workers: *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*.

<sup>45</sup> Nada Igumanović, "Značaj godišnjih skupština sindikalnih proizvođača [The Importance of the Annual Meetings of the Union Branches]," *Radnica* 2 (February 1949): 1–2.

circulating that male workers had to share the burden of domestic chores or care for children. The solution offered by the AFŽ was to construct services such as serveries, day-care centres and kindergartens next to the factories, with other services such as laundry and sewing facilities built in residential areas. These services were also promised by the Yugoslav constitution, and many AFŽ activists volunteered in their development. Initially, firms were encouraged to open kindergartens and crèches, but once the five-year plan was announced, they were obliged to do so if they employed more than 200 women, or if their employees had over twenty children altogether. Architects were ordered to include kindergartens in all future factory and housing projects.<sup>46</sup> During the first two years after the directive was issued in 1947, under strong state pressure and vigilant monitoring by the AFŽ, kindergartens were opened in the many firms, factories and institutions.<sup>47</sup> However, they were met with fierce resistance from the male ruling boards of many factories. Many directors justified not building these services because they had not been originally planned, or simply argued that there were not enough resources, and that other priorities regarding the completion of the Plan were more pressing.<sup>48</sup> As soon as the economy trembled when it came under a blockade from the Eastern Bloc, and when it became clear that the Plan would not be fulfilled, these services were the first to be closed down as a part of a rationalisation of costs. Although the lack of such services was not the only reason for the slower promotion of women, these services were of crucial importance in encouraging women's employment. All caregiving responsibilities fell on women and Yugoslav socialism envisioned no changes in such social practices. Without the state's help, many women simply could not stay at Union meetings after the regular workday was over, and they could not commit to any additional training. As there were almost no female union officials either, there was no one to protest and fight for their

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<sup>46</sup> At that point, it was a major victory for the AFŽ and their efforts and, over the next few years, their activists would closely monitor all factories in the country. They would diligently count the number of women and services, and report to the central office all violations of this directive "Uredba o zaštiti dece radnica, nameštenica i službenica [The Law on Protection of Children of She-Workers, Public Employees and Clerks]," October 16, 1947, Collection 25, Ministarstvo rada vlade FNRJ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia; "Iz uredbe o osnivanju dečjih jasala i dečjih vrtića [About the Law on Establishing Children's Crèches and Kindergartens]," 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>47</sup> AFŽ activists often volunteered to help with the construction of kindergartens, and later with their daily maintenance. "Godišnji izveštaj Glavnog odbora AFŽ Srbije za 1949. godinu"; "Godišnji izvještaj o radu Glavnog odbora i organizacije AFŽ-a u Hrvatskoj."

<sup>48</sup> "Kontrolni obilazak 35 većih preduzeća i ustanova u Beogradu [Control Visit of 35 Larger Firms and Institutions in Belgrade]," January 7, 1950, Collection 25, Ministarstvo rada vlade FNRJ, box 37, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

rights. Not surprisingly, according to an article in *Borba*, not a single director was punished for a lack of childcare services.<sup>49</sup>

For young women who wanted to become educated and pursue jobs in industry, there were other obstacles. If they had not been deterred by the views that jobs in health, education and social care were more suitable for women, they sometimes faced schools that blocked their admission. For example, from the early 1950s, industrial schools in Montenegro only accepted men. In other republics, the situation was only slightly better. For instance, in tobacco factory in Slovenia where women were the vast majority of workers, there was not a single girl in the school for specialists.<sup>50</sup> Male students were always in the majority on highly technical training programmes in schools that prepared pupils to be qualified workers in industries where women dominated the workforce.<sup>51</sup> Considering all technical schools prepared students to obtain qualifications (*škole za učenike u privredi*), female students comprised 15.2% of those attending, whilst in general industry schools women totalled less than 5% of students in 1952.<sup>52</sup> Schools for adults who were already employed in industry, had a similar ratio of male to female attendees. There were several categories of such schools, depending on the students' previous education, and in all of them women were a minority. The same statistics also show that women who graduated from these schools were more often left unemployed, compared with men.<sup>53</sup>

Cultural norms and family relations amongst workers were another set of serious issues. Many men simply did not support women's work and their advancement. This

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<sup>49</sup> "Otvaranje dečjih jaslica - važan zadatak uprava preduzeća i sindikalnih organizacija [Establishment of the Children's Crèches – An Important Task of the Ruling Boards of Firms and the Union Organisations]," *Borba*, January 25, 1950.

<sup>50</sup> By school for specialists, I mean all schools in which students received specific training that would count as a qualification. For the reports on situation in these schools, see: Angela Ocepek, "Položaj radne žene u vreme izgradnje socijalizma. Referat na IV Kongresu Antifašistične fronte žena Slovenije," November 15, 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 36, The Archives of Yugoslavia; Although women comprised a majority of 53.5% of workers in the tobacco industry, in 1953 there were 189 students who were to become "specialists" in this field, and not a single woman. *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*, 92.

<sup>51</sup> "Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ."

<sup>52</sup> "Osnovne i srednje škole 1951/1952 [Elementary and High Schools in 1951/1952]," *Statistički bilten [Statistical Bulletin]*, no. 26 (December 1954): 45.

<sup>53</sup> In schools for adults at the level of the lower specialist schools (*niže stručne škole*), women made up 25% of students. However, in schools for specific crafts (*majstorske škole*) in which qualified workers trained to become specialists, women only studied to become specialists in textiles, and made up 5.6% of all craft students; in the so-called workers' technical schools (*radnički tehnikumi*), after which students could enrol at the university, women made up only 4.7% of all students. "Škole po srezovima [Schools by Counties]," *Statistički bilten [Statistical Bulletin]*, no. 24 (April 1954).

was particularly important as gender and family relations amongst the workers were under the Union and Party's jurisdiction. In theory, there was no private sphere for socialist workers. As the vanguard of society, workers had to exhibit exemplary behaviour both in the workplace and at home.<sup>54</sup> Party members had to offer criticism and self-criticism at their meetings, and the local Party cells had to monitor their comrades. Workers who were not Party members also had to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in their firms.<sup>55</sup> It was therefore hard to hide the existence of domestic violence amongst workers, which was rife. AFŽ activists reported that even shock-workers, the pinnacle of the working class, were regularly beating their wives. Alcoholism amongst male workers was also a daily problem, and even Tito was present when one worker in Zenica begged the factory director to give her child benefits directly to her, as her husband would spend them on alcohol. Reports also suggested that male workers were regularly searching for unemployed wives and, generally, did not support their wives' employment.<sup>56</sup>

Adding to this situation, the shop floors were often very hostile and masculine environments for women. In even highly censored sources, it is possible to uncover the existence of a gender battleground on the shop floor, and the presence of misogyny on a daily basis. For example, inappropriate humour about women's ability to work, and about women in general, was regularly observed. As an illustration, in one case, a male Party member was ridiculed for saying that there was nothing unusual if the husband bathed the child.<sup>57</sup> Drawing on the AFŽ's local reports, it is possible to put together a picture of how the male working class and its local leaders resisted the inclusion of women in the workforce. Dismal living conditions were one obstacle. In some large workers' colonies, such as *Krušik*, located in Valjevo, Serbia, men and women lived in the same barracks;

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<sup>54</sup> As Veljko Vlahović, one of the leading ideologists explained, people had to be "clean in their personal lives" to deserve to be called communists. See his article on: Veljko Vlahović, "O liku komuniste [On the Character of a Communist]," *Komunist*, no. 1 (October 1946): 44–56.

<sup>55</sup> In every Party cell, members had to write "character assessments" of the other members. These were evaluations of how good they were as communists. For example: "Karakteristika za drugaricu Jovanku Ristić [Characteristic Note for She-Comrade Jovanka Ristić]," November 15, 1950, Collection 507, CK SKJ, Ideološka komisija (VIII), box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>56</sup> "Stenografske beleške proširene sednice Izvršnog odbora Antifašističkog fronta žena Jugoslavije [Proceedings from Extended Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Antifascist Women's Front of Yugoslavia]," September 23, 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 8, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>57</sup> As cited by: Crvenkovski, "Društveni položaj žene u NRM i rad partiskih i masovnih organizacija"; Other observations in: "Stenografske beleške proširene sednice Izvršnog odbora Antifašističkog fronta žena Jugoslavije"; Tomšič, "Mesto i uloga ženskih organizacija u današnjoj etapi razvitka socijalističkih društvenih odnosa."

several women shared the same room with their children, all waiting for their housing problem to be solved.<sup>58</sup> In Zenica's steel plant in Bosnia and Herzegovina, paid women would clean the men's barracks, whilst the factory refused to provide the same service for female workers, although both male and female workers paid the same price for housekeeping. Inspectors, called in by the AFŽ activists, uncovered worse working conditions, equipment and clothing protection for women than for men at the same plant. There were other forms of harassment as well: for example, one of the directors of Mostar's aluminium plant in Bosnia publicly ridiculed women who asked to be transferred to easier jobs when menstruating. In the salt industry, in Tuzla, Bosnia, a director specifically ordered doctors not to permit sick leave if a woman was experiencing menstrual pain.<sup>59</sup> Women in the salt factory in Ston reported that they were paid less than men in the same jobs, despite this being against the law. The capacity of the AFŽ to solve these problems was limited. The AFŽ teams could point out the problem, but unless the Unions made specific orders to the directors of the factories, the situation would not improve. The AFŽ criticised Unions for allowing these infringements by the directors, but these directors were also active in their Unions, and their jobs usually only depended on industrial performance.<sup>60</sup>

During the entire period of its existence, the leadership of the AFŽ had a poor level of communication with the Unions, which sometimes descended into mutual accusations. Sometimes, the most prominent communist women tried to make use of its contacts in the ministries directly, or even with Tito, working on legislation and pointing out the most urgent problems. However, they were powerless to respond once the factories began massive layoffs of women, shutting down services, and changing their tone regarding appropriate jobs for women. At that time, the AFŽ was forced to turn its attention to the countryside where the Party had begun engaging in collectivisation, a process which demanded the AFŽ's full mobilisation.

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<sup>58</sup> Krušik in Valjevo employed over 1000 women at that time: "Sastanak aktiva Glavnog odbora AFŽ Srbije [Meeting of the Aktiv of the Head Committee of the AFŽ Serbia]," July 4, 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 36, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>59</sup> Danica Perić, "Materijali o radnoj ženi iz BiH [Documents about the Employed Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina]," 1955, Collection 117, Savez sindikata Jugoslavije, box 235, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>60</sup> "Problemi uposlenih žena i briga sindikalnih organizacija za njihovo pravilno rešenje [Problems of Employed Women and Care of the Union Organisations for their Correct Solutions]," 1949, Collection 117, Savez sindikata Jugoslavije, box 235, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

## **Impact of Economic Changes: The Road to Self-Management**

The Party's reproductive policies, as analysed in the previous chapter, had a critical impact on female workers, regardless of whether they had children. As the Party introduced constitutional articles that vowed to protect mothers and children, the subsequent legislation affected all employed women. The AFŽ was very active in drafting workers' legislation. It intended to help employed mothers by increasing child benefits, the amount of time available for breastfeeding at the workplace, and maternity leave. The AFŽ also advocated for part-time work for mothers, the movement of women from heavy jobs to lighter ones, and for a ban on night-shifts for women. However, each of these policies backfired, as they were not accompanied by radical changes in men's attitudes towards women's work and child-rearing responsibilities. Instead, the Party introduced these policies following their conflict with the Soviet Union. The economy trembled, and the successful completion of the Plan was uncertain. Following each of these measures, many women lost jobs. The directors resisted building more services whilst women themselves protested some of these policies as they placed them on an unequal footing.

The exclusion of women from heavy industry jobs correlated with the introduction of Yugoslav self-management in 1950 as a way of organising many economic activities. Briefly put, Yugoslav self-management envisioned that factories, firms, and institutions would be 'returned' to the workers, who would manage them through workers' councils and ruling boards. The basic principle was that the state would make general plans whilst these self-managed factories would work in the best interest of and according to the needs of the workers. Every worker had the right to vote and to be elected to the council. The council then selected the ruling board. In theory, workers would elect their best colleagues to rule the factories, in so doing helping the ruling boards and directors fulfil the plan, fight for increased productivity, as well as for improved discipline. Therefore, Yugoslav communists often explained self-management in terms of Marx's premise that workers should rule the factories.<sup>61</sup> In terms of broader economic developments, such changes marked a gradual retreat from Stakhanovism and radical campaigns, and towards a more moderate approach in industry and agriculture. At the same time, this encompassed a

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<sup>61</sup> "Radnički saveti - nov prilog jačanju socijalističke demokratije u našoj zemlji [Workers' Councils – New Contribution to the Strengthening of the Socialist Democracy in Our Country]," *Radnica* 3 (March 1950): 3.

move towards a more open, market-oriented approach for individual firms, and envisioned the 'rationalisation' of their production and workforce.<sup>62</sup>

The introduction of Yugoslav self-management placed additional pressure on employed women. Councils included more spaces in which women had to participate – ideologically, to be good socialist citizens who cared for their factories and the state; and practically, to be included in the forums that made decisions about their workspaces. From the reports, it was obvious that many women simply did not have enough time to be present at the numerous workers' council meetings, on top of completing their regular jobs, domestic chores, and caregiving responsibilities. Women often endured criticism from the AFŽ for leaving the workspace as soon as the shift was over.<sup>63</sup> However, one survey in Slovenia showed that a third of employed women spent between three and six hours every day completing domestic chores, whilst another third worked even more, on average between six and nine hours. Most of that time was spent cleaning, cooking, and sewing.<sup>64</sup> With the new economic changes, women's position arguably deteriorated as it was no longer enough for a woman to become a shock-worker and only perform whilst on her shift. The value of shock-work decreased, leaving only skilled workers at the top of the pay grade.<sup>65</sup> For example, a woman named Marija Bujinac was a shock-worker whose duty it was to brew coffee. Once she managed to brew 1,400 coffees a day, she won a federal medal for her work, as well as monetary rewards, and a free all-inclusive holiday.<sup>66</sup> After these changes occurred she became an unskilled worker, with the lowest level salary possible, working in *Narodni magazin* in Zagreb.

The first reaction of the male majority in the factories to the introduction of workers' self-management was to exclude women from the workers' councils and particularly from ruling boards. This process occurred fast. As early as the end of 1954,

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<sup>62</sup> For a detailed analysis of self-management, see: Susan Lampland Woodward, *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia, 1945 - 1990* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*.

<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, Soviet activists criticised employed women for the same reasons, and ignored the causes. See: Diane P. Koenker, "Men against Women on the Shop Floor in Early Soviet Russia: Gender and Class in the Socialist Workplace," *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 5 (December 1995): 1438.

<sup>64</sup> Ocepek, "Položaj radne žene u vreme izgradnje socijalizma. Referat na IV Kongresu Antifašistične fronte žena Slovenije."

<sup>65</sup> Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*, 97-98.

<sup>66</sup> Ivanka Balta, "Marija Bujinac - nosilac ordena rada [Marija Bujinac - a Work Medal Bearer]," *Radnica* 7 (July 1949): 7.



women comprised only 9.9% of self-management ruling board members.<sup>67</sup> Sometimes men excluded women passively by abolishing the factory's child services, but often they deterred women directly by not voting for female candidates. The elections for the workers' councils, supposed to be the pinnacle of socialist consciousness, turned into a silent gender and class war. The notions of gender roles were crucial as were ideas about chastity. For example, if a woman had a child born outside of wedlock, she was prevented from being nominated, whilst the same rule did not apply to men. In many firms, there was a dominant belief held that women could not rule a factory.<sup>68</sup> The percentage of women in workers' councils and ruling boards was consistently lower than the percentage of employed women in factories. In non-industrial firms and institutions, the situation was similar. The number of women involved did not increase in subsequent years, usually remaining below 20%, even when women comprised the majority of workers.<sup>69</sup> Peasant-workers<sup>70</sup> were also excluded, with workers' councils and ruling boards dominated by skilled workers who had ultimate jurisdiction over dismissal.<sup>71</sup> As an illustration, in Slovenia, the economically most developed republic, 98% of skilled and specialist workers were men.<sup>72</sup> Excluded from workers' councils, women often had no place or position in which to protest. Even in important enterprises which were monitored, resistance occurred to every initiative undertaken by female workers. For example, in 1955 in the 'Tito' mine in Banovići, Bosnia, women protested that their barracks leaked, and that there was not a single childcare service on offer. The response from the council was 'why do you have to work?'<sup>73</sup> demonstrating a resistance to the very notion of women's work outside the home.

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<sup>67</sup> By the end of 1954, 10,350 firms had set up self-management ruling boards. There were 54,462 ruling board members, and only 5,392 women (9.9%): *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*, 30.

<sup>68</sup> "Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ."

<sup>69</sup> Radosavljević, "Referat 'Dalji rad na poboljšanju društvenog položaja žena'"; "Zapisnik sa sastanka Organizaciono političkog sekretarijata SO SSRNJ [Minutes from the Meeting of the Organisational-Political Secretariat of the Federal Council of the SSRNJ]," October 3, 1958, Collection 142, SSRN, Box 22, The Archives of Yugoslavia; By the end of 1954 throughout the entire country there were 201,296 councilors, and only 29784 women (14.8%): *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*, 30.

<sup>70</sup> This term usually referred to workers who still kept up their agricultural plot besides working in the factory.

<sup>71</sup> Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia*, 110.

<sup>72</sup> Ocepek, "Položaj radne žene u vreme izgradnje socijalizma. Referat na IV Kongresu Antifašistične fronte žena Slovenije."

<sup>73</sup> "Zapisnik sa konferencije žena zaposlenih u rudniku uglja 'Tito' Banovići [Minutes from the Conference of Women Employed in the Coalmine 'Tito' in Banovići]," February 24, 1955, Collection 117, Savez sindikata Jugoslavije, box 235, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

A further increase in state provisions for children fuelled such ideas. The turning point for employed women was in 1950 when the Party increased child benefits. Mothers received money for nutrition during pregnancy, and money for child rearing equipment. In addition, the state introduced monetary awards that increased with every child, and regular child benefits until the child turned seventeen years old, or finished school. The amount of child benefits available was not negligible. In 1954, it was calculated that a working class family of four would receive 25% of their monthly income from child benefits.<sup>74</sup> This legislation created a serious backlash and gave many factory managers an excuse to dismiss women. The AFŽ teams reported that many managers and male workers insisted that, since women were receiving maternity benefits, there was no need for them to work. The situation was worsened because of the economic hardships faced after the blockade from the East when the Party had to reduce its unrealistic expectations and planning. Factory managers had to rationalise the production. Many firms had employed too many people following the enthusiastic announcement of the Plan, so, from 1950 onwards, women were the first to lose their jobs. Often, factories dismissed married women whose husbands worked first, then women who received monetary benefits, and then single mothers who had children born out of wedlock. A federal member of the parliament Nada Manojlović pointed that some industrial firms rather fired women with children born out of wedlock than drunkards and thieves. In a telling case, a single woman with a child was fired for the drunk men's misbehaviour in the factory's cafeteria. Although this practice was against the law, even local union officials supported it.<sup>75</sup>

The introduction of child benefits also backfired on kindergartens and other services to children, as the government decided that parents should pay part of the fee, using some of those benefits. Many parents opted against paying, and the number of enrolled children sharply declined. The state also wanted these services to be self-sustaining, and the factories to cover all the remaining costs in the spirit of self-management. Consequently, many factories closed their kindergartens and crèches, and

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<sup>74</sup> *Anketa o porodičnim budžetima četvoročlanih radničkih i službeničkih porodica [Survey on the Family Budgets of the Four-Member Working Class and Clerk Families]* (Belgrade: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1957).

<sup>75</sup> Ocepek, "Položaj radne žene u vreme izgradnje socijalizma. Referat na IV Kongresu Antifašistične fronte žena Slovenije"; Rada Manojlović, "Još nešto na temu 'lažni moral' [More on the Issue of 'Fake Morality']," *Borba*, January 11, 1954.

directed parents to services provided by the city councils.<sup>76</sup> In just two years, the number of children's services decreased dramatically throughout the entire country. For example, in 1952 the number of children in kindergartens reduced to a third of the level it was in 1950.<sup>77</sup> Many women who were not dismissed as part of the 'rationalisation,' had to leave their jobs because they had no one to look after their children. Many shock-workers also left.<sup>78</sup>

Another blow to employed women actually came from the AFŽ. Following their paternalistic agenda based on the Soviet model, the AFŽ insisted that women should not work in heavy jobs or on night-shifts. The Soviet Labour Code regulated women's night work immediately after the revolution, and excluded women from the more highly skilled and paid areas of employment, provoking a widespread infringement of the law. The rationale behind the code was a concern for women's reproductive health.<sup>79</sup> In Yugoslavia, the debate, the arguments, and the results of such legislation were the same. The AFŽ did not want women to work in jobs that could endanger their health 'as a future mother, pregnant woman, or a wet nurse.'<sup>80</sup> Although they had such a policy even before the rapid industrialisation took place, it was no coincidence that this idea was put in practice only when the need for female labour decreased. Through the series of directives dating from 1951 until 1955, women were banned from working on many jobs, usually in heavy industry. In 1955, the federal government announced their final decision to ban night work for women, justifying this move in terms of a need to harmonise the legislation with an international obligation which Yugoslavia had signed.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ocepek, "Položaj radne žene u vreme izgradnje socijalizma. Referat na IV Kongresu Antifašistične fronte žena Slovenije"; On average, parents had to give 66% of their child benefits to pay for creches: "Šta moramo učiniti za dječje jaslje i vrtiće [What We Have to Do for Children's Crèches and Kindergartens]," *Žena danas*, no. 90 (December 1951): 9.

<sup>77</sup> "Izveštaj izvršnog odbora centralnog odbora Antifašističkog fronta žena Jugoslavije na IV kongresu [Report of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Antifascist Women's Front at the Fourth Congress]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 5, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>78</sup> "Aktivnost organizacija AFŽ u 1953. godini [The Activity of the AFŽ organisations in 1953]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>79</sup> Melanie Ilič, "Biding Their Time: Women Workers and the Regulation of Hours of Employment in the 1920s," in *Gender in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Linda Harriet Edmondson (Houndmills; New York, NY: Palgrave; University of Birmingham, 2001), 139–57.

<sup>80</sup> "Predlog o zabrani zaposlenja žena na štetnim poslovima [Proposal to Ban Employment of Women of Harmful Jobs]," January 26, 1951, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>81</sup> This was the 1948 Convention by the International Labour Organisation "Zabeleška sa sastanka Saveza ženskih društava u vezi sa predlogom zabrane noćnog rada žena u industriji [Notes from the Meeting of the Alliance of Women Societies Regarding the Proposal to Ban Nightshift for Women in Industry]," 1955, Collection 142, SSRN, box 73, The Archives of Yugoslavia; "Odluka o zabrani noćnog rada žena zaposlenih

All these directives and decisions hit women hard as these jobs were always better paid. The pattern shows that the majority of women lost their jobs in industries in which women threatened the male workforce. For example, only a few women remained in the construction and mining industry, the cornerstones of Yugoslav industrialisation.<sup>82</sup> Those who were not dismissed had to move to less reputable positions when the ministry marked their jobs as heavy and therefore as potentially hazardous to motherhood. Many of these women actually had no children. However, women remained in these jobs – and night-shifts – in the textile industry, food processing, cleaning services, and other jobs that provided services for the general population. The law specifically exempted these jobs from the ban, a fact which demonstrates that the international convention was just an excuse. There was also no consideration of women's reproductive health when women were volunteering for the People's Front, undertaking very heavy manual jobs. The protective legislation was mostly in effect in situations in which women earned higher salaries, and it started to penetrate prestigious industrial jobs.<sup>83</sup>

Women protested, and sometimes simply refused to move to easier jobs or to day shifts. The reasons they gave for their resistance were numerous. Some women preferred to work during the night so that they could watch their children during the day. They also explained that, due to market shortages, they had to have enough time to buy food in the early morning, when it was available.<sup>84</sup> However, the desire for a higher salary was the most common reason given. Resistance to directives that sought to decrease one's salary was by no means negligible, as even pregnant women in the textile factory *Partizanka* (often praised by the AFŽ as an exemplary firm with many shock-workers) refused to move to lighter and lower paid jobs. The AFŽ also conducted a survey to examine whether women with children would accept a move to part-time work, but they soon discovered that no one would agree if this implied a lower salary and more years to wait until retirement.<sup>85</sup>

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u industriji i građevinarstvu [The Decision to Ban Night Work for Women Employed in Industry and Construction],” February 25, 1956, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 7, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>82</sup> “Informacije o sprovođenju odluka XVI plenuma Centralnog vijeća Saveza sindikata [Information on Implementing the Decisions of the XVI Plenum of the Central Committee of the Unions],” November 18, 1952, Collection 117, Savez sindikata Jugoslavije, box 235, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>83</sup> “Zabeleška sa sastanka Saveza ženskih društava u vezi sa predlogom zabrane noćnog rada žena u industriji.”

<sup>84</sup> Perić, “Materijali o radnoj ženi iz BiH.”

<sup>85</sup> “Aktivnost organizacija AFŽ u 1953. godini”; “Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora

The dismissal of women occurred faster than anyone predicted, and the AFŽ leadership had to react to Tito's interventions. In 1952, Tito published an article in *Komunist*, opposing the 'backward, unsocialist views concerning the abilities and the role of women in society, such as the views that women were only created for the kitchen, raising children and doing domestic chores.'<sup>86</sup> He criticised the fact that the number of women in industry had decreased after 1949 – from a total of 465,166 to 375,166 only two years later. Tito agreed with the removal of women from heavy jobs, but pointed out that more women should be employed in light industry, tourism, and trade, crucially setting a tone which led to the feminisation of these professions.<sup>87</sup> Once again, Tito underlined women's role as mother as being the most honoured task in a socialist community, but for the first time he noted that not all women were mothers, implying that some women should work as well.<sup>88</sup> Vida Tomšič also managed to bring the issue of female employment to the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party, criticising *forces* that had tried to trap women back in the house again. She warned them that there was no turning back, and that female employment was a progressive development.<sup>89</sup> Ranković and other high officials agreed and, after these interventions, the decrease in female employment stopped. However, women had already been removed from the most prestigious industries, and the process of the feminisation of certain professions continued until the end of the socialist period.<sup>90</sup>

At that time, the economy started to recover from the initial shock of the blockade from the East. Employment rates rose again, but in contrast to the period of rapid industrialisation, an increase in women's employment was significantly impeded. For example, in Slovenia, the most industrially developed republic, women constituted 70.2% of all unemployed in 1952. Two years later this figure rose to 77.5% and a year later, to 83.3% in 1955. This demonstrates that men dominated industrial jobs even more than

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SSRNJ.”

<sup>86</sup> Josip Broz Tito, “Borba komunista Jugoslavije za socijalističku demokratiju [Struggle of the Communists of Yugoslavia for Socialist Democracy],” *Komunist*, no. 5–6 (December 1952): 84.

<sup>87</sup> According to the 1953 census, women comprised 64.2% of textile workers, 53.5% of tobacco industry workers, 41.4% of paper industry workers, and 40.1% of rubber industry workers. Considering that women only made up a total of 23.9% of employed workers in all industries, this demonstrates the clear feminisation of these professions. Also, the number of women in trade increased to 31.1%. See: *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*, 86.

<sup>88</sup> Tito, “Borba komunista Jugoslavije za socijalističku demokratiju,” 84.

<sup>89</sup> Tomšič, “Govor na Četvrtom plenumu CK SKJ.”

<sup>90</sup> This phenomenon in late socialism was researched in details in: Milić, *Žene, politika, porodica*.

before.<sup>91</sup> Women were employed more frequently in light industries such as food processing, and clothing production, whilst many found jobs in education and health care. Even then, at certain local Party forums there were communists who suggested that the wives of employed men should not work at all.<sup>92</sup>

When Yugoslavia transitioned from high Stalinism and a period of rapid industrialisation to self-management, the overall tone in the press concerning the imagery of the working class changed as well. Of no less importance was a slow transition from socialist realism that had dominated Yugoslav art, towards less Party control and freer forms of artistic expressions.<sup>93</sup> However, it is important to note nuances in these changes regarding the representation of female workers. Scholars<sup>94</sup> have often overlooked the fact that motherhood and femininity were always underlined, even when the press wrote about women who became stonemasons, tram drivers, or engineers.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, representations of shock-workers did not portray women as asexual,<sup>96</sup> and the models from the Soviet press were not asexual either. One article from the Soviet publication *Pravda*, translated for Yugoslav magazines, is very telling in its approach to the sexualised femininity of notable Soviet women: a journalist who interviewed a successful scientist was afraid that she would be ‘an educated woman, tall, with a somewhat man-like outlook, with energetic and perhaps sharp facial features’. Instead, he was happy when he found a ‘young, elegant, charming woman, with skilfully arranged hair, tastefully dressed. Everything on her was full of female charm – her small, smiling, slanted eyes, voice, and soft

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<sup>91</sup> “Zapisnik seje Komisije za žene pri Predsedstvu SZD Slovenije [Minutes from the Meeting of the Committee for Women in the Presidency of the Alliance of Women Societies of Slovenia],” January 23, 1956, Collection 142, SSRN, box 128, The Archives of Yugoslavia; Furthermore, women searching for a job for the first time made up 71.2% of all first time job seekers, which demonstrates that it was harder for a young woman to find employment: *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*, 99.

<sup>92</sup> “Zapisnik sa sastanka Upravnog odbora Ženskih društava Jugoslavije,” March 6, 1954.

<sup>93</sup> Socialist realism in art meant that artists were expected to produce truthful and historically concrete depictions of social reality in its revolutionary development. The central aim was to educate people in the spirit of socialism, whilst the art had to be accessible to all people. Nikolai Ostrovsky’s novel *How the Steel Was Tempered* was considered a cornerstone of socialist realist literature. See: Dubravka Ugrešić, *Thank You for Not Reading: Essays on Literary Trivia* (Normal, Ill.: Dalkey Archive Press, 2003), 25–26; For an analysis of changes which took place in the cultural scene, see: Carol S. Lilly, “Propaganda to Pornography: Party, Society, and Culture in Postwar Yugoslavia,” in *State-Society Relations in Yugoslavia, 1945 - 1992*, ed. Melissa K. Bokovoy, Jill A. Irvine, and Carol S. Lilly (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 139–62.

<sup>94</sup> For instance see: Jambrešić Kirin, “Žene u formativnom socijalizmu.”

<sup>95</sup> N Nikolić, “Zaslugom naših žena [The Merit of our Women],” *Radnica* 5 (May 1950): 11.

<sup>96</sup> A progressive image of female workers in blue working suits, based on the Soviet models, was not simply replaced with an image of sexually attractive women imported from the West as suggested in: Jambrešić Kirin, “Žene u formativnom socijalizmu.”

movements.<sup>97</sup> Similar patterns existed in all other articles about women who had entered previously male occupations. For notable workers or scientists, the press underlined that these women had not lost their femininity.<sup>98</sup> Motherhood was also often emphasised amongst workers. It was not uncommon to see articles praise Yugoslav female shock-workers, before mentioning that they were also the best mothers. For example, a certain Smiljka was praised for being a shock-worker in the *Prolek* factory in Belgrade, as well as for having the cleanest child in the crèches. She worked eight hours in the factory, and would then work an additional nine hours completing domestic chores and nursing her child. This extraordinary woman would also volunteer for the People's Front, whilst her husband (always referred to as a 'comrade' in such texts) was proud of her because she was 'a good worker, a good mother, and a good comrade'.<sup>99</sup>

A struggle to combine these high expectations regarding work, motherhood and marriage set before women was a central theme in the first Yugoslav film that depicted the working class following the war. In *Priča o fabrici* (Story About a Factory), made in 1949, a female worker named Marija is the main character. Marija is an ordinary textile worker, who, inspired by the movement to increase productivity, decides to try to work on more machines. She is also an active participant in political conferences and events, despite her husband's disapproval. Marija also completes all the domestic chores, with several scenes focused on her washing the laundry and cooking, whilst her husband continues to criticise her for attending political conferences. Just before Marija leaves the house to test out new methods of working on a greater number of machines, she leaves him dinner and a note telling him not to wait up for her. That same night, disappointed in his wife, Marija's husband wanders the streets and gets seduced by a capitalist conspirator's wife (a classic motif in which a woman either assumes a role of being a saintly Madonna – Marija; or a debased prostitute). At the very last moment, Marija's husband realises his mistake and, just before the capitalist conspirator conducts an act of sabotage, he runs to the factory. As he is late, the next scene shows him sitting next to Marija in the hospital, whilst Marija explains that she has to work, that working is the purpose of life, of building socialism, and that her husband has to understand.

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<sup>97</sup> "Žena koja se bori sa bakterijama [A Woman Who Fights Bacteria]," March 8, 1945, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>98</sup> Marks Hildegard, "Marija Kiri-Sklodovska," *Radnica* 2 (February 1949): 12–13.

<sup>99</sup> Divna Nedić, "Moj dom i moja fabrika [My Home and my Factory]," *Radnica* 9 (September 1950): 7.

Herein lies the main difference in representing the working class following the above-mentioned changes. With the introduction of Yugoslav self-management and after the dismissal of many women from industrial jobs, women's magazines simply stopped publishing texts and pictures of notable women as shock-workers, or women conquering new industrial jobs. Challenges were no longer made to working class masculinity, with images of female workers in blue suits with bricks and hammers in their hands.<sup>100</sup> Marija from the film would no longer master multiple machines. The Unions stopped publishing the magazine for employed women, *Radnica*, whilst the Party also shut down certain other republican magazines for women, including *Makedonka*, to the dissatisfaction of many.<sup>101</sup> The AFŽ's central magazine, *Žena danas*, was supposed to fill that void and publish more features about workers, but its focus was on helping employed mothers by providing advice and suggestions to aid them with 'their difficult and responsible duty – the education and upbringing of a new man.'<sup>102</sup>

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Following the end of the Second World War, Yugoslav communists initiated ambitious programmes of industrialisation and electrification, which required the expansion of the tiny pre-war working class. The Marxist ideology behind it promised the emancipation of women following their employment, leading to an unprecedented increase in the number of women in industry. The Communist Party removed legal obstacles for women's education and skills training, and set up campaigns designed to recruit more women in industry, particularly in positions where they could replace the male workforce. The Party's press crafted new images of workers in which women occupied previously closed professions and skilled jobs. Many workers became famous 'labour heroes', achieving fame and monetary benefits. However, the Party never sought to change the perception that motherhood was the most important task for employed women, although the state promised comprehensive welfare services as the chief solution to this conflict between work and motherhood.

Despite official policies and directives, many members of the male working class resisted women's entrance into the workforce on several fronts. The predominantly male

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<sup>100</sup> P, "Prve žene - građevinske poslovođe."

<sup>101</sup> Crvenkovski, "Društveni položaj žene u NRM i rad partiskih i masovnih organizacija."

<sup>102</sup> "Našim čitateljicama [To our Female Readers]," *Žena danas* 79 (January 1951): 0.



Unions obstructed women from obtaining qualifications, which determined pay grades; they were reluctant to promote women as local Union officials and were negligent in monitoring factories and firms for violations of laws and discrimination against female workers. Factory managers, primarily interested in productivity and fulfilling the Plan successfully, often discriminated against pregnant women and women with caregiving responsibilities, whilst tolerating a masculine shop floor culture. The inclusion of women in production was important for the Party ideologically, but such inclusion was always second to its economic need to fulfil the Plan. Consequently, the Party cells interfered only when individual women managed to get their attention. Deeply ingrained attitudes about gender roles in the workplace were left little changed.

The period of openness towards women's employment lasted until 1950 when, due to economic hardship after the conflict with the Soviet Union, the Party had to revise the five-year plan. This was followed by a series of reforms, and the introduction of Yugoslav self-management. Firms and factories had to rationalise their production, and women were laid off from their jobs on a large scale. In particular, women were removed from better-paid industrial jobs deemed heavy or threatening to motherhood. The year of 1950 also marked the further feminisation of lower paid professions in light industry. At the same time, many services, such as kindergartens and crèches, which had been opened to help employed mothers, were closed. Without such promised services, but with the same high level of caring responsibilities and domestic chores expected, women also found themselves excluded from the newly established workers' councils and ruling boards. The change was finally visible in the press as well. Articles on successful women workers and their efforts to conquer new workplaces were replaced with advice on how to finish domestic chores more efficiently, and how to organise an apartment so as to be tasteful and cosy for an employed husband.

## Chapter 4: The Impact of Collectivisation on Yugoslav Gender Relations

‘Frogs croaked around, crickets sang their song, the sky was clear full of stars, whilst in that rural beauty Goja talked in a warm and friendly manner about her dear *Zadruga*, the tractors, the Kolkhoz in the Soviet Union, her peasants, and about those who were not yet members of the *Zadruga*, but who will join it.’<sup>1</sup>

A magazine for women, *Žena danas*, August 1947

This chapter turns attention to the countryside where the Party attempted an ambitious collectivisation of agriculture project and examines the extent to which collectivisation altered gender relations in the Yugoslav countryside. I argue that gender played a significant role in both policy formulation and implementing the collectivisation process, which in turn prompted the AFŽ to develop policies targeting peasant women and existing gender relations. The strategies the AFŽ used to emancipate peasant women and bring socialist modernity to the countryside reveal the presence of a complex and patronising relationship, consisting of tremendous efforts to improve peasants’ living conditions, and to involve them in local decision-making institutions. However, the effects of these policies were considered unsatisfactory, and this led to changes in ideas about gender amongst the AFŽ activists themselves. Following on from these findings, this chapter also examines the impact of collectivisation’s failure, stressing that it resulted in an end to attempts to implement an active politics for changing gender relations in the countryside.

The collectivisation of agriculture was one of the key policies the Yugoslav Communist Party attempted in rural areas following the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> Yugoslav

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<sup>1</sup> Nirvana Bočina Ignjatović, “Brigadirka Đurić Goja [Brigadier Djuric Goja],” *Žena danas* 49 (August 1947): 11.

<sup>2</sup> Yugoslav communist policies regarding peasants have been explored in detail by Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*; Other studies on the Yugoslav countryside include: Vera Gudac-Dodić, *Agrarna politika FNRJ i seljaštvo u Srbiji, 1949-1953* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva : Institut za političke studije, 1999); Ivana Dobrivojević, “Selo i grad : transformacija agrarnog društva Srbije : (1945-1955.)” (Belgrade University, 2011); Isić, “Privatnost na selu”; Momčilo Pavlović, *Srpsko selo : 1945-1952 : otkup* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1997).

communists were inspired by Soviet collectivisation policies, both as a means of increasing the productivity of agriculture, and as a tool designed to bring socialism to the countryside. The ideas entailed in building socialism in the countryside encompassed more than the transformation of the peasant economy, they involved changing people's habits and ways of living in accordance with socialist principles. This also included the imposition of new gender relations on what communists considered to be 'traditional communities'. The gender equality that supposedly existed on Soviet collective farms was held in high regard by leading women in the Yugoslav Communist Party, who hoped that they could implement Soviet models so as to improve the living conditions and social status of Yugoslav peasant women.<sup>3</sup>

The Soviet model for collective farming was discussed in a careful manner. The press regularly disseminated messages on how Soviet agriculture had increased productivity through technical modernisation, and peasants' mastery of these technologies which they acquired. Such advances were considered possible because the means of production had been rendered collective – there was no longer any exploitation by private landowners, and the Soviet state ensured that peasants were always happy and protected. The image portrayed was one of a free peasantry, no longer frightened by nature or capitalist exploitation. In such a utopian system, gender relations reflected socialist principles of equality and mutual respect, and women prospered as well. Soviet women mastered the craft of modern agriculture, learned how to use the new technologies, and improved the living conditions of their households. The *Kolkhoz* was presented as a modern, factory-like, scientific unit. The Yugoslav press did not provide the particulars of such progress and never published any texts about peasants' discontent. Instead, Yugoslav peasants were encouraged to follow the Soviet example through vague references made relating to increased productivity and social prosperity.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, this does not mean that Yugoslav communists did not genuinely believe in the benefits of collectivisation. The collectivisation of agriculture was the only acceptable model with which Yugoslav communists were familiar, some having been acquainted with the model

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<sup>3</sup> "Izveštaj Centralnog odbora AFŽ-a Jugoslavije [Report of the Central Committee of the AFŽ Yugoslavia]," 1947, Collection 142, SSRN, Box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>4</sup> For example: "Sovjetska žena velika snaga [A Soviet Woman – The Great Strength]," *Žena danas* 50 (October 1947): 12–13; "Masovno upoznavanje sovjetskih kolhoznika s agronomskom naukom [Widespread Introduction of the Agronomical Science to the Soviet Kolkhozniks]," *Borba*, February 7, 1949.

through their pre-war education in Moscow, whilst others through directives from the Comintern, or from the self-sovietised style education of new communists both during and after the war, as explained in the first chapter. As Melissa Bokovoy showed, in as early as the 1930s, the Party closely followed the Soviet position regarding peasants and agrarian questions. She argued that the later alliance formed between the Party and peasants was tactical, in which the Party promised agrarian reform in return for the support of the peasantry, whilst always keeping in mind collectivisation as their ultimate, hoped-for goal.<sup>5</sup>

The Yugoslav collectivisation of agriculture was aggressively pursued from early 1949, although the foundations for this process were laid earlier. The Party chose the word *zadruga* (plural *zadruga*) to refer to Soviet-style collective farms, which they described as ‘a voluntary economic organisation consisting of working people’.<sup>6</sup> The term *zadruga* already existed in the Balkans, where it signified an extended family who lived in a collective kind of property, engaged in collective modes of production. Whilst detached from the concept of family, the term *zadruga* was chosen deliberately, so as to be familiar to Yugoslav peasants. However, the system of the original *zadruga* was disintegrating, being considered an exception rather than something standard after the First World War. As Vera St. Erlich explained, the basic principle of a traditional *zadruga* is that male members never leave the common home, whilst daughters leave it to become members of their husband’s *zadruga*. A *zadruga* typically consisted of a hierarchical system with the oldest male at the top of the hierarchy.<sup>7</sup> When Yugoslav communists revived the term, it remarkably demonstrated how a Soviet idea might be adapted to Yugoslav practice – a familiar term associated with a traditional order was given a new meaning.

Nevertheless, Yugoslav communists were careful in their pursuit of collectivisation. Given that they had been supported by the peasants during the war,

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<sup>5</sup> Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> As explained by Edvard Kardelj, “Zemljoradničko zadrugarstvo u planskoj privredi [Agricultural Cooperatives in the Planned Economy],” in *Zbornik materijala o zadrugarstvu FNRJ [Selected Works on Cooperatives in FNRJ]* (Belgrade: Komitet za zadrugarstvo vlade FNRJ, 1948), 5–40; In the Yugoslav case several types of socialist *zadruga* existed. In some cases, peasants converted their own farms into collective *zadruga*, whilst in others the *zadruga* were used to buy collective machines or to distribute goods whilst peasants retained their plots. See Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists* for detailed typology.

<sup>7</sup> Erlich, *Family in Transition : A Study of 300 Yugoslav Villages*, 31–32.

Yugoslav communists fulfilled the promise they made of delivering agrarian reforms – peasants’ debts were cleared, whilst huge agricultural estates were eliminated and shared out amongst peasants without land. However, such harmonious relations between the peasantry and the Party were short-lived, as the Party soon established laws demanding the mandatory requisition of goods with a fixed, low price. The state prescribed these prices and demanded ‘surplus’ goods be sold with the intention of feeding the urban population and the army. Markets in goods were removed, and requisition became the main model of exchange of material goods mediating between the city and the countryside. In exchange for their goods peasants received tokens to buy industrial products at fixed prices. Such policies were highly unpopular amongst the peasantry, prompting the Party to promote a move to collective farms carefully and without aggressive campaigns or coercive methods. The first collective farms consisted of war veterans, widows and colonists who received land which had been nationalised, mostly from the evicted German minority.<sup>8</sup> Despite the government favouring collective farms by offering them cheap credits and raw materials, they remained rare, consisting of around 2.5% of arable fields. Only somewhat later, in early 1949, was there a complete shift in policy – a collectivisation campaign was initiated and the number of collective farms increased to take up around 20% of all arable land by 1951.<sup>9</sup> The collectivisation process alienated the peasantry from the Party and created conflicts in the countryside, whilst the positive economic effects gained were below expectations as agricultural production did not increase. As a result of this, unrest swept through the country. Chaos ensued, resulting in clashes, beatings, torture, and even shootings as peasants were unwilling to hand over their produce, and to join collective farms.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Almost 60% of land distributed in agrarian reform of 1945 was confiscated from German minority. *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*, 109.

<sup>9</sup> Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*; Gudac-Dodić, *Agrarna politika FNRJ i seljaštvo u Srbiji, 1949-1953*, 100–102.

<sup>10</sup> The main disagreement present among scholars relates to the reasons for the Party’s insistence on collectivisation once the conflict with the Soviet Union began in 1948. One group of authors argues that collectivisation was promoted due to a Yugoslav intention to refute Soviet accusations of slow collectivisation and the safeguarding of capitalist relations in the countryside. See: Dennison I. Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment 1948-1974* (Berkeley, CA: Published for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, by the University of California Press, 1977); Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*; Gudac-Dodić, *Agrarna politika FNRJ i seljaštvo u Srbiji, 1949-1953*; Dobrivojević, “Selo i grad: transformacija agrarnog društva Srbije : (1945-1955).”; On the other hand, a few authors have emphasised that economic survival, not only ideology, was the main reason for collectivisation. The Party had already planned to collectivise agriculture so as to increase productivity in the countryside and accumulate the capital needed for industrialisation, but the economic blockade from the Eastern Bloc forced the Party to

Collectivisation affected women alongside men, of course, although scholars have not considered the specific repercussions of collectivisation for women, nor how it may have shaped gender relations. For example, some policies only affected women, since products such as milk, wool or eggs were considered being part of an exclusively female sphere, and many women used to sell them at the market. After the government had removed the market in goods, these women lost their only chance to earn some money independently as these products were collected and sold by collective farms.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, collective farming and an increase in the importance attached to women's labour resulted in an opportunity to revalue women's work and challenge existing patriarchal relations. Rural households were extremely dependent on a female workforce before collectivisation, whilst at the time when the Party started to insist on collectivisation, more men than women had left the countryside to work in industry. In many areas the success of collectivisation (e.g. tobacco production in Montenegro) greatly depended on women collaborating as they were the only workers.<sup>12</sup>

The Party had serious concerns that women might impede the process of collectivisation. Indeed, through gathering information from fragmented reports, it appears that women spearheaded much of the popular resistance both to collectivisation and to the requisition of goods. Resistance tactics ranged from rumours and cover-ups to a variety of passive and active forms of resistance. All over the country many women chose not to cooperate with the government and hid cows, sheep, and their products.<sup>13</sup> There are no exact numbers available concerning women's rebellions, but it is clear that many women were unwilling to join collective farms and were active in protesting against state policies. As women were less likely to be arrested, they sometimes took more prominent roles in articulating opposition. For example, reports suggest that men often pushed women forward so as to speak up against the new policies.<sup>14</sup> These protests were

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abandon its gradualist approach. See: Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*; Tvrtko Jakovina, "Historical Success of Schizophrenic State: Modernisation in Yugoslavia 1945–1974," in *Socialism and Modernity: Art, Culture, Politics 1950-1974*, ed. Ljiljana Kolečnik (Zagreb: Museum of Contemporary Art: Institute of Art History, 2012), 7–43.

<sup>11</sup> "Anketa: žena kao ekonomski faktor na selu [Survey: Woman as an Economic Factor in the Countryside]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>12</sup> "Izveštaj sa puta u Crnu Goru [Report from the Trip to Montenegro]," December 5, 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 12, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>13</sup> For example, the Ministry of Agriculture ordered the AFŽ to help in repurchase of sheep in Serbia, as peasant women were hiding them. See: "Planovi rada propagande sekcije [Plans for the Activities of the Section for Propaganda]," October 25, 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 14, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>14</sup> "Stenografske beleške sa savetovanja od 22. i 23. III 1949 [Proceedings from the Consultations from 22

stronger in areas where the Party had received less support during the war. In some districts of Macedonia, for example, women opposed the formation of new collective farms, whilst in other districts their actions even resulted in the destruction of existing collective farms. Peasant women self-organised and interrupted a conference on collective farming in one Macedonian village, whilst in the Kratovo district, seven collective farms were abolished due to the actions of women there. Party officials were alarmed to find there were public meetings in which local women talked openly against the collective farms, whilst locals were also accused of spreading rumours of famine in nearby villages due to collectivisation, or of claiming that collective farming was against the religion of the Turkish minority.<sup>15</sup> Even women who had joined the collective farms earlier were protesting against and abandoning them. At the Second Plenum of the Communist Party's Central Committee in January 1949, Petar Stambolić - a high-level Party official and president of the Serbian government - was compelled to warn the communist leadership that there were cases in which widows and mothers with children had left collective farms. Interestingly, he attacked the 'speculators' for opting out, but restrained from condemning these women. Instead he blamed the communists for neglecting their duty to help them.<sup>16</sup>

The Party's weak level of organisation in the countryside resulted in its struggling to inform the peasantry and implement their policies, and it was even less successful with peasant women. These failures provoked the Party to instruct the AFŽ to focus all of their activities on the countryside. The AFŽ relied on an extensive network of local activists in rural areas, as well as on the support of the poorest women, who were exempted from the requisitions and who could in fact benefit from joining a collective farm. It was the AFŽ who tried to encourage and help women to participate in building socialism in the countryside, although leading communist women had a slightly different agenda to that of the male leadership.

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and 23 March 1949],” March 22, 1949, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 9, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>15</sup> “Untitled report from the Macedonian AFŽ to the AFŽ's Central Committee,” May 14, 1949, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 6, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>16</sup> Petranović, Končar, and Radonjić, “Drugi Plenum CK KPJ,” 52–53; “Speculators” were often those people who tried to avoid the state's requisition of produce, or to sell their produce in the black market. Sometimes, by “speculators” the Party leadership marked anyone who calculated personal interests against the Party's policies. See: “Propagandno agitacioni rad narodne omladine na selu [Propaganda and Agitation of the People's Youth in the Countryside],” 1949, 2, Collection 114 SSOJ, box 95, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

## Policies Regarding Peasant Women

For leading women in the Party, winning over peasant women to support collectivisation became their imperative, and both the means and end of the collectivisation process. Specific policies were articulated within a gendered language framed in terms of ‘modernisation’, a process which referred to much more than new technology.<sup>17</sup> Following the Soviet model, the Communist Party considered itself to be the vanguard of the working class, whose role was to lead the society forward, and to modernise other groups.<sup>18</sup> In that context, the Party acquired cultural leadership in the production of generalised meanings in the name of the working class. By creating imagined social hierarchy, peasants were at the bottom where they were always viewed as a backward group in all Party reports and documents. Media played crucial role: the term backward, the English translation of *zaostao*, *zaostali* (literally meaning *staying behind*), was the word most commonly used to describe peasants and the countryside in this period. Within this class hierarchy<sup>19</sup>, gender played a prominent role as peasant women were considered to be amongst the lowest in the hierarchy, below men. According to this communist worldview, peasants were lagging behind workers, whilst peasant women were considered even more backward through obstructing and resisting the new, progressive social policies.<sup>20</sup> However, socialist modernity entailed the utopian construction of ‘new people’; it thus intended to transform social groups deemed ‘backward’ so that they could catch up with the working class.

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<sup>17</sup> For Soviet modernism see: Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> This idea was developed in the book *История Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (Большевиков): Краткий курс*, widely read by Yugoslav communists, and lectured in the Party’s political schools. See: “Odluka CK KPJ o Partijskim školama [The Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia Regarding the Party Schools],” 1945, Collection 507, CK SKJ, Ideološka komisija (VIII), box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>19</sup> Just as in the Soviet Union, the Yugoslav communists further categorised peasants into “poor peasants”, “middle peasants” and “kulaks” - the rich peasants. This categorisation played a role in the process of expropriation. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2000), 24.

<sup>20</sup> The press regularly repeated such rhetoric. The example of the AFŽ’s usage of the same notions is: Mitrović, “Uloga i mesto seljanke u rekonstrukciji naše poljoprivrede”; Even in their magazines the AFŽ made sure that articles directed at peasants were simplified, with more illustrations, subtitles and entertainment. “Zapisnik br 2 sa sastanka sekretarijata Centralnog odbora AFŽ Jugoslavije u 1951. godini [Minutes No. 2 from the Meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the AFŽ Yugoslavia in 1951],” January 31, 1951, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 9, The Archives of Yugoslavia.



Of course, the view that the countryside was backward compared to urban areas was not novel or exclusive to the postwar communist discourse. There was a long tradition of imagining peasants as uncivilised *Others*, both amongst scholars and politicians. Scholars explored peasants' customs regarding marriage and family relations, sometimes criticising and sometimes lamenting the rural way of life.<sup>21</sup> Politicians acted similarly, although the Croat Peasant Party based their entire programme on the inclusion of the peasantry into national politics, and became a major force in the interwar Yugoslavia. The basic programme of the Croat Peasant Party demanded economic security and social respect for the peasantry. Nevertheless, the idea remained that the peasantry was unchangeable, or that it should at least remain unchanged to avoid being spoiled by the cities. They insisted that peasants should receive more education, land, and credit, but that ultimately they should remain peasants.<sup>22</sup>

Socialist modernisation, on the other hand, entailed the idea that social roles should change over the course of one's lifetime.<sup>23</sup> Although peasants were marked as backward, the Communist Party saw them as a group with a great potential to change, particularly as many Yugoslav communists had been peasants themselves: the war and the revolution had transformed them into a progressive force. After the war, 'enlightened' party members were obliged to help those 'still living in the dark' with the goal of creating a society founded on equality and labour. Industrialisation and electrification were supposed to facilitate this modernisation as was the 'cultural life' of peasants. Party members were aware that it would take a long time before every village had a road, electricity, and mechanised agriculture, and so they insisted that the membership start the modernisation process immediately by educating peasants.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Lodge, *Peasant Life in Yugoslavia*; On the other hand, Jovan Cvijić wrote about the "charming and cultivated" peasants of the Dinaric type: Jovan Cvijić, "Studies in Yugoslav Psychology (I)," *Slavonic and East European Review* 9, no. 26 (December 1930): 382.

<sup>22</sup> For an overview of the Croat Peasant Party see: Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904-1928* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> There was a similar trend in other Eastern European countries following the war. See: G. M Tamas, "Socialism, Capitalism, and Modernity," *Journal of Democracy* 3, no. 3 (1992): 64; Jeffrey Kopstein, "Ulbricht Embattled: The Quest for Socialist Modernity in the Light of New Sources," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 4 (1994): 597–615.

<sup>24</sup> The term industrialisation was often used interchangeably with the term mechanisation when referring to the countryside. A high AFŽ official Mara Naceva elaborated all these views about peasant women at the AFŽ Congress: Mara Naceva, "Referat na II Kongresu AFŽ [Report at the Second AFŽ Congress]," 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 6, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

The class dimension was strictly gendered and backwardness was a universalising category of disempowerment. Communist leadership considered peasant women in Yugoslavia to have been ‘the most exploited amongst the exploited,’<sup>25</sup> given that they were targeted separately and with a care not accorded to peasant men. To some extent, the ‘backwardness’ of the countryside in general was projected onto women and their neglected households and children. This situation was not unlike what occurred in the Soviet Union, where peasant women had only been referred to in negative terms such as backward, ignorant, superstitious, resistant to change and susceptible to bad influences.<sup>26</sup> The AFŽ leaders and other Party officials always saw peasant women as being a homogenous group with the same problems and interests. They also regarded these women to be the weakest group in the country, devoid of agency and consequently placed under the care of the activists.<sup>27</sup> Only a few women were excluded and beyond redemption, typically women associated with the old order: the rare female kulak and the much more common village folk healer.<sup>28</sup>

By marking peasant women as the most vulnerable group in dire need of help, the new tutelary state gained the legitimacy to launch any political programme deemed necessary. Since the AFŽ activists were considered to be ‘more advanced’, they were called upon to spread their knowledge throughout the countryside.<sup>29</sup> These activists, working amongst such passive, ‘backward’ and ‘primitive’ peasant women found themselves in a powerful position. For the first time they could educate, intervene in people’s lives, implement Party policies, and make decisions in the name of others. Peasant women could become active agents in the construction of socialism once they

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>26</sup> On the Soviet case, see: Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, 28; This image changed in the 1930s, see: Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*; In Yugoslavia: Naceva, “Referat na II Kongresu AFŽ”; Vida Tomšič, “Referat održan na II Plenumu Centralnog odbora AFŽ Jugoslavije [Report at the Second Plenum of the Central Committee of the AFŽ Yugoslavia],” October 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 6, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>27</sup> Olga Kovačić, “O prosvetnom radu medju ženama [On Education of Women],” June 19, 1945, 1, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>28</sup> Kulaks, the main enemy of the Party, were almost invariably portrayed as men. The leading Party economist Boris Kidrič explained that being a kulak was all about social relations and not about the amount of land that one had, because if that were the case there would be no kulaks in Yugoslavia. Kulak was therefore a term interchangeable with any enemy of the Party who opposed communist policies in the countryside. Gudac-Dodić, *Agrarna politika FNRJ i seljaštvo u Srbiji, 1949-1953*, 116; Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*, 90.

<sup>29</sup> Mitrović, “Uloga i mesto seljanke u rekonstrukciji naše poljoprivrede.”

had been helped by the Party and its organisations to become equal members of a community which had accepted socialist modernity.<sup>30</sup>

The priority assigned to collectivisation resulted in the AFŽ playing an important role, and it encouraged its leadership in the hope of exploiting collectivisation so as to speed up changes in gender and family relations in the countryside on the basis of Soviet models. Whilst the rest of the Party insisted on collectivisation as a means of increasing productivity and improving living conditions, the AFŽ leadership considered the institution of *kolkhoz* as key for bringing about women's liberation in the countryside.<sup>31</sup> Numerous articles in the press lauded Soviet women and their work on the collective farms, establishing them as *the* model for Yugoslav peasant women. Maternity and labour rights, educational opportunities and advancement, respect and confidence – all of these attributes were supposedly enjoyed by Soviet women in collective farms and they became key goals for which the AFŽ strived.<sup>32</sup>

The AFŽ activists used translations of Soviet pamphlets and books, which were distributed across the country, as textbooks to be applied in practice.<sup>33</sup> In the countryside, where infrastructure and communications were in a deplorable condition even before the war, any available guidance was valuable. Widespread illiteracy only strengthened the position of those who could read and interpret these texts. One should not underestimate the strong persuasive techniques of the activists who were themselves highly convinced by these ideas, given that they were recent converts to communism. Nevertheless, to ensure that they were properly interpreted, the Party supplied officials with internal documents that explained the basic teachings of Marxism and the party line on contemporary political issues.<sup>34</sup> The AFŽ contributed a set of special booklets designed to help activists understand the new ideology and its policies concerning women. They consisted of texts on Soviet peasants, the position of women in the Soviet Union, and the

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<sup>30</sup> Kovačić, “O prosvetnom radu medju ženama,” 4.

<sup>31</sup> Vida Tomšič, “Rad i zadatak Antifašističkog fronta žena [Work and Task of the Antifascist Women's Front],” *Žena danas* 40 (March 1946): 2–3.

<sup>32</sup> “O kolhozima i životu kolhoznice [About Kolkhoz and the life of a Kolkhoznitsa],” *Žena danas* 38–39 (January 1946): 24–25.

<sup>33</sup> “Izveštaj Glavnog odbora AFŽ za Crnu Goru [Report of the Head Committee of the AFŽ for Montenegro],” February 18, 1947, 2, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 12, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>34</sup> An example of such a document is a thirty-five page explanation of Marxism and current political issues. “Jedinstveni program ideološko-političkog rada u NO Jugoslavije [Unified Programme of the Ideological-Political Work in the NO of Yugoslavia],” 1949, Collection 114 SSOJ, box 96, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

new position of women in Yugoslavia. These texts gave Yugoslav activists an idea of how to shape Yugoslav collective farms on Soviet models.<sup>35</sup>

Following the Soviet model of the *kolkhoznitsa*, the AFŽ tried to create a new image of and discourse for Yugoslav peasant women: that of the successful and equal female collective farmer – *zadrugarka* (plural *zadrugarke*). The image of the *kolkhoznitsa* played an important role in defining a new image more generally for Soviet peasant women during Soviet collectivisation. It was the opposite of the backward *baba*, as in hundreds of thousands of Soviet posters the *kolkhoznitsa* was depicted as a young and vigorous worker who brings modernity to the village.<sup>36</sup> The AFŽ press played an important role in the Yugoslav case, strongly believing that they were creating a new character of peasant woman at the same time.<sup>37</sup> In so doing they were accurately copying the Soviet press, in addition to publishing direct translations about Soviet women in the *kolkhoz*. These Soviet peasant women progressed to become heroines of agricultural labour whilst their success earned them medals and fame around the world. Such texts tackled issues of overcoming existing prejudices regarding women's work and intellect, domestic violence, abuse, and they openly insisted that women could equally be good farmers.<sup>38</sup> Soviet films were also widely utilised. For example, a review of the film *The Great Beginning* – which was about a simple *kolkhoz* woman who defeated all opposition and prejudices to become the chair of a *kolkhoz* and a deputy to the Supreme Soviet – concluded with the sentence that every Yugoslav woman should watch the film in order to better understand herself, become stronger in her work, and gain knowledge of the path towards becoming a new woman of the kind that Tito mentioned.<sup>39</sup>

For peasant women joining a *zadruga* was an opportunity to gain a new identity that had only positive traits in the press. The *zadrugarka* became an advanced woman,

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<sup>35</sup> “Za naše aktiviskinja [For Our Activist Women],” 1947, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 14, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>36</sup> For the Soviet case see: Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*.

<sup>37</sup> For example, one article on the first female director of a collective farm described a woman who was able to organise a collective farm in her village, and at the same time raise four children, sew clothes for them and participate in the Party's course on ruling collective farms. Mila Đorđević, “Borka Trapara,” *Žena danas* 67 (January 1950): 8–9; The same discourse was repeated by activists at the congresses, see: Blaga Poposka, “Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Third AFŽ Congress],” 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>38</sup> “Rad u zajednici put uzdizanja žene seljanke [Collective Work is the Road for Elevation of Peasant Women],” *Žena danas* 49 (August 1947): 16–17; “Sovjetska žena velika snaga.”

<sup>39</sup> Original: “Член правительства”, screened as “Pretstavnik vlasti” in Yugoslavia. See: Vanda Novosel, “Pretstavnik vlasti [A Representative of the Government],” *Žena danas* 48 (June 1947): 18–19.

socialist worker, promoted to the same social status as female workers in the factories. As such she was eligible to become a shock-worker and ‘an innovator’ earning benefits.<sup>40</sup> At the AFŽ congresses, the *zadrugarka* was lauded as an independent woman, working hard to build a better future and happier life. She was contrasted with ordinary peasant women who were unaware of their political rights, economically dependent on their husbands and subjugated in the house. Evoking opposite images to that of the folk healer, the *zadrugarka* shunned ‘superstition, religious fanaticism, and various prejudices,’<sup>41</sup> and she was no longer engaged in a struggle for equality, but was rather living that equality. Furthermore, when a peasant woman joined a *zadruga* and became a ‘cultured’ *zadrugarka*, she was no longer a passive victim. Unlike ordinary peasants, the *zadrugarka* was an active agent of socialism who could fight for her own interests.<sup>42</sup>

Texts regarding Yugoslav peasant women were very similar to those translated from the Soviet magazines although slightly more modest. This modesty related to an imagined hierarchical system in the socialist world. Soviet women were an example to others; they had already achieved socialism in the countryside whilst Yugoslav women still had to learn. Consequently, the press also played a role in discovering and promoting successful Yugoslav collective farmers, who would then lead others on the path to progress. As concerns peasant women, the main strategy was to single out and praise these noteworthy collective farmers. A typical press story would follow the success of a poor peasant woman, downtrodden by the pre-war regime, who then finds new happiness in family life and work in a *zadruga*. Real-life examples of such women were promoted by the AFŽ, who tried to make nationwide dignitaries of them.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Đorđević, “Borka Trapara”; M S, “Anka Iskrić - primeran odgajivač [Anka Iskrić - a Notable Breeder],” *Žena danas* 72 (June 1950): 8.

<sup>41</sup> Poposka, “Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ,” 28.

<sup>42</sup> Bosiljka Krajičić, “Poljoprivredna zadruga ‘AFŽ’ [Agricultural Cooperative AFŽ],” *Žena danas* 41–42 (May 1946): 25.

<sup>43</sup> Successful *zadrugarke* were praised even in magazines published for female workers in industry. For example, a tractor-operator named Danica Kosijer was praised in Radnica, in a full page article with a picture of her operating a tractor. Her biography was a typical success story of that time: she was an illiterate partisan during the war, who then learned to read and write on a short literacy course, and then attended another such course for tractor operators. She fought against the prejudices and suspicion of other peasants, improved her skills and became the best tractor operator in that area. She then became a shock-worker and received a monetary reward. As she was only 22 years old, she was already a Party member and a role model for other *zadrugarke*. Ivanka Balta, “Najbolji traktorista Poljoprivredne mašinske stanice u Belom Manastiru [The Best Tractor-Operator of the Agricultural Machine Station in Beli Manastir],” *Radnica* 6 (June 1949): 14–15.

Indeed, certain women who became notable collective farmers enjoyed opportunities for social mobility and advancement. Examples of such successful women were called to congresses of the AFŽ and other organisations where they gave speeches describing the successes of their *zadruga*. They were promoted in the local AFŽ offices and received opportunities to join other activists in building socialist projects in the countryside.<sup>44</sup> For example Goja Djurić, an illiterate peasant woman from a small Bosnian village named Bukvik, was amongst the first to join a collective farm. She became literate, and her *zadruga* sent her on an agricultural course. She quickly became the best worker, organised a kindergarten, and continued to read about modern agriculture and the Soviet *kolkhoz*.<sup>45</sup> A crucial moment in Goja Djurić's career occurred just a year after the press discovered her achievements, when she delivered a speech at the Second AFŽ congress.<sup>46</sup> Just as with the Soviet heroine Aleksandra Grigoryevna Sokolova from the film *The Great Beginning*, Goja Djurić became a member of the federal parliament. She became a real life embodiment of an imagined Soviet model.

Once the conflict with the Soviet Union had moved beyond the possibility of reconciliation, the Party and its organisations tried to distance themselves from Soviet practices, which were then perceived as a deviation from their 'true' Marxism. The detachment from Soviet practice in the case of collectivisation was, however, only verbal, as collective farms still played an important role model in organising production in the countryside. Texts about Kolkhoz successes disappeared from *Borba* in the spring of 1949. From that time on, Yugoslav collective farms were explained as a form of Lenin's idea of cooperative farms. They were claimed to be unique and very different from their Soviet counterparts, for they were defended as voluntary organisations made by free peasants who were motivated by a desire to undertake political work and be good examples to others.<sup>47</sup> Police records and internal reports showed that this picture could

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<sup>44</sup> See: Kata Cmelik, "Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Third AFŽ Congress]," 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>45</sup> Bočina Ignjatović, "Brigadirka Đurić Goja."

<sup>46</sup> Goja Djurić, "Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Second AFŽ Congress]," 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 2, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>47</sup> Yugoslav peasants had more freedom than their Soviet counterparts. They were allowed to move to the cities, or to leave collective farms after three years if they wished to stay in the countryside. Although the Yugoslav leadership insisted on voluntary accession, Mellisa K. Bokovoy showed that peasants were very often forced into the farms by the Party's rank and file. Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*; For the Soviet case see: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994).

not be further from the truth.<sup>48</sup> Soviet *kolkhoznitsa* was no longer mentioned in the press, but the mechanisms through which the image of the *zadrugarka* functioned remained the same. The success and longevity of the *zadrugarka* model depended on the deeper consolidation of socialism in the countryside.

### **Problems in Strengthening Socialism in the Countryside**

From the perspective of the AFŽ, the collective farm was useful not only in order to rationalise and increase production nor simply as a means of monitoring and controlling the peasantry; it was also a structure that could counteract traditional family and gender relations: on collective farms women's work would be valued equally to men's, women would receive help with childcare provision through collective arrangements and women would administer and even run a farm.<sup>49</sup> It was thus a modernist institution, designed to control the work of the farmers, to measure, rationalise, and increase productivity. At the same time, socialist modernity entailed changes in people's living habits, moral norms and worldviews.<sup>50</sup>

For male peasants, the new socialist mode of work was alien, for they were not used to such measurements and expectations; indeed, they were used to working only around a hundred days per year as reflected in the religious holidays. Women worked all year round.<sup>51</sup> In confronting such practices, the AFŽ seized their chance to redefine gender relations. The AFŽ leaders hoped that if women joined collective farms they would be allowed to earn equal amounts of money to men, and therefore cease to be an unpaid and disempowered workforce in their husbands' households. In theory, the socialist community would protect them from their husband's family, whilst their position would also be protected if they could not work due to illness.<sup>52</sup> This economic

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<sup>48</sup> "Zadaci Narodne omladine u borbi za socijalistički preobražaj sela [The Tasks of the People's Youth in the Struggle for Socialist Transformation of the Countryside]," 1951, Collection 114 SSOJ, box 95, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>49</sup> Djurić, "Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ"; Naceva, "Referat na II Kongresu AFŽ."

<sup>50</sup> Here I follow James C Scott's definition of a high modernist ideology that is based on a strong "self-confidence concerning scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature), and, above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws." James C Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>51</sup> This was argued by several scholars, including: Dobrivojević, "Selo i grad: transformacija agrarnog društva Srbije: (1945-1955.)," 30; Halpern, *Srpsko selo*.

<sup>52</sup> Cvetić, "Žena na selu i njena društvena aktivnost."

independence, participation in a collective mode of production in the countryside, and positive discourses concerning female collective farmers were supposed to bring about a change in relations between men women.<sup>53</sup>

At this point it is crucial to outline the living conditions present in the Yugoslav countryside following the end of the Second World War. The poverty of the Yugoslav countryside was overwhelming, and the problems the peasantry faced were remarkably similar in all regions. The population suffered from various epidemics, the most prevalent being typhus and tuberculosis, compounded by poor levels of hygiene and one of the highest infant mortality rates in Europe. Access to a range of necessary food items or even clean drinking water was a serious problem in many districts all over the country. Another problem was the lack of sanitary facilities and basic furniture whilst in many areas it was common to share the living space with farm animals. Numerous reports pointed to dramatic examples of the prevalence of superstitions and traditions that particularly related to pregnant women and children. This all contributed to one of the lowest life expectancies in Europe. As scholars noticed before the war, domestic violence was widespread, whilst in large portions of the Yugoslav countryside an annual baby was the rule rather than a postwar communist exaggeration.<sup>54</sup> By these standards, only Slovenia and Vojvodina were slightly better than the other regions.<sup>55</sup>

Following the war, the communist government invested a lot of effort in vaccinating the population living in the countryside, seeking to counter the most harmful traditions practices regarding health, and improving access to clean water. Members of the AFŽ played a particular role in carrying out these activities. As explained above, the backwardness of the countryside was often attributed to peasant women, giving activists who worked amongst them more power. Consequently, their efforts increased after the collectivisation process commenced. The AFŽ's Central Committee gave general directives in the press, but local activists had the freedom to try out any form of work they

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<sup>53</sup> As imagined in the AFŽ plan: "Pitanja koja treba da obrade diskusione grupe i koja treba da udju u rezoluciju [Questions that should be Discussed by the Discussion Groups and Which Should Become a Part of the Resolution]," 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>54</sup> See: Lodge, *Peasant Life in Jugoslavia*, 199.

<sup>55</sup> For an overview of living standards in Serbia, see: Dobrivojević, "Selo i grad : transformacija agrarnog društva Srbije : (1945-1955.)"; Many primary sources are available for the entire country. For example, see: "Izveštaj Dr Cvjetanovića [Report of Dr. Cvjetanović]," July 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 8, The Archives of Yugoslavia.



thought suitable, within the ambit of their directives.<sup>56</sup> The AFŽ activists tried to find topics that might interest local women, on the basis of their assumed needs, organising thousands of different courses for women all over the country.<sup>57</sup>

As the Party considered illiteracy to be the main obstacle preventing peasant women from accepting the new ideology and politics, all of the Party's organisations had to organise literacy courses.<sup>58</sup> Quite often, they combined these courses with other activities, such as enlightenment efforts related to motherhood or countering 'female superstitions'. The AFŽ especially insisted on sending female children to schools and in fighting the widespread idea that schools were not for girls. Courses for adults differed from place to place, and hence some women learned how to process olives whilst others learned to operate tractors.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of women learned some kind of craft traditionally considered female. This was less the result of official policy, instead owing to the inadequate level of education which many of the activists themselves had received. Many of the AFŽ's local activities perpetuated existing gender relations and a gendered division of labour. Courses in household economics, hygiene, sewing, and food preparation targeted women alone. This was not seen to contradict the official policy of gender equality, as the AFŽ supported any activities that would make women's life easier.<sup>60</sup>

Besides courses, activists made use of reading groups to maintain communications with peasant women. Although they would meet less frequently than in the cities, the reading groups were important gatherings at which women would read and discuss contemporary issues with a teacher. These meetings usually lasted for one hour during which they read a range of materials, from popular scientific literature to political

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<sup>56</sup> "Zapisnik br 26 sekretarijata Centralnog odbora AFŽ-a Jugoslavije u 1950. godini [Minutes No. 26 of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the AFŽ Yugoslavia in 1950]," September 19, 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 9, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>57</sup> "Prilog Br. 5 [Appendix Nr. 5]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 4, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>58</sup> Vanda Novosel, "Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Second AFŽ Congress]," 1948, 8, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 2, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>59</sup> "Izveštaj glavnog odbora AFŽ-a Bosne i Hercegovine [Report of the Head Committee of the AFŽ of Bosnia and Hercegovina]," 1947, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 2, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>60</sup> These courses were widespread. From the beginning of the 1950s the Party planned to switch to a more comprehensive education programme for the rural population. Courses were to be transformed into continual schools for rural youth, with the main intention being that they accept new "scientific methods in agriculture". Rato Dugonjić, "Diskusija [A Discussion]," 1952, Collection 114 SSOJ, box 95, The Archives of Yugoslavia; "Zaključci sa sastanka grupe za domaćinstvo [Conclusions of the Meeting of the Group for Household Economics]," January 18, 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

articles from newspapers. For many women this important social and educational activity was their only chance to escape from their daily chores and work in the field.<sup>61</sup>

Following the Soviet model, once peasant women had been ‘elevated’ to the necessary ‘cultural’ level of being educated in socialist ideas, the AFŽ strongly insisted on promoting them to positions in the People’s Councils – the local ruling bodies – and giving them ruling posts on their collective farms.<sup>62</sup> However, this process was much harder than that depicted by the Soviet press. Despite accounting for the majority of workers in many collective farms, women rarely occupied any positions of responsibility. Goja Djurić was the exception, rather than the rule. Many internal reports describe how women struggled to enter the governing bodies of farms all over the country. Even in the most publicly praised, exemplary farms, they constituted a small minority. When the AFŽ activists intervened, they were met with angry responses from men who justified themselves by saying that they had simply forgotten to nominate women.<sup>63</sup> Women’s advice and their suggestions were often easily dismissed, and even women who were elected onto farm councils were afraid of speaking up and thus had little power in decision making. Those who tried were often prevented from making any suggestions.<sup>64</sup> The situation was grim all over the country, whilst in Montenegro no women occupied any of the presiding posts on collective farms in 1950. In one case, the head of the farm was a man whilst all the workers were women.<sup>65</sup> Another problem was that young women who had been politically active prior to their marriage were often not supported by their husbands in their efforts to obtain administrative posts again.<sup>66</sup> These problems alarmed Vida Tomšič, who became afraid that such ‘patriarchal relations in society and the family’

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<sup>61</sup> “Untitled report from the Macedonian AFŽ to the AFŽ’s Central Committee”; “Upustvo o sprovođenju okvirnih programa za ideološko-vaspitni rad u masovnim organizacijama [Guideline for Implementing General Programmes for Ideological-Educational Work in Mass Organisations],” 1949, Collection 507, CK SKJ, Ideološka komisija (VIII), box 2, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>62</sup> Being elected in a local People’s Council also meant potential influence over collective farming in that location

<sup>63</sup> “Zapisnik sa sastanka predstavnika zadruga [Minutes from the Meeting with the Representatives of the Zadruga],” December 9, 1947, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 9, The Archives of Yugoslavia; “Izveštaj ekipe koja je obradila teren sreza titogradskog [Report from a Team that Worked in the Area of Titograd],” July 15, 1952, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 12, The Archives of Yugoslavia; “Materijal za referat IV Kongresa AFŽ Jugoslavije.”

<sup>64</sup> “Izveštaj o nekim organizacionim pitanjima i formama rada organizacije AFŽ Hrvatske [Report about some Organisational Problems and Methods of Work of the Organisation AFŽ in Croatia],” 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia; “O radu među ženama na selu.”

<sup>65</sup> “Izveštaj sa puta u Crnu Goru.”

<sup>66</sup> “Izveštaj ekipe koja je obradila teren sreza titogradskog.”

would call into question the whole socialist project. She accused the local communists of losing the political 'élan' that had existed immediately after the war and called for them to combat traditional family structures.<sup>67</sup>

The AFŽ leadership considered such traditional family structures to be important obstacles preventing the greater inclusion of women in governing bodies of collective farms. They were convinced that family relations were old-fashioned and in dire need of change. This spurred the AFŽ to form an internal Committee for 'Family Relations in the Countryside'. The committee proved to be mostly powerless: it simply observed and wrote reports that warned against practices forbidden by law but still practised in many areas, such as underage marriages, the exclusion of women from inheritance laws, and bride-selling. Although collective farms offered an opportunity for a break with such practices in the countryside, there is no indication that women's position in the family improved after they had joined collective farms.<sup>68</sup> Domestic violence was still a serious problem. The dominant view - that a woman should be subordinate and that her duty was to obey - remained unchanged and women rarely sued their husbands for violence against them. Cases of domestic abuse were not brought before the courts or to meetings of collective farmers, particularly given that these women had no prospect of leaving their husbands. Despite the collectivisation process, families still kept their family houses, which were most often owned by the husband or his family. The situation concerning the inheritance rights of female children was similar.<sup>69</sup> The idea that these problems could be solved through collective ownership of the land did not work in practice. As one report concluded, cases in which women legally disavowed their own inheritance in favour of their brothers were common practice. The AFŽ hoped that with a firm hand from the Party, the *zadruga* would be able to force men to pay alimony, to respect women's domestic chores, and to fairly divide up property acquired together over the course of their marriage. However, contrary to the wishes of the AFŽ, the government was much

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<sup>67</sup> Tomšič, "Mesto i uloga ženskih organizacija u današnjoj etapi razvitka socijalističkih društvenih odnosa."

<sup>68</sup> Božinović, "Izveštaj o radu komisije za porodične odnose na selu."

<sup>69</sup> Ideally, collective farms were designed to care for homeless children, illegitimate children and children of divorced parents as well. In 1953 the AFŽ concluded that in many villages there were abandoned children, popularly known as "servants" without any rights. Some of them were not even registered as having been born, for their parents wanted to exclude them from inheriting money, possessions or property. See: Cvetić, "Žena na selu i njena društvena aktivnost."

less determined to intervene unless the cases were brought to the courts. Consequently, these practices often remained unchanged.<sup>70</sup>

The work of farmers on the collective farms and their valuation of that work was the primary area in which the AFŽ met resistance on the ground. Different AFŽ teams described the same situation all over the country: just as before having joined the *zadruga*, women were doing all the jobs in the household and in the field, typically from twelve to fifteen hours every day.<sup>71</sup> Yet despite its prevalence, female labour was not equally valued by the community. Women often had fewer recognised work days (*trudodan*) than men, upon which they depended for the further distribution of goods or tokens on the farm.<sup>72</sup> As they were in the minority or sometimes completely excluded from decision making, women produced more food but received fewer benefits. As there were almost no cases in which men constituted the majority of the workforce on the collective farms, the leading AFŽ officials interpreted this gender imbalance in payments as a deeply rooted problem – a form of long-standing discrimination against women.<sup>73</sup> Ironically, when collective farms were called upon to rationalise their modes of production in the early 1950s, many women were told to leave by the governing boards so that a head of the household (i.e. man) could remain. The AFŽ activists protested that men were protected since men were governing the collective farms, and they protected other men who were less productive than women.<sup>74</sup> Reluctantly, some reports even noted that for some

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<sup>70</sup> Domestic violence was very widespread. One AFŽ team noted that in the Montenegro district of Titograd (now Podgorica), “it was common that a husband beats his wife, if not he is considered soft.” See: “Izveštaj ekipe koja je obradila teren sreza titogradskog”; For a detailed report on family relations in the countryside: “Imovinski odnosi u Braku - NR Srbija”; Also see: Cvetić, “Žena na selu i njena društvena aktivnost,” 57.

<sup>71</sup> Poposka, “Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ”; “Anketa: žena kao ekonomski faktor na selu.”

<sup>72</sup> Young people were in a similar position: regardless of the work they did, senior members of the farms were making the important decisions and controlling the distribution of goods. “Seoska omladina od zajedničkog kongresa SKOJ-a i Narodne omladine do danas [Rural Youth Since the Joint Congress of the SKOJ and People’s Youth Until Today],” 1953, Collection 114 SSOJ, box 95, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>73</sup> “Žena u poljoprivrednoj proizvodnji i zadrugama [Women in the Agricultural Production and the Zadruga],” 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>74</sup> The changes made included altering the *zadruga* so that they had to operate according to basic management and accounting norms. The Party leadership recommended abolishing the brigade system, and introducing cost accounting. In practice, this meant that individual peasants completed certain tasks instead of the brigades of women, and individual peasants were paid according to their expertise and available resources. Such a system decreased the chances of women being paid properly, as individual women had less prospects of fighting over resources with the men-dominated boards and directors. Also, women’s expertise was often considered to be at a lower level to that of men’s. Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*, 143–44; Notable AFŽ activists protested against such policies: Milka Kufrin, “Izveštaj o radu komisije po pitanju učešća žena sela u poljoprivrednoj proizvodnji [Report about the Activities of the Committee for Participation of Peasant Women in Agricultural Production],” 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 5, The Archives of Yugoslavia; Nada Sremac, “Govor na IV Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Fourth Congress of the

women, the situation was better on private farms, despite the presence of heavily criticised ‘traditional’ family relations.<sup>75</sup>

Women’s lives were not improved by the newly promised services, which never materialised. Initial high hopes and enthusiasm were met with extensive poverty and a lack of resources, whilst collective services depended on individual women’s abilities to fight for and organise such services themselves. In theory, the *zadruga* was supposed to make all services available that were supposedly offered to urban workers. Cooking, cleaning, and child care were to be collectivised.<sup>76</sup> However, due to the rapidity of the collectivisation process, the state struggled to provide resources for basic buildings such as the central offices of the collective farms (*Zadružni dom*).<sup>77</sup> Other promised services relating to health and hygiene failed to materialise as well. In an ideal situation, all the female members of each *zadruga* would have access to a gynaecologist and a paediatrician. The AFŽ committed itself to realising this daunting task, but in a country faced with a severe shortage of medical staff, specialists and general practitioners were extremely rare outside of the cities. The *zadruga* would be visited by a doctor only during health campaigns. Pregnant women still worked until the day they gave birth, and those who were sick were not spared from work either. Unsurprisingly, miscarriages frequently occurred.<sup>78</sup>

The AFŽ tried their hardest to solve the problem of inadequate service provision, but they often lacked support from the male ruling bodies of the *zadruga*, and from the state. Men were not the only obstacle: many women were unwilling to leave their children in the crèches or were generally distrustful of collective farms and their services. Cases were common in which women wanted to keep their children with them whilst working in the field, a problem several internal reports discussed.<sup>79</sup> These women were described

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AFŽ],” 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 5, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>75</sup> “Stenografske beleške sastanka izvršnog odbora Centralnog odbora Antifašističkog fronta žena Jugoslavije,” 56.

<sup>76</sup> However, it was clear from the plans that individual women were to cook and clean for all. This was also the case with collective bathhouses, where women were placed in charge of hygiene. “Zaključci sa sastanka grupe za domaćinstvo.”

<sup>77</sup> N Vujanović, “O nekim iskustvima i problemima seljačkih radnih zadruga u Crnoj Gori [On Some Experiences and Problems of the Peasant Work Cooperatives in Montenegro],” *Borba*, November 19, 1949.

<sup>78</sup> Lidija Jovanović, “Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Third AFŽ Congress],” 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia; “Imovinski odnosi u Braku - NR Srbija”; “Seljačka žena kao ekonomski faktor [A Peasant Woman as an Economic Factor],” 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>79</sup> “Izveštaj sa puta u Sloveniju od 19 do 26 maja 1950 godine [Report from the Trip to Slovenia between

as ‘backward’ and their concerns disregarded, highlighting broader features of the AFŽ’s inability to alter rural life. Nevertheless, some collective farms did have a kindergarten, although problems were frequently experienced with poor hygiene and incompetent nurses.<sup>80</sup> The AFŽ organised large courses for teachers in the *zadruga*’s kindergartens, but these courses were poorly financed and the programme uncoordinated, whilst various ministries were unwilling to participate.<sup>81</sup> The government did not prioritise this question, and outside of the AFŽ, no one was interested in lecturing. Textbooks were scarce, and the programme was largely theoretical with little practical guidance, whilst many who enrolled were barely literate. The AFŽ even struggled to find available and appropriate rooms for the courses.<sup>82</sup> Despite all these difficulties, thousands of women passed the courses and were qualified to open kindergartens in their villages. They were also expected to be an additional force for the promotion of socialism in the countryside, but the effects of their efforts were marginal.<sup>83</sup>

The AFŽ leaders and its activists were well aware that the high ideals presented in the press did not correspond to the daily realities of the collective farms. They found themselves in a difficult situation as they had to promote an image of an idealised socialist farming community whilst still pressing for more ‘educational’ work and better conditions. The AFŽ leader Vida Tomšič explained that the revolution had removed many political, social, and economic differences between men and women, but that people’s mind-sets still had to be changed. The experience of collectivisation had taught them that old habits cannot change through drawing up new laws and publishing positive articles in the press, without stronger support from male communists.<sup>84</sup> The *zadrugarke* were struggling, but the AFŽ was not given more time to help them. Despite high levels of

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19 and 26 May 1950],” June 1, 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 12, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>80</sup> “Bilten br. 5 Komisije za selo CK KPJ [Bulletin No. 5 of the Committee for the Countryside of the CK KPJ],” December 22, 1949, 11, Collection 114 SSOJ, box 96, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>81</sup> In 1950 around 1700 women enrolled on the courses: “Zapisnik br 12 sekretarijata Centralnog odbora AFŽ-a Jugoslavije u 1950. godini [Minutes No. 12 of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the AFŽ Yugoslavia in 1950],” April 14, 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 9, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>82</sup> “Zapisnik sa sastanka održanog u Centralnom odboru AFŽ Jugoslavije po pitanju otvaranja sezonskih obdaništa u seljaskim radnim zadrugama. [Minutes from the Meeting Held in the Central Committee of the AFŽ Yugoslavia Regarding the Opening of Sessional Kindergartens in the Peasant Work Cooperative],” October 7, 1949, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>83</sup> “Zapisnik br 12 sekretarijata Centralnog odbora AFŽ-a Jugoslavije u 1950. godini.”

<sup>84</sup> Vida Tomšič, “Žene Jugoslavije u borbi za izgradnju svoje socijalističke zemlje i za mir u svijetu [Women of Yugoslavia in the Struggle for the Construction of Their Own Socialist Country and for Peace in the World],” 1950, 24, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

enthusiasm, radically changing rural life in just a few years proved to be an impossible goal.

### **The Failure of Collectivisation and the Shift in Gender Politics**

The sweeping collectivisation ceased in 1950 when the Party decided that it was time to strengthen the existing collective farms. By the end of 1951 over two million peasants were collective farmers, yet many had already appealed to the government for permission to leave. In 1951 the requisition policy was also eased, and in 1952 it was abolished for grains. One year later, the Party finally allowed the dissolution of collective farms, a right that many peasants made use of to quick effect. By the end of 1953 the number of collective farms was again at its 1948 level – the time before the aggressive collectivisation campaign had begun.<sup>85</sup>

The aggressive pursuit of collectivisation was abolished for economic and political reasons, but the AFŽ leadership disagreed with the new policies. Despite all the countryside problems left unsolved or exacerbated by collectivisation, many in the AFŽ still believed that collective farms provided the best framework for peasant women. The collective farm as an ideal model for the improvement of women's position in society continued to dominate until the very end of the AFŽ's existence. In 1953 leading AFŽ figures still claimed that the individual ownership of land was the social foundation of the unequal and humiliating position of women.<sup>86</sup> These distinct ideals highlight differences in priorities between the AFŽ and the Party on a more general level. For example, the Party's main newspaper *Borba* regularly wrote about collective farms, but insisted on their productivity. On the other hand, the AFŽ's magazines focused on social changes brought about by collectivisation.<sup>87</sup>

The effects of the collective farms on gender relations proved disappointing for the leadership of the AFŽ. Key factors which resulted in the failure of the AFŽ to improve the lives of many peasant women included both the limited state resources they received and resistance on the part of many local communities. A large number of peasants viewed

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<sup>85</sup> Gudac-Dodić, *Agrarna politika FNRJ i seljaštvo u Srbiji, 1949-1953*, 125–33.

<sup>86</sup> Cvetić, "Žena na selu i njena društvena aktivnost," 53.

<sup>87</sup> S Mihaljić, "Veliki rezultati u socijalističkom preobražaju sela [Great Results in Socialist Transformation of the Countryside]," *Borba*, October 1, 1949.

the *zadruga* as a usurpation of their autonomy and not as a path to a better life.<sup>88</sup> Several very detailed reports from 1953 indicate that the Yugoslav countryside barely changed over the collectivisation period. Living conditions were unaltered, whilst family relations and women's status were affected only superficially by the new legislation. The socialist family was not established; domestic violence remained rife; and many married women were still often subjugated to the demands of their husband's relatives – especially to their mother-in-law.<sup>89</sup> When the committee asked one Party member why he beat his wife, he unconcernedly answered: 'whose wife am I going to beat if not mine?'<sup>90</sup>

The end of collectivisation, its insignificant influence on social relations in the countryside and the end of professional work undertaken by female activists there, compelled the AFŽ to shift its critique onto men and *their* backwardness, rather than on peasant women as before.<sup>91</sup> The main reason for this was their experience in the field, where they had not always been welcomed by local communities and had often put up with a significant lack of support from many local male communists. Consequently, the activists often saw peasant women as being more accepting of the values of socialist modernity than men, and even as more willing to take the initiative. As a result of men's resistance, however, women's intentions and ideas often remained as words only.<sup>92</sup> The last AFŽ congress evocatively illustrated the bitterness of the AFŽ leadership and activists, as they seized the opportunity to accuse men of holding all the leading positions and of deliberately excluding women.<sup>93</sup> Even in the official papers compiled for the Congress – distributed amongst the membership – rural communists were blamed for their 'incorrect stance' towards women.<sup>94</sup> Vida Tomšič blamed the state for failing to implement the necessary changes required for the improvement of peasants' lives. Although she was pleased with the new laws, she criticised the government for not improving the economic life of peasants and for failing to increase their political engagement or create equal opportunities for women's advancement. Tomšič vehemently

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<sup>88</sup> As argued by Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists*, 124.

<sup>89</sup> "Položaj žene seljanki u Hrvatskoj [The Position of a Peasant Woman in Croatia]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>90</sup> See: "Imovinski odnosi u Braku - NR Srbija," 4.

<sup>91</sup> "Politički deo [Political Part]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 4, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>92</sup> "Seljačka žena kao ekonomski faktor," 12.

<sup>93</sup> Sremac, "Govor na IV Kongresu AFŽ."

<sup>94</sup> "Žena kao ekonomski faktor na selu u NR Srbiji [Woman as an Economic Factor in the Countryside in Serbia]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.



criticised the failure to introduce quality services designed to help women overburdened with maternity and work, whilst she was also bitter about the slow pace of change regarding moral norms.<sup>95</sup>

A strong belief in the collective farms and in collective living was reiterated at the last AFŽ congress at which the organisation was abolished. Successful collective farms were still utilised as an example of women's progress.<sup>96</sup> However, once collectivisation had been abolished, the AFŽ did not offer any other model that would revolutionise rural life, nor were they asked to provide one by the Party. At the final AFŽ congress, the leading party politician Milovan Djilas did not mention the collectivisation process in the countryside. Instead he focused on demands to put an end to the political separation of women and he announced the dissolution of the AFŽ. Work with peasant women was subsequently left to amateur and decentralised women societies.<sup>97</sup>

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The aggressive collectivisation campaign which began in 1948 provided the Party's women section with a new role that focused on encouraging rural women to join collective farms. These farms were conceived, in turn, as an ideal structure through which existing gender relations in the countryside could be changed. Praising Soviet models of collective farms and the role of the *kolkhoznitsa*, the AFŽ hoped to implement similar measures that would protect maternity and labour rights, but also generate new images of peasant women as both a force for and product of socialist modernity. Collectivisation opened up new possibilities for peasants, allowing them to discard long-standing stereotypes which the government had perpetuated. The *zadrugarka*, a female collective farmer, was presented as a new, modern socialist woman who, like their female counterparts in the cities, would enjoy both socialist equality and the respect of the community.

Few peasant women made use of this opportunity for social mobility, and the AFŽ activists soon realised that changing gender relations in the countryside required more than printing and distributing newspaper texts and forcing peasants to work on collective

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<sup>95</sup> Tomšič, "Mesto i uloga ženskih organizacija u današnjoj etapi razvitka socijalističkih društvenih odnosa," 18–19.

<sup>96</sup> Sremac, "Govor na IV Kongresu AFŽ."

<sup>97</sup> Djilas, "Govor na IV Kongresu AFŽ," 5.

farms. The AFŽ's attempts to revalue women's work in the countryside proved particularly unsuccessful as the reality of life on collective farms entailed women working more than men, whilst simultaneously being excluded from decision making or even the basic sharing of resources. The activists reported problems and a lack of support from male communists everywhere they went, which resulted in very low numbers of elected female candidates. Furthermore, attempts to create services that would help women whilst they worked were employed to little avail; the unwillingness of governing bodies to allocate scarce resources for such services undermined the AFŽ's plans to organise kindergartens, cooking and laundry services. In the majority of cases, the new collective farms can be understood to have been a new form of production that did not fundamentally change gender relations.

In the early 1950s, the Party abandoned forced collectivisation due to resistance and the poor performance of many collective farms, whilst a great deal of peasants left. In contrast to the Soviet Union, Yugoslav peasant culture won over new state policies in an attempt to preserve the status quo. However, the AFŽ continued to view collective farms as a vehicle for the personal emancipation and economic independence of women in the countryside, and it never identified an acceptable alternative model for countryside production prior to its abolition in 1953. Although the organisation blamed men for the many failures of the collective farms, conflicts between local AFŽ activists and male communists were never mentioned as a reason for the AFŽ's closure; Party officials simply insisted that women and men had to work together and that no separate women's section was needed. Once the AFŽ was abolished, emancipation of peasants was left to the Red Cross and the decentralised and scattered women's societies that lacked the resources of a mass organisation such as the AFŽ. In many rural areas this meant the end of the communists' attempt to change their way of living and gender relations.

## Chapter 5: The Veil Lifting Campaign

A Muslim wife, ‘buried alive behind the veil, (...) prisoner and slave rather than (...) companion and helpmeet.’ – British missionary-school teachers in 1907.<sup>1</sup>

‘The woman within her family is considered a slave, her husband is the lord of all things, he decides everything and jeers at her.’ – A Soviet ethnographer in 1927.<sup>2</sup>

‘Behind the veil lay our political backwardness, behind the veil lay the illiteracy of the Muslim women, behind the veil lay the hard, slavish life of an unequal woman in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is why the Muslim women of Bosnia and Herzegovina are lifting their veils today.’ A Yugoslav activist in 1950.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter turns to consider the policies of the Yugoslav Communist Party towards Muslim women as they were targeted by a specific set of actions not applied to other groups. It draws on the discussion in the previous chapter concerning the concept of ‘backwardness,’ ever present in Yugoslav society. Arguably, it provided the communist government and its activists with tools for making radical interventions into the lives of Muslim women, which culminated with the veil<sup>4</sup> lifting campaign. This chapter revisits the differences surrounding the marking of Muslim women as backward compared with other women, and correlates this with their religion. Yugoslav communists found inspiration for such policies in the Soviet Union, although the aggressive veil lifting campaign started after the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict which shows that the influences of Soviet ideas remained strong. Yugoslav and Soviet rhetoric and policies had many similarities, but the Yugoslav unveiling campaign was different in several key aspects, and ultimately in its results. In examining the particularities of the

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in: Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 154.

<sup>2</sup> As quoted in Adrienne Edgar, “Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet ‘Emancipation’ of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective,” *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (July 1, 2006): 256.

<sup>3</sup> Dušanka Kovačević, “Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Third AFŽ Congress],” 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>4</sup> The veil in Yugoslavia was called *feredža* and, together with *zar*, it meant both face and head covering. In Bosnia and Sandžak it was often light in colour, frequently pink or blue. In Southern Serbia and Macedonia it was always dark, often black. See: Lodge, *Peasant Life in Jugoslavia*, 285–86.

Yugoslav case, this chapter will tackle the positioning of the Muslim community leadership who supported the new measures, the fervent attempts of activists to ‘modernise’ and unveil Muslim women and, ultimately, the severe punishments imposed by the legislators. All these factors contributed to the removal of veils from public space, forcing many women and men into an uncomfortable position. For the government, this campaign was considered an important success in penetrating communities previously closed to them, and imposing socialist modernisation and new gender relations.

### **The Idea of ‘Backward’ Muslim Women**

After the war, the new communist government established a cultural hierarchy by classifying different groups of the population in terms of how ‘advanced’ or ‘backward’ they were. As I argued in the previous chapter regarding the peasantry, the criteria for belonging to some of these groups was not always clear but, by controlling the available media, the Yugoslav Communist Party possessed the conceptual and rhetorical hegemony in deciding who was ‘modern’. In this unequal relationship between social groups, the discourse of ‘backwardness’ was all-encompassing in Yugoslav society: fostered by political leaders and activists, it was commonly used to describe the peasantry, and also the Muslim population. Belonging to these groups was always collectively understood, and once they had been marked as ‘backward,’ that adjective was employed to justify any action by the government.<sup>5</sup>

Amongst those seen as ‘backward,’ a further social hierarchy was present in which Yugoslav communists considered Muslim women to be ‘the most backward’ group in the country. They were seen as the victims of unfavourable social conditions, family relations rooted within the Muslim population’s traditions, and ‘backward’ religious practices.<sup>6</sup> Their ‘backwardness’ was seen as worse than that of other women (e.g. women living in rural areas), because the traditions of the Muslim population were deemed as foreign, timeless, and associated with the Ottoman past, which was viewed as part of the ‘inferior’ and oriental ‘East’.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, only Muslim women were defined by their religion, as

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<sup>5</sup> Articles on “backward” Muslim women can be found in almost every Yugoslav magazine, particularly those published by the AFŽ. For example: “Provodićemo u život zadatke Petog kongresa naše Partije [We Will Put in Practice the Tasks of the Fifth Congress of Our Party],” *Radnica* 3 (October 1948): 1–3.

<sup>6</sup> Babović, “Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ”; Novosel, “Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ”; Additionally in the reports: “Izveštaj ekipe koja je obradila teren sreza titogradskog.”

<sup>7</sup> Zehira Mindović, “Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Third AFŽ Congress],” 1950, 10, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

the press always talked about ‘*muslimanke*’ (Muslim women), whilst the expression ‘*hrišćanke*’ (Christian women) was never used to describe other women.<sup>8</sup> Peasant women were also often criticised for their religiosity (and they were thought to be more religious than men), or superstitions, but they were still defined by their poverty and living conditions, not their religion.<sup>9</sup> Being described in terms of one’s religion had very negative connotations, but the newspapers also used this description when reporting on Muslim women who had managed to climb the social hierarchy, becoming highly regarded workers in the factories. In such articles, their Islamic faith was used to show that these women had succeeded in the factories *despite* their religion and background. The religious background of other workers was never mentioned.<sup>10</sup>

Compared to other groups in the countryside, certain ‘backward’ practices were more often considered a part of Muslim religious traditions, although such practices were certainly not restricted to Muslims. For example, the press frequently mentioned underage marriages, the abduction of women, a bride wealth system (which was viewed as selling women), the use of veils, and polygamy. However, apart from the use of veils and polygamy, the other practices could be found elsewhere in the countryside.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the ‘backwardness’ of Muslim families was no different to that of any other family in the Yugoslav countryside: the majority of families consisted of a patrilineal social structure in which sons were considered to be more important, as they brought wives and future children to the family, which were valuable resources for the household labour pool. There were no veils, but many Christian peasant women wore headscarves, and had similar notions of shame and respect for male seniority. Communist leaders were uncertain as to how widespread polygamy was, but any cases discovered were publicised to prove a point. Furthermore, the new legislation after the war barely penetrated any communities’ practices.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This was the case in all regions, and at this point it was not connected with the later recognition of Muslims as a nation in Bosnia.

<sup>9</sup> For example: Đuro Pucar-Stari, “Govor na Drugom kongresu Antifašističkog fronta žena Bosne i Hercegovine [Speech at the Second Congress of the Antifascist Front of Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina],” July 12, 1947, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 35, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>10</sup> The article “Među najboljima [Amongst the Best],” *Radnica* 4 (April 1950): 7–8, is a great example as it reported on the best female workers in the country. It described their lives and only emphasised the religious background of the one Muslim woman it featured.

<sup>11</sup> Most of the Muslims had one wife even before the war. Lodge’s informants in 1940 said that only the rich could afford more than one. See: Lodge, *Peasant Life in Yugoslavia*, 192.

<sup>12</sup> On the “backwardness” of the Yugoslav countryside: Kovačić, “O prosvetnom radu medju ženama”;

Once the idea of ‘backwardness’ had become an official state-sanctioned category, as explained by Adeeb Khalid when describing a similar case in the Soviet Union, it brought with it both stigma and possible rewards – both for the entire community and for individuals who managed to use this concept to facilitate their own social mobility.<sup>13</sup> The discourse of backwardness was a crucial component to many subsequent policies that directly influenced the lives of many Muslim women. The reasoning was that, if Muslim communities *required* the Party’s help to get out of their impoverished position, then Muslim women in particular needed a much deeper intervention. This idea was part of the Yugoslav Communist Party’s modernist quest, finding inspiration primarily from the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, such an intervention opened a space for those willing to cooperate with the new regime to advance their careers, achieving posts that had previously been unobtainable.

### **Models for Yugoslav Policies**

Yugoslav views concerning Muslim women were not unique. Strong resemblances were present in Soviet activists’ discourses in Central Asia, and also in the writings of British rulers in the Middle East, in Kemalist Turkey, in Reza Shah’s Iran, and in socialist Bulgaria. Muslim women were commonly described as ‘buried alive behind the veil’, as ‘slaves’, and as ‘their father’s property’ in all these regions.<sup>15</sup> Scholars have yet to examine how such ideas travelled from one place to another. It seems that the

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“Referat o razvoju AFŽ u Makedoniji na plenarnom sastanku Glavnog odbora AFŽ Makedonije [Report on the Development of the AFŽ in Macedonia at the Plenary Meeting of the Head Committee of the AFŽ Macedonia],” April 9, 1946, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 36, The Archives of Yugoslavia; “Zaključci savetovanja sekretara i članova sekretarijata Glavnih odbora Narodne omladine Jugoslavije po pitanju vaspitnog rada medju omladinom [Conclusions about the Consultations of the Secretaries and Members of the Secretariat of the Head Committees of the People’s Youth of Yugoslavia Regarding Educational Work Amongst the Youth],” 1946, Collection 114 - SSOJ, Box 58, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>13</sup> Adeeb Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (July 1, 2006): 238.

<sup>14</sup> The Yugoslav press regularly featured articles about Soviet policies for Muslim population. For example, see: “Položaj žene Sovjetskog istoka [The Position of Women of the Soviet East],” *Žena u borbi* 45 (November 1947): 22–23; Soviet policies towards Muslim women in Central Asia are well researched. There are many studies, including the following: Douglas Taylor Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Edgar, “Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet ‘Emancipation’ of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective.”

<sup>15</sup> Edgar, “Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet ‘Emancipation’ of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective,” 256; Lenka Nahodilova, “Communist Modernisation and Gender: The Experience of Bulgarian Muslims, 1970–1990,” *Contemporary European History* 19, no. 1 (February 2010): 37.

press played an important role as did the experience of key intellectuals with international contacts. These contacts most certainly were crucial in the Yugoslav case.

In interwar Yugoslavia, an impassioned debate about Muslim women and veils began when Reisu-l-Ulema<sup>16</sup> Mehmed Džemaludin Čaušević (1914-1930) travelled to Kemalist Turkey and, impressed by the reforms there - particularly those regarding women's social positions - initiated a debate with 'ulama<sup>17</sup> and Bosnian intellectuals in late 1927.<sup>18</sup> Čaušević published several articles questioning the need for the use of the veil and calling for women's inclusion in public life and the economy. The discussions which took place were so polarising that Čaušević could not achieve any consensus for similar Kemalist reforms in Bosnia. This debate found its way to the pages of the national newspaper *Politika*, where Islamic scholars elaborated their views. A reformist minority amongst Muslim intellectuals disagreed with the majority of 'ulama regarding women's rights, women's public role and the question of whether veils were inherent to Islam or rather just a local tradition. They engaged in a sophisticated religious debate, one that became so inflamed with passion that Čaušević was accused of being an infidel by other 'ulama. He also had to defend his ideas from the claim that they were foreign, arguing that they consisted of his own interpretation of the Quran. Despite fierce opposition, Čaušević organised the Congress of Bosnian Muslim Intellectuals, in Sarajevo in 1928, to discuss these very issues. Once again, the attendees were unable to come to a consensus on the topic of veils and appropriate dress codes, whilst there was greater agreement on the need for women's education. Čaušević, however, retired from his post after disagreements with the Yugoslav government over the Law on the Islamic Religious Community in 1930. Over the next decade, the issue of the veil was not particularly prominent, but occasionally scholars considered the dilemma of dress codes for women.<sup>19</sup> For the postwar Yugoslav communist activists, however, the Soviet literature and translations of Soviet texts published in Yugoslav magazines were their main source of

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<sup>16</sup> The highest official within the Bosnian Islamic Community.

<sup>17</sup> Religious scholars.

<sup>18</sup> Čaušević was also educated in the Ottoman Empire. He graduated in law in Istanbul in 1903. See: Mustafa Imamović, *Vjerske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini i Jugoslaviji između dva svjetska rata* (Sarajevo: Pravni fakultet Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2008), 55.

<sup>19</sup> Karčić, "The Reform of Shari'a Courts and Islamic Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina"; Xavier Bougarel, "Reis i veo: jedna vjerska polemika u Bosni i Hercegovini između dva rata," *Historijska traganja*, no. 6 (2010): 69–114.

information, and there was no such dilemma.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, there is no evidence that Yugoslav communists ever considered the positions of Muslim women before the war. Given their strongholds in urban centres and amongst intellectuals, they probably had little if any contacts with them. Vahida Maglajlić was one of a few Muslim women close to the Party before the war, and certainly, the only Muslim woman who was declared a war hero. According to the Partisan press during the war, they admitted that they knew very little about these ‘enslaved sisters’, before the Partisan struggle brought them together.<sup>21</sup>

The promotion of negative views regarding the veil and the position of Muslim women in society is what distinguished the Soviet, and later Yugoslav, activists from other modernisers. Atheism was a crucial component to their ideology, allowing communist leadership to interfere in all religious communities with lesser scruples than other modernisers. The Soviet and Yugoslav communists launched massive and aggressive campaigns designed to bring about change in Muslim communities,<sup>22</sup> whilst - for example - Kemal Atatürk and Albanian interwar politicians introduced moderate reforms.<sup>23</sup> Soviet policies towards Muslim women provided a framework which was known to Yugoslav communists via the Soviet press and their own translations.<sup>24</sup> The

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<sup>20</sup> See: “Žene Sovjetskog istoka [Women of the Soviet East],” *Žena danas* 37 (December 1945): 21–22.

<sup>21</sup> On their encounters during the war, see: Veda Zagorec, “Na pravi put sam ti, majko, izišo [Mother, I Have Found the Right Path],” *Žena u borbi*, no. 10 (September 1944): 14; Lydia Sklevicky found a document stating that the Party’s agitprop blocked writing about unveiled women in Livno, Bosnia, in 1943, due to a fear of disturbing traditional feelings. Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*, 46; On Vahida Maglajlić: Kačavenda and Živković, *Narodni Heroji Jugoslavije*, 479.

<sup>22</sup> Edgar, “Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet ‘Emancipation’ of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective,” 253, 262; Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective”; In Bulgaria the veil lifting campaign was very aggressive, and even included changing the name of women. See: Mary Neuburger, “Veils, Shalvari, and Matters of Dress: Unravelling the Fabric of Women’s Lives in Communist Bulgaria,” in *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, ed. Susan Emily Reid and David Crowley (Oxford; New York, NY: Berg, 2000), 169–88; Nahodilova, “Communist Modernisation and Gender: The Experience of Bulgarian Muslims, 1970–1990.”

<sup>23</sup> Veils were banned in Albania in 1929, but the authorities were very cautious in applying the law and tried to convince people to unveil voluntarily. Nathalie Clayer, “Behind the Veil. The Reform of Islam in Inter-War Albania or the Search for a ‘Modern’ and ‘European’ Islam,” in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, ed. Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (London: Hurst, 2008), 128–55; Veiling in Kemalist Turkey was not banned, although there was a campaign against the veil, see: Deniz Kandiyoti, “End of Empire: Islam, Nationalism and Women in Turkey,” in *Women, Islam and the State*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 22–47 It was a part of several broader political and social reforms, that among other things introduced voting rights for women, and recognised women as citizens of the new republic.

<sup>24</sup> “Uzbekistan - Zemlja bijelog zlata [Uzbekistan - The Land of the White Gold],” *Naša žena* 6–7 (July 1947): 8; Olga Eleonska, “Djevojka iz pustinje [A Girl from the Desert],” *Naša žena* 29 (July 1947): 10; Jurij Arbat, “Iz ropstva harema [From the Slavery of a Harem],” *Žena danas* 53 (1948): 44–45.



objective of Soviet policies, as Adrienne Edgar argues, was not to perpetuate differences between Muslim and non-Muslim women, but to promote homogenisation and uniformity, and to ‘raise’ all women to achieve the same level of socialist modernity.<sup>25</sup> To briefly summarise, the Soviets tried to include Muslim women in the work of cooperatives, to find them jobs in which they could earn independently, to protect them from forced marriage and arbitrary divorce, to expand their educational opportunities, and ultimately to unveil these women. The unveiling of women was met with the fiercest resistance particularly in Uzbekistan, where the unveiling campaign failed, forcing the state to oppose veils with more indirect means.<sup>26</sup>

Another strong motive for Soviet interventions in Central Asia was to lessen the importance of traditional kin and local affiliations, and to persuade the local population to identify with the newly created national and other political communities.<sup>27</sup> In Yugoslavia, this was only partially true over this period. The Yugoslav leadership wanted to incorporate Muslims into the larger Yugoslav project, especially in areas where the Partisans had not been well supported during the war, but in the Yugoslav region no attempts were made at that point to create new nations as in Central Asia. The majority of the Muslim population lived in Kosovo, Southern Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia. The Albanians and Turks were considered to be established national minorities (*narodnosti*), but the Muslim population in Bosnia did not have a clear status. The new socialist state considered them to be a different community to the Orthodox and Catholic population, but it would take several decades for the government to decide to label them as ‘Muslims’ (*in the national sense*) in the census. In the 1948 census, the government only allowed the Muslim population to declare themselves as ‘Muslims of undeclared nationality,’ in addition to being Serbs or Croats.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the Yugoslav government wanted to

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<sup>25</sup> Edgar, “Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet ‘Emancipation’ of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective,” 265.

<sup>26</sup> Many unveiled women faced severe harassment, whilst numerous other were raped and/or killed. Several high official women were also murdered. See: Gregory J Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929*, 1974, 280–85; Also see: Northrop, *Veiled Empire* for more recent analysis of limits of Soviet power in the Central Asia.

<sup>27</sup> Edgar, “Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet ‘Emancipation’ of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective,” 262.

<sup>28</sup> Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 27; also see: Aydin Babuna, “Bosnian Muslims during the Cold War: Their Identity between Domestic and Foreign Policy,” in *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*, ed. Philip E. Muehlenbeck (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), 184.

include all Muslims in the process of building socialism, which meant creating a loyal and mobile population.

Yugoslav leadership could not have known about the troubles the Soviets had had in Central Asia with unveiling attempts, and instead they had read about the tremendous success of the Soviet state in emancipating Muslim women. These were often stories from Soviet magazines, which described the Soviet liberation of Muslim women from ‘slavery’ – women who then had successful careers thanks to the chance they had finally been given.<sup>29</sup> Yugoslav communists were equally ambitious as demonstrated by the most zealous veil lifting campaign which was launched almost two years after the break with the Soviet Union in 1948.

Similarities also existed in the methods that Soviet and Yugoslav communists applied. For example, in addition to the direct unveiling campaign, Soviet doctors in Central Asia organised medical lectures and check-ups for local women, disseminating the message that traditional ways of living, including traditional dress, had negative consequences for one’s health.<sup>30</sup> The Yugoslav press wrote about these actions and their supposedly great results.<sup>31</sup> The largest Yugoslav health campaign was organised in Kosovo, whilst smaller scale campaigns were organised in other areas with a predominantly Muslim population. Various organisations and local governments ran health campaigns in non-Muslim areas as well, but the large-scale campaign in Kosovo undertaken at the same as the veil lifting campaign was no coincidence. The Yugoslav leadership also viewed the veil as being very harmful to women’s health, and medical discourses were widely used. Medical professionals, consequently, claimed that veils prevented women from being healthily exposed to the sun, and from breathing fresh air.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, much like the Soviets, they linked death and disease directly to every aspect of rural life, and they believed that religious practices and illiteracy played a crucial role in illness. Since the veil was understood as both a symbol and a concrete result of harmful

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<sup>29</sup> These articles were often direct Soviet translations, published in the AFŽ’s central magazine. For example: Arbat, “Iz ropstva harema” was translated from Советская женщина.

<sup>30</sup> See: Paula A. Michaels, “Medical Propaganda and Cultural Revolution in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1928-41,” *Russian Review* 59, no. 2 (April 2000): 159–78.

<sup>31</sup> “Žene Turkmenistana [Women of Turkmenistan],” *Naša žena* 40 (August 1948): 21; “Iz života muslimanke u Sovjetskom Savezu [The Lives of Muslims in the Soviet Union],” *Naša žena* 43 (November 1948): 16–17.

<sup>32</sup> The importance of one’s exposure to the sun was emphasised in numerous articles. For example: S Protić, “Sunce - izvor života i zdravlja [Sun - The Source of Life and Health],” *Radnica* 6 (June 1950): 21.

religious practices and illiteracy, a medical discourse was very useful for the campaign.<sup>33</sup> Similar rhetoric was in use in Soviet Kazakhstan but, from existing research, it seems that in practice Yugoslav communists were more thorough, possibly due to the smaller territory they governed, which made their task easier.

### **The Communist Party and the Islamic Community in Yugoslavia**

The most important difference between the Yugoslav and Soviet cases was the relationship between the Yugoslav Communist Party and the official Islamic Community of Yugoslavia (hereon IVZ - Islamska Verska Zajednica). The Islamic Community was re-established in Sarajevo in August 1947, ruled by the Supreme Waqf Council and the Supreme Islamic Seniority, and led by the elected Reisu-l-ulema. From the very beginning, the Communist Party had an excellent relationship with the IVZ. The Party provided the IVZ with state donations, and installed some of its own Partisans in ruling positions, whilst the IVZ returned the favour by supporting the Party's policies.<sup>34</sup> Zvezdan Folić argues that the IVZ supported each of the Party's campaigns not only due to monetary donations received, but also because the Party did not discriminate the IVZ as compared to other religious organisations: given the newly established state's separation from the church, the IVZ was placed on an equal footing to the previously dominant Orthodox and Catholic organisations. A more conservative line within the IVZ did exist, mostly on the local level, but those who opposed some of the Party's policies were quickly removed from their posts.<sup>35</sup> In the Soviet Union, during the unveiling campaigns and the most radical assaults on the *old society*, there were no religious institutions that had good relations with the Party – the 'ulama was destroyed, and the state introduced a system of controlled 'spiritual directorates' that served as religious authorities similar to the IVZ, but that did not survive the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Marija Marinčević, "Počela je borba protiv neznanja i zaostalosti [The Battle against Ignorance and Backwardness Has Begun]," *Žena danas* 83 (May 1951): 6–8.

<sup>34</sup> Radmila Radić, "Islamska verska zajednica 1945-1970. godine," *Forum Bosnae*, no. 32 (2005): 100–105.

<sup>35</sup> Zvezdan Folić, "Skidanje zara i feredže u Crnoj Gori 1947-1953," *Istorijski zapisi*, no. 3–4 (1999): 79; For example, in the remote village of Dolgoš, in the district of Debar, a local imam tried to forbid female children from going to school. "Izveštaj Glavnog odbora AFŽ-a NR Makedonije za 1948 godinu [Report of the Head Committee of the AFŽ in NR Macedonia for 1948]," December 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>36</sup> Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 71–73.

Yugoslav interventions within the Muslim communities had several turning points which culminated in the veil lifting campaign. The Yugoslav government introduced the new legislation after the war as a first step, but it was not intended to target any religious group in particular. As explored in chapter two, the Yugoslav Law on Marital Relations, enacted in 1946, was in effect for the whole country and replaced sharia law alongside other legal practices. By defining man and woman as equal in marriage, free to choose a profession, and to initiate divorce, new legislation was very different to sharia law which gave men the unilateral power to initiate divorce proceedings, the right to have concubines, a bigger share in the inheritance, and greater weight in legal court testimony. Within the space of a year after the end of the war, the new government had eradicated marriage and family practices based on Islamic and tribal customary law, and vowed to enact and enforce new legislation into everyday life.<sup>37</sup> By taking jurisdiction away from the sharia courts, debates that had previously unsettled the Islamic community were solved, yet in a manner that not even the most extreme modernist had imagined.<sup>38</sup>

The education of Muslim women was another area in which the state intervened by imposing universal laws over the entire country. In the interwar Yugoslavia, only Muslim girls had been exempted from mandatory elementary education, whilst Čaušević's attempts from the late 1920s to change the law had been opposed by other Muslim authorities.<sup>39</sup> After the war, elementary state school became mandatory for everyone, and the newly introduced elementary education lasting seven years (extended by the federal government to eight years in the school year 1950/51) was crucial. Girls were obliged to attend school from the age of seven to fifteen years. The usual practice within Muslim communities had been to bar girls from continuing their education once they had begun to menstruate, a time when they would also start to wear the veil. Furthermore, the new educational system was secular, and planned with no gender segregation in the classroom. As elementary level education became mandatory, parents could face fines for not sending children to school. Reisu-l-ulema Ibrahim-ef. Fejić (1947-1957) supported such policies and explained his modernist views in terms of the need to

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<sup>37</sup> Kaser, *Porodica i srodstvo na Balkanu*.

<sup>38</sup> For more information regarding what it meant to be a modernist in this debate see: Fikret Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma: Pokret za reformu šerijatskog prava i njegov odjek u Jugoslaviji u prvoj polovini XX vijeka* (Sarajevo: Islamski teološki fakultet, 1990), 238.

<sup>39</sup> Imamović, *Vjerske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini i Jugoslaviji između dva svjetska rata*, 88.

reduce illiteracy amongst Muslim women. His arguments were similar to those of interwar Muslim scholars, the difference being that there were no opposing views expressed.<sup>40</sup> The Party also made sure that Fejić's views were known, although their implementation faced many obstacles.

Parents continued to forbid many girls to enrol in schools, a common problem in the countryside regardless of one's religious affiliation. Often, it was the poor school facilities, and the simple lack of space that convinced many parents against sending their children there.<sup>41</sup> Many parents' intentions to offer the better opportunities to their sons was also a common reason for forbidding girls' from attending school, whilst there was sometimes a simple unwillingness to send girls to schools due to prejudices concerning their education.<sup>42</sup> In many cases, if a local school could only admit a limited number of students, parents would typically send boys. In the Muslim communities, this also related to the replacement of religious schools with public ones, of which many parents did not approve. The influence of the Reisu-l-ulema's calls for education of women was not strong enough, especially in rural and isolated areas.<sup>43</sup> The state, on the other hand, was not able to intervene and impose fines, particularly in the areas of Kosovo and Macedonia where the state-building process was far from complete, and where the majority of these people lived.

Educating adult Muslim women was delegated to the AFŽ. However, the AFŽ's leadership crucially contributed to defining Muslim women as the most 'backward' and as an 'exceptional case.' The reason for this was existing dominant ideas concerning Muslim women, but also practical difficulties the AFŽ experienced in approaching Muslim women. These views were particularly important in further defining the Party's policies, as not many men in the Party were willing to work with women, and even fewer with Muslim women. This allowed the AFŽ significant autonomy in developing

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<sup>40</sup> For more on the position of the Reisu-l-ulema: Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma: Pokret za reformu šerijatskog prava i njegov odjek u Jugoslaviji u prvoj polovini XX vijeka*, 238.

<sup>41</sup> The government invested in a number of resources to improve schooling in Muslim areas. Compared to the situation before the war, the number of teachers increased three times, and many new schools were opened. "Izveštaj o nepismenosti [Report on the Illiteracy]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>42</sup> Zahra Mujdović, "Govor na IV Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Fourth Congress of the AFŽ]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 5, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>43</sup> Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma: Pokret za reformu šerijatskog prava i njegov odjek u Jugoslaviji u prvoj polovini XX vijeka*, 238.

campaigns and educational programmes, designed to *elevate* Muslim women through organising different courses and reading groups. Underestimating Muslim women's abilities to deal with political topics, the educators focused on childcare and handcraft, often using alternative learning methods (believing it would help those who were 'backward'), such as the amateur shows, and educational films. Activists also tried to organise separate lectures for Muslim women as more women would participate when men were not present.<sup>44</sup>

According to official data, Muslim women were one of the most illiterate groups in the country,<sup>45</sup> and the language barrier was a serious problem for AFŽ educators. Different dialects existed amongst the Albanian women living in Montenegro and Kosovo whilst a significant number of Muslims spoke Turkish. The AFŽ never had enough bilingual members.<sup>46</sup> Without adequate learning materials, educators had to improvise and use articles from newspapers and magazines as textbooks. However, the texts, once adapted for use in Bosnia, could not be used in Kosovo, Montenegro or Macedonia due to different dialects and languages. Another problem was that only a few Albanian women were members of the AFŽ, and willing to work with the local population. The organisation's attempts to include more Albanian women were often futile, whilst those already working in the field sometimes wanted more prestigious careers.<sup>47</sup> Local activists' lack of experience added to the problem. Their desire to 'modernise' Muslim women as quickly as possible often entailed aggressive persuasion on topics such as unveiling, which resulted in many women keeping their distance from the courses. Nevertheless, women's positions were never taken into account, and both the AFŽ and the Youth Organisation considered conservative parents and spouses as the main obstacles to women's attendance and involvement in events organised by the AFŽ.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Novosel, "Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ"; "Rezolucija Plenuma Centralnog odbora AFŽ Jugoslavije [Resolution of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the AFŽ of Yugoslavia]," October 1948, 5, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 6, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>45</sup> In 1948, 78.4% of women in Kosovo were still illiterate. Sometimes local organisations would claim that minorities were the only illiterate group. See: "Zadaci Narodne omladine u borbi za socijalistički preobražaj sela"; For more details, see: 54-56 *Statistički Godišnjak FNRJ 1955*.

<sup>46</sup> "Izveštaj Glavnog odbora AFŽ za Crnu Goru [Report of the Head Committee of the AFŽ for Montenegro]," December 14, 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 12, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>47</sup> "Stenografske beleške druge sednice Izvršnog odbora [Proceedings from the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee]," April 6, 1948, 3, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 8, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>48</sup> Jovanović, "Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ"; "INFORMACIJA o radu organizacije Narodne omladine sa ženskom omladinom [Information about the Activities of the Organisation People's Youth with Female Youth]," 1951, 5-6, Collection 114 SSOJ, box 69, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

The AFŽ leadership considered Muslim men to be the main culprits resulting in their failure to ‘emancipate’ Muslim women. Men were being collectively blamed as early as in 1945 at the first AFŽ Congress, when the speakers indicated that Muslim women desired to change their lifestyles, but that *reactionaries* were preventing them from doing so.<sup>49</sup> From that time onwards, men were regularly accused of deliberately keeping women in a ‘backward’ state, through preventing them from attending courses, being educated, and joining collective farms or industry. The local religious authorities – mullahs – were particularly harshly criticised, especially when they used religion as an argument against the new policies. In the first few years after the war, the AFŽ continued to denounce them, and to fight more or less peacefully to free women from being under ‘the influence’ of their husbands and fathers. This peaceful approach soon changed, and the AFŽ attacked the wearing of veils more aggressively.<sup>50</sup>

### Why Focus on Veils?

The AFŽ’s approach implied that Muslim women were passive victims, living in an involuntarily subjugated position to all men in their communities. The veil was, then, the main symbol of female subjugation and ‘backwardness,’ humiliating for women, and very often compared with slavery, torture and inequality. The veil was also perceived as foreign, a relic of mediaeval times brought to the region by ‘backward Asian tribes’.<sup>51</sup> However, besides its symbolic associations, the AFŽ considered the veil to be a real physical barrier that was preventing women from having a social life, in addition to creating disturbances at work. Getting rid of it was necessary in order to become a *new woman* who would accept socialist science and culture. Such ideas regarding the veil were repeated in many articles, even in poems published in women’s magazines. For the AFŽ the struggle against the veil was yet another battle for a society that is ‘more cultural, pleasant and [contributing to] a way of living that is worthy of a human being.’<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Mevla Jakupović, “Govor na I Kongresu [Speech at the First AFŽ Congress],” June 18, 1945, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>50</sup> “Zapisnik VI plenarnog sastanka Glavnog odbora AFŽ-a Makedonije [Minutes from the Sixth Plenary Meeting of the Head Committee of the AFŽ Macedonia],” December 8, 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 36, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>51</sup> Bia Vokši, “Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ [Speech at the Second AFŽ Congress],” 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 2, The Archives of Yugoslavia; Mindović, “Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ,” 10.

<sup>52</sup> These ideas were repeated on numerous occasions: Vokši, “Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ”; Kovačević, “Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ”; Also in the poems printed in the magazines: Mira Alečković, “O devojci koja je zbacila feredžu [About a Girl Who Discarded the Veil],” *Žena danas* 51 (December 1947): 43; In

Parallels with Soviet rhetoric on Muslim women were easily made as Yugoslav communists published translations of Soviet articles. The desire to unveil Muslim women was also comparable. It was driven by high confidence in modernism and progress, supported by the belief that every woman deserved a chance to be a part of the socialist project. At the same time, the AFŽ modernisers assumed that Muslim women had the same intentions, as otherwise they would collectively be enemies of the new system which was inconceivable for women. If some women were, nevertheless, hostile to the new policies, they were regarded as having fallen under the influence of *reactionaries* and were considered in need of being saved by the vanguard class. The same conclusions were drawn for those women who simply wanted to keep the *status quo*, and continue with their lives as they had been before the war.<sup>53</sup>

The first attempts to unveil women, although not always direct, were made immediately after the war. Women who wanted to participate in the social and political life of the new state had to unveil, especially if they wanted to join any of the massive organisations ruled by the Party. The problem for the Party was that not many women expressed such a desire. Young people were expected to join the Party's Youth Organisation, but very few Muslim women joined. Only a small number of them participated in Youth Work Actions too.<sup>54</sup> This was not only due to unveiling, but also due to views within the Muslim communities that joining such organisations would be inappropriate for a Muslim woman. Nevertheless, as some of the biggest projects were built next to areas with high Muslim populations in Bosnia, people who lived close to the construction sites found themselves under severe pressure to join. They had to help the volunteers and work on a building site as well, whilst the volunteers vigorously spread the teachings of the Party.<sup>55</sup> Muslim women who took part in sports events arranged by the Youth Organisation were always promoted as a positive example in challenging the

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the reports of the local AFŽ organisations "Rad organizacije A.F.Z. Crne Gore po pitanju skidanja feredže [Work of the AFŽ Organisation of Montenegro Regarding the Removal of Feredža]," September 9, 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia; And finally in the legislation: "Objavljen je Zakon o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže [The Law that Prohibits Wearing of Zar and Feredža is Announced]," *Naša žena*, no. 11–12 (January 1951): 22.

<sup>53</sup> "Rezolucija Drugog kongresa Antifašističkog fronta žena povodom pokreta muslimanki za skidanje zara [Resolution of the Second Congress of the Antifascist Women's Front Regarding the Movement of Muslim Women for the Removal of the Veil]," July 13, 1947, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 35, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>54</sup> The importance of Youth Work Actions will be explored in the following chapter.

<sup>55</sup> S Marić, "Mladi graditelji na velikom delu [Young Builders at the Grand Deed]," *Žena danas* 44–45 (August 1946): 11–14.



'backwardness' of those communities. Consequently, the newspapers praised a few young Muslim women from Bosnia who participated in the 'Youth Relay' for Josip Broz Tito's birthday, or those who showed off their gymnastic skills at a rally in Skopje. Whilst they were small in number, they served for propaganda purposes.<sup>56</sup>

The idea of unveiling never ceased to dominate amongst the AFŽ leaders, who had encouraged activists in several districts of Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo to organise local veil lifting campaigns as early as 1947. These were not welcomed by the local population, and even some of the Muslim women who worked for the AFŽ were not eager to participate. As they did not understand the importance of the veil to these women, the AFŽ leadership believed that the resistance they experienced was due to the power of existing family relations, husbands and their relatives. One internal report quoted a local Muslim woman and AFŽ member, who commented that the organisation would need to find her a new home if she lifted her veil, as her husband would force her out of the house.<sup>57</sup> This case and several similar cases led the AFŽ leadership to believe that Muslim women were willing to unveil, but found themselves under huge pressure from their surroundings. They concluded that the resistance to veil lifting was due to 'religious fanaticism and cultural backwardness',<sup>58</sup> which only prompted the organisation to try harder.

Much like the Soviets in Central Asia,<sup>59</sup> Yugoslav communists used public holidays such as the International Women's day on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, and Mayday, to encourage more women to unveil. These were always public unveilings, in front of a massive crowd, and they were considered a particular sign of loyalty. The Yugoslav press praised Nidzija Batajili and Vajda Jusufi for unveiling in front of 5000 people at a public meeting in Pristina for the March 8<sup>th</sup> celebration, and emphasised that they were followed by thirty-eight other women.<sup>60</sup> At the end of 1947, the leader of the AFŽ - Spasenija

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<sup>56</sup> Neda Krmpotić, "Fiskultura i sport dostupni su danas najširim slojevima naše ženske omladine," *Žena danas* 46 (September 1946): 26.

<sup>57</sup> "Izveštaj glavnog odbora AFŽ-a Bosne i Hercegovine," 3.

<sup>58</sup> "Izveštaj glavnog odbora AFŽ-a Bosne i Hercegovine."

<sup>59</sup> See: Marianne Kamp, "Pilgrimage and Performance: Uzbek Women and the Imagining of Uzbekistan in the 1920s," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 2 (May 1, 2002): 272; Also, widely reported and admired in the Yugoslav press: "Položaj žene Sovjetskog istoka"; "Znamenite Sovjetske žene: Sara Išanturajeva [Notable Soviet Women: Sara Ishatunayeva]," *Zora* 23 (July 1947): 7.

<sup>60</sup> "Pokret muslimanki Kosova i Metohije za skidanje feredža [The Movement of Muslim Women from Kosovo and Metohija for the Removal of Feredža]," *Žena danas* 48 (June 1947): 15.

Babović, claimed that more than 30,000 women had lifted their veils in Kosovo. Whilst that number was exaggerated, it was celebrated as a great victory for the government's attempt to 'elevate the most backward masses'.<sup>61</sup>

The final results of these first unveiling attempts were, however, not so successful. For example, in Macedonia, activists reported that women covered themselves again due to local social pressures, and in some villages this would happen as soon as the activists left. They counted only 1,592 women who had unveiled permanently out of a total of roughly 50,000 Muslim women in Macedonia.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, these initiatives alienated many local women who used to participate in the AFŽ events, but who then avoided further lectures or conferences as they were afraid that they would have to unveil. Veil lifting was more easily achieved in the factories where a greater number of Muslim women worked separately from men. Some factories, such as one which produced traditional rugs in the town of Novi Pazar, employed Muslim women exclusively. They would often start working in the factory covered up before being later persuaded to discard their veils. The press praised a certain Nedžmija Adžović who unveiled after joining the factory, despite being barely literate. The factory was closely monitored and celebrated for its servery, amateur theatre hall and leisure club. Both Nedžmija and the factory were considered to be the pinnacle of the socialist dream.<sup>63</sup> However, the activists were unable to control the actions of women once they left a factory, with some veiling again as a number of internal reports suggested.<sup>64</sup>

Those who lifted their veils permanently were mostly workers, or the wives of highly regarded Party members. However, there were even a certain number of Party members who were unwilling to follow the Party's policies, a fact which outraged the AFŽ leadership and activists.<sup>65</sup> The government only provided moral support and published a resolution in 1947 stating that no one was allowed to prevent a woman from

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<sup>61</sup> Babović, "Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ," 15.

<sup>62</sup> Ljubomirka Tomić, "Referat održan na II Plenumu Centralnog odbora AFŽ Jugoslavije [Report at the Second Plenum of the Central Committee of the AFŽ Yugoslavia]," September 19, 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 6, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>63</sup> D V, "Radnice prvog industriskog preduzeća u Sandžaku [She-Workers of the First Industrial Firm in Sandžak]," *Borba*, February 15, 1949.

<sup>64</sup> "Godišnji izveštaj o radu Glavnog odbora AFŽ Srbije [Annual Report on the Activities of the Head Committee of the AFŽ Serbia for 1949]," December 15, 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 13, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>65</sup> "Izveštaj Centralnom odboru AFŽ [Report to the Central Committee of the AFŽ]," September 9, 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

unveiling. A high ranking Party official named Blagoje Nesković pushed for such a resolution, explaining that the government could not ban the veil as this would be unconstitutional.<sup>66</sup> The government also organised a conference of ‘ulama who proclaimed that the act of veil lifting was not against Islam. Reisu-l-ulema supported unveiling, but this was not enough to persuade many people. For example, the AFŽ in Macedonia were forced to admit that the veil lifting campaign failed completely prior to 1950.<sup>67</sup> The AFŽ leadership learned that they could not have a long lasting impact without involving men in their work, and more importantly, without imposing legal sanctions against those who opposed them.

### **The Aggressive Veil Lifting Campaign**

The AFŽ and the Party took a more aggressive stance towards unveiling from early 1950 onwards. It was only a year after the government had taken decisive steps towards collectivising agriculture, trying to push rural communities onto collective farms so as to build socialism in the countryside. The veil lifting campaign could be seen as part of the same process. Communities which were considered to be closed to communist norms and understood as backward, were to be modernised, promoting their inclusion in public life. The communist state-building process was particularly important in areas where the new government struggled to impose its institutions due to armed opposition in regions such as Kosovo and Macedonia. The Yugoslav secret police and army fought different paramilitary groups in this region until the late 1940s. The timing of the move to an aggressive unveiling strategy corresponds with the defeat of these groups, and the establishment of People’s Councils throughout the entire country. In 1950 the AFŽ Congress proclaimed a resolution in which activists were called to act and *liquidate* the veils quickly in preparation for a law that would ban veils altogether.<sup>68</sup>

Laws enforcing the banning of veils were passed separately in every republic with a Muslim population, starting with Bosnia in September 1950. The government did not think that such laws would be unconstitutional anymore; once the law had been passed in

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<sup>66</sup> “Pokret muslimanki Kosova i Metohije za skidanje feredža”; Similar discussions about banning the veil went on for years in the Soviet Union, see: Northrop, *Veiled Empire*.

<sup>67</sup> “Godišnji izveštaj za rad Glavnog odbora AFŽ-a Makedonije [Annual Report on the Work of the Head Committee of the AFŽ of Macedonia],” December 1949, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>68</sup> “Rezolucija III Kongresa AFŽ [Resolution of the Third Congress of the AFŽ],” 1950, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 3, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

Bosnia it forbade wearing the veil. Laws passed in the other republics consisted of the same text, with a preamble explaining the decision made to ban the veil being based on a desire to ‘remove the age-old sign of dependence and backwardness of Muslim women, and facilitate the full use of rights won in the People’s Liberation Struggle and the building of socialism in this country, and to secure full equality and wider participation in the social, cultural and economic life of the country’.<sup>69</sup> Those who continued to wear a veil could be punished with up to three months in prison or be charged a hefty fine. The law applied not only to women, but also to family members who forced them to wear a veil, or who put pressure on them. If a man forced a woman to wear a veil by means of force, threat or blackmail, the penalty was two years of reformatory work or an even higher monetary fine.<sup>70</sup>

According to the media, such measures were justified by demands made by *advanced* Muslim women themselves. The pattern was the same in every republic. First, the *advanced* women would ask parliament to pass a law repeating the AFŽ’s stance and rhetoric on veils, then parliament agreed with their demands, and other women were reported on as greeting the law with joy. The media, the AFŽ and religious authorities then underlined the view that the veil as such could not convey religious or any other ‘positive’ feelings for Muslim women, alongside the position that society could not wait until all Muslim women had matured enough in their acquisition of socialist consciousness to choose to unveil independently.<sup>71</sup>

Once the law against veiling had been passed, the veil lifting campaign became more aggressive and comprehensive, as the implementation of unveiling now depended upon the local governments – i.e. the People’s Councils. The Party’s massive organisations also took part in the law’s implementation, particularly the Youth Organisation and the People’s Front. Their members had to be the first to unveil their wives and daughters whilst the activists now had both legal and repressive means to ensure unveiling. The Youth Organisation summoned teachers and Party secretaries from

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<sup>69</sup> *Zakon o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže [The Law on Prohibition of Wearing Zar and Feredža]*, *Službeni glasnik [The Official Gazette]*, vol. 33, 1950.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Lj A, “I muslimani Kosmeta i Sandžaka zahtevaju donošenje zakona o zabrani zara [Muslims from Kosmet and Sandžak Also Demand Declaration of a Law to Ban the Veil],” *Borba*, October 26, 1950; “Za potpuno oslobođenje muslimanke [For Complete Liberation of Muslim Women],” *Radnica* 10 (October 1950): 5.

the countryside to provide them with directives concerning the campaign. They formed special teams of people, who spoke Turkish, visited many villages, and put the new law into effect. These teams usually consisted of ten devoted young communists, and each group included a woman. They carefully counted the number of young women who unveiled and monitored local officials and their families. Women who lifted their veils at an early stage in the campaign were expected to help the campaign as well, and indeed, some of them agitated fiercely.<sup>72</sup>

Medical campaigns organised at the same time allowed activists to enter people's homes without prior notice or permission. Health campaigns in Kosovo, Sandžak and in the area around Niš commenced in 1951, and were organised by the Red Cross, the newly founded Institute for Health Enlightenment in Serbia, and the AFŽ. The AFŽ contributed around 200 activists (mostly from Vojvodina, as Vojvodina was considered being the most *advanced* area in cultural terms). These activists entered thousands of houses, giving many women their first gynaecological exams. In addition, almost all young women were enrolled in courses concerning health and hygiene. Over the next two years, the entire population of these areas was affected by these campaigns, whilst the AFŽ praised the fact that 142,401 women had been medically examined, being a very effective tool used to monitor who was unveiled.<sup>73</sup>

### **Resistance to Unveiling and the Aftermath**

Resistance to lifting the veil was strong and there is no clear evidence that all women welcomed the new measures. The AFŽ leadership and their activists never realised the significance of the veil for many women, nor the shock that the veil lifting campaigns produced. They never considered whether women were ready to make such a step.<sup>74</sup> A collection of interviews conducted by Miroslava Malešević with Didara

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<sup>72</sup> Sado Hamo, "Akcija skidanja zara i feredže u Makedoniji [Campaign for the Removal of Zar and Feredža in Macedonia]," *Narodna omladina* 3 (1951): 40–41.

<sup>73</sup> "Osvrt na rad organizacija AFŽ-a od III kongresa Narodnog fronta Jugoslavije do kraja 1952 godine [Remark about the Work of the AFŽ organisations from the Third Congress of the People's Front of Yugoslavia until the end of 1952]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 4, The Archives of Yugoslavia; "Izveštaj o radu ženske organizacije [Report about the Activities of the Women's Organisation]," 1953, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 5, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>74</sup> There are, however, a few reports which the AFŽ collected on the ground about the experiences of unveiled women. In one such report, one paragraph mentions that unveiling was so difficult for some women, they would faint when activists agitated against veils. This was, however, ignored in the meetings. "U Jugoslaviji nema više nijedne žene pod feredžom [In Yugoslavia There Is Not a Single Woman Covered With Feredža Anymore]," 1951, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

Dukaginji Đordjević is revealing, as they describe Didara's experience once her father had decided she had to unveil. Her father was a communist, and had made a promise to the local branch of the Party. She considered unveiling to be the worst punishment - the end of the world as she knew it, and an unforgivable embarrassment. She could not understand why her father would punish her like that. Without the veil she felt naked, afraid to leave the home, or say hello to other people in the street, whilst other women from the town she lived in did not make her life any easier. Didara, however, became a prominent AFŽ activist later on, an outspoken advocate against the veil, a high-ranking politician and even a member of the federal parliament. Yet, she clearly remembered unveiling to have been against her will. She was afraid that she would not have been able to find a husband and have a family, and that her entire neighbourhood would have ostracised her. Only later did she become aware of the new opportunities that opened up to her, particularly after taking several educational courses following which she became qualified as a teacher.<sup>75</sup> Didara's case was not unique, as Semiha Kačar demonstrated in a series of published interviews with unveiled Muslim women. Almost all of her interviewees claimed that they had unveiled as a result of their husband's demands, who were being pursued by the Party, and all the women had a hard time adjusting to the new situation they found themselves in.<sup>76</sup> From the AFŽ's meetings and public rhetoric, it seems that their activists never considered or tried to understand the personal hardships that unveiling imposed on these women.

Men were often called upon to prove their political loyalty to the regime over traditional culture, and it appears that for many, such demonstrations were easier to make than they were for women. Some men did oppose the new policies, even some Party members and members of the People's Front who were loyal as regards other political issues, but incapable of comprehending such dramatic changes to gender relations. The AFŽ pointed out the presence of such resistance, and these men were rebuked for not supporting, and even for discouraging their wives and daughters from unveiling. If these warnings did not successfully persuade particular individuals, the Party cells would make use of measures proscribed by the new law.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Miroslava Malešević, *Didara: Životna Priča Jedne Prizrenke* (Belgrade: Srpski genealoški centar, 2004).

<sup>76</sup> Semiha Kačar, *Zarozavanje zara* (Podgorica: Almanah, 2000).

<sup>77</sup> Tomić, "Referat održan na II Plenumu Centralnog odbora AFŽ Jugoslavije," 6; "Untitled report from the Macedonian AFŽ to the AFŽ's Central Committee."

Once the law had been passed and drastic measures taken, many women were locked in their houses. Once again, officials understood this as the men's decision, with women portrayed as passive victims.<sup>78</sup> Testimonies collected by Kačar showed that many women stayed at home because they felt too ashamed to go out in the street unveiled, rather than this being due to men's pressure. Some women simply did not possess adequate clothing. This was even a problem for men who had to show their loyalty to the new government, by demonstrating to other Party members that their wives had indeed unveiled.<sup>79</sup> Public resistance was broken, even in remote places, but resistance to the ideological hegemony present continued via other means. A large majority of women started to wear a headscarf and slowly adapted to the new situation. The government did not intervene with such coverings as long as the face was visible and was happy that veils had disappeared from the public sphere.<sup>80</sup> Subordinated groups manage to resist total domination by adapting, evading and preserving some agency through their decisions.<sup>81</sup>

The AFŽ and the Party's Youth Organisation tried to work with women who lifted their veils. The idea was to make these women economically independent from their husbands, and activists often tried to empower them by finding them jobs in some public office, or in industry.<sup>82</sup> Young people were expected to help their peers to lift the veil and to include them in the Youth Organisation. Local youth organisations arranged special reading groups and home economics courses, and there was a directive to include Muslim women in choirs and folklore groups. The criteria were lowered for women's membership, and they could postpone paying the membership fee for some time.<sup>83</sup> Hundreds of women who unveiled were sent on a free trip across Yugoslavia, paid for by the AFŽ, as this was believed to have been an emancipatory process. The newspapers and magazines enthusiastically reported on these excursions, stating that these women were travelling for the first time with 'their eyes wide open,' comparing their previous lives

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<sup>78</sup> "Izveštaj ekipe koja je obradila teren sreza titogradskog."

<sup>79</sup> Kačar, *Zarozavanje zara*.

<sup>80</sup> Mujdović, "Govor na IV Kongresu AFŽ."

<sup>81</sup> As Fiske has theorised, any given hegemony's victories are never final, see: John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Routledge, 2007), 40.

<sup>82</sup> "Rezolucija Plenuma Centralnog odbora AFŽ Jugoslavije."

<sup>83</sup> "INFORMACIJA o radu organizacije Narodne omladine sa ženskom omladinom," 4.

with the lives of animals. Such articles particularly criticised by husbands who followed their wives on these trips, not trusting them to travel alone and unveiled.<sup>84</sup>

Although the AFŽ leadership saw itself as very inclusive, it was very hard for women with Muslim backgrounds to obtain high positions. Several women who joined the Partisans during the war and who unveiled before the campaign began, were elected to the AFŽ's Central Committee at the first congress. None of them, however, became members of the inner presidency.<sup>85</sup> Highly regarded Muslim women who held important positions within the organisation, and who were called to AFŽ congresses to deliver speeches, were limited in the fields of work they participated in. At every congress they would talk about issues concerning their own communities, such as the successes of the veil lifting or health campaigns, and never spoke on broader political problems.<sup>86</sup> The AFŽ carefully gathered biographies of many Muslim women who had unveiled, and who were considered good and loyal communists. The majority had relatives already working for the Party whilst some had lost their sons or husbands in the war when fighting for the Partisans. These women enjoyed a special status and, although the AFŽ found it easier to work with them, their biographies were mostly used in newspapers and magazines to promote unveiling. In fact, more women made political careers for themselves outside of the AFŽ, often due to the presence of quotas set by the Party. The previously mentioned Didara became a member of federal parliament, whilst the AFŽ continued to be led by Croatian, Serbian or Slovene communists.

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The aim of the Yugoslav communists' interventions into the Muslim communities was to create what they imagined to be a modern, homogenous and loyal population. Policies focused on Muslim women were both designed to emancipate these women, and to penetrate their communities. These policies included increased education and job opportunities as well as the radical veil lifting campaign. The veil lifting campaign was

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<sup>84</sup> "Prvi put sa otvorenim očima u svet [The First Time With An Open Eyes in the World]," 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 15, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>85</sup> "Pretsedništvo Centralnog odbora AFŽ-a izabrano na I Kongresu [Presidency of the Central Committee of the AFŽ Elected at the First Congress]," June 1945, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 1, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>86</sup> Vokši, "Govor na II Kongresu AFŽ"; Mindović, "Govor na III Kongresu AFŽ"; Mujdović, "Govor na IV Kongresu AFŽ."



organised at the same time as collectivisation, the secularisation of education, and the spreading of broader anti-religious propaganda.

The veil lifting campaign resulted in turmoil and put many women and men into an unpleasant position. Veil lifting, and laws regarding family relations challenged the traditions of the Muslim communities, but the Yugoslav leadership lacked the perspectives of Muslim women, and could not understand resistance to veil lifting. Due to intensive pressure, it became impossible for women to continue wearing the veil. They risked not only social exclusion, but also high fines and imprisonment. The monitoring of veil lifting and health campaigns was conducted by all levels of government and the Party's massive organisations. As a result, veils disappeared in Yugoslavia, leaving many women unconfident on the one hand, but also opening up new opportunities to them on the other, if they were willing to participate in the Yugoslav socialist project.

The veil lifting campaign was also important for Yugoslav state-building. The government intervened in communities closed to them both in terms of politics and in terms of private life. The veil lifting and accompanying health campaigns brought the government into the homes of parts of the population where it had previously had little or no presence. In the Montenegrin town of Bijelo Polje, the AFŽ activists literally demolished the old high walls that had enclosed the houses and gardens of the Muslim homes.<sup>87</sup> Their gardens were converted into open classrooms for literacy courses whilst the windows were widened and opened onto the street. Activists closely monitored what happened inside and commented positively if Tito's portrait was hanging on the walls. Personal spaces became public.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, these campaigns were strong mobilising forces for both men and women loyal to the regime. To a certain extent, the veil lifting campaigns entailed a reconfiguring of existing political hierarchies as men could prove their loyalty to the new government and secure their positions, whilst a few women also gained high ranking political posts that would have been unimaginable previously. The high walls and veils that had earlier prevented the Party's gaze had been destroyed.

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<sup>87</sup> Similar high walls were equally common in Bosnia and Kosovo. See the following ethnographic study: Lodge, *Peasant Life in Yugoslavia*, 77.

<sup>88</sup> Danica Perić, "Nepoznati znanci [Unknown Acquaintances]," *Žena danas* 68–69 (March 1950): 29–30.

## Chapter 6: Gender Policies towards Youth: From Stalinism to the Yugoslav Dilemma

‘It is understandable that the Party fiercely attacks any [debauchery], because people who are not pure in their personal life cannot be called communists and cannot be members of the Party.’<sup>1</sup>

Published in the *Komunist*, the Party’s central magazine

The leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party was not alone in considering young people to be the most important social group. As Anne Applebaum has argued, in the Soviet Union and all over Europe there was an obsession with young people - the rationale was that young people could be easily moulded by education and propaganda, whilst in accordance with the same logic, young people were the most exposed to the influences of ‘hostile ideas’.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, Yugoslav communists did not differ from other communist parties in Eastern Europe, and just like the others, Yugoslav communists had established a youth organisation that was intended to facilitate all the public activities in which young people might participate. The only difference was, just as in many other domains, the Yugoslav communists had established this youth organisation<sup>3</sup> faster than other communist parties, whilst also having its own militaristic youth organisation called SKOJ.<sup>4</sup> SKOJ had a significant pre-war tradition, as it was an elite organisation comprised of the communist youth, and a recruiting centre for the Party. Following the war, SKOJ was merged with the Youth Organisation, their main task being to influence a new generation of young people loyal to the regime.<sup>5</sup> Surpassing religious and class notions, the Party expected its young members to be amongst the most progressive in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> Vlahović, “O liku komuniste,” 55.

<sup>2</sup> Applebaum, *Iron Curtain*, 152–53.

<sup>3</sup> The Youth Organisation changed its name and structure several times, but its role in mobilising young people in Yugoslavia remained. The Youth Organisation was part of the People’s Front, and later it became part of the Socialist Alliance of Working People, after the People’s Front changed its name. For ease of reading, I will consistently use the term the Youth Organisation.

<sup>4</sup> SKOJ – Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije – The League of the Communist Youth of Yugoslavia

<sup>5</sup> The history of SKOJ is a neglected topic. The Party merged SKOJ with the People’s Youth in late 1948, after almost thirty years of its independent existence. For the ideological explanation of this merger: Milijan Neoričić, “O Narodnoj omladini [On the People’s Youth Organisation],” *Komunist*, no. 3 (May 1949): 131–45.

communist morality and gender relations, and therefore the Youth Organisation was designed to facilitate and police such ideals – just as the Soviet *Komsomol* was presented in the Yugoslav press.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter, therefore, explores high Stalinist ideals expected of young people, and uncertainties regarding their morality and the sexual life following the split with the Soviet Union. Through understanding Youth Work Actions as a prime example of adapting the Soviet model to Yugoslav practice, I will explore how Stalinist ideals concerning gender and sexuality were applied during these projects. The Party designed Youth Work Actions with the intention of utilising unpaid labour by young people to build infrastructure and factories, but more importantly, to instil socialist values in young people. These state-led projects were intended to aggressively change the ideas, identities, and behaviour of young people; and indeed, a significant number of young people participated.<sup>7</sup> The first wave of Youth Work Actions came to an end in 1951, mostly due to economic reasons. However, given the ascribed educational importance of these projects, young people's informal education and morality soon became a focus of social organisations. The sexual lives of young people featured in discussions for the first time since the war, causing a certain amount of uneasiness amongst Party officials. As this chapter reveals, this resulted in a futile attempt to proscribe a communist morality for the last time.

### **High Stalinist Ideals: Gender Relations at Youth Work Actions**

The political and economic aspects of Youth Work Actions have been the subject of much research.<sup>8</sup> Yugoslavia's first mass federal work action was the construction of the Brčko–Banovići railway in 1946, when approximately 90,000 young people participated in the construction of a 90km-long railway connecting a coal basin in Bosnia

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<sup>6</sup> For example, see: P. Kolonicki, "Lenjin i Staljin o komunističkom vaspitanju omladine kao glavnom zadatku Komsomola [Lenin and Stalin on the Communist Education of Youth as the Main Task of Komsomol]," *Narodna omladina* 8 (December 1948): 16–24 Here it was explicitly stated that Komsomol had the task of building a communist morality, among other things such as a socialist attitude towards work, collectively-owned property, etc.

<sup>7</sup> In 1946–52, more than one million young people worked on seventy significant projects: Slobodan Selinić, "Omladina gradi Jugoslaviju - savezne omladinske radne akcije u Jugoslaviji 1946-1963," *Arhiv* 6, no. 1–2 (2005): 87–101.

<sup>8</sup> See: *ibid.*; On some aspects of the production of ideology and life in the youth camps, see: Srđan Atanasovski and Ana Petrov, "Carnal Encounters and Producing Socialist Yugoslavia: Voluntary Youth Labour Actions on the Newsreel Screen," *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 6, no. 1 (January 2015): 21–32; Ivana Dobrivojević, "Između ideologije i pop culture. Život omladine u FNRJ 1945–1955," *Istorija 20. veka* 1 (2010): 119–132.

with industrial centres. Guided by the freshly announced five-year plan, the Party organised an even bigger project in 1947 in which 217,000 young people worked on the Šamac–Sarajevo railway. They constructed 243km of railway, nine roads, and many large bridges in Bosnia, through which the success of Youth Work Actions became crucial for the Yugoslav economy. These two large actions also provided models for all later volunteer-based projects. During their participation in these projects (which consisted of a one month residential stay for young people coming from urban centres and two for those from the countryside), young people were offered the chance to gain an education through courses, and had the option of being employed in industry at a later date. For the Party, however, it was also an opportunity to separate young people from their habitual surroundings, which was a particularly useful tool in educating a new generation of loyal communists over a very short period of time.<sup>9</sup>

Changing young people's values was one crucial component of the socialist modernisation project, particularly because of their diverse social and family backgrounds, which were often perceived as conservative. As explained in chapter two, they even came from regions that had had different legislation regarding gender relations prior to legal changes made by the Party. The large majority of youth volunteers were male (for example, eighty per cent in the case of the Šamac–Sarajevo railway<sup>10</sup>) as traditional norms and widespread illiteracy had hindered female peasants' engagement in activities outside of their homes and farms. At the same time, Yugoslavia was largely a rural country, with over 75 per cent of the population living in the countryside, from where the majority of volunteers came.

Gender identities were altered in various ways. Developing a new attitude towards physical work was essential, as any physical job conferred 'honour' and 'pride', and was understood to be of the highest value for everyone.<sup>11</sup> Shock-work was the prime example of this philosophy, which was applied from the very first Youth Work Actions. The Party's choice to create its own shock-workers went further than the volunteer projects as

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<sup>9</sup> In the press, the education of young volunteers was emphasised as much as the economic benefits of the projects. See: "Gradimo prugu - izgrađujemo sebe [By Building the Railroad We Build Ourselves]," *Omladinska pruga*, no. 3 (May 25, 1946): 6.

<sup>10</sup> Selinić, "Omladina gradi Jugoslaviju - savezne omladinske radne akcije u Jugoslaviji 1946-1963," 91.

<sup>11</sup> Mihajlo Švabić, "Omladinska pruga - ponos Narodne omladine Jugoslavije [The Youth Railroad - The Pride of the People's Youth of Yugoslavia]," *Omladinska pruga*, no. 27 (November 7, 1946): 1–2; Brato Pavlović, "Kako se Blagoje popravio [How Blagoje Has Improved His Behaviour]," *Borba na Omladinskoj pruzi*, no. 79 (July 1, 1947): 4.

explored in chapter three, but the heroic shock-worker was a particularly useful model in an isolated environment. In this sense, Youth Work Actions were a testing ground where the Party could put its ideas into practice. The press disseminated ideas both about how shock-workers behaved in the Soviet Union and about what was expected of the Yugoslav youth. The traits of these imagined shock-workers gave a precise indicator of how the Party desired young people to be, and how the Soviet model was domesticated to suit Yugoslav needs.<sup>12</sup>

Both men and women shared some characteristics ascribed to shock-workers, but differed in others. For example, all shock-workers were supposed to go about their tasks tirelessly and enthusiastically, always being ready to learn and adapt to new labour techniques. They fully supported the Party, regularly participated in sports and cultural events and cared about their hygiene and health. Nevertheless, they had to stay focused and intent, prepared for possible new ‘struggles’ in the face of time constraints, norms, nature, enemies, and a variety of other possible obstacles. There were, however, many significant differences in how shock-work was used in defining the masculinity and femininity of the Party’s youth.<sup>13</sup> The Party’s youth press disseminated a completely masculine discourse that described a new socialist man who could achieve anything, a discourse which also put extra pressure on those who were not working hard enough through defining them as less masculine.<sup>14</sup> This discourse was always complemented with the ideal of making a sacrifice, especially given the harsh working conditions. Consequently, shock-work was presented as more difficult for women to participate in, as they had to demonstrate greater persistence and draw on the social resources of the rest of the brigade. Women were expected to achieve the norms set by men, rather than being norm-setters themselves. Women who managed to become shock-workers were also praised for being pleasant, cheerful and humble women who never showed off their

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<sup>12</sup> Dušan Popović, “Sovjetska omladina - naš uzor [Soviet Youth - Our Role Model],” *Omladinska pruga*, no. 27 (November 7, 1946): 4; O. J., “Ko je udarnik taj ne sustaje [A Shock-worker Does Not Lag Behind],” *Omladinska pruga*, no. 1 (May 6, 1946): 6; “Stahanov i stahanovski pokret [Stakhanov and Stakhanovite Movement],” *Omladinska pruga*, no. 16 (August 31, 1946): 7; Stakhanovism in the USSR has been well researched; see, for instance, Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935 - 1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> O. J., “Takmičenje je počelo [The Competition Has Begun],” *Omladinska pruga*, no. 3 (May 25, 1946): 5.

<sup>14</sup> Much of the social power of masculinity is typically dependent upon a belief in the natural physical superiority of men and Yugoslav Communist masculinity was no exception. For theoretical observations, see: Gay Mason, “Looking into Masculinity: Sport, Media, and the Construction of the Male Body Beautiful,” in *Sociology of the Body: A Reader*, ed. Jacqueline Low and Claudia Malacrida (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 2008), 272.

results even when they were the best in the brigade. Whilst women's work was widely recognised, it was up to their male comrades to acknowledge their success.<sup>15</sup>

Similar gendered differences existed in defining 'innovators', as well as in deciding who was permitted to control machinery.<sup>16</sup> Almost all of the 'new innovators' were men. Furthermore, being in control of machines, mining tunnels, and demonstrating the 'conquest of nature' significantly defined what it meant to be a male shock-worker.<sup>17</sup> The Party nevertheless invested a lot of effort in displaying the 'normality' of the work performed by women. Notable young women were praised, either individually or together with their comrades from the brigades. The visibility of women was a significant way of changing old-fashioned perceptions of women's work, whilst many texts about female shock-workers were designed to increase women's self-confidence. This policy was intended to change pre-war patterns of behaviour, when women were not given any credit for their hard work, especially in the countryside.<sup>18</sup> Men had to accept that women were being primed to enter the workforce, and that they should work together.<sup>19</sup> A few female shock-workers even became brigade commandants, which was likely the highest position one could reach during work actions. This was used as yet another example to show that in the new socialist society a woman could move up the hierarchy.<sup>20</sup>

There was a clearly gendered division of labour in everyday life in the brigades. In many brigades, men would carry out most of the hard physical work, whilst women were particularly active in educational roles and in taking care of a brigade's hygiene and

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<sup>15</sup> "Najboljem radniku prve banjalučke brigade - Drugarici Božici Petković [To She-comrade Božica Petković - the Best Worker of the First Banjaluka Brigade]," *Omladinska pruga*, no. 6 (June 15, 1946): 1.

<sup>16</sup> Just as in the Soviet Union, shock-workers had to invent new methods of work, fuelled by their high enthusiasm as expressed in "socialist competition" with others. For Yugoslav understanding of that process, see: Nirvana Bočina Ignjatović, "Petogodisnji planovi pretvorili su sovjetsku zemlju od zaostale u naprednu, od neprosvjecene u kulturnu [Five-Year Plans Have Transformed the Soviet State from Backward to Advanced, from Unenlightened to Cultural]," *Žena danas* 48 (June 1947): 3–5; For an analysis of the Soviet shock-work system: Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935 - 1941*.

<sup>17</sup> The conquest of nature was always perceived as masculine, especially with the use of large machines such as bulldozers that were expensive and scarce. "Naši drugovi savladali su mašine [Our Comrades Have Mastered the Machines]," *Omladinska pruga*, no. 12 (July 26, 1946): 4; Dragomir Tošić, "Buldozeri na Omladinskoj pruzi [Bulldozers at the Youth Railroad]," *Omladinska pruga*, no. 16 (August 24, 1946): 5.

<sup>18</sup> Youth Work Actions were also used to influence gender relations in nearby villages, both by involving local men and women in the work, and by organising educational courses for them and their children: "Primorsko-goranska brigada otvorila je drugi analfabetski tečaj za seljačku djecu [Primorsko-goranska Brigade Has Opened the Second Literacy Course for Peasant Children]," *Omladinska pruga*, no. 7 (June 22, 1946): 6.

<sup>19</sup> Here is one example of such a text: N S, "Milija i Cvijeta - ponos Bijeljinske brigade [Milija and Cvijeta - The Pride of Bijeljina Brigade]," *Borba na Omladinskoj pruzi*, no. 66 (June 15, 1947): 5.

<sup>20</sup> "Po kvalitetu rada varaždinska brigada je jedna od najboljih [Varaždin Brigade is One of the Best by the Quality of Their Work]," *Omladinska pruga*, no. 7 (June 22, 1946): 7.

health-related issues.<sup>21</sup> ‘Domestic work’ was always left to women – reflecting existing gender relations, which were not challenged by the gender policies of the Soviet Union. Such women were not always youth volunteers; they also included activists from the AFŽ, who had been sent to work in brigade kitchens and wash laundry. The AFŽ gave them a directive encouraging them to use their ‘maternal and domestic experience’ to help young people organise their personal lives. One task involved making sure that young women were ‘always clean and properly dressed, with brushed hair, whilst they were not directed to complete hard physical work or to work in damp places when they were on their period’.<sup>22</sup> Although the majority of young women did not work in the kitchen and a lot of them completed the same jobs as men, in the brigades without AFŽ activists the Party advised that once a week a certain number of ‘female comrades’ should stay in the camp and wash laundry for everyone.<sup>23</sup> This sent a clear message to all young women that they would have to carry the burden of housework as well as the burden associated with the reconstruction of the country. Youth newspapers regularly used gender-sensitive language that marked comrades working in the kitchen as ‘drugarice’ (‘female comrades’) whilst not always using such language in other contexts.<sup>24</sup> Since this was never questioned in the communist press, women’s domestic labour practices remained unquestioned and were naturalised. Scholarship on this topic has typically referred to this as a specifically socialist ‘double burden’ imposed by socialist industrialisation and the demand for a larger workforce.<sup>25</sup> Gender historians writing more recently, such as Małgorzata Fidelis, have challenged this, arguing that the double burden did not exclusively relate to state socialism since many women had been expected to work and do unpaid domestic chores before the war as well.<sup>26</sup>

Youth Work Actions also allowed the Party to construct unifying norms of what it was acceptable (or not) to wear, instigating a process which attenuated the expression of individual subjectivity by focusing on collective identities. As described in chapter

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<sup>21</sup> Being a nurse could also bring a shock-work badge: Cvetanka Organdžijeva, “Omladinska ambulanta u Bukinju [Youth Infirmary in Bukinj],” *Omladinska pruga*, no. 23 (October 5, 1946): 6.

<sup>22</sup> Lj M, “Glavnom odboru AFŽ [To the Head Committee of the AFŽ],” May 22, 1948, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 32, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>23</sup> “Uređenje logorskog života [The Organisation of Living in the Camps],” *Borba na Omladinskoj pruzi*, no. 6 (April 6, 1947): 4.

<sup>24</sup> Živan Šijački, “Takmičimo se za bolju organizaciju posla [We Are Competing for the Better Organisation of Labour],” *Omladinska pruga*, no. 2 (May 13, 1946): 4.

<sup>25</sup> For example: Chris Corrin, ed., *Superwomen and the Double Burden: Women’s Experience of Change in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (London: Scarlet Press, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> See: Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland*, 12.

five, Muslim women's clothing was a key site in which some of the Party's biggest experiments with people's values took place culminating with the lifting of the veil. At Youth Work Actions other young people were also targeted. Styles of dress in Bosnian villages located by the Youth Action's construction site were very different, for example, to the styles of students from Zagreb, who arrived at the camps in trousers and wearing make-up. From the images published in newspapers at the time, peasants who helped the youth at the construction site can be seen wearing traditional clothing including headscarves and, sometimes, full veils. Students from Zagreb however, quickly learned that wearing make-up was not desirable. Unifying norms were policed both by issuing direct orders and by presenting ideal images of participants in the media, these images being closely connected with differences in moral codes for young men and women.<sup>27</sup>

Models provided for how a man's body should look were directly taken from the dominant style circulating in socialist realism. This was a cult of a muscular and 'healthy body', capable of a great deal of physical work and endurance. It defined the core values of the new socialist masculinity and shock-work policy: that volunteers had to become strong young men and builders of socialism, who could make any sacrifice on the road to a brighter future. A man's body was disciplined, thus marking out a material space through which the Party exercised its power.<sup>28</sup> As clothing is inseparable from bodily practices, it is crucial to note that in the media men were always displayed half-naked. This was common practice at the construction sites and, although it was a consequence of poverty and very warm summer weather, the Party attached a certain symbolic value to this practice. A young male body had to be visible in order to display its strength and health, as the Party transformed poverty into a desirable condition. The Party ensured that the visions of men's bodies disseminated through the press were also enacted: even men unwilling to cut their hair short were expelled from the actions.<sup>29</sup>

Restrictions regarding the visibility of bodies due to different moral codes which circulated applied to both men and women. Unlike their male comrades, young women were not allowed to be 'inadequately clothed'. This was not only the case during work,

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<sup>27</sup> "Mladost naše domovine [Youth of Our Fatherland]," *Borba na Omladinskoj pruzi*, no. 8 (April 8, 1947): 4; See also film: Gustav Gavrin, *Život je naš [The Life is Ours]* (Avala film, 1948).

<sup>28</sup> "Naši mišići, naša tela i naš um sve za izgradnju [Our Muscles, Our Bodies and Our Minds – Everything for the Construction]," *Omladinska pruga*, no. 11 (July 20, 1946): 3.

<sup>29</sup> "Dopis Glavnom štabu Omladinskih radnih brigada [Report to the Headquarters of the Youth Work Brigades]," June 28, 1947, Collection 114 - SSOJ, box 128, The Archives of Yugoslavia.



but also in the morning, as women were expected to be dressed when they got up and left their barracks. Everybody participated in the morning exercises that followed together, with clothed women training alongside shirtless men.<sup>30</sup> Women were expected to be modestly dressed from early morning until they went to sleep at night. To ensure this, the Youth Organisation issued an order stopping the practice of women working at the construction site in swimming costumes or 'half-naked'.<sup>31</sup> The limits imposed by the Youth Organisation, demonstrate that the 'inadequately' clothed female body was viewed as a potential sexual threat to young men. Despite this, women's bodies were more visible than in pre-war times or than in rural areas just after the war. Young women had to live in the same camps as men, an arrangement which was already a huge change for many. Their lives became more public, and, even if they did not share tents or barracks with men, they did participate in a shared daily routine – they ate, played sport, and worked together. Furthermore, the bodies of young people were visible not only to those in the camps, but also all to those living around the construction sites and nearby areas.<sup>32</sup>

### **Silence over Sex**

Besides moral codes ascribed to bodily practices, Youth Work Actions provide insight into norms regarding proper sexual behaviour. During the immediate postwar period, under a powerful Soviet influence, sex and intimacy amongst shock-workers were viewed as taboo topics, even as too immoral to discuss. The Soviets never discussed the sexuality of their shock-workers, which suited the very prudish Yugoslav communists well. The very strict moral code of the wartime Partisans was continued in the youth volunteer projects.<sup>33</sup> Young people had to restrain from any sexual intercourse. Communist officials actually lacked a language for writing about sexuality: even when several women were expelled from their brigades for 'immorality' (with not a single man punished for this reason),<sup>34</sup> the newspapers targeted at young people never published any

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<sup>30</sup> J O, "Kako izgleda jedan dan u radnoj brigadi [One Day in the Work Brigade]," *Omladinska pruga*, no. 7 (June 22, 1946): 5.

<sup>31</sup> Batrić Jovanović, "Odluka Glavnog štaba Omladinskih radnih brigada na gradnji Omladinske pruge Šamac-Sarajevo. Broj 8583 [The Decision of the Headquarters of the Youth Work Brigades at the Construction of the Youth Railroad Šamac-Sarajevo. Number 8583]," July 10, 1947, Collection 114 - SSOJ, box 128, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>32</sup> As demonstrated by the film: Gavrin, *Život je naš*.

<sup>33</sup> During the war, women were always regarded as the culprits for sexual activities in the Partisan units, and the only persons punished. See: Batinić, *Women and Partisan Resistance in Yugoslavia during World War II*, 189–204.

<sup>34</sup> "Dopis Glavnom štabu Omladinskih radnih brigada."

articles about the proper sexual behaviour of young people or mentioned these incidents at all. The sole exception to this silence seemed to be a two-page health pamphlet on syphilis published in 1946, urging young men to refrain from intercourse before marriage and telling them that ‘people of strong will can restrain themselves, only weaklings cannot!’<sup>35</sup> In the 1950s, the Youth Organisation officials continued to struggle to find adequate terms to discuss sexual activities during work actions. Although their meetings were closed to the public, the officials used vague terms and clumsy descriptions to criticise the reckless behaviour of young people that was ‘horrifying’ the rural population living next to one construction site. None of this was published in the youth newspapers, as young people (or at least young women) were required to stay chaste.<sup>36</sup> An even deeper silence surrounded non-heterosexual practices. There is a lack of sources discussing sexual dissent, as if the Yugoslav communists, just as the Soviets, had chosen to erase same-sex love and gender ambiguities from Youth Work Actions. The Party’s understanding of shock-workers was inherently heteronormative, as no other sexuality was considered to be a possibility.

The Youth Work Actions epitomised how the Party leadership imagined new gender relations for young people based on the Soviet model, contributing to the uneasiness that occurred when these projects were abolished. This silence surrounding youth sexuality constituted an attempt to put young people’s sexual activities on hold. Shock-workers were supposed to work, and not think about sex, relationships, or masturbation. Measures were employed to control youth sexuality by policing young women who did not wear enough clothing in the summer heat, expelling women who dared to have sexual relationships, and silencing the media, an act which left youth organisers unprepared for discussions about sex and sex education when these topics reached the public. Furthermore, sexual activities amongst young people was a topic which came to emerge in public debate at the end of the larger Youth Work Actions after the split with the Soviet Union. Accompanied by new cultural policies, which allowed

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<sup>35</sup> “Zdravstvena poruka br. 6 [Health Message No. 6],” 1946, Collection 114 - SSOJ, Box 127, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>36</sup> “Savetovanje članova CK Narodne omladine republika po pitanju rada u srednjim školama u narednoj godini [Meeting of the Central Committee of the People’s Youth of the Republics Regarding Work in High Schools in the Following Year],” August 16, 1952, Collection 114 - SSOJ, Box 58, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

the import of Western cultural products, a debate about sex came to define the 1950s for the Youth Organisation.

### **Young People's Sexuality: Concerns**

Over the short period after the war when the Youth Work Actions were of great economic and political significance, more than a million young people worked for a month or two at the construction sites. Many of them later found employment in industry, which made them the first generation of postwar communists 'properly' educated in accordance with the ideals of shock-work. When the Yugoslav economy moved towards a more gradual developmental approach following the introduction of self-management, the Party also decided to put an end to the large federal Youth Work Actions.<sup>37</sup> Instead, the Party instructed its Youth Organisation to develop new methods of instilling communist values in young people. Although its most aggressive section – SKOJ – no longer existed, this did not mean that the Youth Organisation abandoned coercion as a key method they used.

It seems that the debate over young people's behaviour and sexuality took place in public as soon as the Party had permitted the freer importation of Western films, literature and comic books. This was part of a broader set of changes as regards the Party's position concerning art, which resulted in less control and more artistic freedoms following the split with the Soviet Union. Whilst continuing to believe that the *Marxist-Leninist approach* would prevail, the most highly regarded Party leaders, such as Milovan Djilas and Edvard Kardelj, insisted on a free struggle for artistic expression. In such a struggle, they expected reactionary and vulgar cultural forms to wither away.<sup>38</sup> From 1950 onwards, the Party decided not to import a single Soviet film; instead, they imported thirty-three American films, and an additional 24 a year later.<sup>39</sup> As argued by Goran Miloradović, the importance of this decision cannot be overemphasised. For the Yugoslav communists, cinematography was one of the most important educational tools at their

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<sup>37</sup> The importance of the shock-work system in factories decreased, yet it remained a badge of honour in subsequent smaller volunteering projects. See chapter three for a discussion of the broader impacts of this change.

<sup>38</sup> Lilly, "Propaganda to Pornography: Party, Society, and Culture in Postwar Yugoslavia," 150–51.

<sup>39</sup> Nenad Đorđević, "Beogradska kinematografska svakodnevnica 1950. godine," *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju*, no. 1–2 (1996): 111.

disposal.<sup>40</sup> The Party's agitprop had to approve every film that was made and screened, whilst the Yugoslav film industry received large state subsidies. The Party's obsession with films is vividly demonstrated by its plans to bring a cinema to every village, through organising mobile cinema units. Unsurprisingly, film was the most popular leisure activity enjoyed all over the country, and changes in screening policies prompted concerns.<sup>41</sup>

Many newly introduced American films were immensely popular whilst the film *Bathing Beauty* (1944) was the most successful amongst Yugoslav audiences.<sup>42</sup> The film was a colourful comedy and a love story that had nothing in common with the socialist realism in art and Stalinist ideals that had dominated the previous years. Women wore less clothing than in Yugoslav films and kissed men more openly, orchestras played jazz, whilst young people were not engaged in grand deeds such as war or Youth Work Actions. Instead, young people were having fun, pursuing love, drinking, and dancing. The film generally conveyed a lighter mood than anything else screened in Yugoslavia at that time.<sup>43</sup> It was the sharpest possible contrast to, for example, the film *Život je naš* [Life is Ours, 1948], a film which depicted life and work at the Youth Work Actions, and in which young people were focused on work and productivity, ready to sacrifice their life for the Plan. In such a film, only a villain would drink alcohol or restrain from hardships.<sup>44</sup> However, once the youth organisers had tackled the issue of *Bathing Beauty*'s popularity, they were distraught in discovering that it was more popular than anything Yugoslav cinematography had ever produced.<sup>45</sup> Soon after, they accused this particular film of bringing about the most serious negative changes to young people's behaviour.

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<sup>40</sup> Miloradović, "U traganju za 'novim čovekom': vrhunac kulturne saradnje Jugoslavije i Sovjetskog Saveza 1944-1948."

<sup>41</sup> Sergej Petrović, "Novi uspeh jugoslovenske kinematografije [A New Success of the Yugoslav Film Industry]," *Radnica* 3 (March 1949): 20.

<sup>42</sup> The film was broadcast as early as 1950, which resulted in immediate concerns: L G, "Govorimo o našoj deci [We Are Talking about Our Children]," *Žena danas* 80 (February 1951): 19–20.

<sup>43</sup> George Sidney, *Bathing Beauty* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1944).

<sup>44</sup> Gavrin, *Život je naš*.

<sup>45</sup> The educators warned that students were not eating in order to save money so they could watch the film ten times over: "Stenografske beleške sa diskusije u CK NOJ sa pedagoškim radnicima [Minutes from the Discussion at the CK NOJ with Pedagogues]," June 24, 1953, Collection 114 - SSOJ, Box 76, The Archives of Yugoslavia; Pero Pirker, a later major of Zagreb, worried that 80% of female students surveyed in one grammar school in Karlovac answered that this was their favourite film. See: Petar Pirker, "O borbi protiv negativnih pojava kod omladine [On Struggle against the Negative Phenomena amongst the Youth]," *Narodna omladina* 2 (February 1952): 15–20; Themes explored by Yugoslav cinematography did not help, as the first comedy was filmed only in 1952: Sava Popović, *Svi na more [All to the Seaside]* (Avala film, 1952).

Supposedly, the film was responsible for young people's poor grades in school, immoral behaviour, and their desire for an easy and luxurious life. Amongst the youth organisers, some considered this film to be the primary reason why a number of young people were trying to leave the country illegally, running away to the West.<sup>46</sup>

Discussions on the banning of Western comics, literature, jazz and films went on for years. The Youth Organisation was the most zealous participant in these discussions, arguing that such films, popular novels (which they referred to as trash literature [*šund literatura*]) and comics were a mortal danger threatening young communists. They also advocated administrative measures for publishers and punishments for young people.<sup>47</sup> However, not allowed to forbid alternative approaches to culture and unable to prevent publishers from printing popular comics and novels, they had to prevent the effects. In practice, that meant spying on their fellow school students, making their life particularly difficult if they engaged in activities supposedly encouraged by such publications – namely dating and sex.<sup>48</sup>

By late 1950, youth sexuality started to feature in debates over leisure time and young people's appreciation for Western culture. Sexuality was often discussed in terms of 'primitive dances' which occurred thanks to Western (jazz) influences, as many youth organisers continued to lack the vocabulary to talk and write about sexuality. However, such language is easily decoded. When the Youth leaders talked about the 'bourgeois decadence' that was intended to distract the youth from reality, or the 'moral debauchery' supposedly widespread in the workers' settlements, schools, and universities, or about 'trivial bestiality,'<sup>49</sup> they were referring to the sexual extramarital relationships of young people. However, despite the fact that these descriptions and phrases were framed in such a clumsy manner, the consequence of their use was that sex was brought into public

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<sup>46</sup> "Stenografske beleške sa sastanka na kome se diskutovalo o zapažanjima u radu Narodne omladine [Minutes from the Meetings about Observations Regarding the Work of the People's Youth]," April 16, 1952, Collection 114 - SSOJ, Box 58, The Archives of Yugoslavia; G, "Govorimo o našoj deci."

<sup>47</sup> However, newly imported comics were very popular, increasing financial support for every magazine or publisher that printed them. Young people in smaller towns often waited several hours for trains to bring copies of superhero comics. Youth leaders claimed in vain that the comics had no educational or pedagogical purpose. Their concern was that they contained stories about "impossible fantasies," sometimes even including racism, mysticism, and sensationalism. See: Mičo Rakić, "O stripu i nevaspitim pojavama u omladinskoj štampi [On the Comics and Rude Instances in Youth Press]," *Narodna omladina* 9 (September 1951): 19–25.

<sup>48</sup> Alija Bejzagić, "O nekim problemima kadrova [On Some Problems of the Cadres]," *Narodna omladina* 10 (October 1951): 10–15.

<sup>49</sup> "Zaključci XV plenuma CK Narodne omladine [Conclusions from the Fifteenth Plenum of the Central Committee of the People's Youth]," *Narodna omladina* 6 (December 1950): 2.

debates for the first time. Yugoslav communists had never discussed sex or sexual relationships before, triggering an avalanche of changes in the country's sexual culture, and a decade-long struggle between young people having sex and young communists trying to stop them. In a similar fashion to other social issues discussed in the previous chapters, such as the divorce rate and women's employment, it was the Party's rank and file that voiced concerns. Lower ranking communists who worked in the Party and state apparatus, and youth leaders struggled the most with the loosening of state pressure following 1950.

Young women were always positioned at the centre of the debate, and often the authorities discussed their behaviour alone. Youth leaders viewed women's sexual relationships either as a form of 'unofficial prostitution' or as a 'thoughtless engagement in sexual relationships that last only a couple of days'.<sup>50</sup> Both of these views demonstrate ingrained views regarding women's sexuality. In such discourses, 'unofficial prostitution' referred to young women having sexual relationships to gain material goods. The youth leaders were gravely concerned about the practice of having multiple relationships before marriage, arguing that a young girl might 'develop a habit of continuously searching for romantic flings and erotic bestiality'.<sup>51</sup> The major concern was that these relationships were not resulting in marriage. Young women were supposed to find one ideal partner at the end of their youth, upon becoming an adult.<sup>52</sup> Prompted to investigate these sexual practices further, the youth organisers gathered data from police reports, and were outraged to find that many young women in Belgrade started their sexual life around the ages of fourteen to fifteen, whilst in one workers' neighbourhood which they surveyed, almost half of all women aged between fourteen and seventeen had had sex.<sup>53</sup> Women were blamed for not keeping up with communist standards, whilst men were rarely mentioned.

To their astonishment, the Youth Organisation discovered that young women who had participated in the Youth Work Actions, before being later employed in industry, also had active sexual lives, thus not living up to the earlier ideals. Upon inspecting women at

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<sup>50</sup> "Moralno vaspitanje omladine [Moral Education of the Youth]," 1951, Collection 114 - SSOJ, Box 76, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> According to Dragić, the well-respected Yugoslav sexologist, young women should marry between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. Milorad Dragić, *Rani Brakovi [Premature Marriages]* (Belgrade: Zadrūzna knjiga, 1955).

<sup>53</sup> "Moralno vaspitanje omladine."

the copper mine industrial works in Bor, Eastern Serbia, they reported how when these women were separated from their homes and the care of significant others, they began to engage in ‘promiscuous ways of living.’<sup>54</sup> This problem continued to be discussed in the context of the industrial town of Bor, where the number of men significantly exceeded the number of women, a fact which further increased concerns.<sup>55</sup> Not only had these young women completed their training at the Youth Work Actions, they had also joined one of the cornerstones of Yugoslav heavy industry. Despite being good shock-workers, these young women had failed the Youth Organisation, and were rebuked for being so ‘light-minded [lakouman]’.<sup>56</sup> The writers of these reports could not comprehend the fact that these women were perhaps engaging in an active sexual life for their own pleasure:

‘They live in the so-called Northern settlement (...) of which one can only hear the worst – it is a synonym for heavy drinking, wild dancing, parties and immorality. Although ex-brigadiers have low salaries because of their unskilled jobs, and therefore harder lives, the opinion exists that they are not selling themselves for money, but that this whole eroticism has pleasure as its goal, a fact which is hard to believe.’<sup>57</sup>

For the authors of this report, the only way to understand a woman’s sexual life was in terms of prostitution and selling the body. Women’s pleasure was beyond comprehension. Men in Bor, on the other hand, were only mentioned in the context of there being a particularly high number of STD cases in the area; their sexual desires were understandable.

Concerns about sex in schools were even higher. The Youth Organisation was against any ‘liberal [sic] approach,’<sup>58</sup> and required ‘energetic interventions’ when cases of intimate relationships occurred. Youth organisations in every school had to observe the individual behaviours of pupils, which most frequently entailed closely monitoring

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.; Gavro Cerović, “Neka zapažanja iz rada organizacije Borskog rudnika [Some Observations Regarding the Work of the Organisation of the Bor Mines],” *Narodna omladina* 6 (December 1950): 43–44.

<sup>55</sup> Similar problems were reported elsewhere, making it impossible to argue that some particular areas were less conservative than others. “Easy entertainment” was reported in Nikšić despite the fact that the majority of new workers came from rural backgrounds: Luka Sredanović, “O jačanju organizacije Narodne omladine u železari Nikšić [On Strengthening of the People’s Youth Organisation in the Steel Plant Nikšić],” *Narodna omladina* 3 (March 1952): 42–43.

<sup>56</sup> “Moralno vaspitanje omladine.”

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Milijan Neoričić, “Problemi vaspitanja omladine i naredni zadaci [The Problems of the Youth Upbringing and Future Tasks],” *Narodna omladina* 6 (December 1950): 6.

female high-school students. All pregnancies were promptly reported to the higher levels of these youth organisations, and to the school authorities. As a consequence, almost all of these young women were expelled from the schools, or moved to another one. Young women were equally under pressure even when ‘only’ dating boys.<sup>59</sup> Cases which have been analysed show that the youth organisers were often more obsessive regarding sex than any other group with authority, taking an even stricter stance than teachers.<sup>60</sup> The most common strategy employed was to name and shame the female pupil, create a public scandal, and try to expel them from school. In many cases, they were successful. For example, when a 19-year-old woman from Novi Sad had an affair, a branch of Youth Organisation got involved in orchestrating a public scandal in her high school, following which she was expelled and had to move to Belgrade to finish her education.<sup>61</sup> On several occasions Branka Savić, the leader of the SŽDJ, intervened in schools for them to return expelled students. For example, in one case she intervened when a young woman was expelled for being pregnant, whilst the local youth newspaper only defended the man involved in this case. From her report, it seems that such expulsions were not a rare occurrence.<sup>62</sup>

The problem was that Yugoslav laws did not prescribe sexual maturity. Instead, the Yugoslav legislators defined the minimum age for marriage (eighteen), but left it up to medical experts, police officers, and in this case the Youth Organisation, to define sexual maturity.<sup>63</sup> All of these stakeholders only viewed sexual relations as acceptable during marriage; therefore, the debate was over whether the minimum age was set too low. Medical arguments were widely used. For example, Yugoslav specialists, such as Milorad Dragić, argued that sexual maturity differed from biological maturity, as sexual maturity comes with marriage and a readiness to have children. For young women, sexual maturity was usually after the age of twenty. Men were expected to be older, and to start their sexual lives after having finished military service.<sup>64</sup> In a series of books and

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<sup>59</sup> “Moralno vaspitanje omladine.”

<sup>60</sup> There were, of course, some very strict teachers. Some of them were criticised in *Borba* for their attempts to prevent any contacts between boys and girls, even when pupils were marched to the political meetings. See: Milka Šćepanović, “Primeri ‘pedagoške’ prakse u našim školama [Examples of the ‘Pedagogical’ Practice in Our Schools],” *Borba*, October 1, 1953.

<sup>61</sup> “Zapisnik sa sastanka Komisije za rad među ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ.”

<sup>62</sup> “Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ.”

<sup>63</sup> The same was the case in the Soviet Union, See: Dan Healey, “Defining Sexual Maturity as the Soviet Alternative to an Age of Consent,” in *Soviet Medicine: Culture, Practice, and Science*, ed. Frances Lee Bernstein, Chris Burton, and Dan Healey (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 111–31.

<sup>64</sup> Milorad Dragić, *Devojka : seksualni problemi devojke [Girl : Sexual Problems of Girls]* (Belgrade:



pamphlets, other specialists also argued that young people should abstain from any intercourse before reaching full sexual maturity, i.e. marriage, and that the state should increase the minimum age.<sup>65</sup> Following on from this, university students were also monitored by the Youth Organisation, but university students were under less pressure because they were legally adults. The youth organisers based in student dormitories and at universities still heavily opposed all premarital sexual relationships, and were upset that some students openly talked against marriage, or had children with no intention of getting married. However, they could not expel these students from the universities for engaging in sexual relationships, whilst in the student dormitories the situation mostly depended upon the goodwill of the dormitory director. University students were expelled from the Party only.<sup>66</sup>

As the youth leaders considered all sexual relationships on the part of young women before marriage to be prostitution, in their reports it is hard to distinguish extramarital relationships from prostitution. Furthermore, arrested sex workers were often very young, and fell under the category of ‘youth’ and therefore under the Youth Organisation’s jurisdiction. Basic ideas about the sex trade were taken from the Marxist classics and their Soviet interpretations,<sup>67</sup> arguing that prostitution in capitalism was a consequence of poverty and unfavourable social conditions. In capitalist societies, prostitutes were considered victims rather than perpetrators. On that understanding, prostitution should disappear following socialist revolution.<sup>68</sup> As prostitution still existed,

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Omladina, 1955), 59; Milorad Dragić, *Mladić: seksualni problemi mladića* [*Boy: Sexual Problems of Boys*] (Belgrade: Omladina, 1955), 54.

<sup>65</sup> Aleksandar Mirković, *Štetnost ranih brakova* [*Harmfulness of Premature Marriages*] (Belgrade: Radnički univerzitet; Rad, 1958).

<sup>66</sup> “Moralno vaspitanje omladine [Moral Education of the Youth],” 1951, Collection 114 - SSOJ, Box 76, The Archives of Yugoslavia; The Youth Organisation had a subdivision at the University level, who had the explicit aim of fighting against the ‘penetration of petty-bourgeois inferno, and negative Western influences’: “Rezolucija o političkom i ideološkom radu Saveza studenata Jugoslavije [Resolution on Political and Ideological Work of the Union of Students of Yugoslavia],” *Narodna omladina* 3 (March 1952): 38–39; On students who were expelled from the Party, see: Dragan Marković, “Traženje odgovora [Searching for an Answer],” *Borba*, April 18, 1954.

<sup>67</sup> For Soviet policies on prostitution, see: Elizabeth Waters, “Victim or Villain? Prostitution in Post-Revolutionary Russia,” in *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Linda Harriet Edmondson (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 160–77.

<sup>68</sup> This was the thesis developed by Engels and accepted by socialists in the Balkans at the beginning of the twentieth century. As early as 1908 T. Cvetkov published a book on the social character of prostitution, using Engels’ arguments. Dragan Radulović, *Prostitucija u Jugoslaviji* (Belgrade: Zavod za izdavačku delatnost “Filip Višnjić,” 1986), 22; It was also a useful idea for political reasons. For example, the argument was used to claim that Trieste should become part of Yugoslavia, as due to the capitalist relations dominant there, many women had to turn to prostitution as under capitalist conditions their salaries were lower than men’s. B M, “U Trstu [In Trieste],” *Radnica* 5 (May 1950): 7–8.

Stalinist interpretation solved this problem by claiming that prostitution was a deviation related to the remnants of the old bourgeois classes, whilst prostitutes were ‘parasites’ who sought to avoid hard labour.<sup>69</sup> This view informed Yugoslav measures against prostitution, particularly in the initial postwar years when Yugoslav communists closed down all brothels, and established specific correctional facilities with the goal of ‘developing work habits’ amongst the arrested sex workers. Such facilities were basically forced labour colonies. This was a classical Soviet method, grounded on the idea that manual labour could redeem a person and instil proletarian values. These colonies in Yugoslavia which were very repressive and unsuccessful were closed down in 1947, but the arrested sex workers were still sent to work at construction sites as a form of forced labour.<sup>70</sup> This measure was finally abolished in 1950, when the state tried to promote a more moderate approach, which still included imprisonment and/or banishment from the place in which they were caught.<sup>71</sup> Although this was a slight departure from Stalinist methods, the way in which prostitution was explained had not changed, and prostitutes continued to be described as people with a petty-bourgeois consciousness. The Yugoslav Penal Code of 1951 did not ban prostitution, but prohibited pimping. However, women were punished when prostitution was understood as an act that ‘insulted public morale,’<sup>72</sup> explaining why the sex workers on the street were often the only persons targeted.<sup>73</sup> The later legislation pertaining to the ‘disturbance of the public order and peace,’ enacted in and by each republic, punished sex workers with thirty days in prison.<sup>74</sup>

The data on prostitution is very fragmented as there were barely any studies on prostitution until late socialism.<sup>75</sup> However, it seems that the vast majority of the street

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<sup>69</sup> Jelena Nikolić, “Prostituciji nema mjesta u današnjem društvu [There Is No Place for Prostitution in the Contemporary Society],” *Nova žena*, no. 18 (September 1946): 18; On the analysis of the Soviet approach towards prostitution, see: Waters, “Victim or Villain? Prostitution in Post-Revolutionary Russia”; Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, 31.

<sup>70</sup> Radulović, *Prostitucija u Jugoslaviji*, 181–82.

<sup>71</sup> This was also part of general changes taking place in the understanding of a legal state. As Kardelj explained at the Fourth Central Committee Plenum, they were moving beyond “rough political violence”: Branko Petranović, Ranko Končar, and Radovan Radonjić, eds., “Četvrti Plenum CK KPJ,” in *Izvori Za Istoriju SKJ: Sednice Centralnog Komiteta KPJ (1948-1952)* (Belgrade: Komunist, 1985), 562; Scattered details on forced colonies are available in: Crvenkovski, “Društveni položaj žene u NRM i rad partiskih i masovnih organizacija.”

<sup>72</sup> “Krivični zakonik.”

<sup>73</sup> Some data was collected by Radulović, showing that the number of sentenced women was usually between 820 and 1250 during the 1960s. Radulović, *Prostitucija u Jugoslaviji*, 40.

<sup>74</sup> *Zakon o prekršajima protiv javnog reda i mira [The Law on the Disturbance of the Public Order and Peace]*, *Službeni glasnik SRS [The Official Gazette]*, vol. 20, 1969.

<sup>75</sup> See: Radulović, *Prostitucija u Jugoslaviji*.

prostitutes targeted by the police were young women. There is no federal data on this topic, although Yugoslav sociologists tended to cite 1951 as the year when prostitution was on the increase for the first time after the war, a time corresponding with the end of forced labour.<sup>76</sup> It is possible that prostitution was not on the rise, but that the authorities paid more attention to it, as from 1951 onwards there were massive raids by local authorities on sex workers. In the port town of Rijeka, over just two months in 1951, the local authorities banished 120 women and fined an additional hundred, half of which were under the age of twenty-five. Some of them were workers employed in factories, whilst there were also medical personnel, cooks, and only a small number of unemployed women.<sup>77</sup>

It was up to the Youth organisers to explain these numbers, and to explain precisely why these young women had turned to sex work. In numerous meetings, parental supervision was mentioned as the crucial reason, given the massive migration of young people from the countryside. Those who had arrived in towns were supposedly naïve and easily corrupted by city life. This explanation was once again accompanied by attacks on Western art. As one report explained, prostitution was related to ‘bourgeois understandings and western decadency, reflected in adventure films, bad literature, and pre-war comics.’<sup>78</sup> These views were important as they set the tone for the debate on prostitution for decades. Different Yugoslav institutions and scholars saw prostitution in a variety of ways, as a consequence of deficient families, bad education, immoral identifications, and amongst other things a lust for an easy and luxurious life owing to the influence of Western novels, films, and comic books.<sup>79</sup> Debates on prostitution never mentioned people using the services of prostitutes, and only women were imprisoned during the raids. Only the AFŽ and later SŽDJ leadership questioned why no men were arrested, and called upon the state to provide more incentives for single mothers to find employment, and receive child support.<sup>80</sup> For the Youth Organisation however, the mere

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 44–45.

<sup>77</sup> “Stenografske beleške sa sastanka na kome se diskutovalo o zapažanjima u radu Narodne omladine.”

<sup>78</sup> “Teze o pojavama moralnih i kriminalnih prestupa kod omladine [Notes on Instances of Moral and Criminal Transgressions amongst the Youth],” 1951, Collection 114 SSOJ, box 76, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>79</sup> According to Radulović, such views were often the only ones articulated, as he cites studies from the 1960s. See: Radulović, *Prostitucija u Jugoslaviji*, 27.

<sup>80</sup> Ljubica Medigović, “Referat o zdravstveno-socijalnim zadacima [Report on Health and Social Tasks],” October 16, 1946, Collection 141 AFŽ, box 35, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

mention of prostitution was used as a means of generating anxiety, and increasing control over young women's sexuality.

Once the discussion over youth sexuality had first featured in public, taboo topics such as same-sex relationships also appeared. The Party continued to render gay people invisible in the media, but homosexuality became punishable by the penal code in 1951. Many medical publications also tackled the issue, and their writings actually explain why the law only addressed men. The law specifically stated that for 'unnatural [or against nature – 'protivprirodni'] fornication between two persons of male sex, the offender will be punished with two years in prison'.<sup>81</sup> Doctors and sexologists at that time understood same-sex relations as a disorder [poremećaj] of young men's libido. In actual fact, the writing of this law was the first time after the Second World War that the Communist Party brought pre-war medical experts into the public debate. The best known of these was Aleksandar Kostić, whose books on sexuality written before the war were very popular.<sup>82</sup> After the war, he continued his work, and made public appearances in 1950 when he published several texts in a magazine for female workers.<sup>83</sup> Despite being ousted from the medical school at Belgrade University and all other posts he held in 1952,<sup>84</sup> the state-owned publishing company *Rad* published his three-volume work on sexuality, and consequently Kostić remained the most important authority on this issue. His views on homosexuality require further elaboration as they represented the mainstream medical theory of that time – one that stood behind the penal code and one which represented what was the dominant medical discourse.

The fact that the law only targeted men was no coincidence.<sup>85</sup> According to Kostić, homosexuality was a disorder that only occurred in young men entering puberty,

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<sup>81</sup> "Krivični zakonik."

<sup>82</sup> His *Polni život čoveka* sold out in just a month. In each new edition he had to defend the book from public attacks. Kostić was accused of abusing public morality, and criticised because young people were reading such books. Some even considered his books pornographic. He rebuked this criticism, claiming that his study was based on the science of other sexologists, mostly German. Aleksandar Đ Kostić, *Polni Život Čoveka [Sexual Life of a Man]* (Belgrade: Geca Kon A.D., 1938).

<sup>83</sup> K, "Prelazna doba u životu čoveka [Transitive Cycle in Human's Life]," *Radnica* 7–8 (August 1950): 26–28.

<sup>84</sup> It seems that he was removed after demanding that academic staff be admitted by secret voting at the board meeting, and that "political suitability" should be removed from the list of required criteria. At a Party cell meeting, he was reprimanded by Milka Minić, whilst his dismissal was signed by Mitra Mitrović, both affiliated with the AFŽ, in whose magazine Kostić published his articles. Vojislav A. Kostić, *Život sa neprebolnim bolom u duši: prof.dr Aleksandar Đ. Kostić 1893-1983* (Belgrade: Draganić, 2004), 78–80.

<sup>85</sup>It is yet to be fully examined to what extent men were prosecuted by the courts. Some initial studies have been completed by Vuletić, "Law, Politics and Homosexuality in Croatia, 1945-1952."

and women upon entering the menopause.<sup>86</sup> Interestingly, he argued that sexuality was fluid, and that no one is absolutely a man or a woman. He claimed that a person is a man only if manhood is more deeply manifested than femininity. For that reason, he regarded it important to prevent the development of characteristics associated with the opposite sex.<sup>87</sup> Since according to him the sexuality of young men begins in an intersexual phase, this means that for young men entering puberty their masculinity has to ‘defeat’ their femininity. Homosexuality, then, can be understood as a deviation during that intersexual phase, and only a real threat to men, as reflected in the penal code.<sup>88</sup> Kostić also argued that young people were particularly at risk from older homosexuals, whom he called ‘really sick beings’, who easily seduced adolescents.<sup>89</sup> Through being seduced, young people’s intersexuality could develop into an exclusively same-sex urge.<sup>90</sup>

Another reason why the law did not target women was the dominant medical view circulating as concerns women’s sexuality. Namely, women entering the menopause were also stigmatised and described as insane and jealous hypochondriacs. They were described as having continual mood swings and were often considered predatory towards young men and women. Women’s same-sex desire was explained as a consequence of their insanity and lack of ability to compete with younger women for men. Such views were not only present in medical studies, but also in popular magazines for female workers. However, in positioning women’s homosexuality as relating to the menopause, this resulted in less concerns arising, as these women were easily dismissed as old and less dangerous, whilst the focus of the entire socialist state was predominantly on young people.<sup>91</sup> In addition, there was no political organisation that could channel anxieties concerning old women, whilst there was as regards young men.

As Kostić viewed puberty as a crucial period during which same-sex desire might develop, the Youth Organisation and the AFŽ became particularly interested in this phase. Kostić published his warnings in the AFŽ’s magazines, and these were developed further by the sexologist Milorad Dragić who wrote less ‘scientific’ books about the sexual

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<sup>86</sup> Aleksandar Đ Kostić, *Polno saznanje. Putevi : seksualno vaspitanje [Sexual Knowledge. Paths : Sex Education]*, vol. 3 (Belgrade: Rad, 1953), 85.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:81.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:82.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:85.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:28.

<sup>91</sup> K, “Prelazna doba u životu čoveka”; K, “Šta treba da zna svaka žena [What Every Woman Should Know],” *Žena danas*, no. 87 (September 1951): 19.

‘problems’ of young men and women, which were published by the Youth Organisation. Dragić accepted Kostić’s views, simplified them, and provided advice to young people, their parents and educators. Drawing on Kostić’s theories, Dragić warned that gender characteristics might become confused in puberty, with some men developing feminine characteristics, whilst women might become more masculine in this period. However, Dragić also provided guidelines for parents to prevent this. He suggested that girls should play with dolls, as this presaged their future roles as mothers. Boys, on the other hand, were allowed to play more aggressively, and to demonstrate their masculinity before puberty. Similarly, he advised that girls play sports that would strengthen their bodies, with the purpose of facilitating easier childbirth. Parents had to observe their child’s development over the course of puberty carefully and prepare young people for an adult life, in which they would assume social roles as workers and parents.<sup>92</sup>

Masturbation was another issue that generated substantial concerns, and was not even possible to discuss publically in the late 1940s. Yet from the early 1950s onwards it started to feature in popular books on sexuality and sex education. One might contend that the overarching anxiety of the Youth Organisation was the question of whether young people were preserving their sexual chastity if they were masturbating. Sexologists tried to argue that masturbation was a normal act, explaining that once boys began their regular sexual life, masturbation ‘disappear[ed] without a trace’ from that moment onwards.<sup>93</sup> However, as with girls’ homosexual desires, experts easily dismissed the importance of masturbation for young women. In his manual for parents and sex educators on the topic of girls, Dragić barely wrote anything about women’s sexuality. He mentions masturbation, but was more worried about the ‘hysterical disturbances’ of young women, and the preparations they needed to make in order to become mothers.<sup>94</sup>

### **Defining Communist Morality**

In light of the above, the Youth Organisation’s biggest challenge was to enforce sexual abstinence, and it seemed that they had sexologists on their side. By the mid-1950s,

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<sup>92</sup> Dragić, *Mladić : seksualni problemi mladića*, 17; Dragić, *Devojka : seksualni problemi devojke*, 10, 49; Magazines for women also contained numerous texts on puberty after 1950. Mothers were told to be particularly careful when their children were going through puberty, as in that time they were very prone to mental “disorders”. See: K, “Prelazna doba u životu čoveka”; K, “Šta treba da zna svaki roditelj: Doba sazrevanja u životu deteta [What Every Parent Should Know: Maturing Cycles in Child’s Life],” *Žena danas*, no. 86 (August 1951): 20.

<sup>93</sup> Dragić, *Mladić : seksualni problemi mladića*, 29.

<sup>94</sup> Dragić, *Devojka : seksualni problemi devojke*.

the debate had become so conspicuous that the Party had chosen to get more involved directly through state institutions and the People's Front. Public lectures on sex education proved very popular, each one of them being filled to the brim.<sup>95</sup> In 1952, the government instructed schools to find some way of informing young people about sex, and sex education entered school curricula as a topic studied as part of 'social and moral education.'<sup>96</sup> It is impossible to measure to what extent this decision was applied in schools, but it shows that the Party did not ignore the issue any more. In the following year, Tito explained to the last AFŽ delegation that communists were not against love between young people, but that limits regarding morality should be imposed. He told them, and to the Youth Organisation to find some method to educate these young people.<sup>97</sup>

The most important attempt to control the debate around sexuality, and to define a proper communist morality once and for all, was a large three-day conference in which sexologists, doctors, pedagogues, teachers, and socially active people (*društveni radnici*) participated in Zagreb, in November 1955. The conference was jointly organised by the SŽDJ, the Youth Organisation, and the Alliance of Societies for the Care of Youth and Children. The significance of this conference was not only that it placed sex, family planning, and sex education at the centre of debate, but that it also rehabilitated various academic traditions, including psychoanalysis.<sup>98</sup> The conference opened with a paper on the patriarchal and the socialist family by Dr. Jože Potrč. This was followed by papers on sex education for young people, abortion, contraception, divorce, puberty, the sexual curiosity of young children, the sexuality of young women, etc.<sup>99</sup> Presentations given at this conference require closer scrutiny as they demonstrate the unwillingness of some Yugoslav thinkers to detach their thought from Soviet gender models, yet also the first major attempts being made to alter these ideals by bringing notions of sexual happiness and contraception to the fore.

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<sup>95</sup> Contrary to the political lectures that were not so well attended: "Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ."

<sup>96</sup> Anka Matič, "Seksualni odgoj omladine [Sex Education of the Youth]," December 1955, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 7, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>97</sup> "Četvrti kongres AFŽ završio rad [The Fourth AFŽ Congress Has Finished its Work]," *Borba*, September 29, 1953.

<sup>98</sup> Mat Savelli has tackled the issue of psychoanalysis, arguing that it became stigmatised after the war: Mat Savelli, "The Peculiar Prosperity of Psychoanalysis in Socialist Yugoslavia," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 91, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 262–88.

<sup>99</sup> D P, "O porodičnim odnosima kod nas [On Family Relations]," *Žena danas*, no. 136 (December 1955): 1.

Although the presenters were mostly scholars, social organisations present expected to receive information and suggestions on how to influence the sexuality of young people, and how to work with parents.<sup>100</sup> However, from the minutes of the conference discussions, it seems that conference organisers had different motives. The Youth Organisation was more interested in receiving directives on how to control the sexuality of young people, whilst the SŽDJ wanted to synchronise sex education with ‘social reality’ and to promote women’s equality.<sup>101</sup>

In the keynote paper, no changes were made concerning how the socialist family was imagined - the ideas were the same as those of 1930s Soviet thinkers. The keynote speaker Jože Potrč ostensibly ‘returned’ to Engels and Lenin, arguing that socialism must show its superiority over capitalism. He urged the withering away of the patriarchal family in which spouses were not equal partners, rather promoting a socialist family based on gender equality, with spouses joined in love and mutual respect. He was aware that women were far from equal in the Yugoslav society of the day, and he explained that a material base should first be developed, and much effort made as regards public education. Building on this, he argued that socialism did not only consist of developed industry and high living standards; it also entailed socialist relations between people.<sup>102</sup> In just one sentence, he summarised the essence of the communist morality, calling for the elimination of ‘everything negative from the past: power and the abuse of power, the disintegration of the family, adultery, cheating, fierce jealousy, the seduction of girls and their coercion into having an abortion, infidelity, prostitution and similar phenomena that humiliate people, running away from responsibilities towards their own children, and similar serious asocial behaviours.’<sup>103</sup>

Potrč avoided any mention of Stalin, or indeed of any Soviet author from the 1930s, yet this was only a rhetorical manoeuvre. A significant part of Potrč’s paper criticised those who argued for the disintegration of the family in socialism. To support

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<sup>100</sup> As explicitly stated by the Alliance of Societies for the Care of Youth and Children: “Izveštaj o radu Društva za staranje o deci i omladini Jugoslavije u periodu od 1 maja 1954 do juna 1956 [Report about Work of the Society for the Care of Children and Youth of Yugoslavia between 1 May 1954 and June 1956,” June 1956, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 7, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>101</sup> “Zaključci [The Conclusions],” December 1955, Collection 354 SŽDJ, box 7, The Archives of Yugoslavia; By May 1954, the AFŽ veterans decided to bring the question of sex education to the SSRNJ. “Zapisnik komisije za rad sa ženama Saveznog odbora SSRNJ.”

<sup>102</sup> Jože Potrč, “O socijalističkoj porodici [On Socialist Family],” *Žena danas*, no. 136 (December 1955): 2–4.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



his views, he called on Soviet authors who were against ideas concerning the disintegration of the family in the 1920s, giving long citations of their works. The main concern of these authors was parents' responsibility for their children, and Potrč argued that the socialist family should express the most profound love towards their children, and the state would provide them with the necessary assistance. Issues such as abortion, divorce, and prostitution were also tackled. He suggested that through evolving a socialist morality these phenomena would all disappear without any policing or administrative measures. Calling for sex education, he suggested that young people be gradually introduced to ideas about sexuality. Considered as a set, the ideas that Potrč presented were far from new. They were actually closer to the Soviet Union of the 1930s than to the Soviet Union of Lenin's time.<sup>104</sup> He never mentioned Stalin, yet even when quoting certain Soviet specialists from the 1920s, he cited less prominent authors, rendering a Yugoslav detachment from Stalinism purely rhetorical at this high political and academic level.

Another keynote speaker, Dr. Anka Matič, urged for planned state interventions in young people's sexuality. She argued that sex education exists in every society either formally or informally, and that it was only natural that in socialism, communists should channel such education. The sexual urges of young people in socialism had to be satisfied according to 'socialist ethical principles,' which entailed being against any kind of sexual exploitation, sexual relations for the sake of financial advantage, or sex for 'unsocial and inhuman means'.<sup>105</sup> Matič advocated open talk about sex with children if they posed questions, greater understanding from parents and pedagogues, and more information being provided to students so as to protect them from 'unhealthy sexual phenomena – pervertism, homosexuality and lesbianism.'<sup>106</sup> Matič then argued that healthy sexual relations should include a 'correct' stance towards the opposite sex, mutual respect for men and women, and full equality. She called for comradeship, independence, and a love that leads to marriage. An ideal socialist marriage would be between two young people who are in 'physical and intellectual harmony' and have 'mutual respect, the same views

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<sup>104</sup> See: Anne E. Gorsuch, "'A Woman Is Not a Man': The Culture of Gender and Generation in Soviet Russia, 1921-1928," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 3 (October 1, 1996): 636–60; Lynne Attwood, "Rationality versus Romanticism: Representations of Women in the Stalinist Press," in *Gender in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Linda Harriet Edmondson (Houndmills; New York, NY: Palgrave in association with Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, 2001), 158–76.

<sup>105</sup> Matič, "Seksualni odgoj omladine," 5.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

regarding building socialism, a love for children, etc.’<sup>107</sup> She added that they should campaign against early sexual relationships, but not because of ‘Catholic morality’, but rather because young people should be more mentally mature.<sup>108</sup> Potrč and Matič’s papers should be read as official stances, but both leave a lot of space for different interpretations. They were both strict regarding sexual conduct, but not prohibitive if it was heterosexual, and both asked for the state intervention with limited policing.

Other discussants also suggested that premarital sexual relations should be avoided, but also that communist morality should be imposed by controlling young women’s sexuality. The original titles of these papers, such as ‘Neglected Girls – Neglected Sexual Education’; ‘The Sexual Education of Female Youth’; ‘Vagrancy, Prostitution and Delinquency amongst Female Youth;’ reveal an intention to place young women at the centre of the debate. Not a single paper discussed men alone. Discussants argued that young women should avoid intimate relationships, that every relationship should lead to marriage, and that the purpose of marriage was to have happy children.<sup>109</sup> Some discussants directly emphasised that girls should be the keepers of morality, criticising those who ‘held hands with boys, and went to dance parties’. Some called upon the conference to define and declare ‘a code of behaviour’ that would support abstinence.<sup>110</sup> This situation is comparable to a similar situation which emerged in the Soviet Union, in which new Party members promoted to positions of authority asked for more concrete ethical rules, and an officially written moral code. Such a code was never written, but personal lives played an important role in Stalinist purges.<sup>111</sup>

Others present opposed such views and were vocal in their opposition. Dušanka Kovačević, an experienced AFŽ activist, was applauded after criticising a society in which one might be called a ‘*propala žena*’ [a fallen woman], but never a ‘*propali muškarac*’, [a fallen man] for having multiple partners. She further argued that young women alone should decide whether they were happy in a relationship, and that they

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>108</sup> Matič, “Seksualni odgoj omladine.”

<sup>109</sup> “Zapisnik sa sastanka u vezi priprema za savetovanje po problemima o odnosima u porodici i seksualnog vaspitanja [Minutes from the Meeting Regarding the Preparation of the Consultations about Family Relations and Sex Education],” February 4, 1955, Collection 117, Savez sindikata Jugoslavije, box 233, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>110</sup> “Savetovanje o nekim problemima odnosa u porodici i seksualnog odgoja omladine [Consultations about Some Problems of Family Relations and Sex Education of the Youth],” December 1955, Collection 114 - SSOJ, box 73, The Archives of Yugoslavia.

<sup>111</sup> Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, 58–62.

should have sexual relations before marriage if they loved a man. Dr. Andrija Krešić argued that sexual abstinence could lead to homosexuality, like in Christian monasteries. Dr. Zec referred to Freudian theories about the phases of sexual development, and insisted that young men should be taught how to please women, since according to his data 78% of women were ‘frigid’ due to men’s incapability. Yet another doctor was vocal about the double standards of morality, arguing that an insistence on women’s virginity was a remnant of patriarchal morals, and that young people were actually progressive because they were breaking with patriarchy. These opinions could not be further away from the morality imposed during Youth Work Actions.<sup>112</sup>

Further steps towards de-stalinisation were visible in the discussion about contraception. For the first time there were voices calling for contraception to be made widely available, so that young people could have children when they were ready. Dr Franc Novak was the main figure advocating the availability of contraception. Once again, young women featured centrally in the debate, and Novak had to argue that they would not become promiscuous [raspuštene] if they were to gain access to contraception. Instead, he suggested that they be educated to use contraception responsibly.<sup>113</sup> Novak argued that the state should do more to prevent unwanted pregnancies, arguing that children conceived in this way would not enter a ‘healthy family environment’ when they were born. He called for cheap and widespread contraception to prevent abortions. What is particularly interesting in the context of Stalinism is that Novak argued that besides the potential unhappiness of unwanted children, he reasoned that a fulfilling sex life in marriage was equally important in a socialist society.<sup>114</sup> If young women had more sex due to the availability of contraception, Novak said that they would at least stay healthy.<sup>115</sup> These views were very important, and the SŽDJ published them in all its magazines following the conference. Later that year, Yugoslav gynaecologists had their own congress, and one of their requests to the government was to provide more easily accessible contraception.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> “Savetovanje o nekim problemima odnosa u porodici i seksualnog odgoja omladine.”

<sup>113</sup> Franc Novak, “Abortus i kontracepcija [Abortion and Contraception],” *Žena danas*, no. 136 (December 1955): 10.

<sup>114</sup> Novak, “Abortus i kontracepcija,” January 1956.

<sup>115</sup> Franc Novak, “Abortus i kontracepcija [Abortion and Contraception],” *Žena u borbi*, no. 2 (February 1956): 14–16.

<sup>116</sup> Franc Novak, “O III kongresu ginekologa i opstetričara [On the Third Congress of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians],” *Žena u borbi*, no. 12 (December 1956): 1–2.

In analysing these papers, and the minutes from these discussions, it seems that the conference had the opposite effect to that the Youth Organisation initially planned. Calls for the Party and its organisations to take stricter stances towards young women's sexuality were dismissed. Instead, the document compiled as the conference conclusion established that 'modern' marriage should be based upon the equality of spouses, mutual love and understanding, and that young people should be helped to become 'the bearers of new relationships between men and women.'<sup>117</sup> There was no mention of any strategy for imposing sexual abstinence. Furthermore, the conference conclusion mentioned the need for contraception, the improvement of legal practices regarding women's discrimination, more services for mothers, and the introduction of 'scientific' sex education for young people. The document also demanded that more popular literature on sexual education adapted for young people be published, and asked for the further systematic examination of youth sexuality.<sup>118</sup>

The importance of this conference cannot be overemphasised. It brought together leading academics, communists, doctors, educators, and social activists. Papers were reprinted in various magazines whilst publishing activity on the topics of sex and sexual education flourished. It was impossible to remain silent about sex, thus leading to a gradual relaxation of all sex-related policies. Interpretation of Soviet models still influenced policy and decision-making, for which the Yugoslav penal code serves as the best example, but a slow detachment from Soviet influences can be observed. Gradually, the Youth Organisation started to lose battles. Young women's sexuality was still closely monitored, but over the following decade, their repressive capabilities weakened. In 1963, a young woman was allowed to write openly about her romantic relationship at the Youth Work Action, reflecting stories that previous generations of volunteers had to make love secretly. Her experience was published in a popular magazine for women demonstrating the scale of changes in sexual culture.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> "Zaključci."

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> "Iz dnevnika jedne brigadirke: Bila sam na radnoj akciji [From the Diary of One Brigadier: I Was at the Youth Work Action]," *Praktična žena*, no. 191 (December 20, 1963): 16–18; On the sexual culture of the 1960s and 1970s, see: Biljana Žikić, "Dissidents Liked Pretty Girls: Nudity, Pornography and Quality Press in Socialism," *Medijska Istraživanja* 16, no. 1 (2010): 53–71.

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This chapter has examined gender policies towards youth during the heights of Stalinist rhetoric and practice, and subsequent widespread concerns regarding youth sexuality following the conflict with the Soviet Union. Youth Work Actions were used as an example of how the Party and the Youth Organisation imagined ideal gender relations and roles. They highlighted the complexity of Yugoslav gender policy, formulated along Stalinist lines. On the one hand, they represented a radical shift as compared to the pre-war position. The Party included young women in very physically demanding projects such as building infrastructure, just as they believed that Soviet women had earlier participated in industrialisation. In following the ideals associated with shock-work, as gained through Soviet pamphlets and magazines, the Party created an image of a young woman who was able to compete with men, even in completing hard physical work, whilst practices that the Party considered being based on gender-based discrimination were strictly forbidden. However, the Communists considered it a given that some duties would be reserved exclusively for women. Young women were expected to pay more attention to their personal hygiene than men, and were also expected to be more concerned about other workers' hygiene. Some young women undertook additional jobs that young men were supposedly 'incapable' of doing, in addition to being shock-workers carrying out heavy physical labour. Many of these women came to take on what were traditionally considered to be maternal roles, and were praised for the selfless help they offered to their male comrades. Women would stitch their comrades' shirts, sort out their laundry, and even check to see if they were covered with enough blankets at night. At the same time, the newspapers would praise them for being nice to everyone. This was all in addition to other expectations exclusive to young women, such as being modest and chaste in intimate relationships. The Party's moral purity was enforced through the control of women's sexuality, with only women being punished for breaking moral codes regarding sex.

After the conflict with the Soviet Union, the Party crafted a new cultural policy that permitted the import of Western films, comics, and literature, and anxiety over young people's education turned into a widespread debate. Sex featured heavily in subsequent discussions, with young women targeted by the Youth Organisation for having intimate relationships. Many young women were expelled from schools for having sexual relationships whilst their behaviour was compared with prostitution. The Youth

Organisation insisted that young women remain under close paternal care, dismissing the possibility that they might have sex for their own pleasure. At the same time, the Youth Organisation prompted fears about prostitution, homosexual relationships, and all kinds of other issues relating to sex.

However, once sex had featured in the public debate, the Party encountered problems in controlling the discussion after years of repressing the subject. The Party opted for an educational approach as a means of intervening in youth sexuality. Public lectures about sex became very popular whilst schools were also instructed to hold talks about sexuality. The most important attempt to address concerns over youth sexuality was a large conference which took place in 1955, when several social organisations brought the most prominent sexologists, academics, doctors, educators, and activists together. During the conference, those who argued for contraception and a freer attitude towards women and young people's sexuality opposed those who suggested harsh measures and the imposition of abstinence. Ultimately, the conference's concluding document took a more open approach towards young people's sexuality, marking a landmark in the history of postwar Yugoslav sexuality. Sex irreversibly became part of the public debate, thus initiating a gradual distancing from Stalinist views on youth sexuality, seven years after the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict.

## Conclusions

This thesis has explored contradictions and peculiarities of Yugoslav gender policies in the first decade following the Second World War, examining them in the context of broader transnational processes of policy transfer from the Soviet Union. The Yugoslav Communist Party formulated its gender programme on Stalinist models which included political and legal rights to women, equal opportunities for work and education, but also the promotion of family life encouraging women to be mothers. Abortion was banned in the Soviet Union, normative distinctions between masculinity and femininity sharpened, whilst the government enacted harsh measures against prostitution and 'deviant' sexual behaviours. However, Stalinist gender policies also resulted in more women finding jobs in industry than ever before, whilst the prestige of female collective farmers increased in the imagined social hierarchy with many peasant women becoming well-known nationwide for their labour and productivity. Moreover, the representation of women in different ruling bodies surged. Once accepted by Yugoslav communists, the basics of these Soviet models remained unchanged even after the split between these two countries. Soviet models promised a radical change in light of the legal, political, and economic disempowerment of women during the interwar Yugoslavia.

By adapting the Soviet 1936 Constitution and several Soviet laws, Yugoslav communists enacted a new constitution and legislation that fundamentally changed the social system in the short space of a year following the war. As regards gender relations, the new laws guaranteed equal rights to men and women, recognised civil marriage as the only legal kind, and took authority away from ecclesiastical courts. They also introduced divorce and alimony, granting the division of property according to the contribution, whilst domestic chores were recognised as a valuable labour. Inheritance law gave women and men equal rights whilst the Party removed legal obstacles surrounding women's employment and education.

Legal transformation was only the first step. Yugoslav communists initiated rapid industrialisation and collectivisation projects, interpreting Soviet models regarding gender that played a significant role in policy formulation and the implementation of these processes. Yugoslav industrialisation resulted in a surge in women's employment, whilst Soviet women were promoted as examples for Yugoslavs to follow. Indeed, many Yugoslav women became shock-workers earning benefits and rewards. This system

brought a new generation of people who participated in the socialist project into the spotlight, demonstrating their remarkable social mobility. Ivka Dugorepac, Sonja Erbežnik and Matilda Baruh were all well-known shock-workers, thanks to the media attention they received for their labour productivity. Tens of thousands other women and men from rural backgrounds climbed the social hierarchy and made careers that were unimaginable before. Such a system revalued the importance of their work, allowing them to create new social identities. Whilst the majority of women found jobs in light industry, thousands were employed in heavy industry and mining, challenging men who dominated the industrial proletariat.

The Soviet system of collective farms heavily informed how the leading communist women imagined solutions to the problem of gender relations in the Yugoslav countryside. Considering peasants, and particularly peasant women as ‘backward,’ whilst at the same observing hard living conditions, domestic violence and deeply patriarchal attitudes, communist leaders searched for drastic solutions. They hoped that collectivisation would revalue women’s work, bringing protection from what they considered being very conservative surroundings, and implementing services that would ease their lives. In that sense, collectivisation was more than a simple increase in peasants’ productivity; it was planned as a tool to alter gender relations. By using the Soviet model of an ideal collective farmer – the Kolkhoznitsa – Yugoslav communists attempted to encourage peasant women to participate in collectivisation, to reject traditions, and fight for socialism in the countryside. Several female collective farmers were promoted in the press, invited to conferences, and elected to positions in the federal parliament, symbolising the apparent success of socialist policies.

Soviet discourses and policies were also replicated as regards Muslim women. Considering Muslim women to be the most backward group in the country, Yugoslav communists saw their veils as symbols of slavery, and as a real physical barrier to their inclusion in the socialist project. Certain ‘backward’ practices were more often considered a part of Muslim religious traditions, although the ‘backwardness’ of Muslim families was no different to that of any other family in the Yugoslav countryside. Many Christian peasant women wore traditional clothing, and had similar notions of shame and respect for male seniority. Poverty was equally widespread. Nevertheless, with an aim of creating homogenous and loyal population, the Party designed a set of policies to target Muslim population separately. Emancipation of Muslim women was at the fore of these policies, hoping to exert influence over the Muslim communities.



Finally, Stalinist ideals of young people putting all their energy into work were transposed to Yugoslavia from the very beginning, encompassing all classes and social backgrounds. Believing that young people could be moulded to fit its intentions, the Party wanted them to the highest ideals: Young people had to become loyal shock-workers, avoiding any sexual relationship before marriage. Sex and love were taboo topics, hidden behind vague ideas regarding a proletarian sex ethic, neither discussed during the war nor in the immediate postwar period. However, as demonstrated through the example of Youth Work Actions, there were clear differences in moral codes. Young women were supposed to be prepared to be both mothers and workers, whilst they were also expected to be the keepers of the socialist morality, their sexuality being policed more than that of men.

There were, of course, adaptations made to Soviet models showing how Yugoslav communists negotiated Stalinist norms. As included evidence shows, laws were introduced in a more lenient form. For instance, divorces were easier to obtain than in the Soviet Union, whilst punishments for avoiding alimony were softer. The situation concerning abortion was also lenient; whilst Yugoslav communists followed the Soviet code and kept abortion outlawed, they decided not to punish women. Although the rest of the law remained the same, this stipulation crucially changed women's practices as they found strategies to get abortions at clinics, either by initiating an abortion at home, or by claiming they were living in negative social conditions. The medical community was divided, with many notable doctors insisting on punishing women and removing any stipulations that would allow abortions for social reasons. However, the leading communist women controlled the debate and opted for the middle ground, rejecting punishing women, but also rejecting the legalisation of abortion. This shows the complexity present in transferring Soviet models. First, they had to be interpreted, adapted, and then applied, whilst the targeted recipients were never passive in that process, forcing the agents of transfer to negotiate with multiple actors at the same time. The power of the Communist Party was never definite, and it did not allow leading communists to ignore fragmented interests which often undermined the application of Soviet models.

Leading Yugoslav communist women had troubles in reconfiguring the male political hierarchy with fragmented interests particularly visible. Even the few women near the top of the Party hierarchy could not exert an influence on major political and economic decision making. Instead, they worked on social issues and legislation.

Working from the AFŽ - an exclusively women's organisation established on the model of Soviet Zhenotdel - the most powerful communist women were insiders to Party politics, but unable to direct sharp criticism at the Party. Yet, the AFŽ was a valuable organisation for many women, and the only forum where they could articulate their interests. Once the Party had abolished the AFŽ for the purported ideological reason of not allowing a separation of men and women in the political sphere, many local AFŽ activists were side-lined. Chapter two revealed the presence of retaliating moves made by many men in rural areas against women who dared to be politically active and challenge gender hierarchy. The Party failed to facilitate women's interests in politics and promote a new generation of activists and politicians, which resulted that Yugoslav women remained underrepresented in the Party, and at all levels of government.

Equality envisioned by Soviet models was a world away from Yugoslav practice, as the implementation of these models showed the limits of the Party's power in changing societal norms. For instance, the state was unable to enforce alimony payments both in the cities and in the countryside, whilst the increased divorce rate caused widespread concerns. As showed in chapter three, even gender relations between workers were not easily altered, and there were manifold resistances to women entering industrial jobs. The unions were dominated by men, and the evidence available suggests that men were often given preferential treatment as regards placements for additional trainings. The directors of factories and firms resisted the provision of childcare services whilst they tolerated and sometimes reinforced masculine and hostile shop floor atmosphere. Many new workers, recruited from the countryside, did not subscribe to a Marxist vision of proletarian solidarity and respect for women. Many were sceptical about women's working abilities and technical skills. Significantly, it was often the Party's rank and file that opposed women's employment.

Once the economy jittered following the Soviet blockade of 1948 and 1949, women were the first to lose their jobs, demonstrating that old gender norms were deeply ingrained. The majority of women who worked in heavy industry, mining and construction were dismissed, contributing to the specific feminisation of less well-paid and less prestigious jobs. The communist leadership including Josip Broz Tito played a crucial role in that process, defining which jobs were considered appropriate for women. This was followed by a series of directives and laws that excluded women from jobs deemed harmful to motherhood, regardless of whether those women had children or not.

Following these exclusions, women were mostly employed in health, education and light industry.

With the introduction of Yugoslav self-management in the economy, men dominated the newly introduced workers' councils and ruling boards of factory and firms, even in cases where women constituted the majority of the workforce. The elections for these councils sometimes resulted in a gender war, with women's personal lives determining their chances of nomination - any transgression of morality was noted, impeding women's chances. Furthermore, these councils constituted a further location in which women had to be active, besides their regular jobs, caring responsibilities and domestic chores. Following economic difficulties experienced after the break from the Soviets, child services were reduced by one-third, often leaving women with no support. As Stalinist gender policies never envisioned the sharing of domestic chores, the Party only offered a technological fix in the household.

In the countryside, the policy of creating Yugoslav versions of the Soviet *Kolkhoznitsa* did not outlive collectivisation. Contrary to Soviet experience, Yugoslav collectivisation failed. Peasants' resistance was widespread, and women often spearheaded such resistance. Many peasants viewed collectivisation as a usurpation of their autonomy, stealing their land and produce, and certainly not as a road to a socialist paradise. As shown in chapter four, resistance was also widespread regarding changes to any cultural norms and traditions, particularly as concerns women's inclusion in the ruling boards of collective farms, and in valuing and paying for women's work. Aggressive collectivisation was abandoned, whilst troubles surrounding the forcing of peasants onto collective farms and in imposing socialist ideals caused a shift in understandings of gender dominant amongst the activist women in the Party. Whilst unthinkable during the first years after the war, they now moved the focus of their criticism onto men's resistance to women's equality. This shift also corresponded with the end of the AFŽ and marked the end of organised attempts to alter gender relations in the countryside.

Application of Soviet models proved successful, however, once it had been imposed on Muslim women, who perhaps were the most vulnerable group in the country – both as women and as a religious minority. Yugoslav communists imposed universal, secular elementary education that was mandatory for everyone, whilst through imposing universal marital and inheritance laws, sharia law ceased to exist. Furthermore, the Muslim population was targeted by large-scale literacy and health campaigns, and finally,

by the so-called veil lifting campaign. Although inspired by the Soviet Union, Yugoslav communists went a step further in banning the veil, and punishing women as well as men who forced them to wear it. As suggested in chapter five, veil lifting was advocated by communist women, who often lacked any perspective concerning the importance of veils to women in Muslim communities. Consequently, all attempts to unveil Muslim women prior to its prohibition failed. Muslim men were blamed for this although the evidence suggests that women resisted it the most. Many Muslim women could not overcome a notion of shame, refusing to leave the house and rejecting being seen in the public so that their husbands could demonstrate their loyalty to the Party. However, once the law was passed, due to the vigilant activities of the activists, veils disappeared from public space. Muslim women had to adapt, whilst those who endorsed the socialist project made notable careers for themselves, some becoming members of federal parliament.

A detachment from Stalinism and Stalinist ideas was slow and often not genuine. Besides the veil lifting campaign, it was probably the most visible regarding policies towards sexuality. Changes in cultural policy that permitted the importing of Western arts, media and cultural products, prompted a discussion concerning sex of young people for the first time. Youth leaders and pedagogues focused the debate on young women labelling them as prostitutes for having premarital relationships. For many years they engaged in a struggle against young people dating and having a sex life. By policing schools, many young women were expelled or moved to other places, whilst youth leaders were aghast to discover that even some women who participated in Youth Work Actions were leading an active sex life. The Youth Organisation spearheaded the attempt to keep restraints on sexual freedoms, whilst in such atmosphere homosexuality became punishable by the penal code in 1951.

The Party intervened by introducing some forms of sex education, either through public lectures, educational books, or school curricula. The most important attempt to direct the debate and provide guidelines for intervening into young people's sexuality was a large conference of medical doctors, pedagogues, and activists which took place in late 1955 in Zagreb. This conference marked the peak of the struggle between those who wanted to impose full premarital abstinence, and those who desired a more lenient approach towards youth sexuality. Young women were again at the centre of the debate. Many speakers struggled to detach their views from a Soviet perspective whilst even the keynotes suggested planned interventions in young people's sex lives. However, the conference opened the floor to other voices, who asked for contraception to be made

widely available, whilst several notable doctors and activists argued that young people should be permitted to pursue a freer sex life. More importantly, with the conference's concluding paper, the second view won. It marked the beginning of a destalinisation regarding views about sexuality, which led to a much freer and less controlled 1960s.

The case of Yugoslavia reveals that following the Second World War, Soviet models heavily influenced the Yugoslav approach taken to gender policies. It also demonstrates that endeavours of Yugoslav communists to reshape Yugoslavia were more successful in the spheres of politics and the economy, rather than in the changing of cultural norms. Soviet models were fundamentally different, and efforts to apply them in practice resulted in severe resistance. Interests were often divided. On some occasions the Party's rank and file could not understand nor accept certain policies, whilst on others leading communist women had different interests to the male leaders. Often, ordinary people who supported the Party on political issues heavily opposed changes to gender relations. Women's interests were also fragmented. Some women in the Party supported easier divorces, whilst others asked for extramarital affairs to be punishable by law. Some peasant women gained social mobility through collectivisation, whilst others staunchly opposed and spearheaded resistance. Leading communist women insisted on the unveiling of Muslim women, whilst many Muslim women resisted it. Other Muslim women used the opportunity to climb the social and political hierarchy. Young people struggled to have sex, hiding from the gaze of the Youth Organisation, whilst their peers policed them. Young women suffered the most from such policing, whilst other women in the Youth Organisation advocated full abstinence. Gay men were prosecuted, whilst lesbians were not targeted by the penal code. Some women endorsed the call to work in industry, only to be later fired or moved to other jobs considered being less harmful to them and their perceived important role as mothers. Many of them had no children at all. Stalinist gender policies were complex enough in the Soviet Union, and once they had been transferred elsewhere, they were enriched by the interpretations of the leading Yugoslav communists, and altered by the local surroundings in which they were applied. This thesis has told a story of the complexity of Yugoslav gender policies informed by that transfer.

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