

# **Sofia Nădejde. A nineteenth-century Romanian Socialist Feminist**

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## Abstract

The topic of my thesis is socialist feminism in late nineteenth- century Romania and the way in which it has been acknowledged (or not) and presented in the Romanian scholarly literature. As a case study I focused on Sofia Nădejde's (1856-1946) writings and activity. I became interested in this topic when I realized that Sofia Nădejde is not studied in the current Romanian feminist historiography. Romanian feminist history has developed since 1989 but there seems to be no interest in the topic of socialist feminism and Sofia Nădejde has been almost entirely neglected. I studied Sofia Nădejde's work and activity in the socialist circle and the Social Democratic Workers Party of Romania and her articles in different Romanian socialist journals. My research questions were: how can we characterize Sofia Nădejde's social and political ideas? Second, how are Sofia Nădejde's writings and activity described in the Romanian historiography of the communist period and in recent feminist Romanian historiography? Regarding the first question, my analysis of some of Sofia Nădejde's journalistic work has shown that Sofia Nădejde was not just a feminist who supported women's emancipation and equal status with men, but also a socialist thinker. Regarding the second question, I have shown the partial and in my view biased ways in which the various bodies of scholarly literature treat Sofia Nădejde. The communist historiography limited itself to identifying her as a socialist, an "activist" who promoted working-class and peasants' rights, without acknowledgment of the feminist dimensions of her work, whereas the feminist historiography neglected the socialist aspects of her work and life and presented her as a (gender or liberal) feminist only. By contrast, my thesis emphasized the importance of regarding Sofia Nădejde in her historical context, which was that of socialist feminism.

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# Introduction

## Introducing the topic

In my thesis I will discuss socialist feminism in late nineteenth- century Romania and the way in which it has been acknowledged (or not) and presented in the Romanian scholarly literature. As a case study I will focus on Sofia Nădejde's (1856-1946) writings and activity. Sofia Nădejde was a member of the Social Democratic Workers Party of Romania (SDWPR), while her husband, Ioan Nădejde, was the head of the party. Although both of them resigned from the SDWPR at the beginning of the twentieth century, her journalistic and literary work was highly influenced by socialist ideas. She wrote in Romanian socialist journals such as *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), *Lumea Nouă* (New World) *Lume Nouă Literară și Științ ifică* (New Literay and Scientific world), *Drepturile Omului* (Human Rights), *Munca* (Work), and *Evenimentul Literar* (The Literary Event).

I became interested in this topic when I realized that Sofia Nădejde is not studied in the current Romanian feminist historiography. Romanian feminist history has developed since 1989 but there seem to be no interest in the topic of socialist feminism and Sofia Nădejde has been almost entirely neglected. The last book published about her dates from 1976, when Victor Vișinescu, a literary scholar and member of the Communist Party of Romania, edited a volume with her literary writings. He also published her biography in 1972. In addition, as I will discuss in chapter 6, not only has there been a lack of interest in her life and work, but the way the historiography deals with her is problematic as well. There is a gap between the communist

historiography that described her as a prolific *socialist* activist and the feminist historiography after 1989 that sees her only as a *feminist*, and does not take into consideration her whole activity, as a journalist, activist and member of the SDWPR. My goal in this thesis is to put Sofia Nădejde in her historical context, which is that of socialist feminism. I am also interested in this topic because in Romania there is a constant “harassment” of any socialist orientation, which is immediately labeled as a form of communism, and thus rejected, or simply neglected. This happens at the level of scholarly publications, but also at the level of media and everyday life.

In order to get a better understanding of Sofia Nădejde’s life and work I studied a number of her publications, where she addressed the topics of women’s financial independence and supportive legislation for women-workers, human rights for all members of society, in particular for working-class and peasant women, which included access to basic education and health care, and recognition of the housework that women, with a special emphasis on peasant women, did as “work”, and should be paid for accordingly.

## **Arguments and Research Questions**

In my thesis I will advance three arguments in addressing this topic. The first is that Sofia Nădejde was a socialist feminist, which needs to be stated because there is no literature that acknowledges her as such. The fact that she was a socialist feminist has two dimensions: one in relation to the topics she concentrated on, and second in relation to the women, she spoke for, meaning working-class and peasant women. My second argument is that, Sofia Nădejde was an important journalist and activist. My third argument is that the historiography has inadequately described and characterized her. As I will discuss in chapter 6, she is depicted either a socialist or a feminist, but not as a socialist feminist, as I will show in my thesis. Therefore, my research

questions are, how can we characterize Sofia Nădejde's social and political ideas feminist? How are Sofia Nădejde's writings and activity described in the Romanian historiography of the communist and in recent feminist Romanian historiography?

Below I will describe the main nineteenth century socialist feminists in Europe and then I will give brief definitions to feminism, socialism and socialist feminism. After that, I will present my methods, research design, and the thesis structure.

## **Main nineteenth century socialist feminists in Europe**

The historian Charles Sowerwine listed Charles Fourier (1772-1837) as the “first theoretician of both socialism and feminism” and said that his writings constituted an important influence on later socialists, “from Flora Tristan to Karl Marx”. Fourier was one of the first who made the statement, in writing, that women's emancipation is one of the most important aspects of all social progress, “the extensions of the privileges of women is the general principle of all social progress”. He wrote this in 1808.<sup>1</sup> In a chapter on women in his 1808, *Théorie des Quatre Movements et des Destinées Générales (The Theory of the Four Movements and of the General Destinies)*, Fourier also wrote, how marriage is enslaving women: “Is not a young woman a mere piece of merchandise displayed for sale to the highest bidder as exclusive property? Is not

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Sowerwine, “Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women's Movement from the French Revolution to World War II”, in Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, Mary E. Wiesner (eds.) *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 359



the consent she gives to the conjugal bond derisory and forced on her by the tyranny of the prejudices that obsess her from childhood on?”<sup>2</sup>

In Great Britain, it was Robert Owen (1771-1858) who shared ideas similar to Fourier’s. Sowerwine characterizes Owen as “the founder of the first popular socialist movement that was both socialist and feminist”.<sup>3</sup> According to Barbara Taylor in *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* “the Owenite commitment to feminism was part of the general humanist outlook which Engels later identified as a key feature of all utopian thought: the ‘claim to emancipate...all humanity at once’, rather than ‘a particular class to begin with’.”<sup>4</sup> Owens’s desire was to abolish what was understood as the traditional concept of marriage, in which women were regarded as slaves for their families. Robert Owen was widely read and became popular in the socialist circles. Among his followers, we can find early feminists, such as William Thomson and Anna Wheeler, who in 1825 published the *Appeal of One Half the Human Race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain Them in Political and Thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery*.<sup>5</sup>

Women’s liberation through industrialization and “earning wages for themselves” was important for the new capitalist industrialized world that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. Karl Marx (1818-1883) concentrated his efforts on the struggle of working class for achieving political and social rights. Sowerwine argued that, “Marx’s analysis, however, was well suited to the new world of capitalist industrialization and democratic political structures, and if his vision of women’s equality was narrower than that of the early socialists, it

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Groag Bell and Karen M.Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents: 1750-1880*, vol. 1, (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1983), 40

<sup>3</sup> Charles Sowerwine, “Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women’s Movement”, 359

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Virago Press), 1983, 35

<sup>5</sup> Sowerwine, “Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women’s Movement” , 359

was more sharply focused.”<sup>6</sup> Marx and his collaborator, Frederick Engels (1820-1895) elaborated on the “double oppression” that women were subjected. One was within the family, in relation to men and the nineteenth century marriage politics, and the other in relation to the industrialized capitalist state. Marx argued in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, that marriage “is incontestably a form of *exclusive private property*.”<sup>7</sup> Engels, his collaborator, stated in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, first published in 1884, “within the family, he is the bourgeois, and the wife represents the proletariat.”<sup>8</sup> This long time historical oppression was doubled, by the industrialized capitalist world in which women of the nineteenth century were living. “They were subjected to the same exploitation as men but at the same time to a ‘double oppression’: employers could pay women half the wages of men and depend on the family to keep them alive. In this way women’s dependence on men facilitated their exploitation by capitalists and vice versa: their wages were kept low because their husbands helped provide for them, and in turn their low wages kept them dependent on their husbands.”<sup>9</sup>

August Bebel’s book *Die Frau und der Sozialismus*, first published in 1879,<sup>10</sup> was one of the most popular and “widely read” of the male socialist who supported women’s emancipation, and who wrote about the “woman question”. His book was a source of inspiration for Engels and his *Origin of the family, Private property and the State*, published in 1884.<sup>11</sup> Although Engels’s book became more famous, it was Bebel who first tried answering and providing solutions to the “woman question”. In 1891, “Bebel revisited his book to take account of Engels work”, as

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Eugen Kamenka, *The Portable Karl Marx*, Penguin, 1983

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, first published in 1884, this edition Abercombe St.: Resistance Books, 2004, p.86

<sup>9</sup> Charles Sowerwine, “Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women’s Movement”, 366

<sup>10</sup> August Bebel (1840-1913) was one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party from Germany and the head of the party.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory Claeys, ed., *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Thought*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 272

Sowerwine showed.<sup>12</sup> Bebel argued that women have a double burden to bear: “Firstly, women suffer as a result of their social dependence upon men, and the inferior position allotted to them in society (...) Secondly, women suffer as a result of their economic dependence, which is the lot of women in general, as it is of the proletarian men.”<sup>13</sup> In addition, he equals the answer to the woman question with the solution of the social question: “Our goal then is, not only to achieve equality of men and women under the present social order, but (...) to remove all barriers that make one human being dependent upon another, which includes the dependence of one sex upon the other. *This* solution of the woman question is identical with the solution of the social question”.<sup>14</sup>

Bebel’s book supported most of the feminist demands of that time, including the right to vote, to enter universities, to practice different professions, to own private property. Sowerwine said that, “the book went even further than did most feminists. It posed radical new demands, such as the right to dress freely and the right to sexual satisfaction. And it dismissed the idea that women had a “natural calling” to raise families (...) the book argued that the domination of women by men was rooted not in biology but in history.”<sup>15</sup>

Another key figure in the history of socialist feminism was the German activist Clara Zetkin (1857-1933). The historian Richard Evans has characterized Zetkin as the, “leading socialist theorist and activist in the field of women’s emancipation in Europe before the First World War. Her friend and political ally Rosa Luxemburg has gained more widespread fame, but

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Sowerwine, “Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women’s Movement” , 367

<sup>13</sup> August Bebel as quoted in Alice S. Rossi, “Working-Class Socialist: August Bebel (1840-1913)” in Alice S. Rossi (ed.), *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to De Beauvoir*,( Northeastern University Press, 1988, 4<sup>th</sup> edition), 501

<sup>14</sup> August Bebel as quoted in Alice S. Rossi, “Working-Class Socialist: August Bebel (1840-1913)” , 502

<sup>15</sup> Charles Sowerwine, “Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women’s Movement” , 368

Luxemburg had little political interest in question's of women's rights or women's place in society."<sup>16</sup>

Karen Honeycutt said that Clara Zetkin as a leading figure in the German Social Democratic Party was "acknowledged for her organizational work among working-class women in Germany and socialist women throughout the world."<sup>17</sup> Zetkin's ideas influenced other "socialist theorists of women's emancipation in other countries", like Alexandra Kollontai in Russia and Louise Saumoneau in France.<sup>18</sup> Zetkin perceived the cause of women's inferior position in society to be the economic dependence on man. The connection between socialism and women's emancipation was that of the emancipation of labor. However, for Zetkin, "economic independence alone" was not enough for women's emancipation, as Honeycutt emphasized.<sup>19</sup>

Despite her public speeches and "voluminous writings", she never gathered them in a major book. Her ideas, as Evans said, have to be "pieced together from scattered speeches, articles and pamphlets."<sup>20</sup> Clara Zetkin did not developed a theory of "sexual freedom and emancipation", as Alexandra Kollontai, neither died in a "martyr" way as her friend Rosa Luxemburg. One of the reasons why her "reputation had diminished and not grow" after her death, Evans argued, is that of Zetkin's "appropriation by orthodox Marxism-Leninism (...) As a passionate supporter of the Bolshevik Revolution, a friend of Lenin, a committed communist."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Richard J. Evans, *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism and Pacifism in Europe 1870-1945*, (Sussex and New York: Wheatsheaf Books and St. Martin's Press, 1987), 15

<sup>17</sup> Karen Honeycutt, "Clara Zetkin: a socialist approach to the problem of women's oppression" in *Feminist Studies*, 3/4 (1976): 131

<sup>18</sup> Evans, *Comrades and Sisters* ,16

<sup>19</sup> Honeycutt, "Clara Zetkin: a socialist approach ", 134

<sup>20</sup> Evans, *Comrades and Sisters*, 16

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Richard Evans points that even if Zetkin is seen and perceived as a communist heroine or an anti-feminist/anti-“bourgeois” feminist she was neither, “although she is conventionally portrayed either as a Marxist-Leninist heroine or an anti-feminist villainess, in reality Zetkin was neither. The available selections of her work carefully omit all the numerous resolutions, protest and speeches that marked Zetkin out as a persistently oppositional figure in the communist movement of 1920s. Nor do the great majority of accounts of her life and work take account of the many complexities and ambivalences of her theoretical position before 1917.”<sup>22</sup>

## **Brief Definitions**

In order to develop my case that Sofia Nădejde was a socialist feminist, I will now provide some definitions of (liberal) feminism and socialist feminism, definitions that I will use throughout my thesis when analyzing Sofia Nădejde’s life and work.

In 1988, the historian Karen Offen published an influential article called “Defining Feminism: A comparative Historical Approach.” The definition of feminism goes as follows: “As an ideology, feminism incorporates a broad spectrum of ideas and possesses an international scope, one whose development stages have historically been dependent on and in tension with male-centered political and intellectual discourse.”<sup>23</sup> Along similar lines, in her 2000 book *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*, she wrote that feminism “is an encompassing program of sociopolitical critique and remediation, with gender issues at its very core. These issues may intersect with other more localized concerns – class, race, age, religion, etc. – in complex fashion, producing specific and differently situated expressions of feminism

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<sup>22</sup> Evans, *Comrades and Sisters*, 23

<sup>23</sup> Karen Offen, “Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach”, *Signs*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Autum, 1988): 199-157, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/317664>, accessed on 24/01/2012

(...) to be a feminist is necessarily, specifically, and primarily to challenge male domination in culture and society, in whatever geographical location or situation in historical time, or in whatever combination with other issues.”<sup>24</sup> Karen Offen also wrote that, “the words ‘feminism’ and ‘feminist’ are used today throughout the Western world and beyond to connote the ideas that advocate the emancipation of women, the movements that attempted to realize it, and the individuals who support this goal. Few people in the English-speaking world realize, however, that the origin of these terms can be traced to late nineteenth-century France political discourse. *Féminisme* was then commonly used as a synonym for women’s emancipation. French dictionaries (and many earlier historians) have erroneously attributed the invention of the word *feminisme* to Charles Fourier in the 1830s, but in fact, its origins remain uncertain. No traces of the word have yet been identified prior to the 1870s.”<sup>25</sup> Karen Offen, then has defined feminism here as focusing primarily on challenging male domination.

Socialist feminism, according to Barbara Ehrenreich in “What is socialist feminism?” (1976), sees the economic system, as the main source of oppression, therefore the capitalist society is the main source of oppression for women.<sup>26</sup> For socialist feminism, women’s liberation is part of a larger demand for social, political and economic justice.<sup>27</sup> According to Barbara Ehrenreich, class struggle occurs not only in the economic system, but, “class struggle occurs in every arena where the interests of classes conflict, and that includes education, health, art, music.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 24

<sup>25</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950*, 19

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, “What is socialist feminism?” First appeared in *WIN* magazine June 3, 1976, retrieved from [www.cym.ie/documents/feminism.pdf](http://www.cym.ie/documents/feminism.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

In the *Encyclopedia of Women and Gender*, edited by Judith Worell and published in 2002, socialist feminism is described as attempting to integrate “(1) an analysis of the structure of production, class and capitalism; (2) the control of women’s bodies, reproduction and sexuality and the manner in which this control is shaped by patriarchy; (3) the impact of gender role socialization.”<sup>29</sup> Other characteristics of socialist feminism mentioned here are the explanation of individual experience through social realities; and that fact that work in the capitalist system is producing “worker alienation from both the product and process of their work.”<sup>30</sup> In addition, “socialist feminists believe that individual opportunity alone will not lead to an egalitarian world (...) Universal access to economic and work options, education, housing (...) and child care is essential.”<sup>31</sup>

In the nineteenth century, at the anniversary of the French Revolution in 1889, German feminist socialist Clara Zetkin stated, “the emancipation of women, together with that of all humanity, will take place only with the emancipation of labor from capital.”<sup>32</sup> This is a statement that appeared in Sofia Nădejde’s writings, as I will show later. Richard J. Evans in *The Feminists: Women’s Emancipation Movements in Europe, America, and Australasia, 1840-1920* published in 1977, stated that socialist feminism started to develop “as the industrial revolution spread across Europe and America in the course of the nineteenth century, so the women of the new urban working classes begun to add their voices to those of their social superiors in the call

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<sup>29</sup> Judith Worell, *Encyclopedia of Women and Gender: Sex Similarities and Differences and the Impact of Society on Gender*, (San Diego and London: Academic Press), 2002, 473

<sup>30</sup> Judith Worell, *Encyclopedia of Women and Gender*, 473

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Marilyn J. Boxer, “Rethinking the Socialist Construction and International Career of the Concept Bourgeois Feminism” in *American Historical Review*, (February 2007):131; see also Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents 1750-1880*, vol. 1, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 87-90 and *Clara Zetkin: Selected Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner, (New York, 1984), 45-50

for women's rights.”<sup>33</sup> Socialist feminism sees the world as a source of antagonisms, between poverty and wealth, capitalist system and working-class, male domination and women's oppression. All these are topics addressed by Sofia Nădejde in her writings. Oppression can take different forms, in different times, and the differences are important. For example, Sofia Nădejde emphasizes the changes that came with the transformation of Romania from an agrarian society to an industrialized one.

Charles Sowerwine argued that feminism and socialism were related, not only because they originated in the same period, but also because of their similar demands and concerns: “Feminism and socialism originated together, out of the crucible of the new world built on the industrial and French revolutions. During the first half of the nineteenth century, general social concern, increasingly known as socialism, conflated the problems of women and of workers. In the second half of the century, these two concerns were articulated in the distinct movements of feminism and socialism.”<sup>34</sup>

I do not know if socialism and women's emancipation originated together, as Sowerwine argues, but most of their goals were similar in the nineteenth century (the right to vote for citizens of “both sexes”, economical independence of women, their access to education, health care and different professions, “equal wage for equal work”). I am using all these definitions mentioned above in demonstrating that Sofia Nădejde was a socialist feminist.

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<sup>33</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America, and Australasia, 1840-1920*, (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1977), 144

<sup>34</sup> Sowerwine, “Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women's Movement”, 360



## Methods and Research Design

The methods that I will use in my thesis are that of historical and historiographical research as well as textual analysis. I could not consult all the primary sources (Sofia Nădejde's private and public correspondence, minutes of the Workers Club lectures/meetings), in the National Archives in Bucharest, because they "mysteriously" vanished from the collections. In addition, the documents regarding the constitution of SDWPR were not available for research, neither the personal founds of the main nineteenth-century socialists.<sup>35</sup>

I have read Sofia Nădejde's articles in different socialist Romanian journals and newspapers from the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, such as *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), *Femeia Română* (Romanian Woman), *Lumea Nouă Literară și Științ ifică* (New Literary and Scientific World), and *Drepturile Omului* (Human Rights). I translated myself parts from Sofia Nădejde's journalistic work, although most of them were written in a Romanian language that is a bit different from the contemporary one. My primary sources were the journals mentioned above, which can be found in the special section dedicated to nineteenth-century publications in the Central University Library and in the National Archives in Bucharest.

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<sup>35</sup> These were the answers that the responsible archivist for that period of time gave me, in the National Archives from Bucharest gave to me, when I was doing my research in April 2012.

## Thesis Structure

My thesis consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, I show how the political, social and cultural environment in Romania developed in the nineteenth century. In the second chapter, I will present a short history of socialism in Romania from 1879 to 1899, the socialist circle in Iași where Sofia Nădejde and her husband were active as well as the Romanian socialist ideology, and the creation of the SDWPR (The Social Democratic Workers Party of Romania), of which Sofia Nădejde was a member. In the third chapter, I will provide a short overview of Romanian feminism/s in the nineteenth century. The main question that this chapter will try to answer is, what types of feminisms existed in nineteenth-century Romania?

In order to better understand her ideas and writings, but also her life, in chapter four I will present a biography of Sofia Nădejde, largely based on the information that the Romanian scholar Victor Visinescu included in his biography of Sofia Nadejde, published in 1972. In chapter five I will analyze some of Sofia Nădejde's journalistic work in the journals *Femeia Română*, *Contemporanul*, *Drepturile Omului*, and *Lumea Nouă Literară și Științifică*. The questions that I will try to answer here are: which topics did Sofia Nădejde write about in these journals and how can we characterize her political ideas in these writings? The sixth chapter will deal with the communist and the feminist historiography regarding Sofia Nădejde's work. I will try to answer the question: how are Sofia Nădejde's writings and activity depicted in the Romanian historiography of the communist period and in the more recent feminist history? The thesis end with a short concluding chapter in which I will answer my main questions.

## Chapter I

### The general historical context of nineteenth- century Romania

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I present a short description of the Romanian nineteenth-century historical context, in chronological order starting from the treaty of Adrianople (1829), when Wallachia and Moldavia were placed under Russian military rule, until the country's independence and the development of Romanian industry at the end of nineteenth century. The historical situation of nineteenth-century Romania was marked by different foreign occupations; the Ottoman, Russian and Habsburg Empires all occupied parts of the Romanian territory. This is why one of the most important political achievements for Romania in that time was the country's independence in 1878. The Unification of Wallachia and Moldavia into one state of Romania, a foreign prince, a new Constitution, modern legislation, the emancipation of peasants, the making of a nation, the development of industry and the creation of the working class, and the struggle for men's and women's human rights were all part of this eventful century.

My short presentation of the most important dates, actions, and social stratification in the Romanian history will contribute to a better understanding of the context in which feminism appeared in Romania and of the kind of society and political ambiance Sofia Nădejde lived and wrote in. It is important to mention that the eastern part of Romania, Moldavia, with its capital

Iași, had fewer resources, besides wood and forests, while Wallachia, had (and has) important natural resources of oil.

## **The Adrianople Treaty (1829) - Wallachia and Moldavia are placed under Russian military rule**

The Adrianople Treaty (1829), which concluded the Russo-Turkish War (1828-1829) between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, was a moment of great significance in the political and economical life of the Principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia. The Ottoman sultan recognized the administrative autonomy of Wallachia and Moldavia and the Principalities duty to provide Constantinople with cereals and other goods was ended and free trade and commerce with other countries, beside the Ottoman Empire was now possible.<sup>36</sup> Through this treaty the position of Russia was consolidated within the Principalities. Wallachia and Moldavia had to pay an annual tribute to Constantinople, and the sultan confirmed every year the election of a Romanian prince.<sup>37</sup>

The Russian occupation brought about radical changes in the political life of these two Principalities. An important aspect was the introduction of a “fundamental law”, in 1834, called “Regulamentele Organcice” (The Organic Regulations), which served as a Constitution, in both

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<sup>36</sup> According to Keith Hitchins, Wallachia and Moldavia were at the beginning vassals of the Hungarian Crown, and remained like this until their independence in 1330 (Wallachia) and 1359 (Moldavia). The two provinces became under formal Ottoman suzerainty in 1476 (Wallachia) and 1538 (Moldavia), but they preserved their self-rule in all aspects except foreign affairs.

<sup>37</sup> Keith Hitchins, “The beginnings of the modern state” in Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Șerban Papacostea, *Istoria României* (History of Romania), (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1993), 358; see also Keith Hitchins, *Români 1774-1866* (Romanians 1774-1866), (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997), 76

of them. Neither Wallachia nor Moldavia had a “Constitution” before. The “Regulamentele Organice” had as primary objective the maintaining of the present social order and the consolidation of the “boieri” (boyars) privileges. These boyars were landowners, who evolved “from acquisitive village leaders who took over the best village lands and gained great influence as the nineteenth century elite, they exploited the peasantry according to the Ottoman model.”<sup>38</sup> These boyars domination the political life, through their exclusive right as rulers, which was expressed by their *exclusive* presence in the central administration and through their exemption from having to pay, and the ownership of the whole land.<sup>39</sup> The peasants were subjected to not only the rule of the boyars, but also to not one, but also two foreign occupations, the Russian and the Ottoman. It must be then clear, that the peasants were at the bottom of the Romanian social order, there were differences among the peasants, though, and the lowest category were “dependent peasants”, also called “rumâni”, “vecini”, “iobagi” and “pălmași”, had no legal status, and were the property of the boyars, who could sell them at any time and do with them what they pleased.<sup>40</sup>

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in 1834, the urban population from Wallachia and Moldavia doubled its number. The migration from rural to urban areas was in its beginnings.<sup>41</sup> A contrasting fact was that of the growing number of the “dependent peasants”, who had to pay monthly taxes to the boyars,<sup>42</sup> and the decreasing number of “free peasants”. According to Hitchins, the “dependent peasants” constituted most of the population from both Wallachia and Moldavia. Another aspect was the heavy social contrast that began to appear in

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<sup>38</sup> David Turnock, *Aspects of Independent Romania's Economic History*, (Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2007) 4

<sup>39</sup> Hitchins, “The beginnings of the modern state”, 359

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 360

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 362

the rural world. In the category of “free peasants”, we can notice few rich peasants, who were the ruling class of a village, and the poor peasants, who began to migrate in the cities and became factory workers. Another social class from the rural area, a form of middle rural class, was composed in highly numbers of teachers and priests.<sup>43</sup>

The “Regulamentele Organice”, as a whole, were part of the modernization process, because they initiated laws regarding the fiscal system, the planning of an annual budget, the strengthening of state authority, and the control over Orthodox Church. Clergy’s role and its intrusion into the political and civil spheres of the state were diminished. Society, as a whole, was pushed into the process of secularization, a “heavy” separation of state and church.<sup>44</sup>

## **The 1848 Revolution and Cultural Change**

In the period between the end of the Russian occupation and the beginning of the 1848 Revolution, the Romanian society began to change. The oriental ottoman traditions were still present and in strong cohabitation with western ones (mainly French), in the cultural, social and political realms.<sup>45</sup> The rulers, called “domni” or “domnitori” were in permanent conflict with the boyars, who supported the Ottoman Empire and opposed the “westernization” of the two Principalities.<sup>46</sup>

Another element made its entrance in this period: a public that could read, with a basic education, who supported and was interested journals and newspapers that began to appear after 1830. The percentage of middle and upper class boyars was decreasing, making place for a new middle-class (not the same as the western bourgeoisie) constituted of teachers, priests and public

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Hitchins, “The beginnings of the modern state”, 360

<sup>45</sup> Neagu Djuvara, *Intre Orient si Occident* (Between Orient and Occident), (Iasi: Junimea, 2004), 24

<sup>46</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Românii 1774-1866*, (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997), 96-98

notaries, most of them from rural areas. This “new” middle class was the class that read newspapers and journals.<sup>47</sup>

Among the intellectuals of the time, we find sons and a few daughters of boyars who completed their studies in Paris, and for whom France becomes their second home. In contrast with their families, who supported an oriental, ottoman lifestyle, these “new people” were fascinated by the western word, and adopted quickly its culture. This culture, and especially the French one, constituted their lifestyle model; even the language they spoke, when they returned home, was no longer Romanian, but French. As Alex Drace-Francis showed in *The Making of Romanian Modern Culture* (2006), “one most not mistake this for the average level of the entire Romanian public – a growing number could already speak French and would not need the conduit of translation to access French literary works – it certainly shows that the publishers were as interested in developing a commercial market as in providing enlightenment through literature.”<sup>48</sup> Most intellectuals were fluent in Turkish, Russian and German, but the French language became the “ideal of civilization”. This new generation was called “pașoptistă” (forty-eighters) and was the one that brought the spirit of the revolution to all social classes. Even if their ideal was the Western civilization, they knew that in practice, in Wallachia or Moldavia it would not work, so they adapted their western ideas to local realities. Knowing the West, they better understood the place where they came from, the East, the “borderland of the civilized world” as it was constructed in the imaginary of those times.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Romanian Modern Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2006), 121

<sup>48</sup> Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Romanian Modern Culture*, 121

<sup>49</sup> Lucian Boia, *Istorie si mit in constiinta românească* (History and myth in the Romanian consciousness), (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), 10

The 1848 Revolution and the new “pașoptist” generation who made it possible, arrived in a moment when all social classes from both Principalities were rebelling against the social, political and economical conditions in which they lived. Many boyars did not agree with the authoritarian methods used by the “domnitori”, the rulers of the Principalities, because they were afraid that their own power would diminish. Others wanted moderate reforms in agriculture and public administration; the middle-class protested against the high taxes required by the state, demanding the right to vote and the possibility of forming political organizations and parties. The peasants were decided to fight against the high taxes, that the boyars requested to them and against the general subjugation in which they were living. They wanted to emancipate themselves from the bondage, and live as free people.<sup>50</sup>

The events from Western Europe, the overturn of Louis-Philippe, the French king, in February 1848, and the fast spread of the rebellion to Vienna, Budapest, and the German cities, made the intellectual Romanians eager to make their own revolution. They elaborated a manifesto, in the form of a proclamation entitled “Proclamația de la Islaz” (The Islaz Proclamation), in which they demanded individual freedom for every category of people, access to education for everybody (including women), universal suffrage for “both sexes”,<sup>51</sup> free press, a new legislation and Constitution, the emancipation of peasants from bondage, as well as the emancipation of women.<sup>52</sup> Those remained only demands, because the revolution did not succeeded.

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<sup>50</sup> Hitchins, “The beginnings of the modern state”, 365

<sup>51</sup> “Both sexes”, referred to men and women.

<sup>52</sup> Hitchins, “The beginnings of the modern state”, 368



## Unification of Wallachia and Moldavia. New economic and social reforms

In 1859, the two Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia formed the new state of Romania. This happened because, Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866), was elected as “domnitor” in both of them, by the upper and middle-class boyars. Prince Cuza studied in Paris, and belonged to the “pașoptist” generation, involved in the 1848 revolution. David Turnock points to the political changes and progress that this union made possible, arguing that, “important political progress was made through the union of the formerly separate Principalities with the ending of Russian protection after the Crimean War (1856) and the inspired decision of 1859 when Prince Cuza was elected in both Moldavia and Wallachia combined with Western support for the larger state as a bastion against Russian expansion. However, Ottoman suzerainty continued until the country gained its independence in 1877 at the time of the joint Romanian-Russian intervention in Bulgaria, following the suppression of revolt by the Ottomans and sovereign status was acknowledged by the powers at the Congress of Berlin in 1878.”<sup>53</sup>

The Habsburg and Ottoman Empires did not support the new prince, but other Western powers, like Great Britain and France, approved the double election, on August 26, 1859. The Ottoman sultan at the officially recognized the unity on 22 of November 1861 at the Constantinople Conference.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the country was still under Ottoman suzerainty.

During his seven years of ruling from 1859 to 1866, Prince Cuza tried to transform the Romanian society into a modern one, working with the Liberal and Conservative parties. Under his government, the first Romanian University was founded, in 1864, at Iași. However, this was

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<sup>53</sup> Turnock, *Aspects of Independent Romania's Economic History*, 6

<sup>54</sup> Hitchins, *Românii*, 88

just “one aspect of the transformation of the entire political system during the 1860s. Among the fundamental reforms of the period – secularization of the monasteries, emancipation of the peasantry, currency reform, a modern constitution –was the Law of Public Instruction of 1864.”<sup>55</sup> With this law education became obligatory for every inhabitant of Romania, as Drace-Francis says, “For the first time (and six years before Britain), education was made obligatory for all inhabitants of Romania, male and female, between eight and twelve years of age. Nevertheless, because of the ideological divergences that existed between the Liberal and the Conservative parties, this law was not applied entirely. Drace-Francis noted, “while a Liberal education minister like C.A Rosetti proposed in 1866 that the Law should be massively publicized ‘with placards, leaflets, beating of the drum’, and pursued the ideal that ‘there should not remain a single commune without a school not a single boy or child who lacks sainted book-learning’, his Conservative successor admitted frankly that ‘education is obligatory only on paper’, and advocated the abolition of many primary schools.”<sup>56</sup>

The situation of illiteracy was not resolved with this law and there were many discrepancies between different areas, “In 1865 there were 57 schools in one Moldavian county (Suceava), while in another (Putna) there was only one.”<sup>57</sup> Alex Drace-Francis described that “nearly ninety percent of those enrolled nationally were in the first or second year, and more than half of all pupils failed (or failed to attend) the end-of-year examination, and were therefore in danger of forgetting any literacy skills they may have learned.”<sup>58</sup>

Regarding the emancipation of peasantry and their economical and social status, prince Cuza, attempted to make reforms that will bring about change and better living conditions in the

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<sup>55</sup> Drace-Francis, *The Making of Romanian Modern Culture*, 148

<sup>56</sup> Drace-Francis, *The Making of Romanian Modern Culture*, 148

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 149

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

rural world. David Turnock noticed that, “prince Cuza attempted to modernize landholding in 1864 by giving land to the peasants and abolishing their feudal obligations, but smallholdings were not viable as family farms and the peasants were obliged to enter into highly oppressive labor contracts (or sharecropping arrangements) in respect of the estates retained by the landowners. This was the social basis of a farming system that made Romania the world’s fourth largest wheat exporter.”<sup>59</sup> Katy Fox said in *Peasants into European Farmers?* that “the agrarian law of 1864 also included the secularization of monastic domains”. Peasants received land “in relation to their wealth, which was calculated according to the number of oxen they owned, creating divisions into *fruntași* (four oxen, ‘those at the fore’), *mijlocași* (two oxen, ‘those in the middle’) and *pălmași* (none, ‘those with palms of hands only’).”<sup>60</sup> This “reform” failed, because the peasants were not having “economic strength to stand up against political inequality, neither sufficient political power to withstand economic oppression.”<sup>61</sup>

## **A foreign prince and a new Constitution**

In the year 1866 Alexandru Ioan Cuza was forced, by a liberal-conservative political coalition, to step down as the prince of Romania. The new ruler, Carol Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (1839-1914), was a foreign prince from Prussia. The Ottoman sultan accepted him, under the condition that the United Principalities (Romania), remained integral part of the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>59</sup> Turnock, *Aspects of Independent Romania’s Economic History*, 8

<sup>60</sup> Katy Fox, *Peasants into European Farmers?* (Zürich and Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), 55-56

<sup>61</sup> Fox, *Peasants into European Farmers*, 56

The most important law that the new prince abrogate was the Constitution (1866), which was a copy of the Belgian one. This was the first modern Constitution of Romania.<sup>62</sup> Once again, western values and laws were introduced in Romania, without any consideration of the local realities and social structures. As Hitchins showed, this Constitution was in essence a liberal one, which transformed Romania into a constitutional monarchy. The liberties of the male citizens were guaranteed, as well as the full equality in front of the laws, and freedom of the press and of expression expression. The powers of the prince were diminished, while the Parliament gained more. There were only two parties, the Liberal and the Conservative. The new Constitution did not respect the 1864 Agrarian Law, stipulating that the farming land belonged to the former owners (the boyars), while the property was declared sacred and inviolable.<sup>63</sup> The Constitution of 1866 officially accorded civic rights to “all Romanians”, but in reality citizenship was limited to the ethnic Romanian boyar (upper-class landowning), and intelligentsia.

### **Romania becomes an independent kingdom. The development of industry**

In 1877, after the Romanian-Russian-Ottoman war, Romania becomes an independent state and its sovereign status was acknowledged by the western powers at the Congress of Berlin in 1878.<sup>64</sup> In 1881, Romania is officially a kingdom (Regat), ruled by the king Carol Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who becomes Carol I. In terms of industrial development, the kingdom, David Turnock argues, “Had considerable potential for industry by virtue of its agricultural raw materials, forest wealth and minerals (especially oil).”<sup>65</sup> In addition, “the 1890s represented a decade of good progress, because of high cereal prices”. Nevertheless, “in the early

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<sup>62</sup> Hitchins, “Inceputurile statului modern”, 368

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Turnok, *Aspects of Independent Romania's Economic History*, 4

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 9

nineteenth century the industrial development was slow, but the village craftsmen and urban-based artisans were numerous.”<sup>66</sup> In the second half and at the end of the nineteenth century the industry developed, in part, also because of the peasant’s migration from rural to urban areas, and their employment into the industrial sector.

A protective legislation was developed in 1881-1882, for the paper and sugar industries, and in 1886-1887, for industry as a whole. In addition, in 1895, through a Mining Law, the oil industry was opened to foreign investment. The oil industry of Romania represented an important part of the whole industry, and a new oil discovery, at the end of the nineteenth century brought Royal Dutch Shell into Romania. David Turnock said that, “until 1900, 80 per cent of Romanian oil came from hand-dug wells. Oil and lignite supplied boilers and powered the first electric generators supplying Bucharest in 1882, Iași and Timișoara in 1884, and Craiova in 1884 (...) Bucharest supported a wide range of activities, including engineering, textiles and food processing.”<sup>67</sup>

The modernization of the country was happening artificially, with western ideas and laws, and without any consideration for the local realities. This was, a fear of stagnation, of extinction, as Berend showed, “the broadening gap in economic development challenged the slow-moving countries, causing a frightening feeling of stagnation, ‘backwardness’, and even military danger, a fear of the final ‘extinction’ of the nation.”<sup>68</sup> I do not know if what Berend says applies to nineteenth century Romania entirely, but a fear of “backwardness”, and the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Turnock, *Aspects of Independent Romania’s Economic History*, 10

<sup>68</sup> Tibor Iván, Berend *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 89

necessity of “keeping up” with the West was predominantly among the political and intellectual discourse of the time.<sup>69</sup>

## Conclusions

The historical context of nineteenth century Romania was marked by different wars, conventions, elections, the unity, a foreign prince, a new Constitution, independence, the development of industry and commerce, the agrarian problem and the emancipation of peasants. This century brought about change, revolution, the struggle for emancipation and human rights, new ideologies. If at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the two Principalities that later will form Romania (without Transylvania, which united with the country in 1918), were under Russian, Ottoman or Habsburg occupation, at the end of it they formed an independent country. The contrast between local peasants, most of them very poor, rich “oriental” boyars and the new “French” generation was huge. It needed a century for this contrast to diminish, but it was not enough. The illiteracy, poor living conditions, and social inequalities were still present among the population in the beginning of the twentieth century. In addition, the problems of the new social class – the workers – were not on the Parliament agenda. A socialist party was formed only in 1893, late for a country with such big social problems as Romania. The socialist ideology and organizations existed prior to that, but they were not organized as a legal party.

In this chapter, I tried to map the most important political, social and economical events in the history of nineteenth century Romania. This short presentation of the most important dates, actions, and social stratification in the Romanian history was needed for a better understanding

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<sup>69</sup> Tibor Iván, Berend *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe*, 89

of the context in which feminism appeared in Romania and in which kind of society and political ambiance did Sofia Nădejde lived and wrote.

## Chapter II

### A Short History of socialism in Romania (1879-1900). The Social Democratic Workers Party of Romania (SDWPR)

#### Introduction

This chapter will provide a short history of Romanian socialism in the late nineteenth century. This history has at its core the struggle for peasants, workers and women's emancipation. The political program initiated by socialists was the first in which women's oppression was explicitly made public, and women's emancipation was demanded. In this chapter, my focus is going to be on the development of the socialist ideology in Romania, from 1879 to 1900. First, I will present the socialist circle from Iași (Iassy), the capital of Moldavia, the eastern part of Romania, where socialism first appeared. The first socialist newspaper appeared in 1879 at Iași, entitled *Besarabia* (Bessarabia), edited by the brothers Ioan and Gheorghhe Nădejde, Theodor Speranț ia, their cousin and "Dr. N. Russel".<sup>70</sup> Then, I will discuss the monthly journal *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), which appeared between 1881 and 1891, and was the main socialist and one of the most popular journals of that time. After that, I will highlight the importance of peasants in the Romanian socialist movement, illustrated by *Manifestul pentru ț ăranii* (A Manifesto for Peasants), published in 1891 by Ioan Nădejde, Vasile

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<sup>70</sup> This was a pseudonym; he was the Russian emigrant Nikolai Konstantinievici Sudzilovski as Victor Vișinescu said in *Sofia Nădejde*, (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1976), 23



Morț un and Constantin Mille, where the socialists presented their political program to the rural workers. Following the chronological order of the events, I will then discuss the establishment of the Social Democratic Workers Party in Romania (SDWPR), in 1894, its short history, and Sofia Nădejde's activity in it.

What is important to emphasize in the introduction is that the eastern part of Romania, Moldavia, had more rural areas than Wallachia. An important socialist movement will develop in Iași and not in Bucharest. The interest that the socialist circle in Iași had regarding peasantry's emancipation is thus normal, considering that Moldavia was an agrarian region populated mostly by peasants.

### **Socialist ideology in nineteenth-century Romania. The socialist circle in Iași (Iassy)**

In 1879, the first socialist conference in Romania took place in Iași. Among those present were the socialists Zamfir Arbore, Văleanu, Lupu, Theodor Speranț ia, the brothers Ioan and Gheorghe Nădejde, and Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea.<sup>71</sup> It was the moment, as Sofia Nădejde recalled it years later (1935) in the pages of *Adevărul* (The Truth), when “a socialist program was elaborated (...) some of them [socialists] wanted to work in schools, to earn the sympathy of the youngsters, while others wanted to illuminate the workers, who were in fact the most interested in the socialist cause.”<sup>72</sup>

The first socialist newspaper appeared in the same year, 1879, and it was called *Besarabia* (Bessarabia). Its editors were the brothers Ioan and Gheorghe Nădejde, Theodor

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<sup>71</sup> Victor Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972), 97

<sup>72</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Amintiri. Mișcarea socialistă” (Memories. The socialist movement), in *Adevarul*, year 49, no.15, 671, (February 1935): 14

Speranța, their cousin, and “Dr. Russel” (Nikolai Konstantinievici Sudzilovski). In the first editorial, they stated that, “in this life, we would not have any goal then empowering the working class. In order to reach this goals we developed this journal.”<sup>73</sup> In the following year, 1880, Iași socialists brought into existence their own printery, where “Dr. Russel” published the brochure: *Un studiu psihiatric, urmat de cateva comentarii asupra ideilor sănătoase* (A psychiatric study, followed by some comments for healthy ideas), in which he contradicted the liberal theories regarding socialism, disseminated during 1880, in the newspaper *Mișcarea Națională* (The National Movement). In addition, in the year 1880 socialists also began to diffuse their ideas in a program, as Sofia Nădejde recalled it: “The *Program* was not about bombes, nor assaults or revolutions, but about written and spoken propaganda.”<sup>74</sup>

A year later, in 1881, the members of the organization “Narodnaia Volea” assassinated Tsar Alexander II, which, as Constantin Mille (1861-1827) remembered in his autobiography *Dinu Milian* (1887), was a moment of great satisfaction, as they (the socialists in Iași) were celebrating ten years from the Paris Commune, they also celebrated the assassination “the anniversary of the Parisian revolt and the celebration of the Tsar’s death.”<sup>75</sup> The Russian Consulate in Iași accused them of complicity in the assassination. Therefore, Ioan Nădejde and his brother Gheorghe were arrested, accused of atheism and the spread of socialist ideas in Romania. Ioan Nădejde was accused, by the director of the National College in Iași, of corrupting young students with offensive ideas against the present order of the society. “Ioan Nădejde is accused of propagating in Iași’s student’s clubs and colleges ideas that will

<sup>73</sup> Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 23

<sup>74</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Amintiri. Mișcarea socialistă”, 3

<sup>75</sup> Constantin Mille, *Dinu Milian*, (Iași: Tipografia Lupta, 1887), 379

destabilize our society, private property and the present order.”<sup>76</sup> The authorities suppressed the *Besarabia* newspaper in 1881, with the same explanation that it “disseminated subversive ideas”. Its editors, contributors and supporters were dismissed from the University: Constantin Mille, Alex. Răreu, “Garanț ă” (Theodor Speranț ă), “I. Cara” (Ioan Nădejde). Ioan and Gheorghe Nădejde were put on trial by the University of Iași. The local authorities searched their homes, while some of them were escorted at the frontier with Bessarabia and banished from the Romanian Kingdom. In June 5, 1881, the lawsuit that the University initiated against the brothers Ioan and Gheorghe Nădejde took place. They were accused of “spreading atheism, explaining poverty through class inequality, defining property as theft, considering the upper and middle-class family as ‘prostitution’, disregard the paternal authority in the family, propagating socialism in schools, participating in working-class meetings.”<sup>77</sup> The law court stated that, “mr. Ioan Nădejde, is found the guiltiest, and is dismissed from his teaching position at National College in Iași. Mr. Gheorghe Nădejde, as less guilty, will be suspended from his teaching position at the Secondary School in Iași for an undetermined period.”<sup>78</sup> After the process, the Nădejde brothers published *Socialismul înainte justiției* (Socialism in front of the justice), a brochure, where they stated that the true cause of their condemnation was that they were socialists, arguing, and hoping “for a day when the human will no more be enslaved by the human.”<sup>79</sup>

In July 1881, the first number of the socialist monthly journal *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary) was published in Iași by the same socialist circle, in Ioan and Sofia Nădejde’s

<sup>76</sup> National Archives in Iași, Ds. 2/1881 quoted in Victor Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 100

<sup>77</sup> Victor Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 101

<sup>78</sup> National Archives Iași, Ds. 2/1881 quoted in Victor Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 101

<sup>79</sup> Victor Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 102

attic.<sup>80</sup> Its main aim was to enlighten readers' minds, through contemporary theories, science and literature. In this first number, Sofia Nădejde published an article entitled *Către Femei* (To Women), in which she demanded women's emancipation and rights. I will come back to this in the fifth chapter.

### ***Contemporanul* (The Contemporary) 1881-1981**

After the Union in 1859 and the election of Carol de Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen Prince of Romania, periodicals, journals, magazines and newspapers increased their numbers. Alex Drace-Francis in *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture* states that journalism and in general printing spread in smaller provincial centers, and “became truly national phenomena”. He says that, “each county town generally had at least a *Bulletin* issued by the local prefecture or county court; from the 1880's a Bulletin of the local Chamber of Commerce; and a host of smaller reviews.”<sup>81</sup>

The most important literary journal that appeared after the Union was *Convorbiri Literare* (Literary Conversations), which was published between 1867 and 1944. It proposed in the fields of cultural theory “radical innovations”, such as the aesthetic concept of “art for the stake of art”, which would be later criticized by the socialist Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea.<sup>82</sup> It appeared monthly and was the organ of *Junimea* (the Youngsters), a group established in 1864, which was composed of, as Drace-Francis said, “boyars, intellectuals, political, legal and

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<sup>80</sup> A small printer was located in Sofia and Ioan Nădejde's house, in their attic. This was the place where *Contemporanul* was printed.

<sup>81</sup> Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2006), 173

<sup>82</sup> He was born as Solomon Katz, in Yekaterinoslav, Ukraine, then a part of the Russian Empire. He came to Iași in 1875, and formed the first Romanian socialist movement together with Ioan Nădejde.

military men centered on the new University of Iași, established in the same year. They were influenced by the Western tradition and had a Western education.”<sup>83</sup> The main rivals of *Convorbiri Literare* were the socialist paper *Contemporanul* (1881-1891) and its theorist Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea. He arrived in the Romanian Kingdom from Bessarabia and started *Contemporanul* after the example and name of the Russian *narodnik* paper *Sovremennik*, which means the same. The editor of *Contemporanul* was Ioan Nădejde. The most important word for *Contemporanul* was “scientific” as opposed to *Convorbiri Literare*’s main word “literary criticism”. Alex Drace-Francis points out “it was the first paper in Romania to give serious attention to ideas of feminist emancipation: the journal published numerous articles on this theme by Sofia Nădejde.”<sup>84</sup> *Contemporanul*, as Nicolae Iorga said, “was one of the most popular in the country in the 1880s, with a print run of over 3,000 copies.”<sup>85</sup>

### **A manifesto for peasants**

In 1888, because of his activity among the peasants, Ioan Nădejde candidates and is elected as deputy in the third College in Iași. He will give speeches in the Parliament, accusing the authorities of atrocities committed during the Peasants Rebellions in 1888. Between 1888 and 1889, Ioan Nădejde correspondences with Engels, about the socialist movement from Romania. In the year 1891, when *Contemporanul* ceased to exist, being replaced with the monthly journal, *Lumea Nouă* (New World), Ioan Nădejde, V.G Morț un and Constantin Mille, published a *Manifesto for peasants*. The manifesto started with the following words, “Workers! The king

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<sup>83</sup> Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, 174

<sup>84</sup> Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, 175

<sup>85</sup> Nicolae Iorga quoted in Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, 175

called at the country's government the old boyars, who are nostalgic of the good old days, when they could treat the 'uneducated' peasant as slaves. The king dissolved the Parliament and gave them [the boyars] the power to make elections."<sup>86</sup> The socialists were calling the peasants to act and understand that these elections were not in their benefit, this is why, in the manifesto, they briefly summarized the ideas and ideology of other parties in a simple manner, in order for everybody to understand.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, they presented their political group, their ideology and program, stating that, "until now the workers did not have their own party, and put their hopes in the ruling parties, in order to defend their interests and ease their pains. Thus, this was in vain! How could the peasant workers emancipate from their slavery condition when these parties represent and defend the boyars interests? How could they help the peasantry, when they are all members of the upper classes?"<sup>88</sup>

The socialist vision of emancipating the peasantry was illustrated, in their manifesto by the following: "1. We want universal vote for everybody, men and women. 2. We want the abolishment of the army; 3. We want the police to stop harassing people and their houses, to stop beating and terrorizing people, without being severely punished; 4. We ask for the state to build in every commune<sup>89</sup> schools big enough and poor children to receive from the state clothes, books and food. It is for the well-being of the country and the state, that all citizens know how to read and write; 5. We demand equal rights for rural teachers with urban teachers, meaning not throwing them out from their position or move them in another place, as the boyar, prefect or inspector wishes; 6. All the land that now belongs to the Crown and to the state (the Monarchy),

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<sup>86</sup> Ioan Nădejde, Vasile Morțun, Constantin Mille, "Manifest către țărani" (A manifesto for peasants), (Iași: Litografia H. Goldner, 1891), 5

<sup>87</sup> The other parties and ideologies were The Conservative Party, the Liberal Party represented by *Junimea* (The Youngsters), and a new fraction within it called the Radicals.

<sup>88</sup> Nădejde, Morțun, Mille, "Manifest către țărani", 8

<sup>89</sup> In the rural areas several villages were (and still are) grouped under the administrative unity of a bigger village, and together formed a commune.

which was given to the King without respecting the Constitution, to be sold back, with minimal prices, to the peasantry; (...) 14. All the taxes on food and basic objects should be abolished, and put on luxury goods; 15. All the taxes should be calculated according to wealth, those who have more should pay more.”<sup>90</sup> 18-22

This Manifesto for Peasants as its name shows was elaborated for peasants. One must take into consideration the fact that only a small part of the peasantry was literate. They could not have been able to read their own manifesto. In this case, the common practice of that time was that the local teacher (or the priest) read it to them. The problem of peasants’ illiteracy<sup>91</sup> was one of the most important in nineteenth-century Romania. In 1886, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea published his program-manifesto *Ce vor socialiștii români?* (What do Romanian socialists want?) in which he expressed as the Romanian socialists’ main aims the following: direct universal suffrage (and not through colleges,<sup>92</sup> as it was the custom, or according to wealth and sex), the abolishment of the permanent army and arming the people, communal autonomy, a free educational system, magistrates elected by the people, the replacement of prisons with correction centers.<sup>93</sup> *Ce vor socialiștii români?*, demanded similar things as *Manifest către țărani* and was popular with the various category of people who attended Nădejde’s house and circle.

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<sup>90</sup> Nădejde, Morțun, Mille, *Manifest către țărani*, 18-22

<sup>91</sup> Who constituted more than half of the population. According to Ștefania Mihăilescu, at the end of the nineteenth century they were 80 per cent of the total population.

<sup>92</sup> A “college” was an electoral organization. After 1866 in Romania were four, and then three colleges (1884). These colleges corresponded to the different amount of taxes (census) that needed to be paid by the male population in order to vote. Although in 1919, the census had gradually been reduced, only 1.9 per cent of the population would have voted directly. If we gather those that could have been voted indirectly, 1,139, 301 with those that voted directly, we have 17.6 per cent of the total population.

<sup>93</sup> Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Ce vor socialiștii români?* (Iași: Tipografia Lupta, 1886), 10-11

## The Social Democratic Workers Party of Romania (1893-1899)

Between 1882 and 1883, the socialists were giving speeches in working-class and students clubs, in the outskirts of the city (Iași) and among peasantry. In 1893, on March 31, the Social Democratic Workers Party of Romania was established, at the Workers Club from Bucharest, where, also took place their first official congress. In the second congress of the Social Democratic Workers Party, in April 1894, appeared as the social problem the emancipation of women. The party asks for “Absolute equality of women with men regarding civil and political rights”; “Access to all liberal professions”; “For equal work, equal wage”; “Protective laws for workers in factories and manufactures.”<sup>94</sup>

This moment was important, because they were finally organized in an official political form. It is a paradox that they did not succeed as a party, in an agrarian country like Romania. They organized meetings in the few factories that existed then, in villages, but most of them were organized in Sofia and Ioan Nădejde’s house in Iași. Although they did not occupied functions in the Government, they were popular as an organization that gathered people and tried to fight for peasants and working-class rights. Inside the party, there were conflicts, regarding the tactic to follow, a revolutionary or a reformist one. Ioan Nădejde, the leader, and Vasile Morț un, writer and activist opted for social democracy, the reformist way, and not for the revolution. This option is one of the reasons why the party ceased to exist in 1899. Nădejde and Morț un, hoped that their vision (and reforms) could be made possible inside the “leftist” or radical wing of the

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<sup>94</sup> “Moș iunea celui de-al doilea Congres al P.S.D.M.R din aprilie 1894” în *Munca*, anul V, nr.9, 24 aprilie 1894; (The program of the second Congres of The Social Democratic Workers Party in Romania, April 1894) in *Work*, year V, nr. 9, ( April, 24 1894): 1-5



Liberal Party, in which they entered at the beginning of the twentieth century, which was not the case, as Sofia Nădejde remembers.<sup>95</sup>

In 1899, the SDWCPR was more and more disorganized. Victor Vişinescu noted in the introduction of Sofia Nădejde's biography in 1972, that guilty for this disorganization was the party's leader Ioan Nădejde, because of his "infusion with liberal ideas."<sup>96</sup> Nădejde singed his rethread from the party in an article published in *Lumea Nouă* (New World), in 21 of February, 1899, entitled "Retragerea mea" (My rethreat), in which he stated, "I could say that I am retiring, because for twenty years I have been in the service of the party, and I think, now, is the moment to give someone else this heavy burden of governing everyday's fights of the party (...). The party has to organize itself again, and establish his future tactic, but I can no longer be the 'man of the moment'. In new times there must be new people."<sup>97</sup> For ten years, from 1900 to 1910 the party no longer functioned. It was reunited in 1910, by the activists Ioan C. Frimu, Ştefan Gheorghiu, Mihail Gheorghe Bujor who during those ten years, participated in syndical meetings and tried to establish deeper connections with the working-class.<sup>98</sup>

### **Sofia Nădejde as a member of SDWPR**

In 1897, at the fourth congress of SDWPR, held at Bucharest in April, Sofia Nădejde was elected as president of the congress. In this congress, the main debate themes were universal

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<sup>95</sup> Ovidiu Gherasim Proca, "Social-Democraţia în România pre-comunistă: geneza mişcării politice socialiste şi tema autenticităţii" (The Social Democracy in Pre-communist Romania. The Beginning of the Political Movement and the Issue of Authenticity) in *Ştiinţele Politice* (Political Sciences), *Analele Ştiinţifice ale Universităţii "Al.I.Cuza"*, vol. V (2010): 28

<sup>96</sup> Vişinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 116

<sup>97</sup> Ioan Nădejde, "Retragerea mea" (My retreat) in *Lumea Nouă*, vol.15, no.4, (1889): 10-12

<sup>98</sup> Vişinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 117

suffrage, the party's finances, improving the socialist propaganda in cities, reorganizing the workers and peasants clubs, "the peasantry question" and the problem of syndical activity within factories. At the end of the Congress's session, Sofia Nădejde said, "now, when the congress is over, (...) we all have to decide to begin the fight with bravery, in order to make happen all that we decided here in this congress, which solidified the brotherly love between all the members of the Social Democratic Party."<sup>99</sup> (The historian Ion C. Atanasiu in his book *Mișcarea Socialistă* (The Socialist Movement) published in 1932 said about Sofia Nădejde that her activism in the movement/party was important, and she was respected and listened in the working class meetings: "Alongside her husband, Ioan Nădejde, she was intensively active in the socialist movement. Her words were listened and appreciated, by the leaders of the party, and in every meetings and events of the party, she gave speeches."<sup>100</sup> As a member of the party, Sofia Nădejde did not participate in an official Parliamentary debate, as neither her fellow colleagues did, but was active in the workers and peasantry clubs, establishing in 1886, clubs just for women, where they could gather and talk about the cause of socialism, but also, as her biographer noticed, about their emancipation. The information that we have regarding her involvement in this women's clubs is limited, because the archival documents are missing. A future research should be developed in this direction.

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<sup>99</sup> Ioan Popescu Puțuri (ed.), *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România*, (Documents from the Romanian workers movement), (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1969), 517

<sup>100</sup> Ion C. Atanasiu, *Mișcarea Socialistă*, (Iași: Tipografia Lupta, 1932), 45

## Conclusion

At the end of nineteenth century there were few factories in the Romanian Kingdom (there were more in Transylvania), and the industry was not yet developed, as it will happen in the first half of the twentieth century. They knew that Romanian peasantry will transform itself, at a certain point in proletarians, thus in factory workers. In addition, it is good to keep in mind that in Moldavia there were considerable more peasants than in the southern part (Wallachia). Socialism, as ideology, concept and organization spread from Iași (the capital city of Moldavia) to Bucharest (the capital of Wallachia, and Romania).

Maybe what happened in the Romanian Kingdom in the late nineteenth century, was not progressive, neither political, neither cultural nor social. The debate between liberals and conservatives animated the public sphere; liberals wanted infusion of capital from West, as well as ideas and civilization, while the conservative wanted to “preserve” them, as Romanian. The socialists were in the middle of this. Actually, it seems that they constantly wanted to adapt the Romanian realities to what was happening in the surrounding countries, to make people aware of this new ideology, and new theories in science, literature or politics, but in the same time to adapt them in the proper context. I think, as I said it in this chapter, that they really understood the “peasantry question” and wanted to solve it. I do not want to make them “heroes” of the Romanian history of that time, but what they did was more empowering than anything in that time. The emancipation of women, the “woman question”, was brought into public attention by them, it was on their political agenda, and not in that of the Liberal or Conservative parties.

## Chapter III

### A short history of Romanian feminism/s in the nineteenth century

#### Introduction

This chapter will provide a short overview of Romanian feminism/s in the nineteenth century. The main question that this chapter will try to answer is what types of feminisms existed in nineteenth-century Romania? In order to answer this question, first I will present the events, associations and personalities involved in the women's movement between 1815 and 1850. I grouped those events in the section "First women's organizations and demands for emancipation", where I will present the first Romanian women's organizations, as well as the first journals edited by men, in which women's emancipation was demanded. In this section, the 1848 revolution and its demands towards women's rights will be also discussed. Then, in the section "Women supporting the nation and the struggle for unity" I will present the events, personalities, magazines and associations active between 1855 and 1878. The third section deals with the years from 1879 to 1900. This was the period when "woman question" gained more visibility in Romania and was debated in various publications, newspapers and journals. In 1894 the League of Romanian Women was constituted and the Social Democratic Workers Party demanded in its official program political, social, economic and civil rights for women. Different socialists wrote in journals demanding women's emancipation. This section is named "The 'woman question'". These three periods in the history of nineteenth-century Romanian feminism, as I constructed them, correspond largely to the political events that the country was

facing, but also to the social, economic and cultural changes. However, one can notice also the international character that Romanian feminism/s had in its demands and synchronicity.

### **First Women's Organizations and Demands for Emancipation (1815-1850)**

In 1815, the *Societatea Femeilor Române din Buda* (Romanian Women's Organization in Buda) was established in the Hungarian Kingdom. It was composed of 33 members, including Elena Gabrovsky, Pelaghia Papacostea, Iuliana Pometea, and Maria Nicolici, who belonged to wealthy Macedonian-Romanian merchant families. The aim of this organization was to support financially the “national Romanian Orthodox schools in Hungary”.<sup>101</sup> It was, according to Ștefania Mihăilescu “the first women's association of our nation.”<sup>102</sup> However, one can point to the “nationalistic character” of this gathering, because of its aims, to support the Romanian Orthodox schools in the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom. Roxana Cheșchebec in “Reclaiming Romanian Historical Feminism” argues that there is no proof of this organization's interest in women's emancipation.<sup>103</sup>

Demands for women's emancipation emerged, in 1837, when “various publications and writings prepared the Romanian public opinion to accept the first demands for women's rights.”<sup>104</sup> These publications were *Curier de ambe sexe* (A magazine for both sexes), edited by Ion Heliade Rădulescu, *Albina Românească* (The Romanian Bee), *Icoana Lumii* (The Portrait of the World), *Gazeta de Transilvania* (Transylvania's Gazette), and *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură* (A Journal for mind, heart and literature). Ion Heliade Rădulescu in *Curier de ambe*

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<sup>101</sup> Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc: antologie de texte 1838-1929* ((From the history of Romanian feminism. Collection of documents: 1838–1929), (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 8

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>103</sup> Roxana Cheșchebec, “Reclaiming Romanian Historical Feminism. History Writing and Feminist Politics in Romania” in *Aspasia*, volume 1, 2007: 255-265, doi: 10.3167/asp.2007.010119

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 259

*sexe* motivated his initiative for establishing a journal for “both sexes”, by stating that “half of humankind is formed by women, who need to demand their human rights in society.”<sup>105</sup>

Another male writer and activist and future leader of the Romanian 1848 Revolution, Nicolae Bălcescu, wrote an article in *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură*, in January 1846, where he stated that, “real progress in the Romanian society, would not be possible without the emancipation of women.”<sup>106</sup> The protagonists of the 1848 Revolution stated as one of their demands women’s emancipation, alongside with the emancipation of the peasantry, the union between the Romanian provinces (Wallachia, Moldavia, Bukovina, Bessarabia and Transylvania), independence of the foreign empires, and the modernization of the society. In Wallachia, *Proclamația de la Islaz* (The Islaz Proclamation), of June 1848, included among its demands at point 16 “Equal and full instruction for all Romanians of both sexes.”<sup>107</sup>

In 1849, in an open letter, addressed to women of the upper classes, C.A. Rosetti, an activist of the 1848 revolution, considered that the “Romanian women’s main duty” was to support the revolution as their own cause. He stated that, “there is no political and social change, no revolution which is not important for you [woman], for your life and happiness (...) the ones who demand liberty and equality for everybody, demand your emancipation as well.”<sup>108</sup> Between 1848 and 1849, women were present and publically supported their “husbands and brothers” revolution, which became theirs as well.<sup>109</sup> Those women were Elena Cuza, Ana

<sup>105</sup> Ion Heliade Rădulescu quoted in Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, 12

<sup>106</sup> Nicolae Bălcescu quoted in Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, 13

<sup>107</sup> Otilia Dragomir, Mihaela Miroiu, *Lexicon Feminist* (Feminist Dictionary), (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 137

<sup>108</sup> C.A Rosetti quoted in Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, 14

<sup>109</sup> For example, Maria Rosetti, the wife of activist C.A Rosetti, helped members of the revolution escape from ottoman captivity, in the aftermaths of the atrocities as Jules Michelet said in “Le Principautes Dannubiennes. Madame Rosetti. 1848”, published in the French newspaper *Evenement*, Paris, 1851. See also Nicolae Bălcescu, *Mișcarea Românilor din Ardeal la 1848* (The Romanian Movement from Transylvania in 1848), published in *Opere*, (Writings), vol. I, Bucharest, 1940.

Ipătescu, Catinca Caracaș, Pelaghia Roșu, Maria Rosetti, Zoie Gloescu, Sevastia Bălcescu, and Maria Eliade Rădulescu.<sup>110</sup>

In March 1850, in the city of Brașov, Transylvania, *Reuniunea Femeilor Române* (The Organization of Romanian Women) was established, with the aim of helping poor orphan Romanian girls. Among its members were Maria Secăreanu, Elena Iuga, Anastasia Datcu, Maria Nicolau, and Sevastia Mureșan.<sup>111</sup>

### **Women supporting the nation and the struggles for unity (1855-1878)**

In 1855, Sofia Cocea Chrisoscolev,<sup>112</sup> teacher and journalist, through her articles published in journals that supported the unity between Wallachia and Moldavia,<sup>113</sup> addressed women to support the unity. She made connections between, the union, reforms and democratization of the Romanian society and women's emancipation, stating that "it is not possible for a state to evolve when women's rights are not respected."<sup>114</sup> By women rights, she referred at access to education. In addition, she demanded rights for peasants, and their emancipation.<sup>115</sup> In 1859, the year of the unity she wrote, "Către Doamnele Române" (For

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<sup>110</sup> Paraschiva Căncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii în România 1848-1948*, (The Romanian woman's emancipation movement), (Bucharest: Ed. Politica, 1976), 25

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 26

<sup>112</sup> This is the name that Ștefan Rasidescu used in his, *Operele doamnei Chrisoscolev, născută Cocea* (The writings of Lady Chrisoscolev, born Cocea), published in Bucharest, 1862.

<sup>113</sup> Such journals were *Reforma* (The Reform), *Steaua Dunării* (Danube's Star), *Dacia* (Dacia), *Românul* (The Romanian).

<sup>114</sup> Sofia Cocea Chrisoscolev quoted in Ștefan Rasidescu, *Operele doamnei Chrisoscolev, născută Cocea*, Bucharest, 1862, 13-18

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

Romanian Ladies). In this appeal she stated that, “the moment has come for us [women] to do something for our country.”<sup>116</sup>

The magazine *Amicul familiei* (The family’s friend), which appeared between 1863 and 1865 was established under the direction of the teacher Constantin Dunca Schiau. *Amicul Familiei* presented to the public arguments in favor of women’s education and instruction. In 1863, Constantin Dunca Schiau, presented before the Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza and the Deputy Chamber, a project for the reorganization of the girls educational system.<sup>117</sup> Between 1865 and 1866, Maria Rosetti edited, at Bucharest the magazine *Mama și copilul* (The Mother and the child), in which aspects of women’s emancipation were mentioned. In this two magazines, *Amicul familiei* and *Mama și copilul* were present discussions related to the inequality of sexes and the lower status of women in family, which were “seen as consequences of inadequate and superficial education.”<sup>118</sup>

In a speech delivered to the Deputy Chamber and Prince Carol Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, in the year 1866, the writer and activist Cezar Bolliac demanded universal suffrage, no matter class, wealth or sex.<sup>119</sup> In the next year, 1867, Cornelia Emilian established in Iași, *Reuniunea Femeilor Române* (The Organization of Romanian Women), after the model of *Reuniunea Femeilor Române din Brașov* (The Organization of Romanian Women in the city of Brașov). Its main aim was to “help girls from poor families achieve a profession, in order to

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 77

<sup>117</sup> Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, 21

<sup>118</sup> Roxana Cheșchebec in “Toward a Romanian’s Women’s Movement: An Organizational History (1880s-1940)” in Edith Sauer, Margaret Lanzinger, Elisabeth Frysak (eds.), *Women’s Movements: Networks and debates in post-communist Countries in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), 441

<sup>119</sup> Dragomir, Miroiu, *Lexicon Feminist*, 137



gain their own existence.” This organization was lead by a committee of 12 members, under the direction of Matilda Sihleanu.<sup>120</sup>

During the Independence War (1877-1878), there have been created committees for helping orphans and soldiers, coordinated by the *Comitetul Central al Femeilor din Iași* (The Central Women’s Committee in Iași), lead by Maria Rosetti Roznoveanu.<sup>121</sup>

### **The “Woman Question” (1878-1900)**

During the years 1878 and 1881, when Romania became independent an a kingdom, appeared in Bucharest the bi-weekly journal *Femeia Română* (The Romanian Woman), under the direction of actress and writer Maria Flechtenmacher. Sofia Nădeje, Adela Xenopol, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Paul Scorțeanu, were among its collaborators.<sup>122</sup> In an article published in February 1879, entitled “Starea economică a femeii” (Woman’s economic condition) the socialist Paul Scorțeanu, argued for equality between men and women. He also was aware and commented on the inequalities in wages, but did not argue for equal pay. He advocated for the emancipation of working-class women, and proposed “asociații cooperative ale femeilor muncitoare” (cooperative associations of working class women), where working-class women’s work products belonged to them entirely.<sup>123</sup> In the same year, 1879, Sofia Nădejde made her journalistic debut in the pages of *Femeia Română* as a feminist, in the article “Cestiunea Femeilor” (The Woman Question). In this article, she criticized the legislation regarding civil rights that saw married women as minors, who could not be legal owners of their

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<sup>120</sup> Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, 25

<sup>121</sup> Căncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii*, 30

<sup>122</sup> Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, 26

<sup>123</sup> Căncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii*, 39

own possessions, and demanded access to education for all women, as well as changes in the education law.<sup>124</sup> In the pages of the socialist monthly journal *Contemoranul* (1881-1891), Sofia Nădejde published various articles regarding women's emancipation that will be discussed in the fifth chapter of this thesis. However, she was not the only socialist feminist who published in *Contemoranul* or in other socialist journals like *Lumea Nouă* (The New World), *Munca* (Work), *Drepturile Omului* (Human Rights). Her male socialist friends published articles where they argued in favor of women's emancipation. The socialists, in their 1886 program presented the emancipation of women as linked to the emancipation of proletarians, because "only when all the classes will fall, and all the political and economic inequalities will disappear, the woman will be free and equal with men."<sup>125</sup>

After workers clubs were initiated, in 1890, the socialist propaganda for women's emancipation, according to historian Paraschiva Căncea, began to widespread. In January 1891, in the journal *Munca* (Work) appears the article "Femeia și Capitalul" (The Woman and the Capital), signed by the collective editors, where they asked women to join their socialist movement: "Workers and comrades, one of our duties is to bring women to fight for our common cause. When they will be joining us, in this fight between working class and capital, this 'monster' will be defeated."<sup>126</sup> In different brochures and in the journal *Munca* were published translations of August Bebel's *Die Frau und die Sozialismus* and of Clara Zetkin's speeches. At the workers club in Bucharest conferences took place, where socialists debated

<sup>124</sup> Sofia Nădejde, "Cestiunea femeilor" in *Femeia Română*, year II, ,no.11, March , 1879): 177-179

<sup>125</sup> Popescu Puțuri, *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România*, 371

<sup>126</sup> "Femeia și Capitalul" in *Munca*, vol. 2, no.1, (1891): 14

scientific socialist ideas, foreign socialist authors, and the emancipation of women, that according to them was possible only under socialism.<sup>127</sup>

In 1894, the *Liga Femeilor din România* (The Women's League of Romania) was founded in Iași by Cornelia Emilian. Sofia Nădejde was part of it, until 1899, when the League ceased to exist. Its main goals were “taking women from the category of minors and outlaws; to place women in society at the level they deserve, as the educator of humankind; to help women achieve economic self-sufficiency; to give women a broader field for their actions, to ensure their survival.”<sup>128</sup> Membership in the League included “all women, regardless of ethnicity”. Regarding this, Maria Bucur showed that, “if the group defined itself as representing the women of Romania, but included in this category presumably Hungarians, Ruthenians, Jews, Russians, Bulgarians, and other non-ethnic Romanians, they were certainly one step ahead in terms of broadening their concept of the nation, by comparison with any of the political parties of that time.”<sup>129</sup> According to “Statutele Ligii Femeilor din România” (Romanian Women's League Status), the League had branches in different Romanian cities, and held a congress every year.<sup>130</sup> In 1896, the League sent a petition for the change of married women's status to the Romanian Parliament, but did not receive any answer.

The first number of the magazine *Dochia* (Dochia) edited by the writer and journalist Adela Xenopol, appears in 1896, which had as main aims the economic, politic and juridical emancipation of women. At the turn of the century, in 1900 at Iași was established the Society “Sprijinul” (The Help) under the initiative of Ecaterina Arbore, Virginia Alexandrescu and

<sup>127</sup> Căncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii*, 54

<sup>128</sup> Maria Bucur, “Between Liberal and Republican Citizenship. Feminism and Nationalism in Romania, 1880-1918” in *Aspasia*, Volume 1, 2007: 84-102 doi:10.3167/asp.2007.010105

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 93

<sup>130</sup> “Statutele Ligii Femeilor din România”, 1894 in Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, 84

Izabela Sadovean with the aim of “awakening working-class women from ignorance and unawareness.”<sup>131</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the most important dates, events and personalities of the nineteenth-century Romanian women’s movements and feminism/s. I distinguished between three chronological periods in the evolution of feminism, all of them in strong relationship with the international feminist movement, but also with the local political, social and economic events. The first period, from 1815 to 1855, was linked to the first women’s organization and the 1848 Revolution. The second period, from 1856 to 1878, was the time of the struggles for the country’s unity and the development of modern institutions, having a predominantly liberal character. In the third period, from 1878 to 1900, answers to the “woman question”, started to be discussed more widely because of the development of the written press, and more articles, in various journals, magazines and newspapers presented the problem of women’s emancipation. In this third period, the Romanian socialist movement was the most active in the journalistic, social and politic sphere, giving “answers” and demanding women’s rights.

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<sup>131</sup> Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, 43

## Chapter IV

### Sofia Nădejde. A Short Biography

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will present a short biography of Sofia Nadejde, based on the information that the Romanian literary scholar and member of the Romanian Communist Party, Victor Vişinescu, wrote in his biography of Sofia Nadejde, published in 1972. First, I will present some aspects of her early years and the encounter with her husband, Ioan Nadejde, and then I will describe, chronologically her literary and journalistic activity, the movement to Bucharest and the encounter with a new ideology called Poporanism.<sup>132</sup> In the end, I will present the activity in her last years of life. This short biography is limited in content, because I do not possess enough information about her childhood and in general about her private life. I decided to include in this chapter some events that happened after 1899, which is the year when my investigation about Sofia Nădejde ends, because I considered them important for a biographical chapter.

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<sup>132</sup> The word “poporanism” is derived from “popor” which means people in the Romanian language. The Poporanist movement was founded by Constantin Stere in 1890s and promoted voting rights for all and the emancipation of peasants; it had a strong nationalist component by promoting the archaic Romanian language and traditions.

## Early years

Sofia Băncilă was born in the town of Botoșani, in Moldova on 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1856, as the first child of Profira and Vasile Băncilă. Her family descended from freed peasants called “răzeși”, who did not work in a boyar household, but had their own house and land. Even so, they were not rich and had no material resources to give all their children a proper education. We know from Victor Vișinescu, Sofia Nădejde’s biographer, that her father was a merchant, but we do not know her mother’s occupation, we can only assume that she was a housewife. Sofia had four younger brothers.

Vișinescu wrote in *Sofia Nădejde*, that for a long period, little Sofia (she was 13 years old) thought that her father did not want her to study further. However, she will find out, listening to a conversation between her father and her uncle, that the financial situation of the family was the true problem. Vasile Băncilă wanted for his daughter a good education, in a girl’s pension, but had no money to pay for the fees. “With tears in her eyes, little Sofia, cried out that she wants to study, more than anything”.<sup>133</sup> Her uncle, the priest, Ioan Băncilă, paid for the fees, therefore Sofia Nădejde did study at the girls pension Glowanska, in Botoșani. Here, she met Ioan Nădejde (1859-1928), her future husband, who teach Greek and Latin languages, in order to pay his own fees at the boys school. He was born in a peasant’s family in a small village near Iași, and his parents could not pay for his education. Sofia and Ioan became friends and started to exchange letters, in which they would talk about the injustice of the political system in Romania, about their lectures and ideas, about their dreams. At this point, Victor Vișinescu saw their

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<sup>133</sup> Victor Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972), 15.

relationship as a form of “camaraderie”, as a union between two people aimed by similar ideals. They were “the pioneers of socialism”.<sup>134</sup>

### **Contact with socialist ideas. Journalistic and literary activity**

After their marriage, in 1874, they settled in the city of Iași, where Ioan Nădejde acquired a teaching position as professor of Latin and Romanian Language at the local high school for boys. In the city, the young couple was seen as “strange”, and Sofia Nădejde was commented on by the local ladies, because of her unusual habit of wearing men’s hats. This is why she was called “the crazy woman”.<sup>135</sup> Instead, Ioan Nădejde, as Vișinescu said, was “the sciences monster”, because of his vast knowledge from different areas of study, although he did not attend any university, and had no degree. They were again, analyzed and critiqued, by Iași high society, because of their decision to get married only civil, without a religious ceremony.<sup>136</sup>

It is interesting how controversial they were as a couple for that time; When Sofia decided to take her baccalaureate, although she was married, the critiques started again. However, she managed to finish her studies. Sofia and Ioan Nădejde, become famous amongst students and high-school teenagers from Iași and they formed the Socialist club/ circle in which they were speaking to these youngsters. While Victor Vișinescu described those times, he intersected their “destiny” as socialist activists with national feelings.

Sofia Nădejde did not attend university; therefore, she did not have any degree in a particular specialization. It is proper to say that she educated herself, reading foreign authors. Her knowledge is reflected in her journalistic and literary writings, and in the translations, she

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<sup>134</sup> Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 15

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*,26

<sup>136</sup> For the Romanian society of that time, this was an offensive act. Even today it is regarded as strange and “not proper” for a couple to get married only civil, without having a religious ceremony.

made from German, English, French, Italian and Russian. In opposition to the new generation of intellectuals, whose representatives were from the upper classes of the society, and attended foreign universities, she left country only once, during the First World War (when she went with the family at Odessa, in Ukraine). Ioan Nădejde, attended the Faculty of Law in Iasi University, when he was forty years old. Until then he had only his baccalaureate that qualified him as a Latin and Greek teacher.<sup>137</sup> This is maybe not an important thing, but is an example of self-educated people who managed to succeed in the public sphere, even without a university degree. Her biographer, Victor Vişinescu, argued that she had no profession, but are not her writings her career? Sofia and Ioan Nădejde's house in Iasi was the socialist's circle "building", where they printed *Contemporanul*, their attic was a "mini printer". *Contemporanul* functioned as a monthly journal, as we have seen in chapter two, which had subscribers in the whole country.

Sofia and Ioan had five children, three girls and two boys, Sonia born in 1876, Victoria born in 1878, Ioan born in 1882, Elena born in 1885 and Horia in 1888, who lived in that environment of meetings and passionate discussions. The family did not have servants, so they did everything related to the house by themselves.<sup>138</sup> One can argue that Sofia was a housewife, which is probably true, but I think that she made from this, a statement. In many of her articles, we find "attacks" to the upper-and middle-class families, where women, who had servants, did nothing by themselves, being preoccupied only about fashion and how to look good, in order to please men. This could be understood as a moral critique, but I do not think it was the case; Sofia Nădejde, in fact, never finds women truly responsible for this, but the society that demanded this for them, meaning to look and act in a certain fashion for pleasing men. She knows all this, and

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<sup>137</sup> Vişinescu, *Sofia Nadejde*, 67

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 76



even if she criticizes women from the elite, she never blames them, but the whole society as structured to favor men.<sup>139</sup>

Her journalistic debut occurred in the year 1879, in the same time when the first socialist journal, *Besarabia*, lead by her husband, published its first number. In 1879, she published in the bi-weekly magazine “Femeia Română” (The Romanian Woman), three articles entitled “Chestiunea Femeilor (The Woman Question),<sup>140</sup> “Starea femeilor și mediul prin care se vor putea emancipa” (Women’s condition and the means of their emancipation),<sup>141</sup> and “Muntele a născut un șoarece” (The mountain gave birth to a mouse).<sup>142</sup> The first two articles exposed women’s oppression in the Romanian Kingdom. Her arguments are rather liberal, than socialist, stating education as one of the most important problems that need to be solved in order for women to emancipate.

Her later articles in *Contemporanul* developed further on the problem of women’s oppression, both in the family, but also in the social structure of Romania, and were written from a socialist and feminist point of view. In the articles published there, she engaged in debates with various Romanian intellectual men, members of the Parliament and/or of the Academy, who insulted her activity and in general women’s struggle for emancipation. Some of the her articles published in *Contemporanul*, that focused on the “woman question” were in 1881-1882 “Către Femei” (For Women), “Femeia și legea” (Woman and law), “Emanciparea femeii” (Woman’s emancipation), “Educaț iunea femeii (Woman’s Education), “Despre căsătorie” (About marriage), “Prostituț ia” (Prostitution), “Răspuns d-lui Maiorescu în chestia creierului la femei” (A reply to Mr. Maiorescu regarding the question of women’s brains), “Observări asupra cărț ei

<sup>139</sup> Sofia Nadejde, “Catre Femei”, in *Contemporanul*, year I (1881-1882), no.1, p.2

<sup>140</sup> “Chestiunea Femeilor” (The Woman Question) in *Femeia Română*, no.111, (March 1879): 177-178

<sup>141</sup> “Starea femeilor și mediul prin care se vor putea emancipa” in *Femeia Română*, no. 122, (May 1879): 287-198

<sup>142</sup> “Muntele a născut un șoarece” in *Femeia Română*, 1879, no. 131, August 26, p.430

lui Mill” (Some observations regarding Mill’s book); in 1883-1884 “Despre femei” (About women), “Trebuie să lucreze femeile pentru drepturile politice?” (Do women need to work for their political rights?); in 1884-1886 “Rolul femeii în mișcarea socială”(Women’s role in the socialist movement).<sup>143</sup>

In her literary writings novels and short stories, she developed a feminist critique of the society in which she was living. Her literary debut occurred in 1885, when she published in *Contemporanul* the short story “Două mame”(Two mothers). After that followed “Un sfârșit” (The end), “Schițe din viața de la țară” (Sketches from a rural life), “Tatăl” (The Father), “Mama” (The Mother), “O iubire la țară” (A countryside love), *Așa a fost să fie* (This is how it was meant to be), *Căpitanul Stănciulescu* (Capitan Stănciulescu).<sup>144</sup> Between 1884 and 1886, she published in *Contemporanul* a number of translations from foreign authors like, Herbert Spencer, Letourneau, and John Stuart Mill, which have as main subject’s problems from the fields of sociology, anthropology, religious beliefs, polygamy, and women’s rights.

In another monthly journal, called *Evenimentul literar* (The literary event), Sofia Nădejde published short stories between 1893 and 1894, and in the magazine *Literatură și știință* (Literature and science) two articles, one in 1893 “Unde mergem” (Where are we going) and one in 1884 “Evoluția familiei” (The evolution of the family).

## **Bucharest**

In 1894, the Nădejde family left Iași and settled in Bucharest. They moved to Bucharest, with the aim of coordinating the Workers Club activity in Bucharest, to give lectures and conferences for peasants and workers, in general to propagate the “cause of socialism”. It is in

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<sup>143</sup> Visinescu, *Sofia Nadejde*, 154.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 157

this period of time when the SDWPR was established and the socialist activity became more intense, and more Marxist in orientation.

It was in Bucharest that Ioan Nădejde finished his studies and earned his doctoral degree in law. Here they both participated in meetings at the Bucharest Workers Club, and published articles in the weekly newspaper *Munca* (Work). The Club organized conferences about scientific socialism, women's emancipation, worker and peasant's rights, supported workers strikes in 1894.<sup>145</sup> The Bucharest Worker's Club had a social sciences branch that provided workers and peasants with lectures and short courses in the fields of economics, natural sciences, French language, history, and accounting. In 1895, Sofia Nădejde began there, her lecture series, with a lecture about the social history of Romanians.<sup>146</sup> Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea was holding lectures about the Romanian socialist tactics and Ioan Nădejde gave lectures in the field of political economics. In total, as Victor Vișinescu said, there were 55 such lectures at the Club in 1894.<sup>147</sup> One of the lectures, held by Sofia Nădejde, was "Are women intellectually inferior to men?" For a period of five years, from 1894 to 1899 she held lectures and conferences in various Romanian cities.<sup>148</sup> Unfortunately, the content of these conferences was not written or recorded. In Bucharest her literary activity continued, she published articles and short stories in the pages of the magazine *Lumea nouă științifică și literară* (New Literary and Scientific World), which was the supplement of the socialist daily journal *Lumea Nouă* (New World). Some of her articles were, in 1895 "Instrucțiunea rurală" (Rural education), "Criminalii" (The

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<sup>145</sup> *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România*, vol.I 1890-1900 (Documents from the history of the workers movement in Romania), 148

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 159.

<sup>148</sup> Craiova, Galați, Bârlad, Iași, Ploiești, Tulcea.

Assasins), “Pe vremea lui Cuza (“In Prince Cuza’s time).<sup>149</sup> A next phase in Sofia Nădejde’s life began in 1895, with her interest in a new social, politic and cultural movement called “poporanism”, which is translated in English language with “populism.” She published in 1896 in the journal “Lumea Nouă” (New World) an article entitled “Poporanismul și Socialismul” (Poporanism and Socialism),<sup>150</sup> where she tried to appropriate the two ideologies, as having common grounds and the same goals.

This phase in Sofia Nădejde’s life is interesting for a number of reasons. First, she moved with all her family in the capital of the Romanian Kingdom, she left behind her beloved house, where all the socialist friendships had developed, the house that she and her husband built, and that served as a printer for *Contemporanul*. She came to Bucharest for a new life. Of course, Bucharest was a bigger city, with a more developed industry and with more factories and workers than Iași. Second, the socialist movement found there its battlefield, and its “people”, the proletarians. This was important, because there she held lectures for working-class women, the party was established, and the political activity became intense. Therefore, her writings should have developed in a more “Marxist way”, but instead of that she embraced this new movement called Poporanism, which was indeed close to the socialist ideology. However, it was also different, because it was exalting the rural archaic civilization of Romania, as authentic in opposition with the urban civilization, considered inauthentic and foreign to the Romanian values. Constantin Stere, the “ideologist” behind Poporanism, considered that Romania in the late nineteenth century had to appropriate the peasant and the rural life, and that this appropriation was the path to be followed.<sup>151</sup> Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea was also

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<sup>149</sup> Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 170

<sup>150</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Poporanismul și Socialismul” in *Lumea Nouă*, no. 412, (January 1896): 2

<sup>151</sup> Zigu Ornea, *Poporanismul*, (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1972), 23

sympathetic with the movement that resembled much to the Russian Narodnik ideology.<sup>152</sup> Actually, Narodnism translated in English, means “populism”, the exact term for the Romanian Poporanism.<sup>153</sup> Sofia Nădejde became interested in this movement and ideology. After 1896, the topics that she addressed in articles, but much more in her short stories, were dealing with peasant women’s life and oppression.

After 1899, when the SDWPR ceased to exist due to Ioan Nădejde’s rethread, Sofia will publish articles related to peasants’ emancipation and education, in 1904, 1906 and 1907 in the monthly democratic journal *Albina* (The Bee). Between 1908 and 1915, she translated in Romanian language writings of Jules Verne, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Camille Flammarion, Matilde Serano, Edmondo de Amicis.<sup>154</sup>

Her husband died in 1928, as well as her two sons. After these tragic events, her literary and journalistic activity will end in 1935, with a series of articles entitled “Memories” published in the journal *Adevărul* (The Truth).<sup>155</sup> In these writings, she remembered the beginnings of the socialist movement, as well as her friends and former colleagues. In the last years of life, she lived with her two daughters Amelia and Victoria. Sofia Nădejde died on June 11, 1946 at the age of 90.

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<sup>152</sup> Narodnism was a social movement, influenced by socialist ideas, that developed in nineteenth-century Russia. Narodniks saw the peasantry as the “revolutionary class” that will overthrow the monarchy, and perceived the villages as the places where socialism would flourish. In addition, they thought that Russia could “skip” the phase of capitalist development and enter straight into socialism. It is worth mentioning that Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, was a narodnik when he came to Moldavia from Ukraine (then part of the Russian empire), and spread narodniki ideas among the Romanian socialists.

<sup>153</sup> Stefania Mihailescu, *Poporanismul și mișcarea socialistă din România*, (Bucharest: Ed. Politica 1988), 15

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 247-251

<sup>155</sup> Victor Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, (Bucharest: Ed. Politica, 1972), 255

## Conclusion

Sofia Nădejde survived two world wars, her sons and her husband. She published lots of articles and novels, in which she criticized the male domination of the world, the capitalist system, the oppressive world in which she, as a woman was living, but she was soon forgotten by the intellectuals of the time. Who was Sofia Nădejde? According to her biographer, Victor Vişinescu, she was an “avant-garde socialist activist [who] fought with thought and facts, with the spoken word, and with the written word. She was in the first lines of the socialist battle, amongst the first Romanian socialists. She was a socialist journalist, a spokes-person, magazine director, member of SDWPR, novelist.”<sup>156</sup> He does not mention her feminism, something to which I will come back in Chapter 6. First, in Chapter 5, I will now analyze some of her major journalistic work.

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<sup>156</sup> Vişinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 21

## Chapter V

### Sofia Nădejde as a journalist

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will present and analyze some of Sofia Nădejde's journalistic work. Journalism was one of the "radical" forms of protest that socialists in nineteenth-century Romania used to advance their cause, in order to popularize their opinions and ideology. The most important socialist journal was *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), established in 1881 at Iași (Iassy) by Ioan Nădejde, Sofia Nădejde's husband and Vasile G. Morțun.<sup>157</sup> It appeared between July 1881 and May 1891 and amongst the editors, we find Sofia Nădejde,<sup>158</sup> who also published sixty-eight articles in *Contemporanul* during its ten years of existence.<sup>159</sup> Other socialist journals in which Sofia Nădejde published articles were: *Lumea Nouă Literară și Științifică* (The New Literary and Scientific World), *Drepturile Omului* (Human Rights), *Lumea Nouă* (The New World), *Lumea Nouă Literară și Științifică* (New Literary and Scientific World), *Evenimentul Literar* (The Literary Event), *Femeia Română* (The Romanian Woman), *Albina* (The Bee), *Universul* (The Universe), *Adevărul* (The Truth), *Munca* (Work).

My focus in this chapter is on the articles Sofia Nădejde published in *Femeia Română*, *Contemporanul*, *Drepturile Omului*, and *Lumea Nouă Literară și Științifică*. The questions that

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<sup>157</sup> Vasile G. Morțun (1860-1919) was a Romanian journalist and politician; also, he became the first socialist deputy in the Romanian Parliament in the year 1888.

<sup>158</sup> Gheorghe Nădejde, Theodor Dimitrie Speranția, Constantin Mille

<sup>159</sup> Victor Vișinescu, who wrote Sofia Nădejde's biography in 1972, provides a list of all her publications in *Contemporanul*.

I will try to answer are which topics did Sofia Nădejde write about in the journals and how can we characterize her political ideas in these writings?

In the chapter, I will present aspects of the social and economical conditions in which her writings were received, and after then, I discuss some articles that she published in the journals listed above. These articles are, “Cestiunea Femeilor” (The “Woman Question”) in *Femeia Română* (1879); “Raspuns d-lui Maiorescu in chestiunea creierului la femei” (Reply to Mr. Maiorescu regarding the problem of women’s brains) in *Contemporanul* (1881-1882); “Despre casatorie” (About marriage) in *Contemporanul* (1881-1882); “Observari asupra cartei lui Mill despre supunerea la femei” (Observations regarding Mill’s book about the subjection of women) in *Contemporanul* (1882-1883); “Un articol din *Timpul* de la 18 iunie 1882” (An article in “The Time” of June 18, 1882), in *Contemporanul* (1882-1883); “Libertatea femeii în prelegerea d-lui Misir” (The liberty of woman as seen by Mr. Misir), in *Contemporanul* (1882-1883); “Azi totul e marfă” (Today everything is a commodity) in *Contemporanul* (1884-1885); “Femeia și socialismul (Woman and socialism) in *Drepturile Omului* (1885); and lastly “Căutarea paternității” (Seeking for the paternity) in *Lumea nouă literară și științifică* (1895).

My aim in this chapter is to, highlight and expose the most important topics in Sofia Nădejdes journalistic work, and I will illustrate them with her writings. In the previous chapters, we have seen how Nădejde’s life and background influenced her activity as a feminist socialist, now we will see how her ideas about women’s emancipation are reflected in her journalistic activity.



## Romania in the Late-nineteenth Century: Social and Economic Context

It is important to understand that the Romanian socialist movement, as I have shown in the second chapter, arose in the early phase of the “newborn” state. Sofia Nădejde and her husband Ioan Nădejde were amongst the first in Romania who embraced and supported socialism and *Contemporanul* was the official journal of the Romanian socialists, from 1881 to 1891. Through this publication, as well as through other socialists newspapers and journals, the Romanian socialists from Iași and Bucharest, demanded universal suffrage, democratic reforms, and women’s rights. The year when the first number appeared, 1881, also marked an important event in the history of the modern Romanian state. It is the year when Romania became officially a kingdom and a constitutional monarchy.

In order to better understand Sofia Nădejde’s writings, it is necessary to take into account the social movements/changes that occurred in late nineteenth-century Romania. Women’s emancipation was happening at the same time with the development of Romanian industry and the creation of new political institutions. It was the hard period of expansion from an agrarian to an industrialized country. The problem for the majority of Romanian women was not that of achieving equal political rights with men, but that they were illiterate and lived in poor conditions, especially in the rural areas.<sup>160</sup> In 1900, approximately 80% of the population was composed of peasants who had no hope to possess someday a piece of land of their own; they were not even dreaming of something called “the right to vote.”<sup>161</sup> For them, the most urgent thing was their survival from one day to the next. This is why Sofia Nădejde in her writings

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<sup>160</sup> *Enciclopedia României* (The Encyclopedia of Romania), vol.III, (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1937), 49-60

<sup>161</sup> Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc. Antologie de texte: 1838–1929* (From the history of Romanian feminism. Collection of documents: 1838–1929), (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 16

identifies as the most important problem to be solved that of rural women's oppression. Even if the industry began to develop, a part of the peasants were freed from bondage only in 1864, and received from the state a piece of land according to their wealth, which was measured in the percentage of cattle's they possessed.<sup>162</sup> If they did not possess any cattle, they would not receive any land.<sup>163</sup>

### **Sofia Nădejde's journalistic activity in *Femeia Română* (1879), *Contemporanul* (1881-1886), *Drepturile Omului* (1885), and *Lumea Nouă Literară și Științifică* (1895)**

The first article signed by Sofia Nădejde was entitled "Cestiunea Femeilor" (The "Woman Question") and appeared on March 25, 1879 in the journal *Femeia Română*.<sup>164</sup> What is interesting is the fact that Nădejde used the term "women" in the plural and not singular as was customary at that time.<sup>165</sup> This may indicate the fact that she thought not of a particular kind of *woman*, but about women from various social classes and even ethnicities. Another explanation is that her usage of this word was linked to the socialist belief in the force of collectivity for achieving social change rather than focusing on the individual person. This first article is reflecting rather Sofia Nădejde's liberal/democratic conceptions regarding women's emancipation, which in my view are characteristic for her ideas in this earlier period.

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<sup>162</sup> Keith Hitchins "Inceputurile statului modern" (The beginnings of the modern state) in Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Șerban Papacostea, *Istoria României* (The History of Romania), (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1993), 381

<sup>163</sup> The piece of land that the freed peasants received from the state was in fact rented to them; they were supposed to pay to the landowner, the boyar, an amount of money during ten years.

<sup>164</sup> This is my translation, it is conventionally translated by the "woman question", but here the exact words are "cestiune/chestiune" which cannot be translated from Romanian language in English language as question, but as problem; Sofia Nădejde did not say "femeie" (woman) at singular, but *femei* (women) at plural.

<sup>165</sup> Sofia Nădejde, "Cestiunea femeilor" in *Femeia Română*, year II, (1879), no.11: 177-179

The main theme of the article was the contemporary debate around the alleged smaller size of women's brains in comparison with men's brains and the male's explanation of women's political, sexual and social inferiority due to these smaller brains. Sofia Nădejde in particular revolted against an article published in *Le Nord* on March 15, 1879, a reproduction of an article published in *Le Liberté* entitled "Women's Brains" which stated that woman was inferior to man in all aspects and that no matter how hard women tried to change this situation they could never achieve the same level of intelligence as men.<sup>166</sup> Nădejde began a polemic against these affirmations and demonstrated that they were just aberrations. In doing this, she quoted different scientific works of the time and stated that the skull must be measured accordingly to the size of the body, height, weight and not to the "idea" of being men or women,<sup>167</sup> as John Stuart Mill had argued in his 1869 *Subjection of Women*. She also accused men of hypocrisy when they were talking about women's intelligence, because the legislation, made by men, denied women access to many forms of education and many professions. In addition, she noted that even if women formally were allowed to continue their education, even at the secondary level, they needed financial resources, "women from rural areas and working-class families will not be able to pay for school; there is a need for special legislation regarding education, but for everybody, not just a minority."<sup>168</sup> One can notice that, while the topic was women's access to education Sofia Nădejde concerns were with working-class and peasant women. From this point of view, she was a socialist feminist, because she stated that access to education has to be universal and not restricted to a particular class.

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<sup>166</sup> Sofia Nădejde, "Cestiunea Femeilor", 177

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 178

In addition, she talked about the “role of mothers” that society and men had imposed on women: “So, what are we, but just some slaves reduced to the role of giving birth? We give birth and raise our children through the hardest works and adversities of life! How many sleepless nights! And how many things we give up for that! (...) Happy should be the mother who is not sacrificed! (...) What can you say, is this not slavery?”<sup>169</sup> Here, she stated that women should have more freedom in choosing the “role of mothers” that male society imposed as the most important “reason of existence” on women. She used the word slaves for women, as Mary Wollstonecraft did in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). This, too, can be understood as a combination of socialist and feminist thinking. She saw in mothers what she saw in slaves – no right to choose regarding their own bodies. This kind of discourse, which evoked the women-slave comparison/identification was used in the nineteenth century by feminists of various generations, as Claire Midgley has shown in her “Anti-slavery and the roots of ‘Imperial Feminism’”,<sup>170</sup> and it was not particular for socialist feminist thinking. My point is that Sofia Nădejde talked in particular about mothers who lived in poverty and about their “burden” as mothers, pointing to the control that society/the state had over their bodies, and not necessarily about all women seen as slaves. It is important to remember that at the end of nineteenth century in Romania, there were still “dependent peasants”, whose situation was a form of slavery as I pointed out in the first chapter; also for the SDWPR, the working-class was subjected to “slavery” by the emerging Romanian capitalist state.

The problem of a proper education is also present in her writings, when she stated, “I will not permit to anybody to accuse women of being less intelligent than men, until we will have

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<sup>169</sup> Nădejde, “Cestiunea Femeilor”, 178

<sup>170</sup> Claire Midgley, “Anti-slavery and the Roots of ‘Imperial Feminism’” “in Claire Midgley (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 161-179

schools, until we will have the same conditions as men have; and then only after ten years it can be decided.”<sup>171</sup> The main themes of this article, from 1879, the size of a woman’s brain, economical independence and equal access to education, will also be present in *Contemporanul* in the article entitled “Răspuns d-lui Maiorescu în chestia creierului la femei” (Reply to Mr. Maiorescu regarding the problem of women’s brains), from 1881-1882. Nădejde reacted to Titu Maiorescu, one of the most famous intellectuals and literary critiques of nineteenth-century Romania, regarding the argument of women’s alleged smaller brains and inferiority that he advocated. Starting from the argument that, in fact women were more intelligent than men were, she relied on examples of the working-class and rural women who had to work in order to sustain their families, but also to work in the household, to take care of the children and even do the same amount of physical work as men. “Peasant women have to be more attentive and stronger than men are, because they are forced by the social conditions in which they live, to work more, to take care of the children, household and work in the field alongside their husbands.”<sup>172</sup> She referred to the double burden that women were facing in society and her examples were always about the lower-class women. She criticized middle-class women for their lack of understanding the true problems that poor women were facing. Nădejde is analyzing “bourgeois women” habits regarding fashion with the aim of pleasing men, as well as their view on work as something degrading, and criticizes them for that.<sup>173</sup> She stated that, “the bourgeois women look at work as something degrading; pleasing men is ‘noble’, but working is a crime. Their only aim is to dress up according to fashion, in order to please their men. Until they [bourgeois women] will understand the complexities of poverty in which

<sup>171</sup> Nădejde, “Cestiunea Femeilor”, 179

<sup>172</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Răspuns d-lui Maiorescu în chestiunea creierului la femei” (Reply to Mr. Maiorescu regarding the problem of women’s brains) in *Contemporanul*, year I, no. 24, (1881/1882): 873

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p.874-876

working-class and peasant women are living, they will not be ‘emancipated’.” Thus, we see again that, her socialist feminist ideas came to surface.

The article “Despre casatorie” (About marriage) published in *Contemporanul*, 1881-1882 by Sofia Nădejde was about the problem of marriage, and the situation of the mother and the child “what is marriage and how is supposed to be? It is something horrible about marriage, because it is an ‘auction house’ where the one who beads the highest is the buyer of the woman. The marriage should be free of all this.”<sup>174</sup>

In another article, published in the same journal, *Contemporanul*, from 1881-1882, entitled “Un articol din *Timpul* de la 18 Iunie 1882” (An article in “The Time” June 18, 1882), Sofia Nădejde responded to an article written by an “intellectual” man of that time, A. Teiulescu, and published in the journal *Timpul* (The Time). In fact, this is the reason she answered to it, because “if it was not published in a prestigious journal like *Timpul* I would not have bothered to answer”, she noted.<sup>175</sup> Sofia Nădejde was reacting to this article, because she felt insulted and misunderstood by this A. Teiulescu.<sup>176</sup> The first thing that she responded to was the use of the term “emancipatoare”, that the male author attached, in a negative way, to her writings and activity.<sup>177</sup> Nădejde explained that Teiulescu used this word, and tried placing her on “the same level with the women that ask for suffrage, although this is not what I consider to be the most important, at that moment, for women’s emancipation (...) it is important, but not *the* most important.”<sup>178</sup> She argues that, “for such a long time now, I am constantly arguing that the right to vote has to be universal, and not limited to those who have money to pay for it, be it men or

<sup>174</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Despre casatorie” (About marriage) in *Contemporanul*, year I, no. 18 (1881-1882): 626

<sup>175</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Un articol din *Timpul* de la 18 iunie 1882” (An article in “The Time” June 18, 1882) in *Contemporanul*, year II, no. 1 (1882-1883): 21

<sup>176</sup> I do not know who this man was; it is possible, as Sofia Nădejde, argues, to be a pseudonym. The practice of writing under a pseudonym was common for that time, even Sofia Nădejde, wrote under the pseudonym “Aglaia.”

<sup>177</sup> This word could be translated into English with “emancipated”, “an emancipated woman.”

<sup>178</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Un articol din *Timpul* de la 18 iunie 1882”, 21

women. It is not possible to talk about ‘equality’ if there is no universal vote, for everybody, for every social class. However, even if the vote will be approved, there are countries in the world, where this had happened and the women are still suffering and are not freed, because of the socio-economical conditions in which they live.”<sup>179</sup> This is one of the moments, when one can understand, how Nădejde was drawing a soft line between herself and the “bourgeois feminism” of that time. She positioned herself on the ground of socialist ideology, even though her ideas were not yet clear developed in that sense yet. She made a clear socialist feminist statement in this article, when she stated that, “rights for women, without the economic emancipation of the peasant and working-class women, will not solve the ‘woman question’.”<sup>180</sup> What she wanted, as a feminist, that challenged “male domination in culture and society”, as Karen Offen described feminism,<sup>181</sup> intersects with what Romanian socialists wanted, meaning universal suffrage, equal wage for equal work, protective laws for workers, equal civil and political rights for men and women.<sup>182</sup>

Nădejde did not want to be called “emancipatoare”, because, she argued, “this means that I am like that women that want suffrage, and I am not like them.”<sup>183</sup> She wanted universal suffrage, but not partial, as the liberal feminists were demanding. She was not “dreaming” of emancipation just for some women and people, but she was dreaming of the emancipation of the humans, in general, of helping the poor, the peasants, and the working-class. “I am dreaming of

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 24

<sup>181</sup> Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, 24

<sup>182</sup> “Moș iunea celui de-al doilea Congres al P.S.D.M.R din aprilie 1894” în *Munca*, anul V, nr.9, 24 aprilie 1894( The program of the second Congress of The Social Democratic Workers Party in Romania from April 1894 in *Work*, year V, nr. 9, April 24, 1894).

<sup>183</sup> Sofia Nadejde, “Un articol din *Timpul* de la 18 Iunie 1882”, 22

‘human rights’ for all humankind.”<sup>184</sup> In the writings I presented so far, I identified a pattern that seems to be present every time she was talking about women. Her focus is not on the vote, but on the economical independence of women; on their rights as citizens, on their recognition as workers, but in the same time, Nădejde argued for laws that protected their work, especially during pregnancy, and for material recognition for their unpaid work in terms of raising children.

In the article “Observări asupra cărții ei lui Mill despre supunerea la femei” (Observations about Mill’s book *On the Subjection of Women*) published in *Contemporanul* in 1882-1883, we can find the same topics mentioned before, such as equal access to education for women, the financial independence, and the problem of marriage. Sofia Nădejde, commented on some aspects of Mill’s book published in 1869,<sup>185</sup> and said from the beginning that, she did not agree with all the problems raised by the author. She stated, “I know that this statement will bring me many critiques, especially from intellectual men, but I am decided to tell what I really think about John Stuart Mill’s book.”<sup>186</sup> Sofia Nădejde agreed that women needed to be equal with men. However, she asked, “if this is going to happen, equal political rights, the right to vote for just a part of women, would the ‘woman question’ be solved? Is this all that is important for women?”<sup>187</sup> For Nădejde, there are other important aspects that need to be solved in order for this “question” to be answered/solved, like the problems of poor women, their economical

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Sofia Nădejde translated fragments and a summary of *On the Subjection of Women* into Romanian language that were published in *Contemporanul* in the years 1882-1883. The whole book was not translated. John Stuart Mill and his utilitarian liberalism was not a subject of debate in the socialist circles from Romania, at least not publicly. Nădejde appreciated Mill’s concerns towards women’s emancipation, but not the political framework on which his theory was based.

<sup>186</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Observări asupra cărții lui Mill despre supunerea la femei” (Some observations regarding Mill’s book about the subjection of women) in *Contemporanul*, year II, no. 13,(1882-1883): 510

<sup>187</sup> Nădejde, “Observări asupra cărții lui Mill”, 510



independence, and freedom from the superstitions, the “things that our parents say is best for us, from the things we do, because this is how it should be done.”<sup>188</sup>

The protection of women, especially during pregnancy and that of the double burden, appeared in this article as well, in close relationship with the economical independence of women. Sofia Nădejde argued, “it is known that bearing children is a problem for working-class women, because they need special conditions of work. After that, even if a woman could work, she also has to take care of the children and of the house. Society and the state do not recognize this kind of work, as ‘work’ that needs to be paid. Men say that they are the only providers of the family, but this is not true, and has to be stopped.”<sup>189</sup> Another argument which Nădejde brought in favor of this was that, “the society needs people to work, but wants to have them for free, and this is not possible; the widow with children is left alone, and nobody [the state] takes care of her. For a woman to be truly financial independent from a man, the society has to be organized in such a way that a woman can work and has where to work. Pregnancy and rising of children should be recognized by the state as work, ‘as hard work’ and the state should provide women with financial assistance during pregnancy and child rising.”<sup>190</sup> Sofia warned the readers in not finding that as a paradox, because “a woman is not raising the children for herself, but for the society; and if the society today recognizes that it is its duty to pay for children’s education, why would not pay for their food and clothes until they are able to work?”<sup>191</sup>

Regarding John Stuart Mill’s ideas, she stated that, “if we speak of Mill’s *On the Subjection of Women*, the ideas that he promotes would reach just some hundreds of intellectual men, that would regard women as equal to them in intelligence and rights, but what about the

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 511

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Nădejde, “Observari asupra cartei lui Mill”, 511

other men, that are still full of prejudices? They would regard women as they always did. For all this prejudices to vanish, it is important that men from all classes and social categories learn about women's rights since they are children.”<sup>192</sup> Sofia Nădejde, emphasized the importance of the education that men should receive from their family. “If from an early age, all the stereotypes about women would be abolished, then we can speak of equal rights.”<sup>193</sup> It seems that for Nădejde an important aspect of women's emancipation was the “education of men”. Another aspect that she discussed in relation to Mill's book, was that of the total silence that Mill had towards the problem of prostitution and female exploitation, by the state, and by the men. She concluded, by saying “I cannot understand how this problem (the prostitution) could be solved if women had equal rights with men and *some* of them the right to vote.”<sup>194</sup>

In another article entitled “Libertatea femeii în prelegerea domnului Misir” (Woman's liberty as seen by Mr. Misir) from *Contemporanul* 1882-1883, Sofia Nădejde, criticizes the speech that “Mr. Misir” gave about “woman's liberty and equality with man”. In his speech, Misir, argued against women's emancipation, and stated that, “it is not possible for a woman to receive the same education as a man does; a woman cannot have a career, because she has to take care of the house and the children.”<sup>195</sup> Of course, Nădejde was vigilant and reacted to his speech, through this article. She was shocked by the ideas that Misir promoted publically, and expressed her “disgust” with his opinions. One of Misir questions was “And, really, what will happen if women were seen as equal to men? Is this really necessary?”<sup>196</sup> Nădejde answered to this question and said that, “the first thing that will happen if women have the same liberty as

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 512

<sup>194</sup> Nădejde, “Observări asupra cărții ei lui Mill”, 512

<sup>195</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Libertatea femeii în prelegerea d-lui Misir” (The liberty of woman as seen by Mr. Misir), in *Contemporanul*, year II, no. 18 (1882-1883): 712

<sup>196</sup> Nădejde, “Libertatea femeii”, 714

men, would be fixing an inequality that lasted for hundreds of years (...) why do men consider themselves to be ‘better’ than women... just because they are born men?”<sup>197</sup> Later she placed men on the same level with the “owner”, the “boyar” that controlled the slaves, the peasants, the workers, “the state is like an ‘owner’, like a man, that oppresses women.”<sup>198</sup>

Women’s emancipation, for Sofia Nădejde meant also equal obligations in work, in society. She stated, “one part of the society is composed by women that work from day to night, raise children and are ‘subjugated by marriage’ (“duc jugul casniciei”),<sup>199</sup> and the other part are women that do nothing, preoccupied only by their appearance, and the wealth of their husbands.”<sup>200</sup> One can notice here how she emphasized problems of class struggle that were specific to nineteenth century socialist feminism.

In the article “Azi totul e marfă” (Today everything is a commodity) published in *Contemporanul*, 1886 Sofia Nădejde saw everything as a commodity; from the structure of the society to art, religion, politics and wars. About military conflicts, she said, “the wars are not for the protection of the weak, not for the nation, but a tool for the wealthy, in order to make new colonies and gain more money from them.”<sup>201</sup> Here, Sofia Nădejde saw the society in which she lived, in antagonist terms between the poor and the rich, and perceived war as a tool for the capitalist system, and not as “a protection for the weak”. In addition, in this article she affirmed that, “the emancipation of women is possible only through the fight of working-class, through changes in the class proportions, and through the replacement of the capitalist mode of

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 715

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 716

<sup>199</sup> This Romanian expression “duc jugul căsniciei” could be translated in English language as oppressed by the marriage.

<sup>200</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Libertatea femeii în prelegerea d-lui Misir”, 716

<sup>201</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Azi totul e marfă” (Today everything is a commodity) in *Contemporanul*, year IV, no. 2(1884-1886): 76

production; the changes in production, the building of assets have brought the subjection of woman, changing this system will bring her emancipation.”<sup>202</sup>

In the article “Femeia și socialismul” (Woman and Socialism), published in 1885 in the monthly journal *Drepturile Omului*, Sofia Nădejde invited women to fight for their emancipation in the socialist movement, and to understand their social force, because “the socialists are driven after the principle that nobody has to be deprived of the fruits of its work.”<sup>203</sup> In addition, she added, “socialists are fighting for economic emancipation, that will assure the right to work for all citizens and for a new social organization (...) at one side we have the luxurious live of the bourgeoisie, which accumulates more and more, and on the other side we have the most unbelievable poverty. It is important then that working-class women work alone for their right.”<sup>204</sup>

In the article “Căutarea paternității” (Seeking for the paternity) published in *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, in 1895 Sofia Nădejde argued that, “all the sufferings that women must endure are because of their way of living, for example working-class women are paid lesser than working-class men. Especially working-class and peasant women are the most disadvantaged, and cannot earn their living in a decent way.”<sup>205</sup> She blamed also the justice system for the oppression of women, “another cause of injustice towards women is the justice system, that blames the single mother for abandoning her child, if she has not the means to raise it (...) the laws are old, and do not make justice for women, the justice is just for men.”<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 78

<sup>203</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Femeia și socialismul (Woman and socialism) in *Drepturile Omului*, no. 873 ( 1885 ): 1

<sup>204</sup> Nădejde, “Femeia și socialismul”, 1

<sup>205</sup> Sofia Nădejde, “Căutarea paternității” (Seeking for the paternity) in *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, year I, 1895, no. 10, 7

<sup>206</sup> Nădejde, “Căutarea paternității”, 8

## Conclusions

Sofia Nădejde's main concerns were women's financial independence and supportive legislation for women-workers, especially during pregnancy, human rights for all members of society, in particular for peasant and working-class women, which included access to basic education and health care, recognition of the housework that women, with a special emphasis on what peasant women, did as "work", and should be paid for accordingly. Another important subject/s that appeared in her journalistic work were the debate/debates with various intellectuals from Romania, who denigrated her feminist ideas, and who wrote articles against women's rights and emancipation. These "quarrels" occupy an important part of her journalist writings. As this chapter has shown, Sofia Nădejde was not just a feminist who supported women's emancipation and equal status with men, but also a socialist thinker, who wrote about the socialist movement in Romania, and who was deeply concerned with the rights of working-class and peasant women. Indeed, it has become clear that these two streams of thinking cannot be separated in her work.

## Chapter VI

### Communist and Feminist Romanian historiography about Sofia Nădejde

#### Introduction

This chapter will deal with the communist and the feminist historiography regarding Sofia Nădejde's writings and activity. I will try to answer the question how are Sofia Nădejde's writings and activity described in the communist and feminist Romanian historiography? From the beginning, I want say that there is no monograph or extensive study published about Sofia Nădejde in the contemporary Romanian historiography. In the 1970s, during the communist regime, there was some interest in her activity; the Romanian literary scholar Victor Vișinescu edited a collection of her literary writings in 1976 and published her biography in 1972. She is also mentioned in other works, most of them about her literary activity, with the exception of the book *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii în România 1848-1948* (The Romanian woman emancipation movement) written by the historian Paraschiva Căncea, and published in 1976, where her journalistic and activist implications are mentioned. It was hard to put together the scattered information about her activity, in the conditions in which she was "praised" as an

extraordinary writer by the communist literary historians, which appreciated her novels and short stories as “socialist realist”, but neglected her journalistic writings.

In this chapter, I will examine first the communist historiography regarding Sofia Nădejde’s writings of the subsequent authors: Victor Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, Ion Popescu Puțuri (ed.) *Mișcarea muncitorească din România 1893-1900* (The Romanian workers movement between 1893-1990) published in 1965 ; Nicolae Sorin, *Din proza Contemporanului* (Writings from The Contemporary) published in 1961; Paraschiva Căncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii în România 1848-1948* (The Romanian woman’s emancipation movement 1848-1948) published in 1976 and Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Poporanismul și socialismul în România* (Poporanism and Socialism in Romania), published in 1988. Then, I will explore the Romanian contemporary historiography, about/that said something about Sofia Nădejde, Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc. Antologie de texte: 1838–1929*, (From the history of Romanian feminism. Collection of documents: 1838–1929), published in 2002 and “Sofia Nadejde” in Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, Anna Loutfi (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of women’s movements and feminisms: Central, Eastern, and south Eastern Europe, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, published in 2006; Roxana Cheșchebec, “Toward a Romanian’s Women’s Movement: An Organizational History (1880s-1940)”, published in 2006; Maria Bucur, Mihaela Miroiu (eds.), *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești* (Patriarchate and emancipation in the history of Romanian political thought), published in 2002; Alin Ciupală, *Femeia în societatea românească a secolului al thought XIX-lea: intre public si privat* (The woman in the Romanian nineteenth century society: between private and public) published in 2003, and the most recent mention of Sofia Nădejde’s feminism

in Krassimira Daskalova “The Balkans” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*, vol. 1 (2008)

## **Communist Romanian Historiography**

Her entire activity was directed to the goal of working-class women's emancipation as Victor Vişinescu said and she was “one of the most interesting women- citizen.”<sup>207</sup> The author mentioned that the reason why “she was deliberately forgotten, first of all, by her contemporaries”, was because “the ideas and ideals that animated her entire life were directed with confidence to the cause of the woman-worker, offering support for her life and emancipation, against the capitalist exploitation.”<sup>208</sup> From these words, one can understand, that Vişinescu is writing in 1972, from a communist subjective perspective, putting in the first place her activity as a socialist. On the other hand, he did not forget that her main objective was women emancipation, from a socialist perspective. I do not want to “defend” Victor Vişinescu, but although he was living under the communist regime,<sup>209</sup> he is the only one that truly studied her life and activity, and although he is emphasizing her activity as a socialist, the importance of Nădejde's support for women's rights is also mentioned.<sup>210</sup> Though, he mentioned her support towards working-class women's emancipation, he never mentioned her support to women's

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<sup>207</sup> Victor Vişinescu, 7

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> The official historiography and in general the literary production in the communist times of Romania, constructed an “alterate” vision of the reality in order to fit the Communist Party directives.

<sup>210</sup> Vişinescu is never using “feminist” or “feminism” to describe Sofia Nădejde's activity and writings.



emancipation in general, and stated that her journalistic articles, where she advocates this cause, were weak and without any aim.<sup>211</sup>

In the volume that he edited, *Mișcarea muncitorească din România* (The Romanian workers movement between 1893-1990), published in 1965, Ioan Popescu Puturi states, in the introduction the following “The Romanian workers movement at the end of the nineteenth-century was successful and obtain important achievements, especially after the creation of SDWPR. However, the workers movement was seen as hostile by the ‘liberal-bourgeois’ elements of the party, who were in great positions of power. They wanted to follow the ‘legal way’ and enter in the Parliament in order to make possible political and social reforms. The legalism was a dogma for this ‘opportunists’.”<sup>212</sup> From this statement, we can see how the “liberal-bourgeois elements” of the party were blamed for not supporting enough the workers movement. The “traitor” of the “revolutionary way” was Ioan Nădejde, who entered the radical wing of the Liberal Party in 1900. He is perceived by Ioan Popescu Puturi as one of the “liberal-bourgeois elements”, and is accused, when reediting in 1894, Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto*, of deliberately changing its name in *The Socialist Manifesto*, and thus delimiting itself from the communist ideology.<sup>213</sup> Sofia Nădejde is mentioned twice in *Mișcarea muncitorilor din România*, once at page 181, when the author says that an “anti-junimist”<sup>214</sup> brochure written by her and entitled “Are women inferior to men?” was edited in 1895, in the city of Craiova. Therefore, it is not seen as a brochure about women’s emancipation, but against the branch of the Conservative Party, called Junimisti (The Youngsters), where, the advocate of women’s “smaller

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<sup>211</sup> Victor Vișinescu, 41

<sup>212</sup> Ion Popescu Puturi, “Cuvânt înainte” (Introduction) in *Mișcarea muncitorilor din Romania*, Bucharest: Ed. Politica, 1965, 7.

<sup>213</sup> Puturi, “Cuvânt înainte”, 48 and K. Marx, F. Engels, *Manifestul Socialist* (The Socialist Manifesto), translated and with an introduction about revolution and revolutionary tactics by Ioan Nădejde, 1894.

<sup>214</sup> “Anti-junimist” refers to the “quarrel” between the socialists and the junimist (the youngsters).

brains” and inferiority, the intellectual Titu Maiorescu activated. The other place where she was mentioned was on page 195, where the author made a short presentation of the Romanian women’s movement. He stated that, “Sofia Nădejde developed an important journalistic activity in the field of women’s emancipation. In her articles, she called women to fight for their civil and political rights, in the socialist party, stating that ‘The only party that wants universal vote for women is the socialist party’.”<sup>215</sup> Here her role as a promoter of women’s emancipation in the socialist party is recognized, as well as her journalistic activity, but not developed further. One must not forget that, this book (*Mișcarea muncitorilor din România*) was written from a certain subjective political position, in such a way to construct an image of the late nineteenth-century Romania as an industrialized country, with a strong working class, and thus with a strong workers movement. In this way, the strong influence of socialism and the industrialization were seen as preceding and legitimatizing the communist regime.<sup>216</sup> It is not the place to discuss here such problems, but this may be one of the reasons Sofia Nădejde was “neglected”. Because of her husband’s actions, she was then perceived as having “liberal-bourgeois” sympathies, and did not fit in the linear development of the socialist thought and action in Romania, that the communist were “constructing” and legitimized.

Nicolae Sorin in *Din proza Contemporanului* (Writings from The Contemporary) published in 1961 studied not her journalistic writings, but her literary writings. He showed how her writings tried to emphasize the rural world, “that was full of tragic [and] how the peasant life

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<sup>215</sup> Ioan Popescu Puturi, “Cuvânt înainte”, 195

<sup>216</sup> On this topic see Lucian Boia, *Miturile comunismului românesc* (The myths of the Romanian communism), Bucharest: Ed. Universitatii, 1995; *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (History and myth in the Romanian consciousness), Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997; *Mitologia științifică a comunismului* (The scientific mythology of communism), Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999; *Două secole de mitologie națională* (Two centuries of national mythology), Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999.

was one of inequality, famine and illiteracy”.<sup>217</sup> The author identified her activity between 1900 and 1934 as “bourgeois” and without any literary, political or social value.<sup>218</sup> This “value” was measured, in my opinion, apparently according to Ioan Nădejde’s decision to leave the SDWPR, and enter in the radical wing of the Liberal Party. Even though her writings after this event did not change and the topics where she addressed women’s emancipation were still present in her literary works.<sup>219</sup> However, this seems to be of no interest for Nicolae Sorin. He is not concerned with her activity as a whole, just with the short stories she published in *Contemporanul*. Therefore, the total silencing of her feminist activity is an indicator of the fact that he did not see or did not want to see her as such. Nicolae Sorin portrayed her as a socialist writer, who wrote about the realities of Romanian society and criticized the power structure of that moment. She was acknowledged as a socialist until 1899, when Ioan Nădejde left the SDWPR.<sup>220</sup>

Paraschiva Căncea in *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii în România 1848-1948* (The Romanian woman’s emancipation movement 1848-1948) saw Sofia Nădejde as a feminist, and even more as a “socialist feminist”. She stated, “in the pages of *Femeia Română* (The Romanian Woman) Sofia Nădejde made her journalistic entrance as a feminist. The socialist feminist exposed women’s inferior civil situation, critiqued the bourgeois legislation that maintained women inferior to men, and proposed as a means for civil emancipation the broadening of educational means and the changing of the educational system.”<sup>221</sup> Paraschiva Căncea used the term “socialist feminist” although she talked about the first period in Sofia Nădejde’s feminism, where the liberal ideas were more representative. However, Paraschiva Căncea mentioned that

<sup>217</sup> Nicolae Sorin, *Din proza Contemporanului*, (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1961), 15-20

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> See her novels *Patimi* (Passions, 1903) which was awarded first prize in a literary competition in 1903, *Robia banului* (The servitude of money, 1906) and *Parinti si copii* (Parents and children, 1907)

<sup>220</sup> Nicolae Sorin, p.20

<sup>221</sup> Paraschiva Căncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii în România 1848-1948*, (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1976), 38-39

Sofia Nădejde “freed” herself from the “bourgeois” idealist conceptions and understood that the insufficient economic development of a society was the cause of women’s oppression. “She [Sofia Nădejde] supported workers movement, women and men, and understood the necessity of their fight against exploitation.”<sup>222</sup> These affirmations are the only information that Paraschiva Căncea provided about Sofia Nădejde. She described the socialist movement as a whole, and labeled it as supportive towards women’s emancipation, but no other things are mentioned about Sofia Nădejde’s work.

Ștefania Mihăilescu is a historian preoccupied with the topic of Romanian feminism, who wrote in 1988, *Poporanismul și mișcarea socialistă din România* (Poporanism and the Socialist movement in Romania), about Sofia Nădejde’s implication in the movement called “poporanism”. There, Mihăilescu portrayed Nădejde as a socialist activist, influenced by the “general democratic theories of poporanism”. The author mentioned Sofia Nădejde’s friendship with Constantin Stere, the ideologist of the poporanist movement, and then investigates the poporanist ideology in a comparative perspective with the socialist ideology.<sup>223</sup> Ștefania Mihăilescu stated, “the well known socialist activist, Sofia Nădejde, was influenced by the general democratic ideas of poporanism and published Constantin Stere’s articles in the journal *Evenimentul Literar* [The Literary Event].”<sup>224</sup> Other suspects of Sofia Nădejde’s connections with poporanism are not developed, neither her activity as a feminist, although Ștefania Mihăilescu will publish in a collection of documents, in 2002 two of Sofia Nădejde’s articles from *Contemporanul*, and will label her as a feminist.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid. , 39

<sup>223</sup> Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Poporanismul și mișcarea socialistă din România*, (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1988), 24-25

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 24

## Feminist Romanian Historiography

The question that this part of the chapter will try to answer is how was Sofia Nădejde been portrayed in the feminist historiography of the last 20 years? As I mentioned above, Ștefania Mihăilescu, published a collection of documents connected to the women's emancipation in Romania, most of them from the journals in which they originally appeared, or from archives, which she published in *Din istoria feminismului românesc. Antologie de texte: 1838–1929* in 2002. In the introduction, she states, “Multiple documents of that time certify the important part that the socialist movement had in the maturing of the women's organizations and associations in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Knowing the vast occidental literature regarding women's place in society, the followers of the socialist ideas (Sofia and Ioan Nădejde, Panait Moșoiu, Constantin Mille, Paul Scorțeanu) wrote articles, studies and polemics in *Munca, Drepturile Omului, Lumea Nouă, Lumea Nouă Științifică și Literară*.”<sup>225</sup> One can notice how Sofia Nădejde was acknowledged as being part of the socialist group, but Mihăilescu, integrated her in the socialist movement as a whole and did not see Nădejde as a socialist feminist. The articles that Ștefania Mihăilescu decided to reproduce in her collection of documents are “Chestiunea Femeilor” (The Woman Question) originally published in the bi-weekly magazine *Femeia Română* in 1879, and “Răspuns D-lui Maiorescu în privința creierului la femei” (A reply to Mr. Maiorescu regarding women's brains), originally published in the monthly journal *Contemporanul* in 1881-1882. Those two articles are from the first part of Sofia Nădejde's feminism that was inspired by liberal and democratic conceptions regarding women's emancipation. Then, it is a bit awkward that Ștefania Mihăilescu identified Sofia Nădejde as

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<sup>225</sup> Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc. Antologie de texte: 1838–1929*, (Iași: Polirom, 2002)

influenced/part of the socialist movement, but decided to reproduce this two articles, and not, for example, the article “Femeia și Socialismul” (The Woman and Socialism) published in *Drepturile Omului* (Human Rights) in 1894, or other articles from *Contemporanul*, where her socialist feminism is visible. It seems like it is better if Sofia Nădejde is constructed as a “bourgeois feminist” with liberal ideas, which she had at a certain point in her activity, than as a socialist feminist. Those ideas that are labeled as “liberal” do not define her whole writings, neither her activity in the socialist movement and SDWPR.

In the short biography “Sofia Nădejde” that Ștefania Mihăilescu wrote in Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, Anna Loutfi (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of women’s movements and feminisms: Central, Eastern, and south Eastern Europe, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, she presents Sofia Nădejde as an active journalist, who published articles in various journals and was active in the socialist movement. “Sofia Nădejde was part of a group of socialist intellectuals in Iași who, between 1881 and 1891, published the newspaper *Contemporanul* (...) This paper became the arena in which Nădejde launched a veritable feminist campaign against the widespread argument of women’s alleged ‘smaller brains’ (used to ‘prove’ that women were unable to attain high spiritual planes and that they should not participate in politics). Nădejde had a particularly heated debate with the prominent intellectual Titu Maiorescu. On the basis of a sophisticated reading of the latest scientific discoveries in biology, anatomy and anthropology, Nădejde demonstrated that proportionally , women’s brains were actually larger than men’s.”<sup>226</sup> Again, here one can notice how Sofia Nădejde’s debate with Titu Maiorescu was at the center of her biography, although it would have been normal to be her activity in the socialist circle. She

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<sup>226</sup> Ștefania Mihăilescu in Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, Anna Loutfi (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of women’s movements and feminisms: Central, Eastern, and south Eastern Europe, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (New York and Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 361

was not presented as a socialist feminist, although Ștefania Mihăilescu asserted, “After 1886, under the influence of Marxism, her articles moved towards a broader view of social inequality and its elimination, portraying women’s oppression as a byproduct of capitalism and private property.”<sup>227</sup> This seems to be an acknowledgment of the influence that socialist ideas had upon Sofia Nădejde’s feminism, but again, she was not directly named/recognized as socialist feminist.

Roxana Cheșchebec in “Toward a Romanian’s Women’s Movement: An Organizational History (1880s-1940)” published in Edith Sauer, Margaret Lanzinger, Elisabeth Frysak (eds.), *Women’s Movements: Networks and debates in post-communist Countries in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, mentioned that Sofia Nădejde’s writings “inspired a subsequent generation of women to reflect on women’s role in society.”<sup>228</sup> In addition, she acknowledged Sofia Nădejde’s relations with the SDWPR, but saw Sofia Nădejde views on women’s emancipation as “formulated from a perspective informed by the ideas of socialism and the liberalism of John Stuart Mill.”<sup>229</sup> From my perspective, the ideas of John Stuart Mill are not so present in Sofia Nădejde’s writings. What about Clara Zetkin’s or August Bebel’s ideas? Where not those ideas present? However, because we do not have any contemporary study regarding Sofia Nădejde as a feminist, member of the SDWPR, socialist feminist, socialist feminist with “bourgeois” ideas, or as a feminist influenced by poporanism, it is hard to express any clear opinions of who and what influenced her writings.

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Roxana Cheșchebec in “Toward a Romanian’s Women’s Movement: An Organizational History (1880s-1940)” in Edith Sauer, Margaret Lanzinger, Elisabeth Frysak (eds.), *Women’s Movements: Networks and debates in post-communist Countries in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), 442

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

Maria Bucur and Mihaela Miroiu in, *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești* (Patriarchate and emancipation in the history of Romanian political thought) published in 2002, which presents the idea of women's emancipation during the nineteenth and twentieth century's, did not mention Sofia Nădejde, neither the SDWPR, although on their political agenda was the universal vote for both women and men, rich or poor. It is rather strange that in a book that deals with the Romanian "patriarchal society" and emancipation in the "Romanian political thought", the social democrats of the late nineteenth century are not mentioned, with the exception of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea.<sup>230</sup>

Alin Ciupală, a Romanian historian wrote in his book *Femeia în societatea românească a secolului al XIX-lea: între public și privat* (The woman in the Romanian nineteenth century society: between private and public) about the general conditions in which women lived in the Romanian society. His interest was directed only in investigating women's lives of the upper and middle classes, and did not mentioned women from other classes, working-class or peasant women. Once more, Sofia Nădejde is referred to only in relation to the "liberal" topics that she addressed during her activity.<sup>231</sup>

Krassimira Daskalova in the entry about "Balkans" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*, presented Sofia Nădejde as a feminist who published in *Femeia Română* a polemical text where she criticized the opinion that women are incapable of development. The debate with Titu Maiorescu is also mentioned. Daskalova stated that, "in the 1880s, Nădejde condemned prejudices regarding women as inferior while demonstrating profound

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<sup>230</sup> Maria Bucur, Mihaela Miroiu (eds.), *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești*, (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 90

<sup>231</sup> Alin Ciupală, *Femeia în societatea românească a secolului al XIX-lea: între public și privat*, (Bucharest: Meridiane, 2003), 76-77



knowledge of the scientific debates of her time.”<sup>232</sup> Here again Sofia Nădejde is not seen/presented as a Romanian socialist feminist, but as a Romanian feminist.

## Conclusion

### “History tends to bury what it seeks to reject”

The chapter has briefly explored how Sofia Nădejde’s writings and activity were described in the communist and recent feminist Romanian historiography. The best answer to this question, in my opinion, is that Sofia Nădejde’s “image” was constructed in both the communist and the contemporary historiography to fit the conditions or aspects of a specific ideology. If in the communist time, the attention was, as this chapter argued, on her portrayal as a socialist activist (only until 1899) and as a “great” novelist, in the contemporary historiography she is remembered as an important feminist of the late nineteenth century, and her “bourgeois” views are highlighted, whereas her membership in the socialist movement and in the SDWPR are not explored. The contemporary orientation of Romania after the collapse of the communist regime is towards a liberal ideology. I do not want to suggest this is an explanation of why Sofia Nădejde is presented as rather “liberal” than socialist, or why there is no extensive study on her life and activity, but on the other hand, this is how things seem to be. Sofia Nădejde, did not embrace “the revolution” and did not support the Communist Party in Romania. In my opinion, this is one of the reasons why the communist historiography concentrated on her literary activity and not on her journalistic writings. In a way, or, in their view, she “betrayed” the socialist cause, because her husband entered the radical wing of the Liberal Party, so she had to be “forgotten”. In the feminist historiography, her literary works and many of her articles were not discussed,

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<sup>232</sup> Krassimira Daskalova, “Balkans” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*, volume 1, ed. By Bonnie G. Smith, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 190

and her activity after 1883 has been neglected. In this case, the reason seems to be the socialist topics that occupy an important place in both her literary and journalistic writings after 1883, but that do not fit in the general liberal trend of post-communist Romania.

The feminist historiography regarding Sofia Nădejde's writings mentions her as a feminist, but her socialist views are neglected. She was described either as "radical" or, in most cases, as a "bourgeois" feminist with some socialist ideas. In addition, it is interesting how most of the scholarship published in Romania about women's movement neglects the nineteenth century. Of course, it is true that most of the feminist organizations appeared in the twentieth century, and we possess more archival sources about their structure and activity than about feminists of the nineteenth century. Due to the period of time in which Sofia Nădejde supported women's emancipation, and because she was a member of the socialist movement alongside her husband, one cannot simply label her as socialist feminist or as a "bourgeois" feminist.

## Conclusion

This thesis has discussed socialist feminism in late nineteenth-century Romania, with a focus on the case of Sofia Nădejde, and the ways in which socialist feminism was and is acknowledged as such in the Romanian scholarly literature. I studied Sofia Nădejde's work and activity in the socialist circle and the SDWPR and the topics that she addressed in different Romanian socialist journals. My research questions were: how can we characterize Sofia Nădejde's social and political ideas? Second, how are Sofia Nădejde's writings and activity described in the Romanian historiography of the communist period and in recent feminist Romanian historiography?

Regarding the first question, my analysis of some of Sofia Nădejde's journalistic work has shown that Sofia Nădejde was not just a feminist who supported women's emancipation and equal status with men, but also a socialist thinker, who wrote about the socialist movement in Romania, and who was deeply concerned with the rights of working-class and peasant women.. Regarding the second question, I have shown the partial and biased ways in which the various bodies of scholarly literature treat Sofia Nădejde. The communist historiography limited itself to identifying her as a socialist, an "activist" who promoted working-class and peasants' rights, without acknowledgment of the feminist dimensions of her work, whereas the feminist historiography neglected the socialist aspects of her work and life and presented her as a (gender or liberal) feminist only. By contrast, my thesis emphasized the importance of regarding Sofia Nădejde in her historical context, which was that of socialist feminism.

Some of the limitations of this research were, first, that I analyzed only a small part of her published articles and none of her novels, and second that I could not consult all the primary sources (Sofia Nădejde's private and public correspondence, minutes of the Workers Club lectures/meetings), in the National Archives in Bucharest, because, I was told, they "mysteriously" vanished from the collections. In addition, the documents regarding the constitution of the SDWPR were not available for research, nor were the fonds with personal records of the main nineteenth-century socialists such as Ioan Nădejde, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin Mille or Vasile Morțun.

I hope nonetheless to have shown that Sofia Nădejde was an important nineteenth-century socialist feminist, who deserves to be known in the fullness of her ideas and activities, i.e., as a socialist feminist. Further research might deal with some of the sources and issues I was not able to include here. That further research might also discuss the question of whether Sofia Nădejde was an exception or part of broader movement in Romania, and compare her ideas with those of better known socialist feminists in Europe of the time.

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