

**THE LITTLE ENTENTE'S WOMEN AND MEN:
Shaping Feminist Networks and Geopolitics in the Interwar Central, Eastern
and South Eastern Europe**

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Abstract

After World War One there was a divide between suffrage and “non-suffrage” nation(s). The Little Entente of Women (LEW) sought to unify women beyond national borders in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe (CESEE). My thesis focused on transnational cooperation between the member organizations of the Little Entente of Women (Greece, Czechoslovakia, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (i.e., Yugoslavia), Poland, and Romania), in the period from the establishment of the organization in 1923 to 1938. Contrary to the internationalist discourse that they heavily relied on, this thesis shows how the LEW was instead maintaining the post-Versailles order. Moreover, the national aspirations of the LEW members seriously limited their proclaimed internationalism. This thesis represents a research of an underdiscussed topic that intends to analyze intertwined political and feminist discursive practices used in and around the LEW: on the organizational, personal, and on the level of ideas.

Besides the fifteen years long period when the first interwar transnational and regional women’s organization in the region was active, I focused also on the years preceding the end of the Great War and the establishment of the new countries in the CESEE – to analyze how the so-called “national question” impacted the women organizing. The analysis of the processes of reception, transformation, reinterpretation and rejection of ideas in the framework of the LEW will enable comparison of diverse women’s perspectives of contemporary political realities. The thesis contributes to the ongoing debates at the crossroads of women’s history, political thought, transnational history and nationalism studies. More precisely, it would add up to research in interwar transnational (feminist) networking.

Keywords: CESEE, feminist networking, interwar period (1923-1939), the Little Entente of Women (LEW), women’s movements.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

CESEE – Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe

IAW – International Alliance of Women

IAWSEC – International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship

ICW – International Council of Women

IFUW – International Federation of University Women

IWSA – International Woman Suffrage Aliance

LE – Little Entente

LEW – Little Entente of Women

WILPF – Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

YWU – Yugoslav Women Union (Jugoslavenski ženski savez)

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
Glossary of Abbreviations	5
Table of Contents	6
INTRODUCTION	8
Theoretical Orientation and Previous Research	10
Previous Research on Women’s Organizations in Interwar Yugoslavia and the LEW	11
Thesis Statement and Justification	16
Methodology	19
Primary Sources	20
Thesis Outline	21
CHAPTER I - Organizing the Little Entente of Women and Modes of Transnational Activity ..	24
Pan-Slavic Women’s Cooperation Prior to 1918	24
Post-WWI Women’s International Organizing and the LEW	27
Organizing the LEW: Its Members	31
The Organizational Structure	37
International Conferences	40
Setting a Common Platform.....	44
CHAPTER II – Tensions and Pathways of (Dis)Integration in and around the Little Entente of	
Women	54
“Upon their bones, Yugoslavia was created”	56
The Dispute over the Bulgarian Membership	68
Struggles for Survival.....	74

Concluding Remarks	76
CHAPTER III - Feminism and Nation Building in the postwar Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia	
.....	78
Serving the Nation.....	81
Appropriation of Czechness to Yugoslav Context and the Croat Reluctance	86
Transnational Agency and National Messianism of Františka Plamínková	92
Incompatibilities and Limitations of “Intellectual Women Workers”	97
Personalized Networking and Charismatic Leadership	100
Concluding Remarks	103
CONCLUSION.....	104
BIBLIOGRAPHY	108
Primary Sources	108
Secondary Sources.....	110

INTRODUCTION

The Little Entente of Women (LEW) was an important federation of women's organizations initiated in the 1920s, insofar as it was the first regional and transnational women's organization in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe (CESEE)¹ of the interwar period. The LEW, even though it partly shared name with the Little Entente (LE),² was not an appendage of this regional political alliance.³ Two separate women's regional cooperation initiatives, the Balkan and the Slavic one, initiated the foundation of the LEW at the International Woman Suffrage Alliance's (IWSA's) Ninth conference in Rome in 1923. Therefore, the new alliance gathered women's organizations from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia (i.e. Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes), Romania, and Greece with the intention to promote women's movement and

¹ I have kept situating the Little Entente of Women within a broader historical-social-economic-political-cultural framework of Central, East and South Eastern Europe (CESEE) throughout this thesis simply because I wanted to emphasize its relevance as the first regional transnational women's organization in this European region (in this case, including Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland and Greece). The LEW was initially organized to represent a platform especially focused at the women of the region, in order to elevate their positions and visibility in society, and to better their representation in other women's organizations (established in the "West," such as were the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), International Council of Women (ICW), and Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)). By dismissing this framework (and by using instead, for example, "the Balkans" and/or "Central East Europe") would not be only partially incorrect (because it would not include the "Slavic" women or Greek women, respectively), but it would fail to explain the main aim of the LEW. That aim was to unite the "Balkan" and the "Slavic" women from the "small [European] nations" and to express novelty and necessity for the organization that would "represent" women of the "Eastern" part of Europe at the beginning of the 1920s. I rather chose to keep this framework to show the relationship between national and international components of the region's women's movements and feminisms to insist on their diversity and their specific historical situations that were neither coordinated, nor initiated in the "West." For the reasons why CESEE's women should be researched, see "Introduction," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*, Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds. (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 1-15.

² The Little Entente was an alliance formed in 1920 and 1921 by Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia with the purpose of common defense. The leaders of these countries organized to present a joint front against the possible threats coming from Hungary for restructuring the post-WWI order.

³ Yet, how the women of the LEW's National Councils followed their national politics in international arena would be one of the major questions of this thesis.

pacifism. The LEW gathered the most influential intellectual women of their time,⁴ which put strong emphasis on transnational⁵ communication actively participating in the political and cultural debates of its time. They held cross-border conferences (1923 in Bucharest, 1924 in Belgrade, 1925 in Athens, 1927 in Prague, 1929 in Warsaw), and introduced rotating presidency. The LEW's delegates were well-educated women from the upper-middle class or the aristocracy (e.g. Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino was a member⁶), who actively participated in their respective countries' politics and lobbying efforts (e.g. Františka Plamínková⁷). In the 1930s the LEW divided into blocks Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia insisted on expanding their political activity within the LEW, while Greece and Poland advocated focusing primarily on the issue of women and pacifism and changing the name of the alliance. It seems that the LEW's activities were either scarce or nonexistent in the early 1930s, and only in the mid-thirties did an initiative to renew the LEW attempt to gather women from Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania. These countries were originally a part of the political Little Ententes initiated in early 1920s, and in the second half of the 1930s LEW continued cooperating only culturally through art exhibitions.

⁴ Some of the LEW's members were: Františka Plamínková, Alexandrina Cantacuzino, Avra Theodoropoulou, Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka, Leposava Petković, Mileva Petrović, Mileva Atanacković, Alojzija Štebi, Vinka Bulić, Ksenija Atanasijević, Catherina Cerkez, Eliška Purkyňová, Mira Kočonda...

⁵ The term "transnational" is understood here as a perspective, "connections, interactions and relations" between nations themselves and supra-national organizations. See Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönpflug, eds, "Introduction," in *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders*, Oliver Janz, and Daniel Schönpflug, eds. (New York, Oxford: Berghahn books, 2014), 2, passim.

⁶ Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino was one of the prominent leaders of the Romanian women's movement and the LEW (she served as the LEW's first president from 1923 to 1924). See more in Chapter I of this thesis and in Roxana Cheșchebec "Cantacuzino, Princess Alexandrina," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*, Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds., (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 89-93.

⁷ Františka Plamínková was a Czech teacher, a senator, and probably the most prominent Czech feminist and one of the most active members in the LEW. See Soňa Hendrychová, "Plamínková, Františka," in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 436-440.

This study calls attention to the overlooked historical subjects and focuses on the often-neglected the Little Entente's countries' political realities, especially during the 1920s and the 1930s. The aim is to transcend the division between historiographies in the LE(W)'s member countries to reinterpret the LE(W)'s policy-making strategies (and to close important research gaps) by piecing together the scattered archival material in the LE(W)'s countries. Using the insights from transnational history, it will offer an understanding of the various types of connections present in the creation of transnational feminist networking.

Theoretical Orientation and Previous Research

Since the beginning of the 1990s, with *A History of Women in the West*⁸ and *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*,⁹ scholars of comparative women's history aimed at transcending national boundaries. Over the last two decades transnational history, as a continuation (or sub-discipline, or maybe even related discipline) of comparative history, opened new and dynamic perspectives. Iriye and Saunier's *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*¹⁰ focused on "people, ideas, products, processes and patterns that operate over, across, through, beyond, above, under, or in-between polities and societies."¹¹ The latest discussions are concerned with understanding the differences between international and transnational. Susan Zimmermann, for example, while analyzing strategies of transnational organizing within the

⁸ Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, eds., *A History of Women in the West* (Harvard University Press, 1994).

⁹ Karen M. Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson, and Jane Rendall, eds., *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991). For Yugoslavia, see Andrea Feldman's chapter there.

¹⁰ Pierre-Yves Saunier and Akira Iriye, eds., "Introduction," in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History. From the mid-19th century to the present day*, Pierre-Yves Saunier and Akira Iriye, eds. (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 18.

¹¹ Saunier and Iriye, "Introduction," 18.

international women's movement prior to 1918, offers an understanding of the *international* as "a realm of transnational and potentially global," and the *national* as composed of "supra-national, sub-national, and 'truly' national components, actors, or dimensions."¹² In brief, international could be understood as "connected with or involving two or more nation states; transnational (...) to refer to practices, organizations and ideas that crossed national boundaries."¹³

Hence, in my work the term *transnational* will not be understood traditionally, as *non-governmental, border-crossing* networking. Instead, as Janz and Schönplflug recently suggested, as "connections, interactions and relations" between nations themselves and supra-national organizations like the LEW. By using transnational *perspective*,¹⁴ I will be able to introduce specific differences of the LEW's member country's political and cultural contexts.

Previous Research on Women's Organizations in Interwar Yugoslavia and the LEW

At this point, a brief overview of the historiographic accounts regarding the women's organizing in interwar Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia from 1929) is needed.¹⁵ Yet, I

¹² Susan Zimmermann, "The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics," in *Globalizing Feminisms, 1789-1945*, Karen Offen, ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 154.

¹³ Francisca De Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis and Krassimira Daskalova, eds., "Introduction," in *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present*, Francisca De Haan et al., eds. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 9. See Joan Sangster, "Crossing boundaries: women's organizing in Europe and the Americas, 1880s-1940s," in *Crossing Boundaries: Women's Organizing in Europe and the Americas, 1880s-1940s*, Pernilla Jonsson, Silke Neunsinger, Joan Sangster, eds. (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2007), 9-19.

¹⁴ Oliver Janz, and Daniel Schönplflug, eds., "Introduction," in *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders*, Oliver Janz, and Daniel Schönplflug, eds. (New York, Oxford: Berghahn books, 2014), 2, *passim*.

¹⁵ For one of the first overviews of women's movements in interwar Yugoslavia, see Lydia Sklevicky, *Žene i moć: povijesna geneza jednog interesa* [Women and Power: Historical Genesis of One Interest] (University of Zagreb, MA Thesis, 1984), forthcoming.

will put special focus set on the accounts about the Little Entente of Women. The topic of this thesis has not been sufficiently researched in historiography, even though it represents a paramount example of the first women's transnational organizing in the CESEE in the aftermath of Great War.¹⁶

The first attempts in writing women back to the interwar Yugoslav history started in communist Yugoslavia with Jovanka Kecman. In her book *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama: 1918-1941* [Women of Yugoslavia in the Workers Movement and Women's Organizations 1918-1941]¹⁷ used the term *bourgeois* to describe all interwar women's organizations in Yugoslavia, highlighting only socialist (*proletarian*) women organizations' efforts in the complete liberation of women.¹⁸ As a product of the communist historiography, Kecman's study failed to offer a comprehensive account of the interwar women's organizing in Yugoslavia, concentrating on supporting the socialist grand narrative of the *long duree* of communist concerns with the "woman question," which Sklevicky called an "invented tradition."¹⁹ Moreover, the women's "exclusive bourgeois feminist movement did not differ from the claims of the so-called 'proletarian women's movement.'"²⁰ However problematic, this study

¹⁶ The term "network" is understood here as a method, with reference to "systematic information on precise ties between specific individuals or organizations." For further discussion see my Methodology, and Claire Lemerrier, "Formal network methods in history: why and how?," *Social Networks, Political Institutions, and Rural Societies*, (2015): 281-310.

¹⁷ Jovanka Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama: 1918-1941* [Women of Yugoslavia in the Workers Movement and Women's Organizations 1918-1941] (Beograd, Narodna knjiga: Institut za savremenu istoriju), 1978.

¹⁸ Lydia Sklevicky and Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin, *Konji, žene, ratovi* [Horses, Women, Wars] (Zagreb: Ženska infoteka, 1996), 66; Thomas A. Emmert, "Ženski Pokret: the feminist movement in Serbia in the 1920s," in *Gender politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States* (University Park PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 33-34.

¹⁹ Sklevicky highlighted the fact that women membership in the Yugoslav Communist Party was only around 1% in the 1920s and 1930s, and around 5% in all the Yugoslav unions in the interwar period. Sklevicky, "More Horses," 71.

²⁰ To prove this point, Sklevicky cited the data presented by the International Council of Women that "in the period between two World Wars Yugoslavia fell into the same category of affiliates as Switzerland, New Zealand, Denmark, Australia and Sweden (from 30,000 to 50,000 members)," Edith F. Hurwitz, "The International

was the first step in approaching the topic. It was not before Lydia Sklevicky helped establish the field of women's history in Yugoslavia in the 1980s,²¹ together with Dunja Rihtman Auguštin, that the accounts on interwar women's organizations became less ideologically contextualized.²² While the first inputs coming from anthropology and ethnology founded the field of women's history, in the last decade of socialist Yugoslavia and the first decades of the post-Yugoslav period, the topics of women's history were rarely revisited by historians. In Croatia, historian Andrea Feldman wrote both about the women's organizations in the interwar period, such as the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), and the theoretical issues regarding the field. She edited the first, and only, comprehensive collection of articles of women throughout history in Croatia.²³ In Serbia, the only study exclusively concerned with the Serbian interwar women's movement was Neda Božinović's *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku* [The Woman Question in Serbia in the 19th and 20th Centuries].²⁴

Standing on their shoulders, this thesis will analyze transnational communication of the first regional transnational women's organization in the interwar Central, East, and Southeastern Europe (CESEE). It will focus on the non-socialist federation of feminist organizations, while also taking into account various inputs of the socialist, nationalist and other discourses and ideologies of the time. Over the last two decades, the LEW has been represented in the literature

Sisterhood," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, eds. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997), 339; Sklevicky, "More Horses," 72.

²¹ Zsófia Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia* (Springer, 2018).

²² Lydia Sklevicky, "More Horses than Women: On the Difficulties of Founding Women's History in Yugoslavia," *Gender & History* vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989).

²³ Andrea Feldman "Prilog istraživanju ženskih organizacija – Udruženje univerzitetski obrazovanih žena," in *Žene i društvo kultiviranje dijaloga. Zbornik radova*, Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin, Zvonko Lerotić, eds. (Zagreb: Sociološko društvo Hrvatske, 1987), 61-67; Andrea Feldman, "Posljednih tisuću godina," *Otium* 7-8, 1999, 30-37; Andrea Feldman, "Proričući gladnu godinu – žene i ideologija jugoslavenstva (1918-1939)," in *Žene u Hrvatskoj. Ženska i kulturna povijest*, Andrea Feldman, ed. (Zagreb: Institut "Vlado Gotovac," Ženska infoteka, 2004), 235-246.

In 2018 Andrea Feldman, with the team of the international scholars, started a project on the women intellectuals in the 20th Croatia: *Modern Women Thinkers: Intellectual Development of Women in the 20th Century Croatia*.

²⁴ Neda Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku* [The Woman Question in Serbia in the 19th and 20th Centuries] (Beograd: Dvadesetčetvrt, 1996).

of interwar women's movements with only a brief listing of its member-countries, its most prominent members, and conferences (sometimes with an incorrect datation), or the main ideas which drove its specific actions.²⁵ Kecman, resting on her ideological position, stated that:

it is obvious from the overview of the Little Entente of Women's conferences, that feminists have not achieved any significant result. The same problems were repeated on nearly every conference and the political rights for women were repeatedly claimed. As always on the international conferences, feminist representatives of our country were very active, but no demand was fulfilled.²⁶

In doing so, historians have been focusing mostly on the biographies of the interwar women intellectuals, as in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*.²⁷ Though a paramount contribution to the field in general, the *Biographical Dictionary* brings the biographies of the LEW's members only to intellectuals.²⁸

Thomas A. Emmert in 1999, among others – such as a Croat historian Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak²⁹ – stated the importance of the LEW because it “monitored the progress of women's issues in each country and encouraged common action on a number of important issues.”³⁰ While criticizing Kecman, along with Sklevicky's argumentation, Emmert's contribution is important in reevaluating the activities of the interwar non-socialist women's organizations. Not only in

²⁵ Ida Ograjšek-Gorenjak, *Opasne iluzije. Rodni stereotipi u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji* [Dangerous Illusions. Gender Stereotypes in the Interwar Yugoslavia] (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2014); Gordana Stojaković, “Ženski mirovni aktivizam u Jugoslaviji (1900-1941) – Gordana Stojaković,” *AFŽ Arhiv*, Accessed 15. 12. 2017, <http://www.afzarhiv.org/items/show/352>.

²⁶ Kecman, *Žene u radničkom pokretu*, 192.

²⁷ Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2006).

²⁸ Such as Ksenija Atanasijević, Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka, Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino, Františka Plamínková, Alojzija Štebi, Maria Svolou, and Angela Vode.

²⁹ Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opasne iluzije*, 115.

³⁰ The “important issues” being, as he cited from the 1923 issue of *Ženski pokret*: “the elimination of all inequalities which relate to women, the right to vote, the protection of children and minorities, a reform in the treatment of children born out of wedlock, the end to the death penalty, and the teaching of civilization rather than war in history classes” Emmert, “Ženski Pokret,” 48; “Mala feministička antanta, liga za mir i slobodu,” *Ženski pokret* 4, no. 6 (June 1923), 264-68.

calling for more thorough research in both non-socialist, but also non-feminist women's organizations of the period. A more recent contribution to this topic comes from the CEU graduate Roxana Cheschebec, who in her 2005 PhD thesis discusses the connections between the interwar Romanian women's movement and the LEW.³¹ Cheschebec rightly points out the complexity of the relationship between the national frameworks and transnational aims of the LEW. She mostly relied on Romanian sources in depicting atmosphere of many contradictions that the LEW embraced in its work, especially in bringing together national and international. Furthermore, 2018 was fruitful for the research on the LEW in Croatia and Serbia.³² Serb historian Jasmina Milanović from Serbian Institute for Contemporary History published an overview-article³³ that called for a more exhaustive research in testing the possibilities of transnational organizing of women in the region. Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak and I firstly presented our papers on the topic, which resulted in the article³⁴ that challenged the previous historical knowledge in addressing the case of this organization as "the dynamic and two-way process of regional and transnational cooperation."³⁵

This renewed interest in the LEW stresses the importance of the more complex and multi-layered study on the issues of the women's regional and transnational cooperation in the interwar CEESE. Thus, the LEW's formal and functional features remain widely unknown. Also, the

³¹ Roxana Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement and the Little Entente of Women (LEW)," in *Feminist ideologies and activism in Romania (approx. 1890s-1940s): nationalism and internationalism in Romanian projects for women's emancipation* (PhD diss., Central European University, 2005), 510-533.

³² At the time I was writing and submitting my CEU application and research proposal, there was still no articles in Croatian or Serbian dealing exclusively with the LEW, or in fact, in any other language, including English.

³³ Jasmina Milanović, "Regionalna ženska udruženja, Mala Antanta žena i Jedinstvo slovenskih žena," [Regional Women's Associations, The Little Entente of Women and the Slavic Women Committee] in *Jugoslavija i Poljska u 20. veku*, [Yugoslavia and Poland in the 20th century] Momčilo Pavlović, ed. (Beograd, Bidgošć; Institut za savremenu istoriju, Društvo istoričara Srbije "Stojan Novaković," Institut za istoriju i međunarodne odnose 2017), 19-40.

³⁴ Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, Marijana Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta," [The Little Entente with a Big Ambition: The Little Entente of Women] *Historijski zbornik*, forthcoming, 2019.

³⁵ Ograjšek Gorenjak, Kardum.

strategies of (inter)nationalizing women's organizations (the LEW and member countries' organizations) in their relation to the inter-state system remain unexplored. This thesis involves piecing together the otherwise scattered archival material to close important research gaps, comparing sources from each country with one another and with the other member countries' sources. According to that, the politics of (re)shaping the relationship between the international and the national will be explored.

Thesis Statement and Justification

The primary focus of the thesis is set on analyzing the processes of reception, transformation, reinterpretation and rejection of ideas between the Little Entente of Women's policy makers. Abstracting relational information from historical sources to analyze networks between organizations, people, and ideas cannot provide us with a "complete representation of reality", because it is not possible to analyze "all the ties that exist."³⁶ Therefore, whom do we observe? Which ties can we observe, and at what time do we observe them? What I will analyze are connections between the LEW and other women's organizations (especially the global ones), while focusing also on women who were left out the LEW's project. Connections between the LEW member countries' women organizations and also between LEW and LE will be included to show the dynamics of transnational cooperation and to detect why there was a need for a women-only regional organization. Moreover, networks built through exchanged words, texts, and ideas, on micro-, meso- and macrohistorical levels were important in constructing the project. Furthermore, I will raise the question of how exactly, and to which extent do these networks

³⁶ Claire Lemerrier, "Formal network methods in history: why and how?," *Social Networks, Political Institutions, and Rural Societies*, (2015): 281-310.

matter? Future research should in-depth analyse the LEW's formal (e.g. network size, contact frequency, and spatial distance between members) and functional features (e.g. a particular network within the socio-cultural and historical context). Also, there is more to be done with the questions of the LEW's direct (e.g. individuals, organizations) and indirect (e.g. ideas, ideology, culture, discourse) continuities and discontinuities within these networks in the 1920s and in the 1930s.

To narrow the focus of this thesis, my hypothesis is that this organization, albeit very similar to other interwar women's organizations in terms of organizational aspects, used a political platform of promoting women's movements to pursue its own national, economic, and cultural interests. Firstly, I look beyond the most frequent women's movements' common agenda, suffrage, as the key to women's political activity, because women from some of the Little Entente's countries had the right to vote before the LEW's foundation, while others did not achieve suffrage for decades. Secondly, I dispute the notion of *transcending* national within transnational women's networking. Even though peace and women's rights were high on the agenda of the international women's movement in the interwar period, national self-interest was frequently more important. During the *fragile years* of the *twenty years armistice*, the LEW's project eventually failed to substitute national collective identities in the 1930s since the Little Entente's member countries gradually adopted independent policies.

The analysis of the networks between the LEW and the other women's organizations, such as the IWSA, raises questions of how these two organizations functioned separately despite their overlapping fields of interest, and whether this eventually caused the LEW's decline in the 1930s. I will provide an insight into the LEW's relation to the IWSA according to its "cautious

support for nation-building in Central Eastern Europe.”³⁷ Networks between the LEW and the LE can provide an answer to the question whether women’s organizations were *agents* on behalf of women and women’s movements, or *transmission belts* of their countries’ national politics. To formulate the research question more precisely, I want to establish if the LEW was putting forth specific women issues (regional, transnational, or particular) or if its member organizations were prisoners of national politics, partially detached from women issues.

Political systems of these countries were obviously different and they can be analyzed with the use of networks between the LEW’s member countries’ women’s organizations. For example, Czechoslovakian democracy, which Melissa Feinberg proves to be *elusive* in its proclaimed equality,³⁸ influenced the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes’ deteriorating democracy in the interwar years. Networks between words, texts, and ideas can be understood by tracing information transfers, processes of creation and fluctuation of ideas, as well as changes of political and discursive practices around the LEW. In order to prove that transnationalism was also manifested on the individual level, I will raise the question of which women thinkers influenced and coordinated the activity of women in other member countries (e.g. Františka Plamínková), what was their relation to the policy-makers in their own countries (e.g. Tomáš Masaryk), and how did they share their ideas (e.g. the periodical *Ženska rada* [Women’s Council]), international conferences, cultural events such as the moving art exhibition)?

³⁷ Zimmermann, “The Challenge of Multinational Empire,” 108.

³⁸ Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1950* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006).

Methodology

Over the last three decades comparative history has been putting a strong emphasis on the concepts of cultural exchange, diffusion and translation. Werner and Zimmermann in 2006 elaborated a new approach among “relational” historical paradigms, called *histoire croisée* or entangled history. It focuses on empirical intercrossing from the perspective in which both objects of analysis and epistemological standpoint are created through intercrossing operations. Its aim is to examine the relationships between diachrony and synchrony, with respect both to comparison and transfer studies.³⁹ As Francisca de Haan recently emphasized, *histoire croisée* adds important dimensions to transnational history, of which she mentions two: the first is “the dimension of the mutual shaping of entities and objects of research,” and the second is the dimension of self-reflexivity.⁴⁰

To explain the relational potential of the entities and subjects of my research, I will implement the findings of entangled history in this thesis. Historical network analysis explores practices of individuals, their relationships within the network and the transformational potential of the networks themselves, to perform a qualitative and quantitative analysis. The network is a relational view of reality, not a separate part of reality, as Lemercier suggests in her study of the formal network methods used in an analysis of historical sources. The term “network” can be understood as a theory, a paradigm, an “ontology,” an approach, etc. Under the term “network,” I consider a method, with reference to “systematic information on precise ties between specific

³⁹ Michel Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the challenge of reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45 (2006): 30–37.

⁴⁰ Francisca De Haan, “Writing Inter/Transnational History: The Case of Women’s Movements and feminisms,” in *Internationale Geschichte in Theorie und Praxis / International History in Theory and Practice*, Barbara Haider-Wilson, William D. Godsey, and Wolfgang Mueller, eds. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 501–536, 509.

individuals or organizations.”⁴¹ Thus, this thesis will analyze the LEW as a transnational feminist network, a “structure organized above the national level that unite women from three or more countries around a common agenda,”⁴² by firstly abstracting the patterns of precisely defined social ties for analyzing their effects.

Primary Sources

To reconstruct the LEW as a transnational feminist network, I will include information that the LEW’s members published to inform the general public of its work. Yugoslavian *Ženski pokret*’s [Women’s Movement’s] official periodical *Ženski pokret* [Women’s Movement] was a valuable source of information for the Yugoslav women’s activity in the LEW. It was established in Belgrade in April 1920 by *Društvo za prosvećivanje žene i zaštitu njenih prava* [Society for the Enlightenment of Women and the Defense of Her Rights], founded a year ago. Društvo was renamed to *Ženski pokret* [Women’s Movement] that also represented women’s movements from other cities of the Kingdom. I will further use two Yugoslavian interwar periodicals, *Ženski list*, a Zagreb-based women’s magazine published from 1925 to 1938, edited by well-known Croatian journalist and writer, Marija Jurić Zagorka. It gained much popularity in Yugoslavia in comparison to the more elitist and intellectual, Belgrade-located *Ženski pokret* written in Cyrillic script. *Ženski list* combined information regarding the “woman question” with a content of a typical women’s magazine concerned with themes related to fashion and household,⁴³ such as another Belgrade-based magazine, *Žena i svet*. The latter was chosen because of its focus on

⁴¹ Lemercier, “Formal network methods?,” 281-310.

⁴² Valentine M. Moghadam, *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks* (Baltimore, London: JHU Press, 2005), 4.

⁴³ For a thorough analysis, see: Marina Vujnović, *Forging the Bubikopf Nation. Journalism, Gender and Modernity in Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2009).

women's emancipation and the status of women in Yugoslavia. Finally, an additional source will also be the Czechoslovak periodical *Ženská národní rada*'s [Women's National Council's] official periodical *Ženska rada* [Women's Council]. In brief, I will include literature on the topic of trans/national women's organizing, review and analyze selected articles from magazines and daily newspapers from the 1920s and the 1930s. Expanding research to the remaining archive material (coming principally from the archives and libraries in Zagreb, Split, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Ljubljana and Prague), such as unpublished correspondence and life-writing material, is of immense importance.

Thesis Outline

The main purpose of the first chapter – *Organizing the Little Entente of Women and Modes of Transnational Activity* – is to analyze the modes of the transnational activities and means of transnational cooperation implemented in the work of the Little Entente of Women. First subchapter will give a brief overview of selected examples of Pan-Slavic women's cooperation prior to 1918, to establish continuities with the LEW project. Next subchapter will aim at precisely explaining how the post-WWI women's international organizing impacted the creation of the LEW. Its main strategies will be also briefly outlined. Then, the LEW's members will be introduced to see how did they cooperate in the 1920s and the 1930s, and what policy-making and organizing strategies they used in their work. The subchapter on the institutional structure will continuously compare the LEW with other transnational women's organizations, such as the IWSA, and regional organizations, such as the Little Entente, each of them being decisively influential for the LEW. In order to explain organizational and institutional similarities and

differences, this part of my thesis will concentrate on the network building on the level of organizations. Another subchapter will analyze the LEW Conferences to explain the organization's international and transnational functioning. The last subchapter will come to some conclusions regarding the LEW's proclaimed platform of internationality and sisterhood, and its complex relationship with the Little Entente.

In the second chapter – *Tensions and Pathways of (Dis)Integration in and around the LEW* – I will detect the most important opposition to the project, answering the question who did not participate in the work of the LEW. A pathway that envisaged the process of integration of both Balkan and Slavic women, clashed with other similar projects in the region. In the first subchapter I will offer an example of Yugoslavia to show how the on-going nation-building processes impacted the policy-making in the LEW. Reversely, I will detect the impacts the LEW's main strategists made in legitimizing the Yugoslav political realities of the same period. Consequently, it will add up to the understanding of how Croat national integration signaled the symptomatic silence of Croat women towards the project. Next subchapter will deal with another opposition to the central principles of the LE/LEW, present in the example of Bulgarian expulsion from the LEW. This subchapter will illustrate the limitations of transnationalism of the LEW. The last subchapter discusses the LEW's struggles for survival in the 1930s.

In the last chapter – *Feminism and Nation Building in the postwar Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia* – I will concentrate on the extraction of the main ideas and strategies that the LEW project was built upon, primarily through the network of Czechoslovak and Yugoslav luminaries. Regarding the interplay between the “woman question” and “national question,” this chapter will apply the idea of importance of both in the aims of women participating in the transnational communication and intellectual networking in and around the LEW. I will then

look closer to the selected examples of women representing transnationalism on the individual level. Františka Plamínková, undoubtedly a central figure in the LEW, stood in full agreement with the LEW's and other transnational women's organizations' visions and represented a decisive part of the LEW intellectual networking.

To sum up, the main purpose of this thesis will be to analyze the Little Entente of Women's political realities as they were created through the connections of its agents on various levels of transnational networking. Furthermore, from a theoretical point of view, it aims at developing a comparative and transnational analysis of the relations between the LEW and other related international organizations, among other networks/connections, related to the ongoing debates about historical regions and transnationalism. Janz and Schönpflug recently suggested that "not only historical agents, but also historians, need to conceive of their thinking and acting as a border-crossing process."⁴⁴ To offer a multi-layered perspective on the history of the Little Entente of Women, the methodological issues in transnational history will be used to prove that historical objects and subjects can be explained by networks and by individual strategies of networking.

⁴⁴ Janz and Schönpflug, "Introduction," 19.

CHAPTER I - Organizing the Little Entente of Women and Modes of Transnational Activity

“... [in the region, there] is no international spirit.”⁴⁵

Pan-Slavic Women’s Cooperation Prior to 1918

Connections between the Slavic women from “nations without states” of Austria-Hungary existed already in the second half of the 19th century. As Susan Zimmermann explained while elaborating on the organizational politics of the two major international women’s organizations prior to 1918, the ICW and the IWSA, their approach to inter/national organizing in East Central Europe reflected broader strategic thinking of the international.⁴⁶ Precisely, there was, on the one hand, “the long 19th century” thinking about the global through the dichotomy of developed “civilized” and underdeveloped “uncivilized” world, with the latter “catching-up” with the former. On the other hand, Zimmermann saw the internationalist spirit of “the short 20th century” led by developmentalist logic of “assimilation as a precondition of inclusion.”⁴⁷ I believe that both visions were present in the establishment of connections between the women from the

⁴⁵ During the 1920s, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) often send its representatives to eastern and southern Europe to work on the creation of its new sections in the region. They usually reported back that the hatred among neighbors obstructs internationalism. This citation comes from one such report by Camille Drevet who sensed the lack of “international spirit” when confronted with animosities between Hungarians and Serbs, Serbs and Bulgarians, Bulgarians and Greeks. There were also reports concluding the same for the sentiments within Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and also Poland. Rupp, *World of Women*, 117. In this chapter, and especially in the following chapter, I will show that in fact there were women who were internationalists in the region, but that that does not mean they were not at the same time also nationalists.

⁴⁶ Susan Zimmermann, “The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women’s Movement: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics,” in *Globalizing Feminisms, 1789-1945*, Karen Offen, ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 156.

⁴⁷ Zimmermann, “The Challenge of Multinational Empire,” 156.

region prior to 1918, precisely among women who lived outside the core zones of Austria-Hungary, i.e. the future Yugoslav and Czechoslovak women.

Women's networking in the region prior to 1918 incorporated personal ties, usually between the well-informed women that engaged in transmitting practical strategies of knowledge production for women in their mother tongues, with explicit legitimation found in the fight for national causes. Marija Fabković,⁴⁸ a Croat pedagogue of Czech origin, published in 1872 texts that represented a translation of experiences and strategies from the Czech women's movement to Croatia.⁴⁹ After the foreword where she condemned Germanization that through German literature popular among Croat women resulted in repulsion of their "duties towards the people and the homeland,"⁵⁰ Fabković proceeded to elaborate on the need of Croat girls' education "in national spirit,"⁵¹ providing her readership with an outline of the Czech advancement in organizing and educating women.⁵² Czech women, continued Fabković, managed to organize cross-class around their women's societies to elevate their political visibility long before the law would enable them to actively participate in political policy-making.⁵³ If applied properly from

⁴⁸ Marija Fabković was also the first female teacher of physical education working in Croatia. For more on Fabković, see Mihajlo Ogrizović, *Marija Fabković. Prilog povijesti hrvatskog uciteljstva* (Zagreb: Školske novine, 1973).

⁴⁹ Marija Fabković, "Proslov; Hrvatskim gospodjam!," [The foreword; To Croatian Ladies!] in *Žena u društvenosti ljudskoj, osobito u Englezkoj i u Americi* [Woman in Humane Society, particularly in England and in America], *Ženska biblioteka*, Karel Jonaš, ed. (Zagreb: Knjižara Lav. Hartmána, 1872), III-VIII and 6-11, database WASME.

⁵⁰ Fabković, "Proslov," IV. She did not only express her concerns with the issue, but proceeded to establish book series *Ženska biblioteka* (Women's Library) in 1872 to encourage women to obtain knowledge in Croatian language, instead of German. Left without enough subscribers to support her project, this publication remained the first and only published in the series, database: WASME. That Croat women of the period usually read and spoke only in German, which draw them away from nourishing a Croat national spirit among youth, was recognized by various Croat writers and intellectuals of the time. To name just the most important, Croat writer August Šenoa wrote first historical novels aimed at educating, primarily, Croat women of national history and customs in Croatian.

⁵¹ For the elaboration on connections between women's education and nation-building in the 19th Croatia, see Meghan Hays and Iskra Iveljić, "'Valjane majke' i 'blage kceri': Odgoj i izobrazba žena u nacionalnom duhu u Hrvatskoj 19. stoljeća." ["Worthy mothers" and "Treasured Daughters": Educating Women in the National Spirit in 19th-Century Croatia], in *Otium: Časopis za povijest svakodnevice* 4 no. 1-2 (1996): 85-95.

⁵² She added to her text the full program of trade and craft courses for girls, established in Prague by the Czech Women's Manufacturing Society. Fabković corresponded with The Society's leadership. Database: WASME.

⁵³ Fabković, "Hrvatskim gospodjam!," 8-9.

the Czech context, Fabković saw these strategies successful in Croat women “catching-up” with their Czech “co-sisters.”⁵⁴

While the previous example talked about the “long 19th century” attempts an internationalist cooperation among women that assumed passivity of the more “advanced” nations, the next century brought more ambitious project of cooperation between the Slavic Women. In 1908, Czech women organized the second congress of Czechoslovak women⁵⁵ held in Prague for the 60th year of the reign of Emperor of Austria, Francis Joseph I. Following the occasion, there were other pan-Slavic congresses organized with the goal of mutual “cooperation [between the Slavs] in the cultural and economic sphere.”⁵⁶ Women came from Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia to the Congress that included discussions of “women’s position in society, family, [and] state culture.”⁵⁷ The Congress brought together eminent women from a Russian diarist and wife of Leo Tolstoy, Sofia, who sent her letter of support for the event to the Czech politician Božena Viková Kunětická.⁵⁸ Among them, Marija Jurić Zagorka, a Croat writer and journalist, and Delfa Ivanić,⁵⁹ a Serb painter and a member of various Serb women’s organizations’ leaderships, were elected honorary vice-presidents of the

⁵⁴ Fabković, “Hrvatskim gospodjam!,” 11.

⁵⁵ Held ten year after the first, see Lj. Krajačić, “II. kongres češko-slavenskih žena,” [The Second Congress of Czecho-slavic Women] in *Domaće ognjište* IX, Issue 3 (February 1, 1909), 56, database: WASME.

⁵⁶ Charitable Cooperatives of Serbian Women, “Drugi kongres československih ženskinja,” [The Second Congress of Czecho-slavic Women] *Ženski svet* 23, no. 9, (January 9, 1908), 193, database: WASME.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ I found Františka Plamínková’s “intervention” at the Congress symptomatic. Her initiative was to provide the Congress with the debates following each speech, in contrast to women who propagated a common debate at the end of the Congress. She grounded her demand in avoiding possible misunderstandings that the “thoughts presented at the Congress could represent those of all women here, especially the Czechoslovak women.” Additionally, her protest took place on the anniversary of Jan Hus’s death “for justice and freedom of speech.” The other, designated by Plamínková as “uncritical,” stream at the Congress protested referring to a main goal of the Congress, “to outline all directions and currents of contemporary women’s movement (except for clericalism, that we do not see as a cultural factor).” Krajačić, “II. kongres češko-slavenskih žena,” 57.

⁵⁹ Delfa Ivanić, a Serb humanitarian and activist for women’s rights. She was well-known for, inter alia, initiating a patriotic and humanitarian women’s organization, The Circle of Serbian Sisters (*Kolo srpskih sestara*) in 1903.

Congress.⁶⁰ Zagorka was critical of “social, cultural, and political” conditions in Croatia, where there is still no women’s movement and where “feminism is called the fight for trousers.”⁶¹ Ivanić mostly talked of Serb women living in and outside Serbia, emphasizing progress that Serb women’s societies had in their work and praising the Serb state.⁶² The Czecho-Slovak Women Congress turned out to be the Czecho-Slavic Women Congress, setting the foundations for internationalist cooperation between the Slavic women in the region: some of the themes, strategies, and even women present at the Congress will still be present in the women’s movements of the interwar period. On the other hand, the event briefly outlined here will anticipate various problems of the future cooperation of Slavic women with the model that implied maintenance of hierarchies, lack of sensibility to class, religious, and other differences among women.

Post-WWI Women’s International Organizing and the LEW

In the years following World War One, the division between the women’s movements in countries that have already implemented women’s suffrage and those where this was still a subject for an on-going debate was more visible than ever. One of the major women’s international organizations, the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), revitalized its activities at the first post-war conference in Geneva in 1920. However, the new decade brought the new challenges, and IWSA faced it through the presence of, as Mineke and Kloosterman

⁶⁰ Charitable Cooperatives, “Drugi kongres,” 195.

⁶¹ Krajačić, “II. kongres cesko-slavenskih žena,” 58-59, database: WASME.

⁶² Eventually published the same year, see Delfa Ivanić, “Govor g-đe Delfe Ivaničke na kongresu slovenskih žena, koji je održan u Pragu o.g. [The Speech of Mrs Delfa Ivanić at the Congress of Slavic Women held in Prague This Year] (1),” in *Ženski svet* 23, no. 10 (January 10, 1908), 223-227; Delfa Ivanić “Govor g-đe Delfe Ivaničke na kongresu slovenskih žena, koji je održan u Pragu o.g. [The Speech of Mrs Delfa Ivanić at the Congress of Slavic Women held in Prague This Year] (2),” in *Ženski svet* 23, no. 11 (January 11, 1908), 246-254.

pointed out, “an inevitable gulf between the delegates from suffrage nations and those from non-suffrage nations, the dividing line roughly running between west and east, rich and poor nations.”⁶³ The need for a reorganization was still present in 1923, during the Congress in Rome. The leadership even believed that the new situation is the result of the fact that “we are too old, and the young lack energy and devotion.”⁶⁴ However, the gap was not the generational one, rather it was a sign of a “growing inter-internationality.”⁶⁵

The creation of the LEW at the 1923 IWSA Congress represented a viable solution to these debates, setting an organization’s structure that would mitigate the discrepancies between the suffrage and “non-suffrage” nations within the LEW. Therefore, the first issue the LEW needed to resolve was the viable prioritization of the possible common strategies to overcome major differences between the members. The LEW proceeded in accordance with the IWSA’s President Carrie Chapman Catt’s main question for the future cooperation of women, that is: “How may enfranchised and unenfranchised women unite to secure the repeal of the last vestige of those outworn codes of law that for many centuries placed women in the status as that of children, feeble-minded and insane?”⁶⁶ So, the first conferences of the LEW were held in Bucharest, Belgrade and Athens, in the capitals of the nations that still needed to fight for women’s political rights and only after that in Prague and Warsaw, the capitals of countries where women achieved suffrage in 1918. Positioning itself between the East and West, negotiating national and international women’s organizing, the LEW believed that this strategy would

⁶³ Mineke Bosch and Annemarie Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship: letters from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, 1902-1942* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1990), 175.

⁶⁴ Carrie Chapman Catt, letter 61, in *Politics and Friendship*, 179.

⁶⁵ Mineke and Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship*, 177.

⁶⁶ “Address of the President, Carrie Chapman Catt, to the ninth Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. Rome, Italy, May 14, 1923,” in *Report of Ninth Congress, Rome, Italy, May 12th to 19th, 1923*, International Woman Suffrage Alliance, ed. (Dresden, Saxony: B. G. Teubner, 1923), 35, database: WASI.

eventually better regional women's positions within their respective national frameworks and in the international women's organizations.

As first regional and transnational women's organization initiated in the interwar period in the Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe (CESEE), the Little Entente of Women (LEW) was an ambitious project that gathered various feminist organizations from the region. In contrast to the ICW's principle that its member organizations should be women's National Councils of their respective countries, the LEW implemented the IWSA's strategy of gathering feminist organizations from each country that would then represent their country in the LEW.⁶⁷ Its agenda focused on achieving feminist demands, such as voting rights, but also maintaining stability in the region with advocating peaceful solutions to, for example, minorities' issues and possible threats to the territorial status quo in the region. As the Yugoslav delegation coherently put in its Annual Report:

The LEW has been established in order to cooperate in all matters relating to the liberation of women, the protection of women and children, all kinds of economic and social problems, to work together sincerely to eliminate possible disagreements between our countries.⁶⁸

Therefore, the organization's transnational endeavors emphasized two building blocks of the Entente: to build bridges between the suffrage and "non-suffrage" nations and to insist on the pacifist solutions for the regional disputes. The end goal was a complete emancipation of women, which could only be possible if members would get to know each other better. The idea of lacking general knowledge between the member organizations within an umbrella organization was already present in the case of the complex representation of Yugoslav women

⁶⁷ This issue of representation will be discussed in the following subchapter.

⁶⁸ "Izvještaj Upravnog odbora Ženskog pokreta za godišnju skupštinu održanu 1. Aprila 1924," [The Report of the Executive Committee of the Women's Movement for the Annual Assembly held on April 1 1924] *Ženski pokret* 7 (1924), 292-299, 293.

in their umbrella organization(s).⁶⁹ This was followed by setting a common goal of knowledge production that would, as was planned both in the cases of the Yugoslav women's movement and LEW, eventually result in closer relationship and enable the member organizations to speak with one voice in the allied conferences.

However, this organization, albeit very similar in organizational aspects to the other women's organizations active in the interwar period, used a political platform of promoting women's movement to pursue its own national, economic, and cultural interests. The activities of the LEW were concentrated primarily with improving women's status, but they also used different rhetorical mechanisms to improve the positions of their countries at the bargaining table of the European political arena. Yet, in the late 1920s the LEW divided into blocks, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia as the core countries of the political Little Entente insisted on expanding their political activity, while Greece and Poland remained more interested in feminism and pacifism, eventually raising a question for changing the name of the organization.⁷⁰ There is no evidence available that the LEW met during the early 1930s and from the mid-thirties would Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, and Romanian women continue cooperating only culturally.

⁶⁹ Even though the simplification of the nomenclature would be preferred here, I do not feel comfortable enough to, when referring to the Yugoslav women's umbrella organization, the National Women's Union of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Narodni ženski savez Srkinja, Hrvatica i Slovenkinja), simply use the Yugoslav Women's Union (YWU). The organization itself failed to come out with a consistent name, and frequently used just National Women's Union (Narodni ženski savez). I believe it is wise to reject the possible analogy with the state's name (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was usually referred to as Yugoslavia), because this issue provoked a debate within the Yugoslav women's movements already after the establishment of the new state. For the debate, see the following chapter, or consult a discussion at the organization's First Congress in Kongres žena Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, *Spomenica sa I kongresa žena Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca održanog u Beogradu 21, 22 i 23 septembra 1919 g.* [A Memorial of the First Congress of Women of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes held in Belgrade on 21, 22 and 23 September 1919.] (Beograd: Narodni ženski savez Srkinja, Hrvatica i Slovenkinja, Nova štamparija "Davidović," 1920).

⁷⁰ Maša Živanović, "Konferencija Male ženske antante," [Conference of the Little Entente of Women] *Ženski pokret* 13-16 (August 1929): 2; Červená, "Letošni konference Male ženske dohody ve Varšave," [This Year's Conference of the Little Entente of Women] *Ženska rada* 7 (1929), 96.

It is opportune now to see how cooperation between the Slavic and the Balkan women actually happened and what were the prerequisites for the women's network building in the region. In explaining this, the more radical shifts that occurred in the late 1920s and during the 1930s, culminating in the World War Two, could be better understood. In order to analyze strategies of transnational organizing used within this organization, I will ask questions of who the members of the LEW were, how did they cooperate in the 1920s and the 1930s, and what policy-making and organizing strategies they used in their work. In broader terms, I am interested in finding out if the strategies they used served them to promote their respective countries' national interests, or if they worked towards proclaimed internationality and *sisterhood*.

Organizing the LEW: Its Members

Two separate women's regional cooperation initiatives, the Balkan and the Slavic one, come together to create a first interwar transnational federation of women's organizations from Greece, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, and Romania to promote women's movement and pacifism. Only Poland and Czechoslovakia achieved their suffrage immediately after the Great War, in 1918. Besides their aims to work towards (complete) women's emancipation in all countries of the LEW, one of their main goals was to more actively participate in the work of the international women's organizations, such as the IWSA. While themselves being parts of the upper- and middle class, educated feminists in the region maintained exceptional relations with the ruling elites. Royal Courts of Yugoslavia and Romania⁷¹ accepted patronage over the LEW's

⁷¹ Connected, after all, with "blood," because Queen Marija Karađorđević was a daughter of Romanian king Ferdinand I. A Romanian delegate Alexandrina Cantacuzino did not miss the opportunity to mention it in a speech at

events and the LEW frequently expressed their gratification to the political elites of their countries.⁷² Support from the ruling elites of the LEW's respective countries was both rhetorical and financial, and sometimes even initiated practical actions, usually in the realm of social work.⁷³ In spite of the common platform they set and the support they claimed to have in their countries, the LEW's activity after 1929 intensely ossified. While there is some evidence that the LEW's framework became ideologically fragmented, the Great Depression decreased the members' ability to travel and participate at LEW's conferences. The turn of the new decade brought changes in political outlook of some of the members' countries, such as was the case in Yugoslavia where the King Aleksandar proclaimed royal dictatorship in 1929. In the realm of women's organizations in the region, the new organizations were established in the late 1920s, channeling international women's activity in the region away from the LEW. One such example was the Slavic Women's Committee, founded in 1929.⁷⁴ There were also requests coming from the highest political levels for women's cooperation in, for example, the Inter-Balkan Conferences in the early 1930s.⁷⁵ Last but not least, internal tensions between the LEW's member organizations (and conflicts within their own leadership) certainly complicated the

Belgrade 1924 Conference, along with lines that stressed the exceptional relations between Belgrade and Bucharest. Alexandrina Cantacuzino, "Govor g-đe Aleksandrine Kantakuzen predsednice M.Ž.A.," [The Speech of Mrs. Alexandrina Cantacuzino president of the LEW] *Ženski pokret* 10 (1924), 400.

⁷² Delfa Ivanić, a Serbian painter, philanthropist, co-founder of the Circle of Serbian Sisters and Vice-President of National Women's Union in Yugoslavia, when organizing the LEW Conference in Belgrade in 1924 reminded the Court that their support was expected, following a custom present "in other countries." The Queen agreed, and Ivanić spent a lot of her time and energy in introducing the delegates to the King. Delfa Ivanić, *Uspomene*, [Memoirs] edited by Jasmina Milanović (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2012), 202.

⁷³ To offer just one very practical example, Ivanić wrote that after she introduced one active social worker who had opened a kitchen for elementary school children to the King during the LEW's event, the Queen opened another only a month later. Ivanić, *Uspomene*, 202.

⁷⁴ The Slavic Women's Committee was initiated by Czech women, more precisely by their representative Bohumila Smolarova-Čapkova, and gathered women from Poland, Yugoslavia, representatives of Russian *émigrés*, and from 1933, Bulgaria. First Congress of Slavic Women was held in Prague in 1930, then in Warsaw in 1931, in Belgrade in 1933. The Sofia Congress, planned to take place in 1935 was never held. J. B. "Kongres Jedinstva slovenskih žena u Beogradu," [The Congress of the Slavic Women Committee in Belgrade] *Ženski pokret, organ Alijanse ženskih pokreta u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji* 9-10 (1933), 114-116.

⁷⁵ More on the Inter-Balkan Conferences in the following subchapters.

relationship between them and the LEW and possibly caused changes in their strategies. Consequently, the LEW ceased to exist after successfully organizing a travelling art exhibition in 1938. Before engaging with the conferences topics, it would be useful to see which organizations cooperated in the work of the LEW.

To start with, the LEW's members were simply the organizations representing Romania, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland, and Romania in the IWSA in 1923, when the LEW was established. Yet, there are still many inconsistencies regarding the exact information of which organizations and women initiated and participated in the work of the LEW. To the best of my knowledge, I will try to avoid misunderstandings, incorrect naming and datation present in previous research on the LEW.⁷⁶ The Romanian delegation to the LEW was led by Alexandrina Cantacuzino, probably the most prominent Romanian post-War feminist, while representing the Liga Drepturilor și Datoriilor Femeilor (LDDR, League for Women's Rights and Duties). The LDDR, founded in 1911, was an organization Cantacuzino in 1919 failed to affiliate with a Christian Orthodox women's philanthropic society she helped found in 1910 – the Societatea Ortodoxă Națională a Femeilor Române (SONFR, National Orthodox Society of Romanian Women).⁷⁷ Moreover, her main goal in the national context was to create a federation of women's organizations aimed at gathering all other women's organization in the country, which in 1921 she established the Consiliul Național al Femeilor Române (CNFR, National Council of Romanian Women). Yet, even though Alexandrina Cantacuzino acted as the CNFR's Vice-

⁷⁶ For extensive information regarding the disputes over the names of organizations within the LEW, see Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, Marijana Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta," [The Little Entente with Big Ambition: The Little Entente of Women] *Historijski zbornik*, forthcoming, 2019.

⁷⁷ Roxana Cheșchebec, "Cantacuzino, Princess Alexandrina," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*, Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds. (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 90.

President,⁷⁸ she performed as the LDDR delegate at the IWSA's meeting (and the founding meeting of the LEW) because the latter was affiliated with the IWSA in 1913.⁷⁹ It was after she took over a first presidency of the LEW in 1923 and the ICW's Vice-Presidency in 1925 (until 1938), that she became the second President of the CNFR, responsible for an international activity of the organization.⁸⁰ Calypso Botez, another leader of the interwar Romanian women's movement and the CNFR's President, present also at the LEW's 1924 Belgrade Conference, resigned from her position in 1930 as a result of continuous conflicts with Cantacuzino.⁸¹ The latter's dominant position within the Romanian women's movement and her insistence on international projects resulted in harsh criticism at home.⁸² Moreover, the Cantacuzino-Botez disagreement was grounded in the fact that the first advocated positioning the "woman question" and the fight for women's political rights within separate, exclusively women's organizations, while the latter advocated their incorporation in the agenda of political parties.⁸³

In general, the LEW succeeded in creating a diverse federation that could bring in major national organizations, such as the CNFR,⁸⁴ and smaller organizations such as the *Klub Polityczny Kobiet Postępowych* (KPKP, Progressive Women's Political Club) founded in Poland by Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka in 1919 to "train women in Poland to exercise their voting

⁷⁸ Cantacuzino was a Vice-President of the CNFR from 1921 and its President from 1930. See Cheșchebec "Cantacuzino, Princess Alexandrina," in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 90.

⁷⁹ Cristina Păiușan-Nuică mentions that Alexandrina Cantacuzino was a delegate of the CNFR. See Cristina Păiușan-Nuică, "Mica Antantă a Femeilor" [The Little Entente of Women]. Bucurestii Vechi si Noi. <http://www.bucurestiiivechisinoi.ro/2011/10/mica-antanta-a-femeilor/>. For the first attempt in unpacking this issue, see Ograjšek Gorenjak and Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta."

⁸⁰ Cheșchebec "Cantacuzino, Princess Alexandrina," 91.

⁸¹ Ibid; Maria Bucur, "Botez, Calypso," in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 78.

⁸² Cheșchebec, "Cantacuzino, Princess Alexandrina," 91.

⁸³ Bucur, "Botez, Calypso," 78.

⁸⁴ Roxana Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement and the Little Entente of Women (LEW)," in *Feminist ideologies and activism in Romania (approx. 1890s-1940s): nationalism and internationalism in Romanian projects for women's emancipation* (PhD diss., Central European University, 2005), 511.

rights.”⁸⁵ The Greek organization *Syndesmos gia ta Dikaionomata tis Gynaikas/Ligue Hélienne pour le droit des femmes* (Greek League for Women’s Rights) was founded by Maria Svolou, an eminent Greek feminist who helped establish the organization and from 1920 served as its General Secretary for the next twelve years.⁸⁶ However, similarly to the Romanian case mentioned earlier, she resigned in 1932 due to the League’s internal disagreements.⁸⁷ Not one but two Czechoslovak women’s organizations entered the LEW. The first organization was the *Ustředni spolek českých žen* (Central Association of Czech Women), a somewhat conservative women’s organization founded at the turn of the century by female Czech teachers to represent “Czech women” of Austria-Hungary.⁸⁸ At the time of the LEW’s establishment the *Ustředni spolek českých žen* was presided by Eliška Purkyňová, a Czech senator and prominent Czech feminist leader.⁸⁹ The second organization was a politically oriented *Výbor pro volební právo žen* (Committee for Women’s Suffrage) co-founded in 1905 and headed by Františka Plamínková.⁹⁰ The late 1920s resembled tensions between the two Czechoslovak women’s movement leaders. In 1927 Plamínková gave up on her position as a delegate to the LEW because of her disagreements with Purkyňová.⁹¹ Finally, the Yugoslav members of a delegation that agreed to create the LEW in 1923 came from *Društvo za prosvećivanje žena i zaštitu njezinog prava* (Society for Women’s Enlightenment and Protection of their Rights), later to be renamed to *Ženski pokret* (Women’s Movement) – sharing the name with the organization’s official periodical. Immediately after the establishment of the LEW, a feminist umbrella organization *Alijansa feminističkih društva* (from 1926, *Alijansa ženskih pokreta* (Women’s Movement

⁸⁵ Katarzyna Sierakowska, “Budzińska-Tylicka, Justyna,” in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 81.

⁸⁶ See Dimitra Samiou, “Svolou, Maria (born Desypri),” in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 552-557.

⁸⁷ Samiou, “Svolou, Maria,” in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 553.

⁸⁸ Libuše Heczková, “Nováková (born Lanhausová), Teréza,” in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 574.

⁸⁹ Eliška Purkyňová, “Mala ženská dohoda,” [The Little Entente of Women] *Ženská rada* (1927): 56-58.

⁹⁰ Soňa Hendrychová, “Plamínková, Františka,” in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 437.

⁹¹ “Ze Žensky nar. radi,” [From the Women’s National Council] *Ženská rada* 3, 7-8 (1927): 100.

Alliance) was established in Yugoslavia and future Yugoslav delegates would be affiliated with this organization – which I will from now on for simplicity call *Ženski pokret*.⁹²

It still remains unclear who initiated the foundation of the LEW. Whether there was an omnipresent awareness that the establishment of a women's alliance is necessary to further the cooperation among women in the region or not is less important here. Interestingly, each member successfully incorporated the notion of their own primary role into their official narratives about the foundation of the LEW. Some follow⁹³ the Romanian version of the organization being founded by its first president, Romanian princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino, while others⁹⁴ believe that the founder of the LEW must have been Polish representative, Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka.⁹⁵ Moreover, both Czechoslovakian and Yugoslav delegates claimed that their organizations made initial contacts with the other delegations.⁹⁶ While Yugoslavia certainly hoped to profit the most from its position of both a Slavic and a Balkan country, it most probably did not go beyond exercising a large-scale support for the establishment of the organization when that question appeared in 1923.⁹⁷ In 1938 the Yugoslav delegate will reflect on this eagerly created cooperation between the Balkan and Slavic women as to a sign of “the post-war delight.”⁹⁸

⁹² The Alliance was founded by *Ženski pokret* from Belgrade and Sarajevo, *Udruženje jugoslavenskih žena* from Zagreb and *Splošno žensko društvo* from Ljubljana. In the press, the Alliance was mostly referred to as *Ženski pokret*, so I will follow this suggestion as present in Ograjšek Gorenjak and Kardum, “Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta.”

⁹³ “Balkans,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*, Bonnie Smith, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) vol. 1, 195.

⁹⁴ Magdalena Koch, “Slavica Non Leguntur: On a Feminist Project of Interwar Yugoslavia,” in *Przekładaniec. A Journal of Literary Translation* 24 (2010): 131–143.

⁹⁵ Magdalena Koch, “Slavica Non Leguntur: On a Feminist Project of Interwar Yugoslavia,” *Przekładaniec. A Journal of Literary Translation* 24 (2010): 131–143.

⁹⁶ Milena Atanacković, “Mala feministička antanta. Liga za mir i slobodu,” [Little Feminist Entente. The League for Peace and Freedom] *Ženski pokret* 6 (1923), 264–268; Eliška Purkyňová, “Mala ženska dohoda,” [The Little Entente of Women] *Ženska rada*, 55–58.

⁹⁷ Atanacković, “Mala feministička antanta,” 264–268.

⁹⁸ Milena Atanacković, “Mala ženska antanta,” *Glasnik Jugoslavenskog ženskog saveza* (1938), 1.

The Organizational Structure

As mentioned earlier in the Introduction, the Little Entente of Women was established during the Ninth Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance's (IWSA's), opened ceremoniously by Prime Minister of Italy Benito Mussolini⁹⁹ and held from May 12-19 1923 in Rome.¹⁰⁰¹⁰¹ Leposava Petković, a chief of Yugoslav delegation, "has been authorized by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to attend sessions as a state delegate."¹⁰² Both Czechoslovak and Polish delegation's presidents were state officials. Especially for the LEW's member organizations from "non-suffrage" countries, a sense of distrust in parliamentary democracy of their time was equally strong as their awareness of their invisibility (or, more precisely, their lack of influence in policy-making processes) in the broader context of international women's movements.

It was not only the IWSA's 1923 meeting the only connection of the LEW to this global women's organization. More importantly, the IWSA seemed to offer a basic organizational structure to the LEW. The Little Entente of Women frequently coordinated its activity and created strategies in accordance with the IWSA's, not only¹⁰³ because all of its member

⁹⁹ *Ženski pokret* published his speech from the opening ceremony. Leposava Maksimović Petković, "IX kongres Alijancije za Pravo Glasa Žene," [IX Congress of the International Woman's Suffrage Alliance] *Ženski pokret* 6 (1923), 251-252. Somehow ironically, a chair of the founding meeting of the Women's Movement, an organization that represented Yugoslavia in the LEW, explained that the need for a women's organization lays in necessity "to educate and persuade women not to vote for Hindenburg or Mussolini." Lydia Sklevicky, *Horses, Women, Wars*, edited by Dunja Rihtman Auguštin (Zagreb: Ženska infoteka, 1996), 81.

¹⁰⁰ International Woman Suffrage Alliance, *Report of Ninth Congress, Rome, Italy, May 12th to 19th, 1923* (Dresden, Saxony: B. G. Teubner, 1923), database: WASI.

¹⁰¹ The call for participation at the 1923 conference and its Program were published in *Ženski pokret* in February. Ashby, "Poziv za IX kongres međunar. saveza za žensko pravo glasa," [Call for Participation at the IX Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance] *Ženski pokret* 2 (1923), 49-50; "Notes," *Ženski pokret* 2 (1923), 78-80.

¹⁰² Leposava Petković, "IX kongres Alijancije za pravo glasa žene," [IX Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance] *Ženski pokret* 6 (1923), 250-264, 251.

¹⁰³ This also means that more practical compromises were exercised throughout the LEW's existence, such as the strategy of scheduling its conferences to avoid overlapping with IWSA's (IAWSEC from 1926). For example, the Prague Conference of the LEW was organized in 1927, because in 1926 there was the IWSA's (IAWSEC) Congress

organizations were and remained affiliated with the IWSA.¹⁰⁴ Delegates of small countries established as a consequence of the Great War were at that time without much influence or visibility within the international women's organizations. Thus, a regional organization consisting of five countries was significantly better positioned to participate in the administration.¹⁰⁵ A Yugoslav delegate, Milena Atanacković, published a report on the establishment of the LEW in the Yugoslav women's periodical *Ženski pokret*. It speaks of the importance of the LEW in elevating positions and the visibility of women of the region in global women's organizations.¹⁰⁶ "The Little Entente has a task," wrote Atanacković after the meeting in Rome, "to get one member in the bureau [i.e., Executive Committee] of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance."¹⁰⁷ With the support of French delegates, the Little Entente of Women got one place out of ten in the IWSA's Executive Committee, and a throw of the dice decided that this duty would be first executed by Greek representative Avra Theodoropoulou.¹⁰⁸ The Little Entente of Women throughout its existence relied mostly on the abilities of their most active members, usually the leaders of the National Councils and a small number of other prominent delegates (such as Greek Maria Svolou,¹⁰⁹ or Slovene Angela Vode¹¹⁰), in creating

in Paris, or to organize the Warsaw Conference in 1929 just after the IWSA's (IAWSEC) Berlin Conference. See: *Ženská rada* (1926): 68; *Ženská rada* (1928): 25.

¹⁰⁴ While Czechoslovak women participated in the IWSA from 1908, Romanian and Polish from 1913, Yugoslav and Greek affiliated with the IWSA after World War One. Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, Marijana Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta," [The Little Entente with Big Ambition: The Little Entente of Women] *Historijski zbornik*, forthcoming, 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Ograjšek Gorenjak and Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta."

¹⁰⁶ Milena Atanacković was a secretary of National Women's Union in Yugoslavia (Narodni ženski savez) and chief of the political section of the Women's Movement (Ženski pokret) in Yugoslavia and a president of its Belgrade section, a clerk in the Ministry of Social Politics, and secretary of Yugoslav section of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW). In the LEW she was a treasurer (1924-1925), Vice-President (1927-1929), and its long-term chronicle for periodical *Ženski pokret*.

¹⁰⁷ Atanacković, "Mala feministička antanta," 264-268.

¹⁰⁸ Avra Theodoropoulou's name is present among others representing "officers of the Alliance," at the page 3 of the IWSA, *Report of Ninth Congress*, 3. Her role was a "rec[ording] secretary." Theodoropoulou was a Greek pianist, leading figure of the Greek women's movement, member of the IWSA's Executive Committee (1923-1926; 1926-1935), and a third president of the LEW (1925-1927).

¹⁰⁹ See Dimitra Samiou, "Svolou, Maria (born Desypri)," in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 552-557.

strategies and disseminating results of the LEW's work both locally and internationally. The organizational structure of the LEW consisted of a concept of rotating presidency, which simply means that the Romanian representative Alexandrina Cantacuzino took over the presidency in 1923, followed by the Yugoslav Leposava Petković in 1924, and the Greek delegate Avra Theodoropoulou¹¹¹ in 1925. Instead of a Czech president, due to the organizational problems which appeared when Theodoropoulou was absent from the conference-hosting country, a Polish representative Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka took over the presidency in 1927. In contrast to the international women's organizations that were active in the interwar period, it seems that the LEW never embraced a strategy of creating a unified outlook that would symbolize unity among member-organizations through, for example, membership symbols.¹¹² That the LEW was only to a limited extent more than a sum of its parts, it can be visible through the lack of its international headquarters or even temporary central offices of the LEW. Rather, the member-organization, i.e. the headquarters of the National Council that took over the presidency at the last conference would serve as the headquarters of the LEW for the following year or two.

Similar to the IWSA's organizational structure,¹¹³ the LEW's Executive Committee consisted of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and additional members. In absence of some form of permanent international executive body, the National Council would take over the presidency of the LEW that year would support the organization with a President and usually secretaries and treasurers, while the Vice-President came from another National Council. The LEW's Executive Committees were mostly responsible for the organization of conferences and

¹¹⁰ See Karmen Klavžar, "Vode, Angela," in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 604-607.

¹¹¹ For more information about Theodoropoulou, see Aleka Boutzouvi "Theodoropoulou, Avra (born Drakopoulou)," in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 569-574.

¹¹² Rupp brings evidence of the ICW, IWSA, and WILPF's badges and banners creation. Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 160-162.

¹¹³ As described in Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 166. The IWSA included additional members to its EC, an Executive Board of Officers, from 1913.

their supporting events (usually) once a year. This strategy was in-between that of the ICW, who delegated an organization of quinquennial conferences to its host National Councils, while the IWSA and WILPF kept organizing the conferences themselves.¹¹⁴ This strategy sometimes caused serious problems, especially when President and the Executive Committee coordinated the organization of an upcoming conference to be held in another country. One example comes from the difficulties with the organization of Prague Conference in 1927, when the LEW's president Avra Theodoropoulou was in fact in Greece.¹¹⁵ Other events organized throughout the year were focused on establishing contacts between member-countries of the LEW.¹¹⁶

International Conferences

Besides reassembling internationally active feminists (such as Františka Plamínková and Alexandrina Cantacuzino who served as the ICW's Vice-Presidents from 1925),¹¹⁷ periodical conferences that the Little Entente of Women organized gathered also women who had no previous experience in organizing international conferences, and those who never before participated. This opportunity enabled a Croat journalist Vinka Bulić to participate at the LEW's conference held in Prague in 1927. Upon returning to Split, she published her Report in local newspapers. She informed readership of the town in a Yugoslav coastal region where she herself helped organize a local women's organization only two years ago:

¹¹⁴ Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 170.

¹¹⁵ Therefore, they changed the order of presidency, and skipped the Czechs in 1927. See: "Výroční konference Malé ženské dohody," [Annual conference of the Little Entente of Women] *Ženská rada* (1927): 73-75.

¹¹⁶ Usually in a form of visiting each others within the LEW, see: "Izveštaj g-đe Aleksandre Kanatakuzen o radu rumunjske sekcije i rumunjskog narodnog ženskog saveza," [The Report of Mrs. Alexandrina Cantacuzino about the Work of the Romanian Section and the Romanian National's Women's Union] *Ženski pokret* 9 (November 1926): 351-356; "Naše ženstí členové parlamentu v král. Srbů, Chorbatů a Slovinců," [Our Members in Parliament of King. Of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes] *Ženská rada* (1926): 108-109.

¹¹⁷ Plamínková served as the IWSA's Vice-President from 1926.

Oh, what women are capable of. (...) Here [In Prague] we saw at its best what national strength could be lost out of various prejudices which deprive a woman of her individual growth and when she is eliminated from cooperation in public life.¹¹⁸

The locations of the LEW's international conferences were, as mentioned earlier, strategically chosen to be held first in the capitals¹¹⁹ of the LEW's "non-suffrage" countries (in 1923 in Bucharest, in 1924 in Belgrade, and in 1925 in Athens), and later in the capitals of countries where women already had equal political and civil rights for almost a decade (1927 in Prague, and Warsaw in 1929). However necessary in informing broader public of its work, the LEW never published its journal modeled on the IWSA's *Jus Suffragii*, the ICW's *Bulletin* or the WILPF's *Pax*. While the LEW raised the question of publicizing its international activities occasionally, the journal that would carry the reports of its international conferences and possibly articles authored by its major strategists did not materialize and this task was left to be handled within the National Councils' own periodicals.¹²⁰ The reason might be found in the lack of finance, and while in the case of the ICW's *Bulletin* the cheap monthly subscription would make "participation possible for all,"¹²¹ the LEW missed the opportunity to gain leverage from such a publication.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Vinka Bulić, "Utisci iz Praga," [Impressions from Prague] *Novo doba* (1927), 9.

¹¹⁹ The LEW's strategists certainly think of (geo) strategic importance of locations for their events, as can be seen from their traveling art exhibitions. It was staged in nine cities, strategically chosen to represent capitals of the historical regions and cultural centers (Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana in Yugoslavia, Bucharest, Cluj and Chernivtsi in Romania, Prague, Brno and Bratislava in Czechoslovakia) from January 20, 1938 until February 26, 1939. See *La Petite Entente des Femmes – Exposition des Femmes Artistes des Etats de la Petite Entente* [Little Entente of Women – Exhibition of Female Artists of the Little Entente of Women's Exhibition], Exhibition Catalogue (Prague: Orbis, 1938).

¹²⁰ There is no evidence that the initiative to start publishing a LEW's Newsletter in French, introduced at the Prague Conference in 1927 in French, ever occurred, see mentions of the idea in Milena Atanacković, "IV konferencija Male Ženske Antante," *Ženski pokret* 10 (1927), 2.

¹²¹ That is, for all women who could not participate in the international conferences due to a lack of money to support travelling and accommodation.

¹²² Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 177.

Therefore, the LEW conferences' presentations and reports were printed in local newspapers and women's magazines,¹²³ and only occasionally appeared as special reports in French¹²⁴ which were distributed among member states, as well as in other countries across Europe.¹²⁵ For example, the Romanian representatives bragged how the Queen of the Netherlands showed a great interest in the Bucharest Conference.¹²⁶ Whether those published brochures with speeches really reached "every feminist and pacifist on every continent," remains an open question that speaks of the LEW's emphasis on its perceived importance.¹²⁷ Following the conferences, the LEW's resolutions usually summed up the most important agreements that were then printed in women's periodicals or in local newspapers. These accounts usually combined local reports from member countries and information gathered and discussed during the conferences. The local media coverage frequently brought information of the formal and informal events that supported the LEW's conferences, such as tea parties, gala dinners, or

¹²³ To name just a few, a Yugoslav women's periodical *Ženski pokret* [Women's Movement] brought long conferences reports and published the LEW's resolutions, together with articles that were usually written by the participants themselves. The Czechoslovak example was *Ženska rada* [Women's Council]. Yugoslav daily newspapers such as *Politika* [Daily Politics] and *Vreme* [The Time] also frequently reported of the LEW's activities. I will use these sources of information in this chapter.

¹²⁴ The Romanian delegation published several publications with conference speeches, see: *Le Conference de la Petite Entente des Femmes. Discours prononcés aux séances publiques de 3 et 4 Novembre 1923*. (Bucharest: Tipografia „Dorneanu“, 1923) and *La deuxième conference de la Petite des Femmes á Belgarde. Discours et rapports de 1-4 novembre 1924* (Bucharest: L'imprimerie des livres religieux, 1925).

It is still an assumption that French served as an official language of the LEW; it was widely spoken among intelligentsia of the time, reports from the first conferences were published in French, together with other self-promoting material. Czechoslovakian *Ženska rada* always published summaries in French.

Interesting comparison could be made with the Slavic Women's Committee; at the Belgrade Conference, in 1933, women from Slavic countries could not agree upon which language should be official. Polish delegates supported the idea of French as an official language of the Committee, which was resolutely refused by the Yugoslav and Bulgarian delegates, who proposed Russian as the official language. Bulgarian delegate insisted on Russian, because it was the language spoken by the people who "worked for the Slavic idea the most. They are the strongest [Slavic country], their literature conquered the world, and their history is a teacher worldwide." At the end, they agreed that every Slavic language would be considered official. At that occasion, Delfa Ivanić stressed the importance of Slavic languages as the official conference languages, because "the unfortunate thing with the Slavic people is that their congresses were always in German or French." "Ruski, zvanični jezik slovenskih žena, predlog bugarskih i jugoslavenskih delegatkinja," *Vreme* (17.10.1933), 5.

¹²⁵ Čerkez, "Izveštaj g-dice Čerkez, sekretara MŽA," *Ženski pokret* 9 (1924), 341.

¹²⁶ "Izveštaj gospođe Čerkez. Sekretara Male ženske antante," *Ženski pokret* 9 (November 1924): 341-342.

¹²⁷ Čerkez, "Izveštaj g-dice Čerkez, sekretara MŽA," *Ženski pokret* 9 (1924), 341.

exhibitions.¹²⁸ These social events often included guests from the host country's ruling elites, especially when Romanian and Yugoslav Royal Courts or Czechoslovak "Castle leaders"¹²⁹ who participated in support.¹³⁰ Besides affirming predominance of higher classes of society in and around the LEW, the extravagance of such social events also served as legitimation of "the woman question" as an important subject by the ruling elites and covered in the press.¹³¹ These events additionally represented occasions that the women included in the work of the LEW saw as a privilege that left great majority of other women outside the LEW. A small number of them were informed of such events through the LEW's published reports, which, however, meant little for a still predominately agrarian and illiterate population of interwar Yugoslavia and Romania.¹³² However limited the LEW's influence and its impact was on a majority of women, its activity deserves to be examined because it represents hitherto unknown attempt of a large-scale inclusion of women from the region in the regional transnational women's organizing after WWI. In the following pages, I will focus on the LEW's first, foundational meeting in Rome in

¹²⁸ See, for example, Ksenija Atanasijević, "Izveštaj s Treće konferencije Male ženske Antante održane od sedmog do trinaestog decembra 1925. g. u Ateni," *Ženski pokret* 1-2 (January-February 1926): 37; "Výroční konference Malé ženské dohody," *Ženská rada* (1927): 73-75; Vinka Bulić, "Utisci iz Praga," *Novo doba* (1927), 9-10; Angela Vode, "Za vreme konferencije Male ženske antante," *Ženski pokret* 11 (July 1927): 2.

¹²⁹ The Castle leaders were primarily Czechoslovak president Tomáš Masaryk and Foreign Minister, later President, Edvard Beneš, and the circle of their closest associates that orchestrated Czechoslovak national politics from the Prague Castle in the interwar period, see Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: the Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12, passim.

¹³⁰ See Delfa Ivanić, *Uspomene*, edited by Jasmina Milanović (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2012), 202.

¹³¹ Besides the press I used in drawing this chapter, there were many other mentions in the speeches from the LEW's conferences that speak of their propaganda in the press. For example, a Romanian delegate and a LEW Secretary Catherine Čerkez would state in Belgrade in 1924 that the brochures were published, lectures were held, and "the articles went out during the past year in large newspapers of our countries." See Čerkez, "Izveštaj g-đice Čerkez, sekretara MŽA," [The Report of Miss Čerkez, secretary of the LEW] *Ženski pokret* 9 (1924), 341.

¹³² In the 1930s, Romania still counted between 75 to 80 per cent of agrarian population, and more than 50 per cent of illiterate women around 1930 in Romania and Yugoslavia. See Sharon L. Wolchik, "The Precommunist Legacy, Economic Development, Social Transformation, and Women's Roles in Eastern Europe," in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe*, Wolchik, Sharon L., and Alfred G. Meyer, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 32-33.

1923, its international conferences, held from 1923 until 1929, and its last activity, a traveling art exhibition organized in 1938.¹³³

Setting a Common Platform

The problems raised up to now add up to more general discussions dealing with the ways in which the LEW, as a regional women's organization, transcended the national framework and/or enriched and supported it. Examining transnational cooperation orchestrated by diverse women's organizations in the region could help in understanding how and when it reflected proclaimed *internationality* and *sisterhood*. It can also highlight when it subordinated its activities to national interests, affected by the dominant political discourses of the time. Extensive description of LEW conferences based on the reports published in *Ženski pokret* could be found in Jasmina Milanović's article.¹³⁴ Additional information regarding the analysis of the LEW's major feminist, political, and pacifist goals could be found in the article authored by Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak and myself.¹³⁵ Starting from the analysis of the Romanian women's movements, Roxana Cheschebec wrote a pioneering work contesting the LEW's aspirations towards the international and national.¹³⁶ Therefore, in this subchapter I will rather focus on the most important problems raised at the LEW's international conferences to explain the LEW's position

¹³³ In the course of this research, two Croatian art historians published an article dealing with this event, although from the perspective of the Club of Croatian artists only, see Darija Alujević and Dunja Nekić, "Women's Art Club and Women' Group Exhibitions in Zagreb from 1928 until 1940," *Artl@s Bulletin* 8, no. 1 (2019): 166-182.

¹³⁴ Published in the course of my research, see Jasmina Milanović, "Regionalna ženska udruženja, Mala Antanta žena i Jedinstvo slovenskih žena," [Regional Women's Associations, The Little Entente of Women and the Slavic Women Committee] in *Jugoslavija i Poljska u 20. veku*, [Yugoslavia and Poland in the 20th century] Momčilo Pavlović, ed. (Beograd, Bidgošć; Institut za savremenu istoriju, Društvo istoričara Srbije "Stojan Novaković," Institut za istoriju i međunarodne odnose 2017), 19-40.

¹³⁵ Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, Marijana Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta," [The Little Entente with Big Ambition: The Little Entente of Women] *Historijski zbornik*, forthcoming, 2019

¹³⁶ Roxana Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement and the Little Entente of Women (LEW)," in *Feminist ideologies and activism in Romania (approx. 1890s-1940s): nationalism and internationalism in Romanian projects for women's emancipation* (PhD diss., Central European University, 2005), 510-533.

towards other important regional alliances, such as the Little Entente, and to one of the most important international women's organization, the IWSA.¹³⁷ In doing so, I will come closer to the understanding of difficult relationship between the international and national when it came to this transnational organization.

At its founding meeting in Rome in 1923, the LEW set up a common platform for work. It was decided that the LEW would fight for women's political rights, equality before the law, women's right to work, advancement and protection against exploitation at work, and would "always try to disperse disagreement between the people of the Little Entente of Women" and develop "cordial relationships" that would lead to world peace.¹³⁸ Setting pacifism high on its agenda did not make the LEW an exemption in comparison to other international women's organizations such as the ICW, IWSA, and WILPF.¹³⁹ The same principles of promoting peaceful solutions¹⁴⁰ for possible future regional disputes and in the same time protection of territorial status quo in the region shared by the Little Entente.¹⁴¹ The Little Entente was both an

¹³⁷ The reason for focusing on these relations comes simply from the fact that the most coherent information regarding the LEW's strategy could be found in its relations to these organizations.

¹³⁸ Leposava Maksimović-Petković, "Mala Ženska Antanta," [The Little Entente of Women] *Žena i svet* 1 [Woman and World] (1925), 6.

¹³⁹ Pacifism was an important topic at the ICW Congress in Wembley in May 1924, of which women of the LEW learned from its delegate there, Františka Plamínková. Similar interest in discussing pacifism was present at the WILPF Congress in Washington, with the presence of the LEW's Justyna Budzinska Tylicka and the IWSA Executive Committee meetings where the LEW previously delegated Avra Theodoropoulou. See Františka Plamínková, "Izveštaj Františke Plaminkove o konferenciji Međunarodnog ženskog saveza u Wemblyu," [The Report of Františka Plamínková about the Congress of the ICW in Wembley] *Ženski pokret* 9 (1924), 343-348; Justyna Budzinska Tylicka, "Izveštaj dr. J. Budzinske-Tilicke sa Kongresa Internacionalne lige žena za mir i slobodu," [The Report of dr. J. Budzinska-Tylicka from the Congress of the WILPF] *Ženski pokret* 9 (1924), 356-361; Avra Theodoropoulou, "Internacionalna alijancija za žensko parvo glasa," *Ženski pokret* 9 (1924), 361-364.

¹⁴⁰ The LEW discussed the popularization of pacifist solutions in 1927, during the Prague Conference, proposing education in the pacifist spirit, and eventual establishment of the Day of Peace, cooperation with the League of Nations, etc. See "Dan mira," [The Day of Peace] *Ženski pokret* 17 (November 1928): 3; IAB, Fond Udruženja univerzitetski obrazovanih žena, box 2, 1931/82, box 5, 1935./78, box 4, 1936/77.; box 5, 1937/67; "Osmi kongres internacionalnog ženskog saveza," [The Eighth Congress of the ICW] *Ženski svet* 7 (July 1930): 3; "Kongres internacionalnog ženskog saveza," [The Congress of the ICW] *Ženski pokret* 13-16 (July 1930):1. For extensive elaboration of the initiative, see Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, Marijana Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta."

¹⁴¹ See Milan Vanku, *Mala Antanta 1920-1938* [The Little Entente 1920-1938] (Izdavačko preduzeće "Dimitrije Tucović": 1969), Sally Marks, *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe 1918-1944* (MacMillan

offensive and defensive alliance of Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, aimed at minimizing possible Hungarian or Bulgarian threats to the post-Versailles order in the region. Whether Poland should enter the alliance was a subject of many debates. Then with eventual French approval, it seems that Czechoslovak-Polish antagonism – grounded in their different visions of the regional dominance and not least with territorial disputes – eventually did not help Czechoslovakian Minister of Foreign Affairs Beneš to agree upon Poland's inclusion.¹⁴² The LEW was aware of the fact that this women's organization actually offered an advancement of the Little Entente's policy, with inclusion of Poland and Greece, something that the LE failed to do. A Yugoslav delegate, Delfa Ivanić, did not miss the opportunity in 1924 to equate women's Little Entente's ability to expand the core of the LE countries further south and further north with the notion of more successful approach than the LE's was.¹⁴³ General understandings of the LEW's position towards the LE could be detected in its "auxiliary" status, mainly in supporting the aims of the LE focused primarily at the rapprochement of peoples in the region. Therefore, the LEW, as a "private and voluntary" organization worked on the "insurance and supplementation of major goals" of the LE.¹⁴⁴ Without differing from the messages Plamínková or Cantacuzino expressed in Belgrade, a Greek delegate Alexandru Ioanides stated that the LEW should understand its position as primarily oriented towards pacifism, without recognition of "enemies" among neighbors.¹⁴⁵ Yugoslav delegation similarly distinguished itself from the LE:

Education: 176), 37-38; Magda Adam, *The Little Entente and Europe (1920-1929)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993).

¹⁴² Piotr Wandycz, *The Twilight of the French Eastern Alliances, 1926-1936: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from Locarno to the Remilitarization of the Rhineland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 1-16.

¹⁴³ Ivanić, *Uspomene*, 202.

¹⁴⁴ Dr. Đ., "Kako se može raditi na bržem izvođenju privrednog mira među Balkanskim narodima," [How Can It Be Done to Speed Up the Performance of Economic Peace among the Balkan peoples] *Trgovački Glasnik* 146 (July 26 1927). Quoted in "Priznanje rada Male Ženske Antante," [Recognition of the Work of the Little Entente of Women] *Ženski pokret* 16 (September 15 1927): 2.

¹⁴⁵ "Discours de Mademoiselle Alexandru Ioanides (Grece)," in *1e Conference de la Petite Entente des Femmes a Belgradei*, 45. Quoted in Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement," 513.

While the governments of our states have united in a political program aimed at joint resistance to an eventual enemy, then women seek to establish a relationship based on pacifist principles. They believe there should be no hostility, there can be no inconsistent disagreement between the two neighboring civilized peoples, and that all the difficulties in the past have been created by the dishonorable and disloyal work of politicians. Women will always strive for peaceful politics, and always use all the activity on cultural and social propaganda.¹⁴⁶

However, the LEW also consisted of exclusionist organizations that consequently translated in the overall organization's failure to include women from those countries the LE expected to have possible (territorial) disputes in future. Those exclusions were primarily Hungary¹⁴⁷ and Bulgaria,¹⁴⁸ even though the attempts were made to include those countries, with a possible enlargement to Albania and Turkey. The LEW's first president, Romanian Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino, systematically opposed to any enlargement of the LEW with an explicit statement that the maintenance of the Versailles order should stay the LEW's political goal.¹⁴⁹ The Prague LEW's conference, held from June 1-4, 1927, was important mostly because of its initiative to expand the LEW. "The alliance well-known all over the world," as it was once called,¹⁵⁰ emerged to include other countries from the region: Albania, Turkey, Bulgaria and Hungary, possibly on Avra Theodoropoulou's request.¹⁵¹ The LEW nominally agreed to accept Bulgaria to the organization, but this did not happen and the request had to be repeated two years later in

¹⁴⁶ "Izveštaj Upravnog odbora Ženskog pokreta za godišnju skupštinu održanu 1. Aprila 1924," [The Report of the Executive Committee of the Women's Movement for the Annual Assembly held on April 1 1924] *Ženski pokret* 7 (1924), 292-299, 293.

¹⁴⁷ Contacts between the LEW and any Hungarian women's organization are practically non-existent. For the introduction in the topic of the politicization of Hungarian women after WWI, see Judith Sapor, *Hungarian Women's Activism in the Wake of the First World War: From Rights to Revanche* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018). Especially interesting there is an elaboration on the question of representation of Hungarian women and general marginalization of liberal feminists during the Horthy era.

¹⁴⁸ The Bulgarian membership in the LEW will be the subject matter of the following chapter.

¹⁴⁹ Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement," 514.

¹⁵⁰ Milena Atanacković, "IV konferencija Male Ženske Antante," [IV Conference of the Little Entente of Women] *Ženski pokret* 10 (1927), 1.

¹⁵¹ "Mala ženska dohoda," [The Little Entente of Women] *Ženská rada* (1926): 76-77. The importance of this initiative was also recognized in the *Jus Suffragii*, August-September, 1927, 148, 159. Quoted in Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement," 514.

Warsaw.¹⁵² The LEW proceeded to act against Cantacuzino's position, and the majority voted for an implementation of a more inclusive politics, in order to truly resemble an international organization.¹⁵³ However, Bulgarian women would not enter any organization consisting of Yugoslavia, Romania, or Czechoslovakia before 1933,¹⁵⁴ when the Balkan Conferences brought ideas of cooperation into high politics.¹⁵⁵ Sometimes the LEW and LE leadership communicated directly. Already in 1923 the first LEW President Alexandrina Cantacuzino sent a telegram to Prague to express the LEW's support for the Little Entente's official meeting, and received a positive feedback for the LEW's principles from Beneš.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, the LE's disputes with Bulgaria mirrored the LEW's decision to keep Bulgaria out of the LEW.¹⁵⁷ The events supported by the Romanian government¹⁵⁸ went from insisting on promoting their activities and implementing the "getting to know you" strategy to "intense work on preparing statutes, programs and plans" for the future activity.¹⁵⁹ In spite of the warm welcome in Bucharest and numerous events where women could share their propaganda with Romanian authorities, there were voices from the highest political levels that opposed the subordination of national interests of Romanian women in order to bring forth the demands of feminism and internationalism.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵² "Mala ženska antanta," [The Little Entente of Women] *Ženski list* 6 (October 1927): 4; "IV. Konferencija Male ženske antante," *Ženski pokret* 10 (June 1927): 1.

¹⁵³ "Konferencija Male ženske antante," [The Conference of the Little Entente of Women] *Ženski pokret* 13-16 (August 1929): 2.

¹⁵⁴ Within the already mentioned the Slavic Women's Committee.

¹⁵⁵ For more information about three Balkan Conferences, see Čedomir Đurđević and Jovan Veljić, eds. *Treća balkanska konferencija (Rad Jugoslovenske nacionalne grupe)* [The Third Balkan Conference (The Work of the Yugoslav National Group)] (Beograd: Izdanje Jugoslovenske nacionalne grupe za Balkansku konferenciju, 1935).

¹⁵⁶ Čerkez, "Izveštaj g-đice Čerkez, sekretara MŽA," *Ženski pokret* 9 (1924), 341.

¹⁵⁷ Leposava Maksimovic-Petkovic, "Mala Ženska Antanta," *Žena i svet* 1 [Woman and World] (1925), 6.

¹⁵⁸ Yugoslav report reads as follows, "The official and private reception of the LEW delegates was very warm. We were received at the Ministry's Presidency, at the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Duca, who also gave an official lunch to the delegates with the heads of his ministry. The official Romania showed a very great interest in the work of the LEW, all the public also: the columns in newspapers were devoted to the work of our sessions, and the public sessions were well attended." Milena Atanackovic, "Mala ženska antanta," *Ženski pokret* 9-10 (1923), 424-425.

¹⁵⁹ Atanackovic, "Mala ženska antanta," 426.

¹⁶⁰ Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement," 517.

Therefore, the major disagreement between the LEW and the LE could not be found in their joint geostrategic goals, but rather in the Yugoslavia, Greece and Romania's failure to recognize women's political rights as legitimate means in fighting for the same goals. The criticism was expressed most eloquently by Czechoslovaks, which did not forbid its women to participate in politics. Františka Plamínková elaborated on the issue at the Belgrade Conference, held between October 30 and November 3 1924, by saying:

You, as us, demand that no great power will consider us less developed, less capable than it. How can you defend the honor of your patrie if you yourselves disregard the greatest half of your own nation, if all your women are incapable of taking part in the public life of the nation that they so ardently love.¹⁶¹

Besides feminist demands, the LEW's conferences addressed a wide range of questions that the LE excluded from its agenda.¹⁶² This conference followed the principles established in Bucharest, with official meetings where they discussed "feminist questions" in member countries. It also presided over "most delicate political issues"¹⁶³ during the closed meetings from which there is no information.¹⁶⁴ For public eyes and ears, the LEW organized a gala meeting where "people of Belgrade" had the opportunity to listen to the speeches of women politicians.¹⁶⁵ The conference was opened by Queen Maria of Yugoslavia with an exhibition of women artists and writers of the LEW.¹⁶⁶ It addressed the topics of women, children and the issue of extramarital children. The Athens Conference happened a year later. It was held from

¹⁶¹ Františka Plamínková, "Govor g-đe Plaminkove delegate čehoslovačkog," [The Speech of Mrs. Plamínková, the Czechoslovak Delegate] *Ženski pokret* 10 (1924), 403-405. This quote could also be found in Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement," 515.

¹⁶² Besides general preoccupation with comparative insights into broader questions of position of women in society, mutual informing of conditions in which women live in the region, there were also questions regarding social work, economic conditions, minorities issues, and so on, which I will try to reflect upon on the next pages.

¹⁶³ Leposava Maksimovic-Petkovic, "Mala Ženska Antanta," *Žena i svet* [Woman and World] 1 (1925), 6.

¹⁶⁴ Even though the LEW generally criticized the LE for their lack of sincerity in cooperation, their still informed the public of the existence of their own closed meetings. See Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement," 513.

¹⁶⁵ Petković, "Mala Ženska Antanta," 6.

¹⁶⁶ The new president was Leposava Maksimović-Petković, president of the Women's Movement in Yugoslavia, see *Ženski pokret* 9 (1924), 337-392.

December 7-13, 1925, just after the Greek-Bulgarian war.¹⁶⁷ As usual, delegates from every member-country delivered speeches on the previous year's work in their respective countries.¹⁶⁸ In Athens, they discussed, among other issues, the position of women in the law, nationalism, and minority issues. There was also a survey about the improvement of the position of women clerks, where only women from Poland fulfilled the principles of the resolution formulated at the last conference.¹⁶⁹ Besides demanding the equality between men and women clerks, the LEW in Athens focused on economic issues because "the economic inequality among member-states of the LEW is the main reason for the conflicts among them."¹⁷⁰ They stated it could be solved through a creation of "an economic union of the LEW."¹⁷¹ Following their stand that economic inequalities represent a major reason for inter-state disputes, the LEW's Economic Committee drew an Economic Resolution that will become a part of the first comprehensive LEW Program in 1927.¹⁷² The Committee offered a proposition for creating a common custom union of the LEW countries, for which it received an approval from an unnamed Yugoslav economist.¹⁷³ However, this scholar believed that propagating a creation of only one custom union for the LEW countries is not a suitable solution for Yugoslavia. Simply, he further explained, due to a

¹⁶⁷ The Incident at Petrich, or the War of the Stray Dog, was a crisis in 1925, in which there was a short invasion of Bulgaria by Greece near the border town of Petrich. It was resolved after a decision of the League of Nations.

¹⁶⁸ Except for Poland, which has not sent its delegates, allegedly because of financial reasons. However, they have sent their reports. Ksenija Atanasijević, "Izveštaj sa Treće Koferencije Male Antante Žena, održane od sedmog do trinaestog decembra 1925 g. u Atini," [The Report from the Third Conference of the Little Entente of Women] *Ženski pokret* 1-2 (1925), 37.

¹⁶⁹ Atanasijević, "Izveštaj sa Treće Koferencije," 40.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Mrs Odobesko from Romania recommended the creation of the Economic Little Entente. Atanasijević, "Izveštaj sa Treće Koferencije," 42.

¹⁷² "Program rada Male ženske antante" [The Little Entente of Women's Program] *Ženski pokret* 11 (July 1, 1927), 2.

¹⁷³ Dr. Đ., "Kako se može raditi na bržem izvođenju privrednog mira među Balkanskim narodima," [How Can It Be Done to Speed Up the Performance of Economic Peace among the Balkan peoples] *Trgovački Glasnik* 146 (July 26 1927). Quoted in "Priznanje rada Male Ženske Antante," [Recognition of work of the Little Entente of Women] *Ženski pokret* 16 (September 15 1927): 1-2.

great discrepancy in industrial development between the Balkans and Central Europe, the less developed Balkans would be simply suffocated by participation in such a union.¹⁷⁴

The minorities' question was one of the most complex in the post-war CESEE.¹⁷⁵ As Roxana Cheschebec pointed out, all the LEW's members supported their countries' policies in creating the nation-states after the war.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, assimilationist attitudes were not rare among the LEW ranks. In 1923 in Bucharest, Eliška Purkyňová spoke of imposing the Czech character to the only state Czechs have, where minorities needed to live accordingly to the Czechs' wishes; if their desires differed, continued Purkyňová, "we desire and wish for the Germans and Hungarians to live accordingly to their wishes in their countries."¹⁷⁷ Declaratively, the LEW urged the unification of all laws regarding the national minorities in the countries of the League of Nations and its stand was to do everything to provide national minorities with the same intellectual and economic conditions for their equal citizenship status.¹⁷⁸ To protect minorities in order to secure their cultural, economic, and social development, the LEW's 1927 Program states, there should be no difference among the countries in taking responsibility for their national minorities.¹⁷⁹ However, the next sentence of the Program showed how tightly the LEW's women stood with their support for their respective countries' majority population: "On the other hand, every propaganda, official or private, aiming at awakening the nationalist

¹⁷⁴ "Priznanje rada," 1.

¹⁷⁵ For a thorough analysis of the Romanian women's movements stand toward this issue, see Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement," 475-509.

¹⁷⁶ Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement," 518.

¹⁷⁷ Moreover, Purkyňová went on to conclude that "in our state the Germans will receive the same state treatment as us when they will stop hating our republic." See "Discours de Madame Purkyňová (Tchécoslovaquie)," in *1e Conférence de la Petite Entente des Femmes*, 36. Quoted in Cheschebec, "The Romanian's Women Movement," 519.

¹⁷⁸ More general resolutions formulated the LEW's attitude against the death penalty and their recommendation that the history of civilizations should be taught in schools instead of military history. Atanasijević, "Izveštaj sa Treće Koferencije," 42-3.

¹⁷⁹ The LEW's Program consisted of The Feminist Program, The Pacifist Program and The Resolution of the LEW's Economic Committee. Published as: "Program rada Male ženske antante" [The Little Entente of Women's Program] *Ženski pokret* 11 (July 1, 1927), 1-2.

sentiment among minorities established in any country, must be honestly avoided.”¹⁸⁰ Speaking of protecting the national borders, imagined or the real ones – before electing the new president, a Greek representative Avra Theodoropoulou at the Prague Conference in 1927– the support was expressed for the Locarno Conference.¹⁸¹

The last LEW conference, held in Warsaw in June 25-28, 1929, spoke against imperialism, nationalism, militarism and promoted pacifism, economic cooperation and customs union, freedom of cultural development and the abolition of passports.¹⁸² However, the conference surfaced polarization within the LEW when Greece and Poland insisted on the termination of all political activities and called for more pacifist and feminist approaches in the LEW’s strategy as well as changing the name of the organization. Romania and Czechoslovakia advocated expanding the LEW’s political activity to support “the existing political treaties of the political Little Entente.” Yugoslavia, according to a Yugoslav delegate from Sarajevo, Maša Živanović,¹⁸³ wanted to further feminist and pacifist engagements of the LEW, but found changing the name of the organization “unnecessary.”¹⁸⁴ Once again Alexandrina Cantacuzino was elected president of the organization and the first conference in the 1930s was to be held in Bucharest. In spite of this agreement, the Little Entente of Women did not meet in Bucharest in 1931. Yet, the Balkan women’s organizations, namely the YWU and CNFR, met during the

¹⁸⁰ The Program published in Yugoslavia consisted of this suggestion that nationalist propaganda among minorities “must be honestly avoided,” see “Program rada Male ženske antante,” 2. However, the Program published in *Jus Suffragii* reads almost completely equal paragraph, except for more direct “prohibition of all propaganda.” See “Peace Programme of the Women’s Little Entente,” in *Jus Suffragii* (August-September 1927), 148.

¹⁸¹ Atanasijević, “Izveštaj sa Treće Konferencije,” 43. Locarno Pact was a set of agreements negotiated and signed at the end of 1925, where Germany, France, Belgium, Great Britain, and Italy mutually guaranteed peace and protection of western borders with Germany (not the eastern ones!). It included, inter alia, treaties between Germany and Poland, Germany and Czechoslovakia, and treaties of guarantee between France and Poland and between France and Czechoslovakia.

¹⁸² Červená, “Letošni konference,” 96.

¹⁸³ Maša Živanović was a president of Women’s Movement in Sarajevo, Yugoslav delegate to the LEW at the conferences in Athens, Prague, and Warsaw.

¹⁸⁴ Maša Živanović, “Konferencija Male ženske antante,” *Ženski pokret* 13-16 (August 1929): 1-2.

Inter-Balkan Conferences from 1930 to 1934.¹⁸⁵ Upon calls from the Balkan governments, women were included in the work of commissions dealing with social and political questions. They mainly discussed “nationality of married women, children’s rights, prostitution and women’s civil rights.”¹⁸⁶ Their demands, ranging from the banning of prostitution to equating men and women in the law of Balkan countries were once again bypassed.¹⁸⁷

When the Balkan Entente was established in 1934, including Yugoslavia, Romania, Greece, and Turkey, recognized the possible Bulgarian threat to their territorial status quo, Cantacuzino led the CNFR delegation to meet with the Union of Bulgarian Women.¹⁸⁸ The Little Entente of Women (consisted of Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia) reorganized “to strengthen peace within the countries of the Little Entente and outside of it.”¹⁸⁹ But it did not take any significant action in that direction before 1938. The LEW was considerably less present in the media, it did not organize big conferences, it did not make resolutions and it published news very rarely. Its last activity, the traveling art exhibition in 1938, showed how difficult it was to bring in, for example, Croat artists to participate at the exhibition or even Yugoslavs into the organization of the event – at least before the Yugoslav Royal Court welcomed the event.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Cheschebec, “The Romanian’s Women Movement,” 531.

¹⁸⁶ Cheschebec, “The Romanian’s Women Movement,” 532.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Cheschebec, “The Romanian’s Women Movement,” 532-3.

¹⁸⁹ “Mala ženska antanta,” *Ženski svet* 12 (1934), 3.

¹⁹⁰ Františka Plamínková, Letter to Consul of Czechoslovakia in Yugoslavia, Arhiv za likovne umjetnosti HAZU [Fine Arts Archives of Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences], Klub likovnih umjetnica [Women's Art Club], Izložba umjetnica male antante [Exhibition of the female artists of the Little Entente], 1937, K 1-4.

CHAPTER II – Tensions and Pathways of (Dis)Integration in and around the Little Entente of Women

In one of her first reports on the work of the Little Entente of Women, Yugoslav representative emphasized that the main task of this alliance is “a joint work on social, economic, and political strengthening of women and solidarity on the elimination of all disagreements that could be created among our countries in order to maintain general peace!”¹⁹¹ As the previous chapter showed, “the national question” and “the woman question” were frequently intertwined in regional women’s movements and organizations, including the LEW. On the other hand, the LEW’s insistence on playing an active role in resolving inter-ethnic conflicts and promoting international cooperation was its pillar-stone. The Little Entente of Woman did not exist in vacuum; it must have position itself to political events and its members’ national interests. Different member-organizations brought diverse past historical experiences and the common platform could be built only on topics they fully agreed upon. Their main preconditions were that they do not know each other enough yet, and a creation of a network of women dedicated to feminism and pacifism should impact their respective countries’ policies and help consequently maintain the status quo in the region. Political dimensions of the LEW’s activity were the strongest at the core countries of the Little Entente: in Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. Greece and Poland were never too enthusiastic for the project, probably as a result of less support coming from the ruling elites of their countries, which stayed out of the project of the Little Entente. Poland had not sent any delegate to the Athens Conference, and the Greek delegation had problems with the organization of the conference in Prague. In numbers,

¹⁹¹ Milena Atanacković, “Mala feministička antanta. Liga za mir i slobodu,” [The Little Feminist Entente. The League for Peace and Freedom] *Ženski pokret* 6 (1923), 26

the delegations ossified as the end of the 1920s was approaching. It culminated at the last conference when, usually large-in-number, Yugoslav delegation sent only Maša Živanović from Sarajevo.¹⁹² As explained earlier, the Warsaw Conference resulted in conflict which was irreparable.

At the very beginning of the LEW's existence, Milena Atanacković thought that "It is natural that the international relations between the closest [i.e., neighboring] peoples are the tightest and the most complex."¹⁹³ Local, often territorial, disputes and the disputes regarding the state organization would during the 1920s show how complex relations between the regional neighboring countries can challenge even the most ambitious internationalist projects. Without explaining too much of specific conditions of the LEW's member organizations, this chapter will show how preoccupations with "the national question" remained dominant in the region during the fragile interwar decades and how various unitarist projects failed to compensate for specific local and national identities. It will zoom in on Yugoslavia to offer an example on how local, national and international contexts mutually informed itself. It was not only Yugoslav, Croat, and Serb narratives that needed to be negotiated after the war, but there was also an international, "foreign," audience that should concern "us." In discussing dynamism that existed in Yugoslav women's movement(s), this chapter will show how transnational activities would be requested not only in the international sphere, but also in the local context. On the other hand, it will demonstrate how the LEW's internationalist project was limited when it collided with its members' national interests. Nonetheless, the LEW represented an important organization that

¹⁹² Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, Marijana Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta," [The Little Entente with Big Ambition: The Little Entente of Women] *Historijski zbornik*, forthcoming, 2019.

¹⁹³ Živanović was a president of Women's Movement in Sarajevo. Milena Atanacković, "Mala ženska antanta," [The Little Entente of Women] *Ženski pokret* 9 and 10 (November and December 1923), 423.

tried to mitigate still underdeveloped feminist activity in Yugoslavia and, more broadly, informed the “non-suffrage” nations’ contexts with those of “suffrage nations.”

“Upon their bones, Yugoslavia was created”¹⁹⁴

In the immediate years following World War One and throughout the 1920s, a struggle between the followers of pathways of integration and disintegration in Yugoslavia, between federalist and centralist solutions in state matters took place. Since “the national question” in interwar Yugoslavia remained the most important issue, it is worth taking a step back and in brief outline the preconditions that created a space for a continuous clash among country’s national ideologies, predominately the Serb and Croat. From the 1860s among the Croat liberal intelligentsia Yugoslavism¹⁹⁵ resembled a national ideology that would bring the unification of the South Slavs, on the principles of sharing a common culture and literary language.¹⁹⁶ When the turn of the 20th century brought Hrvatsko-srpska koalicija (HSK, Croato-Serb Coalition) into life in Austria-Hungary, a form of Yugoslavism revitalized in the doctrine of *narodno jedinstvo* (national oneness). It was this idea that “carried the seeds of integral and unitarist Yugoslavism,” and after the unification of Yugoslavia in 1918 it would understand Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes as “one people with three names (three “tribes” of the united “Yugoslav people”).”¹⁹⁷ In the

¹⁹⁴ Quote from Leposava Petković refers to all Serbs who fell in wars prior to the unification of Yugoslavia in 1918. See Leposava Petković, “Jedan divan ženski govor,” [A Wonderful Female Speech] *Žena* (October 31 1919): 520-529. Full text could also be found in Slavica Popović Filipović, *Courage between the Lines. Miss Annie Christich in Serbia and the Time of the Brave* (Beograd: Društvo istoričara Srbije “Stojan Novaković,” 2015), 418-420, 420.

¹⁹⁵ Yugoslavism grew out of Illyrianism, a national/cultural ideology created by Croat intelligentsia led by Ljudevit Gaj, who in 1830s and 1840s in Croatia-Slavonia, as a part of Austria-Hungaria and in opposition to Hungarians, aimed at constructing a single national culture and consciousness for all the South Slavs, see Ivo Banac, *National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, c1984), 76.

¹⁹⁶ Banac, *National Question*, 89.

¹⁹⁷ Banac, *National Question*, 98-99.

interwar period, Yugoslavism would be contested by both Serbs and Croats; while, even prior to the unification, the centralist Serbian version of South Slavic unification was troublesomely similar to that of Serbian expansionism in the mind of Prime Minister Nikola Pašić,¹⁹⁸ the Croat (and Slovene) political discourse saw a divide between Yugoslavists and anti-centralists.¹⁹⁹ Probably the most important among the latter was Stjepan Radić, the leader of opposition in Croatia, with whom the majority of Croatian (peasantry) population would lean. Without further complicating the issue, with this chapter I plan to prove that these debates were not less vocally present within the Yugoslav women's movements.

Combining her insights from Czech context²⁰⁰ to that of late Austria-Hungary in the Croatian lands and newly established Yugoslavia, Zagreb-based Slovene Zofka Kveder acted as a transnational feminist agent.²⁰¹ Kveder was a socialist and cosmopolitan feminist who published a first feminist journal in Zagreb in 1917. She was an enthusiastic supporter of the Yugoslav unification, who helped set the foundations for the interwar women's organizing in Yugoslavia. In the first issue of her journal *Ženski svijet* (Women's World) she wrote:

During the war a Yugoslav woman had indeed little to say in public about what she wanted, what her thoughts were. Our circumstances pushed us into a deep silence (...) Men were silenced, women were silenced. Our whole nation sank into silence, into unspeakable painful apathy (...) But the nation cannot stay still for years!²⁰²

After the proclamation of Yugoslavia, Kveder could finally rename the journal to *Jugoslavenska žena* (Yugoslav Woman), as she could not do in 1917 because the "name at first had to be

¹⁹⁸ Banac, *National Question*, 116. Nikola Pašić was a leader of The People's Radical Party (Narodna radikalna stranka).

¹⁹⁹ Trencsenyi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2, 72.

²⁰⁰ Kveder kept bringing information on the successes of the Czech women's movement to Croatia. See Zofka Kveder, "Narodna organizacija i žene," in *Ženski svijet* 2, Issue 7 (July 1, 1918), 273-274

²⁰¹ For more information on Kveder see Katja Mihurko Poniž, "Zofka Kveder," in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 282-284. More in Jasna Honzak Jahić and Alenka Jensterle Doležalová, eds. *Zofka Kvedrová (1878-1926): recepcje její tvorby ve 21. století* [Zofka Kveder (1878-1926): The Reception of Her Work in the 21th Century] (Prague: Národní knihovna ČR, 2008).

²⁰² Zofka Kveder, "Što hoćemo?" [What Do We Want?] *Ženski svijet* 1, no. 1. (September 1917), 2.

harmless enough, not to attract unnecessary attention of the Austrian-Hungarian rulers.”²⁰³

Aiming at proving active roles of women during the War, to elevate their positions in the ongoing debate regarding the women’s political rights, she claimed that “to the heroism of men who went to the front, responded heroism of women who stayed at home. It was gender equality brought by suffering.”²⁰⁴ Similar rhetorical mechanism was used among Serb feminist leaders too, such as Leposava Petković when criticizing Serbian Civil Code:

We wish to repay these knights of ours, we want to repay the efforts of our living heroes, we want to show them that war, that worst of all schools in life, has transformed Serbian women and made them mature and independent; that... they deserve to be elevated by these great Serb men to their level; that they deserve to have their work and their rights respected by them and to be placed on an equal footing before the law, just as they are equal before God.²⁰⁵

These “heroic-religious references” were not just an attempt to ingratiate conservative and traditional predominant discourses of the time.²⁰⁶ This type of rhetoric often served as an argument in revoking Serbian primacy in leading the women’s movement in Yugoslavia, especially in the years following the war.²⁰⁷ Jelena Petrović used a similar point recently, when explaining that Yugoslavism was “manifested indirectly” as a pro-Serbian Yugoslavism,²⁰⁸ expressed already in 1919 at the founding Congress of Narodni ženski savez (Kraljevine) Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca (Women’s Union of (Kingdom of) Serbs, Croats and Slovenes), on the issue of naming the Union.²⁰⁹ Similar as the governing Radical Party,²¹⁰ led by Nikola Pašić, who

²⁰³ Zofka Kveder, “Zašto Jugoslavenska žena?,” [Why a Yugoslav Woman?] *Jugoslavenska žena* 2, no. 11 (November 1918), 466.

²⁰⁴ Kveder, “Što hoćemo?,” 1.

²⁰⁵ Quoted in Trencsenyi et al, *A History of Modern Political Thought*, 82.

²⁰⁶ Trencsenyi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought*, 82.

²⁰⁷ A comparison with the proceedings of the first Kingdom SHS’ Congress of Women should be enough. See, for example, Kongres žena Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, *Spomenica sa I kongresa žena Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca održanog u Beogradu 21, 22 i 23 septembra 1919 g.* [A Memorial of the First Congress of Women of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes held in Belgrade on 21, 22 and 23 September 1919.] (Beograd: Narodni ženski savez Srkinja, Hrvatica i Slovenkinja, Nova štamparija “Davidović,” 1920).

²⁰⁸ Jelena Petrović, *Women’s Authorship in Interwar Yugoslavia. The Politics of Love and Struggle* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 69.

²⁰⁹ Discussion elaborated here relies on the document with published sessions from the first Kingdom of SHS’s Congress of Women. Kongres žena Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, *Spomenica sa I kongresa žena Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca održanog u Beogradu 21, 22 i 23 septembra 1919 g.* [A Memorial of the First Congress of

insisted that the name of the new state should be Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, without omitting the name of “legal predecessor” – Kingdom of Serbia, women from various delegations at the Congress came to conclude the “enlargement” of Srpski narodni ženski savez (Serbian Women’s Union). For Serbian women at the Congress, “Yugoslavia was only a term of geography.”²¹¹ The delegates from Croatia and Slovenia opposed, among whom Zofka Kveder was the heaviest supporter, and proposed the name Jugoslovenski ženski savez (Yugoslav Women’s Union), to insist on creating a united and centralized organization:

...we are not three peoples, but one. I have talked to an Englishman who was asking what [an abbreviation in the name of the country] ‘SHS’ was, was it a code, or a name for a joint-stock company.²¹² All American, English, French newspapers call us Yugoslavia. It is necessary to document to Bulgarians, Hungarians, Romanians, Greeks, to the Entente, that we are one (...) We need to represent ourselves as one in front of foreigners²¹³

Her argumentation saw a united Yugoslavia stronger in the eyes of friends and enemies, victors and losers of the last war. The name that would signal unity of peoples in this “triune” country would solidify its geopolitical position. However, Serb women kept insisting on Serb as a component of the organization’s name, analogous to the name of the country, and understood the inclusion of “Croats” and “Slovenes” as a compromise. Calling for the introduction of “Yugoslavia” in the name was rejected instantly by Serb women, because it invoked pre-war “hated Austrians” who used it when referring to Serbs and other South Slavs.²¹⁴ After all, their argument went on, “half of people in Croatia desires a republic, not a unification.”²¹⁵ Not only

Women of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes held in Belgrade on 21, 22 and 23 September 1919.] (Beograd: Narodni ženski savez Srпкиnja, Hrvatica i Slovenkinja, Nova štamparija “Davidović,” 1920), 28-34.

²¹⁰ Major party of Serbian nationalism prior to and after the establishment of Yugoslavia.

²¹¹ Kongres žena K SHS, *Spomenica*, 30.

²¹² This reference was not by accident used in Kveder’s speech, be it true that the conversation with the Englishman ever happened, or not. It was rather an ironic attempt to mock the country’s name, since it referred to an entity in which shares of the country’s “stock” can be bought and sold by shareholders. Metaphorically speaking, each shareholder represents peoples that “own” Yugoslavia in proportion, evidenced by their shares.

²¹³ Kongres žena K SHS, *Spomenica*, 29.

²¹⁴ Kongres žena K SHS, *Spomenica*, 30.

²¹⁵ Kongres žena K SHS, *Spomenica*, 31.

that, but Yugoslav name should be avoided because it have included Bulgarians who were hostile to Serbs during the war(s).²¹⁶ To add just one more layer to this symptomatic beginnings of the attempt to create a centralist and united women's movement in Yugoslavia, it is valid to state that two streams at the Congress debated primarily about the continuity of national narratives. One stream, that of integral Yugoslavism, wanted to build the future from the day of unification,²¹⁷ while other, grounded in nationalism, rather insisted on one continuous narrative that was in no sense dramatically changed or interrupted by the unification of December 1, 1918. After a fervent dispute, the decision was postponed, and the organization was officially called Women's Union of (Kingdom of)²¹⁸ Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Kveder could state, after two years of political struggle over the election law in Croatia, that "on the very first day of our liberation and unification, that we longed for such a long time, on October 29,²¹⁹ which women greeted with joyful enthusiasm, Yugoslavia wronged against women for a first time."²²⁰

Stjepan Radić, an interwar leader of Croat opposition in Yugoslavia, was a "consisted partisan of Croat state right and of South Slavic *narodno jedinstvo*" prior to establishment of Yugoslavia in 1918, but after 1918 abandoned *narodno jedinstvo* to combine various Croat

²¹⁶ Kongres žena K SHS, *Spomenica*, 34.

²¹⁷ Simply because the idea of integral Yugoslavism from the early years of the 20th century meant rejection of "tribalism" and diverse historical and political traditions of each of South Slavic nation, in order to create a new, united Yugoslav nation. On the other hand, it also cut all ties with the 19th century Yugoslavism that propagated "(South) Slavic reciprocity," and in Croatian lands relied on political traditions of Croatian Kingdom and institutions of Croat state right. Andrea Feldman, "Proričući gladnu godinu – žene i ideologija jugoslavenstva (1918.–1939.)," [Foretelling a Hungry Year: Women and Ideology of Yugoslavism] in *Žene u Hrvatskoj: ženska i kulturna povijest* [Women in Croatia: Women's and Cultural History], Andrea Feldman, ed. (Zagreb: Ženska infoteka, 2004), 238.

²¹⁸ Sometimes the name goes with and sometimes without this component in the organization's official documents, and even more frequently, in the press.

²¹⁹ October 29, 1918 represents a day when the Croatian Parliament declared the country's secession from the Austria-Hungary. It resulted in creation of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, which was united with Serbia to form the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on 1 December, 1918.

²²⁰ Zofka Kveder, "Skupština žena u Zagrebu," [The Assembly of Women in Zagreb] *Jugoslavenska žena* 3, no. (March 1919), 118-119.

national ideologies into a peasantist mass-movement.²²¹ Rather than rejecting *narodno jedinstvo* altogether, because Radić was still a proponent of Pan-Slavism, he objected to centralist and monarchist Yugoslavia that materialized it.²²² His influence in providing the different perspective to Yugoslav unitary and centralist narrative was visible in his daughter Milica's²²³ engagement with women's representation at international level. In July 1921 she and Professor Zdenka Smrekar²²⁴ engaged in the attempt to form the Croat (not Yugoslav, or Kingdom of SCS')²²⁵ National Section at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). This initiative bypassed the Serb women and creation of a joint Yugoslav delegation²²⁶ in seeking recognition on the international level of women's organizing. Smrekar "brought

²²¹ Banac, *National Question*, 94-5.

²²² Banac, *National Question*, 231.

²²³ That the transfer of ideas between Radić and Milica was not one-way show the excerpts from their correspondence in the immediate post-war years, where she advised him to "write something against national unity with Serbs," which he declined. See more in Banac, *National Question*, 233.

²²⁴ Later one of the most prominent Ustasha (Ustaša, pl. Ustaše, Croatian fascist movement that founded the Independent State of Croatia during World War Two) public intellectuals and member of *Ženska loza Ustaškog pokreta* (the Ustasha Women Wine).

²²⁵ In the Report of WILPF's Vienna Congress, under the section Admission of new sections submitted by the Secretary-Treasurer and with the recommendations of the Executive Committee, including requests from Greece, Poland and Czechoslovakia, reads as follows: "Croatia. Rule 3 of our Constitution reads as follows: 'Any minority in a country which claims the status of a separate nationality may also form a National Section.' A group of women in Croatia presented a formal request to be admitted as a National Section. As other groups representing the Serbs and Slovenes have not yet been formed and as Croatia does not claim independence this case is not covered by rule 3.

It was agreed that the Croatians attending the Congress should be advised to proceed with the organization of a Croatian group and when this was done to submit their constitution and proposal to the International Secretary, who should then be authorized to admit them provisionally as National Section of the Serbs-Croats and Slovenes. The *Chairman* invited one of the Delegates of the newly admitted sections, the Delegates-at-Large from each country and the Fraternal Delegates to take their seats on the platform for the session," *Report of the Third International Congress of Women*, Vienna July 10-17, 1921. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 6, Rue du Vieux College, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 28. Masaryk Institute, D 2149/22, 7.

It is also interesting that the Czechoslovak request, represented by the organization "The Maternal Heart" was refused, "on the ground that it was better to have National Sections organized as such, rather than to accept already existing organizations as Sections," *ibid*, 27. Greek request was approved, together with the Polish one, the latter recognized as the continuance of the representation of Poland at The Hague Congress in 1915.

²²⁶ Other Croatian delegates were Zagreb-located Vera Quiquerez, Milica Radić [Radić, M.K.] and Helene Kućera-Vrbjak. Under the section Additional addresses, there are listed "Mme. Dedier, Ministère de Politique Sociale" and "Aloysia Stebi [Alojzija Štebi]" from Serbia and Slovenia respectively, but there were not present at the Congress. Report, 190.

greeting from Croatia,”²²⁷ held a speech in German and received a “warm applause.”²²⁸ In that speech, Smrekar raised her concerns with the lack of Slavic women at the Congress. She emphasized the anti-war sentiments in Croatia, where people participate in war only when obliged to. What is more important, she claimed that the strong pacifist sentiments actually raised from “the people,” so there is no need for imposing pacifist strategies upon them.²²⁹ Milica Radić²³⁰ added that:

the Croatian people are wholly pacifist, and consist of 80 per cent of peasants, who, as the last election proved, abhor war. The Croatian peasants wish nothing but to live and work peaceably in a free, independent Croatian republic, and they see the only way to lasting peace in the self-determination of the nations.²³¹

Even Jane Addams, the president of the WILPF, was impressed by this statement.²³² One of the most important sessions was the one about national minorities, where the WILPF reaffirmed its strong belief in the right to self-determination and the rights of minorities.²³³ When all delegates were asked to contribute with their stands on the issue, Smrekar said that in her country there are “nearly no minorities, only a few Germans, who, however, have complete freedom.”²³⁴ Instead of speaking about national minorities in Yugoslavia, she demanded to talk “only of the Croatian minorities in the districts occupied by Italy”²³⁵ and called for the implementation of self-

²²⁷ *Report of the Third International Congress of Women*, Vienna July 10-17, 1921. Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom 6, Rue du Vieux College, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 62-63. Masaryk Institute, D 2149/22, 7.

²²⁸ Report, 63.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the politics of mass mobilization, 1904-1928* (University of Toronto Press, 2000).

²³¹ Report, 131.

²³² She wrote a year later that “Other groups were from ‘minorities’ in the newly annexed territories, who frankly came in search of aid, hoping to gain some international recognition and support from even so small and unofficial a Congress as our own. There was an interesting group from Croatia, whose reports of the pacifist movement among the Croatian peasants were most impressive, especially one given by the daughter of Radek [Radić], the leader of the movement he believed destined to reassert the non-resistant character of the Slav.” Jane Addams, *Peace and bread in time of war* (University of Illinois Press, 2010), 129.

²³³ The Section was called: “Questions of Nationality and National Minorities,” Report, 126-127

²³⁴ Report, 131.

²³⁵ She referred to the so-called Adriatic Question, regarding the fate of the territories of the Eastern Adriatic (formerly a part of Austria-Hungary). The territories were assigned to Italy by the secret Treaty of London in 1915, and caused serious disputes at the Paris Peace Conference. The Treaty of Rapallo between the Kingdom of Italy and

determination principle.²³⁶ This initiative offered an example of quite radically different strategy that, influenced by Radić's thinking, consisted of mixture of invocation of Croat national individualities, Slavic reciprocity, pacifism, underlying (con)federalist conceptions, self-determination, and the envisions of a Croat Peasant Republic.²³⁷ There is some evidence that the Yugoslav authorities frowned upon these actions in Vienna. As the secret report of The Zagreb Police Administration delivered to the Sava Banovina Administrative Department shows,²³⁸ Smrekar was under police surveillance. Already in the early 1920s she was labeled as "separatist," accused of giving public lectures of "separatist content," having secret meetings, and maintaining contacts with "separatists." In 1921, the year of the WILPF's Vienna meeting, Smrekar desired to travel abroad again, but the Provincial Administration in Zagreb declined her request and requisitioned her passport.²³⁹

After the introduction of the Vidovdan Constitution in 1921,²⁴⁰ there were not many new topics in Yugoslav public sphere.²⁴¹ While in the immediate post-war years the leaders of the Women's Union in Yugoslavia declined the "Yugoslav" appellation and felt satisfied with using names of all three "tribes," after 1921 it was opportune to propagate exactly the opposite. It was under the ideology of *narodno jedinstvo*, supported by the Constitution, that they kept formulating their requests. In 1926, there were still clear-cut signs of unsuccessful integration of

the Kingdom of SCS was signed in 1920, attempting to solve the dispute, and leaving, however, a large number of Slovenes and Croats in Italy.

²³⁶ She proposed the following resolutions: "1. The Annulment or revision of all unjust peace treaties that prevent the self-determination of nations. 2. The formation of an international Commission that should carefully examine the actual conditions of the Croatian minorities in the districts occupied by Italy and should then make arrangements for a just and impartial plebiscite" Report, 131. "Report of Dr. Smrekar was voted."

²³⁷ For more on these elements in Radić's political thought, see Banac, *National Question*, 237-248.

²³⁸ Hrvatski državni arhiv (HDA) [Croatian State Archive] Fond 144-Savska Banovina. *Upravno odeljenje*. [Sava Banovina, Administrative Department], box 302.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ The Vidovdan Constitution was Yugoslavia's centralist constitution, approved on 28 June 1921, despite the opposition boycotting the vote. The name Vidovdan came from the feast of St. Vitus's Day, a Serbian Orthodox holiday and a sacred day in Serbian history.

²⁴¹ Banac, *National Question*, 415.

women's groups in Yugoslavia and inability of its main body to deal with "separatists." That year Leposava Petković greeted Lady Aberdeen²⁴² at the Congress of Women's Union on Bled, Slovenia, calling "women of Yugoslavia," "the delegates of each of our provinces [i.e. Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia]" to "clear your hearts, adjust your minds and stick together."²⁴³ In trying to persuade her public (and her readership after the report was published) of the viability of such an enterprise, Petković instructed on how to proceed in such occasions: "in compact lines, as representatives of one, single, state!"²⁴⁴ National quarrels, it seems, were the most important factors hindering cooperation in Yugoslavia. The Report stressed the discrepancy between this and the previous congress, held in Zagreb, where one could sense that "there were traces of one decomposed empire, a terrible regime. The Austrian specter was still floating [there]."²⁴⁵ While in Zagreb, continued the Report, Svetozar Pribičević²⁴⁶'s words of "a unique state" would cause a rupture, here, in Bled, the situation had changed.²⁴⁷ Only a year earlier, the political atmosphere in Yugoslavia was interrupted with an unexpected shift when Stjepan Radić recognized the Constitution, and in fact, the state itself. To enter the government for the first time, he needed to renounce republicanism and Croat self-determination, and the period to come represented a

²⁴² Lady Aberdeen served as president of the International Council of Women from 1893 to 1939, and in the region's women's movements had exceptionally high status for establishing the first contacts with feminist pioneers there. In 1939 "to the women of Yugoslavia, Rumunia, Greece and Bulgaria, the death of Lady Aberdeen comes as a personal bereavement." See Annie Christich, "Our Lady Aberdeen," *Bulletin International Council of Women* (May 1939). Full text could also be found in Slavica Popović Filipović, *Courage between the Lines. Miss Annie Christich in Serbia and the Time of the Brave* (Beograd: Društvo istoričara Srbije "Stojan Novaković," 2015), 428-430.

²⁴³ "Da se ne zaboravi!," [Not to be forgot!] *Kongres Narodnog ženskog saveza: održan na Bledu 26, 27 i 28 oktobra 1926*. [Congress of the National Women's Union: held in Bled on the 26th, 27th and 28th of October 1926] (Beograd: Rad, Narodni ženski savez, 1926), 49.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ "Da se ne zaboravi!," 49.

²⁴⁶ Svetozar Pribičević was a leader of Serbs in Croatia, fervent supporter of Yugoslavism. After the unification of Yugoslavia, centralist and unitarist. Due to corrosion of democracy and constitutionalism in Yugoslavia, in mid-1920s he would create a Coalition with his main ideological opponent in Croatia, Stjepan Radić, and later become federalist and come closer to republicanism.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

retention of any large-scale reform in the country.²⁴⁸ Adding to a general rapprochement between major antagonistic political streams in Yugoslavia, the discussion in Bled resulted in declarative rejection of all existing privileges, emphasizing “healthy, democratic feelings [that] characterize our people.”²⁴⁹ The Report concluded that “we should reject local, narrow ambitions; [we shall] not break our forces in front of strangers by raising our own, some special, provincial merits, we have to go out in tight lines in front of foreign friends and enemies. (...) Always as a whole.”²⁵⁰

These kinds of political and ideological conflicts were not rare in the 1920s. Alojzija Štebi, another important feminist leader and a socialist from Slovenia,²⁵¹ will in 1929 express her lack of understanding for any division of humanitarian work of women’s societies in Yugoslavia. She opposed to these divisions that were (still) based on nationality and religion, because “real humanitarian work is always an act of humaneness, be it done by an Arnaut, a Croat, a Slovene or a Serb.”²⁵² While this excerpt from her speech held at the annual meeting of Yugoslav Women’s Union in Split could reflect Štebi’s naivety when it came to political engagements of various women’s circles in Yugoslavia, she must have been highly aware of the implications of her words. Her patronizing plea for unity among women came in 1929, in the contexts of previous year’s assassination of Stjepan Radić in National Assembly in Belgrade and ruptures caused by it in Croatian and international public, when illusion of democracy in Yugoslavia

²⁴⁸ Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 208-210.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 50.

²⁵⁰ The arrival of Smrekar, at the time she was a director of female gymnasium in Zagreb, at the congress was praised, “even though we do not agree with her in everything.” Ibid, 50.

However, the report was concluded with a warning: “And every fair, honest citizen, an inquisitive statesman, every true, honest, cultural, social, educated female worker has the duty to stand up against every one, whoever he is, who would try to disrupt the harmony among our women in the alliance to reduce through painful and hard work achieved results. After all, the nearest time will tell them: Keep your hands to yourself!” Ibid, 51.

²⁵¹ See Marta Verginella, “Alojzija (Lojzka) Štebi,” in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 530-533.

²⁵² Štebi, Alojzija, *O saradnji društava* [On the Collaboration between Societies], Presentation given at the annual meeting of Yugoslav Women’s Union in Split, 8 October 1929 (Belgrade: Čolović & Madžarević, 1929), 19, quoted in Petrović, *Women's Authorship*, 63.

came to its bitter end. Disillusionment was finally institutionalized earlier that year, when King Aleksandar introduced a royal dictatorship, banned political parties and prorogued parliament.

It might be opportune now to see how these debates were informed by and informed the LEW. Serb women's activist and participant at international women's conferences, Dobrila Glavinić, noted an interview with Františka Plamínková in her unpublished book of interviews with prominent women intellectuals of her era, eulogizing Plamínková's role both within the Czechoslovak context and in making connections with other international women's organizations.²⁵³ Being "a great friend of Serbian nation," Plamínková came to Serbia during the Balkan wars²⁵⁴ to "write and submit a report to the largest Czechoslovak daily newspapers about the heroism of the Serbian soldier and the sacrifice of the Serbian woman."²⁵⁵ In 1924 Plamínková's "merits to Serbia and the Serb people"²⁵⁶ were recognized by the Order of St. Sava bestowed to her by King Aleksandar²⁵⁷ and again, in the name of his son Petar II, in 1937.²⁵⁸ When answering the question concerning political rights of women in Czechoslovakia, she once again emphasized the primacy of Czech understanding for their women's rights "endangered by

²⁵³ "Františka Plamínková," Fond 1119, box: K50 3.2.7, in Dobrila Glavinić Knez Milojković, *Rukopis Dobrile Glavinić Knez Milojković "Naše žene," 155 intervju sa jugoslovenskim, srpskim i ženama stranjinjama*, [A Manuscript of Dobrila Glavinić Knez Milojković "Our Women," 155 Interviews with Yugoslav, Serbian and Foreign Women] 4 volumes, 506 sheets, no. 101, 57-. Archive of Belgrade.

²⁵⁴ Balkan Wars were two military conflicts in 1912 and 1913, aimed at gathering the Ottoman Empire's remaining territory in Europe. In 1912, the Balkan League (consisting of Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro) fought the Turks, and in 1913, Serbia, Greece, and Romania fought with Bulgaria over the division of the territories in Macedonia.

²⁵⁵ Glavinić, "Františka Plamínková," *Rukopis Dobrile Glavinić*, 58.

²⁵⁶ In two-page long manuscript letter written in 1925 (precise date missing), in French, and addressed to an unknown French minister, Plamínková expresses her satisfaction with the fact that the King of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had awarded her with the Order of St. Sava. She believed that this was a merit because of all the contributions of women, as well as for her own work, all done within the Little Entente of Women. It could be concluded from the letter that she thanked the French minister for his great deal of influence to her receiving the Order. She finished with a promise to continue to work for the benefit of two friendly nations. Archiv Narodniho Muzea [Archive of National Museum], Františka F. Plamínková, personal fond, no. 286, 1. osobny doklady.

²⁵⁷ The Order of St. Sava was a state order in Kingdom of Serbia from 1883 until 1918, and in Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the interwar period, awarded to Serbian and foreign citizens for merits toward a Serbian people and state.

²⁵⁸ In her personal fond in the Archive of National Museum in Prague, the two Yugoslav examples are in the forefront in number, comparing to the state and other honours she received for her merits. Archiv Narodniho Muzea [Archive of National Museum], Františka F. Plamínková, personal fond, no. 286, 1. osobny doklady.

the Austrian authorities,” but fighting for their freedom persisted and “to follow the position of a Czechoslovak women through the ages means to prove the depth of democratic feeling of the Czech nation.”²⁵⁹

Justifying the status quo in Czechoslovak case, which was similar to the Yugoslav one, was the predetermined mission for Plamínková that women of the LEW should continue to work for into the future too. Similar tendencies of grounding the LEW’s project in some kind of unifying narrative that would bring together the past national accomplishments into a viable project of the future Balkans, could be also read from Alexandrina Cantacuzino’s²⁶⁰ speech in Belgrade in 1924. At the time the acting president of the LEW, Cantacuzino shared similar convictions of special role Serb accomplishments during the war had in unifying Yugoslavia: “...noble crusade, which, thank to indisputable heroism of the Serb people, liberated the world.”²⁶¹ She will go even further, to explain that the “new society” established after the war dramatically changed the outlook of the region, providing the Balkans with a geo-strategic position that encompassed the narrative of continuities of nation- and international building,²⁶² with the self-reflecting thoughts on imagined unity of its people for the future:

Here, old thoughts of the state administration have fallen forever, and after many centuries, humanity reached the bloody realization that the tyranny of individuals cannot oppress the masses. The Revolution of 1789 ended here, and was once again given to the Orient of Europe, this old disturbed Balkans, to remain a guardian of civilization.²⁶³

Plamínková used similar rhetoric in Belgrade to draw on past military victories in bringing “sacred cause” of the nation-state to life, but kept insisting that the new era would require a

²⁵⁹ “Františka Plamínková,” Rukopis Dobrile Glavinić, 59.

²⁶⁰ She also received an Order of St. Sava, Milanović, “Regionalna ženska udruženja,” 28.

²⁶¹ Alexandrina Cantacuzino, “Govor g-đe Aleksandrine Kantakuzen, predsednice M.Ž.A.,” [The Speech of Mrs. Alexandrina Cantacuzino, the president of the LEW] *Ženski pokret* 10 (1924): 396.

²⁶² She mainly relied on the narrative of exceptionally good international relations between Serbia and Romania that existed throughout history, through the Balkan wars, up to that time and culminated in Yugoslav King Aleksandar marrying a Romanian Princess Maria.

²⁶³ Cantacuzino, “Govor g-đe Aleksandrine Kantakuzen, 397.

better understanding of politics, to fight only on the ground of “ideas and principles.”²⁶⁴ Therefore, to leave women without their political rights would mean to sacrifice the national cause, leaving the (female) citizens uneducated would make nations weak(er), especially when this fight would require “in-depth knowledge of political ideas and [one’s] national interests.”²⁶⁵

Similarities arrived from their “common” history under multiple empires should have united women of the LEW around the common cause. The Czech delegation easily in Bucharest found a common denominator between their and the host country, simply it was “the same enemy – the Magyar.”²⁶⁶ Because geo-political settings generally easily impacted the LEW’s strategies, reliance upon them also made the organization weak in responding along the proclaimed principles found in feminism and pacifism. Rather, pursuing national interests of each member created in the end a fluid sense of unity within the LEW, yet, until some geostrategic goals did not request subordination of feminist demands.

The Dispute over the Bulgarian Membership

Possibly the most interesting, yet misleading information about the Little Entente of Women is the one regarding the Bulgarian membership in the LEW.²⁶⁷ Bulgaria had evidently been part of

²⁶⁴ Františka Plamínková, “Govor g-đe Plaminkove delegata čehoslovačkog,” [The Speech of Mrs. Plamínková, the Czechoslovak delegate] *Ženski pokret* 10 (1924): 403.

²⁶⁵ Plamínková, “Govor g-đe Plaminkove delegata čehoslovačkog,” 403.

²⁶⁶ See “Discours de Madame Plamínková (Tchecoslovaquie),” in *1e Conférence de la Petite Entente des Femmes*, 24-5. Quoted in Cheschebec, “The Romanian’s Women Movement,” 520.

²⁶⁷ For the first attempt in resolving the question of Bulgarian membership in the LEW, see Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, Marijana Kardum, “Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta,” [The Little Entente with Big Ambition: The Little Entente of Women] *Historijski zbornik*, forthcoming, 2019.

the founding meeting in Rome in 1923, “represented” by the Bulgarian branch of the WILPF,²⁶⁸ but it did not take part at the conference in Bucharest. The LEW’s establishment was not defined by the signatures in Rome in May of that year, but it necessitated ratification from the member organizations’ Executive Committees before the Bucharest Conference in November. In-between those two events, the Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom’s Summer School in Poděbrady, Czechoslovakia was an occasion for the Bulgarian delegates’ alleged attack “in an indelicate manner”²⁶⁹ at the Yugoslav representatives.²⁷⁰ After the “incident” that had happened during that summer of 1923, the Yugoslav delegation prompted a decision to exclude Bulgarian women from the LEW project and in Bucharest Bulgarians were shunned from the LEW, at the insistence of Yugoslav delegation. Leposava Petković, a president of the Yugoslav delegation, reported that the “Bulgarian women’s organizations” should not join the LEW “until they have shown that they had accepted the agreement right-mindedly.”²⁷¹ Why Bulgarian women have not ratified the LEW agreement and why the “incident” in Czechoslovakia happened remains an open question. Less than a month after the Rome meeting, Bulgaria experienced dramatic regime change with the military *coup d’état* directed against the leading Agrarians leader and prime minister, Aleksandŭr Stamboliyski. Democratically oriented Stamboliyski was responsible for rapprochement with Yugoslavia, opposing Tsar Boris III and the military, in previous years and his removal from power and eventual death opened political place for a right-wing government. Were Bulgarian women immediately responding to these events in their domestic politics, with

²⁶⁸ Milena Atanacković, “Mala ženska antanta,” *Ženski pokret* 9 and 10 (November and December 1923), 423.

²⁶⁹ Leposava Maksimović Petković, “Mala ženska antanta,” *Žena i svet* 1 (January 1925): 6.

²⁷⁰ Besides Petković, Milena Atanacković used the same explanation, that the attack was performed in a “very indelicate manner,” without precise information on the event. Atanacković added that the Greek delegation was “attacked” along Yugoslav. Atanacković, “Mala ženska antanta,” 424.

²⁷¹ Using plural here, instead of referring to a specific Bulgarian organization that had previously signed the agreement, might signal that Yugoslavs saw this incident as a reflection of Bulgarian hostility towards Yugoslavia in general, see Petković, “Mala ženska antanta,” 6.

taking a more hardline approach to Yugoslavs (primarily, the Serbs), or these events additionally fueled already existing long-term antagonism between the neighbors, cannot be deciphered here. Yet, Františka Plamínková would in Belgrade connect the pre-war World War One Serb-Bulgarian relations²⁷² to the attempts of Yugoslav women to negotiate with Bulgarians, and somehow legitimized the Yugoslav position in this dispute. One year after the dispute over the Bulgarian membership, Plamínková said, referring to her presence in Serbia during the Balkan Wars, “I was then witness to your sincere efforts to reach out to your Bulgarian brothers.”²⁷³

The tensions between the two delegations were caused by the Yugoslav-Bulgarian conflict over the Macedonian question,²⁷⁴²⁷⁵ and they were, at least to some extent, directed by their own governments. This particular conflict was partially impacted by the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs, who conditioned the financial support of the Yugoslav delegation’s trip to the Bucharest conference by insisting on exclusion of Bulgarian women.²⁷⁶ Bucharest Conference started with the “Bulgarian question” first on the agenda of plenary session. Bulgarian women were invited to the Conference, but declined with a short telegram, without further explaining the reason for not showing up. Yugoslav “rightfully” urged the expulsion of Bulgarian women’s

²⁷² Referring to the second Balkan war, when in 1913 Serbs quarreled with Bulgarians over the territories in Macedonia, received after successful war against the Ottoman Empire in previous year.

²⁷³ Plamínková, “Govor g-đe Plaminkove,” 403.

²⁷⁴ The Macedonian question, a dispute involving Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia, dating from the late 19th century over which of these countries should impose its national identity on and gain territory of Macedonia. The partitions of Macedonia among her neighbors occurred after the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). Serbian (i.e. Yugoslav) and Bulgarian tensions over Macedonia generally revolved around their misunderstanding regarding the Macedonian population being either part of Serbian, or Bulgarian nation. The dispute generally represented a difference in terms of maintaining or contesting the territorial status quo in the South Eastern Balkans after WWI. See Dragan Bakic, *Britain and Interwar Danubian Europe: Foreign Policy and Security Challenges, 1919-1936* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 34-38.

²⁷⁵ Atanacković reported that Bulgarian women at the WILPF Summer School in Poděbrady distributed brochures that “treated the Macedonian question quite tendentially and untruthfully.” Atanacković, “Mala ženska antanta,” 424.

²⁷⁶ Milica Antić Gaber and Irena Selišnik, “Slovene Women’s Suffrage Movement in a Comparative Perspective,” in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship. International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms*, Sulkunen, Irma, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Pirjo Markkola, eds. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 219-241, 233.

organization, as the Report suggested, but the discussions were still “long and painful,” and requested Cantacuzino’s “diplomatic talent” in “taking into account national sensitivity and the satisfaction of international justice.”²⁷⁷ After the discussion, the LEW sent a letter to Mrs Patef, who was a Bulgarian delegate in Rome, informing her of the exclusion of the Bulgarian organization, and calling on her to make a public statement whether she is in line with the act of Bulgarian women in Czechoslovakia: “If she is, any relationship, also with her as a private person, would be interrupted; otherwise, if she publicly blames the Bulgarian women’s act, the LEW would propagate the pacifist ideas in Bulgaria with her help in the future, until one trusted organization is established.”²⁷⁸ In her response, Mrs Patef admitted that the organization in whose name she signed the LEW’s agreement in Rome did not want to ratify it, and join the LEW, but that the current situation in Bulgaria make her involvement in propagating peaceful ideas impossible.²⁷⁹ It seems that conflicts between the Bulgarian and the Yugoslav delegations at the international women’s conferences continued throughout the 1920s. As Czechoslovak *Ženska rada* reported, there was propaganda published in Bulgarian press regarding the joint Czechoslovak, Yugoslav and Greek opposition to possible Bulgarian membership in the LEW. Mrs. Malinoff, a chairwoman of Bulgarian Women’s National Council, inquired Czechoslovaks why would they propagate this stand. Reacting to the criticism, Plamínková wrote back, to ease the tensions, that the reports in Bulgarian press must be misguided, because “all the mentioned countries promote the accession of Bulgaria into the LEW.”²⁸⁰ Plamínková continued her efforts to reach the Bulgarian women, following the task undertaken at the Paris meeting of the LEW in 1926, and engaged into the extensive correspondence. However, the results were quite

²⁷⁷ Atanacković, “Mala ženska antanta,” 425.

²⁷⁸ Atanacković, “Mala ženska antanta,” 425.

²⁷⁹ Atanacković, “Mala ženska antanta,” 426.

²⁸⁰ “Mala ženska dohoda,” *Ženská rada* 2, no. 9 (1926):138.

disappointing, because the Bulgarian National Women's Council declined the offer to join the LEW "for the lack of time and other reasons. However, they would welcome the unification of Slavic women," reads the Czechoslovak *Ženska rada*.²⁸¹ As discussed earlier, the Bulgarian membership in the LEW was discussed several times, in Prague in 1927 and in 1929 in Warsaw.²⁸² In spite of that, only the 1930s would finally brought rapprochement between Bulgarian and Yugoslav women²⁸³ and they would eventually join another similar regional women's international organization, the Slavic Women's Committee.²⁸⁴ However, this organization was "neither feminist, neither political;" its main aims was to revitalize the "Slav question" so that "the Slavs come closer and get more acquainted with each other through the mediation and work of women."²⁸⁵ Yugoslav women were not in this organization "represented" by its umbrella women's organization; rather it was the Circle of Serbian Sisters. This organization went through an ideological shift from a Serb nationalist women's organization from 1903²⁸⁶ to embrace some form of integral Yugoslavism in the interwar period, insisting that their Slavo-centric orientation was present in their work from the beginning. With its focus on social issues and humanitarian work, accompanied with spreading of Yugoslav patriotism, it is

²⁸¹ "Mala ženska dohoda," *Ženska rada* 3 (1927): 27.

²⁸² See Chapter One of this thesis.

²⁸³ In a citation I unfortunately lost the track with its source, Lady Corbett Ashby emotionally exclaimed at the IAW Peace Conference in Belgrade in 1931: "This is a historic conference because it is the first meeting of Yugoslav and Bulgarian women since the war!"

²⁸⁴ For the most recent piece on this organization, see Milanović, "Regionalna ženska udruženja," 30-39.

²⁸⁵ The re-vitalization of Jan Kolar's pan-Slavic ideas were also mentioned and, similarly to the LEW's principles, the Slavic Women's Committee aimed at making stronger connections between the peoples of the region for the maintenance of peace and with the emphasis of women's roles in this project. See Dr. Zdenka Marković, "Kongres Jedinstva slovenskih žena u Beogradu," [The Congress of the Slavic Women Committee in Belgrade] *Vardar* (1934): 104-106, quoted in Milanović, "Regionalna ženska udruženja," 30.

²⁸⁶ Trencsenyi et al., *A Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, 602.

no wonder that the Circle was financially supported by the Yugoslav authorities and excluded from taxation.²⁸⁷

That another women's regional project rejected propagation of feminism as its litmus paper for the selection of membership, as was the case in the LEW, might symbolize the Committee's attempt to gather more women around its project. The Slavic Women's Committee also used the different approach to the question of international women's organizations. While the LEW built its strategy around the ICW, IWSA and WILPF's principles and shared leaders and membership with them, attending their conferences and worked along them, the Committee emphasized the "predominance of Anglo-Saxon element" within the women's international conferences. "There are no Yugoslav or Bulgarian women there," said a Polish delegate Hana Hubicka at the Committee's Conference in 1933.²⁸⁸

Nonetheless, the joint projects that would make Slavic women to share a common platform might have filled the gap or compensated for the LEW's unsuccessful transition to the 1930s. As was shown earlier, Yugoslav women's movement had on the agenda many of its own internal problems to deal with and introduction of the royal dictatorship, along with the impacts of Great Depression, might alienate primarily feminist women's organizations in the region away from their common goal in achieving women's complete emancipation. As the case of Bulgarian expulsion showed, the LEW's actions were closely interlinked with the national interests of their respective countries. The Committee success in approaching Bulgarian women speaks less of

²⁸⁷ See: Irena Selišnik, *Volilna pravica žensk kot demokratična novost: dejavniki, ki vplivajo na njeno uveljavitev na Slovenskem* [Women's Right to Vote as Democratic Innovation: Factors of Implementation in Slovenia] (University of Ljubljana, PhD thesis, 2007). Quote in Petrović, *Women's Authorship*, 63.

²⁸⁸ "Dolazak poljskih i čehoslovačkih žena na kongres Jedinstva slovenskih žena," [The Arrival of Polish and Czechoslovak Women to the Congress of the Slavic Women's Committee] *Politika* (October 15 1933), 12.

absence of nationalist orientation of their work,²⁸⁹ than the LEW's was, but rather proves how general political and socio-cultural framework of one's country impacted the cause of the events and strategies implemented. If the 1930s would have not brought an atmosphere that stipulated warmer relationship between Belgrade and Sofia, women's activity that would contradict it would probably receive no support from the political establishment. Both organizations stayed strong in propagating the Yugoslav *narodno jedinstvo* at the international level. It is also worth mentioning that Bulgarian women that came to the Belgrade Congress organized by the Committee in 1933 were led by Dimitrana Ivanova, a chairwoman of Bulgarian Women's Union (Bulgarski Zhenski Sujuz).²⁹⁰ This outstanding woman was an active women's internationalist, and what is more important here, propagator of building bridges between the Balkan women.²⁹¹ Her role in bettering the relations between the Balkan countries might have been important, although such a claim would request further research.

Struggles for Survival

It seems that the LEW revitalized its activity in 1934, with the contacts between Yugoslav and Czechoslovak women.²⁹² When the main strategists of the LEW, Leposava Petković, Alexandrina Cantacuzino, and Františka Plamínková met again in 1938, they claimed to

²⁸⁹ Especially having in mind that Polish women were responsible for approaching Bulgarian women, see Milanović, "Regionalne ženske organizacije," 32.

²⁹⁰ For more information about Dimitrana Ivanova, see Krassimira Daskalova, "Ivanova, Dimitrana," in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 182-184.

²⁹¹ Daskalova, "Ivanova, Dimitrana," 184.

²⁹² Milena Atanacković, "Mala ženska antanta," *Glasnik Jugoslavenskog ženskog saveza* 1-2 (1938): 1-3; Dubravka Peić Čaldarević, "Predgovor," in *Klub likovnih umjetnica: 1927. - 1941.: 70. obljetnica prve izložbe: 1928. - 1998: iz zbirke dr. Josipa Kovačića: Galerija Ulrich, Zagreb, 1. travnja - 25. travnja 1998*, Jasna Gubez and Dubravka Peić Čaldarević, eds. (Zagreb: Likum Galerija Ilirich, 1998), 6; see also Ograjšek Gorenjak and Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama."

represent a renewed LEW that successfully organized the traveling art exhibition.²⁹³ Apparently, during the informal encounters at the International Council of Women (ICW) Congress in Dubrovnik in 1936 Czechoslovak delegates came up with an idea of an exhibition of women artists of the LEW. The suggestion was not at all received with enthusiasm within the Yugoslav Women's Union (YWU) ranks, now a representative of Yugoslavia in the LEW, justifying the refusal by simply saying that they are exhausted with the organization of the ICW Congress in Dubrovnik and that the artists saw no interest if there is only a little chance that the event will make a profit.²⁹⁴ Financial costs were probably also the issue here, because the Women's Art Club (WAC) from Zagreb, the group that helped in organization of the exhibition, experienced the financial difficulties throughout its existence.²⁹⁵ It, however, might also be a sign of its reluctance to join the project. When they earlier showed the interest in participating in the international exhibitions,²⁹⁶ the government subsidies were requested in Belgrade, but the response from Belgrade came with the condition to include other Yugoslav women artists, stating that they will not support Zagreb-located artists only.²⁹⁷

However, the traveling art exhibition was welcomed by the Yugoslav Court, so the YWU and the WAC had no other choice but to put it into practice. Nonetheless, it was by and large the

²⁹³ This was not a first women's exhibition organized by the LEW. On the contrary, from the first suggestion to organize an exhibition of women artists of the LEW's countries in Bucharest in 1923, all the following conferences, with the exception of the Warsaw Conference, had a simultaneously organized women's exhibition. See "Izložba," [The Exhibition] *Ženski pokret* 10 (December 1924): 428; "Sastanak u Atini i predsednica Ženske male antante," [The Meeting in Athens and the president of the Little Entente of Women] *Žena i svet* 12 (December 1925): 5; "Malá ženská dohoda," *Ženská rada* (1927): 10.

²⁹⁴ Františka Plamínková, Letter to Consul of Czechoslovakia in Yugoslavia, Arhiv za likovne umjetnosti HAZU [Fine Arts Archives of Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences], Klub likovnih umjetnica [Women's Art Club], Izložba umjetnica male antante [Exhibition of the female artists of the Little Entente], 1937, K 1-4.

²⁹⁵ They mostly rely on the membership fees. This strategy was not successful at the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s, when the Great Depression conditioned more careful spending.

²⁹⁶ *Minutes of the Executive Board meeting*, Klub likovnih umjetnica [Women's Art Club], Arhiv za likovne umjetnosti HAZU [Fine Arts Archives of Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences], 1936, K 1-4, K2.

²⁹⁷ Probably the financial difficulties redirected the organization into the hands of the YWU, which claimed that the financial support was agreed with the Minister of Education. See Peić Čaldarević, "Predgovor," 6.

result of Plamínková's efforts. Acting as a Czech senator, she used her political influence to motivate the women of Yugoslavia to participate.²⁹⁸ When her attempts to approach Yugoslav women repeatedly failed, she even urged the Consul of Czechoslovakia in Yugoslavia, in 1937, to use his political influence to motivate the women of Yugoslavia to participate in the traveling art exhibition.²⁹⁹ It was only after the Royal Court supported the event that the Yugoslav Women's Union took over the organization. Two Marias (Yugoslav and Romanian Queens) and Hana Benešová, the wife of at the time Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš, all financed and participated in the event(s). The exhibition was well-thought, travelling through the Little Entente's countries to strategically include, besides the capitals, main cities of all the most important historical regions, such as Transylvania, Bukovina, Moravia, Slovakia, Croatia, and Slovenia.³⁰⁰ What is even more interesting, the exhibition was organized at the same time as the Bulgarian women's exhibition took place in Yugoslavia.³⁰¹ At the symbolic level, the LEW somehow after all brought Bulgarian women into a joint project.

Concluding Remarks

As this chapter proves, women were also active in affirming royalist Yugoslavia with its ideal of unitary political nation. The processes of propagating the idea of oneness of Yugoslavs (*narodno jedinstvo*) were closely related to unifying power of women's collective and univocal standpoints – practiced both in national and transnational contexts (in institutional and organizational sense,

²⁹⁸ She even suggested that he might urge the Slovene feminists to engage more actively. Plamínková, Letter to Consul of Czechoslovakia in Yugoslavia.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ See *La Petite Entente des Femmes – Exposition des Femmes Artistes des Etats de la Petite Entente* [Little Entente of Women – Exhibition of Female Artists of the Little Entente of Women's Exhibition], Exhibition Catalogue (Prague: Orbis, 1938).

³⁰¹ For more information on the Bulgarian women artists, see Darija Alujević and Dunja Nekić, "Women's Art Club and Women's Group Exhibitions in Zagreb from 1928 until 1940," *Artl@s Bulletin* 8, no. 1 (2019): 166-182.

not only on the level of transfer of ideas). That results of these actions depended on the international implications could be seen in the example of Czech intellectual interventions implemented to the Yugoslav context. Different intrastate visions of the national elites that opposed the dominant, proclaimed principles of the new state would, however, continuously represent a destabilizing force. In order to prevent that in timely fashion meant to spend most of the 1920s in formulating national identity.

Next chapter focuses more on the international arena where female national elite of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia mirrored similar national unitary and representation primacy. It was on the international level, that their transnational actions served the purpose of propagating the idea of national unity at least to the same extent as they did for “the woman question.” One of the most suited examples to prove the hypothesis was the one of the Little Entente of Women, where Czechoslovak and Yugoslav women exercised closest cooperation, on the organizational, personal and the level of transfer of ideas.

CHAPTER III - Feminism and Nation Building in the postwar Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia

Social, historical, cultural, and political area of the Little Entente, even before this agreement consisting of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Romania came into existence in the early 1920s (and Greece and Poland, in the case of the Little Entente of Women), resembled a framework of incredible diversities in the modes of political and social organization, followed by drastic differences in economic development and cultural traditions present in the region.³⁰² While, for example, Romania still in the 1930s had 75 to 80 per cent of agrarian population, Czechoslovakia counted around 34 per cent.³⁰³ Data regarding women's literacy also revealed great (regional) differences; while Czechoslovak women already in 1921 almost completely solved the problem of illiteracy, there was still more than 50 per cent of illiterate women around 1930 in Romania and Yugoslavia.³⁰⁴ Moreover, women in Czechoslovakia (and Poland) achieved suffrage immediately following the end of World War I, together with improvement in accessibility for political and cultural engagement in their respective societies throughout the 1920s, in contrast to women in Yugoslavia (and Romania) who were enfranchised only after World War II.

³⁰² Of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe (CESEE), see chapter I for the explanation.

³⁰³ Sharon L. Wolchik, "The Precommunist Legacy, Economic Development, Social Transformation, and Women's Roles in Eastern Europe," in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe*, Sharon L. Wolchik and Alfred G. Meyer, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 32. However, Wolchik emphasized "important regional differences," meaning 29.7 per cent agricultural population in the Czech case and 60.6 per cent in the Slovak. Similar can be said for Yugoslavia; while the overall percentage of the agrarian population in Yugoslavia is around 77 percent, in Serbia it was 80.2 in Serbia and 75.2 in Croatia. Ibid, 365.

³⁰⁴ Wolchik, "The Precommunist Legacy...", 33. Again, Lilly and Bokovoy found important to signal major intra-state differences in Yugoslavia (relying on Jovanka Kecman's data) where: "In Slovenia, for example, in 1931 94.2 per cent of women were literate, while in Macedonia the figure was only 18.3 per cent." See also: Jovanka Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama: 1918-1941* [Women of Yugoslavia in the Workers Movement and Women's Organizations 1918-1941] (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1978), 25.

Surprisingly, many found similar causes besides many blatant differences present across the region. There were also significant similarities engaged in the dynamic processes of transfer of ideas, people and organizations through the 1920s (and also 1930s). Cultural and political constructs of Czechoslovakism and Yugoslavism, for example, shared similar evolving pathways when it came to their transformation to political projects, certainly not before (the late phase of) World War I.³⁰⁵ National elites in the nation-states established after the Great War, such as were Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, continued their efforts in “propos[ing] a national definition, basing it on existing and invented traditions”, that “the chosen population accepts, modifies, or rejects.”³⁰⁶ These configurations were initiated in various forms over the decades prior to and especially during the War, in order to come out with the homogenizing and viable political solutions that would further the processes of building of their never before existing nation-states after the ceasefire. At least, as Wachtel warns, “until either some other groups provides a better-articulated and better-chosen vision or the initial vision discredits itself.”³⁰⁷ Without imposing the value judgment of which type of formulation came out to be a “better” vision in the end, I will focus here on the main ideas and protagonists that were active in supporting the unifying narrative of national liberation of the peoples in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and on the content of debates regarding the place women should have in society. The main purpose of this chapter is show how feminism and nationalism were inseparable and intertwined not only prior to the establishment of nation-states in the region, but also in its aftermath. In doing so, I will disentangle the processes of reception, transformation, reinterpretation and rejection of main

³⁰⁵ Trencsenyi, Balázs, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčič, Maria Falina, and Mónika Baár, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe. Volume II: Negotiating Modernity in the 'Short Twentieth Century' and Beyond, Part I: 1918-1968*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 31-2.

³⁰⁶ Andrew Wachtel, *Making a nation, breaking a nation: Literature and cultural politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford University Press, 1998), 3.

³⁰⁷ Wachtel, *Making a nation*, 3.

ideas regarding the issues of national liberation, when connected to women's civil rights, between the Yugoslav and Czech (women) politicians and intellectuals. Consequently, I will be able later in this thesis to look deeper and combine the accounts that then constituted the ongoing debate over the state organization and the state representation and the ones that were simultaneously brought into the discussion in order to continuously discredit the principal ideas. Both socio-political contexts were already polarized, on the one hand, around the dominant discourse supported by the ruling elites and supported by cultural machinery working on providing with the all-embracing narrative of Yugoslavism and Czechoslovakism, and on the other hand, around various regional and minority discourses of cultural, social, political, and even national differences that were put aside with the act of unification in 1918.

Women in the region have entered the debates regarding the abovementioned processes of “accepting, modifying and rejecting” the definition(s) offered long before the interwar period. However, that does not mean that they in general arrived at the similar conclusions or had a unified attitude towards the “woman question,” and even rarely did they in great number used a “feminist” perspective to approach the issue. The same goes for the so-called “national question.” Yet, following the end of World War I, women actively engaged in the international women's organizations or even in participation in their national women's movements insisted, at least rhetorically, on transcending the national frameworks to initiate the transnational cooperation and embrace international women's *sisterhood*. Peace and women's rights were high on the agenda for the LEW strategist, but their national self-interests were frequently more important. This often meant continuous attempts in raising visibility and solidifying their own nations' geopolitical positions, along with the perceived aims and goals of their respective countries' policy makers.

As discussed in the first chapter, the representation of Yugoslav, Czechoslovak or Romanian women within the larger network of international women's organizations (or its regional counterparts, such as the Little Entente of Women) was almost exclusively the task of the well-educated, middle-class women, living in the urban cultural scenes of their respective societies.³⁰⁸ In Yugoslavia, the most prominent feminists were members of the ruling political or economic elite, which was almost without exception oriented towards the Yugoslav unitarist idea. Yet, the new Yugoslav state was conceived in inequality, without a well-defined state outlook, and it would consistently deny equality to women too. In 1918 citizenship was maintained only in the case of the "triune nation of Serbs-Croats-Slovenes," with the exclusion of all women and all of the national minorities. However, this did not silence either the women, or the other (national, cultural, political...) "visions" threatening the proclaimed unity of the state. The processes of national integration would be constantly contested in the on-going debates, both in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, throughout the interwar years.

Serving the Nation

The priority of national over social issues somehow supported the cooperation of the middle-class and working-class women since the middle of the 19th century in both the lands that will later become known as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The First Congress of Czecho-Slovak Women in 1897 designated the divide within the Czech women's movement: "one more aligned with the political goals of the middle classes and focused on such issues as women's political rights and the other aligned with the plight of the working classes and a fledging socialist

³⁰⁸ Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak and Marijana Kardum, "Mali savez s velikim ambicijama: Mala ženska antanta" [The Little Entente with a Big Ambition: the Little Entente of Women] *Historijski zbornik* 71.1 (2019), forthcoming, 1.

ideology.”³⁰⁹ In Yugoslavia, conceptual framework once established by socialist historian Jovanka Kecman was based on the distinction of the interwar feminism(s) between “bourgeois feminism” and “proletarian feminism,” considering only the latter responsible for the complete liberation of women. The sharp distinction was based on ideological settings, understanding interwar feminisms through a dichotomy of a “civil and/or feminist,” the one being related to the well-educated, urban women from the middle-class or aristocracy, and a “proletarian, or worker’s”, the one being strongly influenced by the illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia, banned in 1920. In institutional sense, women’s organizing in interwar Yugoslavia was far more complicated than the abovementioned *terminus technicus* suggests.³¹⁰ Lydia Sklevicky points out that this so-called “invented tradition” of neglecting non-socialist women’s organizations³¹¹ omitted the fact that the women’s “exclusive bourgeois feminist movement did not differ from the claims of the so-called ‘proletarian women’s movement,’”³¹² nor was it so exclusive.³¹³ While the organizations “representing” women in the LEW could all be called non-socialist, political affiliations of their leaders and membership differed greatly, especially before and after

³⁰⁹ Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, *Socialist women: European socialist feminism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries*, New York: Elsevier, 1978, 6, cited in Iveta Jusová, “Introduction,” Jusová, Iveta, and Jiřina Šiklová, eds. *Czech Feminisms: Perspectives on Gender in East Central Europe* (Indiana University Press, 2016), 10.

³¹⁰ For more see: Dubravka Peić-Čaldarović, “Osnovne karakteristike profesionalne djelatnosti žena u Hrvatskoj između dvaju svjetskih ratova: (1918.-1941.),” [Basic Characteristics of the Professional Activity of Women in Croatia between the Two World Wars: (1918-1941)], *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 29 (1997): 491-503.

³¹¹ Sklevicky highlighted the fact that women membership in the Yugoslav Communist Party was only around 1% in the 1920s and 1930s, and around 5% in all the Yugoslav unions in the interwar period. Sklevicky, “More Horses,” 71.

³¹² To prove this point, Sklevicky cited the data presented by the International Council of Women that “in the period between two World Wars Yugoslavia fell into the same category of affiliates as Switzerland, New Zealand, Denmark, Australia and Sweden (from 30,000 to 50,000 members),” Edith F. Hurwitz, “The International Sisterhood,” in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, eds (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997), 339; Sklevicky, “More Horses,” 72.

³¹³ Sklevicky referred to the reports of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance and International Council of Women showing that Yugoslavia did not differ from Spain, New Zealand, Denmark, Australia and Switzerland with the membership of between 30.000-50.000 women in those organizations.

the War.³¹⁴ Even though Czech and Romanian women experienced the conflicts rooted in “ideological polarization within the [women’s] movement” in their respective contexts well before World War One, Yugoslav women spent most of the interwar years struggling to bridge the ideological differences within their national women’s movement.³¹⁵ However, staying on track with entangling the complex relationship between the “woman question” and the “national question,” it might be rather more helpful here to zoom in on the specificities of the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav contexts.

Czech(oslovak) women, there is no doubt, understood their role within the LEW similarly to what Czechoslovakia perceived to be its position in the broader European context in the interwar period: representing “enlightenment, egalitarianism, and relatively equal rights for women.”³¹⁶ Taking a step back, within the nineteenth century nation-building project in the Czech lands, propagators of the women’s rights imagined the outcome of the struggle over the women’s emancipation being closely related to the nationalistic struggle of Czech people against the Austrian monopoly, and especially against the German cultural dominance.³¹⁷ Year 1918 was a last one of the Great War, and it brought major shifts in political, social and cultural life of the respective countries. The Habsburg Monarchy was carved into several independent states, including Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The years following the end of the war brought “the wave of democracy,” that was in Czechoslovakia accompanied with a univocal support for the

³¹⁴ Exceptionally good example is that of the one of the key actors of Yugoslav feminism and a feminist icon throughout the interwar decades, Alojzija Štebi, who prior to the War understood the “woman question” as a part of broader, social question; however, emphasizing the immense importance of the former for the fulfillment of the latter in the interwar period. See Marta Verginella, “Štebi, Alojzija,” in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 532.

³¹⁵ Trencsényi, Balázs, et al. “Faces of Modernity,” in *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the ‘Long Nineteenth Century,’* Trencsényi, Balázs, et al., eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 595.

³¹⁶ Karen Johnson Freeze, “Medical Education for Women in Austria: A Study in the Politics of the Czech Women’s Movement in the 1890s,” in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe*, Wolchik, Sharon L., and Alfred G. Meyer, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 51.

³¹⁷ Jitka Malečková, “The Importance of Being Nationalist,” in *Czech Feminisms: Perspectives on Gender in East Central Europe*, Jusová, Iveta, and Jiřina Šiklová, eds. (Indiana University Press, 2016), 46-60.

women's suffrage. Feminists' recipe for successfully achieving suffrage was their rhetorical engagements in tightening the "national" interests with the "women's rights" and the idea of "democracy."³¹⁸ The same model was later on the agenda of the Yugoslav post-WWI feminist organizations, as the previous chapter showed.

Moreover, Czech feminists³¹⁹ were "the most utopian of Czech democrats"³²⁰ in their pursuit of both a national and an egalitarian vision of democracy. Since the last decades of the 19th century, they had mostly found the theoretical framework of their vision in the writings of the Czech philosopher and politician Tomáš Masaryk. He provided feminists from the turn of the 20th century with the argumentation upon which they could build their own political agenda in the later decades. Women's rights are, he insisted, a building block of the truly democratic Czech society, one that could only be created by and through nationalist efforts.³²¹ To sum up his thoughts on feminism briefly, Masaryk himself was convinced that women's subjugation to men is the result of the institutional obstacles set upon women by society. His understanding of democracy was holistic, as "a new set of beliefs, a new angle of vision, a new method."³²² Moreover, he was a radiant figure not only for the first generations of educated Czech women in the 1890s, but also for feminists of the later decades, because "his work gave them a vocabulary in which they could express their views about women's equality and tie those beliefs to a broader

³¹⁸ Similar example of binding "the national question" and "the woman question" closely together in the nation-building processes was offered by Vlasta Jalušič in her article "Women in Interwar Slovenia," in *Gender politics in the Western Balkans: Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State Press, 1999), 51-66.

³¹⁹ For the overview of the Czech women's movement in the first half of the 20th century, see Jana Burešová, *Proměny společenského postavení českých žen v první polovině 20. století* (Olomouc: Katedra historie Univerzity Palackého, 2001).

³²⁰ Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 3.

³²¹ Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 13.

³²² T. G. Masaryk, *Tomaš Garrigue Masaryk o democii*, [Tomaš Garrigue Masaryk of Democracy] Koloman Gajan, ed. (Prague: Melantrich, 1991), 48, 108, cited in Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 15.

discourse about democracy.”³²³ The so-called “woman question” was in Masarykian theory tightly connected and inseparable with “man question,” social question of all people, and in the end, a result of “democratic principles built into foundations of a renewed Czechoslovak state.”³²⁴

For Czech feminist leader and Senator Františka Plamínková, who was one of the leaders of the LEW and the ICW and the IWSA during the 1920s,³²⁵ feminist activities were closely intertwined with the work for a national cause.³²⁶ She was a member of the national-liberal Czechoslovak Socialist Party³²⁷ and drawing upon Masaryk’s ideas, she insisted on the idea of democratic and egalitarian values being inherent to the Czechs, abruptly taken away from them with the Habsburg rule since 1526. Then again, a “revolutionary” 1918 signified a re-birth of the Czech nation, and a re-establishment of the egalitarian values so close to the Czech people. The overall goal of the Czech women’s movement should be in transmitting the notion of the “woman question” being a crucial part of the “national question,” or in Masaryk’s words: “this modern effort of men and women is a necessary continuation in the work of national revival. Our revival will not be a reality as long as the Czech man, along with the Czech woman, does not undergo a revival, a spiritual, moral and social revival. The modern Czech woman signifies for our small nation a doubling of our strength.”³²⁸ Even though the level of equality women

³²³ Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 24.

³²⁴ Ivan Esih, “Masaryk i žene” [Masaryk and Women], *Ženski list* [Women’s Journal] (May 1 1935):28. See Tomáš G. Masaryk, *Moderní názor na ženu: otisk přednášky z roku 1904* (Brno, 1930).

³²⁵ Serving as the ICW’s Vicepresident from 1925 until World War Two, and as the IWSA’s (at that point IAWSEC) vicepresident from 1926 until World War Two. See Sona Hendrychova, “Františka Plamínková,” in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 438.

³²⁶ Františka Plamínková, “Ríjen 1918-1928,” *Ženska Rada* 4, 9 (1928): 128.

³²⁷ The Czechoslovak National Socialist party was “appealing to lower middle-class Czechs, civil servants, and skilled workers, was patriotic, social reform-minded, non-Marxist, civil libertarian, and not anti-Semitic” See Bruce M. Garver, “Women in the First Czechoslovak Republic,” in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe*, Sharon L. Wolchik and Alfred G. Meyer, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), note 5.

³²⁸ *Masaryk a ženy*, 67, 69. Quoted in H. Gordon Skilling, *T G Masaryk: Against the Current, 1882–1914*. (Springer, 1994), 117.

obtained in Czechoslovakia was not unique, Czechoslovak society demonstrated a large-scale support that seems to relate to the popular understanding of the egalitarian values as Czech, and which the new country promised to cherish in the future.³²⁹ However, when the Constitution of 1920 proclaimed “women equality,” it considered women being equal to men as citizens, while at the same time promised to protect the institution of family. Women’s positions within the private spheres of home were linked to their “natural” roles as wives and child bearers.³³⁰ Czech feminists soon stepped into a decades-long dispute over the family and marriage law. What is important here, the debate about the Czechoslovakian Civil Code helped forming the new women’s organization oriented towards women’s political rights in 1923: Women’s National Council (*Ženska Narodni Rada*). The organization was led by Plamínková and other educated, middle-class women, and it was predominately supported by intelligentsia. It not only claimed to represent many other women’s groups in Czechoslovakia, but it claimed to represent Czechoslovak women in general through its participation in the work of international women’s organizations (also in the LEW).

Appropriation of Czechness to Yugoslav Context and the Croat Reluctance

To, at least to some point, understand the standpoints of Czech feminists toward the project of Yugoslavia and its women’s movement(s) aims in transferring the ideas more south, it is useful to look back at Masaryk’s position and its reception in Yugoslavia. More broadly, regarding the processes of reception, transformation, reinterpretation and rejection of ideas between the Yugoslav (i.e. Serb, Croat and Slovene, prior to the establishment of the state) and Czech

³²⁹ Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 39.

³³⁰ Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 36.

politicians and intellectuals, maybe the most prominent transnational agent prior to the Great War, and in limited sense after the war, was the Croat peasantist leader, Stjepan Radić. Radić himself was under strong influence of Czech realism and “believed that the Czechs ‘will still for a long time remain teachers to us Croats in everything, and especially in politics,’ and that the Croat students would immeasurably broaden their intellectual horizons in Bohemia.”³³¹ *Tatiček* Masaryk’s approach in bettering society in general, especially through solving crucial social problems, resonated deeply with Radić, at least enough to be implemented in the general principals of his Croat Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka, HSS). Masarykian ideas of humanism and democracy had, however, certain limits when it came to recognizing political rights of the smallest of “the small nations,” i.e. Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians or Montenegrins, he had in mind when working against Austrian and German hegemony in Slavic lands.³³² Moreover, Masaryk was often referred to as a “Yugoslav friend,” while taking into account that Yugoslavs “believed in him during the war, and believe in him even more today [in 1931] as to a symbol of loyalty and brotherhood between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.”³³³ Masaryk was staying strongly on the integralist stands, what eventually turned out to be favoring Serb state solution for the unity of the South Slavs. His notions were primarily grounded on demonstrated Serb military primacy expressed in the Balkan Wars and later in World War One, rather than that he was keen to support some kind of federative model of state organizing.³³⁴

Believing that there should not be further insisting on any separatist solutions, such as those of Croat cultural, socio-historical or other differences that would represent a threat to a new

³³¹ Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the politics of mass mobilization, 1904-1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 38, footnote 30.

³³² Tereza Ganza Aras, “Stav T. G. Masaryka prema hrvatskom i jugoslavenskom pitanju od kraja 19. stoljeća do 1918,” *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Zadru* 34(21) (1994/95), 199-219, 216.

³³³ Živan J. Ranković, *Tomaš G. Masarik, njegov život i rad* [Tomaš G. Masarik, His Life and Work] (Beograd, 1937), 11.

³³⁴ Tomaš Masaryk, *Svjetska revolucija* [World Revolution], 48-9.

state of Yugoslavs, Yugoslav unitarism under a Serbian dynasty was, therefore, a logical solution and a guiding principle, also for a future cultural and political mutuality between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.³³⁵ It was at this point, that Radić could not agree with Masaryk anymore. Even though Radić frequently repeated the idea of unity between Serbs and Croats and that of the “Slavic reciprocity,”³³⁶ especially before, but also after the war, he did not put his trust in the centralized government in Belgrade for most of the 1920s. Only in the mid-1920s, before his assassination in 1928, he recognized the state, its leadership and set foundation for the possible rapprochement with the major nationalist party in Yugoslavia.³³⁷ This is crucial in understanding why the majority of Croatian women stayed out of the Little Entente of Women’s project and why they presented an opposition to the Yugoslav women’s movement led-by-Serbians.³³⁸

I will here offer two examples to prove the limitations of integralist and centralist Yugoslav women’s movement. The separate track the most prominent Croat feminist and Croat women’s movements leader took speaks of exclusiveness that the LEW kept maintaining. Marija Jurić Zagorka, the best-known Croat journalist and writer, early on criticized the exclusiveness of the National Women’s Union of SCS.³³⁹ Although there is a genesis of Zagorka’s positioning

³³⁵ Tomaš Masaryk, *Borba za samoodređenje naroda. Nova Evropa sa slavenskog stajališta* [The New Europe (the Slav Standpoint)] 2nd edition (Zagreb: 1920), 103-104.

³³⁶ Stjepan Radić, “Hrvati i Srbi,” [Croats and Serbs] Zagreb, 1902, in Stjepan Radić, *Politički spisi, govori i dokumenti* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1994), 185-6.

³³⁷ Banac, Ivo. *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, c1984, 231.

³³⁸ Mary E. Reed, “Peasant Women of Croatia in the Interwar Years,” in *Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe*, Wolchik, Sharon L., and Alfred G. Meyer, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 98-112; Leček, Suzana, “‘Dosada se samo polovica hrvatskog naroda borila’: Hrvatska seljačka stranka i žene (1918.-1941.)” [Only the Half of Croat People Fought So Far: Croat Peasant Party and Women (1918-1941)] *Historijski zbornik*, 59 (2006): 93-130; Branka Boban, “‘Materinsko carstvo’ Zalaganje Stjepana Radića za žensko pravo glasa i ravnopravan položaj u društvu,” in *Žene u Hrvatskoj: ženska i kulturna povijest*, Andrea Feldman ed. (Zagreb: Institut “Vlado Gotovac”: Ženska infoteka, 2004), 191-209.

³³⁹ Trencsenyi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 603. Quoted from Marina

towards the Yugoslav-oriented women's movement in the country, the common denominator of her feminist activities was her prioritizing of (Croat) national struggle. Already in 1917, Zagorka was confident enough to claim that there have never been a feminist movement in Croatia, due to the fact that nowhere "the notion nation/people (narod) so tightly connects both sexes," as in Croatia.³⁴⁰ At the same time she fiercely requested voting rights for Croat women. She grounded her demands for suffrage in historical engagement of Croat women for the common, national cause throughout history. Yet, the Croatian Electoral Reform in 1917, on her vocal protest, bypassed women.³⁴¹ In 1925, she founded and edited *Ženski list* (Women's Journal), a Zagreb-based women's magazine published until 1938, that opened space for introducing both feminist propaganda and fashion and household related content, without excluding peasant and working women from its potential readership.³⁴² In 1939, in the first issue of her new journal *Hrvatica* (Croat Woman), Zagorka will denounce any form of internationalism, stating that women are responsible for their peoples and their nation primarily.³⁴³

While Zagorka engaged actively with the "women question" Marija Kumičić,³⁴⁴ another Croat writer and member of many women's societies, led *Hrvatska žena* (Croat Woman), the main Croat women's organization, established in 1921 and active until 1943. Kumičić was not as Zagorka so demanding in requesting solutions for the "woman question." In 1906 she recognized feminism as a sign of deviant, modern times, clearly opposing the enfranchisement of women

Vujnovic, *Forging the Bubikopf Nation: Journalism, Gender and Modernity in Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York, 2009), 101–2.

³⁴⁰ Marija Jurić Zagorka, "Hrvatska izborna reforma i žene, 1873-1957," [Croatian Electoral Reform and Women] in *Ženski svijet* I, Issue 4 (December 1, 1917), 145-146, database: WASME.

³⁴¹ Zagorka, "Hrvatska izborna reforma i žene, 146.

³⁴² See Marina Vujnović, *Forging the Bubikopf Nation. Journalism, Gender and Modernity in Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2009), 94.

³⁴³ "Zašto mislim da nam je potreban list *Hrvatica*," *Hrvatica* 1 (1939), 1.

³⁴⁴ Lucija Benyovsky, "'Putem uspomena' Marije Kumičić," in *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 28 (1996) 3, 427–438.

and prioritized their traditional roles and the national question.³⁴⁵ Hrvatska žena was active and had its numerous branches active all over Croatia, generally working for cultural, humanitarian, and educational improvement. The organization was never supportive for the Yugoslav umbrella women's organizations, and it was occasionally banned for being too "nationalistic and separatist."³⁴⁶

Both Masaryk's and Plamínková's conceptualizations of women's role in society received slight adjustments when appropriating to Croatian context. *Ženski list* kept informing its readership of "the illustrious man of past and present," President Masaryk.³⁴⁷ Often, these articles were authored by Ivan Esih, a Prague student and Croatian publicist, writer and translator.³⁴⁸ In the interwar years recognized as "the promoter of relations between Croats and other Slavic peoples,"³⁴⁹ Esih wrote on Masaryk's approach to the "woman question,"³⁵⁰ claiming that Masaryk's egalitarian standpoints regarding women (stretching from their cultural, social and political equality with men to legal and intellectual) came directly from the influence of women who he knew or cooperated with extensively, such as his "pious mother" and his wife, who "was educated in the spirit of American freedom" and brought "religious spirit" into his life. Referring to his 1910 letter, Esih claimed that Charlotte Masarykova,³⁵¹ a translator of John

³⁴⁵ Marija Kumičić, *Žensko pitanje* [The Woman Question] (Zagreb, Grad Zagreb: Hrvatska čitaonica u Zagrebu, 1906), database WASE.

³⁴⁶ Lucija Benyovsky, "Marija Kumičić (1863.-1945.)," in *Informatica museologica* 32, issue 1-2 (2001), 60-64.

³⁴⁷ "Predsjednik Čehoslovačke republike...", *Ženski list* (April 1 1935): 9; "Smrt velikana Tome Masaryka," *Ženski list* [Women's Journal] (October 1 1937): 6-7.

³⁴⁸ "Esih, Ivan," *Hrvatska enciklopedija* [Croatian Encyclopedia], Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?id=18361>.

³⁴⁹ "Ivan Esih (1898. – 1966.)," <http://virtualna.nsk.hr/bugari/ivan-esih-1898-1966/> He wrote extensively of women's political and other rights in various countries around the world. See, for example, Ivan Esih, "Politička i građanska prava žena u svjetskim zemljama" [Political and Civil Rights of Women in World Countries] *Ženski list* [Women's Journal] (March 1 1936): 4-5; Ivan Esih, "Politička i građanska prava žena u svjetskim zemljama (nastavak)" [Political and Civil Rights of Women in World Countries] *Ženski list* [Women's Journal] (April 1 1936): 27, 29, 31. Later in this chapter, I will introduce another such propagator – Maria Omelchenko.

³⁵⁰ Esih, "Masaryk i žene," 11, 28.

³⁵¹ See Anna Nedvěďová, "Masarykova, Charlotta Garrigue," in *A Biographical Dictionary*, 306-310.

Stuart Mills' *The Subjection of Women*, was responsible for all the later development of Masaryk's ideas and also his character.³⁵² Masaryk himself will in the *Talks* with Karel Čapek elaborate that it was Charlotta who was "morally and politically Czech," who helped him with all his political activity and "believed in the genius of our nation."³⁵³ Not only that, he believed that Charlotta was "convinced of our nation's mission."³⁵⁴ The war strengthened Masaryk's beliefs, "women proved to have equal values as men [during the war],"³⁵⁵ which made Masaryk-President consistent to Masaryk-Professor.³⁵⁶ While still taking more traditional stance and prioritizing religious ideas in the dynamics of the Masaryk family and their influence, *Ženski list* informed its readers of Masaryk's wife Charlotta's correspondence with her daughter Alice, published in Prague in 1933.³⁵⁷ Alice Masarykova was at that time imprisoned by Austrian authorities, as the article argues, allegedly only because she was a daughter of Masaryk, later "the Liberator," who left the country to fulfill "the task assigned to him by God's Providence."³⁵⁸ Charlotta's letters sent to her daughter depict a deeply religious woman, who, separated from her family and of poor health, continued the author, needed "to pay her part of the tax for the liberation of the Czech and Slovak peoples and for the realization of the Czechoslovak Republic. Both of these people loved her."³⁵⁹ Moreover, Charlotta was frequently depicted as a martyr, who self-sacrificed for the Czech people, even though being "a daughter of free America."³⁶⁰

³⁵² Esih, "Masaryk i žene," 11.

³⁵³ Karel Čapek, *Talks with TG Masaryk*, translated from Czech by Dora Round, Michael Henry Heim, ed. (North Haven: Cat Bird Press, 1996), 90.

³⁵⁴ Čapek, *Talks with TG Masaryk*, 98.

³⁵⁵ Esih, "Masaryk i žene," 11.

³⁵⁶ He was referring here to Plamínková's book *Masaryk and Women*, 36, 38, to repeat his notion that "woman shall be equal to man."

³⁵⁷ Elena Marothy-Šoltesova, "Majčina pisma," [Mother's Letters], translated from Slovak by Marina Maliakova, *Ženski list* (March 1 1938): 5, 29.

³⁵⁸ Marothy-Šoltesova, *Majčina pisma*, 5.

³⁵⁹ Marothy-Šoltesova, *Majčina pisma*, 29.

³⁶⁰ Esih, "Masaryk i žene," 28.

Transnational Agency and National Messianism of Františka Plamínková

It also may be that her influence in transmitting the ideas coming from the United States helped Masaryk understood Czechoslovakia as a liberal and *democratic* torchbearer of an integrationist “New Europe” in the interwar period. As stated in Trencsenyi et al., these notions were equally informed by František Palacky’s ideas of European federalism and those of President Wilson’s Fourteen Points, while solidifying Czechoslovakia’s “‘missionary’ self-perception (...) not in terms of pursuing narrow national interests but of creating a just and lasting political order on the Old Continent.”³⁶¹ While the Little Entente certainly could not represent a realization of such premises,³⁶² the Little Entente of Women came closer to it. It is interesting to see how Czechoslovakian democratic principles cooperated with the mainstream Serb-dominated royalist political scene. Czechoslovak democracy, which Melissa Feinberg proves to be *elusive* in its proclaimed equality,³⁶³ strongly influenced and in certain ways legitimized the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes’ *facade* democracy,³⁶⁴ that slipped in the royal dictatorship in 1929.³⁶⁵ To prop up to the Little Entente and sustain itself as

³⁶¹ Trencsenyi, “Faces of Modernity,” 626.

³⁶² Masaryk would in his talks to Karel Čapek how he understood Slavdom being rooted in Russian “Orthodoxy’s ignorance and superstition,” while Czechs were rather “liberals and westernizers.” Čapek, *Talks with TG Masaryk*, 113.

³⁶³ Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1950*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006).

³⁶⁴ Yugoslavia was a parliamentary monarchy, whose centralist 1921 Vidovdan Constitution enabled King Aleksandar Karađorđević to control, inter alia, the army, and foreign policy. After 1921, governments were formed at the court rather than in the National Parliament. However, it was not only the King’s extensive political dominance that caused the country’s corrosion of democratic practices. Rather, the disputes over the state organization were present from its beginnings. Mark Biondich, *The Balkans. Revolution, War, and Political Violence since 1878* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 101. For more on Yugoslavia’s parliamentarianism, see Branislav Gligorijević, *Parlament i političke stranke u Jugoslaviji, 1919-1929* [Parliament and Political Parties in Yugoslavia, 1919-1929] (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1979)

³⁶⁵ As Nielsen proved with his extraordinary study, after 1929 with the extensive inauguration of centralism and nationalization, the dictatorship in Yugoslavia, following Poland, was a part of a broader shift away from democracy in the region. Only Czechoslovaks enjoyed some form of “fragile democratic rule.” What made King Aleksandar’s dictatorship exceptional was putting ideology at its core, responsible for providing Yugoslavs with one instead of

its leader, Czechoslovak political establishment led by Edvard Beneš did not protest against the royal dictatorship in Yugoslavia, thereby helping it to legitimize itself in the international political arena.³⁶⁶

One of the most important Czechoslovak women thinkers that influenced and coordinated the activity of women in other member countries of the Little Entente was certainly Františka Plamínková³⁶⁷, bringing much of her affection to the ideas of the policymakers in her own country, in sharing their common understanding of ideas of freedom, democracy, strong unified nation with a centralized government (spreading the ideas mostly through periodicals, international conferences, cultural events such as women's art exhibitions, etc.). Therefore, Františka Plamínková can be seen as a representative example of transnational (feminist/cultural/political...) agent. Her articles were translated and published in the (pro-) Yugoslav newspapers and periodicals, her ideas were quoted in the reports from the conferences of the Little Entente of Women (LEW), but also from the other international women's conferences. During the Belgrade Conference of the LEW in 1924, Plamínková provided her audience with very concrete examples of Czech women's activities and stressed that a successful fight for women's rights demands: awareness, readiness for quick reaction, lobbying, networking, activity and a high degree of excellence of the protagonists themselves.³⁶⁸ Plamínková often gave lectures on various aspects regarding the women's political rights throughout the region and the interwar period. To claim those rights for women meant for Plamínková to highlight the reciprocity expected from women: to become aware of their

more national identities. Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 249.

³⁶⁶ Jana Škerlova, "Czechoslovak-Yugoslav in the First Year of King Alexander's Dictatorship," *Istorija 20. veka* 1 (2016), 80, passim.

³⁶⁷ Františka Plamínková, *Economic and Social Position of Women in Czechoslovak Republic* (Prague: Imprimerie de la Politika, 1920).

³⁶⁸ Františka Plamínková, "Metode," [Methods] *Ženski pokret* 9 (November 1924): 379-381.

obligations to the very society and state.³⁶⁹ To avoid being called “unconscious and lazy” when being led by men only, women must engage with the work of political parties, activity necessary for a “true democracy”: “Czechoslovak democracy enables women to work politically,” and even thought even in Czechoslovakia they are not present in politics in great numbers “their successes do not depend on the number but on the personal abilities of women,” in a sense, positive qualities which “women of all nations have.”³⁷⁰ On the other hand, national elites in Yugoslavia, “often overpowered any discussions of women’s participation as individuals in a liberal state, stimulating instead debate about their roles as members of a particular state.”³⁷¹ Plamínková resembled a mediator between the two opposed visions of women’s position in society. She frequently supported women’s engagement in the political life of their respective countries, giving speeches and holding lectures on this topic on Czechoslovak example.³⁷² Being a Czechoslovak woman politician, and probably the most prominent one internationally, she called for equal rights (and obligations!) for a man and a wo-man (*žena-čovjek*):

A new woman must be a sensible mother, a public worker and a prominent daughter of her people; she must raise her children for the good of all the people and her obligations as a member of the whole nation she must always do. A woman needs great preparation as a partner, mother, housewife and public worker. A man and woman must be not only equal but equally valuable. A woman is a loyal friend to her husband and therefore needs to understand mutual psychology and share their mutual interests. Motherhood is a sacred duty; the sacred instinct we find in all peoples. Both father and mother must be prepared to raise their children, they must be a model for them.³⁷³

³⁶⁹ (ie.), “Žena i politika” [Woman and Politics] *Ženski list* [Women’s Journal] (April 1 1936): 34.

³⁷⁰ (ie.), “Žena i politika,” 34.

³⁷¹ Carol S. Lilly and Melissa Bokovoy, “Croatia, Serbia and Yugoslavia,” in *Women, gender, and fascism in Europe, 1919-45*, Kevin Passimore, ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 93.

³⁷² She held one such lecture in Zagreb in 1934, under the title “Rad žena na socijalnom polju i sudjelovanju žena u političkom životu Čehoslovačke” [The work of women in the social field and participation of women in the political life of Czechoslovakia]. Ivan Esih, “Jubilej gospođe Františke Plaminkove,” [The Jubilee of Madam Františka Plamínková] *Ženski list* [Women’s Journal] (June 1 1935): 6.

³⁷³ Esih, “Jubilej gospođe Františke Plaminkove,” 6.

An ideal-type woman resembled a national conscious political being, supporting the traditional values and embracing an active role in bettering her respective society. Furthermore, “a wife-mother (or woman-mother),” Plamínková continued, “carries out a social duty, she gives birth to children, the future of her people, so mother-wife shall be under the protection of the state and the people. The wife-mother should be supported in her honorary ministry.”³⁷⁴ The Yugoslav representatives in the LEW frequently relied on these premises to negotiate in their own context. For example, a Yugoslav delegate Milena Atanacković understood the LEW’s activity not as a means of spreading propaganda, but as a means of reflecting on the reality that show that “there is no duty towards a state that a woman is not obliged to do; We pay taxes, we are forced to obey all legal regulations. Each woman contributes with her work for the general well-being of the human community.”³⁷⁵ Those approaches combined usually resulted in discussing many more practical issues that resembled the LEW’s framework being a platform for exchanging different national experiences to envisage a mutually intelligible set of principles for joint action. Since its establishment, the LEW was organized into national sections that were informing of their local contexts based on their national experiences, something already familiar to many of its members who have already participated in the work of, for example, the International Women Suffrage Alliance’s (IWSA) activity.³⁷⁶ To offer just one example, during the 1925 Athens Conference of the LEW, Czech delegates Františka Plamínková and Eliška Purkyňová gave a speech on the position of women clerks in Czechoslovakia, based on the questionnaires previously sent to the LEW’s membership. Czechoslovak periodical *Ženska rada* published also a comparative table on women clerks in civil service in each of the LEW’s country members designed by Plamínková

³⁷⁴ Esih, “Jubilej gospođe Františke Plaminkove,” 6.

³⁷⁵ “Konferencija Male ženske antante u Beogradu,” [The Conference of the Little Entente of Women in Belgrade] *Ženski pokret* 9, (November 15, 1924), 339.

³⁷⁶ For example, Serbian women participated in the work of the IWSA already from 1911, Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 16.

for this conference.³⁷⁷ For example, some of the questions in the questionnaire (and published table) were: does the woman stays employed after her marital status has changes, or what are her working conditions/opportunities for advancement in the workplace after she gives birth.³⁷⁸ Actual conditions rarely corresponded with the LEW's previous resolutions' demands;³⁷⁹ only in the Polish case the LEW's requests for equal treatment of men and women were met. While in Yugoslav and Czechoslovak cases the law guaranteed fulfillment of that principle, actual situation differed significantly. In Greece and Romania there was no legal equality between women and men clerks, and in general women did not have the same rights to work in any profession desired, under the same conditions for advancement at work as men did. However, the LEW saw an "equal pay for equal work" standard mostly implemented (at least on paper) as a success of feminism.³⁸⁰ These discussions and surveys eventually resulted in drafting the final Labor Rights Section of the LEW's Program, especially emphasized in Article a), demanding "To seek access for women in all fields of work under the same conditions as men, and the same opportunities for advancement at work."³⁸¹ It also helped in drafting the final Article v) of the Section, requesting "Equal rights to work in all branches for married and unmarried women."³⁸² The situation regarding the status of women clerks was especially pessimistic in the early 1930s,

³⁷⁷ The results were interesting enough for inclusion in this paper, but their analysis would take too much space here and deserves a separate essay. Františka Plamínková, "Tabulka o pomerech veřejných úřednic sestavena pi. senát. Plamínkovou ke konferenci Male Ženske Dohody, jež se konala v prosinci 1925 v Atenach," [Table of women clerks ratios compiled by Senator Plamínková for the Little Entente of Women's Conference, held in December 1925 in Athens] *Ženská rada* (1926): 38-39.

³⁷⁸ "Tabulka," 38-39.

³⁷⁹ I.e. that of 1923 and 1924 Conferences.

³⁸⁰ Dr. Ksenija Atanasijević, "Izvještaj sa Treće konferencije Male Antante Žena, održane od sedmog do trinaestog decembra 1925 g. u Atini" [The Report from the Third Conference of the Little Entente of Women, held from the 7th to the 13th of December 1925 in Athens] *Ženski pokret* 1 and 2 (1925), 39-40.

³⁸¹ "Program rada Male ženske antante," 1.

³⁸² "Program rada Male ženske antante," 1.

when it started to become even more complicated with the consequences of the Great Depression.³⁸³

Incompatibilities and Limitations of “Intellectual Women Workers”

However, the LEW hardly developed its strategy of approaching working or peasant women, its long-lasting stand was frequently reflecting class and social status of their members. It was not in Czech moralizing formulations of the necessity of educating women to become political beings that the Czech intellectual leadership of the movement showed its flaws. It was rather in the realm of unspoken, of incompatibilities between the contexts of agrarian Yugoslavia and industrialized and urban Czechoslovakia. According to Susan Zimmermann and Krassimira Daskalova, “the dominant occupation of most women in East Central Europe, aside from domestic and care-work, was farming and agricultural work, whether paid or unpaid.”³⁸⁴ Women workers in Yugoslavia were in 1920s, “because of their illiteracy and due to the lack of professional and general educational qualifications” mostly employed in agriculture in rural areas,³⁸⁵ as house servants or in industry, as non-qualified/unskilled workers, in urban areas.³⁸⁶

³⁸³ “Zakon o činovnicima i ostalim državnim službenicima građanskog reda,” [The Law on Clerks and Other Civil Servants] *Službene novine* 125, (September 1, 1925); Saša Đuranović-Janda, *Žena u radnom odnosu* (Zagreb, Naprijed: 1960), 115.

³⁸⁴ Krassimira Daskalova and Susan Zimmermann, “Women’s and Gender History,” in *The Routledge History of East Central Europe since 1700.*, Irina Livezeanu, and Arpad von Klimó, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 283.

³⁸⁵ Peasant women in rural Croatia worked very hard, not only tasks considered as “female,” but it was frequently necessarily for them to take over the “male” ones. Their social status was beginning to change in the interwar period, “by changing the economic role of women (unmanageable labor force, own sources of income through ‘female’ trade), as well as by increasing the ability to inherit the land.” Suzana Leček, “‘Ženske su sve radile.’ Seljačka žena između tradicije i modernizacije u sjeverozapadnoj Hrvatskoj između dva svjetska rata” [“‘Women Worked All Out.’ Between Tradition and Modernization in Northwestern Croatia in the Interwar Period”], in *Žene u Hrvatskoj: ženska i kulturna povijest* [Women in Croatia: Women’s and Cultural History], Andrea Feldman, ed. (Zagreb: Institut Vlado Gotovac & Ženska infoteka, 2004), 234.

³⁸⁶ Jovanka Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama: 1918-1941* [Women of Yugoslavia in the Workers Movement and Women’s Organizations 1918-1941] (Beograd, Narodna knjiga: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1978), 32.

Masaryk's words that "the issue of the equality of women is actually a middle-class intellectual issue," carried the judgment that the women of lower classes simply work equality hard as their male counterparts, as if this aphorism would in itself say anything of broader recognition of their positions."³⁸⁷ Rather, their positions remained undiscussed. As one Yugoslav contemporary expert in legal studies and a supporter of women's legal rights stated in 1934, "all our legislation considers a woman to be a subordinate being, who cannot have full legal capacity as a man."³⁸⁸

After reflection extensively on women clerks working conditions, there was also a question of the LEW's stand, being a non-socialist women's organization, regarding women's labor of various kind, i.e. how they defined those various types of women's labor. Helena Negropontes, a Greek delegate,³⁸⁹ read an extensive report regarding the Greek feminism for the LEW's Belgrade Conference in 1924, offering a kind of women's social and class stratification in order to answer the question "do women [in Greece] desire their liberation?"³⁹⁰ This is important because it reflected upon different types of women's labor and because this classification was explicitly or implicitly underlying other LEW's reports/documents. She first enlisted women of well economic background, who were generally not interested in "social question," such as feminism, and how they rather engage with various kinds of charitable work – something Negropontes called an "un-systematized work."³⁹¹ Still, in Croatia many women engaged with the social, charitable and humanitarian activities of various (some lead exclusively by women) organizations of civil society already at the turn of the 20th century, before social

³⁸⁷ Karel Čapek, *Talks with TG Masaryk*, 100.

³⁸⁸ Ferdo Čulinović, *Žena u našem krivičnom pravu*. [A Woman in Our Criminal Law] (Beograd: Globus, 1934), 21.

³⁸⁹ Negropontes was a secretary of the Greek delegation to the LEW.

³⁹⁰ The main aim in raising this question and enlisting women's social positions were, for sure, to offer a valid analysis of the possibilities in approaching each of these "social groups" of women to recruit them to support feminism. However, it is interesting to see this exact Report as an example of broader implications regarding women's positions and validity of these claims throughout the region. Helena Negropontes, "Feminizam u Grčkoj" [Feminism in Greece] *Ženski pokret* 9, 348.

³⁹¹ Negropontes, "Feminizam u Grčkoj," 348.

work became professionalized³⁹² and before feminist movements have gained significance in the interwar period. This can be understood as a mean of their autonomous actions in civil society, not entirely separated from the process of entering the public sphere as recognized social subjects than could afterwards seek transformation of their political and legal positions. The second group of “working women” Negropontes wrote of were “intellectual workers,” mainly consisted of “clerks, professors, students and other workers.”³⁹³ Their positions in workplace reflected, reported Negropontes, the unfair relationships towards their (usually less-skilled but higher positioned) male colleagues, when at the same time these working women had frequently considered work as “temporarily way of living,” before they eventually get married.³⁹⁴ Finally, she reflects upon the positions of manual workers, whose illiteracy and poor living conditions make them suitable only for Communist recruitment. However, she continued, the Communist Party rejected any cooperation with liberal or even socialist women’s organizations, which made LEW’s aims more difficult to fulfill when it came to female manual workers.³⁹⁵ As presented in their discussion, the LEW members considered these premises to be both valid and mostly applicable to other member-countries contexts. However, the “feminist propaganda,” as they usually called their feminist activity, suffered serious limitations especially when it came to the majority of women that did not fall into these categories of either wealthy women or intellectual women workers. Article d) of The Labor Right Section of the LEW’s Program requested that “The right of association must be allowed to all workers (regardless of sex) and the right to strike

³⁹² Sandra Prlenda, “Žene i prvi organizirani oblici praktičnog socijalnog rada u Hrvatskoj” [Women and First Organized Forms of Practical Social Work in Croatia] in *Revija za socijalnu politiku* 12/3/4, (2005), 319.

³⁹³ Negropontes, “Feminizam u Grčkoj,” 349.

³⁹⁴ Negropontes, “Feminizam u Grčkoj,” 349.

³⁹⁵ Negropontes, “Feminizam u Grčkoj,” 350.

In fact, first women’s socialist organization in Serbia, Svest (Consciousness), rejected to cooperate with major Serbian non-socialist women’s organization, the Circle of Serbian Sisters (Kolo srpskih sestara), both established in 1903, because women workers from Svest did not desire any kind of “community” with the “class-based society,” as they have called the Circle. Neda Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku* [The Woman Question in Serbia in the 19th and 20th century] (Beograd: Dvadesetčetvrt, 1996), 82.

should not be forbidden to anyone.”³⁹⁶ Women (professional) organizing was in the example of Croatia represented through various women’s professional organizations, which in the first half of the 20th century mainly situated in “the fields of education, social welfare, nursing, and the creative arts.”³⁹⁷ Inclusion of this article was probably a result of the LEW’s previous discussion nicely summarized in Negropontes’ Report:

whenever we tried to get closer to the workers, and these attempts were made several times, we faced a total misunderstanding, and we were always rejected when we called them to fight with us. We need a lot of money to organize evening and Sunday courses in the working neighborhoods, the practical ones, to enlighten a woman and attract it to our organization.³⁹⁸

There should be no doubt that the LEW believed that it was fighting against social injustice, something that should, in their understanding, also resonate with women manual workers. Still, it seems that the LEW could not yet found (and in fact will not be able to find during its existence) the way to approach these women in a meaningful way. Therefore, the LEW also never developed a discourse that included peasant women and their positions in labor relations.

Personalized Networking and Charismatic Leadership

If there was one publication that can vividly show how political engagement in improving women’s status in the region created a personalized network that, yet, relied on the role of a charismatic leader, then that was a publication following the celebration of Plamínková’s 60th

³⁹⁶ “Program rada Male ženske antante,” 1.

³⁹⁷ Dubravka Peić-Čaldarović, “Osnovne karakteristike profesionalne djelatnosti žena u Hrvatskoj između dvaju svjetskih ratova: (1918.-1941.)” [Basic Characteristics of the Professional Activity of Women in Croatia between the Two World Wars: (1918-1941)] *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 29 (1997): 497-503.

³⁹⁸ Negropontes, “Feminizam u Grčkoj,” 350.

As a Croatian women’s historian, Andrea Feldman, wrote, both women workers sympathizing the Communist Party and “bourgeois suffragettes” mostly mutually misunderstood each other’s positions. Andrea Feldman, “Proričući gladnu godinu: Žene i ideologija jugoslavenstva (1918-1929)” [Foretelling a Hungry Year: Women and Ideology of Yugoslavism] in *Žene u Hrvatskoj: ženska i kulturna povijest* [Women in Croatia: Women's and Cultural History], Andrea Feldman, ed. (Zagreb: Institut Vlado Gotovac & Ženska infoteka, 2004), 237.

birthday. *Kniha života* (The Book of Life) was published in 1935 to also commemorate her authority in Czechoslovak and international public and political sphere. Numerous Yugoslav women public intellectuals, many already introduced in this thesis, participated with their short contributions to the publication.³⁹⁹ Leposava Petković⁴⁰⁰ wrote:

During the year [following the establishment of the LEW] while working together, I already sensed her great mental strength. Later during our meetings, whether in her or in my country, or anywhere in Europe, I have always reaffirmed my first impression (...) So we, Yugoslav women, have many reasons why we send congratulations for her 60th birthday and join the best wishes, let us have a great model, what she showed us as a woman who is active in public life, a good example to us and to our work for a long time.⁴⁰¹

Milena Atancković⁴⁰² emphasized Plamínková's responsibility for insisting on putting the LEW on the right, feminist and pacifist, track, which made her "one of the most prominent leaders of the feminist movement in Slavic nations."⁴⁰³ It seems that she was especially respected for offering "a righteous example that we can always follow in our struggle for political liberation of women (...) and therefore as a feminist [she] does not belong only to Czech women, not only to women of Slavic nations, but to feminists of the whole world."⁴⁰⁴ Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka⁴⁰⁵ emphasized sharing "a socialist stance" with Plamínková, and their mutual fight against the "war chauvinism and barbarism":⁴⁰⁶ "Since 1930, Poland's political events have defined the field of social activity on the ground of international affairs. However, I reply to the call that has come to me, and I am happy to be able to attach my remembrance to the manifestation of worship of a fit

³⁹⁹ Albina Honzáková, ed., *Kniha života: práce a osobnost F.F. Plamínkové. Sborník k 60. narozeninám* [The Work and Personality of F.F. Plamínková. A Festschrift on the Occasion of Her 60th Birthsday] (Prague: Melantrich, 1935).

⁴⁰⁰ The leader of the feminist movement in Yugoslavia for most of the interwar year.

⁴⁰¹ Leposava Petković, "Františka Plamínková," in *Kniha života*, 726.

⁴⁰² A secretary of National Women's Union (Narodni ženski savez) and chief of the political section of the Women's Movement (Ženski pokret) in Yugoslavia, probably the most active Yugoslav delegate in various women's organization throughout the interwar decades.

⁴⁰³ Milena Atancković, "Mrs. Plaminkova," in *Kniha života*, 759.

⁴⁰⁴ Milena Atancković, "Mrs. Plaminkova," in *Kniha života*, 759.

⁴⁰⁵ A Polish delegate in the LEW and prominent Polish feminist. More in Chapter I.

⁴⁰⁶ Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka, "Františka Plaminkova," in *Kniha života*, 729.

warrior for the equality of women and their social liberation.”⁴⁰⁷ Invocation of pacifism and, especially, the Slavic component of the LEW’s project was not by accident present in the recalls of its (national council’s) leadership more than 10 years after the establishment and in the moment of the LEW’s utmost passivity – in the early to mid-1930s. It was rather a joint act of commemorating the pillar stone of the LEW’s ideology: its united Slavic front for fighting the inequalities imposed to women in the region.

Pan-Slavism was not, however, transmitted only by feminist that were active in the establishment of women’s international organizations. Another interesting transnational feminist agent that connected Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in the mid-1930s, as who was supporter of Slavic reciprocity was a Ukrainian literary and social worker, and also an editor of Prague journal *La femme slave* Maria Omelchenko. She visited Zagreb in 1934 to study Croat women writers and to meet “the representatives of Croat women,” (firstly – the editor of *Ženski list* herself, Zagorka) as a part of her trip through Yugoslavia, to write an extensive study “The Slavic Women.”⁴⁰⁸ The foreword of the journal said: “We are publishing our collection, to be read by educated women of the Slavic peoples and women of the whole world; we are publishing it to give it to engage in mutual acquaintance with Slavic women in other countries.”⁴⁰⁹ The author of the article in *Ženski list* expressed his belief that the journal and Omelchenko’s visit will bring contributions of “scientific, educational and artistic work of Croat women.”⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ Budzińska-Tylicka, “Františka Plaminkova,” 730.

⁴⁰⁸ Ivan Esih, “Marija Omeljčenko u Zagrebu” [Maria Omelchenko in Zagreb], *Ženski list* [Women’s Journal] (November 1 1934): 9-10. She later published a book Marie Omelčenkova, *Me dojmy z Jugoslavie*, [My Impressions from Yugoslavia] (Prague: Slovanska žena, 1935).

⁴⁰⁹ Esih, “Marija Omeljčenko u Zagrebu,” 9.

⁴¹⁰ Esih, “Marija Omeljčenko u Zagrebu,” 9.

Concluding Remarks

In the end, this and previous chapter stand in dialogue. Connections between the “national question” and the “woman question,” especially the interplay between feminism and nationalism connected Yugoslav and Czechoslovak contexts. Feminist activities were closely related to the processes of nation-building and national geopolitical positioning of both countries. Therefore, the debate of the place women should have in society never left its national denominator. Plamínková’s ideas and *modus operandi* concerned local, regional, national and international collaboration of women in the region. Regarding the respectfully high place Plamínková had in Yugoslavia among national and cultural elite during the interwar decades, her role in supporting the dominant discourse of synthetic/integral Yugoslavism was of immense importance for the country’s geostrategic and socio-cultural position on a global, or at least European, level. The Little Entente of Women was just one, but the only entirely led by women, of the options offered to fulfill that aim. However, besides integration pathways of the road to integral Yugoslavism, both among intra- and international agents, there were other voices, proposing the disintegration of Yugoslavia and changing the course towards a completely other direction, as was shown in the previous chapter.

CONCLUSION

The Little Entente of Women remains the first regional and transnational women's organization in the interwar CESEE, aimed at sketching a model for women's transnational organizing based on pacifist settings and in seeking the political rights for women. It aimed in transforming the political processes and claimed representation of women in the region. It offered a platform for supporting women's agency in all ways of life, detecting crucial problems of their respective societies, in bettering their opportunities to seek equality with men and demand visibility in political and cultural scene. While at the same time spreading democratic values based on egalitarian and liberal premises. It claimed to offer more viable solutions than their male counterparts in the political Little Entente, by implementing more private approach of so-called personalized politics. Yet, in various occasions, its members used the newly built platform to expand their own national interests and to solidify their own geopolitical positions.

As these chapters showed, various counter-narratives were omitted and neglected in the LEW, directly as with Bulgarian women, or indirectly as with Croat women in Yugoslavia. "Intellectual workers" of the LEW grounded their work in developmentalist rhetoric that excluded many in order to bring united and centralist federation of women's movements and groups in the region. Ever-changing political circumstances forced upon the main luminaries in and around the LEW certain limits. The organization perceived its position actively, as a part of constantly growing and ever narrower "network of common interest" among peoples within which "material, economic, intellectual, and moral transfers" occur.⁴¹¹ This project grew out the experience of World War One, and out of an anticipation that the next world war will be even

⁴¹¹ Atanacković, "Mala ženska antanta," 41.

more devastating if women themselves do not help in establishing fair international relations. Having that said, the LEW operated on many preconceived asymmetries that kept the organizations involved in the project unlikely to go (far) beyond their national interests. Rather than creating a sustainable identity that would connect the women in and around the LEW's women, the organization mostly commemorated the post-Versailles order in evoking main sacrifices their societies had to make for peace. The LEW relied on continuities that made current political situation favorable, only because it provided static imagery of peace even more favorable. However, peace in itself requested active approach that could aim for more than a maintenance of the absence of war.

In almost a historiographical account, Alojzija Štebi wrote in 1935 that collecting historical materials of the Yugoslav women's previous activities is necessary because of the inevitable link of, and that is a topos of the interwar Yugoslav feminism, "our mutual ignorance and the consequence of this ignorance – mutual misunderstanding."⁴¹² This topos was bluntly always there at the LEW's meetings. Knowledge production was necessary to enable transnational communication, but it had quite the opposite results. Instead of bringing them together to the sense of sharing collective identity, the women of the LEW were more than even aware of the crucial differences that will keep them separate. They primarily found their commonalities in sharing similar imperial past of oppressed and their hopes for a democratic future when the war brought the sacred nation-states to life. Yet, before there was the population to inherit the land. Therefore, making Yugoslavs and Czechoslovaks, for example, was the only possible pathway they could envision for the fulfillment of their demands.

⁴¹² Alojzija Štebi, "Osnovi i razvitak Jugoslavenskog ženskog saveza," [Principles and Development of the Yugoslav Women's Union] in *Glasnik Jugoslavenskog ženskog saveza* 1, vol. 1 (January 30 1935): 5.

Instead of mediating this knowledge production to this day, this thesis aimed to research this undiscussed topic to signal the limitations of post-WWI transnationalism. In the case of the LEW, transnationalism did not help in transcending the national boundaries. On the contrary, it enforced the nationalism that in pretending universal, created strategies and mechanisms to further the national cause. Feminist networking implied specific ties that connected their actors. However, these actors approached and saw the network only through their own positions. They were also focalizers of many other networks. The historical events and interpretations are always all filtered through the focalizers. Reflecting their own positions served women of the LEW in strengthening their national identification. Simply because the LEW's strategists always brought in their particularistic perspectives, they reflected chaotic and fractional political climate of 1920s and 1930s. That necessitated their full engagements in the process of the internationalization of integral Yugoslavism, messianic Czechoslovakism and order-keeping Romanianness. If they did not have any significant result in feminist and peacemaking efforts, besides their raised visibility in the IWSA, they certainly legitimized their internationalizing national ideologies.

Going back to the beginning, to the WILPF's delegate quote that there was no international spirit in the region. There was. However, it was limited to the specific class, geopolitical, and commemorative purposes that further nationalized women active in propagating internationality. It strengthened their national frameworks and their biased positions. The LEW model implied the maintenance of hierarchies, together with the inherent conflicts coming from the fact that internationalism in the region looked more like a sum of "the nationals" with opposing and mutually excluding narratives, than a true international women's framework of cooperation. Again, this does not mean that they failed in attempting to combine the national

with the international. On the contrary. The project spoke of introducing women as political, nationally aware beings into the negotiations over the direct benefits international activity could bring. After all, this project was alive for fifteen years because, in the end, both Beneš and Plamínková, King Aleksandar and Leposava Petković were willing to further it. Would it fail if there were Radić and Smrekar, Stamboliyski and Patef, is a question for another thesis.

The thesis came out as a result of research undertaken in 2018 and 2019, and at a more symbolic level, in some form, commemorates several centenaries. There was a centenary of establishment of new nation-states in the region, especially its ambitious projects as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia indisputably were. It does the same with centenaries of Polish and Czechoslovak women achieving suffrage in 1918 and of the establishment of the first Yugoslav feminist organization in 1919. One hundred years after the Paris Peace Conference, this project speaks of the interwar decades, tensions and disputes, but primarily about maintaining or contesting the Versailles order in the region.

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