REINVESTIGATING COMMUNIST WOMEN'S ACTIVISM IN THE INTERWAR KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA

By

Minja Bujaković

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in European Women's and Gender History (MATILDA)

Supervisor: Professor Susan Zimmermann
Second reader: Professor Krassimira Daskalova

Vienna, Austria
2021

Abstract

In this thesis, I analyze the development of communist women's activism in the interwar Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Kingdom of Yugoslavia, focusing on communist women's individual and collective, similar, and diverse actions, trajectories, and emotions. Through an analysis of the official Yugoslav Communist Party and trade union documents, journal and newspaper articles, and communist women's *memoirs*, which I situate within the history of communism, women's and gender history, transnational history, and history of emotions, I investigate the evolvement of the political consciousness and self-identification of the two generations of communist women, seeking to understand the motivation for their political activism and their own understanding of it, as well as its effect on their private lives. I demonstrate that, against the background of the conditions imposed by the illegality of the Communist Party and, in particular, the King's dictatorship, communist-inclined women fell into three groups: "organized communist women," "fellow travellers," and "individual-level sympathizers." I show that the borders between these groups were fluid and that women, as their activism evolved, moved between these groups. My thesis aims to reconstruct the history of communist women's activism, seeing these women as historical and political subjects whose individual and collective actions, motivations, and efforts made an important contribution to the broader interwar Yugoslav communist movement.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis is accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 39, 493 words.

Entire manuscript: 48, 659 words

Signed: Minja Bujakovic

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor Susan Zimmermann for her guidance, extremely useful comments that shaped both my thesis and motivated me to continue researching the history of communist women.

I also want to thank my second reader, professor Krasimira Daskalova, for all the inspiring discussions we had during my semester at Sofia University.

I owe much gratitude to Professor Francisca de Haan, whose lectures and ideas motivated me to pursue further research.

I would not be able to finish my thesis without the constant encouragement and support of Isidora Grubački. In the times of the highest self-doubt, our endless chats and discussions were my anchor. For that- thank you.

I would also like to thank:

Sara Petrović, for all our discussions, words of support, and love.

My dear friends Jelisaveta Fotić, Dara Šljukić, Marija Cvejić, and Emilija Bošković – thank you for all the laughs, talks, and endless zoom talks.

All my friends whose support made me feel like home was not that far when I missed it the most.

Finally, my sister and my parents – for everything.

List of Abbreviations

CRSVJ – Centralno radničko sindikalno vijeće Jugoslavije [Central Workers' Trade Union Council of Yugoslavia]

IKK – Izvršni komitet Kominterne [Executive Committee of Communist International / ECCI]

Kominterna – Komunistička internacionala [Communist International/ Comintern]

KOSTUFRA – Komunistička studnetska frakcija – [Communist Students' Fraction]

KP – Komunistička partija

KPJ – Komunistička partija Jugoslavije [Communist Party of Yugoslavia/ CPY)

MRSV – Mjesno sindikalno vijeće [Local Workers' Syndical Union]

MŽS – Međunarodni ženski sekretarijat [International Women's Secretariat/ IWS]

NRPJ – Nezavisna radnička partija Jugoslavije [Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia]

Profinterna – Crvena sindikalna internacionala [The Red International of Labor Unions /RILU/ Profintern]

SKOJ – Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije [League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia]

SRPJ (k) – Socijalistička radnička partija Juguslavije (komunista) [Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (Communists)

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Walking my dog through Belgrade neighborhoods – Zvezdara, Vračar, and Crveni Krst, I used to pass the blue signs which carry the names of the streets: Vukice Mitrović, Đuke Dinić, Jelene Ćetković, and Nade Purić street. Looking at these names, I started to wonder: What do I know about these women? I know that they participated in the communist movement, as their accomplishments are familiar to anyone interested in the history of the Left. However, I do not know precisely what constituted their activism, how it developed "on the ground," and how it affected their private lives. Armed with these and a broad set of additional questions, I embarked on a journey, aiming to reinvestigate the history of activism of the numerous communist women whose efforts are hidden behind the names of the street signs. This thesis aims to explore the evolvement of political consciousness and self-identification of individual communist women and their everyday lives, starting from the earliest days of communist women's activism at the end of the First World War to the beginning of the Second World War in the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

My thesis builds on and goes beyond the existing rich historiography on communist women's activism in interwar Yugoslavia. Jovanka Kecman's study *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama 1918-1941* [Women of Yugoslavia in the Workers' Movement and Women's Organizations 1918-1941] and Neda Božinović's monograph Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX I XX veku [The Woman's Question in Serbia in 19th and 20th Centuries], are abundant in valuable information originating from archival sources, and they represent a mandatory starting point in the research of communist women's activism in interwar Yugoslavia. While these works outline the development of communist women's activism, in her study on "The Characteristics of the Organized Activities of Women in Yugoslavia before the Second World War," historian Lydia Sklevicky offers a brief yet valuable analysis of communist women's activism in relation to the anti-fascist struggle.[1] The more recent body of literature offers a new perspective on communist women's history. While historian Ana Rajković examines the interwar communist movement from the perspective of the new labor

[1] Lydia Sklevicky, "Karakteristike organiziranog djelovanja zena u Jugoslaviji u razdoblju do drugog svjetskog rata (I)," *Polja*, no. 308 (1984): 415-417.

history[2], Isidora Grubački uses intellectual and transnational history frameworks to expand the discussion on women's interwar organizing.[3] The work of Ida Ograjšek Gornjak[4], Stanislava Barać[5], and Gordana Stojaković[6] constitute a rich contribution to the research of this subject through the analysis of periodical publications. In his soon-to-be-published article, author Veljko Stanić offers a new, nuanced reading of Mitra Mitrović's life and work in the 1930s.[7] Even though this body of literature is rich in analysis and comes up with fruitful conclusions, it does not investigate the history of communist women as individuals, connected through their political activism in the communist movement. Relying on the results of the previous research, I put communist women's activism in the foreground by exploring the following set of questions: How did women choose to become communists? What were the origins of their motivation? How did their political journey look like? What obstacles did they meet on this path? Were they accepted by male members of the party, and on what terms? How did political activism affect their personal lives, and at what cost? Finally, how they negotiated the entanglements of daily life, political culture, and gender relations?

Following individual stories of communist women and examining the idiosyncrasies of their political journeys, I conclude that communist women did not constitute a unitary, homogenous category. I argue that by the nature of their activism and participation in the self-defined revolutionary movement, they pertained to one of the three groups: "organized communist women," "fellow travellers," and "individual-level sympathizers."

---

2 Ana Rajković, "The Position of Female Workers in Yugoslavia Between the Two World Wars - A Historical Perspective (1918 - 1939)", *Antropologija. Časopis Odeljenja za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu*, vol. 20, Issue 1 (2020): 27-54.

3 Isidora Grubački, "Communism, Left Feminism and Generations in the 1930s: The Case of Yugoslavia," in *Gender, Generations and Communism in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, eds. by Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mrozik (London: Routledge, 2020), 46-65.

4 Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opasne iluzije. Rodni stereotipi u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji*, [Dangerous Illusions. Gender stereotypes in Interwar Yugoslavia]. (Zagreb: Srednja Evropa, 2014).

5 Stanislava Barać, *Feministička kontrajavnost. Žanr ženskog portreta u srpskoj periodici 1920-1941*[Feminist Counterpublic: The Genre of Female Portrait in Serbian Periodicals]. (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2015); Stanislava Barać, „Pacifistički i antifašistički diskurs u listu Žena danas (1936–1941) "[Pacifist and Anti-fascist Discourse in the journal *Žena danas*]. U *Intelektualci i rat: 1939.-1947*: zbornik radova s međunarodnog skupa Desničini susreti, (2011), 217-231.

6 Gordana Stojaković, „Crtica o feminističkoj istoriji Grada Zagreba (1918-1940)"[Note on the Feminist History of the City of Zagreb], Presentation at the Conference „ Women's Anti-Fascism in the Eve of the Second World War", Zareb, 2014. https://zenskimuzejns.org.rs/2020/11/09/crtica-o-feministickoj-istoriji-grada-zagreba-1919-1940/; Gordana Stojaković, „Zapisi u *Ženskom pokretu*, O jugoslovenskom feminističkom iskustvu u tri slike "[Writing in *Ženski pokret.* On Yugoslav Feminist Experience in Three Pictures]. Ženski muzej, 2020. https://zenskimuzejns.org.rs/2020/11/28/zapisi-u-zenskom-pokretu-o-jugoslovenskom-feministickom-iskustvu-u-tri-slike/

7 Veljko Stanić, "Parče velkog života: Mitra Mitrović o tridesetim godinama 20. veka". [A Piece of a Big Life: Mitra Mitrović on the 1930s].(Unpublished Manuscript, 2021)

The first group includes "organized communist women," i.e., women who were formally organized within the trade unions and the Communist Party. The second group, "fellow-travellers," refers to the women who ideologically supported the Communist Party, trade unions, or both but formally and publicly stayed outside these institutions. The third group is the most heterogeneous one, encompassing "individual-level sympathizers." Women in this category supported the Communist Party's ideas on the individual level but did not take any organizational commitment. Furthermore, the motivation for their engagement usually stemmed from either their care for the communist members of the family or solidarity with political activists that encompassed donations, rent of apartments, or the employment of the communists. It should be emphasized that there were no clear-cut divisions between these three groups. Over the years, individual women crossed the boundaries of these groups or even switched categories through various actions, which I demonstrate through my analysis of communist women's *memoirs.*

Method(s) and Sources

In my research, relying on social and cultural history frameworks, I attempt to reinvestigate the history of communist women's activism in interwar Yugoslavia. To do so, I explore a range of sources, such as the official Communist Party and trade union documents, newspaper and journal articles, *memoirs*, and a rich body of secondary literature. As the examination only of the official Communist Party and trade unions documents tends to fortify the picture of the communist movement as a monolithic, one-dimensional system shaped solely by institutional politics and Communist Party directives, it is necessary to engage with sources that can challenge this narrative, such as newspaper and journal articles, and *memoirs* of communist women.[8]

The research of the journal and newspaper articles appear as a fruitful source for the research of this subject, as they preserve voices of communist women often eluded from the official Communist Party documents. Therefore, in this thesis, I explore articles written *by* communist women and published in women's journals *Jednakost, Ženski Pokret, and Žena Danas,* as well as the articles *about* communist women, published in workers' and Communist Party journals, such as *Radničke novine, Organizovani radnik, Radnik, Borba*, usually penned by men.

[8] Sara Ann. Sewell, "Antifascism in the Neighborhood: Daily Life, Political Culture, and Gender Politics in the German Communist Antifascist Movement, 1930–1933", *Fascism*, vol. 9, no. 1-2 (2020): 169. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-20201175.

While the exploration of the articles published in women's journals enlightens the trajectories of communist women and their main ideas, the analysis of the workers' and the official party journals is necessary to contextualize the development of communist women's activism accurately.

Still, to capture communist women's activism and history in particular, it is vital to shift from the institutional to the grassroots politics, using *memoirs* as the primary source that allows mapping the history of communist women's activism. Therefore, in my research, I also investigate *memoirs* of communist women stored at the Historical Archives of Belgrade, Serbia, that allow us to bridge the gap in the official records and explore the entangled history of communist women's activism and lives, shaped by everyday intersections of politics, gender, and class relations. These *memoirs* emerged as an outcome of a Communist Party action of preserving the materials related to the interwar workers' movement after 1948. During 1951 and 1952, special teams traveled around Yugoslavia, gathering participants' memories through "interviews."[9] Characterizing these sources as interviews would be misleading, as they did not take the form of conversation but of a one-sided narration. Thus, in this thesis, I refer to them as *memoirs of communist women*. All of the *memoirs* used emerged between 1958 and 1960, and they pertain to the revolutionary activity of communist women in Belgrade, so this thesis will solely focus on the development of communist women's activism in this part of Yugoslavia. Some belong to communist women, and a portion of them represent recollections of family members of communist women who lost their lives before or during the war.

Using *memoirs* as sources requires acknowledging elements of inherent subjectivity and self-censorship.[10] The question of self-censorship is crucial concerning the sources I rely on, as they emerged as part of the Communist Party-initiated action. However, some signs indicate that some of these *memoirs* were not subjected to interventions, such as editing and censorship. For example, in her *memoirs*, Julijana Dograjić gives details on the liquidation of two communists who gave away information about other members to the police. It might be speculated that *memoirs* of the more prominent activists who survived the war, such as Mitra Mitrović, were close-read, while *memoirs* of less-known activists, such as Julijana Dograjić, were not given special attention.

[9] Dušan Jončić, Gojko Malović, Saša Ilić, Nada Petrović, *Vodič kroz zbirke* [A Guide Through Collections] (Beograd : Arhiv Srbije i Crne Gore, Beograd: Bogdanović, 2007), 139.
[10] Hiroaki. Kuromiya, "Soviet Memoirs as A Historical Source." *Russian History*, vol.12, no. 2/4 (1985): 310. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24655816. (Accessed June 6, 2021).

The utility of *memoirs* as a historical source is evident: they illuminate the everyday lives of the political actors, the networks they created, and a recount of strategies of resistance and survival.[11]

Additionally, arguing that the exploration of emotions allows for a deeper understanding of the everyday lives of political activists, their actions, and the movement they belong to, I pay particular attention to communist women's emotional and familial lives. More precisely, to discuss the emotional discourses of the worlds of communist women, I engage with two concepts offered by the History of Emotions: "emotional community" and "activist mothering." Relying on Barabara Rosenweins's concept of "emotional community," which signifies a social community where certain emotions and emotional expressions are valued and devalued, I examine which emotions were valorized and which were disapproved by the communist women's "emotional community."[12] Furthermore, I demonstrate that communist women's families also constituted an "emotional community," which significantly contributed to communist women's activism. To broaden the research of the familial "emotional communities," I introduce the concept of "activist mothering" as a type of activism that develops out of mothering role and care, which turned mothers of communist women into the participants of the communist movement.[13]

Finally, I situate the Yugoslav communist women's activism in the international context by exploring the communication and the connections between the Yugoslav communist women and the International Women's Secretariat (IWS). I demonstrate that the communication between the IWS and Yugoslav communist women was established as soon as the IWS was created in 1920 and that, through the interwar period, it evolved sporadically. Further examination of this relationship would also contribute to the broader examination of the communist women's movement from the perspective of cross-border entanglements and communication.

---

[11] Andreas Lixl-Purcell, "Memoirs as History", *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. 39, Issue 1 (January 1994): 227.

[12] Jan, Plamper, William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns. "The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, And Peter Stearns." *History And Theory*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2010): 237-65. Http://Www.Jstor.Org/Stable/40864443. (Accessed June 13, 2021). Barbara Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions," Passions in Context: Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Emotions 1/1 (2010),11. online at http://www.passionsincontext.de/.

[13] Kety Turton. "Gender and Family in the Russian Revolutionary Movement" In: Ilic M. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth Century Russia and the Soviet Union.* Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018, 71.; Susan Conradsen, "Activist Mothering", In *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studie*, eds A. Wong, M. Wickramasinghe, r. hoogland and N.A. Naples (2016). DOI: 10.1002/9781118663219.

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five thematic chapters following the introduction. Drawing upon a large wide of sources, the first chapter outlines the development of communist women's activism concerning the Communist Party and Trade unions, and more broadly, Comintern and Profintern throughout the interwar period in Yugoslavia. Chapters 2-5 are dedicated to the research of the activism of the two generations of communist women, who challenged the oppressive political system they lived in and contributed to the conversation and tensions between women's emancipation and the revolutionary social transformation.[14]

The political activism of the "early generation" of communist women is in the focus of Chapter 2. This chapter encompasses the period between 1921 and 1929, characterized by the illegality of the Communist Party, introduced by decree *Obznana* [The Pronouncement]. In this chapter, I follow the political journeys of three communist women – Desanka Anđelković-Cvetković, Draginja-Draga Stefanović, and Milica Kostić. While Milica Kostić left a vital mark through her articles published in feminist journal *Ženski pokret*, and communist women's journal *Jednakost*, Desanka Cvetković and Draga Stefanović stood out as some of the leading activists of this period. To shed light on their contribution, I rely on the *memoirs* of Desanka Cvetković and Milica Kostić, as well as on their articles published in *Ženski pokret*. While Desanka Cvetković and Draga Stefanović, as well as other communist women of the "early generation," contributed to the development of communist women's activism on the institutional level, by 1929, "younger generation" of communist activists started to emerge, operating primarily on the grassroots level. The development of their grassroots activism in 1929 is followed in the last section of the chapter by examining the documents from the communist trials.

The newly emerging generation of communist women is in the focus of chapter 3. More precisely, relying on communist women's *memoirs*, in this chapter, I concentrate on the period between 1929 and 1935, aiming to explore the creation of the communist activist and the evolvement of their own political consciousness and self-identification. First, I examine the origins of these women's motivation to join a political movement and the process of joining it.

The second section focuses on communist women's performances "on the ground," which informed their understanding of politics and their political self. In the last section, I discuss the

[14] Ania Loomba, *Revolutionary desires: women, communism, and feminism in India* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 3.

position of communist women towards other women comrades and women workers, introducing a new aspect to the research of the communist women's history.

Exploration of the personal connections and attitudes of communist women sets the stage for chapter 4, which provides an insight into the world of communist women's emotions. Using the History of Emotions frameworks, especially the concept of "emotional community," I explore emotional worlds hidden behind radical political activism.[15] I argue that in the communist culture, a sense of loyalty, comradeship, and bravery were valorized, while the sense of fear was often hidden and condemned. I further expand the concept of the "emotional community" to the examination of the relationship between communist women activists and their family members. Moreover, using the concept of "activist mothering," I demonstrate that, quite often, led by care and worry for their children, communist women's mothers took part in the revolutionary movement. Finally, exploring the actions and emotions of communist women's family members, I show that the development of the communist movement depended on the "individual-level sympathizers" efforts, who were, in this case, close family members of communist women.

The importance of the "individual-level sympathizers'" contribution and participation is discussed in chapter 5, which focuses on the period from 1935-1940 and the development of the Popular Front against war and fascism. Following the Popular Front line, communist women joined the feminist organization Ženski pokret, forming a Youth Section. The results of their collaboration are discussed and analyzed throughout the chapter. In the first section, I demonstrate that the collaboration of the two groups brought visible results and contributed to the visible expansion of communist women's activism. The second section follows the development of the young communist women's activism among workers, focusing on the forms and strategies of organization and agitation. I demonstrate that this period marked the most visible transfer between the three groups of communist women: as the war was approaching, more and more women turned from "individual-level sympathizers" to "fellow-travellers," and from "fellow-travellers" to "organized communist women." The transfer between the groups led to the visible increase of women within the Communist Party membership.

[15] Barbara Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions," Passions in Context: Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Emotions 1/1, (2010): 11. online at http://www.passionsincontext.de/. (Accessed: May 4, 2021).

1 Organization and Development of Communist Women's Activism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941)

This chapter represents a detailed outline of the organization and development of communist women's activism in the interwar period in Yugoslavia. Each section focuses on a different stage of the development, illustrating how different political, cultural, and socioeconomic changes shaped communist women's activism. To fully grasp its history, I will approach this topic from two perspectives: institutional politics and grassroots politics.

In the analysis of the development of communist women's activism from the perspective of institutional politics, I consult the Yugoslav Communist Party documents that allow a twofold insight. Firstly, they demonstrate how communist women's activism evolved under the directives of the Communist Party and Independent Trade Unions (ITU), and Comintern and Profintern. Secondly, they illustrate what space for political action was provided for communist women within the Communist Party and how they manage to use this space.

Expanding the perspective and shifting it from institutional to grassroots politics reveals another side of the history of communist women's activism that only becomes visible through the analysis of a different set of sources, such as communist women's *memoirs*, autobiographies, and biographies, and focus on the intersection of politics, gender relations and everyday lives of communist women. This perspective allows us to see communist women as subjects who formed their politics on the ground and employed a wide specter of practices in their activism.

1.1 Re-Emergence of the Organized Workers' Movement: Following the Transnational Waves of Revolution (1918-1919)

The aftermath of the Great war witnessed a tidal wave of revolutions and counterrevolutions between 1918 to 1923. The fall of the empires and the success of the October revolution set the ground for the revolutionary 'Red Wave' and strife between competing ideologies in the newly created nation-states. In this atmosphere, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was proclaimed in 1918. Serbia, Croatia with Slavonia, Vojvodina, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and part of Macedonia formed historically, politically, and geographically heterogeneous mosaic of the state later known as First Yugoslavia. The state was initially formed as a constitutional, democratic, and parliamentary monarchy. Lengthy

discussions between the centralists and federalists followed the unification and creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia: while Serbian politicians advocated for the centralized monarchy, Croatian and Slovenian ones stood for the federal organization. This division marked the early beginnings of the new state and the first elections in 1919/1920, eventually won by the centralists on the motto one state, one king, one nation.[16]

Yugoslavia emerged as a country characterized by unequal development of the constituting regions. What was common for almost all regions was the fact that they were ravaged during the Great War, and consequently, people struggled with unemployment and poverty. Hardships of the war and the possibility of social transformation legitimized through the Russian revolution motivated, on the one hand, numerous workers' strikes and demonstrations, and on the other, re-establishment of the political parties and trade unions abolished during the war. From 1918, workers' struggle was inherently connected to the activities of the social democratic parties from all over Yugoslavia. The post-war re-emergence of the social democratic parties was characterized by a reorganization introduced after the Russian revolution: the possibility of a workers' revolution signaled an imminent break between parliamentary social democrats, willing to work on the reform of the existing system, and revolutionary communists, requiring a social transformation through revolution. Accordingly, revolutionary factions of social democratic parties were to gather and unify, constituting one party.

1.1.1 Organizing Women within Social Democracy Until the Formal Break-away of the Communist Labor Movement

The history of communist women's activism in the post-war years starts with the re-establishment of the activity of the social democratic parties in 1918 and early 1919 and the revival of the activity of women's sections within them. This period sheds light on the creation of the institutional base on which communist women's activism would develop in the following two decades.

The Central Secretariat of Social Democratic Women in Serbia was the first to renew its activity on November 21, 1918, with Draginja-Draga Stefanovic as its secretary. Until their organ *Jednakost* [Equality] *(*1910-1912; 1914, 1920) was re-established, articles on their work appeared in *Radničke novine* [Workers' newspaper] (1897; 1902-1915; 1918-1941), serving as

[16] Mari-Žanin Čalić, *Istorija Jugoslavije u 20. veku* [The History of Yugoslavia in 20th Century]. (Beograd: Clio, 2013), 107.

an organ of the Social Democratic Party. The re-establishment of the secretariat brought visible results: in 1919, the secretariat organized 9 sessions and 2 big gatherings of women Tobacco workers. [17] Moreover, the success of the secretariat was reflected in the number of organized workers in Belgrade.[18] By its nature, the secretariat was a centralized organization, and Belgrade constituted the center of women's actions. Even though local women's secretariats appeared in different places and reported on the results of their work [19], they seldomly maintained contact with the central Women's Secretariat in Belgrade, representing one of the downsides of the secretariat's work in its first years of re-emergence.

Social-democratic women in Bosnia and Herzegovina steadily initiated their activities in the second half of 1917, organizing events to collect the means for re-establishing the Social Democratic Party's organ *Glas Slobode* [The Voice of Freedom] (1909-1929). Already in 1918, almost 1000 women joined the Social Democratic Party.[20] This period of a high level of women's participation in the workers' movement marked a mass celebration of the International Women's Day in 1918, with more than 2000 gathered women, organized by the Women's Socialist Agitational Board and Board of Reservist women.[21] This celebration was of great importance for Muslim women, as this was one of the few occasions when many, or more concretely, more than 300 Muslim women gathered in a public space. The Secretariat of Socialist Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina was formed in 1919, and it counted 3000 women, 500 of whom were Muslim.[22] The same year's conference, "Woman and Socialism," took place in Sarajevo, when the collaboration between women's secretariats from Serbia and Bosnia was highlighted as a question of great significance.[23]

Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slavonia renewed its activity in 1917, and from the start, voiced for women's equality. An article published in *Sloboda* [Freedom] notes, "…[the transformation of the] current position of women represents the main precondition for transformation of society and elimination of human exploitation, and those are the main aims of socialism […] We demand absolute civic and political equality of women and possibility of

[17] *Radničke novine*, no. 84, April 8, 1919, p. 3, 4.
[18] At that moment, there were already 1326 organized women workers. (*Radničke novine*, no. 84, April 8, 1919, p. 3)
[19] For example, the local women's secretariat in Niš, headed by Sofija Vajdić, reported on the high success of their initial activities, which included the two conferences that resulted in many women joining the Party, Stitchers's Union, and Tobacco Workers' Union. *Radničke novine*, no. 67, March 22, 1919, p. 4.
[20] *Glas slobode*, no. 20, March 9, 1920.
[21] The Board of Reservist Women was formed to help women of the late soliders after the Great War.
[22] *Jednakost*, no. 4, May 1, 1920, p. 4.
[23] *Glas slobode*, no. 70, March 27, 1919.

their action in any field according to their capabilities, but we do not want it in a current social order but in the social order proposed by socialism".[24] Women's secretariat was also formed in Osijek, Croatia, in 1919 under the leadership of Marija Sukić, and, as historian Ana Rajković states, the secretariat operated successfully.[25]

In 1919, in the organization of the Social Democratic Party, a big Regional Women's Conference took place in Slovenia. The main items on the conference agenda were women's political and economic position and the organization of work among women.[26] Marija Rakovec gave a speech on the need for the political rights of proletarian women. She referred to the words of prominent socialist Alojzija Štebi, who urged proletarian women to demand their rights and join the Social Democratic Party as the only party that included women in their agenda. The conference resulted in a resolution, which demanded full social, political, and cultural equality of women, the formation of women's organizations in Slovenia, and the need to publish on women's issues in the socialist periodical *Naprej* [Forward] (1917-1923).[27]

Regional women's secretariats from Serbia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, and Croatia were to unify at a Women's Conference scheduled for April 20, 1919. In the run-up to the conference, the women's secretariat from Serbia addressed social democratic parties from the region, requiring them to send delegates for the Conference. [28] By this time, on a broader plan, the strife among Social Democrats, who represented a moderate fraction and wanted to operate in the realms of the existing sociopolitical order, and communists, who insisted on a class struggle against the bourgeoisie, i.e., the regime, resulted in the separation of the two factions. The revolutionary factions of the social democratic parties from different parts of Yugoslavia organized separately and called for unification. The Congress of Unification of revolutionary fractions, the Congress of Unification of the trade unions, and the first Yugoslav Socialist (Communist) Women's Conference took place in Belgrade from April 20 to April 23, 1919. As an outcome, the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (Communists)- SRPJ (K), the Central Workers' Trade Union Council of Yugoslavia (CRSVJ), and the Central Women's

[24] Karlo Dražaić', "Povijest i ideologija Socijaldemokratske stranke Hrvatske i Slovenije na prijelazu iz Habsburške Monarhije u monarhističku Jugoslaviju" [The History and Ideology of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slovenia inbetween Habsburg Monarchy and Monarchist Yugoslavia]. Master teza, (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2019), 121. https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:131:409482 (Accessed: March 24, 2021).
[25] Rajković, "The Position of Female Workers in Yugoslavia", 39.
[26] 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), 74.
[27] *Naprej*, no. 73, March 31, 1919, p. 3.
[28] *Radnicke novine*, no. 51, March 6,1919, p. 3.

Secretariat of Socialist (communists) came into existence, constituting the organized communist movement of Yugoslavia.[29]

1.2 The Central Secretariat of Socialist Women (Communists) and the Struggle for Equality (1919-1920)

The period between 1919 and 1919 represents a short yet eventful period in the history of communist women's activism. During this period, communist women operated within the Central Secretariat of Socialist Women (Communists) and a high number of regional and local secretariats, organizing conferences, gatherings, reading groups, and small-scale group meetings known as *kruzhoks.* Their activities resulted in a visible increase in women's participation in the social democratic parties and trade unions, which formed the basis for developing communist women's activism in the future conditions of political repression and illegality of the Communist Party.

1.2.1 Early Success of Communist Women's Activism

From April 21 to April 23, 1919, socialist women from Serbia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, and Croatia participated in a conference, resulting in the creation of the Central Women's Secretariat of Socialists (Communists). The conference ended in a declaration of the Statute, which highlighted the spread of the Secretariat's work through the formation and development of regional and local sections as a prime goal. Aspiring to fulfill it, communist women planned to establish regional secretariats Yugoslavia, more precisely, in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Skoplje, Split, Zagreb, Novi Sad, Osijek, and Cetinje, which would be connected to the Central Secretariat, located in Belgrade.[30] As 11 issues of *Jednakost* prove, during 1920, communist women's activity was on the rise.

By the middle of 1920, secretariats of communist women were being formed throughout Yugoslavia. In Serbia, they counted more than 800 members.[31] In Vojvodina, the women's secretariat was formed in late August 1920. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, communist women organized in several cities during 1919 and formed local secretariats all over the country.[32]

---

[29] Josip Cazi, *Nezavisni sindikati* (1921-1929), Knj. 1. [Independent Trade Unions (1921-1929), Book I]. (Zagreb: Republičko vijeće SSJ za Hrvatsku, 1962), 23.
[30] *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije, Kongresi i zemaljske konferencije KPJ 1919-1937, Tom II* [Historical Archives of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Congresses and Conferences CPY 1919-1937, vol. II]. (Beograd: Impresum CK KPJ, 1949), 25.
[31] Communist Women's Secretariats were formed in Valjevo, Niš, Smederevo, Užice, Zaječar, pirot, Mladenovac, Jagodina, Valjevo, Šabac; In Vojvodina communist women were especially active in Novi Sad and Zrenjanin.
[32] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 83.

Work on the organization of communist women in Slovenia started with a delay. The creation of the Workers' Socialist Party and their joining of the SRPJ in 1920 signaled the start of organizing among women.[33] Antonija Tončka Čeč stood out as the leading figure in Slovenia. She played a quintessential role in the Union of Miners of Yugoslavia, within which she organized youth and women's sections.[34] The situation was different in the rural parts of Yugoslavia, such as Macedonia and Montenegro. Here, communist women got organized in secretariats in the late 1920s only, yet they were also active in the early 1900. In Macedonia, prominent socialist Rosa Plaveva, who worked on organizing socialist women since 1909, in 1920 was dedicated to establishing the Organization of Socialist Women in Skopje, as a section of the Central Women's Secretariat of Socialist (communists). In Montenegro, women's boards also emerged in 1920. One of the Montenegro section activities considered a great success was the demonstrations against costliness, marked by the participation of over 300 women workers.[35] Reports from local secretariats published in *Jednakost* show that communist women developed activity even in small towns and were in contact with the Central Secretariat.

In June 1920, during the Second Party Congress in Vukovar, the Party was renamed Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije [Communist Party of Yugoslavia] (KPJ/CPY). According to the Statute of the Central Women's Secretariat, simultaneously with the party congress, women were to organize their conference. Owing to lack of material means and the absence of the material support on the part of the Communist Party, which highlights the organizational and material dependence of the Secretariat, the Women's Secretariat was not able to gather all delegates needed to organize a conference, so instead, they organized a plenary session, that took place on June 23, 1920. [36] Delegates from Croatia- Adela Pavošević, Bosnia- Anka Tamel and Lucija Pažin, Serbia- Desanka Cvetković-Anđelković, Draginja-Draga Stefanović, and Persa Mihajlović, and Vojvodina (the delegate was not named in the report) attended the session. Despite being marginalized in the history of the interwar communist movement in Yugoslavia, all delegates present at the plenary session constituted the "early generation" of communist women and played a significant role in women's organizations in the parts of the Yugoslavia they lived in. For example, Adela Pavošević, known as Luxemburg of Osijek, represented one of the central figures at the local women's secretariat in Osijek and the local

[33] Ibid. 85.
[34] https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1020920/ (Accessed: April 10, 2021)
[35] Dušanka Kovačević, *Borbeni put žena Jugoslavije*, [The Struggle of Women in Yugoslavia]. (Beograd: Sveznanje, 1972), 77.
[36] *Jednakost*, no. 7, July 15,1920, p. 3.

syndical council of Osijek.[37] The activism of Desanka Cvetković- Anđelković, which will be in the focus of Chapter II, significantly contributed to the development of communist women's organizing in Serbia, and broader, in Yugoslavia. Anka Tamel was a member of the regional Women's Secretariat in Bosnia and contributed to the development of other local secretariats in Bosnia. Moreover, both Cvetković and Tamel were chosen as delegates for the Second Party Conference.

During the Plenary Session, Draga Sefanović reported on the regional women's secretariat in Serbia, Anka Tamel on Bosnia, and Adela Pavošević on Croatia. Overall, they were unsatisfied with the results of the secretariat's work, believing that the secretariat did not reach its full potential due to the mass arrests and terror over the workers described in all their reports. As one of the problems, they highlighted the fragile and unstable connection between the secretariats on local and regional levels.[38] The explanation of the low success of the secretariat can be considered realistic since persecution and arrests of workers and anyone connected with revolutionary actions or ideas did start already in 1919. The "white terror" in Yugoslavia emerged as a response to the revolutionary initiatives, constituting a counterrevolution that will mark the entire interwar period. Hence, even though SRPJ, CRSVJ, and the Women's Secretariat were not formally illegal in this early stage of the organization, their work was influenced by the "white terror."

Concurrently with the rise of governmental control, problems arose in the rows of the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia and the Central Workers' Syndical Union. The main problems included the Communist Party's ideological and action plan.[39] Both Communist Party and the Syndical Union went through factional strife, with communists and reformists on the oppositional sides. One of the issues on the agenda was the direct connection between the party and the Unions. Reformists wanted to eliminate the party's influence within the trade unions, while communists insisted on the revolutionary connection between the two.

Consequently, reformists that constituted large portions of the trade unions were no longer members of the Communist Party.[40] The strife within the Party and the Unions affected communist women's activism in certain parts of Yugoslavia. In October 1920, reformists

[37] http://www.antifasistickivjesnik.org/hr/prenosimo/6/Adela_Pavosevic_1897_1928_Heroina_radnickog_pokreta/7/ (Acessed: April 8,2020)
[38] *Jednakost*, no. 7, July 15, 1920, p. 2.

[40] The Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia changed its name into the Communist Party at the 1920 Party Congress in Vukovar.

published "Our Disputable Questions: Manifesto of the CPY Opposition," and whoever signed the Manifesto was subsequently either expelled or voluntarily left the Party. In the Manifesto of the Opposition, a stream of the party members voiced against the homogeneity of the party, as well as centralization and strict discipline prescribed by the Comintern. More importantly, signees of the opposition argued that Comintern's revolutionary politics would only harm the worker's movement in Yugoslavia, as politically, socially, and economically unready for a revolution.[41] Among the people who signed it were prominent figures of the women workers' movement such as Anka Tamel and Marija Žižmund, as well as 37 other women from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Radoslava Ilić, Sofija Levi, and Milica Đurić- Topalović from Serbia. It is unknown whether any of them continued with their activism after 1920, as their names appear neither in the existing historiography nor in the Party documents I accessed. It could be assumed that some of them operated within the Socijalistička radnička partija Jugoslavije [Yugoslav Socialist Workers' Party], formed by the opposition in 1921, but this topic is yet to be explored. Shortly thereafter, in December 1920, the government published the infamous document *Obznana* [The Pronouncement], outlawing all communist activities and the work of the Communist Party.[42] The declaration of *Obznana* put a stop to the development of communist women's activism in this period. Nonetheless, as the following chapter will demonstrate, despite the illegality of the Community Party and trade unions, communist women managed to find a way to continue their struggle.

1.2.2 International Women's Secretariat (IWS) and Yugoslav Communist Women

The Communist Women's International emerged after the First International Conference of Communist Women, held in Moscow in 1920. The same year, the Executive Committee of Communist International (ECCI) established the International Women's Secretariat (IWS) as a section of Comintern and declared Clara Zetkin as a secretary.[43] IWS (also referred to as the Communist Women's Movement) was established to coordinate the work of women's committees of different national parties through international correspondents, contributing to the development of women's struggle for emancipation and mass organizing in different

[41] Text of the Manifesto: https://www.noviplamen.net/glavna/nasa-sporna-pitanja-manifest-opozicije-komunisticke-partije-jugoslavije/ (Accessed: April 9, 2021).
[42] Hilde Katrine Haug, *Creating Socialist Yugoslavia: Tito, Communist Leadership, and the National Question* (New York: I. B. ... Fund, 1962), 17.
[43] John Riddell, *Toward the United Front: Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922*. Historical Materialism Book Series, v. 34, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 50.

countries[44]. Archival documents stored in the fond Međurnarodni ženski sekretarijat (MŽS) [International Women's Secretariat/ IWS] in the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade reveal a network of communication established between the IWS and Yugoslav communist women. Research of these documents indicates that, although their communication was discontinuous, Yugoslav communist women maintained contact with the IWS.

The First International Conference of Communist Women took place in Moscow in 1920, along with the Second Congress of Communist International (Comintern), with delegates from 19 countries.[45] Yugoslav representative Ilija Milkić, who participated in the Comintern Congress, did not attend the Conference.[46] However, he did send a memo stating that he, and the Yugoslav Women's Communist Movement, are in complete agreement with all decisions reached at the conference.[47] This way, Yugoslav communist women followed the creation of the Communist Women's International and the work of the First Communist Women's Conference. In October 1920, the Manifesto of the conference appeared on the front page of *Jednakost.* The same issue included a detailed report from the Conference. This report is of particular significance for the research of the international communist women's movement, as complete proceedings from this conference will be published for the first time in the forthcoming book of Daria Dyakonova and Mike Taber, *The Communist Women's Movement (1920-22).*

The report stated that the Executive Committee of Comintern had not planned to organize a separate women's conference to discuss the woman's question. However, the high number of women who joined the Comintern Congress made them rethink their decision and organize a

[44] John Riddell, eds. *To the Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921.* Historical Materialism Book Series, volume 91, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 1026.
[45] For more information on the and International Women's Secretariat (IWS) see Bayerlein, Bernhard H. 2006. "Zwischen Internationale und Gulag. Präliminarien zur Geschichte der internationalen kommunistischen Frauenbewegung (1919-1945)". International Newsletter of Communist Studies Online (19) 27-47; Waters, Elizabeth. "In the Shadow of the Comintern: The Communist Women's Movement, 1920-43", in Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young (eds.), *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989, 29-56.; Zimmermann, Susan. Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft. Internationale Geschlechterpolitik, IGB-Gewerkschafterinnen und die Arbeiter- und Frauenbewegungen der Zwischenkriegszeit (Women's politics and men's trade union. International gender policy, the women trade unionists of the IFTU and the labour and women's movements of the interwar period), Vienna:Löcker Verlag, 2021; Jean-Jacques Marie, "The Women's Section of the Comintern, from Lenin to Stalin," in Christine Fauré (ed.), *Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women*. New York: Routledge, 2003, 275–285; Studer, Brigitte (Translated by Regan Kramer), "Communisme et féminisme ", *Clio*, no, 41 (2015): 139-152; Suder, Brigitte, *The Transnational World of Cominternians*, Transl. by Dafydd Rees Roberts. Basingstoke [etc.]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
[46] *Jednakost*, 10, 11, October 1920, p. 10.
[47] To the Chair of the First International Women's Conference, July 30, 192, box 1, item 1, Međunarodni ženski sekretarijat (MŽS) [International Women's Secretariat/IWS], Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd, Srbija. [Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia].

conference dedicated to communist women.[48] Before the conference, a special commission was appointed to work with the "Theses for the Communist Women's Movement," previously drafted by Clara Zetkin.[49] However, the "Theses" did not arrive in time, so the Conference relied on the theses proposed by Inessa Blonina, re-written by the commission.[50] Her suggestion was to publish two manifestos: one that would address proletarian women of the world, and the other that would address working women of Poland. This suggestion was accepted, but this raised a discussion. The main criticism was addressed to the heroization of the role of the Second International in women's liberation, and this issue took the central place in the discussion of the delegates. When agreements were made, the theses were organized in three sections: work among women in capitalist countries, work among women in Soviet Russia, and work among women in half-capitalist countries.[51] In the meantime, the theses written by Clara Zetkin finally reached Moscow. The final decision was to combine both versions of the theses and add an introduction supervised and approved by comrades Bukharin, Meyer, and Shublina. As stated in the article in *Jednakost,* whether these two versions were merged in the end remained unknown. Nonetheless, the Theses represented a main document to be followed in the organization of the communist women's movement, which, as Chapter II will later demonstrate, would be emphasized in the Party resolutions in the mid-1920s.[52]

As official party documents indicate, the Second Conference of Communist Women, held in Moscow in 1921, was attended by Ilija Milkić. IWS documents and existing literature mention no further communication between the IWS and Yugoslav communist women by 1925. At the same time, *memoirs* of Desanka Cvetković reveal that she attended the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 in Moscow and a separate gathering dedicated to the woman's question. The analysis of this episode depicted in her *memoirs* demonstrates that, as opposed to the IWS documents and existing literature that characterize the period between 1921 and 1924 as a period of stagnation of communist women's activism, communist women were active and not only maintained contact with the IWS, but also attended the meetings of communist women in the eve of the Fourth Comintern Congress.

[48] *Jednakost*, 10, October 1920, p. 10.
[49] https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/3rd-congress/riddell-translations/Women-resolutions.htm (Acessed: January 16, 2020).
[50] Inessa Blonina is probably Inessa Armand, who used the name Ellena Blonina as a literary pseudonym.
[51] *Jednakost*, no. 10, October 1920, p. 10.
[52] Snežana Pejanović, *Društvena jednakost i emancipacija žena*, [Social Equality and Emancipation of Women].123. AFŽ Arhiv (Accessed: October 23, 2020).

The communication between the Communist Women's International and Yugoslav communist women developed sporadically and could be divided into three phases: Phase of the initial connection (1921-1925); Phase of increased communication (1928); Phase of the anti-fascist struggle (1930-1934). The first period of communication was the focus of this section. The second phase of increased communication occurred in 1928 when both Comintern and Profintern made essential steps towards the work among women, which, as Chapter II will argue, affected the development of communist women's activism and organizing in Yugoslavia. The last communication phase between the two, discussed in Chapter V, occurred between 1930 and 1934 when communist women intensely organized on the ground, and the threat of the incoming war and fascism became palpable.

1.3 The illegal Communist Party and Alternative Spaces for Organized Struggle (1921-1924)

Young Yugoslavia, led by King Aleksandar, followed the rise of the Communist Party in 1920. In December the same year, *Obznana* [The Pronouncement] was introduced, outlawing all communist activities, organizations, journals, and propaganda. The enforcement of *Obznana* further enforced the "white terror" in Yugoslavia, which in response evoked a rise of the "red terror" aimed against governmental officials. The government responded swiftly by introducing the Law on the Protection of the State and Public Safety. From that point, illegality became a trademark of the interwar communist movement.

In this climate, two new legal organizations emerged in the early 1920s: Nezavisni Sindikati Jugoslavije [Independent Trade Unions of Yugoslavia/ ITU] in 1921 and Nezavisna Radnička Partija Jugoslavije (NRPJ) [Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia] in 1923. Under these circumstances, communist women's activism still developed but at a slow pace. Even though 1921 to 1924 represented the most debilitating phase of communist women's activism, communist women were still active and sought to adapt to the new political circumstances. Their successful organization in the conditions of illegality contributed to the institutional recognition of their efforts which led to the participation of several women in the highest Communist Party levels. Moreover, since 1929, it is possible to follow the proliferation of communist women's grassroots activism.

1.3.1 Communist Women within Independent Trade Unions and Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (1921-1924)

The beginning of 1921 was marked by the mass arrests of the communists, confiscation of their materials from the archives and libraries, closure of journals.[53] Moreover, the activity of all unions that belonged to CRSVJ [Central Workers' Trade Union Council of Yugoslavia] was prohibited.[54] At the same time, in 1921 and 1922, new labor-related laws were introduced: Law on the Work Inspection, Law on the Workers' Insurance, and The Workers' Protection Act.[55] The Worker's Protection Act and the Law on Workers' Insurance were created with reference to international instruments adopted by the International Labor Organization (ILO). The Workers' Protection Act regulated working hours, introducing an 8-hour workday, hygiene in the workplace, night work, maternity leave, etc.

Nonetheless, journal articles and reports from the Chamber of Labor demonstrate that mistreatment of the workers was presumed even after introducing the Workers' Protection Act, particularly regarding women and children's workers. The fact that these laws were introduced while trade unions and party activities were abolished might be interpreted as a signal that the government was aware of the power of the organized workers and wanted to temper it through protective legislation. Nonetheless, as work conditions remained the same on the ground and the number of workers' strikes grew, the re-establishment of the trade unions and the party followed naturally.

In March 1921, the minister of social policy declared that trade unions could renew their activity if they agree not to participate in any political activity.[56] Accordingly, in October 1921, revolutionary unions gathered and re-established their activity under Nezavisni Sindikati Jugoslavije [Independent Trade Unions of Yugoslavia/ ITU]. ITU was imagined as an independent grassroots movement dedicated to the struggle of the workers. The newly formed union used the word *independent* in their name instead of the word *neutral*, even though the government demanded political neutrality to legally re-establish the union's work. The union explained its reasoning for this wording in the following manner: Independence from the Party does not include political neutrality, since every economic struggle has a political character; moreover, Independent Trade Unions are not leading the *only* economic struggle, since they

[53] Cazi, *Nezavisni sindikati*, 33.
[54] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 125.
[55] Edib Hasanagić, *Nezavisni Sindikati* [Independent Trade Unions]. (Beograd: Rad, 1951), 50.
[56] Ibid.31.

are fighting against the capitalist class and capitalist exploitation.[57] Although ITU was formed as formally politically independent, they were far from detached from the activity of the Communist Party. Using ITU as a legal platform, communists could continue with their activities, including legal work through party trustees in factories, workshops, and unions, the establishment of syndical newspapers and journals, and education of the masses through them.[58]

At the same time, the Communist Party held conferences outside Yugoslavia, aiming to re-establish its work on a new, legal platform. Analysis of the party and trade union-related documents and the existing body of literature leads one to believe that in the period between 1921 and 1924, communist women and their organizations were marginalized and obliterated by these institutions, and that, therefore, communist women's activism was extinguished in this period. However, communist women and their work among women were discussed during the Communist Party conference in Vienna, 1922, when Draga Stefanović was elected member of the Executive Party Committee.[59] The same year, party officials elected Desanka Cvetković as one of the delegates for the Fourth Comintern Congress in Moscow, 1922. This proves that even in the first period of illegality, characterized by inner-Party factional struggles and difficulties in re-organizing, communist women were active in the higher party rows. On the other hand, *memoirs* of Desanka Cvetković reveal that communist women also performed a specter of activities on the ground, formally outside the Party.

In January 1923, the Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia was created, providing a legal platform for communist activities. The party program proclaimed full equality of men and women concerning their participation in the party and suffrage and emphasized the need for the creation of the Central NRPJ Women's Secretariat, with two representatives at the Party Congress that decide the party's work.[60] The formation of the Central NRPJ Women's Secretariat came with a delay: it was not formed until August 5, 1923.[61] Persida Krstić was elected as a president, Desanka Cvetković as a central secretary, Draga Stefanović as a regional secretary, and Toska Popović as a treasurer. [62] In November 1923, the Central Women's

[57] Cazi, *Nezavisni sindikati*, 270.
[58] The Independent Trade Unions' organs were established: *Organizovani Radnik* [Organized Worker] in Belgrade, *Štampa* [The Print] in Zagreb, and *Radničko Jedinstvo* [Workers' Unity] in Sarajevo. Cazi, *Nezavisni sindikati*, 163.
[59] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 126.
[60] *Radnik*, no. 10. January 31, 1923, p. 3., *Radnik*, no. 22, March 4,1923, p. 3.
[61] *Radnik*, no .69, August 12, 1923.
[62] Ibid.

Secretariat published their regulations, highlighting the importance of creating regional women's secretariats, which, by 1924, emerged in Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and, a year later – Slovenia.[63]

Despite the attempts to attract women workers through agitational articles that periodically appeared in the press, the number of women in the party and women's secretariats remained relatively low. Data from 1924 demonstrates that only 120 women joined NRPJ, and 12 women remained in the illegal Communist Party. [64] Nonetheless, women's secretariats agitated among workers and contributed to International Women's Day and International Workers' Day celebrations. Their agitational activity in this period mainly pertains to the publication of articles in the party press. An article published in the May issue of *Borba* (1922-1929) [The Struggle] represents an excellent example of agitation: "In their own organization, women workers find both protection and a weapon to fight exploitation. […] In their own organization, women workers do not feel abandoned and weak, like she feels outside the organization. In the organization, she feels like a part of something greater, as a soldier in a great army that wants to free the world from the misery, hunger, and the troubles of social injustice. Being without organization means being without a compass to lead you in life. Without support in the struggle, means being convicted to death to bear the burden of her own unjust social position. Being organized means going consciously forward to a better life."[65] However, from 1921 to 1924, women workers seldomly joined the communist women's movement and trade unions. This was not an isolated case pertaining just to women: Aleksa Djilas notes, in 1924, there were less than 1000 party members.[66] What is more, in July 1924, the government again prohibited the work of the NRPJ and all its sections and organizations.[67]

1.3.2 The Features of Communist Women's Organizing (1921-1924)

The overview of the development of communist women's activism in the early 1920s presented above shows that the organization of communist women had two characteristic features: its inability to attract a high number of women workers to participate in the NRPJ and trade unions and the rising number of communist women in higher party structures. When it comes to the success of the communist women's movement in attracting women workers to join the party

[63] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 133.
[64]Ibid. 128.
[65] *Borba*, no. 20, May 5, 1924.
[66] Aleksa Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 64.
[67] *Borba*, no. 20, May 5, 1920.

and Unions, one factor that must be analyzed is how women workers' socioeconomic position contributed to the low participation of women in formal organizations.

Between 1921 and 1926, the number of men in the labor force decreased by 8%, while the number of women workers grew by 97%.[68] The growing numbers of women in the labor market created competition among workers, which could have contributed to women workers' fear of being replaceable. Any rebellion or resistance at work involved a considerable risk of losing a job. There were cases when women who joined ITU were dismissed from their jobs. For example, 18 women workers were fired in Croatia when their employer found out about their union organization.[69] Lastly, low literacy levels among women and traditional masculinist culture within the trade unions could be regarded as a source of women's unwillingness to join the Independent Trade Unions and the Party. Finally, this period witnessed mass arrests and killings of the communists, and the working-class members considered communists. Since the ITU was connected to the Communist Party, joining their ranks was a signal that a person was inclined to revolutionary ideas.

Consequently, one of the reasons why women workers preferred to act separately from ITU, or not to act at all in some instances, could be the fear of arrest and/or prosecution. Another vital factor must be mentioned: many women lost their husbands during WWI and took on breadwinner roles within the family. So, their potential arrest would leave the rest of the family without any sources of income. It would be wrong to think that women workers were pardoned from the arrests and prosecutions. On the contrary, many women have fallen as victims of "white terror." The most famous case was the murder and torture of Ljubica Ljubičić in 1924, who died in prison due to severe injuries.[70] Ljubica's death sparked numerous articles in different journals and even reached the delegates present at the Third International Communist Women's Conference. Clara Zetkin, along with other delegates, sent a letter of support to the women workers of Yugoslavia, offering their condolences and support for the future struggle of women against the "white terror."[71] While there are no other relevant documents related to this year, this article indicates that the IWS was, if not in direct contact, then at least familiar with the development of the communist women's activism in Yugoslavia.

---

[68] Lydia Sklevicky, "Karakteristike organiziranog djelovanja zena u Jugoslaviji u razdoblju do drugog svjetskog rata (I)," [The Characteristics of the Organized Activities of Women in Yugoslavia before the Second World War]. *Polja*, no. 308 (1984): 415.
[69] Cazi, *Nezavisni sindikati*, 452.
[70] Reports on the murder were followed by a protest of 150 women workers and 50 workers, organized by the Independent Trade Unions.
[71] *Okovani radnik*, no. 2, August 31,1924, p. 3.

The second characteristic of the communist women's organizing was women's participation in the higher party ranks. More precisely, in this period, several women played an important role in the higher ranks of the Party structure. Draga Stefanović, a member of the Executive Board of the Communist Party, took part in the formation of the NRPJ and played a prominent role in the Central Women's Secretariat. Savka Tasić, Toska Popović, and Persida Krstić were members of the party administration, and Adela Pavošević became a member of the Central Party Council.[72] The inclusion of women in the higher party ranks at this point came as a form of recognition and legitimization of the most prominent and active communist women. Both Draga Stefanović and Adela Pavošević contributed immensely not only to the formation of women's secretariats but, more broadly, also to the development of the communist movement. Both held numerous speeches for the masses of workers and initiated various strikes and demonstrations. Moving up the party hierarchy meant that their efforts as party members were acknowledged.

1.4 The Institutional Acknowledgement of the Importance of the Work among Women (1925-1929)

Although the governmental prohibition of ITU and Independent Workers' NRPJ in 1924 threatened to hinder the already meager development of communist women's activism, ITU managed to renew their activity and changed the focus of the work among women to trade unions. Nonetheless, amidst the inner-party faction struggles, in 1925, women within the trade unions and the party's work among the women were still marginalized. IWS noticed the lack of activity in the Yugoslav, and more broadly Balkans' communist women's movement, and Communist Parties from the Balkans (Yugoslav, Greek, Bulgarian and Romanian) were asked to send reports on the activity of their movements in 1925. An IWS memo published in a year stressed that although comrades from the Yugoslav Communist Party repeatedly highlighted the importance of the work among women, no such work was done and that the work of the communist women's movement should be given more attention [73]

The Yugoslav Communist Party addressed this issue only a year later, during the Third Communist Party Congress in 1926. Congress included the creation of the commission on the work among women and the establishment of the legal women's journal, both within the party

[72] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 128.
[73]To the Chair of the Balkan Communist Federation, March 25, 1925, box 1, folder 4, Međunarodni ženski sekretarijat (MŽS) [International Women's Secretariat], Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd, Srbija. [Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia], 2, 3.

and ITU frameworks among the main tasks.[74] Following the Congress, ITU established special agitation and propaganda boards.[75] However, no significant development was made in the following two years. A report on the work of the Local Party Committee in Zagreb noted that during 1927, the Local Committee ignored work among women and even hindered all communist women's initiatives.[76] For that reason, during the Plenary Session of the Mjesno sindikalno vijeće [Local Workers' Syndical Union (MRSV)], a Commission for the Work Among Women was set with Josip Broz Tito, Anka Butorac, Anka Gržetić I Zora Nikolić as leading members.[77] As future secretary of the Communist Party, Tito, and secretary of the MRSV, addressed the work among women and/or its lack in all his reports.[78] A women's Committee was also formed within ITU in Belgrade. However, as a report sent to the IWS states, it did not cooperate with the Zagreb Women's Committee and achieved no noticeable results.[79]

The noticeable change in the development of the Yugoslav communist movement occurred after The Sixth Comintern and The Fourth Profintern Congresses in 1928 and the IV Congress of the Communist Party in a year. As Communist Party was illegal in Yugoslavia, the Congress, known as Dresden Congress, took place in Dresden from November 3 to November 15, 1928. The Dresden Congress, organized several months after Comintern and Profintern congresses, particularly highlighted the importance of work among the women and women workers' movement and introduced a Resolution on Woman's Question. The resolutions of Comintern and Profintern visibly shaped this resolution. More precisely, during the Fourth Congress of Profintern, work within the trade unions was proclaimed the most important form of legal work among women workers. Within the trade unions, women were to organize flying meetings, conferences and gatherings, educational, alphabetical, and sewing courses.[80] Accordingly, the Communist Party resolution stated: "The Communist Party underestimated work among working women and peasant women, and even if the work was being done in certain places, it

[74] Milan Vesović, *Revolucionarna štampa u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918-1929* [Revolutionary Press in the Kingdom of SHS 1918-1929]. (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, Institut za savremenu istoriju), 157.
[75] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 137.
[76] Josip Broz Tito, *Sabrana Dijela, vol. I* (1981), 76.
[77] Ibid, 85.
[78] This is important to mention, as the Party and its sections would develop in the future under directives approved also by him.
[79]April 17, 1928, box 1, folder 7, Međunarodni ženski sekretarijat (MŽS) [International Women's Secretariat/IWS], Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd, Srbija. [Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia].
[80] Ibid 3.

was considered women's work."[81] It further emphasized that due to this systemic underestimation, communist women had received neither the support they needed nor concrete directives, which made their work unorganized and low in success.[82] The ultimate goal set before the party by this resolution was organized, planned, and systemic work among women that would result in the mass organization of the female proletariat and create the united revolutionary workers' front. The Party was to "[…] build the Party apparatus for the work among women from the bottom to the top"[83] To do that, a special women's commission should be formed primarily in the industrial centers, and then broader, in the villages and cities that count high numbers of women workers. An extensive section of the resolution was dedicated to the organization of the work among women, and it included illegal and legal work. Illegal work pertained to the organization of *kruzhoks*, which would gather many women workers and discuss their daily problems. Legal work included the work of communist women within the non-communist women organizations. Working in non-communist women's organizations, communist women were to influence members and teach them about the faults of feminism, which would ultimately make them leave such organizations and join the communist ones. The entire resolution was, in fact, written following the "Third Period" line, introduced by Comintern in 1928, which emphasized the need for the national parties to prepare for the upcoming revolution by radicalizing the struggle of the working class, which inevitably included women workers. Moreover, the "Third Period" line was based on the ouverte antagonism towards non-revolutionary (reformist) organizations, which is reflected in the part of the Yugoslav Communist Party's resolution that points women to work in feminist organizations.

The text of the Dresden Resolution on the work among women was sent to IWS in 1928, along with four other reports that described the position of women workers in Yugoslavia and their rising participation in strikes and protests. The proliferation of the communication between the Yugoslav communist women's movement and IWS could be understood as a sign of the evolution and development of communist women's activism and the work among women. Even though in 1929, following the Dresden resolution, the Central Secretariat of Women of the Yugoslav Communist Party was formed and started operating among women workers, its

[81] Rezolucija o radu KPJ među ženama [Resolution on the Work of CPY Among Women], 1928, box 1, folder 5, Međunarodni ženski sekretarijat (MŽS) [International Women's Secretariat/IWS], Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd, Srbija. [Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia], 2.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

work was shortly interrupted and shaped by the introduction of the King's dictatorship in 1929. The dictatorship included abolishing the constitution and ban of all political parties and the Independent Trade Unions' activity. With a military-monarchist dictatorship, the year 1929 marked a new period in the history of women workers of Yugoslavia.

1.5 From the King's Dictatorship to the Organized Communist Women's Activism (1929-1934)

The period between 1929 and 1934 could be described, concerning the development of communist women's activism, as a transitional phase between high hopes brought by the IV Party Congress and more organized communist women's activism of the mid-1930s. The characterization of this phase as "transitional" does not imply that communist women were not active in this period but that their activism in this period started taking the shape it will nurture through the whole decade. This period is characterized by the vastest and visible discrepancies between institutional and grassroots politics.

In the matter of institutional politics, in this first period after the introduction of the dictatorship, the Communist Party's work was reduced to a minimum, which would lead us to believe that communist women's activism diminished, too. However, the change in the perspective from institutional to grassroots politics, possible through the analysis of the different types of sources, confutes this conclusion. More precisely, communist women's *memoirs* pertaining to this period allow a glimpse into the world of the grassroots politics that developed even in periods of low institutional communist activity. As I will show in the following section and describe in detail in Chapter III, in the period between 1929 and 1934, communist women performed a range of activities "on the ground" outside the Communist Party that would eventually lead to their formal membership in the party.

1.5.1 Organizing Communist Women: Two Perspectives

The beginning of the 1930s was marked by the complete illegality of the Communist Party and all-party instances. Data on the persecution and arrests in this period explains the stagnation of the official organization in this period: In 1929 and 1930, more than 10 000 people were arrested as political prisoners; 2857 members of the Communist Party and Youth Section of the Communist Party were taken to court, some were sentenced to life in prison, and some even

to a death penalty. More than 900 were tortured, and 56 were killed.[84] Documents and personal files from the Yugoslav penitentiaries that will be discussed in Chapter II witness these numbers.

Owing to the illegality of the Communist Party, finding data and documents related to this period is somewhat challenging. However, several reports sent to the IWS in the early 1930s give the contours of this period, demonstrating again that Yugoslav communists persisted with the communication with the IWS after 1928 and that their activism did not cease to exist with the decrease of the official party activity. This is especially important since the Central Secretariat of Women of the Yugoslav Communist Party marked the connection with the IWS as one of their main tasks in 1929.[85] Even though the Central Secretariat of Women of the Yugoslav Communist Party had a well-developed plan and agenda, one of the reports sent to the IWS in the early 1930s paints a different picture, stating that nobody doubted the fact that work among women should be organized; however, there were no developments in that field.[86] The report notes: "[…] an article or two in the party press, International Women's Day campaign, and we still do nothing more than that regarding this task."[87]As the main task set before the Communist Party in this period was the overthrow of the dictatorship, it was considered essential at this point to put all efforts into the organization of the revolutionary movement. As this movement had to gain mass character to fulfill this significant task, women had, explained in the memo, to be part of it. For that reason, the party's main task was the formation of the legal women delegate groups in factories and workshops that would agitate among women workers and attract them to the party.[88] The work among women would become one of the main sections in the agenda of the Ljubljana Party Conference, held in 1934. One of the documents from the Conference stated: "Every local committee should appoint a comrade who will be responsible for the work among women. Commissions for the work among women must not represent any special women's organizations in which only women comrades will

[84] Josip Cazi, *Sa puta reformizma na put klasne borbe, - Ujedinjeni radnički sindikalni savez Jugoslavije i rad komunista u njemu 1929-1934* [From the reformist's road to the road of the class struggle: United Workers' Trade Union of Yugoslavia and the Work of Communists Within It 1929-1934]. (Zagreb: Radničke novine, 1978), 50.
[85] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 197.
[86] The report has no exact date, however, as it mentions an event that occurred in 1932, it could be assumed that it was sent in 1933/1934, before the revival of the communist women's movement in 1935.
[87] Žene pod vojno-fašističkom diktaturom [Women Under the Military-Fascist Dictatorship], box 1, folder 19, Međunarodni ženski sekretarijat (MŽS) [International Women's Secretariat/IWS], Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd, Srbija. [Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia], 4.
[88] Ibid.

work"[89]. However, I did not manage to find any official sources that discuss the period between 1929 and 1934 concerning the Communist Party work among women.

However, this period in the history of communist women's activism becomes visible only when we expand the perspective by looking away from institutional and focusing on grassroots politics and activism. By term grassroots activism, I refer to the type of activism that emerged as a bottom-up initiative of individuals who participated in party actions. This form of organizing is constructed around the individual's passion for the cause, which was a struggle against the dictatorship, political oppression, and bad work-life and work conditions in the context of interwar Yugoslavia.

According to available sources, the participation of communist-inclined women in the Communist Party actions organized on the grassroots level can be followed roughly from 1929. This year was marked by mass arrests of communists for propaganda activities, such as the spread of leaflets and brochures and their participation in an illegal organization. Analysis of the documents from state penitentiaries allows us to conduct a prosopographic inquiry, needed to understand who were women who participated in the activities of the illegal Communist Party. This set of documents reveal that arrested activists, when it comes to women, were mostly young women between 15 and 28, in most cases unmarried, literate, and with no private property. All of them were put on a trial for agitation among workers, spread and writing of materials, or for helping communists hide from the police. The increase in the number of communist-inclined women operating on the ground is evident between 1931 and 1933. To reconstruct the history of this period, I rely on *memoirs* of communist women on the interwar revolutionary activity. Their *memoirs* reveal that contrary to the information present in the historiography, the period between 1931 and 1933 was when a spectrum of activist practices was developed. In addition, they confirm that in this period, the younger generation of communist-inclined and communist women stepped on stage: from this point, names of Desanka Cvetković, Draga Stefanović, and other communist women from the "early" period disappear from the documents and press, and new names started appearing – Mitra Mitrović, Anđa Ranković, Jelena Ćetković, Vukica Mitrović, etc. A detailed account of this period in the history of communist women's activism is discussed in chapter III, where I investigate how and why these young women joined the communist women, how their activism developed, and the consequences they faced.

[89] Kovačević*, Borbeni put žena Jugoslavije*, 19.

1.6 Communist Women's and the Struggle Against War and Fascism (1935-1941)

In 1935, Comintern held the VII Congress in Moscow, which shifted the focus of the entire communist movement to the struggle against fascism and the united anti-fascist front by endorsing the Popular Front Strategy. Following the Comintern directives, Yugoslav Communist Party also deviated from the ultra-left position imposed by the Third Comintern Period and worked on the Popular Front. As the following section argues, and Chapter V demonstrates, following the Communist Party directives, communist and communist-inclined women started operating and agitating against the rise of fascism and the incoming war within non-communist organizations, such as trade unions, cultural and sports organizations, women's organizations. Their collaboration brought visible results and initiated the most successful period of communist women's activism.

1.6.1 Years of Turns: Generational, Positional, and Organizational turn in the Yugoslav Communist Party

In the 1930s, Yugoslavia witnessed a tidal wave of demonstrations, protests, and strikes: students protested for the university's autonomy and against the dictatorship, women demonstrated for peace and suffrage, workers took part in strikes demanding better work conditions. Yet, joined, they demonstrated against fascism and the imperial war. Borders that divided and distinguished these groups from one another became fragile and unstable: students started working among workers on the shop floors, and in the factories, non-communist women joined Ženski pokret, organized workers agitated among non-organized ones through different groups and societies. In this climate, gathered from all social milieus and backgrounds, communist women became arduously dedicated to their activism. The main sections of their work became work within Ženski pokret, and work among women workers.

In the second half of the 1930s, young, endorsing the strategy of the Popular Front, educated communist women joined the feminist organization Ženski pokret, forming Omladinska sekcija ženskog pokreta [The youth section of the Women's Movement]. The youth sections rapidly emerged in numerous cities: Zagreb, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Beograd. Within them, they organized lectures and discussions, reading groups, and ultimately large-scale gatherings and demonstrations. The work of the young communist women within Ženski pokret brought noticeable results: more and more women became familiar with the organization's work and started joining it. On the other hand, the activism of the young communist women has often

met the disapproval of feminists belonging to an older generation of Ženski pokret. Actions and public discussions embedded with revolutionary ideas were deemed as too radical.

Consequently, members of the Youth Section and Ženski pokret often found themselves in conflict, which ultimately led, in all cases, but not simultaneously and not precisely under the same conditions, to the dissolution of the youth sections in many regional sections of Ženski pokret. Still, even though existing historiography focuses on the strifes among the two generations, following historian Isidora Grubački's lead, I focus on the successes and contributions their collaboration brought about throughout Chapter V. For example, in this period, communist women became more active among women workers and organized meetings with them within Ženski pokret. The significance of the work among women in the factories was highlighted already at Communist Party Congress in 1934 in Ljubljana.[90] The same goal was set at the Comintern Congress in 1935. So, following these directives, communist women became active among women workers. According to the *memoirs* of communist women, this area of work was the most developed between 1937 and 1938. Their activism was met with noticeable interest among women workers, who gathered in large numbers and attended reading groups, courses, and Party-related meetings. Moreover, data from biographies and *memoirs* indicate that with the sprouting of communist women's activism after 1935 and the expansion of the spectra of activist practices, more and more women were recognized as a valuable addition to the Communist Party membership. The rise of women admitted to the rows of the party became particularly evident in this period, and women's membership in the Communist Party rose from 1 to 6 percent.

1.7 Organizing Communist Women

The previous outline of the development of communist women's history indicates that communist women's activism was visibly affected by Communist Party politics and directives. Therefore, before going into the more detailed analysis of their activism, it is essential to discuss the history of communist women's organizing in relation to the Communist Party.

. Exploring union women and the forms of their organizing, author Linda Briskin suggests that women's organizing takes the following forms: autonomous and separate.[91] While autonomous women's organizing occurs outside and independently of institutions, the separate organization

[90] *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*, 393.
[91] Cathy Brigden, "The legacy *of* separate organizing*:* Women *in the* Victorian Trades Hall *Council* in the interwar years", *Labor Studies Journal* vol. 36, no. 2, (2011)*:* 248.

pertains to two sub-types of organizing: within institutions – such as parties or trade unions, within women's section or women's committee, and within an institution, but without separate women's platforms, together with men. Following Briskin's definition, it is essential to ask: how were communist women organized, and who engaged in their organization? Exploration of the development of Communist Party politics demonstrates that throughout the interwar period, women organized separately, but that this work was at times considered as women-only work, and at times it took a form of a joint effort of men and women.

Nonetheless, due to the illegality of institutions and their low activity, the grassroots communist movement started developing, and a particular form of autonomous organizing occurred. The complexity of the political situation makes it difficult to establish the exact point when autonomous organizing turned into a separate one and vice versa. The analysis of the Communist Party relation towards forms of women's organizing offers a possibility also to examine the Communist Party position on the woman's question and women as political subjects.

By the end of 1920, the Central Secretariat of Socialist Women (Communist) declared the document titled "Duties of the Communist Women Party Members," which noted: "No man, no matter how dedicated communist and agitator he was, could influence women, if he agitated among them, as much as other women agitators could. Masses of women workers still stand in the shadow of ignorance, having absolutely no idea about the goal of our ideal. In their *lack of understanding*, they unnoticeably, but constantly hinder the work of the party and the trade unions, the development of the general struggle of their own working-class by interrupting their husbands who are part of the movement"[92] This text, on the one hand, legitimized the importance of communist women's efforts in women's organizing, and on the other hand excluded male Communist Party members from this area of work, reinforcing gendered relations in the Communist Party. The introduction of *Obznana* hindered the work of the communist women's secretariats, but communist women were still organized within the illegal Communist Party. Moreover, together with male party members, they created the legal Independent Workers' Party (Nezavisna radnička partija Jugoslavije/ NRPJ). The Statute of NRPJ emphasized the equality of men and women and the importance of the formation of the Women's Secretariat of the NRPJ. Later that year, during the Party Conference in Vienna, it

[92] *Jednakost*, no. *9*, September 1, 1920, p. 4.

was decided to organize work among women according to the Comintern Theses on the Work Among Women, confirmed by the Third Comintern Congress in 1921.

According to the Theses, women were to be regarded as equal in all Party rights, underlined in the NRPJ Statut from 1923.[93] The Theses strictly opposed the formation of women's associations within the party or trade unions, yet recognized that the work among women must be done through the usage of special methods, implementation of which requires special organs inside communist parties, which would be connected to all other party sections, on all levels.[94] Clara Zetkin's report on the communist women's movement discussed the formation of women's sections in more detail, arguing, "We call these bodies women's committees, because they carry out work among women, but not because we consider it important they consist only of women. On the contrary. We welcome it when the women's committees include men with their greater political experience and knowledge."[95] Zetkin's position again has a twofold meaning: it again legitimizes the need for separate women's organizing, and on the other hand, it emphasizes that this type of organizing is not separatist, and that men's participation is implied. Still, by marking men as more experienced and knowledgeable, Zetkin reinforces gendered power structures within Comintern, and more narrowly, national parties. Although, it could also be argued that Zetkin strategically relied on such discourse, being aware of the paternalistic character of the Comintern and the party's and assuming that such wording would make them more interested in supporting women's sections, that did depend on material and organizational support of the party, which primarily consisted of men. In 1922, Zetkin returned to this point, explaining: "And we must not lose sight of the fact that both Communist women and also Communist men – for, on average, we are no worse and no more stupid than you – are often lacking in the necessary fundamental theoretical and practical education. The immaturity and weakness of women in the political movement is only a reflection of the immaturity and weakness of the Communists as a whole."[96] NRPJ's plan to form the Women's Secretariat and organize it according to the theses was not realized, as NRPJ was abolished in 1924.

In 1926, after the Third Communist Party Congress, a Commission on the work among women emerged as a mixed-sex organ. As available documents demonstrate, this is one of the rare examples when the women's section had an explicitly mixed-sex structure. Unfortunately, as

[93] Riddell, *To the Masses*, 1014.
[94] Ibid. 1014, 1015.
[95] Ibid. 785.
[96] Riddell, *Toward the United Front*, 850.

it did not develop any activity on this level, it is impossible to say what implications the mixed-sex commission had on the development of the communist women's movement. In 1928, after the IV Party Congress, a Resolution on the work among women was reached, and it emphasized that until that point, the Party had undermined the work among women by considering it as a work to be done precisely and only by women.[97] Additionally, the Resolution noted that the work of communist women party members was not recognized and supported by the party, owing to the inner-party struggles.[98] This Resolution reinforces the idea that the work among women should be done both by communist men and women, which was highlighted in Comintern and Profintern resolutions from this period. The low success of the party in the work among women is an issue that would be often discussed but reluctantly acted upon in the interwar Yugoslav communist movement. As Karen Hunt and Matthew Worley argue, relying on the previous research of communist women's activism, such neglect can be explained by inherently masculinist politics of the Left, tradition, and culture. In the case of Yugoslavia, constant focus on the factional struggles.[99]

The development of women's organizing was impeded by the introduction of the dictatorship in 1929. The period between 1929 and 1934 was marked by the lowest activity of the institutions and the rise of the grassroots movement. It could be argued that the grassroots movement, even though created concerning the Communist Party, operated with a certain degree of autonomy. This point marks a subtle, yet not complete, transition from separate to autonomous women's organizing. Nonetheless, by 1934, the Communist Party was re-established and reorganized. During the IV Conference of the Communist Party in Ljubljana in 1934, it was again emphasized that developing the workers' movement further was necessary to organize work among women workers and support their struggle for their own rights.[100] Moreover, it was decided that every local committee must also choose one male comrade responsible and will along with women comrades on the organization of work among women. [101] This way, the Communist Party wanted to overcome the paternalistic ideas that persisted within the Communist Party rows for so long.

[97] *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*, 209.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Karen Hunt, Matthew Worley, "Rethinking British Communist Party Women in the 1920s", *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 5, Issue 1 (2004): 3.
[100] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 207.
[101] Kovačević*, Borbeni put žena Jugoslavije*, 18.

The mid-1930 witnessed a different form of communist women's organizing, which stemmed from introducing the Popular Front line in 1935. In this period, women's participation in the communist movement was crucial. As author Sandra Prlenda explains, in the period of the rise of mass politics, women were considered a partially politicized group whose support was essential for the movement's success.[102] However, the shift from the ultra-left position to the Popular front strategy announced during the VII Congress of Comintern in 1935 drastically influenced further communist women's activism. The idea of separate communist women's organizations was abolished, and communist women started operating together with women from other organizations, which ultimately resulted in the creation of the communist women's movement.

[102] Sandra Prlenda, "Posebne ženske organizacije u komunističkom pokretu i socijalističkim zemljama"[Separate Women's Organizations in the Communist Movement and Socialist Countries]. *Treća,* vol. 17, no. 1-2 (2015): 141.

2 Illegal Communist Women's Activism from *Obznana* to the King's Dictatorship (1921-1929)

In this chapter, I will discuss how communist women's activism developed in the period that followed the proclamation of *Obznana* [The Pronouncement] and Law on the Protection of the Public Safety and the State that outlawed all communists and communist-inclined activities. Reconstructing the history of communist women's activism from 1920 to 1929 constitutes a challenging task for several reasons. As this was the first period of the illegality of the Communist Party, many Communist Party documents were not preserved, and the preserved ones affirm the assumption that communist women were inactive in this period. To challenge this idea, in this chapter, I will explore *memoirs* of two communist women – Milica Kostić and Desanka Cvetković, which provide a more compelling glimpse into the history of communist women's activism.

The second part of the chapter will refer to communist women's articles published in the feminist journal *Ženski pokret* (1920-1938) [The Women's Movement]. These articles show how communist women, Desanka Cvetković, Milica Kostić, and Draga Stefanović, negotiated the conditions of illegality and managed to publish their ideas using the pages of *Ženski pokret* as their political platform. Moreover, these articles demonstrate that the existing binary division between 'bourgeoise' feminists and communist women was not as firm as it appears and was often successfully surpassed.

Third and the fourth section pertain to the period between 1928/1928. While 1928 was a year marked by increased institutional attention to the work among women, mainly reflected in the work of the Independent Trade Unions, the year 1929 was marked by arrests of communist activists. Therefore, the fourth section of this chapter explores files from communist trials that show that communist women performed a range of activities even under the conditions of the dictatorship, which led to lengthy prison sentences. Moreover, these documents reveal sociodemographic information on the communist women, which allows us to see who were women that constituted the so-called communist women's movement.

2.1 Re-discovering Communist Women's Activism in the Period between 1921 and 1924

The first year of the 1920s began with both victory and defeat of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. As described in the First chapter, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia emerged because of the Congress of Unification of revolutionary factions of the Social Democratic Parties in 1919. In 1920, the first elections held in Yugoslavia after World War I took place in August, and its outcome marked an important point in the development of the political situation in the country. More precisely, during these elections, communists won 12,4% of voices, and a majority in several cities, including Belgrade, Kragujevac, Zagreb, Podgorica, Skoplje, Niš. With more than 198,736 votes, they entered the Constituent Assembly, with 58 seats won.[103] Soon after, the government introduced *Obznana*, outlawing all communist activities. Yet, communist delegates still participated in the Oath Taking Ceremony at the Assembly, held in January 1921. The ceremony was shortly described in *memoirs* of Milica Kostić through an anecdote: "I went with Draga Stefanović to the Ceremony of the Oath taking at the Assembly when communists won the elections. I saw a priest there, and I asked Draga Stefanović what he was doing there and how will Filip Filipović kiss the cross, to which Draga replied that I should be quiet and stop asking stupid questions."[104]

The work of the Communists in the Assembly continued even after the proclamation of *Obznana*, until August 1921, when communists were accused of attempting the King's assassination. Consequently, communists' mandates were abrogated, and they were arrested.[105] The following period was marked by the rise of the "white terror," which included mass arrests of the communists, confiscating their materials, and abolishing their organizations. An article from *Organizovani radnik* notes: "The police used every smallest reason to arrest workers and persecute them. […] Every attempt of a bit more conscious worker, that wanted to resist and

[103] Čalić, *Istorija Jugoslavije u 20. veku*, 116.
[104] O nekim likovima iz naprednog pokreta između dva rata. Sećanja Milice Kostić. Podaci o Filipu Filipoviću, Moši Pijade, Dragi Stefanović, Živku Jovanoviću, Bori Prodanoviću I Veselinu Masleši. 1359- MG-XXIII-244. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [On Some Participants of the Workers' Movement in the Interwar Period. Memories of Milica Kostić. Information on Filip Filipović, Moša Pijade, Draga Stefanović, Žika Jovanović, Bora Prodanović and Veselin Masleša. 1359- MG-XXIII-244.Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia], 8. (Hereafter cited as: Sećanja Milice Kostić)
[105] Mihael Sobolevski, „Djelatnost komunističkog poslanika Vladimira Ćopića u Ustavotvornoj Skupštini od godine 1920. do 1921" [The Activity of a Communist Vladimir Ćopić in Constitutional Assembly from 1920 to 1921]. *Senjski zbornik: prilozi za geografiju, etnologiju, gospodarstvo, povijest i kulturu*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1981): 56.

to struggle against the worsening of the working conditions, is characterized as communist and anti-statist."[106] This constituted conditions under which activism of communist women could develop only with incredible difficulty. Moreover, the first few years of the 1920s mark the meager formal participation of women within the Communist Party. Desanka Cvetković, whose *memoirs* will be discussed in the following section, constituted one of the most prominent communist women of the "early period."

2.1.1 Desanka Cvetković at Fourth Comintern Congress in Moscow, 1922

Desanka Cvetković (1889-1967) belonged to an "early" generation of communists, who first developed their activity within the Social-democratic Party at the beginning of the twentieth century. The exploration of her political journey as one of the representatives of the older generation of communists is significant, as the activism of women of this generation constructed the path for the younger generation of communist women. As author Karen Hunt stresses: women of this generation "had no maps to follow and were assessing the potential of the terrain as they took each step."[107]

Desanka Cvetkovićs joined the Social Democratic Party in 1908. After attending a Party Congress, she noted: "I was impressed by what I saw at that Congress and the final party at the end of the Congress. So, I became a party member through my student society, and my party membership dates way back from those days."[108] In 1919, she joined the newly created Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (Communists)- SRPJ (K). Her *memoirs* do not hold information on the period between 1919 and 1922. However, other available sources demonstrate that in this period, she edited the communist women's journal *Jednakost* and children's journal *Budućnost* [The Future] and gave various lectures regarding the position of workers in Yugoslavia and beyond. In 1922, the Communist Party chose her as one of the delegates for the Fourth Comintern Congress to represent the communist women.

A lengthy section of Desanka Cvetković's *memoirs* is dedicated to her trip to the Fourth Comintern Congress in Moscow, held from November 5 to December 5, 1922. Desanka Cvetković notes: "The Fourth Comintern Congress took place in Moscow from November 5 to December 5, 1922. It was the only Congress that took place in the winter. I went to this Congres

[106] *Organizovani radnik*, November 6, 1921, p. 1.
[107] Karen Hunt, "Rethinking Activism: Lessons from the History of Women's Politics," Parliamentary Affairs, vol. 62, no. 2 (2009): 221.
[108] Desanka Cvetković, 24.-26. april 1956, Fond Ivan Očak 1753, box 1, 4116 MG-XLV-524. Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, 3. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Desanke Cvetković)

in the name of our Party, and I was a Yugoslav delegate. Triša Kaclerović told me that I would be appointed as a delegate. Nonetheless, however difficult that was for me, I decided not to go to this Congress and refused to go there. I told Triša that I couldn't go- maybe this position was not in place on my part, but times and situations were such that I was afraid to go there. However, Triša told me that I was appointed to go there in the name of the party and that I must go. Joking with me he told me: If you don't want to go, we will put you in the basket, so you will have no other choice but to go. That's how I went to Moscow."[109] This section shows the difficulty of walking on the unknown path and that the political life of an individual cannot be defined only through formal participation in the party.[110] Being a political activist meant breaking away from the traditionally accorded gender role and risking one's safety.

Desanka Cvetković's statement demonstrates, among other things, that the party expected her to go to Moscow and that her trip was of great importance. Before her leaving for Moscow, Communist Party held a conference in Vienna in July 1922. Vienna Conference of 1922 was marked by struggles between the "left" and "right" Party factions that would continue throughout the interwar period. During the conference, the question of the women's revolutionary movement was raised, and Draginja-Draga Stefanović (1880-1967), another vital representative of the older generation of communist women, was chosen as a member of the Executive Party Committee.[111] Author Jovanka Kecman argues that, amidst factional struggles in the party, with the "rightist" faction being in charge, the choice of Draga Stefanović for membership stemmed from her political preferences- Draga Stefanović was inclined to the "right" faction. At the same time, Desanka Cvetković was sent to Moscow. Whether the decision to send Desanka Cvetković to Moscow was made during that conference remains unknown. Still, Cvetković noted that she was sent to Moscow by Triša Kaclerović, part of the "left" faction. As Desanka Cvetković stresses: "In factional struggles within the party, I was a part of a "left" fraction, and I was considered to be too much of a "left" factionist, which also was not good. On that line, we did not want to make any compromises. Triša Kaclerović, Rajko Jovanović, and Žika Jovanović headed the "left" fraction."[112] So, while Draga Stefanović was given a significant role within the Party by the "right" faction, Desanka Cvetković was sent as a delegate to Moscow by the "left" faction. During a conference dedicated to Ženski pokret, Stefan Gužvica presented his future research, in which he analyses the relationship of Draga

[109] Sećanja Desanke Cvetković, 23.
[110] Hunt, "Rethinking Activism," 221.
[111] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 126.
[112] Sećanja Desanke Cvetković, 27.

Stefanović and Desanka Cvetković amidst the factional struggle. Until his research is published, the extent to which extent factional struggles affected communist women's activism remains unknown.

Desanka Cvetković describes what was her task at the Fourth Comintern Congress: "I was sent to Moscow by the Party in the name of the [Yugoslav] Communist Women's Secretariat. At that time secretary of the party was Triša Kaclerović. I was delegated in the name of the women's movement, the Central Party Committee delegated me, and Trša wanted me to go one way or another. In Moscow, we were accommodated in a hotel. The accommodation was collective. I cannot remember whether Ilija Milkić was there. I think Zhinoviev was there. Alliluyeva, I know for certain, was there as a delegate of Russian women. We had meetings, especially on the woman's question, and she gave a report. Also, I saw Stalin there. We had a task to work through the Statute, our Statute of the party that would later be adjusted to the needs of Comintern- it was supposed to be adapted. In her report, Alelueva spoke about Yugoslav women and the party Statute that needed adaptation, that would become party statute for Yugoslav women."[113] According to Cvetković's statement, even though the work of the Secretariat of Socialist Women (Communists) was formally abolished with the introduction of *Obznana*, the Party still used it as an organization that was, as it seems from this statement, supposed to be re-vitalized. Desanka went to Moscow presumably by the end of October 1922. In November, while Cvetković was already in Moscow, a book review of Alexandra Kollontai's *New Woman* was published in the journal *Ženski Pokret.* Penned by Desanka Cvetković, this review was published a year after Mihailo Todorović's translation of the book appeared in Yugoslavia.[114] The fact that the publishing date of her review coincided with her time spent in Russia, potentially demonstrates that she read this book in connection with her trip to the Congress Alexandra Kollontai was supposed to attend. The second and the third parts of the review were published presumably after her return to Yugoslavia in 1923.

Through her articles on Alexandra Kollontai, Desanka Cvetković's name first appeared on the pages of *Ženski pokret*, and the feminist readership was introduced to her thinking and work. Cvetković remembers her return to Belgrade: "After the return from Moscow, I held lectures here, describing my experiences from the Congress. Many women comrades came to these lectures. Besides Belgrade, I held lectures in other places too. I went illegally with some women

[113] Ibid. 26.
[114] Minja Bujaković, „Zajedno, organizovane, mi smo nesalomive! ": Aleksandra Kolontaj i "nova žena", *Književnstvo* no.9 (2019) https://doi.org/10.18485/knjiz.2019.9.9.6.

comrades to Vukovar, Veliki Bečkerek, Kikinda, and other places. There were many women in the workforce in all those places, and women mostly knew german, so I gave lectures in German, which turned out to be very successful. I gave numerous lectures in Belgrade and other places."[115] It could be suspected that her lectures were, perhaps, more visited than expected due to her publishing activity in *Ženski pokret.*

Cvetković's description of the trip to Moscow shows that, contrary to the assumptions born from the exploration of the other sources, the years 1922/1923 were not a period marked by a complete absence of communist women's activism. Her *memoirs* prove this point: "So, we worked on that Statute on the woman's question. I brought a draft of the Statute, and then in Belgrade, we had meetings, met in Kosovska street, and worked on it, making conclusions and working on our Statute. Statute of the Yugoslav Communist Party was to be conformed to the Comintern Statute." This, again, shows that while the Secretariat of Socialist Women (Communists) was not able to operate as an organization formally, women gathered around it continued with their work in the conditions of illegality.

The work of the Secretariat of Socialist Women (Communists) was formally re-established soon after the formation of the legal Nezavisna radnička partija Jugoslavije (NRPJ) [Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia] in January 1923. The Party Statute included the formation of the Central Women's Secretariat in its agenda.[116] Cvetković notes: "In 1923, Secretariat of Women of the Independent Yugoslav Workers' Party was formed. That was a legal form of work of the Communist Party, and we took advantage of it. I was secretary of the Central Women's Secretariat. Draga Stefanović always resigned and quit, she was not always ready for the job, but I was different- I always accepted all the duties and worked tirelessly."[117] Simultaneously with the formation of the NRPJ, factional struggles between the "left" and the "right" within the Communist Party culminated, which resonates with Desanka Cvetković's statement on Draga Stefanović. After the Second Communist Party Conference, held in Vienna in 1923, the party's leadership mostly pertained to the "left" faction. Draga Stefanović, a member of the "right" faction, was appointed secretary of the newly created Central Women's Secretariat.[118] Yet, Draga Stefanović declined this offer, which led to the establishment of Desanka Cvetković to the position of the central secretary, while Draga Stefanović took on the

[115] Ibid. 26.
[116] *Radnik*, no. 10, January 31, 1923, p. 3.
[117] Sećanja Desanke Cvetković, 27.
[118] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu,* 128.

role of regional secretary. According to the resolution of the Second Party Conference, communist women were to organize their work according to the Comintern Theses on the Work Among Women.[119] It could be assumed that when Cvetković spoke about „adapting the Statute of Yugoslav communist women, "she was referring to adaptation in accordance with the Theses. Throughout 1923, regional women' secretariats were formed all over Yugoslavia, but there is no much information on the development and results of their work. Articles published in *Radnik*, organ of the NRPJ, seldomly and scarcely refer to the work of the Women's Secretariat in this period.

2.2 Communist Women's Voices in the Journal *Ženski pokret* (1922 – 1924)

In the period between 1922 and 1924, communist women sought a legal platform to publish their articles. One of such platforms became the monthly feminist journal *Ženski pokret.* The analysis of the journal demonstrates that communist women published articles in *Ženski pokret* mainly in the period between 1922 and 1924. This does not seem to be a coincidence, since, in this period, Draga Stefanović was a member of the board of the organization Ženski pokret, and Desanka Cvetković was a vice president of Feministička alijansa [The Feminist Alliance], established in 1923. In 1924, Central Women's Secretariat published a report on their work stating that Central Women's Secretariat has its own cell within Ženski pokret and that it is using journal *Ženski pokret* to publish its articles.[120]

So, between 1922 and 1924, Milica Kostić, Desanka Cvetković, and Draga Stefanović published their articles in this journal. As mentioned in the section above, Desanka Cvetković published a three-part book review of Alexandra Kollontai's piece *The New Woman.* As author Stanislava Barać argues, through articles of Desanka Cvetković, communist ideas entered the journal *Ženski pokret*, and Yugoslav "new woman" was born on the pages of *Ženski pokret*. [121] Moreover, through articles of the communist women, ideological currents started mixing, creating a hybrid discourse of the journal. Desanka Cvetković published another article in 1922, dedicated to Rosa Luxemburg's *Letters from Prison*. In this lengthy article, which included a translation of Luxembourg's book, Desanka Cvetović included her revolutionary thoughts and ideas.

[119] Pejanović, *Društvena jednakost i emancipacija žena*, 123.
[120] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 185.
[121] Barać, *Feministička kontrajavnost*, 149.

The second communist-inclined author that was published in *Ženski pokret* in this period was Milica Kostić. As her *memoirs* reveal, Milica Kostić had been surrounded by the communist idea since her early youth: together with her cousin, she would go to *Radnički dom* [Workers' Home], where workers gathered, and later, as she notes in her *memoirs*, to the trials of the communists. Milica Kostić remembers her cousin's words: "My cousin would say to me [during the trials] "these people are fighting for justice. "[122] Her *memoirs* also show that she spent much time with Draga Stefanović, so it could be argued that her motivation to join the movement stemmed from this connection. Milica Kostić, along with Draga Stefanović, attended the Oath Taking Ceremony at the National Assembly in 1921 and later regularly visited imprisoned or hospitalized communists with her. Also, Stefanović regularly accorded party-related tasks to her. After performing tasks for Draga Stefanović, other important party functioners, such as Sima Marković and Filip Filipović, started relying on Milica Kostić. She would carry money and messages to the prisoners in Požarevac, and she organized and attended secret meetings in her cousin's vineyard.

Kostić described Draga Stefanović at the end of her *memoirs*:" That was an unusually active woman, she had a good relationship with the workers. Maybe she was too ambitious. She was "narrow" in comparison to the intellectuals. She would speak through paroles, and that way of speaking was, I would say so, the characteristic of the entire progressive movement. Andja Banuševac, Sima Marković's secretary, spoke that way, too."[123] Her description of Draga Stefanović as a „narrow" person who spoke through the paroles is probably informed by the fact that Kostić was educated, as her numerous literary works and criticism in Ženski pokret demonstrate, and that, by the time her memories were written down, she considered her self to be one of the intellectuals. However, the influence Stefanović had on her is undeniable. Milica Kostić started her writing career in the journal *Jednakost*. As she notes: "The most active woman in the Women's Secretariat and the journal *Jednakost* was Desanka Cvetković. I did proofread the articles. I joined the Women's Secretariat in 1920. [...] In *Jednakost,* I published articles without a signature or using a pseudonym Netochka Nezvanova or KM. I wrote under several pseudonyms so it would appear as if the journal had more authors and that the police would not be able to trace the author. Once, Olga Timotijević told me that she found some sort

[122] Sećanja Milice Kostić, 4.
[123] Ibid. 22.

of a short poem in the Archives of the Central Committee that said, "it smells like Milica Kostić.. "[124]

From the earliest days of her activism, Milica Kostić was connected to Draga Stefanović and Desanka Cvetković, which certainly must have affected her further trajectory. In *Ženski pokret* she published poems, short stories, literary critiques, and reports. In the November/December issue of *Ženski pokret*, Milica Kostić published a report on the Congress of Communist Women in Germany. Introduction to the report could be read as a direct appeal to the readers of *Ženski pokret* regarding the political situation in Yugoslavia. Milica Kostić writes: "Regardless of the unhappy circumstances, women in Germany kept working on the field of their idea. German monarchist disaster did not confuse German women.On the contrary, it gave her even stronger faith than she had before. And German working woman expresses her wishes publicly and openly. "[125] Further Milica Kostić shortly noted the main content of the reports presented at the conference. Notes from the reports mainly pertain to the tasks of communist women and organizational forms, which could be understood as some sort of guide for communist women in Yugoslavia.

Her articles written by Milica Kostić mainly pertain to literary criticism or romantic poems. In her critique of the book titled *The rebel,* written by French author Marcela, Milica Kostić relies on the class as a category of analysis, and compares the French version of a new woman, of a rebel, who, disappointed by failure in her love life, as Kostić states *rebels gracefully,* with rebels that would appear in Russian literature, as women who would, aware of their class position, turn to prostitution, criticize the social order, and find a student to share a drink with, or who would join the revolutionary movement, visit secret *kruzhoks*, agitate among workers, raises consciousness in other women and at the end, when she gets arrested, stays in what she truly is: "a strong woman that does not bend to anyone's will."[126] Through her critique, Milica Kostić again presents a new woman to the readership, a revolutionary, i.e., the same type of woman Desanka Cvetković will describe through her review of Alexandra Kollontai's book.

Draga Stefanović is the third author, declared communist, who published in *Ženski pokret*. The first article published under her name is a printed version of a speech she gave during the Gathering for the Protection of Children and the Young in Belgrade. In her speech, Draga

[124] Ibid. 11, 13.
[125] *Ženski pokret*, no. 11/12, 1922, p. 35.
[126] *Ženski pokret*, no. 2, 1922, p. 76, 77.

Stefanović describes the terrible position of working children and the workers' children. Addressing the audience, Draga Stefanović refers to the data published in non-communist journals so as she would not be deemed biased, knowing that she comes from the rows of proletarian struggle.[127] In the end, the revolutionary character of her speech becomes emphasized. Draga Stefanović argues: "Finally, we are sending a message to the Government and the National Assembly: No to the increasing of the budged for penitentiaries and prisons! No to the increasing of the budget for feeding the police dogs- but increasing of the budget for nourishment and protection of the children!"[128] Draga Stefanović's concluding statement demonstrates how she negotiated to include the demands of the communists into the speech directed towards the non-communist audience and the government. Quite deftly, she addressed the increased "white terror" issue while still focusing on the issue of the terrible position of children and the youth.

Draga Stefanović, Milica Kostić, and Desanka Cvetković's articles show how communist women, relying on their oratory and writing skills, managed to voice against the social order and skillfully used the legal space provided for them on the pages of *Ženski pokret*. It is important to note that I have identified these three authors as communist and/or communist inclined during the primary research of the articles published in *Ženski pokret*. It is possible that further research would lead to the discovery of more communist voices within this journal. Even though these three authors published actively only during these two years, pages of *Ženski pokret* will again witness the emergence of revolutionary ideas throughout the 1930s.

2.3 **Communist Women and Independent Trade Unions (1925-1929)**

The government prohibited the Independent Trade Unions and NRPJ, representing legal platforms for communist activism in 1924. Even though Independent Trade Unions were soon re-established and included work among women in its agenda, according to the available sources, it could be argued that the period between 1924 to 1928 represented a period of quiescence in the development of communist women's activism. In this period, communist women presumed with their activism through the organization Crvena Pomoć Jugoslavije [The Red Aid of Yugoslvia]. Crvena Pomoć Jugoslavije emerged in 1923 as a humanitarian organization created to provide help for prosecuted and/or arrested workers and activists. When Crvena Pomoć emerged, Desanka Cvetković was appointed secretary of the board.[129] In 1925,

[127] *Ženski pokret*, no. 4, 1924, p. 164.
[128] Ibid. 168.
[129] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 133.

Desanka Cvetković was accused and arrested for her work in Crvena Pomoć. As it is noted in her *memoirs*, her lawyer filed a complaint, but it was denied. Nonetheless, due to the lack of evidence, she was soon released from prison.

According to the available sources and existing literature, between 1925 and 1927, work among women within the party, and party-related communist women's activism stagnated. Even though III Party Congress, held in Dresden 1926, including the formation of the women's commission and journals in its agenda, no notable action followed, as it noted in the report sent to the International Women's Secretariat in April 1929, which stresses: "Communist Party of Yugoslavia does not have a central women's section for the work among women. "[130]

2.3.1 Independent Trade Unions and Work Among Women (1927-1928)

From 1927 to 1928, work among women developed within the Independent Trade Unions. The development of the work of the Independent Trade Unions concerning women workers from 1921 to 1924 was discussed in Chapter I. In 1927, Independent Trade Unions worked on the creation of women's commissions. Such commission was created in Zagreb, after the Plenary Session of the Mjesno sindikalno vijeće [Local Workers' Syndical Union (MRSV)], a Commission for the Work Among Women was set with Marija Gržetić, Zora Nikolić, Josip Broz, Ivan Kardelj, and Barica Debeljak and Anka Butorac as the main members.[131] Women's commission was also formed in Belgrade, with Draga Stefanović, Brana Todorović, and Brana Đurđević as its leading members. However, the report sent to the International Women's Secretariat (IWS) notes that "In Belgrade, in 1927 a commission on the work among women was formed, and in Zagreb, women's commission was formed within the local Party organization. There is no whatsoever connection among them, and they operate in the frameworks of their cities. General party press does not give any attention to work among women." [132]

Research of the documents from the collection on International Women's Secretariat, stored at the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, marks the rise of activity of the Independent Trade Unions among women in the year 1928. A report presented by Yugoslav delegate Trajković at the Fourth Profintern Congress, held in Moscow from March 17 to April 4, 1928, addresses the

[130] April 17, 1928, box 1, folder 7, Međunarodni ženski sekretarijat (MŽS) [International Women's Secretariat/IWS], Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd, Srbija. [Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia].
[131] Josip Broz Tito, *Sabrana Dijela, vol. I* (1981), 85.
[132] Ibid.

work among women in great detail.[133] In his report, Trajković stated that the work among women had been part of the Independent Trade Union's agenda since the first Congress of Independent Trade Unions. He also noted that women's commissions were formed in different cities, with the following goals: introduction of women into the revolutionary trade unions, educational work, agitation, and propaganda, rising of the class consciousness and solidarity, connection with other workers through class-defined actions, a decrease of illiteracy and education on the correspondence for the trade union press.[134] Trajković further argued that these tasks were already being fulfilled and that they gave positive results. Positive results reflected in the visible rising agency in working women, who "during the strikes in textile shops in Duga Resa, and other places with textile shops, women workers were not only participants in strikes, but they held positions, participated in strikers' meetings, etc."[135]

Trajković describes the activities of women workers who gathered help for imprisoned workers, prepared and took food to prison. Furthermore, he describes an action conducted with the working women and wives of the arrested workers. He notes: "One of the important actions was sending of a manifesto to a parliament, all press, and all oppositional parties written by wives of the arrested workers. They described all tortures our comrades and their families went through in the manifesto, left without any support. That action ended in great success. In the parliament, this caused a strong effect and discussion, that the police had to end the torture of our comrades and turn them to the court. This action spread to all other factories and shops from which workers were arrested to stop the police terror and inquisition over our comrades in prisons."[136]

At the end of the report, Trajković listed tasks of Independent Trade Unions concerning work among women. The first task was to turn away working women from the participation of the so-called national-humanitarian organization and turn them towards work within the Independent Trade Unions. Such introduction into the tasks coincides with the ultra-leftist position of the forthcoming Comintern Third Period, established after the Sixth Comintern Congress in the summer of 1928. Other tasks included publishing brochures and literature of interest to working women, especially publications that speak about the position of working

[133] I was not able to track down the name of the delegate Trajković. It could be assumed that Trajković was his pseudonym.
[134] April 1928, box 1, folder 8, Međunarodni ženski sekretarijat (MŽS) [International Women's Secretariat/IWS], Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd, Srbija. [Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia], 7.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid. 8.

women in the Soviet Union and capitalist countries.[137] The post scriptum part of the report noted that the women's commission was set in Belgrade in 1927 and that since then, it has worked on education on women workers.

This report was presented at the Fourth Profintern Congress, which finally published a Resolution on the work among women, which encompassed three main tasks: emphasized work among working women and earning of the trust of the proletarian female masses; systemic work among women that would lead to their joining the rows of trade unions; education of women cadres that would be given leading positions within trade unions and other organs.[138] As discussed in Chapter I, several months after the Profintern and Comintern Congresses, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia held its fourth conference in Dresden. The Conference published a Resolution on the Work among Women, after which the Central Secretariat of Women of the Yugoslav Communist Party was formed in 1929. Nonetheless, the early development of this organ was interrupted by the introduction of the dictatorship of King Aleksandar in January 1929. The work of all political organizations was declared illegal, and accordingly, Independent Trade Unions were abolished, its archives and material confiscated, and its leaders arrested.[139]

2.4 The year of Arrests and Hopes in the Struggle: Communist Women's Activism in 1929

An article published in 1929 in the journal *Proleter* (1929-1942), organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, noted that the Communist Party must keep working among workers and that it must not neglect work among women and the youth.[140] The same issue included an article dedicated to International Women's Day, which stated: "Until now, during the last eight years, the Party has not done anything concerning the work among women, except for unsystematic work in some local organizations. Our Party consists of entire regional organizations that have not one organized woman. The only and sole culprit for this is negligence with which our Party, from the very leadership to the lowest cells, treats the work among women."[141]

[137] Ibid. 9.
[138] Мировое революционное профдвижение, от IV до V конгресса Профинтерна 1928-1930, Москва: Издательство ВЦСПСС, 1930, 226.
[139] *Proleter*, no. 1, March 1929, p. 12.
[140] *Proleter*, no. 1, March 1929, p. 4.
[141] *Proleter,* no. 1, March 1929, p. 12.

Even though the Resolution on the Work among Women did light a spark needed for the development of this work, the first year of the dictatorship was marked by activities of communist women on the ground and outside of formally established women's organizations. Archival documents from the collection Political Prisoners in the Penententaries and Concentration Camps (Leposva, Bileća, Niš, Maribor, Požarevac, Sremska Mitrovica) prove that communist women were active during the year 1929 and that their activism often led to arrests and imprisonment. Documents from penitentiaries include personal information, a description of the trial process, and the trial's outcome. Personal information from these documents includes names of the parents, place of birth, age, religion, marital status, occupation, literacy level, and previous criminal offenses. This information is of great value, as it provides an overview of the sociodemographic background of the women who constituted the communist women's movement.

2.4.1 Individual Cases, Collective Struggle

In 1929, more than 15 communist activists from Serbia were arrested while spreading leaflets about the celebration of May 1. Among them was only one woman- Stanka Tasić. The document notes Tasić Stanka – From parents Todor and Todora ex. Đusić, 38, from Gruža Kragujevačka, ortodox, private clerk, single, literate, non-convicted. Stanka Tasić was being charged "Because she became a member of a secret communist organization, the organization that has communist propaganda as a goal, and in 1929, she wrote on a typing machine, planning to spread communist propaganda in the form of a poster, that titled "To the young workers and peasants, "meaning that she wrote leaflets that call for violence against the state, threaten public peace and bring public order into danger [...] Moreover, she used the word "bloody King Aleksandar, "breaking 1, 2,3 article of the Law on the Protection of Public Security and the State."[142] Against this background, Stanka Tasić was to ten years in prison that will include the time she spent in custody, from May 7 until today, 1929, so eight months and 19 days, and permanent loss of honor "right"s. This case demonstrates that sentences for crimes that could be deemed as marginal were exceptionally high.

Another document describes cases of 25 communists charged as members of the Communist Party for propaganda activities and the spread of the leaflets and brochures on the territory of Croatia. Among them were six women activists: Lidija Herceg, Mira Anatolić, Marija

[142] Politički zatvorenicei u kaznionama i logorima [Political Prisoners in the Penententaries and Concentaration Camps] Fond 726, box 1, folder III/5, Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia, p2.

Marčelja, Elizabeta Turković, Nada Lauš-Karus, Kroporić Glinka. Their personal information demonstrates that four of them were single; non were convicted before or had personal properties, and all were literate. Moreover, all of them were young- between 14 to 28. The youngest one, Anatolić Mira, was only 14, while the eldest, Marija Marčelja, was 28. Even though they were charged with a crime committed in 1929, they were arrested and later sentenced to prison in 1935. The document does not note why these cases were processed with such delay. Nonetheless, they still pertain to their activism during 1929.

Herceg Lidija was accused under two counts of the indictment: 1. participation in the work of the illegal organization with the purpose of the spread of communist propaganda 2. printing and spreading illegal materials, knowing that these materials are used as propaganda and for persuasion of others hat political and social order in the state should be changed through crime, violence or any type of terror.[143] Mira Anatolić and Elizabeta Turković were accused on the same two counts as Lidija Herceg, but also for typing and printing of letters, leaflets, and journals *Srp i čekić* [Sickle and Hammer] and *Seljačka Borba* [The Peasant Struggle].[144] Korporić Glinka was accused of the same counts as Lidija Herceg, and on the count, she received and sent illegal materials, meaning that she operated as a courier. Marija Marčelja was accused only on the count of joining an illegal organization. Under these accusations, Lidija Herceg was sentenced to 14 months of strict imprisonment and Elizabeta Turković to 10 months. While they were underage when they were first sent to custody, they were both over 20 years old at the moment of their imprisonment. Mira Anatolić and Marčelja Marija were sentenced to 1 year in prison, and Koroporić Glinka to 2.

In Slovenia, Katrin Paula (26, from Ljubljana, mother of 4, married, housewife, literate, non-convicted, chaste) and Drakeler Marija (26, seamstress, single, literate, non-convicted, chaste) were arrested for participating in the work of the organization Crvena pomoć in Ljubljana, and through their participation contributed to the organization that is used for propaganda and persuasion of others hat political and social order in the state should be changed through crime, violence or any type of terror. Katrin Paula was sentenced to one year in prison, while Marija Drakeler was sentenced to 6 months, which she already spent in custody, so her sentence was considered done.

[143], Politički zatvorenicei u kaznionama i logorima [Political Prisoners in the Penententaries and Concentaration Camps, 1929/1936, Fond 726, box 1, folder V/1, Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia, 9.
[144] Ibid.

The last case to be presented here is the case of Ruža Planker, an ironing worker from Zagreb. Ruža Planker was put on trial under the indictment that she consciously hosted two communists in her home.[145] According to the document, during 1928 and 1929, communist Hebrang Andrija and later Milan Martinović lived at Ruža Planker's house as a tenant, which she failed to report to the authorities.[146] In her defense, she stated that they were her nephew Josip Plankar's friends. Moreover, she took one letter from Zagreb to Ljubljana, from Martinović to her cousin Plankar. As she claimed, she went to see her cousin tell him that his mother, her sister was ill, and when Martinović found out that she was going, he gave her a letter. Finally, when the police asked her whether she was aware that they were communists, she stated that she believed they were being looked for by the police to participate in a street fight.[147] Ruža Plankar's defense was dismissed, as the court claimed that there was no way that she did not know that people living in her house were communists. What was accepted as a possibility was that Ruža Plankar's actions were motivated by her familial relation with Josip Plankar. Still, Ruža was sentenced to one year in prison.

The presented cases allow only a glimpse into the communist activities during 1929 and the trials that followed. Moreover, presented are just several of numerous cases. Yet, several conclusions can be made according to them. Firstly, comparing these sentences with the sentence of Savka Tasić demonstrates that while Savka Tasić was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 1930 for the spread of illegal materials, a group of communist women whose trial took place in 1935 received much lighter sentences. Documents from other trials also demonstrate that sentences in 1929 and 1930 were much higher. For example, out of 14 communists arrested in 1929 in Serbia, three were sentenced to more than 10 years in prison, and 5 to 6 years in prison for propaganda activities, while from 35 communists arrested and prosecuted in Serbia 1935 for membership in the Communist Party and organization of border crossing and propaganda activities on the territory of entire Yugoslavia, only five were sentenced to 5 to 6 years, while others were sentenced to 2 years or less. Even though it appears that the Court for the Protection of the State in Serbia gave out more strict sentences than sections of the Court in other parts of Yugoslavia, it could be argued that the sentence of Savka Tasić and other communists prosecuted in 1930 was so strict, as their trials took place only a

[145] Politički zatvorenicei u kaznionama i logorima [Political Prisoners in the Penententaries and Concentaration Camps] 1925-1929, Fond 726, box 1, folder VI/1, , Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

year after the introduction of the King's dictatorship and the rise of the police repression over communists.

Secondly, presented cases demonstrate that during 1929 communist women tended to work as couriers, spread and printed the Party-related materials. As the following three chapters will demonstrate, the range of their activities drastically expanded in the following years, especially in the second half of the 1930s. Finally, listed cases also show that activities performed during 1929 were performed both by official Communist Party members and communist-inclined women sympathizers. Therefore, it becomes evident that speaking about "communist women" as a group requires a more detailed and nuanced explanation.

3 Reconstructing Communist Women's History From the "Inside"

In this chapter, I will focus on the period between 1929 and 1934, as a period of a dictatorship characterized by mass prosecution and imprisonment of communists and communist-inclined workers. The particularity of the political situation of this period becomes apparent through the research of the archival sources: this is the period with the least preserved official Party documents and documents on the activity of the organized communist women's movement. Despite this gap in the sources mainly used to reconstruct the "outside" of history, i.e., the observable events, *memoirs* of communist women help us reconstruct the "inside" of history, i.e., the history of thoughts and actions of historical agents. Still, as the analysis of the *memoirs* will illustrate, the "outside" and "inside" of history are entangled, and only combined are they able to tell a fuller history.

3.1 Sociopolitical Contextualization of the Period between 1929 and 1934

Before examining *memoirs* of communist women, a few remarks about the sociopolitical situation in the early 1930s Yugoslavia are in order. To fully grasp the relevant dimensions of the sociopolitical situation in the early 1930s Yugoslavia, it is necessary to look at the broader context first. In 1929, the New York Stock Exchange collapsed and initiated the economic crisis, known as the Great Depression. The Great Depression of the 1930s had a massive influence on politics in European countries: under the conditions of mass unemployment and poverty, authoritarian and anti-democratic parties and regimes gained power.[148] Even though some countries followed a left turn and in some democratic system remained stable, throughout the 1930s, Europe also witnessed the establishment of far-right, authoritarian, and fascist regimes. Yugoslavia followed a similar path when King Aleksandar established an authoritarian regime in times of great economic distress. Political crisis in Yugoslavia culminated on June 20, 1928, when Puniša Račić, a radical representative from Montenegro, assassinated several members of Hrvatska seljačka stranka [Croatian Peasant Party], including a party leader, Stjepan Radić. This event led to the introduction of the dictatorship by King

[148] Antonis Klapsis, "Economic Crisis and Political Extremism in Europe: From the 1930s to the Present." *European View* vol. 13, no. 2 (December 2014): 190. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-014-0315-5.

Aleksandar, characterized by the abolishment of the parliament and the constitution, prohibition of all political parties and associations, and the continued police prosecution of the communists. The King's dictatorship as such appeared in the Communist Party documents under the label monarcho-fascist dictatorship. Still, as historian Marie Janine- Čalić argues, the character of the dictatorship in Yugoslavia differentiated it from the fascist model established in Italy under Mussolini, or the national-socialist model in Germany: King's dictatorship in Yugoslavia was established without a central party, totalitarian ideology, and mass mobilization of citizens.[149] The goal was to overcome inner-state national conflicts and establishing a united Yugoslav nation under the traditional rule of one monarch.

In the early days of the dictatorship, King Aleksandar introduced several essential laws, through which he established himself as the autocratic ruler of the country, in control of all governmental structures. The Law on the Protection of Public Safety and State Order introduced in 1921 was again reintroduced in 1929, with more strict regulations, noting that "all political parties and associations, who work on the propaganda and persuasion of citizens, calling for the change of the current order in the country are abolished."[150] The severity of the newly introduced laws and codes reflects in a fact that one of the articles of the new Criminal code directed that "Who publicly defames the Ruler, or his rights, inheritance order or current form of reign, will be sentenced to up to three years in prison"[151] The State Court for the Protection of the State, founded in 1929, became the primary organ for the regulation of the anti-statist behavior. The Court had strict regulations, which allowed closed trials and the impossibility of filling any legal appeals against the court verdicts.[152] The King introduced a new octroyed constitution in 1931, with a new government consisting of the National Assembly and the Senate, whose members were decided by the King.

The establishment of the dictatorship coincided with important changes within the Yugoslav Communist Partz. Prior to the Fourth Congress of the Yugoslav Communist Party in Dresden, factionalism persisted within the party, largely influencing its development and work. In February 1928, Josip Broz and Andrija Herbrang, Zagreb-based anti-factionalists, voiced for the adoption of the resolution against factionalism, convincing the Local Party in Zagreb to

[149] Čalić, *Istorija Jugoslavije u 20. veku*, 145.
[150] Ljubomirka Krkljuš, *Pravna istorija srpskog naroda* [The Legal History of Serbian People], (Novi Sad, 2002), 518.
[151] Stipica Grgić, „Neki aspekti poimanja uvrede vladara u vrijeme diktature kralja Aleksandra I. Karađorđevića "[Some Aspects of Understanding of Offence of the Govern during the Dictatorship of King Aleksandar Karađorđević]. *Zavod za hrvatsku povijest*, vol 41 (2009): 352.
[152] Ibid. 350.

appeal directly to Comintern to resolve this long-lasting issue.[153] In May, the party accepted Comintern's Open Letter to All Members of the Yugoslav Communist Party, which stressed the necessity of abolishing factionalism. From November 3 to November 15, 1928, the party held a congress in Dresden, fully adopting the Comintern line. The Dresden Congress established new leadership and worked along the ultra-left Comintern line, introduced by the "Third Period" of Comintern (1928-1934), which called for the radicalization of communist actions as part of the preparation for the incoming revolution. Radicalization of communist activism in principle followed the introduction of the dictatorship in Yugoslavia, which communists saw as a sign of the fragility of the regime and a sign for the organization of workers' revolution.

In February 1929, Communist Party leadership published a proclamation calling for the armed overthrow of the regime. Nonetheless, already in May, the Communist Party stated that the proclamation was premature, and that Yugoslavia was not ready for social revolution.[154] Still, during 1929 and 1930, communists participated in organized actions against the police, which led to series of murders and alleged accidents that ended with the death of many communists, among whom were the organizational secretary of the Party Djuro Djakovic, as well as the secretary of the Crvena Pomoć – Nikola Haćimović. The communist confrontation with the state authorities and the publication of materials that called for the social revolution of the regime led to mass persecution and arrests of the communists. As the historian Stefan Gužvica argues, this demonstrates that "Blame could not be placed solely on the Yugoslav repressive apparatus, as it was obvious that the policy adopted in 1928 played a significant role in facilitating the party's repression by the state."[155] Under such circumstances, the Communist Party leadership left the country in 1930 and continued organizing from Vienna. Throughout 1931, Communist Party's activity was minimal: as one of the party reports stated, "[The party] is not active, it does not show signs of life."[156]

The situation started changing for the better in 1932, with the establishment of Milan Gorkić as an interim Party secretary and the gradual reorganization of party instances in the main

[153] Stefan Gužvica, *Before Tito: The Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Great Purge (1936–1940),* (ACTA Universitatis Tallinnensis, 2020), 40.
[154] Dušan Bojković. "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Autocratic Rule of King Aleksandar Karađorđević". *Tokovi istorije* 3, (2015): 79.
[155] Gužvica, *Before Tito,* 42.
[156] Bojković. "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Autocratic Rule of King Aleksandar Karađorđević," 82.

centers.[157] At the same time, Comintern leadership steadily moved towards introducing the new line in the policy, which would end the ultra-left Third Period. The new line pertained to the Popular Front strategy, which included the cooperation of communists with social-democratic and non-socialist parties in the struggle against fascism. As authors Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew argue in their analysis of the Popular Front period, the turn in Comintern policy dates to mid-May 1934.[158] In December, the same year, the Yugoslav Communist Party organized a conference in Ljubljana, establishing new leadership and working on the party's reorganization and formation of the anti-fascist front. Following the Popular Front strategy, introduced by the Seventh Congress of Comintern in July 1935, the Yugoslav Communist Party started working on the creation of the popular front.

3.2 Communist Women in the Making

Even though the Dresden Party Congress held in November 1928 issued a special Resolution on the Work Among Women, previously discussed in Chapter I, the introduction of the dictatorship hindered its realization. Relying on Communist Party documents when exploring communist women's activism between 1929-1934 would lead one to believe that communist women's activism was in a state of hibernation. The shift of perspective from the top-down to the bottom-up allows different interpretations of this period, demonstrating that communist women performed a range of activities on the ground in this period. Furthermore, the bottom-up perspective sheds light on two important insights. Firstly, it shows that communist women were not just passive recipients of the party directives but also acted as individual agents. Secondly, it stresses that the history of the Communist Party cannot be explored outside the grassroots movement it emerged from.

3.2.1 Becoming Communist

Before presenting my analysis of the *memoirs*, few prosopographic remarks are in place. All the women discussed in this chapter were born in the early 1910s, so when they became first involved in the workers' movement, most of them were in their early 20s, and in most cases-single. More than a half pertained to the group of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, while only few had a high education. Nevenka Karakašević was a post-office worker, Jelena Ćetković started as a seamstress, and Julijana Drogajić was a textile worker. Lepa Perović was a

[157] *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*, 219.
[158] K. McDermott, Agnew J. "Popular Front and Stalinist Terror", 1934–9. In: *The Comintern* (London: Palgrave,1996), 125. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25024-0_4.

schoolteacher, Milada Rajter a dental technician, Vera Nenadović a National Museum curator, and Jelena Popović, a professor. Three of them joined the workers' movement at an early age, so Sonja Baruh and Milica Kostić became active as high school students, and Mitra Mitrović as a student at the Faculty of Philosophy. Another common denominator for most of them is that they were born in different parts of Yugoslavia; they moved to Belgrade around 1931 to 1933.[159] Soon after their move to Belgrade, they became involved in the movement and started with various activities. For example. Jelena Topalov, who became familiar with the work of the Communist Party through her friends from Nikšić [Montenegro], stated: "I was particularly interested in Belgrade, as I read a lot about the progressive movement in Belgrade, and movement of the students at the University of Belgrade."[160] So, communist-inclined women, who will later become party members, were first motivated to join the communist movement through their contacts, but the process of decision-making was more complex. As Marie Marmo Mullaney argues in her research of female revolutionary personality, joining a movement, i.e., entering the public sphere, demanded going through a decision-making process. One decision was to engage in a public role and break from social expectations of women's behavior, and the second was to take part in a revolutionary rather than reformist activity.[161] Deciding to participate in a revolutionary movement implicitly meant transforming one's own life. Mitra Mitović explained this decision while discussing the participation in the movement after her partner, Milovan Đilas, was sentenced to four years in prison in 1933: "I did not think for a moment whether I should continue with that life of sacrifices, deprivation, arrests, and loneliness. That was already my life, and that year I continued working even more actively."[162]

Lepa Perović (1911-2000) first learned about the work of the Communist Party through her acquaintance with a communist, Anđa Ranković. When describing her aspirations to join the illegal communist movement, Perović stated: "During my last years of schooling, I realized

[159] For example, Lepa Perović was born in Mašići (next to Banja Luka); Nevenka Karakašević-Stamenković in Mol, Vojvodina, Petruša Kočović-Zorović in Kolašin, Montenegro, Milada Rajter in Vinkovci, Croatia, Jelena Ćetković in Cetinje, Montenegro, Vera Nenadović and Jelena Popović in Gornji Milanovac, Serbia, Sonja Baruh in Požarevac, Serbia, etc.

[160] O partijskim i skojevskim organizacijama na Karaburmi u Beogradu. Sećanja Jelene Topalov, člana mesnog komiteta SKOJ-a iz tog perioda,12. mart 1958. 1381 MG-XXIV-25. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. (On the Party and The League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (SKOJ) at Karaburma, Belgrade. Memories of Jelena Topalov- Member of the Local Committee of SKOJ from That Period, March 12, 1958. 1381-MG-XXIV-25. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.),5. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Jelene Topalov)

[161] Marie Marmo Mullaney, "Gender and the Socialist Revolutionary Role, 1871-1921: A General Theory of the Female Revolutionary Personality." *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* vol. 11, no. 2 (1984): 101.

[162] Veljko Stanić, „Parče velkog života, "32.

that I am a communist by conviction, that I want to work, and that I need to look for a possibility to become connected [to the party]. "[163] Her statement is quite instructive for exploring the history of the organization of the party, as it illustrates that becoming a party member was not a simple task, as it depended on the will of an individual, the connections with and/or within the party, and the trust built between the potential member and' the connection.' As many cases from the *memoirs* show, individual women were first acquainted with the activity of the organized workers' movement and the party through their close contacts, after which they would express their sympathy and interest in the work of the party. Following that, they would perform various tasks outside the party to legitimize their dedication and loyalty, as values cultivated by the communist culture. Even though these tasks, such as the spread of the leaflets, could be deemed peripheral, they were essential for the party's work and the development of the organized workers' movement in the conditions of deep party illegality of the 1930s. These actions often led to arrests, which were followed by interrogations and often even imprisonment. As biographies and *memoirs* show, only after two or three years of performing such activities would they be nominated for the party membership and officially proclaimed party members. Whether and how this process was gendered is a question yet to be answered.

Although one of the central party tasks was to recruit as many members in their rows as possible, the described process demonstrates that this task was realized with a certain level of caution, which emerged due to the political repression communists were facing. For this reason, all communist women in their *memoirs* recall who was the first person to teach them about communism and the person who later granted their membership in the party. For example, Dragutin Čolić recalled admitting Vukica Mitrović to the Communist Party in 1933 and described their conversation in Mitrović's biography: "Do you know what conspiracy is? – I know – she responded shortly, and that one word shone with firm certainty. – According to your activity, you can become a party member. – Yes, I can – she replied shortly and quietly. – That means new obligations. – I am aware of that. – It will be more difficult; you will have more responsibility. – That's exactly what I wanted! – Fine, from now on you are a member of the Yugoslav Communist Party. You need to justify this trust! – I said in a serious voice. – I

[163] Materijal o razvitku radničkog pokreta, 21.02.1959.1385-MG-XXI-229. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [Materials on the Development of the Worker's Movement, February 21, 1959. 1385 MG-XXI-229. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.], 3. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Lepe Perović)

will justify it through my activity; that's all I can say. – responded "Vera" – Vukica, in a low voice, in her manner – simply and modestly."[164]

Many women were influenced by their immediate family members, either by their parents or brothers and, to a lesser extent- sisters. In many cases, sisters were motivated by their brothers' activism and work to join the movement themselves. Petruša Kočović notes in the very beginning of her *memoirs*: "My first contact with the party was through my brother Lazar Kočović, in 1928. Through his work, my love toward the work and the movement developed."[165] The same pattern can be followed in several different cases: Vera Nenadović became connected to the movement through her three brothers- Pera, Gaga, and Midža who were active in the workers' movement and, as she noted, kept the "progressive" literature in the house; Sonja Baruh grew up listening about the revolutionary activity of her brothers Josip, Bora and Isidor and her sister Rašela, and became a revolutionary communist herself, influencing the youngest sister in the family- Bela. In some instances, both parents and siblings motivated their daughters' revolutionary spirit. This was the case with Milica Kostić, who told about her revolutionary beginnings through an anecdote: "In high school, I confronted a teacher who told me that I cheated and that I wrote an essay for my friend. The teacher told me: Well, you are a true Bolshevik! When I came back home, my cousin told me: You idiot, why are you upset? Bolsheviks are the Russians! The tradition of respecting Russia and Russians was so strong in our family that my mother used to tell me if I behaved well, she would take me to see the building of the Russian legation in Belgrade. Afterward, my cousin took me to the trials of the accused communists, saying, "those people were arrested for fighting for justice."[166]

Some women noted that they became involved in the workers' movement through unions or workers' committees in their workplaces. Ratomirka Vasić stated that she heard about the workers' movement while she lived in Čačak [City in Central Serbia], and as soon as she moved to Belgrade, she joined the reading group at the workplace, and eventually, the workers' union.[167] Nevenka Karakašević, a post-office worker, first joined the union of the post-office

[164] Momčilo Stefanović, *Hrabro srce tihe Šunje- životni put narodnog heroja Vukice Mitrović* [The Brave Heart of the Quiet Šunja – Life Road of a National Hero Vukica Mitrović]. (Kragujevac, 1977), 24.

[165] Kočović-Zorić Petruša. 10. jun 1958. 1233-MG III-17. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [Kočović-Zorić Petruša. June 10, 1958. 1233-MG III-17. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.], 1. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Petruše Kočović-Zorić)

[166] Sećanja Milice Kostić, 4.

[167] Sećanja iz radničkog pokreta pre rata: Rastovac Dobrila, Vasić Ratomirka, Simić Nevenka iz Saveza ženskih društava Srbije, 9. novembar 1956. 1325- MG-IX-63. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [Memories from the Workers' Movement Rastovac Dobrila, Vasić Ratomirka, Simić Nevenka from the Union of Women's Societies of Serbia, November 9, 1956. 1325- MG-IX-63. Collection of Memorial

workers connected to the party and operated within the women's section of the union. As she recalled, the women's section was organized by several female comrades, who gave lectures and maintained contact with the rest of the working women. She remembered: "the most conscious women comrades gave lectures and pointed out important issues and questions […] The most conscious women comrades also started many discussions on the position of women, about wages …."[168]

Having new members from different parts of Yugoslavia connected to the Communist Party proved to be more than helpful. The story told by Lepa Perović in her *memoirs* proves this point. When she came to Belgrade, Lepa Perović lived in the same building as Mitra Mitrović, who in 1932 already became known in the communist circles, so Perović's new apartment became a new editorial base for an illegal communist Party organ *Udarnik* [Shockworker], as she was a new person in town whom the police would not suspect.[169] On the other hand, becoming communist and being active in the movement also depended on individual efforts of women eager to engage in revolutionary activities. For example, in 1933, Lepa Perović, as well as a group of other communists connected to *Udarnik*, was arrested but was soon released due to the lack of evidence. After the arrest, she returned to Bosnia. However, as a part of her public punishment' that followed her suspension for participating in the illegal communist activities, she was relegated to Paštrić, a village in the part of Serbia as it was " a village where peasants are loyal to the regime and monarchy, so she would not be able to work against them."[170] Before leaving to Paštrić, Perović contacted Veselin Masleša to discuss her new position as a village teacher and her possibility of activist work in the village. As an active revolutionary and a prominent thinker, Masleša advised her not to go, saying: "I doubt that you as a woman would be able to do anything- the village is conservative. I would suggest you keep looking for a job in the city."

Nonetheless, Perović went to Paštrić and managed to continue with her revolutionary activities among peasants. As she was recognized as a respectable and caring teacher, she was accepted by the people in the village and organized lectures and educated peasants on the party's work

Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.], 3. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Rastovac Dobrile, Vasć Ratomirke, Simić Nevenke)

[168] O ilegalnom radu- sećanja drugarice Nevenke Karakašević- Stamenković, 16. April 1958. 274-MG-IV-22. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [On Illegal Work- Memories of Comrade Nevenka Karakašević- Stamenković, April 16, 1958. 274-MG-IV-22. . Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia], 3. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Nevenke Karakašević-Stamenković)

[169] I did not manage to find the publishing dates for *Udarnik*.

[170] Sećanja Milice Kostić, 6.

and the importance of the workers' movement. The more successful her activities were, the stronger was the response of the local government. As an outcome, Perović was often transferred to new villages. However, she continued with her work. It is important to note that throughout her activity in the first part of the the1930s, she maintained contact with the party in Belgrade through Andja Ranković, and more importantly, with Ženski pokret. As stated in her *memoirs*, she could not be active directly in Ženski pokret, as she lived and worked at the village, but she attended their meetings, so "women comrades could count on me, even though I was not organized in Belgrade."[171]

Lepa Perović's story serves as a good case study to illustrate how communist women developed inventive strategies to pursue their revolutionary activities, overcoming, on the one hand, gendered assumptions on the potential of women's activist success, and the other, political repression of the regime. Even though she participated in the meetings and organized actions with other communists and intellectuals located in the same region as she, due to their revolutionary activity, she still, as an individual, struggled with the police when wanting to go to meetings of Ženski pokret in Belgrade, argued when local governments transferred her on false accusations and opposed when she was discouraged based on her gender. The case of Lepa Perović shows how individual motivation constituted an essential element of communist women's activism.

3.2.2 Communist Women's Understanding of the Political Self

One of the most significant advantages of the research based on *memoirs* lies in discovering how communist women's activists self-developed, their perception of their own activism, and what trajectories they followed in their activism. Still, it must be highlighted that discussed *memoirs* represent constructed narratives created almost 20 years after the events described within them occurred. Moreover, after the War and the success of the Communist Party, they emerged when communist activities became largely valorized and legitimized in public, which, we can reasonably assume, must have shaped the way communist women retold their stories. In my interpretation of communist women's *memoirs*, I focus on communist women's performance rather than their role within the Communist Party and party-related organizations. While role could be understood as something simply accorded to an individual, performance as a concept encompasses activities performed in a particular public space.[172] Moreover,

[171] Ibid.15.
[172] Penny Summerfield, "Concluding Thoughts: performance, the self, and women's history", *Women's History Review*, 22:2 (2013): 346. DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2012.726120.

instead of on the performance, the focus put on a role leads to the underestimation of communist women's activism and ultimately passivization of their actions. Even though I attempt to focus on the performances of communist women, analysis of gendered roles within the party and, more broadly, within the Yugoslav interwar society should not be omitted, as it shaped communist women's perception of their activism and creation of their political and activist self.

3.3 Life Behind Activism

The work of the Communist Party in the period of illegality, especially during the 1930s, was influenced, and up to some extend depended, on the efforts of individual communist women. Still, in their *memoirs*, communist women themselves seem to belittle the importance of their efforts and the influence of their work. For example, Vojka Demajo notes: "I must stress that my task was purely technical, so I cannot give you any information on the work of the party in the political sense, because I, at that moment, was not a party member. I was a coder. When there were busts, I would get texts from comrades and turn them into codes, and I would also de-code coded texts. However, I neither attended meetings of party members nor knew anything about the organization of the party. The nature of my job was purely technical."[173]

Stressing that she was not included in the meetings and that she was ignorant about the party's work demonstrated that Demajo perceived her role as marginal and unimportant. Her understanding was further explained in her autobiography, where she asserted: "As a sympathizer of the Communist Party I carried a great pain within me- not one of my comrades ever offered to provide me with any theoretical education or to connect me to the party life, so I had a feeling that comrades were using me only when they necessarily had to. And only my true dedication to the idea [of communist struggle, presumably, MB] did not allow my vanity to overrule and lead me to reject the tasks I was given, which I would always, happy from the bottom of the heart that I was given a task at all, completed successfully."[174] This excerpt from her autobiography explains the origins of her perception of the role she played. Lack of interest of party comrades toward her and gendered relations among them led her to believe that her role was negligible. A similar attitude was present in the statement of Dobrila Rastovčanin,

[173] O naprednom pokretu u Beogradu. Podaci Vojke Demajo. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [On the Progressive Movement in Belgrade. Information of Vojka Demajo. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.], 14. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Vojke Demajo)

[174] Milan Radanović, *Dida Demajo- biografija* [Dida Demajo- Biography]. (Beograd: Jevrejski istorijski Muzej, 2009), 447. (http://jevrejskadigitalnabiblioteka.rs/bitstream/id/465/JIM). (Accessed: April 5, 2021)

who recalled: "[...] We fulfilled technical tasks: bringing materials, trade union proclamations, gathering the membership. But when something needed a political explanation, I was not able to do it. Then I received help from Jelka Kavgić, who worked with Nata Lažova."[175] Rastovčanin's statement, on the one hand, mirrors the same understanding as Demajo's of the role she played for the movement, but conversely, unlike Demajo's example, demonstrates that she was provided the guidance needed to become politically literate.

Vojka Demajo and Dobrila Rastovčanin recalled the tasks they did through the prism of the role they thought they had. Rather than on the task itself, the focus on the role led them to perceive themselves as unimportant to the broader workers' movement. Shifting the perspective from the role they thought they played to their performance demonstrates that, contrary to their belief, they contributed to the movement. Moreover, to understand the women's political experiences and influence, it is essential to recognize the complexity of internal and external conditions that shaped their activism. From the perspective of internal conditions, it is essential to note that even though Communist Party had equality of women and men as one of the initial points in the statute, patriarchal and conservative positions on women's role and activism persisted among party members. As demonstrated in Chapter I, paternalistic party attitudes presumed until1934 Ljubljana Congress when this issue was finally addressed in the following manner: "One of the mistakes in the work of our organizations up to this point, and the previous leadership also, was ignorance about the need of mass organization of work among women, and qualification of that work as a work of secondary in relation to the party and the youth. The most atrocious understandings on this issue existed within the party, such as women are not fit for revolutionary struggle, work among women is unfruitful, that women are not conspirative enough. Some of our important members relied on such understandings so they would justify their neglect of the work among women, and some of them even believed that women should not be admitted to the party or youth section for the previously stated reasons, which is untrue."[176] On the other hand, communist women's activism was influenced by external conditions, such as communists' persecutions and arrests, which will, as Chapter IV will argue, contributed to the legitimization of their roles and efforts in the second half of 1930s.

My research of the inner-party organization and culture confutes Demajo and Rastovčanin's position on their contribution, demonstrating that without the efforts of individuals working on

[175] Sećanja Rastovac Dobrile, Vasć Ratomirke, Simić Nevenke, 10.
[176] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 207.

the spread of the propaganda materials and text coders, the development of the revolutionary workers' movement would not be possible in the conditions of party's illegality and the Kings' dictatorship. Moreover, the conduction of these tasks was a path towards the acceptance and acknowledgment of the party.[177] This realization was present in the *memoirs* of communist Jelena Popović, who explained that she worked on finding the apartments for the "illegals" (communists who hid from the police). Jelena stated: "I believe that in the conditions of illegal work in Belgrade, the search and organization of the apartments for the illegals represented a significant sector of party work."[178] Such understanding of the task she performed might be connected with the fact that she was highly educated and that owing to her education, she, as compared to Demajo or Rastovčanin, understood the dynamics of the party organization better. Moreover, Jelena was a Party member before the War, while Demajo was admitted to the Party only in 1945. She noted: "I became a party member in 1945; I don't recall the date, I didn't write it down, as I believed that I would never forget that day."[179]

Communist women performed a range of activities, from distribution of propaganda materials, transfer of the messages and materials, text coding and de-coding, organization of meetings and courses, agitation among workers, and work in the local and regional party committees. It appears that the gendered division of tasks within the party was more prominent in the early 1930s when the revolutionary activity and communist network of contacts were in the initial phase of (re)developing, and conservative attituded towards women's activism still prevailed, than in the second half of the 1930s, when many women already stood out as highly successful organizers and party members. Still, both communist women and men relied on traditionally prescribed gender roles to perform party tasks more successfully. For example, communist women would gather in the forest, bringing children along with them to not raise suspicion. Also, they would bring embroidery materials to their meetings, so if the police came, it would look like a regular women's gathering.

While the position of communist men towards women is a topic that was already addressed in the literature on communist women, it is also important to investigate how communist women perceived other women comrades and their efforts. At the end of Nevenka Karakašević's *memoirs*, one separate section was added, titled "Positive characteristics of women comrades."

[177] Mullaney, "Gender and the Socialist Revolutionary Role," 144.
[178] Popović Jelena. 1240-MG-III-8. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [Popović Jelena. 1240-MG-III-18. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.], 6. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Jelene Popović)
[179] Radovanović, *Dida de Majo*, 478.

In this section, she described communist women: "Women comrades knew how to become close to the people who had nothing to do with the workers' movement. They established contacts quite quickly, and they did not need much time to find a common language through which they connected with people. They knew how to take care of people. I was late for a meeting twice, and the third time they got me a watch. When I had no sweater, they gave me one, so I wouldn't catch a cold."[180] One of the most vivid descriptions that encompass both women's positions towards other women comrades and the position of men towards women in the party can be found in the recollections of a communist Katica Novak. She noted: "In the work, I felt particular sympathy for comrade Brozović, a 55-year-old woman. Every day, she would ask me what is new, and I would tell her, and she would make me do the whole meeting. So, I started feeling comfortable in that department. Women comrades started asking me what to do because almost all of them were having problems with women's organs; they asked me what I think, which doctor should they see. I was such know-nothing regarding women's organs, but I was ashamed to be twenty years old and not to know what to tell them regarding this. I was so tortured because of my ignorance at the next meeting, but I did not know whom to turn to regard this issue. So, the president of the meeting asked me what was wrong. I was ashamed, but I stood up and said what was bothering me. The entire plenum started laughing, but he remained serious. Đuka Cvijić stormed in from another room and said: "Hello, comrades, I heard from comrade Novak's words, and her question is very wise." At the end of the meeting, comrade Cvijić approached me and told me that he would send a doctor tomorrow that will introduce me with the contents of women's body and that he will give me addresses of other doctors, so when, in the future, women comrades come to me with a question, I know what to say and where to send the That's how one of my greatest problems was resolved."[181] Novak's recollection demonstrates that women trusted women who were prominent activists, seeing them as more knowledgeable about a certain topic. On the other hand, we see a vivid representation of male party member's attitudes, as well as an example of a man who challenged this order, showing that not all male party members belittled women comrades.

In several cases, communist women described other women comrades as gentle, caring, and loyal. Such descriptions are more present in the parts of *memoirs* that address the period from

[180] Sećanja Nevenke Karakašević-Stamenković, 14.
[181] Ivan Očak, *Braća Cvijići* [Cvijić Brothers]. (Zagreb: Spektar – Globus, 1982), 104–105. (Accessed: May 3,2021). http://library.memoryoftheworld.org/?fbclid=IwAR1oYGJkDwPSjsAAsFr9HsGcRo2LJqG3FEtCl_5TRu4rnI9wRl_oIAn9h84#/book/997be51c-6df1-407a-988c-fe33397b2f02

1935 to 1941, when numerous communist women, along with men, ended up in prisons and went through series of interrogations that took the shape of severe physical and mental torture. For example, Jelena Popović described her transfer to a new party cell, stating: "I was transferred to another organization and secretary of the new organization, a woman comrade, who, next to Cana Babović, was the most resistant one before the police. I instantly knew who she was- even before I listened to stories about Đuka Dinić and her heroic resistance. [...] She had an unusually gentle soul, she was sensitive to other peoples' pain, and she was a heroine in front of the enemy."[182] Popović similarly described Gina Radovanović and her prison experience in 1942: "Gina was arrested in 1942. She was beaten up by the police so bad that they had to perform surgery on her, and they did it without any anesthetization. The word went around that she told Bećarević [inspector], 'You piece of garbage!'. When her friend Dada Konstatinović was to be executed, she went along."[183] This is only one of the descriptions of the prison experiences of communist women, but it demonstrates how communist women perceived the activism of their women comrades. More detailed recounts of prison encounters and actions of solidarity will be analyzed in Chapter IV.

Memoirs also reveal a presence of a role model, whom almost all women mentioned. Among communist women who stood out as prominent role models were Đuka Dinić, Jelena Ćetković, Spasenija Cana Babović, Vukica Mitrović, Julija Delere, Mitra Mitrović, Lepa Perović, and others. The connection with an organization or a union where one of these women operated was especially underlined in all *memoirs*. Nevenka Karakašević recalled how when she operated as a treasurer of a post-office workers' society, a large amount of money went missing, and her comrades started boycotting her and had to cover the missing sum herself. Then she highlighted that her action led to her meeting with well-known communist Vukica Mitrović, who asserted that Nevenka's reaction was noble, and because of that, Mitrović connected her to Julija Delere.[184]

The last aspect requiring further attention is communist women's position toward non-communist women workers. According to the *memoirs*, positions of communist women toward women workers largely depended on their level of education. Lepa Perović's description of women workers in the late 1930s is quite instructive: "I connected with people that stood out with their activity. With Žika and Bosa, I worked on the syndical organizing of workers. We

[182] Sećanja Jelene Popović, 12.
[183] Ibid. 19.
[184] Sećanja Nevenke Karakašević- Stamenković, 7.

started organizing factory workers, but only women. Among them were women gathered pell-mell- ex tavern owners, wives of craftsmen, registered prostitutes- one very heterogeneous element. What made them organize? Primarily, fear of the incoming War. Already then, Czechoslovakia was attacked. Before that, you could talk to them only about banalities- preserves, costliness, husbands who beat them. But after the attack, they even approached me, offering that they do my job while I tell them about the political situation, especially about whether there will be War."[185] Lepa Perović's emphasis on the heterogeneity of the working women allows us to see how it in a manner more realistic as in many contemporary sources in the orbit of the workers' movement. Through her description, women workers come to life as persons with everyday problems that start becoming minor compared to the rising fear of the incoming War.

Additionally, the quoted excerpt shows what one active communist woman understood as banality: domestic-related issues that still constituted many women workers' lives were deemed marginal by a prominent communist woman such as Lepa Perović. This instance of thought might be instructive when analyzing why organizing women workers and attracting them to trade unions and the party was such a difficult task. As it was stated, the most prominent communist women were young and unmarried women who had no burden of family and home on their chest. So, it might be assumed that the lack of understanding of women workers' everyday reality and position by communist activists might have contributed to their low success in organizing. On the other hand, when women felt threatened by real, exceptional danger, they started becoming interested in the movement. This might be understood as a consequence of their political illiteracy, as women workers saw war as a real threat, while the struggle against the dictatorship might have seemed irrelevant and distant for them. However, such conclusions are reductionist and tend to undervalue women workers. Chapter V will demonstrate that, when young communist women became increasingly active among women workers, educating them and informing them on the current events, the women's position, and the struggle of the working class against war and fascism, they exponentially started joining Ženski pokret, trade unions, and ultimately the communist movement. So, even though there were difficulties in women workers' organizing, this did not mean that they passively accepted their lot.[186]

[185] Sećanja Lepe Perović, 20.
[186] Jane McDermid and Anna Hillyar, *Midwives of the Revolution: Female. Bolsheviks and Women Workers in 1917* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), 5.

4 Communist Women's Activism through the Prism of the History of Emotions

This chapter will be dedicated to the research of communist women's activism from the perspective of the history of emotions. History of emotions, as a still-developing field, offers a great framework that has a twofold potential. First, focus on the emotions enables us to see what role emotions played in the activism of communist women and how their activism was informed by certain emotions and understanding thereof. Second, this perspective is needed to research the emotions of individuals standing behind the large political entity, such as the interwar communist movement. It should be noted, that, following Maria Todorova's lead, I use emotion, feeling as well as simultaneously.[187]

The first part of the chapter is devoted to the explorations of "emotional communities" that existed among communist women in the 1930s. The concept of "emotional community," introduced by Barbara Rosenwein, encompasses a social community that values and devalues certain emotions and emotional expression. Relying on this definition, I argue that communist women created different "emotional communities," in which strength, courage, endurance, and loyalty were legitimized and valorized, while fear and weakness that often led to treason were highly criticized and judged.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the family as another form of "emotional community." Moreover, in the context of the interwar Yugoslav political repression, family at times stood out as a political category. In this part of the chapter, I investigate what it meant to have a communist in a family and how these shaped lives of other family members. Additionally, I explore how family members, especially mothers, negotiated their children's political activism and contributed to the development of the communist movement.

[187] Maria Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins: Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 172.

4.1 Communist Women and "Emotional Communities"

Re-evaluating the history of the communist movement through the *memoirs* of communist women requires being mindful of the emotions hidden in such documents. This awareness allows reexamination of the relationship between social history and the history of emotions. More precisely, researched *memoirs* reveal a particular system of "emotional communities" that emerged within the communist movement and between communist women. The concept of "emotional community" is defined as a social community that shares social, political, and economic interests. "Emotional community" develops a specific system of feelings within the frameworks of which individuals assess emotions they value, the bonds created among them, and emotional expressions they encourage and/or criticize.[188] Relying on this concept, of I will reflect on the "emotional communities" that emerged among communist women.

4.1.1 Being a Part of "Something Bigger"

Being a communist activist and participating in a revolutionary movement meant being emotionally invested in the idea of revolutionary struggle. As author June Hannam notes, emotions play a significant aspect in an individual's motivation to join a social movement, create solidarity with others, and persist in activism.[189] Emotions embedded in the creation of "emotional communities" can be identified in the communist women's *memoirs*. Being emotionally invested in the movement produced feelings such as pride for belonging to something greater than oneself. Sonja Baruh's explanation serves as an excellent example of the pride behind activism: "That was my youth- I felt that, while being only 16, I belonged to something greater and more important than weekly dances and hangouts at confectioners' shop. Of course, I had to leave school- both due to the constant prosecutions and continuous impecuniousness. Working, I contributed to the household too, at least, some extent, but what was more important was the pleasure that I was so close to the ideal my brothers and sisters fought for."[190]

Being part of the movement, of "something bigger," had a price of its own. In numerous cases, collective freedom meant the complete lack of personal one. As Vahida Maglajić argued: "I

[188] Barbara Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions," *Passions in Context: Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Emotions* 1/1 (2010): 11. online at http://www.passionsincontext.de/.
[189] June Hannam, "Women as Paid Organizers and Propagandists for the British Labour Party Between the Wars." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 77 (2010): 77.
[190] *Sonja Baruh*, (Beograd: Jevrejski istorijski muzej Saveza jevrejskih opština Srbije, 2003), 306.

am aware that I will never have personal happiness. I will use all my hopes and strength for my work. That is the purpose of my life, and that makes me completely happy. "[191]

However, the idea of being a part of the revolutionary movement and the sense of belonging distinctively shaped the activism and trajectories of communist women. In times overshadowed by fear of arrests, this idea turned out to be a leading force for many activists.

For example, when Spasenija Cana Babović was sent to Moscow by Party leadership to save her from the arrest, Cana felt excluded from the movement and burdened by her emigration. She elaborated on this feeling: "I observed the entire emigration very carefully. I felt that I could exist neither as an individual nor as a human over there. I decided to go back to my country and to struggle there at all costs. I could not live outside my country in emigration. "[192]A similar line of thought could be traced behind the words of Mitra Mitrović when she explained the reasoning behind the participation in the revolutionary activity: "In the spiritual sense this did lead to the serenity, but in the external sense, in the real-life, that was not a peaceful life, on the contrary, you would consciously go into turbulent life, but with an unbreakable faith. That was the only way to go through life. Unrests and doubts appeared when thinking about whether we succeeded, but never reached a question when the revolution would occur because it had to occur, regardless of whether we live to see it. "[193] Mitra Mitrović's sense of belonging was followed by a sense of hope in the future change, which represented one of the pillars of communist women's motivation to be activists.

4.1.2 Hiding the Sense of Fear

Constant threats of prosecution and torturous interrogations did affect communist women's seemingly unbreakable enthusiasm. Exploring communist women's activism in interwar Poland, author Emma Zohar notes that the fear regarding communism was part of public discourse; The sense of fear for non-communists stemmed from the possibility to be recognized as a communist, and for the revolutionary activist, it emerged from the shift their activism would make in their and their close peoples' lives.[194] This was often the case in the late 1930s Yugoslavia, when, as communist activism became more fruitful, the regime's response became more severe. Vojka Demajo expressed her despair over the constant fear of arrest in her *memoirs* when she was interrogated amidst her brother's arrest: "The police held me under the

[191] Himka Maglajlić-Hadzihalilović, *Zapisi o Vahidi Maglajić* [Notes on Vahida Maglajić]. (Banja Luka: Glas, 1973), 34.
[192] Mladenović, *Spasenija Cana Babović- Životni put i delo,* 26.
[193] Veljko Stanić, „Parče velkog života, ", 23.
[194] Ibid.

house arrest for three days. I immediately established contact with my brother, hid him in Belgrade and inner parts of the country, maintained the connection between him and the Party, and finally, managed to send him to France from Split. In great fear that the police is after us and that I will give out something, constant questioning of my mother and brothers about my brother and his whereabouts, constant blameworthiness on their side on the account that everybody will suffer because of me, that my brother, Samuilo, who was a lawyer, will not be able to find a proper job in the city administration because of me, lead me to such condition that doctors sent me to the sanatorium in Vršac, from which I ran away after ten days. Exhausted, both physically and mentally, under the false impression that I was constantly being followed, I told comrades within the Party that I cannot be active anymore, that I am terribly frightened, and that I need some time to come to my senses."[195]

Finding statements of this kind in the *memoirs* and biographies of communist women seems to be extremely rare. On the one hand, biographies of communist women mainly emerged in a post-war initiative of celebration of communist women, due to which they mostly heroize communist women's activism, particularly their courage and bravery. Even though fear is present as an acceptable emotion in these pieces, in most cases, it is represented as something that is always overcome through the belief in the more significant ideals. Communist women's *memoirs* follow the same pattern; in the research of the *memoirs*, almost none of the communist women reflected openly on the fear and dread behind their activism. So, in the "emotional community" of communist women, fear appears to be an emotion to be overcome by bravery. For example, Spasenija Cana Babović wrote this when describing the 40 days of police torture she went through and the bravery she had to stand it: "The most terrible thing was the humiliating torture of people. The treason would mean death to me anyway- either political or physical. And the political was worse. They could cut me, but they could not find out anything. I decided to endure it till the end, so I had no dilemmas or crises. Only, such moments would appear, when I would – if only I had the possibility- commit suicide.[196] Cana Babović's statement does not directly reflect fear, but it reflects a glimpse of despair that is rarely present in biographies.

The instances of fear can be recognized behind certain statements in the *memoirs*. For example, the mother of a communist Jelena Ćetković, quoted a message Jelena sent from prison, which said: "Dig everywhere you can, both with your hands and legs, to get me out of here, I am the

[195] Radanović, *Dida Demajo*, 83.
[196] Mladenović, *Spasenija Cana Babović- Životni put i delo* ,49.

next one in the line for shooting. "[197] The feeling of fear is only indicated through the first part of Jelena Ćetković's message, but it still radiates both fear and despair before the potential death.

4.2 Bravery and Solidarity as the Ideals of Communist "Emotional Community."

In her discussion of "emotional communities," Barbara Rosenwein argues that people as individuals participate in different "emotional communities" simultaneously.[198] Therefore, they are able to transfer from one "emotional community" to another, shifting their emotional displays, privileging specific values, and favoring certain types of expressivities. Following this idea, it could be argued that communist women formed a special type of "emotional community" during their time spent in penitentiaries.

Before coming to a penitentiary, communist women (and men) would go through a process of interrogation followed by severe torture and could last from days to months. Most women in the *memoirs* described these investigations: either they went through such processes or witnessed someone going through it. Descriptions of tortures represent the most emotionally exhausting sections of *memoirs* and mainly pertain to the late 1930s. This is not to say that such interrogations and treatment of the political prisoners did not exist at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, but they became more severe and cruel after 1935. For example, Lepa Perović noted that when she was imprisoned in 1933, women were not beaten up, just deprived of any other food than plain bread and water.[199]

Police interrogations were performed by special police agents that primarily relied on torture to extract information. The methods used for this were various and included extreme beating that often ended in bone fractures, whipping until the skin starts falling off, and a particular method of putting salt directly into an individual's mouth, without the possibility of drinking water. Cana Babović described the last process: "That was terrible. The man feels helpless. Thirst was torturing me like crazy. My head started spinning. I fell into a coma. They stuffed salt into my mouth, and when I would become thirsty, they would start running water in front of the cell without giving me even a drop. Even now, when I hear the dripping of water, it

[197] Sećanja Gorde Ćetkovć na Jelenu Ćetković ,23. jul 1958. 1373-MG -II-10. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [Memories of Gorda Ćetković on Jelena Ćetković, July 23, 1958. 1373-MG - II-10. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.], 12. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Gorde Ćetković na Jelenu Ćetković)

[198] Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 107, Issue 3 (2002): 842. https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/107.3.821.

[199] Sećanja Lepe Perović, 5.

reminds me of those terrible times. That was, actually, the beginning of dying horrendously. When they interrogated me, they would put a glass of water on the table, and whenever I would, unintentionally, reach for the glass, they would start hitting me again."[200]

The interrogation intended to lead to information on the central party organization and members lasted for days. In some cases, women were so severely injured that they were sent to a hospital for recovery, and after some time, brought back and interrogated again. Nevenka Karakašević outlines this process: "I was in the police with Zora Popović and Jelena Ćetković, and afterward Julija Marić and Draginja Raodvanović. She was terribly beaten up. We made her a bed, she had wounds on her head, and she could not stand on her feet, so we had to carry her to the toilet. She walked on her knees. When she went for another interrogation, she required us to sing, and she wanted that spirit to stay in our room. One day Jelena Ćetković walked into the room all beaten up. She was in a hospital because she could not eat, and she was brought in for torture once again. She did not show that she knew me, but we showed her that we are comrades and that there is no danger, and that is he could speak freely among us. It was like that until one Jewish girl came whom we did not know; we did not know what kind of person she was, so we were reserved. Jelena was arrested in the street Žorža Klemensoa because someone, as she believed, brought the police to the meeting. She managed to swallow the materials she had on her. One night they took her to the basement of the police station. There they hanged her comrade; the blood was dripping from his body, and she was forced to watch this. She was also raped that night. On the return to the cell, she cried for the first time. She was black from all the bruises; she was terribly beaten up. There was no place without a bruise on her body. She was summoned to an interrogation once more, and they sent her back to the cell. Her back was broken, and her stomach and all organs were hurt. The flesh from her feet fell off.[201] Karakašević's recollection of the processes of interrogation and time spend at the special police reveals an entire range of emotions, from the sense of solidarity and courage to an incredible stoicism and, finally, complete despair and horror. The moment of singing while being taken to interrogation might be understood as a process of solidarity building and rising of the collective morale.[202]

Regardless of physical and mental pressure, communist women often refused to give out their real names and information on any of their comrades. Of course, biographies and *memoirs*

[200] Mladenović, *Spasenija Cana Babović- Životni put*, 47.
[201] Sećanja Nevenke Karakašević-Stamenković ,10, 11.
[202] Emma Zohar, "Feeling Communists: Communism, emotions, and gender in interwar Polish Jewry", *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* (2020): 12. https://doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2020.1846271.

mainly preserve memories of women who suffered through this process and refused to give any information, while cases of women and/or men who did not manage to cope with such pressure remain either unmentioned or mentioned with despise. For example, Jelena Popović describes with evident bitterness the case of Vera Matić, who was arrested in a storage room filled with illegal materials and a list of communist names. She describes this event in a separate section of her *memoirs* titled "The bust of Buha and Vera Miletić ": "During the bust, Buha and Vera Miletić were caught in a storage room with all lists and materials. They became traitors and told the police everything they knew. All the apartments were endangered, and many people were busted: Srbijanka Bakumirović, Dobrila Blagojević ... As we had no safe apartments, we would spend the entire day on the street. Also, we would sleep in the backyards of the buildings and among corn piles. Vera Dimitrijević, a party member, tried to find new apartments, but they were unsafe. "[203] The weakness before the police was perceived as a type of treason, as it had a significant influence on other activists' lives. A more extreme example also appears in Popović's *memoirs*, when she described the case of Jelena Matić, who was also seen as a traitor. Julijana Dograjić also reflected on the case of Jelena Matić: "Jelena Matić was arrested and later used as a secret agent for the special police. For that reason, it was decided that she will be liquidated by communists in our area of work. Liquidation was done by Ilija Mrgić, who was arrested then, and many people were busted. He busted Božić, and Božić busted many others. "[204]

Therefore, the weakness before the police that would lead to treason, or worse, collaboration with the police, was the most heavily judged action by communist comrades. On the other hand, bravery and endurance were celebrated as the most outstanding values individual could possess. For example, Jelena Popović described well-known communist Đuka Dinić in the following manner: "I was transferred into an organization secretary of which was a woman comrade who, after Cana Babović, was the bravest before the police. I knew who she was right away: I have heard about Đuka Dinić and her heroic endurance many times before. I met her in Valjevo before the war, where her friend Filip Kljajić worked and lived. Unusually gentle in the soul, sensitive to the pain of others, and a hero in front of the enemy."[205] Just as Dinić was known to Popović for her heroic bearing, many communist women were celebrated for their

[203] Sećanja Jelene Popović, 13.
[204] Sećanja drugarice Julijane Dograjić. 5. jun 1958. 1244-MG-IV-21. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [Memories of Comrade Julijana Dograjić. June 5, 1958. 1244 MG-IV-21. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.], 11. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Julijane Dograjić)
[205] Sećanja Jelene Popović, 3.

enormous strength in the face of torture. Spasenija Cana Babović, as one of the women who suffered through this process and managed to tell her story, described where this strength came from: "That is one of the sources of resistance and determination to hold out at any cost. When they try to endanger their human dignity, a man becomes all stiff, turns into a cramp, and strives to remain a winner – which meant not to become a traitor, not to give out any name".[206]As Cana Babović's statement implies, maybe the essential elements of "emotional community" were solidarity and compassion among communist women, especially during their time in penitentiaries.

In some cases, life in penitentiaries in the 1930s often took a form of a community. Cana Babović described her time in the women's penitentiary in Požarevac in 1938: "Conditions of serving time in the penitentiary were not so hard. Probably due to the political situation in the country and the results of the struggles of convicts in other penitentiaries- Mitrovica and Lepoglava. [...] We lived as one family. We knew exactly who took care of the 'household.' I, even if that seems a bit strange, recovered during my time spent there. I was working on being ready to join the movement as soon as I get out."[207] Cana Babović's description of life in penitentiary illustrates that, in some cases, the time spent in the penitentiaries in the 1930s was not closely terrible as the interrogation process itself. Yet, other examples demonstrate that prisoners' living conditions were so bad that prisoners often organized hunger strikes. This situation became even worse when in the face and after the beginning of the war, concentration camps were established.

In concentration camps, communities formed by fellow inmates sometimes proved to be lifesaving. Within them, women would take care of the badly injured ones, providing them with physical and mental help. The best example of solidarity can be found in the biography of Nada Dimić, whose fellow inmate Ljubica Janić-Zec recalled their time spent in the women's concentration camp Stara Gradiška in 1942: "We looked at her chart with curiosity. In the section 'name and last name,' it was written NADA DIMIĆ (?). We have heard about her. We knew that she killed an Ustasha in self-defense, that she was tortured in the worst possible way imaginable, and that agent Bulić would come to her cell every night, trying to confuse her with cross-questioning, but she muttered not even a word. Not a single word. Not even her name. Her name remained a riddle for the blood-thirsty agents. Instead of her mouth, her eyes spoke – light and crystal clear. Her eyes seemed happy. Probably due to her moral victory – the

[206] Mladenović, *Spasenija Cana Babović- Životni put i delo*, 49.
[207] Ibid.51.

question mark on the chart. We knew about her superhuman suffering and victories. We knew that she was not mute; we saw her dead-beat body under the blanket — gaunt body. It was almost child-like. We managed to have her placed in our cell. She needed the best possible care. But, how were we supposed to provide this care for her? How to do that in a concentration camp where we had some beans and pure once per day? We decided to give her spare food that we saved for the worst of the days. We have placed her next to a window, and just like the rest of us, she slept on the floor, on some hay. […] Nada talked to some of us. She was happy to be around comrades, that she can breathe freely, that she can tell somebody about her suffering. She was not able to stand up after all the torture and weakness. We fed her with our last food supplies. Even in the camp's conditions, a close circle of friends and care brought her back to life. She tried to get up to make few steps around the cell. We were so happy to see this, as her walking was a reward for all our efforts to keep her alive."[208]

Ljubica Janić-Zec's recollection gives an insight into the life inside a concentration camp, within which women created particular communities that, as Nada Dimić's case illustrates, were sources of survival. In prisons and, later, concentration camps, inmates constructed specific "emotional communities" based on care and solidarity.

4.3 Communist Women as Sisters and Daughters

> "Arrests, police surveillance… were the years of my youth. Party meetings in our house, secret and dangerous, where we, younger ones kept watch, send messages and signals if an agent would come near, only made my relationship with my family and my consciousness about the world that surrounded us stronger."[209]

The value of communist women's *memoirs* has been underlined several times in the previous chapter. They illustrate how communist women organized on the ground, what their actions looked like and how they felt performing them. The same *memoirs* open yet another dimension, telling a story of communist women as sisters and daughters. On the one hand, some of them recalled their family and their participation in the communist movement, while several *memoirs* pertained to mothers and sisters of communist women. Moreover, the family can also be regarded in the context of "emotional community," in which understanding and care played crucial roles. In this section, I will reflect on recollections of Gorda Ćetković, mother of one of

[208] Stara Gradiška was a concentration camp in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), constructed for women and children of Serbian, Jewish and Romani ethnicity.
Aleksandar Tadić, *Pali za lepša svitanja - majke heroja pričaju...* [They Fell for Better Dawns- Mother of the Heroes Talk…]. (Beograd: Međunarodna štampa Interpress, 1968), 216, 217.
[209] *Sonja Baruh*, 305.

the most prominent communists Jelena Ćetković, Stevka Lazović, mother of communists Gruja and Vera Lazović, Sonja Baruh, who reflected on the impressive history of family Baruh.

4.4 Being a parent of a communist activist

"I used to carry leaflets to the street that now carries her name."[210]

Jelena Ćetković became engaged in the activities of the communist movement in Montenegro at the age of 16 through her friendship with well-known communist activist Božana Vučinić. Already at the age of 17, in 1933, she was elected secretary of the Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije (SKOJ) [League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia]. Jelena's mother Gorda recalled that she was first arrested in an attempt to go to Spain with 150 other communists. As Jelena became noticed as a prominent communist and secretary of SKOJ after attempting to go to Spain in 1936, she had to hide in different villages to avoid police prosecution. For that reason, the police arrested her mother, Gordana Gorda Ćetković, along with other 25 communists, depriving her of food and water and demanding information on Jelena's hiding place. As Jelena was informed of her mother's arrest, which lasted for nine days, she voluntarily surrendered to the police.[211] As Gordana recalled, Jelena and two other communists were sent to Sarajevo, and when their train left the station, more than 300 people joined in sending them off. Jelena returned from Sarajevo in 1937 and continued with her activities, including her mother. As Gordana stated: "Jelena and her brother spent nights and nights writing leaflets, while I would be on the lookout. Later they would give me the leaflets, and I would take them to the merchants so peasants could get them."[212]

Owing to Jelena's activism and the risk it brought upon them, the whole family had to move to Belgrade in 1937. Gordana described their decision to move: "On account of perpetual arrests of Jelena, we had to flee to Belgrade- my five sons and Jelena. We sold everything we had so we could afford to move. They would fire me from my job as my children were communists, so I took sick leave, and I was retired soon. The investigative police followed us to Belgrade."[213] This is just one of the numerous examples that illustrate how communist

[210] Sećanja Gorde Ćetković na Jelenu Ćetković, 8.
[211] Sećanja Gorde Ćetković na Jelenu Ćetković, 5.
[212] Ibid. 3.
[213] Ibid. 4.

women's activism reflected on their family life, how it altered the life that was familiar to them, and how it required different negotiations on the family's part.

In many cases, family members stood out as accomplices but did not formally join the movement of the Communist Party. Yet, there were examples when family members found it difficult to cope with the changes brought on by their children's or sibling's activism. For example, Ilija, father of well-known communists Isidor, Bora, Josip, Rašela, Bela, and Sonja Baruh, was dismissed from his job in the military garment factory due to his children's activism. According to Sonja Baruh's account: "The same year, father lost his job once again and for the last time, not only because he was Jewish, but due to communist activities of his sons. This time it was not that easy to get back on feet. I could not fully understand why- I was too young to understand, but when my father left home and went to Sarajevo to look for a job, we saw it as a retreat from us. This was difficult for all of us initially, but people get used to everything in time. My mother and six of us (Haim passed away by that time) continued our daily struggle for survival."[214] Still, parents, mothers, in particular, were engaged in the political activity of their children. Their support is described in *memoirs* of several communist women, but Sonja Baruh described this support most vividly: "Our mother was a very sober woman. She would never panic while we were around her. She was the home pillar around which everything revolved- while daddy was a man earning money, he did not understand us, neither the young ones nor my brothers who wanted to study. "[215]

4.4.1 From a Family Member to a Fellow Traveller

Parents and siblings of communists performed a variety of tasks that not only contributed to their children's activism but, in some cases, enabled their children's political activism. The tasks varied from distributing leaflets and materials, watching out during the meetings, collecting food and means for the imprisoned communists. As Katy Turton argues writing about gender and family during the Russian revolutionary movement, the family was tightly connected to the highest levels of revolutionary conspiracy.[216] As Gordana Ćetković described: "Cana Babović often visited our home, and I would cook the jam for them. Then comrades

[214] *Sonja Baruh*, 305.
[215] Sećanje Sonje Baruh o porodici Baruh, 11. oktobar 1960. MG-XXIX-292. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [Memories of Sonja Baruh on the Baruh family, October 11, 1960. MG-XXIX-292. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.], 4. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Sonje Baruh o porodici Baruh)
[216] Kety Turton, "Gender and Family in the Russian Revolutionary Movement" In: Ilic M. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth Century Russia and the Soviet Union.* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 70.

Olga Jovanović, Vukica Mitrović, and one comrade who looked like Jelena, so she was arrested often by mistake- her name was Jelena, too, and they worked together at Žana Gros. Jelena never hid anything from me. She used to give me leaflets. […] Before the war, in Montenegro, Jelena and her brother Nikola would ask me to organize the celebration of our family patron, which they would use as an undercover for their meetings. When I would leave the room, they would make a donkey out of black paper and put it over the icon of St. Nicholas. They would take the candle to another room and then hold a meeting."[217] Another important task that has already been mentioned was the lookout during meetings and the establishment of signals when agents or police would come near the house. For example, the mother of communist Olga Petrov noted that they used a window blind as a signal, while Gordana Ćetković described the 'signaling' in more detail: "I would wash a white towel ten times a day. Towel hanging over the door was a signal of danger. If not- the coast was clear. My neighbors used to say: Your towel will burn on this Sun, and I would only say: I have no other place to hang it."[218] Therefore, family ties became a resource that enabled the political activism of communist activists.

The emerging literature introduces the concept of "activist mothering" that pertains to expanding traditional mothers' care to support their children in their revolutionary struggle.[219] The motivation of family members, especially mothers, for the support of the communists in their family stemmed from their care and concern for safety, and ultimately, lives. Examples of "activist mothering " can be identified in the *memoirs* of communist women's mothers. In some cases, usually after suffering a loss of a child, the concept of "activist mothering "would expand, leading to the political activism of mothers themselves. The event from September 1940 serves as a great example of the latter. In 1940, the Communist Party organized a big gathering in Košutnjak, Belgrade, with, as it is noted in several *memoirs,* more than 5000 participants.[220] Julijana Dograjić described this event: "On September 8, there was a big trip to Košutnjak, and 3 or 4 police trucks arrived, and police started shooting right away. There were 5000 people there. Seveth grade student, Vojislav Petrušević was killed. We also heard that the agent Crvenčanin grabbed a woman worker by her hair and shot right in her forehead. After that, the funeral of Petrušević took place. There were around 3000 people at the funeral. When the coffin was supposed to be put down into the ground, Petrušević's mother took off her

[217] Sećanja Gorde Ćetkovć na Jelenu Ćetković, 4, 5.
[218] Ibid. 7.
[219] Turton, "Gender and Family in the Russian Revolutionary Movement," 71.
[220] Sećanja Julijane Dograjić, 5.

headscarf and said: "My son, your mother will not cry because she is aware of what you gave your life." And he gave his life, as she said, for the struggle of Macedonian people. Then she started singing *You fell as victims, and you gave all you could give,* and everybody started singing."[221] A similar reaction was described by Jelena Popović, who recalled the arrest of Žika Pavlović. More precisely, Žika Pavlović was arrested as a communist, but after his many people were arrested, which meant that he probably gave off information on them. Before declaring Žika as a traitor, communists collected information on him. Žika was declared a traitor and was to be 'isolated' from the Party, after the mother of one of the communists he gave away and who died in the police, informed others that her son told her that Žika was cooperating with the police: he would go to the police, cross his legs, light a cigar, and start talking.[222]

Another example of "activist mothering "is the process of food preparation for the activists. This dimension of "activist mothering "also reveals a particular dimension of emotions connected to the food, as a concept related to the care and home safety. Stevka Lazović, the mother of communists Gruja and Vera Lazović, followed their activities within the movement since their high school days. When Vera was arrested after a bust in Belgrade, Stevka prepared food for her imprisoned comrades. Food sent to penitentiaries had a twofold purpose: it often served as a primary channel of communication between those who were in and those who were out, and, for mothers who prepared it, food served as proof that their children were still alive and well enough to eat. Stevka sent Vera dumplings with hidden messages in the middle.

Similarly, Gordana Ćetković talked about her daughter's days of freedom through her eating habits: "While Jelena was free, you would never know when she would have lunch and when she would have dinner. Sometimes she would not even come to lunch or dinner. "[223] Moreover, Gordana stressed her role as a food provider for her daughter and their comrades: "I used to cook food for the youth. Also, I used to take food to Moša Pijade, who hid next to Cvetko's market. I could almost never leave the house because somebody would come at all times."[224] Without women who performed food preparations and similar tasks, the development of the revolutionary movement would hardly be possible.[225]

Following their children's activism, mothers often became familiar with the ideas behind their actions. Jelena Ćetković's mother recalled that Jelena had excellent school grades in all

[221] Ibid. (song lyrics are in italics, MB)
[222] Sećanja Jelene Popović, 6.
[223] Ibid. 8.
[224] Ibid. 9.
[225] Turton, "Gender and Family in the Russian Revolutionary Movement", 76.

subjects except in one: catechism. When her mother asked her why that Jelena was explained that she had better things to do. Gordana explained: "I also knew about those 'better things. Although I was illiterate, I felt like I read all those books my sons and Jelena would read deep into the night."[226] The situation was similar to the mother of Sonja Baruh. When agents came to family Baruh's house to look for Isidor, his mother, Bulina, who suffered a heart attack at that time, got up from bed and quickly went to his room and threw a copy of Marx's Capital into the snow under the window. Hiding the materials was an important task, as it could easily lead to arrest. As the mother of communist Olga Petrov remembered: "I expected that the police would come to the house, so I took the suitcase with forbidden materials into the garden. The suitcase held documents on peace, impressions from meetings with workers, theses of the Central Committee of the Party, and leaflets "Against the imperial war, for the defense of our rights and interests." There was also a leaflet "To the Working People of Yugoslavia" and theatre play "Servant Jernej and his right." The content of this suitcase became known to me only when Olga was summoned to the police."[227]

Mothers of communists were also used directly by the Communist Party leadership. Families of arrested communists were organized through Međunarodna organizacija pomoći borcima revolucije (MOPRJ) [International Red Aid]. They would gather to write petitions to the government, demanding prison visits to their arrested family members. When well-known communist intellectuals Bela Kun, Moša Pijade, brothers Demajo, and Ivo Lola Ribar were imprisoned in Bileće, the Party urged their mothers to demand the administration of the penitentiary to provide them with books, pens, and papers.[228] Family members also played an essential role in the organization of legal help for the arrested. Keti Minderović's sister stressed in her *memoirs*: "I did everything that was in my power to get them out of prison. Jovan Popović, the writer, came to my house and together we visited some lawyer. We managed to get them out with a large amount of money. "[229] Vojka Demajo described her cooperation with the lawyers who worked on the cases of arrested communists: "When I got out of prison I looked for a lawyer for the accused, and that was Selimir Jeftić. In his office, we arranged meetings and discussed the defense of the accused. We organized groups that followed the

[226] Tadić, *Pali za lepša svitanja - majke heroja pričaju*, 52.
[227] Ibid. 179.
[228] Sećanje Sonje Baruh o porodici Baruh, 14.
[229] Sećanja drugarice Petrović Jovanke o radu Keti Šer Minderović, 10. jul 1958.1369-MG-II-7. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [Memories of Comrade Petrović Jovanka on the work of Keti Šer Minderović, July 10, 1958. 1369-MG-II-7. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.], 5.)

conditions in the penitentiaries. We took care of the people imprisoned at the penitentiary at Ada, and we used to bring food for them."[230] The seriousness of this task is best illustrated in the *memoirs* of Gordana Ćetković: "During the meeting in a store, 11 agents came, and Jelena was arrested. That day she told me to collect some rainwater so she could wash her hair. She did not come that evening, nor the next day. I heard she was arrested. I immediately started looking for her. She was arrested on March 3, 1942, and she was held in a street Zmaj od Noćaja. I looked for help all around, but everybody refused to help me because my daughter was a well-known communist. Jelena wrote to me, saying: "Dig anywhere you can, both with your hands and legs, to get me out of here. I am the next one in the line for shooting." I sold everything I had to get her out. "[231]

The last recollection, filled with despair and fear for a child's life, demonstrates what it truly meant to be in a parent's position whose child was a political activist in interwar Yugoslavia. It sheds light on the emotional part of the revolutionary struggle, which is often obliterated behind memories of important events and dates. Moreover, a shift of focus towards the emotions behind communist activism offers a new perspective in the research of the interwar communist movement. In this case, Gordana Ćetković offered a glimpse into this new dimension that is often hidden behind bold statements of communist women who recalled their activist days in their *memoirs* or the heroized biographies produced after the war.

[230] Sećanja Vojke Demajo, 16.
[231] Sećanja Gorde Ćetkovć na Jelenu Ćetković, 12.

5 The Popular Front Strategy in Yugoslavia: Radicalizing the Young

This chapter will reflect on the mobilization of the youth as a political force within the progressive students' movement, SKOJ [Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije/League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia, SKOJ], and Omladinska sekcija ženskog pokreta [The Women's Movement's Youth Section] in the Popular Front Period in Yugoslavia.

The introductory section of the chapter will be dedicated to creating the Popular Front in Yugoslavia and the development of SKOJ and the progressive students' movement. The second section of this chapter follows the mushrooming of communist and communist-inclined young women's activism, particularly among women workers. Moreover, through a case study of Jelena Topalov, this section gives insight into the individual political journey of a communist-inclined activist, depicting the process of politicization of an individual. The last section of the chapter discusses the collaboration of feminists from Ženski pokret and young women from the Youth Section, focusing on its positive aspects. The final section is dedicated to the analysis of the origins of the antagonism between the members of Ženski pokret and the Youth Section.

5.1 The Creation of the Popular Front

By the second half of the 1930s, Europe had already faced the advance of fascism, and the need to create an international, solidary response to it emerged. In summer 1935, Comintern held the Seventh Congress, resulting in the formal endorsement of the Popular Front Strategy. The new Comintern line, which was already in power in some countries, such as Spain and France, centered on creating a Popular front that would stand against fascism and the imperial wars.[232] At this time, two critical events characterized the political situation in Yugoslavia: the assassination of King Aleksandar in Marseille in 1934 and the establishment of Milan Stojadinović as the president of the government in 1935. The assassination of the King and the openness of Milan Stojadinović's government towards Italy and Germany resulted in an even more strict relation towards revolutionary activities in the country. Simultaneously, Communist

[232] James R. Barrett, "Rethinking the Popular Front", *Rethinking Marxism*, 21:4 (2009): 533. DOI: 10.1080/08935690903145671l.

Party worked on the final regulations of inner-party struggles and the endorsement of the Popular Front Strategy.

Right after the Comintern Congress, taking its que from Comintern, the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party published a resolution on the tasks of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Work on the Popular Front organization was marked as a prime task, which, in Yugoslavia, included the struggle against the dictatorship, struggle for equality among different nations in Yugoslavia, and struggle for the betterment of the living position of people amidst the crisis. To put these tasks into practice, communists started operating within different legal organizations: cultural societies, trade unions, women's organizations. Construction of the democratic anti-war, anti-fascist popular front entailed mobilization of the youth. Furthermore, the Popular Front project recognized young women as a distinct political constituency, which resulted in mushrooming of communist women's activism in this period.[233] The research of communist women's activism during the Popular Front period requires replying to a new set of questions: What were the practical implications of the new line concerning communist women's activism? What changes did it invoke? How did these changes affect communist women's experiences? Replying to these questions first calls for a glance into the development of the students and youth activism.

5.2 Progressive Student's Activism and the Work of SKOJ

The development of the students' and youth activism was tightly connected to SKOJ [Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije/League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia, SKOJ]. The introduction of the dictatorship in 1929 brought the activity of SKOJ to a standstill for some more time to come. It was not until 1931 that the communist youth gradually and systematically worked on the re-establishment of the organization. The re-establishment of SKOJ took a form of a bottom-up process: due to the lack of the Communist Party interest in the work of this organization and non-existing leadership in the country, SKOJ started re-emerging as a result of individual bottom-up efforts of students and young workers.[234] In parallel, the radicalization of the students' movement took place. From 1931, students in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana organized, demanding autonomy of the University, democracy, and peace. So, while SKOJ was not operating in 1931 and 1932, so-called "progressive" students developed their activism

[233] Susan B. Whitney, "Embracing the Status Quo: French Communists, Young Women and the Popular Front", *Journal of Social History*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1996): 34.
[234] Miroljub Vasić, *Revolucionarni omladinski pokret u Jugoslaviji* 1929-1941[Revolutionary Youth Movement in Yugoslavia 1929-1941], (Beograd: Narodna Knjiga — Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1977), 146.

within the progressive students' movement frameworks. Accordingly, in 1932 communist students and their sympathizers at the University of Belgrade organized a student fraction called Komunistička studnetska frakcija – KOSTUFRA [Communist Students' Fraction], with a task of educating other students and creation of mass student movement that would struggle for democracy and autonomy of the University.

Recognizing the potential of the radicalized students' movement and taking the lead of the ECCI KI plenum from 1932, Yugoslav Communist Party became more involved in the work of SKOJ. In 1933 the party pointed young communists towards work in non-communist youth organizations, which could be regarded as a prelude to the incoming Popular Front line among the youth. The party included work on the development of SKOJ among the main tasks in the resolution from the Ljubljana Conference in 1934 and published a resolution on the work among youth, demanding from SKOJ organizations to start operating in trade unions, cultural, educational, and sports organizations and clubs, and form youth sections in such organizations.[235]

Progressive students and members of SKOJ participated in numerous actions, protests, and demonstrations throughout the 1930s. Their activism caused a strong regime reaction, resulting in measures such as exclusion from the University and banishment to the place of birth. In 1935, on the eve of parliamentary elections, "anticipating" student unrests, the government established a concentration camp for students' "re-education" in Višegrad, a town in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[236] After unrest during the election of the board of Students' Legal Society, more than ten students were sent to Višegrad without any trial. This regime's reaction caused a wave of almost daily protests, after which more than 250 students ended up in Višegrad. During these protests, the police confronted students, and in 1936 ended up killing students Mirko Srzentić and Žarko Marinović, thus creating an impetus for an even stronger reaction of the students' movement. Radicalization and activity of the student movement became even more prominent after the 1936 First World Youth Congress in Geneva, which was based on the idea of the struggle of the young for peace, the future of the culture, and the happiness of humankind.[237] The Spanish War pushed the student movement even further and made the anti-fascist line even more prominent. With the endorsement of the Popular Front Strategy, the

[235] *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*, 260.
[236] Politički angažovane omladinske organizacije u Vojvodini 1919-1941 [Politically Organized Youth Organizations in Vojvodina 1919-1941]. (Beograd: Alternativna kulturna organizacija - AKO (Novi Sad) i Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Regionalna kancelarija za jugoistočnu Evropu, 2014), 59.
[237] Ibid. 64.

Yugoslav Communist Party ushered students and members of SKOJ to join different organizations, such as trade unions, women's organizations, sports, and cultural clubs, to attract people from different backgrounds to the anti-fascist struggle. Progressive young women joined an organization called Ženski pokret and developed their activity within the Youth Section of the Women's Movement.

5.3 Young, Fierce, Political: Women in The Women's Movement's Youth Section

The advent of fascism and the anticipation of the war in the mid-1930s were instrumental in the formation of alliances between organizations of different political affiliations that hitherto stood in opposition. This transnational phenomenon, fortified by the formal introduction of the Popular Front line and local circumstances, resulted in the creation of such alliances in Yugoslavia. The collaboration of the young communist women and feminists from Ženski pokret originated within this frame of reference. Ženski pokret was a feminist organization that first emerged under the name Društvo za prosvećivanje žene i zaštitu njenih prava [Society for Woman's Enlightenment and the Defense of Her Rights] in 1919 with enlightenment and education of women, and the struggle for women's civic and political rights set as organization's leading goals.[238] Since the early stages of its development, Ženski pokret gathered women with different political backgrounds around their journal *Ženski pokret.* Still, the entrance of young communist women intellectuals visibly influenced the work of this organization.

5.3.1 Anti-fascism, Pacifism, and Feminism: Pillars of the Youth Section

Following the transnational impetus for the creation of the democratic, pacifist, anti-fascist front, confirmed at the World Congress of Women Against War and Fascism held in 1934 in Paris, and the creation of the World Committee of Women against the War and Fascism [Comité Mondial des femmes contre la guerre et le fascism, CMF], feminists from Ženski pokret welcomed the collaboration with the young communist women. Moreover, their motivation for collaboration stemmed from a possibility for the influx of the new, younger, and agile members to Ženski pokret.[239] At the same time, taking the lead from SKOJ and the Communist Party, young women joined Ženski pokret, setting out to create their Youth sections

[238] Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u 19. i 20. veku* [The Women's Question in Serbia in 19th and 20th Centuries]. (Beograd: Devedesetčetvrta, Žene u crnom, 1996), 109.
[239] Ibid.116, 117.

built on the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist line. The amalgamation of the two groups required transcending ideological barriers and concordance of principles of feminism and communism. Ultimately, they found common grounds in their struggle against war and fascism and for women's rights and emancipation. Under these circumstances, from 1934, young communist women started forming Youth sections of Ženski pokret across Yugoslavia.

The first Youth section of Ženski pokret was established in Zagreb in 1934. The work of the Zagreb Youth Section was discussed in the journal *Ženski pokret,* in the new column titled "The Word of the Youth. "The first section of the column brought a letter from the board of the Zagreb Youth Section, that confirmed the collaboration of the section with the journal and directed a critique to the journal for being too arid and for publishing not on the actual issues, but only on the work of the organization.[240] A well-known member of Ženski pokret, Alojzija Štebi, acknowledged this critique, arguing: "The advantage of the youth over the older generation is that they do not see the obstacles that we so often encounter in our work. Not seeing the obstacles, they are more agile in the struggle, and because they are not able to hold an objective view of all the manifestations of life, it has the potential to develop more influence. From my perspective on the youth and its tasks, I take your criticism with a restful soul. I cannot, and I would not ask you to read the old issues that would confute your criticism. No, go straight along the path you started, as you will encounter obstacles way too soon, so while you can, run breathlessly, not minding the left and right. "[241] Štebi's reply suggests that she, as a representative of Ženski pokret, recognized the potential of the entrance of a new younger generation into the movement and the more general struggle. This exchange of opinions brings three conclusions. First, it shows the willingness of Ženski pokret to change its way of functioning to proliferate the organization's work. Secondly, it reveals generational differences among the members of the two groups: in her response, Štebi subtly points to the lack of experience of the young activists, which later might come with a price. Thirdly, it shows that their collaboration started through a dialogue. Nonetheless, as this chapter will demonstrate, this dialogue will develop differently in different parts of Yugoslavia.

After Zagreb, the local youth sections of Ženski pokret started emerging throughout Yugoslavia. In 1935, Belgrade Youth Section emerged with students Mitra Mitrović, Dobrila Karapandžić, Bosa Cvetić, Olga Alkalaj, as its leading members. Mitra Mitrović described the formation of the Youth Section in her *memoirs*: "Since Comintern Congress took place in 1935,

[240] Ženski pokret, no. 3/4, 1935, p. 57.
[241] Ibid. 57, 58.

using the frame of the work among women and the directive on the formation of the Popular Front in 1936, we entered a feminist organization, Ženski pokret, and formed the Youth Section of Ženski pokret. That was a noticeable transfer of our narrow party work among women to a broader, legal ground. The Section emerged on the initiative of few us – me, Dobrila Karapandzic, Dušica Stefanović, Zaga Jovanović, Lepa Laloš, Mica Šuvaković, Ela Palmiš, Bosa Cvetić, Marija Gajić, Boba Djordjević, Marija Gajić, Olga Alkalaj, Olga Jojić, Daarinka Jovanović, Beška Bembas, Pirika Bembas, Lela Matić, etc. In a short time, many of our women comrades organized work in a legal form. I was chosen as a section president, and I maintained connections with comrades from the party. This represented a nice, legal breach into work among women. "[242]

Even though this section from Mitra Mitrović's *memoirs* suggests that young communist women's initiative to join Ženski pokret stemmed from the Comintern and the Yugoslav Communist Party directives, her statement printed in the bulletin of the Youth Section illustrates that their initiative had multifold origins that transcended party directives. She argued: "Us, the young, awaited the struggle for the bread, more and more shop, school and office doors closed before us; here and there you could hear threatening and unresting voices about new reactionary measures. We, women, awaited even harsher injustice and unavoidable faith of our mothers. Part of us, moved by the combative and free spirit at the University, and others, struck as women with all injustices at every step of life, tightly connected to the people hit by crisis and loss of freedom, we understood that the only way out was the way of struggle. Fascism and reaction can only be stopped by the firm and fierce struggle […] That is why we joined Ženski pokret, an organization whose agenda was built on women's rights, regardless of race, religion, nationality, and political beliefs. Clearly emphasized principles of struggle for democracy and peace connected us to the program of Ženski pokret, in which we entered so we would not, together with our women comrades, unready for life, stand alone against the reactionary regime, but that joined, together we stand in the rows of the fighters for rights of women and people, to make the fight that burned low during the dictatorship, stronger and to turn Ženski pokret into a mass organization of women. "[243] In the first statement, found in her *memoirs* from 1959, Mitrović gives concise reasons for communist joining Ženski pokret: a

[242]Sa sastanka sa drugaricom Mitrom Mitrović, 31. januar 1959. 1384 -MG XVI-193. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. [From the Meeting with Comrade Mitra Mitrović, January 31, 1959. 1384 -MG XVI-193. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.] , 6. (Hereafter cited as Sećanja Mitre Mitrović)
[243] *Žena danas*, no. 4, 1937, p. 3.

need for a legal platform amidst the ongoing political repression of communists, the implementation of Popular Front line, and the creation of the mass movement of women. Yet, her statement printed in the bulletin amidst her activist endeavors in 1937 denotes more elaborate reasons, such as the struggle against women's inequality, political repression and dictatorship, fascism, and women's rights. The feminist line, absent from the *memoirs*, probably due to the general post-war stance towards feminism, is visibly present in the statement from the bulletin.

It could be argued that the feminist line in her second statement was a line on which alliance with members of Ženski pokret was built, and it stemmed from the idea of "new feminism." In 1936, members of the Youth Section published the first issue of their journal *Žena Danas* (1936-1981) [Woman Today]. The journal was established on three pillars: pacifism, anti-fascism, and feminism.[244] Feminism, as one of the pillars, was conceptualized through the introduction of the new concept – "new feminism." "New feminism," in the words of the editors of *Žena danas*, visibly differed from the pre-World War I feminism, as it was built not only around the struggle for women's suffrage and demand for women's rights, but primarily on the struggle for peace and democracy, and egalitarian society.[245] As Isidora Grbački observes in her research, the programmatic text on the "new feminism" served as a critique of a feminist movement and Ženski pokret itself, but on the other hand, it could be argued that it also represented an attempt to reconcile communist and feminist demands, and create a concept on which this collaboration could fruitfully rest.

The collaboration of the two groups gave favorable results. The first visible change was reflected in the class character of the organization: while Ženski pokret primarily gathered middle-class women, with the entrance of the young, factory and shop workers, administrative workers, unemployed, and homemakers were invited, and ultimately, started joining the organization. Gathering women from different classes and socioeconomic backgrounds was a demanding task, and it was fulfilled in a threefold manner: through *Žena danas*, close-up work among workers on shop floors factories, and trade unions, and organization of educational lectures and courses, as well as street actions and demonstrations. The following three sections

[244] Pacifist and anti-fascist line of *Žena Danas* are explored by author Stanislava Barać. Stanislava Barać, „Pacifistički i antifašistički diskurs u listu Žena danas (1936–1941)" Intelektualci i rat : 1939.-1947. : zbornik radova s međunarodnog skupa Desničini susreti 2011.
[245] *Žena danas*, no. 1, 1937, p. 3.

will follow the development of Omladinska sekcija and the Youth Section according to these three areas of work among women.

5.3.2 *Žena danas*: The Organ of Woman's Consciousness

Žena danas was a journal addressed to a mass audience, who were to be educated through various articles written in communist overtone that propagated anti-fascist, pacifist, and feminist values. Communism as an ideology was only implicitly present, but it shaped the overall discourse of the journal.[246] The main task of the journal was to attract mass membership to the Youth Section. Accordingly, articles published in the journal were related to the everyday lives of "ordinary" women, such as emancipation, sport, pedagogy, medicine, art, fashion, and literature.[247] It is important to note that *Žena danas* was published in a regular dialogue with the readership: the readers contributed to the journal through letters, reports, and literary works. The editors constantly urged the readers to participate in the creation and shaping of the journal, so, for example, in 1938, in a questionnaire regarding the publishing and content of the journal editors, they asked the readers for their comments and suggestions on the work of the journal.[248] After receiving responses from the readers, the editors published their response in the following issue under the section "To our Dear Readers." The analysis of this section allows us to speculate about the received responses.

The editors start with a personal note, referring to the readers as to the friends and collaborators of the journal. Already in the second paragraph, they state: "*Žena danas* was established by a group of *independent* women and young girls, feeling the need to create a journal that will address all burning issues of a contemporary woman. The readers' responses demonstrated that we were right and that this kind of journal was much needed in our society. *Žena danas is not a journal of any organization*; it solely strives to be the organ of a woman's consciousness. *Žena danas* was initiated as a journal of all women for all women. The task we accepted by publishing this journal was not an easy one. Our password is *feminism, humanity, and enlightenment*. [...] We can proudly say that among our readers, we find women of all social classes, with different education, and we have a substantial number of male subscribers, that

[246] In her research of the pacifist and anti-fascist discourses in *Žena Danas,* Stanislava Barać demonstrates that the communism as ideology was not only implicitly present in the journal, but also more straightforwardly through photographs and collages. Barać, „Pacifistički i antifašistički diskurs u listu Žena danas", 221, 222.
[247] Conference Žena danas, official presentation http://www.ikum.org.rs/news.php?id=139 (Accessed: June 1, 2021)
[248] *Žena danas*, no. 17, 1938, p. 22.

demonstrates that *feminism is not a question of interest only for women* and that our journal is set on a broader, general, human base. "[249] The editors' response sheds light on the potential questions and/or critiques. It is evident that the readers commented and/or criticized the political affiliation of the journal. It could be assumed that this was more a critique than a comment, as the editors use several instances to emphasize their political independence from any organization. Still, although they denied any connection to the political parties and stressed their independence, the editors did not deny the political character of their work. Secondly, the editors again emphasized the feminist and emancipatory character of their work, providing the readers with what I read as an expansion of their definition of the "new feminism." The editors state that feminism is not a woman-only issue and that it rests on a much broader base. Such an understanding of feminism stemmed from the communist understanding of a woman's question, not as a separate one, but as a question that falls into a broader social and class question framework.[250]

5.3.3 Work among Working Women: The Political Journey of Jelena Topalov

In the early 1930s, work among women in the factories developed at a slow pace, as this was the period of the re-establishment of trade unions, youth organizations, and the party itself after the introduction of the dictatorship. In 1934, during the IV Yugoslav Communist Party Conference in Ljubljana, it was noted that "work among women workers and wives of the workers, concerning the rising threat of the war, their organizing within the trade unions and other proletarian mass organizations, and introduction of women to the class struggle in general, are of the greatest importance." Although this stance was present in the earlier Profintern and Comintern resolutions, it was again underlined as crucial at the VII Congress of Comintern and, accordingly, by the Yugoslav Communist Party committee in 1935.

In 1936, women from different trade unions and workers' organizations started joining Ženski pokret, and in 1937/1938, members of the Youth Section started joining trade unions and other worker's organizations.[251] Milada Rajter recalls: "At the end of autumn 1937, women comrades from Ženski pokret, especially Mitra Mitrović and Bosa Cvetić, urged members of Ženski pokret to become active according to their profession and join trade unions. "[252] Milada Rajter, who joined Ženski pokret in 1937, described how they worked on attracting women to the

[249] *Žena danas*, no.19, 1939, p. 3. (the emphases in the section are mine)
[250] Grubački, "Communism, Left Feminism and Generations in the 1930s," 49.
[251] Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u 19. i 20. veku*, 119.
[252] Ibid. 2.

organization: "During 1937 many lectures for mothers were held at Čukarica.[253] Members of Ženski pokret went from home to home, inviting homemakers and mothers. Those were mostly working women. Progressive doctors held the lectures, so except for the issues regarding hygiene, tuberculosis, and so on, they managed to infiltrate lectured on different social issues."[254] Milada Rajter's recollection illustrates that members of Ženski pokret and the Youth Section relied on different strategies that would make them closer to women from the working class. By organizing lectures and discussing the issues that constituted their everyday life, they became closer to women workers and managed to attract them into their organization. The success of this work varied across time and was significantly shaped by the fact that employers harshly sanctioned all revolutionary activities among workers, and in some cases, by the regime itself. Less severe sanctions pertained to layoffs, while more severe ones led to interrogations, arrests, and often deportation from the city to the place of birth.

By the end of 1937 and through 1938, women from the Youth Section started being active among women workers at the factories, and enterprises, which marked a period of mushrooming work among women workers "on the ground." This is noted in *memoirs* of several women, who underline that eminent young communist such as Mitra Mitrović, Neda Božinović, Vukica Mitrović gave lectures and organized reading groups at their workplaces. It was their practical activities among workers that gave positive results. These two years also witnessed a bourgeoning of communist women's activism, which was recognized by the Communist Party leadership.[255] Even though communist women activists were responsible for the rising success of work among women, this was not a one-sided process. By focusing solely on their efforts, the participation of women at the grassroots levels becomes undervalued. Communist women's activism at this moment revolved around meetings, lectures, reading

[253] Čukarica was an industrial workers' neighborhood at that time, so it represented a fruitful ground for the development of activity among workers. Lectures and discussions at Čukarica were held once per week, and attrackted high number of women workers.

[254] O ilegalnom radu: Sećanja drugarice Milade Rajter, 6. oktobar 1958.1245- MG-XX-220. Memorijalna građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. (On Illegal Work- Memories of Comrade Milada Rajter, October 6, 1958. 1245- MG-XX-220. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia, 1.

[255] Starting from 1937, many communist women activists were formally admitted to the party. This development was closely related to the party resolution from 1935: "People who are admitted to the party should be, first of all, people well-respected in the masses, peasant and worker activists, people who performed well in mass organizations and actions, who proved to be worthy of the membership, as well as sympathizers who proved to be up to the task during busts. Besides, the most successful and reliable members of SKOJ should be admitted to the membership. That would also be our response to the public enemies trying to destroy our most successful activists against fascism by arrests and imprisonment."[255] Therefore, by 1937, women who came to Belgrade in the early 1930s, and became active by 1935, were recognized as valuable members of the movement through their efforts and activism, so, by 1937/1938, they were offered membership.

groups, and, in some instances, strikes and protests, yet without women workers' joining these events, they could not have taken place or achieved any measure of success.

Shifting the focus from the activism of women who formally belonged to the Communist Party to women workers' activism at the grassroots level is challenging, as they are largely invisible in the historiography. As author Karen Hunt notes, "Too often an individual is either perceived as an activist or not, rather than seeing political activism as something that might ebb and flow across a lifetime and might also involve a range of different allegiances."[256] To broaden the perspective on women's activism, Hunt suggests mapping individual political journeys that reveal the process of "politicization" of an individual. This process is identified in *memoirs* of different women, who started with grassroots activism, later becoming members, and developing their activism within this institution. The *memoirs* of Jelena Topalov allow us to map such a political journey and use her example as a case study.

Jelena Topalov recalls: "I came to Belgrade in 1938 and I found a job in a linen factory of Vlada Ilić. When I started working, I wondered where and how the workers' movement I read so much about looks like. Nobody from the workers came to introduce me to the movement. So, October and November passed, and I decided to enroll in the Vidović evening gymnasium. In the evening, I met a girl who was in the organization Ženski pokret. She invited me to Ženski pokret, whose offices were in the street Cara Lazara. In Ženski pokret I met Boba Đorđević. Mitra Mitrović and Lepa Perović knew her. I also met Keti Minderović."[257] Jelena Topalov's recollection is quite instructive for the research of communist women's activism, as it proves that without the initiative of individual women workers, communist women would not be able to develop their activism. Joining Ženski pokret and attending its meetings served as an educational practice for new members. Topalov notes: "In the evening school, I met a girl who was in the organization Ženski pokret. She invited me to the meeting of the organization, which was in the street Cara Lazara. The members of Ženski pokret used to come to meetings during which socks for the poor and the fighters in Spain were being knitted. Many progressive women came to these meetings. They also had wall newspapers. I remember an article about a girl who went to some ministry to look for a job, and the head of the ministry offered her a ride in his car. While looking for a job, girls often had to accept such offers or never be hired."[258] What

[256] Hunt, "Rethinking Activism," 220.

[257] Sećanja Jelene Topalov ,6.

[258] The Wall Newspaper was published by Youth Section once per week, and it discussed position of women in Yugoslavia and in the world. O partijskim i skojevskim organizacijama na Karaburmi u Beogradu. Sećanja Jelene Topalov, člana mesnog komiteta SKOJ-a iz tog perioda,12. mart 1958. 1381 MG-XXIV-25. Memorijalna

this section shows is that by attending Ženski pokret's meetings, new members had a chance to meet other activists, as she notes "progressive women," and to get information on the relevant issues from the discussions and the wall newspaper. Reading newspapers and attending meetings was an emancipatory and educational process needed to shape new members' political journey. As Topalov recalls: "In 1939 Juliška Salaj approached me in the factory and offered me to buy Radničke novine [Worker's newspaper]. I bought them, and Juliška asked me what I was doing after work. I told her that I am going to evening school, and she told me that that was very smart of me. Afterward, she gave me few books to read. I think that the first book she gave me was *Selo Dimitrovo*. "[259] The spectrum of her activities soon expanded, and she started participating in the organization of other workers in the trade unions, which served as a practice that would prepare her for future formal work within the party: "In 1939, an action was initiated, and workers were to join trade unions. I joined then. In April, we managed to enroll many workers in the section of textile-garment workers. At that time, I was a candidate for party membership, and the comrades tested me through various tasks."[260] It could be assumed that she performed accorded tasks successfully, as she was admitted to the party the same year and immediately was given a task to work among the youth: "When I became a party member, comrades put me in charge of the work among the youth. […] The four of us were on the board for the youth for the entire Belgrade. The interest of the youth at that time was very high, both for the field trips and other forms of gatherings. In 1939, we organized tea parties in different houses in Karaburma. They would be attended by 30-40 young people and few students. In 1940, the Local SKOJ Committee was formed."[261]

Following the case of Jelena Topalov, we get a glimpse of the journey of a political (communist in this case) activist in 1930s Yugoslavia. Her recollections show that this journey was a lengthy one, that it depended on individual motivation and commitment, personal networks, and connections, and then on the formal acknowledgment by the party. Moreover, it becomes apparent that the political journey of a communist activist was inevitably an educational and emancipatory process that shaped the activist's experience.

građa, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija. (On the Party and The League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (SKOJ) at Karaburma, Belgrade. Memories of Jelena Topalov- Member of the Local Committee of SKOJ from That Period, March 12, 1958. 1381-MG-XXIV-25. Collection of Memorial Documents. Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.) ,6.

[259] Ibid. 7. I did not manage to find information on this book.

[260] Ibid. 8.

[261] Ibid. 8, 9.

5.3.4 Education, in Theory, and on the Streets

The education of women workers and the communist activists played a prominent role in this period. Lepa Perović noted that when she already became known for her activism, the party requested her to read after her shift in the textile factory: "The party required of me to read *the Kapital*, but I was so tired from work that I would fall asleep as soon as I would get home."[262]Even though it does not seem rich in information at first glance, this statement reveals the 'realness' of the life of a communist activist. Almost all women who were active in this period also worked full-time in different enterprises and factories. Since working hours in the interwar period usually included 10-hour shifts, both time and strength left for activism were quite limited. The relevance of the education of communist women cadres was especially highlighted in this period. Mitra Mitrović, a student at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, and, as it could be argued now, a communist intellectual, described how educational work among communists and workers looked like: "As a party member, I worked as an instructor of ideological work. We read *The History of SKPB* [Istorija Savezne Komunistčke Partije (boljševika)/ The History of the All-Union Communist Party (bolsheviks)) part by part. In that period, one of the first courses on the history of the SKPB was organized by the party. There were around ten instructors, and we continually held that course successfully, despite the illegality. My workers' organizations' activity intensified when the party decided to pay more attention to the work among workers in factories. In 1937, one part of the intellectuals returned to Yugoslavia to work among workers in the factories and make them stronger in the ideological sense."[263]

Education of workers was done twofold: through the literature and reading groups and participation in strikes and activities on the shopfloor. Julijana Dograjić actively participated in the work of reading groups which she described in her *memoirs*: "Reading groups were groups of 5-6 people who would read Marxist literature. Dara Miličić was a group member, and we held meetings in her apartment. Beška Radošević and Marija Bačić were also in the group, which was organized in 1938. […] In July Juliška Salaj, Ivanka Glavaški, Ljubica Velebit, Fatima Pejović came to my place to read. At that time, our *kruzhok* read *Mati* [Mother, Maxim Gorky] and *Kako se kalio čelik* [How Steel Was Tempered, Nikolai Ostrovsky]."[264]

[262] Sećanja Lepe Perović, 21.
[263] Sećanja Mitre Mitrović, 8.
[264] Sećanja Julijanane Dograjić, 4, 7.

In her *memoirs*, Lepa Perović described how she relied on strike as an educational tool on the shopfloor of the textile factory "Elka." As C.J. Hunt notes in her research of women in the British trade unions, and Lepa Perović's story confirms, the strike was often used as a successful recruitment device among women.[265] After a failed strike of textile factory workers in 1938, the number of organized workers dropped in Belgrade, so the Communist Party employed Lepa Perović to re-organize workers in "Elka." To do so, she connected with two organized workers from the factory- Bosa and Žika Kočić and together, they started working on organizing women workers. Their efforts soon resulted in success, and women became more interested in organized work. Perović elaborated on their motivation to organize: "What made them want to organize? Firstly, fear of the war. Already then, Czechoslovakia was attacked."[266] Even though fear of the war motivated women workers' organizing, as Perović noted, the workers still needed further motivation to turn their interest into organized action. Therefore, Lepa Perović's recount is valuable, as it demonstrates what organizational skills were needed to appeal to non-organized women workers, educate them, and turn their interest into action.

According to Perović's recollection, "Elka" was a textile factory, and it often happened that materials used in the factory were of low quality, so the machines would produce many faulty items, which caused problems between different departments in the factory. According to the factory rules, the women workers who worked on fixing the mal-produced items were to tell the workers who produced such items. The existence of such a practice indicates that organizing workers based on solidarity would be a difficult task. Perović notes that she was once asked to tell one of the workers. She perfectly seized this moment, turning it into a "lesson," through which she explained to the workers that if she told on her, her pay would be cut off even though it is not her fault, but its faulty materials that are causing this issue. This way, workers were to be educated on the relationship between worker-employer, and on the responsibility of the employer, not and individual, on the production-related issues. Perović elaborated on this event: "This is how I started being successful "on the ground," and we organized a strike against the faulty materials. Women worked for more than 10 hours per day and did not manage to earn even the basic income due to the bad materials."

The strike was organized, and the main demands included the usage of higher quality materials and the fixing of the machines. Perović noted: "This was the first time that we managed to

[265] Cathy. J Hunt, "Sex Versus Class in Two British Trade Unions in the Early Twentieth Century", *Journal of Women's History*, volume 24 (1) (2012): 94.
[266] Sećanja Lepe Perović, 20.

engage women in the strike after the break of the big textile workers' strike. That was the important first step, after which everything went smoother. The strike was not big, but it was important since it demonstrated that women would refuse to work if their demands were not met."[267] The exact strike was described by Sonja Baruh, whose sister Rašela Baruh, as one of the party members connected to the factory, took part in the organization of the strike along with Lepa Perović. As Sonja Baruh recalled, the police interrupted the strike, trying to arrest Rašela, but women workers surrounded her, making it impossible for the police to approach and arrest her. Even though Rašela was arrested in the end, women workers' increased sense of solidarity after the strike, in comparison to their initial position on telling on other workers, signaled that under Rašela and Lepa Perović's guidance, women workers were encouraged to take solidary action, aware of the class struggle they were part of.

The organization of the strike cost Lepa Perović her job at the factory. This was a common practice: the most active women workers suspected of participating and/or participating in revolutionary activities would be quickly dismissed from their jobs. This demanded a new form of work that would not depend directly on employment in the factory. Accordingly, communist women started organizing so-called "flying meetings." Mitra Mitrović noted in her *memoirs* that this was one of the activities that gave the most favorable results, so they turned into everyday practice. As Mitra Mitrović noted: "Out of the forms of the work that we did, I would like to highlight the flying meetings, that we organized almost every day throughout 1937 and 1938 when I would go to the entrance gate of the textile factory, and I would wait for women comrades that were connected to us [CPY] to find out what was going on inside of the factory, to talk to them while walking them home so that I would maintain the contact with them. That is how we invited them to events, manifestations, demonstrations, strikes." Jelena Topalov also described this form of work in her *memoirs*: "When I was unemployed, "flying meetings" were organized in some factories. In those meetings, workers were invited in the struggle against fascism that already enslaved people around Europe. Our task was to inform people about the date of the next "flying meeting." When all workers gather, comrades will put the speaker on their shoulders, he would give a short speech, and then he would run off into the crowd, so none of the speakers were ever arrested. Those actions were very successful."[268]

So, "flying meetings" as a form of work among workers emerged from communist women's negotiation of the conditions imposed by employers and regimes' repression of revolutionary

[267] Ibid.21.
[268] Sećanja Jelene Topalov, 19.

workers. Another form of work that persisted from the early 1920s was a system of home agitation. Communist women would organize home-based meetings, where different issues would be discussed. The system of home-agitation was used to meet with sympathizers. Communist women would come to sympathizers' houses to read the brochures and discuss various issues.[269]

The final form of work to be mentioned is the work in so-called workers' actives. The workers' actives represented a group of workers, organized in the enterprises and factories, to prepare for party membership. As Nevenka Karakašević explained in her *memoirs*: "Before the war, groups of the most active workers organized so-called "*aktivi*," which represented *kruzhoks* in which party sympathizers would gather. Those groups were communist-led and formed to prepare sympathizers for the membership. There they would read theoretical materials and history, so everybody had a task to discuss a section of the history. Afterward, they would all start a discussion and go through other materials.[270] Workers' actives were organized in different factories. Petruša Zorić-Kočović recalled her experience in these organizations: "On the ground, we organized workers' actives in "Cigar-papir" and "Makarnica." In the active in "Makarnica" were Persa Bogdanović and Milan Rakić. In „Cigar-papir"operated Milica Janošević, Draga Petrić. Through these actives, we worked with women politically; we read the brochures from the Soviet Union, the history of SKPB, collected red aid for Spain, for the strikers and comrades in prisons. Only I maintained contact with women comrades, and along with me, there were Milada Rajter, Olga Alkalaj, and Mitra Mitrović. Those women comrades transferred tasks and messages "from above." The meetings were organized in forests."[271]

5.4 Ženski pokret and the Youth Section: Radicalization or Dissolution

The relations between Ženski pokret and the Youth Section had a vital place in the historiography of interwar Yugoslav women's movements. Nonetheless, the discussion of these relations was firstly based on the binary division between proletarian/communist and "bourgeoise" feminist women's movements. This position was later challenged by the new generation of historians, who provided a more nuanced account of this section of history.[272] However, the historiography focuses mainly on the conflicts between the two groups rather than on the achievements of their collaboration. Yet, that the collaboration of Ženski pokret

[269] Sećanja Julijane Dograjić, 7.
[270] Sećanja Nevenke Karakašević-Stamenković, 3.
[271] Sećanja Petruše Kočović-Zorić, 2.

and the Youth Section resulted in noticeable accomplishments in Serbia in particular: the activity among the workers increased, resulting in the development of grassroots activism, new members joined Ženski pokret and attended their meetings, the journal *Žena danas* successfully communicated with the readership, and more and more people became involved in the work of the communist movement. Based on all the information presented so far, it could safely be argued that the collaboration of Ženski pokret and the Youth Section significantly contributed to developing the broader revolutionary movement *in Serbia*. I am emphasizing that their collaboration was successful in Serbia, as the collaboration between other regional organizations of Ženski pokret and the Youth Sections had a considerably different history. When it comes to the conflict between the two groups, it is important to contextualize it by introducing regional and transnational perspective.

5.4.1 Exploring the Conflict between Ženski pokret and the Youth Section: Radicalization as a Signal for Dissolution

As this chapter already demonstrated, from 1934, young women connected to the Communist Party and feminists from organization Ženski pokret managed to find common ground and started operating together. While their cooperation brought positive results in Serbia, sources show that it was characterized by reoccurring conflicts in Croatia.

Members of the Youth Section in Zagreb witnessed the initial signal of fragility already in 1934, during the celebration of the Day of the Peace, on November 11, 1934, when four young communist women spoke about the struggle for peace, the political role of woman in that struggle, and the role of the woman in the struggle against fascism. The speeches were highly criticized by members of Ženski pokret, as they saw them as the politicization of the women's movement. Consequently, the most prominent member of the Youth Section, Jelena Jančić, was disposed from her position and banned from participating in the discussions.[273] Similar situations reoccurred, so in 1937 members of Ženski pokret in Zagreb voiced critiques of the Zagreb Youth Section. Member of the Youth Section was criticized on the following accounts: their lectures were seen as opposite to feminist spirit, their pacifist section spoke only against fascism, the young members took over "freedoms" that did not belong to them, they did not

[273] Similar situation occurred in Macedonia, though three years later, during the yearly assembly, when the president of Ženski pokret, Emilija Jovanović, argued that admission to the membership should be regulated and that new members should not have a possibility to join the movement freely, but they would have to be taken in consideration of existing members. Additionally, she suggested cooperation with the police. The voting in relation to these sections was done outside of the protocol, to which members of the Youth Section protested, but ended up subtly silenced. *Žena Danas*, no. 7, 1937,p. 17, 18.

want shared space with Ženski pokret, and some of the members were criticized and for not joining the organization for feminist reasons.[274] Consequently, the board of Ženski pokret acted upon this criticism, strictly limiting the autonomy of the Youth Section establishing control over their work, which would eventually lead to the dissolution of the Zagreb Youth Section the same year.

The development of the Youth Section in Bosnia and Herzegovina was more affected by the regime surveillance of their work, which consequently caused conflicts among the two groups. Local authorities and the police followed the work of Ženski pokret in Banja Luka since the first gathering for suffrage in 1936. By 1936, when Youth Sections in various cities of the region successfully developed their influence among women, Banja Luka authorities, aware of the connection between the Communist Party and Ženski pokret, started collecting information on the members of this organization. For example, in 1936 administration of Vrbas banovina alarmed the authorities to "keep an eye on the re-establishment of Ženski pokret in the existing women's organizations as new communist directives"[275] Only two months later, the same administration sent another note stressing that "Communists will particularly support the action of SKOJ and organization of action for women's suffrage and equality of women"[276] From that year, authorities in Banja Luka started creating lists which included names of members of Ženski pokret who were deemed, communist. As author Dana Begić notes, the lists expanded exponentially: from 4 names in 1936, and the lists included several tens of names by 1939.[277] Presented information demonstrates that even though Ženski pokret was primarily a feminist organization, from 1936, it was regarded by the authorities as, if not communist-led, then as at least a communist-inclined organization.[278]

[274] Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 323.
[275] Dana Begić, „Antifašistički pokret žena u Bosni i Hercegovini u vremenu od 1937. do 1941. godine"[Anti-fascist Women's Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1937-1941]. *Prilozi Instituta za istoriju radnickog pokreta*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1965): 165. http://iis.unsa.ba/prilozi-br-1-2/#1549158229733d9ac1ad2-f429 (Accessed: April 2020)
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.
[278] The connection between the Communist Party and the Youth Sections of Ženski pokret is already recognized in the historiography of the Yugoslav women's history. Mitra Mitrović's recollection on the history of the emergence of the Belgrade Youth Section's journal *Žena Danas* (1936-1981) [Woman Today] in 1936 serves as another proof of this connection: „ In 1936, on our initiative and with the support of the Communist Party, we formed a journal *Žena Danas.* The idea was born between me, Dušica Stefanović (daughter of Lazar and Draga), and Nataša jeremićJeremić, a- law student. We formed a journal that was under the indirect authority of the party. We were financially supported by the Party, and our actions were approved by the Party until 1939 when we had to cancel the publication because the police bothered us so much that the journal simply could not be published anymore. We published it for three full years, three years on one, direct antifascist line. Then we had a party fraction in the Youth Section, and party unit from 1936 to 1937. Among women who were official

In Serbia, as was already discussed, the situation developed differently. While the Youth Sections in other regions were close to the abolishment or already abolished, the relationship between Ženski pokret and the Youth Section in Serbia was still ongoing. In the report presented during the yearly Assembly of Ženski pokret in February 1939, Aljozija Štebi discussed the successful work of Ženski pokret during the past year, which resulted in the creation of many new local sections. She addressed the work of the Youth Section, stating that it managed to gather many new, enthusiastic young members.[279] Boba Đorđević spoke as a representative of the Youth Section, joyfully announcing that the Section gathers hundreds of young women who, in the realms of the section, "work, breathe, think, find amusement, knowledge, motivation, and bravery.".[280] However, despite the optimistic tone of the reports from the Assembly, the two groups in Serbia drifted apart the same year. The breaking point between the two turned out to be a mass organization of the actions for women's suffrage in 1939, initiated and organized by young women gathered around the journal *Žena Danas*. The action had a vast response: on the one hand, it was criticized by various women's organizations and political parties, and on the other one, it resulted in the organization of gatherings in more than 50 cities.[281] This action's mass proportions and revolutionary character were harshly criticized by older members of Ženski pokret, which ultimately led to the final split among them.

5.4.2 Origins of Antagonism

The conflicts between the young women from the Youth Section and older feminists from Ženski pokret rested on five problems: 1. Connections to the political parties; 2. Reformist/revolutionary stance between the members; 3. Level of radicalness, forms, and strategies of action; 4. 2. Generational differences between the members 5. The consequences of the possible persecution and imprisonment.

The first problem, often discussed in historiography, is the problem of "political neutrality" of Ženski pokret. Ženski pokret is often marked as a "politically neutral" organization. If we understand "political neutrality" as the absence of formal and ouverte support of any political party, then Ženski pokret could indeed be defined as "politically neutral." However, relying only on this concept to describe this organization leads to oversimplification for two reasons.

party members then were Bosa Cvetić, Olga Alkalaj, Olga Jojić, Beška Bembas, Mica Šuvaković. However, that party unit did not last too long. "Sećanja Mitre Mitrović,6.

[279] *Žena danas,* no. 20, 1939, p. 13.

[280] Ibid.

[281] Begić,, „Antifašistički pokret žena," 165.

Firstly, as noted in Chapter II, Ženski pokret gathered women with different political affiliations and published their articles in their journal *Ženski pokret*, making Ženski pokret an inherently heterogeneous organization. The heterogeneity of the organization and the ideas can be detected in the articles in *Ženski pokret.* For example, the journal's first issues addressed the question, "Should women form their party or enter the existing ones?" and published responses throughout several following issues. The responses show the variety of political stances of the contributors, which ranged from liberal to revolutionary. The heterogeneous character of the organization became particularly visible when, in 1927, a group of women, part of whom were members of Ženski pokret, founded Ženska Stranka [The Women's Party].[282] Ženska stranka was founded on the idea that women need a strong political organization to struggle to better women's lives.[283] This evoked a strong response from the members of Ženski pokret, and soon, two groups entered a public debate. Ksenija Antanasijević, one of the most prominent members of Ženski pokret, strongly opposed the party's creation, believing that it could only harm the women's movement, arguing that the creation of this party led to rapture in the women's movement, and that, if this had not happened, Ženski pokret would be close to winning certain rights for women[284] . Moreover, she stated that, until the right moment comes, the best route to women's rights were legislative changes and the enlightenment of women and society.[285] As author Miroslava Malešević argues, emphasis on emancipation demonstrates that Ženski pokret shifted the focus of their struggle from political to social agenda.[286] From this interchange of opinions and re-graduation of members to the Woman's Party, the heterogeneous character of Ženski pokret becomes evident.

More than being heterogenous, Ženski pokret had a changing character. Even though (some) members of Ženski pokret had a negative stance towards organizing and cooperating with political parties, this opinion changed throughout time. The change was particularly evident when Ženski pokret cooperated with young women connected to the Communist Party. Even though this change of line was strategic and served to attract more women into the organization, it also meant changing one of the principles of the organization. Another specific change in the

[282] The Women's Party was formed in May 1927, with an idea that women, as second-class citizens need firm and strong organization in order to work on their position and demands. As Stojaković notes, they were open for collaboration with other parties and organizations that would support their agenda.
https://zenskimuzejns.org.rs/category/citaonica/ (Accessed: June 1, 2020)
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Miroslava Malešević, Ženski pokret- feminističko glasilo [Ženski pokret- Feminist Journal]. U *Žensko-etnografski aspekti društvenog položaja žene u Srbiji,* (Beograd, 2007), 24.

organization can be identified in 1939, on the eve of the Thirteenth Congres of International Women's Alliance (IAW) in Copenhagen.[287] Right before the congress, together with the Youth Section members, Ženski pokret in Serbia had an assembly to discuss their position regarding the incoming IAW congress. The Assembly discussed the incoming war and the agenda that IAW was to suggest during the congress. The new agenda of IAW reaffirmed their commitment to democracy, stating: "The woman's battle is that of all mankind. There can be no freedom for women when freedom is no longer a recognized right of every individual. There can be no justice nor economic freedom for women when all justice is dependent on the will of an oligarchy. Now we live through difficult times in which life-based on our principles is at stake. Therefore, women, with men, true to their fundamental principles, must defend a system that will lead to greater justice, freedom, real peace, general prosperity, and more happiness for all."[288] Accepting this agenda, and collaborating with the Youth Section, signaled that Ženski pokret was not "politically neutral." However, just as the agenda of IAW suggested, feminists were to struggle for democracy within the existing system, which again emphasized the reformist line of the organization, which leads to the second problem between the Youth Section and Ženski pokret. While the Youth Section worked on the creation of the revolutionary mass movement of women, whose struggles would be dedicated to the change of system and social order, feminists from Ženski pokret wanted social and legislative changes, but within the existing system. This difference became apparent during the organization of actions for women's suffrage in 1939, when members of the youth section gathered masses of women and led them to the streets, under the motto "for peace, bread and freedom, "which was criticized as too revolutionary by members of Ženski pokret. As Ljubinka Ćirić-Bogetić notes, older members of Ženski pokret distanced themselves from actions they saw as too radical.[289]

This directly leads to the discussion of the third problem- level of radicalness, forms, and strategies of action. As the cases of Zagreb and Skopje sections demonstrate, the more radically

[287] Yugoslav women joined IAW in 1923. Women's magazines in the country often reported on the activities of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, with a Yugoslav branch of the league established in 1929. In 1931, Yugoslav Alliance of Women's Movements organized IAW Conference for Peace in Belgrade. Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Yugoslav Women's Movement and "The Happiness to the World", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 31:4 (2020): 732, 735. DOI:10.1080/09592296.2020.1842064.

[288] International Alliance of Women, Report of the Thirteenth Congress (Ashford, England: International Alliance of Women, 1939), 8. https://search.Aleksandarstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C1654118/report-13th-congress-iaw#page/11/mode/1/chapter/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C1654525

[289] Ljubinka Ćirić-Bogetić, "Odluke Pete zemaljske konferencije KPJ o radu među ženama i njihova realizacija u periodu 1940–1941," [The Decisions of the Fifth Conference of CPY on the Work among Women and their Realization in the period 1940-141]. *Peta zemaljska konferencija Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*. Zbornik radova, eds. Zlatko Čepo and Ivan Jelić (Zagreb: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta Hrvatske, 1972), 86.

members of the Youth Section acted and thought, the more serious was the response from the members of Ženski pokret. Still, these responses were more severe and even premature in the cases of Zagreb and Macedonia. In Serbia, radical ideas and actions of the Youth Section's members were not supported, but they were tolerated. However, when their actions were deemed too radical, the collaboration would become frail. Members of the Youth Section were aware and critical of this resistance to radicalization, believing that "every action or conscious avoidance of activities that limited inflow of broad masses of women into the rows of Ženski pokret was masked backwardness. "[290] The question and attitude towards radicalization were tightly connected to the generational differences between members of the two groups. As Isidora Grubački demonstrates in her research, the experiences of young women of the Youth Section informed their political agendas, which coincided with the demands of the broader, radical students' movement. In contrast, older members of Ženski pokret informed their agendas on their understandings of feminism and struggled for equality.[291]

It might be argued that resistance towards radicalization and forms of struggle suggested by the Youth Section were met with resistance from Ženski pokret, as they realized that this cooperation could easily lead to the banning of the organization and, more importantly, repression of its members. Author Miroslava Milešević notes, even though the agenda of Ženski pokret partially coincided with the agenda of the proletarian women's movement, the regime considered its work less dangerous, as it did not call for a revolution, but for reform.[292] With the same perspective in mind, member of Ženski pokret Mira Kočonda-Vodvarška's stated during the meeting of the Alijansa Ženskih pokreta [The Alliance of Women's Movements] in 1937 in Belgrade, "As much as we would be glad to see a mass of women in our rows, we would rather size-down these rows, than calling "ours" what does not belong to us. ". [293] What did not belong to them [members of Ženski pokret] was communism, and, in Kočonda-Vodvarška's opinion, small-scale activity represented a better option than no activity at all. The final split between the Youth Section and Ženski pokret occurred in 1940, during the yearly Assembly of the Alijansa Ženskih pokreta. As author Ljuinka Ćirić Bogetić noted: "[the members of Ženski pokret] contended that they hold the same position they held 20 years ago: the women's movement must be neutral concerning party life. The younger members believed that determination must be made and that their determination was the party. In their

[290] Ibid.
[291] Grubački, "Communism, Left Feminism and Generations in the 1930s," 53.
[292] Malešević, „Ženski pokret- feminističko glasilo," 16.
[293] Ženski pokret, no.1/2 , January/Fabruary 1937, p. 5.

opinion, neutrality was not an option anymore."[294] The 1940 Assembly marked the formal split of the Youth Section and Ženski pokret.

5.4.3 The Split and the History of the Women's movements in Yugoslavia

The split between the two groups certainly affected the further development of the women's movement in Yugoslavia. The ideological strife was discussed during the Fifth CPY Conference held in Zagreb in October 1940. During the Conference, Vida Tomšić gave, now well-known, report on the Tasks of the Communist Party in the Work Among Women, stating as feminism is putting common demands of women of all classes separate from the common demands of all working people, it must be eliminated from the Communist Party. As Tomšić stressed: "Feminism in our rows should be marked as a rightist opportunistic help to the women's movement in the spread of illusions that the woman's question could be resolved within the framework of class society through some reforms. That way, women are separated from the revolutionary proletariat and its party."[295]

As author Nađa Bobičić noted, Vida Tomšić's report, shaped by the new party line and informed by the previously described events and conflicts, became a text that will define Yugoslav policies regarding women in the following decades.[296] Moreover, this split radically affected the historiography of the interwar women's movement, as it allowed historians to discuss this history by relying on the communist/bourgeoise feminist dichotomy. I believe that new scholarship and this thesis are challenging this perspective, providing a more nuanced account of the interwar women's history, arguing that the borders of two "cohorts" were fluid and that antagonism between the two was not insuperable as it appeared.

[294] Ćirić-Bogetić, "Odluke Pete zemaljske konferencije KPJ," 91.
[295] Svetlana Stefanovic, „Radnički vs. Građanski ženski pokret u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji 1910-1940", *Antropologija* vol. 20, no. 1–2 (2020): 63.
[296] Nađa Bobičić, *Jugoslovenski socijalistički feminizam u odnosu na savremene teorije nastale na presjeku pitanja klase i roda* [Yugoslav Socialist Feminism in Relation to the Contemprary Theories that Emerged on the Intersection of Gender and Class Issues]. Ph.D. Thesis (Belgrade: University of Belgrade Faculty of Politicology, 2020), 60.

CONCLUSION

In her *memoirs*, Sonja Baruh describes her participation in the interwar communist movement as: "years filled with fear and danger, but also hope and content – this is difficult to understand if one has not shared that sense of belonging and devotion, unlimited trust in comrades and belief in the rightness of ones' own convictions." [297] Sonja Baruh's and other communist women's memories, investigated in this thesis, outline the broader contours of communist women's activism and the social and cultural history of the interwar Yugoslav communist movement. Enlarging the focus of the study of communist activism from institutional politics to the grassroots activism of communist women, I aimed to present the history of communist women's activism from activists' perspectives. In my thesis, communist women emerge as living historical and political subjects whose activism arose from a complex combination of political culture and gender relations, shaping and irrevocably transforming their lives.

Analyzing communist women's *memoirs* and a myriad of other sources, using tools provided by social, cultural, and history of emotions, throughout my chapters, I followed the process of the creation of a communist activist and the political journey of communist women. I argued that political journeys of individual women, especially of communist women of the "early generation," such as Desanka Cvetović and Draga Stefanović, were of great importance for the development of activism of the younger generation of communist women. Cvetković and Stefanović, as well as numerous other communist women of the "early generation," set the stage for the generation to come that will use it to perform an entire specter of activities that immensely contributed to the broader communist movement.

To create a multidimensional picture of the communist movement, I examined a rich body of sources, including journal and newspaper articles and *memoirs* of communist women and official Communist Party and trade union documents. While the examination of the latter allows us to see how institutional politics developed and altered along with the national and transnational political situation, the analysis of the *memoirs* and journal articles reveals the entire worlds of communist women, woven with emotions such as solidarity, fear, comradeship, and hope, underneath the world of the institutional politics. However, I did not

[297] *Sonja Baruh*, 306.

disregard the official Communist Party documents, but I attempted to offer a new reading that reveals how institutional politics, personal attitudes of Communist Party members, and gendered party relations affected the development of communist women's activism.

The focus on communist women's collective and individual actions, emotions, and ideas turns these women into palpable historical subjects, demonstrating that their activism, while closely or less closely interacting with the directives of the Communist Party and Comintern and Comintern, was firmly rooted their belief in social justice and equality.

Bibliography

A. Archives

Istroijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, Srbija [Historical Archives of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia]

Memorijalna građa [Collection of the Memorial Documents]

Arhiv Jugoslavije, Beograd, Srbija [Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Serbia]

790/10 Međunarodni ženski sekretarijat (MŽS) – Radnički pokret žena jugoslavije [The International Women's Secretariat (IWS) – The Women Workers' Movement in Yugoslavia]

790/6 Crvena sindikalna internacionala Profinterna (CSI) – Revolucionarni sindikati Jugoslavije [The Red International of Trade Unions (RILU)– Revolutionary Trade Unions of Yugoslavia]

790/1 Komunistička internacionala (KI) - Sekcija KPJ [The Communist International (CI) – Communist Party of Yugoslavia Section]

721 Revolucionarni sindikati Jugoslavije [Revolutionary Trade Unions of Yugoslavia]

726 Politički zatvorenici u kaznionama i logorima [Political Prisoners in the Penitentiaries and Concentaration Camps]

Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, Hrvatska [The Croatian State Archives, Zagreb, Croatia]

1753 Fond Ivan Očak

B. Contemporary Journals and Newspapers

Borba (1922-1929) [The Struggle]

Glas slobode – organ Socijaldemokratske stranke Bosne i Hercegovine (1909-1929) [The Voice of Freedom: Organ of Social-Democratic party of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1909-1929]

Jednakost – organ žena socijaldemokrata (1910-1912, 1914, 1918-1920) [Equality=Gleichheit = L'Egalité -Organ of Social-Democratic Women]

Naprej – Glasilo Jugoslavanske Socialno Demokratične Stranke (1917-1923) [Forward-Organ of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party]

Okovani radnik (1924) [The Chained Worker]

Organizovani radnik – organ Nezavisnih sindikata (1921-1929) [The Organized Worker-Organ of the Independent Trade Unions] (https://digitalna.nb.rs/sf/NBS/novine/organizovani_radnik)

Radničke novine (1897; 1902-1915; 1918-1941) [Workers' Newspaper /Journal ouvrier /Arbeiter Zeitung]

Radnik – Centralni organ Nezavisne radničke partije Jugoslavije [The Worker- Central organ of the Independent Yugoslav Workers's Party]

Žena danas (1936-1981) [Woman Today]

Ženski pokret (1920-1938) [The Women's Movement]

Proleter – Organ Centralnog Komiteta Komunističke Partije (1929-1942) [Proletary – organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party]

C. Secondary Literature

Antonis Klapsis. "Economic Crisis and Political Extremism in Europe: From the 1930s to the Present." *European View*, vol. 13, no. 2 (December 2014): 189-198. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-014-0315-5.

Barać, Stanislava. "Pacifistički i antifašistički diskurs u listu Žena danas (1936–1941) " [Pacifist and Anti-fascist Discourse in the journal *Žena danas*]. U *Intelektualci i rat: 1939.-1947*: *zbornik radova s međunarodnog skupa Desničini susreti,* (2011), 217-231.

Barać, Stanislava. *Feministička kontrajavnost. Žanr ženskog portreta u srpskoj periodici 1920-1941* [Feminist Counterpublic: The Genre of Female Portrait in Serbian Periodicals]. Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2015.

Barrett, James R. "Rethinking the Popular Front", Rethinking Marxism, 21:4 (2009): 531-550. DOI: 10.1080/08935690903145671.

Bayerlein, Bernhard H. "Zwischen Internationale und Gulag. Präliminarien zur Geschichte der internationalen kommunistischen Frauenbewegung (1919-1945)". *International Newsletter of Communist Studies Online, vol.*19 (2006): 27-47.

Begić, Dana. "Antifasisticki pokret Žena u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1937. do 1941. Godine" [Anti-fascist Women's Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1937-1941]. *Prilozi Instituta za istoriju radnickog pokreta*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1965): 137-198.

Bobičić, Nađa. Jugoslovenski socijalistički feminizam u odnosu na savremene teorije nastale na presjeku pitanja klase i roda [Yugoslav Socialist Feminism in Relation to the Contemprary Theories that Emerged on the Intersection of Gender and Class Issues]. Ph.D. Thesis, Belgrade: Faculty of Politicology, University of Belgrade, 2020.

Bojković. Dušan "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Autocratic Rule of King Aleksandar Karađorđević". *Tokovi istorije*, vol. 3 (2015): 65-87.

Božinović, Neda. *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u 19. i 20. veku* [The Women's Question in Serbia in 19th and 20th Centuries]. Beograd: Devedesetčetvrta, Žene u crnom, 1996.

Brigden Cathy. "The legacy of separate organizing: Women in the Victorian Trades Hall Council in the interwar years", *Labor Studies Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2011): 245-268.

Bruley, Susan. *Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain 1920-1939.* Routledge: Routledge Library Editions: Women's History, vol. 8, 2012.

Bujaković, Minja. "Zajedno, organizovane, mi smo nesalomive!": Aleksandra Kolontaj i "nova žena", *Književnstvo* no.9 (2019) https://doi.org/10.18485/knjiz.2019.9.9.6.

C.J Hunt, "Sex Versus Class in Two British Trade Unions in the Early Twentieth Century", *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 24 (1), (2012): 86-110.

Čalić, Mari-Žanin. *Istorija Jugoslavije u 20. Veku* [History of Yugoslavia in the 20th Century. Translated from German] Preveli sa nemačkog Ranka Gašić I Vladimir Babić. Beograd: Clio, 2013.

Cazi, Josip. *Na političkoj liniji Komunističke partije Jugoslavije -Ujedinjeni radnički sindikalni savez Jugoslavije i rad komunista u njemu 1929-1940*. [On the Political Line of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia- United Workers' Trade Union of Yugoslavia and the Work of Communists Within It]. Zagreb: Radničke novine, 1978.

Cazi, Josip. *Nezavisni sindikati (1921-1929)* [Independent trade Unions (1921-1929)], vol. 3, Notebook 1. Zagreb: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta Hrvatske, 1967.

Cazi, Josip. *Nezavisni sindikati (1921-1929)* [Independent trade Unions (1921-1929)], vol. 3, notebook 2. Zagreb: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta Hrvatske, 1967.

Cazi, Josip. Nezavisni sindikati (1921-1929) [Independent trade Unions (1921-1929)], vol. 2. Zagreb: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta, 1964

Cazi, Josip. *Nezavisni sindikati (1921-1929)* vol. 1. [Independent trade Unions (1921-1929)], vol. 1. Zagreb: Republičko vijeće SSJ za Hrvatsku, 1962.

Cazi, Josip. *S puta reformizma na put klasne borbe- Ujedinjeni radnički sindikalni savez Jugoslavije i rad komunista u njemu 1929-1934* [From the reformist's road to the road of the class struggle: United Workers' Trade Union of Yugoslavia and the Work of Communists Within It 1929-1934]. Zagreb: Radničke novine, 1978.

Cazi, Nada. *Društveni položaj žene: kako slaviti naše praznike : 8. mart--Međunarodni dan žena*[Social Position of Women: How to Celebrate our Holidays: 8th of Match- International Women's Day]. Zagreb: Pregled, 1976.

Ćirić-Bogetić, Ljubinka. "Odluke Pete zemaljske konferencije KPJ o radu među ženama i njihova realizacija u periodu 1940–1941," [The Decisions of the Fifth Conference of CPY on the Work among Women and their Realization in the period 1940-141]. *Peta zemaljska konferencija Komunističke partije Jugoslavije. Zbornik radova,* eds. Zlatko Čepo and Ivan Jelić. Zagreb: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta Hrvatske, 1972, 75-98.

Cobble, Dorothy Sue. "Rethinking Troubled Relations between Women and Unions: Craft Unionism and Female Activism." *Feminist Studies,* vol. 16, no. 3 (1990): 519-548. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178018.

Communist International, and John Riddell, eds. *To the Masses: Proceedings of the Third Congress of the Communist International, 1921*. Historical Materialism Book Series, vol. 91. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015.

Communist International, and John Riddell, eds. *Toward the United Front: Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922*. Historical Materialism Book Series, vol. 34. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011.

Damousi, Joy. "The Woman Comrade': Equal or Different? ". *Women's History Review*, 2:3, (1993): 387-394.

Djilas, Aleksa. *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Downs, Laura Lee. *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in The French And British Metalworking Industries, 1914-1939*. Cornel University Press: 1995.

Dražaić, Karlo, "Povijest i ideologija Socijaldemokratske stranke Hrvatske i Slovenije na prijelazu iz Habsburške Monarhije u monarhističku Jugoslaviju" [The History and Ideology of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slovenia inbetween Habsburg Monarchy and Monarchist Yugoslavia]. Master teza. Zagreb:Filozofski fakultet sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2019. https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:131:409482 (Accessed: March 24, 2021).

Đuranović-Janda, Saša. *Žena u radnom odnosu* [Woman in the Labor Relations]. Zagreb: Naprijed, 1960.

Grgić, Stipica. „Neki aspekti poimanja uvrede vladara u vrijeme diktature kralja Aleksandra I. Karađorđevića "[Some Aspects of Understanding of Offence of the Govern during the Dictatorship of King Aleksandar Karađorđević]. *Zavod za hrvatsku povijest*, vol 41 (2009), 347-365.

Grubački, Isidora. "Communism, Left Feminism and Generations in the 1930s: The Case of Yugoslavia," in *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, eds. by Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mrozik. London: Routledge 2020, 46-65.

Gužvica, Stefan. *Before Tito: The Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Great Purge (1936–1940)*. ACTA Universitatis Tallinnensis, 2020.

Hannam, June. "Women as Paid Organizers and Propagandists for the British Labour Party Between the Wars." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, vol. 77, no. 1 (2010): 69–88. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0147547909990251.

Hasanagić, Edib. *Nezavisni Sindikati* [Independent Trade Unions]. Beograd: Rad, 1951.

Haug, Hilde Katrine. *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia: Tito, Communist Leadership, and the National Question*. New York: I. B. ... Fund, 1962.

Himka Maglajlić-Hadzihalilović, *Zapisi o Vahidi Maglajić* [Notes on Vahida Maglajić]. Banja Luka: Glas, 1973.

Hunt, Cathy. "Her Heart and Soul Were with The Labor Movement': Using A Local Study to Highlight the Work of Women Organizers Employed By the Workers' Union in Britain From The First World War To 1931". *Labour History Review*, vol. 70, no. 2 (2005): 167-184. doi: 10.1179/096156505X53609.

Hunt, K., Worley, M. "Rethinking British Communist Party Women in the 1920s." *Twentieth-Century British History*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2004): 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/15.1.1.

Hunt, Karen. "Rethinking Activism: Lessons from the History of Women's Politics." *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol.62, no. 2 (2009): 211–226. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsn052.

Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije, Kongresi i zemaljske konferencije KPJ 1919-1937, vol. II [Historical Archives of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Congresses and Conferences CPY 1919-1937, vol. II]. Beograd: Impresum CK KPJ, 1949.

Jean-Jacques Marie, "The Women's Section of the Comintern, from Lenin to Stalin," in Christine Fauré (ed.), *Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women*. New York: Routledge, 2003, 275–285.

Jončić D., Malović G., Ilić, S., Petrović N. *Vodič kroz zbirke* [A Guide Through Collections]. Beograd: Arhiv Srbije i Crne Gore, Beograd: Bogdanović, 2007.

Kecman, Jovanka. „Filip Filipović i delatnost organizacije žena socijaldemokrata i komunista do Obznane" [Filip Filipović and Work of the Organization of Social-Democratic Women and Communists Until the "Pronouncement"]. U *Filip Filipović – Revolucionarna misao i delo*[Filip Filipović- Revolutionary Thought and Work]. Beograd, 1983, 89-96.

Kecman, Jovanka. „Mladi komunisti u organizacijama ženskog pokreta"[Young Communists in the Organizations of Women's Movement]. U *Revolucionarni omladinski pokret u Jugoslaviji (SKOJ-SSOJ, 1919-1984)* [Revolutionary Youth Movement in Yugoslavia SKOJ-SSOJ, 1919-1948]. Zbornik radnika radova sa naučnog skupa "Tito i omladina", Zagreb, 1972.

Kecman, Jovanka. *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.

Kirschenbaum, Lisa. *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War: Solidarity and Suspicion*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Kirton, Gill. "Anatomy of Women's Participation in Small Professional Unions." *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2018): 151–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X15606981.

Kovačević, Dušanka. *Borbeni put žena Jugoslaviji* [The Struggle of Women in Yugoslavia]. Beograd: Sveznanje, 1972.

Krkljuš, Ljubomirka. *Pravna istorija srpskog naroda* [The Legal History of Serbian People]. Novi Sad, 2002.

Kuromiya Hiroaki. "Soviet *Memoirs* as A Historical Source." *Russian History* vol.12, no. 2/4, (1985): 293-326. Accessed June 6, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24655816.

Leeb, Claudia. *Power and Feminist Agency in Capitalism: Toward a New Theory of the Political Subject*. Oxford Scholarship Online: April 2017.

Lixl-Purcell, Andreas. "*Memoirs* as History", *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. 39, Issue 1, (1994): 227-238.

Loomba, Ania. *Revolutionary desires: women, communism, and feminism in India*. London and New York: Routledge, 2019.

Malešević, Miroslava. Ženski pokret- feminističko glasilo glasilo [Ženski pokret- Feminist Journal]. U *Žensko- etnografski aspekti društvenog položaja žene u Srbiji,* Beograd, 2007.

McDermid Jane, and Anna Hillyar. *Midwives of the Revolution: Female. Bolsheviks and Women Workers in 1917*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999.

McDermott K., Agnew J. "Popular Front and Stalinist Terror, 1934–9". In: *The Comintern.* Palgrave, London,1996, 120-157. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25024-0_4.

Mladenović, Stanko. *Spasenija Cana Babović- Životni put I delo* [Spasenija Cana Babović – Life Road and Work], Gornji Milanovac, 1979.

Mullaney, Marie Marmo. "Gender and the Socialist Revolutionary Role, 1871-1921: A General Theory of the Female Revolutionary Personality." *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* vol.11, no. 2 (1984): 99-151.

Očak, Ivan. *Braća Cvijići* [Cvijić Brothers]. Zagreb: Spektar – Globus, 1982. (Accessed: May 3,2021) http://library.memoryoftheworld.org/?fbclid=IwAR1oYGJkDwPSjsAAsFr9HsGcRo2LJqG3FEtCl_5TRu4rnI9wRl_oIAn9h84#/book/997be51c-6df1-407a-988c-fe33397b2f02.

Ograjšek Gorenjak, Ida. "Yugoslav Women's Movement and "The Happiness to the World", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 3, issue 4 (2020): 722-744. DOI:10.1080/09592296.2020.1842064.
Ograjšek Gorenjak, Ida. *Opasne iluzije. Rodni stereotipi u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji*, [Dangerous Illusions. Gender stereotypes in Interwar Yugoslavia]. Zagreb: Srednja Evropa, 2014.

Pejanović, Snežana.*Društvena jednakost i emancipacija žena* [Social Equality and Emancipation of Women]. AFŽ Arhiv. (Accessed: October 23, 2020).

Plamper, Jan, Reddy W., Rosenwein B, and Stearns P. "The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, And Peter Stearns." *History and Theory*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2010): 237-65. Accessed June 13, 2021. Http://Www.Jstor.Org/Stable/40864443

Politički angažovane omladinske organizacije u Vojvodini 1919-1941 [Politically Organized Youth Organizations in Vojvodina 1919-1941]. Beograd: Alternativna kulturna organizacija - AKO (Novi Sad) i Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Regionalna kancelarija za jugoistočnu Evropu, 2014.

Prlenda, Sandra, "Posebne ženske organizacije u komunisti čkom pokretu i socijalisti čkim zemljama", *Treća,* vol. 17, no. 1/2 (2015): 129-143.

Radovanović, Milan. *Dida de Majo (1906-1964) Biografija*. [Dida Demajo- Biography]. Beograd: Jevrejski istorijski Muzej, 2009. http://jevrejskadigitalnabiblioteka.rs/bitstream/id/465/JIM).

Rajković, Ana- "The Position of Female Workers in Yugoslavia Between the Two World Wars - A Historical Perspective (1918 - 1939)." *Antropologija. Časopis Odeljenja za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu*, vol. 20, Issue 1 (2020): 27-54.

Rosenwein, Barbara H. "Worrying about Emotions in History", *The American Historical Review*, Volume 107, Issue 3, (2002): 821-845. https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/107.3.82.

Rosenwein, Barbara. "Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions," *Passions in Context: Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Emotions* 1/1 (2010). Online at http://www.passionsincontext.de/.

Sewell, Sara Ann. " Antifascism in the Neighborhood: Daily Life, Political Culture, and Gender Politics in the German Communist Antifascist Movement, 1930–1933", *Fascism* 9, 1-2 (2020): 167-194, doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-20201175

Sharp, Ingrid, and Matthew Stibbe. "Women's International Activism during the Inter-War Period, 1919–1939." *Women's History Review*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2017): 163–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2016.1181332.

Simonton, Deborah. *A History of European Women's Work*. Routledge, 2002. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203007006.

Sklevicky, Lydia. "Karakteristike organiziranog djelovanja zena u Jugoslaviji u razdoblju do drugog svjetskog rata (I)" [Characteristics of Organized Work of Women in Yugoslavia until the Second World War]. *Polja*, no. 308 (1984): 415-417.

Sobolevski, Mihael. „Djelatnost komunističkog poslanika Vladimira Ćopića u Ustavotvornoj Skupštini od godine 1920. do 1921" [The Activity of a Communist Vladimir Ćopić in Constitutional Assembly from 1920 to 1921]. *Senjski zbornik: prilozi za geografiju, etnologiju, gospodarstvo, povijest i kulturu*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1981): 45-56.

Sonja Baruh, Beograd: Jevrejski istorijski muzej Saveza jevrejskih opština Srbije, 2003.

Stanić, Veljko. "Parče velkog života: Mitra Mitrović o tridesetim godinama 20. veka". [A Piece of a Big Life: Mitra Mitrović on the 1930s]. Unpublished Manuscript, 2021, typescript.

Stefanović, Momčilo. Hrabro srce tihe Šunje- životni put narodnog heroja Vukice Mitrović [The Brave Heart of the Quiet Šunja – Life Road of a National Hero Vukica Mitrović] Kragujevac, 1977.

Stefanovic, Svetlana. „Radnički vs. Građanski ženski pokret u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji 1910-1940", *Antropologija,* no. 20, notebook 1–2, (2020): 55-72.

Stojaković, Gordana „Zapisi u Ženskom pokretu, O jugoslovenskom feminističkom iskustvu u tri slike", Ženski muzej, 2020. https://zenskimuzejns.org.rs/2020/11/28/zapisi-u-zenskom-pokretu-o-jugoslovenskom-feministickom-iskustvu-u-tri-slike/.

Stojaković, Gordana. „Crtica o feminističkoj istoriji Grada Zagreba (1918-1940)", Presentation at the Conference „ Women's Anti-Fascism in the Eve of the Second World War", Zareb, 2014. https://zenskimuzejns.org.rs/2020/11/09/crtica-o-feministickoj-istoriji-grada-zagreba-1919-1940/.

Studer, Brigitte (Translated by Regan Kramer), "Communisme et féminisme ", Clio. no. 41 (2015): 139-152.

Studer, Brigitte, *The Transnational World of Cominternians*, Transl. by Dafydd Rees Roberts. Basingstoke [etc.]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137510297.

Summerfield, Penny. "Concluding Thoughts: performance, the self, and women's history", *Women's History Review*, 22:2 (2013): 345-352. DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2012.726120.

Tadić, Aleksandar. Pali za lepša svitanja - majke heroja pričaju... [They fell for better dawns-Mother of the Heroes talk…]. Beograd: Međunarodna štampa Interpress, 1968.

Todorova, Maria. *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins: Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.

Turton, Kety. "Gender and Family in the Russian Revolutionary Movement" In: Ilic M. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth Century Russia and the Soviet Union*. London:Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 69-82.

Vasić, Miroljub. Revolucionarni omladinski pokret u Jugoslaviji 1929-1941 [Revolutionary Youth Movement in Yugoslavia 1929-1941]. Beograd: Narodna Knjiga — Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1977.

Ward, Stephanie." Labour Activism and the Political Self in Inter-War Working-Class Women's Politics". *Twentieth-Century British History*, vol. 30, Issue 1 (2019): 29–52. https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwy047.

Waters, Elizabeth. “In the Shadow of the Comintern: The Communist Women’s Movement, 1920-43”, in Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young (eds.), *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989, 29-56.

Whitney, Susan B. “Embracing the Status Quo: French Communists, Young Women and the Popular Front”, *Journal of Social History*, vol. 30, no. 1(1996): 29-53.

Zimmermann, Susan. *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft. Internationale Geschlechterpolitik, IGB-Gewerkschafterinnen und die Arbeiter- und Frauenbewegungen der Zwischenkriegszeit* [Women’s politics and men’s trade union. International gender policy, the women trade unionists of the IFTU and the labour and women’s movements of the interwar period], Vienna:Löcker Verlag, 2021.

Zohar, Emma. “Feeling Communists: Communism, emotions, and gender in interwar Polish Jewry”, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 2020. DOI: 10.1080/14725886.2020.184627.

Мировое революционное профдвижение, от IV до V конгресса Профинтерна 1928-1930, Москва: Издательство ВЦСПСС, 1930.