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**POLITICALLY BASED “WOMEN’S SOLIDARITY” IN SOCIALIST  
MACEDONIA (REFLECTION PAPER ON THE SOURCE “MAKEDONKA -  
ORGAN OF THE WAF, 1944 -1953)”<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** This is a reflection paper on a particular textual source - “Makedonka - Organ of the Women’s Antifascist Front of Macedonia” (1944-1953). As the official organ of the women’s organization of the Communist Party and the first women’s magazine in the Macedonian language, it is a premiere source for following the political and propagated patterns of the state for women’s emancipation in the frames of the socialist state. This source can also be crucial in researching the concept and social practices of solidarity among women. My thesis is that new gendered relations between women were born in the frames of WAF’s agenda and field work dedicated to women’s emancipation. This “sisterly solidarity” was founded in women’s dedication to fulfilling/solving tasks around gendered issues in rural communities. Thus, for the first time in the Macedonian historical context, women’s new political agency was connected to their mobilization and complex organization outside the patriarchal structure of kinship groups.

**Keywords:** Women’s Antifascist Front of Macedonia, political agency, solidarity, labor, socialism, state, women’s periodicals

## **Introduction**

The political epilogue in Southeast Europe after the Second World War and the participation of a more significant part of the Macedonian population in the anti-fascist partisan movement organized by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia resulted in the creation of the Macedonian national state in 1944. The state was founded on a socialist

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this text are based on and/or taken from the author’s research published as part of the “Archives of the Invisible” project (Hadjievska 2022), which included the digitization of the entire fund of the magazine “Macedonka - an organ of the WAF” (nevidliviarhivi.mk). At the same time, the examples from sources processed and analyzed in this text have not been previously published.

state concept and an appropriate constitution.<sup>2</sup> The new state's policies mainly affected the female population. *Top-down* policies focused on mass literacy, political engagement in communities, and, most importantly, economic activation in various production sectors. How the state's policies were implemented, and the massive inclusion of women in the public sphere represent novelty and rupture.<sup>3</sup> Such a process was not observed in the Macedonian people's history previously, and the policies that were introduced represent a modernization leap.<sup>4</sup> I am considering the legally established rights for voting and representation in government bodies, abortion, education, marriage and family rights, women's health, and labor rights.

Responsible for the implementation and dissemination of these policies were the party's massive organizations People's Front and, significant for the policies focusing on women - the Women's Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia [Antifashistički front žena Jugoslavije (AFZh)]. The latter was founded during the National Liberation Struggle to mobilize women in the struggle against the fascist forces under the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The Front was officially formed in December 1942 in Bosanski Petrovac. Left-leaning women's organizations with similar tasks and ways of working with women had existed before, and the prewar experiences in the mobilization of women in workers' organizations were significant. The leaders of the partisan resistance had an evident vision that the struggle against fascism was, at the same time, a struggle for a more just society in which women would have an active role. This was

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2 The process of creation of the Macedonian state was institutionally and politically linked to the central processes and events in the establishment of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia at the session of the Antifascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in 1943. According to the documents and resolutions from this session, the new Macedonian nation was officially recognized as an equal subject. In November 1943, a Steering Committee for the Antifascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM) was formed. The following important document put together by the Macedonian partisan authorities on liberated territory (in the village of Crvena Voda) was the Manifest of the General Headquarters of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Units of Macedonia that anticipated the AVNOJ solutions for Macedonia. Eventually, on 2 August 1944, on the orthodox holiday of St Elijah, in the Saint Prohor Pcinjski Monastery in the Kumanovo region, 60 delegates gathered (among whom were Veselinka Malinska, Vera Aceva, Mara Naceva, Maca Kabreva, and Liljana Chalovska), and held the First Session of the Antifascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM). The arrival of the Soviet, American, and British military missions on liberated Macedonian territory signaled the international recognition of the Macedonian army – the National Liberation Army of Macedonia.

3 In historiography, the term rupture denotes events or processes that divide the collective past into “before” and “after,” i.e., the occurrence of irreversible processes or a clear cut in continuity. Most often, a rupture is an event that indicates a new periodization of time/past or a complete change of the previous historical horizon in a given space and time.

4 According to the censuses conducted in 1921 and 1931 in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 80% of the population living on the territory of Vardar Macedonia was engaged in agriculture, and only a tiny percentage of that population was literate. Economically active women (outside the household) were employed as unskilled labor forces in the tobacco and textile industry. Women's participation in the public sphere included the roles of educator, humanitarian, and assistant in revolutionary and national movements. On the territory of Yugoslavia, censuses were conducted in 1921, 1931, 1948, and 1953 (for detailed analyses, see Sokolov, 1962; Ilievski, 2017; for a detailed analysis of the gender aspects of this statistical data, see Hadjievska, 2021; For women's political agency before the Second World War (see Hadjievska, 2021a).

included in the ideological and political platform of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia that envisaged full equality between men and women in all segments of life. When the Women's Antifascist Front was formed, the organization's governing boards were formed locally in the entire territory of Yugoslavia. The Women's Antifascist Front of Macedonia was formed based on the same principles on 14-15 December 1944.

The history of WAF and the development and transformation of state policies towards emancipation in the first decade after the Second World War can be systematized historiographically in three main phases: the 'heroic phase' (1944-1946), which was founded in WAF's 'hard' basic tasks and with broader use of the commemorative rituals for highlighting women's participation as *partizanki* in the national liberation; those symbols were important part of women's political subjectification; then, the shock worker's phase (1947-1951), which followed the implementation of the Five-Year Plan,<sup>5</sup> during which women's role in the economy and their 'shock workers' labour were equalized with political participation; and the stage of political and formal reorganization of the Women's Antifascist Front (1952), which occurred following the practical challenges of fieldwork of this mass organization and the political challenges that WAF had to face between 1951 and 1952. The epilogue came in 1953 when WAF was reorganized into the Women's Societies of Yugoslavia (Okić 2016).

Nevertheless, during the first post-war decade, women's political equality was equated with their ability to get involved in the economy and industry as workers. Women's labor exited private households and entered the sectors of the planned state economy on a massive scale; at the same time, this process was coordinated with WAF's fieldwork activities, organized in a complex network spreading from central to the municipal level, with the aim of platforming "political engagement between women."<sup>6</sup> Thus, women's modern political engagement in society got intertwined with informal women's networks of shared and/or collective in communal spaces (analphabetic courses, support and counseling groups for mothers and children, various educational courses, political reading clubs, celebrations and commemoration of essential persons, dates or events from women's history).

The spaces where these economic and political activities between women were taking place were of a communal nature: villages, municipalities, economic cooperative

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5 In 1947, planned production was introduced in Yugoslavia in the shape of the Five Year Plan for Industrialization and Electrification of the State (1947-1951). Implementing this intensive post-war economic program significantly impacted the everyday lives of citizens, especially in the context of women's political and social emancipation. All WAF (Women's Antifascist Front) activities were adapted to the state economic policy. Between 1947 and 1951, a new female figure was at the center of attention in the magazine: the woman shock worker. These politics elevated women's economic activity as the most crucial part of their emancipation (Hadjievska, 2023).

6 The terminological formulas used in the political and ideological discourse were: "political work with/among women" (in Macedonian, as in the sources: „politichka rabota megju zhenite“) and "political advancement of women" (in Macedonian, as in the sources: "politichko izdignuvanje na zhenite").

units, and ‘zadruga’.<sup>7</sup> In women’s participation in the WAF network, the novelty here is that one can follow the forming of social bonds between women outside the kinship group and beyond the ethno-national tropes of women’s public visibility and participation (Hadjievaska 2021a). In this text, I am probing my thesis about the occurrence of women’s solidarity in the context of WAF’s agenda. Additionally, this ‘new found solidarity’ had a political definition and aimed closely at, the general state policies towards the population. However, nonetheless it represented a ‘big leap’ and rupture-like process in terms of women’s agency in the group (active participation in the people’s committees, the decision making in the village, zadruga, municipality etc.) and the society as a whole. Another specific mark of this type of solidarity is that it was born in the process of emancipation itself, or more precisely - its effect came *bottom-up*, as some side-effect of the WAF’s strategically imposed official policies- the state’s prolonged hand.

The need for a platform through which women could meet and discuss their specific problems was especially felt during the reorganization of the WAF and its absorption into the People’s Front in 1952-1953. Historian Ivana Pantelić provides a detailed overview of those events and points to exciting sources, depicting how women experienced the process of dissolution of the WAF in villages:

„According to Neda Božinović, while this decision was accepted in the cities, the women in the villages protested the dissolution of AFŽ [WAF, IH] for a long time: “They told us how their men rejoiced. They told them: ‘Your time is up!’ or ‘It’s over, over!’ or ‘No more.’ They stressed that men were always gathering and had their taverns, football, and the Peoples Front, while nobody gathers them anymore, but they desire to hear something and talk about their women’s problems.” (Pantelić 2022, 21 *passim* Božinović 1996, 174)

To argue my thesis further, I will exhibit sources and examples, focusing on the main media outlet of the WAF - its official magazine, “Makedonka”, issued in 1944-1952. It served as a medium that transferred the party’s standpoints and the state’s ideological concept in implementing women’s emancipation *top-down* in socialist Macedonia. For historians today, when there are still no traces of existing diaries, ego documents, or other private archives of women WAF leaders,<sup>8</sup> While official archives of the WAF are almost entirely concerned with the political and institutional history of women’s emancipation in the socialist state,<sup>9</sup> The magazine Makedonka represents a window to the candid

7 Socialist economic (village) unit of shared production and consumption of collective goods.

8 The last research on such documentation and narratives in Macedonian historiography was done in the 1970s, in the capital historiographic work of the historian Vera Veskovikj-Vangeli, dedicated to documenting women’s participation in the National Liberation Struggle (Veskovikj-Vangeli and Jovanović 1976; Veskovikj-Vangeli 1982, Veskovikj-Vangeli and Manevski 1985; Veskovikj-Vangeli 1994).

9 The State Archives of Republic of North Macedonia store the documentation of the WAF in the following collections: Fond 466 “Glaven odbor na Antifashistickiot Front na Zhenite na Makedonija

facet. With proper critical and discursive analysis, it can bring forward many aspects of women's emancipation that cannot be found elsewhere in terms of source.

### The sources in theoretical and methodological framework

I have chosen the method of reflection paper as an apt one for the presentation of the textual sources. The research consisted of a detailed survey of the entire collection of the magazine "Makedonka"<sup>10</sup> When examining the survey, I focused on the rubrics that directly concerned questions related to women's different forms of political participation in local communities.<sup>11</sup> The rubrics I have selected as relevant for this research included editorials, rubrics that covered the excellent WAF literacy and cultural enlightenment campaigns, WAF's coverage of political gatherings, and speeches of WAF leaders and local politicians. I mainly focused on a specific rubric - the terrain chronicle, dedicated to reporting about the everyday activities of the women engaging in the policies of the WAF around the country. The terrain chronicles were formed by edited letters from local WAF activists who made notes of the daily activities or briefed their local WAF leaders about a trending topic.

From a previous comprehensive research on women's political enlightenment in the context of WAF (Hadjievska 2022), my methodological base was already equipped with a working bibliography of the contents from the complete collection of the magazine's issues. Following the principle of tabular thematic coding, I selected 85 titles relevant to the thesis of this text. From that number, I have further selected five examples I will elaborate on in the following section. In part of the examples, I accompany my

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- Skopje (1944-1950)"; Fond 904 "Okoliski Odbor na Antifashistickiot Front na Zhenite - Resen (1946-1950)"; Fond 219 "Gradski Odbor na Antifashistickiot Front na Zhenite - Skopje (1945-1950)"; Fond 417 "Okoliski Odbor na Antifashistickiot Front na Zhenite - Skopje (1945-1955)"; Fond 173 "Gradski odbor na Antifashistickiot Front na Zhenite (Konferencija za opshststvena aktivnost na zhenite) - Prilep (1945-1990)".

<sup>10</sup> The National Library of Serbia in Belgrade digitized the entire magazine collection in 2022. See: [digitalna.nb.rs](http://digitalna.nb.rs); and [nevidliviarhivi.mk](http://nevidliviarhivi.mk).

<sup>11</sup> Darko Leitner-Stojanov distinguishes three types of texts according to their media communication and propaganda function: "[W]e have distinguished three major types by their function: a. (provisionally) programmatic, b. reporting, and c. suggestive-motivational. The texts of the first type were most commonly lengthy and communicated the political directives for the action of the high party echelons or the state authorities. They often included quotations from speeches of the political elite, most commonly written by the leaders of the Women's Antifascist Front of Macedonia and were published on the first page. The second type of texts were either short or long articles that covered various educational events in Macedonia (and sometimes in Yugoslavia) that often informed about WAF activists' practical experience during their work on the ground or covered quantitative and qualitative data about the current educational processes. The third type of texts often shared personal stories brimming with emotions and a large measure of suggestiveness, making it sometimes unclear to what extent the editors intervened." (Leitner-Stojanov 2022, 152)

commentary with comparative reflections from archival sources about the work of the District and village committees of the WAF.<sup>12</sup>

My analysis of the sources is based on historiographical epistemology. It is well-focused on the precise temporal context and elaborates from the historical methods. However, for further argumentation of the thesis, I realized that I need a more precise theoretical framework to understand and explain the sociological and anthropological facets of the base for solidarity detected between women.<sup>13</sup> Solidarity, especially ‘women’s solidarity,’ is a complex concept.<sup>14</sup> that operates and extends well beyond the historical context relevant to the text topic, and as well as for the importance of the spatial-communal forms of women’s grouping, a proper theoretical framework is needed, one that especially bears in mind gender relations, class, and labor division, as well as feminist theory and women’s history in Southeastern Europe.

I found an appropriate theoretical framework in Ann Whitehead’s research on women’s solidarity. In her text on Women’s solidarity - and divisions among women, she starts from the premise that “one of contemporary feminist theory’s main contributions to the study of women was to rediscover shared gender as a basis for solidarity and common interests, and different gender as a basis for division of interests and ideological dissonance” (Whitehead 1984, 6). According to her explanation

“One basis for women’s solidarity is the concrete interests which women, as a gender, do share. Male violence and coercive forms of heterosexuality leading to violence, rape and wife-battering and issues surrounding reproduction and mothering (abortion, contraception, maternal and child health care, child care provision) provide women with an explicit basis for gender solidarity.” (Ibid)

Further, she analyses empirical situations of relations and norms of control in closely-knit networks of women in developing countries. In all cases, it seems to be an essential first step to understanding what kind of solidarity networks women establish in the structures where they are living:

“By and large, women are ‘enclosed’ to some degree in family/household and kinship structures in which they are not the primary or dominant members, regarding resources, legal status, and capacity to exercise power.

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12 The State Archives of Republic of North Macedonia - Department of Bitola, Fond 904 “Okoliski Odbor na Antifashistichkiot Front na Zhenite - Resen (1946-1950)”.

13 In this text, ‘Women’ are not a homogeneous group or essentialized entity. I refer to the population of women from various ethnicities and complex identities in socialist Macedonia.

14 In this text, I understand and use the term solidarity through its terminological explanation given by Svetlana Slapšak. According to her, ‘solidarity’ always has firm political frameworks based on social relations, maintained or held in the frames of a community: “Finally, solidarity must be completely separated from philanthropy, altruism, and volunteerism, because in them the action is one-way, from the donor to the recipient-victim. Solidarity implies the interaction of equals; therefore, solidarity forms an obligation, part of civic behavior. Solidarity is not giving, but equal lending without interest in which everyone has the same rights and obligations adapted to circumstances and opportunities.” (Slapšak 2023)

Their form of membership often constructs them ideologically as having primary loyalties to these institutions. Insofar as interests in the common fate of their members are ideologically inscribed as the dominant locus of solidarity, this effectively prevents women from establishing solidarity links outside. This is in contrast to men who, under some, though not all, circumstances, have involvement in extra-familial, extra-household, and extra-kin group activities that create overarching ties. These ties are with other men and provide a basis for (male) solidarity as well as, of course, for (male) competition.” (Ibid, 8)

Furthermore, her research indicates situations in which the pattern of female association in groups changes in times of crisis or when conditions are created for the association of women outside the established hierarchical kin-ship patriarchal relations:

“At the same time, solidarity based on the need for mutual support in crises can create the conditions for political mobilization. There are important historical and contemporary examples of women in collective crises using the close-textured informal web of their community links to exert political and economic demands. Sisterly solidarity which is materially founded in this way appears to facilitate radical action.” (Ibid)

Suppose we transfer these conclusions to the context of women’s networks created through the fieldwork of WAF. In that case, it becomes clear that it is precisely the new structure of relations between women (neighbors, friends, colleagues, comrades and fighters in the partisan ranks, activists in organizational and party structures, or simply groups that shared similar life situations in the village cooperatives), contributed toward the political mobilization among women themselves. Moreover, it is precisely in that sense that one can talk about political women’s solidarity that was born during the implementation of the state’s policies. In the following part of the text, I will present sources from the magazine “Makedonka” as examples of situations where the aura of the propagated sisterly *comradeship* expanded deeper in the community and affected women’s emancipation beyond its state utility.

## Examples

Ex. 1: “Nashite emisii preku Radio Skopje” [Our broadcast on Radio Skopje] (no. 3-4, 1945, p. 8)

In this short information, the editors call women throughout the country to listen to the new radio broadcast: „From 14th February this year, every Wednesday night, Radio Skopje will air WAF broadcast.” The broadcast is proclaimed as a novelty for women’s participation in this kind of media: “(F)or the first time, Macedonian women are spreading their rebellious voices.” The main aim of this information is to call women toward collective activities of gathering around the radio medium in their communities

and collective listening of the broadcast, as well as to motivate them to actively participate in media communication by sending their own stories and news from the field.

“For these broadcasts, which aim is to reflect comprehensively women’s engagement in Macedonia and her desires and aspirations in the contemporary struggles, our local WAF committees from all over the country should send letters, information, articles, songs, stories, and other materials, through which an elevated and truthful image of WAF successes in the building of our state, can be shown. Local WAF committees from all over the country should organize regular listening activities and form an individual or **collective** [bold in the source, IH] character. Further on, they [local WAF committees, IH] should be reporting on women’s opinions on the broadcasts and their suggestions about future topics. Occasionally, our broadcast will be used to present instructions for the work in our committees for urgent and important tasks that we should perform [the Central WAF committee in Skopje, IH].”

In the text, the target group is pointed towards everyday activities related to their involvement in the WAF. The editors point to the possibility of individual listening of the broadcast but instead recommend gathering women for collective listening. Another aspect is the additional media agency of women, i.e., the opportunity to publicly share their experiences through the WAF committees through letters to the radio editors. It could be concluded that the new radio broadcast offered an opportunity for women to engage in collective activity unrelated to household labor. Sharing experiences was an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between women as members of certain groups: peasant women could talk about the problems of their everyday lives as working women in the countryside. Listening to the radio broadcasts also promises leisure activities for women’s companies only.

Ex. 2: Antigona Panova, “Za politichkoto izdignuenje na zhenata” [On the political advancement of women] (no. 12-13, 1945, p. 17)

In this short letter sent by Okoliski Okrug na AFZh [District Committee of WAF], Krushevo, the author—a local activist and correspondent—describes a gathering of women within the framework of WAF’s activities in their town. Women were informed about issues and topics in the country’s political and public life at these gatherings.

“Because our women in the past were politically demoted, the District Committee of AFZh in Krushevo organizes weekly classes where women can get acquainted with many topics, from the field of culture or politics. Many antifascists visit those classes, and there is great interest among women. Women listen and, at the same time, knit the wool from which socks will be made for our army.”

In this case, it is noted that the classes and gatherings where women could “raise themselves politically” (in the source, in Macedonian: „politichko izdignuvanje na zhenite“) also included activities such as the organization of manual labor (in this case,

for making socks for the needs of the army). This activity was part of voluntarily giving a certain number of working hours or days for the “socialist construction of society.” However, these practices should also be understood in the context of women’s manual labor, leaving the household or family cooperative. The work typical of women and performed in the old patriarchal kinship structures was now placed in a new framework connected with women’s participation in the political life of their communities.

Ex. 3: Nada Ackova, “Za pomokj na nashite biblioteki” [Help the village libraries] (no. 17-18, 1946, p. 8)

This longer article is a call for action regarding organizing village libraries and reading groups. This activity, or “WAF priority task,” was part of the campaign for mass literacy in the late 1940es (Leitner-Stojanov 2022). The first part of the text is the political instruction of the WAF towards its activists on the importance of opening and organizing village libraries for the education and emancipation of women. The second part gives detailed information on successful initiatives in Belgrade, Skopje, and Sarajevo, as well as some in Macedonia villages where villagers have initiated the gathering of books. The conclusion is exciting as it says: “(...) women WAF activists in the villages should participate in this advancement of the reading culture, with their help in the managing of the libraries and with their efforts to broaden the choice of literature so that we can elevate our country as soon as possible.” This policy encouraged local WAF committees to take patronage over village libraries. The activities around the incitement of village libraries were part of the public enlightenment policy, and the party’s ideological filters controlled the library fund.

Nevertheless, this is another example of mobilization among women around their group interests—libraries and village public reading rooms. The central premise of the People’s Front organizations that supported the action was that “a good book is the best teacher of the people.” Accordingly, the activity was ideologically founded on constructing a socialist state and society.<sup>15</sup> However, for rural women, this also opened up a new form of group gathering: apart from the political and ideological mobilization channeled by WAF’s Section for Education, culture, and propaganda, libraries were another place for gathering and socializing, as well as creative and leisure activities, or something that, in the contemporary language of women’s civil society organizations of today, we would call places for “feminist culture and action.”

Ex. 4: “Na koj nachin zhenite od Vatasha otvoriija gradinka” [How women in the village Natasha opened a kindergarten] (no. 58, 1949, p. 13)

The article briefs about the women’s initiative from the village *Zadruga*, which counted 165 households, to open a kindergarten for the children of working mothers. Women who gave the initiative organized a committee of seven people from the village

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15 An example from the practice in the local WAF in Resen depicts that these tasks were the responsibility of the Section for education, propaganda, and culture. The leaders of this Section would organize groups of ten women, functioning as a reading club. The groups had a monthly meeting schedule and a selection of reading materials from WAF’s magazines around Yugoslavia. See SARNM - Section in Bitola, Fond 904 “Okoliski Odbor na AFZh - Resen” (1946-1950): Zapisnik od sostanok na Izvrshiot odbor na OO AFZh - Resen [Minutes of the Executive board meeting], 14 October 1949, 2.904. 1.48/182.

to manage the location and to provide the construction materials, as well as the logistics around the supply and delivery of food. This article is from the third year of implementing the Five Year Plan, during which the state strongly motivated women to take part in the rural and urban economy. It comes from a time when WAF vigorously agitated village women to send their children to the various types of kindergartens in the frames of village *zadruga* and similar forms of socializing of child care labor in the family unit.

Apart from the propaganda texts in “*Makedonka*,” which promoted the new model of childhood care socialization to increase mothers’ employment, concrete field examples can also be found in the monthly and annual work reports of the district committees of WAF around the country. In Resen, in 1949, the topic was frequent in the meetings of the executive bodies of the local WAF: “Comrade Mileva Shushevska, secretary of the district committee [WAF], brought out the significance of opening kindergartens in our district, even more so - this topic is highest on our agenda, and soon we expect such facilities to be opened in our villages Jankoc, Ljubojno, Podmochani, Dolno Dupeni, Nakolec (...)”.<sup>16</sup> In 1950, one of the WAF’s main tasks was building five kindergartens in the villages of the Resen district.<sup>17</sup> WAF activists were mainly responsible for fulfilling those activities. Thus, I see another form of alliance and mobilization of women in the case of the initiatives for kindergartens. They were coming together in solidarity around an issue related to their economic emancipation.

Ex. 5: “*Nie prashuvame za nashite prava - rubrika pravno sovetualishte*” [We ask about our rights - rubric for legal advice] (no. 80, 1950, p. 5)

The final example comes from the Q&A rubric in the magazine. This rubric started previously in the magazine as an educational section designed by the editors to inform women on issues around common child diseases, treatment of illness, or tips on cooking and preserving food. Around the end of the magazine publication, in no. 80 (July 1951), the rubric was transformed into Q&A for Legal advice. This change is in the context of the government’s reduced interest in the functioning of the WAF and during the plans for its reorganization. In a subtle manner, the rubric was an internal subversion of that political process, as it highlights that the WAF is still very needed in the field for several practical issues regarding women’s emancipation.<sup>18</sup> In the introduction to this rubric, the editorial board pointed out that women should be more interested in the actual legal rights so that those laws could be brought to life in their everyday lives:

“In this issue, the magazine *Makedonka* starts a new rubric, ‘Legal Advice,’ about women’s rights in society and within the family. You can write to the magazine about all your problems about your rights, and you will receive your answer in one of the following issues”.

<sup>16</sup> Zapisnik od sostanok na Izvrshiot odbor na OO AFZ - Resen [Minutes of the Executive board meeting], 26 June 1949, 2.904. 1.45/179.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, Zapisnik od sotanok na sekretarijatot na OO AFZ Resen [Minutes of the Secretariat meeting], 14 March 1950, 2.904.1.35/163.

<sup>18</sup> See similar articles and rubrics in “*Makedonka*”: “Prashanja i odgovori: od teshkotiite na zhenite na AFZh na teren” in Cyrillic, Year. 5, No. 59 (1949), p. 7; “Chas za zhenata – Nova forma na rabota vo organizacijata” in Cyrillic, Year. 6, No. 65 (April 1950), pp. 12-13.

(...)

“Q[uestion]: Comrade N.N., a worker in the economic sector of Skopje region I, asks what her rights are as a nursing mother because the leadership of the economic sector does not approve of her nursing life, and she is a 3-month-old child that cannot be fed for 7-8 hours.”

In the Answer, the editors detail the legal rights of nursing mothers who work and explain the function of part-time working hours for mothers as a solution. In this example, solidarity between women stems from the need to valorize their experience as women who are employed and actively participate in the economy in their community; as nursing mothers, they ask for their rights to be adequately protected as in the state laws. This is a rare public example of rural women, as working mothers with specific gendered problems, vocalizing and mobilizing outside the platforms of the party-led Front-organizations. This came during a period when WAF faced challenges managing its fieldwork. Thus, central decision-makers in the Communist Party sought a solution in reforming the WAF. That process further reduced WAF’s network, a pillar for women’s political mobilization in the frames of the socialist state policies.

## Conclusion

The examples used in this text come from rural areas, where the activities in local committees and village cooperatives were the first contact of women with the functions of the people’s government and, consequently - their participation in community politics. A large number of articles in the magazine “Makedonka” depict different forms of women’s gatherings for “political enlightenment” as envisioned by the socialist state: in the fulfillment of specific WAF tasks in a particular village, the inclusion of cultural activities, inclusion of domestic manual work and physical labor in gatherings of an activist-political character, etc. All examples in the text and many more in the used sources testify to situations where there was an extension of family and/or private relations between women from the same settlement in a new political constellation. The new gendered social relations between women occurred outside the household and in the public and collective space. These relations formed the base for politically structured solidarity related to women’s emancipation in the socialist state.

Analyzed examples show how women gained political agency through practicing solidarity in various forms of mobilization around gendered - ‘women’s issues.’ In Ex. no. 1, we can follow how women’s experiences were articulated and valorized in the public and media discourse through WAF platforms; Ex. No. 2 and 4 showcase how women’s manual labor exits the household economy and intertwines with the People’s Front and WAF activities. Exactly rough thus economic-cum-political communal activities, women were politically transformed from revolutionary subjects (*partizanki*) to productive subjects. During the implementation of the Five Year Plan economic program, women’s economic activity was considered to fulfill the idea of gender equality. In that context, women’s mobilization was around gendered issues regarding the socialization of the family and the caretaking of children - highlighted through initiatives for building kindergartens in the

villages. Mobilization and group work in the frames of the campaign for mass literacy and primary education contributed to creating spaces for socializing, relaxation, and leisure among women. These activities took place outside the home and were a novelty in relation to the old norms for the socialization of women in the patriarchally structured communities in the villages (see ex. no 3). Examples 4 and 5 depict how women used their WAF platforms to vocalize concerns about exercising their rights. The last examples are a good depiction of the practical effects of WAF's work with women in fostering women's ability to self-advocate on issues related to their emancipation in the frames of state policies and ideology.

The detailed reading and analysis of the magazine "Makedonka," accompanied by a comparative reading of archival sources related to the work of WAF, provides an opportunity for a comprehensive following of the processes of emancipation of women in socialist Macedonia beyond the nostalgic or revisionist readings. These sources reveal more about the new social relations through which the structure of the family, the household, and the relations between the sexes changed after the Second World War. In the Macedonian historical context, through the work of WAF, feminist and activist practices emerged, a legacy and a base for the further development of local women's movements for emancipation. The core of AFJ's field work was precisely in creating a platform for the association of women around gender-dimensioned issues, and that is precisely why the research of this complex women's network and organization seems to have much greater potential than simple historiographical canonization.

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