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'ŽENA I SVET' AND *'HRVATICA'*: AN ANALYSIS OF TWO WOMEN'S MAGAZINES IN INTERWAR SERBIA AND CROATIA (1925-1941)

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Abstract

Women's magazines from former Yugoslavia have not seen much interest in scholarship. Seeking to fill this gap, an analysis of two interwar women's magazines from Serbia and Croatia, the Woman and the World (Žena i svet) and the Croatian Woman (Hrvatica), respectively,has been conducted concentrating on the Weltanschauungen they promulgated. Žena i svet possessed what could be designated as fledgling feminism, even though by the end of its publishing period and the onset of World War II, it shifted its narratives towards patriarchy and nationalism, whilst Hrvatica was founded in order to specifically promulgate a highly patriarchal worldview.

Keywords: Serbia, Croatia, women's magazines, patriarchy, nationalism, feminism

Introduction: patriarchy in the Balkans

„Balkan patriarchy can be defined as a complex of hierarchal values embedded in a social structural system defined by both gender and age. This structuring is further linked to a system of values orienting both family life and broader social units. Balkan patriarchy achieves its historical form through the classically complex and interlocking systems of patrilinearity, patrilocality, and a patriarchally-oriented common law. Such supports not only divide and ascribe position by gender, but also allocate to males the predominant role in society. An obvious corollary to this defined structure is the formal subordination of women within the context of an overtly "protective" family and household environment." [Halpern, Kaser, & Wagner, 1996, p. 427]

Halpern *et al* have arguably conducted the most extensive research on the history of patriarchy in the Balkans; the topic was tackled numerous times by the late 20th and early 21st century, though most of it concentrated on the numerous issues rising from the breakup of Yugoslavia and the fall of Communism [Halpern et al., 1996, p. 427]. In this work, we shall tackle the topic of two representative „women's magazines" of the pre-war period, the *Žena i svet* from Belgrade („The Woman and the World", 1925-1941),

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and the *Hrvatica* („Croatian Woman", 1939-1941) from Zagreb.[2] Both have seen minimal interest in scholarship, *Hrvatica* somewhat leading, with an occasional mention from the point of view of language within fashion [Tikvica, 2016], or concentrating on the editor-in-chief of *Hrvatica* [Dujić, 2016; Dujić, Martan, & Popratnjak, 2015], or figuring as one of the media within a broader analysis [Leš, 2014]. On the other hand, *Žena i svet* has so far received only casual mentions [Peković, 2004; Popović, 2014], as well as a single more detailed analysis within a doctoral dissertation [Barać, 2014]; a comparative view between the two has not been worked on. Whilst the *Hrvatica* promulgated a rather patriarchal Weltanschauung, *Žena i svet* was dubbed by some as „a feminist-oriented illustrated magazine" [Barać, 2014, p. 4], though, as will be shown, it has kept swaying from a bourgeois fledgling feminism to a more than occasional influence from patriarchal mores, especially at the onset of World War II.

Having in mind that (primarily) Hrvatica propounded an extremely patriarchal worldview, we nevertheless need to put the two magazines in context prior to delving into the sources at hand. In this case, *patriarchy* is the key word for a broader, historical and social contextualization. Scholarship has established that „historically the Balkan patriarchal pattern encompassed most of the Balkan peninsula. It was present in its regional complexity from southern Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina to Serbia, western and central Bulgaria, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia and northern Greece", [Halpern et al., 1996, p. 426] while some scholars trace the patriarchy in the Balkans far into history, even to the Roman and Greek civilizations [Kaser, 1992]. On a more despondent note, traditional/conservative views of gender and sexuality are still present in the Balkans [Simkus, 2007], though it is safe to say that the pre-war era saw a significantly stronger patriarchal pathos. Nevertheless, the question of women within history – at least when it comes to the Balkans – is still one that begs further research. Sklevicky writes that 'the lack of women's history, or the failure to even recognize women's activities as relevant in Yugoslavia until recently, can be traced to two main causes', which she classifies as „the animosity towards the prerevolutionary feminist tradition" and „the rather late emergence of the new feminism in Yugoslavia" [Sklevicky, 1989, p. 71]; thus, writing in 1989, she came to the conclusion that there is a „meagre body of historiographic literature" on the topic of women in history in Yugoslavia [Sklevicky, 1989, p. 72]. Even though the situation has become better during the 21st century, historical topics that have not yet seen light in scholarship are ripe for analysis, especially having in mind the plethora of historical documents available in the national libraries of Zagreb and Belgrade.

„The Woman and the World": balancing between patriarchy and feminism

According to Stanislava Barać, „The Woman and the World" can be categorized as a „moderate feminist" monthly [Barać, 2014, p. 246], drawing upon the categorization of German periodic women's press by Susanne Kinnebrock [Kinnebrock, 1999], having in

2 The National Library of Serbia lists the following information about Žena i svet: Published from 4 January 1925 to April 1941. Owners: from issue 4 (1929) Miloš Sofrenović; from issue 1 (1930) Pavle Dr. Gregorić; from issue 3 (1940) Marija Obradinović Editor from issue 3 (1929) Jelena Zrnić; Editor from issue 4 (1929) Miloš Sofrenović; from issue 1 (1930) editor Zora Stanojević, managing editor Pavle Dr. Gregorić; editors: from issue 5 (1930) Zora Stanojević and Marija Gregorić; from issue 1 (1931) Marija Gregorić; from issue 1 (1934) Zaza Gregorić; from issue 1 (1935) Marija Gregorić; from issue 5 (1940) Marija Obradinović; from issue 1 (1941) Ivanka P. Gregorić Press: from issue 3 (1929) Ilustracija; from issue 4 (1929) Dom; from1930. Štamparija Drag. Gregorića, Beograd. Contributors: Jelena Zrnić, Milica Janković, Desanka Maksimović, Ksenija Atanasijević, Milivoje M. Milenković, Marija Ilić, Paulina Lebl Albala, Jovanka Hrvaćanin, Milan Kašanin, Kosta M. Jovanović, Vlad Petković, N. Vulić, Svetislav S. Petrović, Marina Nedeljković, Veselin Čajkanović, Aleksandar Milićević, Stoja Stajić, Anđa Bunuševac, Mihovil Tomand, Erna Kramarić. Less information is found for Hrvatica: place of issue: Zagreb, Editor and Publisher: Marija Jurić Zagorka, published from 1939-1941, monthly.

mind that the concept of the magazine was based on women's fashion magazines of the time. Barać categorizes it furthermore as a „fashion magazine", in her analysis, being that it often concentrated on women's fashion, yet this is not the direction we wish to explore in this article; instead, we shall concentrate on the general rhetoric of the magazine in an attempt to gauge the *Weltanschauung* that the magazine promulgated. As it shall be seen in the paragraphs to come, the magazine could be classified as feminist only up to a certain point. What is of utmost necessity – and the prerogative of the historian's craft – is to take the time period in consideration. What might have been feminist at that time could by today's standards be seen even as somewhat patriarchal.

Case in pointFor example: issue 9, September 1928, devoted a page to the then upcoming presidential elections in the USA, however, concentrating on the potential first ladies, who were called the „mother of the nation" in the making. Even though the two women were put into the spotlight within an issue that centers on two male figures, the presidential candidates Hoover and Smith, the two potential first ladies were consistently called „Mrs Herbert Hoover" and "Mrs Alfred Smith", putting their husbands in the frontlight. The end paragraph positioned them squarely within the confines of the household: „The question now is which out of these two will lead the home of he, who is considered to be the 'most powerful monarch of the world'". On the other hand, issue 10, 1928, the text entitled „The Woman's Movement: For the Woman's Right to Vote" asks the following: „Are we, perhaps, wrong, that a woman-physician cannot be the leader of a successful feminist movement?", as a reply to the then recent news of the women of France campaigning for the right to vote. Yet the same issue boasted the article „Svetislav Petrović among us", about a famous actor, welcomed by a „charge of 30.000 skirts" by a throng of women who were welcoming him, which were afterwards, on page 14, transformed into (sic!) „30.000 women throats", transformed yet again on page 15 into „30.000 heads in love". The shift from patriarchy to feminism continues. The 1930 issue 11 went back into feminism, asking, in the text „Slavery of the modern woman", whether „the ideal of the woman as an amateur at work is justified", challenging norms that describe the woman as less competent than a man when it comes to professional work. Going in a subversive fashion, the author (of whom we only have the initials) writes that it is „unbearable to see a flock of submissive women submit to the government", urging them to enter politics as well (they „have to"). For Serbia, the interbellum was a period in which women started entering politics, as „in Eastern Europe, feminism was once held in great respect, commanding both political influence and intellectual authority in many places. In the interwar period, it was a respectable mainstream ideology—not necessarily embraced across all political parties, but certainly accepted as an important movement and perspective in the making of public policy" [Bucur, 2008]. The end of the article could be seen as thoroughly modern even from a late 20th century perspective (especially within the Balkans and former Yugoslavia): „Most feminists will agree with me that in commercial companies and factories, womanhood suffers a shameful tyranny. One should aim to destroy that tyranny". Having in mind that the initials of the author do not tell us much orthe grammatical gender of the first person within the verb conjugations used imply that the author was what would today be called an „ally" – a male. The same issue, in a shorter text, concentrates on the plight of Indian women, indicating that there was an awareness of feminist and emancipatory issues on a global level: „The Indian women's movement holds the key of progress", the unsigned author writes. „In the whole of India, women are humiliated . . . closed behind walls that separate their living quarters, and these quarters are so unhygienic, that the number of fatalities among girls is large . . . the main goal of the Indian women's movement is to free the woman from her yoke"; *Žena i svet* had an international view of the world, at least when it comes to its first years of publishing.

However, by the late thirties and at the beginning of the forties, *Žena i svet* started publishing articles that were more in lieu with the Zeitgeist and the upcoming war. The

1941 issue (2), from February, saw more incursions into religion and traditionalism, and the international view was more and more commonly replaced by a local and national one. Vera Kostić, in an article entitled „Our Duties", wrote how „the wonderful divine nature is destroyed by man, soaked in blood of the sons of God", while she saw that „the main properties of the woman of today are in decadence, backing up against the scrupulous invasion of vice", in a highly moralistic fashion. Women are said to be „the representatives of the main cell of society – the family". For woman, „the creation of offspring, its raising and upbringing, the ennobling of its soul by Christian morality and St. Sava-based Serbianhood, is the most sacred of duties". Yet within the same text, the author goes against such traditionalisms, claiming that „men and woman are capable of building their individualism only in a free society". *Žena i svet* seems to have been riddled with such controversy, bouncing from traditionalism to a fledgling feminism quite often. However, the advent of the World War II pushed further into a sort of defensive nationalism. The so-called „St. Sava-based" Serbian nationalism has been tackled in scholarship [Aleksov, 2016; Kostić, 2017; Marković, 2015], having developed gradually with the formation of the nation in the 19th century; it has seen a resurgence during and after the conflicts in the 1990s, and to this day remains rather potent in Serbia.

One of the last issues of *Žena i svet*, issue 3, March 1941, tried to combine the trope of the woman with the burgeoning nationalism and the atmosphere of a continent at war in its initial article, entitled „From Our Past: Teodora, Mother to Tsar Dušan". Tsar Dušan (often designated as Emperor Dušan as well) is one of the historical figures who have figured in nationalist narratives since the establishing of the nation, as a strong ruler and conqueror to whom praise should be given [see: Ejdus, 2017; Filiposki, 2016; Koludžija, 2016; Perica, 2017]. His mother, Teodora, has figured as a focus of public interest significantly less; we can assume that a female figure in connection with a powerful ruler from the past was needed to strengthen the warmongering atmosphere in which most European countries saw themselves in 1941. She is referred to as „the Serbian ruler" from the time when „Serbia . . . became a powerful force under King Milutin". Teodora is depicted as she who „showed (tsar Dušan) the goals so easily attainable". The very next article carried the title „The role of family in the national restoration", perhaps fully embracing Serbian nationalism. It contains the trope of the „spoiled West", a view of the Western world that will remain a part of Serbian nationalism up to this day and age. The conception of the family is seen, as based on Western values, as „individualistic", which cannot stand up to its tasks". Earlier generations are accused of not taking their nation seriously, as they should – within the family – „work on the strengthening of national consciousness and respecting national traditions". As the author, Olga Aksentijević, wrote, „the family has the duty to enable its members for the great dead of national rebirth".

It can be noticed that seen *Žena i svet* evolves from a fledgling feminism to the acceptance of traditional, patriarchal nationalism within the temporal framework of sixteen years. The Zeitgeists changed, and with it, the very nature of the magazine. By the time its publishing drew to a close in 1941, it became gradually more similar to Hrvatica, to which we shall now turn our attention.

The „Croatian Woman"

In Croatia, by the beginning of the 20th century, it was taken for granted that it was precisely the woman in the family, the mother, who has the strongest influence on the upbringing of children [Gverić, 2016, p. 9]. This can be said to have become at least semi-official since 1868 and the founding of the High School for Girls (Viša djevojačka škola), where girls were taught housekeeping, cleaning and cooking [Ograjšek-Gorenjak, 2004]. Even in the first half of the 20th century, the „real woman" was the onewho was a mother, there to provide mercy and love [Jagić, 2008]. Pre-war and World War II Croatia was indeed not women-friendly. In such an atmosphere did *Hrvatica* see its first issues

published. Its editor, Marija Jurić Zagorka, wrote about why she thought that such a publication was needed at the time:

„All women in the world live the lives of the nation to which they belong, and so all their problems and feelings develop under the circumstances in which that nation lives . . . The spirit of the family cannot be international, neither is the woman's soul international, as all the feelings of a woman connected to the circumstances in which her nation lives" (Hrvatica, issue 1, 1939).

The nationalist *Weltanschauung* is clear, as the Croatian woman is connected to the nation, specific, and non-international. Issue 4, 1940, just asa single example, offers culinary advice (a trope that has not changed even until today) for Croatian women. It additionally offers a text about St. Vlaho, drawing upon Croat nationalism's intrinsic connection with Catholicism. The text „Woman is the spiritual need of the genius" in the same issue exposes that woman should serve as a complement, an addition to the (male) genius, as she is „a necessity to all men of higher competences". She is supposed to „carry her entire being into the improvement of his work", which is „the only way for her to have a happy life". Additionally, the woman is seen as a mother, such as the case of issue 5 from 1940, in which a slew of poems in praise of the Mother and Catholicism is seen.

Other issues promoted Croatian nationalist heroes and leaders, with robust nationalism riddling every text. Such was the case of issue 8, 1939, in which praise was put forth for Vladko Maček, „our leader": "The world is preparing itself. The world is arming itself. They starve in order to feed their cannons. Cannons and tanks are parading . . . but there were parades in our cities and in our streets. On July 16, the people were celebrating the leader's birthday, whom they have chosen themselves. By their own will, the people gave their destinies into his hands. And this is why the people consider the leader's birthday as their own celebration, the celebration of their lives' wishes". The „Croatian woman" gets mentioned by the end of the text: „Croatian women, who have been raising the brave nation for millennia, gave it life, their blood, the spirit of the knowing of its Croatian being". The *Blut und Boden* mentality of Walther Darre here gets its time in the spotlight [Lovin, 1967; Murray, 2015]. The warmongering, reminiscent of National-socialist Germany, also figured in the magazine's rhetoric [Kiper, 2015], as seen in the textual clanking of weapons at the beginning of the article, with depictions of cannons and tanks, as well as the „whole world" preparing for war.

Issue 3 (1940) of the „Croatian Woman" is seen of particular relevance, as it boasted an elongated text written by Alojzije Stepinac, the then Archbishop of Zagreb, a contested and much debated historical character. Much was written about „the ambiguous relationship of Zagreb's Archbishop Stepinac with the *ustaša* (Croat fascist) puppet-state" [I. Iveković, 2002, p. 526]. He is seen in international scholarship as „the leading cleric at the time of the World War II Ustasha-inspired ethnic cleansing in Croatia and Bosnia", [Cohen, 1997] who had given his blessing to the Ustaša regime, later to rescind [Miller, 2005; Steindorff, 1999], though most of official Croatian historiography tends to see him in a rather positive light [Horvat, 1996; Rogić, 2001; Štefan, 1999]. Stepinac has afterwards become „a martyr for the 'Holy Croat Cause'" [I. Iveković, 2002, p. 527], and has figured in much of the warmongering discourse in the 1990s, during and after the breakup of Yugoslavia, as a key figure in Croat nationalism, corresponding somewhat with the similar figure of the Orthodox priest Nikolaj Velimirović in Serbia. His text was written as directed to the editor of the „Croatian Woman", though he addressed Croatian women in general in it, in which he espoused strong patriarchal, traditional values as the core of the woman's being.

He began by proclaiming that „the wisdom of the Creator summoned the woman out of nothingness to be *adiutorium simile sibi* – help similar to himself", an essential help-tool for the Croat man/husband. In his view, „her impact upon life is different than her husband's; she takes part in attaining God's goals in a way separate from the hus-

band. May she believe in the value and meaning of her own work. May she not leave her place. May she not leave her role in a death-inducing illusion, that she will have more meaning and accomplish more, if she should take the husband's role". In an all-too-standard rhetoric, he proclaimed that the woman should „know her place", a trope heavily worked on in contemporary scholarship [Kerber, 1988]. She is also put into the role of the mother: „The woman is not a mother only in a bodily sense; her motherhood, with her love and endless sacrifice envelops the whole of man's life", another common trope for patriarchy [see: Rosaldo, 1974]. He furthermore claimed that „to exclude women from public life would humiliate her", yet his „solution" to this issue is that the woman should work publicly – from home: „The most natural and ideal field of work for a woman shall always be the home's hearth. There shall she . . . exert her enormous impact unto the development of humanity, and so on politics as well", essentially yet again putting the woman „in her place", at home, by the hearth. „Public life", for a woman, was not public in the least. Appeal to the nation and the fatherland was the *coup de grace*: „Until Croat men and women, by heroic sacrifice, served their nation through the most basic of duties, those of fatherhood and motherhood, the most ecstatic cries to the fatherland will sound like hollow phrases, a shadow of lies will cover our patriotism". As Iveković and Mostov noticed, „gender identities and woman's bodies become symbolic and spatial boundaries of the nation" [R. Iveković & Mostov, 2002].

Three recurring themes are seen in the „Croatian Woman": the insistence on culinary expertise (almost every issue boasted recipes), a constant emphasis on the religious, and the importance of the woman's care for children, known from German history as „Kinder, Kuche, Kirche", or „children, kitchen, church" – the three instances that should, according to the ideology of National-Socialism, define every woman worth her while [Bieber, 2011; Herrmann & Lünenborg, 2001; Herve, 1982; Ingenhoven & Kemper; Weisstein, 1966; Zaiceva & Zimmermann, 2007]. This is entirely in line with the Croatian *Zeitgeist* in the pre-war era, to continue during the Nazi-puppet state of the early forties [Andjelic, 2014; Lemkin, 1945; Schindler, 2007; Uvanović, 2014]. In other words, Stepinac was propagating the tropes required by National-Socialist Germany of the time.

Conclusion

It could be said that „The Woman and the World" might have been seen in a different light, were it not for the comparison with the „Croatian Woman". Whilst the Woman and the World actually did engage in what can be classified as feminist thought (even for that particular time period), it did suffer from more traditional, patriarchal remnants, especially at the onset of World War II. On the other hand, the „Croatian woman" was a clear-cut patriarchal pamphlet since its inception, arising from the nationalist, masculine *Weltanschauung* that was typical for interwar Croatia. As scholarly research has noted, „the role ethnic nationalism plays in not only perpetuating the conflict but also in repatriarchalizing society and gender relations in general" [Albanese, 2001, p. 1000], and this was unambiguously seen in *Hrvatica*, where tropes of national heroes and Croatian women who „gave birth to the nation" saw significant saturation. It has been noticed that „the suffrage movement from the end of the 19th century has doubtlessly impacted all cultures, and in some, women have finally stopped accepting the position of a societally marginalized entity, so the question of women started to be debated in the South Slavic region by the beginning of the 20th century" [Gazetić, 2009, p. 24]. For Croatia at least, the interbellum was a break from the suffrage of the 19th century; for Serbia, on the other hand, the situation seemed to have been slightly better. This stems from the diverging fates of Serbia and Croatia, after the invasion of Nazi Germany and the consequent division of Yugoslavia; the banovina Croatia that led to the Independent State of Croatia during the Nazi rule has been significantly more nationalized and patriarchalized than Serbia.

Having in mind that Hrvatica had only a two-year run in publishing, while the *Žena*

i svet managed a decade and a half, *Žena i svet* could somewhat be followed at a longer timescale, so that the differences in topics and framing could be seen at the nearing of the War. As the thirties came to a close, with the 1939 invasion of Poland and the commencing of World War II, even *Žena i svet* modified their content, though only somewhat. Hrvatica, on the other hand, was founded at the very beginning of the global conflict, and its content reflected the nation-based, warmongering, clerical atmosphere in which it was published.

Though essentially a micro-level study, it has beendeemed that the presentation of these two women's magazines might be valuable for potential large-scale research, especially having in mind that they have not figured as topics of scholarly interest in a historical and socio-political context. The two magazines have been chosen as representative samples of the Zeitgiest, being published at a similar time, as microlevel historical studies concentrate on more precise and oftentimes single places (two women's magazines) and times (the interbellum), and tend to provide useful data for macrolevel studies [Ernst, 2000, p. 32].

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