

Collection of papers

# The Position of trade workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a historical overview



Sindikat radnika trgovine  
i uslužnih djelatnosti BiH



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## Editor's words,

Dear readers, before you is a collection of papers **The Position of trade workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a historical overview**. The collection contains four scientific works that chronologically follow the events from the end of the Ottoman administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina until the beginning of the war conflicts in the 90s of the 20th century. A particular emphasis on the entire collection of papers is placed on the trade.

The trade and service trade union has been building its historical matrix since 1996 when Bosnia and Herzegovina gained independence. However, the time that preceded the modern union of trade and service activities certainly gave the stamp of coverage of its existence, which primarily has the task of protecting workers in the most populous sector. Nevertheless, the forerunner of the trade union gathering were various trade associations that had a similar role - market protection and every worker's rights.

Thus, the first work presented in the anthology, which bears witness to various intra-trade meetings, is entitled **Rights and obligations of employees in trading houses towards the end of the Ottoman administration**, authored by **Ph.D. Hana Younis**. Based on original archival material and relevant literature, the author points out the rights and Position of merchants and their employees, in the last decades of the Ottoman administration in Bosnia. Special attention was paid to the issue of bankruptcy as the biggest problem faced by traders in that period. In the text, the author points out merchants' rights through legal regulation. Through specific examples, she points out the traditional relationship within trading houses between the store owners and the workers who worked for them.

The second work, entitled **Position of trade assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century** by **Mag. Mehmed Hodžić** is followed chronologically by the first work. According to the author, this work shows the position occupied by auxiliary trade workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Those employed in trade shops acted according to the rules and orders of their bosses. In the first part of the paper, the author writes about the state of the available original material that enables the reconstruction of the role and position of sales assistants. In the second part of the paper, the author points out the basic features that characterized the activity of trade assistants, the problems and difficulties they faced during work, and the activities they undertook to join together and improve their position as workers in the trade.

The third paper by the author, **Ph.D. Dženita Sarač-Rujanac** is called the **Union in Socialist Self-Management**. The experience of the trade, hospitality, and tourism trade union of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the irregular position of female workers (1947-1962). The author pointed out, in particular, the position, organization, and operation of trade unions in the system of workers' self-management, a historical period often called the golden age of trade unions. In the second part of the article, the organization, way of working, and critical fields of activity of the trade and hospitality workers' union of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the end of the 1940s to the beginning of the 1960s were pointed out. From these documents, a broader political-economic context can be discerned. The critical problems of workers employed in



trade, hospitality, and tourism are revealed, which are also general problems of the social community. An important issue that arose was the issue of women workers, where significant difficulties and problems in their imagined economic emancipation were identified.

The last article chronologically ends with the 1990s by the author **Mag. Dražen Janko's** title **The position of women in Socialist Yugoslavia until the end of the 70s and the importance of workers' protests during the 80s of the 20th century.** The purpose of this article is to present the position of women in all sectors of work, including in trade, as well as issues primarily of "women's rights" until the beginning of the eighties. The second part of the paper continues with the general problems of the socialist system that led to a joint (men's and women's rights), i.e., joint protests that culminated in the second half of the 80s and finally showed the rottenness of the system through the example of the Borovo Combine. This example will show how shaky the former Yugoslavia was when it comes to trade union rights and the rights of workers in general.

Based on the presented works, readers will get a broader picture of the significance of the role of merchants throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina's past from the end of the 19th century until the end of the 20th century. It will be easier for them to understand trade processes that were realized through market supply and demand, developing their trade activities from the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian administrations to the obligations and rights and the role of women as a particular category that was demanded by trade union gatherings at the end of the 20th century.

**Dražen Janko**

# Rights and obligations of employees in trading houses towards the end of the Ottoman rule

Ph.D. Hana Younis

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**Abstract:** *Based on original archival material and relevant literature, the paper points out the rights and position of merchants and their employees, so-called “boys,” in the last decades of Ottoman rule in Bosnia. Special attention was paid to the issue of bankruptcy as the biggest problem faced by merchants in that period. In this text, the author indicates the rights that merchants had through legal regulation and instances in which they could claim those rights. The traditional relationship between the store owners and the “boys” who worked for them was also clearly pointed out through specific examples. The boys’ rights and obligations are shown through the original contracts.*

**Keywords:** *trade, commercial law, boys, trading houses, bankruptcy*

## Introduction

Bosnia, as the westernmost province of the Ottoman Empire, had an important strategic position, both politically and economically. Therefore, major changes in the long 19th century are also visible in its history. At the very beginning of the 19th century, trade as an important branch of the economy experienced a sudden boom, solely thanks to the *Napoleonic wars*, when Bosnia became an important transit zone due to the blockade of established maritime routes. Sarajevo stood out as the most important trade center, which was an important transit point in transport between the inner centers of the Ottoman state with Vienna and Trieste.<sup>1</sup> After France lost the territory of the Adriatic coast in 1813, waterways again became a priority, but trade in Bosnia received a great boost and proved to be an extremely profitable profession.

The cotton trade brought several important changes in trade, and the most important thing is that merchants established personal connections with Western European wholesalers and wholesalers within the Ottoman state, accumulated material resources, and due to the increased number of merchants, the competition was created, thus increasing market activity. Merchants were divided into 7 guilds, and the most active in trade were leather and fur merchants. They, together with ironmongers, were the founders of manufacturing

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<sup>1</sup> Mithat Šamić, *Ekonomski život Bosne i Sarajeva početkom 19. vijeka*, in: *Godišnjak Društva istoričara*, yr. XI, Sarajevo, 1960, 111-116.

shops. By increasing their jobs, they managed to lease the jobs of smaller merchants who would then work exclusively for them. With such a policy, towards the end of the Ottoman rule, “almost all central Bosnian iron maidans came into the ownership of rich merchants”.<sup>2</sup>

The merchants were mostly located in Sarajevo, which is logical considering the number of inhabitants but also the strategic position of the city. A large number of merchants were also in Mostar and Banja Luka, and at least 10% of the population of those cities were engaged in trade.<sup>3</sup> The number of merchants in towns depended exclusively on economic activities and the infrastructural position of the town. It should be emphasized that all denominations in the Bosnia Vilayet were involved in trade, both Muslims and Christians, as well as Jews.

Data analysis on the number of trade guild members, given the available archival material, can be partially done only for Muslims. The Sarajevo guarantee from 1847/48 is used as the most important source, according to which there were 152 merchants in those years, of which 18 were partners or “companions”. Only those who are more than 20 years old are listed as merchants, considering that this criterion was regulated by law. Therefore, all those under the age of 20 were not even mentioned. In addition, this number is certainly lower than the real one since the Orthodox population was also very actively and deeply engaged in trade. The stated number is much lower only when Muslims are concerned, which is indicated by a complaint sent to the Sharia court, which was signed by 270 members of Sarajevo guilds and merchants from 1845.<sup>4</sup> Certain authors include members of all 7 guilds of “various trades” as merchants, thus obtaining a number of 530 Muslim merchants in Sarajevo in 1847/48.<sup>5</sup> It is also necessary to state that Osman Sokolović, based on the transcription of the merchants’ names found in the chronicle of Muhamed Kadić Effendi, recorded 190 Muslim merchants in Sarajevo.<sup>6</sup> In any case, merchants were well represented among the economic activities of the city and their number contributed significantly to the economic development of the city.

Most of these shops were retail shops; small shops where only the owner, or possibly another member of the close family, was employed. There were only a few stores that operated wholesale and had employees who were paid for their work regularly, which we can count as wholesale houses.<sup>7</sup>

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2 Ilija Hadžibegović, *Postanak radničke klase u BiH i njen razvoj do 1914*, Sarajevo, 1981, 30.

3 I. Hadžibegović, *Postanak radničke klase u BiH*, 41.

4 The Oriental Institute of the University of Sarajevo (hereinafter OISA), Zbirka ANUBiH (hereinafter ZANUBiH), Šikajet defteri, shelfmark no. 85/IV.

5 Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Izabrana djela II*, Sarajevo, 1991, 45; I. Hadžibegović, *Postanak radničke klase u BiH*, 41.

6 Osman A. Sokolović, *Djelomičan popis trgovaca muslimana pred kraj Turske uprave*, Sarajevo, 1943, 32-33; See also: *Târîk-i Enverî*, *Hronika*, volume 24, 249-282, Gazi Husrev Bey’s Library.

7 The term *house* implies a trade run by one family and refers to the business, not the private aspect of life.

## Legal regulation of trade

When it comes to the last decades of Ottoman rule, it is necessary to mention that it was a period in which reforms were actively implemented, which changed the way how trade functioned. The main change was that the Tanzimat tacitly abolished the guild organization, which made the open competition a reality. The work and functioning of the trade have been regulated by a special Trade Act, which was adopted in 1850 based on the French model.<sup>8</sup> The analysis of that law indicates that the biggest problem that was intended to be solved by this law was the bankruptcy of merchants, as well as the attempt to regulate it.

However, when it comes to the rights and obligations of employees in trading houses, there are very few provisions, even those indirect. One of them is Article 58, which regulates the rights of those who transport commercial goods. The responsibility of that person if he loses it or damages it or it “gets spoiled by the rain” is absolute. He is obliged to compensate for the damage unless otherwise stated in the contract or if it is not an “irreversible and extraordinary cause”.<sup>9</sup> What is meant by that is not specified. Article 61 also regulates the rights between the merchant and those who transport their goods. The only possibility to exercise some of the employee's rights was to have a “send-off letter,” which was a type of contract that contained detailed rights and obligations and the conditions under which they are exercised. Interestingly, this worker could file a lawsuit against the merchant to whom he transferred goods within 6 months if the work was within the Ottoman state, and a year if it was outside the borders. An exception was if the merchant deceived the employee by “cunning”. In that case, there was no time limit for the lawsuit.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the rights of employees in the store were valid only for those who worked on the transfer of trade goods, while the status of employees in trading houses depended on the agreement between the merchant and the *boy*, as the employee in the store was called in that period.<sup>11</sup> Archival material shows that Bosnian wholesalers, when hiring a boy, were signing special contracts with him, which both of them would sign with witnesses.

For the implementation of lawsuits, appeals, and supervision of all disputes in commercial affairs, it is planned to open Commercial Courts in all cities of the Vilayet. They were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Trade in Istanbul.<sup>12</sup> Litigation was not attended only by judges. Active members were also representatives of merchants who were chosen by themselves based on their reputation in the commercial bazaar.<sup>13</sup> Their task was exclusively

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8 Bozkurt Gulnihâl, The Reception of Western European Law in Turkey (From the Tanzimat to the Turkish Republic, 1839-1939, in: *Der Islam*, volume 75 (2), De Gruyter, 1998, 5.

9 *Ottomanski trgovački zakonik*, Sarajevo, 1880, 26.

10 *Ottomanski trgovački zakonik*, Sarajevo, 1880, 27.

11 In the text, the term “boy” will be used for an employee or a worker, given that this was the title that was officially used in that period.

12 Mustafa Resid Belgesay, Tanzimat ve adliye teskilatı, in: *Tanzimat*, Istanbul, 1940, 212.

13 Ahmed Aličić, *Uređenje Bosanskog ejaleta od 1789 do 1878*, Sarajevo, 1983, 136.

to protect the interests of merchants. This was especially important in large centers such as Istanbul, Cairo, and Jerusalem, where merchants from various countries were located and trade was extremely profitable and widespread. The first Commercial Court began operating in Istanbul in 1848.<sup>14</sup> The year when the Commercial Court in Sarajevo was opened is still unknown. According to the available data, it could have been 1851/52 but only “provisionally”.<sup>15</sup> Documents show that in the 1850s the court was mentioned as a part of the system, but not as active as it will be in the next decade. Extremely important for the establishment of the Commercial Courts was the proclamation of the Vilayet Constitution for the Bosnia Vilayet from 1864. It states the opening of Commercial Courts throughout the entire Vilayet as an obligation. After that, we see that the Commercial Courts were opened in Travnik certainly before 1869<sup>16</sup> and in Banja Luka certainly before 1871.<sup>17</sup>

Court organization was carried out following the provisions of the Commercial Law, in which merchants of all religions had to be represented.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Commercial Court in Sarajevo had 5 members: two Muslims, one Catholic, one Orthodox, and one Jew. Each court also had a permanently employed scribe.<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that all lawsuits were public and that the parties could appeal the verdict to a higher court. Although this regulated the law and the instance where all merchants could seek justice, in traditional Bosnian society problems were first tried to be solved within the trading houses and with the presence of “trusted” merchants. When it comes to women merchants, we must point out that they could testify and file lawsuits in the Commercial Courts, but only if they were merchants by profession.<sup>20</sup>

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14 The Commercial Court in Sarajevo was also called the Vilayet Commercial Court or Commercial Majlis.

15 Ahmed Aličić writes that the Commercial Court was formed in 1852 and another one in 1859. Skarić cites 1852 as a provisional establishment and the one in January 1853 as a formal one. Mita Živković states the year 1851, while Hamdija Kreševljaković states the year 1861. Compare: Ahmed Aličić, *Uređenje Bosanskog ejaleta*, 59 and 136; Vladislav Skarić, *Izabrana djela I*, 236; Mita Živković, *Kratke priče iz Bosne*, Požarevac, 1894, 19; Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Izabrana djela IV*, Sarajevo, 1991, 54.

16 *Bosna*, no. 70, 1. and 15. 9, 1869, 2.

17 *Bosna*, no. 280, 19. and 31. 10, 1871, 2.

18 A. Aličić, Uredba o organizaciji Vilajeta 1867. godine, in: *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, no. XII-XIII, 1962/63, Sarajevo, 1963, 228.

19 About the composition of the court, see: H. Kreševljaković, *Izabrana djela IV*, 54 footnote no. 11.; Vladislav Skarić, *Izabrana djela I*, Sarajevo, 1985, 236.; M. Živković, *Kratke priče iz Bosne*, 19.; Roskiewicz Johan, *Studien über Bosnien und die Hercegovine*, Leipzig und Wien, 1868, (The translation of this travelogue can be found in the Historical Archive in Sarajevo, Zbirka Varija no. 488, 236).

20 *Bosna*, no. 124, 14. and 26. 10, 1868, 1.



Image no. 1. Trade shop (HASA, ZF, ZFR-354)

The work of the Commercial Courts in Bosnia can only be traced through the rare archival material of certain wholesale houses, but also through the press, which after 1866 reported litigation in the official newspaper “Bosna”. The analysis of that material shows us that the commercial courts mostly dealt with the bankruptcy of trade stores, while the lawsuits of the boys are not mentioned even once. However, this does not mean there were no disagreements between store owners and employees, but that such disputes were resolved outside the courtroom. There were also a lot of lawsuits from the owners of trade houses who sued each other for debts.

The biggest problem that appeared in commercial business in the last decades of Ottoman rule was bankruptcies.<sup>21</sup> We want to mention them exclusively through the prism of the rights of merchants, in case the trade goes bankrupt. Namely, declaring bankruptcy was quite simple, but the question was how to pay off all the debts that the store had. Wages were sometimes included in those debts, but most often they were large sums that were claimed by another merchant. The question arises, how could their rights be protected?

## Merchant bankruptcy

Before we move on to the specific issue of bankruptcy of trading houses, it is necessary to point out that the trading system in the 19th century, as in centuries before, was based on debtor-creditor relationships in which the mutual trust of merchants plays the most important role. Considering that, the consequences of losing trust in a merchant who proved to be a “fraudster” had far-reaching traditional consequences that manifested themselves through the blocking of trade relations, not only with the merchant who proved to be a fraudster but also with merchants from the place where he came from. The Commercial Law attempted to protect merchants by dividing bankruptcies into real and fake.<sup>22</sup> In addition, every possible

21 See: H. Kreševljaković, Stečaji u Bosni (1867-1877), in: *Narodna starina*, bk. XIII/1934, vol. 34, no. 3-4, 189-192; Ibrahim Tepić, *Trgovina Bosne i Hercegovine od 1856. do 1875. godine*, master's thesis in the manuscript.

22 *Ottomanski trgovački zakonik*, article 288, 166.

option of bankruptcy of the merchant is explained in detail. However, in practice, the situation was much more complicated.

In the last decades of Ottoman rule, foreign merchants appeared in Bosnia, especially from the Habsburg Monarchy, who also declared bankruptcy quite often. When it comes to foreign merchants, their legal protection was regulated through the consulates, which had the right to represent them in courts and perform all trade-related transactions on their behalf. How frequent the problem of merchant bankruptcy has become is best illustrated by the announcements of the Commercial Court published in the newspaper *Bosna* during 1868 and 1869.

In practice, the merchant himself was declared bankrupt, which resulted in the involvement of the family and collection of the debt from the funds at their disposal.<sup>23</sup> Considering that the law tried to protect the family of the failed merchant, and according to Article 177, they could receive certain funds of the money that had not yet been distributed among the debtors, but only for necessary things. Also, the merchant's wife could request her personal property to be excluded from the auction, but she had to prove that what she claimed was true, which was difficult, especially if it was about the money that was promised to her or taken from her property.<sup>24</sup> Also, the wife or other heirs, if they are of legal age, could attend the litigation in case the merchant died.<sup>25</sup>

The legal procedure was carried out in the following way: if a merchant was unable to pay his debts, then he was considered a failed merchant. Such a merchant was obliged to contact the commercial agency in writing within three days, announcing that he had failed. After that, the commercial agency issued a verdict, i.e. *ilam* (Eng. law, decree) about the failure of the merchant in question, which was published in the press or through the *telali* (Eng. peddler) so that his debtors could present to the court the amount they claim from him.

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23 The complete property at the debtor's disposal automatically became the subject of sale. One advertisement for the sale of property from 1877 was "Sarajevo resident Ibrahim Agha gave his two pieces of land named Podkraj Grabovac and Podkraj, which were located in the village of Rakovica, in the Sarajevo judicial area, as a pledge for a debt of 450 Ottoman lire, and this bungalow belonging to the land, two serf houses, two orchards and one garden, one slaughterhouse and gazebo and one mill also in pledge for 120 Ottoman lire to the Sarajevo merchant Pero Kraljević, on the condition that this immovable property, in case the debtor is unable to pay the sum, will be sold through a public auction and use the received money to pay off the debt, for which the aforementioned agha authorized the merchant Vasa Kraljević. After the specified deadline had passed, at the request of the aforementioned assignee, the office of the *imperial defter* and the Shariat court prepared bid sheets (*mesad pusula*) and gave them to the messenger. According to the *defterdar's* conclusion, everyone who wants to buy any of the mentioned immovable property is invited to apply to the messenger." *Bosna*, no. 566, 17. 4. 1877, 2.

24 *Ottomanski trgovački zakonik*, article 177, 84.

25 *Ibid*, article 186, 189.

The deadline for reporting the debt was 20 days if the debtor was from the same place, and if it was a debtor from outside the borders of the Empire, then the deadline for submitting the documents was extended by one day *for each night spent on the trip*.<sup>26</sup> After submission of all documentation, the court would convene a meeting with all debtors or their creditors within 15 days and appoint representatives who will further handle the case. If the merchant who declared bankruptcy had any property, they would be put up for auction and the debts would be settled on a percentage basis to the debtors.<sup>27</sup>

Considering the speed of mail delivery and the possibility of communication within the Bosnian eyalet/vilayet, as well as the wider appearance of the press, it played an extremely important role in the process of bankruptcy. Sarajevo merchants conducted active trade with over 80 trading centers throughout the Ottoman Empire, the Austrian Empire, and beyond.<sup>28</sup> According to the official jurisdiction, all commercial courts in the Vilayet were obliged to inform the Sarajevo Commercial Court about their work. This was especially important for the issue of bankruptcy because if someone from any city in the Vilayet went bankrupt, the Vilayet Commercial Court in Sarajevo was obliged to inform not only the other Commercial Courts in the Vilayet, but also beyond, about further proceedings in the relevant dispute. This protected the right of merchants who, if they submitted their debts within the legally specified period, could receive them. This is why the announcements of the Commercial Court necessarily indicated the time for receiving requests for debt payment, which was limited to a period between 21 and 31 days, extremely rare to 2 months, depending on the distance from the place where the debtor was from.<sup>29</sup>

As we have already stated, the law made a clear distinction between those who went bankrupt and those who did it falsely, i.e. to deceive other merchants. During the last decades of Ottoman rule in Bosnia, several merchants were arrested and convicted for going bankrupt with “false intent” under paragraph 292 of the Commercial Law. This paragraph left such “liars” to be condemned under the penal code, which classified them as thieves. For all frauds, the court first decided who had jurisdiction – the commercial or criminal court – and then left the litigation or just the verdict to the responsible court.<sup>30</sup> It is obvious that in cases of false declaration of bankruptcy, the judgment was pronounced according to the criminal law, not the commercial law.<sup>31</sup>

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26 The deadline for registration of Austrian merchants in Sarajevo was 31 days. See: *Bosna*, no. 118, 2. and 14. 9. 1868, 2.

27 *Bosna*, no. 108, 24. 6. and 6. 7. 1868, 2.

28 Hana Younis, *Od dućana do pozorišta, sarajevska trgovačka elita 1851-1878*, Sarajevo, 2017, 158, footnote 806.

29 *Bosna*, no. 24, 24. 10. and 5. 11. 1866, 2; *Bosna*, no. 108, 24. 6. and 6. 7. 1868, 2; *Bosna*, no. 118, 2. and 14. 9. 1868, 2; *Bosna*, no. 198, 24. 3. and 5. 4. 1870, 2.

30 NUB BiH, Zbirka rukopisa, *Carski kazneni zakonik*, kopija hatihumajuna, Vilajetska štamparija u Sarajevu, 1870, § 292.

31 *Bosna*, no. 179, 3. and 15. 11. 1869, 2.



The protection of trade and merchants due to false bankruptcies was also the topic of the local press. In 1868, *Sarajevski cvjetnik* published a text in which the issue of purchase with deferred payment (debt) was explained as follows: "So that credit, which is the soul of trade, would not be abused, governments have issued commercial laws that aim to facilitate the trade of every profession, while at the same time guaranteeing and insuring the property of those merchants who gave their goods on credit. The importance of this guarantee is that every trader is required by law to keep protocols and accounts so that in the event of an accident or a claim, he can prove that he did not misuse the goods entrusted to him, but also that the creditors themselves can be convinced that everything was fair, in case of an accident. We also have a law § 5 point g. 2. Everyone who is engaged in trade must keep a diary and a ledger (*maestro*) which will be numbered and confirmed by the commercial court. Sales, billing, and everything else related to the trade must be recorded in these books every day, monthly correspondence must be consolidated and kept, a balance must be made at the end of the year, etc. However, on some occasions that we have seen, we have learned that until now merchants in our vilayet did not want to know about these things. Most of them, if not even all, today do not want to understand that they are obliged by law to do so and that they are breaking the law when they ruin themselves and their business. We ask how it is possible to demand the trade to be raised when there is no credit, and how credit can be demanded when there is no guarantee for the accuracy and safety of the entrusted goods. By these words, we also think that it is time for the judges to pay attention to this matter and issue a warning on the above-mentioned regulation with their decree, as well as to deal strictly with these people who would continue to conduct the trade in such a disorderly manner. We think that this would be a good step for the return of credits in our bazaar."<sup>32</sup> Although this text did not cause any changes in the way of keeping the *defter* (notebook; Ottoman tax register), nor in the matter of the guarantee for taking over, it shows us that the problem was extremely important and that the official authorities tried to bring their view of the solution closer to the merchants through a text presented as a piece of advice for conducting commercial affairs.

Although merchants were at least partially legally protected, the collection of their debts was often time-consuming and useless.<sup>33</sup> In the second half of the 19th century, small merchants declared bankruptcy the most, but at the same time suffered the most from its consequences. During 1868, more than twelve middle-class merchants went bankrupt, their reputation was destroyed to the extent that in one of the taverns where prominent merchants gathered, one of them declared that "very soon he will open a tavern" in which he will not allow bankruptcies to enter.<sup>34</sup> This statement offended the editor of *Sarajevski cvjetnik*, who published an article on this occasion. He noted that such insults are the result of "vile passions" and that those "inciting" such insults should "retire for a time in the circle of decency

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32 *Sarajevski cvjetnik*, no. 43, 23. 10. 1869, 1.

33 It often happened that after completing the legal procedure, it was established that the merchant in question did not have sufficient property value with which he would settle the debts to other merchants. See: ABiH, RGKS, 4/53, 27/53, 164/53, 207/53, 332/53, 442/53, 355/53, 584/53, 502/53, 604/53.

34 *Sarajevski cvjetnik*, no. 41, 18. 12. 1871, 2.

and let them remember that everyone's deed will eventually come to light".<sup>35</sup> However, the story did not end only with this reaction. The owner of the tavern in question also stated in the newspaper that he had nothing to do with the event, asking "merchant visitors who are used to harm society by intrigue and insult that I no longer wish to receive their visits in my social meeting room".<sup>36</sup> This story clearly shows us that bankruptcy was often the reason for quarrels among merchants, but also the reason for insults, which in traditional society were worse than any other punishment.

One letter from the commercial correspondence of the "Braća Kumašini" wholesale house shows the merchant's shame in case he was declared bankrupt and his goods were sold at auction. The letter is addressed to the Kumašin brothers and was sent by Pero Tekić from Bijeljina. Among other things, he wrote: "how low I have fallen, I am ashamed when someone sees me or asks about me. I am so bothered and I can not do this anymore, I say to myself if only God let me be dead, better than living without any employment and work". In the letter, he begged the Kumašin brothers to hire him as their worker, emphasizing that "I trust in God that you will give me something to do so that I will not be completely unemployed".<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately, due to the lack of available archival material, we do not know whether the wholesale house "Braća Kumašini" sent goods to Pero in Bijeljina or not. The "Jelić" wholesale house had a similar request from a certain Pero, but from Travnik, and as we can see from the documents, they sent him the goods on debt.<sup>38</sup> However, the "Hadžiristić" wholesale house did not respond positively to pleas "for another chance" from bankrupt merchants.<sup>39</sup>



Image no. 2. Bosnian grocery store (HASA, ZF, ZFR-355)

Through the bankruptcy of the Levi trading house, we will explain how it all looked in practice, given that their debt is a characteristic example of bankruptcy and that it has the

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 HASA, FK, box no. 5, document no. 355.

38 ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-7.

39 ABiH, FH, box no. IX-1-12.

most comprehensive documentation. In 1850, a request for debt collection from Bosnian merchants indicates that the Levi family, more specifically David Levi and Abraham Levi, were already engaged in trade with Trieste and that they did not settle their debts on time. These two members of the Levi family were no longer mentioned in these documents, but the trading house “Salamon Levi i sinovi” began to be mentioned regularly. His trading house operated in Sarajevo and Banja Luka, and both branches were closely connected and resold the same goods purchased from the same merchants. They were facing bankruptcy already at the end of 1852, which was indicated by Karlo Preinister’s request to collect his promissory note through the consulate general. This was a sign that all other possibilities of collecting the promissory note had failed and that the last level, the official authority, became the only way out of the situation, in order to protect himself. In January 1853, the debts of the trading house “Salamon Levi i sinovi” became so big that they decided to close the house. It was not an easy step considering that the debts had accumulated over the years and it was necessary to at least partially pay them off. Already on January 4, “Salamon Levi i sinovi” sent a letter to the general consulate in Sarajevo with a request to mediate between creditors and them, explaining that they had to liquidate the trading company due to constant losses.<sup>40</sup> How expeditiously the consulate performed its work can be described by the fact that just four days after this notification, Kris Boise from Trieste requested them to collect his debts from the bankruptcy estate of the “Salamon Levi i sinovi” store.<sup>41</sup> At the beginning of February, a sequester was placed on the “Salamon Levi i sinovi” stores in Sarajevo and Banja Luka. In the following months, several trading houses from Trieste and Vienna, such as Bosi de Chesne, demanded their debts be paid as soon as possible.<sup>42</sup> In March, a list of all the goods on which the sequester was placed has been made, but certain reputable trading houses considered that list was false. Chesne indicates this in his letter, claiming that there must have been more goods in Salamon Levi’s heap.<sup>43</sup>

This was extremely important because the debtors could only be charged from the goods which were confiscated and sequestered, and considering the demand, it was an extremely small amount. Aware of this, the Chesne trading house sent a letter in May demanding to arrest the “Salamon Levi i sinovi” store owners as an example to other merchants who easily declare bankruptcy.<sup>44</sup> Less than a month after that letter, Rafael Levi was arrested.<sup>45</sup>

Every hope of Austrian merchants to collect a percentage as high as possible of the amount owed was directed toward the general consulate and consular agencies. The problem with the amount of collection was also the payment of the *resum* – the collection fee charged by the consulate which was 5%. Despite this, trading houses hoped to collect debts in the amount of 35%. While the merchants from Trieste were trying to get a percentage of their

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40 ABiH, RGKS, 27/53.

41 ABiH, RGKS, 48/53.

42 ABiH, RGKS, 163/53.

43 ABiH, RGKS, 332/53.

44 ABiH, RGKS, 502/53.

45 ABiH, RGKS, 584/53, 587/53.

debts as high as possible, in June 1853, Viennese merchants were officially informed that the store “Salamon Levi i sinovi” had gone bankrupt.<sup>46</sup>

Owners of the “Salamon Levi i sinovi” store remained in prison for several months, which is indicated in a letter from the Bosnian government from October 1853, in which it is announced that they are in prison and that the rabbi guarantees payment of 40% per debtor but in 6 installments. Correspondence about the amount of collection continued throughout 1854. The Bosnian government became actively involved in the entire case and took responsibility for debt collection.

To get the job done as quickly and efficiently as possible, the Bosnian government demanded from the consulate general the original promissory notes of all debtors from the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Certain trading houses did not leave their claims to the consulate and agencies but tried to collect their debts through merchants they knew and trusted. Such was the case of the “Berjamier i Land et comp.” who entrusted their bills to Jovo Pištelić, a merchant from Banja Luka.<sup>47</sup> With that, they had to pay Pištelić, but it was less than 5% of the total sum charged by the consulate.

In May 1854, the consulate received all the bills of exchange from the merchants who agreed to pay their debts in the amount of 40% from the “Salamon Levi i sinovi” bankruptcy estate.<sup>48</sup> Soon after that, the Bosnian government confirmed the amount of the payment but then stated that the debt can only be paid in 18 installments. After everyone agreed on the amount of the payment and the number of installments at the beginning of October 1854, the sequester on the goods of the trading house “Salamon Levi i sinovi” was lifted and the goods could be sold in order to collect the debts. The first installment was already paid on October 3, and the second in December of the same year.<sup>49</sup> The collection of installments was carried out by paying a part to the consulate after the sale of the goods to the creditors who sought their claims through the consulate, while other Ottoman subjects took over the installments personally. Those creditors who gave their power of attorney to one of the Bosnian merchants had the option of having that merchant take the money from them and then, according to the agreement, send it through the consulate or agency or in the way they agreed. How the agreement was made had to be reported in order to issue a receipt for the money taken, which included the exact amount and date of collection, as well as information about who handed over the money. When it came to Trieste merchants, the consulate forwarded the money to the Maritime Administration Center. It further informed the merchants about the amount of money received and sent the consulate general confirmation of the receipt of the money and the names of the merchants it paid out.<sup>50</sup>

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46 ABiH, RGKS, 642/53.

47 ABiH, RGKS, 425/54.

48 BiH, RGKS, 135/56.

49 ABiH, RGKS, 1248/54, 1355/54.

50 ABiH, RGKS, 1572/55.

It is difficult to determine what was exactly the total amount owed by the trading house “Salamon Levi i sinovi,” but the sum of his debt to the merchant Isak Salamon from Vienna was 430 forints, while the debt of Vilhem Heinrih was 1,207 forints, and Boise de Ehesse from Trieste had to charge 7,541 forints. They received only 40% of that sum, which indicates that there was no possibility of protecting those merchants or paying the entire sum. The maximum charge was 50%, which confirms the stated conclusion.

That Salamon Levi's store in Sarajevo did not completely stop working is indicated by the fact that in September 1855 Baise de Clasine sent new promissory notes to be collected from him. The bankruptcy of his shop was officially lifted in March 1856.<sup>51</sup> The efforts that the consulate general made to collect the debts of its subjects were officially praised by the Maritime Administration Center from Trieste.

Another case shows the personal perspective of a failed merchant and how it came to be. How easy it was for small merchants to go bankrupt is shown by the case of Teodor T, a merchant from Brod. He described the entire process in a letter to the wholesale house “Hadžiristić” in 1850. Teodor was a small merchant and he gave goods with the possibility to purchase with deferred payment to, among others, merchants such as “priest Judić, bishop Adža Dašin, Jozef B. Danon, Fratel O. Danon, and Moize D. Baruh” who were his regular customers and bought with deferred payment from him, until they got in debt for a “huge sum”. After that, they switched to doing business with Aleksa, as he writes, “just because they do not pay me, they do not want to see my receipts, and according to their receipts they have nothing to pay”. Because of this his patience “has come to an end”. The purpose of this entire story to the Hadžiristić family is to explain that he is unable to pay the debt he owes to them because he is facing bankruptcy, due to the debts of the aforementioned merchants. He goes on and explains that he was unable to sell the goods he bought from them, and offers them the option of selling the same through the *telali* (Eng. peddler) and sending them money, or can return the goods to them. Teodor also reminds Hadžiristić twice that he is obliged to warn the other merchants “about Sarajevo's Jewish thieves” so that something similar does not happen to them.<sup>52</sup>

It is also necessary to point out that boys who worked in stores had to report a debt if the owner of the store owed them any money. Like everyone else, they had to have proof of the amount of the sum and what it was based on.

## Employment of boys

Being employed in trading houses, which is synonymous with wholesalers, was not easy in that period. Traditionally, family members who had a share in it worked in them and received income from the realized profit. However, some trading houses employed boys who worked in the store, collected debts on their behalf, or managed branches. Those boys were always

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51 ABiH, RGKS, 1219/55.

52 ABiH, FH, box no. IX-1-9. Letter 18. 3. 1850.

young and capable, good at math, but most importantly trustworthy to the owner of the trading house. This meant that they had a recommendation when looking for a job.<sup>53</sup> An interesting recommendation for a job in the wholesale house of Hadžiristić was submitted by Vladimir Medvedić in the month in which the occupation by Austria-Hungary took place. In it, it was written that Vladimir is a “trade assistant” from Karlovac, that he graduated from trade school in Vienna, where he worked as an apprentice in a trade for 7 years. In addition, he stated that he “speaks Serbian or Croatian, German and Italian”.<sup>54</sup> In some cases, we see that the boys were minors and that instead of a salary for working in the store, they received food, accommodation, as well as an internship.<sup>55</sup>

The duties of these boys were sometimes not only to work and help in shops. From the documentation, we see that they also helped in the houses of the store owners. When they arrived at the trading house, they always had a letter in which their characteristics were written, and the most important thing was that the boy was “faithful and good”.<sup>56</sup> Sources confirm that the parents or guardians of those boys and the store owner were signing a contract, which contained the exact obligations of the boys. The obligations were contained in a formulation that stated that the boy was obliged to do everything “commanded” by the owner of the trading house. In that contract, the obligation of the owner of the trading house towards the boy was also formulated, which in the case of the “Jeftanović” wholesale house was to “send him to school once every day before noon or in the afternoon to study science, and to dress and feed him”. The letter also emphasized that all this is valid for the next 3 years.<sup>57</sup> “Budimlić” trading house tried to find a boy to work for them in Derventa. They wrote in the letter that it would be best for him to be the “tailor’s son” but that he must be “good and faithful”.<sup>58</sup>

Being employed in a trading house was a great honor, and rights were not even discussed. The expected bright future was a sufficient motive for employment in stores. For many families it seemed like a perfect solution for their sons, they would benefit financially and at the same time gain business experience and basic education.<sup>59</sup> The owners of the trading house could complain to the signatory of the contract, a parent or a guardian if they

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53 In February 1855, the Jelić family was looking for boys for themselves, their son-in-law, and Hajji-Risto through their friend Vidić, who told them that he had found a certain Mihajlo Žutić, so if they wanted, he would send him to them. ABiH, FH, box no. IX-1-5. Letter 21. 2. 1855.

54 Hadžiristić 21. 10. 1878.

55 Boys aged 8-9 were accepted as helpers in shops. See: ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-2. Letter 8. 2. 1855.

56 In May 1863, Konstantin Milaković begged Kosta Hadžiristić to ask his brother if he would accept him to be his “shop servant.” As a recommendation, he wrote that the two of them went to school together and that he already worked in shops. See: ABiH, FH, box no. IX-1-13. Letter 11. 5. 1863.

57 HAS, FJ, box no. 2, document no. 584.

58 ABiH, FB, box no. 1. Letter 13. 7. 1841.

59 HASA, FJ, box no. 2, document no. 584.

did not like something about the boy they hired. Considering their youth, sometimes it was something like playing with other children, which hindered them in the numerous tasks that the owner of the trading house would assign them.<sup>60</sup>

Except for these boys, there were also (older) boys working in the shops, who would receive an agreed material sum for their effort and work. The documents show that their employment was long for a year at most, and if the wholesaler was satisfied with their work, the contract was signed again for the same period.<sup>61</sup> The contract which was signed by the boys and the store owners contained obligations and rights in detail.

Those boys who did their work by traveling from shop to shop could also be petty merchants themselves. Aware of such a possibility, the wholesalers who paid them would necessarily enter the type, quantity, and price of the goods they carry on their behalf in the contract. In 1872, Mičo Đerić was employed in the “Jeftanović” wholesale house. His task was to collect trade debts on their behalf, but only in Novi Pazar. Before leaving for the trip, he received a special contract specifying how much money and from which trading house he should collect.<sup>62</sup> A special problem would arise if the boy fell sick on the way. Difficult travel conditions, especially in winter, were a risk for the boy to even reach the designated place alive. In the summer of 1866, the wholesale house “Jelić” was informed that their young man had come to Srebrenica seriously sick. According to the details in the letter, he was bleeding and “barely alive” when he reached Srebrenica. However, as we can see, Gavro Jelić, the owner of the wholesale house “Jelić,” did not do anything about it, he only took note of this information. We can also conclude that nothing was expected from him because Trifko continued his journey when he recovered, and worked for the same wholesaler for almost the entire next decade.<sup>63</sup>

An analysis of the letters sent by those boys to the trading houses indicates that such extraordinary expenses were not recognized by the trading house owner. It is clear from certain letters that the boys stayed on the road longer than they expected, which is why their expenses were higher, but this did not affect the money they had agreed upon. It is also clear that due to weather problems, they often had to stay for several days in some places. In such cases, they tried to spend the night with a well-known merchant in order not to pay for a night's stay in some lodging, because the landlord did not recognize the costs of the night's stay.<sup>64</sup>

One of the contracts that provide detailed information on the rights and obligations of employees in trading houses is the contract between the wholesaler Jeftanović and Stefan Kovačević.<sup>65</sup> The contract was signed in January 1856, and in addition to the standard principles that regulate the type of work that the boy performs, the amount of salary and the

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60 ABiH, FH, box no. IX-1-12, 1. 2. 1861.

61 Compare: H. Kreševljaković, *Izabrana djela II*, 61.

62 HASA, FJ, box no. 2, documents nos. 472. and 475.

63 ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-6. Letter 4. 6. 1866.

64 ABiH, FH, box no. IX-1-20a. Letter 14. 1. 1850.

65 HASA, FJ, box no. 2, document no. 440.

duration of the contract, there was also a part in which Stefan and his wife undertake that “they will not buy anywhere on debt and that everything they buy will be paid immediately, and in case they have to go into debt, they are obliged to inform Jeftanović first”.<sup>66</sup> Stefan was in debt for coffee and sugar when he was hired to work at the “Jeftanović” trading house, and the trading house owner Manojlo Jeftanović undertook to repay that debt. At the same time, it had to be his last debt if he wanted to work for Jeftanović. That Stefan was poor is also indicated by the information from the contract in which he declares that he has “no other clothes except the clothes I am wearing, everything else that is in my hands, whether money, goods, or something else, everything is my master’s Manojlo Jeftanović property”. All this was signed by three witnesses, who were also merchants.<sup>67</sup>

The employees had various duties, and it could simply be whatever the owner of the trading house ordered them to do. Occasionally, they would receive these obligations in writing. The wholesale house “Hadžiristić” compiled a list of 47 obligations for the boy who worked for them, and one of them was “to take care of everyone around you”.<sup>68</sup>

The basic unquestionable right that the employees exercised was the salary. Given that during the last decades of Ottoman rule in Bosnia, there were several currencies of various values in circulation, the contracts strictly stated which amount in which currency the employee would receive. Most often, the salary was in ducats or gros, depending on how much it was. If the amount was larger, then the ducat was more common, however, for smaller sums, the gros was a safer option. The salary was agreed upon for one year and according to the available documents, employees in the wholesale received twice the salary of those employed in smaller shops. “Budimlić” trading house offered a salary of 15 to 20 forints for an employee in their store. Aware that it is a small amount, they wrote in the letter that “if he is good, his monthly salary can be increased”.<sup>69</sup>

In the middle of the 19th century, the average annual salary of small merchants was around 400 gros.<sup>70</sup> In 1857, the wholesale house “Jeftanović” contracted a salary for its employee Stefan Kovačević in the amount of 2,000 gros per year.<sup>71</sup> The trading house “Budimlić,” which was smaller in scale, paid an annual salary of 600 gros in 1860. The documents show that the salary increased over time and at the same trading house 12 years later it amounted to 3,300 gros.<sup>72</sup> We also see that wages were paid regularly without any delay at wholesalers’, while at smaller stores this was also relatively problematic.

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66 H. Younis, *Od dućana do pozorišta*, 179.

67 HAS, FJ, box no. 2, document no. 440.

68 ABiH, FH, box no. IX-1-21. Undated list.

69 ABiH, Budimlići, 13.7.41.

70 HASA, FD, box no. 9, GAN-1844, 2. august u Sarajevu (Tefter 1844-1857).

71 HASA, FJ, box no. 2., document no. 440.

72 In 1869, the Austrian consul paid the services of a cook he brought from Zagreb in the amount of 36 ducats or about 2,160 gros per year. Compare: ABiH, RGKS, 657/69; HASA, FJ, box no. 2., document no. 475.





Image no. 3. Jeftanović trading family (HASA, Photo collection (hereinafter ZF), ZFR-970)

When it comes to the right to transfer from one trading house to another, it is necessary to note that it was completely legal but not practiced. The available material shows that not a single well-known wholesaler has ever hired a worker from another retailer. We can relate this with the owner's opinion that if the employee was not satisfied in another store, then he is not grateful either, which was the basic postulate of that time. Those who left trading houses mostly opened their shops and engaged in petty trade.

This was also tried by Đorđe Bogičević from Zvornik, who worked for a certain time in Sarajevo in one of the stores, and at that time he was quite close to Gavro Jelić, the owner of the "Jelić" trading house. After he returned to Zvornik, he wrote to Gavro that he was not satisfied with his shop and that he would like to return to Sarajevo to work, adding that the rent in Zvornik was expensive. However, it is quite clear that Gavro did not employ him.<sup>73</sup>

Not everyone was like Bogičević. In 1861, a boy named Risto Kiperašić left the "Jeftanović" wholesale house. He worked for them for three years. After he "voluntarily" decided to go to work in Brčko, Jeftanović paid him the entire debt for his salary as well as a reward for his work and effort during those three years.<sup>74</sup>

Employees from smaller stores mostly left because of bad conditions. The trading house "Budimlić" had an employee from Derventa who worked for them for almost two decades. Given that they had a lot of financial problems, he decided to leave his job. He only verbally informed Stiepo Budimlić about this, and he "let him go". However, his brother and co-owner warned him not to give him a recommendation "because he did not bring one either when he got hired". By doing so, he effectively reduced the possibility of employment for the boy in question. Although "Budimlić" was a small trading house, they found a new employee very quickly, and it was a certain Jovan from Tešanj. Jovan wanted a job at all costs, which was clear from the fact that he worked for free for a month.<sup>75</sup>

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73 ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-7. Letter 3. 11. 1869.

74 HAS, FJ, box no. 2, document no. 452.

75 ABiH, FB, box no. 1. Letter 11. 8. 1860.

Regarding the issue of rights and obligations, as well as the personal relationship between employees and owners of trading houses, it is interesting to point out their correspondence. Employee status is best illustrated on letters addressed to the trading house owner which were signed by *your servant*, followed by a personal name. At the same time, the personal name of the shop owner was always preceded by the word *master* or *Mr.* in shorter form.<sup>76</sup>

Such a choice of words was not just a formality. Essentially, the employee, not only materially but also morally, depended on the store owner in a traditional Bosnian society. The pressure of such a relationship is most noticeable in boys who worked in trading houses.<sup>77</sup> This is best illustrated by the example of Simo, a 15 or 16-year-old boy who worked at the wholesale house “Jelić”. We are not sure how long he worked in that trading house, but the authorities found out that in January 1875 he hanged himself in the yard of Jelić’s private house. His master did not inform anyone about this but buried Simo in the yard. After that, an investigation was launched, and as the press reported, “it was not found that the merchant was responsible for the death of the deceased, but he was blamed for burying the same without reporting the matter to the court for examination. And for that, he was punished according to the regulation of the Imperial Penal Code, with two months and eleven days in prison”.<sup>78</sup> No one mentioned why Simo hanged himself, not even in private correspondence, which also indicates that everyone wanted to keep such an event quiet and not pay attention to it even in their correspondence. Simo’s mother wrote in one letter that he must be careful “not to spoil the reputation of both, yourself and us”.<sup>79</sup> We can only guess whether Simo mistakenly believed he did exactly that.

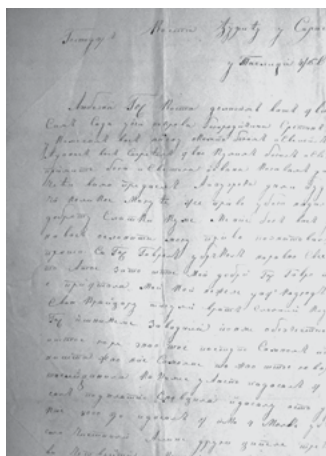


Image no. 4. A worker's letter addressed to the Jelić trading family (ABiH, Fond Jelići, box no. 4, no shelfmark)

76 BiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-9. Letter 23. 3. 1875.; ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-5, authorization 15. 1. 1864.; ABiH, FH, box no. IX-1-9. Letter 20. 2. 1850.

77 ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-2. Letter 8. 2. 1855.

78 *Bosna*, no. 458., 24. 3. and 5. 4. 1875, 1.

79 ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-2. Letter 8. 2. 1855.

The case of Jovan Mihajlović also leads to such a conclusion. He ran the branch of the “Jelić” wholesale house in Brčko. The business was managed quite well until Jovan fell sick so badly that Jelić sent another boy to replace him.<sup>80</sup> He most likely informed Jelić that Jovan was not reporting to him all the transactions he made. After the first warnings and account checks, Jovan continued to work as he thought was best, which in the end turned out to be disastrous. After three months of checking Jovan’s work and jobs, Jelić was able to prove his “scheming actions”.<sup>81</sup> After that he was fired. This represented a disaster not only in his business life but also in his private life. Mihajlović returned to his hometown of Taslidža, from where he tried to beg Jelić with letters to accept him again for a year free of charge so that he could “restore his reputation”. He wrote that he “would forgive him even if he had killed me just so I would not live in this world, because that kind of life is not what I hoped for, from his good and generous and excessive master...”<sup>82</sup> In one of the letters he also writes “if master Gavro does not approve my request, I will be my murderer or I will have to wander in the world where no one will know about me”.<sup>83</sup> And indeed Jovan was found by Gavro Jelić’s brother after 12 years in Belgrade.<sup>84</sup> He lived in a dilapidated house with his wife. It is interesting that when he saw Jelić, “he wanted to kill himself”.<sup>85</sup> In the letter, Jelić described him as a “poor man who is constantly crying... may God protect him”.<sup>86</sup>

So, the relationship between the boy and the owner of the trading house was not just a formality, reputation depended on it, and life itself depended on reputation. However, the cases we mentioned are not established. They only show the complexity of the relationship between employees and store owners. In the majority of shops, boys were considered part of the family. A letter from Dubočac from a merchant named Dimitrije Sakagalić confirms that. He traded rice across Brod and was supposed to take over on May 11, 1867, however, his boy Hasan got sick and died. Dimitrije asked the trading house “Hadžiristić” to take over his rice because he “was in mourning,” and Hasan’s wife was also sick, so he could not take care of the rice. He considered Hasan, the boy who worked for him, and his family as part of his own.<sup>87</sup> It was similar to other trading houses. This is also indicated by the case of Hačim Petronija, who in his will written in 1850 left Stipan Ristić, “a boy who worked hard for me,” the sum of 2,000 gros out of a total of 11,000 he distributed.<sup>88</sup>

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80 ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-4. Letter 17. 3. 1859.

81 Gavro wrote: “I discovered all of your scheming actions.” ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-4. Letter 20. 7. 1860.

82 Ibid.

83 The letter indicates the boy’s relationship with the boss or the owner of the wholesale house, but it also indicates that the boy who was employed to collect money was of the lowest rank, given that Jovan agrees to that job as the ultimate humiliating offer. Ibid.

84 ABiH, FJ, box no. IX-3-9. Letter 28. 8. 1874.

85 bid.

86 Ibid.

87 ABiH, FH, box no. IX-1-14. Letter 11. 5. 1867.

88 HAS, FJ, Trgovačka prepiska Manojla Jeftanovića, 1837-1878. Letter no. 6.

## Women merchants

When it comes to women as merchants, we must note that in the available material, we find them as the wives of merchants who actively participated in commercial affairs, and if the owner died, they continued the business as if nothing had happened. It is also necessary to mention that merchants did a lot of business with Ušćup, and the most important merchant there was Ana Narenčković.<sup>89</sup>

The source that leads us to the conclusion that women independently engaged in trade – not so often but they were still present – is the register of debts. In the “Despić” trading house’s register of debts from 1855, there are mentions of several female merchants who bought goods with the possibility of deferred payment, but we do not know whether they had a separate shop or resold them in another way.<sup>90</sup> Gjulanuma Arapagić was certainly one of the merchants in the last decades of the Ottoman rule. She was engaged in trade in Kobaš, where aid was collected after the big fire in Prijedor. The names of those who gave a certain amount were published in a Sarajevo newspaper, and among them was Gjulanuma Arapagić, a merchant who gave 1 forint.<sup>91</sup>

Trade was mostly done by men who were ready to travel and face all the hardships of travel in that period. Although women would inherit the trade, especially if it was a whole-sale, they usually took their share of the profit on an annual basis and left the management to male family members.

## Conclusion

Being a merchant in the last decades of Ottoman rule in Bosnia meant that a person was over 20 years old, capable, and smart, which the law clearly specified. It is not possible to determine exactly how many merchants there were, but according to the available data, in Sarajevo as the most important shopping center, they made up more than 10% of the population, while this percentage was represented in Banja Luka, and Mostar. Trade was especially stimulated by the cotton trade, which during the Napoleonic Wars showed that trade was extremely profitable and introduced Sarajevo merchants to merchants outside the borders of the Ottoman state. The key change, however, occurred when the Tanzimat (which was a period of modernizing reform in the Ottoman Empire that began in 1839 and ended with the First Constitutional Era in 1876) tacitly and completely abolished the guild organization, which represented the protection of the rights of guild members but prevented faster development and open access. As part of the reforms, the Trade Act was adopted, according to which the work of merchants is regulated. The analysis of that law indicates that only those boys who worked as travelers, i.e. collected money or sold goods that were the property of the trading house, were indirectly mentioned. The largest part of the law was related to bankruptcy as

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89 H. Younis, *Od dućana do pozorišta*, 125.

90 ABiH, Ostavina Vladislava Skarića, defteri Hadžiristića, defter veresije 1855.

91 *Sarajevski list*, 1882, no. 101, 23. 8. 1882, p. 4.

a big problem that appeared in the last decades of Ottoman rule. The law regulated all the rights and obligations of both the merchant who declared bankruptcy and those merchants who had claimed from him. However, it was difficult to implement it in practice. Through the example of the trading house "Salamon Levi i sinovi," which declared false bankruptcy and ended up in prison but was obliged to pay only 40% of the debts, and the bankruptcy of the small merchant Teodor from Bijeljina, it was shown how it worked in practice.

Special attention is paid to the rights and obligations of boys, i.e. employees in trading houses. Analyzing the contracts they signed with the owners of the trading houses, it is noticeable that the contracts were signed for one year and that the salary was agreed upon during that period, but was paid monthly. It is also clear that the boys in the wholesale houses had twice the salaries of those in the small shops, but their responsibilities were also much higher. If they traveled, they were responsible for all the goods, but also for their accommodation and health condition, as well as the delay, which was extremely difficult to comply with, especially in winter conditions. Alongside the boys in the trading houses, some unpaid boys were obliged to do what the merchant ordered them to do, and he was obliged to introduce them into business. Such contracts were signed by the merchant and the parent of the child. How much was expected from such a boy and what kind of pressure was on him is illustrated through the example of Simo, a boy who worked in the "Jelić" wholesale house in Sarajevo and who hanged himself in the landlord's yard, after which he was buried without being reported to the authorities. The relationship between the shop owner and the boy was also shown through the example of Mihajlović, who has lost his honor and also lost the possibility of a "normal" life.

When it comes to women merchants, it is necessary to point out that they were there but in small numbers, mostly due to the need to travel and constant work. If they inherited a store, they occasionally took it over, but to the large extent, they simply received a percentage of the earnings that a male family member would give them while running the store. One of the rare merchants mentioned is Gjulhanuma Arapagić, who lived and worked in Kobaš.

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# The position of trade assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century

mag. Mehmed Hodžić

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**Abstract:** *Throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina's long past, trade represented one of the most important economic branches that enabled the economic and social development of the local population. This segment of human activity was also of exceptional importance to the Austro-Hungarian authorities, who, through special legal regulations, tried to improve, organize and bring under control all parts of this type of economy. Although traders were the main bearers of trade, in this work we strive to show the position of auxiliary trade workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, those who were employed in trade shops and acted according to the rules and orders of their bosses. The first part of the paper discusses the condition of the available original material that enables the reconstruction of the role and position of trade assistants, which is stored in the archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the second part of the work, using unpublished archival material, the press of that time, and reference literature, we will try to point out the basic features of the activities of trade assistants, the problems and difficulties they faced during their work, but also the activities they undertook to join together and try to improve their position, that is, the position of workers in the store.*

**Keywords:** *trade, trade assistants, Trade Employees Union, working hours, days off, trade course*

## Introductory remarks

Trade, as one of the oldest economic branches, with all its peculiarities is deeply rooted in the being of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It represented an important segment in its cultural and civilizational development, as well as social and economic prosperity. Throughout all historical eras, traders and trade were present in the territory of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina. With the progress and development of society, the norms of business and economy were developed and shaped, which were changed and perfected. Accordingly, centuries-old ways of trading have crystallized over time and formed according to the needs of the market. In the modern period, which we usually recognize in the context of time and space from the nineteenth century, traditional forms of trading have already taken on new contours, which have led to new ways of acquiring material profit.

The mainstay of the trade was represented by the trader. He was its bearer and, in addition to earning and providing a livelihood for himself and his family, he represented an important link in the chain of social business in general. Given that our intention in this paper is not to talk about trade as an economic branch, nor about the traders themselves,



but about trade assistants, i.e. the auxiliary workforce and their position, accordingly we will limit any detailed introduction to the story of trade, except as much as it will be necessary for understanding the topic we will deal with.

As expected, the topic and subject of our research lead to a chronological presentation of recognized elements of similarity, which can be observed through different epochs of Bosnia and Herzegovina's past. In the classical Ottoman period, the organization of the guild regulated the relationship between the master and the auxiliary worker, i.e. the craftsman or trader on the one hand and the apprentice or journeyman on the other, according to clearly established and applied rules.<sup>1</sup> It should be emphasized here that the student had a special dimension towards his teacher, who trained him in a trade and trained him for independent work and business. It was not the classic relationship between the boss and the auxiliary worker that we will talk about, but it points to the foundations from which the phenomenon that we are analyzing developed. According to the mentioned rules, it was clearly defined how the apprentice progresses in his education and acquires the title of master.<sup>2</sup> The abolition of the guild organization did not completely abolish the established and customary rules and norms of behavior, however, they underwent certain transformations due to the influx of more modern and contemporary ways of doing business.

During the nineteenth century, trade took on new patterns. In the last decades of Ottoman rule in Bosnia, the formation and establishment of a significant number of trading houses and the growth of a special layer of the trading elite took place. In such a development of events, the role and position of auxiliary trade staff, who were simply called *boys*, can be traced. They were usually young men who, as employees of trading houses, performed tasks on the orders of the store owners.<sup>3</sup> The relationship between the boss and the boy could be regulated orally or through a written contract. Some of them started their working life as little boys and were employed in the same trading house for years. It was common for them to come from rural areas. The range of their activities was extremely wide, so they did various jobs under the orders of the store owner, "from loading, unloading, shopping for the house, debt collection, carrying goods to various locations, taking inventory in the store, as well as arranging business on behalf of the trading house, but only in cases where they had permission to do so".<sup>4</sup> On these grounds, the position of trade assistants was developed, which in the following Austro-Hungarian period represented an element also present in the framework of trade activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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1 Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Izabrana djela II. Esnafi i obrti u Bosni i Hercegovini (1463-1878)*, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1991, pp. 59-62.

2 About how the ceremonies were held when an apprentice was declared a journeyman or a journeyman a master of a trade can be found in: Kerima Filan, "Iz svakodnevnice osmanskog Sarajeva: druženja i razonode", *Analizirani Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke*, volume 17, no. 31, Gazi Husrev Bey's Library, Sarajevo, 2010, pp. 113-120.

3 Hana Younis, *Od dućana do pozorišta. Sarajevska trgovačka elita 1851-1878*, University of Sarajevo – Institute of History, Sarajevo, 2017, pp. 175.

4 Younis, *Od dućana do pozorišta. Sarajevska trgovačka elita 1851-1878*, pp. 175.

The Austro-Hungarian authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina paid exceptional attention to the issue of trade, so following these special legal acts, they tried to regulate and arrange all segments of this activity.<sup>5</sup> These norms were valid for both traders and trade assistants as a special category, and any deviation from them meant acting against the law. Although trade in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries has been significantly mentioned in the historiography so far, there has not been much written about trade assistants as a special group of workers. Incidental references in the literature that treated the topics of the development of the labor movement and the organization and activities of the trade unions brought only basic information about the auxiliary trade staff and their role in the mentioned historical events and processes. For this reason, it is possible to write a paper that will primarily focus on trade assistants.

The main goal of this work is to show the role and position of trade assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of the nineteenth and in the first decades of the twentieth century. We intend to show what was the attitude of the traders towards the assistants, but also how the authorities reacted to the workers' requests and appeals, and ultimately how and to what extent the existing rules and legal norms protected the rights of the trade assistants. The data and information presented in this paper are the results of the research of available archival material, analysis and comparison of published sources and contemporary press, as well as historiographical achievements so far.



Sarajevo trader Jeftan Despić, a descendant of the famous trade family Despić, with his wife. (HAS, Zbirka fotografija (hereinafter: ZF), ZFR-1178)

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5 An extensive and important book about Austro-Hungarian trade policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina was written by Amila Kasumović. The book is a revised doctoral dissertation that the author defended at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Sarajevo in 2013. In it, trade legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period from 1878 to 1914 is described very detailed and studiously, with all its peculiarities, changes, and regulations. Also, the establishment and activities of the Chamber of Commerce and Crafts for Bosnia and Herzegovina were presented, as well as the establishment, organization, and work of trade schools and the Trade Academy in Sarajevo. Look: Amila Kasumović, *Austrougarska trgovinska politika u Bosni i Hercegovini 1878-1914*, Association for Modern History, Sarajevo, 2016.

## Condition of the original material

The original material stored in archives and other scientific and cultural institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina allows us to learn a lot of information about the trade of the Austro-Hungarian period. The previous historiography has used this fact sufficiently. Many archival funds and collections contain valuable data used to create an overall picture of the Austro-Hungarian trade policy, trade legislation, and conducting trade in the field. However, if we are talking about the original material that can be used to reconstruct the position of trade assistants, then we should point out the scarcity of the original material and its inferiority concerning the previously mentioned data on trade in general. The focus of various funds and collections on trading houses are the traders themselves, their activity on the market, and the creation of economic profit. Sporadically, very rarely, one can find some information that talks about auxiliary trade staff or indicates their position.

Although to a smaller extent, there are preserved and available sources that provide the possibility of presenting the position of trade assistants at the end of the nineteenth and in the first decades of the twentieth century. Thanks to them, in the second part of the paper, we tried to present basic information about trade assistants and point out the problems they encountered in their workplace. Analyzing the available lists of archival material in the archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it can be concluded that there is a very small number of funds that contain the necessary information in the context of the topic of this work. We will present them below.

The Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina preserves material created by the activities of the National Government for Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period from 1878 to 1918. This archival fund, *the National Government for Bosnia and Herzegovina – Sarajevo (1879-1918)*, is one of the most important for understanding and reconstructing Bosnia and Herzegovina's past in the Austro-Hungarian period, so we also consulted this material for our topic. A smaller number of documents stored in this fund could serve us to show the position of the trade assistants. They are presented in the form of petitions sent to the National Government to solve certain problems that the assistants were facing. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, an extremely large number of preserved documents talk about trade in general, laws and rules, the work of trade schools, and the like.

Another important archival fund that we used and which provides important information about trade assistants was created by the work of the Association of Traders for the City and County of Sarajevo. It is stored in the Historical Archive of Sarajevo. This association was founded in 1906 with the aim of binding traders together and improving trade traffic, so these topics are dominantly present in the structure. Only a small part of the fund deals with the period until the end of the Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the majority of the material refers to the period from 1920 to 1948. The data contained in this fund talk about the working hours of trade assistants, the relationship between boss and worker, the issue of using days off, and the like. In addition to these two, there are other archival funds and collections in the mentioned, but also in other Bosnian and Herzegovina

archives, which preserve material related to trade or trading houses and families.<sup>6</sup> However, by looking at the available inventories, it can be seen that chronologically this material does not cover the period that this paper treats, but the later one, and even in the one that refers to the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, there is no mention of trade assistants.

In addition to unpublished archival material, an important source for our topic is the press of that time. Compared to archival sources, it provides much more information and data about trade assistants. And yet, these are mainly professional and workers' magazines, which tried to popularize the issue of the workers' position and the problems they encountered. The official gazettes did not provide information on the position of trade workers and their condition to such an extent, but only sporadically.

*Glas slobode*, the body of the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the most famous workers' newspaper, is the paper that, compared to all the others published in that period, published the most articles in which it dealt with the problems and the difficult position of assistants in shops. After the general strike of workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1906, the National Government in Sarajevo allowed the launch of a workers' paper called *Radnik*. However, the paper was not launched then, but in 1909, as *Glas slobode*.<sup>7</sup> It was published from 1909 to 1929, when it was banned, except for 1915 and 1916, when it was not printed due to wartime circumstances. It was originally published once a week, and then, depending on the period, it was printed two or three times a week, and as a diary.<sup>8</sup> *Glas slobode* represents an extremely important source for the study of the history of the labor movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and accordingly for the reconstruction of the position of trade assistants. In its articles, it provided descriptions of the difficult working conditions in trade shops, highlighted the efforts of assistants to improve their position, and pointed to the need for an association to exercise workers' rights more easily, but also criticized those trade assistants who did not want to take a greater engagement in the field of the

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6 Such funds and collections, apart from the Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Historical Archive of Sarajevo, are stored in the Archive of the Tuzla Canton in Tuzla, the Archive of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton/County in Mostar, the Archive of the Central Bosnia Canton in Travnik and the Archive of the Republic of Srpska in Banja Luka and Doboj. They preserve the materials of various Chambers of Commerce, artisan and craft associations, trade families, houses and companies, and catering and tourist organizations. The largest part of this material refers to the socialist period of Bosnia and Herzegovina's past. In the Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the fund of the *Chamber of Commerce and Crafts for Bosnia and Herzegovina* is also archived, which to a lesser extent can be used to describe the position of trade assistants.

7 Ibrahim Karabegović, "Glas slobode od 1909-1929. godine i njegov značaj za proučavanje istorije radničkog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini", *Prilozi*, year II, no. 2, Institute for the History of the Labor Movement Sarajevo, Sarajevo, 1966, pp. 30-32.

8 Đorđe Pejanović, *Bibliografija štampe Bosne i Hercegovine 1850-1941*, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1961, pp. 68-69.

aforementioned activities. *Glas slobode* was a workers', but first of all, a socialist newspaper, and it should be analyzed and understood in that context, and the end – used with caution as a historical source.

Another newspaper that can serve as a source for our topic to a greater extent is the *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik*. This professional journal was published in Sarajevo in the period from 1911 to 1914 when it was shut down due to wartime circumstances. It was printed once a month, sometimes as a double issue. In the subtitle it had *A newspaper for trade, crafts, and cultural and economic development of the people*.<sup>9</sup> *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik* was a “class” gazette whose primary goal was to promote and improve the position of traders and artisans, as well as the affirmation of the improvement of trade operations. It mentions trade assistants in the context of their demands to reduce the length of working hours and to join the trade assistants’ union. Considering that it represented the interests of traders, in some articles it speaks indirectly against shop assistants, pointing out how they can work against their boss, to harm his shop. And yet, although, unlike the *Glas slobode*, the articles in the *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik* are much rarer and of a specific character, they are important for understanding our topic.

Other Bosnian-Herzegovinian press from the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century deals with this issue in a smaller number of cases, so it is analyzed and presented in this paper to that extent. An exception may be *Sarajevski list*, the official gazette of the National Government for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which provides more information about trade assistants. However, they do not talk about the position of assistants or their labor rights from a social aspect but show certain sequences from their daily life, which is still useful for creating an overall picture.



The cover of the first issue of the *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik za Bosnu i Hercegovinu* from September 1911.

9 Pejanović, *Bibliografija štampe Bosne i Hercegovine*, pp. 78.

The position of trade assistants in the period covered by this paper appeared sporadically as a research topic in the previous literature, within the framework of more extensive research on workers, the development of the labor movement, and the establishment and activities of the trade union movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In such studies, one can find some information about the association of trade assistants in the Trade Employees Union and its activities until the beginning of the First World War. These were activities aimed at reducing the duration of working hours and improving working conditions. As a study entirely devoted to this issue, the work *Sa nepoznatih stranica. Trgovinski i ugostiteljski radnici Bosne i Hercegovine u borbi za svoja prava* (Eng. *From Unknown Pages. Trade and catering workers of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the fight for their rights*),<sup>10</sup> which is a collection of documentary articles from the history of the struggle of these two trade unions, to improve the living conditions of their members, should be highlighted.<sup>11</sup> It only talks about the time of the Austro-Hungarian rule to a small extent, while the period between the two world wars is covered more in detail. The main shortcoming of this monograph is the weak use of archival materials compared to the labor press, whose articles served as the authors' basic source. For this reason, our work can represent a kind of contribution to the study of this issue, given the significantly larger archival base. With this overview of the condition of the original material, we tried to present, in brief, how far the available sources enable the realization of the set topic. In the second part of the paper, using exactly them, we will try to reconstruct the position of trade assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

## About the position of trade assistants at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries

### a) Establishment of the Trade Employees Union

Trade was an extremely important economic activity for the Austro-Hungarian government, therefore they took significant measures with the aim of better control, organization, and supervision. After the occupation in 1878, the earlier Ottoman laws were valid for a while, however, the drafting of the new Commercial Law for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was promulgated in 1883, has begun soon.<sup>12</sup> In the context of the topic of our work, this law is of exceptional importance, considering that it recognized and confirmed trade assistants as a special category. Seven articles of this law regulated the rights and obligations of trade assistants, their relationship with employers, the issue of salary and paid leave, and the

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<sup>10</sup> *Sa nepoznatih stranica. Trgovinski i ugostiteljski radnici Bosne i Hercegovine u borbi za svoja prava*, Sindikat trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije, Republički odbor za SR Bosnu i Hercegovinu, Sarajevo, 1964, pp. 362.

<sup>11</sup> A detailed presentation of the study *Sa nepoznatih stranica*, authored by Uroš Nedimović, can be found in: *Prilozi*, year II, number 2, Institute for the History of the Labor Movement Sarajevo, Sarajevo, 1966, pp. 450-455.

<sup>12</sup> Kasumović, *Austrougarska trgovinska politika u Bosni i Hercegovini 1878-1914*, pp. 46-50.

notice period.<sup>13</sup> What is important to point out, and what was foreseen in Article 58, is that the trader and the assistant concluded the contract by “free bargaining”, which means that the amount of salary, working hours and other specific relations were different from case to case.<sup>14</sup> In this way, the trader as an employer had complete freedom in setting conditions.

Taking into account this state of affairs, there were various problems in the relationship between the boss and the assistant, difficult working conditions in shops, and restrictions on workers' rights. In one of its articles, *Glas slobode* presented the following characterization of a trade assistant: “A trade assistant is a white slave of the 20th century. He is a victim of capitalism – who is so oppressed – that he does not have the consciousness to see how sad he is being exploited.”<sup>15</sup> For this reason, and under the influence of the creation and activities of other professional organizations, trade assistants decided to found their organization to jointly seek their rights through it. Traders had previously founded their associations to protect their interests, which in some segments was at the expense of the support staff. One of them was the *Udruženje bakalskih i špecerajskih trgovaca za Bosnu i Hercegovinu* (Eng. *Association of Grocers for Bosnia and Herzegovina*). From the preserved documentation of this company, it can be seen that certain funds were spent on auxiliary workers.<sup>16</sup> Trade assistants had several associations, established on a national basis and jointly with employers.<sup>17</sup> Seeing that they could not achieve much if they are divided, and them being prompted by various reasons such as “long working hours, low wages and various harassments”, they decided to convene an assembly and agree on joint action.<sup>18</sup> In this way, the Trade Employees Union was founded at the beginning of August 1909. Its task was to work on improving the condition of all trade employees or assistants regardless of their religious or national affiliation, considering that all trade assistants had an equal interest.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the Union was supposed to “comprehensively protect the interests of its members and to work on their social, mental, moral and material strengthening”, so it was a part of the Central Workers' Union, recognizing its rules and regulations.<sup>20</sup> The fact that the Austro-Hungarian government did not look favorably on these activities shows the fact that it did not want to confirm the rules of the Union

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13 *Zbornik zakona i naredaba za Bosnu i Hercegovinu, Trgovački zakon za Bosnu i Hercegovinu (Odobren Previšnjom odlukom od 7. juna 1883., oglašen zemaljskom vladom za Bosnu i Hercegovinu dana 24. juna 1883., broj 4173/III.)*, Zemaljska tiskara, Sarajevo, 1883, pp. 323-325.

14 *Zbornik zakona i naredaba za Bosnu i Hercegovinu, Trgovački zakon za Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, pp. 323.

15 “Šta je trgovački pomoćnik”, *Glas slobode*, no. 71, October 20, 1910, pp. 3.

16 The Historical Archive of Sarajevo (hereinafter: HAS), Fond Udruženje trgovaca za grad i srez sarajevski (hereinafter: UTGSS), Glavna knjiga Udruženja bakalskih i špecerajskih trgovaca za BiH, 1911-1914, pp. 8.

17 “Trgovačke omladine i zanatlijska društva”, *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik*, no. 7, 1912, pp. 97.

18 *Sa nepoznatih stranica*, pp. 14.

19 “Savez trgovačkih namještenika”, *Glas slobode*, no. 1, January 1, 1910, pp. 6.

20 “Savez trgovačkih namještenika u Bosni i Hercegovini”, *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik*, no. 2, 1911, pp. 31.

even nine months after they were sent to the National Government, which was a common practice, despite numerous urgings to do so.<sup>21</sup>

One of the basic tasks of the Union was to encourage as many trade assistants as possible to join this association. The largest part of the membership was concentrated in Sarajevo and until the beginning of the First World War the influence of the Union did not significantly spread to other places.<sup>22</sup> The workers' press was a means of informing the population about the position of trade assistants, but also of recruiting them to join:

Anyone who observes the conditions of trade employees will see that they are very rusty, just so that they could not be worse. The working hours last from 12-14 hours, and it often happens that person works 1-2 hours per night without any special payment. The work itself is very tiring because trade employees have to stand on their feet all day, run up and down the stairs, and carry boxes and other goods, which are often very heavy. What's worse is that they are exposed to harassment from both the employer and the audience. Most of the shops here are unhealthy, there is no question of hygiene, the heavy dust has a killer effect, so the trade assistants came out of the store completely exhausted. For this, they all have a poor salary of 80-120 kroner. When everything is taken together, it can be seen that the condition of trade assistants is not enviable at all. The only salvation and way out of this unbearable situation are in the organization. Trade assistants should embrace their union, because only through it and fighting they will be able to improve their condition.<sup>23</sup>

Milan R. Pupiċ, the secretary of the Trade Employees Union, has repeatedly advertised through the press and appealed to trade assistants to join the Union. In one article, he stated that there is no justification for the weak response of the assistants if they want their position, which he equated to that of slaves, to improve and their demands to be respected.<sup>24</sup> In rare places of the province, however, there was a significant movement of trade assistants where, like Banja Luka, branches of the Union were also established.<sup>25</sup> That the listed appeals

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21 "Šta je s pravilima trgovaċkih namještenika?", *Glas slobode*, no. 29, June 8, 1910, pp. 3.

22 Ilija Hadžibegović, *Postanak radniċke klase u Bosni i Hercegovini i njen razvoj do 1914. godine*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1980, pp. 329.

23 "Iz krugova trgovaċkih pomoćnika", *Glas slobode*, no. 81, December 7, 1910, pp. 4.

24 "Trgovaċkim pomoćnicima u Bosni i Hercegovini", *Glas slobode*, no. 11, January 23, 1912, pp. 4; "Zašto je potrebna organizacija trgovaċkih pomoćnika", *Glas slobode*, no. 21, February 15, 1912, pp. 4.

25 At the assembly of trade assistants in Banja Luka, it was concluded that their position is "miserable" since "trade assistants have been exploited more than wage earners themselves, because the latter, among other things, have their working hours regulated, while trade assistants are still left to this day to the arbitrariness of their bosses, who have no compassion towards their assistants, because with them, in the matter of profit, all human feeling ceases." "Sa skupštine trgovaċkih pomoćnika", *Glas slobode*, no. 30, April 19, 1911, pp. 4. Apart from Banja Luka, a more significant trade assistant movement has



were not particularly successful is also shown by the number of members over the years:

YEAR	NUMBER OF UNION MEMBERS
1911	107
1912	171
1913	110
1919	118

Table no. 1. Number of members of the Trade Employees Union.<sup>26</sup>

That the figures presented are extremely low is also confirmed by the fact that the total number of trade assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina during 1913 amounted to 2,028.<sup>27</sup> The small membership was undoubtedly a consequence of the fact that the Trade Employees Union was organized and led by socialists and that it was part of trade union organizations in the country. This caused many traditionally oriented assistants to continue to be attached to national and confessional associations.



Advertisement in the press in which a trade assistant is looking for employment. (Glas slobode, 1910, no. 35)

After large workers' demonstrations on May 1, 1913, the government introduced a state of emergency. All labor organizations were dissolved, including the Trade Employees Union. After the government's harsh measures eased, at the beginning of October of the same year, its work was renewed, now under the name of the Trade Assistants and Private Clerks Union.<sup>28</sup> This happened thanks to the fusion of the Union with the Association of Private Clerks, which led to a new name. However, as the First World War began in the following year,

also happened in Bijeljina, where a branch was also organized. „Sa skupštine trgovačkih i privatnih namještenika“, *Glas slobode*, no. 64, October 8, 1910, pp. 1-2.

26 Hadžibegović, *Postanak radničke klase u Bosni i Hercegovini i njen razvoj do 1914. godine*, pp. 326; Nedim Šarac, "Kratak pregled razvoja pojedinih strukovnih saveza do 1919. godine", *Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini 1905-1975*, Vijeće saveza sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine. Fond za izučavanje istorije sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini "Mičo Sokolović", Sarajevo, 1977, pp. 100.

27 "Sreske bolesničke blagajne u godini 1913", *Sarajevski list*, no. 304, December 10, 1914, pp. 4.

28 Šarac, *Sindikalni pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini do 1919. godine*, pp. 171.

the activity again came to a standstill, given that labor organizations stopped working, and many workers were mobilized into the army, including trade assistants. Work resumed again at the end of 1918, when a temporary administration was elected with the task of renewing work, gathering the old membership, and preparing to hold an election conference.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the Union welcomed the end of the Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the emergence of the common state of the South Slavs. For the entire time of its existence, within the chronological framework of the topic of this paper, the Union has been fighting for the improvement of the position of trade assistants, which we will talk about more in detail through various thematic units.

## b) Working hours

One of the main issues, the positive solution to which the attention of trade workers was directed, is the length of working hours. Earlier we stated that this issue was regulated by the agreement of the trader and the assistant in the Commercial Law for Bosnia and Herzegovina. That there were different examples of work in inhuman conditions in this field is also shown by the case of an assistant in P. Krisch's shop in Sarajevo, who started work at five in the morning and closed the shop at eleven in the evening.<sup>30</sup> Other examples also testified that the working day was too long, and the workload for the trade assistant was extremely high. Therefore, initiatives to shorten working hours were launched quite early. Among the first such requests was the request of trade assistants from Banja Luka, who already in 1904 requested the National Government to pass an order on the closing of shops at one o'clock in the afternoon on Sundays and on days when saints are celebrated, so that they too could go to church and temples for prayer.<sup>31</sup>

Among the first activities of the Trade Employees Union after its establishment was the action to close shops at 7 p.m. Trade assistants demanded traders limit the duration of working hours in this way and thanks to their joint action, employers agreed to their request.<sup>32</sup> However, it was quickly established that many traders did not comply with the agreement and that the shops remained open beyond the agreed time. This caused a sort of rebellion by assistants who organized demonstrations in front of these shops, trying to force their owners to close. There was also an intervention by the police, who arrested several assistants, and some of them suffered injuries as a result of the use of force.<sup>33</sup> To solve this issue effectively through the Chamber of Commerce and Crafts, which in principle represented the interests of traders, a request was sent to the authorities to legally introduce the end of working hours

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29     *Sa nepoznatih stranica*, pp. 41.

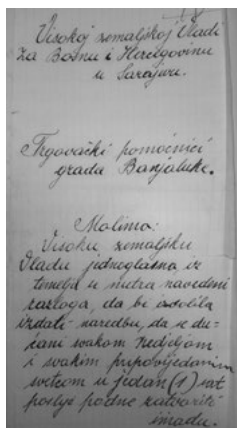
30     "20 sati dnevnog rada!", *Glas slobode*, no. 71, November 2, 1910, pp. 3.

31     Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: ABIH), Fond Zemaljska vlada za Bosnu i Hercegovinu – Sarajevo (1879-1918) (hereinafter: ZVS), 1904, box no. 169, shelfmark no. 197-28/2.

32     "Sedmo-satno zatvaranje trgovina", *Glas slobode*, no. 1, January 1, 1910, pp. 6.

33     Šarac, *Sindikalni pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini do 1919. godine*, pp. 122.

at 7 p.m. in shops.<sup>34</sup> The persistence of the workers bore fruit when the National Government accepted this request and issued an order to close shops at the specified time. This was certainly contributed to by the simultaneous efforts of the Austrian trade assistants in Vienna who demanded the same thing.<sup>35</sup>



Facsimile of the request of trade assistants from Banja Luka sent to the National Government in 1904 intending to reduce working hours. (ABiH, ZVS, 1904, box no. 169, shelfmark no. 197-28)

Traders did not look favorably to this development. Many of them resisted such an idea, although over time and in accordance with the existing order, they gave away, so in the end the official attitude of the *Bosnia and Herzegovina trading association* was positive.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, the previously mentioned *Association of Grocers* emphasized its “permanent effort to change the order on closing shops”.<sup>37</sup> The biggest drawback of this decision of the National Government was that the order only applied to the city of Sarajevo. Therefore, there were movements in other places as well, as evidenced by the request of trade assistants from Tuzla who demanded the closing of shops at 7 p.m.<sup>38</sup> The shortening of working hours represented the first victory achieved by the Trade Employees Union. It gave its membership the drive and energy to persevere in achieving other workers’ rights.

34 “Zatvaranje trgovina u sedam sati”, *Glas slobode*, no. 4, January 21, 1910, pp. 3.

35 “Uspjeh trgovačkih pomoćnika”, *Glas slobode*, no. 38, July 9, 1910, pp. 3. According to the provisions of this order, all those who ignore it and violate it could be fined 500 kroner or imprisoned for up to six weeks. “Naredba vladina o zatvaranju radnja”, *Glas slobode*, no. 43, July 27, 1910, pp. 3-4.

36 *Izveštaj bosansko-hercegovačkog trgovačkog društva u Sarajevu za godinu 1911*, Tiskara “Sarajevoer tagblatt”, Sarajevo, 1912, pp. 38-39.

37 “Skupština bakalskih i špecer. trgovaca”, *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik*, no. 2, 1912, pp. 28.

38 “Pokret u Tuzli za zatvaranje radnja u 7 sati”, *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik*, no. 8, 1913, pp. 106.

### c) Days off

Another important issue related to the improvement of the position of trade assistants was related to days off. According to the order of the National Government from 1907, trade assistants had the right to a weekly rest, Muslims on Fridays, Jews on Saturdays, and Christians on Sundays. In practice, this order was not implemented, so the Trade Employees Union strove for a uniform weekly rest for all assistants. It was determined that that day would be Sunday.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, the main discussions that were held at the assemblies of the Union were related to this issue.<sup>40</sup> A letter was sent to Sarajevo traders with a request for a non-working Sunday. Of the 50 to whom this request was sent, 40 stated that they accept to close the shops on Sunday. There was a far greater number of those who opposed this idea, especially Muslim traders, justifying such an attitude with religious arguments. An open discord between traders and assistants occurred at a joint assembly in April 1913. The traders were against the request, so after a sharp discussion and verbal conflict, they demonstratively left the meeting. In its report to the National Government, the *Association of Grocers* labeled this assembly as illegal, considering that all its possible conclusions have no "legal significance".<sup>41</sup> And yet, the Union managed to work with some traders to submit a request to the Government to legally determine Sunday as a non-working day for all assistants.<sup>42</sup> The state of war and the cessation of all labor activities slowed down these activities as well, and such a decision was not made until the end of the Austro-Hungarian rule. However, the order for a day off during the week was in force at all times.

That it was still not fully respected is also shown by the fact that some trade assistants worked without a day off. Therefore, in the middle of 1914, the Union passed a protest resolution stating that the weekly rest order was not being carried out, and sent a request to the government commissioner for the city of Sarajevo with the aim of taking concrete measures to resolve this issue.<sup>43</sup> Due to the specificity of the market in this city and the extremely important trade in plums, the traders of Brčko asked the Joint Ministry of Finance in Vienna to allow half-time work on Fridays for Muslims and Sundays for others during a certain period of the year. In order not to conflict with the existing order, the Ministry accepted this request, with the condition that employers give trade assistants half a day off on the other day of the week or one full day every fifteen days.<sup>44</sup> In this way, the government met the re-

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39 *Sa nepoznatih stranica*, pp. 28.

40 In one invitation to the assembly of the Trade Employees Union, which had the item "Sunday rest" on the agenda, it was stated: "Comrades! Trade employees! We can only achieve weekly rest through a strong class organization! That's why: Let's all get in line without distinction so that by fighting together we win what rightfully belongs to us." "Pozor trgovački namještenici!", *Glas slobode*, no. 37, May 13, 1911, pp. 4.

41 ABiH, ZVS, 1913, box no. 660, shelfmark no. 214-40/7.

42 *Sa nepoznatih stranica*, pp. 37.

43 "Savez trgovačkih namještenika i privatnih činovnika za Bosnu i Hercegovinu", *Sarajevski list*, no. 114, June 6, 1914, pp. 2.

44 "Dan odmora u Brčkom", *Trgovački glasnik*, no. 11, 1912, pp. 165.

quest, affirmed the plum trade, which was extremely important to it but also respected the assistants' right to Sunday rest.

The example of Milka Simić, a trader from Brčko, shows how much individual traders tried to limit the rights of their trade assistants. She asked the authorities that her assistant Cvjetko Damjanović be exempted from the jurisdiction of the order on the day off, given that she was left a widow with four children and that because of taking care of them she cannot work in the store, and for this reason, her store "will completely fail". The city district administration asked the city administration in Brčko to investigate the case more in detail. It was established that Milka Simić owns a well-established grocery store, that in addition to Damjanović, she has two assistants and an apprentice, and that she has three children aged 20, 14, and 9.<sup>45</sup> The Joint Ministry of Finance did not allow the cancellation of the day off for assistant Damjanović, stating that there is no justified reason for it, given that his right to vacation does not cause any inconvenience to Milka Simić, nor does her business suffer any damage as a result.<sup>46</sup>

The issue of a day off on Sundays was also relevant in the common state after the First World War. The traders still tried to keep their shops open that day, despite the ban on working on Sundays. The representative of the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce spoke about it:

If we are talking about the issue of regulating working hours in shops, I think that it is necessary to highlight the special circumstances in certain areas... in these areas, shops with more assistants are the only exceptions... The issue of work and working hours in such shops is certainly more economic than social because the number of trade employees in such stores is so minimal, that when regulating this issue, the social interests of the workers – customers, rather than those employed in the shop itself, must be taken into account.<sup>47</sup>

This example, although chronologically outside the scope of the topic of this paper, is important because it shows how the right of trade assistants to a day off was continuously tried to be usurped even in newly created circumstances. It is all more problematic considering that a small number of trade assistants in certain places and the willingness of customers to trade on that day was taken for the argument for working on Sundays. This issue was, therefore, very topical in the struggle of trade assistants for a better position.

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45 A BiH, ZVS, 1913, box no. 660, shelfmark no. 214-40/18.

46 A BiH, ZVS, 1913, box no. 660, shelfmark no. 214-40/14.

47 HAS, UTGSS, box no. 1, Predlog pretstavnika TOI komore iz Ljubljane g. Albina Smrkolja po pitanju nedeljnog poslovanja u trgovačkim radnjama, pp. 1-2.

#### d) Courses for trade assistants and apprentices

Since the development of trade depended on the education of trade personnel, the Austro-Hungarian authorities opened a large number of trade schools already in the first years. Until 1886, they were opened in Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Tuzla, Bihać, Brčko, Livno, and Bijeljina.<sup>48</sup> In the context of our topic, the establishment of courses for trade assistants and apprentices, which were organized at existing trade schools, is important. As the assistants did not have a formal trade education, these courses aimed to train them in theoretical knowledge as well.<sup>49</sup> Some of the subjects studied were trade accounting, bookkeeping, stylistics, trade correspondence, and commodity science.<sup>50</sup> The leaders of these courses were obliged to send reports on their work to the National Government. Information on the number of participants and achieved success is obtained from this documentation.<sup>51</sup> Considering that a smaller number of trade assistants and apprentices attended this course, the idea arose that employers should force their employees to attend the course.<sup>52</sup> Apart from Sarajevo, these courses were also organized in other places of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Mostar, lectures were held in the evening from 7 to 9 p.m., so that trade assistants could attend classes after the end of working hours.<sup>53</sup> This was primarily in the interest of the traders, who did not want the assistant to be absent from the shop during working hours. And in the following period, they protested against the courses that were held during the day by order of the authorities, considering the evening sessions to be a better option.<sup>54</sup> We can see that the interest of the trade auxiliary staff in these activities was not particularly pronounced. Hard work in the store certainly contributed to this, so the hours after the end of working hours were used for rest and relaxation.

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- 48 Hadžibegović, *Postanak radničke klase u Bosni i Hercegovini i njen razvoj do 1914*, pp. 91. Amila Kasumović wrote extensively about the opening, organization and operation of trade schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Look: Kasumović, *Austrougarska trgovinska politika u Bosni i Hercegovini 1878-1914*, pp. 176-179, 221-225, 303-311; Amila Kasumović, "Austrougarska trgovačka politika i obrazovanje: trgovačke škole u Bosni i Hercegovini (1878-1914)", *Historijska traganja*, no. 14, Institute of History Sarajevo, Sarajevo, 2014, pp. 119-158.
- 49 "Trgovačka stručna škola u Sarajevu", *Glas slobode*, no. 63, October 5, 1910, pp. 3; Kasumović, *Austrougarska trgovačka politika i obrazovanje*, pp. 144.
- 50 "Tečaj obrazovanja za trgovačke šegre i pomoćnike", *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik*, no. 4, 1912, pp. 50.
- 51 ABiH, ZVS, 1918, box no. 232, shelfmark nos. 76-151/2, 76-151/3, 76-151/4.
- 52 "Sjednica trgovačko-obrtničke komore", *Sarajevski list*, no. 221, October 9, 1912, pp. 3.
- 53 "Trgovački kurs", *Novi Vakaf*, no. 25, September 27, 1913, pp. 3-4.
- 54 HAS, UTGSS, box no. 3, Zapisnik XI redovne glavne godišnje skupštine Trgovačkog Udruženja za grad Sarajevo i sarajevsku oblast, pp. 6-7.



Advertisement for the “Radošević and comrade” shop. (*Glas slobode*, 1914, no. 2)

### e) Women as trade assistants

As much as the position of trade assistants was difficult and very often characterized by inhuman working conditions, the position of women trade assistants was far more burdened with problems, and insecure. At its assembly at the beginning of 1910, the Trade Employees Union extensively analyzed and discussed the condition of female assistants. On that occasion, it was established that “the position of the female sex is worse than that of the male” and that “it is the duty of the union to try, with all possible forces, for female employees to join the organization”. It was especially pointed out that employers pay female assistants less and try to make maximum use of them as cheaper labor compared to men.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it was concluded that a live agitation should be carried out so that women assistants in trade shops would join the Union. How successful it was is also shown by the fact that at the end of 1912, out of a total of 171 members of the Union, there were 19 women trade assistants, which means more than 10%.<sup>56</sup> During this period, the *Sarajevski list* published an article in which it presented the case of an assistant in Berlin, who was dismissed from her job without notice, all because the trader thought that she was “very unsympathetic-looking” and that the customers did not want her to serve them. After this girl sued the employer, the court adjudicated in her favor, stating that he was obliged to comply with the notice period.<sup>57</sup> The original material does not mention similar cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we cannot be completely sure whether the newspaper wanted to tell domestic traders to treat their assistants fairly with this text.

As well as for male assistants, a course was organized for women in Sarajevo.<sup>58</sup> The founder of this “One-year trade-professional course for girls” was *the Bosnian-Herzegovinian*

55 “Skupština trgovačkih namještenika”, *Glas slobode*, no. 8, February 18, 1910, pp. 3.

56 *Sa nepoznatih stranica*, pp. 27.

57 “Antipatična pomoćnica”, *Sarajevski list*, no. 197, September 9, 1912, pp. 3.

58 “Trgovački tečaj za djevojke”, *Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik*, no. 1, 1912, pp. 11. Relatively late, girls received permission to regularly attend trade schools, and even when it was granted, it was conducted under special conditions. See more details about it: Kasumović, *Austrougarska trgovačka politika i obrazovanje*, pp. 145. Therefore, the organization of this course was a positive step forward in the education of Bosnian girls.

*trade association*, which believed that women proved to be very suitable assistants in the trade, so it wanted to provide them with a better trade-professional education.<sup>59</sup> The National government gave the association a special subsidy, so that it could cover the costs of the course, and the school fees were paid by the candidates themselves.<sup>60</sup> The available sources allowed us to briefly highlight the position of trade assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the twentieth century. A more detailed reconstruction and creation of a picture of the everyday problems of these women is prevented by the lack of available archival material.

#### **f) Dashes from the everyday life of trade assistants**

In this last subsection of the work, we will try to present certain segments from the daily life of trade assistants. It was stated earlier that most of them worked in difficult conditions, for low pay and overtime, with constant uncertainty as to whether the employer would respect the existing work orders and the provisions of the signed contract. In such circumstances, some assistants did their work for many years. For example, Aleksa Mitrović from Sarajevo was a trade assistant for ten years and if he had not been arrested due to illegal political activities, he would certainly have continued to do his job.<sup>61</sup>

Some of the assistants sought not to be auxiliary staff forever and to join the trade class. The following two examples show the success and failure of such intentions. In 1882, Mijo Babić started working as a trade assistant in Sarajevo in the hardware store of Racher and Weiss. With his “hard work and trade skill” he managed to open his own store in 1886. That he was successful in business is also confirmed by the fact that he also opened an ironworks factory in the Sarajevo field, and became one of Sarajevo’s most famous traders.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, Izidor Danon was a trade assistant in various shops in Sarajevo for many years. At the beginning of 1910, he opened a manufacturing shop, but after only ten months he went bankrupt. The shop was closed, and he owed twenty thousand kroner to his associates. Because of this, the District Court in Sarajevo sentenced him to prison.<sup>63</sup> The Trade Employees Union did not view such activities of individuals with sympathy. It even told them

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59 ABiH, ZVS, 1914, box no. 208 C, shelfmark no. 76-251.

60 ABiH, ZVS, 1914, box no. 208 C, shelfmark no. 76-251/3. The participants of the first generation of this course were: Altaraz Bukica, Levi Eleonora, Orliček Mila, Pešek Stefanija, Philipović Micika, Richter Valerija – all from Sarajevo, then Yull-Stuart Ivana and Yull-Stuart Luiza from Maglaj, Štagljar Kornelija from Tuzla, Hochmayer Ludmila from Pisarovina, Jawor Wanda from Zvornik, Kašparec Ružica and Löwy Simha from Mostar, Petrović Gospava from Bosanska Gradiška, Rapp Anka from Blažuj, Rosenrauch Sabina from Kimpolong, Srnez Ančika from Zenica, Schaffer Jelka Daniela from Mitrovica, Šomek Franjka from Stolac and Zorec Elza from Graz. Martinek Micika from Sarajevo, Matulić Kalypso from Makarska, and Mihajlović Anka from Tuzla were enrolled but left the course due to sickness. ABiH, ZVS, 1914, box no. 208 C, shelfmark no. 76-251/2.

61 *Sarajevski list*, no. 21, January 26, 1916, pp. 2.

62 *Sarajevski list*, no. 26, March 1, 1896, pp. 2-3.

63 *Večernji sarajevski list*, no. 64, March 7, 1912, pp. 2.



through the press to “throw out of their heads that today something can be created out of nothing” and become “independent”.<sup>64</sup>

One of the activities that trade assistants organized independently or in the organization of the Union was parties. They were very successful and voluntary contributions were collected for the association's fund. The *Glas slobode* described these events positively and emphasized the Union's effort to “give its members opportunities to entertain”.<sup>65</sup> Trade assistants also took part in voluntary actions to collect financial aid for the poor. Thus, the assistant Šandor Babić gave two kroner of contribution to the poor students of the school in Vrnograč near Velika Kladuša,<sup>66</sup> and the assistant Emin Osmanović gave the same amount to the students of the school in Drinjača near Zvornik.<sup>67</sup> As an association, the Trade Employees Union also participated in such activities. It is recorded that it contributed fifty kroner from its fund for sanitary aid during the First World War.<sup>68</sup>



Announcement of a party with a dance organized by the Trade Employees Union in 1912. (*Glas slobode*, 1912, no. 30)

With the beginning of the First World War, the everyday life of trade assistants changed. The activities of the Union were interrupted, and high prices, shortages, and low wages affected an already difficult life. Many trade assistants were mobilized into the army. For this reason, the National Government addressed the Chamber of Commerce and Crafts with a question of whether it believes that a special regulation, like the one already proclaimed in Hungary, should be adopted, which would guarantee the return of trade assistants to their workplaces upon arrival from the front.<sup>69</sup> The Chamber responded positively to this inquiry:

By issuing such an order, trade assistants, who are now performing military duty, are relieved of their worries about survival after the end of the war. In addition, the possibility

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64 “Sa javne skupštine trgovačkih namještenika”, *Glas slobode*, no. 86, November 1, 1911, pp. 3.

65 “Zabava trgovačkih namještenika u Tuzli”, *Glas slobode*, no. 19, May 3, 1910, pp. 3; “Zabava Saveza trg. namještenika za B. i H.”, *Glas slobode*, no. 22, March 15, 1911, pp. 3.

66 *Sarajevski list*, no. 25, March 4, 1903, pp. 4.

67 *Sarajevski list*, no. 38, March 31, 1905, pp. 3.

68 *Sarajevski list*, no. 226, September 23, 1914, pp. 2.

69 ABiH, ZVS, 1916, box no. 332, shelfmark no. 209-33.

is not ruled out that there will be a large number of principals [employers, traders, etc.] one by one, for whom provisions will be necessary that he must hire the former assistant.<sup>70</sup>

In September 1916, the Joint Ministry of Finance issued an order regulating this issue. Some of the key provisions were: 1) the trader could not fire the assistant as long as he was in the army, 2) if the assistant was supposed to start receiving a higher salary after a certain period, the time during which he was mobilized had to be taken into account, 3) after completing his military service, the assistant could continue his work in the store.<sup>71</sup> In this way, the trade assistants were ensured in terms of preserving their pre-war workplace. Such a positive solution, which no doubt limited the arbitrariness of individual employers, in a modest way made up for the lack of struggle for workers' rights during the war years. Trade assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomed the end of the war and the creation of a new state with a reactivated Union and a new enthusiasm to improve their position.



Advertisements for trade shops in Sarajevo in 1911. (Trgovačko-zanatlijski glasnik, 1911, no. 1)



Presentation of a grocery store in Sarajevo's Baščaršija. (HAS, ZF, ZFR-1208)

70 ABiH, ZVS, 1916, box no. 332, shelfmark no. 209-33/3.

71 ABiH, ZVS, 1916, box no. 332, shelfmark no. 209-33/7.



Trader and trade assistant in front of the soft goods store. (HAS, ZF, ZFR-507)

## Conclusion

With this work, we tried to show the position of trade assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that is, during the Austro-Hungarian rule. The available source materials allowed us to show, in different proportions, certain segments of the efforts of the trade assistants to exercise their labor rights. They mainly related to the regulation of the duration of working hours in the store and the provision of days off.

The labor press, with a distinctly socialist touch, reported the difficult and, in some cases, the inhuman position that trade assistants had in trade shops. And yet, to a significant extent, it served us to form the overall picture of the topic of this paper. Here we will also state the basic conclusions of our research. The trade assistants' movement at the beginning of the twentieth century was part of the general labor movement, when, as a result of labor and union organizing, actions were taken to realize their rights. The bearer of these activities was the Trade Employees Union. It tried to affirm the auxiliary trade staff to leave individual national and confessional societies and unite in one, labor and interconfessional, association. If we take into account the total number of trade assistants and the number of members of the Union until the end of the Austro-Hungarian rule, it is clear that there was not too much success in the joining of assistants to this Union. However, regardless of this fact, it was possible to achieve several important goals and improve the position of assistants to some extent.

In this context, it is worth pointing out what role the government played in these processes. It can be concluded that, although it was nominally sympathetic to the interests of the trade class, by bringing positive solutions in favor of trade assistants, it contributed to the legalization of certain rights related to the limitation of working hours, the closing of shops at 7 p.m., as well as the provision of a day off in the week. Particularly important was

the order of the National Government from 1916, which enabled all assistants who were in the war to return to their jobs after completing their military service. Of course, such decisions of the government were caused by the general development of things and the activity of the labor movement in the Monarchy, as well as by the adoption of the same provisions in other parts of the country.

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# Trade union in socialist self-management

## The experience of the Trade, Catering, and Tourism Workers' Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the *irregular* position of female workers (1947–1962)

Ph.D. Dženita Sarač-Rujanac

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**Abstract:** *In this paper, the author chronologically referred to the development of the labor movement and trade union organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina from its beginnings at the end of the 19th century to 1990, relying on numerous available and relevant literature. She particularly pointed to the position, organization, and operation of trade unions in the system of workers' self-management, a historical period often referred to as the golden age of trade unions. In the second part of the article, based on available archival material, the organization, method of work, and key fields of activity of the Trade, Catering, and Tourism Workers' Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the end of the 1940s to the beginning of the 1960s were pointed out. From these documents, a broader political and economic context can be discerned. They also reveal the key problems of workers employed in trade, catering, and tourism, which are also problems of the social community in general. An important issue that arose was the issue of women workers, where significant difficulties and problems of their imagined economic emancipation are observed. There were numerous irregularities and inconsistencies in the attitude towards female workers, inconsistencies in legal frameworks and practices that burdened their already difficult position. The trade union discussed this, reached conclusions about the need to overcome such a situation, petty-bourgeois consciousness, and adopted specific guidelines, insisting on compliance, but also improvement of existing legal regulations.*

**Keywords:** *workers, labor movement, trade union, trade, socialist self-management, committee, women, comrades*

## The labor movement and trade union in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the *long* 19th and *short* 20th centuries

Today, a very respectable member of the University of Sarajevo, the Institute of History was formed way back in 1958. Originally, by decision of the KPJ Central Committee in 1949, a historical department was established within the republican Central Committee, which in 1954 grew into an archive, which, based on the Law on the Organization of Scientific Work, will become the Institute for the Study of the History of the Labor Movement, by decision

of the Executive Council of the NR BiH (abbreviated from: People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina). Its primary task was "to encourage and organize the study of the history of the labor movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina from its beginnings to our time". In doing so, it was based on the fact that the development of the "revolutionary labor movement" since the period of the Austro-Hungarian occupation, during the past six decades, is very important, but that issues from this domain "have not been investigated and scientifically illuminated, nor have the causes and consequences of all these movements been examined, their conditionality and mutual connection".<sup>1</sup>

In the following period, the associates of the Institute dedicated their research work precisely to the labor movement, the historical context in which its first indications are recognized, and the elements that were crucial in its origin and gradual development. They tried to determine what influenced it, who were its founders, who were its bearers, how it developed, and strengthened, and what positively and negatively influenced its dynamics. At the same time, they recognized specific stages of its development and different ways of acting and organizing. Special attention was paid to trade unions, their role in society and their significance, specifics and historical scope, their transformation, social and political significance, the influence of current political elites on their work, connection with the communist idea and party membership, etc.<sup>2</sup>

Very significant is the research on workers', i.e. union organizing<sup>3</sup> by Ahmed Hadžirović, Ilija Hadžibegović, Nikola Babić, Ibrahim Karabegović, Enver Redžić, Nevenka Bajić, Budimir Miličić, and others. Numerous studies, articles, and monographs which treat certain thematic and temporal segments of this complex issue have been written. They indicate the historical context in which labor was *born* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as their

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1 *Prilozi*, no. 1, Institute for the History of the Labor Movement, Sarajevo, 1965, 489-491.

2 In early 1973, the Institute for the History of the Labor Movement grew into the Institute of History. Its program orientation has been significantly expanded to "the history of the peoples and nationalities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Yugoslavia as well as other peoples whose past is connected to the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the immigration of the Slavs to this area until today". *Prilozi*, no. 9, Institute for History, 1973, 9.

3 In this paper, we point to the labor movement as a progressive historical process in which, after the initial phase of spontaneous dissatisfaction and sporadic resistance of workers, its driving force is represented by associations, i.e. unions that connect, coordinate, and direct workers' activities. Therefore, in the paper, labor, and trade union movements are mostly used as synonyms. However, the theory of social movements makes a distinction between the labor movement as a broader, overall movement that encompasses the entirety of labor organizations and, on the other hand, the trade union movement as a narrower concept that tends to greater cohesion and stronger internal unity than the labor movement. Benisa Bibuljica, *Problemi i perspektive sindikalne politike u postsocijalističkoj Bosni i Hercegovini i Crnoj Gori*, Master's thesis, University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Political Sciences, Department of Political Science, 2020, 22. Available at: <https://fpn.unsa.ba/b/> (Accessed: March 26, 2023)



first associations at the end of the 19th century, with the same social task that trade union organizations still have today. The goal was to oppose labor exploitation and the violation of workers' rights with one synchronized voice, to achieve the best possible working conditions, to establish a transparent system of wages and compensation, and working hours, and to specify all this in a contract that would bind both parties: workers and employers.

In conditions where workers were undervalued, exploited, and minimally paid, faced with the daily arbitrariness and force of employers, in the absence of any legal frameworks that would legally regulate their status and protect their position, there are increasingly frequent reactions of workers against which employers and the government have applied various violent and repressive measures with the help of the police and the army. The first workers' associations were formed on a humanitarian basis, with the aim of mutual social support and better filling of free time and cultural education. Such were the first associations of graphic workers (Typographic Sickness and Support Society), the association of railroad workers, train drivers, and then others in the 1880s and 1890s. However, due to the great dissatisfaction of the workers, as "an expression of their conscious action to improve their position", their role is strengthening over time. Unions become *fighters for labor rights*, and coordination between them was necessary. The connection of numerous and different workers' associations, which had been waiting for years for government approval and legalization, happened in 1905, when "labor unions became an integral part of the reality" of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first large workers' assembly was held in Sarajevo on August 27, 1905, when the decision was made to organize the Central Workers' Union for Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a central trade union body, it was supposed to connect and direct the activities of an increasing number of labor associations and initiate various propaganda activities, tariff movements, demonstrations, strikes, May Day celebrations, and similar things in the coming period. After the great May strike of 1906, which began in Sarajevo and spread throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, the government was forced on September 12, 1906, to officially confirm the rules of the Central Workers' Union (abbr. GRS) and individual professional unions. Six GRS congresses have been held in the coming period, and in 1909 the newspaper *Glas slobode* was launched. In June of the same year, the first political organization of the labor movement was organized – the Social Democratic Party – which will have a "close relationship" with the GRS. However, although their activity led to significant positive developments, there were numerous reasons why their action did not meet with the "full and permanent support of the exploited elements in society".<sup>4</sup>

Wartime circumstances further worsened their work, which began to gradually recover only from the middle of 1917, so that at the end of 1918, under the conditions of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the Central Workers' Union had 15,822

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4 About the basic characteristics of workers in the conditions of the change of government, still dominant serf relations, marked illiteracy, poverty, economic backwardness, and foreign exploitation, see more: Ilijas Hadžibegović, "Radnička klasa i sindikati u Bosni i Hercegovini do prvog svjetskog rata", in: *Tito, radnička klasa i sindikati. Saopštenja sa naučnog skupa 'Tito, radnička klasa i sindikati' održanog 7. i 8. februara 1978. godine u Beogradu*, (ed. Čedo Maleš), Belgrade: Radnička štampa, 1979, 50-64.



members. After the great February strike in Sarajevo in 1919, the final congress of the Central Workers' Union was held on April 17, which discussed "unionization". The delegates adopted the decision to cease the work of the Central Workers' Union as an independent organization, as well as the decision on its accession to the Single Workers' Trade Union of Yugoslavia. On the same day, the Sixth Concluding Congress of the Social Democratic Party was held as the "representative of the entire proletariat of these countries", which also brought up the decision on unification at the state level. At the Unification Congress on April 19, 1919, the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia / Communists (from July 1920, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia – KPJ) was formed, while on April 22 and 23, the Congress of Trade Union Unification with the central leadership for the entire country was held.<sup>5</sup>

The further development of the labor movement and the activities of trade union organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina must be viewed in a wider, Yugoslav context and in connection with the activity of the KPJ, i.e. the activities of the communists who were often the most agile members of the trade union. However, the Government Proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes of December 29, 1920, and the Law on State Protection of August 2, 1921, prohibited "all communist and other disruptive propaganda". It banned their "organizations, their gatherings were closed, their newspapers and all other writings that would disrupt the peace and tranquility of the State were banned". However, in May 1921, independent trade unions and the Central Workers' Trade Union Council of Yugoslavia were authorized to work, under the condition that they be politically neutral. The following, interwar period was marked not only by strict control and repression of the authorities but also by the internal disagreement of the trade union movement, and the dispute between socialists and communists, i.e. reformists and revolutionaries over numerous essential issues. The communists continued their illegal activities through the Independent Trade Unions, which will be banned in 1924, and during the 1920s there were unsuccessful negotiations on a common platform and unification.

Bans, control, and repression were not consistently implemented throughout Yugoslavia at that time, with Bosnia and Herzegovina being the area where they were applied more rigorously and intensively. After the 6 January Dictatorship in 1929, only the United Workers' Trade Union Federation of Yugoslavia (abbr. URSSJ), the General Workers' Union (abbr. ORS), as well as the Union of Graphic Designers and the Union of Bank and Commercial Clerks had permission to work. In Bosnia and Herzegovina in that period, the labor movement has its specificities, and all three types of unions operate on its territory: reformist unions (with the Provincial Committee of the URSS for Bosnia and Herzegovina and ORS), national (HRS,

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5 See more: Nedim Šarac, *Sindikalni pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini do 1919. godine*, Sarajevo: Izdavačko preduzeće Narodna prosvjeta, 1955. and Nikola Babić, "Doprinos radničkog pokreta Bosne i Hercegovine stvaranju jedinstvenog radničkog pokreta", in: *Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini 1905-1975*. (ed. N. Babić, A. Hadžirović), Sarajevo: Vijeće sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine / Fond za izučavanje istorije sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini Mićo Sokolović, 1977, 114-126.

Yugoslav National Union), as well as regime unions (Yugoslav Labor Union – JUGORAS).<sup>6</sup>

In that period, the Communist Party remained completely isolated from the working masses, which was a consequence of “irregularities in the work in the trade union field, sectarianism and underestimation of that work” by its membership. At the Fourth KPJ National Conference in 1934, a decision on the stronger inclusion of party membership in trade unions was adopted, and it was not favorably received by the Presidency of the URSSJ, while the communists themselves, who are numerically extremely weak in Bosnia and Herzegovina, did not seriously implement this directive until the beginning of 1939.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, in the 1930s, cooperative organizations were formed, among which the Union of Procurement Cooperatives of Civil Servants stood out, and despite their “bourgeois character” and limited field of activity, these organizations enabled a certain type of workers’, i.e. trade union, activity.<sup>8</sup>

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6 About that: Ahmed Hadžirović, “Sindikalni pravci i organizacije u Bosni i Hercegovini 1935-1941”, in: *Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini 1905-1975*. (ed. N. Babić, A. Hadžirović), Sarajevo: Vijeće sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine / Fond za izučavanje istorije sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini *Mičo Sokolović*, 1977, 290-324.

7 More about the labor movement in the interwar period: Ibrahim Karabegović, “Glas slobode – prvo radničko glasilo u Bosni i Hercegovini”, in: *Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini 1905-1975*. (ed. N. Babić, A. Hadžirović), Sarajevo: Vijeće sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine / Fond za izučavanje istorije sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini *Mičo Sokolović*, 1977, 182-219; Ahmed Hadžirović, “Djelovanje i uticaj Komunističke partije Jugoslavije na sindikalni pokret između dva svjetska rata”, in: *Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini 1905-1975*. (ed. N. Babić, A. Hadžirović), Sarajevo: Vijeće sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine / Fond za izučavanje istorije sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini *Mičo Sokolović*, 1977, 220-257; Uroš Nedimović, “Nezavisni sindikati u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1921. do 1929. godine”, in: *Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini 1905-1975*. (ed. N. Babić, A. Hadžirović), Sarajevo: Vijeće sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine / Fond za izučavanje istorije sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini *Mičo Sokolović*, 1977, 258-289.

8 In the article in which he talks about interwar cooperatives, Goran Musić draws attention to a commendable contemporary tendency in the study. In addition to the previous research on the participation of women in the National Liberation Movement (abbr. NOP) and their activities within the framework of the Women's Anti-Fascist Front, i.e. the organization of women and feminist circles under the auspices of the state in the period of socialism, there is a growing interest in the history of the feminist labor movement in Yugoslavia before the Second World War, women's organizations whose activists were from the upper layers of society, the feminization of administrative jobs at the beginning of the 20th century, the creation of biographies of prominent feminist activists and the like. Goran Musić, “Službenice, potrošačice i komunistkinje: zadruga uredskih radnica u Jugoslaviji između dva rata iz rodne perspektive”, in: *Socijalna demokratija u Bosni i Hercegovini. Historijski pogledi i razmatranja za budućnost*, Sarajevo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, (ed. Alberto Sasso i Nermin Kujović), 2020, 80-87.

The activity of the trade unions was interrupted by the German and Italian occupation, while only at the end of the Second World War their activities will be gradually renewed. However, now, in significantly changed political circumstances, their position and significance, their relationship to the government, and the dominating ideological concept have changed. Their organization and way of acting are changing. Trade union organizations, as legitimate representatives of the working class are given a prominent place in the overall transformation, i.e. the continuation of the *revolution* that was carried out by all means and in all fields, now, in peace. *Revolutionary trade unions*, following the forced and disseminated Marxist ideology, were supposed to help significantly in achieving better socioeconomic living conditions and establishing a *fairer and more prosperous society* in which the state plays a key role, and the Communist party plays a key role in the state.

In January 1945, the founding congress of the Single Union of Workers and Employees of Yugoslavia (abbr. JRSNJ), i.e. the First Nationwide Trade Union Conference for Yugoslavia, was held and the Central Committee was formed.<sup>9</sup> Not long after, on April 29, 1945, the Provisional Executive National Committee of the JRSNJ for Bosnia and Herzegovina was formed.<sup>10</sup> The first congress of the JRSNJ for Bosnia and Herzegovina was held from September 1 to September 3, 1946, in Sarajevo.<sup>11</sup>

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9 See: Života Kamperelić, "Obnova sindikata 1945. pod Titovim geslom bratstva i jedinstva", in: *Tito, radnička klasa i sindikati. Saopštenja sa naučnog skupa 'Tito, radnička klasa i sindikati' održanog 7. i 8. februara 1978. godine u Beogradu* (ed. Čedo Maleš), Beograd: Radnička štampa, 428-435. and Dušan Bogdanov, "Tito i kongresi Saveza sindikata Jugoslavije", in: *Tito, radnička klasa i sindikati. Saopštenja sa naučnog skupa 'Tito, radnička klasa i sindikati' održanog 7. i 8. februara 1978. godine u Beogradu* (ed. Čedo Maleš), Belgrade: Radnička štampa, 436-445. The first congress of the unified trade unions of Yugoslavia was held from October 24 to 28, 1948 in Belgrade, when it was renamed to the Federation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia. In the adopted Resolution, it was stated that the trade union has an important role in building the economy, improving the standard of living and protection at work, and regulating the social security of workers as well as their ideological, political and cultural work. In the following period, every four years, just like party congresses, trade union congresses were held: Second in 1951, Third in 1955, Fourth in 1959, Fifth in 1964, Sixth in 1968, Seventh in 1974, Eighth in 1978, Ninth in 1982, and Tenth Congress in 1986.

10 Raif Dizdarević, "Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta Bosne i Hercegovine i trideset godina njegovog djelovanja i socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji", in: *Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini 1905-1975*. (ed. N. Babić, A. Hadžirović), Sarajevo: Vijeće sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine / Fond za izučavanje istorije sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini *Mičo Sokolović*, 1977, 25.

11 The Second Congress of Trade Unions of Bosnia and Herzegovina was held in 1949, while by the decision of the Third Congress of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1955, the highest bodies of the republican federations of trade unions will take over the organization of the assembly instead of the congress. In the following period, six annual assemblies were organized in April 1956, April 1957, May 1958, April 1959, October 1961,

## Trade union in *administrative* and *self-management* socialism

In the conditions of *reconstruction* and *construction* of the newly formed state, accelerated industrialization and electrification as a prerequisite for overall modernization, trade union organizations organized in this way had a “first-class and basic political task” to *emancipate, convince* the “working class” for socialism, encourage its mobilization and participation in a complex process of building a new system and a new state. In the conditions of strict centralism (statism), i.e. administrative socialism, a strong ideological, personnel, and action bond was gradually created in the triangle state-party-union, whereby the republican specificities visible until then were lost in the activity of the labor, i.e. trade union movement and the relationship between the authorities towards him. KPJ is marked as the vanguard of the working class that builds the system, and the trade union as an organization of the working class, as a key tool of its action in socialism. At the same time, the further development of the trade union movement was directly related to the developmental stages through which Yugoslav socialism passed.<sup>12</sup>

In the first years after the war, strike action was especially propagated, which ensured the glory of prominent strikers and revolutionaries to workers' organizations, unions, and individuals, while consistently following the Soviet model.<sup>13</sup>

In the conditions of the new political crisis caused by the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, there was a significant reorientation of the Yugoslav path to communism, changes, and reduction of the first Five-Year Economic Development Plan. However, the importance of the working class, workers' associations, and trade unions are increasingly highlighted in the context of the gradual replacement of state socialism with a new one dominated by workers' self-management, which, from the standpoint of historical results, can rightly be called

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and December 1964. At the SSJ congress in 1968, trade union organizations were allowed to adopt their statutes, and the highest bodies of republican trade union federations became congresses again. The third congress of the Federation of Trade Unions of Bosnia and Herzegovina was held from May 28 to 30, 1969 in Sarajevo. This was followed by the Fourth Congress (18-20 November 1974), the Fifth (30-31 October and 1 November 1978), the Sixth (8-9 October 1982), the Seventh (28-29 March 1986), and the Eighth Congress (March 30-31 and April 1 1990). At the end of 1990, there were 5,100 trade union branches, 32 city trade unions, 109 municipal trade union councils, the Sarajevo City Council, and 9 inter-municipal councils operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *100 godina sindikata u Bosni i Hercegovini (1905-2005. godine)*, Sarajevo: Savez sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine, 2006, 27-39.

12 See: Belma Buljubašić, “Iznevjerena tradicija: kratak osvrt na istorijski razvoj sindikalnih organizacija u BiH”, in: *Lice i naličje socijalne pravde* (ur. Svjetlana Nedimović), Sarajevo: Fond otvoreno društvo BiH i Fondacija mirovna akademija, 2014, 16-18.

13 See e.g.: “Pojam udarništva”, *Oslobođenje*, 27. 4. 1946, 4; “Proglašenje udarnika na gradnji elektrocentrale u Bogatićima”, *Oslobođenje*, 19. 1. 1947, 10; “Postavljanjem normi radni kolektiv u Bogatiću ubrzao izgradnju hidrocentrale”, *Oslobođenje*, 13. 4. 1947, 3.

one of a series of specific Yugoslav experiments. The so-called pre-self-management phase (1945-1950) was followed by a self-management period in which, in the context of imagined workers' self-management, workers were no longer just *strikers* with clear tasks, but were supposed to participate in the management of the enterprise in which they were employed through workers' councils. On the other hand, the means of production that became state property in the 1940s through a series of laws are being socialized, i.e. they become social property that is taken over by direct manufacturers.

The outlines of workers' self-management were first announced at the session of the Economic Council and the Central Committee of the Federation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia in May 1949. At the end of December 1949, the *Instructions for the establishment of workers' councils* were adopted, which was significantly specified in the *Basic Law on the Management of Economic Enterprises and Higher Economic Associations*, which was adopted by the National Assembly of the FNRJ on June 27, 1950.<sup>14</sup>

Workers' self-management and social property fit into the imagined concept of the death of the state and its central leadership role in society, which at the same time should strengthen workers' interest in the process and results of production in which they were involved.<sup>15</sup> Workers' councils were organized as "social governing bodies" that were formed for the first time in 1949 with the adoption of the Instruction on the establishment and operation of workers' councils of state-owned enterprises dated December 23, 1949, which the Central Committee of the Federation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia submitted to the main committees of the republic's trade unions.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the Party was the initiator of "this democratic step forward in the management of the economy", while the organization of workers' councils was left to the unions, which in that period expanded the field of their work and thus strengthened their social role.<sup>17</sup>

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14 Mitar Miljanović, "Trideset godina društvene akcije sindikata u socijalističkoj Bosni i Hercegovini (1945-1975), in: *Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini 1905-1975*. (ed. N. Babić, A. Hadžirović), Sarajevo: Vijeće sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine / Fond za izučavanje istorije sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini *Mičo Sokolović*, 1977, 331.

15 More about that: Dejan Jović, *Jugoslavija, država koja je odumrla, uspon, kriza i pad Kardeljeve Jugoslavije (1974-1990)*, Zagreb: Prometej, 2003.

16 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: ABiH), fond Glavni odbor sindikata trgovačkih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika i namještenika (RO STUTR), box no. 1, Izvještaj o radu Zemaljskog odbora Sindikata radnika i službenika trgovinskih preduzeća za BiH za 1951. godinu podnesen na Zemaljskoj skupštini 5. maja 1952.

17 Radelić points out that the organization of workers' councils should be understood as an experiment by the KPJ, which faced a serious economic and political crisis after 1948. Striving to make a move away from the Soviet model, emphasize Yugoslavia's democracy and at the same time increase the responsibility and initiative of the workers, the new orientation of the party leadership initially did not have clear outlines or the intention to change the entire system. The task of the workers' councils was primarily to "increase

Self-management as a constitutional principle found its place in the Constitutional Law of 1953. In Article 1, FNRJ is defined as a socialist democratic state in which power, unlike the Constitution of 1946, now belongs not to the people, but to the working people which became the bearer of sovereignty. The Council of Manufacturers also became part of the federal assembly.<sup>18</sup>

The second constitution of Yugoslavia from 1963 is often referred to in the literature as the charter of self-management because it proclaimed self-management as the fundamental social framework of Yugoslav integration that was to be applied in all spheres. Article 1 of this constitution refers to Yugoslavia as a socialist state, based on the rule of the working people and self-management. Social property is listed as the basic form of property, while workers' councils are constitutionalized.<sup>19</sup>

This constitution defined the trade union as an organization with voluntary membership, i.e. it was emphasized that "in socialist social relations and conditions of social self-management, working people voluntarily join trade unions to cooperate as directly as possible in the realization and development of socialist social relations and social self-management, in harmonizing their individual and joint interests with general interests, in realizing the principle of distribution according to work and in training workers for work and management, as well as for taking initiatives and measures to protect their rights and interests and to improve their living and working conditions, develop solidarity, harmonizing opinions and mutual relations and solving other issues of common interest".<sup>20</sup> The key provisions of these federal constitutions were transferred to the constitutions of the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>21</sup>

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production at any cost", and only later would they be understood as the nuclei of the new socialist system. Although the workers' councils became more and more mandatory overtime, Radelić points out that, even though the management committees were the operative body that elected the workers' council, their actual competencies were very small. Zdenko Radelić, "Pitanje uvođenja radničkih savjeta s gledišta kontinuiteta i diskontinuiteta. Radnički savjeti u 1949. i 1950. godini", in: *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1990, 69-77.

18 See more: *Ustavni zakon o osnovama društvenog i političkog uređenja Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije i Saveznim organima vlasti*, Zagreb: Novinarsko izdavačko poduzeće, 1953.

19 Goran Marković, "Dostignuća samoupravljanja u Jugoslaviji", in: *Socijalna demokratija u Bosni i Hercegovini. Historijski pogledi i razmatranja za budućnost*, Sarajevo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, (ed. Alberto Sasso i Nermin Kujović), 2020, 100-106.

20 *Ustav Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*, Belgrade: Sedma sila, 1963.

21 On republican constitutions as a transmission of federal see: Dženita Sarač-Rujanac, "Ustavi iz 1963. i 1974. kao uvod u fazu zrelog socijalističkog samoupravljanja i prirodan hod ka ravnopravnosti", in: *Zbornik radova sa međunarodne konferencije Ustavnost Bosne i Hercegovine kroz historiju*, Sarajevo 23. 11. 2021, Sarajevo: University of Sarajevo – Institute of History, 2022, 165-207.

In 1965, the Basic Law on Labor Relations was adopted, which specified the basic postulates of labor relations, rights, and duties of workers in socialist self-management. This issue was one of those that were discussed during the perennial constitutional and economic reform in the 1960s and early 1970s when the full political mobilization of the trade union membership was felt for the consistent implementation of the reform. Changes in the field of labor are regulated by the so-called labor amendments (XX-XLII) adopted in 1971. They defined the basic organization of joint labor as the basic form of association and the body through which workers were supposed to directly decide on the conditions, method, and results of work. The amendments found their place in the last Yugoslav constitution from 1974, which, among other things, specified that joint labor councils, which would be representatives of the working people, will be organized within the framework of the republican, provincial, and municipal assemblies. The Constitution of the SFRY from 1974 gave a kind of definition and established the basic framework for the trade union's activities:

“Workers voluntarily organized into a union as the broadest organization of the working class fight: for the realization of socialist self-management relations and the decisive role of workers in the management of social reproduction; for the realization of the interests and self-management and other rights of workers in all areas of work and life, for ensuring the equality of workers in the pooling of work and resources, the acquisition and distribution of income, and the determination of common criteria for distribution according to the results of work for the self-management connection and integration of different areas of social work, for developing the productive forces of society and raising labor productivity, for self-management harmonization of individual, common and general social interests, for raising the education of workers and training workers for the performance of self-management and other social functions, for democratic nomination and determination of candidates for delegates to management bodies in organizations of the joint labor and other self-management organizations and communities and candidates for delegations in these organizations and communities and delegates to assemblies of sociopolitical communities, for the widest participation of workers in the performance of government functions and management of other social affairs, for the realization of the interests of the working class in personnel policy, for the protection of workers' rights, for ensuring social security and development of workers' living standards, as well as for developing and strengthening solidarity and raising class consciousness and responsibility of self-managers.”<sup>22</sup>

“The ruling position of the working class and all working people”, their rights and duties, to the basic organizations of united labor as “an independent self-management organization of workers linked by common interests”, and also to their delegations in the assemblies of sociopolitical communities, which through them “decided on issues that were related to the common interests and needs of joint work and working people”, was defined by the Law on Joint Work adopted by the Assembly of the SFRY on November 25, 1976. Article 36 of the Law says:

“In exercising its constitutionally established rights and obligations, the union starts the initiative to take measures and undertakes measures to ensure that workers exercise



their socioeconomic and other self-management rights and decide on other issues of their socioeconomic position. The trade union has the right to take the initiative and make a proposal for the conclusion of a self-management agreement and initiate a procedure for reconsideration of concluded self-management agreements if it believes that they violate the self-management rights of workers and socioeconomic relations established by the constitution. The trade union participates in the process of concluding a self-management agreement that regulates the mutual relations of workers at work or establishes the basis and criteria for the distribution of income and the distribution of funds for personal income and signs that agreement. If the decisions in the organization of joint labor are made on issues related to the self-management rights of workers, the material position and interests of workers and the organization of joint labor, and if in the decision-making process, the interests and attitudes of one part of the workers need to be harmonized with the interests of the majority of workers in the joint work, the authorities in organizations of joint labor are obliged to enable the trade union to participate in the consideration of these issues, to consider each of its requests, to take a position on the request and, if its request is rejected, to inform it on the reasons for the rejection. If a dispute arises in the organization of joint labor between workers of individual parts of the organization, i.e. workers and the organization's bodies and the bodies of the sociopolitical community, which could not be resolved through regular means, the union has the right, at the request of the workers or on its initiative, to initiate proceedings to resolve the resulting dispute.”<sup>23</sup>

The public presence of numerous trade union organizations in the late 1970s and during the 1980s, with significant material and human resources, was obvious, but their social role was insufficient. Especially during the 1980s, the existing contradiction between “normative potential and factual exercise of jurisdiction” came to the fore. The trade union leadership was closely linked and dependent on political structures, i.e. the League of Communists, and had no autonomy, and therefore no strength to point out numerous inconsistencies, existing contradictions, and pressing problems of the workforce. The problems of the functioning of the existing system were reflected in the work of the trade unions, which, in the absence of their political platform, continued to stubbornly cling to the already questionable postulate of socialist self-management as a model that has no alternative.

At the end of the 1980s, in the conditions of a severe political and economic crisis, the trade union “followed the fate of the state in an organizational but also political sense”, performed a “complete turnaround in its policy” and participated in the transformation of “the workforce into a nation”. Some trade unions, in close connection with the *reconstructed* republican political leadership, stop propagating class solidarity and actively participate in the process of national homogenization. The workforce, although with “limited room for maneuver”, and numerous “work stoppages” actively participates in the complex social process of restoration of capitalism in which “under the pressure of the market imperative (...) it progressively lost its previous material, institutional and political supports”.<sup>24</sup>

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23      *Zakon o udruženom radu*, Zagreb: Vjesnik SSRNH, 1976, 24-25.

24      Mario Reljanović, “Položaj sindikata u SFRJ drugoj polovini 1980-ih”, in: *Gradove smo*



The year 1990 was the end of one historical phase of the development of the labor movement and trade union activism, which was the beginning of a new one that promised more democratic working conditions and a weakening of the political, i.e. party, influence on the trade union. At the same time, it brought new and numerous challenges characteristic of societies in painful transition, as was the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Trade, Catering, and Tourism Workers' Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Single Trade Union of Yugoslavia, i.e. the Federation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia, had its republican branches in which the highest administrative body was the Congress from 1946 to 1954, the Assembly from 1955, and again the Congress from 1968. Between the two congresses, the republican organizations were managed by the National Committee, from 1946 the Main Committee, from 1952 the National Council, and from 1954 the Republican Council. From 1971 to 1990, this role was played by the Council of the Federation of Republican Trade Unions with various specialized commissions. At the head of the committee was the presidency with the secretariat and the president. The republican trade unions were members of the People's Front, i.e. the republican Socialist Alliance of the Working People (1953). They consisted of a complex network of district, regional, county, city district, municipal and local trade union branches that were constantly changing. The professional system, i.e. guild association, was replaced by the so-called industrial principle of organization, whereby association was carried out at the level of each enterprise, that is, the employer (workers of one enterprise or OOUR formed one union).<sup>25</sup>

The trade union was intended to play a "constructive and builder" role in society in solving the "permanent and current interests of the working class and working people", strengthening the standard of living and health care, and the level of education and culture. It had a significant role in organizing evening schools, educating the population, various courses, organizing social meals, helping the sick, providing accommodation, and housing, and organizing annual vacations and recreation.<sup>26</sup>

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*vam podigli. O protivrječnostima jugoslovenskog socijalizma*, (ed. Vida Knežević, Marko Miletić), Belgrade: Center CZKD Center for Cultural Decontamination, 2018, 57, 60-75; Sven Cvek, Snježana Ivčić, Jasna Račić, "Rad, klasa, nacija: radnički štrajkovi u Hrvatskoj 1990. godine", in: *Gradove smo vam podigli. O protivrječnostima jugoslovenskog socijalizma*, (ed. Vida Knežević, Marko Miletić), Belgrade: Center CZKD Center for Cultural Decontamination, 76-82. and Belma Buljubašić, "Sindikalne organizacije u Bosni i Hercegovini. Između radničke klase i političkih elita", in: *Socijalna demokratija u Bosni i Hercegovini. Historijski pogledi i razmatranja za budućnost*, Sarajevo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, (ed. Alberto Sasso i Nermin Kujović), 2020, 61-62.

25 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Prijedlog zaključaka sa narednim zadacima Sindikata trgovinskih radnika, 21. 8. 1955.

26 The president of the National Board of Trade Unions at the Annual Meeting in February

Taking into account the complex organizational network in permanent change and a long period of time, in this second part of the paper we will point out in detail some characteristics and work of trade unions in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1947 to 1962. Namely, we draw information from documents that are currently available in the Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the fund of the Republički odbor sindikata trgovačkih radnika i službenika za Bosnu i Hercegovinu (Eng. Republican Board of Trade Unions of Trade Workers and Officials for Bosnia and Herzegovina).<sup>27</sup> The largest number of documents are the records and reports of the Republican Board, the Presidency, the Secretariat, county, municipal and city trade union councils from their regular meetings, annual assemblies, election conferences, plenary sessions, their shorthand notes, drafts of tariff regulations and the like.<sup>28</sup>

It is important to point out that in 1955 trade, catering, and tourism trade unions merged into one union.<sup>29</sup> The Republican Board was its key body and coordinating body

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1955 gave a kind of definition of the union and underlined what its tasks are in Bosnian society. On that occasion, he said: "As a mass organization of working people, trade unions primarily develop activities to raise the economic, professional, political and cultural education of workers. Further tasks such as participation in the adoption of tariff regulations and solving other issues concerning the financial position of working people, or concerns about the daily needs of workers such as leisure, rest, their cultural life, etc. exhaust a large part of the activities of our organizations (...). After the liberation of the country from the occupiers, as part of the changes in our social and economic development, the character of the trade union also changed. Trade unions contributed to the most diverse areas of social activity. Let's just remember the contribution to the reconstruction of the country and the huge successes of the working class under the leadership of the Party in industrialization, where trade unions, in addition to the Party, were the decisive factor in organizing production." Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Stenografske bilješke sa godišnje skupštine Zemaljskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih radnika za BiH održane na dan 21. februar 1955.

- 27 The first Trade Employees' Union was formed in Sarajevo in August 1909, and one of its first demands was the shortening of working hours. During 1911 and 1912, the union expanded and the number of its members grew to 171. After the ban in May 1913, during the second half of the year, workers' associations were renewed, including the Union of Trade Assistants and Private Clerks on October 4. Nedim Šarac, *Sindikalni pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini do 1919. godine*, Sarajevo: Izdavačko preduzeće Narodna prosvjeta, 1955, 122, 171.
- 28 The oldest known tariff rulebook in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the rulebook of the Mostar printing house Don Franjo Miličević from 1888, which defined working conditions, working hours, salary, and the like. Nedim Šarac, *Sindikalni pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini do 1919*, Sarajevo: Izdavačko preduzeće Narodna prosvjeta, 1955, 38.
- 29 Emil Zrelec was appointed for president of the Trade, Catering, and Tourism Workers' Union of Yugoslavia for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Džihad Burazerović as vice president. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Zapisnik sa zajedničke sjednice Republičkog odbora Sindikata trgovinskih radnika za BiH i Republičkog odbora Sindikata ugostiteljskih radnika za BiH 24. 10. 1955.

between the county councils, i.e. the county boards of trade and catering workers' unions and branches that were the bearers of the union's basic activities. In 1957, county boards were organized in Banja Luka, Tuzla, Brčko, Doboj, Zvornik, Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica, and Trebinje, while 5 municipal boards and about 360 branches were active.<sup>30</sup> In 1959, there were 10 county and 4 municipal boards in Bosnia and Herzegovina. County boards were then organized in Banja Luka, Brčko, Doboj, Goražde, Jajce, Mostar, Prijedor, Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Zenica, and municipal boards in Bosanska Gradiška, Prnjavor, Travnik, and Visoko, with 416 union branches.<sup>31</sup> A few years later, 6 municipal and 8 county boards of this union were active.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the Republican Board, the trade union was managed by the Presidency of 21 members, the Supervisory Board of 3 members, as well as the Secretariat. At the same time, only the president and vice president were paid for their work and had their own offices.<sup>33</sup> The following year, in 1958, the Presidency had 25 members, and the Secretariat had 9 members.<sup>34</sup>

It was obvious that trade has an important role in the new economic system and that as an economic branch, "it is becoming an increasingly important factor in ensuring the conditions for our future development". At the same time, raising the standard of living, which was aimed, placed "more serious and responsible tasks" in front of the trade. The priority tasks were "improving the trade network, perfecting its way of doing business and raising it to a more modern level and more complete supply of goods to consumer centers, improving the professional and political knowledge of employed workers, a more persistent

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30 County committees were not formed in Bihać, Prijedor, Derventa, Jajce, Livno, and Goražde. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Izvještaj o radu u 1957. godini (Sindikat trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije, Republički odbor Sarajevo), December 1957. In the report from the end of 1957, it is stated that there are 5261 stores in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where 408 trade union branches, 5 municipal committees, and 9 county committees were organized. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Informacija o organizacionom stanju ugostiteljske i trgovačke mreže sindikalnih organa i organizacija trgovinskih i ugostiteljskih radnika sa stanjem 31. 12. 1957.

31 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Informacija o organizacionom stanju Sindikata trgovačkih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika na teritoriji BiH, 1959.

32 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 9, Program rada za 1962. Republički odbor sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika za BiH, Sarajevo January 1962.

33 In 1957, there were 7 workers, 17 officials, and 2 directors in the trade union presidency. Of this number, 3 were women, 1 young person, and 18 members of the League of Communists. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Opšti podaci iz republičkog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika za BiH, Sarajevo, 11. 9. 1957.

34 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa sjednice sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije. Republički odbor za BiH, Sarajevo 5. 4. 1958.

fight against all negative and speculator tendencies” and the like.<sup>35</sup>

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the 1950s, progress was felt in the development of the trading network and trade in general, with the obvious expansion of the assortment of articles and improvement of their quality being particularly emphasized. “Our shop windows and shops”, it was noted in 1952, “don’t look so sad now”.<sup>36</sup>

The number of stores, merchandise traffic, as well as the number of employees grew. According to data from the Bureau of Statistics and Records in July 1954, 10,999 workers and 5,070 employees were employed in the general trade sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Of these, 0.7% were highly qualified workers, 35.4% were qualified, 23% were semi-qualified and 41.1% were unqualified. In 1955, 12,686 persons employed in trade paid the membership fee, and 1,174 persons, out of 4,108 employed in the catering industry, paid the membership fee.<sup>37</sup> In 1958, 29,795 workers were employed in trade, catering, and tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, of which 17,820 were “organized”, i.e. union members.<sup>38</sup>

The trade apprenticeship system was abolished by the Decision of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette No. 28) in 1952. The school year 1951/1952 provided two-year training for trade workers in Mostar, Sarajevo, and Banja Luka. At the same time, trade workers were educated and qualified through 33 evening trade schools, which in 1955 had 900 participants.<sup>39</sup>

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35 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Informacija o organizacionom stanju ugostiteljske i trgovačke mreže sindikalnih organa i organizacija trgovinskih i ugostiteljskih radnika sa stanjem 31. 12. 1957.

36 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 1, Izvještaj o radu Mjesnog odbora sindikata Sarajevo u 1952. godini.

37 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Pripremni materijal za skupštinu Republičkog odbora sindikata trgovinskih i ugostiteljskih radnika, 26. 12. 1955.

38 At the same time, there were 228,962 workers in these economic sectors in Yugoslavia, and 150,819 of them were “organized”. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Materijal za II sjednicu Plenuma Centralnog odbora Sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika 15. 1. 1958. Izvještaj o radu Centralnog odbora Sindikata od Prvog kongresa (oktobar 1955) do Trećeg plenuma.

39 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Izvještaji Zemaljskog odbora za BiH sindikata trgovinskih radnika za 1954. In 1956, schooling began to last three years and trade schools were established in Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar, Tuzla, Zenica, and Doboj. They had 658 students while catering schools in Mostar and Sarajevo had a total of 105 students. Already at the end of the decade, this network of trade and catering schools will have serious problems. Namely, the People’s Committees persistently refused to be their founders, i.e. for them to be included in the calculation of expenditures of social funds for education at the People’s Committees. In 1958, the catering school in Sarajevo was closed due to a lack of financial resources. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Analiza ekonomsko-stručnog i tehničkog osposobljavanja radnika trgovine, 13.

However, in addition to the obvious progress, the trade network was not yet sufficiently developed and satisfactory, and trade shops were not yet “arranged” and equipped with technical equipment. There was still a weak connection between trade and production, and there was also “irrational business” that was accompanied by disputes and expensive transportation, inadequate storage and preservation of goods, especially fruits, and vegetables.<sup>40</sup> As an obvious lack of the network, the “fragmentation of the trade” and the phenomenon that some shops have a limited assortment, e.g. some of them only had milk and bread, and some colonial food products or fruit and vegetables, which was present in urban industrial areas, where universal food stores were supposed to operate.<sup>41</sup> Also, the working hours of shops and catering establishments, overtime work and its compensation, days off, as well as annual vacations of workers, were also the subject of frequent discussions and required harmonization.<sup>42</sup>

From the available archival material, we can see the key issues that the trade union discussed during the decade and a half, and the problems faced by the trade and trade workers, as well as the Bosnian society in general. It was a wide plethora of issues that were closely related to this economic branch, the trade union mentioned but also issues that encompassed a much wider range and concerned overall economic development and social progress.

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3. 1953; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Zapisnik sa II sjednice Predsjedništva Zemaljskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih radnika za BiH, 20. 5. 1953; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Izvještaj o radu u 1956. godini, December 1956. and Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa godišnje skupštine Republičkog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika za BiH, 20. 2. 1959.

40 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Zaključci zajedničke sjednice Predsjedništva Centralnog vijeća Saveza sindikata Jugoslavije i Predsjedništva Centralnog odbora Sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije, 16. 5. 1956. and Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Izvještaj o radu u 1957. godini, Sarajevo, December 1957.

41 At one of the sessions of the Republican Board in 1958, there was talk about the disproportion between the number of citizens and the number of shops in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whereby the republican average was significantly higher than the Yugoslav one. In the city of Sarajevo at that time, there were 111 stores in which only 167 sellers were employed, where the problem of hard physical work, insufficient income, the practice of “piljarluk”, “working in *čepenci*”, and the like was still present. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa sjednice Predsjedništva Republičkog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, 16. 6. 1958.

42 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Zapisnik sa VI sjednice predsjedništva Zemaljskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih radnika, 3. 4. 1954. and Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 6, Zapisnik sa sjednice sreskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika za srez Doboje, 10. 11. 1960.

Key tasks of trade union branches and organizational problems, existing trade union network, membership activities, branch financial operations, visits to trade union organizations, and membership fees were also discussed.<sup>43</sup>

Quite often, at the sessions of the Republican Board, the Presidency, and the Trade Union, as well as branches, it was discussed about “ideological, educational and political work in trade union organizations”, i.e. political education of the membership, “raising their ideological awareness to a higher level”, organizing political lectures, “increased vigilance against all enemies, especially supporters of the Informbiro”.<sup>44</sup> The orientation of the union to help the current political processes initiated and led by the Party was obvious, whereby the union acted as a useful means of disseminating the party’s policy and its decisions among the broad masses of the people.<sup>45</sup>

Records from the Fifth National Assembly of the Union of Workers and Officials of Commercial Enterprises in Bosnia and Herzegovina were submitted to the Central Committee of KPJ with the following note:

“From the regular annual assembly of our trade union, we send you fighting comradely greetings! Aware of the tasks facing our Trade Union and the working class of Yugoslavia today, in the construction of socialism in our country, our Trade Union has set itself the important task of mobilizing the membership in the struggle for the consistent implementation of our Party’s line into life, the struggle for the implementation of our Party’s decisions. and the Federal Government on the implementation of new economic measures, and a new payment system in trade. Our special task will be the struggle to stabilize the market. On this occasion, we express our readiness and determination to carry out all the tasks set before us by our party, our Central Committee headed by our comrade Tito. Long live KPJ with comrade Tito at the head!”<sup>46</sup>

The trade union also discussed its activities as part of the implementation of numerous legal regulations, such as the Social Plan for the Economic Development of Yugoslavia

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43 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Zapisnik sa VIII redovne sjednice Predsjedništva Zemaljskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih radnika za BiH, 28. 9. 1953; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Informacija o naplati članarine i kretanju broja članova sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika za 1960. godinu i neki prijedlozi za budući rad, March 1961.

44 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 1, Zapisnik godišnje skupštine sindikata podružnice Trgovačkih radnika broj 4. Bosanski Brod, Jugopetrol, 12. 1. 1951.

45 See e.g.: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa sastanka sekretarijata Republičkog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika za BiH (Zadaci sindikata u svjetlu sprovođenja u život pisma Izvršnog komiteta Centralnog komiteta SKJ) 24. 3. 1958.

46 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no 1, Zapisnik sa V zemaljske godišnje skupštine sindikata radnika i službenika trgovačkih preduzeća za BiH, 5. 5. 1952.

1957-1961, the annual Social Plans for Economic Development, the Law on Contributions from the Income of Business Organizations, the Law on Contribution to the Budget from the Personal Income of Workers, the Law on the Funds of Business Organizations, the Law on Labor Relations, the Law on Pension Insurance, the Law on Associations in the Economy, and the like.

On the other hand, *trade union issues* such as tariff regulations on the distribution of the salary fund were considered. They were harmonized and passed by agreement between the enterprises, i.e. business organizations in the trade, trade union organizations, and the People's Committee of the given section based on the federal Regulation on salaries and were regularly submitted to the Republic Committee.<sup>47</sup> More narrow, trade union issues which were discussed were issues of protection of workers' rights and trade union authority and intervention in that domain, but also social catering restaurants, child allowances,<sup>48</sup> construction of apartments for workers and goods traffic officials,<sup>49</sup> "committee tasks in connection with preparing workers' winter food",<sup>50</sup> cultural and entertainment life,<sup>51</sup> publishing wall newspapers, organizing reading groups, workers' games and forming work brigades for the construction of gymnasium stadiums and the like.<sup>52</sup> Also, there was talk about workers' free time and how

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- 47 The tariff rules were adopted by the work collective, then the workers' council and the enterprise's Management Board, and then they were sent to the National Board of Trade Unions of Workers and Officials in Sarajevo for approval. See more: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 2 (Republički odbor sind. trgovačkih radnika i službenika za BiH, Tarifni pravilnici 1952) and box no. 7 (Republički odbor sind. ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika BiH, Nacrti tarifnih pravilnika, razne informacije o tarifnoj politici 1954-1961)
- 48 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Zaključci sa III redovne godišnje skupštine Zemaljskog odbora sindikata radnika i službenika trgovinskih preduzeća Jugoslavije za BiH, 5. 5. 1950.
- 49 For more information on the construction of apartments for workers and goods traffic officials, see: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 6, Zapisnik sa sjednice Sreskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, Sarajevo 9. 10. 1959; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa sjednice Predsjedništva RO radnika trgovine, turizma i ugostiteljstva 20. 1. 1961; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 9, Zapisnik sa proširene sjednice Sreskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika koji je održan sa jednim dijelom predsjednika sindikalnih podružnica sa terena opštine Brčko, 26. 1. 1961.
- 50 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 6, Zapisnik sa sjednice Sreskog odbora Sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, Sarajevo, 9. 10. 1959; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa sjednice Predsjedništva RO sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, 7. 12. 1961.
- 51 See e.g.: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 6, Zapisnik sa sjednice Upravnog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika sreza Zeničkog, 12. 1. 1960.
- 52 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 6, Zapisnik sa održanog sastanka

to take advantage of annual vacations. In the early 1950s, the union launched an initiative to build a union resort in Gradac, Croatia, which consisted of 2 buildings (Vila Bosanka and Traders' Building; 140 beds). Since the mid-1950s, this resort has been used by county boards on a schedule determined each year after signing a contract with the Resort Association.<sup>53</sup>

In the context of the discussion about the significant role of the press as a method of work of trade union branches, in the mid-1950s a decision was made to launch the trade union newspaper *Naša riječ*, i.e. the formation of a republican editorial office.<sup>54</sup> Not long after, a project was launched to collect material on the “revolutionary work” of trade and catering workers in the period from 1919 to 1945.<sup>55</sup>

Special attention to trade unions in the 1950s was devoted to seminars on the seller-consumer topic that were organized in trading enterprises. These repeated lectures aimed to influence the modernization of the trading system and change the existing relationship between seller and consumer while trying to overcome the “irregular treatment of traders towards working people and consumers”, and numerous “outdated and foreign customs”, which are no longer desirable, i.e. “foreign greetings” such as “I am your servant, I bow, I kiss your hands, my respect” and the like, addressing as “sir”, “all kinds of frauding” in the shop, and the like.<sup>56</sup>

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Sreskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Banja Luka, 24. 4. 1959.

53 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Zapisnik sa V redovne sjednice predsjedništva Zemaljskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih radnika, 8. 5. 1954; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Zapisnik sa I sjednice Zemaljskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih radnika za BiH, 4. 1. 1955; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 9, Informacija o korišćenju godišnjih odmora radnika i službenika robnog prometa, Sarajevo April 1962.

54 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa sjednice sekretarijata republičkog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika za BiH, 15. 5. 1956. and Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa sjednice sekretarijata Republičkog odbora za BiH sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije 6. 1. 1958.

55 See: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 8.

56 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa sjednice predsjedništva RO sindikat trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika (Održavanje seminara u trgovinskim preduzećima po pitanju odnosa prodavač-potrošač), 7. 12. 1961; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 9, Zapisnik sa sjednice Republičkog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika za BiH (Sprovođenje seminara po pitanju odnosa prodavač-potrošač), 30. 1. 1962; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa Godišnje skupštine Republičkog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika za BiH, 20. 2. 1959; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 9, Odnos prodavača prema potrošaču. Rezultati provedene ankete Trgovačkog preduzeća Zvijezda Travnik, 9. 1. 1962.



## “Irregular view of women as workers” in the first decade of workers’ self-management and the Trade Union

One of the very important issues of progress and modernization of the entire Yugoslav and also Bosnian-Herzegovinian society was the issue of the position of women, which was based on Article 24, Chapter 5, of the Constitution of the Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (January 31, 1946), which clearly defined equal rights of women and men and which also transmitted to the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (December 31, 1946). After the established legal regulation, the emancipation of women should have been put into practice by their stronger inclusion as an important regiment in current social processes and as a necessary workforce in economic plans.

The available archival material testifies to the gradual *economic emancipation* of women, their employment and work in trade and catering, which took place with great difficulty.<sup>57</sup> The working women in these areas, their work, status, number, daily experience, rights, and obligations were discussed at the meetings of the union branches, but also at the meetings of the central management of the union, it is true, more intensively during the first half of the 1950s.<sup>58</sup>

The available material partially illuminates the position of women and reveals the dominant narrative about their social role, but also the inexorable reality, as well as how this issue was treated in the union and what it did about it. The process of opening up the women’s issue more closely was at the beginning of this period and was heavily burdened by numerous ballasts of the past, under the strong influence of the low level of development of both society and social consciousness. In doing so, the trade union appears as an organi-

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57 In his introductory speech at the ceremonial session of the Council of Trade Unions of Bosnia and Herzegovina on June 26, 1975, Raif Dizdarević, the president of the Council of the Union of Trade Unions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasized the great importance of women, i.e. workers since the beginning of the trade union movement. Their role was significant in the historic strike of 1906, especially the role of the workers of the Sarajevo Carpet Factory, Ključ Socks Factory, Tobacco Factory, and Banja Luka Tobacco Factory, who were taken, imprisoned and suffered severe torture. Raif Dizdarević, “Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta Bosne i Hercegovine i trideset godina njegovog djelovanja u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji”, in: *Sedamdeset godina sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini 1905-1975*. (ed. N. Babić, A. Hadžirović), Sarajevo: Vijeće sindikata Bosne i Hercegovine / Fond za izučavanje istorije sindikalnog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini Mićo Sokolović, 1977, 24-25.

58 At the beginning of 1950, the members of the Union of Workers and Clerks of Trade Enterprises of Yugoslavia were mainly civil servants (68.94%), while workers made up 25.46% of the membership. Of these, 33% were women, with this percentage varying significantly across individual republics. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Analiza statističkih izvještaja za IV tromjesečje 1950. godine Sindikalnih radnika i službenika trgovinskih preduzeća Jugoslavije.

zation that was supposed to contribute to the more massive participation of women in this economic sector, protect their status and at the same time oppose “reactionary understandings” about women and the female workforce. They were primarily reflected in the obvious delay in accepting women into the service and their frequent dismissal, where they were at the top of the list in cases of necessary reduction of the workforce, which, according to the overall difficult economic situation, were frequent.<sup>59</sup>

At the annual assembly of the National Committee in February 1955, still, the Union of Trade Workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, delegate Vehbija Imamović, who partly blamed the women themselves for such an unsatisfactory position, spoke about this in the discussion as an obvious problem.

“We have to pose one problem again. That is the issue of women in the trade. A while ago, someone symbolically said: how much we have succeeded in this can be seen best at this assembly where we have only one female delegate. Although we have quite many women in the store, they still did not occupy the right place. They did not occupy through their fault, because they are not aware of their function in our order. Our women did not take advantage of the great achievements of our Revolution. If we look at who these comrades are, then we will see that they mostly work in secondary positions. If we ask them to be trained then we will see that we will encounter difficulties. We cannot separate her from her natural calling, to be a good housewife, and to take care of children, but we must not forget that we are working to ensure that a woman gets and sees her true position in society. In the store, we have options for solving the issue of women-mothers. We also raised the issue of short-time employment. In the store, for example, we do not mind if one woman works until noon and the other from noon. We have plenty of places in the store where you would have to work for a shorter time, but understandably with a lower salary. So we have to fight to equip and prepare a woman to take the right place, i.e. the position that belongs to her.”<sup>60</sup>

In 1955, there was intense discussion about the position of women in trade, as well as the need for their massive employment. Trade in goods was marked as a suitable activity for this, although recently conducted surveys indicated that throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, in certain areas, men have an almost absolute primacy over women’s labor

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59 The practice of resorting to “bureaucratic methods” of firing sensitive and vulnerable categories of workers, including pregnant women, mothers with children, nursing mothers, and the like, in cases of emergency “deployment of excess early manpower” was widespread throughout Yugoslavia, where the union’s reaction was often absent. See: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Zapisnik sa III sjednice predsjedništva centralne uprave sindikata radnika i službenika trgovinskih preduzeća, 26. 2. 1951. and Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 1, Zapisnik sa V zemaljske godišnje skupštine sindikata radnika i službenika trgovačkih preduzeća za BiH, 5. 5. 1952.

60 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Zapisnik sa godišnje skupštine Zemaljskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih radnika za BiH, 21. 2. 1955.

force. At the same time, women are almost as a rule employed in secondary and physically demanding jobs, so 98% of managers are men, and 89% of sales managers are men, as are sales assistants (55%). "A certain reserved attitude of the responsible factors towards the employment of women", especially for management positions, was observed. The problem was that several "comrades were employed after the war, without the necessary professional training, so a significant number of them left the trade after a longer or shorter time and did not tie their perspective to that branch of the economy" and saw it as an opportunity for further training. Such a situation, according to the records of the session of the trade union Presidency, was due to "wrong management and an irregular attitude regarding the employment of women in certain enterprises, and on the other hand, the insufficient activity of trade union organizations and bodies governing this issue". In the conclusion of this session from July 1955, it was pointed out that "trade union organizations are obliged to provide all possible help to comrades to acquire the necessary vocational training through evening trade schools. Of course, this would apply to comrades who already work in the trade. However, the task of trade union organizations is also to advocate for the achievement of prerequisites for the permanent employment of women in trade. In particular, the republican boards and the Central Committee of the Trade Union are tasked with taking care, together with the Chamber of Commerce, that when accepting new students in trade and regular trade schools, the ratio of female students is set following the perspective of the proper ratio of employed women in trade to the total number of employed staff."<sup>61</sup>

At the beginning of 1956, a special survey related to the position of women in trade was conducted *in the field*, now also in the catering industry, which was discussed as a special, first item on the agenda at the session of the Presidency of the Republican Board. The survey pointed to the extremely unfavorable position of women in trade and catering and the widespread practice of disrespect, i.e. circumvention of existing legal regulations. Women worked up to 12 hours a day in enterprises such as "Zemplod" and "Sutjeska" in Sarajevo, where the existing tariff rates were not respected, so women were often paid significantly less than men and what was prescribed by the regulations. In the discussion, it was said that there are also numerous cases, e.g. in Banja Luka and Zenica, where "comrades are irregularly characterized", whereby the union had to take certain measures to regulate numerous irregularities in the field of hiring, working, and firing female workers. One of the very important issues related to women's work was working hours, especially in the case of fruit and vegetable sales, where it was pointed out at this session that, although working hours from 12 o'clock to 4 p.m. are unacceptable, in this sector "working hours cannot be determined" because such perishable goods "cannot wait and must be sold as soon as possible". As a possible solution, the construction of eaves, i.e. canopies, on these stands was mentioned. The general conclusion was that the union's task was to "stimulate one working time for women" and more significantly encourage *female comrades* to attend evening schools "to have better living conditions" and get "more responsible duties". This had to be preceded

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61 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 3, Zapisnik sa VI redovne sjednice pretsjedništva Republičkog odbora za BiH sindikata trgovinskih radnika, 23. 7. 1955. and Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Prijedlog zaključka sa narednim zadacima Sindikata trgovinskih radnika, 21. 8. 1955.

by a systematic harmonization of the number of men and women in evening schools, which until then were mainly attended by men.<sup>62</sup>

The position of women in the catering industry was not better either. A field survey showed that 50% of employed women in this sector were engaged in side jobs (cleaners, laundresses, etc.) where they often faced the free will of the director when firing them. On this occasion, Jovanka Čović particularly pointed out that a significant number of women work in “abnormal conditions”, especially during winter, and that it is necessary to make more concrete conclusions in this domain that will affect the change in such a situation.

The conclusions were indeed adopted at the session. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to all county trade union councils with the instruction that the current position of employed women has to be discussed at meetings of trade union organizations and that the basic intention of the trade union management would help with this: “a) to make it impossible for women to work more than 8 hours a day, especially in fruit and vegetable stores and similar establishments, b) to correct mistakes in the tariff policy towards women who work at the workplaces of qualified workers and determine the appropriate tariff position, c) to ask fruit and vegetable trading enterprises not to put women behind open counters, exposed to the cold, bad weather and frequent sicknesses, i.e. to create and set up closed kiosks for the sale of vegetables, d) that in all cases of refusal to employ women in the store, managers and the president of the workers’ council should be called to moral responsibility, e) that an analysis of the problem of women’s employment in catering and trade is also brought to the Council of the Republic in order to take measures on the line of the council, f) that the municipal boards of trade and catering workers’ trade unions make an analysis on the position of women in these economic branches, draw conclusions from the analysis and take the necessary measures”.<sup>63</sup>

In the middle of the year, women in the trade were also discussed at the joint session of the Presidency of the Central Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia and the Presidency of the Central Committee of the Trade, Catering, and Tourism Workers Union of Yugoslavia. On that occasion, it was noted that, despite the real possibilities, there is still a small and unsatisfactory number of women engaged in trade, while certain collectives, i.e. their “existing cadre of traditional understandings” oppose the employment of women. It was also pointed out that there is an obvious practice of mass dismissal of women from the trade, their neglect in “professional promotion and selection for management positions and self-management bodies” where often “tariff policy is handled irregularly and for the same or similar jobs, women are assigned lower tariff rates than men”. The conclusion was that

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62 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa treće sjednice Predsjedništva Republičkog odbora za BiH sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije (Položaj žene u trgovini i ugostiteljstvu), 16. 4. 1956.

63 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Zapisnik sa treće sjednice Predsjedništva Republičkog odbora za BiH sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije (Položaj žene u trgovini i ugostiteljstvu), 16. 4. 1956.

trade unions have a significant role in pointing out the great employment opportunities for women in trade, that “with the cooperation of other social organizations, they work on this issue, that they fight against other people’s understanding of work and the attitude towards working women in trade, that working hours and working conditions are increasingly adapted to the needs of women workers in shops, etc.”<sup>64</sup>

At that time, a survey on labor management in trade and catering was conducted in the Republic, the application of legal provisions, and the way of functioning in certain enterprises such as “Metal”, “Namirnice”, “Bezistan”, “Granap”, “Angrotekstil”, “Vlašić”, “Melaeksport” and “Eksport-import”, in which there were 210 men and 84 women employed, while only 11 of them joined the workers’ council. In general, at that time, an average of 24% of the workers’ councils in the trade were women. There were 506 men and 149 women in the workers’ councils and management committees of worker self-management in the catering industry. In particular, the results of a survey from the Tuzla area speak about the relatively small number of employed women and their disproportionately small number in workers’ councils. Of the total number of employees in commercial enterprises, there were 1012 men and 463 women. Within 36 trade enterprises, 19 works councils were elected, while in 17 enterprises the workers’ council is the entire collective. There were 652 workers and officials in them, of which 511 were men and “only 141 were women”. These results were even more devastating if you consider that only 62 women were elected to the workers’ councils, while the other 79 women were automatically included in the workers’ councils, which were made up of all workers.<sup>65</sup>

At its second regular session in December 1956, the Republican Board discussed this issue in detail. This was especially discussed by *comrades* Ljubica Jovičić and Ljubica Ružić. Jovičić, referring to the survey carried out at the beginning of the year, which showed a devastating situation and the widespread practice of enterprises being reluctant to hire female workers, said: “You can also read an advertisement in our daily press: such and such a person is wanted for a commercial enterprise, but female comrades are out of the question. It is sad, but true”, she pointed out. “There are times that even when a woman is hired, she is placed in a lower position, illegally classified, even though she has the same qualifications and the same number of years of service as a man. We will ask ourselves why this is so, and the answer has always been: we do not know.”

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64 At the session, it was pointed out that the trade union councils should analyze the situation and point out the possibilities of determining jobs in the trade where only women can work, and draw the attention of the people’s committees to this. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Zaključci zajedničke sjednice Predsjedništva Centralnog vijeća SSJ i Predsjedništva Centralnog odbora Sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije, 16. 5. 1956.

65 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Analiza o radničkom samoupravljanju u trgovini i ugostiteljstvu (Glavni odbor sindikata), 20. 3. 1956; Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Radničko i društveno samoupravljanje u trgovini i ugostiteljstvu, Sarajevo, 28. 3. 1957. and Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 5, Rad organa radničkog i društvenog samoupravljanja, Tuzla 29. 6. 1956.

Alluding to the fact that it is absolutely clear the extremely difficult position of women, even though they are hard-working and active workers in the trade, in front of which those responsible can no longer retreat from this important issue, where the key problem is in “people’s consciousness”, Jovičić continued: “This survey showed that the conditions of women employed in fruit and vegetable stores are very difficult. These women work at the stands, their workplaces are outdoors and they work 12-14 hours so they get sick, they work in warehouses, pull heavy things, etc. On our side, we have to influence a very negative relationship. The customer, when he is in a relationship with the woman-seller, is very impudent (although it also depends on them). All female workers complain about this, and I beg you to influence your acquaintances and others so that people treat women employed in trade and catering with a little more respect. Here we have to ask ourselves what each enterprise has done to reverse this situation. You know that there is this irregular attitude towards women, have the trade union organizations pointed out these irregularities, and if they have not – that you take our message from here to do something in this regard. As comrade said, if I am here next year, maybe I will say the same thing again if you do not take this seriously.”

Emphasizing that today’s debate must be taken seriously and that the Republican Board should initiate significant changes through its branches, Jovičić continued: “The other day I was at the Labor Mediation Bureau. I was horrified when I saw that there were mostly women behind the counter. When enterprises have to choose, it seems that even when layoffs are justified, they prefer to fire a woman rather than a man even though she may be a better worker. That’s why some positive regulations have foreseen that the procedure for firing a woman is more difficult because the consent of the trade union organization is required, but it still happens more often.”

In such a practice of avoiding and violating already existing regulations that partially protected female workers, Jovičić considered a more agile union reaction necessary. The fact is, she continued, “that catering and tourism are very favorable for the employment of female workforce because it is an easier job and that is why there should be a female workforce there, as in other European countries or here in Slovenia”. Look here now! How many women are employed in the trade, and what percentage of women are here among us today.”

She considered the raising of the standard of living conditionally on the improvement of the position of women workers and again emphasized the necessity of stronger involvement of trade union organizations that were supposed to influence the change in the “awareness of people and enterprise managers” about the work of women and the contribution of the female workforce.<sup>66</sup>

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66 Ljubica Ružić spoke similarly, emphasizing the practice of circumventing the existing tariff regulations and the “improper treatment” of women in the catering industry, where due to difficult working conditions and excessively long working hours, they often fall sick and resort to sick leave, which becomes an unjustified excuse for the obvious advantage given to men at the time of admission new workers. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Stenografske bilješke sa druge redovne godišnje skupštine sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije. Republički odbor Sarajevo, 22. 12. 1956.

In the summary, in the annual report on the work of the Trade, Catering, and Tourism Workers Union of Yugoslavia of the Republic Board for 1956, special attention was paid to the position of women in trade and catering, the survey conducted in enterprises and the recording of the situation on the ground, as well as the discussions and adopted conclusions of the trade union meetings during the past year.

The findings of the Main Committee were that women perform their work duties up to 12 hours a day ("Vočar Mostar", "Povrće", "Crevar", "Jadran", "Sutjeska", and "Zemplod Sarajevo"). At the meeting in February 1956, the female workers of the "Sutjeska" enterprise had special complaints about the difficult working conditions in the warehouse and at the counters on the open surface in all weather conditions, i.e. unfavorable weather. The workers of Bezistan in Bašćaršija worked at the stands from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. without a break, *on their feet*, without heating or rest, because the stands were open all day long, and until then "the market management did not find it necessary to somehow regulate working hours and in this market".

The report stated that "the enterprise's management and even the workers' councils in the trade have an irregular attitude towards women", citing the example of the Sarajevo enterprise "Vočar", which in February 1956 published an advertisement in the newspaper *Oslobođenje* for the recruitment of more employees with a clear indication that "women are out of the question". "They said without blushing" – it was recorded in this report.

In addition to the excuses that women "get sick more easily", "use sick leave", that "they are burdened with family and motherhood and are unable to work overtime when necessary", the key problem of "irregular attitudes of managers regarding the employment of women in the trade" was the so-called petty bourgeoisie. "From their petty-bourgeois point of view, they look at and look for the male workforce, even though today in the world the practice is that women are predominantly employed in trade, i.e. female workforce (80%)." This *petty bourgeoisie* was also present among the workers in the shop, and an example of this is the statement of a worker at the conference of the trade house NA-MA (abbreviated from: Narodni magazin) in February 1956, who pointed out that the key problem is that "women in NA-MA work more in general. For example, we have to clean the shops after working hours, while it is not the duty of men to do so, even though they work in the same workplaces as we do".

A similar situation of hard and overtime work, "irregular treatment of female workers" where "individual managers expressed today, in the system of worker self-management, incomprehensible attitudes" was also recorded in the catering industry. In the "Uranak" enterprise in Tuzla county, female workers worked shifts of 14 to 16 hours a day, while their overtime work was not paid. In Sarajevo's "Hotel Beograd", it was recorded that the manager "used vulgar expressions, even swear words, towards certain members of the collective". In addition, the arbitrariness of the superiors, who used their position for various reasons, acted unprincipledly towards their colleagues. In the same enterprise, the case of "a female comrade who was a waitress, then was transferred to the position of a maid and then a cleaner, and after a short time she was ordered to go to work in the laundry room" was recorded.

In the catering shop “Ekspres”, there was a case where the manager fired a worker, the mother of a minor child, without notice. The manager of the catering shop “Bosna” fired a worker who was six months pregnant, while at the “Ugostitelj” enterprise in Vareš, the worker was fired during her three-month sick leave under the excuse that they were no longer needed. A significant number of these cases of unjustified dismissal of female workers became trade union cases and were resolved with the intervention of trade union bodies, but as stated in this report, there were examples of trade union branches “being passive and not always watching over the fact that legality was enforced and the interests of individual members were protected”.

The report pointed out the significance of the session of the presidency held on April 16, 1956, where the position of women in trade and catering was discussed, and several constructive conclusions were adopted on that occasion, which should have had a significant impact on the elimination of negative phenomena and practices. If the conclusions were justified, clear, and feasible, the report states that the Market Management in Sarajevo has already started the process of replacing the stands with kiosks. In the end, it was pointed out that the trade union is precisely the factor that “fights against arbitrariness and negative phenomena in enterprises”, the invited body that “must be the bearer of the fight against illegal actions that harm the worker and create mistrust according to our positive regulations”.<sup>67</sup>

The next annual report of the trade union for 1957 referred to statistical data that indicated that the number of employed women in the trade and catering industry had gradually increased, but also that the current situation was far from satisfactory. In 1957, 6,313 women were employed in all trade activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. 26.3% of the total number of employees. That percentage was somewhat lower than the Yugoslav average, which was 27.2% (46,488 employed women in the Yugoslav trade). Very significant problems that affect such low employment of women in trade, but also in catering, were double work (as an aggravating circumstance for housewives, i.e. those who had a family), the existing system of professional promotion, overtime, and unresolved the issue of Sunday rest. “It is difficult for women to work in the catering industry”, the report pointed out, “and because of the unacceptable view of a part of consumers towards women employed in catering facilities”.

Pointing to the conclusions reached at the end of 1956, this report also states that the trade union organizations were not active enough – not as much as the circumstances allowed, while they could significantly influence the mass employment of female workers, i.e. find various opportunities for it. “All the bodies of our trade union should pay constant attention to this issue because it is not only objective conditions that bother more women in catering and trade, but also subjective causes, i.e. the irregular view of women as workers. This is best observed if we consider how many women are in management positions in catering and trade” – this report points out.<sup>68</sup>

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67      Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Izvještaj o radu u 1956. godini, Sarajevo December 1956.

68      Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 4, Izvještaj o radu u 1957. godini



Although it seemed from the above that the problem was clearly identified and that the adopted tasks would indeed lead to significant changes, the issue of women in trade, catering, and tourism was no longer analyzed separately. As evidenced by the available data, the situation did not change significantly in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In addition to the adoption of “the concept that women have their place in trade and catering” there was still obvious “resistance from business organizations since women use certain benefits, such as frequent sick days, occasional leaves, etc.”<sup>69</sup> In addition to the retreat from the female workforce and the obvious resistance to the employment of women, there were still “various negative phenomena” that violated the existing legal regulations. In the report on the work of the regional board of trade, catering, and tourism workers’ union for Sarajevo county from 1960, it is stated that in the “Veletrgovina” enterprise, a worker, a mother of three children and a fighter since 1942, was fired with the explanation that she performed her duties poorly. The report states that after a while it was determined that this explanation was unfounded and untrue. Also, female workers in this enterprise were given notices of dismissal without the knowledge and consent of the Commission for Admissions and Dismissals. The management board of the enterprise annulled the dismissals after their appeal, but immediately after that, the commission gave its consent to the already announced dismissal of the same *female comrades* without additional explanation.<sup>70</sup>

Meetings of the Sarajevo and Banja Luka county boards testify that the numbers were at the expense of female workers and indicated a marked predominance of men. At the annual assembly of the trade union of the Sarajevo county board in April 1961, out of 63 union members appointed to the assembly’s bodies, i.e. the county board, the delegation for the assembly of the Republican Board, and delegates to the assembly of the County Trade Union Council, there were only 7 women.<sup>71</sup> A few days later, a session of the county board of the Banja Luka trade, catering, and tourism workers’ union was held, to which 60 delegates elected at the annual assemblies in trade union organizations were invited, of which only 8 were women.<sup>72</sup>

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(Sindikat trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije Republički odbor, Sarajevo December 1957.

69 Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 6, Izvještaj za godišnju skupštinu sreskog odbora sindikata koja će se održati 16. 11. 1958. (Sreski odbor trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Zenica)

70 In the context of a series of irregularities in this case, it should be noted that the chairman of the Commission for Admissions and Dismissals, who subsequently gave his consent to the dismissal, is the secretary of the basic organization SKJ in this enterprise. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 6, Izvještaj o radu Sreskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Jugoslavije za srez Sarajevo za period od decembra 1958. do marta 1960.

71 They were: Ankica Narančić, Milica Ledinski, Nada Akulović, Emira Emrić, Nevzeta Maslić, Draginja Vuković i eng. Velida Mehmedagić. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 9, Zapisnik sa godišnje skupštine sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika. Sreski odbor Sarajevo, 14. 4. 1961.

72 Miroslava Babić, Emira Kadenić, Nisveta Ibrahimpašić, Dragica Trkić, Magda Petrić, Slavica Blagojević, Vida Bulajić and Zdenka Bubalo were invited, and seven of them

## Conclusion

The labor movement, as well as labor union organizing, from its beginnings at the end of the 19th century until today, was a very dynamic process that had distinct social, economic, and political implications. We recognize its beginnings in the individual and unrelated reactions of workers in the 1880s and 1890s, dissatisfied with their position and working conditions, which reflected on their entire lives. Originally conceived as social, humanitarian organizations that were supposed to show collegial solidarity and help in case of sickness or unplanned losses, trade union organizations gradually grew into associations that entered into an open struggle for a better position of workers, workers' rights, and legislation that was supposed to define key segments of workers' relations and obligate both workers and employers to comply with these rules.

Such a *revolutionary* labor movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina through different historical periods, from the Austro-Hungarian occupation, the First World War, monarchist Yugoslavia, and the Second World War, socialist Yugoslavia itself went through characteristic phases, had its own singularity, dynamics, *high tide* and *low tide* and at the same time was exposed to different, more or less intense, ideological, i.e. political influences. After briefly pointing out the key determinants of the development of the labor movement up until now, we have devoted special attention in this paper to the importance and organization of trade unions in socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina and the self-management system that was supposed to represent the workers' ideal in which they were supposed to enjoy their rights unhindered and fully. In *Second Yugoslavia*, the trade union significantly changed its position and social role. Placed at the service of the monist party leadership, first in the *reconstruction* and *construction* of the post-war society, and later in the implementation of the Yugoslav experiment of workers' self-management, it became a desirable, massive, and ubiquitous complex organization that had its own local, republican and Yugoslav network established on the so-called industrial principle. Simultaneously with the strengthening of the organizational network and the increasing number of "organized" workers, the trade union as part of the People's Front, and since 1953 of the Socialist Alliance of Working People, is increasingly becoming a tool in the hands of the authorities. It no longer acts as a fighter for workers' rights, raising the economic, professional, political, and cultural education of workers, contenting itself with the role of the proofreader. "Today, trade unions do not act as protectors of workers' interests (according to some other social interests), but in the role of social control over the shortcomings and weaknesses of the self-management bodies of the producers themselves", said the president of the Trade Workers' Union in 1955.

At the end of this era, the trade union found itself in an unenviable gap between an obviously worn-out ideological paradigm, the thesis of socialist self-management as a model that has no alternative, and the increasingly pronounced need for a radical change in society and the political system. It has been in a multivalent crisis for several years, in which the trade

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attended the session. Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RO STUTR, box no. 9, Zapisnik sa IV redovne sjednice sindikata sreskog odbora sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika Banja Luka, 28. 4. 1961.

union gradually lost its material, institutional and political support, and thus its social role.

The archival material of the fund of the Republican Board of Trade and Catering Workers' Unions (1947-1962), which we had the opportunity to analyze in detail, still gives a much more nuanced picture of the position, role, and work of this particular union. A new dimension is given to its activities in the post-war period and the first years of the introduction of workers' self-management. That transitional period was marked by numerous fractures, strong changes, large and differently motivated resistances, burdened by a heavy historical legacy, ballast of backwardness, illiteracy, poverty, and shortages. It turned out that it was not enough to adopt a certain law, rulebook, or conclusion, whereby a serious discrepancy was felt between the legal and the real. This is exactly where the trade union came in, insisting on respect for legality and thus influencing the gradual change of social consciousness and value system. True, the trade union response was often inadequate, untimely, and insufficient.

Through the records of the sessions of the Republican Board, the Presidency, the Secretariat, county, municipal, and city trade union councils, and numerous branches, it is possible to partially reconstruct the current zeitgeist, real and everyday problems of workers as problems of the entire social community. They reveal to us the position of working women in trade and catering from a special angle. Their employment and the economic emancipation of women should have been very significant in the context of the envisioned modernization and raising of the standard of living. However, we see that women faced numerous challenges and difficulties as sediments of the previous historical course and deep-rooted patriarchal consciousness. Open resistance to their employment, their reluctant acceptance into service, difficult working conditions, more frequent dismissals, inadequate pay for the same jobs, weak involvement in administrative bodies and trade union organizations, and difficulties in advancement and training, which are mentioned in these documents in the 1950s, testify that it will take a long, long time to reach the proclaimed equality.

At the same time, we cannot break away from the impression that certain elements of *irregular treatment* of women in trade and catering that were mentioned in the 1950s, unfortunately, are also recognized in modern Bosnian society. Therefore, the trade union today, as a politically independent organization of voluntarily associated workers and an important actor of civil society, should return to its original task of opposing the exploitation of workers and take a more combative approach to the protection of their rights.

## Attachments

Ustavni sud  
Sudbeni vijeće  
Predsjednik  
Prof. dr. Stjepan  
Dujčević

27. 2. 1997

Konferencija o radu Sudbenog vijeća  
Sudbeno vijeće

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Source: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fond Republički odbor sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, box no. 1. Republički odbor sind. trgovačkih radnika. Zapisnici sjednica sind. pod. i god. skupština 1949-54.

[illegible]

Source: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fond Republički odbor sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, box no. 1. Republički odbor sind. trgovačkih radnika. Zapisnici sjednica sind. pod. i god. skupština 1949-54.

Trgovinsko preduzeće  
"Bratstvo"  
Bijeljina, 25.12.1952  
Brg: 326/sz

Republički odbor Sindikata  
Trgovinskih Radnika BiH  
Sarajevo

Na priopćenje Vam se podnosi  
Tarifni Pravilnik za 1952. god. sa  
zapisnikom od 24. sv. sj. s molbom  
za odobrenje.

S. F. - S. V.

Priop: 4

Director:  
Stanić Stjepan

Source: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fond Republički odbor sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, box no. 2. Republički odbor sind. trgovačkih radnika i službenika za BiH. Tarifni pravilnici 1952.

- 3 -

SREZ - UKUPNO	Broj prodav. u sastavu trg.predus.	Trg.radnje sa red.obr. radnje	Posredni radnje	Prod. preis. 22-a prod. B.H.	Prod. Ostale
Banja Luka	426 134	14	8	53 166	51
Bihac	236 103	5	-	14 103	13
Brčko	479 171	1	3	45 210	49
Derventa	198 99	2	4	27 99	7
Doboj	334 133	2	4	33 130	32
Goražde	252 98	1	-	29 117	7
Jajce	190 85	3	16	14 99	13
Livno	129 60	4	-	9 51	5
Mostar	520 274	9	5	38 173	22
Prijedor	347 103	12	9	23 150	42
Sarajevo	1010 601	67	49	132 133	28
Trebinje	123 43	2	-	10 62	6
Tuzla	431 216	5	7	59 135	9
Zenica	444 226	5	-	86 94	31
Zvornik	133 55	-	3	4 67	4
Ukupno:	5255 2361	132	109	578 1757	319

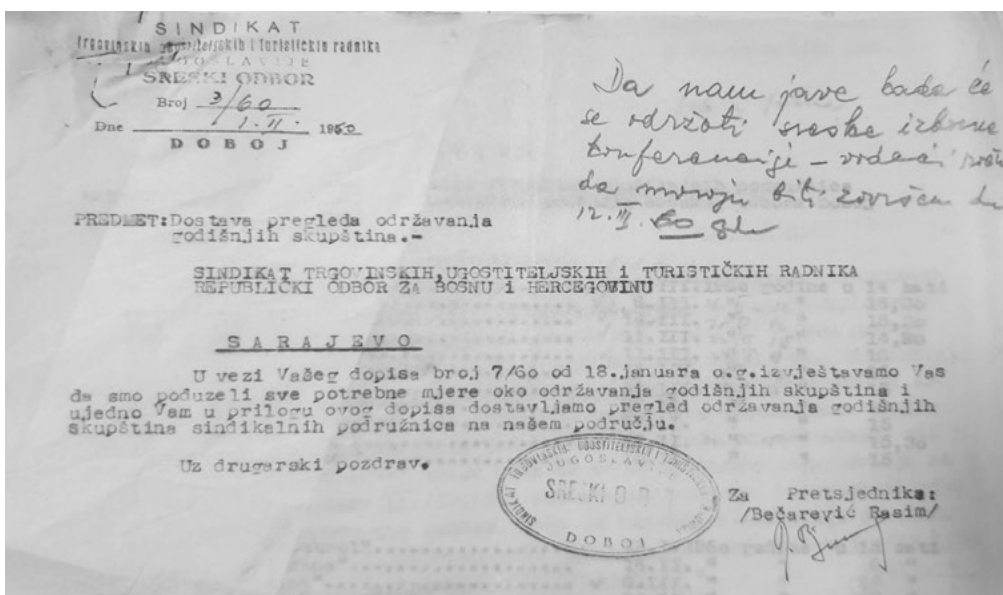
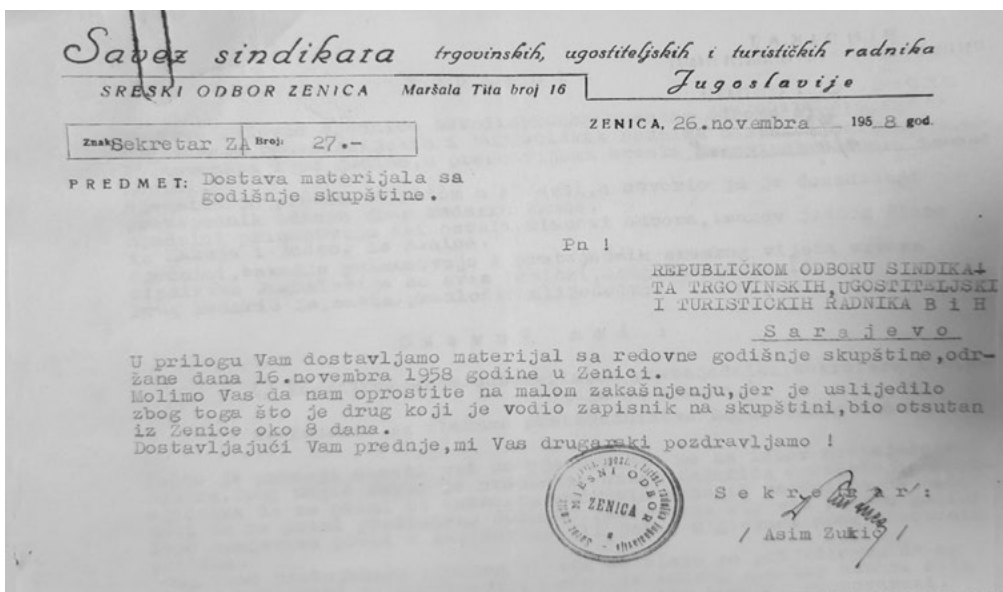
Is prednjeg pregleda vidi se, da je ukupan broj svih prodavnica koncem 1957 godine iznosio 5.255, te sa 6 robnih kuća /koje nisu uzete u obzir/ ukupno iznosi 5.261 prodavnica.

**B. UGOSTITELJSTVO:**

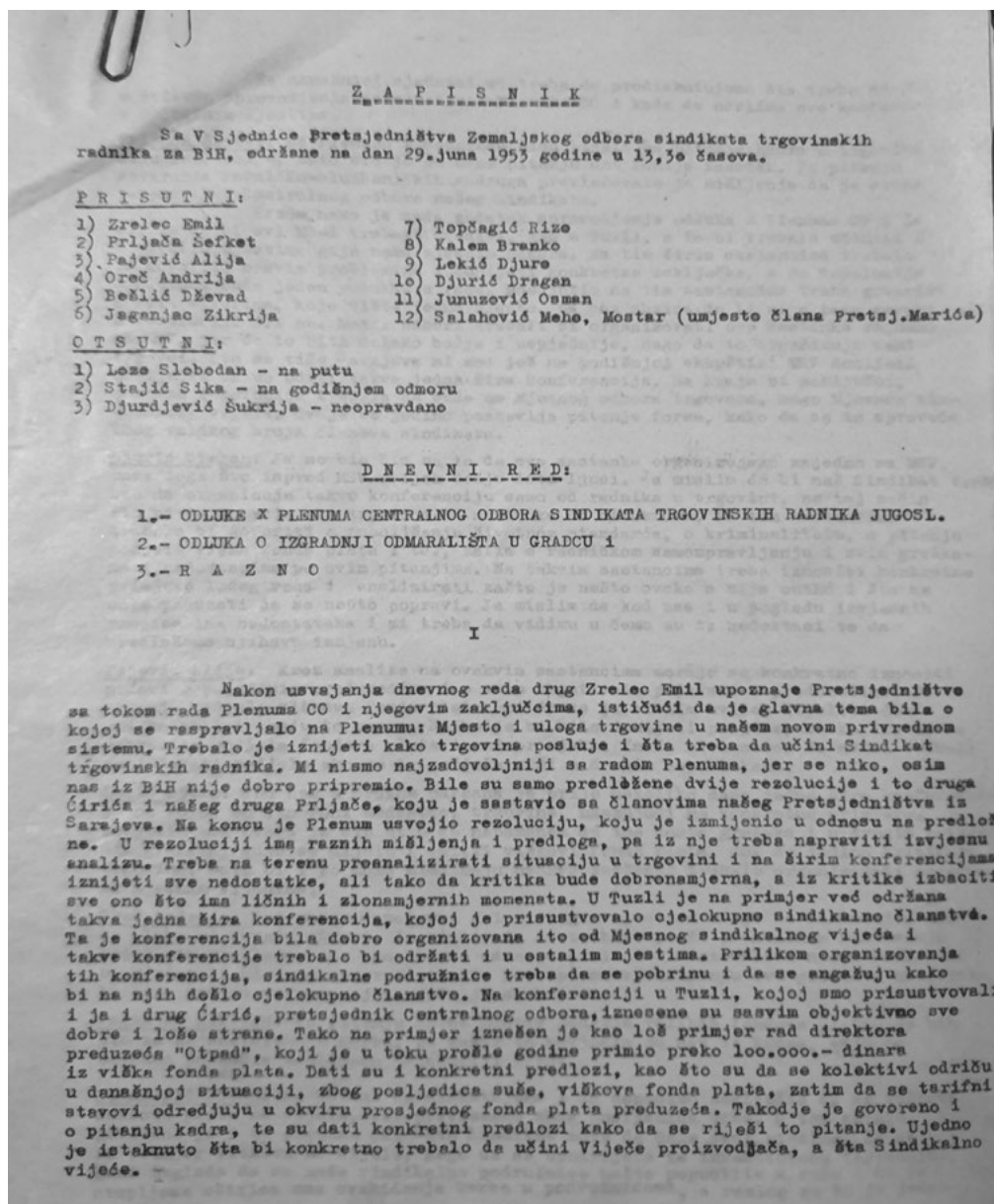
Stanje ugostiteljskih objekata koncem 1957 godine po sresovima izgledalo je ovako:

Srez - Ukupno	Broj ugost. pred.bor. poslj.jed.	Broj ugost. poslj.jed. u sastavu ugost. radnji	Broj ugost. poslj.jed. sa red.obr. radnje	Broj ugost. poslj.jed. sa red.obr. radnje	Broj ugost. poslj.jed. sa red.obr. radnje	Broj ugost. poslj.jed. sa red.obr. radnje
Banja Luka	126	-	19	28	32	6
Bihac	92	-	37	4	23	2
Brčko	86	-	30	7	9	18
Derventa	77	-	25	3	16	17

Source: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fond Republički odbor sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, box no. 5. Republički odbor sind. trgovačkih radnika za BiH. Zapisnici sjednica rad. savjeta, razne informacije, raspisi 1950-1959.



Source: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fond Republički odbor sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, box no. 6. Republički odbor sind. trgovačkih radnika za BiH. Zapisnici, izvještaji sreskih sindikalnih vijeća 1959-1960.



Source: Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fond Republički odbor sindikata trgovinskih, ugostiteljskih i turističkih radnika, box no. 3. Republički odbor sind. trgovačkih radnika za BiH. Zapisnici, sjednica predsjedništva sekretarijata, materijali sa godišnjih skupština radnih organizacija 1947-1955.

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# The position of women in socialist Yugoslavia until the end of the 70s and the importance of workers' protests during the 80s of the 20th century

mag. Dražen Janko

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**Abstract:** *After the end of the Second World War, a socialist state had to be built. The process was slow because, after not only the destroyed system but also the destroyed infrastructure, everything had to be put back into operation. As women proved to be true comrades in the national liberation struggle, the issue of women had to be resolved as soon as possible. There was a large number of illiterate women. The founding of the Women's Antifascist Front in Bosanski Petrovac, better known as AFŽ (abbreviated from: Antifašistički front žena), had the task of incorporating a greater number of women into the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Over time it turned out that women did not get the rights they needed. Women's movements, both in the world and in Yugoslavia, emphasized the malignant diseases of the system, which were reflected in the representation of women in the public-private sector. The one that should have cared the most for the rights of all workers was the trade union, which in the early eighties after the death of Josip Broz Tito showed the internal rot of the system it stood for.*

*The purpose of this article is to present the position of women in all job sectors, including trade, and the issues of "women's rights" up to the beginning of the 1980s. The second part of the paper deals with the general problems of the socialist system that led to joint rights (men's and women's), i.e. joint protests that culminated in the second half of the 1980s and finally showed the rottenness of the system through the example of Kombinat Borovo. This example will show how shaky the former Yugoslavia was when it comes to trade union rights and the rights of workers in general.*

**Keywords:** *women, workers' rights, trade union, protests, Yugoslavia*

## Introduction

The socialist emancipation of women led to their significant step forward into the public and political sphere, and to the improvement of the overall social and even trade union association of women. The participation of women in partisan units paved the way for their emancipation.<sup>1</sup> The confessions of countless examples of female partisans point to their great

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<sup>1</sup> Ivana Pantelić, *Partizanke i antifašistički front žene Jugoslavije (1945-1953)*, ProFemina, summer/autumn 2011, 81.

contribution to the fight. The partisan struggle was the “founding” myth of the new society, and in these myths, the struggle and contribution of comrades were highlighted. The most significant form of organized participation of women in the revolutionary struggle and the construction of society is certainly the Women’s Antifascist Front of Yugoslavia (abbr. AFŽ), formed in Bosanski Petrovac in 1942 when the AFŽ’s First Land Conference was held. The conference which lasted for three days was attended by 166 women representatives who were among the leaders of the party, the pre-war women’s movement, active youth, and women partisans.<sup>2</sup> An important mechanism of this education was the press, and despite the difficult conditions during the war, 30 newspapers intended for women were occasionally printed.<sup>3</sup> During the war, AFŽ’s focus was, of course, on liberating the country from occupiers and fascism, but with emphasis on the ideological commitment that women should be equal to men. In this spirit, Josip Broz Tito emphasized the importance of women’s contribution to the revolutionary liberation struggle. But it was certainly not like that in the practice. For example, according to the post-war president of AFŽ Cana Babović, women came to AFŽ meetings, but with the prior consent of their husbands!<sup>4</sup>



(Downloaded from: <https://voxfeminae.net/>)

After the war, the focus of AFŽ’s activities was on women’s participation in the reconstruction and building of the state, but also on those activities that traditionally belong to women: caring for orphans, the elderly, people with disabilities, etc. Women were allowed to choose and be chosen, and the AFŽ played a significant role in these activities. Local AFŽ committees are also being formed in all villages and towns. In the period after the war, the greatest focus was on organizing illiteracy courses due to the high illiteracy of the population in general, especially women, as well as on health and home economics courses. Over time, AFŽ’s work became more humanitarian, and AFŽ’s leaders were aware of the danger of reduc-

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2 Ibid, 81.

3 Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, *Ženski pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini: Artikulacija jedne kontrakulture*, Sarajevo 2013, 79.

4 Ivana Pantelić, *Partizanke i antifašistički front žene Jugoslavije (1945-1953)*, 82.

ing the front to a humanitarian organization, as was evident by the speeches of activists such as Mitra Mitrović and Vida Tomšić. At the first plenum of AFŽ, the first one mentioned here pointed out: “(...) Our movement needs to be drawn into the struggle in all fields, especially economics, and business, and we should not let it turn into a humanitarian or some other organization that will lose its fighting revolutionary character, which it acquired through its actions during the National Liberation War (...).”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to self-criticism, during 1947 there was also criticism from the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (abbr. KPJ). The insufficient activity of AFŽ's local committees was pointed out, as well as the fact that still, a large number of women have not joined AFŽ. One well-known analysis of AFŽ, which was investigated by Lydia Sklevicky, has shown that many women in AFŽ saw the dangers approaching them, and even predicted the abolition of AFŽ. In some documents, AFŽ thus criticized the People's Front of Yugoslavia, which previously treated AFŽ only as technical assistance. What is particularly highlighted as a precedent for the existence of the AFŽ and which indicates the destructive policy of the KPJ towards the female population is the fact that many prominent party leaders did not allow their wives to get involved in the work of the AFŽ!<sup>6</sup>

These and other numerous contradictions led to the so-called “self-abolition of the AFŽ” and its transformation into the *Union of Women's Societies* at the Fourth Congress in 1953 (which was supposed to reflect the so-called democratic trend, because the KPJ was also transformed into the League of Communists of Yugoslavia – SKJ). Over time, this union proved to be weak. The fact that AFŽ grew from a semi-autonomous organization after the Second World War into one of many segments of the party organization (the so-called umbrella organization) facilitated this “self-abolition”.<sup>7</sup> Behind the massiveness of the AFŽ was an oligarchic structure, and the female party oligarchy, in a far worse position than the male party oligarchy, was not able to oppose these trends, nor grow into an authentic interpreter of women's needs and goals.<sup>8</sup>

Such complex problems for the female population persisted until the 1970s, when the second and third waves of the feminist movement appeared, which also covered issues of women's position in the public and economic sectors.

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5 Ivana Pantelić, *Partizanke i antifašistički front žene Jugoslavije (1945-1953)*, 88.

6 Lydia Sklevicky, *Konji, žene, ratovi*, Ženska infoteka, Zagreb, 1996, 124.

7 Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, *Ženski pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini: Artikulacija jedne kontrakulture*, 80.

8 Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, *Ženski pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini: Artikulacija jedne kontrakulture*, 81.

## The position of women until the beginning of the 1970s

The gender discourse in the SFRY, as in other socialist countries, mainly focused on the role of women in the process of industrialization, with the fact that the socialist model tried to harmonize and integrate working with the functions that women usually perform in the private sphere, with an emphasis on motherhood. The so-called women's issue is defined as a part of the class issue, and the specifics of the position of women from such a one-dimensional perspective can not be viewed as an objective phenomenon.

The percentage of women employed was particularly high in the period of post-war reconstruction and state-building when all forms of labor were welcome. However, the working conditions were often very difficult, and in workplaces where there was a lack of staff (e.g. in hospitals) it happened that women worked overtime, in two shifts, and very difficult working conditions.<sup>9</sup> With the introduction of self-management in 1950, companies were required to be profitable, which led to a reduction in subsidies for social standard institutions. With the introduction of the decree on child allowance in 1951, women were encouraged to leave their jobs and be with their children. Although many traditional male occupations were opened up to women in socialism, they continued to be part of the so-called secondary labor market.

When it comes to the manufacturing sector, women mostly worked in the secondary sector of the textile and leather industry, which was paid the lowest. According to Stipe Šuvar, women in the secondary sector are assigned according to the principle of selective discrimination, where the work is "female," most often with outdated technologies, lower educational structure, and lower personal income.<sup>10</sup> Research conducted by Željka Sporer, which refers to the period 1965-1980, shows that greater participation of women in certain economic branches is always associated with lower personal incomes in these branches.<sup>11</sup> The largest number of women were employed in the fields of education, healthcare, social protection, hospitality industry, and trade.

Statistical data indicate various forms of discrimination against women in the workplace: there are much fewer women in management positions, they wait longer for promotion, and depending on the branch of work, the average personal income of a woman is lower than the average personal income of a man with a suitable professional education – in the industry, the differences range from 11% in the group of unskilled workers to 33.8% in the group of skilled workers.<sup>12</sup> Describing this situation, Slobodanka Nedović points out that "it

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9 Vera Gudac Dodić, *Žena u socijalizmu*, The Institute for Recent History of Serbia, Belgrade, 2006, 56-57.

10 Stipe Šuvar, *Diskusija u raspravi: Društvena svijest, marksistička teorija i emancipacija žena-danas*, *Žena*, no. 2-3/1972, 73.

11 Željka Sporer, *Feminizacija profesija kao indikator položaja žene u različitim društvima*, *Sociologija*, no. 4/1985.

12 Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, *Ženski pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini: Artikulacija jedne kontrakulture*, 83.

is an unwritten rule that even in work organizations with a large majority of the female workforce, men are in the management positions”.<sup>13</sup> The participation of women in management positions was very low – the average was around 6%, and according to some research around 14%. In any case, it is about the underrepresentation of women in management positions.

When it comes to the commercial sector in the 60s and 70s, women made up about 70% of the workforce. They were not in management positions, but were, in percentage terms, paid less for their jobs. As this sector was also *under the state boot*, the same rules were applied in other professions. What makes trade different from other professions is that public procurement and even trade unions were more “entertained” by the production sector than the tertiary sector, and the reason is that industrial enterprises contributed more to the market economy. When we talk about unionization and protest in the trade, which will be discussed a bit later, these occupations were not on the list of workers who protested.

What distinguishes women from men of this period is the problem of the so-called double burden of women. A woman, even when she was employed, performed most of the household chores and was most often responsible for raising children. If she had any help in this, it was the help of her mother or mother-in-law. According to data from 1965, women worked an average of 60-70 hours a week, of which 20-30% was unpaid work.<sup>14</sup> To solve this, there were also attempts to socialize household chores. At the end of the 50s, there were more and more services that were founded on the initiative of women’s societies. However, these services were used by a small number of women, for example, according to a survey conducted by the service itself, only 1% of service users were women.<sup>15</sup> Social catering restaurants were established for the same purpose, but they were mostly used by single men, and housework continued to absorb hours and hours of women’s work.<sup>16</sup>

The problem was also that the so-called women’s issue was treated in a simplified way. There were fewer women than men in politics. In the former Yugoslavia, the percentage of women participating in the SFRY parliament in 1963 reached 19.6%. Also, women who were in politics at that time held a large number of prominent positions. However, they did not hold these positions because of quota or form, but on the personal qualities and contributions basis, as well as a broader sociopolitical determination that the position of women should be equal.<sup>17</sup>

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13 Slobodanka Nedović, *Savremeni feminizam. Položaj i uloga žene u porodici i društvu*, The Center for Advanced Legal Studies, The Center for Free Elections and Democracy, Belgrade, 2005, 110.

14 Ibid, 105.

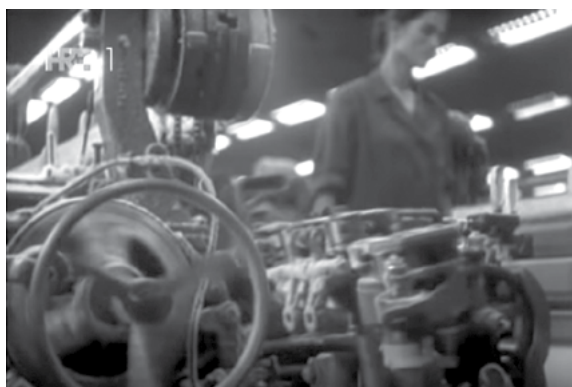
15 Slobodanka Nedović, *Savremeni feminizam. Položaj i uloga žene u porodici i društvu*, 107.

16 Ibid, 108.

17 Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, *Ženski pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini: Artikulacija jedne kontrakulture*, 85.



What was the position of women in Yugoslavia, the distinguished Croatian scientist and sociologist Inga Tomić-Koludrović commented for *Deutsche Welle*. “I doubt that many women would be satisfied. In Yugoslavia, they got the same rights as men, but the family remained a patriarchal niche in which even the most educated women performed all household chores. The burden on women was extremely high. Krešo Golik’s documentary film from 1966 ‘From 3 to 22’ perfectly illustrates this: coming to work, working, buying groceries, taking care of the family, household chores... Practically 16 or more hours of work a day. Historian Brunnbauer claims, for example, that in the 1960s in Yugoslavia, women worked an average of 60-70 hours a week, of which 20-30 hours were unpaid work at home, which was significantly more than the highest workload of women recorded in Italy where women worked an average of 54 hours a week. But the fact is that they got the right to leave the house and the right to work, which was extremely important for them at that time,” concludes Inga Tomić-Koludrović, head of the research on the division of household chores carried out within the project *Relational Gender Relations in Croatia: Modernization and Development perspectives – GENMOD*.<sup>18</sup>



(Downloaded from: <https://www.mojevrijeme.hr/magazin/><sup>19</sup>)

Krešo Golik’s short documentary film from 1966 shows one day in the life of 22-year-old Smilja Glavaš, a married woman and mother from the suburbs of Zagreb. Her day starts at 3 in the morning and lasts until 10 at night. Before work, she goes to the market to buy groceries, and after work, she returns to her child and dilapidated house on the edge of town. She does the household chores herself. She walks to the tram line every day, while her husband goes to work by bicycle.<sup>20</sup>

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18 <https://www.mojevrijeme.hr/magazin/2019/10/tomic-koludrovic-u-jugoslaviji-su-zene-radile-od-jutra-do-mraka/> Accessed: April 4, 2023.

19 Clip from the video.

20 Link to the short film, from 13:42 min. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avaas3e37T4>) Accessed: April 3, 2023.

## The awakening of women during the 1970s

The 1970s were significant in the SFRY for the women's issue, as well as the position of women workers in all sectors of the public and economics gathering. Since the abolition of AFŽ until the 1970s, any special importance or attention was not given to women's issue. However, in the mid-1970s, the second wave of the women's movement, better known as *feminism*, slowly arrived in Yugoslavia, fueled by student protests in 1968. A generation of young and educated women from urban centers (...) formed the core of the new movement in the early 1970s (...). These women had access to education and employment. The year 1978 is of special importance for women and women's issue in the SFRY, because that year the international gathering of *Drugarica žena. Žensko pitanje – Novi pristup?* (Eng. *Comrade Woman. The Women's Question – A New Approach?*) in the Student Cultural Center (abbr. SKC) in Belgrade was held. It represented the first international conference on the position of women in Yugoslavia.<sup>21</sup> The meeting was attended by educated and established women from Zagreb, Sarajevo, Ljubljana, and Belgrade, as well as those from Italy, France, and England. The conference pointed out all the hypocrisy of the regime that claimed that the women's issue was solved in socialism, that women were equal to men, and that every issue of specific women's interests was declared to be neo-leftism, or both at the same time. It was suggested to self-managed women that their main task was the kitchen and giving birth, so the socialist party of Yugoslavia considered the women's trade union movement invalid and a priority that had to be solved.<sup>22</sup>

In the Yugoslav form of industrial democracy, known as self-management, there is a noticeable discriminatory attitude towards women, who were slightly more represented only in the representative bodies of their basic organizations of joint work (abbr. OOUR), and more symbolically when this representative structure is separated from the base.<sup>23</sup> However, the question arises as to whether greater formal legal participation or rather the mere presence of women in decision-making bodies would deeply change the existing gender and wider social relations in general. Deeper analyses on this topic were made by Blaženka Despot,<sup>24</sup> a philosopher who wondered why socialism does not give equal rights to women if it stands for equality for all. Her work is considered significant because it talks about the limited emancipation of women in socialism.

New social movements play a key role in this because student, anti-racist, ecological, and feminist movements "can no longer reconcile themselves to the paradigm of political emancipation of established freedom, but seek freedom from freedom understood in this

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21 Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, *Ženski pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini: Artikulacija jedne kontrakulture*, 89.

22 Ibid, 89.

23 Ivana Pantelić, *Partizanke i antifašistički front žene Jugoslavije (1945-1953)*, 119.

24 Milena Karapetrović, *Ona ima ime (o filozofiji i feminizmu)*, „Lara” Bijeljina, ART print, Banja Luka-Bijeljina, 2007, 52.

way.”<sup>25</sup> They question the uncritical faith in progress brought by “modern”. Blaženka Despot analyzes the women’s movement in the context of other progressive social movements and their aspirations towards new sociability, which are impossible to understand within the framework of existing political paradigms, concentrating them in trade union protests that will escalate in the 80s of the 20th century. By abolishing ownership and socializing the means of production, socialist societies “did not make man’s freedom towards the state more serious, nor did they change the relationship with nature as a thing.”<sup>26</sup>

In the book “Teorija i praksa samoupravnog socijalizma” (Eng. *Theory and Practice of Self-Management Socialism*) from 1976, it was stated: “The working class and all working people are the bearers of power and management of other social affairs... But equality in rights... does not necessarily mean actual equality. In our socialist society, the latter is much more important, i.e. not to declare working people and all other citizens equal, but to ensure that they become equal.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, equality was insisted upon in the SFRY because it was one of the basic segments of state leadership and the transfer of ideology. The context of the 1970s and 1980s is also a turbulent period, given that Tito’s death in 1980 stirred up circumstances throughout the country.

During the 70s and 80s, the popular culture which film is a part of, presents a special problem: there was suppression and avoidance of socialist thought and consciousness, and thus an “obscure ideological situation, in which social forces that are bearers of group ownership mentality strive to support that form of social reproduction, which petrifies the existing division into managers and executors with clear social differences”.<sup>28</sup> The sphere of popular culture projected certain significant figures that carried ideological assumptions, and which varied depending on the socioeconomic conditions that worsened following the approach of the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Traveling to Western Europe and the USA, women from academic circles got the opportunity to learn about the women’s movement and literature and to analyze and observe their society from a new angle. In such circumstances, a kind of precedent took place: the organization of the first “feminist conference” in some socialist country. Conference *Drugarica žena. Žensko pitanje – Novi pristup?* was organized in Belgrade in the Student Cultural Center in 1978, when women’s demands for rights equal to men’s rights were more serious and could be followed, which laid the foundation for a joint rebellion that followed already in the early 80s of the 20th century. This will lead to an even greater wave of awakening and union gathering.<sup>29</sup>

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25 Blaženka Despot, *New Age i moderna*, Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, Zagreb, 1995, 66.

26 Blaženka Despot, *New Age i moderna*, Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 101.

27 Mratović Veljko, *Teorija i praksa samoupravnog socijalizma*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1976, 150.

28 Reana Senjković, *Izgnubljeno u prijenosu: pop iskustvo soc kulture*, Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb, 2008, 86.

29 Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, *Ženski pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini: Artikulacija jedne kontrakulture*, 89.

## The decline of trade union gatherings in SFRY during the 1980s

The shaky social security of trade union membership leads to the appearance of the first protests in a socialist society. More serious and comprehensive analyzes of the position of trade unions in a self-management society are rare, and even rarer are those that are critical of the current system at the time; mainly through theoretical constructions and retelling of some dogmatic beliefs, an attempt is made to convey the current image of the trade union as a very important factor in self-management.<sup>30</sup>

Through different apologetic approaches to the dysfunctional concept of trade unions, one can see the processes that ultimately led to a complete turnaround in trade union politics at the end of the 80s of the 20th century. While in the analyzes from 1985 and 1986, strong positions on self-managing socialism as a model without an alternative can be seen, discussions from 1989 already focus on new perspectives of trade unions in the conditions of an open market economy. The trade union in an organizational but also a political sense followed the fate of the state in which it existed – the split in the League of Communists led to the creation of alternative views on the future of the trade union and society, in which the trade union will perform functions that it did not before. In the same processes, the transformation “from workers to the nation” is also visible, which will soon lead to military confrontations on the territory of the former joint state.<sup>31</sup> The trade union welcomed the second half of the 80s and significant turmoil in the existing sociopolitical system, as well as the disintegration of the SFR Yugoslavia in a normative framework that was mainly limited by the Constitution of the SFRY from 1974 and the Law on Collective Labor (abbr. ZUR) from 1976.<sup>32</sup> The biggest shortcoming was visible in the fact that the union was viewed through the Constitution and laws as “a subject of the implementation of state policy, and not as a support for workers’ rights and an autonomous organization of the workers themselves”.<sup>33</sup> Such institutionalization of the trade union and its participation in the sociopolitical council of the Assembly of the SFRY did not lead to stronger political activity of the trade union on an independent basis, especially when it comes to women’s issue. On the contrary, many authors from the late 1980s criticized the approach of the trade union to the state, which was established to such a significant extent that it was not possible to distinguish where state policies and interests end, and where the trade union builds its specific platforms of action.<sup>34</sup>

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30 Goran Musić, *Radnička klasa Srbije u tranziciji*, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Belgrade, 2013, 69.

31 Ibid, 69.

32 Janos Kornai, *Reforma socijalnog sektora u post socijalističkim zemljama: normativni pristup*, Zbornik radova: *Globalizacija i socijalna država*, Zagreb, 1988, 232-233.

33 Ibid, 234.

34 Ibid, 234.

## The importance of protests as a response to the poor position of workers and their rights

It can be seen from the previous text that the trade union organization in SFRY already had very shaky foundations. They were completely shattered during the 80s, especially in the second half, which was marked by numerous and increasingly massive protests by workers. The union then followed the fate of the common state, fragmented, and turned to new rhetoric that assumed a fundamental change in the political and economic system. The extent to which the existing system was unprepared for the implementation of “stabilization measures” that entailed pronounced austerity and limited the rights of employees, and which would undoubtedly further collapse the already declining standard of living, can be seen from the very terminology used when it comes to protests.

Namely, in legislation as well as in everyday speech, the term “protest/strike” is not used, but the term “work stoppage” (which was considered colloquial, although it was also used in professional literature), while the ZUR presented a meaningless linguistic construction – “disputes which could not be solved in a regular way”.<sup>35</sup> In such a system there is no room for extra-institutional dissatisfaction, and this is a theoretical position that officials held practically until the very collapse of the system, labeling protests as “wild,” while some authors even had very critical constructions of how and why protests occur, ignoring the basic motivation of workers, and apologetically trying to reduce them to isolated phenomena that do not go against the system, although there were also contrary examples.<sup>36</sup> The number of protests<sup>37</sup> in the SFRY grew rapidly in the mid-80s. In 1980, a total of 235 protests were organized in which 13,504 workers participated. These figures rose to 1,685 protests during 1987 and 1,348 protests involving 314,060 workers in the January-October 1988 period.<sup>38</sup> During 1989, it is estimated that around 470,000 workers protested in 1886 protests.<sup>39</sup> Most protests in the former Yugoslavia were organized in Serbia (and its provinces) and Croatia. More than 200, up to several thousand workers participated in every fifth protest. Although they are still short-lived, the average duration of protests has

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35 Janos Kornai, *Reforma socijalnog sektora u postsocijalističkim zemljama: normativni pristup*, 235.

36 Stjepan Martinović points to the fact that during 1985, protests were on the decline in most countries, with rare exceptions (Spain, Denmark), while in the SFRY they were on the rise, which means that the causes of protests must be sought on domestic soil, not within the framework of global market disturbances and world economic trends. Stjepan Martinović, *Sindikat u suvremenom svijetu i jugoslavenskom društvu*, Republički i Gradski odbor sindikata radnika u grafičkoj, informativnoj i izdavačkoj djelatnosti Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1987, 16.

37 In the text, the terms “protest” and “work stoppage” will be used as synonyms.

38 Zoran Stojiljković i Vukašin Pavlović, *Sindikat i nezadovoljstvo radnika*, Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, 1988, 42.

39 Štrajkovi 2013, „Koliko je bilo štrajkova”, 1990, Borovo, 3116, 8.

increased to 10.5 working hours, which is significantly higher than the average for strikes in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>40</sup>

Vukašin Pavlović and Zoran Stojiljković also analyze the qualitative dimension of the protests, concluding that some regularities and trends are present: that production activities protests are spreading to education, trade, health, and other state services, as well as that workers' awareness of the need for change has gone beyond the limits of their enterprise – the protests are thus transformed into attempts to point out the difficult situation in the entire economy and to influence the macro-conditions of the economy, i.e. various state policies.<sup>41</sup> This kind of positioning of the workers in the protests is a logical consequence of the changes they have observed for a long time, which culminated in the announced reforms. Even 62.8% of protesters are employed, under the age of 35, and almost the same percentage of protesters are of working-class origin (57.1%). 76.6% of protesters have a high school education, while the support of highly educated employees is absent. The social dimension of the protest is evident: 75% of the protesters consider their material position to be below average, and 90% consider that they are paid less than they deserve for their work. The attitude of the protesters towards the trade unions is also interesting: 45.6% of the participants in the work stoppage declared themselves to be members of the trade union, while 49.6% of them refused any connection with the trade union.<sup>42</sup> Bearing in mind the high level of membership in the trade union in that period, it seems that the revolt was the reason for individual workers to depart from any political expectations from the trade union.

How do unions manage in such circumstances? One of the most significant uprisings of the second half of the 1980s was organized in the “Raša” mine in Labin in the Republic of Croatia, in April and May 1987. This protest is known for the fact that it was the longest at that time – it lasted for 34 days – as well as for the fact that the public's attention was always focused on the miners' revolts (which, unfortunately, has persisted to this day), whose role in the production and the economy was generally very appreciated.<sup>43</sup> That period in Yugoslavia was marked by protests in which, according to estimates, around half a million workers participated. There were most protests in the late 1980s and early 1990s, at the time of the introduction of austerity measures and “restructuring” of the economy, when protests became an everyday and massive phenomenon.

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40 Zoran Stojiljković i Vukašin Pavlović, *Sindikat i nezadovoljstvo radnika*, 9-11.

41 Ibid, 9-11.

42 Zoran Stojiljković i Vukašin Pavlović, *Sindikat i nezadovoljstvo radnika* 13-14.

43 Perhaps the symbolic importance of that mine in the history of labor struggles also contributed to the visibility of this protest. In 1921, the miners revolted against the fascist regime and the mistreatment of the miners' union representatives by the fascist army of Italy. The initial protest grew into the first anti-fascist rebellion, so the miners founded the workers' “Labin Republic”. The rebellion was suppressed in a military operation by the Italian army, after a little more than a month of its existence.

According to research, there is almost no enterprise where workers did not protest, and some of the most significant protests took place in the already mentioned Croatian mine “Raša” in Labin, which lasted the longest, Belgrade’s “Rakovica,” Bosnian “Đurđevik,” Vukovar Kombinat “Borovo”. The demands of the workers in the protest represented resistance to the decline in living standards.<sup>44</sup>



(Downloaded from: <https://radnickaprava.org/>)

Zoran Stojiljković and Vukašin Pavlović conclude that in most cases the union ignored the existence of the rebellion and withdrew completely; in the least number of cases, it actively spoke out against the protesters. In the remaining cases of work stoppages, the union either supported the demands of the protesters but distanced itself from the protest itself, or actively helped and organized the protests.<sup>45</sup> Despite the generally negative spirit towards the trade union, it is very indicative that the workers do not give up on trade union organizing as a way of fighting for their rights. On the contrary, during the protest, among the demands for the replacement of enterprise management and changes in certain policies at micro or macro levels, there were also demands for union reform and using the existing potential to establish a new organization that would be autonomous, non-bureaucratized and which would have no direct connection with either the party or the politicians – both normatively and factually.

In the period of the construction of self-management socialism, the trade union was expected to be a supervisory body and create preconditions for the implementation of official state policies, which led to the perception of the trade union first as an unnecessary entity, and then as directly opposed to workers’ demands. The 1980s are an excellent example of such a conflict since there was a reform in progress that was not in favor of the workers (the so-called “stabilization”) and that required the trade union to prepare its membership

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44 Vida Knežević i Marko Miletić, *Gradove smo vam podigli, O protivrečnostima jugoslavenskog socijalizma*, Center for Cultural Decontamination, Belgrade, 2018, 59.

45 Zoran Stojiljković i Vukašin Pavlović, *Sindikat i nezadovoljstvo radnika*, 30-31.



for work plans that essentially meant a reduction in rights and a drop in living standards, for the placement and success of which they simply had no authority and credibility.

“In that period, the trade union appears as a mediator in the dispute between the two parties. (...) The workers, however, expect the trade union not to be a mediator, nor to remain on the sidelines, and even less to stand ‘on the other side’, i.e. on the side of those against whom the protest is being made (which, until now, has been most often the practice case). In this type of dispute, the trade union should represent the workers, that is, by official duty, be on the side of the workers – even in some situations, when it does not completely agree with their demands. (...) Only at that cost, the union will be able to regain the trust of the workers.”<sup>46</sup>

Since 1988 and 1989, the disunity in the union began, followed by a party split. Although the protests of the 80s carried, above all, a social message and the ethnicity of the protestors did not come to the fore, turns in official policies and rhetoric, especially since 1989, created nationalist forces from labor movements, which were later abused many times as a trump card for the realization of the plans that SFRY pushed into the civil war in the nineties.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the unions never had the strength to grow into an alternative political option and practically to this day, they have not succeeded in developing their political platforms with which they would influence their membership or with which they would appear independently in political life.

Such examples, unfortunately, remained “in force” until the beginning of the war that followed in the 90s of the 20th century.

## Protests in Kombinat Borovo – a hint of conflict in the 90s

The period of the late 1980s and early 1990s meant a comprehensive transformation of social relations for socialist Yugoslavia. This transformation primarily included the processes of abolishing social property and weakening the political influence of the working class, followed by increasingly frequent labor protests that overlapped with other political conflicts. These conflicts took place in parallel with the establishment of capitalist social relations, which is why the position of labor, the experience of crisis, and labor revolts must be analyzed both within the framework of local political turmoil and within the framework of global capital flows.

The fight for workers’ rights was by no means easy. The struggle of workers for the improvement of working conditions is mainly expressed by organizing them into a trade union. Trade unions in the form in which they exist today are subject to criticism,<sup>48</sup> given the increasingly frequent media attacks.

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46 Zoran Stojiljković i Vukašin Pavlović, *Sindikat i nezadovoljstvo radnika*, 34.

47 An excellent example of this kind of abuse was the so-called “rally for Kosovo,” where workers’ dissatisfaction was channeled through the national question.

48 Fleksibilizacija rada zahteva transformaciju sindikata - Mašina (masina.rs) Accessed: April 4, 2023.



Although there is a predominantly negative attitude towards the trade union in society, there is still no real alternative to trade union organizing,<sup>49</sup> so there is a visible tendency to use the existing potential of the trade union for its reformation. To adequately think in the direction of this reorganization, it will be useful to look critically at the role and position of trade unions in the late 1980s, while considering the consequences with which certain functioning of trade unions is connected.

In the text resulting from the research *Kontinuitet društvenih sukoba 1988-1991: Kombinat Borovo* (Eng. *Continuity of social conflicts 1988-1991: Kombinat Borovo*),<sup>50</sup> the Borovo group (Sven Cvek, Snježana Ivčić, Jasna Račić) explains the discontinuity of labor protests from the late 1980s and violent conflicts from the 1990s. As they state, although the research dealt primarily with “one factory and one city,” i.e. the situation in one republic (Croatia), through the case study of Kombinat Borovo, often called “Yugoslavia in miniature,” it is possible on a micro level of sociohistorical analysis to reach insights that are important for the broader issue of conflict. The considered period of their research (1988 – 1991) represents a period of comprehensive social change where Yugoslav conflicts are connected with the process of establishing capitalist social relations. It seems that in that period everything underwent a transformation, so the communists (who were then communists in name only) changed to the new democrats, the social had to become private, and the working class struggle was transformed into a national one. It is important to know that the mentioned transformations did not pass without worker resistance. More precisely, some changes and conflicts began at a time of already heated labor struggles.

The protests in Yugoslavia were primarily a struggle against the years-long decline in living standards, which later culminated in the bankruptcy of companies and layoffs. So, it was about conflicts that should be understood as class ones. However, due to the collapse of the SKJ, the conflict between the republican leadership, the interference of party politics, etc., the class struggle of the workers turned into an ethnic-national conflict that culminated in war. It could be said that after the elections, nationalist policies culminated because party activists who obscure their social goals by dividing them along ethnic lines were increasingly involved in workers' rebellions. In the research, the attempt to “remove the director” in Borovo in Vukovar in the summer of 1990 can be seen as an example of the party's attempt to manipulate and use worker protests to replace the director. The workers' protest broke out during the period of announcing the possible dismissal of redundant workers after the failed negotiations of the protest committee with the management of the enterprise. The involvement of national parties discredited the protests and led to accusations that the protest was politically motivated, and there were accusations that “Serbs wanted to work, but Croats did not”.<sup>51</sup>

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49      Budućnost sindikata: šta je moguće uraditi - Mašina (masina.rs) Accessed: April 4, 2023.

50      Vida Knežević i Marko Miletić, *Gradove smo vam podigli*, 78-79.

51      Vida Knežević i Marko Miletić, *Gradove smo vam podigli*, 79.



(Protest of Borovo workers in 1988; Source: Archives of Yugoslavia – AJ-115-L-11703-57)

It is necessary to point out once again that the intervention of party politics was crucial for divisions among workers. That is why the research concluded that the national divisions were not nearly complete. The authors cite an example from an open session of the workers' council, where one worker warns: "Are we going to fall for these kinds of frauds and this kind of misinformation shared by our biggest non-workers, and already tomorrow we will be equally hungry: Croats, Serbs and Muslims!"<sup>52</sup>

Although we can assume that many workers were thinking in this direction, in the following year (1991) such turmoil became less important. In the spring of next year, in many social enterprises, few people have time to think about the burning issues of privatization, since they are overshadowed by the concern for bare life.

At the end of their research, the authors made a significant thesis indicating that, in addition to the fact that the armed conflict began at a time when the class conflict among the workers was still ongoing, it also managed to end it. The problem lies in the fact that at that time there was no emergence of any supranational or non-national political option among the workers, which is to some extent a consequence of the lack of independence of the trade unions. Unfortunately, there was no alternative. Thus, in this area, there was a nationalist upsurge, based on the construction of post-socialist societies, and thus it determined the direction of the states of the former Yugoslavia.

## Instead of a conclusion

The period between 1992 and 1995 is characteristic for describing war operations within the countries of the former Yugoslavia, when trade unions have also disorganized. The country was once again destroyed and divided into two entities, burdened with a large number of social problems, from poverty and social misery to unemployment and homelessness, which required additional efforts and help from the outside in overcoming the chaotic situation and finding ways to recover. Transitional processes, characterized by the privatization of social enterprises and all social assets, along with the necessity of a new, different form of organization, put the trade union in an extremely unfavorable position.

In the first years of the war, the mass presence of trade union protests is increasingly taking on a calming tone. Workers, in search of any social security primarily provided by employment, are increasingly renouncing protest as, historically speaking, the most frequently used resource for exercising social rights. This condition results in the increasing neglect of the principle of social solidarity, the loss of the social protection function of trade unions, and the reduction of trade union membership. Unfortunately, this trend is rapidly increasing with the departure of the population from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The post-war period is behind us. The position of women in the public sector is much better than at the end of the 1980s. But it is far from ideal. Unfortunately, the position of workers within the union organization still did not meet with progressive consensual attitudes. When it comes to the trade sector as the largest trade union gathering in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is still on the margins of financial and existential survival. In the post-war period, the chaos of transition processes reigned in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which resulted in a widespread gray economy today, anxiety and fear of social misery, that is, social insecurity, and the public existence of a black labor market. Such workers, with minimal means necessary for survival, worked as hard as possible saving the earned money, which they would later use to start their businesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, despite this desire, today in Bosnia and Herzegovina there are extremely unfavorable consequences of the transition processes, which are most often linked and explained in political defensive platitudes as causes generated by the war. In this way, idleness is covered up, returning to the conflicts of the 90s of the last century.

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**Mag. Dražen Janko.** Born in Ozimica, Žepče municipality, on January 4, 1995. He began his academic education at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, which he entered in 2013. The first cycle of studies at the Department of History ended with the defense of the thesis on "Josip Stadler and the Franciscans." The second cycle of studies at the Department of History ended in 2019 with the defense of the master's thesis on the topic "Resistance Movement in Sarajevo from 1941 to 1945." He completed his second master's thesis from the master's degree in Interreligious Studies and Peacebuilding at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Sarajevo in 2022 with the topic "The impact of migration on the redefinition of family relations: historical overview and contemporary challenges." He is the author of a total of 12 scientific papers and presentations. He participated in several scientific conferences and seminars and was a lecturer at various forums. In 2021, he enrolled in doctoral studies in history in contemporary history at the Croatian Catholic University in Zagreb with the topic of his doctoral dissertation, "Activities of the Croatian Cultural Society Napredak in the period from 1990 to 1996." On the initiative of the director of KŠC Sveti Josip, he occasionally worked in an elementary school in Sarajevo Canton, where he held the position of a history teacher. After volunteering at Radio Marija in BiH, he became their employee in the role of promoter and then coordinator, where he still works today. He also has experience in journalism and has modeled, led, and coordinated several cultural meetings throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to history, Dražen Janko also deals with psychotherapy, i.e., Transactional Analysis. He currently holds the position of TA practitioner in Transactional Analysis.





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