

From the Heroine of Labor to the Mother-Heroine

Gergana Mirolyubova Popova

*South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, BULGARIA
Faculty of Philosophy, Blagoevgrad*

Abstract

The paper analyses the transition of the ideal of women under socialism in Bulgaria from the heroine of labor to the mother-heroine. In its first part it focuses on the elevated hierarchical position of the woman shock worker during the early socialist regime. This ideal of Bulgarian woman is considered in the context of the communist project that tries not only to reduce the elaborate taxonomy of various kind of women to the married hard-working woman, but to equalize and even to merge the figure of the woman with the man in a universal subject of labor that gradually loses the distinguishing features of the sex. In its second part the paper analyses the pro-natal policies of late socialism in Bulgaria. It compares the early communist practices and ideology focused on the ideal figure of woman shock worker with those of the late communist regime oriented towards the favoring of maternity. This accent on the role of woman as a mother changes the emancipatory politics of the regime and ultimately leads to recapturing of femininity of socialist women.

Keywords: heroine of labor, pro-natal politics, womanhood, bio-politics.

1. The heroine of labor

On 13th Oct. 1944 – a little more than a month after the 9th September¹ – one of the first legislative initiatives of the new communist power in Bulgaria was the passing of the “Regulations act for the equalization of rights of persons from both genders”. It gave equal rights to both genders in the economic, state, cultural and social-political areas of life (Regulations Act 1944). This legislative document put an unexpectedly rapid and decisive closure to the endeavors of Bulgarian women to obtain equality – endeavors, dating back to the end of the 19th century. The Regulations Act literally copied all practices, established in the USSR after the revolution. Just like in Soviet Russia, women’s emancipation in Bulgaria was not a formal juridical act. From normative documents to the establishment of increasing labor and public responsibilities; from privileges and awards to the operation of the propaganda media machine – different techniques of social engineering were systematically applied in this historical initiative.

What came to the fore – at least in the first fifteen years of the establishment of the communist rule – was the figure of the heroine in work. The post-revolutionary society now laid new economic and ideological foundations. They were based on a permanent clash with the non-socialist world and on an increasing resistance to foreign influences. This new society claimed that

¹ 9 September 1944 was the date when the communist party took over the power in Bulgaria.

it decidedly needed hard-working and efficient individuals. The Marxist theory about labor as a basic human activity presented in its vulgar Soviet version sets the indisputable ideological foundation of the Bulgarian socialist society. Love for the communist party and fatherland was associated with love for labor, which, logically, became a basic communist virtue; all the aspects of socialist morality were invariably defined through the attitude to labor.

So, in the first place the number of women workers increased rapidly. While in 1952 it accounted for only 25% of the whole of industrial workers, in 1960 it came up to 30%, in 1964 it was already 34% (Marcheva, 2010: 206). What's more, the communist emancipation project envisaged that women would also have leading roles in various fields of public life.

Bulgarian women – as an editorial of the Party's official newspaper "Rabotnichesko delo" emphasized in 1951 – make an army of workers and this army is continuously participating in the socialist construction and rule of the country. The leading organ of the state – the Parliament-- already has 38 female MPs. 5,202 women have been elected to People's councils. A woman is in charge of the Ministry of Post Offices, Telegraphic and Telephone Communications. There are women deputies, ministers, women are prominent figures in all spheres of life. Because of their excellent work in various spheres of our socialist life, many women have been awarded the highest prize in this country – the Dimitrov's award. Promoting women as leaders is an important goal of the Party and the state. The achievement of this goal is a signal of the awareness of our Party, state, Fatherland's, etc., cadres of the serious and challenging tasks that our country is facing. (On the need 1951).

In response to this imperative of the Communist party in the first years after the 9th September 1944 newspapers and magazines were virtually flooded with stories and images of heroines of labor: women brigade workers, women turners and reaping-machine drivers, women in military uniforms and so on; now we could see women who fulfilled their communist duty not only near the traditional loom, but also in the until recently associated mainly with men occupations like tractor-driver, crane-drivers, reaping-machine driver, turner and so forth. A new subject irreversibly marginalized the typical of women's magazines rubrics about fashion, cooking, motherhood, beauty tips and love stories. For years to come the only appropriate topic of any women's magazines would be the woman in a working uniform, the woman shock worker, who accomplished labor feats:

White dust, just like snow, has covered the hair and lids of their faces without make-up – intense, pale and concentrated, there is only one thing these women are discussing: We'll increase the production, we'll exceed the norms, we'll recover our devastated economy (Stancheva, 1946: 8-9).

There are hundreds of them, the girls at the big construction site. They go down the deep pits and climb up the concrete columns and roofs, operate the hoists and concrete mixers, pull the scrapers and bulldozers.

They look the same in their quilted jackets and trousers. They cannot be distinguished from the men. And just like the men, they are angry when the reinforced iron mixer is full and there aren't enough trucks to drive the reinforced iron away, they are furious when the machine gets jammed up in the muddy ditch (Borisov, 1961: 68).

Women started occupying typically male-associated professions, questioning men's dominant position both at work and at home. The newspapers of the time outlined a series of emancipation archetypes: the heroic one – a young and seemingly vulnerable girl met with a lot of distrust by the experienced workers, who soon demonstrated willpower and competence in tough situations and as a result gained the trust of her repenting colleagues; the enlightening one – a village girl, who overcame all difficulties, including the conservatism of her own milieu, in order to work and study according to the demands of the new times; existential – a politically and

professionally active family woman, who experienced an intense inner fight and chose to follow the Party's creeds instead of the will of her patriarchal and jealous of her growing social importance husband. Those archetypes were a widespread didactic product that, after the Ninth of September, had to address the conservative reactions of the Bulgarian men defending their masculinity. The numerous propaganda activities of the authorities shed light on how common this problem was. "A man that treats his wife as a household object cannot be considered a decent and cultured person. A man that behaves to his wife like those Turks that had harems is not a cultured person" (Dimitrov, 1946: 78-79). That is how Dimitrov summarized the persisting problem of patriarchy in a letter from 05.08.1946 to the delegates of the First Congress of the Bulgarian Women's Union. Bulgarian women were forced into emancipation and neither regressive activities, nor issues from their private life could stop the implementation of the Party program for women's proper inclusion in the professional, social and political life of the state.

Working women were represented as loving and caring mothers, but the stories about them lay a special emphasis on the labor achievements, on their dedication to work and to the construction of the socialist society. The children went to the background, these mothers were proud to say that from dawn to dusk their children were brought up and taken care of in kindergartens where the cares of the mother are completely unnecessary. In this regard Rada Todorova wrote²: "There is no personal life and mother's joys for the heroine dedicated to the Party's creed" (Todorova 1947: 1).

A similar trend could be observed in the representation of woman as wife. She was a comrade of her husband; but the ontology of 'comradeship' presumed a community of spiritual interests, not irrationality of sexual impulses. This was a kind of indirect relationship that was based on the mutual achievement of the supreme goal, not on the self-sufficiency of the love affection; it was a position that was near, not against in the whims of the erotic game. Thus, socialist woman was gradually stripped of various features of her femininity; in the first decade after 1944 her natural role of 'an object of desire' was almost entirely obliterated. After the war the variety of clothes that women could wear was by no means wide, but it was mainly the party's indignation with well-dressed bourgeois women, who had elegant hairdos and manicure, that hindered women from taking care of their physical appearance. In the first decade of the communist rule fashion was hardly ever mentioned – even in its pejorative aspect – it was only occasionally given as an example of capitalist indulgence, a form without any essence, adequately representing the emptiness of its consumers. The connection between woman's attractiveness and success, between beauty and popularity was discarded. These features of feminine nature were deemed suspicious, to say the least, because of their dangerous proximity to desire, moral corruption, lavish lifestyle and idleness. In this sense it could be added that along with criminal recidivists, political offenders, prostitutes and procurers in Bulgarian labor-correction institutions – better known as labor camps³ – the so called "zozas" were detained. The word "zoza" has an

² Rada Todorova (1902-1987) is a renowned Bulgarian communist functionary. In 1920 she became member of the Communist Party's Youth Organization (Komsomol). Until 1925, when she was given a 12-year prison sentence for illegal communist activities, she worked as a teacher. In 1932 she was released, only to be interned in "St. Nicola" labor camp in 1941. Rada Todorova escaped from there but a year later she was arrested again and was given life sentence. After the Ninth of September she became lifelong Chair of the Committee of Bulgarian Women, as well as editor in chief of *The Woman Today* journal. Between 1947 and 1950 Todorova was vice minister of Labor and Social Care, while between 1958 and 1971 she was part of the leading organ of Bulgaria's National Assembly. In the period 1947-1987 she was member of the International Women's Federation.

³ In December 1944 'Bill of labor correction institutions' was published. This Bill legitimized the foundation of Bulgarian communist labor-correction institutions. In 1962 most of the labor camps were closed down.

unclear origin but it designated those girls with loose behavior who were mainly interested in their good appearance, sexual attractiveness and entertainments.

Along with these various aspects of intimate life of the Bulgarian citizens were subjected to legislative sanctions and restrictions. As a paradoxical heritage from the undesired past, woman sexuality was stagnated within the framework of the monogamous family. In 1956 the new Criminal Code explicitly indicated 6-month prison sentence or up to 1,000 leva fine, as well as a public reprimand for husbands who left their families and started living with another person. The law provided the same punishment for the person who the husband started living with; in case of relapse the punishment was three-year prison sentence (Criminal Code, 1956). Synchronized with the legislation, there were various other regulations and acts that banned extra-marital relationships. Thus, for example, unmarried couples were not allowed to check in the same hotel room. The introduced in 1945 mutual-agreement divorce was removed from the changes in “The law of People and Family” from 1952 and 1953. Ironically enough, the law of People and Family (1956) covertly opposed Marx’s and Engels’ views, which claimed that the ban on divorces in bourgeois society was one of the main factors contributing to the humiliating situation of woman.

In fact, in spite of the unceasing references to Marxist theory, Bulgarian communist regime made a radical turn in relation to Marx’s and Engels views upon the “woman question”. The bourgeois family, Engels claimed in “The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State”, was not a voluntary union between two people, but an economic enterprise. The woman there was a representative of the exploited class, being situated somewhere between a means of production and a tool for satisfaction of sexual needs. These were the primal forms of class-gender exploitation of woman that predetermined her further social restrictions – the formalities of divorce, the repudiation of extramarital children, the inequality in inheritance, the impossibility to practice a profession of her choice. Therefore, Engels foresaw that the proletarian revolution would not only destroy the economic relationships of capitalism but also the family connections, thus leading to the liberation of women. Engels wrote about “gradual development of freer sexual intercourse and, along with this, of a more lenient public opinion about a maid’s honor and woman’s shame” after the revolution (Engels, 1975: 69).

In broader terms this thesis was already presented in *The German Ideology* (Marx & Engels, 1957: 52) and in “Manifesto of the Communist Party”. Since, according to Marx and Engels, bourgeoisie conceived of women and children as ordinary tools of labor, the dying out of the family was considered a result of the abolishment of private property upon the means of production (Marx & Engels, 1984: 55-56).

In spite of the extenuating explanations the manifested visions about the destruction of the monogamous family and the common possession of women posed a tough choice to the future communist ideologists – they had to either ground the emerging new society on these, in their essence, socially disruptive views or silently refute the classics of socialism. So attempting to avoid the ambiguous foundation of Marx and Engels’ reflections on the “women’s and sex question” what Vladimir Ilich Lenin borrowed from them was mainly the negation of the autonomous feminist movement as well as the realization that the abolishment of household chores should become an absolute necessity in the course of women’s liberation. The urges about the destruction of the monogamous family, however, did not find ground in Lenin’s ideas. Whatever Marx and Engels envisioned as more liberal sex relationships, the speeches and works of the later communist ideologists silently avoided discussing this delicate aspect of socialist vision and represented its counterpart.

What Marx and more specifically Engels saw as a unified liberating pro-feminist discourse, Lenin later on divided into two autonomous paradigms – the energetic activities regarding the liberation of woman from her domestic chores went along with a fierce stagnation

of female sexuality. The unifying attempts of the already ruling party required a serious revision of the socialist pre-revolutionary utopian visions on the women's and gender problem. Already in 1914 in a letter to Ines Armand, which discussed Armand's brochure about the proletarian views on the women's question, Vladimir Ilich Lenin insisted that she should remove the claims for "freedom of love" from the list of the proletarian demands. He stated that this was not a working-class but a bourgeois desire, which could easily lend itself to numerous interpretations such as promiscuity and exemption from the responsibility to give birth and raise children. What he put among the most significant issues for women was the elimination of financial calculations and material needs in love, the eradication of religious and social prejudices; the prohibition to find the father and other limitations set by legislation, the court of law and the police. The same opinion about the woman and sex question Lenin expressed after the revolution. And in this sense the woman emancipation in Soviet Union and after that in communist Bulgaria excluded the freedom of love, satisfaction of desire, liberal sex relationships.

So, the emancipated Bulgarian woman builder of socialism was seen as an asexual person devoted to labor and public responsibilities. What became an adequate visual and discursive representation of her militant, ascetic spirit was the image of the loom-operator (with a blue overall); the worker (in overalls, with a helmet); the woman brigadier (in a shapeless dress and head scarf); the public-organization functionary (with tied hair and a strict face); the girls (looking the same in their quilted jackets and trousers, undistinguishable from one another or from their men colleagues).

While for the man worker the role of a fighter and heroic builder of the new society to a certain extent reinforced the traditional notion of masculinity, in the female version of this main socialist protagonist – the woman shock worker – the heroism in battles and labor definitely went beyond the boundaries of what was traditionally seen as essential to feminine nature. The transformation of yesterday's women peasants into today's reaping-machine drivers, tractor-drivers and team leaders, of yesterday's tailors, spinners and housewives into construction-workers, turners and crane-operators – this seemingly chaotic and not very practical invasion of women in men's professions – was in fact relevant to the organic-communist layers of the project for the construction of the socialist society. The goal of this project was to reduce the complex taxonomy of various types of women – the proletariat woman, the intellectual, the housewife, the actress, the bourgeois lady, the peasant woman, the courtesan, the coquette – to the family-type woman-worker, as well as to level off and even merge woman and man into one universal labor subject that would gradually lose any sexual characteristics. In reality, general labor service did not mean that women were supposed to massively start work in heavy industry. When the socialist authorities made secondary and higher education accessible to girls, they actually provided girls with serious opportunities for creative and intellectual development in areas that were earlier unattainable for them. This, however, did not discard the fact that – first, there were a lot of women who worked in production sectors that were inappropriate to their physical abilities; secondly, numerous resources were wasted in attempts to legitimize the presence of women in these sectors.

These resources could hardly find their economic justification as lathe-work, metal production, hoist-operation, bulldozer-driving and scraper-dragging were activities, in which the use of men's power insured far higher productivity.

The attempt to obliterate gender differences through labor universalization delineated a spot, specific of the socialist society. There the ideological factor did not simply exercise its traditional dominance over the other socially structural factors, but for a certain period of time it even transgressed the limitations set by nature. As if the amount of time and effort put by women into production indicated the strength and force of their communist spirit, their willingness to sacrifice.

2. The mother-heroine

Gradually, however, this ideal of the communist woman began to retreat in favor of another one, based not so much on the representation of a genderless and rationalized mechanism, whose powers are being derived, condensed and included into the rhythm of a ceaseless work activity cycle, but rather on the intuitions of man, conceived as a part of nature, an entity with particular properties, characteristics and limits (Foucault, 1993: 187-188; Foucault, 1998: 164). If historically, according to one of the main researchers of modern biopolitics Michel Foucault, the vision of a “natural man” replaced the concept of the “machine-body” of the 18th century, in the context of the Bulgarian socialism a similar replacement could be traced in the transformation of the communist biopolitics in the end of the 50s and 60s of the 20th century. Precisely then, after the VII (1958) and the VIII (1962) congress of BKP (Bulgarian Communist Party, in Bulgarian: Balgarska Komunisticheska Partiya), a new course had been taken: one of satisfying the increased citizens’ needs, expressed through numerous campaigns, practices and initiatives in different areas starting from the middle of the 60s and continuing until the end of the 80s.

It appears that the most apparent expression of this change could be observed in the pronatalistic campaign, initiated in the end of the 50s for the stimulation of birth rate. In fact, the concern of the party with respect to birth rate could be seen through a multitude of legal and sub-legal acts, adopted right after the 9th of September. In the first place, it consists of numerous sanctions, restrictions and limitations. Abortions were prohibited until 1956 (Criminal Code, 1956; Criminal Law, 1951: 19). In 1951, an Act for birth encouragement was promulgated, requiring all unmarried and childless men from 21 up to 50 years and women from 21 up to 45 years to pay a “bachelor tax” (Act for birth encouragement, 1951). Along with this, during the period of the early socialism, erotic acts and the deriving of self-centered pleasure from the body were represented in a highly negative plan as political acts, directed towards the building of communism. Solely the instrumental direction of sexual intercourse towards its future product provided the necessary justification of the sexual relations. The activities for conceiving children and the production of goods were identified with a sterile productivity, according to the anti-hedonistic communist viewpoint with the demographic requirements (Popova, 2016: 58-107).

Along with this constraining-limiting line, the socialist state also introduces a multitude of social measures for the mothers and the children. They are expressly emphasized even in the general law of the state – the Constitution from the year of 1947:

The woman-mother benefits from an individual protection with respect to labor. The state puts extra care for the mother and the child by establishing maternity and children’s homes, kindergartens and dispensaries as well as by providing women with maternity leave before and after the birth of the child, while keeping her salary and the possibility for free obstetrician and medical help benefits (Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria, 1947).

In the year of 1950, a medal of the “Mother’s glory” was founded, and renamed later in 1952 into “Mother heroine”. This medal was awarded to women who have raised more than ten children. “Act for birth encouragement” from 1951 affecting workers, employees and retirees, besides the already mentioned “bachelor tax”, also envisaged a one-time financial help during birth, an increase in salary for each following child, a paid and an unpaid maternity leave and a low interest rate loans for the young families (Act for birth encouragement, 1951). Changes in the Act and the Regulations for its application in 1955 executed the right to a one-time financial support for the multi-child families (three or more children) with financial issues (Ivanov, 2010). A special provision in the “Law of pensions” envisaged women, who have given birth to and raised more than five children up to the age of eight, to be retired with 15 years of service and age divided into three categories: I category labor – 40 years of age, whereas for categories II and III – 45 years of age, respectively (Ivanov, 2010). Moreover, the multi-child mothers could use free transport with BDZ (Bulgarian State Railway, in Bulgarian: Balgarska darzhavna zheleznitsa) and marine transport, as well as a free or discounted use of public baths (Balutsova, 2011: 48).

In her research on the family legislation in Bulgaria, Svetla Balutsova notes that in the period of 1944-1957 approximately 50 normative acts had been promulgated, all of which were directed towards stimulation of the natality rate through the increased number of multi-child families (Balutsova, 2011: 48). However, in the first 10-15 years after 9th September, the communist politics was focused predominantly on the inclusion of women in the labor and the social sphere. The pronatal measures were in contrast with the Stahakhanovian enthusiasm required of the shock worker and in these first years after 1944, the heroine woman of labor possessed a far greater symbolic capital than the mother. The extreme increase of the natality rate, towards which laws and encouragements for such a stimulation after the war were directed, aimed at the poorest and uneducated parts of the population (mostly from Muslim origin), for which child allowances (accumulated with the birth of each next child) represented a serious proportion of the total family income (Ivanov, 2010).

In the end of the 50s and the beginning of the 60s, the demographic politics acquired an entirely new addressee. The attempt for bringing the woman out of the family-centered rut and the incautious deviation from her mother's role in favor of labour and social activities threatened to cause serious disturbances in the demographic process and, in perspective, to deprive the building of communism from the so very important human resource (Rangelova, 2011: 26). As a result, the monopolistic appropriating of the polyvalent female activity from the labour sphere was being disturbed by the accelerated pronatalistic politics. A speech of Todor Zhivkov, from the year of 1963, which appealed for an increase in birth rate and emphasizes on the necessity of having a third child in young families, officially posed a new goal of the demographic practices from the 60s and the 70s (Zhivkov, 1963).

In the end of 1966, the Decree of the Central Committee of BKP (Bulgarian Communist Party) and of the Council of Ministers (№ 61/28.12.1966) for stimulation of birth rate was endorsed, which redirected the financial stimuli for birth and raising of children from the extreme multi-child encouragement to having a second and a third child in the family. The one-time financial support for the second and the third child were determined in the amount of 200 and 500 leva, respectively, whereas for the first, the fourth and each following child, the amount was only 20 leva of allowances. For the third child an additional financial support of 10 leva was envisaged, irrespective of the income of the family, including the agrarian owners, who before that hadn't receive any financial support for the birth and the upbringing of their children. Since the year of 1969 and thereafter, the different income groups, determining differential monthly aids for children, were removed and their allowances amount was in accordance with the new politics, which encouraged the birth of a second and a third child – 15 and 35 leva, respectively, whereas for all other children the financial support was 5 leva. It was recommended to TKZS (Labor Cooperative Agrarian Holding, in Bulgarian: Trudovo kooperativno zemedelsko stopantsvo) to pay these allowances to the cooperators from its own funds. The paid pregnancy and maternity leave for the birth of a second and a third child was increased from 120 to 150 and 180 days, respectively, whereas from the year of 1973 and afterwards it began to cover a whole year (Act for birth encouragement, 1968; Regulations for application the Act for birth encouragement, 1968; Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, 1971) .

The period of the unpaid leave was increased as well, and it was also regarded as a time of service for both the female workers and employees, as well as the female cooperators and the women unemployed up until the moment of giving birth. The children up to the age of one were provided with dairy products, fruit and vegetables, whereas the children up to the age of seven were provided with appropriate food and clothing, respectively. The multi-child families paid considerably lower taxes in kindergartens, they had the advantage for an admittance in the latter, whereas their children educated in technical schools, in higher and semi-higher educational institutions received scholarships. These families were granted with privileges in employment and with advantages in residential accommodation and residence construction. A complex healthcare

was envisaged for the children and the mothers, namely: specialized measures for fighting the infertility and miscarriage; a development of child gynaecology; prophylactic measures for women's health and fertility preservation; a preparation, an introduction and a compliance for labor supervision of the pregnant women and mothers, et cetera (Ivanov, 2010). In this way, if in the early post-war years, the measures for stimulation of birth rate were focused on the uneducated groups of the population with the lowest income, the ones from the 60s and afterwards were addressed towards the emancipated woman, the female worker or cooperator, who combined the labor duties with the maternal ones.

Here it should be added that, except the privileges envisioned for the mothers and the multi-child families, this powerful pronatalistic politics continued to exist up to 1990. In a research on abortions in Bulgaria during the time of socialism, Vivian Hamburger points out that, even after the permission for abortion *ad lib* in 1956, abortions were actually hard to be performed – with numerous administrative obstacles and humiliations, often even without anesthesia. In 1972, a decree from the minister of health care, Dr. Angel Todorov, was signed. It posed additional limitations on abortions *ad lib*: they were forbidden for married women without children or for those with only one child. The same research shows that these limitations were also accompanied by the lack of any popularization of the different types of contraception (Pramataroff-Hamburger, 2015: 257-269).

The demographic strategies of the late socialism, as expected, were also based on the massive inculcation of new discourses and images. In this way, in the first place, in the end of the 50s, the ambivalent discourse related to motherhood, the raise of children and the care for the personal life was left behind. If in 1947 Rada Todorova had declared that for the loyal female fighter for the motherland there is no maternal joy, by the end of the 50s the female shock workers rarely expressed their pride of the lack of time spent with family. Medias showed pictures and reportages of happy multi-child families by stigmatizing the yet another negative anti-socialist hero – the one-child parents, who led by their egoism, neglected not only the spiritual development of their child, but also the common good of society.

Gradually, socialist ideologists abandoned the archetype of silence in relation to some problematic areas of the intimate sphere – the children seized being born and educated “on their own”, while the woman performed high-industrial labor in a factory or in the field. The family terminated its unproblematic existence as a union of comrades, whose common worldview had the conjuring power of keeping it together under all circumstances. The melodramatic pathos against the divorces and infidelities, the legal measures and social reprimand of partners who abandoned their family, the recipes in the press for marriage strengthening, raising and upbringing of children, as well as the new advices for beautification in magazines and books devoted to cosmetics, fashion, and maintenance of an aesthetic face and body; all these visualized the ambiguous situation of the Bulgarian woman, who was torn apart between the symbolic labor achievements and her questioned existence in the private life.

In 1967, in a speech of the joint meeting of the Political Bureau and the Council of Ministers, the ideologist of the socialist family, Pencho Kubadinski, found the causes of the lower birth rate in the alteration of female labor and in the active inclusion of women in the societal, economic and cultural life (Hristov, 2016: 99). The postulation of such a proportionally inverted correlation between the ratio of birth rate and emancipation led to the expected conclusion of the necessity of rethinking the yearly socialist views on the shock worker labor and the social activity of women. With respect to this plan, in the 80s a delicate criticism of women's excessive emancipation resulting in her decreased femininity started to appear. In his book “Reflections on the equality of rights”, published in 1985, Hristo Domozetov cited the reflections of different women on the topic of the equality of rights, among which could be read the following ones: “Emancipated women reach out either to a neurologist or to an extramarital relationship” and “Up to now, the woman had received goods, but she has manifested an elation from that. However,

from now on, using different measures, society should educate girls in a more traditional way, with truthful values” (quoted in: Galabova 2016: 196; my translation). In this line of reasoning, the magazine “Otechestvo”, from the same time period, represented the viewpoint of men on the contemporary woman, viewed by a part of them as “a soulless clerk”, as “a director, who imposes her own veto”. One of the statements eloquently mentioned the following: “[...] a major weakness in our educational system: girls are unprepared for their future roles of women. They are educated as personalities, as specialists, as employees, but they are not being prepared for truly being women” (quoted in: Aleksandrov, 2015: 198-199; my translation).

Propagandistic campaigns reiterated the old headlines with brand new thesis material. The Decision of the Political Bureau “On the elevation of the women’s role in the building of the developed communist society” from 06.03.1973 insisted that: “Appropriate labor for all women fit for work and more leisure time for the mothers should be provided...” (“On the elevation of women’s role 1973”; my translation). Also, in a speech by Pencho Kubadinsky – “Active female builders of the socialist society” – it was pointed out that: “The labor activity of women should be combined harmonically with motherhood – this so highly noble function and inevitable duty to mankind...” (Kubadinski, 1983; my translation). The campaigns for inclusion of women in the traditional male industrial fields were replaced with campaigns prompting women to fulfil their maternal duty.

The drastic decrease in the shock work rhetoric and its replacement with archetypal discourse of the reproductive femininity was marked by the serious deviation from the communist project in a regressive direction against its universal design.

The labor-heroic activity of the woman began to lose its symbolic significance faced with the real threat seen in the decrease of the natality rate and the aging of the population. The first decade after 9th September marked the culmination of the grandiose project for gender universalization on the labor subject. But in spite of its progressive rhetoric, from now on its dynamics could be described by a certain backwardness of the optimistic-modernized communist program in relation to the natural regularities and requirement as well as in relation to the legitimation of the pre-socialistic values. Starting from the maternal functions of women, the late-socialist biopolitics seriously impaired the gender-unified socialist dogmatism.

As a consequence, from this ideological turn towards an elevation of the mother’s role once again, the socialist woman was “feminized” in another aspect as well. The focus on her physiological particularities led to the rethinking of her place in a multitude of spheres of hard labor. The care for the health and the reproductive capacities of the woman placed under question the so extended boundaries of her professional reach in the 40s and the 50s. In the first 10-15 years after 1944, media reportages enthusiastically welcomed maidens and women among scrapers and bulldozers by dignifying their tense and exhausted faces, but since the beginning of the 60s, this type of media pep talk gradually faded away. From the end of the 60s and onwards, began a process of inclusion of women in some of the industrial fields, in which they had been included almost forcedly. This process was far more silent in comparison with the large-scale campaign for a stimulation of birth rate. This process accelerated in the 70s and culminated in the above mentioned Decision of the Political Bureau “On the elevation of the women’s role in the building of the developed communist society”:

Due to the particularities of the female organism, it is necessary for the difficulty, the strain, the intensity of labor and other possible noxiousness in the industrialization to be constantly researched. Gradually, a reassessment should be made in professions that were traditionally considered as female ones. Based on scientific research of the strain of the professions the noxiousness and the intensity of the labor should be determined. It should also be determined which ones of them are appropriate for women’s labor and evaluated which male professions as a

result of the scientific-technical progress are now actually accessible to women (On the elevation of the women's role, 1973).

Instead of the discursive and visual representations of women in coveralls and a genderless knot or a headscarf in a tractor or a bulldozer, other propagandist images of women and maidens started getting created: smiling with a baby stroller in the park; self-confident and neatly dressed in a clean and modern workplace; in a wedding dress in the ritual house; as a seller or a customer, surrounded by goods in the shop; or resting with friends in a confectionery.

In this way, the legitimization of the motherhood dug on the gaps, through which the gender particular body with its needs, idiosyncrasies and differential markers performed its return into a society, which by definition rejected it. Through this gap the concession to traditional care for the appearance of the woman and also the attempts for a relief of her household labor gradually rushed in. The latter along with their social significance, in another aspect represented a recognition of the failure of the project for total emancipation of the woman from the “household chains”, which went back to the first years after the 9th of September. The Decision of the Political Bureau “On the elevation of the women's role in the building of the developed communist society” demonstrated exactly this interlacement of the concern of the mother with the awareness of the difficulties with the movement of women from the gender non-universal area of the household labor as well as with the suddenly appeared attention towards her female role in the marriage relations:

During the past period, the socialist state and the society put great care and devoted significant resources to the relief of the household labor of women. However, the taking of the household activities from the societal industry seriously falls behind from the needments [...]. The traditional attachment of women to the household activity is not overcome yet. Due to all this, the household labor takes a big part of a woman's time and has a negative influence on the upbringing and the education of the children, on her own personal spiritual growth and on the marriage relations as well (On the elevation of the women's role, 1973; my translation).

In the history of the socialist and the communist movement, the “woman question” had always taken a middle place, not only with its social implications, but also due to the organic connection with the idea of the creation of a gender neutral labor subject. In the same vein, even the partial rejection for emancipation in the Party's concern of the natural limitations of the female organism and women's reproductive functions deeply changed the social bases of the communistically constructed society, the sexual-role models in it and finally the life- world of the socialist citizens.

Without a doubt, the “feminization” of the woman had nothing in common with the ecstatic of the desire, the individualization of the body, nor with the outlets from the world of disciplines. The interest towards the female organism became a starting point for new forms of control: through demographic strategies and the redirection of the human resources from one place to another; through the limitations on abortion and the contraceptive means; via the liberation from the household labor once again, which on its own turn had to lead to the formation of user's habits and the usage of the wide developing complex of goods and services; through the multiplied role of the woman, determining her leisure time and personal life. Nonetheless – compared not only with the ascetic bodily ideal of the early communist regime, but also with the post-socialist “synopticum”, which overcomes the body not in spite of, but through desire (Bauman, 1999: 72-77) as well as in general with the dominant in Bulgaria neoliberal model, which mostly puts under suspicion the security and the health of the body and along with this, leads to a serious imbalance the labor-leisure time relation (see Ghodsee, 2017) – the late socialist politics of the body, including those related to the role of the woman, have to be appreciated in their ambiguity.

Even with the attempts for a regulation and a control of the private life, the social acquisitions from the middle of the 60s, in the first place, secured the not so small and the not so unimportant sphere of a free from engagements time, and, in the second place in the particular sense, they freed the citizens from significant efforts for a physical survival, profits, a professional career and realization. A reasoning of Boris Grois, cited by Ivaylo Znepolski in “The Bulgarian Communism”, represents exactly this rarely disputed aspect of the freedom’s notion in the East European socialist societies:

“What does it mean to be free? To have free time! To simply do nothing. It is often said nowadays: the people from Eastern Europe were liberated from communism. But during communism, they had far more free time and therefore greater freedom. No one was making great efforts. Due to this reason, the mere undertaking was very efficient, but it has nothing to do with freedom. It was exactly the opposite: in the West, people were way more dependent on external subordinations” (Znepolski, 2008: 242; my translation).

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The author declares no competing interests.

References

- Act for birth encouragement. (1951). *Izvestiya*, 29.06.1951.
- Act for birth encouragement. (1968). *Darzhaven vestnik*, 09.01.1968.
- Aleksandrov, I. (2015). The love image of woman in Bulgarian socialist advertising. In: D. Koleva (Ed.), *Love during socialism* (pp. 176-203). Sofia: Centre for Advanced Studies.
- Balutsova, S. (2011). Transition and family code in Bulgaria (1930s-1950s). In: K. Daskalova & T. Kmetova (Eds.), *Gender and Transition 1938-1958* (pp. 39-52). Sofia: Center of Women's Studies and Policies.
- Bauman, Z. (1999). *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Sofia: Lik {In Bulgarian}.
- Borisov, S. (1961). The girls from the great building. *Lada*, 4, 25-27.
- Changes in ‘The law of people and family’ (1953). *Izvestiya*, 06.11.1953.
- Constitution of People’s Republic of Bulgaria (1947). In: V. Metodiev & L. Stoyanov (Eds.), *Bulgarian Constitutions and Constitutions Projects* (pp. 52-54), Sofia: Peter Beron, 2007.
- Constitution of People’s Republic of Bulgaria (1971). In: V. Metodiev & L. Stoyanov (Eds.), *Bulgarian Constitutions and Constitutions projects* (pp. 66-68), Sofia: Peter Beron, 2007.
- Criminal Code* (1956). Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo.
- Criminal Law* (1951). Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo.

- ... (1973). Decision of the Political Bureau "On the elevation of the women's role in the building of the developed communist society".
- Dimitrov, G. (1946). The Bulgarian woman wins a place of honour in our country. In: G. Dimitrov, *About woman worker* (pp. 77-78), Sofia: Profizdat, 1972.
- Engels, F. (1975). *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Sofia: Partizdat {In Bulgarian}.
- Foucault, M. (1993). *History of sexuality. The will to knowledge*. Pleven: Abagar {In Bulgarian}.
- Foucault, M. (1998). *Discipline and Punishment. The Birth of the Prison*. Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press. {In Bulgarian}.
- Galabova, N. (2016). Political dimensions of the Bulgarian socialist discourse on cosmetics: the impact on women's bodies. In: D. Koleva (Ed.), *Body during socialism* (pp. 182- 197). Sofia: Centre for Advanced Studies.
- Ghodsee, Kr. (2017). *Why Women Had Better Sex Under Socialism*. In: New York Times, 12.08.2017, Available at: <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/opinion/why-women-had-better-sex-under-socialism.html?referer=https://www.google.bg/>. [Accessed 23 March 2019].
- Hristov, T. (2016). Hysterization of labor: Mental Hygiene and byopolitical regulation of the female body. In: D. Koleva (Ed.), *Body during socialism* (pp. 90-110). Sofia: Centre for Advanced Studies.
- Ivanov, A. (2010). The unpredicted (d)effects of the pro natal policies. *Geopolitica*, 4, Available at: <http://geopolitica.eu/2010/1110>. [Accessed 23 March 2019].
- Law of people and family (1952). In: A. Kozhuharov (Ed.), *Legal Code* (pp. 278-279), Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1956.
- Lenin, V. (1979). To Ines Armand. In: V. I. Lenin, *Works. Vol. 49* (pp. 50-51), Sofia: Partizdat {In Bulgarian}.
- Kubadinski, P. (1983). Active female builders of the socialist society. *Rabotnichesko delo*, 8 March 1983.
- Marcheva, I. (2010). Problems of modernisation during socialism: The industrialisation in Bulgaria after the WWII. In: E. Kandilarov (Ed.), *Studies on history of socialism in Bulgaria 1944 – 1989* (pp. 178-224). Sofia: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1957). *Works. Vol. 3. The German Ideology*. Sofia: Publishing house of BCP {In Bulgarian}.
- On the need for a more intensive promotion of women as leaders. Editorial. (1951). *Rabotnichesko delo*, 12 January 1951.
- Popova, G. (2016). *Body in the socialist oxymorons*. V. Tarnovo: Faber.
- Pramataroff-Hamburger, V. (2015). Of the Illegal and impossible love. In: D. Koleva (Ed.), *Love during socialism* (pp. 257-269). Sofia: Centre for Advanced Studies.
- Rangelova, R. (2011). Changes in the economic and social status of Bulgarian women 1938-1958. In: K. Daskalova & T. Kmetova (Eds.), *Gender and Transition 1938-1958* (pp. 13-38). Sofia: Center of Women's Studies and Policies.
- Regulations for application the Act for birth encouragement (1968). *Darzhaven vestnik*, 16 April 1968.

- Regulations act for the equalization of rights of persons from both genders (1944). In: *Legal Code from 09.09.1944 to 15.12.1945* (pp. 126-128), Sofia: Darzhavna pechatnitsa, 1947.
- Stancheva, P. (1946). Forward to labor achievements. *Zhenata dnes*, 5, 8-9.
- Todorova, R. (1947). There is no personal life and mother's joys for the heroine dedicated to the Party's creed. Editorial. *Zhenata dnes*, 5, 3-4.
- Znepolski, I. (2008). *Bulgarian communism. Socio-cultural traits and power trajectory*. Sofia: Siela.
- Zhivkov, T. (1963). Ideologically steeled, educated and cheery youth. *Mladezh*, 5, 11-20.

