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Engendering Social Work Education under State Socialism in Yugoslavia

PROF. DR. DARJA ZAVIRŠEK

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work

Darja.Zavirsek@fsd.uni-lj.si

Introduction

Prior to the 1990s, social work in Eastern Europe lagged far behind its western counterparts. Perceived as an activity for petite-bourgeois women in the early 20th century, it was deemed an unsuitable activity by the communist regimes which came to power following the Second World War. The belief that socialism would be able to eradicate the need for social work interventions and would ensure the well being of every 'human being' was also prevalent at the time. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that in Hungary, some university level social work courses were terminated in 1948 and the Ministry of Welfare and the Social Policy Institute ceased their activities in the following year (Juhasz, 2003). In 1952, the departments of social work at universities in Czechoslovakia and Poland were also terminated (Seibel, 2001). In Romania, the Principesa Ileana Superior School for Social Assistance, which had opened in 1929, was first transformed into the Institute for Social Assistance in 1948 and then into the Institute for Social provision in 1951, before finally being shut down in 1952 (Rachieru, 2005).

In post-war Yugoslavia, however, the situation was different - Yugoslav communists ensured the establishment of schools for social workers throughout Yugoslavia (in 1952 in Croatia, in 1955 in Slovenia, in 1957 in Macedonia, and in 1958 in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina). Little research on the history of social work in eastern Europe had been conducted before 2001, when the *Network for Historical Studies on Gender and Social Work in Europe* began to fill this void (cf. Schilde and Schulte, 2005; Hering and Waaldijk, 2006).

This article analyses how the communist leadership in Yugoslavia established social work education in the 1950s and the important place some women founders had in these time. It also outlines how the communist party de-politicised women's activities and legitimised several occurrences of gender inequality. In the conclusion, some characteristics of social work education in the communist period, as well as their legacy in current social work practices, are discussed.

Methodology

This article is based on a multifaceted methodological approach, which includes archive analysis (focusing on the period 1945-1970); interviews with early welfare and social workers, as well as with teachers from the Former Yugoslavia; the analysis of photographic material; site-visits; and early graduation theses. In-depth interviews used in this article were conducted by the author in 2005 and 2006. They included interviews with: two pioneers of social work education, early social work teachers, Slovenian 'field visitors' and older professional social workers. Field research included visits to the largest semi-closed asylums in Slovenia and Croatia, where social workers have been sending persons with various disabilities since the early 1960s.

Field visitors as the predecessors of social workers

Many women's organizations in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes addressed social issues and social inequality during the inter-war period (1919-1940), and certain Slovenian feminists and professionals within the sphere of social welfare (Angela Vode, Alojzija Štebi) had praised the work of Alice Salomon and Jane Addams before 1945. Although the political demands of pre-war feminists were almost identical with communist party programmemes from the early 1940s and the

demands of women's party activists during the partisan struggle, pre-war feminists and professionals active in welfare politics throughout Yugoslavia vanished from the public sphere after 1945. Women in the communist party, on the other hand, toed a party line which gave class issues priority over gender issues and focused on universal workers' rights (Vode, 2006).

Following the war, social aid was mainly provided by the *Antifascist Front of Women* (AFŽ), a major women's organisation with over 4,000 members in Slovenia and 2 million members in Yugoslavia (Arko, 1958; Milić, 1993). These unpaid workers, known as 'field visitors' (*terenske obiskovalke*), were usually persons who had played an active role in the partisan struggle. The AFŽ was established by the Yugoslav Communist party in 1942 (in 1943 in Slovenia) in order to mobilize aid to partisans and to ensure a wide loyalty base among women, in particular among peasant women, for the forthcoming rise to power (Jancar Webster, 1990). After 1945, its work focused on three basic activities: 'collecting information' about individuals and families in need and reporting the 'situation in the field' to higher local authorities; distributing material aid to the most needy and organising housing for war orphans; and organising educational seminars on hygiene, infant mortality, and child care (Zaviršek and Leskošek 2006; Zorn, 2006). Apart from providing aid to 'all those in need' and carrying out certain modernisation processes (anti-tuberculosis campaigns, registering children for medical examinations), the work of the AFŽ was supposed to construct a new socialist subjectivity.

One could claim that the AFŽ represented the beginning of social work education, as the recruitment of paid female social workers began within this organization. At the beginning of communist leadership, women were readily encouraged to take various unpaid voluntary activities, and later on paid social work jobs. But the patriarchal communist leaders did not 'confer' the right for paid employment to women without a reason. They emphasised that women had 'earned' their rights during the liberation struggle, where they had showed their 'maturity' and had justified their equal place with men, fighting against the enemy, 'shoulder to shoulder'. The formal equality was a form of a reward for their self-sacrifice. Such an attitude has not been unknown in other European countries, as, for instance, in Ireland where in the eyes of the male

dominant society, their philanthropic work justified women's entrance into the public sphere (Luddy, 1995).

Despite its initial importance, the AFŽ was disbanded by the communist leadership in 1953 on the grounds that it had become historically irrelevant. At this time, schools of social work throughout Yugoslavia had begun to train professional social workers in order to replace the AFŽ; in 1958, social work was officially recognized as a profession.¹

Yugoslav welfare workers and female volunteer workers in the Soviet Union – a comparison

Although the Yugoslav communist party severed political ties with Stalin in 1948 (in the conflict known as *Informbiro*), the communist system in the Soviet Union remained a model for leading Yugoslav political figures, who had been trained in Soviet party schools (cf. Soviet Women Among Us, 1945; Kriškova, 1945). A number of similarities with the Soviet communist system could therefore be found in 'Tito's' Yugoslavia.²

In both early Soviet Russia and post-war Yugoslavia, most modernization processes were carried out by women (Kiaer and Naiman, 2006). In Stalin era Russia, women played an important role in the *kul'turnost* campaign (raising the cultural level), while Yugoslav women carried out activities pertaining to hygiene and public health. The role of the AFŽ had several similarities with that of two Soviet women's organisations, the *Zhenotdel* and the Soviet *obshchestvennitsy*. The *Zhenotdel*, the women's department of the Central Committee of the Communist party, was created in 1919 in order to spread the Communist party's message among women (Bridger, 1987; Ashwin, 2000), or, in Lenin's words, to 'rouse the broad masses of women, bringing them into contact with the Party and keeping them under its influence'

¹ Before 1955, persons doing paid welfare work were called 'administrative workers' (*administrativni delavci*) and 'social protection officers' (*referenti za socialno skrbstvo*).

² Josip Broz Tito [1892-1980], commonly known as Tito, was the leading commander of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia from 1941 to 1945, and became the president of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945. In 1953 he was made president for life.

(Lenin, quoted in Stites, 1978: 341). Two decades later, Yugoslav communists established the AFŽ with the same ideological objectives.

On 5 January, 1930, the Politburo eliminated the *Zhenotdel* on the grounds that it was inspired by 'bourgeois feminism', and in 1953 the Yugoslav Central Committee dismissed the AFŽ, claiming that it was no longer needed. Both organizations were active for 11 years. The actual reason for the termination of the Yugoslav AFŽ was the communist party's desire to curb women's demands for the reestablishment of pre-war women's organizations, which were, to use the words of Mitra Mitrović, a national hero, full of 'bourgeois ladies' (Jancar Webster, 1990). The political life of women, which had flourished before the war, had to be channeled into a single women's organization under party control (Sklevicky, 1996). Both Yugoslav communists and Soviet party leaders feared that women would become too independent and link their activities to those of the pre-war feminists. *Zhenotdel* and the AFŽ provide interesting examples of how communist parties used gender politics to influence vast sections of the population during their rise to power, thus 'mobilizing a key section of the population in the service of the new state, and extending the sphere of control into the private household' (Ashwin 2000:9).

Following the dissolution of the *Zhenotdel* in the late 1930s, the Soviet *obshchestvennitsy* was founded and began to carry out activities very similar to those of early welfare workers from the AFŽ (*afežejevka*³) (Buckley, 2001). At least four significant similarities between these two women's mobilization movements can be found: both organizations promoted literacy, the construction of kindergartens, playgrounds and summer retreats (*kolonije*) for children, cleanliness and hygiene, and seminars on cooking, housekeeping, etc.; both organizations arose through the initiative of the communist party as a means to mobilize women to perform social tasks outside of the family unit and to influence 'less advanced' women to abandon gendered activities and consequently gender identity; neither organization received payment for the work it did. Finally, workers from both organizations were often despised: *obshchestvennitsy* workers were turned away from factories and public

³ Author's note: *afežejevke* is a noun made from the phonetic pronunciation of the acronym AFŽ plus the -ec/-ka termination, a rough equivalent of the English -er termination. This practice is quite common in colloquial Slovene, but relatively rare in English. One example would be 'PCer', which, in colloquial American English, denotes a person who makes an effort to ensure that his actions are politically correct (PC).

kitchens, where they were supposed to promote cleanliness and morale; *afežejevk*e were despised by the rural population for allegedly trying to destroy rural village life. Both organizations also continued to conjure up negative connotations long after they had ceased to exist (Buckley, 2001). In Slovenia, *afežejevk*e were not taken seriously. As an early social work teacher remarked, 'calling them 'afežejevk' was like calling women 'feminists' today; it was a pejorative term, something to ridicule them.'

It is highly likely that the communist leadership in Yugoslavia followed the example set by the *Zhenotdel* and *obshchestvennitsy* when mobilizing women to join the AFŽ in 1942. For this reason, many people were rather apprehensive about the work being carried out by the AFŽ. Interviews with early social workers from Slovenia showed that joint activities, and especially organised child care in the first decade after the war, were viewed by many people as something dangerous, and that many women feared that their children would not actually be sent on summer retreats, but to Russia.

The liberalization of everyday life after 1948

Certain processes of the liberalization of everyday life went hand in hand with the ideological rift with the Soviet Union. When the Yugoslav communists ended their close relationship with Stalin, they were forced to find other political allies, and linked themselves with the United States in the social field. The development of schools of social work was, to a large extent, a product of the cold war equilibrium. Yugoslavia had positioned itself as the most open of all communist countries, the phenomenon sometimes being called 'socialism with a human face' (Zaviršek, 2005). American experts became advisers in the process of establishing the first social work curriculum in Croatia in the early 1950s, and helped to establish social welfare institutions called 'centres for social work' throughout Yugoslavia in the early 1960s. Some foreigners were allowed to enter the country, and certain citizens were sent abroad by the communist party in order to 'learn more about social services'. One of the pioneers of social work education in Slovenia, Katja Vodopivec, was given a passport and granted permission to visit the USA and bring back information about workers' legislation. Instead, she learned social work methods from this 'western ally', and intended to share her newly acquired knowledge once she returned. Another pioneer of social work education, Nika Arko, was sent to Sweden to visit social

services. In Croatia, prominent founders of social work education were sent abroad through UN exchange programmes in order to acquire knowledge for the establishment of the Croatian school of social work (Ajduković, 2002).

It seems that this 'third way' political system had initially allowed greater freedom in the re-establishment of certain pre-war structures on the level of everyday life, especially in the social sphere. The liberalisation of everyday life was also reflected in the 7th Congress of the League of the Communists of Yugoslavia in 1958, where prominent party members stressed the need for a general improvement of living standards, more activities in local communities, and the development of 'professional social workers' (*Programme of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia*, 1958: 213). This was the first time the expression 'social worker' was used at the highest level of Yugoslav politics.

An intellectual, a party activist, and a peasant woman – the three orders of society

Slovenia, as part of Yugoslavia, was the second of the five socialist republics (Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia) to institute social work education. The opening of the School for social workers (*Šola za socialne delavce*) in Ljubljana took place on 7 November, 1955, that is, on the anniversary of the October Revolution. On the morning of 8 November, 1955, all Slovenian newspapers published a small note about the modest ceremony. One newspaper summed up the school's activities by saying that it 'will qualify its cadre for duties in the spheres of social insurance and social protection and medicine, and will combat criminality and alcoholism' (*Slovenski poročevalec*, year XVI, no. 262, 9. Nov. 1955). A different newspaper stressed the 'protection of the family' and problems like foster care, divorce, and single mothers as tasks of future social workers (*Ljudska pravica*, no. 262, 8. Nov. 1955). Newspapers also mentioned that 30 students were enrolled in the school, and that an estimated 900 social workers were needed in Slovenia.

Three women symbolizing the 'three orders' of the new society were present at the school's opening ceremony: a communist intellectual, a party member with a working class background, and a party member with a peasant background. They represented a

fundamental shift from the pre-communist period, when the leading women within the social sphere were catholic women and nuns, philanthropists, feminists with a strong background in activism for social justice, and professionals from bourgeois families. Katja Vodopivec (1917-) was an intellectual with a bourgeois background (her father was director of the City Bank of Ljubljana). As an expert on workers' rights legislation, she went on to become a leading figure at the Faculty of Law. Her major contribution was a textbook on social work methods, the first of its kind to appear in Slovenia. Nika Arko (1914-) came from a working class family and simultaneously served as deputy director of the Council for Health and Social Policy of the People's Republic of Slovenia, an important institution which gave the initiative for the creation of social work training. It should also be noted that Nika began her career as a member of the AFŽ. Marija Jančar (1913-1991), who was to serve as the school's director for its first 17 years (1955 – 1972), was a school teacher from a peasant area of Slovenia. She was not an important figure in the communist party or an intellectual. She was, however, the third type of socialist woman, and was meant to serve as a role model to future social work students from rural areas. In an interview, one of the first social work teachers remarked that Marija Jančar had been called in the middle of the night by the communist party and told to get ready to begin with the social work education project.

While the party intellectual, dr. Katja Vodopivec, was sent abroad to learn and write about workers rights, Marija Jančar was sent to the city to carry out another important socialist project, the development of the school for social workers. Sending teachers from rural areas to cities was a common occurrence in many communist countries. Educated women recruited peasant women into the communist party, that is, women with a 'higher intellectual and political consciousness' were asked to influence those who remained stuck in the private sphere. In Yugoslavia, members of the AFŽ were assigned the task of educating and influencing women, especially those with an impoverished rural background, and were also asked to become role models for other women. Marija Jančar, herself an AFŽ member, was a hard-working woman, a modest teacher, and a firm believer in communism. Living in Bela Krajina, a liberated territory since 1943, she had helped find homes for displaced children and provisional housing for people who had lost their homes. Social work teachers who knew her

speak fondly of her: ‘she was a mother to us all’; ‘she really wanted to create a school that would educate social workers.’

The school was meant to educate welfare workers (social protection officers) who were already active within the welfare system. It was developed as a 2-year school, and did not become a higher school until 1960 (*Višja šola za socialne delavce*). In 1975 it became a part of the University of Ljubljana, and began offering a four year degree programme in 1992. In 2003 it was officially renamed the Faculty of Social Work (*Fakulteta za socialno delo*). It remains the only institution of higher education for social work (up to the doctoral level) in the country.

The influence of social work education on the new gender and social order

One of the most unusual and unexpected elements of social work training throughout Yugoslavia after 1952 was that the majority of the first students were not women, as one would anticipate, but men who had already worked as social protection officers (Zaviršek, 2005; Ajduković *et al.*, 2007). A survey of welfare officers in Slovenia from 1957 showed that 41.3% of a total of 293 persons with the professional title of social worker were men who had jobs pertaining to social issues in their local municipalities (Arko, 1958). Such a gender structure shows that although caring work was considered an inherently female activity, professional training was desirable for men as well. Several reasons for this unusual blurring of gender lines can be found: a.) a lack of paid employment for men; b.) an increased interest in welfare work, stemming from stipends offered for the study; and c.) the easily attainable symbolic mobility that came with a diploma, in the case of men who had already worked within the social field. Through the school, the state rewarded both women and men who had served in the partisan struggle and helped carry out modernization processes in the socialist state. Eugen Pusić, a leading figure of Croatian social work, pointed this out when he explained why the first school was established in Croatia:

‘[...] But something unique to Croatia, something that others did not have, was perhaps of crucial importance - a group of social activists who participated in the national liberation movement and the National Liberation War. I’m referring to women such as Tatjana Marinić, Jana Koh and Valerija Singer. These partisan women, who later came to Zagreb and worked on

social policy, wielded authority even over the Party. Only in this way was it possible to overcome the regime's strong opposition to the idea of educating social workers. This must be made clear. The authorities worked on the assumption that the destiny of the people can be shaped only by sweeping social changes. Means of production and production technology develop and clash with relations of production. Relations of productions are abolished in revolutions, and new relations of production come about and solve all problems. The individual approach was considered wrong; it was considered an indication of civic individualism. If capitalism is abolished and socialism is introduced, then there are no social problems. This opposition to the education of social workers could hardly be overcome by anybody else but us, in Croatia, primarily because of the Partisan women who were active in this field' (Ajduković, 2002).

In Slovenia, disabled veterans were granted special status, and had a privileged position when enrolling in the school (the second director of the school for social workers was a war invalid).

Modernisation also encompassed the modernisation of the gender and social orders.

On the one side the socialist state declared its support for women's liberation. On the other side, as Ashwin has pointed out, it attempted to put an end to the subordination of women to the patriarchal family, especially in rural areas, 'in order to 'free up' both men and women to serve the communist cause' (2000: 5). The state guaranteed women certain formal rights, such as the right to enter the workforce, but at the same time instrumentalised women in order to achieve hegemony through the collapse of the old gender order. In exchange for bearing the burden of having to perform both paid and unpaid work, women received 'protection' from the state (jobs, subsidies for children), though they were rarely protected against domestic violence.

The high number of male students was not only the consequence of a structural focus on male needs, but a deliberate move to counter the pre-war tradition of female charity and philanthropy. A large number of men in a traditionally female profession

could change the gendered image of welfare and influence both the gender and social orders. Also, Eastern European patriarchal societies had long held the belief that only men could turn an activity into a profession (Lukić, Regulska, Zaviršek 2006).

This unique situation could, therefore, ensure that welfare work would finally shake off the actual and symbolic characteristics of charity or alms work and become a formal profession. A similar blurring of gender lines for the sake of the implementation of a new gender order could be found in Stalin era Russia, where, for a short period in the 1930s, the *obchchestvennitsy* had more male than female members (Buckley, 2001).

From the 1960s onwards, however, the number of men at schools for social work throughout Yugoslavia rapidly declined, and social work became a feminised profession. One reason for this change stems from an increase in job opportunities for men and the fact that the leading positions within social welfare were already occupied by men (from the 1950s on, a majority of welfare institutions were led by male directors).

A historical analysis of the development of social work in Yugoslavia shows that a combination of pragmatic and implicit goals led to the establishment of social work education. The liberalisation of everyday life and the genuine wish of some professionals and educators to provide those working in social welfare with a formal education were the key pragmatic goals. The implicit goals were at least five:

- 1.) The communist leadership had to prove to the west that Yugoslavia was not a typical communist country: 'We were totally convinced that the West was wrong and that the Soviet Union was wrong. We were the only socialist country' (Jancar Webster, 1990:72).
- 2.) The communist leadership used the experiences of women and men who had worked with communities during the partisan struggle and made sure that the first diplomas were issued to persons who had already worked in the field of social welfare as social protection officers.

3.) Schools of social work were aimed at women from peasant and poor rural areas, and brief vocational training provided an ideal opportunity to spread socialist ideology among women with poorer social backgrounds. As one early student remarked, 'my brothers went to the university; I had to study social work, because it was only a 2-year education, and we couldn't afford anything more.'

4.) Social work created new jobs for women through the establishment of large-scale welfare institutions (nursing homes, boarding schools for disabled children, asylums for people with disabilities). These segregated institutions, which could accommodate 100 to 800 persons, created job opportunities for many women and gave communist party leaders an opportunity to show that they cared about them. At the same time, these large, semi-closed places of public care were meant to replace unpaid caring work at home, in line with the view, that paid employment was an important factor of women's emancipation and should be imposed upon women from all social strata. The common memory of women with disabled children during communism was that social workers always encouraged or even forced them to 'put' the child into long-term close institutions.

It should be noted, however, that the communist party had begun to encourage women to enter the public sphere even before this institutional network was established. One social worker (74 years old) who worked in a kindergarten recalled that 'only after 1961 were more kindergartens built throughout Slovenia. Women often said to me: 'I lock my child in my flat and go to work'. When I would ask them when they would return, they often said 'Around 2 or 3 pm.' This meant that the baby was left unattended for 4 or 5 hours. I also locked my children in my flat, as I had had only 3 weeks of maternity leave.' This example shows how the state expected women to struggle to balance paid and unpaid work.

5.) The institutionalisation of social work training gave the party control not only over welfare and gender regimes, but also 'in the field', where 'deviant' behaviour such as alcoholism, work-hatred, and prostitution could be carefully monitored. In practice, social work often did not support people in need, but rather constructed 'social problems' based on the new gender order. Foster care, which constituted one of the primary activities of professional social work during its first two decades, provides a

good example. It was often used to 'help' single mothers enter the work force: 'We resorted to foster care because of housing problems and for the protection of children. Mothers had to return to work after 2 months. Foster care was most often used in the case of single mothers' (social worker employed at the centre for social work since 1967). In this case, social work was defined as a 'protective measure' against economic vulnerability, but ended up separating families instead of helping individuals.

The implicit and pragmatic goals of social work training show that gender and welfare orders overlapped, and that developments in the social welfare system, such as the raise of welfare institutions or certain social work interventions (for example foster care), helped facilitate developments in the gender system.

Teaching social work under state socialism

The conviction that social work 'carries out the goals of social policy' (Vodopivec, 1959) remained prevalent well into the 1970s. All teaching materials were written by Yugoslav writers and literature on social welfare from before the Second World War had fallen into oblivion. Katja Vodopivec, a founder of social work education, said that 'politicians allowed certain foreign writers to be quoted, but in such a way that it would be clear that 'we' were the first to say these things.' In Slovenia, two important events shaped social work training in this period: the publication of the *Handbook of Social Work Methods* in 1959, and the publication of the first translated book on social work in 1970.

The *Handbook of Social Work Methods* was written by Katja Vodopivec upon her return from the USA. It focused on case work, social re-education, and group work; international authors, such as Hamilton Gordon, L. de Bray and Herbert Latthe, were mentioned throughout the book, but never quoted. Most quotations came from speeches by leading party figures, such as Tito and Kardelj, and from Yugoslav sociologists, psychologists, lawyers, and medical professionals who wrote about 'Marxist personality', 'communist morale', and 'building socialist consciousnesses'. The communist leadership censored any traces of knowledge of social welfare that had existed prior to the implementation of socialism in Yugoslavia, and social work

students did not learn about international social work pioneers such as Mary Richmond, Ilse Arlt, Alice Salomon, Helena Radlinska, and Alice Masarykova. Although Katja Vodopivec wrote about social case-work, she was not allowed to mention those individuals who had contributed to its development.

Today, her book seems to be a patchwork of western social work methods, consciously and over cautiously packaged in the canonised ideas of communist party politics. When the author of the article asked why she had quoted so many communist authors, she said that she knew she would have to send the book to the Ministry for review: 'It was probably read by Vida Tomšič and certain other politicians. They got back to me and requested that I use more of our writers, because everything the foreigners said had already been said by us'.

The conflict between what was desired and what was allowed is evident in her book, and the reader can feel that one layer has been superimposed upon the other, as if it were a palimpsest tablet. The first layer was meant to present a collection of existing social work methods, based on therapeutic knowledge and self-reflexivity, in order to avoid the imposition of the 'truth' of the social worker onto that of the 'client'. The second layer served to justify the one-party system: 'The aim of the core subjects in social work education is to teach the future social workers the political and legal-organisational principles of our societal system and the principles of the formation of a healthy personality within this societal system' (Vodopivec 1959: 11).

Furthermore, whenever Katja Vodopivec wrote a passage which might be considered unacceptable, she justified it by citing party politicians. For example, 'The aim of social work is to balance the relationship between persons who are in need of special protection and the society in which they live, and *vice versa*, between society and individuals' (ibid.:78) was followed by a footnote from a speech Tito had delivered in 1958: 'Comrades, we will not be mistaken if we will look at the human being with the same care and understanding with which we look at the factory!' (ibid.: 78). When she wrote that 'the social worker has to be a human being [...], it is not about imposing our life-style on another person' (ibid.: 86), she proceeded with a quotation from Edvard Kardelj, the creator of socialist self-management: '[...] the state

apparatus has to serve people, not impose power upon them – this is the basic principle of socialist democracy’ (ibid.: 86).

Nonetheless, this endeavour could not prevent the book from being removed from libraries and social work curricula forever. A librarian at the school remembered finding a lot of unused copies of the book in a locked closet; in the 1970s all but two copies were promptly thrown away. After her book had been demonised, Katja Vodopivec moved to the faculty of law: ‘They wouldn’t let me work in social work any more. I had to go, but I also wanted to be closer to my initial discipline.’

From 1959 to the early 1990s, not a single textbook on social work methods was written, and some teachers recall that methods were commonly considered a touchy subject within social work. A lack of teaching pertaining to social work methods became characteristic of all schools of social work in Yugoslavia. Instead, the core curricula consisted of topics such as Yugoslavia's social and political system, the health care system and hygiene; legislation, psychology, pedagogy, and civil military education.

History repeated itself in 1970, when Bernard Stritih (1937-), a psychologist and respected social work teacher, gave the initiative for the translation of a book edited by Walter A. Friedlander and Hans Pfaffenberger, *Basic Terms and the Methods of Social Work (Grundbegriffe und Methoden der Sozialarbeit)*.⁴ Stritih's introduction advocated a holistic perspective, and emphasised that social work, despite its administrative beginnings, had gradually developed ‘humanistic approaches’ and a ‘scientific perspective’ in order to understand the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ factors in a person's life: ‘Social workers realized that the social difficulties of individuals and groups consist partly of objective components (poor housing, poor food, the lack of paid employment, low wages, etc.) and partly of subjective components (the passivity of clients, aggressiveness, an inclination to steal, work-hatred); these factors form a kind of a vicious circle (because of bad housing and low wages one becomes passive or aggressive, and his objective situation can therefore become worse)’ (Stritih, 1970: 12). Like Katja Vodopivec, Bernard Stritih stressed that social workers have to

⁴ Friedlander, W. A and Pfaffenberger, H. (1966) *Grundbegriffe und Methoden der Sozialarbeit*, Neuwied and Berlin, Luchterhand.

respect the personal dignity and increased self-reflexivity of the client. Hence the conclusion of his introduction:

‘It is interesting how much we like books which are written from a positivist perspective. [...] I therefore call your attention to a critical reading of this book, and at the same time to ideas about how to conceive our own foundation of social work. Unfortunately, this has yet to be done; even what we perceive as the philosophy of social work, when reflected critically, remains only a word, a phrase, a cliché, behind which there is no system of theoretical terms. Often, even short periods of time show that these were only political claptrap.’ (Stritih, 1970: 16)

When the book was published, Bernard Stritih was held responsible by the local office of the communist party and accused of treason against the ideals of socialism; he nearly lost his job. A fellow social work teacher recalled that he was accused of translating ‘an American social work book which does not fit into our system, as we require another type of social work’. The lengths to which the state was willing to go in order to influence the sphere of everyday life can be seen in the fact that he was censured, among others, also because his book contained the Slovene equivalent of ‘Mrs. and Mr.’ instead of ‘comrade’. The political purge which followed involved everyone at the school, and his colleagues were asked to ‘re-write their opinion’. These developments not only show that state socialism after 1970s had begun to rule with an iron hand, but also constitute the beginnings of the development of scientifically based social work education.

Conclusion

Although the new communist leadership established social work education, it made sure that social work methods were not taught. The universalist perspective, which states that all human beings are equal and should be treated in the same manner, dominant in Yugoslav schools of social work, remains its strongest legacy. The lack of gender and ethnicity perspectives has often caused poor practice toward women and ethnic minorities. Violence against women was usually justified by alcohol abuse

and was considered socially acceptable. It was finally recognised as a 'social problem' by social work in 1989, when feminist social workers helped establish the first SOS help-line in Ljubljana for women and children (help-lines were earlier set up in Zagreb and Belgrade). Before this, social workers intervened in cases of severe violence only if children were in danger, and using methods based on control and punishment; the perpetrator was threatened with the involvement of police and local party officers, or the children were put into foster care. An abusive spouse could expect to be asked to visit the municipal office, where he was warned that good communists were not allowed to be violent:

'I remember a violent man who was a respected war veteran, but had taken to drinking after the war. [...] He was paid a visit by someone from the party committee, and warned that the issue would be resolved politically. The man calmed down and ceased his violent behaviour. If you had a bad record with the committee, you couldn't get a job; they could also put you in prison' (interview with an early Slovenian welfare worker).

These examples elucidate the traditional gender dynamic between women and men, as well as the gendered relationship between the socialist state and its citizens. Situations were handled through the direct intervention of the state through police and party officers, and not through specific social work methods. The perpetrator was forced to change his behaviour, not in the name of equal rights and safety for women, but because of a state apparatus based on repression and guilt, which demanded that communists never soil their public and private image as proper 'humanitarians'. Such interventions assured women that the party/state was like a caring father. Ashwin has called this phenomenon a 'triangular set of relations, in which the primary relationship of individual men and women was to the state rather than to each other' (Ashwin, 2000: 2).

The lack of anti-racist social work practice became most explicit during the ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had provided a shining example of a modern multi-ethnic society before 1991, and where social work students of different ethnic backgrounds had studied together, several new schools of social work were developed as a consequence of ethnic cleansing and segregation

(Miković and Habul, 2007). Most Muslim students, and a handful of Croat students, study at the School of Social Work at the University of Sarajevo, the oldest institution of its kind in the country, while most Serb social work students have been attending studies at the University of Banja Luka since 2000. A third school of social work was established at the University of Tuzla in 2004, and its student body is also mostly Muslim while the Croat part of Mostar has established social work training only for Croat students in 2006. Serbia and Kosovo face a similar ethnicisation of social work education. Under socialism, social work students from Kosovo studied at the University of Belgrade. Since 2004, however, Serb students have been encouraged to study in Kosovska Mitrovica and Albanian students at the University of Pristine, where social work courses have been offered since 2006. Institutionalized, ethnically segregated social work education of this kind has prevented anti-racist social work principles from being taught.

Social work education in socialist Yugoslavia was imposed from above in order to influence the everyday life of people below. The most important areas of social work at the time were work with families and the protection of children (mostly in the form of foster care). As a consequence, certain areas of social work, such as social work with people with disabilities and mental health problems and work with ethnic minorities are underdeveloped. The historical ambivalence towards the profession, as well as the 'sense of shame felt by some party politicians upon the establishment of social work', as a founder of the school of social work in Slovenia recalls, have had a profound impact on social work education and practice in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

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