

background of the massive amount of material evidence presented by McKean on just how fragile the links actually were between the various instances of a political process that, all the same, eventually resulted in nothing less than a revolution.

*Reinhart Kößler*

JANCAR-WEBSTER, BARBARA. *Women & Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941–1945*. [Women and Modern Revolution Series.] Arden Press, Inc., Denver 1990. xvi, 245 pp. Ill. Maps. \$ 26.50. (Paper: \$ 16.95.)

This book is a reviewer's nightmare: the author's argumentation is so opaque that the reader constantly ponders whether the author indeed denies what she just has asserted on the previous pages. It is not easy to give an outline of her main theses.

The author's point of departure is G. Lerner's questionable periodization of the development of women's consciousness in four stages: (1) the recognition by women of "a collective wrong suffered"; (2) efforts to remedy these wrongs in terms of political economic and social rights; (3) development of women's culture – "sex-segregated living styles"; (4) final shift from man-centred to woman-centred mode of thought and behaviour (p. 2). This American-centred or West-European-centred scheme serves as a theoretical framework for the description and the explanation of the women's liberation movement in Yugoslavia from times immemorial until the beginning of the 1980s. The stress lies on the period of World War II.

Drawing on primarily (if not exclusively) the Communist sources – carefully sifted published documents and synthetic works – the author offers a picture of women's exploits during the war. These efforts resulted in gaining political, economic and social rights, Lerner's stage 2. Further progress to stages 3 and 4, thus achieving the ultimate liberation, has been blocked by the rapidity of moving through the first two stages: it made it impossible for women to develop the required political and organizational skills: they rolled back into patriarchal oppression.

Massive women's participation in the armed struggle receives most attention, since the author wants to prove that women were at that time equal with men in playing male roles and thus created the basis for their postwar equality. At the same time Jancar-Webster furnishes numerous arguments in favour of the thesis that very few women joined the struggle with women's liberation in mind and that the Party did not cherish women's liberation as one of its priorities. This contradiction does not strike her since she has to defend Lerner's presumably universally valid scheme of the development of women's consciousness. Therefore Jancar has to construct a continuity of prewar "bourgeois" and Bolshevist "feminism" (stages 1 and 2) and neo-feminism (stages 3 and 4), a link which is, certainly with her arguments, hard to maintain.

In contrast to Jancar-Webster, Yugoslav neo-feminists understand that the whole body of conventional women's history in Yugoslavia has to be purged from Party bias and submitted to radical re-thinking free from schematism and romanticism. When this line of thought is pursued further, the hypothesis could perhaps be formulated that women's liberation under Communist auspices was a gift from

above, never appropriated, even less appreciated, by any significant section of Yugoslav women. After all, as the neo-feminists see it, Yugoslav women have never really fought for emancipation and have not yet even reached a shared experience of “collective wrong suffered”.

Jancar-Webster’s book belongs to the genre much admired by the, until recently, ruling Communist Party of Yugoslavia: it commends Yugoslav women’s war participation as “one of the most significant events in modern history” (p. 1), stresses the crucial role of the Party in the liberation of women (p. 185), giving simultaneously “constructive criticism” of the not yet fully realized promise of liberation. It compliments Yugoslav women, who, thanks to the Party resisted the charms of fascism to which so many women in Germany and Italy succumbed. Consequently, the author admonishes Yugoslav neo-feminists not to underestimate the “gains made by Yugoslav women during the war” (p. 187).

Finally something has to be said about the general sloppiness of this book. One of the many amusing illustrations of this is the phrase *Kinder, Kirche, Küche*, much used and regularly quoted by the author as *Kirche, Küche, und Kinder!* Most errors, however, have something to do with Yugoslavia and languages spoken there. It seems as if the author either did not read the proofs, or that her command of Serbian and Croatian (as well as of the general data about the country) is insufficient (or both): practically every toponym is wrongly spelled. Towns on one page turn into villages on the next and *vice versa*, Igor Mandić, a Šibenik-born Croat turns into a Zagreb-born Serb. She writes about Moslem-Serbs as if all, instead of only a negligible minority, of Bosnian Moslems view themselves as Serbs and she discovers the non-existent Ilinden Mountains. Proto-feminist poets M. Stojadinović (1830?–1878) and D. Dejanović (1840–1871), turn into singers and so on. Jancar-Webster apparently does not know when Sv. Marković (1846–1875) actually lived or the views he expounded and she turns him into a Marxist (if not a Bolshevik), while his inspiration in the matters of women’s liberation came from J.S. Mill. Moreover, one wonders whether she knows enough about the internal structure and organization of Communist parties.

The author’s curious reading of Yugoslav situation allows her to make statements like: “The soldier [during World War II in Yugoslavia] lost forever his uniquely male image” (p. 184) about a country marked by exclusively male militarism, and “[...] the feminist demands for the transformation of patriarchal institutions into more representative and democratic entities threaten the very existence of the party that has been ruling Yugoslavia for the last 40 years” (p. 187) about a country torn up by national strife where women have hardly reached Lerner’s stage one!

The purpose of this book is, in author’s modest words, “to fill a serious gap in Western literature”, but one fears rather that it might cause serious confusion.

*Mira Bogdanović*