

EDUCATION INTERACTION BETWEEN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS AND NATIONAL LIBRARIES IN BULGARIA 1944-1956

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Abstract: The following publication is on a project entitled: “Library education in Bulgaria in sources 1944-1989” funded by the state budget of the “Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia for scientific research in 2017. The type of this research is historical and pedagogical and it aims to reconstruct by means of historical sources the main dimensions of the educational interaction between women's associations and national libraries in Bulgaria as well as to excel the specific character of this interconnection during the researched period. The trend concerning the development of the interaction is very well intertwined in the Bulgarian educational tradition as much as both structures of an informal education are a unique continuation of school education and a factor for permanent self-education, not only for those who have graduated from schools but all layers of population. The chronological scope of the research has the radical social-political and economical change in Bulgaria as a beginning; it has affected the country on 09.09.1944; and 1956 as an end period – this year divides two development stages of education of the national library as the oldest mass cultural organization in Bulgaria – a stage of transition from an autonomous library education to an ideologised one (1944-1956) and a stage of experiments of a social model of library education (1956-1968). At the same time, the period is of primary importance for women's associations as in the late 40s of the XX century the Bulgarian National Women's Union was established which has turned into the only mass organization of Bulgarian women. Its forms and methods of work are arranged normatively.

Forms of educational interaction are developed between both structures of informal education in Bulgaria which are specific for the researched period. These forms are a reason for redefinition of the contemporary extra-school educational practices by means of a rich historical experience and continuity is achieved. At the same time, the reliable sources and the source material which is scarcely researched by historians and pedagogues let a number of ideas concerning the place and the role of the education work of national libraries and of the women's association as well as their interaction and relation of these structures with school education.

Keywords: education interaction, women's associations, national libraries

PREFACE

The aim of this research is to excel the trend of development of the interaction between national libraries and the women's associations in Bulgaria within the period 1944-1956. The aim is achieved by implementing three major tasks – selection of reliable historical sources from the Central State Archive and from the periodical press; inspection of main dimensions of the interaction between both structures of informal education- the national libraries and the women's associations as well as illustrating the specific character of this interaction. The used research methods are suitable for this aim-theoretical reconstruction, comparative analysis, documentary and archivist's method together with problematic-historical and chronological approach.

1.SPECIFIC FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL INTERACTION

The cultural-educational collaboration between libraries and women's associations has its 160-year-old history and it dates back from the dawn of the establishment of these structures. During the late Revival period, the first libraries are created almost at the same time in the towns of Lom, Svishtov and Shumen (1856) as well as the first women's association in Lom (1857)¹ which amount to 195 and 61 right before the Liberation. The specific character of the work of both structures during the separate historical periods differentiates those specifics in their interaction. If their uniting functions during the late Bulgarian Revival period are related to the support of education in the settlement – creating of schools, start of teacher's meetings, participation in their decisions, establishment of Sunday and evening schools etc. when state education institutions do not exist, so the aim in the conditions of the Third Bulgarian State (1878-1944) will consist in meeting the needs of a large-scale informal education, extra-state school system, which adds to the school by means of lecture and library activity

¹ In 1857 the national enlightener Krastyo Pishurka (also teacher, translator, librarian, theatre worker and poet) establishes the first women's association “Virtuous Women's Association” with a representative Elenka Tsenko Todorova. Its main goal is to develop women's education in the town of Lom. The union establishment process develops at a fast pace during the period 1869-1876 as their number reaches “61 women's organizations, 46 of which are located on Bulgarian territory, 7 are in emigrant's centres and 8 girls' associations” (16, p. 19).

and amateur art activities that motivate people to personal self-education. During the years of national democracy and imposing of totalitarianism in Bulgaria, the new aims of both structures are combined striving to achieve mass education activity and amateur art activities in the spirit of the policy of the Party-State. This is natural when on the one hand, national libraries are “the most important social cultural organizations” for the “cultural ascend of our nation and for the self-education and upbringing of our youth”, on the other hand the women’s associations build the most massive women’s organization² that includes women from all social strata and perform large-scale cultural and educational work for “political education for women” for their “cultural ascend” and an active participation in the development of the country.(11, p. 33; 10, p.2).

2.DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATIONAL INTERACTION

The dimensions of educational interaction between libraries and women’s associations during the researched period, based on historical sources, can be separated into:

- **literacy of population**

In the activities for literacy of population, national teachers are: “those teachers who work in libraries or schools” organized by the Supreme Library Union and the Bulgarian National Women’s Association. Part of these teachers are women, members of Women’s associations on a local level: children’s, elementary, junior high school and high school teachers. (11, p. 29). For example, “new 1688 courses for illiterate people and 548 courses for partially literate people resulted from the two-month implementation of the 53rd Ordinance of the Council of Ministers. The number of the new illiterate students attracted in the courses rises by 17.373 and the number of partially literate people – by 6.734. New 21.526 illiterate people and 11.083 partially literate people are searched. (8, s. 69). The amount dimensions of the results of the literacy of population are an achievement of the common activities thanks to social organizations – the Fatherland Front³, the Common Worker’s Professional Union⁴, the National Library Union, the National Women’s Associations and others who send their plans to the party guidance and the instructions and the instructors – to places where literacy is needed. This manifestation of interaction and every other act including the re-implementation of the “accepted literacy guidance” from three regions to five are guided and coordinated by the governing party (7, s. 497).

The literacy activity has its variations one of which is the health education. The Supreme Library Union, the Bulgarian Women’s National Association and the National Youth Union respond to an appeal in the letter from 90.12.1948 of the Bulgarian Health Workers Union about “performing a wide health education activity among population.” They take advantage of the “particularly suitable winter season for this purpose.”(13,s.103). The coordinated collaboration between both structures takes place in the Health commissions in regional, district, city and rural committees of the Fatherland Front initiated in the summer of 1947 that aim to achieve health education of all age groups of population- the youth, the students, the workers and the pensioners about “different illnesses of epidemic and contagious character”, “venereal diseases”, “swamps” etc. The staff of the commissions includes “representatives of the sanitary power, the administrative power and the social organizations.(12, s. 102).

Another variety is the eradication of illiteracy among women in the countryside. Education of rural women and girls who pertain to the group of illiterate people is an aim for the common education activity of the National Women’s Union, the Ministry of National Education and other educational institutions and organizations” among which is the Library Union (6, p. 19). At the same time “in all schools with compact Turkish population, the libraries are the most active participants in the literacy actions for Turkish people – from searching for illiterate people, to supplying rooms for the courses etc. (9, s. 220).

- **lecture education**

² The Bulgarian National Women’s Union “includes the existing women’s organizations after 9 IX.1944 such as: “Mother care” Gabrovo, Plovdiv, “Bulgarian home”, “Widow” and others. An organization called “Union of mothers with many children” also takes part in this union; “Union of Bulgarian women – cooperators” and “Union of women with high education”. The foundation of the union starts with the formation of regional conferences and meetings, just after 9.IX. and its full establishment happens at the First Congress in June 1945 which accepts the Rules of the Union”(10, p. 2). The change of the Rules of the Second Congress of the BNWU (11-13.X.1947) is related to the normative arrangement of methods of work approved in the practice.

³ The Fatherland Front transforms from a coalition to a mass non-party organization with an individual membership, which reveals the representative system in the country at its Second Congress (2-3.02.1948) and it gradually turns into the most large-scale transmission of the governing party.

⁴ The common worker’s professional union is a socialist syndicate created on 16.09.1944 which is renamed into the Central Trade Unions Council (CTUC) at its Third Congress in 1951.

The only and direct task – the “all-round education of working people” and “upsurge of their common and political knowledge”, the national libraries perform this task in collaboration with the other mass organizations among which is the Bulgarian National Women’s Union and traditional forms are used for the purpose – lectures, talks, discussions of essays, study circles, national library university etc. (3, p. 3-4). This coordinated, systematic, everyday, mass education for the population in the fields of “industry, agriculture, hygiene, everyday life etc. is elicited as a necessity in the conditions of a planned developing society.(3, p. 3). It is expressed through the coordinated lecture education of rural population where 1312 local lecturers’ groups⁵ hold 22 692 talks only in 1951 and their topic is the popularization of the achievements of the labour-cooperative agricultural farms (TKZS in Bulgarian) and the new methods in agro and zoo technology for high production, for clarification of international status, internal and external policy of Bulgaria, spreading scientific knowledge (2, p. 21-22). The agricultural study circles⁶ in rural schools spread the type of organization, work methods and advantages of TKZS without copying the work of the agro-technical study circles of the Dimitrov National Youth Union and they clarify “some common problems in the sphere of agriculture, stock breeding and plant-growing” as they are guided by rural intelligence, teachers part of whom are members of women’s associations (14, s.34).

As a traditional uniting centre of educational activity of other organizations, the library finds a common purpose in the lecture activity with the women’s associations in terms of political and law knowledge of women. In the summer of 1945 XXI the Supreme Congress of the Supreme Library Union sums up that the woman in the library is not defended enough and that an increase of the number of women is about to happen (proportion: 5 men : one woman). The aim is her development into a person enjoying full rights, who also takes part in “every initiative and manifestations at local level”(4, s. 89). The setting of the goal that women have access to education in terms of policy and law, performed in women’s associations is one way – “a systematic preparation of educated and devoted women to the National Republic in all spheres of state, social-political and cultural formation as well as in the field of social policy and cares for the mother and the child.” In terms of contents, the lecture activity of both structures unites in the fields of formation of better educated women who are acquainted with the “matters of Bulgarian domestic and economic policy”, “international relations”, “health and scientific knowledge about nature and society” (1, s. 16). This interaction is favourable to the political activity of women as “propagandists during the national consultation about the monarchy and during elections for Grand National Assembly” when the first women’s conferences were held as well as their participation in “congresses, conferences and plenary sessions related to the fight for peace.” (10, p. 3-4).

- **Amateur art activities**

Both structures develop a certain strength and an interaction in the amateur art activity directed to the formation of a harmonically developed personality and cultivation in a socialist spirit. The amateur art activity is defined as a genetic and existential factor for a part of the women’s associations – “at certain places around it, women’s associations are established and strengthened. These associations draw means for a number of support initiatives on here and they develop them later.(10, p. 3-4). Among the mass spread forms of amateur art activities where the interaction between a women’s association and a library is highlighted on are: festivals, theatres, dance and choir performances, fairs for folk art etc. For example, women’s choirs are created this way in almost all associations which are later separated as choirs in libraries and local Fatherland Front organizations.(again there). Both the Bulgarian National Women’s Union and the Supreme Library Union accentuate on the integration of ethnical minorities in the amateur art activity. In settlements where there is compact Turkish population, the Women’s associations “take special care of Turkish and Bulgarian-Mohammedan women” vreating “separate groups of women as sections of these associations.”(10, p. 4). Libraries themselves create “88 Turkish collectives in 14 regions” for amateur art activity and “16 Bulgarian-Mohammedan ones in three regions.”(9, s. 220).

CONCLUSION

In the process of the whole interaction between women’s associations and national libraries during the researched period we see a trend to a unification of the functions towards continuing of the school education. The main dimensions of the mutual collaboration and interaction between the unique and the oldest mass cultural organization in Bulgaria –the library, on the one hand and the women’s association, on the other hand, reveal that “the women’s associations take the guidance on schools” and educate women and girls irrespective of ethnical

⁵ In 1951 a national group of lecturers consisting of about 600 lecturers holds 2150 talks in the villages only and in October 1952 – 2249 (2, p. 21; 15, s. 18).

⁶ For a year and a half, 128 agricultural study circles are created from July 1949 to the beginning of 1951 (7, s. 497).

difference and the libraries move on with their traditional role of a ‘real library school that continues the school education’ for the entire population (10,s.3-4,5,s.27). They strive to prevent the risk of secondary illiteracy. Both structures themselves continue school education by cultivating people by means of the forms of lecture education and amateur art work in the spirits of the values of the time.

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