

“Maro the Fighter:” How Soviet Armenian Media Created Politically and Socially Active Women through Media Discourse

(A case study of the newspaper Avangard (1923-1926))

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This article analyzes the discourse¹ of the newspaper *Avangard* related to the new Soviet Armenian woman. The study tries to investigate the tools that *Avangard* used for the popularization of ideas of gender equality, women’s empowerment and their political and social activity.

In my research, I focus on the newspaper *Avangard*, since it represented the discourse of the working class. This class found it particularly difficult to adopt the new gender roles pushed forward by new Soviet daily practices.

This article analyzes the issues from the first years of the newspaper’s publication and singles out articles related in any way with women’s issues, the specifics of their new roles, the proclamations on women’s involvement in the social and political life of the country, and it also identifies obstacles and problems in the implementation of the new gender roles as described in the newspaper. Besides this, the article has paid particular attention to

¹It is obvious that the meaning of the word “discourse” is used with certain reservations here. In the Soviet media, discourse could only be within the framework of Bolshevik ideology and it could not discuss ideas but rather options for the implementation of proposed issues. The newspapers would simply not publish opinions other than ‘accepted’ ones.

certain aspects of the newspaper's language, the intended audience for its calls and messages, and the role of women in those messages.

Soviet ideology and women

After establishing the Soviet State, the ideologists of the Bolshevik party aspired to create the "New Soviet citizen."² The analysts of the Soviet state's social policy show that the Bolshevik Party dreamed about politically and socially active citizens free from religious prejudices. The new citizen would propagate socialism and spurn capitalism. This citizen would also actively build a society where social equality would dominate.

The Bolshevik engineers of the "new man" first marked the social phenomena that were unacceptable for them, then they labeled them as bourgeoisie, and finally, they created the opposite ones – phenomena and manners that were positive and socialist.³

*"According to E.G. Panamaryov and L.N. Velichko: "The Establishment of the new society was accompanied by the creation of a new kind of man. This new man was free from foregoing moral structures and behavioral stereotypes. Previous traditional moral values based on Christian virtue were being replaced by other educational and pedagogical paradigms.""*⁴

²Коган, С. В., *Детство Как Этап Формирования «Нового Человека» В Довоенном Советском Обществе*// Известия РГПУ им. А.И. Герцена. 2012. №150, стр.165 [Kogan, S. V., *Childhood as a Stage in the Formation of a "New Person" in Pre-War Soviet Society*, News from the Russian State Pedagogical University named after A.I. Hertsen, 2012, No. 150, page 165] URL: <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/detstvo-kak-etap-formirovaniya-novogo-cheloveka-v-dovoennom-sovetskom-obschestve> (date accessed: 30.07.2015)

³Новиков, С. Г., *Разработка модели «нового человека» советской властной элитой 1920-х гг* // Известия ВГПУ . 2012. №5. [Novikov, S. G., *The Development of a Model for the "New Person" by the Soviet Ruling Elite in the 1920s*, News from the Russian State Pedagogical University named after A.I. Hertsen, 2012, No. 5] URL: <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/razrabotka-modeli-novogo-cheloveka-sovetskoj-vlastnoy-elitoy-1920-h-gg> (date accessed: 26.07.2015).

⁴Коган, С. В., *Детство Как Этап Формирования «Нового Человека» В Довоенном Советском Обществе* // Известия РГПУ им. А.И. Герцена . 2012. №150., [Kogan, Sofya Vadimovna, *Childhood as a Stage in the Formation of a*

New daily practices were created for the invention of the new man. But the USSR was a modernizing country, and the changes in the image of the citizen were revolutionary in their nature. These changes were implemented through revolutionary plans and at a rapid pace. This was not an easy task in general and especially with respect to women. Taking into consideration the fact that nations with mostly traditional and often patriarchal societies were living in the newly Sovietized republics, these difficulties were enormous.

Cultural and social anthropology assume that men can live only in an orderly world, that is, in a situation where a cultural order dominates over natural order. In the Soviet society, ideology assumed the role of that kind of regulator.⁵An affirmation of the new cultural order was taking place through the invention and popularization of new Soviet daily practices.

Soviet daily practices defined, for example, gender equality, equal responsibility and equal opportunities, also those practices granted the women the right to vote and promoted their political and civic activity.⁶Bypassing the important question that “political activity” in the Soviet Union meant active proclamation of allegiance towards the ideology and government of the Communist party, it is worth mentioning that these activities were expected both from men and women equally.

“New Person” in Pre-War Soviet Society, News from the Russian State Pedagogical University named after A.I. Hertsen, 2012, No. 150, page 166] стр.166 URL: <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/detstvo-kak-etap-formirovaniya-novogo-cheloveka-v-dovoennom-sovetskom-obschestve> (date accessed: 30.07.2015).

⁵ Волков, В.В., *Концепция культурности, 1935-1938 годы: советская цивилизация и повседневность сталинского времени* // Социологический журнал. 1996. № 1-2., стр. 15 [V.V. Volkov, *The Concept of Being Cultured, 1935-1938: Soviet Civilization and Everyday Living in the Stalin Era* // Sociological Journal. 1996. No. 1-2, page 15]

⁶Коган, С. В., *Детство Как Этап Формирования «Нового Человека» В Довоенном Советском Обществе* // Известия РГПУ им. А.И. Герцена . 2012. №150. [Kogan, Sofya Vadimovna, *Childhood as a Stage in the Formation of a “New Person” in Pre-War Soviet Society*, News from the Russian State Pedagogical University named after A.I. Hertsen, 2012, No. 150] URL: <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/detstvo-kak-etap-formirovaniya-novogo-cheloveka-v-dovoennom-sovetskom-obschestve> (дата обращения: 30.07.2015).

An important basis for the popularization of Soviet daily practices were served by political myths, such as the myth called “an end to backwardness.” The truth about backwardness is not important; it’s the contrast between the “in the past” and the “now” that is very important. What is more, in the slogans used, what we call the myths were rooted mainly in the idea of an expected good future presented as something occurring “now.” And in those myths, the reality of the present was completely erased, especially when concerning the primitive replacement of the functional roles of “the past” with the similar roles “now.” For example:

“In the past, the children of workers and peasants did not have the possibility to get an education, whereas now they can become engineers. In the past, the land owners would oppress the farmers, but now the farmers are united and themselves are the owners of the lands. In the past, the employers would tyrannize the workers, but now the employees are lords themselves. In the past, clerics would deceive the people and religious opium would befuddle them, but now science and enlightenment are opening people’s eyes.”⁷

For example, in the statement “*In the past, the land owners would oppress the farmers, but now the farmers are united and themselves are the owners of the lands,*” there is no emphasis on the fact that, despite the replacement of the forms of land ownership, farmers continued to be oppressed as they did in the past because now they had to give a large part of the results of their work to the state. Certainly, one of the “correct myths” was that “currently Soviet women have rights and duties equal to Soviet men,” but it too was voiced in contrast with the past: in the past, women were oppressed within the bourgeois family, whereas now Soviet women have rights and responsibilities equal to those of Soviet men. Denying all things from the “bad past” and the practically forced introduction of “good

⁷ Фицпатрик Ш., Повседневный сталинизм. Социальная история Советской России в 30-е годы: город // Российская политическая энциклопедия (РОССПЭН); Фонд Первого Президента России Б.Н.Ельцина, М., 2-е изд., 2008. [Fitzpatrick S., *Everyday Stalinism: The Social History of Soviet Russia in the 30s: City* // Russian Political Encyclopedia (ROSSPEN), Boris Yeltsin Collection, M., 2nd edition, 2008.] http://www.krotov.info/libr_min/21_f/iz/patrik_0.htm (accessed on 06.07.2015)

present" became one of the most important tools and methods for interrupting the cultural continuity of groups and nations, regardless of their "backwardness," and opened a wide scope for standardized values, introduced in the social relations of the whole population of the Soviet socio-cultural space with a rich ethnic and cultural diversity.

The Soviet governors considered their mission to be educating and civilizing the huge masses of the newly established empire, as they perceived those masses as backward and uneducated. In general, the women were identified as more degraded in those "backward masses."⁸

Bolshevik ideologists considered the institute of the family as one of the reasons for women's backwardness. That is why the defamilization of society and the need for transferring the relationships between women and men from the field of the family to the space of love became a key point of the "women's issue."⁹

As new Soviet citizens, the Bolsheviks were creating new Soviet women and new Soviet men, and new relationships between them.¹⁰ These relationships underwent enormous changes both in the personal and social spheres.

In private life, those changes concerned the familial-marital, friendly and sexual areas, and in social life they encompassed the economic, ideological and cultural areas.¹¹

The personnel policy of the state also influenced the differentiation of gender roles. In the 1920-1930s, one of the mainstream approaches of Soviet personnel policy was the assignment of the farmers and workers to state and party positions. Within the scope of that approach, the regional

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Коллонтай, А. М., *Семья и коммунистическое государство* // Российская коммунистическая партия, 1918, стр. 4 [Kollontai, A.M., *The Family and the Communist State* // Russian Communist Party, 1918, p. 4]

¹⁰ Здравомыслова, Е. А., Тёмкина А. А., *Государственное конструирование гендера в советском обществе* // Журнал исследований социальной политики, том 1 (3/4), стр. 299. [Zdravomyslova Y.A., Tyomkina A.A. *The State Construction of Gender in Soviet Society* // Journal of Social Political Studies, Vol. 1 (3/4), p. 299] http://ecsocman.hse.ru/data/072/627/1219/zdravomyslova_temkina_gosudarstvennoe_konstruirovaniye.PDF, (accessed on 20.07.2015)

¹¹ Ibid, p. 301.

social anchorage of the state was expanding due to women's participation too.¹²

The Bolshevik ideologists used the party meetings, party agitators, work collectives, educational centers, particularly schools kids/youth institutes (pioneers, *komsomols*), NGO's, especially professional unions and of course print media for the popularization of the peculiarities of new Soviet daily practices.

The Bolshevik government considered the emancipation of women as one of the main goals of their activity. They perceived the bourgeois family as one of the obstacles on the way to that goal. That is why they strongly condemned the old fashioned institution of the family.¹³ The perception of motherhood was changing too. In 1923, A.M. Kollontai, who was one of the leaders of Bolshevik's feminization ideology, proclaimed: "The Soviet government will take the burden of motherhood off the shoulders of women and will pass it to the state."¹⁴ In her book, "The Family and the Communist State" she wrote:

*"There is no need for the concealment of the truth: an average family, where the man was the boss and bread-winner and the woman was dependent on the husband and she had neither her own will nor her own time, is changing in front of our eyes."*¹⁵

From Kollontai's point of view, the type of family that was common among the urban and rural proletarians was the remnant of the old bourgeois customs. She was certain that the Soviet citizen had to get rid of that

¹² Земзюлина, Н. И., *Гендерный аспект кадровой политики в СССР в 1920-1930-х гг* // ИСОМ, 2013, №6. [Zemzyulina, Natalya Ivanovna, *The Gender Aspect of Personnel Policies in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s* // ISEM. 2013. No. 6] <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/gendernyy-aspekt-kadrovoy-politiki-v-sssr-v-1920-1930-h-gg> (accessed on 26.07.2015).

¹³ Шаповалова А. Я., *Политика большевиков в отношении семьи в первые годы советской власти* // Общество: Политика, экономика, право, 2010, № 1, стр. 105 [Shapovalova A.Y., *Bolshevik Policy in Relation to the Family in the Early Years of Soviet Rule* // Society: Politics, Economics, Rights, 2010, № 1, page 105].

¹⁴ Коллонтай, А. М., *Семья и коммунистическое государство* // Российская коммунистическая партия, 1918, стр. 146. [Kollontai, A.M., *The Family and the Communist State* // Russian Communist Party, 1918, p.146]

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 4.

remnant on the way to the creation of new daily practices.¹⁶ According to Kollontai, there were no factors in favor of retaining the family and so there was no need or reason to maintain the old model of family. Her ideology influenced the Soviet government's policy, and during the first years of the state, the Bolsheviks adopted several decrees that were very important from the viewpoint of gender equality. Among those, there were decrees about "Bookkeeping of the acts of civil marriage, children and civil accommodation" and "The ending of marriage."¹⁷

It is possible that the ideologists of the Bolsheviks felt a possible counterweight to the state monopoly on the pressure of the will of the citizens in the family institution as a closed cell with a strong adhesion of its members, having diverse manifestations especially in the traditional patriarchal societies of the Soviet's peripheral East and South.. In any case, the state took in its strong arms the regulation of relations between men and women in the public sphere, as well as in the family not only through legal rights and laws, but also, and more importantly, through propaganda and the imposition of appropriate and glorified images and/or through administrative punishment(eg., a Brigadier, the chairman of the *kolkhoz*, could administratively punish a husband if he cited the need to care for children as a reason for prohibiting his wife from participating in the collective work in the field, meetings and so on). Similarly, the image of Soviet women and men were carefully crafted by certain ideological and party designers – how to dress, how and with whom to visit friends and relatives, whether or not to use jewelry, how to allocate family-related responsibilities and relationships, etc.

It is important to note also that the first years of Soviet policy on gender equality in addition to "the Soviet way of life" and/or within the "Soviet way of life" Soviet propaganda also tried to personalize women,

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁷ Собрание узаконений и распоряжений РСФСР, М., 1917. № 1, 10, цит. Пушкарева, Н. Л., *Гендерная система советской России и судьбы россиянок* // НЛО, 2012, № 117, [Collection of the Legalization and Regulation of the RFSSR, M., 1917 No. 1, 10, cited in Pushkareva N.L., *The Gender System of Soviet Russia and the Fate of Russian Women* // NLO, 2012, № 117, <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2012/117/p5.html>, (accessed on 30.06.2015)

focusing on their human needs, health, opportunities for individual development, education, financial independence, and what was more important, tried to make women more aware of their legal and social rights.

According to Russian and Western modern sociologists, the period between the establishment of the Soviet state and the late 1920's was the first stage of the development of Soviet gender relations. This stage stands out due to the existence of "women's groups" and the fact that it was the period of Bolshevik experiments in the area of family issues.¹⁸

During this period of time, the redesign of the family institution and the political mobilization of women were considered as cornerstones of women's emancipation. The heads of the departments for the control of labor among women assured that "work must be done in places, the ideas must be strongly agitated and where agitation does not help achieve the goal, those members and candidates of the party that have not yet denied the old practices, must be chastised publicly."¹⁹

The Armenian Soviet State was not an exception and its Bolshevik leaders, too, used the print media as one of the tools for the popularizing the new Soviet practices. In this paper, as stated above, a very short period of time (three years) is considered in the early experiments of the development of a Soviet gender policy when both the state and society tried sometimes rather primitively to find the lines of Soviet gender equality.

"How shall we work with the girls"

The gender discourse of "*Avangard*" newspaper mostly targeted the male readership. This discourse used mostly masculine language and

¹⁸ Пушкарева, Н. Л., *Гендерная система советской России и судьбы россиянок* // НЛЮ, 2012, № 117, [Pushkareva N.L., *The Gender System of Soviet Russia and the Fate of Russian Women* // NLO, 2012, № 117] <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2012/117/p5.html>, (accessed on 30.06.2015)

¹⁹ ЦДНИ КБР. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Д. 11. Л. 65—70, цит. Пушкарева, Н. Л., *Гендерная система советской России и судьбы россиянок* // НЛЮ, 2012, № 117, [Collection of the Legalization and Regulation of the RFSSR, M., 1917 No. 1, 10, cited in Pushkareva N.L., *The Gender System of Soviet Russia and the Fate of Russian Women* // NLO, 2012, № 117, <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2012/117/p5.html>, (accessed on 30.06.2015)

referred to the men. Almost all issues of the newspaper contained articles about the inaction of women in the party and social works. The male authors of the articles called on their male colleagues to encourage their female comrades to actively participate in party work. They considered the low degree of women's participation to be the result of bad work by the party men. In particular, one of the authors wrote:

*"We, komsomols of the village have not yet managed to have the necessary attitude towards our girls (the girls of the village) to make them interested in the work of our cell and gradually, to make them become one of us."*²⁰

Through this statement the author gave the women a passive role in their inaction. Instead, the article calls on the active participation of men for the emancipation of the women.

The Bolshevik ideologists of the newspaper asked their male readers to fight for women's emancipation on two fronts. First, male members of the party were supposed to create an atmosphere during party and cell meetings where women would be able to participate freely and without reservation. The articles that address this issue had titles such as: "About Women Correspondents"²¹, "You Must Organize Women"²², "An Issue about Women,"²³ "They do not Attract Girls,"²⁴ "A Friendly Attitude toward Girls,"²⁵ "Open their Eyes,"²⁶ "Who are the Ones who Hamper,"²⁷ and so on.

The addressees of these articles were male peasants and workers, male members of party cells - this much is obvious simply from their titles. The articles called on them to create a better environment for women's

²⁰ *How to Approach Girls* // Avangard, issue 58(87), p.3, Yerevan, 1924

²¹ *About Girl Authors* // Avangard, issue 15(43), p.6, Yerevan, 1924

²² *You Must Organize Women* // Avangard, issue 58(87), p.5, Yerevan, 1924

²³ *One Issue for the Promotion of Girls* // Avangard, issue 26 (55), p.8, Yerevan, 1924

²⁴ *They do not Attract Girls* // Avangard, issue 14(173), p.4, Yerevan, 1926

²⁵ *A Friendly Attitude towards Girls* // Avangard, issue 98(254), p.2, Yerevan, 1926

²⁶ *Open their Eyes* // Avangard, issue 13(104), p.2, Yerevan, 1925

²⁷ *Who are the Ones who Hamper?* // Avangard, issue 27(185), p.2, Yerevan, 1926

participation in all activities of the party cells. The authors of these articles asked the new Soviet citizens to make party activities more understandable and accessible for their women counterparts. One of the barriers in the women's emancipation process is considered the patriarchal attitude of the men towards them and temerity. In order to overcome these barriers, anxious "comrades" wrote articles condemning those members of the party who demonstrated inappropriate behavior. The articles stressed that the misleading behavior of such comrades must be condemned and punished.

The authors emphasized that there were numerous barriers for women's involvement in the party's activities, and that careless actions by men were complicating the situation. One of the "worried authors" wrote:

*"For farmers, it a new and unseen phenomenon that girls can attend party meetings...One careless comment in the presence of the girls is enough for the village to burst with gossip and stories about the immorality of the komsomols."*²⁸

Thus, the author draws the reader's attention upon the vulnerable plight of women's emancipation in the villages.

Besides mentioning the importance of men's benevolent and polite behavior towards their female counterparts, the newspaper called on his male readership to use more understandable language when explaining the importance of party work for women. In this framework, the articles gave special importance to personal qualities and the meaning of the implemented work of the instructors. The newspaper published the names and images of the best instructors as exemplary members of the party. In the distinguished instructors' activities, special attention was paid to their work for women's involvement in the party activities.

For example, one of the articles published in the column called "Farmers for the Village" was devoted to laborer H. Darbinyan, who was the instructor of the Kotayk region. Regarding his exemplary activities, the article said:

"The organization of the Kotayk region is growing daily...recently 15 girls became members of the union and this is a big victory for the village."

²⁸ *The New Life style must not be Distorted* // Avangard, issue 30 (121), p. 4, Yerevan, 1926

*And of course this is due to the ENOURMOUS EFFORTS OF THE INSTRUCTOR.*²⁹

The other key issue in the discourse of gender relations in the public sphere was the disrespectful attitude of men towards their politicized women counterparts. The author of the article entitled “Why do Girls Refuse to Attend Meetings” wrote about this problem. He was worried because, during the women’s speeches in the meetings or when cell meetings were supervised by women, the men would make noises, behave disrespectfully and in a disorderly fashion. As a result of these negative actions, the work of girls would be rated with low scores and they would lose their positions.

The second battlefield in men’s struggle for women’s emancipation was the area of family. The main focus of the discourse about new daily practices and the new Soviet family was the equality of the women and men in the family and the importance of the change of men’s superior roles in the families. There were numerous articles in *Avangard* about the disapproval of men’s aggressive masculinity and their desire to rule over women in the family. These articles were entitled “A Sad Phenomenon,”³⁰ “We Must Abandon Old Customs,”³¹ “Women are Men’s Equals and Not their Slaves,”³² “They do not Keep Them, nor do they Divorce them,”³³ “He Beat and Evicted her,”³⁴ “The Family and the Construction of Socialism,”³⁵ “Instead of Helping, they Prevent them”³⁶ and so on.

²⁹ *The Workers for the Village* // *Avangard*, issue 55(84), p.4, Yerevan, 1924

³⁰ *A Sad Phenomenon* // *Avangard*, issue 26(55), p.6, Yerevan, 1924

³¹ *We Must Abandon Old Customs* // *Avangard*, issue 34(191), p.3, Yerevan, 1926

³² *Women are Men’s Equals and not their Slaves* // *Avangard*, issue 37 (194), p.3, Yerevan, 1926

³³ *They do not Keep Them, nor do they Divorce them* // *Avangard*, issue 61(218), p.3, Yerevan, 1926

³⁴ *He Beat her and Evicted her* // *Avangard*, issue 74(231), p.3, Yerevan, 1926

³⁵ *The Family and the Construction of Socialism* // *Avangard*, issue 30(121), p.3, Yerevan, 1925

³⁶ *Instead of Helping, they Prevent Them* // *Avangard*, issue 44(133), p.2, Yerevan, 1925

These articles deprecated those party members and workers who abuse their wives and/or prohibited them from participating in party meetings. Both negative phenomena were considered parts of “old practices” that had no place in the life of a Soviet citizen. In these articles, the features of the new family model could gradually be discerned. Contrary to the first gender ideologists of the Soviet state, the discourse of the newspaper did not regret the institution of the family at all, but it was against the old kind of family. In the new family, men and women were equals as they were in the social areas, and men had no rights over women. First of all, they were equal builders of socialism, and the family had no right to challenge their social activities.

In the article “Who Are the Ones who hamper?” the author wrote:

“In Taza village, Hrazdan region ,the farmer Yegiazar Avetisyan has married one of the female party members and now he does not allow her to participate in party meetings.” Avetisyan has forced her to wear jewelry and keeps her at home.”³⁷

The author equalized things like beating one’s wife and wearing jewelry, and considered them leftovers from a past life. An image accompanied the article in which a man in farmer’s clothing and a sad woman with jewelry were depicted. Such images represented the old daily practices, the morals of the “backward villagers” and traditional clothes. The image had a quote: “You - woman! You’d better stay home like you should! Meetings are none of your business!”³⁸

“Go away, luxuries”

Only some of the articles on gender discourse spoke to a female readership. The majority of the authors of these articles were nevertheless men who cared about women’s issues and sometimes decided to address women on issues of their concern. The lion’s share of these articles was

³⁷ *Who are the Ones who Hamper?* // Avangard, issue 27(185), p.2, Yerevan, 1926

³⁸ “You-woman! You’d better stay home like you should! Meetings are none of your business! // Avangard, issue 37(194), p.3, Yerevan, 1926

about women's hygiene, health issues, and some of them spoke about topics concerning appropriate clothing and make-up for women.

The author of one of the articles published in a column called "Is it permissible to use perfume and powder?" spoke against the use of these old fashioned and bourgeois items of female hygiene. After this piece, a series of articles appeared as part of the same column. Each of the articles used different arguments when speaking about the need to refuse these items. The arguments of those ideas can be grouped as follows:

1) Perfume and powder are markers of a bourgeois lifestyle and they must be abandoned as should everything related to the former lifestyle.³⁹

2) A Soviet woman must not be concerned with things such as perfume and powder. The main goal and the passion of her life must be the construction of socialism and not the use of make-up.⁴⁰

3) Perfume and powder are dangerous to a women's health. They are poisons and women used to use them as a result of their illiteracy.⁴¹

The last argument also had the support of Soviet doctors whose ideas concerning the above-mentioned issues were published in the same column. According to the published medical opinion:

*"Fragrances usually erase the sexual desire of men. Perfume and fragrances are for women who smell badly for some reason (for example because of smelly underarms, bad breath or smelly feet)."*⁴²

When speaking about the peculiarities of powder, the article emphasized that it blocks sebaceous glands and therefore causes skin irritation.

The articles concerning the importance of physical activity and its influence on physical health mostly spoke to the male readership were complemented with images of men. Nevertheless, the newspaper included some articles that raised the issue that there is a misunderstanding regarding

³⁹ *Is it Permissible to Use Perfume and Powder?* // Avangard, issue 91(247), p.4, Yerevan, 1926

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Powder and Perfume from a Medical Perspective* // Avangard, issue 97(253), p.4, Yerevan, 1926

the physical activities of women. The articles placed blame in general on those readers and *komsomols* who assumed that physical activity was not for women.

These articles were grouped in a column called “Physical Activity is Not Only for Boys.” The articles stressed the special importance of physical activities for women’s physical and mental health. They contained some instructions about the best approaches and times for workouts.⁴³

Interestingly, there were almost no articles about motherhood and child care. When referring to the female readership the newspaper targeted young women and focused on their problems in the personal and public spheres, but bypassed issues of maternity. The articles referring to women’s health were mostly about the importance of women’s hygiene, issues of the reproductive system, peculiarities of sexual desire and ways to restrain that desire.⁴⁴ Pieces in this column were mostly translations of articles from Russian newspapers, and represented the thoughts of ideological speeches and publications.

The main message of these articles was the significance of the ability to restrain sexual desire and to use the energy born from that desire for the fulfillment of public and social activities, thus becoming active party members and refraining from sexually transmitted infections.

There were a number of articles related to the women who show inappropriate behavior, considering them morally corrupt or as someone still practicing old ideas. An article entitled “Komsomol, KIM and ...the ring” said:

*“The ring is a symbol of reluctance, a leftover of bourgeois life. The komsomol must fight against the leftovers of old practices and that must first start with a personal example. But you can see that our friend is doing just the opposite. It would be smart of her to throw the ring away, and she must do it or else she will become a laughing stock.”*⁴⁵

⁴³ *Physical Activity is Not Only for Boys* // Avangard, issue 23(114), p.4, Yerevan, 1925

⁴⁴ *The Issue of Sex and the Comsomol* // Avangard, issue 30(121), p.3, Yerevan, 1925

⁴⁵ *The Komsomol, KIM and... the Ring* //Avangard, issue 33 (190)

Our friend Tarlan as a parliamentarian

Another topic of *Avangard's* gender discourse concerns women who have attained party and political positions. This discourse was presented via stories of both Soviet women ideologists and ordinary women. The success stories of these women appeared in the newspaper's pages especially during state celebrations such as March 8 and May 1. In the newspaper issues printed on those days, one could read numerous articles on the achievements of women in social and political life, about their struggle against old values and their desire to emancipate all their sisters in the world.

The articles about women soviet ideologists and high level officials are mostly translations from the Russian newspapers. The ideas and worldviews of Clara Zetkin,⁴⁶Rosa Luxemburg⁴⁷ and other women appeared often. The majority of these articles stressed that the Soviet Union is the best place for the emancipated women and that women suffered from the inequality, poverty and backwardness in all other countries.

Some articles told stories of worker or peasant women who had become politically active now because of Soviet ideology and the opportunities the Soviet State had given them. In the article about an annual party meeting, the image of a *komsomol* woman was printed with the following name: "Our friend Tarlan as a parliamentarian."⁴⁸

The newspaper had a special column for literary works and they contained gender discourse too. The two main themes of these works were the need for women's emancipation and anti-religious activities. Usually these topics were correlated in literary works about women who struggled against religious prejudice and fought for their right to be active in public life.

⁴⁶ *The International Day of Women is the Day of New Struggle* (An article by Clara Zetkin) // *Avangard*, issue 18(177), p.1, Yerevan, 1926

⁴⁷ *Rosa Luxemburg* // *Avangard*, issue 4(163), p.3, Yerevan, 1926

⁴⁸ *Our Friend Tarlan as a Parliamentarian* // *Avangard*, issue 15(174), p.2, Yerevan, 1926

In an essay called “Maro the fighter,” the author told the story of a young woman who was an active party member and encouraged her friends to follow her and emancipate themselves. Her advice included relentless struggle against all religious customs and rituals. She was depicted as a kind of advisor for young women and was the best example of a free and active woman. The essay “*Komsomol Hury*” told an almost similar story about another woman, Hury. All of them were presented as brave, clever and admirable citizens of a new reality.

The story “A Female Peasant” is about a brave woman who is an active cell member struggling against her family and her relatives for her rights to be politically active.

Thus, an analysis of *Avangard*'s articles related to women's issues shows that they reflect the state ideology of women's emancipation often using masculine language and patriarchal attitudes. The articles examined paid particular attention towards men's participation in the empowerment of women. Taking into consideration the patriarchal values of newly Sovietized republics, the authors called on their male counterparts to be more careful when dealing with female party and cell members.

**Պայքարող Մարոն . ինչպես էր խորհրդային
հայաստանյան մամուլը «նոր խորհրդային կնոջ»
կերպար կերտում
(Ավանգարդ (1923-1926) թերթի օրինակով)**

*Աննա Գևորգյան,
Երևանի պետական համալսարան*

Հոդվածը վերլուծում է «նոր խորհրդային կանանց» մասին «Ավանգարդ» թերթի դիսկուրսը: Հետազոտությունը փորձում է վեր հանել այն գործիքները, որոնց շնորհիվ «Ավանգարդ» թերթը հանրայնացնում է այնպիսի գաղափարներ, ինչպիսին են՝ գենդերային հավասարությունը, կանանց հնարավորությունների հզորացումը և նրանց քաղաքական ու հասարակական ակտիվության բարձրացումը:

Հետազոտության նպատակը նոր խորհրդային առօրեականության ու դրա համատեքստում կանանց նոր դերի ու տեղի ընդունումը ընկալելի ու հասկանալի դարձնող մեդիա գործիքների ուսումնասիրությունն է: Որպես հետազոտության առարկա ընտրվել է «Ավանգարդ» թերթը, քանի որ այն ներկայացնում է «բանվորա-գյուղացիական» դասակարգը, որի համար առավել բարդ պիտի որ լիներ «նոր կենցաղի» կանոնների ընդունումը: