

The Position of Trade Workers in BiH: a historical overview
(Collection of Papers), Sarajevo: Union of Trade and Service
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The Trade and Service Workers Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina organized a round table on May 1, 2023, on International Labor Day, named The Position of Trade Workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a historical overview. This meeting was attended by established researchers, historians and doctoral students from the University of Sarajevo and the Catholic University of Croatia. The presentations, in the form of scientific articles, were published in the Collection of Papers, of the same name, which was edited by Dražen Janko and published by the aforementioned trade union. The Collection contains four papers in which, based on unpublished archival material, published sources and existing literature, an attempt is made to show what the position of trade workers was in Bosnia and Herzegovina in different time periods. Chronologically, the Collection covers the period from the middle of the nineteenth century, that is, the last decades of the Ottoman rule in Bosnia, until the beginning of the nineties of the twentieth century.

In the first paper, *Rights and obligations of employees in trading houses towards the end of the Ottoman rule*, Dr. Hana Younis reconstructs the position of merchants and their employees, so-called boys, in the last decades of the Ottoman rule in Bosnia. In the middle of the nineteenth century, a significant number of trading houses were formed and established in Bosnia, and a special layer of the trading elite grew. The boys, the trade assistants, were usually young men who performed various types of work as employees of the trading houses. The author states that their duties were not only to work in shops and other jobs related to trade, but also to help in the houses of shop owners. The relationship between a boy and his boss was regulated by a written contract or it was agreed upon orally. Using concrete examples from the archive, the author presents and shapes the picture of the good and bad segments of these relationships, stating the

problems that the boys encountered in their work. The basic right they exercised was to receive a salary for their work. It was usually agreed on an annual basis, and based on preserved documents, and it may be seen that its amount differed depending on whether it was a matter of smaller shops or more significant wholesalers.

The paper written by Mehmed Hodžić, *The position of trade assistants in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century*, attempts to show the position occupied by trade assistants at the turn of the two centuries, those who were employed in trade shops and acted according to the orders and rules of their bosses. The Trade Law for Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1883 recognized trade assistants as a special category, therefore, seven of its articles regulated their rights and obligations, that is, “their relationship with employers, the issue of salary and paid leave, and the termination notice period.” From this relationship, and as a result of unfavorable working conditions, various problems arose, which the author presents using data from archival material. To eliminate existing problems and improve the position of trade assistants, the Association of Trade Employees was founded in early August 1909, which was part of the Official Workers’ Union. The author recognized and presented the main features of the work of the mentioned Union, which are reflected in its efforts to shorten working hours, to increase the salaries of trade assistants, to enable them to have days off, as well as additional education in the form of courses for assistants and apprentices. Although the government was primarily in favor of the interests of the merchant class, it contributed to the legalization of some of their rights by making positive decisions in favor of trade assistants. At the end of the paper, the author presented some segments from the daily lives of trade assistants.

The third paper, *Trade union in socialist self-management; The experience of the trade, catering, and tourism workers’ union in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the irregular position of women workers (1947–1962)*, written by Dr. Dženita Sarač-Rujanac, provides, in its first part, a chronological overview

of the development of the labor movement and trade union organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina with special reference to the organization and operation of trade unions within the framework of socialist self-management. In the second part of the work, the author attempts to point out the main characteristics and features of the work of trade unions in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1947 to 1962, drawing information from the available unpublished archival materials of the Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Trade, Hospitality and Tourism Workers' Union, as its official name reads, strove with a branched network of trade union branches, of which there were 416 throughout the Republic in 1959, to eliminate the daily issues faced by trade workers, all with the aim of modernization, improving the trade network, improving it and raising it to a more modern level. Important issues that were the subject of discussions also concerned the working hours of shops, overtime, days off and annual vacations of workers. The author focused special attention on the reconstruction of the state and representation of women in trade and hospitality, as well as the problems that caused their unfavorable and unequal position in relation to men.

The last paper in the Collection is a thematic and chronological continuation of the previous paper on the women's issue. Dražen Janko, in his paper *The position of women in socialist Yugoslavia until the end of the 70s and the significance of workers' protests during the 80s of the 20th century*, attempts to show how this topic was treated in Yugoslav society. When the author discusses women in the trade sector during the 1960s and 1970s, he states that they made up about 70 percent of the total workforce, with a lower salary than men and without management positions, and concludes that there was "the hypocrisy of the regime that claimed that in socialism, the women's question is solved, how women are equal with men." The author also pointed out the importance of protests during the eighties and early nineties, which were the reaction of dissatisfied workers caused by their poor position and disrespect of their rights, while the role of the unions themselves were the subject of the analysis.

The presented Collection, *The position of trade workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a historical overview*, is a valuable study that provides important data and information about the specific category of trade workers. In socialist Yugoslavia, the publishing activity of trade unions was at a much higher level than it is the case currently in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The leading historians of the time, researchers of the labor movement and trade union organization, were the authors of studies that represent exceptional achievements in our historiography, and their results are still scientifically relevant to the greatest extent today. In independent Bosnia and Herzegovina, the trade union's activity in publishing such studies is almost negligible, and the published papers are mostly of an ad hoc nature and without scientific apparatus. Accordingly, the initiative of the Trade and Service Workers' Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina to organize a round table and print a collection of papers represents an important and serious step forward in this field and deserves praise. If one considers the seriousness of the research approach as well as the results presented in the papers, it can be concluded that this Collection represents a significant achievement in Bosnian historiography, which can serve as an example for the study of other similar topics. This collection is the first new edition of this type within the trade union organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina after almost sixty years, which further indicates its significance.

Mehmed Hodžić