

Feminine Words for Feminine Actions: Women's Partisan Newspapers in the Greek Civil War

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Abstract: This article analyzes the origin and the development of the women's partisan journals that were published during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949). It constitutes an unexplored topic despite the fact that it can provide crucial insights into the women of that time. In the beginning, it describes the basic factors of the early feminist editions. Subsequently, it examines the course of those newspapers during WWI and the Interwar period in order to delineate the disruption of their progressive evolution. Afterwards, it presents the changes that affected the character of the women's publications throughout the Second World War, the Axis occupation and the first post-liberation years. Then, it focuses on the fundamental characteristics of the women's partisan newspapers, their technical aspects, their objectives, their thematic content and the journalistic coverage of the feminist issues. In parallel, it makes several comparisons with the Spanish case and it places the Hellenic example within a broader framework (pertinent European phenomena, feminist waves, etc.) to outline a clear, satisfying and comprehensive picture.

Keywords: press, clandestine, underground, women, publishing, newspapers, journals

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Introduction

The Civil War is one of the most analyzed periods of contemporary Hellenic history because it constitutes a very significant trauma that concerns the domestic public sphere in different ways. There are however several issues that have not been sufficiently explored since special attention was given to the principal political factors, the central military developments, the decisions of the primary protagonists, the relentless ideological struggles, the foreign interventions, the party confrontations and the acknowledged or unacknowledged pursuits of the rival coalitions.

The role of the Greek press throughout the Civil War is one of these subjects although there are some archival collections that provide unfettered access to the basic newspapers of that period. The majority of the Greek or foreign historians, political scientists and journalists have nevertheless overlooked the relevant periodical publications which could highlight the course of the fratricidal rivalry, the bilateral propaganda, the state censorship, the related info wars, the stance of the principal journals and the communication practice of the era.

The academic research has moreover ignored the left-wing newspapers and the rest clandestine publications even though they played a basic role in the communicative and the propagandistic activity of the time which had great importance for the wider public opinion, the stimulation of guerrilla's morale and the influence of the Democratic Army. Nobody has additionally explored the journals that were published by the antigovernment women who aimed to highlight the life, the significance, the course and the evolution of the female partisan fighters.

These publications can however provide a valuable starting point and bring out very significant information about feminine action during the Civil War. They may also fill several practical gaps that were created by the natural and human destruction of women's records, the incomplete character of the historical sources and the silence of the traditional Greek historiography which ignored the feminist issues for too many

years reflecting the dividing and separating atmosphere of the recent past (Αβδελά & Ψαρρά, 1985, pp. 13-15).

This article tries therefore to use these specific journals in order to answer a series of questions: How many women's editions were published? Who issued them? For how long? What was their role? What advantages and disadvantages did they have? What were they writing about? Which claims did they have? Were there any interruptions or continuities in their action? How did they deal with the rest publications? How were they connected to the feminist currents of that epoch? What were the central axes of their activity? How were they related to the international and the European framework of that particular time?

The article also seeks to gather valuable information and avoid the trap of anachronistic reading in order to present the style of women's writing and show the historicity of the feminine movement that should have been more prominent because they have no museum character. The research on these texts might prove to be very fruitful because it could reveal several facts about the psyche, the demands, the requests, the claims, the interests and the goals that concerned the active women of a certain historical period.

As Simone de Beauvoir wrote about the female writers of the time:

Sometimes they really excel in observing the given and they become excellent reporters. They know how to portray atmospheres and faces, to highlight the thin relationships between them, to make us participate in the delicate movements of their souls. Attached to the secret character of the objects, charmed by the uniqueness of their senses, they offer their warm experience with delightful adjectives and vivid images. Their vocabulary is usually more remarkable than their syntax since they are more interested in things than the relations between them. They do not want to achieve the abstract elegance of speech but instead their words speak to the senses (Μποβουάρ, 2021, pp. 887-888).

These texts were not so assertive, according to Beauvoir, as they mainly tried to show women's place in the world. But no one could deny that the feminist newspapers have always constituted a very significant weapon for their emancipation. Those who wrote challenged the male society, escaped from their usual occupations, expressed themselves and communicated with each other. They aimed to overcome loneliness and create a joint identity. They typically spoke collectively and demanded an active role (Περυσκόπιο, 5 March 1987).

Writing, which could be a very powerful weapon, distracted females from their household tasks, eased their confinement at home, promoted their introspection and made them think about their position in society. The publication of these texts constituted a revolutionary act since it fought to bridge the gap between the private and the public sphere and alleviate the chasm that usually separated men and women. For these reasons they represent a very interesting historical subject that deserves to be examined and analyzed quite carefully.

The first feminist newspapers

The first wave of feminism, which lasted from the 19th century to 1920, focused on political and legal matters since it promoted the women's right to vote, to own property and to be protected by anti-discrimination laws. During this time, several pioneering journals were established, such as the French *La Voix des Femmes* (1848), the German *Die Frauenbewegung* (1895), the Italian *La Donna* (1868), the Spanish *Ellas* (1851) and *La Mujer* (1871), as well as the British editions *The English Woman's Journal* (1858) and *The Women's Penny Paper* (1888), that tried hard to underline the aforementioned goals and support the relevant claims.¹

The systematic questioning of women's role in Greece appeared at the same time as it coincided with the creation of three newspapers which wanted to boost the feminist discourse of the epoch. In 1867, Penelopy

1 For these feminine editions see Crawford, 2001; Easley, Gill & Rodgers, 2019; Sullerot, 1966, pp. 88-122; Dölle Endlich, Golling & Hering, 1988; Marrades, 1978, pp. 89-134; Requena Hidalgo, 2014; Mitchell, 2014.

Lazaridou founded the monthly Athenian journal *Θάλεια* (*Thalia*) that aimed to encourage gender equality. In 1845, Efrosyni Samartzidou published three or four issues of *Κυψέλη* (*Kipseli*) in Constantinople. In 1870, Emilia Ktena-Leontias produced a corresponding edition in the capital of the ottoman empire, with the title *Ευριδίκη* (*Eurydice*), since she wanted to enhance feminine political and social advancement (Περισκόπιο, 5 March 1987).

These newspapers had however a fragmentary nature as they did not formulate a comprehensive feminist critique. *Η Εφημερίς των Κυριών* (*The Newspaper of the Ladies*), which was issued by Kallirroï Parren in 1887, can therefore be considered as the first important women's publication that was founded in Greece. The Greek case hence corresponded with the rest European context despite the fact that it had a lower level of industrialization, less women in the factories and a much smaller female participation in the country's economic life that played a very crucial role in the emergence and the advancement of feminism (Σκλαβενίτη, 1988, p.13).

Η Εφημερίς των Κυριών (*The Newspaper of the Ladies*) stood at the forefront of the liberationist movement since it supported women's claims until 1917. The first feminist wave ended around 1920 but Greek women, like most European women, continued to publish new editions in order to examine their social position and underline their central demands. They created the following papers: *Δελτίο του Λυκείου Ελληνίδων* (*Bulletin of Women's Lyceum*) within 1920; *Εύα Νικήτρια* (*Eve Winner*) and *Ελληνίς* (*Greek Woman*) in 1921; *Ο Αγώνας της Γυναίκας* (*Woman's Struggle*) within 1922; *Σοσιαλιστική Ζωή* (*The Socialist Life*) in 1928; *Εφημερίς των Γυναικών* (*Women's Newspaper*) within 1929; *Φεμινιστική* (*Feminist*) and *Εφημερίς των Ελληνίδων* (*Greek Women's Newspaper*) in 1930 (Κυριακίδου, 2001, pp. 67-96 & Ελεφάντης, 1979, pp. 363-364).

The feminine journals that were created after WWI changed, in some way, their nature because they acquired a more collective character which differed from the writings of the previous years. Women were

now fighting through unions to overcome the discriminations, gain the legal right to vote and obtain better job prospects. In the first decade, especially, (1920-1930) they prioritized these matters because they considered them to be of primary importance for the wellbeing, the gradual advancement and the substantial evolution of their gender.

But in the second decade of the Interwar period, after 1930, two divergent tendencies arose that revealed the main differences within the feminist movement, divided it even more and separated it between two basic political alliances. The radical women supported the so-called progressive or procommunist forces while the rest endorsed the traditional civic formations. Therefore they created a Manichaeian approach that halted any cooperation or joint action of the Greek women who had to choose ideological sides to navigate through an era of rapid democratic decrease.

The decline of liberalism, the evolution of socialism, the rise of fascism and the looming threat of war left two main choices for Greek feminists: either to limit their political involvement and try to keep their status or to adjust their struggle to the causes of democracy and socialism striving to advance the preceding feminist movement. Some leading figures started to abandon women's organizations in order to join the Communist Party of Greece (K.K.E.) that changed its skeptical stance towards domestic feminism since it had to promote the policy of popular fronts following the international communist line (Αβδελά και Ψαρρά, 1985, pp. 17-34, 43-54, 66-67, 93-96).

These developments were nevertheless interrupted by the harsh dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas which restricted the feminist movement and shut down some women's newspapers because they would not embrace the new social order. On August 5, 1936, just one day after the establishment of the regime, the Hellenic Police disbanded, for instance, the Association for Women's Rights, sealed its premises, confiscated its records and seized all the old issues of *Αγώνας της Γυναίκας* (*Woman's Struggle*) that could be found in the offices (Φαράκος, 1980, p. 162).

Several leftist women turned to illegality since they wanted to avoid arrests, imprisonments and exiles, escape torture, reinforce the resistance and fight against the dictatorship that hastened to suppress the domestic clandestine publications because they constituted a significant risk. These women did not issue any feminine newspapers but they probably assisted the 22 illegal journals that were established throughout those four years (Παπαθανασίου, 2011, pp. 6-14).

Women's war and postwar newspapers

This situation changed during the Second World War and the Axis Occupation of Greece (April 1941-October 1944) when Greek women established about 18 newspapers to combine the resistance with the feminist issues. The National Liberation Front (E.A.M.), which was the largest anti-fascist organization of that time, issued four publications: *Γυναικεία Δράση* (*Female Action*) within 1942, *Φωνή της Γυναίκας* (*Woman's Voice*) within 1943, *Ρουμελιώτισσα* (*Woman from Roumeli*) and *Συναγωνίστρια* (*Female Co-fighter*) within 1944.

E.P.O.N. (United Panhellenic Organization of Youth), which issued the majority of the Hellenic clandestine publications, founded *Ελεύθερη Κρητικοπούλα* (*Free Young Woman from Creta*) in 1943, *Σουλιωτοπούλα* (*Young Woman from Souli*) and *Ελεύθερες Νέες* (*Free Young Women*) in 1944. The National Solidarity (Εθνική Αλληλεγγύη) established two feminine newspapers that had the title *Μάνα* (*Mother*) within 1943, *Μάνα των Θυμάτων* (*Mother of the Victims*) and *Μάνα του Λαού* (*Mother of the People*) within 1944.

Some feminine schools and other resistance organizations, which were much smaller, published *Φωνή της Νέας* (*The Voice of Young Woman*) in 1942, *Ελεύθερη Ελληνίδα* (*Free Greek Woman*), *Ελεύθερη Κρητικοπούλα* (*Free Young Woman from Crete*), *Εμείς* (*We*) and *Σουλιώτισσα* (*Woman from Souli*) within 1943, *Ηπειρώτισσα* (*Woman from Epirus*) and *Δελτίο του Λυκείου Ελληνίδων* (*Bulletin of Women's Lyceum*) in 1944 which was the last year of the Axis Occupation.

Unfortunately, we do not have much information on these journals as no relevant study has been conducted yet. However, we do know that

this period “democratized” and radicalized the war since it did not distinguish between combatants and civilians because everybody could take part in the resistance. Women, although they did not play a central role, marched in the liberated territories, became objects of admiration and symbols of the “new woman” (Βόγλης, 2012, pp. 311-312).

During the Occupation, they entered the political scene and the public sphere as they participated in demonstrations, transferred printed stuff and joined solidarity committees. Their involvement in the E.A.M. (National Liberation Front) organizations reached 40% in certain areas but it was only 20% in the Communist Party of Greece. Most of them had auxiliary duties (mainly nurses, guards, carriers, suppliers and paramedics) albeit there were some cases where they joined voluntarily the women’s military units and the School for Reserve Officers that were managed by E.L.A.S. (Greek People’s Liberation Army) (Βερβενιώτη, 2013, pp. 302-304).

The role of women advanced after the liberation of Greece, that was completed in October, 1944. The Greek Communist Party emphasized, for example, feminine issues due to the role they held throughout the Occupation and the political contribution they could have. “They will obtain the same political and social rights as men”, mentioned its renewed program. “A popular democracy cannot be established and preserved without their emancipation” (Κ.Κ.Ε., 1981, pp. 27-28).

The women of Epirus continued issuing *Ηπειρώτισσα* (*Woman from Epirus*) that was circulated (at least) until March 1945. The last saved issue, which was published that month, urged women to preserve their achievements during the Occupation period, to secure their accomplishments, to celebrate International Women’s Day, to claim proper food for children and their right to vote that was essential for their freedom and their disentanglement (*Ηπειρώτισσα*, 5 March 1945).

Η Μάνα του Λαού (*Mother of the People*), which was published by the National Solidarity until 1946, enhanced the aforementioned feminist rhetoric since it sought adequate nutrition for young children, suitable medical

care, clothing, support for the rural populations, release and amnesty for the procommunist political prisoners, reconstruction of the country, immediate confinement of the paramilitary organizations, cessation of the anticommunist “white terror”, reinforcement of the domestic organization and instantaneous withdrawal of the foreign powers.²

These two aforementioned newspapers were initially issued during the epoch of the Occupation. The women of the first postwar years founded additional journals to highlight the problems and the claims of their gender. The female political prisoners of the National Resistance Movement established, for example, *Φυλακισμένη Αγωνίστρια* (*Imprisoned Female Fighter*) that aimed to present the daily life of the leftist incarcerated women (*Φυλακισμένη Αγωνίστρια*, 1 May 1946).

The women who left Greece in order to avoid the “white terror” issued two newspapers because they wanted to propagate the procommunist ideology. Those who went to Bulkes of Yugoslavia established *Λαϊκή Αγωνίστρια* (*People's Female Fighter*) which aimed to underline the equality that they had achieved through communism and promote women's emancipation, human rights, anti-fascism and peace. Those who fled to Albania to join the Democratic Army and participate in the Civil War printed *Ταξιαρχίτισσα* (*Brigade Woman*) which emphasized the feminine contributions and advance their status in the postwar socialist countries of Eastern Europe.³

The previous five newspapers constituted just a small part of the 309 legal, semilegal or entirely illegal leftist publications that were issued during the postliberation years (October 1944-March 1946) and the first period of the Greek Civil War (April 1946-December 1947). These journals, whether issued in Greece or abroad, praised feminine resistance

2 For these political claims see *Μάνα του Λαού*, 10 June 1945; *Μάνα του Λαού*, 28 June 1945; *Μάνα του Λαού*, 12 July 1945; *Μάνα του Λαού*, 9 August 1945; *Μάνα του Λαού*, 30 August 1945; *Μάνα του Λαού*, 22 September 1945; *Μάνα του Λαού*, 20 November 1945; *Μάνα του Λαού*, 22 December 1945; *Μάνα του Λαού*, 1 March 1946.

3 For these newspapers that were published in the East-European countries see *Λαϊκή Αγωνίστρια*, 10 August 1946; *Λαϊκή Αγωνίστρια*, 7 December 1946; *Λαϊκή Αγωνίστρια*, March 1947; *Ταξιαρχίτισσα*, 6 September 1947.

activities, honored feminist and labor anniversaries, commended women's position under communism, and advocated for the expansion of the relevant rights in order to achieve full equality, parity and equity with men.

Women's Civil War newspapers

Greek women played a supplementary role throughout the first two years of the Civil War (April 1946-December 1947) since they were primarily working as nurses, carriers, cooks, launderers etc. Most of them did not really participate in the factual combats. From 1948 nevertheless this started to change due to the leftist forces which introduced a mandatory conscription of women in an attempt to overcome the numerical deficit of the Democratic Army. More than 30% of the combatants and 70% of the auxiliary staff consisted of women during 1949 (Βόγλης, 2012, pp. 315-316 & Βερβενιώτη, 2008, pp. 345-346).

These women issued 15 out of the 132 partisan publications that were established between 1947 and 1949. One of them (*Ταξιαρχίτισσα*) was founded in 1947 and the rest in 1948 and 1949. The number of these editions (approximately 11.3%) is rather adequate considering the position of women and the important technical difficulties. These figures appear even more revealing if we assess that they surpassed, both in figures and proportion, the feminine newspapers which were printed during the Spanish Civil War – although Greece had much less population.⁴

The Democratic Army of Greece established nine newspapers altogether: *10λεπτο της Γυναίκας* (*Woman's 10 minutes*), *Μαχήτρια της Λευτεριάς* (*Female Freedom Warrior*), *Μαχήτρια του Μάλι Μάδι* (*Female Warrior of Mali Madi*), *Θεσσαλιώτισσα* (*Woman from Thessaly*), *Παρτιζάνες του Βίτσι* (*Female Partisans of Vitsi*), *Ηλέκτρα* (*Electra*), *Παρτιζάνα* (*Female Partisan*) and a couple of guerilla publications which had the title *Αγωνίστρια* (*Female Fighter*).

4 One of the most significant women's journals in Spain, if not the only, was *Mujeres Libres* that was issued by the homonymous anarchist-inspired organization in order to promote their emancipation, their political equality, their education and economic independence. For this newspaper see Ακελσπεργ, Κάπλαν & Ουίλις, 1988, pp. 71-76. For an overview of the Republican editions that were printed during the Spanish Civil War see Diaz-Balart, 1992.

The Panhellenic Democratic Union of Greece (Π.Δ.Ε.Γ.) founded *Μαχήτρια* (*Female Warrior*) which was the most important feminine edition. The Democratic Organization of Greek Women in Egypt published *Ελληνίδα* (*Greek Woman*). Women who fled to Bulgaria created *Αγωνίστρια* (*Female Fighter*), those who lived in South Greece issued *Αγωνίστρια* (*Female Fighter*) and the Slavomacedonian women established *Nova Makedonka* (*New Macedonian Woman*) which was a bilingual journal as it utilized the Greek and the corresponding Slavic language side by side to facilitate the communication among the leftist guerillas (*Nova Makedonka*, 1 March 1948).

Most of them, unlike various Spanish cases, were formed in rural or mountainous territories in Macedonia and Thrace, Egypt, Albania or Bulgaria since the Democratic Army did not manage to seize control of any major Greek city. The majority had two or four pages and were published every week, every two weeks or every month because it was difficult to find adequate newsprint or sufficient stuff. They normally created several hundred or a few thousand copies - except for *Μαχήτρια* (*Female Warrior*) which allegedly had larger circulation. Some produced a few issues and disappeared while others, like the latter one, were printed until the end of the Civil War.⁵

These journals were written by educated Greek and occasionally Slavomacedonian women who were teachers, journalists, feminists or intellectuals, members and volunteers of the K.K.E. and the Democratic Army. Some were founded by Π.Δ.Ε.Γ. that resembled the Union of Democratic Women of the Spanish Civil War since both had very powerful connections with the respective communist parties. Nonetheless we still do not know most of them and we cannot specify their identities because they usually did not sign their articles as they used pseudonyms or the initials of their names in order to avoid possible reprisals against their relatives.

5 For *Μαχήτρια* (*Female Warrior*) see Τζουβαλάς, 2018, vol. 2, pp. 252-253 & Λαζαρίδου, 2010, pp. 209-218. For the procommunist newspapers that were established by Π.Δ.Ε.Γ. see Ματθαίου & Πολέμη, 2003, pp. 72-73.

“This newspaper will be written by women for women, men and the rest of the people”, declared the first issue of *Αγωνίστρια* (*Female Fighter*) which was published by the Democratic Women of Southern Greece. But the truth is that they were chiefly aimed at women. These publications were usually read collectively in the evenings, after other daily chores, to address the high rates of female illiteracy, fill leisure time, analyze the news and educate uneducated women - mainly those who were conscripted from the villages and those who left rural areas to escape the “white terror”, the military operations of the National Army and the rest government measures.⁶

The texts and the articles of these publications utilized a simple and understandable vocabulary because they wanted to reach all women, whether they were educated or not. Their tone was slightly milder compared to the other editions although they used several negative terms (fascists, monarchist-fascists, reactionaries etc.) to describe their opponents. They also employed an emotional language to present the feelings of women (care, love, joy etc.) - something that did not happen with men. They usually applied the third person singular to portray the actions of a female co-fighter, the third person plural to highlight the collectiveness of the Democratic Army and the first person singular to underline a testimony or appeal to the public sentiment.

The quality varied, of course, from one journal to another, as some publications, like *Μαχήτρια* (*Female Warrior*), hosted several noteworthy analyses, while others did not exceed mediocrity. This issue depended, after all, on the political, ideological, educational and social backgrounds of the writers, the availability of the relevant books, the punctual access to the daily news and the level of their technical means. It should nonetheless be noted that there were various journalists and publishers who sought to receive the necessary feedback because they strived to assess the strengths and the weaknesses of these editions and gain more social influence.

6 For the target groups and the collective reading see *Αγωνίστρια*, 12 February 1949; *10λεπτο της Γυναίκας*, 1 June 1948; *Ριζοσπάστης*, 12 February 1997; Κατσής, 2003, vol. 6, pp. 90-91; Αποστολόπουλος, 1998, pp. 85-87.

Some newspapers attempted, for instance, to develop their distribution and their circulation as they faced significant challenges in the territories that were not controlled by their forces or the communist Balkan states. Almost all editions also wanted additionally to improve their appearance, utilize better fonts and include slogans, sketches, caricatures and political cartoons, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, in order to strengthen the reading experience, create the desired climate, attract greater attention, emphasize the demands of the procommunist coalition, simplify and clarify their central messages and promote their multiple goals.

Topics, objectives and goals

The objectives of the women's partisan newspapers resembled the goals that were expressed by the respective publications of the Spanish Civil War since they aimed to boost the morale of the fighters, disseminate the orders of the General Staff, commemorate certain historical and labor anniversaries, emphasize the significance of wartime vigilance, condemn the violent crimes of the opposite alliance, denounce the targeting of civilian populations, impact public opinion and underscore the political or ideological support of the friendly foreign forces.⁷

The Hellenic editions had some additional objectives that were adapted to the particularities of the domestic situation. Some journals aimed, for example, to highlight the internal competition (Άμιλλα) among women's military formations in order to boost their performance. Others tried to proselyte girls who were conscripted or had escaped from the "white terror" and the National Army. *Οι Παρτιζάνες του Βίτσι* (*Female Partisans of Vitsi*) motivated the feminine guerillas to speak out during the military assemblies and *Μαχήτρια* (*Female Fighter*) sought to describe the

7 For the objectives of the Greek papers see *Παρτιζάνες του Βίτσι*, 24 July 1949; *Ηλέκτρα*, 25 March 1949; *Ηλέκτρα*, 9 August 1949; *Μαχήτρια*, 18 April 1949; *Μαχήτρια*, 5 May 1949; *Μαχήτρια*, 10 June 1949. For the mission of the Spanish journals see Diaz-Balart, 1992, pp. 120-122; Άκελσμπεργκ, Κάπλαν & Ουίλις, 1988, pp. 75-77.

leftist positions regarding the feminist issues and their liberation from the oppression.⁸

Η Αγωνίστρια (Female Fighter) comes to serve the struggle of the woman from Southern Greece and has the ambition to become the herald that will transmit a militant signal, whether holding a weapon in the ranks of the Democratic Army or living and combating in the enslaved cities and villages. It aims to convey the pulse of the fighting women and the warriors. It aims to assist their militant ascents, improve their martial performances and their cooperation with the male guerillas (Αγωνίστρια, 12 February 1949).

The usual demands for political rights occupied less journalistic space for three central reasons: a) these publications claimed that there was already complete political equality and equivalence between men and women within the leftist coalition b) they stated that they would extend these rights across Greece very soon because they would prevail in the Civil War c) they operated in a fluid theoretical international framework since the first (political and legal) feminist wave had essentially been terminated but the next one (sexuality, gender and social roles, discriminations in education and workplaces etc.) had not yet begun.

Η Μαχήτρια (Female Warrior) accused, for example, the opponent camp and the Radio Station of Athens that they announced an upcoming granting of voting rights to Greek women because they simply wanted to distract the United Nations. Its female compatriots of Egypt blamed the “reactionary forces” because they were attempting to maintain their gender at a derogatory position despite their substantial contribution in the last years. Nova Makedonka aimed to see all women enjoying the same social status as the women of the Democratic Army of Greece.⁹

The subjects and the topics of women’s newspapers were aligned with the aforementioned goals since they aimed to depict the wartime actions of the female fighters and highlight their required rights. In parallel, they

8 Παρτιζάνες του Βίτσι, 24 July 1949; Ηλέκτρα, 30 June 1949; Μαχήτρια, 12 December 1948.

9 Μαχήτρια, 5 April 1949; Ελληνίδα, 3 October 1949; Nova Makedonka, 1 March 1948.

praised the women who excelled in the battles against the enemy, hailed those who received medals of bravery and honored the leftist heroines who sacrificed their lives during the last ten years in order to underline several exemplary examples, promote their social and political goals, set proper standards and foster the unity among the fighting women.¹⁰

The feminine journals aimed to enhance this unity since it could seamlessly integrate new women, improve their daily lives, prevent several problems and empower their wartime actions. The Democratic Army was now their new family. The senior and older women tried to create the appropriate atmosphere and these editions published some relevant dialogues to disseminate this fact. “We will be together, you will get used to it and together we’ll build the trench, together we’ll go into battle”, underscored a pertinent text. “The sun sets in the west, elders and youngers, together we will set up the dance” (*Μαχήτρια*, 10 September 1948).

These partisan newspapers nevertheless urged the younger women to strictly follow orders, adhere to the hierarchy and maintain the discipline in order to create better results. That is why they had to execute the instructions of the female political commissioners which were supposed to understand the life and the particular needs of those girls, look after their health, oversee their behavior and advance their political education (*Μαχήτρια της Λευτεριάς*, 22 July 1949).

These publications also encouraged additionally women to obtain an open role, to meet their female counterparts in a deeper way, to join left-wing feminine organizations, to exchange knowledge, to gain various political experiences and develop close interpersonal relationships, to strengthen unity and become fulfilled individuals. In parallel, they tried to enhance their extroversion by describing the Greek participation in international women’s conferences, they presenting the developments

10 For the subjects, the fields and the topics of the Greek leftist publications see *10λεπτο της Γυναίκας*, 1 June 1948; *Μαχήτρια της Λευτεριάς*, 22 July 1949; *Παρτιζάνα*, 26 July 1949; *Θεσσαλιώτισσα*, 4 August 1949; *Παρτιζάνες του Βίτσι*, 24 July 1949; *Μαχήτρια του Μάλι Μάδι*, 20 July 1949; *Μαχήτρια*, 10 September 1948.

in the European women's movement, reposting external journalistic texts and publishing several messages of solidarity from foreign feminist organizations.¹¹

The women's newspapers of the procommunist coalition concurrently sought to strengthen the relations between the two genders of the Democratic Army. However, they also tried to set clear boundaries, specific margins and precise distances in order to minimize the sexual relationships between them and refute the accusations of the opponents that utilized the strength of the anticommunist journals to question the erotic propriety and the ethics of the female partisans.¹²

These editions also paralleled the combative skills of men and women by publishing various texts which praised the decorated women and the female officers who received military distinctions. But they did not condemn publicly their absence from the highest military ranks, the male guerillas and leftist officers who undervalued their fighting abilities and their exclusion from the Provisional Democratic Government (Π.Δ.Κ.) that was founded by the procommunist coalition to run their territories (Βόγλης, 2012, p. 327 & *Μαχήτρια*, 8 December 1948).

It should nonetheless be noted that no journal of the Democratic Army reached the extent of the Republican Spanish newspaper *Presente* (Periodico de la 31 Brigada Mixta) which mentioned: "The words are feminine. The deeds are masculine. Always be masculine that means act always. A mistake in action is worth more than a truth spoken". The chief political commissioner of the Greek guerrilla forces encouraged, on the contrary, his warriors to approach women, help them to overcome their difficulties, support them, enhance them and consolidate their self-confidence (Diaz-Balart, 1992, p. 124 & *Κομμουνιστική Επιθεώρηση*, 1 September 1947).

11 For these common journalistic efforts see *Ηλέκτρα*, 7 February 1949; *Αγωνίστρια*, 12 February 1949; *Αγωνίστρια*, 18 April 1949; *Αγωνίστρια*, 9 September 1949; *Μαχήτρια*, 10 September 1948; *Μαχήτρια*, 13 January 1949.

12 For the interpersonal relationships between the men and the women of the procommunist forces see Μαργαρίτης, 2001, vol. 2, pp. 254-255; Βόγλης, 2004, pp. 193-194. For the stance of the women's partisan newspapers towards the opponent soldiers and the officers of the National Army of Greece see *Αγωνίστρια*, January 1949.

Ο Δημοκρατικός Στρατός (The Democratic Army), that constituted the most significant military publication of the procommunist alliance, urged the male warriors to avoid treating their female co-fighters in a demeaning way because they struggled alongside them, in life and death, under the same conditions. *Η Εξόρμηση (The Expedition)*, an equally important leftist newspaper, also praised the mothers, the spouses, the siblings and the girls which wished for the immediate end of the fratricide destruction, the instantaneous cessation of the bloodshed and the saving of their children's lives (*Δημοκρατικός Στρατός*, November 1948 & *Εξόρμηση*, 1 March 1948).

This leftist rhetoric stopped after the end of the Civil War (29 August 1949) and the final defeat of the Democratic Army although there were two editions outside Greece which continued for a short period of time. *Η Αγωνίστρια (Female Fighter)*, that was issued by the Π.Δ.Ε.Γ. branch in Bulgaria, circulated at least six issues because it wanted to continue its reasoning and support the struggle of the procommunist women. *Η Ελληνίδα (Greek Woman)* released at least four more issues since it tried to promote the rights of Greek women in Egypt and engage in a crucial and substantial self-criticism that would be quite beneficial for the future.¹³

Conclusions

The women's partisan publications that were issued during the Greek Civil War did not suddenly emerge since they obviously continued the work of the newspapers which began to be published in the 19th century. These editions followed the increasing politicization of the Interwar period, suffered from the Metaxas dictatorship, participated in the harsh resistance of the Second World War, faced the persecutions of the domestic "white terror" and struggled to strengthen the leftist coalition that opposed the anticommunist postwar Hellenic governments.

13 For more see *Αγωνίστρια*, 9 September 1949; *Αγωνίστρια*, 14 November 1949; *Αγωνίστρια*, 11 December 1949; *Αγωνίστρια*, 3 March 1950; *Ελληνίδα*, 5 September 1949, *Ελληνίδα*, 12 September 1949; *Ελληνίδα*, 26 September 1949; *Ελληνίδα*, 3 October 1949. For the *Voice of Woman (Φωνή της Γυναίκας)* and the rest journals of the political refugees that were established in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe see Ματθαίου & Πολέμη, 2003.

However, the women's partisan newspapers differed from the Interwar editions which had many diversities, contradictions, conflicts and inconsistencies because they belonged to distinct groups. The journals of the Civil War, which followed the respective publications of the Occupation, used, on the contrary, a unified, obedient and disciplined journalism because they followed the Greek Communist Party and the rest leftist political formations of the anti-government coalition.

The women's partisan journals argued that there was an obvious chronological and geographical rupture as colossal changes had occurred since the Second World War. Prewar women and those who resided in the "enslaved" Greece were described as female individuals that lacked equality, legal rights and equal opportunities because they lived under an oppressive regime. The women of "free" Greece were, conversely, shown as liberated, independent and integrated persons who enjoyed full legal, social and economic rights and the same status as men.

The partisan publications did not reproduce the stereotypes which suggested that they belonged to the civilian population with the children and the elderly. They also did not see themselves as victims who could not bear arms, as weak and vulnerable people who were forcibly conscripted by the communist leadership. The feminine wartime involvement tried to deconstruct the "male qualities of the soldier" although it encouraged the Greek female guerillas to fight like men and offered them several "masculine" bravery awards (Βόγλης, 2004, pp. 306, 311, 329-332).

The women's partisan journals wanted to provide ideological guidance, strengthen the personal relationships among them, manage their emotions, promote the feminist rhetoric, present a new paradigm, demonstrate the distinct social perspective of the opponents and transform the female subjectivity. However, they did not overturn various traditional gender viewpoints as they reproduced multiple male perceptions and the male division of labor. "The female writing, although crucial, rarely deviated from the predominant line", underlined, for example, a female

historian. "It was a dedicated and loyal political action that obeyed the prevailing authority - predominantly male" (Βερβενιώτη, 2008, p. 347).

Unfortunately, it is difficult to estimate the impact and the influence of these publications since it concerns an issue that cannot be assessed easily due to the lack of more data and testimonials. It seems however that they strengthened women's unity, explained the organizational structures, supported the chain of command, reduced the female illiteracy, enhanced the political and ideological education but they did not manage to affect significantly all the subjects they addressed. The publishers and the journalists of these partisan newspapers were nonetheless very proud of them and they aimed to improve this crucial task as much as possible.

It should additionally be noted that the journalistic and the communicative activity of the female partisans constituted only a fraction of their overall propaganda efforts. They wrote multiple slogans on clean walls, they utilized loudspeakers to recruit enemy soldiers or neutral civilians, they created, printed and distributed thousands of proclamations, leaflets and tracts in order to promote the political line of the leftist coalition and achieve their aforementioned goals.

The female journalistic and propaganda activity of the Civil War was positive according to the partisan publications and the leftist perspective of that period. The French poet Paul Eluard dedicated the following short poem to *Μαχήτρια* (*Female Warrior*) because he wanted to honor the communicative work of the feminine parts: "To my Greek sisters: Sisters of mine in Greece, oh, brave women / You formed an alliance against death / Oh, my dear and immortal ones / You risk your lives so that life may exist / The day has dawned, oh, sisters of mine / When we will laugh at the word war / the word misery, because you will have won" (*Μαχήτρια*, 10 June 1949).

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