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Hungarian Feminist Periodicals as Alternative Public Spaces, 1907–18: Values, Networks, and Dissemination Strategies

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Hungarian Feminist Periodicals as Alternative Public Spaces, 1907–18: Values, Networks, and Dissemination Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Women have been active as writers, translators, journalists, and editors in Hungarian public life since the mid-nineteenth century. They both participated in the mainstream press and created their own public spaces by establishing periodicals advocating women's education, employment, and political rights. This article focuses on the Budapest-based journals *A Nő és a társadalom* [*Woman and Society*] (1907–13), founded by Rózsa Schwimmer (1877–1948), and its successor *A Nő* [*Woman*] (1914–27), the official organs of the Hungarian Feminist Association and the National Federation of Female Clerks. Drawing on the archives of the Feminist Association, including readers' letters, it explores the networks connected to the journals. More particularly, it demonstrates how the editors, who also played key roles in the Association, established local offices and affiliate groups outside the capital to expand their readership and to propagate feminist ideas in the most effective way.

KEYWORDS

Feminist periodicals, networks, women editors, Rózsa Schwimmer, *A Nő és a társadalom*, *A Nő*, Hungary, public sphere theory, social movement theory

Introduction: International Spaces and Feminist Journalism

In the early twentieth century, feminist periodicals all over Europe contributed in many ways to mediating progressive ideas and carrying them beyond national borders. These journals were most often edited and published in the languages native to their place of production, targeting readers of particular national communities. Yet through the way they were compiled and the way their contributors, correspondents, and editors were connected across borders, they also served as international spaces for the exchange or transfer of ideas and contents.

This article focuses on the early-twentieth-century Hungarian feminist periodicals, *A Nő és a társadalom* [*Woman and Society*] (1907–13) and its successor *A Nő* [*Woman*] (1914–27), edited and published by women affiliated with the Feministák Egyesülete [Feminist Association]. Serving as the official organs of this Association and the Nőtisztviselők Országos Szövetsége [National Federation of Female Clerks] (founded in Budapest in 1895), the periodicals were received regularly by all registered members and by subscribers living in many different parts of the territory of Hungary (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy), including small provincial towns and villages as well as major cities and the capital. There were also subscribers elsewhere in Hungarian-speaking communities in other parts of the world. Drawing on the periodicals themselves as well as on the editorial board's correspondence archive, the article will examine these periodicals as examples of how the Hungarian feminist press created an alternative public space in Hungarian public life that transcended national boundaries. It will do so through the triple lens of public sphere theory, social movement theory, and periodical history proposed by Maria DiCenzo, Lucy Delap, and Leila Ryan in *Feminist Media History: Suffrage, Periodicals and the Public Sphere* (2011).¹

The article complements earlier research by Andrea Pető and Judit Szapor, who have argued that 'the progressive counter-culture of early twentieth-century Budapest', including women's movements and associations, 'emerged outside of the "public sphere" of official, mainstream politics and culture'.² According to Pető and Szapor, debating societies and open universities formed the backbone of this 'alternative public sphere'.³ This article aims to demonstrate that feminist periodicals also contributed to the formation of a counter-public sphere by developing a new progressive discourse opposing mainstream conservative patriarchal values. These periodicals did so by taking part in the international intellectual exchange of ideas among the women's movements and by reporting to their readers about women's social situation in other countries as well as events of sister organizations abroad.⁴ In addition, as social movement periodicals, they participated in a larger network of periodicals, pressure groups, and individuals involved in social or political reform.⁵

1 Maria DiCenzo, Lucy Delap, and Leila Ryan, *Feminist Media History: Suffrage, Periodicals and the Public Sphere* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 21.

2 Andrea Pető and Judith Szapor, 'Women and "the Alternative Public Sphere": Toward a New Definition of Women's Activism and the Separate Spheres in East-Central Europe', *NORA — Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 12.3 (2004), 172–81 (p. 175).

3 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

4 For more information about the context of these movements, see for example Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) and Susan Zimmermann, 'The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics', *Journal of Women's History*, 17.2 (2005), 87–117.

5 DiCenzo et al., *Feminist Media History*, p. 24.

Feminist Periodicals as Counter-Public Spheres and Social Movement Media

The concept of the 'public sphere' as defined by the sociologist Jürgen Habermas in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (1962) is a discursive space of social interaction and intellectual exchange in civil society. Cementing the democratic mechanisms of state and institutions in modern societies, it is the space where public opinion is formed through debate among individuals. Habermas has received strong criticism from feminist scholars such as Joan B. Landes and Nancy Fraser for conceptualizing the public sphere as a male space that excluded women. Arguing that Habermas's concept 'idealizes the liberal public sphere', Fraser calls attention to the need to identify the masculinist gender constructs built into the very conception of the public sphere in the republican sense.⁶ In fact, she argues, we cannot speak about one particular public sphere of given societies. Subordinated groups, such as women or the working classes, may form 'subaltern counter-publics', competing alternative spaces where they can express 'oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs'.⁷ Feminist periodicals, too, can be seen as counter-public spheres when we think of them as 'spaces' in Brolsma and Wijnterp's sense of the word, including both the 'physical space' of the periodical and the 'mental space' it generates for challenging the discourse of the dominant sphere.⁸

Social movement theory regards the publishing activities of political organizations and movements as integral parts of movement strategies. Social movement periodicals have the double function to reach out to the public and to attract members within the movement.⁹ As Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani point out, they serve as distributors of information about the movement both to their own networks and other groups in society.¹⁰ They also help to maintain the cohesion of the movement by supporting the construction of shared values and aims, which in turn contribute to the development of a common identity. They play an essential role in distributing the alternative worldview of the movement and connecting with people sharing similar values.

While a feminist critique of Habermas allows us to look from a gender perspective at the production, dissemination, and reception of feminist periodicals, the lens of social movement theory invites questions about their political effectiveness, capacity for shaping public opinion, and discursive exchanges with other print media. One way of addressing these questions is by studying readers' letters to the editors of the journal. As this article will demonstrate through the example of *A Né*, these letters serve as valuable sources for mapping the social network around the periodical and reconstructing the reactions and attitudes of the readers.

The Feminist Movement and Feminist Press in Hungary

The process of women's emancipation in Hungary as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire started in the mid-nineteenth century with the initiatives for women's education and their participation in public life in the so-called Reform Age. Women's emancipation

6 Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), 56–80 (p. 59). See also Joan Landes, *Women in the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

7 Fraser, p. 67.

8 Marjet Brolsma and Lies Wijnterp, "Just Read my Magazine!" Periodicals as European Spaces in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of European Periodical Studies*, 3.2 (2018), 1–6 (pp. 4–5).

9 DiCenzo et al., *Feminist Media History*, pp. 13, 57.

10 Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements. An Introduction*, 2nd edn (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), p. 93.

happened gradually and was often met with strong opposition not only in contemporary media but also in parliamentary debates.¹¹ The first grammar school for girls was established in 1869 as a result of heroic efforts by Hermin Beniczky Pálné Veres.¹² Universities opened their gates to female students of medicine, pharmacy, and the humanities following a decree issued by the Minister of Education, Gyula Wlassics, in 1895.¹³ In addition, vocational training enabled women to engage in some occupations, especially after the outbreak of the First World War. Women were primarily employed in offices, shops, and post offices, and also worked as teachers and nurses. Certain industrial fields, including textile, tobacco, match production, and agriculture even employed women workers for hard physical labour, often in dangerous and unhealthy circumstances. Still, a large number of employed women worked as domestic servants. As female employment increased, women workers started to get organized to defend their interests. Women's unions, political organizations, clubs, and associations were part of the flourishing civil life that characterized Hungarian society around the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁴

The history of women's employment in modern European societies is also shaped by technological advancements in communication that led women from writing private letters, memoirs, and diaries to actively participating in public life and print media.¹⁵ In Hungary, women have been present in the public sphere as writers, translators, journalists, and editors ever since the mid-nineteenth century. They either tried to integrate into the mainstream periodical press, often with enormous difficulties, or they created their own public spaces by establishing their own periodicals. The number of potential consumers of these periodicals grew steadily as more and more women became literate and better educated.

The first journal edited by a woman in Hungary was *Családi kör* [*Family Circle*] (1860–80), discussed in more detail in Petra Bozsoki's contribution to this special issue. It was founded and edited by Emilia Kánya (1828–1905), a writer and divorced mother of four children. *Családi kör* was followed by a number of literary and fashion magazines for women such as the *Magyar Bazár* [*Hungarian Bazaar*] (1866–1904) edited by Janka (1843–1901) and Stephanie Wohl (1846–89) — the focus of Zsolt Mészáros's article in this special issue — and magazines that combined educative and commercial aspects. Even if these periodicals connected women readers to the public sphere, thus expanding their horizons, they did not intend to challenge existing

11 See also Judit Acsády, 'The Debate on Parliamentary Reforms in Women's Suffrage in Hungary, 1908–18', in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms*, ed. by Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Pirjo Markkola (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), pp. 242–58.

12 Orsolya Kereszty, *„A Nő és a Társadalom” a nők művelődéséért (1907–1913)* [*Woman and Society for Women's Education (1907–1913)*] (Budapest: Magyar Tudománytörténeti Intézet, 2011), p. 10. See also Judit Acsády, Irén Elekes Borbála, and Katalin Sári Szabó, *125 éve járhatnak egyetemre a nők Magyarországon 125 éve. A nőképzés hazai előzményeiről és az egyetemet végzett nők első nemzedékének tagjairól* [*Women Have Been Allowed to Attend Universities in Hungary for 125 years. About the Domestic Antecedents of Women's Education and the First Generation of Women with University Diplomas*] (Budapest: Budavári Önkormányzat, 2020), pp. 9–10.

13 Katalin N. Szegvári, *A nők művelődési jogaiért folytatott harc hazánkban (1777–1918)* [*The Struggle for Women's Right to Education in Hungary (1777–1918)*] (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1969), pp. 380–82. See also Acsády et al., pp. 6–7.

14 See also Judit Acsády, 'Women's Industrial Labor in Hungary. An Overview of Main Tendencies and Turning Points from the End of the Nineteenth Century', *East Central Europe*, 46.1 (2019), 9–28.

15 Lilla Krász, 'A nőtörténet és a kommunikációtörténet historiográfiai perspektívából' [*Women's History and Communication History from a Historiographical Perspective*], in *A női kommunikáció története* [*A History of Women's Communication*], ed. by Balázs Sipos and Lilla Krász (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2019), pp. 9–17 (pp. 15–17).

social relations or the prevailing social norms.¹⁶ By contrast, the pioneering monthly *Nemzeti Nőnevelés* [*National Women's Education*] (1880–1919), edited by Ilona Stetina (1855–1932), published debates about women's education and emancipation long before the first organized women's movement in Hungary. It also provided a platform for feminist authors, including Rózsa Schwimmer.

The first feminist journals in Hungarian were *A Nő és a Társadalom* [*Woman and Society*] (1907–1913) and *A Nő* [*The Woman*] (1914–1927). (Fig. 1) First appearing as a fortnightly, *A Nő és a Társadalom* changed its name to *A Nő* and its frequency to monthly at the beginning of the First World War. It appeared irregularly in the 1920s due to censorship, financial issues, and paper supply problems, and ceased publication in 1927. The periodicals appeared as organs of a movement whose main organization was the Feminist Association, founded in Budapest in 1904, which became the Hungarian affiliate of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA). While the first Hungarian feminist movements received little scholarly attention until the transition to democracy in 1990, they have been the focus of an increasing number of studies in more recent decades.¹⁷ These include efforts to re-evaluate the significance and scope of the movements by mapping their social relations, the role of local groups, and the networks connected to the Association.¹⁸

The formation of the first group that identified itself as feminist, the Feminist Association, is rooted in the earlier endeavours of the Reform Age in the first half of the nineteenth century, when Hungarian women took initiative to improve women's education and participation in public life. Feminists considered them their forerunners. The founders of the Association were Rózsa Schwimmer (1877–1948) and Vilma Glücklich (1872–1927) (Fig. 2), who became internationally acknowledged activists of early feminism. Glücklich was born in the north of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in a small town called Vágújhely (now Nové Mesto in Slovakia). When the 1895 law admitted women to higher education, she enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy in Budapest, becoming the first woman in Hungary to enter university. Glücklich spoke four languages, English, German, French, and Italian, and from a young age was committed to women's emancipation, social reform, and pacifism. After the foundation of the Feminist Association, she soon became a key figure in the international women's movement and was elected to several national and international posts, including membership of the presidential committee of the National Association of Female Employees (1902). She was also a founding member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), established in The Hague in 1915, and served as secretary general

16 Zsolt Mészáros, 'Női hálózatok és a 19. századi divatlapok: A *Magyar Bazár* és olvasóközönsége' ['Women's Networks and Fashion Magazines in the Nineteenth Century: The *Magyar Bazár* and its Readers'], *Magyar Könyvszemle*, 133.3 (2017), 297–313.

17 One of the few pre-1990 studies is Katalin N. Szegvári, *Út a nők egyenjogúságához* [*The Road to Women's Equal Rights*] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1981). More recent examples include Judit Acsády, 'A magyarországi feminizmus a századelőn' ['Hungarian Feminism at the Turn of the Century'], in *Politika, Gazdaság és Társadalom a XX. Századi Magyar Történelemben* [*Politics, Economy and Society in 20th-Century Hungary*], ed. by László Püski, László Timár, and Tibor Valuch, 2 vols (Debrecen: KLTE Történelmi Intézet, 1999), I, pp. 295–311; Mária M. Kovács, 'A magyar feminizmus korszakfordulója' ['The Turning Point of Hungarian feminism'], *Café Babel*, 4.1/2 (1994), 179–184; Susan Zimmermann, 'Hogyan lettek feministák?' ['How Did They Become Feminists?'], *Eszmélet*, 32 (1996), 57–92; Claudia Papp, *Die Kraft der weiblichen Seele: Feminismus in Ungarn, 1918–1941* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004); Irén Simándi, *Küzdelem a nők parlamenti választójogáért Magyarországon, 1848–1938* [*The Struggle for Women's Suffrage in Hungary, 1848–1938*] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2009).

18 See Judit Acsády and Zsolt Mészáros, 'A Balmazújvárosi Szabad Nőszervezet és a Feministák Egyesülete közötti kapcsolat (1908–1929): A női szolidaritás megnyilvánulásai a hazai feminista mozgalomban' ['The Relationship Between the Free Women's Organization of Balmazújváros and the Feminist Association (1908–1929): Manifestations of Women's Solidarity in the Hungarian Feminist Movement'], *Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat*, 8.2 (2018), 80–96.

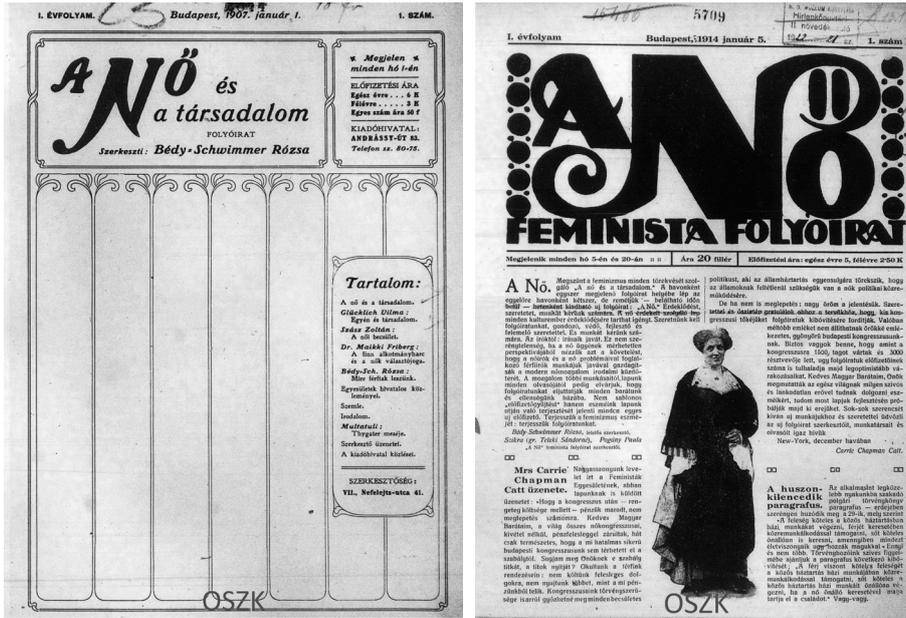


Fig. 1 The cover pages of the first issues of *A Nő és a társadalom* (1907) and *A Nő* (1914)



Fig. 2 The founders of the Hungarian Feminist Association, Rózsa Schwimmer (1877–1948) and Vilma Glücklich (1872–1927). Glücklich is holding a copy of *A Nő és a Társadalom*

of the organization in Geneva in 1924–26. Glücklich died after a long illness at the age of forty-five and was commemorated by many activists of the women’s movement.¹⁹

Rózsa Schwimmer was the editor-in-chief of *A Nő és a Társadalom* and another major voice of the Hungarian feminist movement. Born in Temesvár (now Timisoara in Romania) and growing up in Budapest, she was well educated and spoke several

19 For more biographical details, see Acsády et al., pp. 11–14 and Melanie Vámbéri, ‘Glücklich Vilma, a magyar nőmozgalom megalapítója’ [‘Vilma Glücklich, Founder of Hungarian Women’s Movement’], *Századunk*, 2.2 (1927), 375–79.

languages. She became knowledgeable about progressive movements and organizations at an early age and was involved in the work of several women's organizations. She was particularly influenced by the radical pacifism of Austrian campaigner Bertha von Suttner (1843–1914). Schwimmer had a wide network of personal contacts in both the Hungarian and the international women's movements. She participated in numerous international events and congresses and as a gifted orator travelled to many places to give public speeches. Although she left Hungary in 1914 to become press secretary of the IWSA in London and lived her later life in the United States, she maintained her key role in the Feminist Association in Budapest and its periodical. Her personal archive is held by the New York Public Library.²⁰

As social movement theory suggests, periodicals are crucial instruments for movements in reaching their goals. Periodicals help movements define their own counter-public, an alternative space for criticizing the patriarchal social order and disseminating their own innovative discourse. The Feminist Association subscribed to dozens of foreign journals of women's movements and thus was connected to social movements abroad. In its office in Budapest, it established a library providing public access to German and English titles in particular, including *Die Frau* (Berlin, 1893–1944), *Die Frauenbewegung* (Berlin, 1895–1919), *Der Abolitionist* (Dresden, 1902–33), *Die Neue Frauenkleidung* (Köln, 1905–10), *Woman's Journal* (Boston, 1870–1931), *International Woman Suffrage News* (Rotterdam, 1917–24; previously *Jus Suffragii*), and *La Femme contemporaine* (Paris, 1903–14). The Association first issued a Bulletin that informed both their own members and members of the Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete [National Association of Female Clerks]. It was through these foreign examples, however, that they became aware of the importance of building a wider media presence in order to reach women in larger circles and also to provide society in general with information on feminism and the development of women's emancipation. As the editorial article in the inaugural issue of *A Nő és a társadalom* put it: 'The efforts of women's movements abroad have long been supported by their own press. We, Hungarian feminists, cannot do without our own journal anymore.'²¹

The intention to publish a Hungarian feminist journal was present years before the appearance of the first issue. The Statute accepted at the General Assembly of the Feminist Association in 1905 already formulated the aim to reach a wide public by establishing local offices and affiliate groups outside the capital in towns and villages and by 'giving out thematic publications and publishing our own journal'.²² To publish a periodical the Association had to adhere to the legal conditions of the time. Hungary as part of the Habsburg Monarchy (Austro-Hungary) was governed by a double level of legislation enforced by the Hungarian parliament and the Austrian Court, including

20 For more biographical details, see Susan Zimmermann's entry on Schwimmer in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. by Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loufti (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006), pp. 484–90. See also Susan Zimmermann, 'Hogyan lettek feministák?' ['How Did They Become Feminists?'], *Eszmélet*, 32 (1996), 57–92. For more information about Schwimmer's personal archive, see Dóra Czeferner, 'A New York-i Schwimmer Rózsa hagyaték jelentősége' ['The Significance of the Rózsa Schwimmer Papers in New York'], *Levéltári Közlemények*, 1 (2017), 157–69.

21 'A Nő és a társadalom' ['Woman and Society'], *A Nő és a társadalom* (January 1907), 1–2 (p. 1).

22 Documents of the Feminist Association, Hungarian National Archives, P 999, box 1, folder 1, item 2.

the regulation of the media. The Hungarian Constitution had guaranteed the freedom of the press since 1848, yet later amendments made the control by the authorities on the contents of printed materials stricter.²³

Censorship was put in place long before the outbreak of the First World War. Article 63, added to the law in 1912, set out the exceptional steps to be taken in the event of war.²⁴ According to this amendment, all printed press material should be submitted for approval to the authorities before it could be distributed. The security forces had the power to ban the publication of a particular issue of a periodical if it was found to contain unsuitable material. In 1914, the Press Sub-Committee of the Committee for Military Control was formed with a mandate to subject the content of the press to even more severe control. The practice of censorship can be followed in the issues of *A Nő*, where empty pages and columns indicate that their contents violated the regulations in the eyes of the authorities, especially during the war. (Fig. 3)

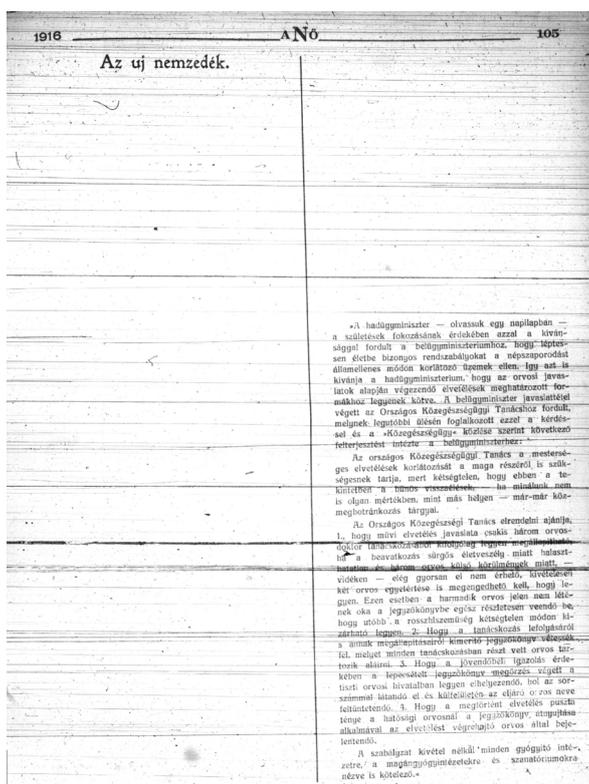


Fig. 3 Censored content in a 1916 issue of *A Nő*

The first issue of *A Nő és a társadalom* came out in January 1907.²⁵ Later that year, the successful foundation and publication of the periodical was proudly reported

23 Rozália Rákóczy, 'Katonai sajtó: Adalékok a Tanácsköztársaság katonai sajtójához' ['The Military Press: Supplements to the Military Press of the Council Republic'] (unpublished doctoral thesis, ELTE University, 1978), p. 19. The censorship is also discussed in Judit Acsády, 'In a Different Voice: Responses of Hungarian Feminism to the First World War', in *The Women's Movement in Wartime. International Perspectives, 1914–1918*, ed. by Alison Fell and Ingrid Sharp (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 105–23.

24 Rákóczy, p. 19.

25 See also Orsolya Kereszty, 'A Great Endeavor: The Creation of the Hungarian Feminist Journal *A Nő és a Társadalom* (*Woman and Society*) and its Role in the Women's Movement, 1907–1913', *Aspasia*, 7.1 (2013), 92–107 and Dóra Czeferner, 'A magyarországi feminista mozgalom első hivatalos lapja: *A Nő és a Társadalom* (1907–1913)' ['The First Official Journal of the Hungarian Feminist Movement: *Woman and Society* (1907–1913)'], *ArchívNET*, 19.2 (2019), 1–37 [accessed 7 April 2019].

at the Assembly of the Association, as the following excerpt from the minutes of the general meeting shows:

Needless to say how glad the membership of our association is that this year we succeeded in launching the first issue of our journal [...] as the first Hungarian feminist periodical. It is also needless to point out what enormous significance the journal has as the means of spreading our ideas in these days when the media already represent a great power. In the earlier years we were attacked in several ways by both the media and by ignorant public opinion. Without the journal we could not defend our case: we were able to inform only smaller circles of people about our goals that had been misinterpreted before so many times. We hope to get the journal distributed in a broader circle. The journal is a powerful tool in our hands to reach our goals.²⁶

The same message is also conveyed in the very first issue of the journal, where the feminists state that one of the key reasons and motivations to launch their own periodical was to help dissolve the prejudices about feminism that prevailed with the Hungarian public. By reaching more people they aimed to establish the foundations of a firm and broad circle of supporters. They also argued that it was an inevitable function of the journal to make the public understand the real goals of feminism by providing information about its precise meaning, about women's situation, and about the trends and events of the international feminist movements. They claimed to promote women's rights not only for women's sake, but also because gender equality would serve men's and the whole of society's interests in the construction of a just and fair democratic society. The values of Hungarian feminists expressed in the journal were thus formed on the basis of 'relational' arguments in Karen Offen's sense of the word.²⁷

According to the editorial article in the first issue, the title of the periodical, *A Nő és a társadalom*, *Woman and Society*, referred to an imagined and wishful unity. In order to remedy women's exclusion from public life and lack of participation in society, feminists aimed to include women in all social spheres, such as education, employment, political representation, and cultural life. In this way, women would not only aid in curing the pains and problems of society but would also contribute to its construction.²⁸ By expressing these intentions, the founding editors made sure that the journal from the beginning served the publication strategies of the Association in the most effective ways.²⁹

In addition to news of the international women's movement and women's suffrage, *A Nő és a társadalom* covered a wide range of subjects concerning women's social status, such as economic issues, employment, education, recent political affairs, health, sexuality, family, motherhood, and childcare.³⁰ The journal also reported on severe social problems, including trafficking in women and prostitution, poverty, the situation of women working as domestic servants, and the miserable conditions of women in the industrial

26 Documents of the Feminist Association, P 999, box 1, folder 2, item 9.

27 Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 14.1 (1988), 119–57 (pp. 134–50).

28 'A Nő és a társadalom' ['Woman and Society'], *A Nő és a társadalom* (January 1907), 1–2 (p. 1).

29 Maria DiCenzo, Judit Acsády, David Hudson, and Balázs Sipos, 'Mediating the National and the International: Women, Journalism and Hungary in the Aftermath of the First World War', in *Women Activists Between War and Peace: Europe, 1918–1923*, ed. by Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 173–219 (p. 231).

30 Dóra Czeferner discusses some of the topics addressed in the journal, but fails to account for the significance of *A Nő és a Társadalom* as a social movement periodical. See Czeferner, p. 10.

workplace.³¹ In doing so, the periodical adopted a completely new discourse compared to previous Hungarian women's journals. Alongside other activist initiatives such as public debates, meetings, campaigns, lectures, and training, the feminist press thus became a vehicle for the formation of women's alternative public space and for promoting women's equality to men in all social spheres.

A Nő és a társadalom also manifested the shared commitment to international sisterhood and common interests that transcended national and cultural borders.³² Internationalism in women's organizations such as the IWSA was a key trend 'in late nineteenth- and early twentieth century thinking, fostered by developments in communication and trade and the exchange of ideas and cultures'.³³ The IWSA's commitment to international co-operation between movements and activists was bolstered by its journal, *Jus Suffragii*, launched in 1906.³⁴ The editorial office was located in London, the French version was published in Geneva, and the periodical itself consisted of news, reports, and articles sent by contributors from the different affiliated organizations of IWSA member states. The journals of national women's organizations, including *A Nő és a társadalom*, in turn published international news from sister organizations translated from *Jus Suffragii*.³⁵

Dissemination and Contents of *A Nő*

The Feminist Association had strong networks of supporters in Hungary and abroad, and its activities were embedded nationally and internationally. It was a member organization of the National Association of Hungarian Women's Organizations and an affiliate to the IWSA and the WILPF. Recent research has shown that the movement reached beyond the urban confines of the capital city, Budapest, to rural areas and small country towns.³⁶ The organization had forty local branches all over the country that were involved in activities and campaigns and took part in the distribution of the periodical and other publications. Members received the journal regularly and were urged to find new members to join the Association and to encourage people from their local community to subscribe to the journal. The Association also had male supporters, both as members and as contributors to the journal, including lawyers, sociologists, writers, teachers, and school directors, such as Gusztáv Dirner, head of the Midwife Training Institute in Budapest. Men were also elected as members of the board of the Feminist Association.

The international acknowledgement of the achievements of the Budapest group is evident from the fact that the Seventh Congress of the IWSA in 1913 was hosted in Budapest and organized by the Feminist Association. *A Nő és a Társadalom* covered both the preparations, including reports of the Congress Preparatory Committee about campaigning, fundraising, and programme coordination, and the event itself. The

31 See also Judit Acsády, 'Women's Industrial Labor in Hungary. An Overview of Main Tendencies and Turning Points from the End of the Nineteenth Century', *East Central Europe*, 46.1 (2019), 9–28.

32 Ingrid Sharp, Judit Acsády, and Nikolai Vukov, 'Internationalism, Pacifism, Transnationalism: Women's Movements and the Building of a Sustainable Peace in the Post-War World', in *Women Activists between War and Peace: Europe, 1918–1923*, ed. by Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 77–122 (p. 77).

33 See also Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

34 DiCenzo et al., 'Mediating the National', p. 177.

35 See *ibid.*, pp. 180–83 for a discussion of several examples of translated articles in *A Nő és a társadalom*.

36 For a study of agrarian worker feminists in Balmazújváros, in the Hungarian countryside, see Judit Acsády and Zsolt Mészáros, 'A Balmazújvárosi Szabad Nőszervezet és a Feministák Egyesülete közötti kapcsolat (1908–1929): A női szolidaritás megnyilvánulásai a hazai feminista mozgalomban' ['The Relationship Between the Free Women's Organization of Balmazújváros and the Feminist Association (1908–1929): Manifestations of Women's Solidarity in the Hungarian Feminist Movement'], *Társadalmi Nemek Tudományos Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat*, 8.2 (2018), 80–96.

journal thus contributed to the visibility of an international feminist event and to the preparation and dissemination of the results. The success of the IWSA Congress, which attracted almost 3,000 participants instead of the expected 1,500, had a positive impact on the financial situation of the Association, enabling it to spend more money on the journal. In 1914, the first Hungarian feminist journal underwent significant changes and improvements. Its title changed from *ANő és a Társadalom* [*Woman and Society*] to *ANő* [*Woman*], with the subtitle *Feminista folyóirat* [*Feminist Journal*] explicitly identifying the periodical as feminist. It appeared as the official organ of several organizations: the Feminist Association, its two local branches in the regions of Felvidék (now Slovakia) and Nagyvárad (now Oradea, Romania), the National Association of Female Clerks and its two local branches in Temesvár (now Timisoara, Romania) and Szombathely, and the Hungarian Men's League for Women's Suffrage.

The new design of the journal included black and white photographs, which was seen as a state-of-the-art printing technique at the time. On the cover of the first issue in January 1914 there is a photograph of the leading American suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt (1859–1947), who sent the Hungarian feminists her congratulations on the success of the Congress and her good wishes on the renewal of the journal. The journal's content was similar to that of *A Nő és a Társadalom*, but with an expanded scope. In addition to news reports about international women's movements and local affiliates it also published essays, glossaries, and articles on social issues, including the working conditions of women employed in industry, poverty, homelessness, education, women's health, and sexuality. In order to express and disseminate their ideas most effectively and to spread knowledge about feminism and women's issues, the editors invited activists, sympathizing intellectuals, artists, writers, and politicians to contribute articles, in addition to publishing translations of foreign articles and essays.³⁷ Well-known Hungarian and foreign authors and celebrities whose works were published in *A Nő* include the Hungarian poet and journalist Endre Ady (1877–1919), composer Béla Bartók (1881–1945), writer and film critic Béla Balázs (1884–1949), philosopher György Lukács (1885–1971), dance theorist Valéria Dienes (1879–1978), actress Mari Jászai (1850–1926), Swedish novelist Selma Lagerlöf (1858–1940), feminist writer Ellen Key (1849–1926), and American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935). The journal also published book reviews and lists of books available to purchase or borrow at the library of the Feminist Association.

The editors also adopted a number of social networking strategies to reach growing numbers of subscribers. They issued popular postcards with cartoons and expanded the scope of activities attached to the journal, organizing social and cultural events such as open meetings and discussions, literary performances, and charity concerts. In addition, they maintained good relations with other journalists and editorial offices. The office of the Feminist Association was in the same building as, for example, the German-language daily newspaper *Pester Lloyd* (1845–1945; 1994–). The editors of *A Nő* also coordinated a team of volunteers who aided in the distribution of the journal, conducting operational meetings with them every Sunday in the editorial office. These volunteers sold the journal in the streets of Budapest, in cafes, and at public events. The journal was also made available in bookstores.

In addition to promoting events of their own organization *A Nő* advertised commodities and services that were carefully selected by the editors in line with their morality and values. Thus we can find advertisements for stationery, books, and typewriters alongside ads for jewelry, certain hygiene products, medicine, childcare products, food and drink, and shoe and garment repairing services. The range of advertised goods reflects

37 See also Czeferner, pp. 18–26 and Kereszty, 'A Great Endeavor', p. 95.

the world of a modern, emancipated woman who is educated and has an occupation but also a family, who takes part in public life, attends cultural events, travels, and practices sports. For example, one frequent advertisement for the Dunlop Pneumatic shop selling bicycle and car fixtures in central Budapest suggests that female readers of the journal could be just as mobile and move around in their vehicles as men.

By the time the first issue of *A Nő* appeared, Rózsa Schwimmer was already in London as the appointed secretary of the IWSA office. From then on her role evolved into that of foreign correspondent to the journal. Especially after her exile to the United States, other members of the Feminist Association took over editorial responsibilities, including Adél Spády, Margit Máday, Melanie Vámbéry, and Paula Pogány. After August 1914, the renewed journal also related differently to its readership as the international conflict that led to the disasters of the following four years unfolded. The editors of *A Nő* addressed their readers with anti-war and pacifist messages, and offered practical help to women at the home front by advertising employment opportunities, running an employment office, and supporting war widows and orphans.³⁸ Pacifism was a significant element of the counter-public position of the journal in 1914–18. Arguing against the militarist patriotic discourse of the Hungarian mainstream media, which were 'keen on creating an atmosphere of hostility to legitimate the war', *A Nő* adopted a pacifist voice from a feminist perspective and rejected the necessity of the war.³⁹ The periodical neither supported the idea of women's participation in military action nor shared the view that women's involvement in armed conflicts was a necessary part of the emancipation process.⁴⁰ Women's suffrage was seen as a political tool that had the potential to reduce militarism: if women had a voice in parliament, they might help to bring about an earlier end to the war.

In their pacifist discourse, Hungarian feminists included both modern and traditional language, similar to that of the IWSA and the WILPF.⁴¹ On the one hand, *A Nő* rejected chauvinism, urging nations to resolve economic, territorial, and other conflicts peacefully. Joining other international initiatives, the journal published a petition in 1918, following the Wilson peace plans, advocating for a sustainable peace that would not create a basis for new conflicts between nations.⁴² On the other hand, the Feminist Association and the editors of its journal defined their own role in more traditional terms as that of guardian angels, saving humans from the pain and death caused by the war. Similarly, the journal showed motherly concern for the lives of young men and expressed solidarity with those who suffered both on the battlefield and behind the front lines.

During the war, *A Nő* regularly published news reports on international pacifist events as well as translations of pacifist texts by foreign authors, such as Ellen Key's article about world peace 'Le Problème de la paix' ['The Problem of Peace'] from the French periodical *Les Documents du progrès*, an article on the war by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Eleonora Kalkowska's anti-war poem 'The Scream', translated by one of the

38 For more information about the pacifist messages and the practical work of the Association during the First World War, see Judit Acsády, 'In a Different Voice: Responses of Hungarian Feminism to the First World War', in *The Women's Movement in Wartime. International Perspectives, 1914–1918*, ed. by Alison Fell and Ingrid Sharp (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 105–123.

39 Sándor Giesswein, 'A békés jövő reményégei' ['Hopes for a Peaceful Future'], *A Nő* (January 1915), 4–6 (p. 5).

40 Acsády, p. 117.

41 Ibid., p. 118.

42 'Válságos órában fordulunk hozzátok, Magyarország Asszonyai' ['We Are Appealing to You, Women of Hungary, in a Time of Crisis'], *A Nő* (October 1918), front page.

best-known contemporary Hungarian poets, Dezső Kosztolányi, in 1917.⁴³ In addition, *ANő* published contributions expressing solidarity with women both in Hungary and abroad, including women from the ‘enemy nations’. For example, in a letter to the editors of *ANő* in Budapest, a French feminist activist emphasized the need for women to find ways to communicate across borders during the war: ‘Let us fulfill our duties for our nations but let us not be hostile and let us try not to treat each other unfairly. [...] Women’s role now is to be fair judges.’⁴⁴

The Readers of *ANő*

The Hungarian National Archives hold a collection of more than one hundred letters to the editorial office that give us some insight into the readership of *ANő*.⁴⁵ Among them are letters and cards sent from major cities, towns, and villages across the former territory of Hungary, including many places where the Feminist Association did not have local branches.⁴⁶ This suggests that the circle of supporters and subscribers to the journal was in fact significantly wider than the actual membership of the Association. Most of the letters and cards in the archive were written after 1914 by individuals who identified with the feminist cause and were interested in subscribing to *ANő*. Examples include Emilia Heinz from Szombathely in the west of Hungary, most likely an unmarried young woman given that she signed with her maiden name, and Jenő Kis, a man from Esztergom in the north of the country, who each requested a copy of the journal.⁴⁷ Kis also expresses his wish to join the Association as a supporter.⁴⁸ Others offered their support in different ways, by distributing the journal among friends, acquaintances, and family members, or by organizing small reading groups or information nights. Writing from Selmezbánya (now Banská Štiavnica in Slovakia), the young Kosáryné Réz Lolar (1892–1984), who would later become a well-known author, proposes to host lectures about feminism and gladly participates in disseminating the journal.⁴⁹ A passionate female subscriber from Beregszász (now Beregovo in Ukraine) informs the editors that she passes issues of *ANő* on to her female friends in town.⁵⁰ (Fig. 4a)

The editorial office offered free sample copies to whoever requested them. The correspondence archive includes such requests from many different parts of the country and from overseas. István Fargo, for example, a Hungarian-born owner of a pharmacy in Cleveland, Ohio, wrote a very polite and charming letter to the editors on writing paper bearing the Cleveland Patika [Cleveland Pharmacy] logo.⁵¹ (Fig. 4b) Institutions

43 Ellen Key, ‘A békéről’ [‘About Peace’], *ANő* (May 1914), 203; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, ‘Elmélkedés a háborúról’ [‘Reflections on the War’], *ANő* (January 1915), 8–11; Eleonora Kalkowska, ‘A sikoly’ [‘The Scream’], *ANő* (February 1917), 19. Kalkowska’s poem first appeared in German as ‘Aufschrei!’, *Neues Frauenleben* (January 1916), 1–2. See Éva Sárközi, “Kedves szerkesztő kisasszony”: Kísérlet egy ismeretlen Kosztolányi levél megfejtésére’ [“Dear Editress”: An Attempt to Decipher an Unknown Letter by Kosztolányi’], *Irodalomtörténet*, 87/37.2 (2006), 242–49.

44 ‘Teljesítsük népeink iránti kötelezettségeinket, de ne legyünk egymással ellenségesek. (...) A nők szerepe most, hogy igazságos bírák legyenek.’ ‘Levél a francia szüffrazettektől’ [‘Letter from French Suffragettes’], *ANő* (February 1915), 26. See also DiCenzo et al., ‘Mediating the National’, p. 232.

45 Hungarian National Archives, P 999, box 22, folder 30.

46 By the ‘former territory of Hungary’ I mean the Hungarian territory within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy before it was redefined by the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War. Many places from which letters were sent now belong to neighbouring countries, including Ukraine, Slovakia, Austria, Serbia, and Romania, where Hungarian-speaking populations live.

47 In Hungary, married women used to take their husband’s name with the suffix -né, for example Kovács Sándorné. A woman’s full maiden name is her father’s family name followed by her first name.

48 Letter by Jenő Kis, 14 June 1914, P 999. 22d/30/a – No. 38.

49 Letter by Kosáryné Réz Lola, 15 January 1913, P 999. 22d/30/a – No. 42. I am currently preparing a transcription of this letter for publication.

50 Letter by ‘Egy előfizető’ [‘A subscriber’], 29 March 1914, P 999. 22d/30/a – No. 132.

51 Letter by István Fargo, 1916, P 999. 22d/30/a – No. 31.

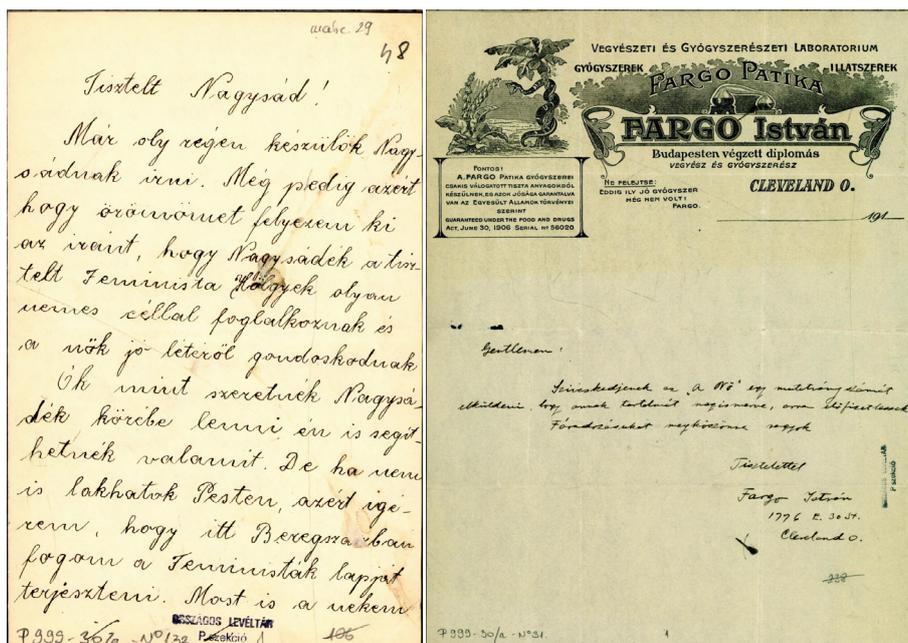


Fig. 4a/b Letters to the editors of *A Nő* from Beregszász (now Beregovo, Ukraine) and Cleveland, Ohio. Hungarian National Archives

also followed the feminist periodical closely: the headmaster of the Girls' School in Nagyszalonta (now Salonta in Romania) wrote to ask for copies of missing issues.⁵²

Another marketing strategy was to send free exchange copies to other journals. A letter dated 14 July 1914 from the editorial office of the *Kassai Újság* [*Kassa Newspaper*], based in what is now Kosice, Slovakia, addresses the feminist editors in Budapest as 'colleagues' and asks for *A Nő* in exchange for their paper.⁵³ In the same way, copies were exchanged with several other companies, shops, printing houses, social leagues, public libraries, and other institutions, including a shoe shop and the Casino and Theatre Association in Trencsényteplíc (now Trenčianske Teplice, Slovakia).

Correspondents often shared their views and concerns about certain issues discussed by the journal. Kamerer Ernőné, a married woman from Koppányszántó, a small village in central Hungary, not only asked for back issues of *A Nő és a Társadalom* but also suggested that men's education should include housework and care work. In her view, men should not merely support women but take on domestic responsibilities themselves. The author of the letter must have been aware that her ideas might stir controversy, as she asks the editors not to reveal her name should they decide to publish her letter.⁵⁴

Several letter writers sent articles or shorter pieces that they wished to get published in the journal. In addition to informing the editors about the local activities in her town, the president of the local branch in Nagyvárad submits a review to the journal and expresses her intentions to write about the situation of women industrial workers in the coming issues.⁵⁵ Her request to receive the latest issue of *Jus Suffragii* indicates that the Budapest office of *A Nő* served as a distributor of the international journal to local networks. Similarly, a married teacher named Mária Hauser Raikicsné

52 Letter by the headmaster of the Girls' School, Nagyszalonta, 10 October 1914, P 999. 22d/30/a – No. 188.

53 Letter by Kassai Újság Kiadóhivatala, 14 July 1914, P 999. 22d/30/a – No. 161.

54 Letter by Kamerer Ernőné, 9 September 1914, P 999. 22d/30/a – No. 36.

55 Letters by 'Gusztí' (Ágoston Péterné), 16 February 1914 and 8 March 1914, P 999. 22d/30/a – No. 27.

living in the small town of Karasjeszenő (now Jeseno in Serbia) sends her article ‘The Woman’s Tragedy’ to the editors, stating her wish to become an ‘intellectual partner’ to the feminist periodical. Both women propose a free subscription to the journal as payment for their contributions.⁵⁶

The readers of *A Nő* were a heterogeneous group, not only geographically but also socially and professionally. The collection contains letters from women and men from many different occupations, including teachers, lawyers, writers, artists, clerks, journalists, and politicians. There is even an expression of interest in the journal from a protestant priest.⁵⁷ The archive also holds several greeting cards informing the editors of a change of address. These cards were often sent by readers who could afford to spend the summer at luxurious holiday resorts, such as in the Tatra Mountains or at Lake Balaton. At the same time, as previous studies have shown, the supporters of the Association and readers of *A Nő* also included manual labourers and women working in agriculture.⁵⁸ The letters addressed to the editorial office of *A Nő* during the First World War thus testify to the periodical’s widespread and diverse social network of individuals and groups who all shared the same pacifist values and concerns for a just society based on gender equality. Through this virtual community of readers, subscribers, and contributors, *A Nő* created an alternative public sphere that opposed the mainstream militarist and patriarchal values of Hungarian society.

Conclusion

Recognizing that the efforts of the international women’s movements were backed by their own specialized media, the board of the Feminist Association in Budapest in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy decided to launch their own journal, *A Nő és a Társadalom*, in 1907. Edited by Rózsa Schwimmer and other members of the Association on the same principles as the IWSA publication, *Jus Suffragii*, it was well embedded in the international circles of the women’s rights movements and organizations. *A Nő és a Társadalom* developed an innovative narrative that criticized women’s subordination and the double morality in Hungarian society. After the outbreak of the First World War, the periodical was renamed *A Nő* and underwent a restyling in order to reach a wider audience. It took on a pacifist, anti-war position similar to that of international organizations such as the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

The periodicals not only functioned as an integrative force by fostering solidarity among the members of the organization and rallying them around shared norms, values, and a common identity. In the dissemination of the journal, the editors involved a much wider network of individuals and civil groups alike. Letters from readers, subscribers, and contributors in the correspondence archive of the editorial office show that *A Nő* had a variety of supporters from diverse social backgrounds and from different parts of the country. As social movement periodicals, *A Nő és a Társadalom* and *A Nő* created a subaltern, subversive, and, at the same time, international space in opposition to the dominant Hungarian patriarchal discourses and practices of the time. Framed by the intentions and values of the international women’s movement, they articulated women’s

56 Letter by Raikicsné Hauser Mária, 24 October 1914, P 999. 22d/30/a – No. 60.

57 Letter by István Szombatiszabó, protestant priest from Sátoraljaujhely (northern Hungary), 24 June 1914, P 999. 22d/30/a. – No. 69.

58 See Judit Acsády and Zsolt Mészáros, ‘A Balmazújvárosi Szabad Nőszervezet és a Feministák Egyesülete közötti kapcsolat (1908–1929): A női szolidaritás megnyilvánulásai a hazai feminista mozgalomban’ [‘The Relationship Between the Free Women’s Organization of Balmazújváros and the Feminist Association (1908–1929): Manifestations of Women’s Solidarity in the Hungarian Feminist Movement’], *Társadalmi Nemek Tudomány Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat*, 8.2 (2018), 80–96.

points of view that were not presented in the Hungarian mainstream media and took a stand against fundamental inequalities in Hungarian society. *A Nő és a Társadalom* and *A Nő* thus represent an important alternative voice in the history of Hungarian journalism.

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