"All eight-hundred of us girls!"
Women Tobacco Workers and the May 1906 Strikes in Sarajevo

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1. Introduction

Early in the afternoon of May 1, 1906, several hundred women employed at the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory stood at the head of a procession of nearly two thousand people. Together with their colleagues from various workplaces across the Habsburg occupied territory's capital city, the women set off to celebrate the workers' holiday, May Day. Two days later, on May 3, many of these same women and men clashed with gendarmes outside of city hall in an event that sparked what historians later referred to as the "May strikes" or the "general strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina". After hearing about the events in Sarajevo, workers, peasants, and political activists across the territory organized a series of strikes, demonstrations, and assemblies. May 1906 was the largest industrial action to take place in the territory during the Austro-Hungarian occupation. The collective strikes were also notable due to their broad social basis, including the large number of women workers who participated in them.[1]

Labour historians have traditionally framed May 1906 as an important turning point in the development of a working class in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Not only did the strikes compel administrators for the first time to approve a workers' union for the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina but it was also in this moment, historians argue, that the working class entered the scene as an actor in its own right.[2] Previous analyses of this instance

1 Hadžibegović, Iljas: Postanak radničke klase u Bosni i Hercegovini i njen razvoj do 1914. godine [The Origin of the Working Class in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its Development until 1914], Sarajevo 1980, p. 291.

2 The government approved several workers' unions based on confessional and national affiliation at this time. However, unlike the *Main Workers' Union* that operated as an umbrella organization for all trade unions across Bosnia and Herzegovina, these other organizations remained anchored in specific towns until at least 1907. Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase, p. 291. For assessments of May 1906 from a labour history perspective see Babić, Nikola: Osnivanje organizacija radničkog pokreta Bosne i Hercegovine i njihova društveno-politička orijentacija [The Foundation of Workers' Movement Organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their Socio-political Orientation], in: Prilozi 7 (1971), pp. 11–47; Elaković, Sergije: Generalni štrajk 1906 godine u Bosni i Hercegovini

of social mobilization, however, have focused primarily on the role of labour organizers and local political activists, all of whom were men. Iljas Hadžibegović has recounted, for example, how the male members of the *Sarajevo Workers' Committee* used these strikes to agitate for the approval of the charter of the *Main Workers' Union* (*Glavni radnički savez*).[3] At the same time, scholars have also shown how nationalist activists tried to use the momentum generated by the events of May 1906 to create a broader movement that could pressure the Habsburg administration to accept more far reaching political reforms.[4] Although historians do acknowledge that the women tobacco workers in Sarajevo were the very first to go on strike, they have not explored the women's actions or experiences in May 1906 in any meaningful way.[5] How did women workers participate in the Sarajevo strikes of May 1906? What can their practices during this time tell us about the general strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina more broadly?

This chapter investigates the actions and experiences of women tobacco workers in the May 1906 strikes in Sarajevo. I argue that women workers not only played a significant role in Sarajevo's nascent labour movement at the time but that they also negotiated directly with Habsburg administrators in order to pursue their own demands separate from men workers. My analysis examines the women workers' interactions with Habsburg civil servants during the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory Strike from April 30 to May 7, 1906, as well as their actions during the May Day celebration on May 1 and the *Sarajevo Workers' Assembly* on May 4, 1906. To do so, I analyse women tobacco workers' testimonies, which they gave during a factory investigation on May 11 and May 12, 1906, as well as administrative reports produced by city, provincial and imperial-royal administrators in Sarajevo and Vienna from April 30 to May 12, 1906.[6] I seek to show that both the women workers' activism in the factory and their participation in the labour movement's strike are critical examples of women's political action.

[The General Strike of 1906 in Bosnia and Herzegovina], Beograd 1951; Hadžibegović, Ilijas: Položaj radništva u Bosni i Hercegovini do majskih štrajkova 1906. godine [The position of workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina until the May strikes of 1906], in: Prilozi 3 (1967), pp. 47–74; Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase.

3 Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase, p. 291.

4 Ibid. On nationalism and workers' movements in imperial Austria see Beneš, Jakub S.: Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890–1918, Oxford 2017.

5 Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase, p. 290; Kreševljaković, Hamdija: Sarajevo za vrijeme Austrougarske uprave (1878–1918) [Sarajevo during the Austro-Hungarian Administration (1878–1918)], Sarajevo 1969, p. 72.

6 These sources are published in two volumes in the original language (predominantly German) and Serbo-Croatian translations written in the Latin script. I analyse the original German and South Slavic transcriptions. I thank Valentina Ivcec, Mersada Gewessler, and Silke Tork for their help in translating the sources quoted here. All translations and errors appearing here are my own. Isović, Kasim (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963; Isović, Kasim (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 2, Sarajevo 1966. Using these sources to examine women workers' actions and experiences in particular rather than the development of a Bosnian-Herzegovinian and later Yugoslav working class, I move away from the male-oriented labour history narratives these volumes were likely designed to convey.

The literature on women's history in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina has grown in recent years. Historians have examined, for example, women's participation in voluntary associations, their engagement with different administrative and legal institutions, as well as their contributions to contemporary intellectual and cultural debates, among other topics.[7] These works have greatly enriched our understanding of women's lived experiences as well as their strategies for navigating and negotiating the socio-political hierarchies of the time. However, women's engagement with labour is an area that is yet to be fully explored.[8] The present chapter contributes to this literature by providing an example of women workers' political action in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the late Habsburg period. Building on a feminist understanding of politics, I define political action as practices that speak to relationships of power rather than formal participation in institutions of governance or political organizations as is typically emphasized by more traditional approaches to political history.[9] Women tobacco workers had no official decision-making power vis-à-vis the Habsburg administration, nor were they recognized leaders of the Sarajevo workers' movement at the time. Indeed, participation in formal political institutions by people from Bosnia and Herzegovina was limited in general under Habsburg rule until the beginning of the twentieth century. This was in part due to the occupied territory's ambiguous legal position within the monarchy.[10] A diet with re-

7 For example, see Bernasconi, Sara: Fragile Intermediaries. Midwives in Bosnia under Austro-Hungarian Rule (1878–1918), translated by Rosemary Rodwell, in: Clio. Women, Gender, History 2/48 (2018), pp. 91–110; Bernasconi, Sara: The Prnjavor Women Fight for Their Midwife: Professional, Social, and Cultural Continuities from Habsburg Bosnia to Yugoslavia, translated and edited by Babajalscha Meili and Sarah Hyde, in: Historijska tragnanja 17 (2018), pp. 15–34; Bumann, Ninja: Ehe und Scheidung nach der Scharia. Schariagerichtsakten aus dem habsburgischen Bosnien-Herzegowina (1878–1918) [Marriage and Divorce according to Sharia. Sharia Court Records from Habsburg Bosnia-Herzegovina (1878–1918)], in: L'Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft (2020), pp. 105–109; Bumann, Ninja: Marriage across Boundaries: Mixed Marriages at the Supreme Sharia Court in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina, in: Historijska traganja 19 (2020), pp. 151–182; Giomi, Fabio: Making Muslim Women European. Voluntary Associations, Gender and Islam in Post-Ottoman Bosnia and Yugoslavia (1878–1941), Budapest 2021; Giomi, Fabio: Daughters of Two Empires: Muslim Women and Public Writing in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1918), in: Aspasia 9 (2015), pp. 1–18; Giomi, Fabio: Forging Habsburg Muslim girls: gender, education and empire in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1918), in: History of Education 44/3 (2015), pp. 274–292; Kasumović, Amila: Zatočene. Žene u zatvorskom sustavu Bosne i Hercegovine 1878–1914 [Imprisoned. Women in the Prison System of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1878–1914], Sarajevo 2021; Kasumović, Amila: Konkubinat u Bosni i Hercegovini na prijelomu 19. i 20. stoljeća [Concubinage in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the turn of the 19th and 20th Century], in: Prilozi 47 (2018), pp. 69–90.

8 On the role of women in workers' movements during the interwar period see Kecman, Jovanka: Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu i ženskim organizacijama: 1918–1941 [Women of Yugoslavia in the Workers' Movement and Women's Organizations: 1918–1941], Beograd 1978.

9 For an overview of feminist debates on the definition of politics see Squires, Judith: Politics Beyond Boundaries: A Feminist Perspective, in: Adrian Leftwich (ed.), What is Politics? The Activity and Its Study, Oxford 2015, pp. 119–134.

10 Constitutionally, Bosnia and Herzegovina was not a part of Austria or Hungary, nor was the territory represented in either parliament. At the same time, one of Austria-Hungary's common ministries – the Joint Ministry of Finance – governed the territory. This asymmetric legal-political relationship, together with the presence of a self-proclaimed Austro-Hungarian civilizing mission, has led

stricted male franchise was only established in Bosnia in 1910 following the annexation of the territory to Austria-Hungary in 1908. Women who owned land, however, were able to vote by proxy as part of the landowners curia within their respective ethno-confessional curia if they paid at least 140 Kronen in taxes.[11] The degree to which women also worked in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian civil service, as was the case in Austria beginning in the 1860s, remains an open question.[12] People from the occupied territory did not typically occupy positions of substantial administrative power within the Provincial Government (*Landesregierung*/*Zemaljska vlada*), which acted as the main governing body on the ground.[13]

Yet, despite their marginal role in formal political institutions, the women workers' actions were anything but apolitical. Women tobacco workers were employees of a government-owned factory where Habsburg civil servants negotiated the realities of the occupation on the ground, including issues of economic control and integration, as well as administrative rule.[14] At the same time, the women participated in a Sarajevo labour movement that sought to position itself actively as an intermediary between governing authority and local workers. Their participation in these processes meant that the women workers were well aware of their position embedded in hierarchies of power. Their attempts to influence how these hierarchies functioned constituted significant political acts. Scholars have made similar arguments regarding women workers in different historical contexts across the globe.[15] The case of the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory is not an exceptional example of women workers' activism, nor should we somehow be surprised that women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, possessed and wielded a knowledge of the ways in which administrative hierarchies functioned. Rather, my aim is to detail how exactly women workers navigated and pursued their own interests in the context of the May 1906 strikes in Sarajevo. In doing so, I suggest that the events of May 1906, as an instance of women workers' political action, provide new insight into a significant

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scholars to debate whether or not Bosnia and Herzegovina constituted a Habsburg colony and to what degree we can speak of a colonial or quasi-colonial experience. For an overview of these debates see Trode, Rachel: The Sarajevo Tobacco Factory Strike of 1906: Empire and the Nature of late Habsburg Rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in: Central European History (2022), pp. 1–17, 2–4, *https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938922000310*, 17.4.2024.

11 On the Diet of Bosnia and Herzegovina see Imamović, Mustafa: Bosnia and Herzegovina. Evolution of its Political and Legal Institutions, translated by Saba Risaluddin, Sarajevo 2006, pp. 244–246.

12 For women in the civil service in imperial Austria see Heindl, Waltraud: Josephinische Mandarine. Bürokratie und Beamte in Österreich, Band 2: 1848–1914 [Josephinist Mandarin. Bureaucracy and Civil Servants in Austria, vol. 2: 1848–1914], Wien 2013, pp. 147–154.

13 On the number of civil servants from Austria and Hungary compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina see Kraljačić, Tomislav: Kalajev režim u Bosni i Hercegovini (1882–1903) [Kállay's Regime in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1882–1903)], Sarajevo 1987, pp. 438–439.

14 On the Bosnian Tobacco Monopoly as a nexus of state and society see Trode: The Sarajevo Tobacco Factory Strike of 1906, pp. 5–8.

15 The literature on women's labour history globally is vast and I will not attempt to offer an overview of it here. For but one recent example that takes up these questions in a number of different contexts see Eloisa Betti/Leda Papastefanaki/Marcia Tolomelli/Susan Zimmermann (eds.), Women, Work, and Activism. Chapters of an Inclusive History of Labor in the Long Twentieth Century, Budapest 2022.

moment of social mobilization while at the same time expanding our understanding of women's history and women as political actors in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2. The Bosnian Tobacco Monopoly as a Site of Women's Political Action

The tobacco industry played a crucial role in the Habsburg project in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the outset. Following the occupation of the Ottoman province in 1878, the newly installed Austro-Hungarian administration quickly faced the question of how to fund its operations since neither the Austrian nor the Hungarian halves of the monarchy would agree to finance its activities.[16] One of the ways the administration, led by the Imperial and Royal Joint Ministry of Finance (*Gemeinsames Finanzministerium/Közös pénzügyminisztérium*), sought to address this budgetary gap was by introducing a government owned and operated tobacco monopoly.[17] This choice echoed earlier Habsburg state building policies. In 1784, the Austrian Empire established a tobacco monopoly as a way to help fund the expanding responsibilities of the Habsburg state under Joseph II.[18] When the empire was reorganized into a dual monarchy in 1867, the tobacco monopoly was also split into two separate Austrian and Hungarian state monopolies.[19] With the introduction of the Bosnian Tobacco Monopoly in 1880, the Provincial Government brought all private cultivation, production, and sale of tobacco in the Habsburg occupied territory under its control.[20] A directorate was established to manage the day-to-day aspects of the monopoly and answered directly to the Provincial Government's finance department. The Bosnian Tobacco Monopoly quickly became one of the most important sources of tax revenue for the Austro-Hungarian administration. Indeed, by 1908 it provided the largest contribution to the state budget.[21] The tobacco monopoly was critical to the financing of Habsburg rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The tobacco monopoly was also an important site of women's labour during the Austro-Hungarian period. Indeed, the majority of people working at the monopoly's various tobacco purchasing stations and factories were women from Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, in 1907 women and girls comprised approximately 70 percent of all workers in the tobacco industry.[22] By comparison, women made up only 7.30 percent of workers employed in both private and state industries in that same year.[23] This figure does not include people working in agriculture, which was the main occupation for the majority

16 Sugar, Peter F.: Industrialization of Bosnia-Hercegovina, 1878–1918, Seattle, WA 1963, pp. 44–45.

17 Ibid., pp. 88–89.

18 Hitz, Harald/Huber, Hugo: Geschichte der Österreichischen Tabakregie 1784–1835 [History of the Austrian Tobacco Monopoly, 1784–1835], Wien 1975.

19 On the Austrian tobacco monopoly see Kolm, Evelyn: Die interne Sozialordnung der österreichischen Tabakregie von 1875 bis 1913 [The Internal Social Order of the Austrian Tobacco Monopoly from 1875 to 1913], unpublished dissertation, Universität Wien 1981.

20 The Bosnian Tobacco Monopoly was institutionally distinct from the respective Austrian and Hungarian monopolies.

21 Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase, p. 82.

22 Ibid., p. 139.

23 Ibid., p. 191.

of people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time. Women workers also often represented the majority of tobacco factory workers. At the monopoly's largest and most significant production facility, the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory, for example, women workers accounted for approximately 67.80 percent of the overall workforce in 1906.[24] The high proportion of women working in tobacco in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina was typical of trends in the broader region at the time. For example, in the Ottoman Empire, approximately two-thirds of the workforce at the Régie Company's factory in Cibali at the beginning of the 1890s were women and girls.[25] In 1911, nearly 88 percent of all people working in the tobacco factories of the Austrian monopoly were women.[26] Women's labour drove the development of one of the Habsburg administration's most significant industries in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Women tobacco workers were actively involved in labour movements across the region. At the level of the factory, they often led or participated in strikes. Throughout the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, women tobacco workers in the Austrian half of the monarchy and the Ottoman Empire took to the streets over issues such as wages and working conditions.[27] Women tobacco workers also took part in labour organizations such as trade unions. In Klagenfurt, two hundred women tobacco workers joined the *Professional Association of the Men and Women Tobacco Workers* (*Fachverein der Tabakarbeiter und Tabakarbeiterinnen Klagenfurt*) during its founding meeting in 1903.[28] As Can Nacar notes, women were active members of the *Istanbul Cigarette Makers' Union Association* (*Dersaadet Sigara Amelesi İttihad Cemiyeti*) founded in 1908.[29] In many areas, trade unions worked closely with the local Social Democratic party. Such ties are demonstrated, for example, by the fact that in 1904, the *Union of the Tobacco Workers of Lower Austria* (*Gewerkschaft der Tabakarbeiter Niederösterreichs*) was renamed the *Social Democratic Union of Women and Men Tobacco Workers of Austria* (*Sozial-demokratische Gewerkschaft der Tabakarbeiterinnen und Tabakarbeiter Österreichs*).[30] Despite this, women workers often had to fight for their specific demands to be recognized as well as for the ability to contribute to decision-making within these organizations. As Gila Hadar notes, in 1913 and 1914, women tobacco workers in Salonika/Thessaloniki/Saloniki/Selanik began to demand a larger role in the

24 [Anonymous]: Provincial Government to Joint Ministry of Finance, telegram, May 4, 1906, no. 23, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 94.

25 Nacar, Can: The Régie Monopoly and Tobacco Workers in Late Ottoman Istanbul, in: Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 43/1 (2014), pp. 206–219, 208.

26 Benedikt, Anna K.: „Von diesen Stunden an ist unser Geist erwacht". Arbeiterinnenbewegung in Kärnten, 1900–1918 ["From these hours, our spirit has awoken". Women Workers' Movement in Carinthia, 1900–1918], Klagenfurt 2014, p. 47.

27 Kolm: Tabakregie, p. 197–208; Nacar, Can: Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire. Tobacco Workers, Managers, and the State, 1872–1912, Cham, Switzerland 2020. *https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-31559-7*, 17.4.2024.

28 Benedikt: „Von diesen Stunden an ist unser Geist erwacht", p. 55.

29 Nacar: Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire, p. 113.

30 Benedikt: „Von diesen Stunden an ist unser Geist erwacht", pp. 51–52.

city's trade unions.[31] In Sarajevo, women tobacco workers also took part in the development of the labour movement. Approximately twenty of them attended the founding meeting of the *Main Workers' Union* on August 27, 1905.[32] Women tobacco workers participated in political movements that sought to reshape how hierarchies of power in the factory, and across society more broadly, functioned.

The Bosnian Tobacco Monopoly was a key site of politics throughout the Habsburg period. As a core contributor to the Provincial Government's budget, it played a crucial role in financing Austro-Hungarian administrative activities in the occupied territory and therefore significantly impacted Habsburg civil servants' capacity to wield power. The monopoly was also likely an important site of workers' labour activism. In both the Austrian half of the monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, tobacco workers, including the large number of women who underpinned this industry, participated in strikes, unions, and social democratic organizations. In the Austro-Hungarian occupied territory too, women tobacco workers had taken part in union related activities since at least 1905. As we will soon see, the Bosnian Tobacco Monopoly, and the hierarchies of power that defined it, also served as an important setting for women workers' political action in late Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3. Women Workers' Political Action at the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory

One of the primary examples of women workers' political action during the events of May 1906 was their strike at the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory. From April 30 to May 7, 1906, the women workers of the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory went on strike in order to exact a number of concessions from their government employer. Initially begun by the women of the loose tobacco packaging department, the work stoppage soon spread to include the women cigarette workers. The strike was likely brought on due to a change in the carton manufacturing process which led to a decrease in the women workers' daily wages.[33] The industrial action was a specific moment of women workers' activism since, as the Habsburg authorities noted at several points throughout the week, none of the men working at the factory joined the industrial action until a city-wide general strike was proclaimed on May 4.[34] Even at that late date, the men did not join the women in making workplace-specific demands. Though we cannot know for certain it is possible that the men workers

31 Hadar, Gila: Jewish Tobacco Workers in Salonika: Gender and Family in the Context of Social and Ethnic Strife, in: Amila Buturović/Irvin Cemil Schick (eds.), Women in the Ottoman Balkans. Gender, Culture and History, London 2007, pp. 127–152, 134.

32 Government Trainee Alfred Koszler: Report on the Course of the Workers' Assembly on August 27, 1905, no. 289, in: Vojislav Bogićević (ed., trans.), Građa o počecima radničkog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1878–1905 (dokumenta iz austrougarskih arhiva) [Material about the Beginnings of the Workers' Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1878–1905 (Documents from the Austro-Hungarian Archive)], Sarajevo 1956, p. 293.

33 [Anonymous]: Directorate of the Tobacco Monopoly to the Provincial Government, report, May 9, 1906, no. 152, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 238.

34 Ibid., p. 236.

did not join the strike because their wages were not affected by the new carton manufacturing process. Men tobacco workers typically held different positions in the factory than women and were paid a higher wage. For example, in 1881, the only position held by both women and men at the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory was that of "general labourer" (*Arbeiter allgemeine Manipulation*).[35] However, men working in this position were paid a daily wage of 70 Neukreuzer, whereas women only received 50 Neukreuzer for their work.[36] Across the entire factory, women earned on average 47 Neukreuzer per day compared to men workers' average of 75 Neukreuzer.[37]

In total, 450 of the women workers employed at the factory participated in the May 1906 strike.[38] During that time, twenty-three women continued working and were escorted to and from the workplace under a police guard.[39] As Claire Morelon points out in the case of imperial Austria, state protection of so-called 'willing workers' (*Arbeitswillige*) was common by the early twentieth century.[40] Morelon also tells us that the crossing of the picket line by 'willing workers', usually seen as 'strike breakers' by the strikers themselves, could often lead to conflict and even violence between workers.[41] Similar tensions existed between the women tobacco workers in Sarajevo in May 1906. For example, some of the striking women workers would later demand that the women who continued to work during the strike be removed from the factory and even claimed that they were "much to blame that we [the strikers] suffered and that blood [was] spilled".[42] The strikers in part blamed the women who reported to work for their negative experiences during the industrial action. The dynamics of women workers' solidarity was thus often shaped by a number of factors.

During this time, the women who did strike negotiated directly with Habsburg administrators at the factory and the tobacco monopoly directorate. This was due in part to the fact that the Joint Ministry of Finance had not yet approved several proposed labour

35 [Anonymous]: Department of Finance for Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Joint Ministry of Finance, report, October 16, 1881, no. 40a, in: Vojislav Bogićević (ed., trans.), Građa o počecima radničkog pokreta u Bosni i Hercegovini od 1878–1905 (dokumenta iz austrougarskih arhiva) [Material about the Beginnings of the Workers' Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1878–1905 (Documents from the Austro-Hungarian Archive)], Sarajevo 1956, p. 36.

36 Ibid. The currency used at the beginning of the occupation by the Habsburg authorities was Gulden and Neukreuzer, however with the introduction of the gold standard in Austria-Hungary in 1892 the units of currency changed to Krone and Heller.

37 Ibid. Averages calculated by the author.

38 [Anonymous]: Provincial Government to Joint Ministry of Finance, no. 23, p. 94. This number likely only includes permanent women workers. Approximately 100–200 women were probably employed as provisional or temporary workers since the total workforce at the time including men was approximately 700 persons.

39 [Anonymous]: Directorate of the Tobacco Monopoly to the Provincial Government, no. 152, pp. 235–236.

40 Morelon, Claire: Social Conflict, National Strife, or Political Battle? Violence and Strikebreaking in Late Habsburg Austria, in: European History Quarterly 49/4 (2019), pp. 650–676, 658–663.

41 Ibid., pp. 660–661.

42 Glišić, Angja: Statement 23, no. 83, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 173.

unions whose leaders might have otherwise led the negotiations.[43] The women workers relied on a variety of strategies of their own making during these interactions. First, the women used their knowledge of administrative practice, hierarchy, and decision-making to try to force the civil servants to address their demands. For example, on April 30, a deputation of women from the tobacco packaging department appeared before the head of the factory, Inspector Gustav Keller. The women had previously submitted a petition to the inspector asking for a wage raise. They had now come to find out, "if and in which way the petition […] had been settled."[44] A clear answer on the issue was not immediately forthcoming. Instead, Keller told the women workers that he had forwarded their request to his superiors at the tobacco monopoly. Rather than "await its settlement" as the inspector proposed, however, the striking women decided to speak personally with the monopoly officials about their concerns.[45] The women apparently wished to advocate for themselves higher up the hierarchy directly.

Once at the directorate, a deputation explained to a monopoly administrator that the women workers "could not meet their [means of] subsistence with the current (*bisherigen*) wages".[46] They furthermore declared that "they would not take up work again" until their petition had been settled.[47] The monopoly official did not concede their demands. Rather, he assured the women that a wage increase was forthcoming, but that he, "however for the time being [was] not in the position to communicate the extent of the raise".[48] In the meantime, he too "strongly encouraged the deputation to behave calmly, [and] to take up work on the next work day, since before [doing so] there could be no talk of [a] wage increase."[49] Though the women failed to receive an immediate raise, their decision to approach the monopoly administrators demonstrates that they understood different civil servants had different degrees of decision-making authority. Furthermore, the women workers used their knowledge of administrative decision-making processes in order to try and circumvent decisions they disagreed with and to advocate for their own solutions.

The women workers deployed this knowledge in different situations as a way to address a variety of concerns. For example, after a brief interlude to celebrate May Day, the strikers resumed their industrial action on May 2. They once again came face to face with the monopoly official, this time at the factory itself. In addition to their previous demand for a wage increase, the women workers now demanded that the civil servant remove a woman supervisor (*Aufseherin*) from her post since she "treats them in a haughty and imperious manner and insults them."[50] The women workers apparently did not consider this to be an appropriate way for a supervisor to interact with her subordinates. They instead wished to enforce a relationship rooted in respect. According to the monopoly of-

43 On the development of unions in Bosnia see Hadžibegović, Postanak radničke klase, pp. 309–359; Šarac, Nedim: Sindikalni pokret u Bosni i Hercegovini do 1919 godine: hronika [The Trade Union Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina until 1919: A Chronicle], Sarajevo 1955.

44 [Anonymous]: Directorate of the Tobacco Monopoly to the Provincial Government, no. 152, p. 230.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., p. 231.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., p. 232.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., p. 234.

ficial's account, the strikers had chosen to report this complaint to him directly because "otherwise they would have had to harass the [factory] inspector with complaints on several occasions" in order for the issue to be properly addressed.[51] According to the women, the factory's complaint procedure did not function the way it ought to. The women workers thus relied on their understanding of administrative decision-making within the tobacco industry to bypass a complaint process they considered ineffective.

The women workers also possessed an understanding of the Habsburg administration beyond tobacco specific institutions. This became apparent on the third official day of their strike. On the morning of May 3, city police arrested two of the women workers – Luca Pažin and Milka Petrović – while they were picketing the factory. These two women had allegedly "forcibly restrained a female worker (*Arbeiterin*) and beat her and spit in her face."[52] A few hours later, several hundred women tobacco workers gathered at city hall. From them, a deputation of six women proceeded to negotiate directly with the Government Commissioner for the City of Sarajevo, Myron Ritter von Zarzycki (1853–1934), regarding the release of their two colleagues. The arrests may have taken place at the factory but the women workers understood that the police were the prerogative of the city commissioner. They used their knowledge of the administrative chain of command in order to challenge the Habsburg authorities' decision to arrest the two women workers.

Commissioner von Zarzycki denied their request, stating that "the decision about their [the women workers] release exclusively concerned the courts."[53] According to him, the office of the government commissioner did not exercise adequate judicial power to free the women. At least one member of the deputation, however, continued to try and convince von Zarzycki to release the women. In response to his explanation, the unnamed women declared: "You must let our comrades go or lock up all 800 of us girls!"[54] The demands of several hundred women workers, they argued, ought to be considered more significant than court procedures. In the end, the police escorted the deputation from the building. Though these demands went unfulfilled, the women workers' attempt to persuade the government commissioner demonstrated that they differentiated between the kinds of decisions Habsburg administrators were able to make.[55]

The next strategy the women workers used in their negotiations with the Habsburg administrators was to invoke their experiences of the factory to legitimate their de-

51 Ibid.

52 Government Commissioner Zarzycki to Provincial Government, report, May 5, 1906, no. 42, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 110. Milka Petrović later argued that she and Luca Pažin were actually the ones who had been "deterred before the factory by two women workers (*dvije radnice*), who did not want to go to work." Petrović, Milka: Statement 17, no. 83, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 170.

53 Government Commissioner Zarzycki to Provincial Government, no. 42, p. 110.

54 Ibid.

55 People across the Habsburg monarchy used petitioning as a strategy to pursue demands in a number of different contexts. For example, on petitioning practices during the First World War see Healy, Maureen: Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire. Total War and Everyday Life in World War I, Cambridge 2004, pp. 282–291.

mands. On May 4, the committee elected by the *Sarajevo Workers' Assembly* submitted its petition to the head of the Provincial Government. On May 5, in response to the women workers' specific complaints, Civil Adlatus Isidor Benko von Boinik (1846–1925) – head of the Provincial Government – ordered Monopoly Director Julius Reumann (1852–?) "to immediately conduct a rigorous investigation regarding the individual complaint points and to report the result [to him]."[56] Five days later, on May 11 and 12, twenty-nine women workers testified in front of the temporary head of the Provincial Government's finance department, Franz Ludwig. According to Ludwig's later report, the administrator travelled to the factory to collect the women workers' testimonies and had had them transcribed verbatim in the local language.[57]

In their complaints, the women workers detailed their interactions with the factory doctor, the police, and male workers in order to argue that certain institutional procedures in the factory did not function the way they ought to. First, the majority of the women pointed to their relations with the factory's doctor – Karl/Karel Bayer (1850–1914). Leposava Petrović, for example, described how during a stomach illness, Bayer "did not even examine [her] […] and only gave [her] one droplet [of medicine], which did nothing to help."[58] The doctor apparently chose not to perform some of his most basic duties. Other women argued that he dismissed their concerns. Mara Kovačević told Ludwig that Bayer "never believes that I am sick [and] he says that I am healthier than him."[59] Some of the workers asserted that the doctor did so because they were women. Dragica Mitrović recounted how during one of her visits Bayer had told her: "There is nothing wrong with you, you grow like the devil. Marry, then your illness will pass."[60] According to Mitrović, the factory doctor attributed her symptoms to her marital status rather than to the work she performed or her living conditions.

In other instances, the women workers explained that Bayer had sexually assaulted them instead of providing care.[61] Jovanka Avramović recalled how during one visit, "Dr.

56 Civil Adlatus Benko to Monopoly Director Reumann, draft communication, May 5, 1906, no. 32, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 101.

57 [Anonymous]: Provincial Government to the Joint Ministry of Finance, report, June 28, 1906, no. 8, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 2, Sarajevo 1966, p. 35.

58 Petrović, Leposava: Statement 11, no. 83, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 169.

59 Kovačević, Mara: Statement 28, no. 83, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 174.

60 Mitrović, Dragica: Statement 8, no. 5, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 2, Sarajevo 1966, p. 33.

61 On the sexual harassment of women workers more generally see Lipp, Carola: Sexuelle Belästigung von Arbeiterinnen [Sexual Harassment of Women Workers], in: Herrad Schenk (ed.), Frauen und Sexualität: ein historisches Lesebuch [Women and Sexuality: a Historical Reader], München 1995, pp. 157–160.

Bayer did not knock on [her] chest [to check for illness], but rather he hit [her] and shamelessly touched [her] breasts."[62] The women workers expected their medical concerns to be taken seriously and for female respectability to be upheld during their visits to the doctor. By describing how Bayer had violated these expectations, the women asserted that the doctor's actions constituted a significant breach of his duties. Moreover, they argued that Bayer's misogynistic behaviour was all the more grievous because it prevented the women workers from accessing the health care to which they were entitled as members of the *Workers' Association for Sickness and Support* (*Arbeiter-Kranken- und Unterstützungsverein/Radničko društvo za bolesnike i za potpomaganje*). For instance, having also been groped by Bayer, Stana Mijović announced that: "I never went to him [again], nor will I go."[63]

Next, many of the women workers complained about their encounters with the police while picketing the factory on May 3. Vidosava Krtolica, for instance, explained how one member of the police guard threatened that "if [she] did not remove [herself] he would cut off one of [her] hands".[64] One of the women arrested on that day, Luca Pažin, argued that the police attacked her, knocked her unconscious, and then "dragged [her] away like a dead calf."[65] Both of these women recounted interactions with the police defined by violence.[66] This violence was not only physical but also verbal. According to Stana Mijović the police "shouted 'whore' [at the strikers] for no reason."[67] The women workers were subjected to insults they felt unfairly targeted their sexual morality since, according to them, they had not behaved during the picket in a way that could justify such accusations.[68] The women workers argued that sexual morality was irrelevant to their interactions with the police in this moment. They asserted that the officers' violent treatment of them was unwarranted.

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62 Avramović, Jovanka: Statement 7, no. 5, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 2, Sarajevo 1966, p. 32.

63 Mijović, Stana: Statement 14, no. 5, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 2, Sarajevo 1966, p. 33.

64 Krtolica, Vidosava: Statement 13, no. 83, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, pp. 169–170.

65 Pažin, Luca: Statement 18, no. 83, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 170.

66 On state intervention and the policing of strikes in other parts of the Habsburg monarchy see Morelon, Claire: State authorities, municipal forces and military intervention in the policing of strike in Austria-Hungary, 1890–1914, in: Matteo Millan/Alessandro Saluppo (eds.), Corporate Policing, Yellow Unionism, and Strikebreaking, 1890–1930, London 2020, pp. 79–96.

67 Mijović: Statement 14, p. 33.

68 Throughout the nineteenth century women in various contexts routinely sought redress for "sexual slander". See for example Lake, Jessica: Protecting 'injured female innocence' or furthering 'the rights of women?' The sexual Slander of Women in New York and Victoria (1808–1887), in: Women's History Review 31/3 (2022), pp. 451–475.

Lastly, some of the women workers spoke of their dealings with the factory's male workers. Stana Mijović continued her testimony, telling Ludwig that "Our male colleagues (*Naši muški saradnici*) want to command us and snapped over us more than the officials (*gospodari*). We demand that we have only one master who commands us."[69] Relations between women and men in the factory at times obscured job specific hierarchies. Ultimately, by sharing their experiences with Ludwig during his investigating, whether about the inappropriate behaviour of the factory doctor, the illegitimate use of violence by the police, or the gendered conceptions of authority wielded by men workers, the women workers communicated their expectation that the provincial administrators should correct the situation. At the same time, their testimonies also illustrate the degree to which concepts like female respectability and sexual morality, as well as social relations between men and women affected the women workers' daily experiences of the factory.

In the end, the Habsburg administration granted a number of the women workers' demands. The tobacco monopoly directorate formally reprimanded Bayer, while the Provincial Government urged that he be replaced as factory physician by the end of the year.[70] The monopoly directorate also agreed to institute a wage increase not only at the Sarajevo site but for workers employed at all tobacco factories in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to prevent spill-over strikes.[71] Though we cannot say exactly why the Austro-Hungarian administrators chose to make these concessions, the women workers' attempts to force the issue are illuminating. Women tobacco workers had negotiated directly with Habsburg civil servants throughout the course of their week-long strike. They had mobilized several practices to pursue their aims. Some of these, such as the repeated targeting of different administrative units and decision makers, drew on the women workers' political knowledge of the Habsburg bureaucratic apparatus in the city. Others, like the women workers' depictions of their often hostile workplace interactions, were grounded in personal experience. All of their strategies demonstrate the ways in which the women workers tried to influence how relationships of power within the factory and the administration played out on the ground.

4. Women Workers and the Politics of the Sarajevo Labour Movement

In addition to their strike at the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory, many women workers also took part in the activities of the larger Sarajevo labour movement in May 1906. The political nature of the women's actions in this case, however, is more ambiguous. On the one hand, women workers employed at the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory and the carpet weaving

69 Mijović: Statement 14, pp. 33–34.

70 [Anonymous]: Joint Ministry of Finance to the Provincial Government, communication, August 2, 1906, no. 9, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 2, Sarajevo 1966, p. 43.

71 [Anonymous]: Directorate of the Tobacco Monopoly to the Provincial Government, no. 152, p. 237. The monopoly did not introduce the minimum wage the petition demanded but rather increased wages by 20 Heller for all time-based wages and 10 to 15 percent for piece wages. Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase, p. 225.

mill were significant participants in the city's May Day event on May 1, 1906. According to administrative reports at the time, both the women workers of the tobacco factory and the carpet weaving mill were among the "close to 2000 women and men workers (*Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen)* who took part in [the May Day] procession."[72] That afternoon, women and men workers, "dressed in their Sunday clothing and many of them [wearing] red carnations in their buttonholes", gathered on the outskirts of Sarajevo.[73] With the women workers standing at the very front, the group soon began their parade towards a fairground some five kilometers south-west of the city. Upon their arrival, the workers sang, danced, and gave speeches that allegedly "called for the solidarity of the workforce."[74] A few hours later, the women and men re-formed their procession and marched back to Sarajevo. The city's first officially sanctioned May Day had come to an end.

The women worker's choice to participate in May Day was a form of political action because their presence likely helped to lend legitimacy to the event. Initially associated with bourgeois leisure practices, May Day became a significant annual performance of political action as well as of rest from their labour for workers across the empire around the turn of the century. As Harald Troch demonstrates for the Austrian half of the monarchy, social democratic activists often used May 1 demonstrations since the 1890s as a way to champion specific political demands such as the eight-hour work day and universal male suffrage.[75] In April 1894, when ironworks in Vareš submitted their request to hold the first officially approved May Day event in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina, Austro-Hungarian civil servants interpreted their actions as socialist activism.[76] Many labour and social democratic activists in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1906 thus likely also understood May 1 in these terms. However, no social democratic party under whose banner a May Day event might be organized existed in the occupied territory at the time. Indeed, the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Socijaldemokratska stranka Bosne i Hercegovine*) was not officially founded until 1909. [77] This was due in part to Habsburg policies that enabled administrators to prevent the formation of associations they perceived as political. The Austro-Hungarian administration had not passed a law on associations which effectively left the approval of such organizations to the discretion of the authorities.[78] In practice, administrators routinely rejected or delayed the approval of applications to establish organizations whose activities extended beyond "cultural" or

72 Government Commissioner Zarzycki to Provincial Government, report, May 3, 1906, no. 22, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 93.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Troch, Harald: Rebellensonntag. Der 1. Mai zwischen Politik, Arbeiterkultur und Volksfest in Österreich (1890–1918) [Rebels' Sunday. May 1st between Politics, Workers' Culture and Folk Festival in Austria (1890–1918)], Wien/Zürich 1991.

76 Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase, p. 312.

77 On the Social Democratic Party in Bosnia and Herzegovina see Fejzić, Elvis: Socijaldemokratska stranka Bosne i Hercegovine (1909–1919) [Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1909–1919)], in: Godišnjak Bošnjačke zajednice kulture "Preporod" 1 (2009), pp. 149–162.

78 For Habsburg approaches regarding associations see Kraljačić: Kalajev režim, pp. 149–186. For policies toward the Social Democratic Party in particular see Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase, pp. 333–343.

"social" concerns.[79] Toward the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Habsburg practices regarding associations began to liberalize and increasingly administrators allowed for broader forms of formal organizational life to emerge.[80]

The emphasis on non-political forms of association likely helps to explain why, in their petition to the Austro-Hungarian authorities asking that the 1906 event be allowed, the organizers in Sarajevo framed the day in terms of working class leisure and cultural importance rather than in terms of political significance. For example, the organizers argued that May 1 was "not only a celebration but is also of great cultural meaning. And […] with the celebration of May 1 new Western ideas [can be] introduce[d] into this Eastern land (*unosi nove zapadne Ideje u ovu Istoćnu Zemlju*)".[81] In framing their demands in this language, the organizers likely sought to link their event to the Habsburg administration's self-proclaimed civilizing mission, making their request more palatable to the authorities.[82]

The organizers' emphasis on the alleged cultural value of the day did not mean that other actors did not interpret Sarajevo's May Day in terms of the politics of social democracy. In their coverage of the celebration, journalists at the Serbian language newspaper *Serbian Word* (*Српска ријеч/Srpska riječ*) argued explicitly that the event was a moment of social democratic activism. The newspaper noted how, "Many speeches were held, in which the principles of social democracy were discussed, and especially the deplorable condition of men and women workers [*жалосно стање радника и радница*] in some large factories, where they work in suffocating dust and unsanitary apartments for – 25 coins a day, was emphasized."[83] Indeed, as historians have demonstrated, intellectuals and activists alike formulated and circulated socialist ideas in Bosnia despite the practical ban on organized politics.[84] This often took the form of pamphlets and was bolstered by the regular movement of workers between the protectorate and other parts of the monarchy. In this way, the Sarajevo May Day of 1906 functioned to some degree as a gathering with explicitly political aims.

By choosing to take part in the May Day activities, the women workers signaled their support for the ideas the event represented. This was all the more significant because the

79 As Hadžibegović points out, in reality, the instability of such categories meant it was nearly impossible for administrators to differentiate between exclusively "cultural", "social", or "political" practices. See Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase, p. 316.

80 On the shift in Habsburg policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina under Joint Minister of Finance István Burián von Rajecz (1851–1922) see Okey, Robin: Taming Balkan Nationalism: the Habsburg "Civilizing Mission" in Bosnia, 1878–1914, Oxford 2010, p. 144–175.

81 [Anonymous]: Petition to the Government Commissioner for the City of Sarajevo, copy, May 3, 1906, no. 21, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 91.

82 For the Habsburg civilizing mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina see Okey: Taming Balkan Nationalism.

83 [Anonymous]: Прослава I. маја. [May 1 Celebration], in: Српска ријеч [Serbian Word] 59, 4.21.(4.5.) 1906, pp. 1–4, 3.

84 On the circulation of socialist ideas Pejić, Luka: Revolutionary Migrants of the Early Labor Movement in Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia, and Istria in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century, in: History in Flux: Journal of the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Juraj Dorbila University of Pula 3/3 (2021), pp. 79–102.

women employed at the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory and the carpet weaving mill were some of the most numerous industrial workers in the city at the time.[85] Indeed, the fact that such a large number of workers (nearly two thousand) attended the event probably suggested to observers that the politics of the workers' movement and social democracy had found a significant foothold in Sarajevo. At the same time, given the previous statements of the women strikers, it is highly likely that at least some of the women workers in Sarajevo also sought to claim a place for themselves in the city's labour movement and directly influence its work. As historians have shown in other contexts, women workers actively participated in and attempted to shape workers' movements and social democratic organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[86] The sources for the events of May 1906 in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not allow us to explore these dynamics in further detail. How women workers in Sarajevo interacted specifically with their male colleagues and local labour organizers during this time remains an open question.

Women workers also contributed to the *Sarajevo Workers' Assembly* petition. Following the women tobacco workers' attempts to negotiate the release of their arrested colleagues on May 3, 1906, a group of demonstrating workers and the gendarmes who had been sent to disperse them clashed outside the steps of Sarajevo's city hall. The altercation ultimately left three men dead and many more wounded. In response to what the local newspaper *Sarajevo Newspaper* (*Sarajevski list/Сарајевски лист*) later termed, the "bloody events of May 3"[87], labour leaders declared a general strike in the city beginning on May 4. On the first day of the general strike, a deputation appeared before Civil Adlatus Benko, who "gave the workers authorization to be allowed to hold undisturbed this afternoon [May 4] a gathering outside of the city for a discussion of their interests".[88] Some hours later, between one and two thousand people congregated at the military parade ground to discuss the situation. The next day, on May 5, a group of workers presented themselves as an elected workers' committee to the Provincial Government and submitted a list of demands.

With this document, the eight men of the committee sought to convince the Provincial Government that their petition and its content was legitimate. The authors did this in two ways. First, they argued that the document was broadly supported by Sarajevo's working class. Indeed, the authors explicitly referred to the "workers" or "workforce" (*radništvo*) as the people making the demands listed in the petition. For example, it was

85 Approximately 200 weavers worked in the carpet factory in 1901, the majority of whom were women. See Sugar: Industrialization of Bosnia-Hercegovina, p. 148.

86 For example, on the role of women in international labour politics, see Zimmermann, Susan: Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft. Internationale Geschlechterpolitik, IGB-Gewerkschafterinnen und die Arbeiter- und Frauenbewegungen der Zwischenkriegszeit [Women's Politics and Men's Trade Unionism. International Gender Politics, Female IFTU Trade Unionists and the Workers' and Women's Movements of the Interwar Period], Wien 2021.

87 [Anonymous]: Krvavi dogagjaji u Sarajevu 3. maja/Крвави догађаји у Сарајеву 20. априла [Bloody events in Sarajevo on May 3], in: Sarajevski list/Сарајевски лист [Sarajevo Newspaper] 53, 9.5.(26.4.) 1906.

88 Civil Adlatus Benko to Joint Minister of Finance Burián, report, May 4, 1906, no. 30, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 100.

this collective Sarajevo workforce who called for a "free worker organization" and that the "establishment of a central association of all workers be allowed."[89] By framing the document in this way, the authors suggest that these demands were not simply the desires of a small group of activists but rather constituted the interests of a substantial and apparently unified segment of the city's population. Habsburg civil servants should take the matter seriously because a broader public allegedly supported the petition and the demands it outlined.

The second way the authors attempted to legitimate their petition was by including workplace specific issues. In particular, the all-male Sarajevo workers' committee incorporated women tobacco workers' demands and complaints into the broader workers' petition in order to support their argument for a workers' union.[90] For example, of the thirty-three demands the workers' committee petition listed, a full twenty-five of them concerned women tobacco workers' wages and working conditions.[91] How these demands came to be included in the larger petition is unclear. It is certainly possible that the women workers had to actively convince the workers' committee to insert their demands and concerns into the document, as historians have demonstrated was the case in other centres of tobacco production.[92] It is also possible that the male labour organizers purposefully solicited the women workers' demands. Regardless, the male workers' committee ultimately chose to devote approximately 75 percent of their petition to demands concerning women tobacco workers.

Above all, the authors listed demands in the broader workers' petition that clearly spoke to the multiple ways women workers had experienced the tobacco factory. In some cases this included women workers' material conditions such as wages. For example, the petition claimed that at present the women who manufactured Foča cigars were only being paid 2 Kronen 88 Heller per one thousand pieces. However, "because three day's work [was] needed for 1000 pieces," the women workers should be paid 5 Kronen.[93] The petition argued that the women's current wages simply did not accurately reflect the work they did. Women workers' environmental experience of the factory also shaped the demands the workers' committee included in its petition. For example, the document advocated on behalf of the women who handled small tobacco packages (*mali paketi*), and demanded "that they [the factory administration] expand the rooms for small packages,

89 [Anonymous]: Sarajevo Workers' Committee to the Provincial Government, petition, May 4, 1906, no. 43, in: Kasim Isović (ed., trans.), Generalni Štrajk u Bosni i Hercegovini 1906. godine [The 1906 General Strike of Bosnia and Herzegovina], vol. 1, Sarajevo 1963, p. 116.

90 A workers' committee had already submitted the rules of the *Main Workers' Union* to the Provincial Government for approval in September 1905. However, by May 1906 the Joint Ministry of Finance had yet to make a decision on the matter. Hadžibegović: Postanak radničke klase, pp. 318–320.

91 [Anonymous]: Sarajevo Workers' Committee to the Provincial Government, pp. 116–118.

92 For example, in 1911, after the male workers at a tobacco factory in Salonika (Thessaloniki, Saloniki, Selanik) agreed to wage reductions for the women workers, the women chose to carry on their own strike and negotiate with the factory officials directly. See Hadar: Jewish Tobacco Workers in Salonika, pp. 132–133.

93 [Anonymous]: Sarajevo Workers' Committee to the Provincial Government, no. 43, Point 7, Subsection B, Sub-point b., p. 117.

which are the worst in the whole factory".[94] The petition also described how the tobacco dust "chokes the women workers (*radnice*)" of the same department.[95] For this reason, the workers' committee required "that tobacco meant for packaging must first be picked over" in order to remove any bad leaves.[96] According to the broader workers' petition, the women workers' ability to carry out their tasks depended on the environment in which they worked.

Additionally, many of the broader demands the Sarajevo workers' committee listed in their petition reflected the women's gendered experience of the workplace. For example, as women, the petition had claimed that they were often treated poorly by officials. The authors of the petition demanded that the factory remove its doctor because he "acts indecently with women workers (*s radnicama*)."[97] The factory's director also ought to face a reprimand "because of his rude approach towards the women workers (*radnicama*)."[98] According to the broader workers' petition, women workers' relationships with men in positions of authority within the factory were negatively impacted due to the fact that they were women. At times, gender and other aspects of the women workers' experiences of the factory, such as spatial considerations, intersected. For example, the final demand the workers' committee included in the section regarding the women tobacco workers was "that it be established and strictly executed that women emerge from one door, and men in another."[99] From the point of view of the broader workers' petition, the way that workers moved through the physical space of the factory depended on whether they were men or women.

By including points that discussed factory conditions in such a detailed manner at the centre of their petition, the male authors of the Sarajevo workers' committee suggested that they had a very close relationship to the women tobacco workers. Their ties were apparently deep enough that many workers, including the women of the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory, were willing to share their personal experiences of the workplace with the petition's organizers in hopes that the latter could help bring about change. In conveying this allegedly close relationship to the city's workers through their petition, the labour leaders sought to persuade the Habsburg officials of the deeper validity of this document and its demands. Women tobacco workers' experiences were actively deployed to help legitimize the work of the male-led Sarajevo labour movement.

Overall, women workers' participation in the Sarajevo labour movement in May 1906 presents a relatively ambiguous case of women's political action. Women workers took part in significant numbers in events that were closely linked to workers' activism and social democratic politics in Sarajevo, like May Day. They contributed demands based on their personal experiences that were later used to attempt validate the petition of the May 4 *Workers' Assembly* in the eyes of the Habsburg administrators. Whether intentional

94 Ibid., Subsection A, Sub-point c., p. 116.
95 Ibid., Sub-point d.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., Subsection G, Sub-point b., p. 117.
98 Ibid., Sub-point d., p. 118.
99 Ibid., Sub-point f.

or not, women workers were intricately bound up in the politics of the Sarajevo workers' movement and thus, with attempts to reorganize relationships of power between the Habsburg administration and working people. However, we still do not know why these women workers chose to participate in the ways they did and what that participation meant to them. Further research is needed so that we may begin to more fully understand the dynamics of women's political action in the context of Sarajevo's workers' movement at the time.

5. Conclusion

In the end, the Joint Ministry of Finance accepted the workers' demands and approved the charter of the *Main Workers' Union* on July 10, 1906. The events of May 1906 no doubt contributed to the Habsburg administrators' decision to allow the union to take up its work.[100] Yet, as we have seen, the strikes of May 1906 were also an important example of women tobacco workers' political action. During their strike at the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory, women workers used their knowledge of Habsburg administrative practice and decision-making, to attempt to force civil servants to adapt certain bureaucratic processes, like the factory's complaint procedure or those of the courts, to meet their concerns. The women tried to further legitimize their demands by invoking their personal experiences of the factory. As participants in the Sarajevo labour movement, the women workers took part in May Day and thus leant support to an event that historically functioned as a platform for social democratic politics. Although their role in the formulation of the *Sarajevo Workers' Committee* petition was ambiguous, by sharing their experiences of the factory the women workers provided the opportunity for the petition's male authors to claim that their demands reflected the concerns of a wider Sarajevo workforce and were therefore legitimate. Whether through their direct action at the factory, or as significant contributors to the activism of the Sarajevo labour movement, women tobacco workers sought to shape relations of power during the May 1906 strikes in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This case of women workers' political action in Sarajevo during May 1906 is important for two reasons. First, the case sheds new light on this moment of social mobilization by demonstrating that the strikes had a previously unacknowledged gender component. The women workers' strike and subsequent demands were driven in large part by their negative experiences of the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory. As their testimonies demonstrate, many of these experiences were shaped by concerns about female respectability, female sexual morality, and relations between men and women in the workplace. Such aspects of May 1906 only become visible when we consider the practices and experiences of women workers during these events. Second, the example of the women tobacco workers helps to expand our understanding of women as political actors in the late Habsburg

100 The Provincial Government sent a communication to the Joint Ministry of Finance urging a decision on the matter on May 4, 1906 – the same day as the *Sarajevo Workers' Assembly*. Hadžibegović, Postanak radničke klase, p. 321.

Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite not formally participating in decision-making processes within the Provincial Government or taking a leading role in the Sarajevo labour movement, women workers were still very much politically active in this moment. By focusing on how women were embedded in and sought to shape how hierarchies of power functioned, rather than on their participation (or lack thereof) in government institutions or political organizations alone, we are able to open up a number of potentially rich sites for future research on women's political action in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina.