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Renegotiating Skills, Wages, and the Right to Work: On the Gender of Labor Activism around Rationalization in the Bulgarian Tobacco Industry in the Early 1930s

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Abstract

Starting from the early 1930s, structural changes in the Bulgarian tobacco industry, prompted by the advent of the world economic crisis and German economic expansionism into Southeastern Europe, led to a deep restructuring of the labor processes, known in the terminology of the time as rationalization, in the Bulgarian tobacco industry. The introduction of the *tonga* rationalization technology had a deskilling and deeply gendered effect on the industry, making a significant number of skilled male workers redundant, disproportionately decreasing average male wages and leading, in turn, to a further feminization of an already majority-female workforce.

The introduction of the new system provoked a strong response from the organized labor movement, which used a variety of tactics to fight against the new technology: from strikes to petitions to tripartite negotiations. Organized labor's reaction was deeply gendered, an aspect that only becomes truly visible if, in addition to gender and skill, we employ the analytical lens of scale. By following trade union policies on the local, national, and international levels, the article goes beyond the carefully crafted gender-neutral language in official documents to reveal tensions between the conservative attitudes of rank-and-file activists and the official trade union agenda. This is especially evident in communist labor politics, where Bulgarian trade union policies on the local and national levels provoked an intervention on the part of the Profintern between 1930 and 1931. The movement's internal contradictions resulted in a polyvalent, ambiguous, and non-linear trade union policy formed through the clash of and negotiations between local activists' conservative notions of gendered work and family roles and the radical gender program of international communism.

Keywords: rationalization; Bulgarian tobacco industry; Bulgarian trade unions; Profintern; women's labor activism

In her memoirs, Elena Motova—a tobacco worker and labor activist in Plovdiv—recalled the introduction of a new tobacco-processing technology, called the *tonga* system, as follows:

1930 was the hardest year for tobacco workers. The world economic crisis ... had also reached our country. ... Tobacco processing was simplified through the introduction of the *tonga*, which led to even greater unemployment. Men were particularly affected, as 80 percent of them were laid off. The cheap female and youth labor that was underpaid and highly exploited was preferred.¹

However, an article in the communist-leaning *Eho* newspaper from July 1930 explained labor protests against the *tonga* system by stating there was “the real danger of permanent unemployment for three-quarters of qualified workers of both sexes,”² while in December 1930, the agrarian MP Nikola Petkov claimed that the “processing tobacco with the *tonga* method reduces production costs by 50 percent or more and puts more than 80 percent of the workers on the street.”³ As we can see, Motova’s recollections, the *Eho* article, and Petkov’s speech give comparable estimates of the proportion of workers that the *tonga* rationalization would leave unemployed (75 to 80 percent), yet they differ in one crucial detail, namely, which group(s) of workers would be affected by the introduction of the new work process: all workers, male workers, and/or skilled workers. The three sources are illustrative of the ways in which labor activists and contemporary discourse addressed the gendered aspect of rationalization in interwar Europe. Gender and skill often were used as intertwined and co-constructive bases of work organization,⁴ but one or both of these categories were also often disguised, particularly in international and national contexts, behind generalized, gender-neutral wording implying that the experiences of (skilled) male workers were representative of the working class as a whole.

This article deals with labor restructuring processes in the Bulgarian tobacco industry that were aimed at increasing efficiency and cutting costs (known in the terminology of the period as “rationalization”) through the implementation of a new technological process—the *tonga* system. The main innovation of the *tonga* system was its elimination of some labor-intensive stages of tobacco processing, which consequently led to significant cuts in labor and production costs. In terms of timing, the implementation of the *tonga* system occurred in two waves, which corresponded closely to the two peaks of labor mobilization around the issue—first in the early 1930s, when the *tonga* system was first implemented and reached between 30 and 40 percent of the country’s tobacco processing,⁵ then followed by a much weaker wave in the late 1930s to early 1940s, when *tonga*-processed tobacco completely dominated the industry, with a share of up to 90 percent.⁶ This article deals only with the first peak of labor protests, which occurred in the early 1930s.

The *tonga* system had a highly gendered impact on the tobacco labor force, particularly on its gender composition, skill structure, and wage levels. The *tonga* system had a deskilling effect, which affected men disproportionately. The introduction of the new technology made a significant number of skilled male workers redundant, decreased the average male wage, and led to a further feminization of an already majority-female labor force, as well as to a reduction in the gender wage gap.

As the Bulgarian tobacco industry employed a large number of workers and had a strong tradition of militant labor protests, the introduction of the new system provoked a strong response from the organized labor movement on local, national, and international levels. This article outlines the spectrum of reactions from labor activists across a range of political affiliations as well as the variety of tactics they employed: from strikes and other militant forms of activism to petitions and tripartite negotiations. Bulgarian organized labor had an ambivalent attitude toward the gendered aspects of rationalization, vacillating between a rhetorical defense of all members of the working class and a simultaneous defense of the male breadwinner norm. Socially conservative attitudes of the local rank-and-file activists could and often did diverge from the official trade union programs. This is especially evident in communist labor politics, where in the early 1930s national and local trade union campaigns against the *tonga* system provoked an intervention by the Profintern in order to bring local activists in line with the official communist stance on rationalization.⁷ To explain the ambivalent and contradictory nature of interwar trade union politics, this study goes beyond existing research, which has only studied the phenomenon on an international,⁸ national,⁹ or local level.¹⁰ It argues that in order to capture the complexity of trade union politics regarding gender and rationalization, analysis must include a further axis of differentiation beside gender and skill—that of scale. Without contradicting existing findings, the present article complicates them by arguing that a multiscale approach allows for a deeper understanding of trade union politics and helps us see how conflicting gender policies of organized labor were negotiated on and between different scales. Evidence from the Bulgarian case study suggests that in the early 1930s compact groups of radical skilled male workers could exert disproportionate influence at the local level, but that this influence was partially curtailed by an international (communist) trade union agenda that sought to appeal to the increasing numbers of gainfully employed women.

The first two sections of the article are based on statistical data and contemporary descriptions of labor processes in tobacco production. They introduce important aspects of the social and labor history of the Bulgarian tobacco industry, with a particular focus on the gendered impact of the *tonga* system on tobacco labor. The third and fourth sections of the paper focus on trade union politics and labor activism around the issue of rationalization. They are based on Bulgarian and international trade union archival and printed materials, as well as on Bulgarian and international trade union and left-wing periodicals.

The Tobacco Industry in Interwar Bulgaria: Economic and Social Overview

The Bulgarian tobacco industry witnessed a significant boom in the first decades of the twentieth century due to the ever-increasing popularity of tobacco products worldwide. It continued to flourish in the early 1920s and together with cereals, tobacco became Bulgaria's most important export commodity in the postwar period. The share of tobacco in the country's total export value rose sharply from 1.3 percent in 1907–1911 to 26.5 percent in 1921–1925 and to 38.5 percent in 1926–1930.¹¹ Tobacco retained its important position throughout the 1930s, accounting in various years for between one-third and one-half of Bulgaria's overall exports.¹² Tobacco

export revenues, along with tobacco taxes, were critical to the postwar Bulgarian economy and to the country's fiscal solvency. Often called "Bulgarian gold," tobacco was one of the country's best collaterals on the world market.¹³

Like any agriculture-based sector, tobacco was subject to year-by-year fluctuations in quantity and quality of output. These fluctuations, however, pale in comparison to the veritable collapse the industry experienced in the early 1930s, caused by a multitude of factors, the most important of which was the impact of the Great Depression. Due to its predominantly agrarian economy, Bulgaria was gravely affected by the dramatic worldwide decrease in market prices for agricultural and food products. Tobacco export value decreased to 1,078 billion levs in 1932, reaching its lowest point (982 billion) in 1934—almost three times lower compared to 1929 (2,896 billion).¹⁴ The onset of the world economic crisis changed the international tobacco market and put significant pressure on exporters to lower their prices. This provided the impetus for a thorough restructuring of production and labor processes, which the Bulgarian tobacco industry underwent in the 1930s, and which will be analyzed in detail in the following sections of this paper.

Apart from a failed attempt to establish a state monopoly in 1934 and 1935,¹⁵ the Bulgarian tobacco industry in the interwar period was composed mainly of independent private companies. A noticeable upsurge of foreign direct investment in the industry could be observed after the late 1920s and early 1930s, when large European tobacco enterprises (particularly from Germany, Italy, and Austria) established branches or formed mixed partnerships in the country.¹⁶ This shift in the organization of tobacco exports was tightly related to the introduction of the *tonga* system, since foreign firms' direct involvement in the purchase and processing of raw tobacco mitigated the new technology's main disadvantages, namely, shorter shelf-life and limited opportunity to inspect the quality of the tobacco once it was processed. These disadvantages made the *tonga* technology suitable only for cigarette manufacturers operating through local branches and/or in long-term partnership agreements with Bulgarian companies. Thus, in 1930, when Balkan Tabak—the first company to introduce the *tonga* system in Bulgaria—started implementing the new technology, it did so in fulfillment of a contract with the German cigarette producer Reemtsma.¹⁷ Moreover, the intense competition from the other major exporters of Oriental tobaccos—Greece and Turkey—put pressure on tobacco manufacturers to cut costs in order to retain and increase market share, particularly in the highly competitive German market. By 1930, tobacco manufacturers claimed that Bulgarian companies were lagging behind international competitors such as those in Greece and Turkey that had already introduced the *tonga* system, and were being economically pressured by the low prices of Soviet tobacco. Furthermore, the technological switch to labor-saving technologies in tobacco-producing countries was a direct consequence of changing demand in key export countries such as Germany and Italy and their economic expansion into Southeastern Europe.¹⁸ Tobacco exported to countries lacking a foothold in the Bulgarian tobacco industry, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the United States, continued to be processed using traditional methods and sold at significantly higher prices until the beginning of World War II.¹⁹

In terms of export destinations, Bulgarian foreign trade was heavily concentrated in a small number of countries. The relative importance of the German market

increased progressively throughout the 1930s,²⁰ and by 1936 it accounted for 72 percent of all tobacco exports.²¹ The adoption of the *tonga* system in Bulgaria, similar to what Juan Zabala's research has established in the case of Greece,²² was tightly linked to the rise of large German cigarette manufacturers such as Reemtsma, to Germany's general economic expansion into Southeastern Europe, and to the *Rationalisierung* drive in the German cigarette factories.

Bulgarian Tobacco Labor before and after the *Tonga* Rationalization

Tobacco labor can be divided into three main categories according to the stage of production: tobacco growing, tobacco processing (sorting, packing, drying, and fermentation of leaves), and production of tobacco-based products (e.g., cigarettes). The rationalization discussed in this article affected tobacco processing, which in interwar Bulgaria was classified as an industrial sector. Until the early 1930s, tobacco had been commercially processed in several ways, depending on the sort and the quality of the leaves. A fraction of the agricultural production, particularly low-grade leaves and tobacco intended for the domestic market, was processed using simple, labor-saving technologies. The bulk of export tobacco was processed using various "detailed" processing methods, depending on the variety and quality of the tobacco leaves, with the two most widespread methods being *shirok pastal* and *basma*. The *shirok pastal* method was used for the main type of tobacco produced in Bulgaria, was moderately labor-intensive, and mainly employed women workers. The *basma* technology was used for a high-quality tobacco of the same name, which could only be grown in some southern regions of Bulgaria due to the specific soil and climate conditions it required. Thus, *basma* processing was concentrated in the south and southeast of the country, with the city of Haskovo as its most important center.²³

In addition to technological and geographical factors, the structure of the Bulgarian tobacco labor force was also shaped by the co-constructive hierarchies of gender and skill. The tobacco labor market was gender-segregated, with positions designated as either women's or men's work.²⁴ Positions held by men were traditionally considered skilled labor and received correspondingly higher wages (see Table 1).

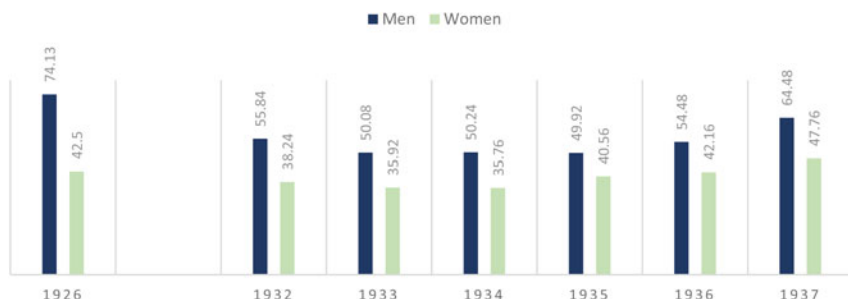
Table 1. Men's and women's wages in tobacco processing in the early 1930s.²⁵

Men		Women	
Position	Average daily wage (levs)	Position	Average daily wage (levs)
Stacker (<i>Istifchiya</i>)	95	Sorter (<i>Chistachka</i>)	63
Baler (<i>Denkchiya</i>)	85–95	"Sweeper" (<i>Metachka</i>) (also called first apprentice)	60
Trasferer (<i>Aktarmadziya</i>)	70–75	Right, left, and top bundlers (<i>Pastaldzhiiki</i>) (also called second, third, and fourth apprentices)	35–57

The *basma* technology was particularly labor-intensive, as it required separate handling of each leaf and employed a significant number of skilled male tobacco workers (particularly balers). The high price of raw tobacco combined with the high processing costs made *basma*-processed tobacco an expensive and luxurious commodity. After the onset of the world economic crisis, its market shrank dramatically, making most of the output practically unsellable due to its prohibitively high price.²⁶ Consequently, tobacco manufacturers turned to new labor-saving technologies, the *tonga* system being the most important and widely used of these. The main innovation of the *tonga* system was placing tobacco leaves of different grades in the same bale, thus eliminating the labor-intensive stages of quality sorting and subsequent separate handling of different grades of leaves. This resulted in a significant cost and labor reduction, as producing a bale of *tonga*-processed tobacco required a full day of labor by only two to three women sorters, in addition to some part-day work by other workers.²⁷ Shifting to the *tonga* system was in effect a replacement of skilled, artisanal labor with a system of standardized operations and, similar to other processes of industrial restructuring in the interwar period,²⁸ it was a highly gendered one.

The shift from detailed to simplified processing that the Bulgarian tobacco industry underwent in the 1930s had a substantial impact on the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the labor force. The *tonga* rationalization was particularly catastrophic to workers in the *basma* sector, since it swiftly took over the processing of the lion's share of this expensive and luxurious variety of tobacco, making the overwhelming majority of skilled male workers, especially balers, redundant. The newly opened positions created by the *tonga* system (e.g., sorters) were designated as women's work, with correspondingly lower wage levels (see Table 1), making them unsuitable for the laid-off skilled men. Women workers employed in the *shirok pastal* system were also affected by this same rationalization, although less severely. First, while the use of *basma* technology was significantly and abruptly reduced in the early 1930s, the shift in the *shirok pastal* sector was more gradual, as the latter technology had some competitive advantages over the *tonga* rationalization, such as a longer shelf life and the possibility to conduct quality inspections of baled tobacco, which partly compensated for its higher cost. Furthermore, while the implementation of the *tonga* system made a significant proportion of women bundlers redundant, this was partly offset by the increased demand for the better-remunerated sorter positions and led to a concentration of women workers in the highest paying occupation for women.²⁹

The restructuring of the tobacco industry in the 1930s had a significant impact on wages. In 1926, the average male wage in the tobacco industry was slightly lower but comparable to the average male industrial wage. In the early 1930s, following the introduction of the *tonga* system on a larger scale and the subsequent layoff of a considerable number of skilled men tobacco workers, men's wages dropped significantly and fell below the average industrial wage. The trend was reversed only in the second half of the decade, especially after 1937, when the first nationwide collective agreement in the tobacco industry was concluded. By contrast, the wages of women tobacco workers continued to be comparable to the average industrial wage for women from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s. After 1937, women's wages rose as



Graph 1. Average wages in the Bulgarian tobacco industry (mid-1920s to mid-1930s, lev per day).³⁰



Graph 2. Men's and women's wages in the Bulgarian tobacco industry in comparison with the average industrial wage (levs per day).³¹

a consequence of the collective agreements, but to a lesser extent than men's wages (see Graph 2). Thus, following the introduction of the *tonga* system in the early 1930s, the gender pay gap in the Bulgarian tobacco industry narrowed significantly: In 1926, women tobacco workers earned, on average, 57.33 percent of a man's wage, while in 1932 it was 68.48 percent. The gender pay gap was smallest just before the introduction of the industry-wide collective agreements in 1935, when women earned an average of 81.25 percent of men's wages. After 1937, the gender pay gap increased to around 74–77 percent (see Graphs 1 and 2).

The implementation of the *tonga* system affected the absolute numbers as well as the gender composition of the tobacco labor force. Unfortunately, data from the 1930s are scarce. Due to budget cuts, there was a fifteen-year gap (1926–1941) in comprehensive general censuses. In 1926 there were 34,992 workers in tobacco processing and factories producing tobacco-based products, of whom 22,092, or 63.13 percent, were women while 12,900, or 36.87 percent, were men. From 1937 onward, when the *tonga* system had become the main tobacco processing technology in Bulgaria, the proportion of men in the tobacco industry fell to approximately a quarter of the labor force.³² In 1941 the number of workers in the tobacco processing sector was 30,916 (22,967 women and 7,949 men). Comparing the two datasets, it is clear that the drop in the total number of tobacco

workers between 1926 and 1941 correlates almost perfectly with the drop in the number of men, some five thousand of whom were being driven out of the industry. Some categories of skilled workers such as balers were disproportionately affected.³³ In contrast, the absolute number of women rose slightly, and their relative share of the workforce increased from 63 to 75 percent between the mid-1920s and early 1940s.

Tobacco processing is closely tied to the agricultural cycle of tobacco growing. Consequently, it has always provided seasonal employment that can often leave the vast majority of tobacco workers unemployed for several months per year, during the so-called “dead season.” The restructuring of the labor processes in the 1930s and mass implementation of the *tonga* rationalization made the already precarious nature of tobacco labor even more acute, as it led to a later start to the working season and thus to increased periods of seasonal unemployment. Initial fears that the working season would be shortened to a mere third or fourth of what it had been, from eight-to-ten months to just two-to-three months, turned out to be exaggerated.³⁴ Nevertheless, the *tonga* system did indeed reduce the tobacco working season, shortening it to between five and seven months.³⁵ This, in turn, aggravated the already existing problems of precarity and high (seasonal) unemployment and put unemployment-related demands at the top of tobacco workers’ agenda.

Last but not least, tobacco was a sector with strong traditions in labor organizing, where communists in particular had a strong influence, but with social democrats and later nationalist corporatist trade unions competing with them for tobacco workers’ loyalties. The first communist tobacco trade union was established in 1908 with seventy members, but its influence grew significantly after World War I, reaching 7,166 members in 1922, 61.91 percent (4,437) of whom were women.³⁶ That trade union was disbanded in 1924 by the Law on the Protection of the State that made the communist party and its affiliated organizations illegal, but the union was restored under the name *Nezavisim tyutyunorabotnicheski suyuz* (NTS [Independent Tobacco Trade Union]) in 1926. In 1927, the NTS had 1,231 members (967 men and 264 women), while in 1931 it grew to 1,750 members, including 978 women (55.89 percent).³⁷ On the international level, it was affiliated with the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU or Profintern).

Social democrats’ influence among tobacco workers was weaker. Although data on their trade union membership and activity is not as abundant or detailed as that on communist trade unions, we know that the *Svobodni tyutyunorabotnicheski Suyuz* (STS [Free Tobacco Trade Union]) had three sections and a total of 241 members in 1926, two sections and 121 members in 1927, and 106 members in 1931. There is no data on women’s unionization rates in the tobacco industry, but the STS’s umbrella organization—*Svobodni obsht rabotnicheski sindikalen suyuz* (Free General Trade Union Federation)³⁸—had 153 women members (out of 2,074) in 1926 and 171 women members (out of 2,485) in 1927.³⁹ In some areas, such as the region around Haskovo, there were active anarchist organizations whose members took part in tobacco workers’ struggles.⁴⁰ Following a coup d’état in 1934, a third type of union, namely, a corporatist trade union—*Bulgarski rabotnicheski suyuz* (BRS [Bulgarian Labor Union])—was established, based on the trade union models of fascist Italy and national socialist Germany. Additionally, some center-right political

parties such as the Demokraticheska partiya (Democratic Party) tried to establish affiliated trade unions, but their influence among tobacco workers was limited.⁴¹

The political influence of tobacco workers varied with different currents in the labor movement. They held a strong position in the communist labor movement—in 1927, the NTS constituted approximately 18 percent of the communist trade union membership base (growing to 20 percent in 1931).⁴² By comparison, tobacco workers were just under 5 percent of the social democratic trade union membership base in 1927.⁴³ Finally, tobacco workers were among the most militant members of the labor movement, and throughout the interwar period the industry experienced frequent strikes, with the two largest (in 1929 and 1940) reportedly having up to twenty-five thousand participants.⁴⁴

Labor Activism around Rationalization in the Bulgarian Tobacco Industry: A Spectrum of Repertoires and Agendas

The spread of the *tonga* technology was a major issue for tobacco workers in the 1930s. When it was first introduced in the early 1920s, the technology was not controversial, since its application was limited to low-quality tobacco that otherwise would have been wasted.⁴⁵ The *tonga* system was first used to process regular-grade tobacco in the Kutsoglu warehouse in Plovdiv in the mid-1920s.⁴⁶ Tobacco workers reacted immediately: In September 1926, the communist-affiliated NTS held a meeting in Plovdiv to discuss the most pressing problems facing tobacco workers in Bulgaria. These included unemployment, violations of labor laws, limitations on the right to unionize, and the introduction of the *tonga* machines. The workers attending the meeting called for a ban on the new technology.⁴⁷

While the 1926 protest was more or less an isolated incident, in the early 1930s the *tonga* system became a major concern for Bulgarian tobacco workers. This was triggered by the decision of several large tobacco firms to implement the technology in 1930. The reaction of organized labor was multifaceted and varied according to political affiliation. Social democratic trade unions held a moderate and nuanced position. Social democrats acknowledged tobacco workers' dire situation if the *tonga* system were to completely replace other processing methods; however, they focused their agenda on alleviating potential consequences rather than trying to stop the process altogether. In their view, banning the new technology was neither realistic nor desirable, especially in the long term. Thus, they accepted the economic arguments of the tobacco industry that rationalization was the only way to stay competitive in the international market but argued that workers should not solely bear all the costs of the process.

The STS agenda regarding rationalization in the tobacco industry included four major points, two addressed to the state and two to the "masters," i.e., the owners and management of the companies. Its demands on employers included pressure to invest part of the additional profits in their workers by raising wages, decreasing working hours, granting paid leave, etc. Moreover, workers' commissions were to be involved in company management and decision-making processes. Demands on the state concerned social policies in case of mass unemployment: Socialist trade unionists insisted that the state had an obligation to assist workers in finding new occupations and, in the meantime, to also pay sufficient unemployment benefits.⁴⁸

On August 15, 1930, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Labor organized a Conference on *Tonga*, attended by representatives of tobacco companies, tobacco cooperatives, tobacco technicians, tobacco workers, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Bulgarian Agricultural Bank, and the Labor Directorate. The communists claimed they were not invited, but that even if they had been, they would not have attended.⁴⁹ For unknown reasons, the social democratic trade unions also didn't participate. While the conference was purely consultative and no decisions were made, the proceedings made visible the divergent views of the different political camps regarding the implementation of the new technology. The tobacco companies insisted once again on the inevitability of the rationalization process and its vital importance for Bulgaria's competitiveness in the international market. In contrast, the representative of the tobacco cooperatives insisted on changes in social policy to mitigate the negative consequences felt by tobacco workers by introducing shorter working hours, raising the wages of workers in the *tonga* system, and imposing additional taxes on *tonga*-processed tobacco in order to fund unemployment benefits for affected workers, etc.⁵⁰ The latter idea was copied from Greece and Turkey, where similar new taxes were reportedly introduced in order to mitigate the effects of the *tonga* system.⁵¹

The social democratic trade unions convened their own Conference on *Tongas* in Haskovo on August 25, 1930, with workers' representatives from all major tobacco centers in Bulgaria (Plovdiv, Dupnitsa, Haskovo, Sofia, etc.). The conference passed a Resolution on the *Tonga*, outlining the STS's agenda with regard to rationalization in the tobacco industry: respecting the right to unionize and to strike; expanding social legislation and enhancing access to social security rights, especially with regard to unemployment benefits and health insurance; better working conditions for tobacco workers, including a reduction in work hours to seven hours per day and a free Saturday afternoon; three weeks of paid leave per working season; and a prohibition on downgrading a worker's (wage) category.⁵² STS publications on the *tonga* system were completely in line with analogous IFTU resolutions and were similarly drafted with a gender-neutral wording, without directly addressing the gendered aspects of rationalization and the substitution of men's with women's labor.⁵³ As a follow-up to this program, in 1931, the STS started pressuring the government to develop special schemes for unemployed tobacco workers, many of whom were ineligible for existing benefit schemes due to the seasonal nature of the work.⁵⁴ In 1933, the government did indeed adopt a one-time special unemployment benefit program for laid-off seasonal workers.⁵⁵

By contrast, the communist trade union's stance on the *tonga* issue in the early 1930s was much more radical, centering its demands on a complete ban on the new technology. In March and April of 1930, anticipating the rationalization measures, tobacco workers in Haskovo and Plovdiv formed an anti-*tonga* organization, including a central committee and a network of activist groups in each warehouse.⁵⁶ The first firm to introduce the *tonga* system in Haskovo—Balkan Tabak—was instantly boycotted, with workers refusing to work until the technology was abandoned. Attempts to implement the technology by a second and third company both failed under threats of boycott. On July 2, 1930, all tobacco workers in the city of Haskovo (around 6,500 to 7,000 people) went on a one-day strike. They assembled in front of the labor inspectorate, demanding not only a ban on the new

technology but also a job placement system, unemployment benefits, higher wages (as negotiated during the 1929 strike), the right to unionize without state repression, etc.⁵⁷ Communists were supported in their struggle by a parallel anarchist campaign demanding a ban on the new technology. Anarchist labor activists in Haskovo published leaflets and organized a series of factory meetings dedicated to the *tonga* system's disastrous consequences, especially the mass unemployment it would bring.⁵⁸ Thus, the local Committee against *Tonga* was able to boast in August 1930 that, thanks to their resistance, no tobacco company in Haskovo had managed to implement the *tonga* system. In October 1930, tobacco workers in the city were still keeping a united front and successfully boycotting all companies attempting to introduce the new system. However, police surveillance reports reveal that by that time, tobacco companies in Haskovo were already closing their local sites for the year and moving the unprocessed tobacco to sites where workers had agreed to work under the *tonga* system.⁵⁹

The anti-*tonga* reaction in Haskovo was particularly strong, but there were labor conflicts in other industrial centers as well. Tobacco workers in Plovdiv held a series of meetings on the factory level as well as a general meeting on June 26, 1930, in order to discuss "the introduction of the *tonga* machines which make many workers, especially men, redundant."⁶⁰ As a result of these meetings, coordinated by the NTS, a protest resolution was adopted and subsequently sent to various authorities and organizations, including the prime minister, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Labor, and left-wing journals. In Plovdiv alone, the resolution was signed by more than 3,700 workers (roughly one-third of all tobacco workers in the city). Later, the text of this resolution was adopted in similar workers' assemblies in other cities and towns as well as by the "Central Committee against *Tonga*." While a ban on the *tonga* system was by far the most important demand, the resolution contained a far broader labor agenda, including unemployment benefits, shorter working hours (seven hours for men and six hours for women and youths,) strict application of labor laws, the abolition of internal rules that allowed arbitrary fines and dismissal without notice, and higher wages, as according to the agreement that ended the 1929 strike.⁶¹

The seemingly unanimous anti-*tonga* reaction in the first weeks of the campaign soon broke down as the workers' diverging interests gave way to disunity and conflicts. Gender was one of the major lines of division, as a group of workers (mostly women) accepted positions in the new rationalized production in Haskovo. Those workers' decision was sharply criticized by the Haskovo branch of the NTS, which, in a leaflet, accused them of "two great sins," namely, causing the layoff of some six hundred male *basma* workers and, by accepting lower wages, reducing remunerations across the whole industry. The leaflet also displayed some degree of bias toward the men in the *basma* sector, praising them for being "the most conscious workers in the industry."⁶² The strong influence male workers in the *basma* sector had at the local level and the existing gender-based tensions among tobacco workers in Haskovo are corroborated by events around the 1929 strike, when the Haskovo branch of the NTS was criticized by the trade union's headquarters for failing to involve women workers in the preparation of the strike. The strike was started by two thousand male workers in the *basma* sector. It took an intervention by the

trade union headquarters, as well as self-organizing on the part of women workers themselves, who threatened to go on their own separate strike, before a general strike of all seven thousand tobacco workers in the city was declared.⁶³

The special characteristics of the Haskovo *basma* workers—a compact, homogeneous group of skilled workers with strong traditions of labor organizing—gave them disproportionate influence in the local trade union branch. This influence carried over nationwide, as evidenced by the following NTS leaflet text, which paints a dark picture of tobacco workers' post-*tonga* situation:

Today, when the worker is oppressed by unbearable misery, high prices, unemployment, inhuman capitalist exploitation, he is forced to sell the labor of his whole family, wife and children, and again he lives in misery, and now when only the wife, daughter, mother or sister of the male worker will be preferred, a family of four or five could not survive in today's dearth on a forty-to-fifty-lev daily wage. ...

Working mothers will go to work in the warehouse for a miserable wage to feed an unemployed husband and children, abused intolerably by masters and various clerks, pressed by thoughts of their children abandoned on the street, the arbitrariness of fate, housework (cooking, laundry, cleaning), they often fall unconscious during work due to exhaustion, thoughts, and hunger. This hard life creates domestic quarrels, family tragedies, and the women workers, unable to bear this hard life, often end their lives by poisoning themselves or committing suicide.⁶⁴

The leaflet's position was not an isolated example, and the NTS publications routinely bemoaned the *tonga*-induced "lamentable situation in which wives provide for their husbands and children for their fathers" and in which "children send off their mothers in the morning and welcome them in the evening with bitter tears in their eyes. Other [children] are left on the sidewalks outside the warehouses, unattended and unprotected."⁶⁵ From the NTS point of view, one of the most undesirable effects of the rationalization process was the substitution of men's with women's labor and the threat this posed to men's position as (main) breadwinners. Trade union publications highlighted the social tensions between women's gainful employment and their domestic and care responsibilities while at the same time depicting in vividly dark imagery any real or hypothetical changes in family breadwinner models. Nevertheless, NTS publications did not explicitly question women's right to work and contained no clear-cut calls for their exclusion from the labor market.

The restructuring of production processes related to the introduction of the *tonga* system evidently destabilized the gender-based segmentation of the tobacco labor market. Men's exclusive right to the highest-paying occupations began to be challenged as a limited number of women were hired as balers. Men tobacco workers called for a formal ban on women's access to the position, making this one of their major demands during the 1936 tobacco strike. The right-wing press was quick to point out the discrepancy between this demand and organized labor's official declarations in support of gender equality and women workers' rights.⁶⁶

Gender and Rationalization on a Different Scale: The Politics of the Communist Labor Movement from the Local to the International

Basma processing was heavily concentrated in a few tobacco centers in the south and southeast of the country, with Haskovo as the most important center. Regional specificities soon resulted in divergent reactions toward the implementation of the *tonga* system. When a group of workers in Plovdiv agreed to work under the new system, this provoked a regional conflict with the militant anti-*tonga* faction in Haskovo.⁶⁷

By December 1930, the issue of the *tonga* system and the resulting conflicts within the Bulgarian “revolutionary” labor movement had reached Moscow. This escalation of the conflict into the international sphere was facilitated by tensions between the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) organs in exile and the party structures on the ground. Moscow-based Bulgarian communists accused their comrades in Bulgaria of both left-wing and right-wing deviation, and they used their influence and positions within the Comintern and the Profintern to bring local and national organs in line. Internal party politics aside, the Profintern’s criticism of the NTS’s position on the *tonga* rationalization appears to be part of a general shift in the communist labor movement during the so-called Third Period, adopted in 1928–1929 and marked by an “ultra-left” policy and pronounced hostility to political reformism under the slogan “class against class.”⁶⁸ In light of this new approach, the NTS campaign “Down with the *Tonga*” was deemed a deviation from the official communist stance on rationalization. In December 1930, the BCP’s organs in exile brought the issue to the Profintern’s Balkan Section and its Union of Food Workers, as well as to the Comintern. The BCP’s organs in exile, the Profintern, and the Comintern’s bodies all agreed that the position and course of action of the NTS were in need of correction. Their criticism centered on two points. First, they argued that focusing solely on the *tonga* system left out important aspects of the communist policy toward rationalization. The *tonga* system was just one of many rationalization methods, and the NTS should form “committees against capitalist rationalization” instead of “committees against *tonga*.” Second, only some Bulgarian tobacco workers would be deeply affected by the *tonga* system, and the NTS’s partisanship was already leading to disunity and internal conflicts between workers affected by the *tonga* system and those who weren’t. This, the resolution claimed, would weaken communist influence among tobacco workers.⁶⁹

In January 1931, an article titled “Mistakes and Lessons of the Fight against the *Tonga*” appeared in the Profintern’s official journal, *Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale (The Red International of Labor Unions)*. The article outlined the essence of the problem, namely, that simplification and standardization of production processes had made many skilled workers redundant, particularly in the *basma* sector, and replaced them with the cheaper labor of women and youths. The author then proceeded to explain how the misguided and divisive policies of the NTS had alienated large groups of workers, thus damaging and weakening the Bulgarian communist labor movement. Finally, the article gave instructions as to how communist trade unions should address rationalization in an inclusive manner that would preserve and strengthen the unity of the working class. The article insisted that, in addition to fighting against the *tonga* system, communists should also fight against

other forms of rationalization, including the introduction of piecework payment systems, internal regulations that strengthened employers' control and supervision, increased output standards, and other forms of rationalization that affected women workers particularly hard. None of the Profintern documents mentioned above explicitly addressed the gendered implications of the issue, preferring to couch tensions within the working class in gender-neutral wording. Yet, the Profintern's instructions on how to address rationalization in an inclusive manner targeted women workers specifically by emphasizing the need to include gender-specific demands such as equal pay for equal work and paid maternity leave.⁷⁰

Communist policy on gender and rationalization in the so-called Third Period is clearly outlined in a letter from the RILU's Balkan Section to "the Profintern's supporters in Bulgaria," dated October 1, 1931. The letter offered guidance and critique on how to align Bulgarian communist trade unions' policies with the decisions taken at the 1930 Profintern Congress. The "struggle against the *tonga*" was singled out as an example of a wrong policy and contrasted with the "right" demands that trade unions should be fighting for, such as a seven-hour working day without wage cuts, an expansion of social security, a fight against piece work and against restrictions on unionization, etc. The letter also stressed the need for work among women workers and again recommended targeting women through gender-specific demands such as equal pay for equal work, paid maternity leave, socialized childcare, and improved working conditions.⁷¹ These documents echo other Profintern publications from this period, in which skilled male workers were labeled "working-class aristocracy" and accused of "alignment with the bourgeoisie." In the same 1930 publication, the Soviet trade unionist Grigoriy Smolianskiy also stressed the need to address the structural shifts taking place as a result of "capitalist rationalization," such as the need to involve the increased numbers of women and young workers into the labor movement.⁷²

The Profintern's critique targeted the Haskovo communists in particular, who, due to their large share of the local *basma* sector, were the most radical and vocal supporters of the Down with the *Tonga* policy. This conflict probably contributed to BCP Central Committee's decision to conduct a purge (*chistka*) among Haskovo communists in November 1931, following accusations of Trotskyism and insubordination.⁷³

If we take a look at Bulgarian women workers' protests around rationalization, it becomes clear that the Profintern's insistence on an inclusive approach was, to a large extent, aimed at incorporating the forms of rationalization that were relevant to traditionally marginalized groups, such as women and youths. The reorganization of wage policies through the (re)introduction of piecemeal schemes, minimum daily quotas, time-motion measurement technics, etc. constituted one group of popular rationalization practices in the tobacco industry that women workers fought particularly hard against. The strike in the tobacco warehouse Orienttabako in Haskovo in 1931, for example, was triggered by the imposition of minimum daily production quotas, which, according to the striking workers, were not achievable within normal working hours but were instead used to extract unpaid overtime.⁷⁴

Women workers also protested new factory regulations that standardized and routinized production steps by introducing various forms of scientific management. In November 1932, the women's communist newspaper *Rabotnichka* (*Woman*

Worker) published an article on the organization of labor in the Balkan Tabak warehouse in Haskovo. In addition to the *tonga* system, the company had also recently implemented Taylorism. Women workers complained that the new systems intensified labor and reduced their freedom to a minimum.⁷⁵ A leaflet from the Sofia NTS branch similarly claimed that in addition to the *tonga* system, employers now kept productivity records that “doubled the exploitation of women workers.”⁷⁶ In another example, a 1940 report on women tobacco workers in the village of Maglizh lamented the consequences of the new rationalization methods that the German company Hansa had recently implemented. These included timing workers’ movements and requiring a sustained rate of thirty-two tobacco bundles every seventy seconds for the whole fourteen-hour shift.⁷⁷ These practices were, of course, not limited to the tobacco industry but were also widespread in other sectors.

Conclusion

Starting from the early 1930s, structural changes in the tobacco industry, prompted by the advent of the world economic crisis and German economic expansionism into Southeastern Europe, led to a deep restructuring of labor processes, known in the terminology of the time as rationalization, in the Bulgarian tobacco industry. The introduction of the new *tonga* system—the most impactful of a variety of rationalization technologies—had a profoundly gendered effect on the industry, making a significant number of skilled male tobacco workers redundant and disproportionately decreasing average male wages, which, in turn, led to a further feminization of an already majority-female workforce.

The issue of the *tonga* rationalization galvanized an already militant and well-organized labor force. In the early 1930s, it featured very prominently in the agenda of trade unions across the political spectrum. Depending on their political and ideological affiliations, trade unions employed a wide repertoire of actions, including strikes, public demonstrations, lobbying the state, and collective bargaining. Their agenda ranged from the radical Left’s demand for a complete ban of the *tonga* system to the social democrats’ call to limit the scope of rationalization and mitigate its negative impact on workers.

Organized labor’s reaction to and struggle against this particular rationalization process was deeply gendered, an aspect that only becomes truly visible if, in addition to gender and skill, we employ the analytical lens of scale. The carefully crafted gender-neutral language in official trade union documents often subsumed women workers under references to a gender-neutral yet ontologically male working class. However, when we examine the local level, the gender-based tensions generated by the substitution of skilled (men’s) with unskilled (women’s and/or youths) labor become clearly visible. A closer look at the communist tobacco trade union politics reveals the disproportionate influence of skilled men tobacco workers and their struggle to retain gender-based privileges in the workplace and the family. At the same time, the subsequent conflict with the Profintern shows limitations to this influence, which were imposed by international affiliations and official ideological stances. Consequently, the movement’s internal contradictions—unfolding in the context of a particular political constellation and an ongoing economic crisis—resulted in a

polyvalent, ambiguous, and nonlinear trade union policy formed through the clash of activists' conservative notions of gendered work and family roles against internationally adopted progressive programs.

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If not otherwise specified, all translations of quotations are my own.

Notes

1. Elena Motova, *Memoirs*, Sp 2262B, Tsentralen Durzhven Arhiv, Bulgaria (hereafter TsDA).
2. *Eho*, July 7, 1930.
3. *Stenografski dnevnitsi na XXII-to Obiknoveno narodno subranie*, December 16, 1930, p. 349.
4. The phenomenon has been researched for a number of contexts; see, e.g., Alexandra Ghiț, "Gendered Work and Women's Labor Activism in Romanian Tobacco Factories from the 1920s to the 1960s", *International Labor and Working-Class History* 104 (forthcoming); Helen Chenut, "The Gendering of Skill as Historical Process: The Case of French Knitters in Industrial Troyes, 1880-1939," in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, eds. Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 77-108; Laura L. Frader, *Breadwinners and Citizens: Gender and the Making of the French Social Model* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Laura L. Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries, 1914-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).
5. Yurdan Ivanov, *Bezrobotitsata v tyutyuneviya bransh i tyutyunevata manipulatsiya tonga* (Sofia, 1932), 18-19.
6. Dimitir Popanastasov, *Vuzmozhnostta da budat povisheni nadnitsite na tyutyunorabotnitsite v Bulgaria* (Sofia, 1938), 3; *Trud*, June 25, 1938; Simeon Bozhinov, *Trudut v tyutyunomanipulatsionniya otrasul: opit za statist. izsledvane* (Sofia, 1941), 6.
7. The article's approach is indebted to a cluster of literature on the ambiguities, contradictions, and complexities of state socialist gender regimes. See in particular Susan Zimmermann, "Gender Regime and Gender Struggle in Hungarian State Socialism," *Aspasia* 4 (2010): 1-24.
8. Susan Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft. Internationale Geschlechterpolitik, IGB-Gewerkschafterinnen und die Arbeiter- und Frauenbewegungen der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Wien, 2021), 446-47.
9. Frader, *Breadwinners and Citizens*.
10. Laura Lee Downs, "Industrial Decline, Rationalization and Equal Pay: The Bedaux Strike at Rover Automobile Company," *Social History* 15 (1990): 45-73.
11. John R. Lampe, *The Bulgarian Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 53.
12. Marin Marinov, "Vunshniat stokoobmen i iznosut na tyutyun prez 1938," *Bulgarski tyutyun* 1-2 (1940): 25.
13. Mary Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2013), 114; Vladimir Zlatarski, "Bulgarskoto zlato. Turgoviyata s tyutyun mezhdur Bulgaria i Tretiya raih," *Istoricheski pregled* 1-2 (2011): 99-120, 3-4 (2011): 109-27; Martin Ivanov and Daniel Vachkov, *Istoriya na vunshniya durzhaven dulg na Bulgaria, 1878-1944*, vol. 2, *Bulgarskiyat vunshen dulg mezhdur dvete svetovni vojni (1919-1944)* (Sofia, 2008), 137, 159, 190-204.
14. Marinov, "Vunshniyat stokoobmen," 25.
15. Marko Dimitrov, *Durzhava i iekonomika v Bulgaria mezhdur dvete svetovni vojni 1919-1939* (Sofia, 2014), 237-38.
16. Ivan Pitekov, *Tyutyuneva istoriya na Bulgaria 1909-2009* (Sofia, 2010), 76-77.

17. *Bulgarski tyutyunotehnik*, August 1, 1930.
18. Jacques Aseov, *Tyutyunut v bulgarskoto stopanstvo* (Sofia, 1933), 175–90; Juan Carmona-Zabala, “German Economic Power in Southeastern Europe: The Case of Reemtsma and the Greek Tobacco Merchants (1923–1939),” *Business History* 64 (2022): 537–57.
19. Tobacco exported to Czechoslovakia was almost double in price compared to the *tonga*-processed tobacco exported to Germany. See: Marinov “Vunshniyat stokoobmen,” 25.
20. Zlatarski, “Bulgarskoto zlato.”
21. Marinov, “Vunshniyat stokoobmen,” 25.
22. Juan Zabala, “State Expansion and Economic Integration: A Transnational History of Oriental Tobacco in Greece and Germany (1880–1941)” (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2018).
23. Veselina Uzunova, *Nerazkazanite istorii na haskovskite industrialtsi* (Sofia, 2021), 41.
24. The gender segregation in the labor market was not only routinely mentioned in numerous sources but, due to the gendered nature of the Bulgarian language, is also evident in the names of the positions. Positions held overwhelmingly by women were always used in their feminine form (e.g., *chistachka* instead of *chistach*).
25. Ivanov, *Bezrobotitsata v tyutyuneviya bransh*, 6–14.
26. In the early 1930s, the price of a bale of tobacco processed using the *tonga* system was 12 levs per kg whereas the *shirok pastal* tobacco was 19–20 levs per kg and *basma* tobacco was 30–32 levs per kg. Ivanov, *Bezrobotitsata v tyutyuneviya bransh*, 6–9.
27. Ivanov, *Bezrobotitsata v tyutyuneviya bransh*, 6–14.
28. Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*.
29. Sotir Filipovich, *Bulgarskiyat tyutyun: stopanski i sotsialni otrazheniya* (Plovdiv, 1942), 60–79.
30. Data for 1926: Glavna direktsiya na statistkata, *Statisticheski godishnik na Tsarstvo Bulgaria* (Sofia, 1929), p. 157; Data for 1931–1937: Ministerstvo na turgoviyata, promishlenostta i truda. *Otchet za deinostta na Direktsiyata na truda i obshtestvenite osigurovki za 1931–1937* (Sofia, 1939), 135.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Ministerstvo na turgoviyata, promishlenostta i truda, *Godishen otchet na Otdelenieto za truda za 1926* (Sofia, 1928), 37; Glavna direktsiya na statistkata, *Statisticheski godishnik na Tsarstvo Bulgaria* (Sofia, 1942), 432–35; Dimitur Popanastasov, *Materialnoto polozhenie na tyutyunevoto rabotnichestvo i sklyuchvaneto na kolektivnen trudov dogovor* (Sofia, 1937), 3.
33. Statistical data on local trade union sections for 1931, TsDA, f. 38B Nezavisimi rabotnicheski profesionalni suyuzi [Independent Labour Trade Unions] (hereafter f. 38B), op. 1, a.e. 216.
34. *Eho*, September 30, 1930; *Bulgarski tyutyunotehnik*, August 1, 1930.
35. *Trud*, July 10, 1938; Bozhinov, *Trudut v tyutyunomanipulatsionniya otrasul*.
36. Dimitur Mladenov, *Razvitie i postizheniya na revolyutsionnoto profsuyuzno dvizhenie v Bulgaria* (Sofia, 1976), 48.
37. *Ibid.*, 131.
38. Affiliated with the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU).
39. Report of the Central Body of the Free General Trade Union Federation, TsDA, f. 273K Reformistki profsuyuzi [Reformist Trade Unions], op. 1, a.e. 3, p. 8. TsDA, f. 3B Zadgranichni organi na BKP [BCP’s organs in exile] (hereafter f. 3B), op. 4, a.e. 293.
40. Neli Doncheva, “Anarhizmut v Haskovo,” *Izvestiya na durzhavnite arhivi* 72 (1996): 253–74; Mariya Bozhikova and Leko Lekov, *Stachkata na haskovskite tyutyunorabotnitsi prez 1929. Sbornik dokumenti* (Haskovo, 1979).
41. *Ustav na Tyutyunorabot. sektsiya pri Demokraticeskata organizatsiya Haskovo* (Haskovo, 1921); Rositsa Stoyanova, “Mladezhkiyat suyuz, zhenskite i profesionalni grupi kum Demokraticeskata partiya (1924–1934),” *Istoricheski pregled* 50–51: 128–51.
42. Dimitur Mladenov, op. cit., 124, 131.
43. See note 39.
44. Georgi Vangelov, *Tyutyunorabotnitsi: Spomeni i belezhki za borbite na tyutyunorabotnitsite v Bulgaria* (Sofia, 1955).
45. *Trud*, July 10, 1938.
46. Ivanov, *Bezrobotitsata v tyutyuneviya bransh*, 12.
47. Resolution of the NTS, September 19, 1926, TsDA, f. 173K Narodno subranie [Parliament], op. 4, a.e. 363, p. 92.

48. *Narod*, June 20, 1930; *Tyutyunorabotnik*, August 20, 1930.
49. *Eho*, August 13, 1930.
50. *Narod*, August 16, 1930.
51. Ivanov, op. cit., 20.
52. *Narod*, August 25, 1930; *Narod*, August 29, 1930.
53. Susan Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 446–47.
54. Vasil Vasilev, “Dvizhenieto na bezrabotnite v Bulgaria po vreme na svetovната ikonomicheska kriza ot 1929–1933,” *Profsvuyuzni letopisi* 5 (1966): 196.
55. *Zakon za vremenno ednokratno podpomagane na osigurenite pri fonda “Obshtestveni osigurovki” rabotnitsi, ostanali v prinuditelna bezrabotitsa i poradi murtuv sezon, nyamashti pravo na obezhtetenie po Zakona za nastanyavane na rabota i osiguryavane pri bezrabotitsa* (Sofia, 1933).
56. Leaflet of the Committee against *Tonga* in Haskovo, August 1, 1930, TsDA, f. 38B, op. 1, a.e. 155; Nikolova and Bogdanov, “Nyakoi dokumenti za stachnite borbi,” 162–64; Dobrin Michev, *NRPS. Suzdavane i deinost, 1925–1936* (Sofia, 1965), 73–74.
57. *Eho*, May 5, 1930.
58. History of the Haskovo anarchist organization, n.d., Durzhaven Arhiv – Haskovo [State Archives – Haskovo], f. 1646B Angel Todorov, op. 1, a.e. 3, 56–58.
59. Nikolova and Bogdanov, “Nyakoi dokumenti za stachnite borbi,” 164–66.
60. *Eho*, June 26, 1930; *Eho*, June 8, 1930.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Addresses from the striking committee and the Independent Tobacco Trade Union in Haskovo to the striking tobacco workers in Haskovo, n.d., TsDA, f. 166B Tyutyunorabotnicheski profsvuyuzi [Tobacco Trade Unions], op. 1, a.e. 46–47.
63. Eighth of March Talk, TsDA, f. 39B Tsentralen komitet na Bulgarskiya komunisticheski mladezhki suyz [Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Youth Union], op. 1, a.e. 118. Stefan Abadzhiev, *Spomeni ot izminatiya put: istoriyata na stachnite borbi na plovdivskite tyutyunorabotnitsi* (Sofia, 1982), 125–26; Dobrin Michev, “Dokument za tyutyunorabotnicheskata stachka prez 1929,” *Profsvuyuzni letopisi* 6 (1967): 194–95.
64. Leaflet of the NTS, n.d., TsDA, f. 166B, op. 1, a.e. 62.
65. Leaflet of the Committee against *Tonga* in Haskovo, August 1, 1930, TsDA, f. 38B, op. 1, a.e. 155.
66. Pavlina Laskova, “Tyutyunorabotnitsite v Bulgaria prez perioda 1934–1939,” *Godishnik na Sofiiskiya universitet – Ideologicheski katedri* 63 (1974): 98–122.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Reiner Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) 1920–1937* (Leiden: BRILL, 2016), 744–85.
69. Letter from the BCP Organs in Exile to BCP’s the Central Committee (CC), December 17–18, 1930, TsDA, f. 1B TsK na BKP [CC of BCP], op. 3, a.e. 209; Michev, *NRPS*, 73–74.
70. *Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale*, January 31, 1931.
71. TsDA, Kolektsiya mikrofilmi [Microfilms Collections] (hereafter KMF) 40, inventory number 937/96.
72. Grigoriy Smolyanskiy, “Revolutsionnoe profdvizhenie i problema rabochei aristokratii,” in: *Desiat’ let Profintern. Sbornik statei*, ed. A. Lozovskiy, G. Smolyanskiy, and I. Yuzefovich (Moscow, 1930), 81–98.
73. Protocol of the Political Secretariat of the Comintern, November 2, 1931, TsDA, f. 3B, op. 4, a.e. 354.
74. Addresses from the striking committee and the Independent Tobacco Trade Union in Haskovo to the striking tobacco workers in Haskovo, n.d., TsDA, f. 166B, op. 1, a.e. 46–47.
75. *Rabotnichka*, November 7, 1932.
76. Leaflet of NRPS against wage cuts, TsDA, f. 3B, op. 4, a.e. 256, p. 34.
77. Description of the exploitation of tobacco workers in the German enterprise “Hansa” by P. Kalaydziev, 1940, TsDA, f. 38B, op. 2, a.e. 48.