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### AIMS AND FORMS OF POLISH FEMINISTS ACTIVITY IN „STER” AND „NOWE SŁOWO” DURING THE 1<sup>ST</sup> WORLD WAR

The social situation of Polish women before the 1<sup>st</sup> World War was not radically different from the situation of women in other countries<sup>1</sup>. Similarly as in the most European countries Polish women had no rights for voting and limited accessibility to education on medium and higher level. Moreover, Victorian Age put severe moral obligations for women, and at the same time allowed men for much more freedom in this area of life. Hence Polish feminists demanded „Rights for women, morality for men”.

However the political situation was different since Poland was divided into three parts under foreign occupation. The problem of the rebirth of independent country in some way influenced the activity of Polish feminists. Still they underlined that the fight for women’s rights should not be postponed to the moment of the creation of independent Poland. The specific character of Polish emancipation was described in 1902 by Maria Turzyna in the paper „Good and bad will”:

The main feature of our women’s activity is its social character. Women in other countries fight for having equal rights with men. Our women first of all fight for the possibility of access to civil life and social duties even without equal rights with men. They want to cooperate with men in the common work for social goods<sup>2</sup>.

These words were written not without sadness. Women fighting for liberation of Poland wanted to have the same rights as men had. Maria Dulębianka used to say that while fighting for the rights of the Nation we should not forget about the rights of the women.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Sierakowska, *From the Partitions to an Independent State. The Feminist Movement in Poland in the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, [w:] *Women’s Movements. Networks and Debates in post-communist Countries in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, hg. Edith Saurer, Margareth Lanzinger, Elisabeth Frysak, Böhlau Verlag Köln-Weimar-Wien 2006, s. 475–494; R. Blobaum, *The ‘Woman Question’ in Russian Poland, 1890–1914*, „Journal of Social History” 2002, nr 35, s. 799–824.

<sup>2</sup> M. Turzyna, *Dobra i zła wola*, „Nowe Słowo” 1902, nr 4.

The Social character of women's movement in Poland led to the activation of efforts in the area of education. First of all women should have to take care about higher education. The lack of access to regular universities forced Polish women to the creation of secret, so called „Flying University” for women in Warsaw, organized by Jadwiga Szczawińska-Dawidowa. Many women who started their higher education in the Flying University, continued their studies on universities in Geneva, Zurich or, like Maria Curie-Skłodowska, in Paris.

Since political parties and organizations were forbidden in Polish Kingdom also women's organizations were secret. One of the first such organizations, the Circle of Women of Kingdom and Lithuania founded in 1886, was involved in patriot, independence activity. Its leader Cecylia Niewiadomska and her cooperators formed the group of progressive feminists who organized this movement in Poland, and moreover, found her place also in political parties<sup>3</sup>.

In 1889 there was a division in Polish emancipation movement. Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmidt, former activist of the Circle of Women of Kingdom and Lithuania, founded the Union in Warsaw which was the division of the International Women's Organization from Paris. The main aim of the Union was the fight for equal rights for women; the problem of the fight for independent country was not the most important<sup>4</sup>. The second group of Polish feminist movement was focused on education, taking care of Polish language, culture and tradition. It was strongly influenced by National Democracy, a party of strongly nationalist programme<sup>5</sup>.

Before the beginning of the I World War Polish women were strongly engaged into activity of paramilitary organizations involved into fight for the independence of Poland. The roots of such women's attitudes were connected with the tradition of Polish insurrections in November 1830 and January 1863. In 1913 the anti-

<sup>3</sup> J. Dufurat, *Kobiety w teatrze wojny. Społeczna i polityczna aktywność kobiet na ziemiach polskich w latach 1914–1918*, [w:] *O wojnę powszechną za wolność ludów... I wojna światowa na ziemiach polskich – aspekty społeczne, polityczne i militarne*, red. R. Kotowski, L. Michalska-Bracha, M. Przeniosło, Kielce 2014, s. 113–124; też, *Kobiety w kręgu lewicy niepodległościowej. Od Ligi Kobiet Pogotowai Wojennego do Ochotniczej Legii Kobiet (1908–1918/1919)*, Toruń 2002, s. 27; D. Wawrzykowska-Wierciochowa, *Od prądki do astronautki. Z dziejów kobiety polskiej, jej pracy i osiągnięć*, Warszawa 1963, s. 243–244; In the Circle of Women of Kingdom and Lithuania were active among others: Jadwiga Dziubińska, Iza Moszczeńska, Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska, Maria Wysłouchowa (the leader of peasant movement), Jadwiga Jahołkowska, Teodora Męczkowska, Maria Dzierżanowska, Teresa Ciszkiewiczowa, and women related to socialist movement: Maria Paszkowska, Marta Marchlewska, Estera Golde-Stroicka.

<sup>4</sup> J. Sikorska-Kulesza, *Trójzaborowe zjazdy kobiet na ziemiach polskich na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, [w:] *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki... Samoorganizowanie się kobiet na ziemiach polskich do 1918 roku (na tle porównawczym)*, red. A. Janiak-Jasińska, K. Sierakowska, A. Szwarz, Warszawa 2008, s. 81–95; K. Sierakowska, „Nowe Słowo” – trybuna polskich emancypantek, [w:] tamże, s. 69–80.; też, *Aspiracje polityczne Związku Równouprawnienia Kobiet*, [w:] *Kobieta i świat polityki. Polska na tle porównawczym w XIX i w początkach XX wieku*, red. A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarz, Warszawa 1994, s. 245–253.

<sup>5</sup> J. Dufurat, *Kobiety w kręgu lewicy...*, s. 28.

russian League of Women of War Allert was founded, with Iza Moszczeńska as the leader. The League cooperated with Józef Piłsudski's Rifle Squads and supported Polish Legions. Founders of the League criticized polish feminists from the Society for Equal Rights for Polish Women. In their opinion protest rallies were not sufficient for the realization of political aims. The League was rather inspired by the english League of Women which supported women in their economical activity and the improvement of qualifications. Although the League was mainly the political organization it also laid down the foundation for new forms of liberation movement, as was noticed by Joanna Dufrať.

Women engaged into League's actions were connected with radical left wing educational movement and with the group of polish feminists; in fact they treated themselves as feminists. Aleksandra Szczerbińska, the second wife of J. Piłsudski, declared her links with liberation movement and called herself „radical feminist”. She underlined the influence of western feminists for the creation of polish paramilitary organizations.

In 1912 there appeared the opportunity to engage into Rifle Squada, Piłsudski already promised that if he started to organize the army he would not forget about women's unit. Feminist movement was very popular in Europe in this time. In England suffragists chained themselves to bars on the streets and torched castles while fighting for women's rights. Feminists were also popular in France and other countries. Only socialists claimed that women should have equal rights with men<sup>7</sup>.

Women were active also in other paramilitary organizations like Military Organization of Polish Socialist Party, Intelligence Unit of I Brigade of Legions, or Polish Military Organization.

In such geopolitical circumstances polish feminists decided not to cooperate strictly with political parties. They were afraid that women and their interests will be used in current political confrontations and that politicians will forget about their promises after the resurrection of Poland. Of course they realized that it is indispensable to appeal to parties operating on polish territories – socialists, nationalists and peasant activists. But they claimed strongly that women's organizations and women should be independent, because they have separate aims.

Women's movement must be organized independently in order to obtain equal rights with other political parties, instead of being just a tool which is abandoned when it is not needed anymore<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Tamże, s. 85–86.

<sup>7</sup> A. Piłsudska, *Wspomnienia*, Warszawa 1989, s. 125.

<sup>8</sup> „Ster” 1907, nr 1.

This passage comes from the programme written by Paulina Kuczalska for the first issue of warsaw feminist paper „Ster” which appeared in 1907. The consequence of this radical stand was the decision that men are forbidden to apply for the membership in the Union for Equal Right of Polish Women<sup>9</sup>.

This radical position was expressed by Maria Dulębianka in the paper from 1907 entitled „Political stand of a woman”:

If we are supposed to make some important, independent actions, we should have to free ourselves from following other’s tracks. We must be able make independent statements and actions. We must have our own command and direction. We must find our own way. Otherwise we will never free from slavery and immaturity<sup>10</sup>.

Polish suffragists were gathered around two journals and consequently divided into two groups: warsaw group connected with „Ster” and cracow’s group connected with „Nowe Słowo”. The leader of the first wave of polish feminist movement was Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmidt, the editor of Lvov’s (1897 r.), and then warsaw’s „Ster” (1907–1914). Her strict collaborators in warsaw group were Józefa Bojanowska and Romana Pachucka. In Cracow the editorial board of the „New Word. Biweekly Social – Literary Magazine devoted to Women’s Matters” (1902–1907) comprised Maria Turzyna, Kazimiera Bujwidowa, Maria Dulębianka. Activists of both groups cooperated strictly and published articles in both journals. There were two organizations of polish feminists: the Union of Equal Rights for Polish Women, with the leader P. Kuczalska-Reinschmidt, and Polish Society of Equal Rights for Women founded by Ludwika Jaholowska, Teodora Męczkowska, Cecylia Walewska. Both organizations started in 1907, and both had similar aims, although the Society evolved from the Union.

The program of polish feminists contained the postulates typical for world’s liberation movement. First of all demands of equal rights for voting, changes and unification of education, admissibility of university studies and economical rights – equal salaries, rights to having own properties. Feminists required changes in civil rights – the Codex of Napoleon was burned on the Women’s Convention in 1908, as a symbol of humiliation of women in the family and the society. They were fighting also against alcoholism and prostitution.

But the activists of liberation movement in Poland also took part in current political life and realized that the so called „National Question” is the most important issue in polish politics. Feminists criticized the position of National Democracy.

<sup>9</sup> K. Orecka, *Prasa dla kobiet jako odzwierciedlenie zmiany roli i pozycji kobiety w dziewiętnastowiecznym społeczeństwie*, [w:] *Przeszłość – Teraźniejszość – Przyszłość. Problemy badawcze młodych politologów*, Kraków 2010, s. 23–35; J. Franke, *Polska prasa kobieca w latach 1820–1918. W kręgu ofiary i poświęcenia*, Warszawa 1999, s. 8.

<sup>10</sup> M. Dulębianka, *Polityczne stanowisko kobiety*, [w:] *Chcemy całego życia. Antologia polskich tekstów feministycznych z lat 1870–1939*, oprac. A. Górnicka-Boratyńska, Warszawa 1999, s. 238.

They were convinced that the policy of „national egoism” has led to antagonization of several nations living on polish territories, first of all to conflict between Poles and Ukrainians<sup>11</sup>.

The left wing of political arena was certainly closer to feminist’s ideology; in particular the vision of independence represented by Józef Piłsudski. Some of feminist leaders preferred radical option – Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmidt was close to communist’s ideology and kept distance to independence movement organised in Galitia<sup>12</sup>. Yet despite the ideological differences, feminists realised that the problem of independence was to important to be neglected:

(...) women always thought about themselves as citizens, even if they had no civil rights, they shared all duties with official citizens – men<sup>13</sup>.

They underlined that polish women have a great sense of duty for resurrected state, and that they should be one of the main power of resurrected nation, that the fight for independence should be carried in the name of „Ours and yours freedom” – the freedom of women and men<sup>14</sup>.

Women gathered around Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmidt, the editor of „Ster” were active in the Union of Equal Rights for Polish Women. The main aim of this radical organization was the fight for equal political rights for all women independently of their social status, political orientation and the wealth. Kuczalska, as well as her nearest collaborators Józefa Bojanowska and Kazimiera Bujwidowa, were convinced that „women’s question” should be separated from other social and political questions:

The history of our movement [...] teaches us that women taking active part in the fight for the liberation of all, do not obtain civil rights for themselves<sup>15</sup>.

The first issue of „Ster” was devoted mainly to the problem of women’s fight for equal rights in the whole world. In fact, this question was the constant problem discussed in the journal. Here is the characteristic quote from 1909:

(...) it represents the real democratic position, demands equal rights for all classes, equal justice, ethics, purity of behavior, freedom of conscience and civil rights for all with no difference with respect to sex, religion and nationality<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> M. Turzyna, *Wyzwalająca się kobieta*, Kraków 1906, s. 110–111.

<sup>12</sup> R. Pachucka, *Pamiętniki z lat 1914–1935*, „Walka”, s. 8.

<sup>13</sup> M. Turzyna, *dz. cyt.*, s. 112.

<sup>14</sup> Tamże, s. 114.

<sup>15</sup> „Ster” 1907, nr 1.

<sup>16</sup> „Ster” 1909, nr 1.

Feminists were in favour of common, direct and secret voting. They were convinced that the election to I Duma should be used to obtain the right for voting for women. Although they preferred to cooperate with socialist movement, they appealed also for the support to members of national democracy and peasant party. Candidates for members of parliament were regularly invited for conventions with the hope that with their help women's demands will be presented in the forum of Duma<sup>17</sup>. During the propagandist campaign in Warsaw feminists prepared notes: „For voting rights for women” and distributed them in the city. They also prepared a petition to Polish Circle in Duma, signed by 4 thousand women and given to Leon Petrażycki, who, as a member of parliament presented the problem in 1906 on the forum of Duma. He said: „It is in favor of society and culture to give women political rights, i.e. rights and social duties”<sup>18</sup>. In his talk he also asked for the equal treatment of men and women in civil rights, but these postulates were not realised in I Duma.

As we remarked above feminists were looking for support also on the right wing of political area, for example, they sent petitions to Stanisław Głąbiński, the activist of National Democracy. But still the support of the left wing seemed more promising. For example they invited for the meetings Ignacy Daszyński, the leader of galitian socialists, who wrote in his diary:

I cannot imagine what will be with the life of humans if the half of them – women – enter into this life with the will and strength corresponding not only to their number but also to their values, in some respects stronger than men's values<sup>19</sup>.

The cooperation with parties did not give the expected results. These feminists who tend to cooperate with the left wing were suspected that they were trying to convince the women connected with socialists for the application to the Union. The differences in programs make impossible closer connections with nationalists, despite the fact that National Democracy included women's postulates into their program. Activists of the new National Organization of Women claimed that:

when Poland becomes independent [...] it will be obvious that there is impossible to forbid the women voting rights and, in general, to forbid them access to rebuild Poland<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> K. Sierakowska, *Aspiracje polityczne...*, s. 247.

<sup>18</sup> L. Petrażycki, *O prawa dla kobiet*, Lwów 1919, s. 13.

<sup>19</sup> I. Daszyński, *Pamiętniki*, t. II, Warszawa 1957, s. 84.

<sup>20</sup> U. Jakubowska, *Kobiety w świecie polityki Narodowej Demokracji*, [w:] *Kobieta i świat polityki w niepodległej Polsce 1918–1939*. Zbiór studiów, red. A. Żarnowska, A. Szwarc, Warszawa 1996, s. 146–147.

Although socialists as well as nationalists supported women's demands, they were not the main points of their programs. P. Kuczalska-Reinschmidt was disappointed and wrote that socialists used to say: „do not disturb us now and you will obtain the rights in the future better society which will be built by us”, while nationalists asked women: „do not sacrifice the interests of the nation to your own peculiar interests”<sup>21</sup>. Also the cooperation with peasant parties was not realised although in their programs the support for women's demands was also present.

About 1910 feminist activists were already aware that the realization of their postulates will be possible only in free Poland<sup>22</sup>. The I World War made many women active in the field of military actions. The first women's troops were organised already before the beginning of the war; in Lvov since 1910, then in Cracow and other galitian cities. In 1914, Polish Women's Rifle Squads and the women's troops of the Rifle Union were unified under the command of Janina Antoniewiczówna. Women took a serious role in Polish Military Organization, in the League of Women of Military Support, founded in 1913 and in Voluntary Legion of Women<sup>23</sup>. They were working in Legions in intelligence service, some of them were even fighting on the front in men's uniforms. The separate and important side of feminist activity is women's scouting.

Despite the military and paramilitary activity during the war feminists did not forget about fighting for voting rights. They choosed the model of activity similar to the model of english feminists. In the opinion of most suffragists the situation of war should have been well used in order to realise their social and political postulates. The time of rapid changes for the whole society with no doubt offered the occasion for realising the most important aims of women's movement. So it is not surprising that during the war feminists were extremely active. A lot of women's organizations of different type were settled, moreover many women started to work.

In Warsaw feminists from the Union for Equal Right of Polish Women started several forms of social activity for the need of victims of war. They organized courses for nurses, on 17 august of 1914 the series of medical lectures begun. Lectures were provided by physicians who were member of the Union<sup>24</sup>. On these courses a lot of warsaw women were well prepared to taking care for injured.

The Union organised also dinners rooms for workers and courses for analphabets directed by Maria Biniekówna. In fact, the whole period of war was the time of intensive activity for improving the level of education in Poland. Also feminists

<sup>21</sup> „Ster” 1907, nr 1, s. 21.

<sup>22</sup> R. Błobaum, „Kwestia kobieca” w Królestwie Polskim (1900–1914), [w:] *Działaczki społeczne, feministki, obywatelki... Samoorganizowanie się kobiet na ziemiach polskich do 1918 roku (na tle porównawczym)*, red A. Janiak-Jasińska, K. Sierakowska, A. Szwarz, Warszawa 2008, s. 54.

<sup>23</sup> J. Dufurat, *Kobiety w kręgu lewicy...*, s. 78–79.

<sup>24</sup> R. Pachucka, *dz. cyt.*, s. 8–9; Among women-physicians delivering courses there were: dr Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka, dr Zofia Lipińska. In the first year of war there was 272 courses with 1555 participants.

were strongly engaged in this activity and organised courses of reading and writing for children and adults. Through all the war members of the Union organised courses preparing girls to exams of maturity and to further studies. They believed that after the war all universities will be open for women.

Still feminists focused on political moves directed to obtaining full voting rights for women in independent Poland. All of them were connected with support for the fight for resurrection of Poland.

After the Proclamation of President W. Wilson, the activists of the Union expressed written gratitude in english embassy for official proclaiming of independent Poland. They were grateful to President of USA also for his propagation of peace. Proclamation of Wilson was treated as an occasion to recall that modern society consists of men and women with equal rights. Feminists underlined that they write these words as citizens without voice, representatives of „silent mass”<sup>25</sup>.

Dynamic situation of war motivated women to stronger actions of propagandist character. In January 1917 Temporary State Council begun preparation to the first project of Constitution. In March 1917 the project of voting ordination was published in which only men have voting rights. Public discussion concerning these proposals activated feminists who undertaken concrete actions for blocking this project. On 24 April 1917 a delegation of the League of Women of Galitia and Silesia had given the director of Polish Circle in Vien a petition for extending voting rights.

On the 8–9 September 1917 r. in Warsaw it took place a convention of Women from three divisions of Poland representing different political and social options. The main theme of this meeting was: „Women as citizens of independent, united Poland”.

The Convention was radical, Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka who opened it said:

We Polish women, [...], do not want to be passive observers but we want to be active, to take part directly in the act of resurrection of Poland<sup>26</sup>.

Participants of the meeting discussed matters of education and culture of women, but first of all they referred to the current political affairs. The first postulate contained an agreement in the question of independent and democratic Poland and the call to all women for activity in creation of it. Next there were postulates concerning equal voting rights for men and women, active and passive voting rights for women in city and rural governments, creation of political vying fighting for women's rights, and the National Council of Women which in the future was supposed to join to the International Committee for Women's Rights<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> R. Pachucka, *dz. cyt.*, s. 17–18.

<sup>26</sup> *Pamiętnik Zjazdu Kobiet Polskich w Warszawie w r. 1917*, red. J. Budzińska-Tylicka, Warszawa 1918, s. 2–3.

<sup>27</sup> R. Pachucka, *dz. cyt.*, s. 27.



The next half of 1917 was full of women's manifestations, in december on the meeting with about one thousand women, a resolution was claimed about foundation of Central Political Committee of Equal Rights for Women. On 5<sup>th</sup> of january 1918 this Committee was actually organised<sup>28</sup>. The activity of women during the war with no doubt had the influence for decision of Head of the State for giving women voting rights. Before this act a delegation of Central Committee of Equal Rights for Polish Women visited Józef Piłsudski (10.XI.1918). Józefa Budzińska-Tylicka and Maria Chmieleńska on behalf of the Committee declared the tasks of political rights for women. One should mention that they referred to „Manifest for people” of Lublin's Government of Ignacy Daszyński, in which political and social rights for women wer declared.

While taking part in military operations and approvisation, women did not forget about ideological work. In 1918 a brochure of Z. Daszyńska-Golińska „Voting rights for women” was published with a project of parliament activity. The author asked women not to be passive and to use their new rights. Many years of social work made women well prepared to undertake new forms of activity. Daszyńska-Golińska proposed women in parliament to take part in the following fields: regulations concerning care of mothers and children, education, care of poor people, social hygiene, legislation concerning security and insurance, work for women and youthful, equal payment for people with equal qualifications, support for cooperatives, fight against alcoholism, revision of civil codex. These proposals due to Z. Daszyńska-Golińska shown a spectrum of unsolved problems in independent Poland to deal with by women. In fact they coincided with postulates posed in 1917 by the Convention of Polish Women. Satisfaction with fresh rights did not make women free of social work carried so far. Z. Daszyńska-Golińska wrote:

Social and educational work for polish women was always not only a fight for rights of women but first of all a national service and duty. And I hope that in the nearest future in our new reality it will keep this character<sup>29</sup>.

Hence she was convinced that for voting rights women must pay with hard social work. In contrast many feminists claimed that voting rights are only a tool in the fight for full social equal rights.

The Decret of the Head of the State from 28 november 1918 was an ultimate answer for many years of consequent fight of polish women for their rights. Although the forms of this fight on polish territories, due to the lack of independence, was not so radical as in the western Europe, it finally led to the realisation of women's postulates.

<sup>28</sup> J. Dufurat, *Kobiety w kręgu lewicy...*, s. 283–288.

<sup>29</sup> Z. Daszyńska-Golińska, *Prawo wyborcze kobiet*, Warszawa 1918, s. 3.

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## **CELE I FORMY DZIAŁALNOŚCI POLSKICH FEMINISTEK SKUPIONYCH WOKÓŁ „STERU” I „NOWEGO SŁOWA” PODCZAS PIERWSZEJ WOJNY ŚWIATOWEJ**

Artykuł ten stanowi szkic działalności działaczek feministycznych skupionych wokół warszawskich czasopism „Ster” i „Nowe Słowo” u progu niepodległości. Aktywność środowisk feministycznych została zaprezentowana na tle działalności innych ugrupowań kobiecych, które zaangażowały się w działalność polityczną, społeczną i paramilitarną w tym okresie.

Sytuacja kobiet na ziemiach polskich przed wybuchem I wojny światowej nie różniła się diametralnie od sytuacji kobiet w innych krajach. Epoka wiktoriańska nałożyła na kobiety surowe wymagania moralne, zezwalając jednocześnie na swobodę obyczajową mężczyzn. Stąd też wśród haseł polskich feministek pojawiło się hasło: „Praw dla kobiet czystości dla mężczyzn”. Jak w większości krajów europejskich Polki nie posiadały praw wyborczych, a ponadto miały utrudniony wstęp na uniwersytety oraz ograniczone możliwości kształcenia na poziomie średnim.

W odmiennej zaś sytuacji politycznej znajdowały się ziemie polskie, które były podzielone pomiędzy trzech zaborców. Brak państwa polskiego wyznaczał kierunki działania polskich feministek, które uwzględniały w swoich programach kwestię niepodległości Polski. Podkreślały jednak, że nie można odkładać walki o prawa kobiet do momentu odzyskania niepodległości.

Przedstawicielki ruchu feministycznego uczestniczyły także w bieżącym życiu politycznym i zdawały sobie sprawę, że tzw. „kwestia narodowa” jest w polityce polskiej sprawą najważniejszą. Ustosunkowały się również do partii i liderów, którzy na początku wieku XX zabiegali o poparcie społeczne. Feministki krytykowały stanowisko polityczne Narodowej Demokracji, uważając, że polityka „egoizmu narodowego” prowadziła do zantagonizowania różnych nacji wchodzących w skład społeczeństwa zamieszkującego ziemie polskie, przede wszystkim do konfliktu między Polakami a Ukraińcami.

Feministkom zdecydowanie bliżej było do lewicowych ruchów politycznych, łączyły się z ideą niepodległości reprezentowaną przez socjalistę Józefa Piłsudskiego. Wybierały również opcję radykalną – Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmidt skłaniała się ku poglądom komunistycznym i zachowywała dystans wobec ruchów niepodległościowych organizowanych w Galicji.

Mimo pewnych różnic światopoglądowych, feministki zdawały sobie sprawę z dążeń niepodległościowych i obywatelskich. Uważały, że aspekt ten powinien być wykorzystany w politycznej walce kobiet: „(...) kobiety czuły się zawsze obywatelkami, nie mając żadnych obywatelskich praw – a dzieląc tylko wszystkie obowiązki i poświęcenia uznanych obywateli mężczyzn”. Podkreślały, że Polki mają wielkie poczucie obowiązku wobec odradzającego się państwa, i że powinny stanowić jedną z sił odradzającego się narodu, że walka o niepodległość winna toczyć się w imię hasła „Za naszą i waszą wolność” – wolność kobiet i mężczyzn, wolność Polek i Polaków.

Kobiety skupione w Warszawie wokół redaktorki lwowskiego „Steru” P. Kuczalskiej-Reinschmidt i działające w Związku Równouprawnienia Kobiet Polskich, którego jednym z priorytetowych celów było wywalczenie równych praw politycznych dla kobiet niezależnie od pochodzenia społecznego, orientacji politycznej, pozycji majątkowej. ZRKP był radykalną organizacją feministyczną, który stał na straży interesów kobiet. Zarówno Kuczalska, jak i jej najbliższe współpracownice Józefa Bojanowska i Kazimiera Bujwidowa uważały, że zdecydowanie należało oddzielić „kwestię kobiecą” od innych kwestii społecznych i politycznych.

Feministki uważały, że okres wojny należy jak najlepiej wykorzystać dla uzyskania społecznych i politycznych korzyści dla kobiet. Uważały, że był to moment, w którym dokonują się przemiany społeczne, spowodowane wspólną walką mężczyzn i kobiet o niepodległość kraju. Przemiany, o charakterze politycznym, dzięki którym kobiety uzyskają pełnię praw obywatelskich oraz przemiany obyczajowe, dzięki którym kobiety będą korzystać ze wszelkich praw i swobód obywatelskich – będą miały wolny dostęp do szkolnictwa wszelkich typów, będą mogły wykonywać wszystkie zwody, uczestniczyć w życiu publicznym i politycznym.