

**WOMEN
FOR
PEACE**

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**ALWAYS
DISOBEDIENT:
ETHICAL
PRINCIPLES**



Women in Black against war

We are a group of women who, in Black and Silence, express our protest against war. This type of protest was by Israeli woman pacifist in January 1988, protesting against the occupation of the Palestinian people, supported by Palestinian and American women. In this manner, the women have demonstrated that women's solidarity confronts us and divides us with well defined aims.

In February of this year, Italian woman pacifists in the same way protested their opposition to the war in the Persian Gulf. The same was done by woman pacifists in Germany and Britain. Some weeks ago, Women in Black in Italy protested against the war in Yugoslavia.

Women in Black of Belgrade each Wednesday gather in public places to protest, in black and silence, against the war.

Why the color Black and why in Silence?

Usually, women dress in Black for the death of people close to them. We, on the other hand, dress in black to mourn the death of people both unknown and known, victims of this war.

We dress in Black to protest against the irresponsible and nationalistic "leaders", responsible for the victims of this war; these leaders utilize military power and violence as their only argument.

The Silence we chose as a refusal to use superfluous words which impede thinking for oneself and about others.

The Silence characterizes the life of the majority of citizens of this



country. The mass-media is closed to us. We want to demonstrate that Silence does Not Mean Approval, but, in fact, the contrary.

The color Black along with Silence express our Refusal of this war and any type of war.

With arms one can never impede war, let alone obtain peace. We are deeply convinced that respect for human life is the premiss for any political activity.

We Women in Black wish to stimulate different values than those dominated by the patriarchal spirits which are imposed upon us: nonviolence in place of violence, solidarity instead of oppression, life instead of destruction, necrophilia and death.

We invite all women to join us (every Wednesday at 15.30h) in this act of rebellion against the war, against those in power, against the patriarchate.

We did not want this war, we refuse it.

We oppose it with nonviolence and women's solidarity.

Belgrade, October 9, 1991.



Always disobedient

20 years of Women in Black

On October, 9th it will be twenty years since we first took to the street.

We are still in the streets. We still advocate the same ethic principles and political ideas, and the most important among them are:

Not in our name: public and non-violent resistance to the regime that practised aggression and waged wars in our name; and after the wars, to all those who deny, downplay, relativise or glorify the crimes committed in our name. We will never stop disturbing the government and the public by questioning about the responsibility for the atrocities from the past. We will not consent to keep silent about this in the name of 'project partnership' with the state or in the name of 'integration processes.' We will not stop having a critical stance towards every government, firstly towards the government of the state we live in, and then towards every other government.

We don't let ourselves be deceived by our own people: the feminist ethic of responsibility always commands us to oppose nationalists, militarists, all patriarchal people firstly in the state we live in and then in all other states. Our feminist ethic is the assumption of responsibility and care for a given time, context and space, but also for the whole world we live in.

Always disobedient: to war and all other aspects of patriarchy. We are disobedient because we are responsible citizens, autonomous women, and



free-thinking beings. We reject obedience to patriarchal power because this is 'unfreedom' and slavery for women as well as irresponsibility towards the country and world we live in.

For 20 years, we have been building a policy of peace, non-violence, solidarity, feminism, anti-militarism, anti-fascism, anti-homophobia, alter-globalism...

For 20 years we have been the witnesses of a politics of evil, but also the actresses of non-violent resistance, which has left deep and indelible traces in each of us, in our activist community, but also in society.

For 20 years we have been transforming our rage and indignation into acts of activist and civic responsibility in spite of all injustices.

For 20 years we have been jumping over the walls of hatred and evil as well as consciously, deliberately and wittingly violating all sorts of imposed politics and consensus between, on the one hand, the state and, on the other, the nation, the army, the churches, the parties,...

For 20 years we have been revealing the links between war and poverty, between war and the daily growth of violence in an allegedly peaceful period, between war and the sudden accumulation of wealth by particular groups in power, between war and the destruction of the educative and health systems, between war and the destruction of solidarity among people, between war and the loss of hope in a better tomorrow,...

For 20 years we have been organising non-violent actions against regional and global militarism; in our actions and thinking, we always have in mind the interdependency and connection of local, regional and global patriarchal power.



For 20 years we have been building, persistently and patiently, a politics of trust, mutual support and just peace 'from above' - through a direct relationship, first of all with the victims of crimes committed in our name, and also with all the people marginalised, excluded from economic, political, and social power, both in our society and in the whole world.

For 20 years we have been creating an alternative history and creating knowledge, by linking the theory and practice, the ethics and aesthetics of resistance on the basis of our activist experience - through reflection and exchange - in our society and in the whole world...

For 20 years we have been actively building networks of solidarity outside state, national borders and divisions. A multitude of threads connect us - feelings, values, principles – with our friends, both in ex-Yugoslavia and on all the continents...

For 20 years we have been caring about each other and developing a feminist ethic of care and feminist responsibility – together we build a fairer world...

Always disobedient!

Belgrade, 5 October 2011.

Staša Zajović



Staša Zajović

**Feminist ethics –
Women in Black resistance
Always disobedient**

In October 2011, was the twentieth anniversary of our first street protest. We are still in the streets. To this day, we have been guided by the moral imperative: *Not in our name!* In the first ten-year period, we lived in a country of state organized crimes; in a country that denied its criminal reality with the phrase ‘Serbia is not at war’. After the demise of the dictatorial regime, in October 2000, we went through a period of hope and unfulfilled expectations. Since then, governments and ruling coalitions have been shifting power. Over the past few years, we have been living in a Serbia heading toward ‘European integrations’, understood exclusively as a means of maintaining the ruling coalitions in power, by endless copying and reproducing ‘European’ laws, promoting ‘reconciliation’ without responsibility, implementing transitional laws and cooperating with the Tribunal in the Hague as an exchange of goods and services, as market commodities and financial transactions. In short, the so-called European standards all too often do not serve the purpose of confronting our criminal past, but rather that of its blurring, and even mitigation of reality. A normative optimism is typical of the most part of state institutions, and, unfortunately, a large part of civil society organizations maintain so-called partner relations with the state.

We have always been disobedient: ever since 1991, we disobeyed the criminal regime of Slobodan Milošević, and after 2000, we have

disobeyed the authorities who have not made a genuine dissociation from the policy of war and war crimes. We have not embraced uncritically the pragmatic policy of “top-down reconciliation”, without accountability and serious reconsideration of the atrocities committed in the past, i.e. reconciliation in the name of “higher national interests”. We have actively continued creating a policy of trust and just peace “bottom-up” – through direct relations with the victims’ communities, with related civil society organizations from the entire region, creating together models of justice from the feminist-pacifist point of view.

This paper presents the ethical principles of Women in Black (WiB), the way in which WiB activist have been forming and perceiving those principles, and the perspectives of others, i.e. the way in which they perceive us. Since we did not have many theoretical references to rely on in our formation, lacking this “support” (“ohne Geländer”- Hannah Arendt),¹ guided by the moral imperative and activist “obligation” to transform our feelings of anger, bitterness and shame into acts of civic responsibility, we have developed, mainly based on experience, modest theoretical assumptions and concepts of responsibility. Out of duty to constantly react to the policies of evil, we often did not have time to study what had been written about similar situations, but we have found correlation with our theoretical activism: “I believe that this removal of support – in spite of the fact that it provokes fear – is the only way to establish political responsibility. This is becoming painfully obvious in borderline situations, in cases of utter horror such as evil totalitarian policies can bring about”.²

Ethical principles

Here are some of the most important ethical principles of *Women in*

1. Duhaček, Daša, Breme našeg doba – Odgovornost i rasuđivanje u delu Hane Arent, p. 46; published by the Belgrade Circle and the Center for Women and Gender Studies, Belgrade, 2010.

2. Ibid.



Black, which have continually and permanently been key determiners of our non-violent resistance. This text focuses on the ethical principles concerning accountability for war and war crimes, since this is the most important aspect of the political activity of Women in Black.

I Not in our name

Not in our name means for us a constant, public, clear and loud distancing from those who speak, wage wars or resort to violence in our name; unless we do that, they could assume that they have our approval, our consent and even complicity in committing atrocities. Now, after the wars, unless we spell this out clearly, publicly and loudly, they might take it for granted that they have our tacit agreement and complicity in denying and relativizing the criminal past. Or else, that we choose not to raise the issue of accountability for past atrocities by entering project partnership with the state for the sake of European integrations!

Srebrenica – a paradigm of Serbian crimes

Although the Serb military and paramilitary formations conducted countless crimes, without attempting to establish a hierarchy among them, this text will predominantly address the issue of Srebrenica, as a paradigm of all Serb crimes. Srebrenica is, like Auschwitz, a most profound ethical problem, a “a watershed in history”³, ‘a place of fabrication of corpses’,⁴ i.e. of humiliation and death (or, as a young WiB activist, confronted for the first time with the scene of the commemoration in Srebrenica, wrote: ‘Suddenly, I realized that something was moving through the masses. It was the dead bodies. Packed into boxes, not longer than one meter and not wider than a shoe box, they were being moved like a train by the hands of the living. Someone had done that in a day, without feeling any remorse on the next. Nor the day after, nor on the day that followed.

3. Agamben, Giorgio, *Ono što ostaje od Auschwitza- Arhiv i svjedok* (Homo sacer III), p. 56, published by Antibarbarus, Zagreb, 2008.

4. Ibid.

Serial production. Like boxes of some product on a conveyor belt.’⁵

The conveyor belt for the fabrication of the culture of death goes on: ‘We in Serbia must know that by denying the Srebrenica genocide, we are actually living in Srebrenica ourselves and that we will stay there as long as they finally decide to tackle this issue and confront it.’⁶

The moral downfall and the emotional breakdown – the societal divide continue until a society becomes capable of admitting the crimes committed in its name. “Technical indictments (or sentences) before the courts must be accompanied by emotional reconsideration: through the awareness and interiorized feeling of the damage that has been caused and that kind of feeling is developed as a matter concerning the social community, and cannot occur in an emotionally devastated society”.⁷

The authority of the witnesses of a time is built through intervention in context, through intervention from context, by conquering public space for revealing what is being denied, in Cassandra’s words, ‘I want to testify, even if no living soul should seek that testimony from me’.⁸

‘The struggle for remembrance of Srebrenica in the streets of Belgrade is a metaphor of the struggle for remembrance of the wars, victims and war crimes. The message of Women in Black “*Not in my name*” means that they will continue their vigils in the streets, constantly reminding of what really happened – in their name. Which is completely opposed to the general tendency to go further, looking only ahead, without turning back, avoiding problematic and difficult questions of accountability and guilt, of holding festivals of peace in the spirit of consumerism. While the streets and the people aspire to normalization, the message of anti-war activists reminds the passers-by that not everything is normal. In

5. Dimitrijević, Jovana, *Žene za mir*, 2009.p. 60; published by Women in Black, Belgrade.

6. Tomić, Milica, from the march “Trasom smrti do slobode”, *Žene za mir*, 2009, p. 92.

7. Alonso, Martin, during a debate at WiB, held in Belgrade, on 9th July, 2009.

8. Razgovor sa Kasandrom, *Žene za mir*, 2007; p.11; published by WiB; On Cassandra, after Krista Volf.



this way, they pose a threat to a pleasant and beautiful Sunday evening in Belgrade”.⁹

As one of the founders of Women in Black said, “It is my moral responsibility and duty. I have taken part in the vigils in the streets of my city as a witness of the moral downfall, but people did not want and still refuse to see that, because our presence makes them feel uneasy. I can understand their desire to live in ignorance, but I cannot accept it!”

The link between responsibility and shame is present in the opinions expressed by many members of WiB:

*“Shame is nothing else but the fundamental feeling of being the subject,”*¹⁰ or “We can condemn crimes of our or any other country, but we can be ashamed and guilt-ridden only because of the crimes committed by our country. Because of what has been done in our name”.¹¹

‘Shame is what I feel most in Srebrenica. I saw a public notice there that said ‘Let the peoples be ashamed of genocide’. I am not a people, I am an individual, but I am ashamed...’¹²

‘Our experience, the experience of citizens of a state that pursued a hegemonic, criminal policy and waged war in the name of the Serbian nation, created a sense of guilt, shame and despair with us. What I have learned from the feminists is that our guilt feelings are a mechanism of social control over women, but what I learned from Jovana Vuković (WiB, Belgrade) is that these feelings should guide me to rebel against the crimes that were committed in my name. However, a complete

9. Fridman, Orli „Javno gradski prostori i alternativni glasovi – slučaj Žena u crnom“, Žene za mir, 2009; p. 90; published by WiB.

10. Agamben, G.; Ono što ostaje od Auschwitz; p. 75; published by Antibarbarus, Zagreb, 2008.

11. Staša Zajović, a public address at the commemoration of the crime committed over the Bosnian population in Višegrad, May 2009.

12. Zajović, Staša, Tranziciona pravda – feministički pristup - iskustva Žena u crnom; statement of activist Marina from Kruševac, p. 75; published by Women in Black, 2008.

elimination of guilt feelings from my life would make me insensitive to injustice”.¹³

I am responsible not only for my own actions, but also for what is being done in my name – public resistance to the denial of the criminal past, indignation at the denial of the criminal past, outrage at the denial, minimizing and relativizing the crimes committed in our name...

“Hannah Arendt’s reflections made me think about Women in Black from Belgrade, who resisted and have been resisting their government’s nationalist policy, by preserving the memory of the Srebrenica genocide and demanding that the criminals be tried by the ICTY. They announced publicly that the Serbian women accept the responsibility for what has been done in their name, but, having rejected their government’s policy, they have confirmed that they will not cease crossing the borders erected by the war, so that they could meet the Bosnian women in Srebrenica, from whom they sought forgiveness and with whom they have been trying to weave the threads of coexistence, thus setting into motion the ”beginning” that takes place in the sign of gender and future.

Their political action (of WiB) clearly demonstrates the dialogue structure of the relations of responsibility, which can be expressed in the following way: *Assuming collective responsibility means to respond to the other woman, to invite her to appear on the global stage as a collocutor, to be recognized in the pain that was inflicted to her, in the insult that offended her dignity, in her right to justice and compensation, and at the same time to make them feel as members of a community led by a government that committed violent acts, but members who are conducting internal differentiation in the collective being, since they did not take part in the actions that inflicted injury, and who therefore can say to the victims: “This evil was not done in our name; in our name, we wish to resume the weaving of the threads of an interrupted dialogue, to tread the way that will enable*

13. Perković, Marija, *Od pobune do alternative, Žene za mir*, p. 28.



*us to meet again, because you are not our enemies, but others who live in this world of ours today”.*¹⁴

Politics of location – It is requisite to locate responsibility, to place it in a definite time, context and space: “Feminist ethics compels me to always bear in mind where I come from, from which emotional, moral and political perspective I speak”.¹⁵

The ethic principles of WiB spring up from “direct non-violent intervention” in the context, from a political decision and moral imperative to name the place from where we derive, i.e. the “*location for which I have to assume responsibility*” (A. Rich): “As a woman, I have a state; as a woman, I will not rid myself of that state by condemning its authorities or repeating three times “The whole world is a woman’s country”. Our status as witnesses of a politics of evil, compels us to turn around Virginia Wolf’s idea: “As a woman, I have no country. As a woman, I wish no country. As a woman, the whole world is my county.”¹⁶

“I come from the capital of the successor state of the aggressor criminal regime from a capital where to this day, crimes committed in our name are still being glorified and denied.

My decision to oppose this constantly, unequivocally and publicly is part of my feminist ethics. It is my decision to know, to keep repeating it and seeking accountability for the countless crimes that were committed in my/our name”.¹⁷

“We must always bear in mind where we are from. We are from the

14. Longoni, Gracijela: Hana Arent o odgovornosti, pp. 88 and 89; *Žene za mir*, published by WiB, 2009.

15. Zajović, Staša, Ne u naše ime! Ne dajmo se od svojih prevariti! , *Žene za mir*, p. 45, published by WiB, 2007.

16. Rič, Adrijen, Politika lokacije, translation of the essay of Adrienne Rich, “Notes Toward a politics of Location” by Tamara Kaliterna, 2011.

17. Zajović, Staša, Ne u naše ime! Ne dajmo se od svojih prevariti! , *Žene za mir*, p. 47, published by WiB, 2007.

occupier's side, and they are the occupied. We do not live in the same conditions, but we have to renounce to paternalism so that we could build our mutual relations".¹⁸

From a witness of her time become a rebellious citizen to an activist who, instead of being conciliator, constantly disturbs, making demands both to society and the state...

In view of the fact that the fourteenth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide has passed and "Serbia has not yet expressed condemnation of that atrocious event, has not offered a genuine and unequivocal apology, has not shown respect for the victims' dignity or understanding of the grief and suffering of their dearest, and has not arrested and handed over to the Hague Tribunal the persons indicted for this crime", each and every of the Women in Black, in an explicit personal formulation (*I as an anti-fascist, as an anti-militarist, as a feminist, a citizen, a woman and a mother*) demand that:

– In all small, medium sized and large settlements in Serbia, the main street, or one of the main streets (or boulevards) and squares, be named (or renamed!) as the Street (Boulevard, Square) of the Victims of the Srebrenica genocide and that in places with several schools, one of the schools be named (or renamed!) that way, and that the decision on naming (or renaming) be binding and upheld by legal acts.

– That within the school syllabi and curricula, adequate space be devoted in the history or sociology textbooks for comprehensive and accurate accounts of the Srebrenica genocide and other Serbian crimes committed during the 1990's, both written and visual (photographs of the concentration camps prisoners, photographs of works of art referring to genocide and other Serbian crimes); to further illustrate genocide and other crimes and to make published testimonies of the survived prisoners of the Serbian camps and other places of crime part of required reading

18. Traubman, Lily, Stanje permanentnog sukoba Izrael-Palestina, Žene za mir, p. 158, published by WiB, 2009.



lists, and incorporate them in history and sociology classes, etc. ¹⁹

The policy of esthetics of resistance is developed through conquering public space for exposing what is being denied, because “Those acts happen in a certain time and ‘that is why the proportions, or the specific meaning of the act itself, can rest on its very implementation, performance’ and it is from there that the importance and the need for (a public) scene or stage derives, where this revelation before audiences is to take place”. ²⁰

The process of creation of the esthetic dimension of resistance will be observed through one of the street actions ‘**A pair of shoes – one life**’, conducted on 7th July 2010 in Knez Mihajlova Street. This artistic-activist action consisted of donating shoes to the victims of the Srebrenica genocide, which had a decentralized character, because ten days prior to the action on 7th July, activists of the WiB network had been collecting shoes from the citizens throughout Serbia.

The action was the first phase of the campaign for the erection of a permanent monument in Belgrade in the memory of the victims of the Srebrenica genocide, on the occasion of which several hundred pairs of shoes were collected from all over Serbia. This action continues until 8,732 pairs of shoes have been collected, which corresponds to the official figures referring to the number of victims of the genocide. The action was conceived and realized by Women in Black, together with numerous engaged artistic associations and artists (Škart, Dah Theater, the group Spomenik, Art klinika, Novi Sad, Center for Cultural Decontamination).

The action of shoe donation is articulated on several levels, related to addressing victims, *addressing the citizens of one’s country of residence and addressing the state.*

19. Ja, građanka Persa Vučić, zahtevam...; *Žene za mir*, 2009. p. 92.

20. Duhaček, Daša, *Kako do političke odgovornosti: Hana Arent i slučaj Srbija*. Genero, Belgrade, no. 10-11, p.9 Rasuđivanje u delu Hane Arent, p. 46; published by the Belgrade Circle and the Center for Women and Gender Studies, Belgrade, 2010.

First and foremost is the political, emotional and moral ‘ritual’ of addressing the victims (primarily the victims of the crimes that were committed in our name, and only after this has been done, we will have obtained the legitimacy to speak of our victimization by others); this represents Women in Black active policy of peace and solidarity, and this poses a great problem to a great number of people in Serbia, including those who share our moral values. “Facing them (the victims) is probably the most difficult step that (ought to take place) after the eruption of evil: in all probability, this is because responsibility for one’s actions, misdeeds or even failure to act, becomes concrete, because it acquires a face. And as Levinas reminds us, *“the approach to a face is directly ethical”*.²¹

The process of addressing the victims is not a single symbolic act, it works on several levels, but the victims are invariably our first addressees. With this act, we show that *we know that genocide has been committed and who committed it, and that the crime was committed in the name of our nation, and at the same time we respect the dignity and human dimension of the victims*, expressing regret over the loss of life and solidarity and compassion with the suffering of the victims, letting them know that they have made an imprint on our lives.

By displaying the shoes, we cherish a memory and fill the gap that the persecuted, the killed and the tortured have left behind...

By addressing the citizens of the country we live in, we encourage them to join us in reflection and to build from there because Srebrenica (just like Auschwitz) is a historical watershed and to define our position together, because our future depends on it. With this address, we wish to share with our fellow citizens our regret, compassion, solidarity and responsibility towards the victims of the genocide and to develop a different moral order together, an order that can be made possible solely through acts opposing the culture of oblivion and of rejection of denial of genocide, normalization of crime, violence, humiliation and lies and through the discontinuation of the culture of insensitivity and indifference.

21. Agamben, G.; Ono što ostaje od Auschwitz; p. 75; published by Antibarbarus, Zagreb, 2008.



That is why *the shoes donated to us by the citizens acquire a value*, denoting not only respect toward the victims' community, but also toward the community we live in.

By addressing the state, we demand that it fulfill its obligation and define a location because the act of defining the location for the erection of a permanent monument represents not only the attitude towards the victims, but also towards the members of our own community who have expressed their civic responsibility and solidarity – (the gift/the donated shoe must be protected) but also the establishment of the rule of law, political culture of sanctioning crime, respecting of the dignity of the victims and those who express their solidarity with them and state respect of those striving for the plurality of otherness, good neighborly relations, peace and solidarity. The building of the monument marks the beginning of the process of public mourning, and by bringing out grief on the public scene, this would no longer be a matter of 'privacy and intimacy', but a public cultural, moral and political fact. It is our demand that a permanent monument be erected in a location that epitomizes the victim's calamity and our anti-fascist heritage (for example, the Old Belgrade Fair, former nazi World War II concentration camp or the Archives of Yugoslavia), *and the building of a permanent monument to the victims of genocide*, Belgrade would achieve the status of a *post-genocidal city*.

In March 2011, the authorities finally replied to our initiative, with a negative response. In their announcement, the initiators of the move said that "the state lacks both the political will and the moral capacity for compassion with the victims' and that our campaign continues.

II Let us not be deceived by our own!

Let us not be deceived, first by our own, and then by others: these are acts of disobedience to the militarists and nationalists, primarily in the state I live in and then to all the others. It is requisite to first disown one's own

heroes, not forgetting the fact that in the area of the former Yugoslavia (and broader), we are not in the same position. That is to say that we come from a country that waged wars; therefore, our responsibility is the biggest, but it does not exclude the responsibility of others.²²

The ethical principles of *Women in Black* were developed in response to the reality around us, through live action and intervention into context.

In the course of searching for a point of support (“Geländer”), we found “refuge” in the ancient figure of Cassandra. Cassandra was the daughter of Trojan King Priam and Queen Hecuba. She lived in the 33rd century B.C. According to Christa Volf,²² Cassandra tried to prevent the Trojan War with her prophecies, explaining to people that the cause of the war was not the abduction of Helen, but a struggle for supremacy between Greece and Troy. Cassandra tells people what her father Priam and other men are trying to conceal, that the cause of the war is false and that it actually does not exist, and that they are fighting to preserve the rule of the patriarchal/male principle of living. Cassandra foretold the tragic end of the city of Troy, and was then locked away by her father, who proclaimed her to be insane. However, she did not stop fighting against the deafness of “her own”, and continued announcing her prophecies and her uncompromising opposition to war; she protests, seeking to be heard by the Council, where she could speak out the truth about the war. She then becomes a “stranger”, an outcast among “her own people”. She rejected war and she refused to comply; she publicly spoke and testified against it. Cassandra is a story about the resistance of women against war, about the struggle for the autonomy of women. Cassandra is a real woman, whose existence is universal, irrespective of time and place. Over centuries, Cassandra has become a symbol for ‘tragic but true, yet ignored prophecies. It is on the subject of Cassandra as the main character of German writer Christa Volf that “Cassandrism” rests, denoting intellectual streams of thought assuming a critical and even pessimistic attitude toward the systematic reality of destruction on one

22. Žene za mir, 2007 p. 25.



hand, and on the other, commending the ethics of resistance and civic/civil disobedience”.²³

Cassandra has left us as her spiritual heritage one of the core and fundamental principles of our women’s peace policy: “*Let us not be deceived by our own!*” The performance *Cassandra among us* by Women in Black, in cooperation with Dah Theater, was presented in 1997, in the form of dialog between Women in Black and Cassandra, paying homage to women’s resistance to war and militarism, everywhere in the world, in all epochs.²⁴

“Cassandra becomes a modern figure where a raised chin and human decency become the main topics of the esthetics of an emancipating rebellious subjectivity, whose principal mission is to say NO. The metaphor of a raised chin thus becomes an ethical and political figure of intentional, practical and subjective resistance in solidarity – the figure of dignity”.²⁵

Women in Black, deserters from ‘their community’, from all imposed identities, eternal dissidents, loners and strangers among ‘their own’, violators of all forms of consensus, trespassers of all walls and divisions, have the spirit of Cassandra in their activism and policy of transgression. “ (...) in a world where identities and allegiances are imposed, where, I am being ascribed to those whom I reject, it does not suffice to say “refuse” and turn the other way. Freedom of choice in this case does not mean condescendingly leaving the community that appropriates them, but rather taking responsibility for one’s place within that community, namely, assuming a critical position toward it. And irrespective of whether that community has been imposed /inherited (as in the case

23. Calloni, Marina, *Etika i estetika otpora – Kasandra po Ernstu Blochu i Christi Wolf*, Filozofska istraživanja, god. 7 (1987), Sv. „ (519 – 532).

24. Zajović, Staša, *Antimilizarizam i žene*, p. 47, published by WiB, 2009.

Žene za mir, 1997. p. 26.

25. Calloni, Marina, *Etika i estetika otpora – Kasandra po Ernstu Blochu i Christi Wolf*, Filozofska istraživanja, god. 7 (1987), Sv. „ (519 – 532).

of ethnic, religious or state/territorial communities) or else chosen (like professional, political and even emotional communities), what I have learned from Women in Black is that responsibility in all these situations means **“Let us not be deceived by our own!”**.²⁶

Just like Cassandra, Jelena finds herself ‘among heterogeneous groups – heterogeneous both according to their social and ethnic composition – developing relations with the minorities’, building bridges among them, aware that the lack of solidarity among the oppressed serves only the potentates, and that solidarity is a civic value which is based on empathy”.²⁷

“Never conceiving any hierarchy in human rights and solidarity, Biljana (Kovačević –Vučo) defended all the marginalized/oppressed/persecuted... deserters and fugitives from the army, conscientious objectors, rebels against the Milošević regime, Roma people, LGBT activists, Albanian political prisoners...”²⁸

“Together with Women in Black, we held a vigil in Republic Square on 10th July, holding placards bearing the words Responsibility and Solidarity, at the same time presenting to the citizens of Belgrade the film ‘The Women of Srebrenica Speak’ by Milica Tomić. It was surreal – the Square was in the dark, the women of Srebrenica were addressing Serbia, Belgrade was silent, only from time to time someone would come forward and spit on us”.²⁹

The policy of conveying the “symbolic and ethical contagion” of Women in Black, Belgrade, creates a common ethics of feminist solidarity and internationalism with the women of Israel, Andalusia, the Basque Country, Russia, etc.

Women in Black from Israel and from Serbia made it their objective

26. Perković, Marija, *Od pobune do alternative*, Žene za mir, 2007. p. 30.

27. Zajović, Staša, *Omaž Jeleni Šantić- Jelena – građanka sveta, buntovna aktivistkinja, osećajna umetnica...* March 2010.

28. Zajović, Staša, *Omaž Biljani Kovačević-Vučo*; 29, April 2010.

29. Stojanović, Boban, *Kakvo je vreme u Srebrenici?*, Žene za mir, 2009, p. 65.



to express solidarity with the missing and the prisoners in Palestine and with the victims in the Balkans, pledging to expose the truth, write and testify about it, which labels them as outcasts, excluded from their own communities”.³⁰

“We have conceived our activist and peace-building activities after the model that you, Women in Black from Belgrade, created in the first years of your activism, and afterwards we adopted your experience of visiting the sites of crimes. I have no friends, because I am concerned with the issue of Chechnya. People do not like it when I talk about Chechnya. The foundations that support us tell us to avoid the issue of Chechnya. The European parliamentarians who are concerned with Chechnya or who go to Chechnya are not allowed entry into Russia”.³¹

“Fifteen years ago, I decided to reflect as a Basque woman, as a Woman in Black and as an anti-nationalist. In this context, ‘the other, different, or unaffiliated’, or even worse than that, ‘he or she who set themselves apart’ become an unacceptable threat. To express oneself as a non-affiliated party is the only possible crack where a response and reaction to silencing, disciplining or trenching that such a social structure requires from you”.³²

III Always disobedient:

to patriarchy, war, nationalism, militarism...

The strongest form of non-violent resistance springs from a feeling of personal responsibility, which has been globally acknowledged through the slogan always disobedient, adopted by Women in Black – Belgrade in the 1990’s. This is how Women in Black reacted to the accusations by Serbian nationalists, of being dissidents and disloyal, together with

30. Valdes, Ana Luisa, *The Women of Srebrenica and Women in Black*, from the March for the Missing, Tuzla, 11th November 2010.

31. Vilenskaja, Elena “Čečenija ili bol zaboravljenog konflikta”, *Žene za mir*, 2009, p. 163.

32. Romano, Idoja, *Bez rezignacije*, *Žene za mir*, 2007, p. 101.

conscientious objectors, which was proudly and subversively admitted, and emphasized on T-shirts and banners.³³

WiB activists see disobedience as responsibility, autonomy, freedom and dignity and, vice versa, “obedience as irresponsibility, slavery, lack of freedom”, and also as a means of opposing authority, the church, the state and the family.

This can be observed in their personal positioning:

‘Since I became disobedient, I feel much better, disobedience has a central place in my vocabulary...’ (*Borka, Belgrade*)

‘While I was obedient, I used to feel bad, and since I became disobedient, I feel good, I can say everything, and do things...’ (*Milka, Leskovac*).

‘During my eight-year term as deputy in the Parliament of Vojvodina, I protested publicly against war, I was disobedient and that was very important for me’ (*Julija, Bečej*)

‘Disobedience is like an excess on all levels, disobedient as positioning oneself towards the state, the church, the family...’ (*Jelena, Bor*)

‘Disobedience is a constant conquest of freedom, it is hard and painstaking, but if you are obedient, then you are humiliated and enslaved.’ (*Senka, Belgrade*)

‘Refusing to be loyal to everything that has been imposed on me; being disobedient means living actively, assuming responsibility. Let us dismiss everything that has been imposed to us.’ (*Ana, Belgrade*)

The truth is our disobedience, forcing them to hear us out.’ (*Jasna, Belgrade*).

33. Zajović, Staša i urošević, Mičoš ‘Simbolika Žena u crnom’. Monografija Žena u crnom, 2002. i Žene za mir, 2007



The symbolism of Women in Black (during the war and after)

Commemorative rituals, expressions of our policy of memory and remembrance in the public space of Women in Black will be addressed here, since in the other actions WiB has a practice of bringing into the public scene a lot of colors, sounds and visual materials.

The legacy of *Women in Black* is contained in three symbols: wearing black, silence and body, which in their interpretation and actions has a special meaning. Being dressed in black is important as a testimony, a warning, but also as a transgression, a subversion, ‘kidnapping’ of traditional symbols and their transformation into political messages that are diametrically opposed to the traditional and patriarchal:

Wearing black is testifying about war while the war is still going on, and about crimes while they are being committed; it is intervention in reality and exposing what is being denied in the public sphere, in the City Square.

Here are several statements by Women in Black referring to this:

“The black color is like absence of choice, a paradigm of life devoid of colors and nuances. My black clothes are not only a sign of mourning for persons close to me, but grieving for all the victims of all wars. It does not mean lending oneself to weeping and grieving as a corporate part of the woman’s role; it means resisting the annihilation of cities and people, the violence in our daily lives, rebellion against the militaristic regime generating death, misery and destruction (...) It is the public color of revolt, an example of how the traditional symbol can be transformed into something subversive; and I also like to irritate them, because they think that they have a monopoly on the cultural heritage and tradition, and that is mourning in silence, those are their symbols, and you take them and completely alter their contents and form. You are a part of that culture, you are rooted in it, because wearing black is so traditional that you break away from those roots with your body. Because women

who wear black can be seen only in graveyards and around coffins, they are not supposed to be seen in public places, and that is why it causes so much irritation.” (*Staša*)

The traditional symbols of wearing black and keeping silent have been turned upside down. Black clothes are almost part of the traditional role of women, the historical, family duty that women fulfill, in order to express grief, exclusively in the invisible, family sphere. We have brought out black clothes onto the Square, as a visible, political color. (*WiB, Belgrade*)

It has been four years that we have been trying to warn with the black color we put on our bodies – that the war was launched from our city. (*Jadranka Milićević*)

“The reason I wear black is first of all because of the destruction of multicultural life in this area.” (*Neda Božinović*)

“The very act of rising up wearing black was our personal and public act – we do not agree with nationalism, we do not agree with killings.” (*Lepa Mladenović*)

After the war, wearing black acquires a new meaning, it represents a symbol of the struggle against oblivion of crime by the official politics and against the denial of the criminal past. Mourning as a symbol of memory of the crimes and as remembrance of the crimes that were committed in our name. As an expression of solidarity with the victims of the war.

“We do not wish the war to be forgotten, nor memory of the victims of war to be stamped out, we do not wish the continuation of amnesia of war crimes – our protests are a reminder of that.” (*Zinaida*).

We want to warn, to demand accountability for the war: we refuse to accept general accountability that equalizes all the parties in the war. We know:

“Serbia participated in the war” and this regime is the most responsible for the war, and a large part of the opposition bears moral responsibility



for the war as well. (Women in Black, Belgrade, 4th March 1997).

“Black is for me a symbol of rebellion even after the war, because we are different. Black means spelling out our rebellion.” (*Senka*)

Black is like our policy and for me it is a very important distinction. Black as a policy that we learn and that we adhere to, is a cornerstone of Women in Black. As for commemorations, they must be continued. (*Boban*)

“They are irritated by black, because it comprises shedding light on some victims that are not politically admissible, and they say : ‘How can you mourn other victims with our black color?’” (*Boban*)

We are much more visible when we wear black, it makes us more powerful. Wearing black is a political attitude. (*Ljilja*)

We wear black because we are the others, and as we are invisible, and black for me means becoming visible, leaving an impression, being noticed and acknowledged, making the mute onlookers react. (*Miloš*)

When I wear black, I feel compassion and express sorrow. For me, it would be out of place and indecent to be dressed otherwise; I feel compassion with those who were victimized, and we address our empathy to their relatives, speechless. (*Ljilja*).

For me personally, black is the color of empathy. It irritates people a lot and I like it that

way, it is not a sad color, but the color of understanding the suffering of others; I deprive myself of something else and I accept that and understand it that way. (*Boban*)

They want to say that we are not part of this people, “you have nothing to do with our people.” “I have to do with “your” people, because I define who my people is, I do what I want with the black color and you cannot decide who I am going to mourn after, I mourn according to my own attitude, and not for your people, but for my community of peoples, and they are all those that you have killed. (*Stiša*).

Silence

While the war is still going on, while crimes are being committed - silence is yet another intervention into reality.

Like the Israeli Women in Black, we decided to be silent so as to avoid provocations of people who were harassing us in the streets. As Haja Shalom puts it: “Silence has also been used as a means of non-violent technique of protest. Besides, we knew that men are rarely silent in demonstrations, and if provoked, they always wish to react. Silence is one dimension of women’s lives that we have consciously chosen to use as a means of protesting. Therefore, silence of our group was a way to keep men at bay.”

“We have decided not to utter excessive words and that is why we believe that important feelings and experiences are best expressed by silence. By silence as a protest here, from where the war was being waged, with a conspicuous silence, like a shriek and a warning. In mourning and in silence, we wish to express our sympathy. (WiB, Belgrade)

The symbolism of silence is also important in the aftermath of wars, after the crimes have been committed. Silence symbolizes respect, graveness and dignity; it a space that belongs to others, a space without violence.

“We send out a strong message by remaining silent, we manifest dignity, send out a message of compassion, and also demonstrate that we do not wish to enter any verbal exchanges with onlookers.” (*Ljilja*)

“It means expressing our respect for what is the reason of our vigil that day.” (*Fika*)

“I believe that it is important to adhere to the symbolism of silence, because in that way our performance becomes more explicit.” (*Ana*)

“Since the 1990’s, it was a way of distancing ourselves and a method of defense, a way to show that we are different.” (*Lina*)



“Silence as a means of non-violent defense is extremely important. You are not part of the wars they would like to drag you in, you do not react to provocations. This is an important step in learning non-violence. It means deconstruction, you remain silent, you do not wish to repeat what they expect you to say.” (*Staša*)

“Silence is a choice I made; I remain silent because everything has been said already; in a world and at a time where nobody hears anyone else even when everyone is talking, because of the lack of space where the voices of others could be heard, I have opted for silence.” (*Miloš*)

The body

The body in the Square

The body in the Square, exposing the body is a symbolic, provocative way in which women, by exposing their own bodies, express their outcry against war in their attempt to raise consciousness. With our bodies, as a shriek and a warning, we expressed our bitterness and resentment toward all those who want and who wage war. (*WiB, Belgrade*)

Now that the wars are over, with only the crimes remaining to testify about them, we continue to expose our bodies in the Square. We are witnesses of a history written in our own handwriting. By exposing their bodies in the Square, members of Women in Black inscribe their bodies in the history of anti-war resistance, “kidnapping” the space from the dominant discourse and from those who promote it in public spaces, acting subversively against patriarchal traditional symbols.

The symbolic message of this discussion is: we are visible, therefore, we exist, or “*We hold our vigils – therefore we exist*”, or, as activist Jelena briefly and clearly expressed in 2010, the policy of continuity, persistence, alert in solidarity and non-violent struggle of Women in Black.

“I have exposed my body in the Square; my body as a medium, a recipient of reactions coming from outside; an attempt of corporal

transgression, in order to be there with the others. I have embraced all the three symbols: the body, wearing black and silence, because I want to maintain the tradition of Women in Black, because I am this in the emotional, moral, cultural and political context. Although I am uprooted from all the prescribed categories, I feel deeply rooted in the idea of Women in Black” (Miloš).

Engaged art and resistance to war

Ever since its inception, Women in Black have been working together with artists and artists’ associations in the aesthetic shaping of resistance. Instead of the indifference of the majority of artists, who followed the official position that ‘Serbia is not at war’ , i.e. who did not react to the reality of war while it was going on and now fail to react to the reality of its denial, most artists found refuge and still do in escapism, in the so-called fine arts, neutral, apolitical, actually immoral, ethically unacceptable. Unlike most of them, the artists and artists’ associations we work with (Škart, Dah Theater, Hor proba, Art klinika, Grupa Spomenik, Četiri lica Omarske, etc.) share the same ethical values with us, rejecting commercialized art, do not belong to the official world of art, renounce to and do not follow the “fashion/project tendencies” (i.e.. ‘If you follow fashion, you are bound to always lag behind’- Škart); rather, we work together, in a two-way direction, with long-term goals, learning from one another and generating acts of resistance.

The political aesthetic platform of WiB was emphasized in the exhibition on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Women in Black ‘*Always disobedient – We leave an imprint*’.

The exhibition is a re/action, re/presentation of a context dominated for twenty years by policies of evil, within a homogenized uniform public:

– from which the topics unwanted by the dominant political/social public and which the cultural production did not want to acknowledge:



countless atrocities committed in our name (for example, the Srebrenica genocide);

– from which the individuals and collectivities who were outside the dominant/ national /state/ aesthetic code /model have been excluded and banished;

– from which, in the name of ‘fine arts’ or in the name of the neo-liberal market model or integrations, poverty, criminal privatization, etc. have been erased as invisible and non-existent...

The exhibition is also an *active creation* of a different, re/presentation of the pluralism of the public in Serbia and broader; inclusion of the ‘written off/ discarded’ (Škart), those who are on the margins, outside and above consensus, eternal dissidents, outsiders, offenders of all patriarchal norms; memory opposed to organized oblivion of voices, emotions, thoughts, actions... against policies of evil – war, nationalism and militarism.

The exhibition represents, like the entire engagement of Women in Black, *persistent insisting on the same topics* – on the ethical /political values, principles, responsibility... at times of cultural relativism, moral cynicism, and even civic nihilism, provocation and subversion as opposed to trendy-project neo-liberal market tendencies.

And as we said in our announcement on the occasion of our 20th anniversary:

For 20 years, we have been witnesses of a policy of evil, but also actors of non-violent resistance, which has left a deep and permanent imprint in each one of us, in our activist community, and also in our society.

For 20 years, we have been building a policy of peace, non-violence, solidarity, feminism, antimilitarism, antifascism, anti-homophobia, alterglobalism...

Belgrade, November 2011.



Jasmine Tešanović

Women in Black Serbia: 20 years After

Activists of Women in Black Are Answering Sept 3, 2011

What does Women in Black mean to you today?

Initiative, a possibility for new values, a denial of patriarchy; an organization which is coherent with its basic values; an authentic activist organization; a way to the light, to permanent peace, to equality, to justice; the only place where I feel full and myself; an organisation of brave, affirmative, responsible and friendly women, feminists and antimilitarists; a place where I feel safe, and autonomous; an organization which opens our eyes in this darkness; a feminist group which is not depoliticized; the last island; the beginning of my activism; solidarity, right to the right, resistance; life, motivation, energy, belonging to women with similar views; against violence, strength, support; not to be fooled by our own; path to my life and my past; the most reliable and relevant pacifist organization in Serbia; the most numerous group even though authorities don't like us; one of the rare NGOs whose activity is not controlled by the donors; persistence, truth; transformation of anger into action; an organisation which builds bridges, unifies women with ideas, escapes from false reality; place of inspiration, motivation; an anthem of Women in Black we sing; a place where we think about the past, we change the present to have a future; an institution to preserve peace, dignity, identity, human rights, understanding, warmth, knowledge, exchange, giving; a group which awakes the good in us.

In April 30, 1999 I finished my first essay on *Women in Black*, Serbia



with these words: this essay could have been different if the world did not go in this direction. I wrote it after waking during the heavy NATO bombings in Belgrade, because of the even heavier internal repression of the criminal regime of Slobodan Milosevic.

And today, October 9, 2011, I am repeating that point. *Women in Black* in Serbia are celebrating 20 years of existence. It is an occasion for us women activists to celebrate the joys of activism but also an opportunity to remember the circumstances that brought us into the world. *Women in Black* in Serbia, the best and biggest worldwide ambassador spreading the truth about the existence of another, honorable Serbia, a Serbia of public conscience, has never become an institutional part of the society.

We are still in the streets. We are still public enemies. Serbia still lives in organized denial about the political criminality of the last 20 years.

A WIB activist from USA told me, when she heard I was writing this text:

„Even though you may sound obsessive, bear in mind that your work on the criminal past is the most important activism in this historical moment in the world. Your persistence and your methods will become a manual for the construction of an alternative history for others, as well.”

And this is what the activists of WIB in Serbia said today answering the question:

What do you know about history of WIB Serbia?

Transitional justice; antimilitarism, peace actions against the war, stimulating citizens to rebel, bringing out the crimes committed against civilians; facing the past, street actions against the war; visiting the places of crime as a mean of transitional justice, solidarity with the victims, antifascism, women's tribunal, Srebrenica genocide, everyday refusal of war and war consequences; counterculture, standing in ritual black in silence, engagement for a better future; standing for Srebrenica and

a march; support for trials against war criminals Mladic, Karadzic and others; help for Roma and other women victims of war; healing, feminism, permanent remembering of the injustice; a group which brings evidence about truth in recent wars, facing the responsibility of crimes committed in our names, and our responsibility for it.

During that faraway 30th of April 1999, I tried to explain the meaning of WIB in Serbia. Even now, don't know what direction the world will take. After September 11 and the „War on Terror,” Balkanization has been globalized. I do know that we will still be in the streets. We will be in public, with words that must be spoken.

„It is a symbolic, provocative way in which women expose themselves and their own bodies, to express their cry against the war, trying to awaken the conscience of others,” says Stasa Zajovic

The most important aspects of this crisis of conscience are the war crimes committed in our names. First among many crimes, the Srebrenica genocide. WIB reached out to the survivors, mostly women from Srebrenica, very soon after the massacre. That powerful alliance and friendship, based on solidarity and empathy among women regardless of religion and ethnicity, became the means of building an alternative power structure. That structure resisted against the local, regional and world politicians who attempted to obscure the suffering, including the Hague tribunal, which recently destroyed the personal evidence of the victims. This bond is the most valuable pacifist victory in the region: our men fighting wars did not manage to make us enemies.

WIB from Serbia regularly visit the scenes of crimes committed in our name:

Srebrenica, Tuzla, Vukovar, Sjeverin, Prijedor, Omarska, Vlasenica, Lovas, Visegrad, Štrpci, Bratunca, Zvornik ...

On every anniversary of these crimes, WIB warn the local and world community that justice has not been achieved – not even the minimum needed to achieve political reconciliation in the region. WIB regularly



issue their communiqués decrying yesterday's unnecessary wars, today's life in denial, and tomorrow's shallow and opaque national identity, all of them the responsibility of an authority structure which has never been held accountable.

„The political philosophy of WIB has sprung out of life, by a patchwork method” claims Adriana Zaharijevic .

„For us, facing the past is primarily facing the truth about crimes and criminals, but also remembering the peaceful resistance in this country.

As a feminist, I know that it was only a continuation of home work, which has a therapeutic effect, but not a transformational value. I felt very keen not to be not only the mothers but the women, not merely to comfort and nurse our own sons.

The first standing of WIB in the Balkans was organized in Sarajevo 27 September 1991. It was an extremely strong experience for me, physical and spiritual.

When I came back to Belgrade I spent days and nights convincing women to do the same since I thought it was the best way to fight. And thus 9 Oct 1991 WIB came to be.” Stasa Zajovic

Hannah Arendt argued that a trial brings a platform for responsibility in the space between the past and the future.

In order to start such responsibility it is necessary to use, in the present, that precious talent of imagination, which allows us to rethink our future, since we have questioned our past.

You can forgive the person, but not through obscuring the commission of crime, which is unforgivable.

In 2010, in the action „Women Ask,” Women in Black sent a letter with the same content to 15 addresses. This letter marked the 19 years



since the beginning of the war. The letter was sent to all relevant ministries which dealt, or should deal with, the confrontation of the Serbian state with the past, with demilitarization, reparations, rights of war invalids, material and non-material damages, human security, domestic violence, mental health, and so forth.

The letter asked simply:

How many civilian victims were there in the 1991–1999 wars?

How many recruits/soldiers died in the wars?

How many mass graves are there in Serbia, and what is the number of victims in the mass graves in Serbia?

What is the number of war invalids?

What is the number of refugees?

How many volunteers from Serbia were there?

Which percentage of reservists did not respond to the calls to mobilisation, and how many reservists hid from the draft in order to evade military obligation?

How many men were tried before military tribunals for failure to comply with mobilisation or for deserting from the battlefield?

How many men were sued for offense to the law for the same reasons?

How many rebellions of reservists were there in Serbia?

How many reservists participated in them?

How many men, mostly young, left the country in order not to go to war?

How many refugees in Serbia were mobilised for war and this, against all international conventions?



How many refugees were mobilised on the basis of the lists delivered by the Red Cross and the Commissariat for Refugees to the Ministry of Internal Affairs?

How many war victims received indemnification?

What is the extent of the material damage inflicted to military runaways/deserters, because they could not, for objective reasons (hiding), earn for their life?

How many men, military runaways in the student population, were compelled to leave their studies?

How many victims of post-traumatic stress disorder/PTSD are there in Serbia and how many men suffering from PTSD committed suicide?

How many women suffered violence, the most serious form of domestic violence, from male relatives suffering from PTSD and how many women experience daily domestic violence from former participants in the war?

We demand that all these data becomes public, and that these truths should cease to be a military secrets. Only by stating the truth about crimes committed in our names will the present authorities rid themselves of the weight of the criminal past.

We all know that there was a war in Serbia. If we don't get to know the facts about the war, the climate of opinion that allowed the war will still prevail, and we will live in danger of new conflicts.

In 2010 WIB sent a letter to the president of Serbia Tadic:

Respected president:

We are asking you as a president of Serbia who has the authority to decide the major issues of serbian policy.



We are reminding you that 15 January 2009 the European Parliament has voted a resolution which declares 11 July as the Memorial day of the genocide in Srebrenica”

WIB have stood for that initiative „Declare” from January 2009 to June 2010.

Writing of the alternative history is a duty of us feminists writers and activists, witnesses of the world we are living. The way women see it and phrase it through the history written by men from a patriarchal point of view, has not been recorded, sometimes even is a secret. When we look into the written past we find out only what women did NOT do. They are almost invisible.

That is why WIB ritually follow the trials for war crimes committed in our names and in our language, and then writing the diaries from the trials: Scorpions for Srebrenica genocide, for the Podujevo crime, Suva Reka, etc

Sitting together with the victims, listening in our language about crimes committed in our names, writing it in our mother tongue, those details, the body language and vicinity, brings us to a catharsis and a new space of mind and political action, where there is our hope if not our future.

But it is not enough to pursue only institutionally the war crimes, we also need the alternative models of transition justice.

We must:

– **Create new ways of transitional justice:** the models we have known up to now do not respond to the complicated matters in the past and are not adequate to break with the criminal past and that is why our feminist approach for transitional justice is a way to build a feminist theory and practice. As we follow the trials we support the members of the families of the victims, we organize film screenings and discussion, readings with the topic of transitional justice



– **Do permanent educational work:** organizing seminars, workshops, conferences, and testimonies from war victims as material for alternative history. The war has been a long term planned issue, the creation of that moral system which allowed the war in which many took part. To destroy that system, to get rid of the causes of war, it takes time too.

Continuos brainstorming on this topic is necessary.

– **Remember and celebrate important dates of the non violent resistance in Serbia: the fact that the regime in Serbia permanently produced hate wars and violence.** But to stress also the fact that it produces the antiwar movement.

To build an alternative history is for women a jump in the abyss because for centuries they have been silent and they don't own a proper language and tradition. That is why our own language and esthetics has to be rested parallel.

„My wearing black is not only mourning of my nearest and dearest but of all war victims. It's not the classical woman's role or mourning, it is a resistance to killings of towns people, violence in everyday lie, and standing up against military power which brings death and disasters.” Stasa

„ I think that it is important to keep the silence as a ritual because our performance becomes more expressive that way” Ana

Silence is a territory of the Others, a place of non violence

Milica Tomic is the conceptual artist a collaborator of WIB who performed the march of peace for days and miles, on the path of Bosnian victims. She made a movie „ *Women from Srebrenica talk*”, produced by WIB in 2008

The theatre group ' „Dah teatar” our activist companions several times staged WIB performances:

„Niether whores nor saints (2007)

„Bread' (2004)

They staged a tour „ Women's side of the war' based on the anthology published by WIB 2009



The conceptual group „Skart” has been the visual music and graphic designer of the group; the anthem, the cover pages of books, the posters...

Memorial to the deserters: building of a symbolic monument to the rebels against war is remembering the non violent peace movement, pursuing the civilian courage and disobedience

The mottos of WIB often try to deconstruct the kitchen and traditional role of woman. From a patriarchal space to a free space of power.

And men in WIB are welcome since WIB cannot be defined as an exclusively women's group. So what does then word Women exactly mean?

War deserters, gays and all men who don't have a problem to call themselves Women in Black. To say:

Don't speak in our name we are speaking in our names

Don't be fooled by our own

Don't be fooled by others

To be an antipatriot

To implement women's solidarity

To accept the role of a traitor

To build trust

To transform the sense of guilt into the sense of responsibility

To support war deserters and conscience objectors

To stimulate responsibilities

To leap over the ethnical walls and barriers, condemning every war, refusing obedience to heroes militarists, helping victims of war, permanently asking responsible for war crimes.

WIB also take part in the global feminist politics of the international



WIB movement as well as other sisterly groups: they stand in solidarity always in pacifist initiatives against wars and discriminations in the world.

WiB have issued critical assessment for the implementation of the UN resolution 1325 which in a detailed way analyzes the sense of insecurity of women in Serbia as well as deep mistrust in the serbian government

WiB have been several times candidates for Nobel peace prize and have received other international and national prestigious recognitions. We are still in the streets, still notorious in the mind of the majority of the serbian population: this shows the seriously distorted system of values of the serbian society where the women have the role of witches to exorcize the evil, to admit publicly the guilt and and crimes of the whole society.

Physical, institutional and verbal attacks continue, the criminalization's of the group and it 's members is still present in the mainstream press, police and patriotic citizens living in denial.

Our motto ALWAYS DISOBEDIENT is a permanent political and mental hygiene which is a positive permanent corrective for all healthy democratic societies too.

Always and all the time: Always Disobedient with WIB!

And finally the words that WIB members associate with WIB today

Hope, a different world, non violence, safety, independence struggle, all equal all different, strong woman, feminism, critical mind, truth, justice solidarity support community activism, streets, embrace, pride, coherence, adventure, chaos / cosmos, resistance, bravery, care embrace peace, peace and love.

Athena Athanasiou

THE POETICS OF DISSENT AND THE POLITICAL COURAGE OF WOMEN IN BLACK

1. Shifting the boundaries of public sensibility

How have twenty years of *Žene u Crnom* (*ŽuC*) street politics articulated, innovated, and transformed the languages of the political? How does the *ŽuC* politics of dissent shift the limits of the very audibility and intelligibility of the discourses of the political? How does it change what can be heard and what can be spoken in the public space of contemporary Serbia? How does it dislocate the common places of national memory and accountability? The task of my inquiry in this paper is to explore the ways in which the disquieting, agonistic politics of *ŽuC* derails the ethnocentric, phallogocentric and heteronormative assumptions of what lives and deaths matter as memorable in the time and space of national belonging.

Since the emergence of the movement, *ŽuC* have been interweaving feminism with antinationalism in order to embody a politics of counter-memory. In publicly combating official denial and acknowledging the dead of the “rival side” (the nation’s enemies), these activists have been undermining the normative associations of mourning with the feminine, the familial, and the patriotic, while, at the same time, exposing the silences shrouding injurious national and gendered histories. Indeed, as I argue throughout this essay, the poetics and politics of dissent, as it is performed by *ŽuC*, renders crisis into regulatory nationalist discourses,



and, at the same time, recalls the meaning of critique as an eventful practice of reiterating but also reclaiming the object of contestation.³⁴

2. ŽuC as an antimilitarist, antinationalist and feminist political subjectivity

The wars that led to the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have posed some crucial challenges on contemporary thinking about politics and the political. The political subjectivities that emerged from that historical moment alerted us to the significance of Jacques Derrida's distinction between justice and formal regimes of law (i.e., bureaucratic, administrative institutions of law-making and legislation) (1990: 977). They have worked to denote the conditions of violence and law, war and peace, local conflict and international peace keeping, dehumanization and humanitarian intervention. Above all, they have worked to bring us in front of various quandaries regarding the internal limitations of transitional justice, the fraught politics of memory and oblivion, the possibilities and impossibilities of witnessing, the critical discourse of human rights, and the ambivalent event of testimony (Savić 2010).

The disintegration of Yugoslavia, especially the nationalist politics, the militarization of the conflict and the normalization of violence in the mid-1990s, have all manifested the crucial role of gendered norms as constitutive of nationalist discourses. Since the late 1980s, while the discursive conditions of the ensuing military conflict were being established, various grassroots feminist and women's groups across the region were involved in antimilitarist and antinationalist political work. Feminist groups engaged in solidarity activities with victims of war violence and refugee women, in the major cities of the former republics

34. I draw the case in point from fieldwork I have been conducting with Žene u Crnom since my initial short stay in Belgrade 2005. I undertook intensive research in 2010, when I got involved in the ŽuC actions in a more systematic way. I wish to thank all ŽuC activists who honoured me with their trust and shared their stories with me. This text is part of a book project that I am currently working on.

since the war began (Cockburn 1998). When the news about the war rapes in Bosnia emerged in August 1992, these groups responded immediately and persistently, organizing numerous protest actions, struggling to demystify and denaturalize the issue of war violence against women, and attempting to put it onto the agenda of international institutions (Djuric-Kuzmanović, Drezgić, and Žarkov 2008). Elissa Helms and others have suggested that these groups strategically deployed gender essentialisms, that is, representations of nurturing and peacemaking femininity, in articulating antinationalist claims and in engaging in anti-war activities (2003).

It is in this context that I am looking at the historical conditions of possibility for the emergence of *ŽuC* as a form of political subjectivity, which stemmed from a tradition of radical feminist and antinationalist thought and politics in the early 1990s, developed into a critique of politics of “transition” in the 2000s, and struggles today not to be absorbed by the depoliticized routine of post-conflict, post-Yugoslav NGO-ization. In my research, I am particularly interested in the ways *ŽuC* have been deploying the idiom of “mourning woman” in order to dismantle the militarist discursive matrix which has historically lent the stereotype of female mourning its normativity. I have been interested in *ŽuC* conditions of emergence, in their modes of discourse, forms of community, poetics of political subjectivity, and, above all, their constant call for vigilant and testimonial memory. The line of inquiry I propose is organized around a nexus of interweaving key-concepts: mourning and the testimonial event, memory and counter-memory, public space and heterotopia, body politics and the disquiet of silence, affect and the redistribution of the sensible, the restoration of dissent to politics, and activism as agonistic reconfiguration of the political.

From its inception, *ŽuC* represented a courageous, alternative occasion for anti-war, feminist political subjectivity. As one *ŽuC* recounted her own first encounter with *ŽuC*: “For me, *ŽuC* is the family that I have chosen. It is clearly a relationship of the heart, a very strong one. I was looking for them even before I met them. I was one of them. I met

them and I was rescued at the moment when everything was falling apart. The times were tough, however. (...) Women from various regions of Yugoslavia, refugees from Croatia, from Bosnia, women who had lost their own people, women who had been raped. You cannot imagine the range of women's suffering. But even under those bitter circumstances, I had found what I was looking for, a consolation. We got engaged with women's testimonies of exile and displacement: histories that are typically erased from official national history" (interview with the author, 2010).

Another *ŽuC* activist recalled her own first engagement with *ŽuC* movement of anti-war civic opposition thus: "When I joined them, I realized that I had been doing during those years on the micro-level of my life what *ŽuC* were practicing on a larger level: antinationalist and antimilitarist action. I am against any form of discrimination. I have always been opposing the spirit of national heroism. When the war broke out, I did not feel proud, but disgusted" (interview with the author, 2010).

And yet another *ŽuC* activist emphasized the testimonial performativity underlying the exposure of activists' bodies in public, a performativity combating collective cultures of political amnesia: "In the most official place, in the center of Belgrade, we bring the citizens of this country face to face with what they want to forget. (...) Our politics is simultaneously and non-hierarchically antinationalist, antisexist and antihomophobic. (...) In our vigils, we are in the place of the victims of nationalism, those who have no way to speak, and, at the same time, in the place of those who are alive but commonly viewed as lives not to be lived" (interview with the author, 2010).

3. Affects of commemoration: Re-arranging the public space of national memory

ŽuC activism should be contextualized within a heterogeneous and malleable realm of dissent in the context of 1990s Serbia (Erdei 1997, Jansen 2000, Lazić 1997, Spasić and Pavićević 1997, Torov

2000). Clearly, against the backdrop of a peculiar mixture of Yugoslav federalism and Serbian populist nationalism that the Milošević regime had fabricated, we should take into consideration not only the internal heterogeneities of discourses of dissent (ranging from anticommunists to reformists, left-wing Yugoslav dissidents, and antinationalists), but also the political tensions and hierarchical distinctions within antinationalist discourse itself (ranging from elitist liberal cosmopolitans to alter-globalists, pacifists, feminists and queer activists) (Jansen 2008). *ŽuC* formed yet another polyvalent and heterogeneous discursive layer of resistant solidarities within an already multilayered landscape of anti-war and anti-regime civil opposition during the 1990s (Fridman 2006).

Within the wider context of feminist and antinationalist dissent that emerged before, during, despite and against the wars that led to the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, my main focus is on the ways in which the political subjectivity of *ŽuC* has been performing itself in their activity and affectivity of commemoration that involves a redefinition of national memory and a rearrangement of public space. My point of departure is that the sensible and affective intensity of their politics of reclaiming public space provokes crisis to the fundamental forgetting upon which the mnemonic normality of communities and topographies is based. Even more significantly, my central question is how the gesture of mourning the other might be intertwined with a process of undoing grief as a socially prescribed feminine idiom.

The network of *ŽuC* became known in the public space mainly through their weekly vigils in the center of Belgrade and in other places of former Yugoslavia, by which they specifically drew attention to the war crimes committed by the Serb military and paramilitary forces. They were active in the massive demonstrations against Milošević in March 1991 in Belgrade, before the war broke out, in the massive demonstrations in Belgrade against shelling of Sarajevo in 1992, often in cooperation with other dissident groups, such as the 1992-founded association of intellectuals “Belgrade Circle,” as well as in the 1996-7 Winter Protest against the Milošević regime. Their politics, openly feminist and



antinationalist within a wider landscape of anti-Milošević alliance which was not always and univocally antinationalist, was signposted by their two mottos: “Not in our name” (“*Ne u naše ime*”) and “We will not be fooled by our own” (“*Ne dajmo se prevariti od svojih*”).

The historical centre of the city, the *Trg Republike* (Republic Square) is the emblematic site for *ŽuC* street actions. In fact, it has been one of the prominent sites of the movement’s actions since 1991. The square has also been the site of all important events in the country’s contemporary political history. It has been the emblematic rallying point for the first anti-Milošević demonstrations in 1991, the student protests in 1996-97 and the rallies in the Fall of 2000. But also, when Milošević was impeached to The Hague, his supporters organized a demonstration at the square, and nationalists staged a protest when Bosnian Serb wartime president Karadžić was captured in the summer of 2008. And it was here that in June 2001 the country’s first Gay and Lesbian Pride was organized and violently attacked by ultra-nationalists. The second Belgrade Pride was cancelled in September 2009 amid fears of violence in September 2009, after the fatal attack of a French football fan by hooligans; the city centre was full of *Obraz* graffiti and posters warning participants: “We are waiting for you” (“*Čekamo vas!*”).

ŽuC actions take place at the Republic Square in suggestive juxtaposition to the *Knez Mihailo* memorial. The sublime memorial occupies an inaugural place in Serbia’s national master narrative. Dedicated to exalting the birth of the Serbian nation, the late nineteenth-century monument was erected in honour of the Serbian hero who had liberated the remaining seven Serbian towns which were still under Ottoman rule. Underscoring the constitutive role of masculinity in the production of national meaning, the declarative architecture of the memorial follows the code through which vertical monuments symbolize military honour (Sturken 1997). The sculpture depicts the prince on horseback and with his hand allegedly pointing to Constantinople, showing the Turks to leave, in a gesture of defiant expulsion of the conquerors which echoes the liberatory national ideologies of the nineteenth century. Despite its

panoptical presence, however, the heroic figure does not retain much of its commemorative and declarative purpose. The statue itself has even lost its “proper name”, as in recent years it has become known simply and anonymously as *kod konja*: here, the omission of the famous rider’s name might ambiguously signify *both* a loss of the aura accompanying the lapse into the dishonour of oblivion *and* the intimacy of the diminutive, emasculated, common “pet name” –an intimacy so profound that it does not need to utter its name. Thus, the synecdoche in which the male hero stands for the nation is coupled with –and displaced by- the synecdoche in which the animal stands for the rider. War remembrance is rescripted through the ambivalent intimacy that the masculinity of the Serbian soldier indicates.

In this embattled arena of national commemoration, *ŽuC* activists seek to trouble the monolithic production of national memory and its gendered underpinnings, through actions of counter-memory that oppose the forgetting of traumas inflicted –rather than heroically and narcissistically endured- by the ethnos. The action of the black-dressed women generates a temporary break not only in the stream of pedestrian crossings that animate the square, but also in the national narrative immortalized in its architecture. This performative en-gendering and de-normalizing of the established topographical and historiographical structure is akin to the conflicted and indecisive status of heterotopia: “Heterotopias are disturbing”, writes Foucault, “because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names” (1994: xviii).

At the heart of this silent intervention that seeks to unsettle the languages of national sovereignty, lies the demand for Serbian accountability for the nationalist crimes committed by military and paramilitary forces in the wars of former Yugoslavia. At stake in this intervention is the way in which contemporary Serbian society commemorates a contentious event of its recent past, one that had divisive and traumatic effects, and whose narrativizings and silencings have been turned into arenas of fierce contestation:



We demand ... that the citizens of Serbia confront the recent past and take their share of responsibility for the dishonour which we were pushed into by criminal leaders and criminal defenders of national interests, but also our lack of strong opposition to the evil around us (*Women for Peace* 2001: 103-104).

The first silent protests of *ŽuC* were inspired by the action of *Women in Black* in Israel/Palestine. The feminist antimilitarist organization *WiB* emerged in Jerusalem in January 1988, one month after the beginning of the first intifada, when a small group of Israeli Jewish women, actively supported by Palestinian women, started marching into the West Bank to protest against Israeli aggression. Since its inception, *WiB* has become an international movement of women who hold vigils, usually at rush hour in central public squares, at busy intersections or in front of major buildings and monuments, to protest against ethnonationalist violence, militarism, racism, sexism, and homophobia.

In a similar vein of feminist dissent and patriotic disloyalty, *ŽuC* emerged as part of the resistance movement against the regime of Slobodan Milošević. Supported by antimilitarist groups, the movement of conscientious objectors, and Belgrade's opposition intelligentsia, the first group of *ŽuC* consisted of feminists, leftists, war deserters, refugees, people politically excluded from civic belonging by virtue of ethnicity and sexuality, as well as foreign friends and comrades. Weekly silent actions were organized from October 1991 through October 1995 at the Republic Square. Since then, the street actions have been continuing on specifically scheduled dates with varying frequency depending on political events. The silence of the standing women was accentuated by written slogans: "Women, traitors of war, protest for peace", or "We are disloyal". Those actions typically met with the public's apathy, but they often ignited raged attacks, such as that launched by the extreme rightwing militarist group *Beli Orlovi* ("White Eagles") in 1993. *ŽuC* continued to organize vigils until October of 1998, at the verge of NATO air strikes. Street actions were combined with other activities, such as documentation and refugee solidarity work. After the overthrowing of the regime in 2000,

they continued to mobilize against nationalist forgetting, by organizing actions of counter-memory in places where crimes were committed in the name of the nation.

Echoing the inextricably heteronormative and nationalist rage that *ŽuC* politics ignites, co-founder and coordinator Staša Zajović records the comments launched against members of the network during their weekly public vigils: “You are not Serbs, you are Yugoslavs’ because ‘if you were Serbs, you would give birth to Serbian heroes for Serbian revenge’” (1997:21). It is in this context of contesting the normative interplay between national and sexual bodies that *ŽuC* activists have worked against the employment of rape as a means of warfare, as a biopolitical project of regulating the political body according to the norms of national reproduction. They struggled to bring into public attention the ways in which the military prevailing over the rival ethnic community was established through the rape of the enemy’s women and their instrumental deployment as territorial markers and reproductive means of demographic sovereignty. In fact, at the heart of *ŽuC* politics lies the link between feminism and antinationalist, anti-war activism (Papić 1989, Yuval-Davis 1997). Thus, they problematize the naturalized convergences between national affiliation, gender-sexual norms and demographic-biopolitical injunctions. One of their enduring concerns has been the critique to the discourses of national demography and national(ist) politics of reproduction (Drezgić 2004, Helms and Jansen 2009, Zajović 1994).

4. Remembering Srebrenica: The call for accountability

In this vein of interweaving feminism with antinationalism, *ŽuC* have struggled for public accountability for the massive ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslim civilians in Srebrenica in July 1995, a project that was implemented by Serbian military and paramilitary forces, under the command of Ratko Mladić. On July 10, 2004, *ŽuC* held the performance “Maps of forbidden remembrance”, produced in cooperation with *Dah*



Theater of Belgrade, to mark the ninth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre. Before and during the performance, nationalists attacked the activists screaming: “Whom are you mourning?”, “Whores!”, “You are a shame to Serbia!”, while others were singing Chetnik songs. Jasmina Tešanović commented thus: “‘Srebrenica’ is a bad word for modern Serbia, even worse than ‘feminism’, and Women in Black put the two together” (2005:35).

The year 2004 indicated an important turning point for the international legal dealing with Srebrenica, since it was then that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) located in The Hague ruled that the atrocities committed at Srebrenica constituted an act of genocide; in 2007, the International Court of Justice concurred with the ICTY judgment, but determined that Serbia itself was not guilty of the crime. President Boris Tadić of Serbia welcomed the ruling (at least in rhetoric) and urged the Parliament to condemn the Srebrenica massacre. Nevertheless, committee findings and court jurisprudence remain generally disputed by Serb nationalist groups that still subscribe to the Milošević-era propaganda that the massacre never happened.

In 2008, *ŽuC*, along with seven other NGOs, such as the Belgrade Circle, the Center for Cultural Decontamination, and the Humanitarian Law Center, drafted and presented the Serbian national assembly with a “Declaration of the obligation of the state of Serbia to undertake all measures aimed at protecting the rights of the victims of war crimes, particularly the rights of the victims of the Srebrenica genocide”. The declaration was clear about the obligation of Serbia: “to candidly address the victims and their families, and to confess that the crime of genocide has been committed on our behalf, and thus legitimately and morally demonstrate that it distances itself from the crime. Victims are entitled to this and rightfully expect us to confess”. The declaration was officially rejected.

On March 11, 2010, *ŽuC* held another vigil about Srebrenica, this time in front of the Presidential building, at Terazije. The point of the demonstration was to call the Serbian Parliament and Serbian President to recognize the Srebrenica massacre as genocide and not just as a “terrible crime”, as it was referred to in the text of the resolution on Srebrenica that was deposited in the Parliament. According to the text of the resolution, the Serbian parliament condemns the crime that took place in Srebrenica, in line with the ruling of the International Court of Justice, and expresses condolences and apologies to the victims’ families. The Serbian government has said a declaration on Srebrenica would be a crucial step in the country’s attempts to present itself as a changed society, with hopes of future membership to the European Union. The European Parliament adopted a resolution in January 2009 calling all European Union member and Western Balkan countries to recognize July 11th, the date of the start of the Srebrenica massacre, as “a day of commemoration throughout the EU.”

The genealogy of the Srebrenica resolution poses crucial issues regarding international law, crimes of universal jurisdiction, the conceptual boundaries of genocide and ethnic cleansing, and, after Nuremberg, the very notion of crime against humanity. The Srebrenica resolution hardly signals an end of such questionings. Yugoslav successor states have resorted to the international law institutions in order to settle their disputes. Serbia and Croatia have filed genocide lawsuits against each other before the International Court of Justice. Croatia filed a genocide lawsuit against Serbia at the International Court of Justice in 1999, and after it declined requests to withdraw the suit, Serbia filed a countersuit in January 2010. In March 2010, the two Presidents, Serbian Tadić and Croatian Josipović, agreed that an out-of-court settlement would be their preferred solution to this.

But why do *ŽuC* insist, then, and continue to hold their vigils of counter-memory? For *ŽuC*, “Srebrenica” is not only a proper name of collected national death, but also the call for political responsibility vis-à-vis the unrecognizable suffering of victims. The question of responsibility



and accountability is crucially at stake in the work of *ŽuC*. Daša Duhaček has significantly laid out the problem of civic responsibility in the context of 1990s Serbia through Hannah Arendt’s political theory and by means of focusing on the political work of *ŽuC*. As she puts it: “(*ŽuC*) are building a model of citizenship that is based on responsibility *for the political unit* they belong to” (2006: 214, original emphasis).

In that respect, “Srebrenica” becomes a mnemonic topos for a political sense of responsibility and justness rather than a legal(istic)-administrative conception of transitional justice (Savić and Miljanić 2006). In the political work of *ŽuC*, such contingent possibilities and impossibilities of responsibility require the invention of another mode of mourning and another mode of silence. Contrary to exercises in moralistic testimonial truth-declaring, the activist work of *ŽuC* is geared toward bearing witness as an arduous engagement in the political action of counter-memory. Their mnemonic and commemorative silence puts into play—rather than leaving in abeyance or pretending to fix—the constitutive tension between the normative and the counter-normative forces historically involved in the work of mourning and bearing witness.

Thus, through the silent expression of their bodies, beyond the tropic apparatus of either active or passive, they do not simply give an account for political events; they rather reconfigure the political in the event. The event of posing the question of the political, especially as this is actualized in this daunting space of dispute, is at the core of their vigilant solidarity with victims. “Our government,” they say, “should be able to pronounce the name of the atrocities committed in our name.” As one *ŽuC* activist put it in a conversation with me, “instead of the moralism of guilt, we demand an act of political accountability.” And she goes on: “It was just in March 2004 when the Serbian government decided to compensate indicted Serb war criminals who were jailed in the Hague for lost pay, legal fees, and family expenses” (interview with the author, 2010). Clearly, although the law has not been enacted, it could be taken as a suggestive indicator that, as *ŽuC* claim, a large segment of the Serbian population views war criminals as national heroes, assumes that prison

camps did not exist, and maintains that the number of people killed in Srebrenica is exaggerated by international agents.

I would like to suggest that the *ŽuC* emphasis on “the victims” could be viewed as a critical mis-appropriation of national self-victimization, which has been historically a crucial theme of Serbian nationalism. Instead of and against the obsessive rhetorical reiteration of the traumas the Serbian nation has suffered defiantly and heroically throughout its history, the memory work of *ŽuC* shifts the emphasis to the horrors that Serbian nationalism has provoked to other post-Yugoslav republics. The discursive device of proclaimed Serbian victimhood is thus unsettled as it is deployed to antinationalist purposes.

The sustained preoccupation of *ŽuC* is with drawing attention to the ways in which the righteous self-representations of the Serbian nation as perennially innocent and traumatized all too often disregard or erase the suffering of others, most importantly those affected by Serbian nationalism: those who do not “count” as memorable in the official national regimes of memory and oblivion.

5. Mourning differently

ŽuC deploy, dismantle, and invert the master narratives of national memory and mourning in order to demand accountability from those who master the national master narratives. As the cultural idiom of mourning is typically imbued with the nationalistic and heterosexist fantasy of the “mother of the nation”, the weeping mother who has honorably sacrificed her sons to the nation’s military pursuits, *ŽuC* undermine the normative role assigned to women by nationalism and kinship normativity by re-embodiment the sign of mourning outside the sanctioned boundaries of home, proper femininity and national allegiance. The sexually and nationally marked idiom of mourning, predicated upon the relegation of the female to the maternal as a means for honoring the nation’s aims, is catachrestically appropriated by *ŽuC*, that is, enacted beyond and against the proper meanings and places of *oikos* (as home and homeland).



In their catachrestic mourning for the nation's others, these activists engage in an ethical and political reflection on what it means to be responsible to the memory of the lost other, the one whose loss is expropriated. Jacques Derrida has importantly suggested that mourning is impossible, as the other resists our own horizon of intelligibility but also technologies of appropriation, memory, and language. "Speaking is impossible", he writes, "but so too would be silence ..." (1989:xvi). Indeed, the politics of mourning raises questions concerning the "appropriation of the other and the resistance of the other to that appropriation" (Deutscher 1998:176).

Such questions have emerged in the context of different renditions of "activism of mourning", that is, public and collective enactments by which trauma is addressed in all its affective, social, and political implications. The ways in which AIDS activism in the nineteen-eighties conjured the sign of mourning – i.e., the AIDS Memorial Quilt and "die-ins" in major places of public administration - have brought into relief the forms of trauma generated by the social death of homophobia, thereby forging not only a collective recognition but also affective networks of camaraderie built on a queer archive of testimony. Such antinormative enactments of mourning have called into question the identification of mourning with political inertia in the face of losing a public language to mourn and in the face of political, social, and psychic foreclosures that, in Judith Butler's words, "have made certain kinds of losses ungrievable" (1997:185). *ŽuC* participate in this tradition of political enactments of mourning, whereby public grief emerges as a performative practice of protest with intense, albeit ambivalent, sensuous suggestiveness.

In their actions of silent public grief, *ŽuC* strive to counter the normative ideals of war sacrifice and national affinity that are founded upon narratives of kinship symbolics of blood and family values. In so doing, they not only potentially compel gender, sexual, kinship, and national intelligibility into crisis, but also they unsettle the very boundaries of the political. It is precisely the imperative to put the feminine body in its proper place vis-à-vis the *polis* that they dislocate by reclaiming the

public space and its order, as they publicly hold their unfamiliar rituals of political mourning for the dehumanized dead other. In radically appropriating the idealized propriety of place for mourning and in mourning for the unmournable, they risk being relegated to the abjected realm of improper femininity. Public grieving for loss unrecognized as such by national sovereignty represents an aberration from the customary propriety of both mourning and femininity. Improper public mourning for the *external* enemy exposes the limits of cultural intelligibility, in ways typically akin to a “woman”, the perennial dissenter, or *internal* enemy. In meditating on the figure of the female mourner outside the boundary wall of the polis, Gillian Rose writes: “In these delegitimate acts of tending the dead, these acts of justice, against the current will of the city, women reinvent the political life of the community” (1996:35).

Silence and mourning are stereotypically reduced to incapacity to speak or act. They also signify the language of the “victim”, or the language of the unspeakable – of harms and losses that cannot be spoken in conventional idioms of language. The mournful silence of *ŽuC*, however, opens spaces for catachrestically reiterating such norms by challenging conventional divisions between the affective and the political, between speech and silence, as well as between body and language.

As *ŽuC* rework cultural models of grief, their disquieting silence produces a discursive gap in the imaginative space of the Serbian national narrative. At the same time, it produces a gap in the space of the gendered and racialized experience of being silenced. This silence breaks from its proper sense as the other of speech (including the very genealogy of feminine suppression in language), and, therefore, opens to the voice of the other. It brings forth the forced silence of the victims, and, along with it, the question of how we can testify in their name. As *ŽuC* exemplify, there is a certain work of reappropriating silence and language, as well as the silences and languages of memory and mourning, involved in the task of addressing this question.

Mourning is a fetishized strategy of all patriotisms, ethnocentrisms,



and familialisms -of all that is common to the community. In its enactment by *ŽuC*, however, mourning reforms its own binding historicity. These activists seem to go beyond mourning's currently available modes of intelligibility, in order to hold open a space for new articulations of justice. In this sense, Srebrenica vigils imply a reflective alertness vis-à-vis what remains to be reflected upon. Thus, the memorial site of Srebrenica –a contested and multilayered place of memory- might be refigured as a site of irresolution.

These modes of catachrestic mourning question the ways in which the banality of public memory and mourning is cast, configured, archived, and lived, the ways in which memory, oblivion, amnesia, and amnesty are nationalized, and the ways in which gender, sexuality and national positions regulate what counts as memorable. Above all, they pose the question of who is left out of the common intelligibility of memory and the memorable (Butler 2004). Thus, they put the question of justice at the centre of their political work on peace: Peace ceases to be a consensus around what exists, and becomes a dissenting urge towards what does not exist yet.

6. Epilogue

I have argued that the interminable mourning of *ŽuC*, which remains excessive to its formal limits and normative preconditions, exposes the limits of official commemoration and thus reconfigures the conditions of in/justice. A certain performative poetics is at work, in other words, as *ŽuC* refuse the closure of mourning and keep it open to a different future. This poetic-performative modality of counter-memory is probably the only place where mourning is not “at home”. It is a mourning without mourning; one which renders possible what it simultaneously crosses out.

What I call “poetic-performative” here can be traced in an “aesthetics” (and not aestheticization) at the core of politics, as this is put forward by Jacques Rancière's notion of the “distribution of the sensible” (*le partage*

du sensible) (2004). This notion reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community; it defines what is visible, audible and comprehensible or not in a common space. Following this formulation, the question at stake in the *ŽuC* poetic-performative dissent is precisely what presents itself to sensory and sensible experience, what utters itself in audible language; what is included, what is excluded, what is admissible and what inadmissible; what is capable of being intelligibly and sensibly shared. An example of what is normatively constructed as “inaudible” is precisely a *ŽuC* mode of enunciation such as: “As women we are traitors,” a self-representation that mimics and, at the same time, undermines the legitimate and audible order of discourse which portrays *these* women as traitors of their nation.

Through their disquietingly reverberating silences and voices, *ŽuC* articulate the experience of being excluded from dominant – speakable, audible – national narratives and unsettle the discursive normativity that makes women-as-mothers stand for the idealized suffering of the nation. Thus, by troubling the gender and national prerequisites of collective memory and public mourning, the political subjectivity of *ŽuC* unsettles the given categories of audibility and sensibility. Theirs is a political subjectivity that enables and enacts occasions of dissent by reclaiming inaudible and disqualified voices, and by exposing the unheard foreclosures through which discourses and subjectivities are constituted. This is no less than claiming an alternative future for democracy.

Feminist and antinationalist politics of mourning–otherwise, like the one performed by *ŽuC*, gives us a cue of the possibilities at the heart of the very political praxis of mourning for those socially instituted as impossible, prohibited, and unimaginable to mourn. Indeed, this is the very eventuality that the disquieting voices and silences of *ŽuC* make us listen to.



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Strong Women

I am standing here
in black from head to foot
The wind is blowing and I am sure it's warm at home.
We are just a few women
In the square with no name
And my head is buzzing
IS THIS THE CHANGE?

There are fewer and fewer actions of real reactions
We are consumed by the negative truth
Killings violence corruption lies
More and more crimes, fewer and fewer questions.

We are sitting at home, warmed from foot to head
We lead elite discussions about social issues

Fingers cut, falls from bridges
In my head the buzz
I HAVE HAD ENOUGH

Fake promises
Sweet addresses
Hypocritical hopes
Political tedium



Political correctness
Social correctness
Inclusion
Resistance and other mottos

Memories come back
Of the protest of that day
For Srebrenica more people have fallen than we can see

That's why chins up, small groups still change the world
for the better

As long as there are still a few of us
We will challenge everybody
We are disobedient
BUT WE KNOW WHERE WE ARE!
They always ask me, What is women's strength?
I say, It is the joy that rules the world.

Loud, passionate, we wake up everyone until we go crazy.
We set on fire, we wire, we stress you all
We challenge, we bark, but WE PERSIST, STRONG!

A poem gift to Women in Black by *Zoe Gudovic*



**FEMINISTIC
DELIBERATIONS
ON
EXPERIENCES
IN ACTIVISM**

Staša Zajović

Feminist Anti-Militarism of Women in Black

I Introduction – in a country of permanent militarization

In the course of more than four decades of duration of SFR Yugoslavia (1945 – 1991), the process of militarization was continually at work, both on the institutional and on the cultural and educational plane. During that period, tremendous budgetary sums were allocated to the JNA – the Yugoslav National Army, or, as they used to teach us at school, ‘the army of all nations and nationalities’, while the JNA was exempt from all parliamentary or public control.

Prior to the war, the civil and military authorities of SFRY used to boast of “JNA being the fourth military power in Europe, and of SFRY being a major producer and exporter of armament. The so-called defense (military) industry produced massive lethal weapons, which were later to be used in wars against the civilian population, from Slovenia, over Bosnia and Herzegovina to Kosovo”³⁵.

As early as the beginning of the war, if not even earlier, it was clear that: “it is the potentates, well paid generals, warmongers and profiteers – all those who force other people to kill in order to defend their power positions and privileges, who want this war.”³⁶

The Serbian regime waged wars against the civilian population, which

35. Women in Black announcement, Belgrade, May 1996.

36. Women in Black announcement, 18th December 1991.



were, at the same time, plundering crusades aimed at redistribution of national wealth: “The only ones who will benefit from this war are militarists, dictators, the government elites, arms dealers, war profiteers and criminals. Everyone else will be defeated, and among them those most unprotected in the war zones: women, children, and the elderly”.³⁷

The Yugoslav National Army (JNA) sided with the Serbian regime and together with diverse paramilitary formations, committed countless war crimes in the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia.

On 10th December 1991, the so-called Presidency of the rump Yugoslavia (a collective power authority, made up exclusively of Serbia and Montenegro, after the other SFRY republics withdrew from it) decided to put all the volunteer units under the sole control of JNA; it was decided that the volunteers would have the same status as the other members of JNA, which was allegedly meant to demonstrate that there were no paramilitary formations in Serbia. Therefore, JNA put under its command practically all the paramilitary formations, including those who had committed the most atrocious crimes.

By that act, JNA (which was renamed as the Yugoslav Army in 1992, and in 2006 as the Army of Serbia, after Montenegro gained independence) became a criminal aggressor organization, imposing the burden of accountability to hundreds of thousands of people who were forced to go to war and in whose name they spoke and acted (criminal accountability, but above all political and moral responsibility for complicity in aggressive operations).

Therefore, the period 1991 – 2000 was marked, primarily, by the aggressor campaign of the Serbian regime (1991 – 1995 against Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), the continuation of low intensity war against the Albanian population in Kosovo, and the NATO military intervention in Serbia and Kosovo in 1999.

Under the pressure of the International Criminal Tribunal for the

37. Women in Black announcement, 30th October 1991.

former Yugoslavia /ICTY, the Serbian authorities were forced to extradite the war crimes indictees. However, none of the key political figures of that period have ever been subjected to lustration, while some of the suspects of the gravest war crimes, including genocide (the case of R. Mladić) were on the Army of Yugoslavia payroll until 2002.³⁸

Besides, parts of the Army and Police secret services were (and have been) operating without any control, hiding some of the war crimes suspects in the Army facilities: “On the occasion of the seventh anniversary of the murder of soldiers Dražen Milovanović and Dragan Jakovljević, we express our solidarity with the parents and families of the killed soldiers and, once again, lend our support to their pursuit of the truth about the causes of death of the two young soldiers, which are with good reason related to the hiding of The Hague indictee Ratko Mladić in military facilities”.³⁹

Twenty years after the launching of imperialist aggressor wars, the citizens of Serbia are increasingly becoming aware of the direct link between those wars and poverty and humiliation, as those who have committed the most atrocious crimes are still being financed. Namely, under the Law on assistance to The Hague indictees and their families (adopted in 2004), Serbia not only provides ample financial support for indictees and their families, as well as their lawyers, but the hiding of R. Mladić has meant that “every citizen of Serbia, including those still in their cradles, has been losing 159 euros every month over the past 16 years. At one point, there were 46 ICTY fugitives in Serbia. They have blocked the accession of Serbia to the EU and locked Belgrade out of European funds”.⁴⁰ The direct link between the utter poverty in which most of the people in Serbia live and the war crimes committed in our name is strikingly obvious.

38. After 2000, his pension was discontinued, but R.Mladić's family received 90,000 euros after his arrest.

39. Women in Black announcement, October 2011.

40. Tamara Kaliterna, Newsletter/Supplement, Women, peace, security, October 2011, WiB publication.



II Militarism, nationalism and sexism – 'the holy' trinity of patriarchy

As Betty Reardon says, "*Patriarchy is not only a consequence of war, it also generates war, as an essential means of its survival*"⁴¹, and the connection between patriarchy and militarism as armed patriarchy is obvious, both at peacetime and especially at times of war. The visible manifestations of militarism are: war, armed forces (Army and Police), the military industry, military budget, mandatory military service, conscription, arms production and arms trade, etc.

On the institutional level, militarism is manifested as: 'a system of military prevalence, the use of arms in conflict resolution, a system of control over civilian life and politics by means of military apparatus, control by "military and police institutions, the interference of military and political institutions with politics, economy, culture, education."' ⁴²

From the rhyme "Hey young pioneers, we're a real army..." to war cries "Three things matter in life: pussy, my rifle and my state"...

According to Cynthia Enloe, "unlike militarism as an ideology, militarization is a socio-political process that is at work at times of war, but also at times of peace."⁴³ In this process sexist models overlap (superiority of one sex over the other – of the male sex over the female sex), militaristic (superiority of force and violence over non-violence) and the nationalist/racist (superiority of one race and/or nation over the other). The militaristic training was implemented in SRY for a very long time, and particularly through schools and the educational system in general.

What we experienced at schools in the form of pioneers' chants like 'Hey young pioneers, we're a real army ...' was actually teaching us

41. Antimilitarism and Women, 2009, p.13, WiB publication 2009.

42. Ibid, p. 16.

43. Ibid, p. 21.

militarism and adoration for the father of the nation: ‘If Yugoslavia were a little girl, Tito would be her daddy...’.⁴⁴

One of the basic aims of militarization is the transfer of military values and military organization to all spheres of life: ‘The army is trying to militarize the society by presenting itself as something pure, free of the ‘filth’ of the civic society, the army positions itself as the moral arbiter of a corrupted society’⁴⁵.

Training for militaristic/military values (obedience, blind compliance with orders, hierarchy, machismo, xenophobia, authoritarianism, uniformity, homophobia...) acquires its criminal form in the wars. There are numerous examples of this, and I will dwell only on one – the trial of the five members of the Scorpions units charged with the war crime of killing six captured Bosnians from Srebrenica near Trnovo on 17th July 1995 began on 20th December 2005 and lasted until April 2007. Activists of the Network of Women in Black monitored the trial before the Special Court in Belgrade, listening to the statements made by the defendants charged with this war crime.

In nearly all their statements, elements of ‘the holy triad of patriarchy’ – sexism, nationalism, and militarism – are present.

In a disturbed system of values, criminals become heroes, murderers become patriots, and war looters turn into respectable members of the society: “*The Scorpions*” unit brought people joy. *The next generation must know about our heroism*”.

Their misogyny and love for their fatherland were contained in the following words: “*I love only three things in life – pussy, my rifle and the state*”, “Try courtship before rape”.⁴⁶

44. Žene protiv rata, 1995, p. 21 (WiB publication).

45. Despotović, Nada “Da li je moguća demilitarizacija na Balkanu?”, Žene za mir, 2004. p. 278.

46. Zajović, Staša “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel”, Women for Peace, 2007. pp. 101-105.



Violence against women during the war – by husbands, sons, warriors...

Violence of male relatives, and particularly of sons over mothers, grew as the war went on. The SOS telephone in Belgrade recorded that women who endured violence from their sons returning from the theater of war, were saying that their violent sons “did not use to behave like that before they went to war, and that they returned from there with completely altered personalities. They brought back huge amounts of armament, with which they threatened members of their households at first, and later other people around them...

Those perpetrators enjoyed protection and immunity and were condoned by the institutions. Seeking help from the police is useless because they have full understanding for violent warriors.”⁴⁷

The same happens after wars. The state that generated and exported war, refuses to confront the consequences of the war, which inevitably backlashes, not only in the form of a normalizing of violence by excluding the others and the different, but also by showing complete neglect towards the victims within ‘its’ nation. For example, there is no statistical database or records about the post-traumatic stress disorder/PTSD in Serbia, nor do we know how many women are exposed to violence inflicted on them by former participants of war suffering from PTSD. “Domestic violence is intensified because of frustrations, but also of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/PTSD. The biggest danger from firearms for women is in their own homes. The statistics show that women die from violent death three times more frequently if there is a weapon in the house. Most frequently, the perpetrator is the husband or the partner that had been reported for domestic violence earlier. The state does not intervene, neither to combat this type of crime, nor to provide medical treatment of men suffering from PTSD syndrome”.⁴⁸

47. Žene protiv rata 1994. p. 38.

48. Statement by Kostić, Nevena, (seminar Security seen by the eyes of women“), Women, Peace, Security – Resolution 1325 - 10 years, p. 110.

Every year, Women in Black has been (vainly) addressing the same question to the relevant institutions; however, the state does not perceive this phenomenon as a social problem, but exclusively as a matter of individual pathology.

Nowadays, there are analyses of autonomous women's organizations addressing the issue of domestic violence of violence generated by the militaristic state.

According to the data collected by the Network against Violence in Serbia, since the beginning of 2011 until 9th September 2011, 25 women were killed in their family environment and eight outside it. "All the soldiers or policemen who killed their wives did so within the legal context of family. Out of the 25 women who were killed within the legal context of family, five were killed by a soldier/policeman. Therefore, they accounted for one fifth of the killers. Such crimes are rarely sanctioned, because the perpetrators enjoy the solidarity and assistance of their fellow policemen. On the other hand, fearing such reactions, women often fail to report or withdraw criminal charges, so that the perpetrator, often carrying his service weapon, carries on with his actions with impunity. The state has not to this day, 12 years after the end of the last in a series of wars, taken into account this devastating consequence of the war, which has its medical, psychological, social, and even an economic dimension."⁴⁹

Women's labor (unpaid, invisible) an important resource during and after the war

The regime of S. Milošević also conducted a constant institutional militarization, primarily by investing vast budgetary means (i.e. the citizens' money) in arms and means of repression, which is why the largest part of the population lived in penury and misery, while the tremendous social discontent was depreciated by the invisible and unpaid work of women.

49. Cakić, Jelena (statement at the UNDP meeting, on the occasion of World Day of Peace, Belgrade, 19th September), WiB Supplement/Newsletter, October 2011.



The entire population paid the price of militarism, with women and children being the most stricken. Women's labor (unpaid and invisible) was being used by the regime as an effective instrument for the purchase of social peace. In order to sustain their families, having lost their jobs, or after being deprived of their salaries for months or even years, women were forced to find work in the zone of gray economy – especially in the black market. In that way, they defended some kind of 'family frontlines', while their male family members were engaged on the 'patriotic front', predominantly forcibly drafted but also as volunteers. At the cost of formidable effort and exhaustion, women maintained a fragile social peace in their families, and yet, paradoxically, "the regime used women's work as an effective instrument in buying social peace. Women's labor remains the largest economic resource at wartime and at times of acute economic and social crises. In short, women labor is used to buy peace within the family, the state and the nation".⁵⁰

Unfortunately, the demise of the regime of S. Milošević (October 2000), did not bring the expected changes, nor did it fulfill promises. Nowadays, women in Serbia are the biggest losers of transition and of the plundering privatization; however, to this day, women have maintained a precarious social peace at the cost of great sacrifices.

III Are women the peace-loving gender by nature?

Deconstruction of myths and stereotypes

Are women a function of war, nationalism, militarism

Since time immemorial, war has been a predominantly male activity, which has been confirmed by extensive research: "War has been, doubtlessly 'the splendor and misery' of the male sex. Ever since the end of the Neolithic period and the inception of the Age of Metal, war has left its imprint in the collective graves. The skeletons pierced with arrows belong

⁵⁰. Women in Black announcement, May 1996.

to men, and there are no such female skeletons to be seen anywhere”.⁵¹

In the 20th century wars, the civilian population was the greatest victim of war (accounting for around 70%, and in some wars even 90% of the casualties), while the most affected civilian categories were women and children; women and children make up around 80% of refugees and displaced.

However, women are not only victims of violence, war and militarism, but are themselves being militarized in the first place, through patriarchal socialization, and particularly by their inclusion in the military structures. I will look at merely few examples to demonstrate the active-passive participation of women in the war machinery, the abuse of reproductive rights as well as their presence within armed formations.

Women who agitate against deserters – the so-called women organizations as a function of war, nationalism and militarism...

The Movement of Women for Yugoslavia is an example of militaristic colonization and belligerent collaboration of women. The movement of so-called ‘women in fur coats’, predominantly made up of female relatives of high-ranking military officers, who were given this epithet because they used to demonstrate their privileged position by wearing expensive fur coats. The movement sprang up in the beginning of 1991, as a sign of support to JNA generals. For the needs of the warmongering propaganda, the members of this instant “movement” sought that JNA disarm the paramilitary formations in Croatia, and simultaneously demanded the armament of ‘our’ side.⁵² This is an instance of abuse of women, after the well tested recipe of national-socialism ‘the top military leadership plays the role of a political pimp’ (B. Breht), who rally women out in the streets, using them for their militarist ends.⁵³

51. Badenter, Elizabet “Jedno je drugo”, p. 67; „Svjetlost“ Sarajevo, 1988.

52. Zajović, Staša, Militarizam i žene, Žene za mir 1993., p. 27.

53. Ibid, p. 28.

The main activity of ‘women in fur coats’ was agitating for war and demanding punishment for those men who refused to go to war or deserted: “I would never call upon my sons to desert the army, that is a shameful act. I would be ashamed if they gave themselves up“. The ‘women in fur coats’ did not operate continually; they appeared upon directive and depending on the needs of the warmongering policies of the political and military-police machinery. They reappeared under a new name, “The Alliance of Women of Yugoslavia” at the height of the manhunt for conscripts during the war in Kosovo, and particularly on the eve of the NATO intervention (1999). Since draft dodging was widespread, they began, in the line of duty, agitating for war a boosting the war morale: “The Serbian people is blessed, because we have all rallied to defend our fatherland”.⁵⁴ That is how patriot poetess Mira Alečković cheered up support.

Among the agitators for war were also various women patriotic organization, two of which will be mentioned here: *The Central Circle of the Serbian Sisters* (Kolo srpskih sestara), and the fact that the head of that instant organization is Biljana Plavšić, who was sentenced for war crimes to an 11-year prison term by the ICTY and, having served two thirds of her sentence, was released in 2010 and greeted in Belgrade with high honors, serves as sufficient proof of their criminal activity .

There is also a “women’s” organization, some kind of civilian part of the criminal paramilitary formations, ethnic cleansers and killers: SSSS/*Only the Serbian Women Can Save the Serbian Man* (Samo Srpkinja spašava Srbina) made up of women working in the film and cultural sphere, who organized “cultural manifestations in the frontlines, strive for the return to church and tradition’ and keep repeating, ‘We are not feminists and our very name exempts us from that label”.⁵⁵

54. Zajović, Staša, *Zemlja mobilizacija... apatija i magija; pevanje i pucanje*, *Žene za mir*, 1999, p. 284-288.)

55. Zajović, Staša “*Žene i militarizam u Srbiji*”, *Žene protiv rata*, p. 42.

Maternal patriotic mobilization for war – demography in function of nationalism and militarism

In the mid-80's: the demographers were still guided by the territorial principle, because the falling birth rates in some regions of Serbia (central and east Serbia and Vojvodina) and rising birth rate (Kosovo), as well as the uneven demographic growth, were accounted for by economic and cultural factors (changes in the system of values).

However, in the late 1980's, along with the strengthening of the nationalist ideology, the demographic approach acquired racist features. In 1992, the ruling SPS (Socialist Party of Serbia) adopted a document named *Upozorenje* (Warning), as their congress document, which was later supported by nine national institutions, including SANU (The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and SPC (The Serbian Orthodox Church). The above mentioned document says that "Albanians, Muslims and Roma people diverge from the rational, human reproduction rates, thus threatening the rights of other peoples, which is part of the general conspiracy against the Serbian people", because their women "give birth out of separatist and fundamentalist motives and that is why Serbian women should bear children for patriotic and moral reasons that is why their desire to have children should be mobilized", etc.

During the wars of the 1990's, the propaganda aimed at women beefed up, i.e. the so-called patriotic mobilization coincided with the period of wars, resting on the tenets that: the aim of childbearing is not only to save the nation from extinction, but is also a function of national security and defense ("The last Serbs will be defending themselves on the Kalemegdan fortress in 2091. That last showdown could take place even before that date...); it meant that maternity wards were supposed to become some sort of "recruiting centers" because, as Rada Trajković, one of the national-patriotic workers, stressed: "For each Serbian young man killed in Slovenia, Serbian mothers ought to bear a hundred more soldiers"; it also meant that childbearing was aimed at defending the



national territory: “We have to preserve our territories and holy lands (Kosovo, Sandžak) because if we continue this way, the vacated space will be filled by Shiptars, Muslims...”).

Furthermore, nationalist-militaristic propositions and measures for amending the “reproductive tragedy and reproductive holocaust, were being considered, such as, for example, “medals for fertile mothers, whereby medals would be conferred to mothers of four or more children, on the same occasions as to the warriors. Everything unfolded with the fervent participation and support of SPC, until the ritual was discontinued because they were not satisfied with the results: “Mothers used to be able to send up to nine sons to the Tsar’s army, to fight for the freedom of their fatherland and for the Orthodox religion. There are some mothers who measure up to them even today, but they are few...” said Artemije, one of the SPC dignitaries.

After the wars, the repressive propaganda was continued, in order to degrade women, reduce their identities to the role of mothers and wives as their national and patriotic duty, and above all in order to stifle social discontent because of massive job losses, as women are always the first to be dismissed from work.⁵⁶

Women in armed units during the war – the aim of propaganda on the participation of women in military forces

JNA had trouble filling the front lines for their aggressor campaigns and, as the war went on, the number of men who refused to go to war was rising (the phenomenon of defection in Serbia will be dealt later). Military units were being filled with diverse male volunteer detachments. However, all of a sudden, amid the warmongering propaganda, the media began writing about female army units on the frontlines and about their feats. However, the analysis of such reports revealed that very low

56. Zajović, Staša, “Rađanje, rat, nacionalizam”, *Žene protiv rata*, 1994, *Žene za mir*, 1998, *Žene za mir*, 2002.

numbers of women actually took part in war clashes. The aim of that kind of propaganda was the following:

- to mobilize men for war by the sheer presence of women in armed formations ('to prove to those male cowards that women can also be successful soldiers...');

- to incite retaliation against the men who refused to go to war,

- to inflame passions against the mothers who were hiding their sons so that they would not have to go to war ('When did a Serbian mother implore her son to throw away arms? Never! I was induced to sign up for the army when I saw deserters and when I saw those mothers in the Assembly of Serbia protesting and inflicting injustice to the Serbian people...')

- to mobilize the entire population for war...⁵⁷

During the war in the former Yugoslavia, women-members of regular armies, as well as diverse paramilitary formations, took part in molesting the prisoners of war and detainees: My experience from Mostar, where I had seen most of the women in HOS (Croatian Defense Forces) uniforms, was atrocious. I feared women in uniforms more than men, because you could never know whether they had been coerced into joining the army or not, whereas the women were there of their own free will and they were much more cruel."⁵⁸

Women in armed formations after the war – women un/willingly join the army...

Ever since the beginning of the war (1991), *Women in Black* voiced their opposition to the inclusion of women in armed formations, seeing this as the 'militarization of women', and the vast majority of women

57. Zajović, Staša, "Žene i militarizam u Srbiji", *Žene protiv rata 1995, Žene za mir 1995*.

58. *Žene i militarizam* (workshop at WiB, statement of Rade Žarković), 1995.



rejected this idea: ‘Why would I need to have equal opportunities in the army? Are we supposed to seek equality in killing and in the production of death?’.⁵⁹

After the wars, *Women in Black* have not only continued, but also developed antimilitaristic convictions and practices, considering the inclusion of women in the armed forces, either professionally, on voluntary basis or coercively, to be “the most explicit form of militarization of feminist demands”.

Mandatory military service was abolished in Serbia late in 2010, which marks the beginning of the process of transformation of the army into a professional organization. Volunteer military service with armament was also made possible for women and reserve troopers who had completed their military service or had been serving as civilians, invoking the right to conscientious objection. At the peak of the propaganda for professional army, they had already begun calling and encouraging women to enter the army in large numbers, because “the inclusion of women in the armed forces is becoming important as it embellishes militarism”.⁶⁰

The inclusion of women, allegedly, gives the army a ‘modernizing and emancipating’ character, meets international standards, authorities look ‘modern’ in the eyes of their own citizens, but also to foreign observers. Experiences from elsewhere show that the ephemerality of illusions, even voiced by some feminists, that an increased participation of women in the armed forces would result in a gradual dissolution of patriarchy, that it will make the armies less machoistic, thus altering the power relations. On the contrary, the danger is that conservative politics, fearing the strengthening of the autonomous women’s movement and the development of different forms of power, put forward responses and solutions that militarize feminism, reducing demands to equal access of power exclusively to the participation of women in the authoritarian patriarchal structures – military power.

59. Women in Black announcement, 1996.

60. Forel, Mireja, *Nasilje nad ženama u vremenima rata- nasilje kao oružje rata*

As part of the year-round educational seminar on the feministic-antimilitaristic concept of security, a series of workshops was held “Women un /willingly join the army – About militarization or emancipation of women in armed forces – towards a feminist-anti-militarist concept of security” (in 2010) throughout Serbia, whose participants believe that:

The participation of women in the army does not alter the character of the army, or the power relations, but rather reproduces them, does not weaken militarism but militarizes women and the emancipation of women:

- It is a reproduction of patriarchy. In the army, not even formal equality is achieved: women are promoted only up to a certain point;
- Women in the army do not change a thing, it is the army that changes them.

In addition to the above mentioned prevailing opinion, the participants think that:

Women join the armed forces (the army and the police) out of economic reasons: absence of choice, lack of money, feminization of poverty... (“The women who decided to join the army told me: ‘I can either start prostituting myself/become a hooker, or join the army, and since the latter is acceptable, I have opted for that’”).

The warmongering propaganda and a disturbed system of values lead to the militarization of women and this is reflected in their inclusion in the armed forces: “The women who join the army, subscribe to a killing machinery. In the 1990’s, little girls (in Serbia) grew and were brought up in different circumstances. It never occurred to them that they could join the army. After these wars, little girls, just like boys, like wearing uniforms, the value system has changed. They have been given the possibility and now they enroll at the Military, and particularly at the Police Academy, they hear about the ‘adventures of women’ in Iraq and they like that”.

Women join the armed forces because it is a way of achieving emancipation and gender equality: this was the opinion of some of the participants, who did not provide sufficient explanation how such an attitude can



be explained by the official discourse on ‘modernization’ of the army through women participation, and on gender equality and equal access to power.⁶¹

IV From caring for others to antimilitarism – women’s resistance to war and militarism

One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman...one is not born a feminist, but rather, becomes a feminist; one is not born a pacifist, but rather, becomes a pacifist ...

Feminist antimilitarism considers that the armed forces are the main generator and pillar of militarism, analyses and criticizes war and militarism from the gender perspective, because “war is socially organized violence with a marked gender dimension.” Feminist antimilitarism is a rebellion against other roles – against men going to the army, daughters marrying in spite of their will, or bearing sons for their fatherland”.⁶²

Feminist antimilitarism rejects superficial binary oppositions of biological determinism (woman-peaceful; man-aggressive, etc.) but believes that neither women nor men are naturally aggressive. Both men and women are taught their gender roles, but in the distribution of these roles, the places where decisions are made about war, the army and military industry are less accessible to women, which means that:

– Women are more peaceful, because based on their own experience of inequality and all forms of violence they are exposed to, they are more perceptive and aware of the link between domestic violence and military/war violence – that is why women are more receptive of the culture of peace.

61. Zajović, Staša “Ne/rado žena ide u vojnike”, *Žene, mir, bezbednost – Rezolucija 1325, 10 godina*, pp. 106-109.

62. *Antimilitarizam i žene*, 2009, p. 39. (published by WiB)

– Women are brought up to be carers, and thus more focused on the respect of life and others’ needs, on caring for others, compassion and solidarity.⁶³

According to Dutch peace activist Shelly Anderson, political exclusion sometimes gives women more space and possibilities for “peace-building”, so that it happens that at times of war, protests of women against the army are not taken “seriously” by the public, but the consequences of such activities are very important, as can be seen in the women’s movements actions, especially of mothers during the war in the area of the former Yugoslavia.

Engaged motherhood – mothers against war

The most renowned “mothers” in the world are the Argentinean *Mothers of May Square*/Madres de plaza de Mayo, who in the beginning got organized as a group of mothers, but did that publicly, demonstrating the power of public and “engaged” motherhood. They used to say ‘our children gave birth to us’, alluding to the process of raising political consciousness.

In the course of the war in ex Yugoslavia, some women became political subjects through the process of transformation of their innermost vulnerability, personal tragedy and grief into action.

Mejra Dautović lost her two children, her daughter Edna and her son Edvin, who were killed in the Serbian concentration camp, near Prijedor, in 1992. Like the Mothers of the May Square, Mother Mejra is not only trying to find out the truth about her children, she is no longer driven by personal motives, looking for their children, but extends her care to all those who have the same problem, who suffer the same way: “I have not given up, I am helping other people’s children because I have no children of my own... I help as much as I can, in every possible way, with moral and material support. This makes me feel like the happiest person

63. Zajović, Staša, *Ženska mirovna politika*, p. 5, published by WiB, 2006.



in the world... Every mother grieves over her children. Those are all our children. Helping other gives me joy, that is why they call me Mother Mejra”.⁶⁴

Let me mention a few more instances of ‘engaged motherhood’:

Mothers against war – July and August 1991: on 2nd July 1991, several hundred parents, predominantly mothers of young recruits, broke into the Parliament of Serbia, interrupting its session and demanding the return of their sons from JNA and from war and putting an end to all armed conflicts. Their demands were similar or identical, which is illustrated by these mothers’ statements, such as: ‘What good is the state if my son gets killed?’, ‘I won’t let my sons die for the policy of S. Milošević’, etc.

The mothers’ message to the militaristic-nationalistic establishment was: ‘Give us our children back, victory in fratricide is a disgrace. We want peace now!’ In their memorable announcement, they said: “We refuse to have our children sacrificed by the militarists. In the name of life, youth and all the children in this region, in the name of love, friendship and understanding, we say to the army, the paramilitary and all other militarists that we are not intimidated by their threats and we shall fight for peace. Let the politicians who conceived those insane imperial projects die for them”.⁶⁵

Late in August 1991, several thousand parents, mainly mothers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia, sought truce and the return of their sons from the theater of war in the National Guard Hall. The authorities banned their protest rally in front of the JNA Headquarters. The most active were the mothers from Sarajevo and other parts of BH.

That was one of the few, perhaps the only joint protest of mothers from all the republics of the former Yugoslavia, since numerous mothers’

64. Feminist approach to justice, panel discussion organized by WiB, 9th July 2009 in Belgrade).

65. The appeal of the Soldiers’ Mothers of Belgrade, 20th July 1991, *Žene za mir*, 1993. p.8.

associations were the object of abuse by the nationalist – militaristic regimes. Many mothers and fathers of the young men who were coercively sent to war, deserters and draft dodgers, actively joined diverse forms of the anti-war movement.

Unfortunately, the Mothers' Movement was fragmented both on national and on ideological grounds, and exposed to different kinds of manipulation. The largest part of the Mothers' Movement withdrew under the pressure of a minority of mothers who served devotedly the patriotic war propaganda. A number of mothers actively joined anti-war groups, including Women in Black.⁶⁶

The women of Trešnjevac – a movement of civic disobedience, women's courage and solidarity

On May 10, 1992, in the village of Oromhegyes/Trešnjevac in Bacska/Bačka, Vojvodina, the women, mostly mothers, decided to collectively oppose the forced mobilization – to oppose their sons, husbands, and fathers being sent to battle. The women decided to remain in the Zicer Pizzeria and to organize their lives there. The very same day, 92 JNA (Yugoslav National Army) tanks surrounded the village to intimidate the people who demanded that mobilization be stopped and the already mobilized men returned to their homes, etc. "The Zicer Spiritual Republic" was founded as a spiritual community for everybody who wished peace "without borders, territory, or property". The permanent action "*Words are our only weapon*" began. Soon, the villagers of Trešnjevac were joined by war deserters and conscientious objectors from the surrounding villages and towns; support was received from the whole province of Vojvodina.

The women from Trešnjevac transformed their fear from war threats into civil disobedience actions for peace, assuming responsibility and resorting to all non-violent means to stop the military force and violence, and they won – the tanks withdrew!

66. Zajović, Staša, 'Militarizam i žene u Srbiji', *Žene za mir*, 1993., p. 29, published by WiB Belgrade



Naturally, Women in Black immediately lent them support in solidarity and help. The non-violence protest went on continually for several months, and its cultural and political importance is still present.

Women in Black organized two conferences of the International Network of *Women in Black*, several meetings of the Conscientious Objectors' Network in Serbia and numerous seminars in Trešnjevac.⁶⁷

Protests of women in Kruševac during the bombing in 1999

The protest of mothers in Kruševac lasted for ten days in the course of May 1999.

The protests were launched by women, predominantly from rural areas, because the largest number of men had been drafted from there. Their most frequently voiced demand was “give us our sons back”.

“The effect of this defiance was that the bombing of Kruševac stopped, and the protest attracted the attention of foreign western media, whereas the media at home remained silent: “The mothers’ protest was amazing because afterwards, they stopped bombing our brigade in Kosovo and Kruševac itself”.

Military sources were saying that the mothers had “disbanded the Kruševac brigade made up of eight to nine thousand people, because, according to the testimonies of the mobilized men, and also those of army officials, “two-thirds of the soldiers and reserve officers returned from Kosovo”⁶⁸.

Although the media had remained silent about this protest, its participants have reminded the public of their remarkable act to this day: “Every year we organize a meeting to remind Kruševac of that forced conscription, we hold our vigil quietly and in dignity, holding banners, and I am proud of the fact that we are striving for change in our society”.⁶⁹.

67. Žene iz Trešnjevca, *Žene za mir*, 2007, p. 367.

68. From the discussion held in the City Library of Kruševac, on 15th October 2005, published in the magazine *Republika*

69. Statement of an activist from Kruševac at the seminar *Women’s Court – a feminist approach to justice*, Vrnjačka banja, 29th October 2011.

V War deserters and conscientious objectors – allies in opposing war, militarism, nationalism...

Deserters from war – neither cowards nor heroes...

The most concise reply to the question who the deserters are was: I regard as deserters all those who were hiding or avoiding taking up arms in any other way, and also those who left their barracks or units, having experienced the sheer horror of war”.⁷⁰

In many cases, their decision to flee was spontaneous and was often without political motives: “Deserters did not necessarily share our political views, and some of them were not even pacifists. However, by their act of desertion they sent out a (semi-conscious) message. Many risked their lives to run away and cross the sealed borders. Deserters are neither cowards nor heroes. They are simply human beings who help us understand the causes and the consequences of war”.⁷¹

The numbers of deserters have never been disclosed, from the beginning of the war to this day, but the figures range between 380, 000 to half a million. The anti-war movement has been requesting data on this since the beginning of the war, but the military and civilian authorities have refused to provide them for the following reasons: because it was considered to be a military secret (and still is), and because the disclosure of these figures would be contrary to the regime’s interpretation of the conflict and the contention that ‘Serbia is not at war’. Because, if the official data on desertion were to be announced, Serbia would admit that the JNA (who deferred to the Serbian regime) was an aggressor army and that Serbia participated in the war, because JNA troops were massively going to war outside the territory of Serbia. During the fall of 1991 and the winter of 1992, the anti-war movement organized the signing of a

70. Aleksov, Bojan, „Ni kukavice ni heroji“, *Žene za mir*, 2002, p. 313-314.

71. Ibid.

petition for calling a referendum coercive conscription, and although an enormous number of signatures was collected, the Assembly of Serbia never accepted to put these requests on its agenda. Besides, publishing the data about the number of deserters, the military and civilian authorities would have acknowledged the impact of the anti-war opposition in Serbia, who had been encouraging desertion of the army and supporting it actively. Veljko Kadijević, former minister of national defense in SFRY (who is now an ICTY fugitive) said that the JNA had three enemies: “the newly-created Croatian Army, the manipulated Croatian people and the coordinated activities of the peace movement and the mothers’ movement”.⁷²

The men refused conscription for many reasons, out of which those that are relevant from the anti-militaristic point of view will be mentioned here, namely ‘refusing to take part in an aggressive war, in a war for territories and for expansionist aims; to be part of the criminal activity of ethnic cleansing and the creation of ethnically clean territories.’⁷³

In the course of 1991/1992, 140,000 people were coerced into conscription in Serbia, of whom 82,000 accounts for Vojvodina. There were 100,000 draft dodgers, (videti da li je to u 1991. i 1992.) fleeing the authorities that were forcing them to go to war. Criminal charges were pressed against 10,000 of them.⁷⁴

In spite of the fact that it was extremely dangerous to talk about desertion, let alone to organize mutinies, between October 1991 and the spring of 1992, there were around 50 mutinies of reserve troopers, with approximately 55,000 participants.

The deserters were exposed to double repression, both from a militaristic state and from a militarized society:

The repression of the militaristic state in the form of draconian

72. Aleksov, Bojan i Zajović, Staša “O mobilizaciji i antimobilizaciji”, *Žene za mir*, 1995, p. 36-40.

73. Ibid.

74. *Žene za mir*, 1993, 1994, 1995, *Ženska mirovna agenda* 2006.

punishments for ‘avoiding military duties’ (prison sentences of up to 20 years, as of October 1991); all men had to seek permission to leave the country from the military authorities, which they could not obtain if they had refused conscription – the ban on leaving the country; the ban on issuing passports to individuals who had refused conscription; the Law on Inheritance Unworthiness (1995), which all conscripts who deferred military duty, (escaped abroad so as to avoid being drafted) were deprived of their inheritance rights, etc.

Societal repression: in some cities, the names of deserters were being written on lampposts and notice boards (in places obituaries are customarily displayed, therefore symbolically proclaiming them ‘dead’, and in reality, they were being sentenced to social death, as this entailed the loss of a host of civil rights, ranging from freedom of movement to inheritance rights, etc.); many physical assaults and acts of retribution against the mothers of deserters were also recorded.

In addition to this, the military and civilian authorities of the state of Serbia engaged in the criminal activity of drafting refugees, which is contrary to all international conventions.⁷⁵

That said, nobody has ever been indicted for these crimes in Serbia, nor have they ever been considered as ‘infractions’.

Deserters of war – victims of regional and international militarism

There are numerous examples of the convergence of regional and global militarism, some of the most drastic ones will be mentioned here:

Denying the issuing of visas to deserters of war as a form of complicity with the repression of the Serbian regime: that was a decision made by European countries at the peak of the war, explaining that they were “saturated with refugees”. Owing to the pressure of pacifist, and especially anti-militaristic

75. Women in Black announcements, 22nd January 1994 and 2nd February 1994.



organizations and joint actions with related organizations from Serbia (especially in Germany and Norway) a couple of hundred of deserters were granted political asylum. European countries never accepted desertion as a 'justified' reason for the granting of political asylum. They did not even respect the decisions of the European Parliament, which in 1994 adopted a Resolution on support to deserters in the former Yugoslavia. This is indicative of the fact that they behaved in the same way as regional governments, and an expression of fear of the European states that "desertion and disobedience in the Balkans could lead to popular support to such phenomena in their countries as well."⁷⁶

The peace agreements (the Dayton Agreement, signed in late 1995, after the war in BH) or the Kumanovo Agreement (concluded in 1999 after the NATO intervention) did not address the problem of deserters by a single word. "UN Resolution 1244 (adopted in June 1999, which ended the military intervention) in an utterly unjust and unjustifiable manner failed to impose the obligation to SR Yugoslavia to urgently adopt a law on amnesty for military deserters".⁷⁷

The legalism of European institutions – a pretext for militaristic repression: The West European countries deported conscripts, the Serbian Law on Amnesty (passed in 1996 casually, and completely arbitrary and selective in character) and referring to its 'principled' implementation, invoking the legalistic principle that conscripts cannot enjoy the right to political asylum. Because of such a policy of West European countries, conscientious objectors who had been granted residence permit were deported, and after their return to Serbia, and particularly after the beginning of the NATO bombing, they were drafted and became 'a legitimate military target'. Their year-long opposition to war and their refusal to take part in it was eventually 'awarded' by sacrificing them and turning them into cannon fodder".⁷⁸

76. Kovačević-Vučo, Biljana, Balkan: Dezerteri kao žrtve rata i mira, *Žene za mir*, 1999, p. 301-304.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

For the international community, the deserters were invisible and unimportant victims of war and militarism.

The war crime of coercive conscription was invisible to the world media, which were reporting about destructions, ethnic cleansing, war rapes, and yet next to nothing about the resistance to war, and least of all about deserters. Of course, the behavior of anti-militaristic activists in Europe was completely different and they not only voiced their opinions and alarmed the public, but also gave concrete support and sanctuary.

Throughout the war, but also in its aftermath, *the militaristic character of the institutional international assistance was clear*: “The representatives of international organizations and diplomatic missions followed instructions which did not provide for assistance to the civilian population, the anti-war movement or deserters. They explained this in hypocritical terms of ‘neutrality and non-interference’ because they did interfere with internal affairs by imposing the embargo or bombing.”⁷⁹

The principle of ‘neutrality’ was violated when it comes to war profiteering of the international ‘guardians of peace’: ‘It was common knowledge that the UN troopers in BH charge between 1,500 and 3,000 marks from deserters for their transfer in UN vehicles to the safe territory. WiB has recorded many such testimonies from deserters of war who were trying to escape’⁸⁰

VI Feminist–antimilitaristic engagement – intervention in the context – the ethics of responsibility and care

Ever since its inception, *Women in Black* has expressed support and solidarity with all those that denounce war and conscientious objectors, considering them to be our allies in all actions and against war and the aggressor regime in Serbia.

79. Aleksov, Bojan, „Sudbina dezertera u ratu u bivšoj Jugoslaviji“, *Žene za mir*, 1996, pp. 282-286.

80. Ibid.



We demanded the return of all recruits and reserve troopers from war-affected areas, the discontinuation of all illegal coercive conscription in Serbia, the abolishment of penalties for all those who refused to comply with the summons for recruitment or returned from the battlefield on their own free will.

In one of its first announcements, *Women in Black* made its support to all deserters public, i.e. support to ‘the men who refused to participate in all military formations – regular armies, the paramilitary, and above all in the aggressor army (JNA and AJ) as well as in the armies of the aggressed countries.’⁸¹

Through actions and theoretical contemplation based on experience, we were developing a *feminist-antimilitaristic ethics of responsibility* (‘I am accountable not only for my actions, but also for what is being done in my name’). This is, above all, a condemnation of crimes conducted by nationalistic-militaristic structures against others (other countries, communities, the civilian population...), but also of crimes against the civilian population of the aggressor state we lived in and still do: I am responsible because by fellow citizens, the deserters, were forced to leave the country, because my Croatian neighbor was forced to leave the country, because the Albanian owner of the pastry shop was also forced to leave the country.... as a feminist and anti-militarist, I have to be disobedient to all forms of ethnic homogenization, to all armies...”⁸²

It is self-understood that this was not only condemnation of the regional or global militarism that affected the former Yugoslavia, but a policy of *internationalist anti-militaristic solidarity of Women in Black*. In addition to the denunciation of all military interventions, ‘humanitarian wars’, the global ‘war on terror’, various ‘wars for peace’, (of course, including the recent military intervention in Libya), it has always meant support to resistance to war – non-violent, invisible and silent or silenced resistance of women (but also that of men) primarily in zones of conflict, and elsewhere.

81. Women in Black announcement, October 1991.

82. Kostić, Nevena, *Ženska mirovna agenda*, 2008.

Together with conscientious objectors, during the war, and particularly after the war, we pledge for the recognition of conscientious objection as a fundamental human right. In the Manifest (1998) ‘I am a conscientious objector’, WiB activists, in a way similar to the anti-militarists from Spain, explain why they consider themselves to be conscientious objectors: because conscientious objection/CO is ‘a right to a choice, my political choice, and not part of my woman role of caregiver; CO is an expression of disobedience to patriarchy, and especially to militarism as armed patriarchy; it is disobedience to all forms of militarization of society...’.⁸³

The action of collecting signatures for the recognition of the right to conscientious objection, organized by WiB together with the Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights, lasted from the end of 2000 until May 2001, while continual activities were organized until this right was recognized – as late as 2003. Compulsory military service was abolished in 2010.

There are no men and women issues – all issues concern women

The experiences from that action are very important for our feminist anti-militaristic engagement for several reasons: this action was almost entirely carried out by women and women’s autonomous organizations, as well as by conscientious objectors. Later, we analyzed this ‘phenomenon’ and concluded that such massive participation of activists (not only from the WiB network) could be explained only by emotional, moral and political reasons:

–’Rejection of the division into men and women issues, renouncing to ghettos where women’s activism is the extension of caring for others, in the public sphere;

–’CO does not mean only supporting friends/objectors and male relatives, it is also a political choice – there is a direct causal link armies

83. Manifest, 1998.



and army expenses and the penury in which the majority of women in this region live;

*Because feminism and anti-militarism are inseparable, just like militarism, sexism and nationalism are an integral part of patriarchal control.”*⁸⁴

Furthermore, we analyzed why this legislative petition was massively supported by women between 40 and 65 years of age, and we arrived at the following conclusions:

– Experience has shown that, irrespective of their ideological orientation, women are the ones who have borne and are still bearing the heaviest burden of militarism – women are tired of being caretakers, and they do not want to live in constant fear;

– Women were the ones who were the most concerned with their male relatives who were coercively drafted, fleeing from war and avoiding or are still trying to avoid military service”.⁸⁵

As in the case of their male relatives – deserters – the turnout of women in this (and in similar actions that followed) cannot be explained by some clear anti-militaristic convictions, but rather by the fact that women unconsciously transform their painful personal experiences, fear and constant care for others into a struggle against militarism. We have learned another important lesson for our future anti-militaristic engagement, it being that *‘Women are prepared to take part in militaristic-anti-militaristic actions if they are related to their everyday experiences. Feminism and anti-militarism are equally alien to women unless they concern their personal lives’*.⁸⁶ As it has already been said, military service was abolished late in 2010, but in spite of a highly militarized social environment, interest for similar anti-militaristic actions has not waned. Let me mention a few examples:

84. Zajović, Staša, “Od brige o drugima ka antimilitarizmu”, *Žene za mir* 2001, pp. 294-297.

85. Ibid.

86. Zajović, Staša, *Žene u crnom: rat, feminizam i antimilitarizam*, *Žene za mir*, 2004, p.13-21.

Street action ‘*In memory of the deserter*’, where a live monument was erected by women activists who supported the deserters and conscientious objectors, paying tribute to all the male deserters and conscientious objectors, who they consider to be their allies in the anti-patriarchal non-violent rebellions. Women in Black presented this performance for the first time on 18th October 2006 in Belgrade, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of anti-war peaceful resistance in Serbia.

The artistic-activist initiative that WiB performed several times with the artist group Art Klinika from Novi Sad ‘*We are returning your tank – homage to the rebels against war and violence*’, was performed in memory of Vladimir Živković, a coercively drafted reserve trooper from Valjevo, and his courageous act. In the fall of 1991, he took an armed transport vehicle and drove it in front of the Assembly building of SFR Yugoslavia, as a sign of protest against war. On that occasion, we addressed, in a choral performance, the institutions of the state of Serbia, demanding from them to answer some questions related to the war, war crimes, coercive conscription and violence against women, and we also presented all deputies to the Assembly of Serbia postcards with questions concerning the consequences of the wars of the 1990’s, with the aim to encourage a culture of responsibility and politics of memory.

Working together with conscientious objectors and with politically engaged artists means that desertion is not reduced to acts of fleeing the war affected areas or refusing military service, but that we have been developing ‘desertion’ as a policy of subversion and transgression of all imposed identities, crossing borders and violating all sorts of consensus (national, religious, sexual...).

Stigmatization and silence about desertion remains a constant in a militarized society, so Art klinika, in their artistic manifest, ask this question: “Did the event depicted in the picture take place at all? Are the participants of that event heroes or deserters? Patriots or traitors? We see the mutiny of the Valjevo detachment and the gesture of Vladimir Živković, who parked his armored vehicle in front of the National Assembly



building, as some of the most remarkable events of the 1990's. What do you think about that event? Was it real? We have the impression that it has been maliciously neglected...Is there a history outside history? How does an event either become part of history or gets deleted from it? ⁸⁷

VII The concept of security – demilitarization and the feminist-anti-militaristic concept of security

“Resolution 1325 – a women’s resolution or a militaristic-bureaucratic tool for Euro-Atlantic integrations of the ruling elites?”

On 31st October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace, Security”. It was the first time that UN SC, at such a high level, promoted the inclusion of women in peace processes and in the implementation of peace agreements. At least, that was the idea of R1325 that numerous peace activists throughout the world had fought for.

Ever since the beginning of 2005, *Women in Black* has requested the implementation of Resolution 1325. We also adopted our resolution ‘Women, Peace, Security’, with demands that are specific for the political context of Serbia. For this, we had the support not only of dozens of civil society organization, but also of a number of female deputies to the Assembly of Serbia. Unfortunately, our demands were not considered, but the state took into account R1325 in an attempt to achieve the political goals of the ruling elite.

During our year-long field work (educational activities, legislative campaigns, research, publishing and artistic-activist engagement) concerning the issue of security and Resolution UN 1325, we, *Women in Black*, have acquired relevant knowledge /findings :

Firstly, on the intuitional militarized concept of security on all levels

87. Art klinika, 2010.

– regional and global, on the complete opposition of that concept and practice to the needs and interests of women.

Secondly, the absence of political will both on the regional and on the global plane for the demilitarization of the concept of security. The famous ‘women’s Resolution 1325 is not exempt from that: instead of encouraging the creation of a different concept of security, it often serves merely as an instrument for achieving the legitimacy of militaristic governments before the UN, and also as a means for ‘pacification’ of the feminist-anti-militaristic activists. Namely, out of utterly pragmatic reasons, i.e. formal adoption of international documents, in 2010, the institutions of the state of Serbia prepared the National action plan/NAP for the implementation of R1325. Although this “women’s” resolution cooperates only with organizations which obediently follow the state needs, whereby the civil society, more precisely, the ‘civil sector’, is divided into the obedient and disobedient ones and, instead of solidarity, discord is brought in on the principles of patriarchal competition”.⁸⁸

In the political analysis of the text and process of preparation of recommendations of the NAP in Serbia, *Women in Black* pointed to serious shortcomings, above all the markedly militaristic character of the document and the entire process of NAP: The Ministry of Defense, as the responsible agency for the preparation of NAP, speaks of its militaristic approach to security. The experience of the wars of the 1990’s in the area of the former Yugoslavia, and especially the role of the Army of Serbia, which inherited the burden from JNA (the Army of Yugoslavia, the Army of Serbia and Montenegro) and one of the principal executive organs of the regime of S. Milošević, seriously jeopardizes the credibility of this in the preparation of NAP, which is particularly unacceptable from the feminist-pacifist perspective”.

The militaristic complicity of national, regional and international agents of power is obvious in this case: “The entire process unfolds with

88. Žene, mir, bezbednost – Rezolucija 1325- 10 godina, p. 27, published by WiB Belgrade, 2010.).



the full consent and complicity of international organizations, primarily of UNIFEM, which provides all forms of assistance, ignoring in this process the experience, knowledge and engagement of NGO's for Resolution 1325 over the past 6 years, ignoring the contribution of activists in peace building over the past 20 years, their security risks in confronting the criminal past, condemning the Srebrenica genocide, etc.⁸⁹

As the activists all over the world had been warning of the danger of bureaucratization of R1325 by the governments and a good part of NGOs, Women in Black in Serbia denounced the abuse of R1325 by the ruling elite and one part of NGOs aimed at achieving their political goals. The entire process of preparation of NAP Serbia is not transparent and that is the reason why Women in Black has formed autonomous power groups for the monitoring of the implementation of Resolution 1325, to ensure efficient control of the process of implementation of NAP and all the government activities on this plane.

For the authorities in Serbia, Resolution 1325 is yet another bureaucratic tool that creates the illusion of integration and a mythomaniacal obsession by 'leadership in the region': "Our country is among the small number of countries that have seriously tackled the issue of implementation of R 1325. This is where we occupy a leading position indeed. The idea of R1325 was first embraced among the activists for women human rights, then a little broader than the NGO, and finally the idea entered our ministry from there".⁹⁰

How to demilitarize security?

The fact is that it is predominantly the mainstream women organization that deal with this Resolution, for the most part in a superficial and bureaucratic manner. Resolution 1325 has become one of the "attractive

89. Critical remarks and activities of WiB concerning the preparation of NAP for the implementation of R1325, 13th March, 2010.

90. Danas, 9-10 June 2011; Statement by Tanja Mišćević, State Secretary in the Ministry of Defense of RS

fashion hits” on the market of projects, a form of an allegedly “fruitful and successful cooperation” among the civic society, the state and the international institution, primarily the UN.

The feminist-anti-militaristic organizations in western countries do not even take into consideration R 1325 or shun from it because “every principled anti-militaristic attitude would be rather reserved toward Resolution 1325”.⁹¹

Still, Women in Black has decided to grapple with all these challenges and to try to give its contribution to the feminist-anti-militaristic concept of security, sharing this experience with related networks: “The more we insist on its implementation, the more we become aware of its limitations and of the fact that it could be put to wrong use. We are outraged because this reveals how the patriarchal and militaristic institutions manipulate with good feminist deeds”.⁹²

In our comprehensive activist and research work, we have acquired relevant knowledge about a different/demilitarized concept of security, which can be summarized in the following way:

– **The traditional militarized concept of security is clearly opposed to the aspirations and needs of women – women do not relate security to institutions of repression and security forces (the army and the police), but exclusively to the concept of human security:** women, and above all civic society activists, are devoted to the prospect of developing a completely different concept of security, above all from a feminist/anti-militaristic point of view;

– **Human security must contain a gender dimension:** the replies indicate that the definition of human security as stipulated in the UNDP documents does not sufficiently express the concept and meaning of security, that women’s experience is much broader and that the concept of human security has to be extended, primarily with the gender dimension

91. Discussion with activists of WiB Madrid, September 2009.

92. Cockburn, Cyntia, U zamci kontradikcija, Supplement „žene, mir, bezbednost“, November 2011, published by WiB Belgrade).



(the gender dimension of human security comprises women's human rights, gender justice and protection from all forms of violence);

– **Violence against women has to influence the shaping of the policy of peace and security on the national and international level:** relating violence against women, both domestic and in the public sphere, with the traditional concept of security; quite often, women face their greatest threat at home, and that is the reason why large numbers of workshop participants emphasized the need for a change of relations within the family; conversely, the creators of strategies of national security do not see domestic violence as a threat to the security of women, and it is therefore necessary to change the relation of private-public, personal-political and personal-international;

– **Field work encourages the marriage of theoretic knowledge and activist experience concerning the issues of gender, peace and security:** relating seemingly abstract topics/high, so-called male politics (such as militarism, military expenses, disarmament, security) with the everyday lives of women, their daily experiences both in the personal and family sphere and in the public sphere (political, economic, social, cultural, educational, etc.);

– **A multidisciplinary approach is necessary in reconsidering the militaristic concept of security:** it must be placed in the context of the widespread patriarchal oppression by linking together all the generators of threats to women (sexism, militarism, nationalism, economic exploitation, xenophobia, fundamentalisms, clericalization, impunity of violence and crimes;

– **Relating the local and the global ('act locally, think globally')**: all the crises are inter-related; knowledge must be generated and conclusions drawn from field experiences, but we must always keep in mind the global perspective of peace and security, the interdependence and overlapping of all phenomena, etc. ⁹³

93. Zajović, Staša (in cooperation with Saša Kovačević and Miloš Urošević) "Od svakodnevnog iskustva do teorije- ka feminističko-antimilitarističkom konceptu

How to demilitarize Resolution 1325?

The previous section pointed to the problems of application of Resolution 1325. Nevertheless, the question arises whether this is merely a matter of bureaucratic ab/use of R1325 by the ruling elites, with UN support. Women in Black fully agrees with the opinion of expert on security issues, Dragana Dulić, who rightly argues that the problem is not only the implementation of R1325, but that its militaristic character is also debatable:

– **The militaristic character of Resolution 1325:** it addresses the issue of war and military conflict as a continuous, natural and inevitable situation, which is “contrary even to the role of UN in maintaining peace and security in the world. The Resolution binds the countries that have adopted it to act in the spirit of its articles, especially at times of armed conflict, which in itself is not enough to guarantee the protection of women and children from the consequences of war, i.e. from displacement, poverty, and even rape. It is therefore natural that it was soon complemented by Resolution SC 1820 (19th 06 2008), 1888 (30th 09 2009) and 1889 (5th 10 2009) which specifically focus on sexual violence in the course of armed conflict”, etc. ⁹⁴

– **Militarization of feminist demands for equality:** the quantitative inclusion of women in the security sector and the militaristic structures reduces the demands for equal access to power exclusively to the participation of women in authoritarian patriarchal structures – military power: “women are not only victims, often, they are armed, therefore active participants...” ⁹⁵ For the elites in power, R 1325 represents a license to join the world of the mighty: “That is why Resolution 1325 takes into bezbednosti”, *Žene, mir, bezbednost-Rezolucija 1325*, pp. 121-124 (WiB publication, 2010.).

94. Dulić, Dragana “Prilog diskusiji o Nacrtu Nacionalno-akcionog plana za R1325” – unpublished.

95. Statement of state Secretary in the Ministry of Defense T. Mišćević, *Danas*, 9-10 June 2011.

account the fact that the leading forces of its external support – UN, EU, USA – should help in the redevelopment and reform of the army, police and other security forces, by means of efficient training in gender issues for their entire staff, as well as the inclusion of women in these forces. The dimension of a specifically human security is in the background, in spite of being declaratively present”.⁹⁶ Therefore, R1325 does not pursue what women in the field understand as human security! Besides, the monitoring of R1325 reveals that women do not participate even in this militaristic concept of security, and there are numerous indications that women (usually the “eligible and complying”) do not participate either in management on the local level or in the security sector!

– **The colonial and hegemonic spirit of R1325:** The Resolution is mainly implemented in the poor countries of the South, in post-conflict areas, in the so-called countries in transition. Not even all the members of the UN SC have accepted National action plans for the implementation of R1325. In western countries, it is predominantly the object of concern of governments, primarily of NGO experts and women experts, who support it and put it on offer as an export item to the activists from poorer countries. Since they are exposed to constant struggle for survival of their organizations, they accept partnership through R1325, in other words, they accept subjugation both to the state and the donors. And this is one of the reasons why this Resolution is becoming more and more a matter of state of NGO elites, estranged from the reality of the majority of the population, especially women. That is why R1325 has a very limited impact on the status of poor women, and on the sanctioning of violence and crime. This is obvious from the reports on implementation of R1325. Besides, as D. Dulić puts it, “not even this ‘women’s resolution’ makes room for reforms of the UN, it does not question the hegemonic position of the rich states, confrontations and the North-South division, which has been deepened further after 11th September 2001, inasmuch as it is the civilian population, primarily women and children who are the most

96. Dulić, Dragana “Prilog diskusiji o Nacrtu Nacionalno-akcionog plana za R1325” –unpublished.

affected by the so-called war on terror and humanitarian intervention”. That is why it is not surprising that some of the promoters of R1325 are hard-core militarists, such as Ursula Plasnik, special envoy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria, former Foreign Affairs Minister: “NATO is our best ally in the implementation of Resolution 1325 – they know how important it is to include women in ‘peace’ operations, which is particularly visible in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan”.⁹⁷

– **The non-binding character of Resolution 1325:** D. Dulić considers that the mechanisms of responsibility for its implementation are insufficiently developed, that it has no set time frame or implementation strategy, and moreover, that it is not binding, which can be an advantage in the sense of leaving the initiative to each country to set the agenda according to its priorities, but it can also be a disadvantage if it should lead to the absence of a common strategy among those countries, together with the UN, so that each country would apply R1325 depending on the needs of the ruling elites, regardless of the needs of women for human security.

– **The limited performance of R1325 in the field:** Although the performance depends on a host of factors, on the grounds of the reports submitted over the ten years of R1325 implementation, small advances have been made regarding the curbing of sexual crimes in the war affected area; the voices of women (except for the “chosen ones”) are not heard in the UN international conferences on peace and security, let alone the “disobedient” feminist-anti-militaristic conferences! “That is why there are less and less optimistic tones in the abundant literature concerning R 1325 and its implementations, and all the more accusations that it is being upheld only declaratively, and even that it is yet another “trick” contrived by the SC in order to pacify the activists.”⁹⁸

97. Statement of U. Plasnik, at the panel “There are no women without peace: the inclusion of women in regional security in the organization of the Regional Women’s lobby for peace, security and justice”, held in Skopje, on 25th June 2010.

98. Dulić, Dragana “Prilog diskusiji o Nacrtu Nacionalno-akcionog plana za R1325” – unpublished



In the case of Resolution 1325, as well as regarding all difficulties, obstacles and challenges on the course of creation of a just peace and the feminist-anti-militaristic utopia about a different kind of security, it is not enough to be angry, but to assume responsibility to get organized on the local, regional and global level and to prevent the corruption and usurpation of important international documents, such as R1325 should be. That is the reason why the number of coalitions and networks who are doing this in increasing, including WiB.



Mireya Forel

Violence against women in times of war – violence as a war weapon

1. Introduction

The importance of creating a collective memory on violence against women in times of war.

War weapons. Violence endured by women

2. We are in the proto-history of our memory

(Proto-history: a term referring to the transitional period between prehistory and history in the historical development of peoples and countries – translator's remark)

Obstacles posed by the western patriarchal power to the creation on feminist memory.

Black spot: fallen into oblivion. Numerous and concealed wars. The concept of civilian population. Our perspective screened by a veil of victimization discourse.

3. Forms of violence against women as a weapon of war

From legitimacy to strategy

4. The conclusion depends on us



I. Introduction. Creating memory

This presentation was given during the conference *Less visible forms of gender-based violence* held in Bilbao in 2010. However, the text has been somewhat altered, due to the changes I introduced on my return from the conference of Women in Black of Serbia (in August 2010). Except for the women from Serbia, the conference was also by women from Montenegro, as well as one activist from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has been seven years already since the war in Yugoslavia ended. Virginia Wolf wrote that the point when a war ends is obvious, but not where starts. Indeed, I am not sure whether we are ever aware of the fact that a war is coming to an end. More precisely, I do not believe that all the communities affected by war share the same kind of consciousness in this respect.

To start with, I would like to stress that an armed conflict does not end before there is memory of it openly discussed by both, both the aggressed and the aggressor side, through daily experience, feelings, and also from the point of view of justice and factual truths, and causes and consequences of the conflict. Creating memory is a very long, terribly painful and complex process. Generally, we tend to believe that a war conflict ends when the arms go silent. When there is no more violence and no more death. And when we hope it is all behind us.

In her novel 'Le Square', written in 1952, Marguerite Duras wrote, referring to the concentration camp victims, 'They were forced to withdraw into silence' (Ils etaient contraints de rentrer dans silence).

The main objective is reconstruction, and of course, we always have in mind material things. With this aim, assistance often arrives from outside, from many countries and individuals, but never without some vested interest involved. In this way, dependence in relations is created and this is ever-present in the aftermath of all destruction. It is a time we refer to as post-conflict, which unfolds in ghastly media silence, and also

in absence of solidarity, as if war were merely the firing of mortars, falling of bombs and rattle of machine guns, but also of axe blows.

Nowadays, the state of memory and violence against women in times of war leads to the conclusion that the violence is a war weapon. In spite of that, we can draw the difference between planned and strategic violence and violence that is considered to be legitimate. Later on, I will dwell on war rapes and forced pregnancies as weapons of war.

What are weapons of war?

How are they conceived, developed and applied?

Our friend Graziella Longoni, Women in Black from Milan, says that “weapons are requisite murder accessories that turn bodies into war machines, they are a means of destruction generating fear, a means of destruction of other bodies, which are often unarmed, as is the case with civilian population ... a means that makes entire zones of our planet uninhabitable, that will continue generating death even after the end of war...” (1). The author has in mind the consequences arms can produce, such as in the case of landmines.

Weapons of war are the product of an entire process. They are produced in the period preceding a war, used at wartime and maintained in the aftermath of war. It goes without saying that I do not refer merely to the processes of material arms production.

Weapons of war can alter or remain unchanged, depending on the type of war. By this, not only do I have in mind wars in the form of armed conflicts, but also other wars: economic, social, cultural, climate and ecological. Armed conflicts sometimes precede other forms of war or are a form of punishment of societies that do not accept the implications of an armed conflict, i.e. dependence, unemployment, inequality, corruption, and seizure of power by dictatorships or establishment of governments serving the interest of capital. Such instances are present on all continents, and also in our Mediterranean environment. Many



armed conflicts are terrifying in character, because they comprise all forms of war and everything takes place within a short period of time. All these wars make use of similar weapons. For example, socio-economic war generates violence, most of which is in the form of rape and forced prostitution. Namely, these diverse forms of war result in stratification at all levels. They foment a climate of tension and fear.

All wars are a result of militaristic logic, which varies depending on the society and the epoch.

Nowadays, militarism comprises an ideology that links together the concept of 'security' with military power. It is a political ideology that justifies, structures and 'reinforces' a system – militarism – through which the entire society gets organized around the idea of security that depends exclusively on the military sphere. This is how the phenomenon of militarization is fostered. In spite of the 'rule of law', division of power, diverse and autonomous social spheres, all the socio-cultural relations and all the organic structures are permeated with militarization. Militarism is the axis everything revolves around, i.e. security is maintained in the name of 'public good'. When talking about security, it is invariably related to defense from someone or something, or to attack 'in the name of something', which always comprises 'in the name of security'. Therefore, weapons are always mentioned. There is a great deal of armament around and it is versified. And security is in itself 'a weapon'. 'Security means the maintenance of an existing order, and nowadays it implies the preservation of all levers of patriarchal rule in the western world and of the influence that rule exerts in the entire world.

In short, I believe that this order is based on the idea of male supremacy over women, over 'others' and over nature. That idea rests on the need for competition and conquest. Those are the principal causes of militarization of our societies and that is the framework that breeds violence among us. Violence is the fruit of a long-lasting process of education that can be regarded as a weapon used either in function of war and/or in order to preserve the established social order. Generally, this is

accounted for in diverse ways, with diverse excuses, yet it always serves the aim of generating fear, actually, the capacity to maintain the existing order. When referring to propaganda, the term ‘weapons of propaganda’ is used. They are produced in the name of ‘values’ regarding the relations between men and women, human rights and issues of socio-cultural or so-called religious identity. That is why we have to learn to unmask this propaganda and to defend ourselves from it. War propaganda is streamlined in such a cynical way so as to adopt or kidnap our aspirations for peace and justice and turn them into weapons in function of conquest and winning supremacy. That is one of the gruesome aspects of militarism, which creates a climate of disorientation and divisions and helplessness in situations of civil conflict, just like in case of Afghanistan and Libya.

I exposed such a character of the patriarchal western militaristic power some time ago, indicating the similarities between the process of war violence and the process of gender based violence, which can be seen in Appendix 1 to this paper. It also transpires from the message of Women in Black from Seville, issued on the occasion of 25th November 2009:

“Violence seen from a feminist perspective means that the power that generates, justifies and makes violence possible, has to be exposed and condemned. It is impossible to condemn criminal macho acts of men towards women, and at the same time support:

- Military intervention in a country with the aim to destroy it and make it dependent, just as macho behavior with women aims at,
- Occupation of a country under the pretext of defending peace and human rights, just like macho behavior toward women does,
- Finance paramilitary formations or regular army in order to prolong a dictatorship, just like macho behavior prevents independent women’s initiatives,
- Produce and sell armament for war and repression, just like macho behavior tortures and abuses women, including murder.



We could go on endlessly about situations in which every man is allowed to resort to violence under any excuse whatsoever and under any circumstances, in relation to women.

The similarities mentioned here, as well as in Appendix 1, clearly demonstrate the relation between diverse patriarchal weapons in exercising power and with the aim of creating permanent war and chronic tension.

It is impossible to uproot gender based violence, unless the ubiquitous justification of violence in various social spheres is taken into consideration and condemned, such as violence against others in the form of threats, blackmail and other acts of war.

It is usually said that in traditional patriarchal relations, this kind of legitimacy is enjoyed by adult men in relation to women and the young, and by 'foreigners' towards 'our folk'.

However, in today's modern world this legitimacy is enjoyed by states and international institutions of all kinds, together with their experts. All those are basic levers of militarism that nourish and maintain it.

By usurping the right to commit acts of violence, to intervention and to retribution, modern countries have, allegedly, the objective to prevent sexist and racial violence, so as to decrease tensions and make possible coexistence, while in fact they instigate and legitimize violence.

With this aim, modern countries implement security policies that are reduced to permanent fear of threats and dangers, whether they are of social, economic or political nature. On the plane of inter-human relations, this is manifested through a strong identification with violence as a means of self-assertion in any frustrating situation. And there are all too many of them in a society affected by the disease of patriarchal power. **These are relations that are conducive to a collective pathology, which is becoming a chronic threat to all of us.**

What kind of violence are women exposed to?

In war, women are exposed to extreme violence, long-lasting and often incessant, both in the private and public sphere, which leaves consequences that will be discussed in Appendix 2. Each imprint is more than a story or an episode; it is a whole world of internal destruction and disaster. The consequences are life-long. Not every war leaves the same traces, yet all wars testify of certain war aims and strategies.

It should be clearly emphasized that we cannot merely condemn the situation the women in countries under attack find themselves in, because it is vital to be aware of the violence endured by women in aggressor countries. We must not forget that the majority of men returning from the front lines become more aggressive and assume more rights to subdue their mothers, wives and sisters. In this way, they regain their assertiveness. Neither must we forget the political propaganda calling for child-bearing (increasing of the birth-rate) that puts strong pressure on women to become reduced to the role of mothers and wives for the 'good of the fatherland'. However, this does not mean that women do not participate in affairs and issues related to warfare.

In this respect, we have to address the issue of the young, and even of boys and girls, with particular care. They are increasingly becoming the target of violence and serial abductions, although this is not a novel phenomenon in history. They suffer horrendous trauma because of the loss of their identities and for being used as weapons of war, in addition to all other forms of violence that deprive them of their growing years.

Dealing with the issue of violence against women in times of war ought to awaken our numbed consciousness, and make us find out more about what goes on during the present-day armed conflicts and create a living memory of that, but also to make us alert to everything that could happen at times preceding a war.



In that respect, knowledge about times before and after a war must become an integral part of our consciousness in building our female memory of violence in times of war.

II Proto-history of our memory of violence against women

Until the breakout of the war in the former Yugoslavia, in the 1990's, there was no political collective awareness of the existence of crimes against women. That happened owing to the feminist movement that preceded that war, and which became involved a strong feminist-pacifist and eco-feminist movement in Europe and in Latin America. Also, there was a strong movement of thousands of victims of sexual slavery that was practiced on during the Second World War by the Japanese army in the Pacific region.

One of the major forms of violence against women in times of war is exactly the century-long silence about the crimes they suffered. However, this does not mean that we know enough about that. Nowadays, in my opinion, the creation of memory is still in its proto-historical stage, for manifold reasons. I will try to define it as a four-point methodological question:

- 1. Black spot: fallen into oblivion**
- 2. Numerous and concealed wars**
- 3. The concept of civilian population**
- 4. Our perspective screened by a veil of victimization discourse**

1. Black spot: fallen into oblivion

On this occasion, I am going to quote the excellent remark made by Rene Maheu in his very concise introduction to *The World Anthology of Freedom* (2). He reminds of the fact that the entire written and oral history is covered by a veil of silence about millions of women, men, girls

and boys from all over the world who did not have the possibility to speak out of their dignity wounded by violence and misery.

History does not record the traces of those who endured most violence. **Let us not forget the following fact: violence had the upper hand throughout history, and this is also true of our time; history has pushed into oblivion its victims, and it did so resorting to lies, terror and manipulation.** It is the voices of the women victims that have always come out of the shadow; those are the voices that take us back to the proto-history of our memory, all the way to the origins of resistance. Those are the voices that create history: a history that differs from that of wars and of violence in all spheres, a history that from the very beginning testifies of an alternative human development, which does not depend on violence.

Due to the fact that this did not have any public or political importance or influence, we could not ever imagine everything that war implied. Namely, there is memory of wars, of actions and values in societies in times of peace, in which sexist violence was completely legitimized. And we know that violence increases uncontrollably in times of war. It can be said that a darkest veil of silence has covered all the victims of genocidal conflicts, in which entire communities, and even civilizations, had perished. Those were societies that either did not practice organized violence, or that were even semi-patriarchal, according to the usual definition, or else, simply did not bear any organizational similarities with the invaders.

2. Numerous and concealed wars: put an end to myths

Among the patriarchal heritage is the concept war and of what is referred to as our civilization.

The need to define what is comprised by war has led to a great deal of research in social sciences, in history and, of course, among analysts in the peace movement, in literature and art. It is not my aim to offer a



more or less accurate definition of what an armed conflict is and what it would be. I will simply remind of some patriarchal militaristic obstacles that hamper the entire feminist understanding of what is comprised by war and what it means for us women. Among those obstacles, I would like to highlight two myths:

2.1. The natural process myth

Umberto Cori, an expert on war issues, who was cited in the book “War, Peace and the State System” by Jaime Pastor, says that out of the 3400 years of documented history of humanity, merely 234 were years of ‘peace’. Furthermore, (Bertul i Karier) Berthoul and Carriere (3) say that ever since 1740, there has not been a single year without war. These facts tell us that war is considered to be something normal, inevitable, or even ‘natural’ for human beings. These facts mainly refer to men, because, as a rule, women were excluded from military and warrior structures. However, a historical overview would reveal that not all women were unfamiliar with belligerent intentions or their ‘effects’: from Cleopatra and glorious queens, such as Isabel of Castile, all the way to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher or present-day defense ministers. We know all too well that women have been participants and have supported, either directly or indirectly, war campaigns. Although we are not going to open an argument here about diverse opinions on this matter, nor about the reasons why men ‘traditionally’ assume the role of ‘warriors’, we will now consider two critical current issues.

Firstly, the opinion that the inclusion of women into the armed forces /AF can alter the essence of AF, or that militarism has nothing to do with patriarchal power. In reply, we can say that the characteristics and the essence of the army are not a quantitative issue and that they do not depend on gender balance, but primarily on the extent to which we actively accept patriarchal values or not, as well as the acts and structures underlying armies and militarism. The cruel treatment of Iraqi prisoners by female USA soldiers serves as a proof to this.

Moreover, let us be reminded that, during the Second World War, or precisely, during Nazism, women actively participated in militaristic structures, and that nowadays Israeli women are included in military duties, which has not in least altered the strategies of colonization or war that is being waged by this country. Militaristic methods that were implemented by guerilla liberation anti-occupation movements or against dictatorial regimes have not changed with the inclusion of women, although they allegedly banned sexual abuse. The inclusion of women in armed forces has become important, because it ‘embellishes’ militarism. It is supposed to introduce more justice and equity into the armies and make them ‘civilized’. The objective is to achieve a higher degree of acceptance of armed forces in societies, especially in the case of military missions. This is a weapon of war, because a policy of active gender equality allegedly breaks away with the traditional reactionary policy that reduced women to their reproductive role. Such a policy means that ministries of defense are making efforts to rectify sexist behavior in order to avoid internal tensions. Nevertheless, the gist is that sexism cannot be eradicated from the patriarchal power by combating only certain forms of discrimination, because sexism is at the core of the entire patriarchal system. And power is very well aware of that.

Secondly, the opinion that human beings are ‘naturally’ inclined to generate war. Let alone the fact that the concept and content of ‘nature’ would have to be reconsidered, because we know that all organized violence stems from a long process of upbringing (in which the army played a major role). The stimuli of such violence are numerous, notably drugs and pornography, as well as the right to have women – sex workers available in brothels in the vicinity of military bases. However, the process of that extensive upbringing does not depend exclusively on what is being learnt and acquired in the army, but also on some other forms of militarization of society in times of war, such as repressive control over the citizens or putting numerous branches of economy in function of war and of the profit they generate. The pervasiveness of militarism forces us to perceive it from different angles, both from the visible ones,



and even more so from those that are somber and concealed. This is not about militarism in the form of dictatorial attitude toward the civilian population, but about militarism that permeates all the arteries of our social, cultural, economic, political and even emotional life.

In other words, it is about a process of ‘normalizing’ militarism. It is applied in ‘education’ for patriarchal values, such as hierarchy, competitiveness, the ability to win and to conquer space and power. This invariably presupposes an ‘enemy’ on the frontline. It trains for a life under constant tension, in fear of the different, in vigilance of ‘threats’ and transforming life into a world of ‘security’, which can never be attained in such circumstances. That is why alliances and pacts are created, either on the collective or on the interpersonal plane, and this is precisely where disappointment and frustration originates from, resulting in dangerous sexist, homophobic and racist acts, etc.

On the level of societies, competitiveness and the struggle for power and interests are always related to the respect of authority, to supremacy over ‘the other’ – the enemy – and this is always disguised by political and social values. Those are processes of collective militarization that have a powerful impact on the state of minds. These processes culminate in various ways, of which I will mention instances ranging from gangs of organized crime to fascism, from cold war against ‘communism’ or terror that stems from Islamophobia. Militarism creates uniformity as the dominant way of thinking, based on the omnipotent patriarchal authority. It arouses amazement at power and strength, which can also easily seduce us women.

The process of education for militarism becomes ever more dangerous because it entirely fits the present social model, where everything is temporary and ephemeral, where people are becoming goods or objects and where the social and emotional ties have been disrupted to the benefit of a unilateral relation to the state. The individuals find themselves amid a constant struggle to prove themselves, to get approval and an unprecedented degree of possessive individualism.

One of the proofs that violence is not ‘inherent’ to human beings is also the fact that the majority of soldiers experience severe trauma in war, which does not support the premise about ‘normalizing’ violence. On the contrary, there is a great deal of evidence and proof based on which we can argue that **war is a place where supremacy and competitiveness are expressed in their extreme, and even pathological form and it is at the same time a place that annuls all that.**

One or several reasons for waging a war are always put forward, which is also indicative of the fact that the argument that war is a ‘natural’ feature of human beings is shaky. It is even less surprising that history abounds in polemics about the nature of war.

2.2 The myth about the natural process of development (or evolutionary process)

What traps do we come across?

Numerous political, territorial, economic and cultural reasons are put forward as a justification of war, which makes the aggressor authorities be perceived as the aggressed side. As we have seen, the politics of fear related to the enemy figure and the feeling of being threatened become the key reasons for waging a war. That creates a climate of alienation, in which it is easy to justify war in the eyes of the population. In spite of that, to this day, many conflicts in history are not considered to have been wars. As a rule, they are labeled differently, such as territorial expansion of this or that imperial power, the Visigoths’ or the Francs’ conquests, crusades, the so-called Reconquista (re-conquest) , the discovery of America or the conquest of the Americas, slavery, the formation of nation-states, and, of course, colonialism. All this forms our collective western memory. They influence our attitude toward historical facts, i.e. toward a never-ending history of warfare. They influence our decision to side with the power that erased those wars, so as to explain them as part of an evolutionary process that created and established modern civilization. These processes were



explained to us as an inevitable part of historical development and used to justify what we now refer to as modern history. That is the point where we reach the core of the western patriarchal hypocrisy. Our textbooks are full of such instances, let alone the role of the media such as film, which convey the concepts of good and evil, justifiable and unjustifiable war, deserved punishment, etc. However, not a word is ever uttered about the victims.

The outcome of that all is that we come across evidence that, for a long time – even to this day – it has been considered that, in terms of the amount of violence and the historical toll, the Visigoths' conquest was a far cry from the 'Arab conquest'.

Double standards are typical of western patriarchal relations, and are especially manifested in the manner of blaming 'others' for what we are actually doing ourselves. For example, systematic rapes of women, either summary or selective, were conducted throughout the Greco-Roman epoch – the cradle of Western civilization – and they also took place during the 800 years of our invasions, crusades and genocidal wars. However, an entire racist discourse was formed about the 'allegedly' sexually indecent and uncontrolled behavior of men from other cultures, notably the 'Moors' or 'Indians', who abduct white women. That discourse is well established through numerous action films. Ascribing 'savage' violence to the 'enemy' means washing one's hands of violence and justifying retaliatory and 'civilizational' interventions as pretexts for waging wars.

There are many forms of denial of the history of wars and its consequences to the history of mankind. There have been recent instances of denial of war related to colonialism. France is still refusing to admit that it waged a war in Algeria, although it took over 100,000 casualties. Instead, they refer to the 'Algerian issue', and the situation is similar in the case of Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Libya, and all those wars are being concealed by phrases such as *occupation, humanitarian war, war for peace, war for democracy, or equality, war on terror*, etc.

Owing to such devious and perverse concepts, explicitly racist memory

is formed (4). ‘The drama of Africa lies in the fact that the African man has not yet stepped into history’, according to French President Sarkozy, in his address to the youth of African continent at the University Chek-Anta-Diop in Dakar in 2007. According to that revolting speech, which I advise you to read, attention ought to be paid to Sarkozy’s intention to persuade us that the subjects (of the empire) had been pursuing the noble cause of civilizing them, and that, eventually, ‘both the colonizers and the colonized turned out to be victims’.

It is obvious that the French authorities are trying to draw as much profit for themselves and are both unable to free themselves from the aggressive patriarchal double standards, and conceal their inability to renounce to the idea of **colonialism**. Namely, I define that inability to renounce to (colonialism) **as appropriating androcentrism as an integral part of the western white man. This is a violent, racist, sexist, class/elitist act in line with the modern patriarchal way of thinking and exercising power**. Such a way of thinking and this kind of power breed profound resentment, repulsion and disgust. Jean Ziegler, in his recent book “*La haine de l’Occident*” (Hatred of the West) exquisitely analyzed this phenomenon in the light of current events, which is also dealt with by Sophie Bessis in her book “*The West and the Others. A history of Supremacy*”.

Our civilization, dubbed progress, is relieved on the level of collective consciousness of the entire burden of war crimes, from which we have drawn ‘benefits and privileges’, reminds R. Mahez in the above mentioned book.

Still, there have always been people who reminded us that our model of development has always and completely depended on violence and the patriarchal discriminatory and militaristic spirit, which has made a significant impact on the way we manifest solidarity. While we were condemning rapes as war crimes during the war in the Balkans, we barely said anything about events that were simultaneously going on in Rwanda, and later in Congo (1998-2003), where tens of thousands of women



were exposed to systematic rape. As a living memory, suffering from grief and trauma, they are now trying to overcome the victimistic discourse, condemning violence as a weapon of war.

Perhaps we should summon up courage to wonder whether we might have, unawares, adopted the colonial idea according to which massive rapes in Africa are taken as normal, whereas the same is absolutely unacceptable on the Old Continent. I will not dwell on this, but it DID prompt me to think about the third and fourth reason why I believe that we are still in proto-history of memory.

3. The concept of civilian population

Silence about violence used against the civilian population has always prevailed. This silence is such unbearable violence, in view of the fact that, according to analyses, during the 20th century, we were faced with a new phenomenon, i.e. wars affecting about 70% of the civilian population.

This data is usually related to the new technologies of death, allegedly, a great ‘contribution’ of the present-day progress of societies that launch rockets 3, 000 km into space, but are unable to efficiently quench fires.

This argument about the history of wars is indicative of the way the patriarchal western androcentrism counterfeits history itself. In the previous chapter, the way in which incessant wars have been erased from history has been explained, wars in which **millions of civilians were massacred, humiliated and exterminated, much before the invention of the atomic bomb or other sophisticated weapons of mass or selective destruction.**

Therefore, we could go on forever quoting concrete instances of denial of wars during both French and British colonialism, in Australia, for example, or the history of slavery as a genuine genocidal war against Africa, where the female slaves were forced into childbearing, having been raped by their masters.

Deleting all those periods or avoiding confrontation with such memory by no means gives us the right to talk about the universal character of violence over civilians, or, more concretely, over women. **Before we assume the right to perceive our perspectives as universal, we should take a good, scrutinizing look at ourselves.** This will raise some questions. When this is accepted, our memory will perhaps come out of its proto-historical stage...

As for violence against the civilian population, it is considered that the 'ideal of each armed conflict is the direct collision between the belligerent sides in which one side beats the other (5).

There have been such wars as well, and insisting on that means disregarding the role of women in war conflicts and the violence they were exposed to. Such a perspective of the allegedly 'ideal war' devoids the concept of war of its real meaning. So, what is this all about?

The answer lies in simple examples that reveal what preparation for war and warfare means for the civilian population, even when the war takes place in the battlefield.

- Loss of loved persons. Widows. Orphans.
- Caring for war invalids.
- Socio-economic and demographic imbalance.
- Pollution of the environment.
- Appropriation of resources for war purposes and general militarization.
- Control over demography, i.e. over the reproductive capacity of women.

Regardless of the manner in which a war is being waged, it always affects the civilian population and women particularly, in a very specific way.

In that sense, it is important to insist on the fact that every war



invariably leads to the militarization of society and forming of socio-political archetypes from the gender perspective. Amparo Moreno Sarda presented a detailed research of that phenomenon in her book *'The other Aristotle's Policy'* (La otra politica de Aristoteles). Besides, this allegedly ideal concept of war comprises clear acceptance of militaristic principles and armies in conflict resolution, and therefore, promulgates professional armies and everything they entail. That is the apology of death and sacrifice, as the main components of militaristic philosophy. Needless to say that the belligerent power uses the war technology nowadays – as an integral part of its might – so as to convince us that, owing to that technology, they achieve 'justifiable' aims' without collateral damage', which is how aggression over civilians has been referred to ever since the Vietnam war. This propaganda weapon is then widely accepted as a form of 'progress'. However, we are very well aware what kind of technology this is and what its consequences are.

There is yet a great deal to do in favor of 'demilitarization' of the minds in solving the problem of violence, and particularly in respecting and nurturing life.

4. Our perspective is screened by a veil of victimization discourse

This leads me to the fourth and last reason for the assumption about the proto-historical stage of our memory. It is some kind of conclusion about the consequences of the developments I have discussed so far. It has already been said that the silencing of violence against women in times of war constitutes one of the graves forms of violence against women.

Why has this silence occurred?

“The argument can even be heard that addressing the issue of wartime violence against women actually means discrimination in relation to the civilian population in general. When we denounce, warn and analyze situations in which women find themselves in times of war, we do not

by any means reproduce the sexist policy of denial of the suffering of the rest of the civilian population, or that of the military, for that matter. We do not attempt to numerically measure the suffering of women and men, or to compare who is more victimized. What we do is lay bare what is understood by the concept of civilian population, because this concept is too comprehensive and gender undifferentiated. It is necessary to shed a light on what is actually done against women. We do that in case of all kinds of silencing that conceals the plurality of realities with the clear aim to put an end to all hierarchical approach to values, which devaluates life itself and which is one of the weapons of power' (6).

Memory is a fundamental thing, and it is so disturbing that people go to great lengths to erase it. Women in Black in the former Yugoslavia invest daily efforts in opposing attempts to do away with memory. This is particularly marked when memory jeopardizes the values and the power structures that justify violence and legitimize its use in certain periods. In the summer of 2010, I attended the conference of the Network of Women in Black of Serbia, where WiB activities on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide were analyzed. It was obvious that people tend to get involved more actively in the symbolic activities, such as 'performances' (the action A Pair of Shoes, One Life, aimed at erecting a monument in Belgrade to the victims of genocide) than in the projections of documentary films with the testimonies of the victims of the genocide. It is clear that, more important, live and vivid testimonies on the experienced ordeal, find space much more painstakingly in the process of the building of memory. This is because **testimonies in general, and particularly women's testimonies, authentically convey what happened during the war, its impact on women and on all human beings. Testimonies expose the weapons of war and war strategies.** In the emotional sense, testimonies are traumatic to dignity. This works both ways, but differently.

Testimonies help unmask manipulations of those who wage wars, and they also enhance understanding why wartime violence against women is being. **Knowing how to reabsorb the gaze of the victims means to shed**



a light on the victims' lives and on the spot/place from which they address us. We often prefer to remain blind: the decision to remain blind is a victimistic discourse weapon, or a weapon of victimization of women victims.

That is a weapon used to silence women. The victimistic discourse reproduces patriarchal patterns and the binary order: the active and the passive; the enemy and the victim; the subject and the object, overlooking the fact that those subjects have feelings, reasoning and a capacity to react. Victimization is an obstacle on the way of rebuilding our memory. When speaking of the issue of violence against women in times of war, we should be aware of the fact that the victimistic discourse persists for various reasons, two of which I am going to explain.

1. As a rule, it is the women from other cultures that are being victimized. Even among the feminists, there is a strong tendency to reproduce the western patriarchal pattern concerning the other. The construction of the other is very similar to 'feminization', i.e. a process of inferiorization and exclusion of individuals or communities, just because they do not belong to our western community. This is an integral part of the masculinized concept of the modern nation state. It is applied to other societies, disqualifying their men as 'undeserving of manhood', because they are not active factors of 'civilization'. This is a feature of superiority the white western man has ascribed to himself, as one of the symbols of his patriarchal power, which justifies interventionism and other macabre phenomena, such as the ubiquitous and dominant militarism. Moreover, among us, feminists, these patriarchal values of hierarchy and exclusion are being vehemently accepted, and we therefore believe that it is our duty to 'intervene', or to assume the role of saviors of women in 'backward societies', of women who live in conditions resembling our Middle Ages', which actually reveals our great ignorance about the history of those times. This is denial of the processes going on in today's world. It

is denial of women as subjects, because allegedly, they live in societies dominated by men, who are snared in tradition and unable to step out of it. This is blind acceptance of the ploy of duality – either tradition or modernity according to western standards. This kind of duality has shaped a way of thinking that predominantly implies the right to evaluate, judge, censor, intervene and decide in the name of others.

We ourselves make inferior women from societies that have been ‘feminized’ i.e. underestimated, by our patriarchal power. From the so-called policy of equity, unawares, we are moving toward a patriarchal policy of inferiorization. We practice silence in favor of our interpretation, instead of creating memory through listening, looking at others and learning to observe ourselves.

2. Maintaining the victimistic discourse is also possible because we perceive the position of women almost exclusively on the grounds of discrimination of women as compared to men. We take as a starting point duality favoring uniformity based on the male model of power. In this way, it is only the sexist aspect of the entire patriarchal power that is being challenged, while all the other patriarchal structures and values remain intact and invisible. So far, I have not come across feminist texts on the so-called gender-based violence or on domestic violence that tackle the issue of militarization of societies as a structural phenomenon of patriarchal violence. No mention is ever made of the position of women in war, whereas condemnation and criticism of the sexist character of the judicial authorities are ever-present. However, from the point of view of anti-militaristic feminism that differs from pacifist feminism due to its radical criticism of military power, and particularly after the outbreak of war in the former Yugoslavia there have been more analyses disputing the link between peacetime violence and violence in times of war. This



refers particularly to the issue of summary rapes by men, and also prostitution, reducing women to the role of mothers and wives so as to cater for the needs of a militarized population policy. We might be able to overcome the gruesome aspects of patriarchal power once we have succeeded in overcoming some traps of feminism of equity, dominated by a struggle to gain the same rights as men, for example, presence in the armed forces. Instead, it is requisite to bring into question the army itself and the militarization of society.

III. Types of violence against women as a weapon of war

Of all forms of war violence against women, forced pregnancies and summary rapes, which have become infamous during the war in the former Yugoslavia, should be set apart. There is a widespread belief that rape and forced pregnancies are used as a weapon of war. Due to a sharp polarization regarding sexual crimes and crimes against reproductive rights, such crimes are seen exclusively as the extermination of a community, where women are the most affected.

Bearing in mind such attitudes, let me remind of the fact that acts of sexual aggression were also present in Nazi ghettos and concentration camps, but they were not part of their genocidal war strategy against the Jewish, Roma or homosexual community; this can by no means be argued in the case of the Israeli armed forces and their genocidal policy of apartheid against the Palestinian women. In spite of that, we cannot overlook the fact that acts of killing of women and children are present in some strategies of extermination.

In the introduction, I remarked that a difference should be drawn between what is part of strategies and what is considered to be legitimate acts. The dividing line between those two things depends on what is understood as the pathology we call 'patriarchy', i.e. on the manner in which power and influence are exerted over the people in a particular society.

1. Legitimate sexual crimes

Although rapes are not necessarily systematic, they are a legitimate weapon of war because they foster a climate of terror and fear, and those are requisite ingredients of the policy of militaristic struggle, and as such they are considered to be legitimate. Occasionally, they cause the so-called 'cultural shocks', although it is well known that these criminal practices have become an inevitable component of war conflicts.

The above mentioned practices acquire legitimacy in the patriarchal interpretation of male sexuality, i.e. justifiable sexual relief of the experienced tensions. As we know, there are rules and norms of war, laying down what is allowed and what is forbidden. On the normative plane, rape did not use to be incriminated as a crime, in spite of the fact that it was always practiced and normed.

The legitimacy of sexual violence must be related to the intention to underrate the men of the attacked side. That is a form of humiliation and usurpation of power of the men on the attacked side, from the patriarchal point of view. Besides, one should think of the active participation of women in the function of humiliation and blackmail of the men from the attacked countries.

Both rape and the position of the 'enemy' women, who are compelled to go into prostitution because of poverty or because they are coerced into prostitution, are indicative of derision and strong resentment toward women. That is annulment of women as subjects, and a demonstration of male supremacy. And that exactly is the point that clarifies the reason why violence against women has been shrouded by silence.

We ought to be reminded of the fact to which we will return later, that when women report rape, they are not trusted at first, and then it is accepted as an isolated, sporadic act committed by warriors. That also is a way of concealing the violence endured by women in times of war.



2. Sexual violence as a strategy

The existence of strategic programs of systematic rape aimed at ethnic cleansing, coupled with forced pregnancies, was confirmed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This weapon of war, whose objective is territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing, is aimed at the men: the rape of women is actually a conquest of territory in order to change the 'ownership of the property' and therefore to crush their spirits. They are to be weakened and their power is to be taken away from them.

In this process, the women do not play any role whatsoever of actors in these events, but rather of objects of patriarchal strategies, according to which women are treated as the property of men and of the country that is to be conquered. Women are like a piece of land that has to be exploited in order to make a profit. They are a war trophy. In the past, they used to be abducted. That was a trophy that enhanced reproduction of the community. Following the conquest, the trophy loses active contact with her former identity. In patriarchal cultures, women have the role of transmitters of cultural identity. After they are abducted or raped, the balance resting on male power, through the roles of father, husband or brother, is upset.

Rape of women that has as a consequence forced pregnancies has a twofold strategic aim: to crush the morale of the man, proving that he is incapable of fulfilling the prescribed role of defender of the assets of his community – women and children – and at the same time to destroy the continuity of the identity of the community guaranteed by women as its reproducers. **Everything is directed at the destruction of the community and its identity, which is afterwards imposed by the male 'victor'. The new master.**

Various analyses have revealed the contradiction between the policy of hatred instigated against a community as a form of weapon of war in

the pre-war period and rape committed by warriors, forcing pregnancies upon women at wartime. I believe that this contradiction is at the core of the double standard patriarchal morals, aimed at achieving the main objective:

Women are the main object of the strategy of war, which deprives them of the capacity of being subjects. Perpetuated silencing of violence against women is actually a way of concealing the patriarchal character of militarism, i.e. the ways in which women have been abused in achieving war aims.

In that sense, it is important to highlight what goes on with the victims in the aftermath of war.

For the victims, memory of torture, rape, wounds, loss of their nearest become unbearable. In spite of that, many of them do not dare to denounce the crimes. And yet, what is happening before the war crimes tribunals? As Staša Zajović from *Women in Black – Belgrade* explained last summer, the victims are often denied the possibility to express their observations and understanding of what happened. They have to limit their statements strictly to factual descriptions. In that way, they experience genuine psychological trauma, because by being made to repeat facts, the victims are deprived of their capacity of active subjects. Once again, they are humiliated and stripped of all power.

Consciously or not, they are transformed into passive victims at the hands of the authorities, who decide on everything. And such justice resorts to methods that are similar to those in cases of gender based.

On November 25, 2009, *Women in Black* from Seville took the following slogans into the streets: ‘A dead soldier = a medal. A killed woman = a numeral’. On that occasion, we handed out leaflets with the following wording:

“Gender based violence is generally reduced to the family sphere, with the aim to define macho violence exclusively as an unfortunate act against women committed by individuals. And those individuals are men



depicted as pathological cases, who remain anonymous even after they have been sentenced. Conversely, women victims are entered in statistical registers. That is very similar to what goes on with monuments that are being erected to ‘the unknown heroes’ in memory of them all, killed in wars as cannon fodder. However, nowadays there are professional armies whose soldiers have names and medals, whereas women victims have neither faces nor voices.”

Such a procedure is the consequence of ‘institutional’ methods that perpetuate silence about the power structures that generate violence, although they pledge for women and speak in their name. In war crimes tribunals, the victim is a passive subject confronted with the man accused of having been her executor. One man, or even several of them, is represented as an isolated case, an exception within the war machinery that must not be unmasked. In courts dealing with cases of domestic violence, the perpetrator is treated as a simple delinquent, with no possibility to seriously consider the causes and origins of such macho criminal acts.

It is crucial to break the silence imposed by the institutions. That would make possible to expose the cynicism of the patriarchal double standard morals. Let me just remind you of the attempt to justify the escalation of the military intervention in Libya by revealing mass rapes carried out by the troops controlled by Gaddafi. Instead, the fact that the intervention generated even more violence must be condemned in the first place. Part of this violence are rapes conducted by both camps, and, according to the news coming out of Libya, it is women immigrants who are the main target.

CONCLUSION

We have to draw a conclusion ourselves, through exchange of ideas and experiences related to violence, with no fear of diversity and plurality of ideas and experiences, and thus enrich our commitment to being disobedient feminists-anti-militarists, actively pledging for non-violence



and wellbeing, undermining patriarchal power which, in its agony, undertakes megalomaniac ventures that threaten to destroy humanity as such.

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APPENDICES

Appendix1. Chart: similarities in exercising violence as a weapon of destruction and as a means of oppression

WAR

1. *The first process*

Underestimation of a society /community through negative stereotypes and prejudices, of its culture, customs, stage of development,



its rulers and history. That society is to blame for being ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘maladjusted’.

The need to stamp out that society becomes visible, because our collective memory is built on ignorance of the ‘other’.

Humiliation of the community we intent to subjugate is part of the strategy of war and justification of war. Fear and a sense of impending threat is generated among the population that is preparing for war.

2. The second process

We move on to the second process in which the ruling power, in the name of security, democracy or human rights, and all the more frequently, in order to safeguard the women or peace, undertakes the risk of provoking international imbalance/unrest, requires intervention because of allegedly feeling threatened or embittered by the violation of rights, or jeopardizing resources or progress. It has no other option but to monitor/spy, isolate, sanction or boycott, intervene and impose its conditions, since that society, that ‘other’ is not capable of making decisions complying with the expectations of the ruling power. In other words, ‘There are limits to our patience’.

3. The last step

The ruling party with its expansionist power carries out a military intervention, destroys the infrastructure of a society, its cultural resources, occupies and invades its territory, subduing or killing its population. **And that is genocide.** That is a process of terror and destruction, which leads to dependence, aimed at generating profit for a small number of people who are leading the world to ruin.

MACHO VIOLENCE

1. *The first process*

The woman is sanctioned by means of: insults, humiliation and underrating. She doesn't do anything right (or: all she does is bad), she is the culprit and the cause of the man's stress '*She aggravates him all the time*'.

The man asserts himself through destruction, fear of diversity...

And annuls the woman, either because of his inferiority complex or frustration deriving from macho values: competitiveness, possessiveness, feeling of superiority, etc.

2. *The second process*

In the second step, he apologizes a thousand times, does it all in the name of 'love', but complains that 'she plagues him because she won't change', that she is 'always the same way', that she 'always provokes him, he isolates the woman, controls her movement, her financial means, her feelings. That is a demand for complete subjection, i.e. for dependence, under the threat of battering or killing her, or even committing suicide.

3. *The last step*

Physical violence always implies complete control over the woman, leading to annihilation, and even the killing of the woman. Such violence usually destroys everything; it is a process of destruction and auto-destruction that can lead to **femicide** and to collective subjugation of women, when the violence becomes legitimate and pervasive.

APPENDICES 2.

Violence on the individual and collective level

- Prostitution and sexual slavery
- Forced pregnancy



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- Rapes
 - Double crime – rape and murder
 - Sexual torture
 - Physical and psychological abuse
 - Femicide
 - Infanticide
 - Consequences of chemical-biological weapons
 - Sterility or fetal malformations
 - Deprivation of the right to control fertility
 - Deprivation or limitation of the right to free movement
 - Militarization of all spheres of life
 - Rejection
 - Public castigation or other forms of retaliation against 'traitors'
 - Victimism or victimization
 - Cultural and social exclusion
 - Persecution. Exile. Refugee camps

Translated by *Staša Zajović*

Rada Iveković, (Paris)

Feminism, nation and the state in the production of knowledge since 1989. An epistemological exercise in political translation

The production of knowledge and bordering

In the autumn of 1978, a meeting that has by now become historic was held in the Students' Cultural Centre in Belgrade, entitled "Comrade woman – a new approach?". It was convened by Dunja Blažević, the then Director of the Center, and Žarana Papić, sociologist, a young editor at the time. Žarana is no longer among us, nor are Lydija Sklevicky, Jelena Zuppa and several other participants. That meeting marked a turning point not only for the women's movement in the Yugoslavia of that time, logging a fresh start (and a beginning for my generation), but also a crucial moment, for multiple reasons. Most importantly, it set in motion social movements that were critical of the policy and authorities. Somewhat concurrently, the movement of the Roma people sprang up throughout the country. While in the aftermath of 1968, the students' movement and individual dissent were typically repressed, the women's movement – predominantly associated with universities – was mainly subjected to regime criticism combined with journalistic and machistic derision. One of the reasons for this lies in the fact that the feminists were able to invoke proclamations and declarations of the, formally, relatively progressive – yet unaccomplished – state feminism. At that time, we were learning from western feminism; nevertheless, we were aware of the different historical situation we were in compared to radical western feminists, some of whom



were simply fighting for essential rights, such as the right to abortion and the right to divorce, which we already enjoyed. The 1978 conference in Belgrade confronted us with those feminists and immediately opened up not one, but myriads of perspectives that instantly made us realize that there was no space for unilateral thinking among us. My presentation today will not dwell directly on that event or on its political legacy. I am not a historian and our feminist history is not my subject matter, however remarkable I believe it to be, and deserving to be preserved from falling into oblivion and fairly supplemented. Personally, I do not relish the idea of “legacy” (which was in the title⁹⁹ of our conference in Zagreb), I am not inclined to capitalize on it or regard it as a museum exhibit. I leave it to others, to reconsider the importance and the history of 1978 and its unquestionable impact on our broader circles in big cities. It definitely had a – somewhat suspended – direct or indirect influence on the following generations and intellectual elites. However, none of the things I have since been doing as part of my work, my “discipline(s)” and in my life would have been possible, had it not been for that venue. This is where, among other lines, I began thinking politically from. It is particularly important to understand the historical circumstances in which the feminisms – and the plural form is deliberately used here – would soon be facing war and, as a reaction to it, the rise of nationalisms they would be opposing. Partly the same women participated both in the “first” and in the “second”. That “second” wave of feminism, in which I was not involved directly on the spot, also has great merit. Having withstood the worst years and the war in resisting violence, it has spelled out and sharpened political thinking and attitudes, so that nowadays it stands among the most progressive forces in the Yugoslav successor states and is capable of convening conferences and events of interest. This was just a brief comment, a reminder of how much this convention owes to the previously mentioned one, which in turn, remained indebted to the preceding generations of women who fought for freedom, emancipation,

99. REDaktura: transjugoslavenski feminizmi i žensko naslijeđe (REDacting TransYugoslav Feminisms: Women’s Heritage Revisited), 13 – 16 October 2011 / Zagreb.

justice and equality. On one occasion (after 1978), at the section of the Sociological Association in Zagreb, we organized a small promotional meeting marking the jubilee reprint of the pre-war (Second World War) magazine “Ženski svijet” (*Women’s World*). As my mother had been part of its team, she attended that meeting, and i had the opportunity to find out that, in the eyes of her generation, my mother had also been a feminist. And yet, to our great dismay, the women’s movement has ever so often been dotted by discontinuity, that every generation began feminism from scratch. On the other hand, from the historical and philosophical point of view, discontinuity is needed and beneficial, even vital for continuity. I will not dwell on the reasons for this, let me just say that we are lucky to have had discontinuity. All the dynamic emerging forces, unlike the dominant sclerotic ones, resort to scattered, seemingly “underground” intermitent breakthroughs, and this is where their strength lies. My recount of the conference in 1978 about continuity through periods of discontinuity is merely oral memory. That said, i am changing the topic and am here reverting to the text i had prepared, which is not unrelated to the aforesaid.

I will argue here that the “-isms” are instruments of producing knowledge which creates separate areas (disciplines), maps them or projects them onto certain areas or groups, thus creating borders, distinct territories and “identities”. Among the latter, there are also prescribed, normative sexual identities, whose normative forms are referred to as *gender* in English.

Feminism is yet another-ism, fraught with all the plus points and downsides of -isms. It definitely implies a risk, e.g. the risk of essentialization of the sexes (*spolova*¹⁰⁰). Such objections are widely

100. The terms “sex” and “gender” do not function in the same way in different languages. The distinction belongs mainly to the English language; it looks very different from the French language i usually use. What is generally irreflected in English is that both “sex” and “gender” are easily essentialised and that they do not correspond to the idealised distinction between “nature” and “culture”: both sex and gender come to us through culture. The distinction between the two has some



known and invoked both by feminists and by anti-feminists. The answer to this is that there can be no risk-free arguments or political engagement, fortunately, for otherwise we would be condemned to totalitarianism with one unquestionable truth. That said, i nevertheless do not choose to reject it, as i believe that the feminist orientation will be indispensable over quite a long term, since reasonable feminist demands, let alone equality or mere *women's rights*¹⁰¹ have not been achieved, and also because there is no such knowledge that could guarantee the truth. That is why i see feminism as *a series of open epistemological principles sensitive to the social relations of sexes* that are continually being redressed and complemented. In this sense, as an epistemological formation, and to a great extent as a political engagement (these often coming hand in hand), feminism has played an outstanding ground-breaking role in social sciences and political life, enriching them with its innovations and achievements, both in terms of research methodology as well as of social awareness, on the political level. In this sense, feminism is an important element of the epistemological revolution that encompasses several periods (as well as historical–contextual differences), as much as the decolonization of anthropology (Žarana Papić & Lydia Sklevicky), Subaltern Studies, Postcolonial Studies, the Decolonial “Option”¹⁰² etc. We emerged from 1989 and then from the Yugoslav wars *without a significant or operational conceptual apparatus*, we awakened to epistemological anarchy and disorientation, and i have in mind here the citizens (*gradjanke i gradjane*) of our former country in general. (The period) “1989” requires an epistemological revolution, as much as the first decolonization of the 1960's. That revolution was considerably enhanced by feminism. In the post-Yugoslav countries, feminism has another, much more important role, however modest in scope, a role that is yet to be assessed in the future. Unlike nationalistic, religious and other movements on all sides,

practical political use, but it has its limits.

101. Namely: women's human rights (these are both universal and particular).

102. And with us, during the last undivided Yugoslavia, modestly, also the principle of non-alignment combined with the principle of self-management, neither of which was conceptually or historically devoid of potentials.

feminism did not destroy any bridges. Feminism nurtures cross-border ties, continuity in discontinuity, thus cultivating the historical dimension and methodological advantages, which can be preserved despite the gap that was created in 1989. At this point, let me note that the concept of “1989” also includes a series of the wars of the nineties.

Feminism, which in its plurality (the details of which will not be elaborated here), bears a *philosophic importance* even when unacknowledged by philosophers, displaces the purpose of rationality, logic and thinking onto tracks that are opposed to their original application or traditional use. Thus, it essentially and substantially recognizes the alterity and allows for a higher degree of *principled democracy*¹⁰³ than it is traditionally known to our disciplines and particularly in academia. In this way, feminism probes the limits of thought and politics. This “discipline”, let’s call it *philosophical feminism*, manifests its profound engagement on two plans – methodological-speculative and practical-political. In this sense, the role of feminism in the Yugoslav countries, that of a bridge between the period “before” and “after” the recent wars and at the same time that of a leap in perspective/viewpoint (*motrištu*) and in the subjects-agents of speculation and events – is unaparalled in view of 1989. And the experience of 1989 has had a bearing not only on the fate of Central, Balkan and Eastern Europe, but also on the entire world¹⁰⁴. That was a turning point.

Therefore, feminism has a specific, important and new role in the recent breakup of Yugoslavia and in the successor states of our former common country. But it had also played a remarkable role in the long term, revolutionizing social sciences and the political horizon globally,

103. It is, of course, far from always being achieved. But it is possible in principle (and only in principle), and it is defended.

104. 1989 marks not only the end of the division of Europe, but also the introduction, or rather, the disclosure, of planetary neo-liberalism. In Asia, Latin America etc, it is important in various ways as the turning point of the new economic boom and liberalization, and also as the end of dictatorships in Latin America. In Africa, the end of the Cold War accelerated the demise of apartheid in the South African Republic.

(*toute proportion gardée*), much as Post-colonial Studies did. The latter, it seems, have concentrated their global impact within a shorter span of time and more intensively, receiving clearly targeted reactions that re-echoed, recognizing it perhaps to a greater extent than feminism had been credited; they have generally been approved as the outcome of an evolution in the understanding of history, of universality, of the subject-agency in politics as well as in comprehending geo-political ensembles in view of the revolution in historiography. It is not accidental that feminisms, as well as Subaltern and Postcolonial Studies should be confronted with an exaggerated resistance of the institutionalized way of thinking, which generally tends to cooperate with domination. There appeared a remodelled Gramscian concept of “subaltern subject” at the crossroads of revolutionary historical and feminist contributions to historiography: in India (country of origin for most of the respective studies), the subaltern subject is that which is recognized neither by the dominant subject (the British authorities), nor by the subject forged out of resistance to the former (i.e. nationalistic, liberational elites); the most common examples for this are in India peasants and women, but can be others elsewhere. The subaltern subject thus finds itself in a “double bind” position, forced to fight for freedom side by side with more powerful like-minded groups that negate it: it is thus forced to act simultaneously against one part of the ruling ideology of resistance, both in concert with it and opposition to it. Such is our situation too.

The subaltern subject, therefore, embodies better than anyone else, by making it visible, the original division of the subject as such, in the building of a new and non-dominant universality¹⁰⁵. I identify the latter in *karma*, as a principle of solidarity of *all* forms of life (trans-gender & trans-species)¹⁰⁶, and in a principled non-privileging of humanity (which

105. Universality that is not, by means of imposed universalization, at the same time domination, that is our aspiration. Etienne Balibar, “Les universels”, *La Crainte des masses*, Galilée, Paris 1997, pp. 419-454.

106. A vulgar and predominantly western interpretation of the concept of karma is “destiny” as the impossibility of controlling our own lives. This is an orientalist reading, which has often been relied upon even in the reverse process of auto-

stands for a particular “specieism”). This new type of universalism¹⁰⁷ provides for the possibility of translation – amid *the impossibility of translation as such* or the latter’s eternal imperfection and incompleteness. In such an asymmetric situation, women and the feminine (as essentially *non identifiable*) are both a translated object and a medium of translation; they are the translators. Therefore, they remain in the gap, enabling exchange, translation, communication, socialization and politics, as ambivalent, but not as substantially “other” (because “women” and the “feminine” are not so), but as at the same time the “same” and the “other”, and also “neither the same”, “nor the other”. There are other “conceptual” characters and figures that resemble women in this sense, whose role in political and societal translating has been historic. Depending on the concrete situation, they can be political companions to women in part of their common trajectory. Why in “translating”? Because it fosters a flow of events, motion and constant change that can help us overcome the impasse of “communitarianism” and “identity” calcification. Migrants, who are already on their way and uprooted, represent one such figure (among others) of openness toward others. When they reach our (European, American, Australian, Israeli and other) borders, migrants find themselves in a situation of non-citizens, without rights, without documents, without families, without homes or property. This volatility

orientalization even in later Asian sources, in an attempt of attaining the “political” discourse. This political discourse was, namely, made inaccessible for them by way of the norms of the colonial and imperial politics of knowledge. My reading rests on the possibilities opened up by my teacher Čedomil Veljačić, who, nonetheless, did not himself reach the point of outright political reading. We also come across some more vulgar interpretations of karma as the idea “that is your fate” in Hindu Castism or in the interpretations of the Bhagavad-Gita by diverse modern political denominations, and also, unofficially (and only seemingly paradoxically) with the Khmer Rouge in justifying genocide over urban populations.

107. Historically, feminism has strived for the treatment of differences both from the universalistic, and conversely, from the particularistic point of view. However, it is obviously necessary to grapple with both ends of this construction, which is a whole, whereas tackling only one end always proves to be insufficient and achieves the opposite effect. Our interests are at the same time universal and particular.

is their predominant feature and propulsive force on their way (for diverse reasons). On their way, they establish themselves in a (mobile) *community* with their fellow sufferers-travelers, primarily as “citizens” of a new and broader, more important sort, *unrelated to (any) state* and prepared for a new era. They are the ones who open up new horizons to us, to those of us who live in countries of immigration (which are at present struggling against the inevitable immigration from the South and East in the most disgraceful manner). It is they who bring us a ray of hope for changes in our depoliticized and clogged societies. Nowadays, we can learn from them¹⁰⁸. It is from them, and from women, women’s movements with feminisms that our systemically patriarchal societies or, societies paradigmatic along masculine patterns¹⁰⁹ have been learning and have yet to learn. Both (Postcolonial Studies and migrants; women and feminisms) are mediators. Translated and at the same time translators, neither here nor there, they (oni i one) have made translation a vehicle of “transition”. At present, as a phenomenon of unprecedented proportions on the global scale, the migrants are one of the potential allies of women and women’s interests, inasmuch they are the proponents of a new human universality in the process of creation (though they may not be aware of it; in any case, they are a particular type of subject, with an unstable identity). Those allies must be approached and one must fight along with

108. The Arab uprisings of 2011. See a series of texts by a group of authors “Arab revolutions” in the journal *Transeuropeennes* <http://www.transeuropeennes.eu/en/articles/248> ; also Sandro Chignola & Mezzadra, *Lampusia*, UniNomade 25-2-2011: <http://uninomade.org/lampusia> ; Collettivo Edu-Factory, “La nuova Europa comincia dal Maghreb”, 25-2-2011, <http://uninomade.org/la-nuova-europa-comincia-dal-maghreb> ; Sandro Mezzadra & Brett Neilson, “Né qui, né altrove: migration, detention, desertion. A dialogue”; <http://www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au/issues/vol2no1.html>; S. Mezzadra, „Avventure mediterranee della libertà” (in print).

109. This is not about the role of individual men, but about the historical alliance between male dominance and power as such: the state with its sovereignty and even international relations, societies, communities, “governance”, over time, have all acquired that character. Women, as well as men, are the transmitters of those values, which range from the private sphere to the public and political, cognitive, etc., to inequality and injustice.

them, instead of them being expected to address us first. Our causes must be combined with theirs, because one cannot do without allies. We ought to bear in mind that women, as well as migrants, refugees, the banished and stateless are susceptible to selective and arbitrary, and definitely subordinate inclusion into the citizenship, when they are not completely excluded from it. Citizenship rights apply *unequally* (contrary to their alleged universality), either as passive or active, to different groups, the clearest division being between the natives and the foreigners, who are being separated by an abyss¹¹⁰. We should also bear in mind that political actions today often reach beyond national borders, even though we may not be aware of that. New allies might spring up any time. The migrants are instilled with the desire for rebirth, for transformation, reincarnation and turning into others, not only for their own sake, but for all others' sake, and in this sense they represent sheer openness and new prospects. They are our, European, most conspicuous *missing citizens* today¹¹¹. On the way and during migration, they are building themselves citizenship¹¹², solidarity and responsibility outside and across state borders. The traditional citizen figure is opposed to that of a migrant, who is not a

110. See the case of the “missing” in Slovenia. Many authors have addressed this subject. Sandro Mezzadra/Brett Neilson, *Borders as Method*, book in print (Duke UP, 2012).

111. The missing citizens can be missing in various ways and on different levels. We miss them. They drown in the Mediterranean or die by the thousand trying to reach Europe, see the blog of Gabriele Del Grande, <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/p/la-strage-negata-17317-morti-ai-confini.html>: from 1988 until July 2012, at least 18,278 persons disappeared in the waves, out of those who had been counted (not counting the unlisted or other borders). Missing are those citizens too who are passive for different reasons. Women have been most frequently and moreover, historically, in this position. The concept of “missing citizens” is based on the model of that of “missing women” of Amartye Sena. It is important because a category becomes visible and real once it is named, opening a niche for representation. R. Iveković, *Les citoyens manquants*: <http://www.reseau-terra.eu/article1061.html>

112. Citizenship, *citoyenneté*; in Slovenian, a more neutral term, “občanstvo”, an older term that dismisses the dilemma between “bourgeois”, “civil” or “civic” society, between the “bourgeois” and the “citizens”. Acknowledgement to Rastko Močnik.



citizen and is generally unable and often unwilling to become one, and therefore cannot claim any rights, while even his/her fundamental rights are at stake. That means that a migrant is a nuisance. This is indicative of how “citizenship” and “nationality” actually coincide. Problems arise when cracks appear between them, manifesting themselves as lack of national homogeneity, like in the case of migrants or minorities. The national state prefers its citizens and its “nationals”, a concept for which our language has no corresponding term.

“Gender” is a *regulative idea* in the Kantian sense¹¹³, which serves the purpose of questioning and regulation (*ravnanje*), and not for prescribing or constituting.” “Transcendental” ideas can be regulative, indicating “the way” in life experimenting, with no pretensions to the absolute or theological finality and certainty (Kant understood god as a regulative idea). Thus the constant receding of the horizon before us is acknowledged, and ultimately, so is the inexhaustible politicality of each and every act and decision. The differentiation between sex and gender, which does not function equally in all languages, is politically beneficial to a certain extent, but is reflexively inconclusive and problematic; as much as the concept of gender, it serves the purpose of rationalizing, disciplining and of social engineering (from the social state to harsher forms, from the left to the right). Every political system rests on a complex system of exclusions, and especially on subordinated and differentiated inclusion, where the the regime of the sexes (gender) is the first to be laid down, with no consultation with the interested parties or any of their representatives, as an axiom and tacitly accepted order.

Does sovereignty suit women more than its contemporary relativization?

Sex in itself is nothing, but as an idea it represents a border, “a first” border. Borders help us set standards and comprehend the world with

113. As much as the term “rod” in our language, the term “gender” has been relatively losing part of its normativity and precision. Namely, a regulative idea cannot be completely normative, although the norm for gender roles tends to be set heterosexually as much as possible, especially regarding women.

our knowledge. They delineate the units of our knowledge, tentative and diverse “objects” (among which is that of “sex”) and cannot be abolished as such; but a politics can be assigned to them and can be controlled by means of *cognitive politics* that we choose and the goal that we set. Sex in the meaning of “boundary”, “cut”, can be used as a concept in homo-political, homo-economic, homo-social societies as ours, in promoting inequality of those to whom either of the sexes is ascribed. In this sense, *instrumental sex* (instrumental to power and authority) is a directive idea, escaped from the circle of a mere and much more rewarding regulative concept of gender. Because sex is an ascriptive category. A crucial historical moment that also controls this historically established inequality is, as well as for colonies, initial western modernity, although it is here only a component of the explanation, since the global consensus about the subordination of all women to all men has older origins. Nowadays, along with the alteration of the relation of the nation toward the state and sovereignty, the fundamental incompleteness and incompleteness of the nation can be an opportunity for women.

The principle of preserving identity and sovereignty is paralyzing. It generates *self-foundation of the self* by means of the mechanism I have named *partage de la raison* (partitioning/partaking of reason)¹¹⁴. Hierarchical constructions such as sexual differences, the nation, etc. are instrumental to it and inter-dependent. Yet, the preservation of continuity consists of a series of interruptions. Thus the condition and cost for a community (under the sign of one and the ego) is paradoxically – the existence of at least one divisive element. This *section* is a precondition for the existence

114. R. Iveković, *Le sexe de la nation*, Paris, Eds. Léo Scheer 2003; *Dame-Nation. Nation et différence des sexes*, Ravenna, Longo Editore 2003. The concept *partage de la raison* functions exclusively in French, where I use it to denote the idea of “partitioning/partaking of reason”. *Partage*, just like the term *partager*, means two opposite things at the same time: separate, but also share with others. These two meanings are two sides of the same medal and it is therefore necessary to bear them both in mind in order to comprehend the dialectics of their interaction as in-compossibles. (Translation added by S.L.)



of a community. Sex is one such “prime” *différend*¹¹⁵, which constitutes the community and also the nation to the extent in which it is (and in the periods when it is!) a community.

What is it that maintains sovereignty? Let us say that it is the abundance of self. In this aspect, politics is a passion (a passion for oneself) and a “homo-doxo”. It is therefore not surprising that sex and sexuality are a pledge of power that can reach the point of *sacralization of dominance*. However, the difference of sexes, and even more so “gender”, are but one of their forms – a form fundamental because it is normative, a form of *partage* (dividing/sharing) *de la raison* (of the mind or of reason): sex and gender are, namely, hindering this process of *partage de la raison*, inasmuch as they are *preventing translation*. They are ontologically “weak”, which is why they have a ritual, commanding character that compensates for their lack of substance. Sex is, therefore, a *strong idea* (exactly that: *an idea*), constitutional for a fictional sexual identity in the function of hierarchy as much as for any other identity. It is a “prime” section in thinking/of thinking, a *partage de la raison* before the mind could be reflected. We can doubt its existence (that of sex) (beyond its biological aspect), beyond the phantasmatic heterosexual normative construction that generates divisions. From the biological sex that is accessible to us only through culture, to the social and political distance between the sexes, there is a leap in dimensions from the imaginary to the real, or between the normative and the experienced. But sex in its form *partage de la raison* marks citizenship and nation, whose hierarchies it maintains and renews. Historically, the subordination of women establishes them both, notwithstanding the fact that the feminine subject cannot be identified.

Let us take as a starting point that the production of knowledge, with the purpose and under the excuse of rationalization, facilitating

115. *Différend*: « that which makes the difference ». Cf. J-F. Lyotard, *Le Différend*, Minuit, Paris 1983. The term has been maintained in the English title: *Differend : Phrases in Dispute*, Univ. of Minnesota Press 1989. “Prime” does not refer to time, of course, but to a possible logical conceivability.

its understanding and conveying, is the result of a certain *politics of knowledge and positioning* of its subjects in a certain context. In order to encompass the supposed entirety of the “object”, which is actually only being created in this very process, the procedure of acquiring knowledge, its destilation, inevitably draws borders and devises “units” and wholes.

The entities created in this way are of different orders. One order, or dimension, is linguistic in the broadest sense¹¹⁶. *Which* parallel orders this is about in the “objectal”¹¹⁷ world, depends on the historical context. One of the constantly reproduced borders (and yet reproduced differently in every context, so that it has its historical quality) is sexual difference – let me remind of its aspect of severing (*section, sex*). This border is constantly being modified and moved, like other types of border for that matter – but it is important to highlight it concerning this one because “sex” has a (constructed and utilitarian) pretence of immobility. Other types of borders that are being constructed along with those referring to knowledge, disciplines, categorizations and classifications, i.e. in value judgement, are the so-called ethnic or national borders. Sex and sexual borders, or establishing gender, play an important role in the building of a nation as its essential constitutive part. That is why, for women, an important moment of negotiation and political pressure is precisely that when the nation is being reconfigured. That chance ought to be taken, because the period of sclerotization of a nation is not favorable for the alteration of hegemony.

Sovereignty, the state and the nation

Sovereignty is, in its “western” modern form, the outcome of Westphalian secularisation of the divine state in mid-17th century (1648). It is characterized by the positing of the axiom of an indisputable transcendence. The latter was primarily ascribed to the monarch, and

116. Language, translation, both intra and inter-lingual. “Language” also comprises visual, linguistic and other ways of representation, projection, rationalization, cartography, etc.

117. Why in inverted commas: because in the way of thinking i am trying to establish, the opposition subject-object is questionable and disputed.



later to the people. Sovereignty can be questioned neither conceptually (on the plan of knowledge), nor practically, or in terms of its source or purpose (it does not have a source, for it rests on circularity). For putting it into question, one is responsible before the law – of which sovereignty itself is the source. Thus the concept of sovereignty can justifiably be compared to the Sanskrit concept of *svayambhū*, “self-arisen”¹¹⁸. The political figures established by sovereignty itself move top-down. Opposed to this are reactive figures and resistance, moving, or at least in principle and in the ideal case, striving bottom-up. Except for being vertical, sovereignty, as a hierarchy, also implicates a dichotomy between the “centre” and “periphery”, between the West and “the Rest”, between the metropolis and the colony¹¹⁹. Sovereignty is the sovereignty of the nation state. The colonies, in order to win independence, had to struggle for their own national sovereignty. In this way, they entered modernity – by creating alternative forms of modernity. All these modernities converge in neoliberal globalization nowadays. Modernity is an epochal change. Colonies have access to modernity provided they renounce continuity with their own antiquity and history, their own epistemologies, the genealogy of their own concepts and conceptual apparatus. The same applies to women. Modernity thus represents a constructed continuity

118. I have examined diverse degrees and origins of sovereignty in Europe, China and India elsewhere: *L'éloquence tempérée du Bouddha. Souverainetés et dépossession de soi* (Paris, Klincksieck 2012).

119. Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power”, *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. by Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, Kenneth Thompson, Blackwell, Malden (Mass.) 2000 (first ed. 1996), pp. 184-224. Naoki Sakai argues that within the Westphalian model, the second geopolitical area has been excluded by the first from the rules that are valid for the “West” (while the latter at the same time performatively equates itself with the “International community”). These rules are: 1) sovereignty of the nation state and self-determination, 2) legal equality among nation states, 3) the rule of international law among the states, 4) non-interference with internal affairs of other countries. None of these referred to the colonies (extra-territorial and unconstitutional) or to territories that were not organized as national states. Sakai, “Translation and Bordering”, presentation at the international conference “Borders, Displacement & Creation”, Porto, 29-08-4-09-2011.

from antiquity to the present (with a vision of the future in direct line) for Europe, and an imposed discontinuity for the other continents. Together, this continuity and this discontinuity make up global history and two sides of a medal that increasingly permeate each other.

The national state and its borders, a product of western modernity, have been exported to the continents beyond Europe by colonialism. This form became dominant globally, having reconstructed retrospective perception of the national state as fatal and uniquely possible, just like the nation was constructed as a historically inevitable and – in retrospect – original form. Other historical options have been discarded. This has been complemented with forms of gradually developed national awareness (where it had not existed before), with the policy of national education and official national historiography. Strategic methodological nationalism corresponds to this. From the period of World War II well into the 1960's, such nationalisms, as far as non-European continents were concerned, were liberational. Nowadays, in the aftermath of 1989, this is no longer the case¹²⁰.

At the other, bottom end of the vertical or ladder at the top of which is sovereignty, there is the subject. It is then said that sovereignty rests upon it or that sovereignty guarantees it. The logic is circular and self-sufficient. This is actually about a system of organization of the world

120. This matter is more complex. Nationalism must always be observed within a historical process and context. In the mid-20th century, nazism severely and permanently compromised the existing nationalisms as such, at least in Europe and Asia (Japan), but this did not apply to the colonies that produced by induced reactive nationalisms during the 1960's, which liberated most of the Third World. Palestine may look as a disputable case, as it is still on the agenda because its process of emancipation has not been completed yet. However, the case of Palestine is simply that of an Israeli colony brokered by European forces (especially Great Britain) at the end of World War II. The present-day Palestinian nationalism is liberational. Nationalism can, by all means, lose its liberational character occasionally, it might even be its general tendency. Nationalism is liberational inasmuch as discrimination and exclusion are (not) based on "identity". Colonial nationalisms generate liberational counter-nationalisms.



and of rationalization of dominance, both in the political and in all other ways. The feminist critique, as well as subalternist researchers, Postcolonial Studies, translation theories etc. and also, not to be forgotten, at least partly, in potentiality and in a process, the Marxist epistemologic attempts all point to the historical and situational location of the subject. Nowadays, this goes without saying. More than 20 years ago, while i was still living and working in Zagreb, this was not clear, and we occasionally had our male colleagues, who considered themselves to be senior to us and superior in intelligence, as if by definition, even when this was not true, treat us with derision. A subject thus conceived bears the traits of an ideal dominant subject in the current hegemony, so that it is never female, except for the alternative paradigms of resistance, where it is pluralistic , and only partly “feminine”. Once again, the issue of the relation between the individual and the collective is posed here, i.e. that of developing the “commons” , beyond the public.¹²¹

In other words: this collective, or common, which comprises both common goods, given resources (thus generating diverse problems depending on the circumstances: water, air, soil, etc.) as well as what is yet to be acquired and developed as common, is characterized by partaking (sharing in) and giving (*partage*, in the positive sense). This *sharing with others*, partaking, is a matter of politics, both social and economic, and also of the politics of knowledge, or epistemology. Although the role of women in this proces is fundamental, it is far from being secured and is yet to be conquered and established. Every historical turning point reverses the counters to zero, with some arrangements, compromises and minor concessions, preserving the essence of dominance. Each historical crosroads and change of the paradigm of circumstances for a new systemic “deal” between the sexes is, at least for a brief period before the relations become sclerotized again, also a chance for putting in place a new gender regime. This is done, among others, through the categories of knowledge and by means of construction of political imagination.

121. Toni Negri, “Il diritto del commune”, <http://uninomade.org/il-diritto-del-comune>, 14-03-2011.

Cognitive justice, therefore, constitutes an important part of the horizon of justice¹²².

In principle, the subject could always have been either individual or collective. Part of the cold war ideological controversy between *real capitalism* and “real socialism” rested on that opposition: the former invoked individualism and the preservation of individual rights and property, and the latter, a certain collectivity and the preservation of primarily collective rights and social or state property. Both options imply violence, but differently deployed. In the period after World War II, an untranslatable dialogue of two deaf parties went on between those two clans, i.e. the Cold War, and in some instances genuine war. In the aftermath of 1989, together with a premature “triumph” of the “free West” and the capitalist option, it was made to look as if the Berlin Wall had fallen only on one side, towards the East (in all that, Yugoslavia fell into oblivion, just as it slid into utter self-oblivion among its former ‘peoples’ and ‘peopelities’¹²³), so that the official political discourse from that side sounded like a one-dimensional and all the more beaurocratized language, despite considerable nuances¹²⁴. Authority “emanates” from the sovereignty of the people, which is sanctioned as a doctrine. At present, when this wall has finally crumbled from the western side as well, we can also hear this one-dimensional, ideologized and uniform language (*langue de bois*) and way of thinking (*la pensée unique*) on the other side. And this is practically all that we can hear nowadays. All the other voices are stifled. This, at the same time, poses a challenge to women, who in the western hemisphere are affected by the backlash, and also to the populations of

122. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Para um novo senso comum* (vol. 1) : A crítica da razão indolente. Contra o desperdício da experiência, Cortez, São Paulo 2000.

123. “Peoples” & “peopelities”, the irony of the “translation” is deliberate. This division is not typical of Yugoslavia only, but also of many other countries and not only socialist ones.

124. Darko Suvin, “Diskurs o birokraciji i državnoj vlasti u po-revolucionarnoj Jugoslaviji 1945-75” (unpublished manuscript) reveals these nuances in detailed readings of the official socialist thought in the country (Tito, Kidrič, Kardelj, Bakarić, etc.).



colonized countries, a fabricated global enemy – the Muslims, or Roma people as ever and currently, and nowadays above all, *the migrants*, bearers of a new universal interest.

The case of the multiple assassination in Oslo on July 22nd 2011 is probably inscribed in the superstructure of the cold war bipolar construction in the post-bipolar world: the assassin, *a male* assassin in this case, represents himself as a knight saviour of the European, Christian and masculine westwen civilization from the ubiquitous evil: communism, feminism, homosexuality and Islam. Allegedly, one of his first targets should have been Gro Harlem Brundtland, the epitome of socialdemocracy and the “mother of the nation”, a remarkable Norwegian progressive politician. Seldom has Christian fundamentalism been labelled as a source of terrorism (it was marginally mentioned by scholars in the Bush era), but it has considerably moved forward on the list in the meantime; and, its roots being much older, it is itself among the factors responsible for the positing and generation – by the West and the colonial heritage – of Islamic fundamentalism. In the 1990’s, it was overdramatized as a transnational and powerful source of overall terrorism¹²⁵. However, in an initial reaction to the Oslo tragedy, on the very same day, Christian fundamentalism was cautiously mentioned as a possible motive. This genealogy of violence ought to be examined by all means regarding all its components. It has been neglected in the “securitarian”, the policing attitude toward social freedom, in the closing of the borders of Europe. Regular migrants are being persecuted, the disempowered are being generated, the foreigners deprived of documents and civil rights arrested, walls are being erected. Instead, pedophiles are being hunted, the social and political life is being depolitized, moralized and desemanticized, yet the essence of vice is sought in others and not within. The Norwegian

125. R. Iveković, “Terror/isme comme politique ou comme hétérogénéité. Du sens des mots et de leur traduction”, Rue Descartes n° 62, pp. 68-78; « Terreurs et traductions », in *Contre-Attaques. Perspective 2* : Jean-Marc Rouillan, sous la dir. d’Alain Jugnon, Paris-Marseille, Al Dante 2011, pp. 131-169.

black knight is, for the time being¹²⁶, treated as an isolated case, as an anomaly, and we are still far from developing an object equivalent, in the west, to Al-Qa'ida – a mighty menace that is a global threat. Of course, feminist analyses clearly point to the conjunction among the multitude of phobias of the jeopardized civilizational masculinity, and can be in the foreground of a new, sobre interpretation of such events. It is easy to expose how detrimental the association of “excess of testosterone” and the power conferred to individuals by the “civilizational” support of history, where they are featured as a model for political hegemony.

The subject on which sovereignty rests and which it invokes is “the people” (at the time of the Cold War, the same denomination was on both sides of the wall, but with different connotations). That subject is becoming increasingly devoid of its active, material, real importance and active potential as we draw further away from revolution (the French; Mexican; October; Yugoslav; any whatsoever), and as a citizen has less and less decision-making power and fewer decisions to make. Decisions are taken above the heads of citizens. The subject, as well as the citizen, becomes a figurehead.

The proponents of sovereignty in the socialist countries of diverse denomination were more and more *representatives within the authorities* and within the the framework of the state that endorsed it all, called “the people”; “the working people”, “the communists”, “socialist ideas” etc. The proponents of sovereignty – therefore also the subjects – are no more “the peoples” (although nominally they still bear this supposed capacity), but rather recalcitrant financial market forces, emancipated from the states. Thus we now have “governance” both in socialism (China) and in the West. In the present-day constellation of the global, predominantly post-industrial, financial and cognitive capitalism, neither the subject nor democracy are any longer requisite. *Sovereignty is transferred from the state to the market.* The global market is sovereign, the nation is subjected to it, and the functionalities of the national state are changing.

126. This was one week after the event.

The market outgrows “the state”, but uses its clout, the state army, so that the weight of a national state that was economically dominant in the previous period remains indisputable even when it is outweighed by the international market: Europe is at present a mightier economic power with a bigger market potential, but the USA still exerts a stronger political and military influence in the world in spite of its weakening, so that Europe remains subordinated to it in spite of having a larger share in the global trade. Soon, both are being overrun by Asia. The USA keeps playing a more important role (although somewhat diminished) of world order watchdog than Europe. It is just little by little that we have been moving out of the bipolar Cold War world, over the interim unipolar world headed by the USA, toward a multipolar world.

As far as the language is concerned, its constellation is similar on the level of universality and on that of “internationality” (within globalization, the “transnational” is more appropriate than the “international”) – one language and one truth equal the one scale for the entire reality, which is the market (but this is quickly changing, and we might all be learning Chinese very soon). Yet, even the market, as used to be the case with the sovereign state and the nation, uphold individual liberties and private property. After “1989” (which is actually much more than a certain year, a long, still ongoing period) the state subordinates itself¹²⁷ to the transnational market which takes advantage of it, and thus transforms a succession of functions of the national state without formally abolishing it, because it is at its service. Instead of sovereignty, “governance”¹²⁸ is installed, which continues to invoke sovereignty as a mere formality, i.e. it

127. Yves Charles Zarka, “La dictature des marches à l’âge de la servilité de l’État” *Le Figaro* 19-7-2011, p. 19

128. I am tempted to translate this as “gospodarstvo”, although in the Croatian variant this word has acquired different meanings in time, which of course obstructs my personal translating inclination. Yet the closeness of meaning of “gospodarstvo” in the sense of (national) economy and in the sense currently mostly derived from Foucault’s usage of the term “gouvernance” (as well as “gouvernementalité” for the entire overall system), as well as the close link between the ideas of rationalization and efficiency, open the horizon of the contemporary and are thought-provoking.

establishes itself *within* it, while crossing all boundaries at the same time. The market has outgrown the state and the states. Thus, “governance” is an inside/out construction, like some new Leviathan. The sovereignty of the national state, which had marked the hegemony of the previous epoch, has been weakened considerably, so that the state has been “dying out” in favor of the market, in locations and in ways unexpected by an earlier Marxist theory. A superior principle to that of state sovereignty is now at work, namely the supra-national economic interests, to which, in the form of their respective financial systems, sovereignty complies, thus denying itself. “Identities” are thus hopeless, non-starter anacronisms dating back from the time of national sovereignties, which are trying in vain to *recover* and establish local centres of a world that has in the meantime exploded either into policentricity or into the nonexistence of any centres any longer.

The idea of going back to the previous state of affairs is an illusion. This is the situation in which, admittedly with some differences and some questionable advantages of the former, both postcolonial national identities in their second wave (with a long tradition of struggle for independence), and national identities that emerged out of the end of the Cold War and the downfall of the socialist sovereignties, find themselves in. The original perception of the fall of the Berlin Wall exclusively on the East has been dismantled as deceptive. The process which has been unfolding ever since 1989 is a gradual but definite crumbling of that wall on the western side, with the same, though prolonged outcomes: ethnicization, fragmented trivial nationalisms, “populisms”¹²⁹ and the rise of racism everywhere, even in the core of western Europe, which in this process is becoming foreseeably Balkanized, mirroring the dreadful Yugoslav model from the 1990’s and afterwards. One of the characteristics of the turnaround that engulfed the planet with “1989” – the touching up and smoothing over of the *historical* dimension of history i.e. relativizing

129. Cautiousness about this term and the use of inverted commas are due to its relativization, although problematic, convincingly attributed to it by Ernesto Laclau in *On Populist Reason*, London, Verso 2007.

the values without the requisite new epistemological instruments for a critical attitude towards them, general desemantization, depolitization and disorientation. The Cold War was “easier” because everything was black-and-white.

Nowadays, in other words, in globalization, the most frequent responses to this – to the *desovereignization of the state* – are again collective: communalisms and nationalisms. They support the idea of autochtony of the nation (who was “first” there). Still, does it have to stay that way? A high toll has been paid to that in the Yugoslav area, both by the “subject” and by the “counter-subject”, both by the sides of aggression and by the sides of resistance to aggression.

Someone who was able to problematize this issue even *before* 1989, which is indeed a question of modernity itself regardless of the later Cold War options East/West, socialism/capitalism (since *both* derive from *western modernity* and deal with sovereignty as one of their basic axioms) is, in this part of the world, Radomir Konstantinović¹³⁰. Although his examples are local, and we are used to recognize our situation in Yugoslavia in *The Philosophy of the settlement (palanka)*, this particular choice of material is irrelevant and does not diminish the *epochal universality* of his analysis valid elsewhere too. I have encountered people from all corners of the world who, having heard Konstantinović’s arguments, recognized the state of *palanka (the provincial, comment added, S.L.)* as a familiar climate in their own social environments. In addition to identifying the downsides of modernity, whose impact on other, and post-colonial countries in particular, have been widely researched, Konstantinović’s work is an epochal contribution to constituting a requisite new post-1989 and post-colonial epistemology, which is still being painstakingly developed. An ever more sombre and comprehensive analysis is conducted by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (op. cit.), based on different (yet translatable) theoretical assumptions on the contemporary circumstances of globalization, especially in Latin America.

130. Konstantinović, *Filozofija palanke*, BIGZ, Beograd 1981 (first ed. Third program of Radio Belgrade 1969).

Language and nation, patching and mending

From his own perspective of the translation theory, Naoki Sakai looks into nationalisms¹³¹. He reverses the position of nation and derives it from the transnational, inasmuch as he derives language from *translating as the antecedent of language itself*: namely, language as such is *already* translation. It precedes the definition of language and its relation to any particular nation. Paradoxically, translation *crosses, but at the same assumes and sets* boundaries. Placing the (national) language, as well as the nation, into the “origin”, the “timeless”, and the “source” is an epistemological trick, all too familiar with us too, by way of resting on an indisputable axiom which implies *the ban on further exploration of origins*, which are established once and for all. Namely, such research could reveal that origins are always elsewhere and ungrounded, with no definite beginning. The origins actually conceal the fact that there are no origins to be found. The unity of language (national “identity”), as a historical *a priori*, therefore, inevitably misfires. Ascribing such an *a priori* “bedrock” to a language or nation means concealing the impossibility to trace back its basis. Language is complex in itself and by definition. It bears within other languages and their potentials. Thus it could be said that the unclear term of “mother tongue” in fact, potentially denotes for us the mother of all other, learned languages¹³². The fictional unity of a language, like that of a nation, can be only a “regulative idea”. It is not a tangible, experience reality, but a fiction that is yet to be “accomplished”, that catalyzes abstraction, conceptualization and thinking, without which reasoning might not be possible. Such fictions are indispensable in speculative thinking and rationalization. Also, they are necessarily evolutionary, which implies that there can be no final definition or identity. This equally applies

131. Sakai, “Translation and Bordering”, op. cit. and his other works. See “Translation as filter”, <http://www.transeuropeennes.eu/en/recherche/find/>, 25-3-2010.

132. Boris Buden/Rada Iveković, “Babilon moj roden kraj”, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0908/ivekovic-buden/hr> March 2008.

to feminism and its subjects, which cannot be rounded up as separate independent units. We have to proceed in practice without a solid object, but with a strategic aim and epistemic principles (which are also liable to change). Therefore, we are currently working within an epistemological uncertainty, unlike the framed and limited, internally systematic Cold War certainty. Defining languages and nations as completed identities means petrifying discontinuity. Translation can, in some of its aspects, increase such petrification, and conversely, depending on the underlying *politics*, it can enhance the creation of ties and continuity in the problematic and torn connections in a society dominated by divisions, rifts and discontinuity. Such a translation policy, as a political method, would be ideally practised by feminisms. In his book on Pakistan, *Shame*, Salman Rushdie said that translation means “to be borne across” (the border). Yet the English term “borne” is homophonic with “born”. This means, as I see it, *that we are born only if we are being borne, by another*. Translating as an activity reveals this general debt to the other or others. Alterity is, therefore, part of us and it dismantles identity to oneself. Irrespective of the state or states, appearing on the horizon today are new forms of constituting and instituting, which are still evolving through informal and merely experimental forms that we have been unable to name yet, that are not classical social movements, but political and peculiarly novel. Political representation has lost a great deal of its value along with the deterioration of sovereignty. Among these new forms, away from being active through the system of representation, are also migrations, as well as part of the activity going on over the Internet and other twitters. Women’s movements, even the older ones, often belong to this camp, by being unconventional and by being denied their political dimension. Nevertheless, we are now aware that “*the political*” (*le politique*) is in itself normative, and that political qualities are denied to those who are meant to be obstructed from accessing the public scene. Migrants delimitate our political and public space, that in which we are unable to hear them even as they speak, because we do not share it with them, because we have not accepted them¹³³.

133. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” A seminal text

The nation has played a historical part in the homogenization of scattered, diverse, multi-lingual, miscellaneous people. In France, regional options and local languages were cruelly stifled in bloodshed at the Revolution. To this day, there and in other places (eg. Latin America) there have been problems related to the inclusion into the nation of those on whose principled exclusion that nation has rested ever since its inception. Let us be reminded that the founding principle of AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia, comment added, S.L.) Yugoslavia was different – the nation was not the paramount principle, but rather the federation, which brought together not very clearly defined “nations”, “nationalities” and federal-administrative units (republics) and sub-units (autonomous provinces). In other contemporary circumstances, we now have Europe as a supra-national unit, and cases such as Italy, where Padania is being profiled as a form of anti- or sub-national separatism, because the rich North no longer perceives any common interests with the poorer South. This is also what happened in the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia, but over a much shorter period of time, which left no room for a historical process to take its course, and in a much more brutal way. In Spain, the regional separatist tendencies have been mostly overcome, except with the Basque Country. And the problem of Ceuta and Melilla remains gaping in the African part of the Spanish territory. All this is happening within the framework of the general European relativization of state sovereignties and the European Regional Policy. On the other hand, Belgium, which had been without a government for more than a year, has a completely divided society, with only the dynasty symbolizing national unity – has shown that the government, political forms of representation, etc. are no longer needed when the *technical* mechanisms of cohesion and the institutions have been *formally operating smoothly and stably* long enough.

which has seen numerous editions and versions, among which one as a separate chapter of the book *The Critique of postcolonial reason. Towards the History of the Vanishing Present*, Harvard UP 1999. R. Iveković, seminar held on 19th March 2011 in Geneva, “La nouvelle universalité de l'exil” (in print, ed. Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp).



This has been made possible by governance, whereas sovereignty is merely formal, but as such useful as a kind of container.

The nation serves, in its *naturalized* form, of which we have seen many in the period of the partition of Yugoslavia, the purpose of uprooting social antagonisms by “flowing into” a higher instance (the nation). It is the object of desire of the nationalists and it is hailed, it has been imposed on others, while many accept it indifferently or put up with it, because they “cannot beat it”, since it is in synergy with mightier forces: the state and its sovereignty, the legal system, the army and war. In its constitutive phase (in a more or less cruel, and more or less physical manner – ranging from the conceptual level to massacre), the nation erases class difference, “ethnic”, “racial” competition or clashes (at times leading to their escalation), as well as to some extent sexual antagonism. As regards the sexes, the nation offers rallying around the patriarchal vertical, and the inclusion of women as dependent second-class, i.e. as subaltern citizens. The state that takes over the hierarchical vertical from *the nation as an established community* based on the axis of birth (*rod*; while “narod” means “people”) on the principle of the gender hierarchy as a paradigm for all other hierarchies, and not from *the nation as a society* (because such a nation has neither been attained, nor is it attainable), that state guarantees and obscures the secondary status of the female citizenry. Of course, grading also applies to other societal groups, differentiated according to principles other than sex, and grading is an open string, which means that new groups of subordinately included (rather than “excluded”) can be added. We have seen endless instances of such nbargaining in the Yugoslav reshuffling, because in every reconfiguration of a system or of a world, the regime of the sexes is renegotiated, and that regime is referred to as “gender”. Gender is, certainly, ambiguous, as much as translation is. It is ambiguous because in “nature” it does not exist in a determined form, according to the model male/female, and because the sexual delienation cuts *through* each and every one of us, and not between us. We can never be assured what the “other ” sex is, nor can we ever agree on that, although we may have

a regulative idea about it. Linguistic conventions regulate a simplified usage of those terms. Likewise, we cannot agree on what is another language or another nation. Why? Because the other is constitutional for us, it is our “external”, or “outwardly” projected constituent. Without the other, there would be no us. Therefore, neither “the other” nor “we” is assigned. The nation is not assigned either, although historically, it is more firmly established by its first constructions between the 15th and 19th century, while more recently, events such as decolonization, or the 1989 rip, invoking the nation was often seen as a solution for a consumed legitimacy of the forms of governance or sovereignty from the preceding period. It turned out to be a vain hope. Methodologically, nationalism constitutes our knowledge, our education, our disciplines, *without being our fate*. It is necessary to break loose from that. Women and feminism (as an epistemological configuration) can play an important role in this getting away, as they are the ones that disturb, patch and dismantle the blissful, constructed continuity of nation and dominance.

I thank Goran Fejić for reading and commenting this text.

Translated by Stanislava Lazarević



Nataša Lambić and Staša Zajović

Women in Black's Antifascism

The concept of an ethnically pure state inevitably leads to fascism in action...

From the very beginning, *Women in Black* (WiB) have been opposed to fascist tendencies, perceiving fascism as the modern form of the patriarchal-authoritarian syndrome, which is at the root of violence and wars (including those wars that led to the creation of WiB and our activities since 1991). However, we were directly confronted with fascism in Serbia, which has its own specific forms. Latinka Perović excellently explains the origins and manifestations of fascism in Serbia.

According to her assessment, fascism is “a firm system which, over time, has changed shape and place on the political scene, but whose main components remained unchanged. It is a deep, closed ideological system that recycles itself for almost a century and a half, changing forms from early Serbian socialism of Svetozar Marković, through radicalism and various forms of ideologies close to fascism, between the world wars and during World War II, through communism to nationalism, which occurred in mid-eighties. That ideology saw economic reforms as the breaking of Serbian peasants’ social unity; it perceived the modern rule of law as the negation of the national state, which is expected to achieve, in the name of the people, the union of the legislative, executive and judicial powers, the foundation of all authoritarian systems. This egalitarian and collectivist state is equated with the ethnic state, which, according to this ideology, must comprise within its borders the territory “in which the last Serb lives.”¹³⁴ According to Dubravka Stojanović, “such a concept

134. Latinka Perović, About the relations between the rejections to face the past and the struggles against the modernisation of Serbia, from XIX century till today,

requires constant efforts to achieve territorial expansion, ignoring the relentless spending of resources, primarily human resources.”¹³⁵ Besides many other factors that influenced the permanent state of war, “in the period between 1876 and 1914, Serbia had a war once in every 6 years and 2 months...”¹³⁶

The almost bicentennial obsession with the idea of a “covenant of Serbian lands – all Serbs in one state” expressed itself in nineties in the form of fascist atrocities and in the practice of ‘ethnic cleansing’ (at the military, political, cultural and spiritual level). It has had and still has disastrous consequences: “This stifled the entire development, including the development of a political thought and political culture. State limits have changed, the institutions changed, but both kept the same matrix of political thought and ideology, which was an obstacle to development.”¹³⁷

The continuity of the negative legacy in terms of political culture is apparent. The direct result of this continuity is the creation in the early nineties of the regime, that led Serbia into wars of aggression and which, in many respects, contained visible characteristics of fascism.

Expectations that the collapse of the regime will break the continuity were not fulfilled; on the contrary, after Milosevic’s departure, the victimizing nationalist legacy proved even more deeply rooted in the political culture, inherent in the majority of the population. So the

lecture held at the WiB seminar “Facing the past – feminist approach”, held between March 25th and 27th 2005, in Belgrade, published in the publication „Facing the past – Feminist Approach“ by Women in Black.

135. Dubravka Stojanović, “Peščanik”, April 13th 2007, Belgrade, <http://www.b92.fm/channel/Peščanik/34335.html>.

136. Latinka Perović, About the relations between the rejections to face the past and the struggles against the modernisation of Serbia, from XIX century till today, lecture held at the WiB seminar “Facing the past – feminist approach”, held between March 25th and 27th 2005, in Belgrade, published in the publication „Facing the past – Feminist Approach“ by Women in Black.

137. Dubravka Stojanović, “Peščanik”, April 13th 2007, Belgrade, <http://www.b92.fm/channel/Peščanik/34335.html>.



stereotype of the nation as a victim, which emerged through ethnic conflicts, still extends from generation to generation, and is still firmly rooted in the perception of people and determines their attitude towards the 'other,' the different ones. Women in Black are permanently struggling against the nationalist ideology, which ends in the genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass murder, and war crimes, during the war, and in the prevailing climate of impunity and insecurity, in the period of so-called peace.

Continuity of Women in Black's Anti-fascist Actions – “Anti-fascism is my choice”

This paper will refer mostly to the period after the fall of S. Milosevic, but we will briefly recall the way in which WIB clearly identified and denounced the fascist ideas during the above-mentioned political regime.

One of the earliest WiB's public statements refers exactly to the fascist character of the politics of the Milosevic regime that was implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina: “Fascist leaders of Serbian politics continuously kill, torture, and rape, for a year. The whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina is cut off from the electric, water and telephone systems. People, regardless of what name they carry, are dying every minute, dying of cold, disease and hunger. Fascist leaders of Serbian politics dispersed over three million people from their lives. Manipulate women, men blackmailed. We don't have words left. Fascist leaders of Serbian politics still destroy all attempts of positive inter-ethnic communication. They are separating streets, school classes, families, and cities. They draw lines across the hills, corridors across the roads... Women in Black are accusing the Serbian regime of destroying lives with its fascist politics. We invite all citizens of Belgrade to publicly express all kinds of civil disobedience resistance to the fascist regime. The misery we live in should not scare us, but encourage us to confront it. Refusing to confront the regime becomes a crime itself.”¹³⁸

138. Women in Black, Press release, October 28th 1992, Belgrade.

Back in 2000, looking back at the nineties, Žarana Papić defined fascisation of the society as “the systematic destruction of the ‘Other’... The sacrifice of ‘the other’ for the sake of ‘yours.’ This model led us this far, and it is clear that this model led to the driving of millions of refugees out of Bosnia, and million Albanians out of Kosovo. This system mechanism makes everybody dispensable and easy to sacrifice...It is a tool of manipulation, generalisation, in order to create a fascist reality... In these last fifteen years, we were in a time period in which it is allowed to hate others...We came to the point where it is not allowed to respect others...to the point where the disappearance of others has nothing to do with us...The whole model relies on the fact that we are better, that we push ‘the other,’ the different one, down under us, that is how we become ‘better,’ and the fascism can rely upon that dominance...”¹³⁹

Accordingly, Žarana Papić said that “the process of the fascisation of the social life during the wars in former Yugoslavia” actually meant “...the adaptation of social memory...and the divergent construction of Otherness...” through a false picture of reality, constructed by the media, which has been repeated so many times, that is artificially converted into a lived-through experience. Her conclusion is that “the collective identity created in that manner has legitimized the dominant discourse of fascism and kept it till today.”¹⁴⁰

Women in Black’s activists have defined their attitude toward fascism in the following way:

Fascism is hidden in thousands of forms – from the kitchen to the bedroom...because they teach us that we are always a little better than others.

139. Workshop “We live in fascism every day”, held on March 1st 2000, Belgrade

http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=71&Itemid=19&lang=sr

140. Žarana Papić, Europe after 1989: Ethnic wars, fascisation of social life and the body politics in Serbia (Article), Sociologija 43.3, Belgrade, 2001, 193 – 212.



We use the term fascism:

– Because it makes us uncaring to everything – violence, the pain of others, aggression, massacres, demolished homes, death...This apathy is fascism.

– Because of the fear of being rejected or isolated, we settle with irresponsibility and counterfeit reality. This is fascism.

– Because the violence has become commonplace – the children that are different have been beaten up, the media representatives who say what they see and hear have been beaten up, as well as all those who think differently. “It is important that the party is intact, people can be changed.”

– Because life has become irrelevant; this is why we are paid 74 German marks, why we have cold schools, why teachers are hungry, why we have a lack of transportation, and why we have no medicine, no sugar, no oil, no milk, because of that people get sick and simply die.

We, Women in Black, have decided:

– To be responsible, to react to the smallest crime around us. We have not agreed to the role of the victim, we reject the division between ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’;

– Not to forget the “Others”, because we believe that the experience of others is as important as ours;

– To speak of repression, war, poverty, forced mobilisation, false bridges, burning villages, etc, because silence will not save us;

– To be disobedient to the country, to the fathers and husbands, because we believe in the antifascist which lies in each of us;

– To take responsibility for hope, because we appoint the fascism, we are aware of it, because we are not afraid to confront it, and because

we organize large and small acts of insubordination every day. We do not only appoint fascism, we publicly oppose it, as activists, legally and artistically...¹⁴¹

The decision to reject all forms of ethnic and religious homogenisation and reduction of identity to its religious and ethnic dimension of a woman, and to the patriarchal role of mother and wife, and guardians of the nation and religion, is personal – political. It was formulated in 2000: “Fascism is extremely capillary, it is everywhere... I do not know why people do not care about both ‘theirs’ and ‘not theirs’ in an equal way, because the roots of fascism lie in the exclusion of the other, in the divisions between “ours” and “theirs”, between “I” and “the other”, to “normal” and “abnormal”.¹⁴²

We follow the spirit of our founder Neda Božinović, who said: “I have been an antifascist and women’s human rights defender since 1936, and I fight for peace, tolerance, coexistence, and equality. I survived the dismantling of my country, the former Yugoslavia; in order to survive it, I chose to be a Woman in Black, in order to save the values that represent my life. Today, Women in Black fight against global militarism that destroys us all.”¹⁴³

Manifestations of fascism after 5 October 2000 – ‘A leopard doesn’t change its spots’ or Fascist war by other means

Women in Black immediately celebrated the fall of the “fascist regime” of Slobodan Milosevic by saying: “The regime was defeated, but not over ... We will continue to work on the abolition of militarism, nationalism

141. Workshop “We live in fascism every day”, held on March 1st 2000, Belgrade http://www.zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=71&Itemid=19&lang=sr.

142. Teodora Tabački, Workshop “We live in fascism every day”, held on March 1st 2000, Belgrade http://www.zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=71&Itemid=19&lang=sr.

143. Jasmina Tešanović, *Istorija Žena u crnom /History of Women in Black, Women for Peace, Belgrade, 2001, p.12*



and violence against women.”¹⁴⁴

Expectations that the collapse of Milosevic’s regime would lead to the suppression of fascism and fascistic discourse in general did not get fulfilled. In fact, the too broad political coalition that came to power after the political changes of 5 October 2000 and whose only common denominator was the desire to remove Milosevic pursued an inconsistent political course, in which there has never been a clear break with the politics and ideology that led to wars and genocide. Individuals who belonged to the regime that did the atrocities to others are still in positions of power, in the civil service, army, police, judiciary, in short, at all levels of government. At the same time, public activities of openly fascist and neo-Nazi groups and organisations, so-called hooligans, close to the aforementioned state and quasigovernmental structures inherited from earlier times, gained in strength. The main feature of these groups is still the glorification of war criminals (primarily Karadžić and Mladić) and the crimes they committed (for instance, the slogan ‘Knife, Wire, Srebrenica’ can be heard at football games, but also on Belgrade streets, especially during WiB’s vigils on Belgrade’s Republic Square). As we noted in 2002, “times have changed, the war is gone, but as if someone is missing it; the generation that is growing up is raised in the spirit of Vučelić-Milanović notion of patriotism and social values. Hooligans have sent a message that ‘women in Serbia are in the best situation, because they can clean the house and take care of their husband...’ The main feature of the counter-protesters, however, was a shirt with a picture of Radovan Karadžić...The incident at the Republic Square is a proof of the sad, but also dangerous continuity, and suggests that those who belong to modern Serbia, which recognizes the right to be different, are apparently the minority...”¹⁴⁵

The legitimisation of fascist ideas in Serbian society has been made possible by the will of the political elite (above all, of the parties in power, the current opposition, and the church) so that, when they need it, they

144. Women in Black, press release, October 9th 2000, Belgrade.

145. Women in Black, press release, October 9th 2000, Belgrade.

can rely on structured “extreme right-wing groups”, i.e. clero-fascists and neo-Nazis, who introduce “in public speech the crudest forms of hatred and seek the establishment of a totalitarian fascist order.”¹⁴⁶ Antifascist legacy, which was stopping the revival of chauvinistic tendencies in the genocidal wars of the nineties, has been equated from 2000 with the communist legacy, which was suppressed when the nationalism grew stronger.

The process of suppression of anti-fascism from the official political discourse became stronger after 2000, when the nationalist policies of the nineties were normalized through “democratic nationalism” and liberal anti-totalitarianism. The complete lack of principles in political coalitions and economic benefits as a top priority for the ruling power, also contributed to the general climate of impunity and fascisation, maintaining the value system that excludes all those who are different, and denies them all rights, starting with the right to life.

After the breakup of Yugoslavia and especially after October 5th, the new elite of Serbian society has drawn demarcation lines with the previous state, in all aspects, including its interpretation of the past. This phenomenon is especially visible in the revisionist history of World War II, and the relationship between anti-fascism and collaboration with fascism, where both are relativized beyond recognition.¹⁴⁷ The way the contemporary political elite sees our anti-fascist past is illustrated by the fact that Serbia is the only country that has not sent an official delegation to mark 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

In times of deep economic and social crisis, while the number of mass graves of victims of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic are still undiscovered, and while undiscovered corpses of Jews (killed in the Holocaust) lie on the island of Ada Ciganlija, the state resorts to manipulating the public and

¹⁴⁶ Women in Black darkness, Danas daily, November 11th 2002, Belgrade.

¹⁴⁷ Workshop “We live in fascism every day”, held on March 1st 2000, Belgrade

http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=71&Itemid=19&lang=sr.



established, in the spring of 2009, a commission whose job is to find the grave of a fascist, Chetnik leader and war criminal, Draža Mihailović.

The Rehabilitation Act equalized the chetniks of Ravna Gora and Partisan movements, for the purpose of daily politics. The modern political elite, especially the intellectual one, imbued with nationalism, declared anything contrary to 'communist' values a priori good and desirable. The problem with this logic is that in this way they also relativize the Holocaust and concentration camps in Belgrade. This is reflected in Serbian history books, that speak no more about the abovementioned crimes and where Milan Nedić, the president of the puppet government, so-called 'government of national salvation,' set by the German occupation authorities in Serbia, is represented as a 'saviour of the substance of Serbian ethnic being.'¹⁴⁸

The Serbian political elite, led by Serbian President Boris Tadić, shows casual attitude, at the least, towards equalizing fascist and antifascist values and flirting with nationalism for the sake of cheap political points: "I belong to the family of partisans, but I think that, historically, [the search for the tomb of Draža Mihailović] is important. My uncle was a chetnik, so I understand the tragic division and antagonism between Serbian people. But it's not the most important national issue, and it would be bad if that would become a major national issue..."¹⁴⁹

Danica Milosavljević,¹⁵⁰ the last People's heroine to be still alive, expressed her attitude towards today's politics of Serbia and towards fascist tendencies: "Our country betrayed us. I do not feel that I live in my country. My dignity, as a fighter, is not protected, because it made

148. Olivera Milosavljević, *Stare vrednosti za novo vreme* – Svetislav Stefanovic, *nekad i sad, Sociologija* 52.4, 2010, Belgrade, 399 – 420.

149. Interview with Boris Tadić, *Nedeljnik Press*, January 2012, <http://www2.pressonline.rs/sr/vesti/Nedeljnik/story/197056/Tadi%C4%87+u+De%C4%8Danima++intervju+kakav+niste+%C4%8Ditali.html>

150. *Forgotten ninety-year-olds*, *Danas daily*, December 26th 2011, Belgrade http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/drustvo/terazije/zaboravljeni_devedesetogodisnjaci.14.html?news_id=230920

chetniks equal with anti-fascists, even though they fought shoulder to shoulder with Germans against us on all fronts, in all offensives. The tragedy is that they are now acknowledged equally with partisans.”

The education system supports such historical revisionism, which is particularly evident in history books, but also in literature, religion and other subjects. In this way, the young generations are being poisoned with ethnocentrism, xenophobia and hatred, so it should not surprise us that much of the youth is open to accepting the most extreme neo-Nazi ideas.

Having this in mind, we have warned: “The change of the dictatorial regime in Serbia has not led to changes in the ideological systems and cultural patterns that produced war and hatred towards all those who are ‘Others,’ in ethnic, religious, and sexual terms.”¹⁵¹

One of the important moments of this continuity is reflected in the idea of Greater Serbia, which the neo-Nazi and extreme clero-fascist groups share not only with the majority of leading national institutions, such as the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, but also with the leading political parties, including those in favour of pro-European values, at least in words. Serbia did not give up territorial aspirations, especially in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; the only different thing is their reformulation, through new initiatives, such as supporting the secessionist policy of Milorad Dodik (Republika Srpska) as well as the Montenegrin political parties supporting the idea of Greater Serbia, such as the New Serbian Democracy.¹⁵² Due to support of the international community, the laborious and tedious process of denazification is also missing, which practically led to the amnesty of Serbian expansionism and the relativisation of war crimes. “Well known war criminals, such as Arkan’s men who were killing civilians in Bijeljina, or members of ‘White eagles,’ known for their crimes in Voćin, and

151. Danas Daily 27.12.2012.

152. Women in Black, press release, November 9th 2006, Belgrade.



assassins-members of the police of Republika Srpska and so on, freely roam through the streets of Belgrade.”¹⁵³

**How Women in Black face these strengthening fascist tendencies
– “Fascist darkness into the corner!”**

“Fascism is a violent, reactionary right-wing movement that manifests itself as an open terrorist dictatorship. Fascism gains support in all social groups, particularly in times of political and economic crisis. Fascism destroys all the liberties and discriminates minorities / marginalized groups and people of different opinions. Fascism builds on the strong nationalism that always excludes the other.”¹⁵⁴

Fascism in Serbia ‘only’ is the technical result of this repeatedly-mentioned concept, whose ideologues, like their Nazi role models, take out to the streets thanks to their military wing (hooligans, fans, clero-fascists and Nazi organisations), whose members act according to the recipe of the ‘father of the nation’ (Dobrica Ćosić), when they exercise their anger, physically assault and even eliminate all those who are different, on the basis of racial and/or ethnic differences. Sometimes, even more eagerly, they target ‘their own,’ members of ‘their’ nation who thinks differently: “... For the political / spiritual and the military wing of this ideology, the war is a male / Serbian / sacred duty, while the peace is an expression of ‘women’s’ weakness, which is in line with the famous thought of the father of the Serbian nation, Dobrica Ćosić: “We (Serbs) were always losers in times of peace, and winners in times of war...”¹⁵⁵

Because of this, WiB often reminds that “the political and cultural elite is responsible for the growth of fascist tendencies, because it refuses to

153. Sonja Biserko, *Danas* daily, March 16th 2011, and Nikola Samardžić, *Danas* Daily, December 26th 2011, Belgrade.

154. Slobodan Kostić, *Vreme* weekly, March 10th 2011, Belgrade.

155. Name of the series of artistic/activist street actions, organized by Women in Black and Škart.

face the criminal past and encourages the activities of fascist groups.”¹⁵⁶

After October 5th, 2000 and the end of the previous regime, the fascist tendencies took new forms, which can be explained by the skipping of the crucial break with these negative legacies that allowed the emergence of the Milošević regime. Women in Black continue, often together with other civil society organisations, to denounce this tendency. This was the case in 2006, when, because of his views on the fascist tendencies within the Serbian Orthodox Church, the sociologist of religion Mirko Đorđević was attacked in front of his house. Along with other civil society organisations, WiB have emphasized: “In a society that is considered to be democratic, attacks on individuals who are criticizing the system are intolerable. This act of vandalism expresses the widespread clericalisation of society and the institutionalisation of intolerance of different opinions.”¹⁵⁷ We demanded that the identity of the perpetrators be revealed and charges be brought against them, and also asked for “revealing the political forces behind this attack.”

However, the perpetrators have remained unknown to this day, while fascist tendencies have gained public acceptance. Because of this, we made a statement on 9 November 2011, and reminded again that, this year, Serbia ‘welcomes’ the International Day against Fascism and Anti-Semitism in an atmosphere in which anti-fascist heritage is endangered, and in an atmosphere of depriving minority groups of their basic rights. Violence against is normalised, with unwritten rules of impunity for the perpetrators in power. Instigators and disseminators of the dark ideas are protected by invoking their right to express their political views; they get space in most of the media, but the condemnation of their politics is missing; they freely publish open calls for crackdown on minorities on their websites, and write graffiti calling for crimes.

It stated: “A year ago, we have wondered why fascist organisations had

156. Women in Black, press release, November 9th 2004, Belgrade.

157. Women in Black, press release, May 9th 2008, Belgrade.



not been banned, and now the Constitutional Court and Prosecutor's Office reply that the fascists changed the names of their groups, and cannot be prohibited without new requests. Such reasoning raises the anxiety and doubt about the good intentions of those who should protect the safety of the citizens who are struggling day and night in their attempt to stop the discrimination."

"Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the Protocol of the Elders of Zion, and books written by Serbian clero-fascists Nikolaj Velimirović and Amfilohije Radović, who promotes his four-volume-long fascist pamphlet all over the Serbian capital, have been flaunting in the bookstore windows. This testifies of the impunity and social desirability of the fascist actions," we warned.

This atmosphere of violence has been supported by the educational institutions, which do not teach about the various forms of fascism and its dangers and ridicule anti-fascism. However, national institutions, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Belgrade University are deeply contaminated with these ideas and carry the burden of war crimes from the past wars, because they took part in their creation and implementation. Today's generations are developing under their auspices and their dangerous influence, while the state leaders and church frequently, openly and covertly, weaken the secularity of the state.

2011 was also marked by the uncovered demonstration of power over members of LGBT population, by banning the Pride Parade. The strongest parties in the Parliament and the violent quasi-intellectuals, who were given unlimited space in the media, supported this banning.

On the International Day against Fascism and Anti-Semitism, on 9 November 2011, we realized that the spirit of Kristallnacht (Germany, 1938) is ominously spreading across Serbia, and demand from the top of the government to ban fascist organisations immediately and give severe sanctions to the hate speech directed at minority groups, especially when used by public figures.

The members of Roma populations were also, as usual, victimized by these policies. They were exposed to specific institutional racism, since, in the midst of greedy transition and privatisation, the Roma people are, along with the impoverished working class, the target of constant persecutions and evictions (without providing the necessary accommodation). WiB and related organisations continuously organize actions of solidarity.

We signed the Declaration of Antifascists on 9 November 2009, which states, among other: “Fertile ground for the strengthening of fascism in Serbia obviously is a continuation of the national-chauvinistic policies of the nineties, which could never have been defeated by the new Serbian political, economic and cultural elite – because, mostly, it was never radically criticized by it. The global economic crisis, whose social consequences are yet to manifest in full force, enhances national-chauvinistic forces, and provides an opportunity for them to regroup and try to use the dissatisfaction of humiliated workers, by cheap demagoguery, in order to implement their fascist program.”¹⁵⁸

Fascist organisations’ attacks of the Roma population culminated during the attacks at the villagers of Jabuka, in summer 2010. After the murder of 17 years old boy D.S., for which police suspected B.J. (17), on June 10th 2010, in the village Jabuka / Vojvodina (40km from Belgrade), there was an escalation of violence against the Roma population when a group of villagers of Jabuka, under the pretext of mourning for the lost life of the young man, threw stones at members of the Roma minority, to destroy their property, and to harass them for days, without prompt state reaction. Because of their endangered security, and the lack of freedom of movement and right to education of the Roma population, Women in Black organized, together with other civil society organisations, solidarity campaigns and visits to Jabuka, and sent many appeals to the authorities and reports on the situation in Jabuka to domestic and international networks, etc.

In accordance with the Nazi ideology of ‘pure race’ and ‘healthy

158. Declaration of antifascists in action, November 9th 2009.



nation,' the relevant political forces require the application of eugenic solutions. In a statement on 21 November 2011, WiB mentioned the presentation of the Serbian Progressive Party's "Program for changes," and warned that it did not cause an appropriate response and that "only very few critics noted that there are some seemingly exotic ideas in the platforms of the leading opposition parties, such as the idea of introducing genetic state policies. The aim of such policies, as the Progressives say, is to reduce the birth of children with hereditary disorders, and reduction of occurrence of cancer, cardiovascular and psychiatric diseases that have genetic predispositions, as well as reducing the number of children with a predisposition for alcoholism and obesity. The Serbian Progressive Party considers that all this would lead to a reduction in financial expenses in the field of health and social policy, and Serbia would turn into a healthy and vital nation."

Women in Black's statement also read that "the public predominantly ignore such proposals, with slight ridicule to the Progressive Party's attempt to introduce principles of eugenic hygiene and genetic engineering to the sphere of reproductive policy. We think that such an ignorant attitude is unforgivable. Many people in Germany and abroad ridiculed the weirdoes from Munich beer taverns, but their actions ended up with gas chambers and the extermination of millions of people, proclaimed racially and medically unsuitable for human beings. So this is a moment neither for suppression nor for ridicule, especially when those ideas come from a serious party, which uses the accumulated discontent of the people, and offers itself as an alternative for the future of Serbia. We must alert to fascism before it is too late. And tomorrow may be too late."

Feminist anti-fascist interventions in context

Living in a country in which, until today, war crimes have been glorified and denied, we are guided by feminist ethics, which requires us to constantly and publicly oppose oblivion, relativisation of the past, and renewing and strengthening of open and covert fascist tendencies: "It is

my decision to know, and to seek accountability for atrocities committed in my/our behalf.”¹⁵⁹

Together with other civil society organisations, we filed a request to ban a neo-Nazi gathering, in October 2007. The request read: “Why are national institutions (the Serbian Orthodox Church, Serbian Academy of Science and Arts and others) silent regarding the actions of neo-Nazi groups, which, in their advocacy of ethnic purity and recovery of Serbianness, call for patriotism? Does this mean that the prominent national institutions agree with their ideas and actions? For how long will some spokespersons of legalism interpret the idea of tolerance as the basis for the equation of fascism and anti-fascism, and even repression against those who oppose the legalisation of celebrating crimes and relativisation of basic principles of democracy?”¹⁶⁰

In October 2007, together with other anti-fascists, we participated in the protest against the neo-Nazi march foretold in Novi Sad. During our protest march, the members of the gendarmerie protected the members of the ‘Nacionalni stroj’ [National Alignment]; reaction after the march proclaimed the anti-fascist march as ‘extreme.’

In the statement of 8 February 2008, regarding the attempt of the clero-fascist organisation ‘Obraz’ [Honour] to prevent a group of artists from Pristina to exhibit their works in the ‘Kontekst’ gallery in Belgrade, we named the institutions responsible for this manifestation of power of new Serbian fascism.

When the Peace march that WiB scheduled for 8 March 2008 was banned, we gave a statement, stressing that: “the Serbian Democratic Party and New Serbia, together with parties from the Milosevic era, rule the country in an atmosphere of fear. With the help of fascist and neo-Nazi groups, they intend to strengthen the nationalist-patriarchal matrix

159. Staša Zajović, “Not in our name! We won’t be fooled by our own! speech held at the gathering “Keep the peace in Sandžak,” October 22nd 2007, Novi Pazar.

160. Women in Black, Humanitarian Law Center, YUCOM and YIHR, press release, September 16th 2007, Belgrade.



and impose political and cultural single-mindedness, while their goal is to create a homogeneous obedient majority, which does not tolerate any different opinions ... We refuse to agree to a ban, fear, and the veiled state of emergency, produced by some of parties in power.”

Thanks to the support and solidarity of over fifty civil society organisations, many artists, public figures etc, we held the march a week later, under the slogan “Postponed March 8th – Enough with prohibitions, fear and violence! Free citizens, never obedient!”

On 1 October 2009 Women in Black urged citizens to take part in a civic solidarity action that took place on 2 October in Belgrade’s Pioneer Park, using the motto ‘Always disobedient.’ The action was the response to a police ban of a ‘Citizens’ Response to Violence’ protest. Women in Black assessed that the “selective and arbitrary implementation of the law” on public gatherings announces a “possible new state of emergency and intimidation of citizens, which confounds civil and pro-European orientation of Serbia. We do not agree to the bans, we move wherever we want and go wherever we want, this time to Pioneer Park.”

To mark the International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism in 2010, Women in Black and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia pointed out that “those who spread fascist tendencies are untouchable” in today’s Serbia “because of the political protection they enjoy,” reminding that the perpetrators of physical violence against minority groups remain unpunished. “Although the proceedings for banning the organisations ‘Obraz’ and ‘1389’ have started, after wild riots of clero-fascists on 10 October 2010, there is still no progress in these cases. When will the Constitutional Court decide on the prohibition of fascist and neo-Nazi organisation?”¹⁶¹

On 14 December 2011 The Constitutional Court of Serbia held a public hearing on a proposal to ban the clero-fascist organisation ‘Obraz’

161. “Serbia tolerates fascism”, e-novine, November 7th 2010, <http://www.e-novine.com/drustvo/42075-Srbiji-tolerie-faizam.html>.

because of its calls to hatred and discrimination and numerous violent actions, such as the attack during a New Year's reception for distributing presents at the Pentecostal Church, with screams of 'Kill, slaughter, so that there are no sectarians!' as well as the interruption of Women in Black street action, with shouts of 'Knife, Wire, Srebrenica' and 'Kill Shiptars [Albanians].' Mladen Obradović, Obraz's leader, said that the movement stands for "the civil and structural restoration of the Serbian nation on the grounds of Saint Sava's tradition."¹⁶²

In a statement on 30 September 2011, we strongly condemned the ban of the Gay Pride, which the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia put under the pretext of prohibiting all meetings during that weekend in Belgrade. "Regardless of the explanation, it is clear that, by doing this, the institutions of state ceded Belgrade to the Serbian fascists, whose performance we saw during the Parade in 2010. The banning of the Parade confirms that Serbian authorities, which call for sovereignty in the case of Kosovo, waived its right of sovereignty in Belgrade and the monopoly of power apparatus. Prohibiting the Parade, and the justification for the government ban, the government policies undressed Serbia – the government DOES NOT WANT TO allow the Pride, and the government DOES NOT WANT TO respect its own Constitution. We demand that the Serbian authorities respect the Constitution as well as the human rights of all citizens. We also demand that the Constitutional Court ban fascist organisations' work in harmony with the Constitution which it is supposed to protect."

In particular, we insist on the necessity of ending the impunity of crimes: "We request from the authorities to prevent the impunity that allows modern forms of fascism: clero-fascist tendencies, erasing memories of the fascist past, the institutional ghettoisation of Roma population, the rehabilitation of collaborators from Second World War, and calling for a lynch of the LGBT population and human rights defenders."¹⁶³

162. <http://www.vesti.rs/Organizacija-Obraz/Sud-raspravljao-o-zabrani-Obraza.html>.

163. Women in Black and Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Press Release,



Artistic-activist initiatives against fascism – “Solidarity against Fascism”

Politics of representation of erased topics – crimes committed in our name – which the dominant political and social public and cultural production did not want to know of, is the constant engagement of WiB, together with art associations: Dah Theater, Škart, Art Klinika, Group Spomenik/Monument, Četiri lica Omarske/Four faces of Omarska, and others. It is the policy of creating resistance – the voices, and action... Against the policies of evil – wars, nationalism, fascism, militarism... To illustrate this, we will mention a few artistic-activist actions carried out in recent years.

Anti-fascist march – Anti-fascism is my choice: On 9 November 2009, on the International Day of Action against fascism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. The march demanded the extradition of those indicted for war crimes, the prohibiting of clero-fascist organisations and the appraisal of the anti-fascist legacy of World War II. In front of Belgrade City Council, activists of Women in Black and Labris, and artists from Škart organized a performance. The police prevented the performance in front of the National Assembly, it was later forbidden to continue the march. We have violated the ban and, together with the activists of the initiative Antifascists in Action, we laid flowers on Terazije, at the memorial to anti-fascists hanged there during the World War II (ritual which we repeat every year on November 9th). Despite the ban, we continued the march, through the central city streets to the Academic Square in front of the Faculty of Philosophy, where a concert of the Roma group Muha Blackstazy took place. The action attracted approximately 500 participants.

Declaration on the continuation of the struggle against fascism: Activist-artistic campaign, on the occasion of 9 May 2011, the Day of Victory over Fascism and the Day of inmates in Bosnia and Herzegovina – against

November 9th 2009, Belgrade.

the negation and the denial of the existence of fascist concentration camps, and the impunity for war crimes committed in the nineties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and organized by the Republic of Serbia and the Republika Srpska. The Declaration calls for the recognition of anti-fascism as common values and the heritage of modern democratic society and is a reminder of the continuation of fascist policies in new circumstances: “With this Declaration we want to point to the Republic of Serbia’s current policy, which denies the war crimes and the existence of concentration camps during the nineties. This policy reverses a major achievement of the Second World War – the equality of all nations of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This policy of denial, negation and impunity is produced by national institutions, the extreme right-wing organisations and supporters’ groups, which encourage violence and hatred. The political rehabilitation of Draža Mihailović’s chetnik movement revises history of the Second World War, leading to the equalisation of fascism and anti-fascism.” The Declaration supports the initiative of Omarska concentration camp former detainees to build a Memorial Centre on the territory of the former concentration camp Omarska. Women in Black, together with artistic associations from Belgrade ‘Spomenik/Monument’ and ‘Četiri lica Omarske/Four faces of Omarska’ and hundreds of surviving prisoners of the Omarska concentration camp, visited the camp – a place of suffering of Bosniaks during the war in 1992. In the presence of about a thousand people from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina, a joint declaration on the occasion of International Day against Fascism – May 9th was inaugurated. On the same day, in Belgrade in Banjica Nazi camp (from WWII), Women in Black activists read the above-mentioned declaration.

Srebrenica threshold: With the construction of cultural memory, Women in Black want to prevent historical revisionism and contribute to the creation of an undeniable historical truth, based on facts. On the International Day against Fascism in 2011, Women in Black activists and artists from Art Klinika laid flowers at a monument to anti-fascists murdered in 1941, and organized a performance in Srebrenica’s Street,



in memory of the victims of the genocide in Srebrenica in 1995. The participants have crossed the wooden threshold with the number of those killed in the genocide – 8,372 persons – engraved. With the We cross the threshold symbolic statement “we wish to remind that the victims’ right to life and dignity depend on our memory and esteem. These can all too easily be lost, if we do not cross the threshold and fight against a closed existence and manipulated, unrefueled standpoints that inhibit us from thinking for ourselves. By crossing over the threshold of Srebrenica with one step we show that we have managed to escape from the static and the security of silence about crimes – and, also, that we confront crimes, which we bravely undertake in this hard reality...”¹⁶⁴

To summarise:¹⁶⁵

Anti-fascism is the value of the feminist and peace movements, anti-fascism is the legacy of the most progressive parts of Europe and all over the world, anti-fascism is the legacy of the former Yugoslavia, and this means that:

instead of relativisation of anti-fascism – equalisation of the fascists and quislings with anti-fascists, and the elimination of memory of anti-fascist legacy – we must rehabilitate the values of anti-fascism;

Those indicted for war crimes must be extradited to the Hague tribunal – this is not only an obligation of the State under international law, it is not only an obligation under the Law on Cooperation with the Hague tribunal, it is primarily the obligation towards the victims of crimes committed in our name, the respect of the dignity of victims, the creation of a climate of trust, good neighbourly relations and stability in Serbia and throughout the region (it is one of the few of our demands that has, at least formally, fulfilled – obviously under pressure of the international community and only out of pragmatic motives);

164. www.bezbednost.org/files/podlistak_zene_mir_bezbednost_3_2011.pdf

165. November 9th, Day in Memory of the Victims of Fascism and Anti-Semitism, WiB press release.

The denial of the genocide in Srebrenica, as well as the denial of the Holocaust in World War II must be declared a crime;

All manifestations of neo-Nazi or fascist organisations and associations, as well as the use of fascist and neo-Nazi symbols and associations must be prohibited;

All publications that incite hatred and intolerance (such as The Protocol of the Elders of the Zion) must be prohibited;

All organisations and associations that violate or call for violation of guaranteed human and minority rights, and incite or encourage inequality, hatred and intolerance based on racial, ethnic, religious, sexual or other affiliation must be banned.

The law on Prohibition of Racial and Religious Discrimination in Serbia sanctions such acts. Therefore, to do so would not be prohibition but law enforcement. Democratic principles of freedom should not apply for such offenses, because they violate the freedom of others – because of that fact, the application of laws is the state’s obligation. Acts that promote fascism and hatred and threaten the rights and freedoms of others must not be tolerated in the name of freedom of thought and speech, because it is not just a different opinion, it is a call for lynch and elimination. “There is no clash of civilisations. The conflict in the world today is between fascists and antifascists” said our political friend from Algeria, Marieme Helie-Lucas, calling for internationalist solidarity, which “transcends national, ethnic and religious boundaries.”¹⁶⁶

166. Helie-Lucas, Marieme, *Fundamentalisms today – feminist and democratic responses*, Women in Black and Women and society, Sarajevo, 2008, page 100



Where do feminism steers today?

Experience of feminists on the territory of ex Yugoslavia show similarities and differences compared with the experiences of Latin American world.

First, in the countries of Latin America there is a longer tradition of societal movements, autonomous organizations of feminist movement, then it is a case on the territory of ex Yugoslavia and secondly, this part of the world is kind of `avanguard-precursor` of what will happen in other places, as well. Numerous political earthquakes in the second part of XX-ieth century, have occurred there first, military dictatorships, mass political repression, but also the resistance. The jolt of new-liberal capitalism came earlier (since the 80-ies of the past century) and the negative results of it strongly influenced societal movements, including the feminist one. At the same time, in this part of the world were constructed first alternatives to new-liberal capitalism (social forums, wide social movements, leftist regimes, ect).

In the organization of *Women in Black* we held a series of panel discussions, inspired by public debate of the same name published in above mentioned feminist magazine `Mujer publica-revista discusion feminista` (Public woman-magazine for feminist discussion) which covers the whole Latin America world and a big part of USA. We provide you with the most important parts of those debates, during which participants have spoken upon the same questions as those in the above mentioned debate.

In those debates, which were organized during meetings of Women in Black or as separate events, participated in whole around thirty panelists from the countries of ex Yugoslavia, mostly from Serbia where, all the debates were organized, but also in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo and Macedonia, as well as feminist friends of ours from



Greece and Spain. Except those panelists, in those debates were involved twenty five women (as well as smaller number of men) who attended above mentioned meetings on which the debates were organized.

Public debates were held in certain cities:

Vrdnik/Vojvodina: 4th and 5th of June, 2010: within working meeting of *Women in Black* of Serbia, organized by *Women in Black*, Belgrade. In this debate were involved: *Bojana Genov* (Croatian Women Network), *Ljiljana Živković* (Women group Mali Lošinj/Croatia), *Nevena Kostić* (Leskovac) and other activists of *Women in Black* Network, in whole 30 of them from 10 cities of Serbia, two from Croatia and one activist from Greece (Athens).

Velika Plana, 28th of August, 2010: within the meeting of *Women in Black* Network of Serbia.

In this discussion were involved: *Ljupka Kovačević* (psychologist, Anima activist, from Kotor, Montenegro), *Nuna Zvizdić* (economist, activist of Women to Women, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Ervina Dabižinović* (psychologist, activists of Anima, Kotor, Montenegro), *Adriana Zaharijević* (philosopher, Women Studies and Women in Black, Belgrade), *Jelena Višnjić*, (sociologist, activist of Voice of difference, Belgrade), *Lino Veljak* (philosopher, Zagreb, Croatia) and *Mireya Forel* (historian, activist of Women in Black from Sevilla, Spain). A moderator of this debate was Staša Zajović.

On a Network meeting, as well as during this debate, 54 activists were involved, from all over Serbia, as well as from Sarajevo/Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Kotor and Pljevlja/Montenegro (3), Croatia (1) and Spain (1).



Novi Sad, 1st of November, 2010: dr *Svenka Savić* (psycholinguist), *Jovanka Zlatković* (journalist), *Silvia Dražić* (philosopher from Novi Sad), *Slavica Stojanović* (philologist from Belgrade), *Mirjana Mirosavljević* (activist from Belgrade), *Danica Todorov* (Ombudman from Novi Sad). Roundtable was held on the Art Clinics, organized by Women in Black and Women Studies from Novi Sad, and it was attended by thirty persons.

Kruševac, 21st of June, 2011: panelists were Network activists: *Jelena Memet* (designer and activist) and *Slavica Jakovljević* (writer and activist), *Vesna Vesić* (official of Democratic Party-Vice President Kruševac City Assembly), Peđa (student, activist), Melanija Lojpur (philosopher, activist), *Marija Perković* (Novi Sad). The debate was held in the premises of Kruševac City Assembly, attended by thirty persons.

Vrnjačka Banja, Women in Black Serbian Network meeting: panelists were Women in Black Serbian Network members, and in whole were present around sixty persons from twenty towns of Serbia and three activists of Montenegro.

Belgrade, 7th of October, 2011: roundtable discussion on: mutual reflection on feminist-pacifist activism on the territory of ex Yugoslavia.

Panel discussion: *Biba Momčinović* (activist from Poreč, Croatia), *Ljupka Kovačević* (Kotor, Montenegro), *Tenta Čučkova* (Macedonia), *Selma Hadžihalilović* (Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Igo Rogova* (Women`s Network Kosovo, Priština/Kosovo), *Slavica Stojanović* (Women in Black, Reconstruction Women`s Fund, Belgrade, Serbia).

Is there, to your opinion feminist movement in your country/ region and which are its fundamental characteristics?

Feminist movement in the states of former Yugoslavia was always directly connected with antiwar activism:

In the antiwar movement of **Serbia** women were the most involved. Even today, we are on the same platform made by feminists, and it is that we are against war, nationalism, rasizm, discrimination and violence over women.

In **Kosovo** we were fighting as much as we could. For example, we get out on the street and around us approximately five thousand of snipers. We managed to reveal the truth of what is happening for real.

For me, Women in Black were a window to the world, because then I did not have a passport, police took it from me, because of my visit to Albania, as it was a crime. I was an activist at that time, but did not call myself a feminist. I used to work in the villages with my sister, teaching women to read and write. And I did not do it because I was a feminist but because I wanted to help my people in the times of oppression during Milošević's regime. Lepa used to give me books and by time I became a feminist. But, also a peacekeeper, thanks to all those meetings with *Women in Black*. I thought everybody thinks the same way of Albanians and Kosovo, and that they all hate Albanians, but when I met you, and women from Bosnia and Herzegovina, we said that we will cross the border, too. It helped me even after the war. We decided to lend our hands to Serbian women of Kosovo and create organization together. Peace school of Women in Black helped us to do it.

In **Croatia** feminists expressed their resistance to war, nationalism, militarism, excluding of others and it connected us. I am of those women who were users of good services of other feminist and women who started



dealing with civil engagement since the times of former Yugoslavia. For me important fact was that women organized themselves related to rape and there were organizations devoted to other activities, as well. And only women, human rights organizations and peace organizations produced another kind of speech and different action, in which I could of seen myself and persisted to this very day.

In **Montenegro** in the middle of nineties contacts have been established and we received strong support by the side of women in the region, by the side of Women in Black, and so women from Montenegro organized themselves in small groups, which opposed the war, nationalism, and against impunity.

In **Macedonia** women organizations resisted by the beginning of the nineties and even today, to overgrowing nationalism and deterrence, together with students, ecological groups, organizations for human rights, minority groups.

Feminist movement exists in Serbia and within there are various strategies: feminism its not based only on politics of women rights, but is formed today on politics of differences-solidarity with all who are under oppression. We live in the society with continuity of violence, so that feminism regenerates itself again, but its vital despite to all kinds of jeopardy. The greatest of all threats is the institutionalisation of feminism, because great part of it absorbed institutions. Institutions included in the policy of gender equality part of feminist demands, pressed by European Union, but in fact they have marginalised the role and the history of women organizations who were creating those spaces of freedom. Declarative feminism which creates feminocracy is a great danger for feminist strategy. This kind of institutionalisation of feminism, is actually the loss of its strenght. For me feminism is an intervention in the context, and I connect it to *Women in Black*, Center for Women Studies, Labris,

Voice of difference. These are independent, autonomous groups which still do stand against the state, review their positions, do not give up of their autonomy. Therefore, feminist movement exists.

– *As long as there are women who declare themselves as feminists, there will be feminism too:* no matter the differences between us. Feminist discussion is an essence. We ask ourselves based on what then women who are different and belong to different ideologies are trying all the time to stick together and identify themselves as feminists?

– *Feminist movement exists, but there is not enough women:* feminist movement in Serbia reacts too slow on some of the questions, on fascism and other tendencies and movements. On the other side, we do try to rectify all the injustice, but there is a lack of women.

– *Serbian feminist movement do not react in certain situations:* for example, when the government gave its proposal, in the March of 2011. to reduce number of women deputies, we did not react to it. For us who strive for gender equality it was a slap in the face of feminist movement.

– *Feminism in Serbia is often stigmatized:* the problem is lack of education, women do not have the place to learn what feminism is, because they are afraid to be stigmatized. Women are insecure, and therefore it is not clear to them what is going on within feminist movement.

– *Feminist movement is not centralized, it is connected with the values and principles, and not with projects:* there is a movement directed toward societal rebel in the context we live in, it happens out of Belgrade, too, more or less, and women are connected through values, clear political attitudes, and not project tasks. That`s why we are considered to be the extreme ones.

– *Feminism in Serbia went in the wrong direction:* values which I ascribe to feminism, are severely tested, especially since 2000 and afterwards. There are numerous women organizations dealing with various issues, and I do not know if it is a movement or not. Incest Trauma Center values almost are not recognizable any more within values of women



NGO's, but much more within human rights organizations, first of all Helsinki Committee on human rights. The only organization I feel really close to us are *Women in Black*. In the middle of professionalization we should not forget that we are working within certain societal-political context. We can be experts, but we were in the country which fought the war, where we dally the responsibility. During nineties we all could of speak of women NGO's, we could of been related, but since 2000, Serbian state proclaimed partnership with NGO's.

I am worried because we all have excepted feminism as a concept of different power. It seems to me that now we have a phenomena of powerful women within the movement. To be closer to certain centers of power, to be state within the state or state above the state.

– *Feminist theory should be crucial for activism-as kind of activism:* the subject of my dealing is theory, but I do consider myself as activist, because the theory is crucial for feminism. My idea was to talk of significance of feminist theory and its 'efficiency'. As some women are still dreaming within theory, but have not done much through activism. If we would make fast checksum of feminism, we would see the growth of the influence of theory. Meaning, theory have created an ambient for us. However, there is no movement, only feminist initiatives. It is our reality. Criticism of the language, body as a cultural stereotype, starts from the theory, though, it seems from the perspective of activism, that theory is irrelevant.

Feminist movement does not exists in Bosnia and Herzegovina- there are some feminist initiatives: in the moment when we develop awareness of feminism, of what means to be one, gender policies appear over night. They put us in those frames and convince us it is the only valid frame, within which we could define and recognize women human rights, activities and actions in which women are active. Why did I walked in, in the world of feminism? Due to my languor for myself, because it introduces gender policies in my everyday life and women's lives too,



due to rebel it creates in my own head. And that is why I stay in it for those various practices.

In Montenegro there is no feminist movement, but women organizations do create it: through joint efforts. There are certain endeavours of women in Montenegro to support feminism. But, what exists for real is antifeminism in any form and at any place. Instead of feminism, we got institutional mechanisms, on the level of state, which are not working for women.

It is a great problem that academics do not want to stand up for feminist theory on the University. Women are invisible, and are those who are the most crisis-ridden part of the population, their labour rights are limited. There is just a few feminist activists, though problems are numerous.

Feminist movement in Croatia exist formally: if we can include in feminist movement women organizations network, which declare to be as those based on feminist principles, and in fact are transmission of the state bodies for gender equality. Croatia follows the UN and EU efforts through mechanisms of gender equality, Croatia has developed feminist movement in accordance with the European and world criteria. But, feminist movement can not be reduced on UNIFEM criteria or similar to them, so I do consider that in Croatia there are certain elements of feminist movement.

Beside feminist activists from Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in one of the debates was involved as well Mireya Forel, Women in Black of Sevilla activist, whose attitudes we separately transfer here to you:

Feminism will exist always, as long as patriarchy does: there are periods when a small number of women considers themselves feminists, periods of aggression and attacks on feminists, loss of orientation by the



side of feminists, it is part of life in many countries. Today, feminist movement is facing serious problems, and the greatest are those connected to institutional/state feminism. They foist us as feminism what they call within the institutions gender perspective. The policies of gender equality matched the institutionalization of feminism through the policies of gender equality/formal equality. We do not reject all of this. However, the gender equality policies have disabled women almost everywhere to become subjects and they treated them mostly as objects, reducing them to victims and only...Gender equality policies took them the status of those who decide, who are protagonists and are involved in crucial social changes. It is hard for young women and men to accept feminism as a significant achievement. For them it is only a gender equality policy and incurious. They do not know it as a movement, but as an institutionalized gender equality. Such a kind of policy is not friendly toward us, takes from us the significance we possess, makes meaningless what we are doing. But, they have made a mistake in this certain point, they have forgotten that we as feminists and antimilitarists question everything, entering the essence of power. They do not want to see it. Our task as feminists and antimilitarists is not only to fight against some of the manifestations of discrimination, against which we have to fight, but against the power structure itself.

What kind of influence NGO`s have on the whole civil society, on feminist movement/feminist initiatives, in all the countries of the former Yugoslavia?

The influence of NGO`s is negative on the whole civil society, on feminist movement or feminist initiatives, in all the countries of the former Yugoslavia-it is manifested in different ways:

NGO-isation of feminist movement-mainstreaming-enters the strife within feminist movement: co-optation of feminist activists, which considers depolitization of all the issues. Without comprehension

and analysis of a wider political and societal context, women NGO's are reduced on the survival of the group, as an aim itself, without any connection with strengthening of the movement, and only.

By the beginning of the war in our country (Croatia) we had one more division: on so called state and antistate organizations. When the state formed its own institutional mechanisms, as the office for gender equality, Ombudsman, ect. Those institutions were weak, did not know what to do, so they properly hitched feminists who were working out the workshops for them, wrote programs and wholeheartedly deleted their principles. We got strong governmental feminists and it is very bad.

I took part in the work of one of the national policies body, for gender equality. It was nice to get a honorarium for it, for travel expenses, the promotion was in Sheraton hotel. And women like those things. Who does not? Everybody wanted to be involved in those bodies. When I saw that nothing of those things I consider crucial, will not enter in this policy, I convened a press conference. I told this policy is bad, we are out of it, and we do consider it is a huge omission of the state. And it was a befall between us. We all had a fight among ourselves. One half stood up for the side of Head Officer, and the others supported me. So we divided in two. But, I do think it is inevitable and it is not so horrible...

Serbian state feminism trend and the NGO-isation influence on the loss of feminist movement: we got thousands of strategic planning, evaluations, specifications, diversifications, but no cohesion, what is needed for the movement. So, what we talk now is the need to talk about the movement. Recent selection of Commissioner for gender equality in Serbia, which was imposed by the side of the state, and unfortunately, NGO's have accepted (except the rare exceptions among which were Women in Black), is a prove of the loss of autonomy of the civil society. State has entered its apple of discord, through its standards and mechanisms. These are the traps in which they toss all of us, we have to talk upon this matter calmly, we must not allow them to tear us apart...

NGO's are now mostly state service: it is obvious on the terrain. Now



they look for the quality of the service of the NGO's. And women NGO's repeat too that they do not deal with politics, so that state can keep on using them in the future. Now donators as well as the state itself limit our methods, initiatives, and values. There is a danger that only organizations which are service of the state, will prevail, will hold on, because they do not have any criticism toward the state. Besides it, NGO's are the cheap state service, they cost the state less than its own bureaucrats, and work out whatever they are asked to. I got to admit with regret, because I do belong to NGO, only when they will be out of state money, and partnership with the state, some important things will happen for civil society. But this will happen out of NGO.

Partnership with the state influences with the loss of the autonomy of civil society organizations: NGO's become obedient, passive and defensive, striving to remain close to the legal and political centers of power in order to preserve newly acquired position.

In the NGO's due to war circumstances, traumas, there was certain amount of money, so people entered in order to resolve their financial problems. There is a competition for money and glory. And therefore we have marking one, same date, ten times. There is no autonomous civil society in Croatia, nor it can be critical toward the state, by which it is financially supported. State proclaimed us as partners and everybody wants to take part in it!

In Serbia state engrains the discord, enforces retro tendencies and corruption. In accordance with international standards, Serbia introduced budget line-BL 481, grants to NGO's. Individuals get money from this budget, as well as political parties, and religious communities, even clerofascist organizations...

Those organizations who have critical attitude, are more and more marginalized: they are more and more in jeopardy, and the state considers that civil society should not exist, therefore what exists already, should be destroyed.

Feminist groups and civil society organizations who have critical attitude toward state, fascism, racism...will not be prohibited by law, but the regime will do everything so that they are unaccepted even more, by the side of the society. Regime will do it in various ways: through media blockade, indirect and sophisticated demonization, minimizing all the achievements reached so far, founding NGO`s which deal with human rights protection but are obedient and loyal to regime...

NGO`s have become solution of the existence for many people, space for mutual friction, quarrels, and fights for projects: it is very hard to work for NGO`s or to join any of feminist organizations, because there is a jealousy regarding the projects. Those groups are mostly organized not for the reason of common fight for certain issues, but for one-time use. For the need of parties, state, ministries...

By fulfilment of so called European standards, they actually divide civil society on the obedient and disobedient organizations: it is the practice not only of ours, but, unfortunately of the international institutions, too. They entry the strife instead of solidarity, impose the issues, questions with which civil society has to deal...By the beginning of nineties, all of us from ex Yugoslavia behaved in an inferior manner, so we were learning new words, great `knowledge`. They thought us what are the projects ect. Short, instant story. All this, including the whole transition process, was conducted within new liberal frame, meaning patriarchal competition and market principle.

Donors impose issues with which NGO`s should deal: foreign grants are coming from abroad only in case of payroll ideas, which influence negatively the organizations. Issues are changing on annual level. For example, in some of the periods they potentiate intercultural dialogue, then violence over women...and NGO`s revise their program on the principle `she played one summer, only`.

Bureaucratization of the NGO`s by the side of the state and donors: the pressure from the side of the state, increased, so each of them had to function as a small enterprise. They had to have an accountant, to know



this, to know that. The demands accumulate. Though, the pressure on the state by the side of European Union is pretty strong, but the problem will be, if we enter and when we enter European Union, when this pressure stops. Therefore, numerous changes are waiting on us. Until now, we managed to skip all of these barriers. We are lucky, because women who are coming to us have something to provide us with, also, not to take from us, only.

More and more we hear that it is not so important what kind of seminar it was, but it is important to write the report, the form is crucial, the fine evaluation, and financial cover, in order to satisfy the donors. It does not matter what we acquired.

The policy of international help is very often conditioned with the cooperation with the state, instead of solidarity and cohesion, intensifies rivalry among the NGO's which loose autonomous position toward the state: donors have the expectations of NGO's cooperation with the officials of the authorities, and similar commissions, and that kind of organizations have certain advantages.

You can not get the project unless you are cooperating with the regime, which produces anti-democracy. European Union suggests bad things, and it is demanded from the organization through projects applications. NGO's are not traitors any more, but people with very good appanage. In this way they are turned into enemies once more, and citizens are against them. NGO's which are autonomous are devastated, marginalized on all of the levels. Anima, which is autonomous, is one of the rare organizations which have credibility in Montenegro, which is supportive and in solidarity, but at the same time is under the pressure and threats. They threat to activists, destroy their property. State institutions establish their own NGO's.

Numerous international institutions enforce patriarchal power: in Kosovo there is a UN structure called UNMIK. When we translate it into Albanian language it means enemy. They were the obstacle, and they came with this patriarchal model in Kosovo.

But, we worked a lot and set mechanisms. Those mechanisms function even today. Our President is a woman and the Prime minister announced for the first time they will work on gender equality. If there are mechanisms, it does not mean that they are implemented, because everywhere in Kosovo women are unemployed and there is a high degree of domestic violence.

It is revealed on which bases UN is situated. When they are with their back to the wall, they admit that they are state officials. Otherwise, they are summit of states. They have demanded from us in Serbia, to assist to the state and make the report regarding the position of women's human rights. They wanted the same group of women for the official and for the shadow report. It happened too, with the 1325 Resolution. They left us burden of undone work, system is corrupted, and our position is complicated. Even the Ombudsman speaks of stamping laws...

Hana Arent also said that we can not be too optimistically inclined, but we should not be desperate either. Virginia Woolf spoke on this as well. We can not allow this strong feminist voice to crack down at any point.

Both state and parties, as well as donors are interested to regulate and control NGO sector: the money comes from abroad, and the same people from which money is coming from want to cooperate with us, only if we cooperate with the structure of the authorities.

In this kind of situation feminist organizations are in difficulties, because they do not want to cooperate with the authorities, especially not with the parties. In Serbia there are more than twenty thousand of NGO's. But, real civil society does not exist. It is not only the question of undermining by the side of the state, but there is also submission to donors. Real civil initiative is not coming out from the project. As long as someone pays NGO's, no matter who it is, they will be subordinated. When we talk of credibility among citizens, we should say that great part of NGO's live parallel life, beside the others, ordinary people. They operate as state enterprises, they got they own consultants, luxury



premises and provide good sinecure. And as long as it is so, we will not restore our credibility.

The influence of NGO-isation is both positive and negative at the same time: it is positive because they enabled women to work directly on the terrain, to promote initiatives, which would not be started by the side of the state, to raise awareness regarding certain issued, educate, research, lobby for the laws important for women, build capacities, employ women. Besides that, some women survive thanks to NGO's, and they enrich people with knowledge which would not be provided by the state or institutions. It was positive indeed. However, the positive side used to happen in the beginning.

Now we have another phase in which prevail negative elements: as an NGO you got to respect directive principles, which are limiting, and there are more and more formal organizations. We loose the connection with women everyday problems on the terrain.

Which is the influence of political parties, especially women within, on feminist movement?

NGO activists do feel betrayed by the women from political parties, but also by the side of women form the academic community: in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1998., activists have conquered the change of the election law, with which it has to be now 30% of women on all the lists of candidates, and in all Parliaments. It was a victory, because we worked upon this thoroughly. For me, it is our finest common action, cohesion and unity of women from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Commitment and unity resulted with victory. But, immediately after the elections women from political parties divided from us as activists. We did not find at least one of the problems where we could share the same attitude. Academic scene was not connected with the activists, who were always alone, but women from the parties and academic women, used to take from them whatever they needed, using activist groups. Today, we got institutional mechanisms established, in the local community as well as in the state.

Three thousand persons are employed there. For them feminism and gender equality are `women`s work`.

The word gender mainstreaming i really hate and that is the reason why I do not deal with violence over women.

Political parties reject feminism as the idea as well as the practice itself: parties do not consider feminist movement as their natural partners, but as their opponents. In the parties everything is messed up: conservative parties got social components within their program, and some leftist parties have rigid attitudes. Today, we are even losing women quota within the election laws, but there are no political institutions either where some of the attitudes would be created...

Laws in favour of women are the condign of political parties: if there were no Democratic Party today we would not have the law on domestic violence, we would not have foster care. We got it thanks to Democratic Party. We made the law on gender equality. Besides, we use gender-sensitive language. New statute of G17+ (political party), was written with gender-sensitive language, we attended seminars on gender equality. It is a positive thing that pro-democratic parties got their own women networks, but often those women forums are established only because somebody in the world said they should have it.

Political parties establish their own NGO network: this is a smokescreen of the state to take over funding and discredit autonomous NGO`s by establishing numerous NGO`s of their own: almost all of the parties have their own NGO`s. For example, in Novi Sad, Vojvodina, we got organizations which have their own representatives in the institutions as ex presidents, counsellors of NGO`s. The reason of the conflict are donations. Each of the parties has its own NGO. I can assure you, because I used to be in the party too, until 2004.

All over Serbia Democratic Party establishes NGO`s and sign up for the contest which were dedicated by local, provincial or republic authorities for civil society. From it, activities of the parties are largely funded, as well as some other activities.



Feminists should stick in solidarity with women involved in politics: we have to inform them. I do not consider institutionalisation of feminism as dangerous.

Official of the parties relinquished their base: I am an activist of League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, but I am not a functionary. There women of ours within the institutions, and I am sorry for it. They were fine activists, feminists, but they relinquished their base.

What is the output of the entry of women in the politics, as institutional mechanisms of equal opportunities, quotes, senates, National Action Plans ect, and their impact on the status of women?

Policies of gender equality are distanced of the real problems of women: through the institutional mechanisms of gender equality we have women who only declaratively conduct the policy of gender equality in the way we as women organizations criticize, and therefore we are demonized and we loose the race. Our voice is either demonized or minimized.

In accordance with this, the state will not provide you with any grant for your project, and there is the policy of donors saying you have to cooperate with the state. We can not cooperate with the government that has not changed within the past twenty years, there was no lustration, which is still unpunished for being involved in the war and for what they were doing to women, for the last twenty years in Montenegro.

Women from women organizations put a lot of effort so the National Action Plans for gender equality is adopted. Only due to responsibility of the state its adoption was late three years, and it was adopted secretly and the actions demanded by it are still not conducted, in accordance with our information, and we do not have the information it is happening at all. What are real problems of women, what should be totally vivid as poverty, lack from the documentation of the Assembly. We can not gaze out of this invisibility.

In all the mechanisms of gender equality dominates party profile: I got the impression that we live in two different realities: the one is when we are with Women in Black and Peščanik, it is solidarity, help, protection of minorities. On the other side, we have contacts with the people from our high schools, student times, who are outraged when they hear feminism. I consider institutionalisation of feminism as a great problem, because among all of those mechanisms, dominates party profile.

Institutional mechanisms of gender equality and the fulfilment of the formal standards does not decrease violence over women, they baffle and suffocate feminist/pacifist initiatives:

Euro-Atlantic integrations and European ones became an imperative in the public discourse, but in the essence, except the greater militarization of the society, societal differentiation, collapse of the weak, already existing initiatives, higher degree of repression and human freedoms oppression by the side of the state, is vivid, supported by the means of international organizations. Women feminist movement failed, as underbuilt, to resist societal reality and all the kinds of oppression over women in Montenegro. Establishing institutional and legal frame seems has taken all of the power of the authentic women actions. And so the voice of women in Montenegro is more diffuse and quieter. Women are under a huge pressure, especially those who speak as feminists, and there is a danger that even those small improvements in resisting the oppression over women, will be suppressed.

Discrimination of women continues, repression over women is institutionalised, and followed by even greater street violence over women. Feminist and pacifist ideas maintain small number of women who are active since the first days, but there is no action or organization in those days of crisis, so we raise the question should we enforce the organization and integrate those individual voices, or let them be carried through civic initiatives.



It is obvious there is a conflict between feminist activists and women within institutions: this is a debate I have realised as the attack on women within institutions. I am the part of the institution. There are numerous sectors we should work upon in order to improve everyday life of women and men. To my opinion feminism should always be awake and follow the situation. But, is it possible to do anything through institutional or evolutive way, or we do need a revolution?

Is there a generation gap and due to all kind of differences, between women within the feminist movement?

Generation do not divide us apart, we are on the same political path: I fear of another generation power-exclusion of younger ones. There are few young women. We are the spring of the continuity of other women: crossing the internal and external borders. For our generation it is crucial to recognize historical laminations, but to deliberate ourselves of the schism within feminist movement, which was not personal but the political one. Female intervention was swallowed by the state.

Schism between the activists and theorists is characteristic question of XXI century: It is a merit of our time. I entered the space of feminism with the belief it is out of hierarchy, devoid of power relations, devoid of limitations based on the age. This space is not so clear. Nowadays generation has continuity of conflicts and arguable issues, in whose names we are speaking, in which feminism we do speak up, when we pronounce this word. If you got the strenght to ask yourself, to define yourself as a feminist, you have already passed half of the way. I think there is nothing connecting me with my ancesstress, with those who revealed the truth, except this insatiable desire for freedom and nothing more. Strategies, theoretic frame, ways n which we have treated different questions, like the issue of abortion and violence, on which we have remained silent for a very long time. The only thing which connects us is a dissatisfaction.



There is a gap between young and old feminists: our generation got a lot as a finished product, as tradition is, which we did not create by ourselves, but also a heavy tasks and reviews. I do feel the gap-class, gender, ethnic, religious, generational and sexual one...The deepest point is to reassess the power, because the system breaks us, but we have to reconnect ourselves, find alliances with the women who are close to us...

Women solidarity is to listen, hear and understand the others.

Which is the role of men within feminist movement? Could we name one of the feminist attitudes-that feminism is only for women, to be surpassed?

On this question have responded mostly men, no matter if they are active within the movement or just are close to us.

Feminist movement can join those men who are fighting for the abolition of patriarchal power, and whose victims are first of all women. They can be part of feminist organizations.

Feminist movement and theory depend on the change in mindset, both of women as well as men: this path is long, painful and slow and without change in mindset of men will be even slower. It is a constant fight. Feminism can be reduced to biologism, without cultural or historical plane. Feminism must not turn to dogma, therefore we have to review all the time main factors within the movement, theory and strategy. We are all in the same system of manipulation in which freedom can be something ostensible. Constant auto-reflection of feminist theory is necessary.

With which questions feminism should deal with today? Working on the terrain is the right thing: unemployment of women is very high, that is why various kinds of violence still survive. We wonder what kind of destiny this movement has if we got problems all the time. Feminism



should not be the law. It has to flow through your veins, there should be every kind of criticism.

We should deal with social issues: poverty, uncertainty, we should go a bit through Serbia and see how women really live...

We should return to feminism in the region: Nuna said we have created monsters within the institutions, when she mentioned mechanisms for gender equality. So, we should return to feminism in the region...

Feminists have to fight against all kinds of nationalisms: nationalisms are great problem so we have to work on interethnic dialogue and to respect the rights of the minorities and religions.

It is necessary to discuss and develop reflection constantly: we do not have enough time, we have so many obligations, everything is reduced on our sitting between four walls and writing the reports. We forget to keep the space for the reflection. It is very important.

How do you see feminism in the near future?

During this discussion the participants paid the most of their attention to their need to create new knowledge together, cherish feminist ethics of responsibility, care, solidarity...

To discuss openly about problems-to work together in solidarity: if we can find one common thing then lets gather around it. Not only with feminist but also with artistic groups. Solidarity is very important. We can always find those small things we could cooperate upon.

When the disruption exists we have to build our own internal mechanisms of democratic dialogue and clear the problems within NGO`s. When it does not happen, because there is always a lack of time and there is burn-out too, there will always be individuals who will try to find help out of NGO`s. To find the answers with government. We know, though, the government will not provide help, it is not in its interest, so we should not loose our people, who are close and loyal to us,

and therefore marginalized by the side of the government. It is double marginalization, then. And it is horrible when happens. It means, we have to build all those mechanisms of feminist dialogue and solidarity, we insist upon, talk about, because they are binding, too.

We have to democratize the knowledge all the time: we have to think over all the time and find methods which assure relations of equality between us and target groups, those who use our educational programs, contents. Working all the time upon this is a big challenge...

To discomfort the state all the time: we have to demand even the impossible, demand all the time, it has to be a principle of all of us. Our role is to be annoying continually...

To provide accounts at each other: There is a big danger that NGO`s will become too bureaucratic, through NGO-isation, due to demands we receive and we have to be aware of it. We have to provide accounts at each other, among us who cooperate closely, first of all and then come the donors.

We have to support each other: when we start an initiative we have to demand others to join us too, because the state is not our mother and protector but our tyrant...

To develop together feminist codex of honour: it will be our model of responsibility, to fulfill a given word, our mutual promises. To count on each other is of great significance.

To preserve political, societal, moral credibility: recently on a meeting in Montenegro, (organized by KTK), the best workshop which was not on the agenda, was the one when we were giving to each other recognition, we who are the oldest feminist activists from the former Yugoslavia, provided each other with small presents, symbolic ones. That was new for all those who are not coming from feminist world or belong to `state feminism.`

All of this was happening in a luxury hotel, which is in moral, political and emotional sense totally unacceptable, and bring me and my



friends in a humiliating position, because we do live in a very modest conditions, we work with poor women...You see, I got an old, very old haversack, totally ripped apart, and really felt very bad and miserable when a bellboy started taking it out, I felt miserable in comparison with the ambient. I told him, I'll take it myself. It was embarrassing. Simply, I did not belong to all that. And, on the other side, it was a new experience... (Nevena Kostić).

*To reward each other is a significant part of feminist policy:*we should not only criticise ourselves all the time and only. Svenka Savić says that mutual support can be seen even if we do or do not quote each other, and not only Judith Butler...Biljana Kovačević-Vučo left us this as one of the most important legacies of hers, she used to keep the hope warm, was a kind of `cohesion glue`, dynamic, political and personal between us and so now we have to keep it warm all the time. With Biljana we were creating all the time symbolic, political capital...

Tamara Kaliterna

Ours and „their” perpetrators

The past is the reality of Serbia

Appeals to state and publicity

Ever since its inception, *Women in Black* has used statements as a way of communication in order to influence relevant decisions of the government, institutions, groups or individuals. The statements are at the same time documents for media, they remain in the archive of non-acceptance and protest, they are transmitters of good vibrations in the Western Balkans. Statements are a means of communication with unknown recipients, with uncertain reactions as well as uncertain effect, but the motivation of the authors statement are undeniable – to allege, to shout, not to withhold, to inform, to indicate, to remind, to criticize – in order to change bad practice and its protagonists.

Statements contribute to more efficient communication of revealing and resolving the conflict. Recipients of the statements often have different attitudes, of the one which is advocated in the statements itself, but when *Women in Black* corroborate their views with facts, it may prompt others to reassess their rigid attitudes, to complement their knowledge about certain phenomena, or to realise that the situation is not so desperate as it seems because there is a solution offered in the statement.

Statements of *Women in Black* are either separate, or signed in cooperation with Serbian or NGO's from the region.

Political statements range from mass demonstrations to wearing badges with a political slogan, which is also experienced in *Women in Black* practice. Their statements are, at the same time, their manifesto.



Just like the `theme` of a piece of music, *Women in Black* statements are evocative and contain a moral attitude. In this case, the moral attitude is a civilization norm applicable to individuals and groups impersonated in the society and the state.

The history of ex Social Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in the last decade of XX century was stamped by wars, lies and destruction. Women in Black has never given up the message and the conviction that the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo was conceived and produced in Belgrade.

This is also true of the crimes against those who are `different` within Serbia – national minorities, political opponents, groups of different sexual orientation, believers who do not belong to Serbian Orthodox Church, etc.

Some of the major protagonists of the wars 1991–1999 were reached by the justice of Hague and those who are less striking were processed by the regional courts. Many of them will never be punished. What is constant about Women in Black attitude toward the indicted and those sentenced for war crimes is `Not in our name` and `Justice for the victims – punishment for the perpetrators`. It is not only the moral attitude of Women in Black, but their message to the society to dissociate from the crimes, to relieve the citizens of collective guilt and to serve justice, in order to open the road for reconciliation in the region.

However, on the institutional level, Serbia prefers impunity. Or, at best, indifference. Serbian society needs the truth, then justice and at the end catharsis, which is a precondition for a `healthy society` of Serbia which will coexist with its neighbors, aware of their guilt, and therefore of their responsibility.

In this text I will dwell on statements after the changes (5th of October, 2000), on the period of great hopes and unfulfilled expectations, which will be shown through those appeals and statements. Those statements, as I have said already, some moral and political attitudes are repeated:

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- **Serbia: safe house for war crime perpetrators, which they leave only under international pressure,**
 - **In Serbia, crime is worthwhile, and the perpetrators are awarded,**
 - **Serbia: a country of sad farewells with war crime perpetrators and a warm welcome to war crime perpetrators,**
 - **In Serbia, a reconciliation without responsibility is the actual model: all this is a function of coalition agreements and trade,**
 - **In Serbia, we have a lopsided moral order and system of values: war crime perpetrators are proclaimed as victims and the victims as perpetrators,**
 - **In Serbia Women in Black repeat constantly: `Not in our name, not with our money` and they demand: `Justice for the victims and punishment for the perpetrators`...**

The arrest of Ratko Mladić, who was indicted for the Genocide in May of 2011, is just the beginning of the end of what *Women in Black* demanded since the Tribunal in the Hague started to work, in 1993 – the impunity of for war crime perpetrators and war crimes, makes a society and all its citizens hostages of evil and excludes coexistence with the neighbors in the region.

Women in Black, on 22nd of May, in 2007., `energetically call upon authorities to take off the placards `Ratko Mladić's Boulevard` immediately, with which unidentified persons have daubed buildings in the Boulevard of the Antifascist Council for National Liberation of Yugoslavia, at New Belgrade`. In the statement they remind on the fact: `Mladić has been for decades a Hague fugitive, accused among other things of the execution of Bosnian boys, who keeps citizens of Serbia as hostages, evading justice for years,` says the statement of Women in Black decidedly.



Women in Black has, together with five other NGO's (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Center for cultural decontamination, Belgrade Circle and Impunity Watch), on 22nd of July in 2008, commend the authorities for the arrest of Radovan Karadžić. But, they did not accept it as a closing of the circle of crimes. They hope it `will bring a thorough change of attitudes toward the recent past, which is the most important step to achieve the justice for the victims of the crimes committed in our name (Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Foča, Omarska...). Parties have added that the `arrest of Karadžić indicated once more that Serbian authorities are ready to do their obligations only if they are under the pressure of Brussels, Washington or the Hague, whether this occurs based upon the judgement that it is a step necessary to achieve political aims, or interests of the country.`

On 20th of July, 2011., *Women in Black* have asked, after the arrest of Goran Hadžić, who is charged in 14 counts for war crimes and crimes against the humanity: `Will anyone be responsible for keepiing Hadžić away from justice for years (referring to the accomplices in the hiding of Mladić's, and hiding of others, too), will they, after his arrest, disclose the data about the concentration camps for Croats all over Serbia, will they press charges against those who are responsible for torture and execution of Croatian prisoners and civilians in Stajićevo, Begejci, Sremska Mitrovica, Aleksinac, Niš and elsewhere, will it be allowed to mark with dignity places of their torture and death, will the fact be still ignored that Hadžić's property and also his family's (and not only theirs), was acquired through looting, or will Serbia – as in many previous cases – help financially Hadžić's defence in front of the ICTY, as well as will the end of the cooperation of Serbia with the Hague Tribunal be the beginning of a thorough review of the attitudes regarding the wars of the nineties, of the past century and the responsibility of Serbia for those wars.

On 8th of June, 2003, *Women in Black* statement was joined by fifty other organizations from Serbia and Montenegro. The statement under entitled `War crimes perpetrators have to be punished and not awarded`,

written because of the decision of the Council of Ministers from Serbia and Montenegro, to provide financial support for the indictees in the Hague Tribunal, and also to their families, as their citizens, in the amount of €10,000 per year, conveyed the message: maybe this is about the introduction of the institute of cost-effectiveness of committed crime.

Women in Black and the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights from Belgrade, gave their comments on 17th of October, 2009, regarding the reduction of the sentence to Biljana Plavšić, who, in 2005, was sentenced before the ICTY to eleven years of prison for war crimes against Croats and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She was released in September of 2009. 'We expect that the Serbian authorities will not allow any kind of worship of the person sentenced for the most severe crimes, any kind of triumphant celebration or similar manifestation,' the two NGO's reminded the state of Serbia and its citizens.

The death of Slobodan Milošević, the epitome of Balkan crimes during two decades of the last century, was commented with a statement which, among the other things, said: 'People's' farewell to a man who harmed his own people with so much evil, and neighboring nations even more, in front of the Assembly of Serbia and Montenegro, represents, hopefully, the final act of a shameful worship of the policy of endless violence and ethnic cleansing, symbolized by this leader of the crimes.' That is how *Women in Black*, on 19th of March 2006, evaluated the commemoration in Belgrade, just before the funeral of the ex President of Serbia and Yugoslavia. *Women in Black* approved the decision not honor the dead one by the side of state, but they declared that: 'The Supreme Council of Defense and the Ministry of Defense should ask themselves whether they still enjoy any authority, when they tolerate retired generals appearing in uniforms at the funeral of a war criminal, and prosecuting authorities should answer if they intend to continue tolerating political and ideological abuse of children, in funeral ceremonies to those accused for war crimes.'



Plavšić, Milošević, Mladić, Karadžić, Hadžić are just some of the symbols of the policy of evil, who fettered Serbia from 1991 until the summer of 2011, when the last of the ICTY indictees were handed over to justice. They felt safe and at ease, both those who were accused for war crimes as well as those whose sentences were shortened half way through. Plavšić, who comes from Sarajevo, settled in Belgrade after her release from prison, Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as from Croatia, who were accused for war crimes were hiding in Serbia, just like perpetrators from Chetnic and Ustasha ranks are doing after the Second World War, taking refuge themselves in Chile, Paraguay and Argentina, protected by the military juntas of dictator and criminal regimes of Videl, Stresner, Pinochet...

The question why Serbia is a Mecca and a safe haven for the suspects, accused and released war crime perpetrators, is raised in the statement of Women in Black of 10th of March, 2011, joined by Lawyers Committee for Human Rights from Belgrade, Youth initiative for human rights from Belgrade, Independent Society of Journalists of Vojvodina, Center for development of Civil society from Zrenjanin, Center for Regionalism from Novi Sad,

‘Panonija’ Civil Fund from Novi Sad, NGO Opened Lyceum from Sombor, Civil action from Pančevo, Green Network of Vojvodina from Novi Sad.

It is all about the decision of the Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković to appoint Zoran Stanković Minister of Health.

... Stanković was a member of the Commission for truth and reconciliation in Koštunica’s government (Vojislav Koštunica, President of Social Republic of Yugoslavia, authors remark) who have minimized the number of the executed in Srebrenica’s Genocide and accused the Tribunal of the Hague of tampering with the number of victims of crimes and with documentation regarding the crimes over Serbs, on the territory of the ex Social Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Stanković, as retired general, was in the headquarters Mladić, a man who has been accused of

Genocide. After 1996, when an international arrest warrant was released for Mladić, Stanković as the executive of Military Medical Academy in Belgrade, allowed Mladić to hide and obtain treatment in this very institution, in accordance with evidence provided by the Prosecution of the Hague. The accusations of which numerous NGO's have annunciate by the middle of February, Stanković did not deny, nor they were denied by G17+, which did not protect its own candidate. In that way they have clearly demonstrated the ignorance of the autonomous civil society, especially the part of it which strives for apparent break with criminal past. Civil society organizations demanded for years to ascertain who have killed guards Dražen Milovanović and Dragan Jakovljević, in 2004. in Belgrade caserne: 'We express our solidarity with the parents and families of the executed soldiers and once more we give our support to their pursuit of the truth regarding the causes of the death of two young soldiers, which, based on firm evidence, is surely connected with the hiding of Mladić, ICTY indictee, within military facilities,' reads the statement of Women in Black Serbian Network, signed together with Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and Youth initiative for human rights, Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, and Centre for Euro-Atlantic Studies from Belgrade. The statement claims that state institutions (especially judicial authorities) continue with the obstruction of the investigation of this crime, disgracefully.

In Serbia after 5th of October, we still have habit of reversing arguments. Serbia is a victim and not the culprit. Serbia is a victim of regional intrigues, global constellation of forces, symmetry and balance of guilt. In brief, the victim becomes the perpetrator. Based, on 3rd of March, retired general of Bosnia and Herzegovina Army Jovo Divjak, who was on the list of wanted persons from Serbia, was arrested at Vienna airport. He was the key figure of the resistance of Sarajevo, during the siege from 1992 until 1995. His arrest at Serbia's request, is just 'the continuation of counterproductive behaviour of Belgrade, concerning the interpretation of the wars of nineties,' according to the statement issued by a of couple of NGO's, including Women in Black.



After the arrest of Ejup Ganić, member of the War Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ilija Jurišić, who was accused by Belgrade of the attack on the columns of Yugoslav National Army's soldiers, retreating from Tuzla, in May of 1992, and Tihomir Purda, Vukovar defender, followed by their release due to the lack of evidence, 'Divjak's case' deepens mistrust in the region. 'With this kind of behaviour Belgrade has assumed the role of prosecutor and of the party that defines the character of the war,' it is said in the statement.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 6th of April, 1992 until 15th of September, 1995, was nothing but aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina from Belgrade and then also from Zagreb. When Bosnia and Herzegovina accused Serbia and Montenegro of Genocide in front of the International Court of Justice, the Court ruled on 21st of February, 2007, that the war had an international character. During almost four years of war, 39.684 civilians and 57.523 soldiers were either executed or missing. Muslims account for 65,88% victims of the war, which ended by signing the peace agreement in Dayton, 21st of November, 1995. Crimes committed in Sarajevo and Srebrenica are the subject of the Hague charges against Mladić, but also against most of those accused and sentenced for crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both of those crimes are the examples of Belgrade war policy toward Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Srebrenica

Before the European Parliament adopted the Resolution on Srebrenica's Genocide in January of 2009 and proclaimed 11th of July as Memorial Day of the victims of Srebrenica Genocide (instead of massacre) in Srebrenica in European Union, Women in Black remind Serbia on its responsibility for the greatest crime in Europe after the Second World

War, demanding from Belgrade to acknowledge the facts and punish the perpetrators of the Srebrenica massacre.

After the appeal to the Serbian Assembly to proclaim 11th of July as Memorial Day of the Srebrenica Genocide, which was joined by more than hundred NGO's, on 16th of January, 2009, *Women in Black* concluded in a statement entitled 'The continuity of Serbian denial of the Srebrenica Genocide', that the declaration of the Assembly regarding Srebrenica is the continuation of denial of the fact that Serbia conducted aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina... The Assembly of Serbia derided once more all the victims of Srebrenica's Genocide and their families, as well as the survivors, avoiding once more to express the solidarity with the victims of a crime committed in our name, to put on trial and punish all of those who were involved in the Genocide.'

Women in Black, together with Center for cultural decontamination, Dah Theater, sentry team of the Art-Clinics, art group Škart, performer Ana Vilenica, art photographer Biljana Rakočević, psychoanalyst Branimir Stojanović, artist Milica Tomić and visual artist Saša Stojanović, demanded on 11th of March, 2011, from the Mayor and deputies to Serbian and Assembly of the City of Belgrade, in an address from the Memorial Center of Potočari, and in the name of solidarity with the victims, to collect in cooperation with the citizens of Serbia eight thousand and three hundred and seventy two pairs of shoes. Each of the pairs was to contain a message to families of victims, addressed from Serbian citizens, and to be the basis for creation of memorial in Belgrade, for the victims of Srebrenica's Genocide.

Under the title 'We shall never forget', *Women in Black*, called for a peace action under the same title, on 10th of July, 2011, on Republic Square in Belgrade: 'Srebrenica is, like Auschwitz, a deepest ethical problem...The guilt is individual, but the responsibility is on all of us,' concluded the statement.

Women in Black issued a statement on 10th of July, 2006 that "the toppling of the dictatorship since October of 2000, had not led to a



break away with the criminal past, or state organized denial of crimes and criminal past. That is what Koštunica's government has been doing as well. Citizens are not only hostages of Mladić and a group of five ICTY indictees, but of the actual government and the distorted value system in which the perpetrators are worshiped as heroes, and citizens who demand responsibility for war and war crimes are labeled as traitors.'

Due to the commemoration of the thirteenth anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide, six NGO's, including Women in Black, reminded Serbia in their statement on its failure to fulfil obligations which emanate from the verdict of International Court of Justice, of 27th of February, 2007 and of the disrespect of the Convention on prevention and punishment of the crime of Genocide.

Under the title 'Shameful decision of Supreme Court of Serbia', Women in Black protested with their statement addressed to the public, on 13th of September, 2008, because upon counsel's appeal, the sentences of two members of 'Scorpions', who had been involved in the execution of six male persons from Srebrenica, in Trnovo, July of 1995, had been mitigated. For the first accused, the sentence was diminished from twenty to fifteen years, and one of them had his the verdict of five years of prison abolished.

SARAJEVO

In the statement on the occasion of the pronouncement of verdicts by the International Court of Justice regarding the charges of Bosnia and Herzegovina against the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, Women in Black, do consider that 'the verdict is not the reason for jubilation in Serbia. It is the defeat of Serbia, because it deprecates Serbia for not preventing the Genocide and not handing over the indictees to the Hague Tribunal,' reads the statement of 28th of February, 2007.

In the statement on the occasion of the anniversary of the beginning of aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, Women in Black, with

‘Respect for the victims, remind of 6th of April of 1992, of beginning of four-year of blockade of Sarajevo, during which 11,000 of people, including 1,601 children, perished...Despite of all of the prejudices of the International Criminal Court for ex Yugoslavia, executors of innocent people in Serbia are still worshiped as heroes,’ it is said in the statement of 5th of April 2007. A similar statement was released on the 4th anniversary of the beginning of the aggression, with the observation: ‘All the commanders of the Army of Bosnian Serbs who are suspected for war crimes in Bosnia, have found their shelter in Serbia.’

Tools and weapons of war – the war crime of rape

In Bosnian war, according to UN and Hague Tribunal data, between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped. It is qualified as ‘mass’ or ‘systematic’ rape or ‘sexual slavery’, which constitutes a war crime against humanity, closest to Genocide. Margot Wallstrom, a Special UN Reporter on sexual violence in conflict, counted that only twelve cases of rape were prosecuted.

Under the slogan ‘Rape is a war crime’, Women in Black protested on 25th of September, 2008, because the Hague Tribunal did not incorporate in the amended indictment against Karadžić, as a separate item, mass rapes as a part of war strategy.

The statement was supported by Women in Black Serbian Network, Association of citizens – Srebrenica women from Tuzla, Society for people in jeopardy from Sarajevo, Women to Women from Sarajevo, Fondation CURE from Sarajevo, BABAE from Zagreb, Center for Cultural Decontamination from Belgrade, Voice of Difference from Belgrade, Reconstruction Women’s Fund from Belgrade, Autonomous Women Center from Belgrade, Incest Trauma Center from Belgrade, Žindok from Belgrade, Center for Women Studies from Belgrade, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights from Belgrade, Regional Center for Minorities from Belgrade, Women’s Space from Niš, Anti-trafficking



Center from Belgrade. Labris from Belgrade, Women`s club Hera from Niš, Anima from Kotor, Impuls from Tutin, Women`s shelter from Belgrade, Lesbian organization from Novi Sad, Taboo from Zrenjanin, Center for Girls from Niš, Women for Peace from Leskovac.

CROATIA

The war in Croatia lasted from 1991 until 1995. The conflict was between Croatian soldiers, police and paramilitary forces of the rebel Serbs of Croatia, in fact forces of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, supported by the Yugoslav National Army, and later on from Serbia. The war involved 54% of the Croatian territory, with 36% of Croatian population. The war resulted in 13,583 dead and missing persons and 37,000 wounded. Even today, 1,827 persons are still missing. Vukovar and urban sieges are the first martyrs of this war.

‘It is with sorrow and feeling of shame that we remember the tragedy of Vukovar. We repeat what we said sixteen years ago: the crime was organized in Belgrade,’ reads the statement of Women in Black, of 16th of November, 2007. Women in Black commemorated the 17th and 18th anniversary of the Vukovar tragedy with the conclusion: ‘we will never forget ordinary people of Belgrade who accompanied tanks which departed in order to conquer and destroy Vukovar, with flowers. This shameful act is an act of complicity with one of the worst crimes,’ they warned.

Women in Black marked the fifteenth anniversary of the attack of the Yugoslav National Army against Dubrovnik, emphasizing that among the executed citizens were people of all nations. ‘As during all the previous years, we demand from Serbian authorities to assume responsibility, to relieve the citizens of the general stigma for what happened in Dubrovnik and to punish in an adequate way every single perpetrator of the Dubrovnik theater of war,’ said the statement published on 30th of September, 2006.

`Storm` is a joint military operation of Croatian and Bosnia-Herzegovina`s military and police forces in summer of 1995, when large regions near the Croatian border with Bosnia and Herzegovina were liberated, the cities of Knin, Obrovac, Benkovac, etc, and `Serbian Republic of Krajina` was abolished. Helsinki Committee for Croatia identified 400 civilians who were executed in this operation, and for the most of the executed the exact details of their ordeal, as well. Also, an undetermined number of prisoners were shot.

`Storm` led to mass deportation of Serbian population from the territory of the so-called Serbian Republic of Krajina... Remembering all the innocent victims, we have to mention Slobodan Milošević`s regime and his satellites from Krajina, as well as the Serbian intellectual elite, who for years had been spreading the conviction that Serbs cannot live with other nations, in order to abandon hypocritically their creation of Serbian Republic of Krajina, just before operation `Storm`, leaving the population to its fate of exile...Let the `Storm` be one more admonition on where false patriotism leads, based on financial and political interests,` said Women in Black, on 4th of August, 2008.

On 5th of August, 2001, on the anniversary of `Storm`, it was stated: `There is no hope until the majority of Croats come to understand that the `Storm` was a systematic crime done in the name of false national interests.`

KOSOVO

Concerning two most horrible of the revealed crimes in Kosovo, the one in Suva Reka and Podujevo, that took place within two days of March of 1999, Women in Black warned Serbian the public that crimes happened in their neighborhood and that they are their accomplices. In the statement on the 10th anniversary of the crime, Women in Black emphasized that Serbian policemen executed within only a couple of hours 48 civilians, and that 46 of them were members of the Berisha family. The oldest one was Hanumsha, she was a hundred years old, and



the youngest one was Eron, who was merely one year old. Three members of the Berisha`s family survived a pogrom. The dead ones were found in the second mass tomb in Belgrade settlement of Batajnica.

`Scorpions` from the reserve corps of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Defense in Podujevo, on 28th of March 1999, executed or wounded 19 civilians. Women in Black remind: `Those, as all the other crimes against the Albanian population, were organized by the state and their instigators and executors were members of Ministry of Internal Defence. It is, therefore, necessary for the Prosecution on war crimes to demand the investigation against all the executors and instigators for war crimes in Kosovo.`

Also, we demand investigation on mass tombs in Serbia, into which the bodies of Albanians from Kosovo were transferred... We emphasize that a proclamation of Kosovo independence must not be taken advantage of as an excuse for the relativization of the responsibility for the crimes committed in our name, and in no case for the amnesty of perpetrators`, it is said in the statement of 2009.

SERBIA

The war for `Greater Serbia` was also fought on the territory of the Socialist Republic of Serbia. It started by deportation of Croats and Hungarians from Vojvodina, Muslims from Sandžak and Albanians from everywhere in Serbia. Among the war crimes, two are the most notorious for their cruelty, both of them against Muslim population, at the time when the aggression of Serbia and Montenegro against neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina, was at its peak. These are the crimes of Sjeverin and Štrpci.

`Fourteen years have elapsed since the abduction and the execution of sixteen citizens of Serbia, from Sjeverin. Those dead people from Sjeverin, have not yet been buried with dignity, all the executors have not been convicted yet, and Serbia has not admitted its own crime,` read the statement of October 21st, 2006.

Women in Black remind that members of Serbian paramilitary formation 'Avengers' kidnapped from the bus on the line Pljevlja-Priboj in the place of Mioče, fifteen men and one woman. They took them to Višegrad, where they abused them, and then executed them on the banks of the Drina. 'Those citizens of Serbia were executed only because they were Muslims.' Women in Black assessed that in the verdicts for the kidnappers 'neither the Supreme Court and not even the First Instance Court, accepted that the convicted belonged to the Republic Srpska Army, which was financed, organized and supported by the Yugoslav Army of that time.'

On the occasion of the fourteenth anniversary of the crime of Štrpci, Women in Black again, as in 2010, 'reminded with bitterness that the organizers, instigators, the key figures of the abduction and executors of the murder of nineteen people on 27th of February, in 1993, from the train at Štrpci station, are still free.'

The statement contains the chronology of the crime, pointing to those who knew about the plan of the abduction of the passengers of non-Serbian nationality, citizens of Social Republic of Yugoslavia. 'President of Social Republic of Yugoslavia at the time was Dobrica Ćosić, Commander of the Užice Corps of the Yugoslav Army- a ICTY indictee Dragoljub Ojdanić, and the manager of Railway Transport Enterprise Milomir Minić, deputy of the Serbian Social Party.'

'Except Muslims, a Croat was also victim of the execution chosen. The youngest who was executed was only sixteen years old. The following persons were abducted: Esad Kapetanović, Ilijaz Ličina, Fehim Bakija, Šećo Softić, Rifet Husović, Sead Đečević, Ismet Babačić, Hail Zupčević, Adem Alomerović, Rasim Ćorić, Fikret Memetović, Favzija Zeković, Nijaz Kajević, Muhedin Hanić, Safet Preljević, Džafer Topuzović, Jusuf Rastoder, Zvezdan Zuličić i Tomo Buzov, enumerated Women in Black, who will 'never stop seeking the truth on war crimes, committed first of all in our name and then in the name of all the others.'



Marija Perković

To feel as a human being-feminist approach to justice of Women in Black

‘I confess...that I did not agree with multiple beatings of members of other nations and nationalities, political beliefs, confessions, sexual orientation. I confess... that I have considered democracy as a support to antiwar activists, friends – Albanian, Muslim, Croatian, Roma stateless sisters.’¹⁶⁷

Introduction

Caught in Serbia at the beginning of nineties, of the 20th century, which started with the aggression first against Croatia, then Bosnia and Herzegovina, and parallel with those wars, conducted terror on Kosovo. We were caught in a state whose government organized the Srebrenica Genocide, whose population tried to resist the war machinery just before the war, but the resistance which melted down during hyperinflation in the early nineties...the ideas of peace, truth and justice became crucial in our everyday lives, crucial for our survival, as human beings.

Twenty years after the beginning of the war in ex Yugoslavia, peace is here allegedly, because there is no war, any more. The truth sometimes emerges, but not in full light, not in accordance with the facts, as for example, the exact number of the victims, not even in the symbolic way because nationalism is still the ruling ideology.

Destructive effects of the war and nationalism, then privatizations after the war, are visible everywhere. ‘We inclined to interpret the

167. Women for peace, Women in Black statement, since 9th of October, 1998, Belgrade, 1999, page 13-14

appearance of Slobodan Milošević exclusively through nationalism, and his dictator traits. It was wrong to reduce it all to one person and to not see this historical socio-economic context from which this person sprouted and in which it survived for so long, from which the person merely disappeared physically. It is our crucial problem and the question of facing the past.¹⁶⁸

The practice and thought of *Women in Black* referred to all societal phenomena, because of the awareness that war and crimes did not befall ex Yugoslavia as a natural catastrophe, but were rooted in the ideologies, history, and that war and crimes have consequences even after the war finished. It meant to remind all the time the public that ubiquitous impunity culture in Serbia, creates the grim reality of Serbia today. And what we have seen, that we got in almost all of the societies and states which were created in the territory of ex Yugoslavia, instead of solidarity and compassion with the victims, identification with those who are either accused of war crimes or there are serious indications that they have committed war crimes.¹⁶⁹

Women in Black have reminded and still do, that the culture of impunity for war crimes and the absence of solidarity with the victims does not stop there. The culture of impunity for war crimes and the absence of solidarity with the victims, is overflowing on all the segments of the society, make the Serbian society an unjust society which does not have solidarity with marginalized groups, and this is what makes it the poorest country in the region.

Reminding of the absence of solidarity and the culture of impunity in all the actions, statements, actually was constant revelation of all the points of repression, because even the slightest repression makes

168. Latinka Perović, Regarding nowadays refusal facing the past and resistance to modernization in Serbia, brochure

‘Facing the past: feminist approach,’ WIB, Belgrade, 2005, page 132

169. Nataša Kandić, 8th of March – A hundred and first year of women solidarity! – compilation of *Women in Black*, Center for cultural decontamination – 8th of March, 2009, Belgrade, transcript



one society unjust. It meant constant building of solidarity where the repression breaks off human relationships. It meant to establish universal ethics and create upon it the policy of equitable social relations.

Justice has utopian character and therefore it is so important for our lives. That is why we always remind ourselves of its significance, and we search for ways to establish it...We remind ourselves of its older occurrence in the history, as well as we remind ourselves of the difference between the legal system and justice, and in the end... we build a totally different concept of justice through the phenomena of restorative justice and the way to achieve it in reality.

On the phenomena of justice, the importance of the secular aspect of solidarity

Secular aspect

As we look at human beings primarily through their acts (moral, their choices of good and evil), so also we refer to a society from the standpoint of justice. Opting for good is a task every man should undertake, and to establish equitable relationships in the community - is the task of any society. These fundamental values of humanity are unquestionable, as much as the historical, geographic verticals and horizontals, regardless of whether this view comes from a theology or philosophy, the political left or right.

However, for us, as activists, the important is the aspect of justice which is not connected with religion (and is not connected to the political right), or to be precise, we insist on secular aspect of justice. The secular aspect of justice considers that justice can be conducted in this world (unlike the religious phenomena of justice, which is conducted in 'another' world and does not depend on humans but on a divine force). The secular aspect of justice grows out of real relations between people of a society, and is not prescribed by some higher being whose intentions

mortal beings, usually, can not comprehend (that there are `strange ways of the Lord,` which is the slogan with which the ruling class justify unjust social relations). Besides, we have to say that justice, even when it does not derive its legitimacy out of religion, always contains this so-to-say, utopian (or idealistic) dimension, or presentation of a better (more just) society.

The secular concept of justice can be associated with the process of separation of the church and the state on European soil. The French Bourgeois revolution that took place in late eighteenth century was the turning point, or it can be said that only with the establishment of the bourgeois society and the state it was possible to restore justice among the people, and that means - that since then people themselves, and not divine powers, were responsible to define what is really fair. Of course, for the past two centuries, they changed what all the people, or which part of citizens can decide on the concept of justice, and who can be the subject of justice. That is how the phenomena of justice expanded and deepened, and by the time started including all those societal groups which were excluded by previous civilizations (women, lower social classes, LGBT community, immigrants, etc).

Why do we insist on the secular aspect of justice, though for two centuries already secularity has been an integral part of it? The reason is that nowadays Serbia manifests outstanding clerical and fundamentalist tendencies. `After the fall of the regime on 5th October 2000, especially since the actual government came (Koštunica`s government), the process of losing the secular character of the state, has escalated in Serbia,` in that way we have violation of the basic principles of democracy - the separation of church and state. Parallel with this process is the clericalization of society – the intervention of Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) in all spheres of public policy and social life. SPC has become a political factor, not only interfering with state affairs, but also with educational, cultural, health, social institutions, the sphere of intimacy, family, and especially in reproductive and sexual rights of women.`¹⁷⁰

170. Sekularism and women, Women in Black, Belgrade, 2007, page 32



As *Women in Black* warn on this growing clericalization in Serbia and advocate for the preservation of the secular character of the state, we also, because of the experience of socialism in the former Yugoslavia, are aware of the jeopardy of `dogmatic atheism`. Also, we are aware of unwarranted equating of secularism and atheism, as we are aware of the fact that quite a few believers unreservedly support the strict separation of church and state.

In a number of peacekeeping associations, as well as the struggle to preserve the secular state, the support of religious people is very important. The values that we represent, we share in a platform with people believing in this struggle, which says:

- joint action and equal treatment for all of us – believers and non-believers (atheists / agnostics and activists or religiously indifferent);
- full equality between women and men, women rights, women's autonomy and self-determination; (. ..)
- `solidarity over racial, ethnic, religious affiliation, across borders and divisions, ideological beliefs and sexual orientation`¹⁷¹

Solidarity as a central value of justice

The key problem of achieving justice in a society has always referred to all members of society estimating that their relationships, and society as a whole, are just. That is why the modern state and societies on the basis of ideas of equality and liberty have been trying to define fair relations. However, what is lacking in these concepts of justice, is solidarity. In fact, what characterizes the notion of justice in modern societies, is its supposed impartiality, which rests on the idea of freedom (freedom for all to participate freely on the market, whether commercial, or political one), and equality (everyone has equal status in front of the law).

However, the fact is being overlooked that certain societal layers have

171. Peace activism in religion, edited by Staša Zajović, Rachel Long, Miloš Urošević, WIB Belgrade, 2007, page 6

economic privileges (so they can be competitive in the economy), and economic privilege follows with social ones, in the broad sense (that the laws of, or exercise of their rights in front of the court are available for some, and for some not). That is why solidarity is important, because only through it we can balance our unequal positions in a society.

What in this sense, does *Women in Black* solidarity mean? `I have learned through this process of joint construction of transitional justice what I already knew, that solidarity has nothing to do with charity, that solidarity is a political process, a fully two-way flow.`¹⁷²

Solidarity is primarily a political concept, as Mother Mejra Dautović from Prijedor (Bosnia) testifies: `Perhaps no one knows that in the Prijedor genocide occurred in 1992, thousands of people were killed, it is still pushed under the carpet. In 1996 when I spoke, I do not know how many women were around me, it gave me the strength to do even more. Every mother who lost her child is a mother, and only she knows what pain is, nobody knows the pain of a mother. This is done by the policy makers , by the inhumane.`¹⁷³

On the other hand, just as a testimony to the importance of `two-way flow` solidarity, is the testimony of another mother, Žanka Stojanović from Belgrade (Serbia) about her meeting with women from BiH: They (my friends) I was asked whether they think it is a tragedy greater than mine, I said that I somehow got my son a week after that, and I buried him, and I know his proper place, that I can go and light a candle for him, but there were many people who still do not know where their children are, and it is an even greater tragedy, and nobody says a word of apology or acknowledgment.`¹⁷⁴

The attempt to reduce social inequality, we recall, was carried out after World War II (as in a number of socialist revolutions in the twentieth

172. Staša Zajović, roundtable: `Feminist approach to justice`, organized by WIB, Dah Theater, Belgrade, 9th of July, 2009, transcript

173. Majka Mejra, the same, transcript

174. Žanka Stojanović, the same, transcript



century), but the key source of social inequality has not been repealed (and that is private property and economic benefits), the idea of the welfare state (otherwise known as the 'welfare state'), began to decline, even during the seventies. On the other hand, states that were known as 'socialist', and which have abolished economic inequalities have also curtailed some freedoms and, in conjunction with the bureaucratization, failed in an attempt to build a just society.

In one, albeit simplified sense, since the end of the twentieth century (with the fall of the Eastern bloc) until now, the prevalent idea has been that justice is still 'best achieved' through the legal system, and the one 'impartial' or 'objective' notion of justice - that we are all, without any exception equal, and that we are all, without distinction – free.

The difference between justice and the legal system

An impartial or objective notion of perceived justice of every man in the abstract, without taking into account the reality of his existence, which class he belongs to, sex, nation, religion, domicile or immigration status, or education ... All of these enumerated categories in reality are important to man and his everyday life. To make this apparent objectiveness of justice more comprehensive, let us illustrate it with the statement of Anatole France, French writer and Nobel prize winner, who lived at the turn of 19th to 20th century – that the liberal, capitalist countries under fair attitude considered 'just to allow the rich and to the poor to sleep under a bridge, such as they forbids to both to steal bread.'

Such an 'objective justice' has its own expression within the legal system. However, what is often overlooked is that it is only a technique of ruling, and not a means of fulfilling the justice. Because, within modern states which have put violence 'out of law and abolished it in the circulation of ideas, but was preserved in the form of colonisation, unemployment and rent...' ¹⁷⁵ nobody wants to see that society, just

175. Moris Merlo Ponti, 'Humanizam and terror', Small edition of ideas,

because of this division in accordance with class, sex, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, etc., is in constant severe conflicts and permanent violence. And that violence occurs not only in war, but is extensive at 'peacetime' as well. The experience of modern states, of women and other marginalized groups, shows us once more how justice could not be fulfilled within the legal system of our states, nor within the institutions of justice on the international level.

What we, as activists, do criticize regarding the institutional justice system and its practice of determining of what has happened and who has to be punished for it. 'There is another part, which everybody missed. What is the point of everything that happened?', 'How did it happen and why?', 'People seek answers'.¹⁷⁶ There are certain questions, those with which the institutional justice system never deals with, and therefore the justice is not fulfilled in the full sense of the word.

The concrete case of the state of Serbia, which conducted the aggression against ex-Yugoslav republics, in the wars by the end of the 20th century, and parallel organized crimes, serve as a proof that the legal system is more than insufficient. Women in Black experience, through their field work as well as during following the trials in front of the Special Court on war crimes in Belgrade¹⁷⁷, shows that the institutional law system:

- war crimes are treated as isolated incidents, and not as organized by the state,

- the accusations are raised only against the direct perpetrators of crimes and not against the commanders,

- the trials last for years,

- Special Court sentences for war crimes are abolished by the Serbian Supreme Court, and the proceedings return to the beginning,

Belgrade, 1986, page 139

176. Ljupka Kovačević, roundtable: 'Feminist approach to justice', organized by WIB, CZKD, Dah Theater, Belgrade, 9th of October 2009, transcript

177. Activists of the Serbian WIB Network have followed six cases in continuity, in front of the Special court on war crimes since 2005 until today.



insufficient capacities of the judiciary, meaning insufficient number of the judges in the Special Court on war crimes.

‘We, as Serbs, have got one responsibility more, because based on our myths and national prejudices Slobodan Milošević launched his campaign for Greater Serbia, with which he rallied people for the fight’.¹⁷⁸

Because the issue of accountability is absent in the state of Serbia, the question of causes - how and why so many crimes occurred in the former Yugoslavia, Serbian society is still groping in the dark. More precisely, it is still mired in the nationalist ideology and continually renews violence, with the exception that after the fall of Milošević’s regime, violence of the regime is directed against the citizens of Serbia. As feminists who believe that justice is a critical measure of any society, we are dissatisfied with the legal system which does not recognize the reality of complex relationships. Also, we are dissatisfied with the legal system (as well as other parts of the country and nearly the entire society) which reduces justice to a system of punishment and only focuses on the perpetrators rather than on the victims and society, and also remains blind to the series of injustices for which the institutional systems of justice do not even have a name. Therefore, we investigate, we build different models of justice.

About restorative justice

The understanding of justice which goes beyond frames of existing institutions at the national or international level, which leaves or exceeds the existing patriarchal models, sprang from the practice of feminist anti-militarist practice of Women in Black.

What can often be heard among the activists is that they had practiced the ‘policy of location’ of Adrienne Rich, and the concept of ‘political responsibility’ of Hannah Arendt, for years before they read the texts of

178. Svetlana Šarić, activist of WIB Serbian Network, seminar ‘Women’s Court -feminist approach to justice’, Sijarinska Banja, April, 2011, transcript

these authors. The cruel reality of war, the inhumanity of the situation necessitated a reaction, meaning - humanity. And at a time full of bestiality, since the beginning of the wars in 1991, the activists of Women in Black began visiting victims on `their` territory. By developing a practice of visiting the place of crime, and in the midst of war and after the war, Women in Black have developed a different model of justice against the patriarchal model, that of ethical concern for their own, against the political order of the state of Serbia towards undesirable ethnicities.

In such a model based on solidarity, justice is a political process to which it is inhumane to put an end. What is important for this process is to abolish the patriarchal concept of ethics and to develop feminist ethics of care. In this case, concern is not merely self-sacrifice (in the patriarchal model to be primarily related to women), but care which `ensures that the people are looked at as people, rather than as one's masters or as subordinated individuals.`¹⁷⁹.

The feminist ethics of care that goes beyond family and tribe and nation, deepens with its sensibility the ethical self (complements traditional aspect of rational which is necessary for ethics), therefore within the political concept, as well as in understanding of justice, introduces emotions. Respect for the rational and the emotional aspect is what makes justice in human society possible and only then.

`We were on hunger strike, and this is the thirst for justice ...`¹⁸⁰ and this quote shows that justice requires emotion in order to be able to reflect on it, and also when justice is thought of, the emotions have to be respected.`

The way *Women in Black* understand policy is relying both on feminist ethics of care and on the responsibility. For, although the ethical principles are related to the human community, Women in Black activists are aware

179. Ljupka Kovačević, `Feminist concept of care` , booklet `Women`s Court - feminist approach to justice,WIB, 2011, page 78

180. Lola, Women peace agenda, 2012, edited by Ljupka Kovačević and Staša Zajović, WIB, Belgrade, 2012.



of that reality puts them in a particular group, and that just for this certain group they should take over the responsibility. The maxim 'Not in our name' is a maxim which applies to a political group to which they belong (the state of Serbia), from which they took a critical stance.

'Where I live, my responsibility is situated there, our responsibility is within the country we belong to. I do not want to reject my belonging, but those who are citizens of one state do bear the responsibility for it, at some point.'¹⁸¹

Collective or political responsibility of *Women in Black* is reflected through constant criticism of the regime, the rejection of loyalty to nationalism and militarism. In refusing to be silent about war crimes, to conceal, or to leave it to oblivion. The political responsibility of Women in Black, 'site policy' means that Serbian elites – political, economic and cultural, are constantly harassed. Namely, in a world where human community is broken, and between those broken groups are high walls of hatred, or at least prejudices, reality dictates that we 'first clean up in our backyard' (meaning within the political community of Serbia), and that is what legitimate us to raise the question of responsibility of the 'others', too.

Upon these initial values, further practice is developing a model or models of justice of Women in Black. Insisting on the emotional side of justice means that the focus is on the victim of injustice, rather than on the perpetrator. Taking responsibility (the rational side of justice) for the community to which we belong, considers public criticism and degradation of matrixes that produce injustice (patriarchy, militarism, nationalism, competition ...).

The critique of ruling models is in reference to the society, as well as different models of societal relations are offered to the same society. In that

181. NN, seminar 'Women's Court – feminist approach to justice', Sijarinska Banja, april 2011, transcript

way are created (so far) oasis of more equitable relations, whose strength is within direct contacts with those who are defined by the elites as 'the others.' It is crucial to return over and over those 'others' within the human community, and it is possible only through our physical presence, by listening, respecting the experience of the 'others', respecting the sufferance and injustice they have been through.

These are the first steps in creating more equitable relations. Besides, *Women in Black*, in this listening are neither servile nor paternalistically oriented (visiting the victims). Coming from the state of aggression, by these acts they show full awareness of the responsibilities of the political community that has undertaken them and has committed a crime, on their behalf. On the other hand, appreciation of reality, which is in this case the existence of the state as an alienated and repressive apparatus, is constantly seeking of the activists to refer to their state, with requirements regarding changing the prevailing policy and legislative changes, too.

Restorative (or renewing) justice, ultimately, demands social change. In contrast to the retributive¹⁸² and distributive justice (which should distribute fairly goods of one community to all its members, but without prejudice to the method of production of these goods), none of which touches the very core of social relations, but deal only with their particular areas, restorative justice requires a fundamental change in those relationships. It requires the appointment of the causes of injustice, the change of those causes, healing of community, and prevention of crime.

The experience of suffering, of both women and men, showed that the injustice is structural in the world. It does not appear as a sporadic

¹⁸².Retributive justice - traditional criminal justice system that is based on the principle of punishment. The crime is seen as a violation of certain norms and violations of the state, which produces the blame on the one who inflicted the injury, while justice is understood as blaming the administration for pain and suffering. This is the traditional response to crime that focuses on crime and sentencing of offenders, while the needs of victims and the importance of social renewal is in the background. (brochure 'Women's Court - a feminist approach to justice', *Women in Black*, Belgrade, 2011, page 196)



error in history, but it is the only history of the people. The causes of injustice lie in the manner of (capitalist) production, in which militarism is an integral part of capitalism, the nationalist ideologies, and in all the others based on the exclusion of people on any basis, that all rely on the oldest unfair cultural matrix - patriarchy.

On the other hand, the experience of resistance to both women and men, as well as the experience of Women in the Black itself, has shown that it is possible to create more equitable relationships and to change history. The experience of resistance is based on great ideas of long humanist tradition, and how to respect the reality of women and men. Without the daily practice of `small steps,` those great ideas would remain empty, according to activists of Women in Black.

Those models of reaching the renewing justice are different and what is important for Women in Black is the end of `the sin of silence` and taking `the risk of speech`¹⁸³, despite of and contrary to the orders of the elite, regarding silence and loyalty to the system that survives today.

Women`s Court as an alternative model of justice

Thought and practice of Women in Black, as already said, has grown from the experience and understanding of history, from the connection within humanity. It also means taking responsibility for hope. This is why the search for a different model of justice that may shed light the (criminal) history, and that can create a just future, are the most important engagements and part of *Women in Black*.

Leaning on history, the international experience, the idea of women`s courts, as `... where women testified on their experiences of violence, they name the crime and are seeking the fulfillment of justice,`¹⁸⁴ opened like a real answer to the ubiquitous injustice, the unrecognized suffering

183. Memnuna Zvizdić, Women peace agenda, 2012, edited by Ljupka Kovačević and Staša Zajović, WIB, Belgrade, 2012.

184. Korin Kumar, `Women`s Court –feminist approach to justice`, edited by Ljupka Kovačević, Marija Perković, Staša Zajović, WIB, Belgrade, 2011, page 12

of victims, primarily women, in the wars of former Yugoslavia. Women's Court is the opportunity to stop in one place the 'sin of silence' in the torn tissue of the former Yugoslav community, to be number the crimes ('We've got to have the names of all crimes and have the names of all missing during the war, and without it there is no improvement'¹⁸⁵) so that justice is satisfactory for the victims. The power of appointment of national courts in the symbolic order of European culture (and not only European), is very important, and is equally inherited from the ancient tradition of public political speeches of the ancient Greece, as well as from the heritage of Judeo-Christian culture (the book of Genesis), which from the beginning of the twentieth century existed in Balkans, the people's tribunals that were established by engaged intellectuals after World War II (like the Russell's Court) ...

Women's Courts, also, in modern society, in which '... there is no time to remember and think'¹⁸⁶, refuse to obey the oblivion, refuse to accept the form of memory, which lasts as much as a press news, or the longest, as much as election cycle. At the same time, Women's Courts refuse '... waiver of the effort of thinking, uncritical, passive acceptance of the attitudes suggested by the newspapers, radio, television, advertisement...' ¹⁸⁷.

By refusing the orders of political and cultural elite, women Courts opened a new political space, it is a call to common thinking that '... challenges the dominant politics of our time, its the horizon that invites us to think, feel, create, connect, dream'.¹⁸⁸

Women's Court is the voice, experience, the lived suffering of women, what has actual weight, in contrast to the perception of an

185. Munira Subašić, seminar, 'Women's Court –feminist approach to justice', Mostar, BiH, 16 - 18. 9. 2011, transcript

186. Maks Horkhajmer, *Obscuration of the mind*, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1963.

187. Gajo Petrović, *Man and freedom*, repertory 'A man today', Nolit, Belgrade, 1964, page 37

188. Korin Kumar, 'Women's Court –feminist approach to justice', edited by Ljupka Kovačević, Marija Perković, Staša Zajović, WIB, Belgrade, 2011, page 12



armed patriarchy which reduces women to collateral damage (form of patriarchy wrapped in wafers of capitalist efficiency) or on legitimate sacrifice (in the unhidden form of patriarchy) in war, but in `peacetime`. However, Women's Courts, which have been organized more than 40 times worldwide, although they give the advantage to giving testimony, do not stop there. The concept of Women's Court, along with Bel Huks, shows that `... describing of our own troubles (is not) a synonym for critical political consciousness.`¹⁸⁹

In order to provide two branches of the feminist maxim `the personal is political,` for Women's Courts is extremely important `the voice of the context` as well (political). Voice of the context reveals the causes, mechanisms, objectives and consequences of crime, the voice of context `historicize the crime.`¹⁹⁰

The initiative to form Women's Court for the ex Yugoslavia¹⁹¹

The process of forming the Women's Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has just begun. After this first year of fieldwork in the former Yugoslavia, with the participation of nearly 400 women from more than 100 cities in the seminar `Women's Court - a feminist approach to justice`, the experience and views of women (activists) from the former Yugoslavia, that match with the experience of women around the world.

The idea of Women's Courts for former Yugoslavia is to strongly link the feminist movement on one platform, as well as that this process results in the formation of the court. This idea is illustrated by the statement that:

189. Bel Huks, `From the margin to the center,` Feminist editions 94, Belgrade, 2006, page 38

190. Korin Kumar, `Women's Court -feminist approach to justice`, edited by Ljupka Kovačević, Marija Perković, Staša Zajović, WIB, Belgrade, 2011, page 72

191. see more in `Women's Court -feminist approach to justice`, edited by Ljupka Kovačević, Marija Perković, Staša Zajović, WIB, Belgrade, 2011, WIB, Belgrade, 2011, page 132

‘From this court I expect dialogue and trust. And condemnation’.¹⁹²

This ‘dialogue and trust’ in the first year, in working together on comprehending the issues of justice and in reaching itself, at the time called the ‘era of informatics’ and the area where the language barriers are invalid, or easy to span, we revealed to each other that all sufferings are not told, there are too unrecognized crimes, too much impunity, and that the ideological and cultural matrix that led to the war is still in force.

We agreed that the existing institutions of justice are insufficient. *‘I am disappointed after all. I believed in the Hague, I believed Europe. Is it possible that the victim, who lost her children, her loved ones, does not believe that she is treated almost as a criminal. I am shocked by this, but we have to fight and move on,’* (NN, Veles, Macedonia).

‘Women think that the court can give us what these kind of institutions do not provide, and here we are then based on feelings: dignity, compassion, it can provide us with the truth, the feeling that we are human beings, it is important to hear, because we believe that nobody is talking about the crimes.’ (Stana, Kotor, Montenegro)

We have determined that taking over responsibility is a demanding process which requires us to continually disturb the political and other elites. That our different contexts require different dynamics of the process. Also, in our societies, under the pressure of nationalist ideology, they suffer due to the myth of collective guilt and collective sacrifice, they are not up to the notion of political responsibility.

‘We have adopted the principle of collective responsibility. Adopted the notion of collective victims. It was once difficult to deal with collective sacrifice,

192. Munira Subašić, seminar ‘Women’s Court –feminist approach to justice’, Mostar, BiH, 16 - 18. 09. 2011, transkript



then with collective guilt. For me it is an Isrealization of the victims, and I often talk about it. To the victim everything is to be forgiven in advance, as a rule, and the whole society becomes a hostage of collective sacrifice, where you cannot say anything, or laugh, or pronounce it. This is what is going on in Bosnia. (Duška, Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

'We expect that the `... women through the courts actually try to change the social consciousness and individualized story put into the public space, and allow to be heard what really happened ... And all this talk about the identities of whom we spoke this morning ... in fact, to try to put it into one place, at one level where women can be women regardless of ethnicity or anything like that, where they will be human,' (Mira, Zagreb, Croatia).

Once again we saw that the moral sensitivity of a women who survived the horrors of war, who rebelled against the war, scrupulousness of the power elites is inversely proportional.

And at the end...

The idea of emancipation and progress of all people was born in the bosom of the bourgeois class. However, knocking down feudal relations in the bourgeois revolutions, and becoming the class in power, progress in capitalism has become a matter of technique, and not of the emancipation of the people. Mass production of commodities has become a priority in relation to the development of humanity. Interest prevailed over humanity.

We are witnessing mass production every day, from shampoo to `lifestyles` which capitalism sees only as a commodity on the market. `The flood of the accurate information and groomed entertainment, make people both more skilled and more stupid`. ¹⁹³

However, in this note, once again it is reminded that capitalism

193. Maks Horkhajmer, Teodor Adorno , Dialectic of Enlightenment , Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1989, str. 11

is not only producing objects of which we have many redundant, or produces only mass entertainment which makes us stupid or makes us laugh. In the mass production of capitalism, it is a mass production of injustice as well, appropriating profits for itself, leaving the majority of people in poverty as well as in humiliation. Capitalism produces massive wars `...militarism is one of the most important forms of investment for capitalism. From the standpoint of capital, militarism is certainly a relief (for the society of economic pressure).¹⁹⁴ Capitalism is a producer of the mass death.

Namely, since the French Revolution and throughout the nineteenth century and during the twentieth century, 32 armed conflicts were recorded in the world. Until today, there were as many as 67 wars! For better comparison, since the end of the fifteenth century until the beginning of the nineteenth, through three centuries of growth of the power of bourgeoisie, the number of recorded wars was 30, almost as much in one, in nineteenth century¹⁹⁵, when the bourgeoisie is already a class in power.

In the 21st century, and today in 2012, each year was the outbreak of armed conflict, since the war in Macedonia (2001) until the war in Libya (2011).

The wars and violence in general, are all the more common, more intense. `Legitimate gratefulness of the ones who remained spared, consists of uncompromising hatred against the terror performed even over the last of the creatures,`¹⁹⁶ wrote Horkheimer and Adorno, after their experience of World War II. This terror, which has not yet stopped taking new forms, requires an organized resistance that could create a more just society.

194. Roza Luksemburg, Social Reform or Revolution , BIGZ, Beograd, 1975, str. 103

195. <http://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

196. Maks Horkhajmer, Teodor Adorno, Dijalektika prosvetiteljstva, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1989, str. 227



Miloš Urošević

Punishment of the crime – the way to a just peace

Women in Black experiences of monitoring trials

Monitoring of trials is an integral part of our activities, which could be divided into the period before and after the fall of the criminal regime.

I Trials before and after the fall of the criminal regime

1. Mounted trials to members of Albanian nationality from Kosovo and Serbia, trials were held in Belgrade and Niš

After the military intervention (1999), as well as during 2000, until the fall of the criminal regime, we paid special attention to trial monitoring of the victims of political repression and institutional apartheid in Kosovo.

We were monitoring trials to members of Albanian nationality and expressed our support to victims of political trials against Albanians in front of Serbian courts

(Belgrade, Niš).

The trial of poet and activist Flora Brovina before the Court of Niš: in December 1999, she was sentenced to a twelve-year prison term, although her guilt was not proven. During the closure Flora Brovina, that very same day (9th of December 1999) presented a powerful and moving testimony: *'My homeland is everywhere where my friends are, where they*

read my poems...`.¹⁹⁷

It sent huge reverberations throughout the world, and both the International *Women in Black* Network and associated networks initiated a world campaign of solidarity. It is very important that we were supported by Serbian civil society in our demand for the liberation of Flora Brovina. We decided to step up the campaign shortly before the session of Serbian Supreme Court (16th of May, 2000.) but unfortunately it did not happen (she was released by the end of 2000) Namely, we adduced in our appeal-`Freedom for Flora Brovina – we are all Flora Brovina`, and among other things: `Flora Brovina has been sentenced to twelve years of jail for `terrorism`. She was sentenced without proven guilt. Incriminating material are bandages and wool for knitting. Her `guilt` is being an activist of a humanitarian organization, organizing of peaceful actions against the repression of this regime, violence and war. Each of us could be sentenced for the same `criminal deeds`. We are all Flora Brovina`, etc. We got support for the liberation of Flora Brovina from courageous organizations of civil society, first of all women organizations and not only from Belgrade, but from Čačak, Kraljevo, Niš, Leskovac, Velika Plana, Novi Sad, Pirot, Kikinda, Šabac.¹⁹⁸

Also, we should remind of the support we got from the Writers' Forum and especially from poet Radmila Lazić who also attended the trial, wrote about it and actively advocated for Flora Brovina`s liberation. She wrote an eminent article `Give a pen to Flora Brovina`.¹⁹⁹

A collective trial before the Military Tribunal in Niš (1999), to the so-called `Đakovica group`-143 Albanian civilians who were randomly captured in three streets of Đakovica, retaliation and only because they were Albanians, was a real Stalinist process which lasted just as long as

197. Staša Zajović`s , 12th of December 1999., Women for peace, 2001., Women in Black

198. We are all Flora Brovina-Freedom for Flora Brovina, statement of WiB of 12th of May 2000.

199. Lazić, Radmila `Give a pen to Flora Brovina`, Women for peace, 2001. page 153.



it took for the sentence to be pronounced by former military prosecutor Goran Petronijević (who is nowadays famous defense attorney of war crimes criminals before the Special Court in Belgrade, as well as of the indictees of Serbian nationality before the Hague Tribunal). Criminal behavior of Serbian state institutions is reflected in the judgment to 'Đakovica's group'. Judge Goran Petronijević entered the annals of justice when he said, addressing the group of 143 Albanians: *'Knowing that it is impossible to prove the individual responsibility of each one of you, you are all collectively responsible.'*

Judicial procedure to Albin Kurti, leader of Students Union of the University in Priština: one more mounted trial in front of Court in Niš, in March of 2000. After the trial which lasted for 30 minutes, during which Albin Kurti acknowledged his guilt by saying: 'I am proud of my work, if I had the chance again, I would do the same and I do not regret it. I do not care to how long you are going to sentence me: 10, 20, 30 or 40 years,' the sentence was fifteen years because of 'endangering the territorial integrity of SRJ' as well as for the 'criminal association for hostile activities in connection with terrorism'. He was also convicted without any charges being proved'.²⁰⁰

Those sentences also exposed the political arbitrariness of the criminal regime and its abuse of the judiciary. The sentences were not only the expression of state repression but the continuation of the war by other means, the continuation of permanent production of hatred, ethnic discrimination, silencing of all who are different and distinct.

Though we did not attend the trial, because most of the sessions were not announced, we also initiated a campaign for the liberation of twenty-year-old Albanian Igbale Džafai. We addressed it to all the international organizations, UN. Namely, it was about an 'anonymous' girl who was accused of terrorism, involvement in armed actions of OVK'.

Igbale Džafai was kidnapped during NATO bombing by OVK

200. Zajović, Staša 'Smile of Albin Kurti', March 2000, published in Women for peace, 2001. page 145.

members, she was raped by one of them, she was captured for one week in the woods and then she was released. On her arrival home, in her village Miraše (Uroševac), Igbale reported to the police that she had been kidnapped and raped and after the trial, she was punished with one year prison sentence. She was sent to serve the sentence and in the beginning of September 1999, she gave birth to her first child. This case confirms that rape is carried out both by liberation and the aggressor armies... 201

The trial of the group of five students of Albanian nationality, at Belgrade University (2000) who were accused of joining an illegal political group People's Movement of Kosovo, which allegedly collected money from Albanian private entrepreneurs of Belgrade for the armament of OVK, the defendants were accused of terrorist actions at a time of imminent danger of war and during the war. Students were jailed until the end of 2000. 202

2. Mounted/political trials to members of Serbian nationality–political opponents

Criminal processes against the leaders of civil society which were held in Serbia during 1999 and 2000 before the Courts in Leskovac and Valjevo (trial of Ivan Novković and

Bogoljub Arsenijević-Maki), who were accused of engaging in activities against the regime (organizing civil demonstrations, appeal for civic disobedience, etc). We organized campaigns of support to the persecuted opponents of the regime all over the world. 203

201. Women for peace, 2001., page 69.

202. Report from the trial to Albanian students, Women for peace, 147-149.

203. Appeals and support, Women in Black International Network meeting, Ulcinj, 10.10.1999.



II Trials after the fall of the regime we have followed in the Special Court for war crimes

The Law on processing war crimes was passed in Serbia in 2003 and the War Crimes Prosecution, as well as the War Crimes Chamber of Belgrade District Court with Special Court and Department for War Crimes of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia, were in charge of its implementation.

Special Court

The Special Court is an important mechanism of transitional justice. In spite of all the difficulties, the trials for war crimes are still going on. This Court should be a kind of domestic Hague Tribunal, in which the trials should continue even when ICTY terminates its work and the trials are transferred to the domestic prosecution.

The Special Court for war crimes in Belgrade, just like the Tribunal in the Hague, does not have in its statute crimes against peace/engaging in aggression of war, as the Nuremberg Tribunal had. This implies that the the context of war is not examined, so that the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia are defined as armed conflicts/civil war and not as aggression by the state of Serbia. The Special Court has a lots of deficiencies:

Capacity

The Special Court is faced with the lack of capacities, there are lots of crimes, and even more perpetrators, but limited physical capacities, which is why trial procedures last long and they are few. Also, the Court is faced with the lack of funding. The Special Court has only five judges for war crimes, though the crimes were numerous and the number of perpetrators was even greater.

Accusations/Crimes

All the crimes are presented as isolated cases/incidents, not as planned, organized and executed by the state. Such charges are intended to demonstrate that the crimes were executed by paramilitary armies, which had broken loose from the commanding chain and not just `screws` in the whole `death machinery`. During the war, crimes were organized by the state and on the trials they are presented as state organized lies.

Since its inception, the prosecution have processed 383 persons. In total 143 persons have been indicted and the number of victims amounts to 2598. There have been 26 cases in total, 58 sentenced persons and 11 released.

Duration of court proceedings

Court proceedings last very long and it exhausts witnesses, damaged as well as victims of families. It does not does meet the legal standards of fair trial.

The accused

In the Special Court processed are only the lowest ranking perpetrators and not the high ranking military, police or political officials of the criminal regime, who are still out of reach of justice and keep living in impunity. The examples are numerous: Goran Radosavljević Guri, Obrad Stevanović, Božidar Delić, Veljko Kadijević, Blagoje Adžić, Života Panić, Dobrica Ćosić. The perpetrators are presented as members of various paramilitary formations, but they do not take into account that all the paramilitary formations were placed under the direct command of the Yugoslav National Army, as of 1991. Later on, they became part of the reserve troopers of the Police or Yugoslav Army.



Verdicts

Court councils in most of the cases sentence merely the executors, while their commanders are liberated due to a 'lack of evidences'. This kind of tendency aims at shifting away responsibility from top stat officials, who organized and ordered all of the crimes. The aim of the Prosecution is to exonerate Serbia from all responsibility for those acts. The Supreme Court of the Republic of Serbia has abolished many sentences and ordered that the procedure and the trial be renewed, which is not more that the continuation of the impunity policy.²⁰⁴

Special Court-reverberation in the public

The media coverage of the activities of the Special Court in is poor, because the trials are monitored only by two news agencies. It shows disinterest of Serbian society for the issue of confronting the past and punishment of war crimes. The society still lives in a culture of impunity, incapable of empathy with all the others who are different or have survived the crimes which were committed in our name.

The public in Serbia is not informed enough about the activities of the Special Court, because the news upon the trials is very brief and infrequent, in the press as well as in the electronic media. In accordance with the public opinion poll²⁰⁵, trials as well as the Special Court are marginalized the influence on Serbian society and its commitment to SP. VRZ does not allow TV broadcast and the Serbian media are not interested to follow up the trials. The spokesperson of the War Crimes Council, has attempted to meet up twice a week with media representatives, but he had to abandon this practice, because just few journalists responded.

204. Urošević, Miloš, roundtable-`Transitional justice-feminist approach`, 9th of July 2009., Belgrade and Zajović, Staša `Transitional justice-feminist approach-Women in Black experiences`, 2007.

205. Subotić, Jelena, `Abduction of justice: facing the past on the Balkans`, 2010. page 80.

The public in Serbia is not interested in being informed about the cases of prosecution of war crimes, the prevailing view being that we should not deal with the past, that it should be forgotten, or swept under the carpet. The society wants a future without a critical review on the past and without it, the so much-desired future is impossible: 'Today we work intensively on a past without war, in which the most disturbing factor is war. The actual is fabrication of a version of the past without war in which people who come from different ideological and other backgrounds are reconciled, though they were involved in the war, in conflict relations, but today they are being reconciled in a past without war', (Snježana Milivojević).

Legitimacy of *Women in Black* – to be witnesses of a time/to testify about evil times

It is important to testify for many reasons: it is a way to gather the knowledge on this model of transitional justice within the institutional justice system of models of transitional justice as a way of strengthening the accountability of civil society in facing the past, as well as a contribution to sensitizing the public for crimes committed in our name. Monitoring of the trials is for us, first of all, solidarity with the victims, because our contacts with the relatives of victims, who also monitor the trials, are precious in the moral, emotional and political sense. Within this activity, we organize meetings with the relatives of the victims, as well as with representatives of organizations from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, which monitor the trials, we organize circles for discussion with groups within the Network, in the public too, we write reports and conduct analyses, etc.

Women in Black Serbian Network activists said their most important reasons for monitoring the trials are: solidarity with the relatives of the executed who monitor the trials, deconstruction of the state organized crimes, the fact that the state organized and executed those crimes in our



names, to assume responsibility as women, activists, feminists etc.²⁰⁶

We attend the trials at the Special Court because we want to hear the voices of the survivors, to hear their story, so that they can tell us what happened to them, to create space for confidence, compassion, to inform them that we know what has happened to them, to acknowledge their suffering, to say that we are sorry. To be together with them in the successor state of the that which fought the war and executed them, to help them on the occasion of their visits to the Court.

Court proceedings

Women in Black used to monitor and still do certain trials:

- Scorpions (fro from December 2005 until April 2007) – 9 days
- Suva Reka (from October 2006 until April 2009) – 7 days
- Lovas (from April 2008) – 112 days
- Podujevo (from September 2008 until June 2009) – 27 days
- Zvornik (from March 2009. until November 2010) – 40 days
- Ćuška (since December 2010) – 32 days

We spent 347 days in total monitoring trials since February 2012

Scorpions

Trial to five members of `Scorpions` unit for the murder of six men of Muslim nationality from Srebrenica, in Godinjske Bare, near Trnovo, 16/17th of July 1995.

206. Subotić, Jelena, `Abduction of justice: facing the past on the Balkans`, 2010. page 80.

Suva Reka

Trial to eight members of Serbian Ministry of Internal affairs, for the murder of fifty civilians/Albanians from Kosovo (48 members of Berisha family), 26th of March, 1999. in Suva Reka, in pizzeria Calabria.

Podujevo

Trial to four members of `Scorpions` unit, for murder of 19 civilians/Albanians from Kosovo, 28th of March, 1999, in Podujevo, at no. 7, Rahman Morina street, in the yard of Hallim Gashi`s home. On that occasion, five children were wounded. For the war crime in Podujevo, until now, Saša Cvjetan, a member of `Scorpions` unit, was sentenced to twenty years of jail, in 2005.

Zvornik

Trial of two persons, military and political officials of Republika Srpska, for the murder of 700 men, Bosnian Muslims, on 1st of June, 1992 in Gerina klanica, during the aggression of Serbia against Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Lovas

Trial of fourteen members of the Yugoslav National Army/Territorial Defense/volunteer unit `Dušan the Powerful` for the execution of 69 Croatian civilians in the village of Lovas, in October of 1991, during the Serbian aggression against Croatia.

Ćuška

Trial of nine members of `Jackals unit` for murder of 43 civilians/Albanians from Kosovo, on 14th of May in 1999, in the village of Ćuška (municipality of Peć). Three men have survived the massacre.



Who are the perpetrators?

The perpetrators of war crimes in the territory of ex Yugoslavia acted as state death squads/technical executors of state-organized crimes, from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to Kosovo.

Descartes declared: 'I think, therefore I exist', and they translated this maxim into: 'I execute, therefore I exist', and during the trials they transformed it into: 'I deny, therefore I exist'. In the war, perpetrators went on death expeditions along the highway of 'Brotherhood and unity', sewing death. On the trials, the perpetrators are in the plot/crime/burden/heritage of silence.

Scorpions`

Slobodan Medić: 'The only three things I only care about in my life are: pussy, rifle and state.'

Aleksandar Medić: 'I think we should say here, because of the mothers who are present, that the murdered ones were civilians, and that they did not resist, that they were killed because it was ordered, and only because they were Muslims.'

Pero Petrašević: 'In front of God I certainly am guilty and whether I am guilty of obeying orders, is for you to decide.'

Suva Reka

Radoslav Mitrović: 'Me and my men were engaged in the cleansing of the terrain. Albanian population was leaving their houses due to UCK and OVK. I am a highly professional commander.'

Repanović Radojko: 'My goal is to prove my innocence, I do not know why I've been held in custody, I believe in this institution. I, as a conscientious citizen made a mistake but committed no criminal act.'

Jovanović Nenad: 'I am sorry for what has happened as a human being, a citizen, and a parent. I am clean, innocent, I am not guilty.'

Čukarić Slađan: 'I did not kill anybody, none of the monstrous things they ascribe to me.'

Milorad Nišavić: 'The court will confirm my innocence, I will prove I bear no responsibility.'

Miroslav Petković: 'I feel sorry for all the victims.'

Podujevo

Đukić Željko: 'We had been informed that we were part of the reserve troopers of the Serbian Ministry for Internal Affairs. I do not deny that crimes happened. It did happen, but not on those dates. The crimes happened, but I do not know how. I did not do it.'

Borojević Dragan: 'I was involved on all the theaters of war in the territory of ex Yugoslavia, from 1991 until 1999. Some of the officers told us at the time: 'In the war, you must not execute women, children and military prisoners.'

Medić Dragan: 'I deny all the charges against me, I consider myself innocent. I do not want to answer any questions.'

Borojević Dragan: 'I am not guilty. I feel sorry for those kids but I did not have anything to do with it.'

He did not recognize the sketches of the crime scene, or photos of the victims.

Šolaja Miodrag: 'I do not admit the criminal act, because I did not commit it. I did not know to whom I belong to, I was a volunteer. I had no allegiance. I did not even know where I was going or what I would be doing. I went on Kosovo to defend Serbia.'



Zvornik

Brano Grujić: 'I am glad it is over. In Zvornik there was a war. Kozluk was not forcibly evicted. They were allowed to leave quietly. They have returned to their homes. It was a human relocation. Nobody should be held responsible for something that others have done.'

Lovas

Ljuban Devetak: 'The Prosecutor described me in the indictment as someone who organized everything and was in charge, which is not true.'

Milan Devčić: 'What is in the new indictment has no nothing to do with the truth.'

Milan Radojčić: 'I was not part of what have happened de facto and de jure.'

Željko Krnjajić: 'If there had been no resistance , nobody would have got killed in the village.'

Miodrag Dimitrijević: 'I was not involved in the war crimes which occurred there.'

Zoran Kosjer: 'The indictment is the prosecutor's ploy. What is going on here is a political trial, because we were members of a certain political party.'

Aleksandar Nikolaidis: 'Ljuban Devetak brought to me Snežana Krizmanić, immediately after the conquest of Lovas and he said: 'Take her, fuck her and kill her.'

Saša Stojanović: 'I was a military policeman in the army, I was in the reserve troops of the Federal Police Department.'

Dragan Bačić: 'I am not violent. I was never a member of any party or of the formation 'Dušan the powerful', I wasn't armed and did not wear a uniform. I went there because of my job.'

Zoran Kosjer: 'I was member of the Serbian National Renewal party, and was never a member of the formation 'Dušan the powerful'. I considered myself a Serbian volunteer, who defended the territorial integrity and state sovereignty, as well as the constitutional order of Social Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, against the secessionist Croatian groups of Zenge, Territorial defense, with the legacy of Ustasha's crimes in the Civil War.'

Radovan Vljaković: 'I went there in order to give my life, not to kill anybody. The Yugoslav National Army was responsible for everything that happened in Lovas. 'Dušan the powerful' is a volunteer unit who operated under the command of the Yugoslav National Army'.

Radisav Josipović: 'I do not feel guilty, with any of my act I did not jeopardize anybody's safety or life in Lovas. I am not a perpetrator.'

Jovan Dimitrijević: 'I did not go to make war. I did not go as a civilian, a citizen. We did not know, they did not tell us where we were going, or what we were going to do. I do not feel guilty, I did not kill anyone, for that matter.'

Ćuška

All the indictees said: 'OVK is a terrorist organization and terrorists or those who support them should be killed', 'The West blackmails Serbia to force it to accuse Serbs and so Serbia has to indict innocent people, and they are innocent, though they have been indicted,' or 'It is known that only Serbs are being charged with war crimes, and even in those wars Serbs are those who have been the most victimized,' and frequently 'the yellow house' was mentioned ('certainly an

Albanian was killed by a Serb, but Serbs were kidnapped and



Albanians were removing their organs, 'Here they prosecute innocent Serbs and not the Albanians for the yellow house events', 'If some of the Serbs killed an Albanian it is only because they had removed their organs in that 'yellow house' and executed them afterwards'...). Without any exception, each of the accused mentioned the 'yellow house' and the political as well as the financial pressures and blackmails, which 'Those Westerners', or those 'foreigners' exert on Serbia. After so many times of mentioning of the 'yellow house' and the 'pressures on Serbia', the denial of any crime continued, even of indirect involvement in crimes, as well as any knowledge that in the village of Čuška there had been the slightest incident, let alone anyone's execution. About the crimes, 'if there were any', they only just found out, for the first time, from the indictment.

Who are the victims?

The victims are the civilians population, only because in that historical moment their name was different, and that is why there were labeled as the enemy. Court proceedings have shown until now, that military and police formations of the Republic of Serbia in the wars of aggression, waged war against the civilian population. Under the excuse of 'preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity and constitutional order', and at same time insisting that 'Serbia was not involved in the war', crimes were committed. But, victims are also those who have survived and testify about war crimes.

Scorpions`

Safeta Muhić: 'I always wanted to face them. Always wanted to ask them: 'What kind of people you are? Are you human?'

Nura Alispahić: 'I gave Asmir half of the bread and a handful of salt. Azmir was sixteen years old.'

Salkić Osman: `I have lost everything, my soul is empty. This Court might wash off the stain from the face of the Serbian people, because people do believe that the war came from here. If there had not been for Serbia there would have been no war.`

Ibrahimović Samir: `I would like to ask the executors: Why did you not give him water before the execution?` And then he asked the Court Council: `Why did they shoot at him even after they had killed him?`

Salkić Hana: `I want to see those who killed my child...I just want a fair trial for the perpetrators if there is justice anywhere... I want to mark the grave of my kid. My husband was killed in the village of Kravice – I have buried only half of his body.`

Suva Reka`

Šireta Beriša: `I am a living corpse, so that I could tell what they have done to them. They took the money, soul, everything. I am alive, though dead and still I am living. They took our lives away on 26th of March`.

Podujevo`

Saranda Bogujevci: `I have lost my mother, two brothers, cousin Nora, who was like a sister to me. I still have numerous scars, limited movements of the hand, I can not bend my arm in the elbow, cannot move my fingers. I was wounded three times in my arm, twice in my leg and twice in my back. It is hard. I have to live with it every day.`

Jehona Bogujevci: `We were just kids, we hadn't not done anything wrong. We thought they would not kill children. I cried and said that they had killed everyone. I know they have killed all of them.`

Lirije Bogujevci: `This event has influenced my whole life. I have to explain to everyone why I have so many wounds. My mother Šefketa was killed, my cousin Nora, my cousins Špetim and Špendim.`



Fatos Bogujevci: `My mother was crying and begging: `Please do not kill them, they are just kids.` One soldier pushed her and shot her. She fell on the ground and he shot her once more. We started to cry, we shouted. When the shooting started, they all fell over one another. People were still breathing, they were alive, but they started shooting again. I closed my eyes, I felt a strange smell, there was blood everywhere`.

Safet Bogujevci: `When I excavated my family, then I excavated my sons' bones, they were headless corpses. They have to be punished for sure, but no matter what, they put an end to so many lives. We are all human and I do not know how they could commit such crimes. Even if they gave me millions, they would be worthless to me, because human life cannot be restored.`

Seljatin Bogujevci: `In August of 1999, in the yard of Hallim Gashi, where the murder took place, we found 97-98 shells. In my children's bodies, I found shells of bullets, I took them out of my daughter Saranda's body, but the body of my son Genz still carries them.`

Enver Durići: `I always expected my death, and it was not so catastrophic, but the reverse happened. I told to my sister: `The sun had set forever. After so many beatings, a man does not exist any more. There is no price on Earth which could compensate the price of human life.`

Zvornik

Mevludin Lupić: `Any kind of punishment, for the accused means the right to live, and it was taken away from all those who were with us`.

Suvada Selimović: `Our people did not have a choice, either to stay or to go, they did not have where to go, no exit. I always have this picture before my eyes. I got my eight-months-old baby in my arms, and I held my other child by the hand. And there was a soldier who was picking green plums and pegged them into my baby's head. The children were screaming, but I could not do anything. I saw them being taken away

with their hands tied by their necks and how they beat them. They were all in blood and the children were screaming for their fathers.'

Fatimka Mustajbašić: 'We lost eleven men from five households of ours. Because of my dead children, I speak only the truth. Anyone who has children will know how I feel. I could not cry. I was petrified, my eye were tearless. The man who shot my children, does he have his own children? How could he done it? I remember everything as it had happened yesterday. I will never be able to forget, ever'.

Ismeta Okanović: 'We have heard that they killed all of them at Eid, they were all executed on that very same day. When they told me that they were dead, only then did I believe they had been executed. We saw their bones after ten years, when we came back.'

Ermina Suljić: 'Here they took my child of me, saying one day he would be a man. But, I started to cry and took him back. Then, they separated my husband. He has not been found yet. Now, I would not allow anyone to expel me from my house. I would resist.'

Lovas

Snežana Krizmanić: 'Life was worthless at their hands. Every silence was painful. Petronije had told them that I had been cutting off fingers of Serbian children and making necklaces. On 29th of November, 1991, Aca took me to his brother's apartment. I cried and begged him not to rape me. He looked mellowed. I refused to take off my clothes. Then he hit me, and pulling my hair he pushed me on the bed and raped me.'

Ćuška

Hazir Beriša: 'When soldiers came, I heard somebody saying: 'In the name of the state of Serbia, you are all going to be executed. I did not come here to lie and I am not interested if anyone is sentenced, first of all I came to tell what criminals have done to innocent people and civilians.'



Hadri Čeku: 'The crimes those people have committed, history does not remember and they owe us an apology. I did not come here to lie but to speak on the reality I have lived through.'

Court Judgments?

Judgments of Court Councils:

- the legal system does not provide justice,
- they conceal the responsibility of the Serbian state in the organization of those crimes
 - they show the crimes as if they were not organized by the state
 - they conceal the fact that the doctrine of national security was used for the elimination of all the others with different names
 - they caused pain to the families of the victims, humiliate their dignity as well as that of the survivors, discourage their expectations regarding the punishment of the crimes,
 - the level of certain sentences are cynical and offensive for the victims, so they lose/do not have trust in the judiciary system of the state who executed them
 - they relativize the crimes
 - there were no institutional reforms (we are still living in a country where the crimes are not punished), in the climate of moral and criminal law with impunity.

`Scorpions`

The Court Council brought the verdict in which four of the perpetrators were sentenced and the one was released.

The Court Council explained that the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina had been a civil war. In that way they deny the fact that Serbia conducted aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and did not prevented genocide,

as International Court of Justice determined on 27th of February 2007. The Court Council stated there is no evidence that the dates were 15th, 16th and 17th of July, as it is written in the indictments, and that there is no evidence that the executed were from Srebrenica. It was ascertained that the executed men were civilians, and that three of them were juveniles. The truth is that Scorpions were a special unit of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs, and that is why Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović, as chiefs, were indicted before the Hague Tribunal. In this indictment, the unit Scorpions is treated as a unit of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs under control of Serbian State security, (April, 2007)

Suva Reka

The Court Council sentenced four of the indictees and the other four were released. With this verdict the impunity of planners and commanders continues: the highest police officials, as state representatives, are being allowed to walk free, as well as their commanders, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia and their death squads, made up of members of Special police units.

Though the verdict has its deficiencies, the positive aspects of these trials are :

- it was proved beyond any doubt that the crime in Suva Reka was committed
- it was also proved beyond any doubt that the perpetrators of those crimes were members of Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs, (*April, 2009.*)

Zvornik

The first defendant, Brano Grujić, was sentenced to a six-year prison term, while the second defendant, Branko Popović, was sentenced to fifteen years of prison.



It is unacceptable that the first defendant should get such a small penalty, when it is known that he held a position which implies command responsibility, because he had to know about the crimes, and he showed cruelty on Muslim prisoners, just because their names were different. We consider taking into account mitigating circumstances as unacceptable (e.g. 'family circumstances of the accused'), when it comes to war crimes, (*November, 2010*).

Outside the consensus or witnesses who do not deny...

'Scorpions'

Jovan Mirilo: 'a man who testified against the defendants, who had been seen as 'ther traitor, because my wife was Croatian'. The price he has had to pay for his testimony is constant threats addressed to him and to his family, coming from partners from his unit. The first defendant said it with enthusiasm: 'We have many people of ours outside.' This witness has been condemned to permanent solitude and isolation, in the small city he lives in: 'The freedom I live in is the prison.' He can visit only one of the coffee restaurants, in all the others he is not welcome', (*April, 2006.*)

Suva Reka

Velibor Veljković: policeman, witness, who recounted the whole story about the crime: 'on 24th March, the crime happened and therefore I am here today.' He said he refused to accept the task of killing Albanians, because he considered it to be a criminal act, and there is no rule of that kind in the regulation of police use of firearms. It also proves that the state had organized those crimes, that state had conducted them, and it is obvious that they had been preconceived, nothing happened accidentally. On behalf of the defendants, he said: 'They knew exactly what they were doing.' Witness Velibor Veljković, who is 'disobedient

to his unit partners`, precisely said: `Albanians did not shoot at us, and the victims were civilians. All the bodies were civilians, nobody was in uniform.`

He also mentioned various groups: first, the `group for executions` acted, then the `group for collecting corpses` and at the end for cleaning, (*November, 2006.*)

Ćuška

Zoran Rašković: `Witnesses who have abandoned the program of witness protection, recounted the story of bloodshed: `When the bombing started, a crystal night followed. Serbs broke all the windows of Albanian shops they could. I remember Ranko Momić forced an Albanian girl to orally satisfy him while they were looting. On the same day, we went to Ćuška, and commander `Dead` (Nebojša Minić) said: ` Lets get moving and hunt down the Germans.` Before the village of Ćuška, crimes occurred in Bražanik (near Peć) and in the village of Ljubenić (municipality of Peć, where on the 1st of April in 1999, sixty-six Albanian civilians were killed, but this is not the subject of this indictment). The `Dead` used to brag: “You approach an Albanian from the back, under the certain angle, then you shoot his head and it is easy to see how his skull and brain are flying in the air.” Next were Pavljani and Zahać. In Pavljani, I saw Ranko Bosanac raping an Albanian woman. She was folded over the couch. He then asked us if we wanted to have a bit of fun, while she whimpered, she did not cry. When he came, he wiped it on her, and then he pushed his Kalashnikov inside of her vagina and fired. I have reformed my consciousness. That cannot be justified by saying that they did the same to us. A villain is a villain. Then we arrived in Zahać. One boy from Kragujevac was riding a donkey and was shooting from a Kalashnikov, and Srećko Popović told me to let him be because it is the way he finds relief. In Ćuška we were organized, in Zahać we were not. Some thirty houses burned, robbing people and driven out, but I did not see any mass murder. Ranko and Dead had a disagreement

over how Albanians give out information in the fastest possible way. The Dead said that when he switches a hot iron and puts it on the body of an Albanian, as soon as the iron begins to burn, he speaks out. And Ranko claimed it was faster when he struck him with a rifle butt on the head, and while he shakes his brain, and peels his hair off from his head. Not all the people in this unit were war crimes perpetrators. We were there until three o'clock in the afternoon. From there, we left with about two dozen of stolen cars. Ranko Bosanac had blank certificates signed by the Albanians, giving away their cars to him, in exchange for not being executed. Srećko Popović and Šumadija killed two Albanians near one barn. When we returned, we went back to the truck singing, with the three-fingers raised in the air. Later I learned that the real reason to go to the village was Agim Čeku. Then I heard Dead saying to Siniša: 'I am impressed by the way you slaughtered him, so that I did not have to kill him afterwards.'

Witness testified: 'I am revolted, angry, upset and I do not feel safe. I have been accused by mistake for the rape of the daughter of Iso Baljaj, the butcher. I have a witness for this but he is afraid to face the court, regarding all those security measures. My crucial question would be why the witnesses are scared. I am ready for the threats, I am not scared of the 'Jackals'. I was informed by a high police official that the Albanians are executing their witnesses and so I should be careful and think what I do. They are threatening to my father and my mother that they will be executed, slaughtered. The police was sent to my father. He is not under protection, and he lives in the refugee camp. The police invades and searches the apartment looking for weapons. No one from the witness protection unit has visited them, yet.

What happens to me is not because of the 'Jackals', but because of the other, more powerful people. I want to reveal the names of the people who were filling Serbia with refrigerator vans full of corpses of women and children. I do not know for how long Serbia will keep protecting war crime perpetrators who were killing in its name. In the Prosecution office they say to me that I am courageous and a patriot. I am a Serb and

have Serb genes, I am someone who has an attitude, who is disobedient, who does not play along with the others, and I am ready to die for it. There will be no trade with it. I am here in the name of ideals, I do not betray Serbia, I defend all those three Serbian armies which were honestly dying until the capitulation. Not all the Serbs were loading the refrigerator vans. They can kill me, but not the truth. I would not like to end up as the previous protected witness did, who was found with the stick in his ass and with his head cut off, by the road. Police officers tell me I am a skunk and they stare at me. If we have listened Milošević, Mladić, dr Dabić and grand duke Šešelj, lets hear something different now. It is inappropriate for attorney Petronijević, a convict who wears a bracelet, to declare that it is inconvenient that this trial should attract so much the media coverage. If the filth is pushed under the carpet, then the whole house stinks. Some of the politicians were involved in all these things. And I am sorry that this trial is so poorly monitored by the public,` (*January, 2012.*)

Women in Black as a human rights organization will continue to monitor the trials for war crimes, believing it is one of the ways to achieve the climate of institutional sanctioning of crime. Court judgments are of historical importance because the facts which are judicially determined are a precondition to start the process of facing the past. Believing that the trials for war crimes are the places where the voices of the victims could be heard, Women in Black will continue to monitor the trials, providing emotional, moral and political support to the relatives of the victims of the crimes committed in our names.



Marijana Stojčić and Ivana Vitas

FROM THE GLOBALISATION OF POVERTY TO THE GLOBALISATION OF SOLIDARITY, PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE

Belgrade's Women in Black emerged as a pacifist feminist organisation that, from the start, has been searching for different answers to the questions about the reality in Serbia – wars, nationalist mobilisation, quick impoverishment of its citizens followed by the ‘transfer’ of social wealth into the private pockets of people close to the political regime. *Women in Black's* activities are not only opposing the dominant nationalist discourse, but searching for alternatives to the system (first at the local level, and, with time, at the global one). These activities did not get ‘used up’ on one subject, because being against the war and the patriarchal structure of power also meant being against the most varied forms of discrimination, oppression and injustice, as well as against the system that creates and reproduces them. Activities that began primarily as resistance to war and its consequences imposed, with time, the need to reflect both theoretically and in the activist sense on the globalisation that became one of the key topics in the late nineties.

On the one hand, resistances to globalisation articulated themselves as xenophobic and retrograde, as anti-globalisation. They advocate shutting oneself up in rigid religious, ethnic and gender identities, and the “defence” of the traditional ways of life and practices in opposition to “the alienation of the globalised western world.” Regardless of the differences among them, they unite in attacks onto women’s human rights and attempts to reduce women to machines for giving birth for

the nation and/or religion.²⁰⁷ On the other hand, there also is a resistance to globalisation not as a “global process of creating as more and more dense network of connectedness and interdependency,” but as resistance to neoliberal and authoritarian globalisation. Nowadays, the dominant model of globalisation implies total domination of the neoliberal economic model and its accompanying effects – an increasing abyss between rich and poor, the destruction of the achievements of the welfare state, the growth in all forms of violence and the strengthening of retrograde, racist, fundamentalist and militaristic tendencies, the elimination of the achieved level of economic and social rights. The resistance to this authoritarian globalisation in the name of peace, cosmopolitanism, social justice and solidarity with people oppressed around the world (regardless of race, gender, religion, culture, sexual or any other orientation), that is, in the name of all whose rights are completely or partially denied, is the essence of the alter-globalist movement.

Women in Black's alter-globalist position came and still come from the reflection about the experiences of activists and from the need to articulate them theoretically. The dominating terminological and conceptual confusion imposed a need to clarify the concepts and terms that appear in the public. On the one hand, this was encompassed in the joint reflection with activists and participants in courses and workshop and on the other, by organising conferences at which this practical experience could be reflected upon in a theoretical way. One of the key conferences in terms of shaping *Women in Black's* alter-globalist position is the “Globalisation of solidarity and social justice” international conference, held in the *Centre for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade* in 2003 and organised by *Women in Black, Women's Studies* and the *Society of Philosophy Students “Filonus.”* Activists from more than twenty towns in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany and Italy attended and discussed

207. For further information on the characteristics of fundamentalism, see: MariemeHeli-Lukas, „Šta je zajedničko fundamentalizmima?“ u MariemeHeli-Lukas, „Fundamentalizmidanas – feministički i demokratski odgovori“, *Žene u crnom* – Belgrade.



the dimensions of globalisation, its contradictions, consequences and alternatives.

The main fields of activity that were mentioned were:

- Clarifying the terminological confusion around globalisation;
- Clarifying the reasons for opposing unjust globalisation;
- Using the contradictions and vulnerability of globalisation in the benefit of peace, non-violence, and solidarity;
- Building and supporting small global media and systems of counter-information;
- Strengthening of civil society (especially the anti-war movement) on the local, regional and global levels;
- Encouraging relationships between the alter-globalist movement and non-governmental organisations.

Globalisation – for and/or against – what do we exactly talk about when we talk about globalisation?

Globalisation in its neo-liberal form shapes our present more than any other contemporary process. It develops itself as the globalisation of the neo-liberal economic mode, which is a powerful instrument of increasingly quicker creation of more and more world wealth. The generation of young people in the West today spend 6 times more than their parents; the global income increasing by 40% in just 165 years (1870-1985). The profits made by international corporations increased by 700%. There are a number of reasons for this efficiency:

- the massive deregulation, privatisation and liberalisation of capital and its transfer from the inert hands of bureaucratic states in the entrepreneurial hands of companies;

– the new global mobility: free movement of capital and the removing of protectionist barriers, while the most favourable conditions for a quick turnover of capital become the only criterion for investment: the cheapest working force and raw material possible, zones with lowest social costs and taxes on corporations;

– the reduction or elimination of public costs for social security, health and education, while the idea of full employment disappears by itself;

– the drastic reduction of aid to “developing countries”: economic aid has been divided by four in a few decades.²⁰⁸

On the political, social and cultural levels, globalisation manifests itself through the expansion of democracy and human rights, greater and greater connectedness and interdependency of states, the creation of supranational political institutions and networks of global political organisations, the creation of new forms of sociability across great distances thanks to new means of communications, the global security of information and the ever increasing reciprocal connectedness of cultures.

Only the positive or negative aspects of globalisation are emphasised in public discourse, but without any insights in the complexity and contradiction of globalisation. For most citizens, this makes understanding the actual state of things harder. Thus, globalisation stops being seen as a product of human activity whose shape it is possible to influence. It thus receives the status of inexorable natural force. Although the question of globalisation and its consequences have been running through all the activities of *Women in Black* in an indirect way, the need to clarify the concept itself, the factors contributing to globalisation and its positive and negative dimensions, manifestations and consequences resulted in a series of workshops dedicated to this precise topic in six towns in Serbia

208. Miroslav Pečujlić, „Globalizacija - dvalikasveta“ u: Ivana Pantelić, Vlado Pavićević, Vladimir Petrović, Goran Milovanović (ur.), “Aspekti globalizacije”, Beograd: Beogradska otvorena škola, p. 13.



in 2010. The aim was to familiarise the workshop participants with the gender dimension of neo-liberal globalisation and the consequences it has on the position of women on the labour market, the political, reproductive and sexual rights of women, as well as the presentation of the alternative and new global strategy developed by the alter-globalist movements against political, economic and military power (with special emphasis on the feminist movement).

The workshops showed that the participants easily recognise the positive and negative manifestations of globalisation and successfully link them with their own experiences, getting surprised and dumbfounded by the examples of successes of alter-globalist actions (often initiated by one person or a small group of people). This is what they mentioned the most as the most significant thing they got out of workshops.

Why are we against such a globalization?

Globalization is a contradictory process. As said before, on the one hand, it manifests itself in increasing world social wealth, computer revolution, the expansion of the movement for democracy and human rights on the global level, the globalisation of punishability, the creation of institutions of international justice, the creation of global networks: for human rights, women's human rights, peace, non-violence, against the negative effects of globalization and global military interventionism. On the other hand, it manifests itself in:

- The globalization of poverty – the increasing abyss between rich and poor;
- The decline of the role of the welfare state;
- Global militarism, global military interventionism and the explosion of international conflicts, as well as conflicts within individual states;
- The globalisation of international crime;
- The globalisation of conservatism and all forms of mentalisms.²⁰⁹

209. StašaZajović, "Globalizacija: pitanjaidgovori", Beograd: Žene u crnom,

While the first round – privatisation and deregulation, entrepreneurship and motivation, free movement of capital – forcefully increases economic efficiency, the rate of capital yielding, until now the second round – disassembling the welfare state and drastically constricting economic aid – inevitably leads to malign social consequences. In opposition to social capitalism and the project of the “welfare state,” which increased wealth and expanded well-being to all social classes at the same time, the neo-liberal formula increases the wealth of a small elite more and more quickly, but increase social inequality at the same time and leads to the globalisation of poverty.

A comparative snapshot of two historical periods – the period from 1960 to 1980 and the one from 1980 to 2000, which correspond to the reign of two different economic models – clearly shows that, according to all the indicators, *progress* in the last two decades of neoliberal globalisation is expressly smaller, significantly slowed down or completely stopped. The growth of gross national product drastically fell. In the group of the poorest countries, the fall is dramatic, with an annual rate of 2%, the growth fall by only 0.5%. In the group of ‘average’ countries, the fall is from 3.6% to 1%. In the second period, unemployment became 3 to 6 times bigger, even in states within the European Union. Social inequality between and within societies is becoming bigger and bigger. In 90 countries, the economic situation is worse than ten or twenty years ago; over 1.5 billion people live on 1 dollar a day. On the other hand, 255 world billionaires control more wealth than the combined annual income of countries where 45% of the world population live. The abyss is deepening more and more quickly. Income disparity between the richest and the poorest countries was of 1:3 at the beginning of the 19th century; and climbed “at a meteoric speed” to 1:13 at the beginning of the 20th century. But, while the differences in the sixties were at a ratio of 1:30 in the welfare state’s economy, they jumped to 1:60 in the nineties, and to 1:74 only seven years later, and then to 1:84.²¹⁰ At last, the *countries that*

2008, p. 12

210. UN Human Development Report 1999, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/>



globalised most quickly recorded high rates of economic growth (5-6.5%), as well as *drastic increase in social inequality* for almost one fifth (15-20%) at the same time. The deepening social polarisation does not dominate between the first and third worlds only: the “new poverty” spreads within wealthy societies as well. “The black holes of globalisation,” i.e. people and territories excluded from progress, can be found in each big city of the First world, in American urban ghettos, French Arab neighbourhoods, Japanese Zoseba areas. Millions of homeless people live in them, in a world of prostitution, crime and drugs, illness and illiteracy.²¹¹

The growth of inequality is only the reverse of another phenomenon: diminishing possibilities. Equality, freedom and justice in their unity of action are the basis of every quality society. If only one is abolished, the two other ones get cancelled as well. The idea of social justice is not separable from the concept of human rights. Discrimination is the most open contrary of equality. Discrimination manifests itself in a lot of different forms: gender-based, national, ethnic, religious, age, class-related, as well as forms of discrimination of poor and uneducated people. The accompanying phenomenon of neoliberal economic globalisation and of the expansion of poverty is an increasing insecurity of individuals, groups and states in various spheres – economic, financial, cultural, legal employment status, social, health, ecological, political as well as on a personal level.

The rules of globalisation are also tailored to benefit wealthy people: they encourage states to compete in terms of entrepreneurship, which lower taxes on corporation, weaken protection of health and environment and sap what we once saw as “basic” rights of workers. Most of the community ends up being deprived of influence on their earnings and, consequently, on every other aspect of decision-making. Economic, political and every other power are concentrated in a very small circle of power elites that do not suit anyone anymore. Parliamentary democracy is getting emptied of its essence and is increasingly becoming a media show. .

HDR_1999_EN.pdf

211. Manuel Castells, “End of Millennium,” London: Blackwell, 2000, p. 168

One of the most conspicuous features of this economic model is that the common resources of the planet are being used in such a way that only a drastic minority enjoys the fruits of natural riches, human work and knowledge. As a consequence of deregulation and privatisation, the state retracts from the public services sector (such as health, traffic and education), which results in the majority getting poorer and poorer and vulnerable (especially members of minority groups – women, religious, national and sexual minorities...). The budget cuts in health, education, child protection and social services means, among other things, the end of free or cheap care for children and old people. This burden of course completely falls on women as the primary carers in society.²¹² The double pressure on women, at work and at home, gets bigger with social pressure on them to make a choice to dedicate their time or paid work to either their carrier or their children. Even more so since private sector employers expect greater productivity and investment at work, as well as unpaid, volunteer, overtime work. Although the loss of workplaces affects men as well, it is harder for women to get into employment again because of the lack of particular education and qualifications, life cycle (employers favour younger women) and lack of independent access to capital, property, loans and resources. An increasing polarisation of employed people related to gender, age and qualifications is visible. Because of the incompatibility of economic and reproductive roles in changed economic conditions, the already weak economic position of women is additionally worsened. Research shows that the most jeopardised are families whose members have unsecure employment, single parents and marginal groups, which mainly women belong to due to the effect of multiple discriminations.²¹³ Authoritarian globalisation is not gender neutral, and gender appears as one of the key determinants of poverty.

212. Joanna Kerr, *Responding to Globalization: Can Feminists Transform Development?: A Practical Critique*, M. Porter & E. Judd (ed.), London & New York: Zed Books, 1999, pp. 191-192

213. For more information, see: Gosta Esping-Andersen, "Why We Need a New Welfare State?," Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002

In Serbia, the effects of the neoliberal economic model on peripheral societies are more complex, merging itself in synergy with the reality of Serbia as a post-conflict society with a devastated economy and high unemployment, heavy heritage of war crimes and wars in ex-Yugoslavia, destroyed institutions and corruption of the state apparatus,²¹⁴ erosion and destruction of the most basic solidarity. The heritage of authoritarian mentality, xenophobia systematically induced for many years and intolerance towards every difference (whether towards women, people from other nations, religions, races...) combines with the impossibility of most people to satisfy even their most basic needs.

According to official statistics, 700,000 people live below the poverty line, and around 1.3 million difficultly make ends meet. According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the unemployment rate reached 23.7% at the end of November 2011 (22.8% for men and 24.9% for women) with a tendency of further growth. According to the National Office for Employment, there are 746,000 unemployed, while the real number is estimated at around one million, with a tendency of further growth. From August 2008 to October 2010, 130,000 companies closed, 400,000 jobs were lost, 64,000 companies were on strike, and bankruptcy was anticipated for 25,000 companies, with a tendency of further growth.²¹⁵ 30% of companies do not respect the 40-hour week, the right to non-working days and annual leave.²¹⁶ 50,000 workers do not receive a salary in Serbia, and 650,000 receive their salary two or more months late. According to the data of the Association of free and independent trade unions, 105,000 workers, i.e. 5.6% of employed

214. Taking only the example of privatisation, the extent of corruption and abuse was such that the state has had to cancel 629 of 2,281 privatisations because the new owners had stopped production, sold off the equipment and reduced workers' salaries. See: <http://www.cins.org.rs/?p=7466>

215. According to the statement made by the president of the Association of small and medium enterprises, Milan Knežević <http://rs.seebiz.eu/drustvo/nezaposlenost-u-srbiji-preko-27-/ar-15824/>

216. <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/aktuelno.290.html:357010-Gazden-haju-za-radno-vreme>

people, earn less than 200 euros a month in Serbia.²¹⁷ It is most often the case in catering, textile and skin industry and agricultural production where the participation of women is usually dominant. Even when they have a job, women mainly work in less-paid activities and jobs that leave enough time for family and upbringing children.²¹⁸

The situation of unemployed women in Serbia is defined by little possibilities for sustainable employment, low and irregular unemployment benefits, little chances for requalification and professional reorientation and high likelihood that they are engaged in unpaid jobs at home or in the “grey economy” without formal work contract, without social insurance or pension fund, without security whatsoever.

The participants in our workshops also confirmed this:

I have no security at all for tomorrow. I've been employed for three years, I worked in the private sector and my employer did not pay pension contributions for my years of employment. I didn't know what to do. The state doesn't do anything in this respect, and I don't have money to sue him. The employer has powerful contacts and I can't do anything to him. (Dimitrovgrad)

Our survival is threatened because of the corruption of the system. Laws aren't respected, affairs aren't disclosed, and state control doesn't exist. The legal system doesn't work. (Belgrade)

217. <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/aktuelno.69.html:346835-Rade-a-ne-primaju-plate>

218. Statistical data show that the biggest shares of women in the percentage of employed people in the period from 2001 from 2005 was recorded in the textile and skin industry (85%), health, pharmaceuticals and social care (83%), trade (77%) and education (76%). Women's participation depends on the education level of the institution, so that among kindergarten teachers, 95.5% are women while the percentage of women among university professors is 29.4% (RZS, 2008).

<http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/00/36/36/MuZe08s.pdf>



I don't have social insurance because I work illegally. I live in constant fear of getting ill. (Bečej)

They constantly frighten us with the Office for Employment. Every year. Our contract is renewed from year to year, we don't have sustainable employment, although we're needed. (Kragujevac)

I remember everything according to crises – the chronic anxiety and nervousness I've lived with for all my life. I lived through the horrible nineties in my best years, and now I live in anxiety again. I support my sister financially; I'm a single mum and think about my 16-year old daughter, if she'll have a profession and a future of her own. Disturbing news, an atmosphere of chaos and hopelessness, non-implementation of laws. (Belgrade)

I'm unemployed after 25 years of employment. There aren't any jobs anywhere, no one will employ you, children don't get any scholarships, there no way out for me, and people aren't interested in anything. (Niš)²¹⁹

The general pauperisation of society and the negative effects of transition are followed by the strengthening of neo-conservatism, re-traditionalisation and clericalisation, which as a whole contributed to the worsening of women's position. Gender identities and roles got extremely polarised in the wars that took place in ex-Yugoslavia in the last decades: men are perceived as warriors and women as women and victims. This contributed to the strengthening of traditional relationships of power, of social and cultural roles and norms. As in many post-conflict societies, the strategies of political, social and economic reconstruction became the domain of men. The patriarchal model of men-women relationships, xenophobia and intolerance towards every difference puts women in Serbia today in the situation of “conquering” old, already conquered positions, but paying the price of this “conquest.”

I understood that people avoid me, because I'm not good. I contrast

219. „Žene, mir, bezbednost/ Rezolucija 1325 - 10 godina posle“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2010, pp. 91- 94

with the rest, I'm outside the matrix of obedient, peaceful, unobtrusive, and innocent girls. I won't be like this, I won't talk about how I'm going to find a nice home for myself. I want to talk about what I can do for myself, about things that are about me, and me alone. (Novi Pazar)

I consider that my disloyalty precisely is my unexpected role. I cause excesses that destroy the system of control. These are progresses that I make and my artistic-feminist engagement is consequence of this. At the same time, I suffer from the consequences of punishment for this progress made. After each progress, each excess, the answer of my environment is denouncing, excluding and making me 'inexistent.' Firing people – this is a system of punishment – aim to eliminate your strength, autonomy, and also have economic, social and political instability as an aim. (Bor)

My parents were disturbed because I'm a lesbian, because I love girls, and, for them and people around, this made me bad. They sent me to the psychiatrist to cure me from homosexuality, stuffed me with drugs, blackmailed and insulted me. At the beginning of the torture, these were some lighter drugs, and then insults, everyday, again: "you're deviant, abnormal, you're going to destroy the population..." (Zaječar)²²⁰

A colleague at work told me: "You're Croatian, you'd kill you." None of my colleagues supported me, or said anything comforting. This constantly persecutes me. (Belgrade)

All values are devalued. Political insecurity is in the first place because the matrixes of the nineties are coming back: the church, nationalism, violence, and lawlessness. (Vlasotince)

I've felt insecure for my whole life because I'm a half-black person in a white country. Because of the escalation of hatred towards everything that's

220. „Ženezamir“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2007, pp. 52- 57



different: religions, races, nations, whatever. I feel insecure because of the growth of nationalism and religious fanaticism. (Mladenovac)²²¹

Not in our name! / Towards the globalization of peace, solidarity and non-violence...

At the beginning, it was resistance to war, to the crimes and regime of Slobodan Milošević, to the looting that was taking place under the guise of the protection of the «Serbian nation,» and with time it took form in an uncompromising demand for confrontation with this past and for the punishability of the committed crimes; in resistance to the looting privatisation and the tycoons created by Milošević's regime; in resistance to the militarisation, clericalisation, re-patriarchalisation and re-traditionalisation of society that is taking place under the excuse of 'foggy' national interests and/or defence of identity.

This resistance is:

Anti-patriarchal, as a rejection of gender ranking based on inequality and power, in which men have the power to define women as «Other,» and thus inferior. But also as a rejection of the patriarchate as a wider system of domination in which Others are perceived as weaker and less valuable (and thereby deserve everything horrible happening to him/her). The patriarchate, on the one hand, supports servility and absolute obedience to, and adoration of, those who have power. On the other hand, it supports, justifies and implies demonstrations of power (from belittling and humiliating to violence and complete destruction) towards those who have less or none at all. Children, various minority groups (religious, national, sexual...) and women are at the bottom of this ladder. Patriarchate, nationalism and militarism are "brotherly" ideologies and have similar scenarios for men and women, for their gender relationships, as well as for all those who represent "the Other."

Anti-militarist, because *militarism is armed patriarchate*, whose

221. „Žene, mir, bezbednost/ Rezolucija 1325 - 10 godina posle“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2010, pp. 95- 96

indispensable part is a form of gender relationships that reduces the whole spectre of manifestations of humanity to rigid gender roles: men as fathers, patriots and soldiers and less-worthy women as wives, mothers and victims.²²²

Anti-nationalist, as a rejection of the ideology of nationalism that monopolises all other forms of political and social identification and leads to fundamentalism and xenophobia.²²³

Anti-clericalist, because removing the secular character of the state jeopardises the basic human rights of both those who are believers and those who are not and represents an instrumentalisation of religion and tradition in order to get political power.²²⁴

Alter-globalist, against the authoritarian globalisation and the globalisation of conservatism, where the neoliberal ideology of “free market” merges with political repression and fundamentalisms.²²⁵

Internationalist, for a solidarity among women that is above all racial, ethnic, religious, state, sexual belongings and choices.

Women’s court – an alternative vision of justice

The political philosophy of *Women in Black* originated from life by a «patchwork method.» It is open, is updated and enriched by daily life,²²⁶

222. Sintija Kokburn, „Zašto feministički antimilitarizam?“ u „Ženezamir“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2004, pp. 265-268; Videti takođe: Atena Atanasiou, „Orodnjavanjenacije: politička demografija i politika rođa“ u „Pretećiznacifundamentalizama: feministički odgovori“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2006, pp. 146-147

223. Zagorka Golubović, „Nacionalizam kao degenerisani oblik kolektivnog identiteta“ u „Pretećiznacifundamentalizama: feministički odgovori“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2006, pp. 24-31

224. See: „Sekularizam je ženskopitanje“ u „Ženezamir“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2009, pp. 261-293

225. See: Panel „Patrijarhat - globalizacija konzervativizma“ u „Globalizacija: problemi, dileme, odgovori“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2003, pp. 34-45.

226. Marija Perković, „Od pobune do alternative“ u „Ženezamir“, Beograd: 2007, str. 28



comes from real needs, fears, revolts and experiences. In the search for alternatives, it uses the experiences of international feminist and pacifist organisations and movements, adapting them to the local context.

One such alternative is the *Initiative for the creation of a Women's Court for ex-Yugoslavia*. *The Women's Court* emerged within the international feminist movement twenty years ago. Women's organisations and/or networks organise and convene it on the local, regional or international level and many women's courts have been organised in the whole world. It represents a space for women's testimony against all injustices suffered in war- and peacetime: women testify about violence in the private and public spheres at a Women's court, but it also is a place of resistance and of women's contribution to the feminist concept of justice and peace. This approach does not represent a negation of the existing models of transitional justice but, among other things, implies: the inclusion of the gender dimension in the theory and practice of justice; the visibility and valorisation of women's resistance to the patriarchy – sexism, nationalism, militarism; the visibility of women's contribution to the processes of justice, i.e. the roles of feminist activists in non-violent resistance to war, in the processes of trust- and peace-building.²²⁷

The reasons for organising of a Women's court can be divided into a few categories that intertwine with each other:

- To highlight the continuity of violence against women in peace- and wartime, a violence that remains invisible most of the time;
- To give a voice to women's individual experiences and enable the inclusion of women's experience in public memory;
- To recognise victims' suffering in order to determine the facts and apply symbolic and legal pressure onto the community and the institutional system;
- To highlight and understand the context in which violence against

227. For more information about the history, aims, scope and methodology of Women's courts, see www.zenskisudovi.rs

women happens and that makes it possible (social, economic, familial, cultural, personal and political);

– To satisfy the needs of that international justice does not satisfy and create a space for creating new approaches to justice;

– To empower women and create networks of international women's solidarity;

– To confront crimes from the past and highlight the social mechanisms that are the basis of these crimes in order to prevent future crimes from happening and establish a lasting peace.

The Women's Court has existed as a regional initiative in ex-Yugoslavia for already ten years, but systematic work on its organisation began in late 2010.²²⁸ *Women in Black* are in charge of the organisation of the Women's Court and members of the initiative board are the following organisations: *Women Studies* and *Women in Black* in Belgrade (Serbia), *Women to Women* in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Centre for Women's Studies* and *Centre for Women War Victims* in Zagreb (Croatia), *Anima – Centre for Women's and Pacifist Education* in Kotor (Montenegro), and the *Women's Network of Kosovo* in Pristina (Kosovo). The court deals with the violence committed during and after the war of the nineties in ex-Yugoslavia.

Until now, women have been expressing great interest in this initiative, not only as a space for testimony about the daily experience of injustices, during the war and in peacetime, but also as a means of pressure on the institutional legal system and on the building of alternative models of justice by women:

We want the continuum, the uninterrupted violence – when a woman's body becomes a superfluous, valueless good – to be shown at this Court. A battlefield also becomes a superfluous good on the market in the process of privatisation, through economic policy... (Belgrade, Serbia)

228. 10 regional seminars were organised during the organisation process in 2011. The total number of participants in these seminars was 382, from 100 towns in ex-Yugoslavia.



It's hard to get out of refugee camps. If there was a possibility of getting out, it was unfortunately for rapists. It was real slavery: work and sexual slavery. When I watched the film, I wondered when women from Kosovo would harness the courage to speak out about the suffering. For now, no one wants to speak. Maybe when they obtain a different status in the family. Only then will they not fear that someone stigmatises them. (Kosovo)

It's necessary to break the taboo of violence against women publicly and to include directly victims of violence, to implement the feminist and humanistic approach in the framework of institutional justice. We have to create a safe space for victims of violence. So that they feel safe, and talk about their experiences. Afterwards, we need to increase awareness among institutions and in society about the fact that criminals, and not women, are guilty. It necessary to work out a new approach to documenting crimes. The process for a definitive court, for punishing criminals, can only be opened in this way. (Veles, Macedonia)

This violence repeats itself in schools, universities, churches, mosques... everywhere. This court should deal with this. Look at this woman who said yesterday that she works for three engineers and has a small salary because she's a woman and so, people can do whatever they want with her... (Lukavac, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

You saw that women's court are held again and again. This means that it's some social pathology, these aren't individual cases of violence but rather, a structure is constantly behind this. Restorative justice makes sense, among other things, if I say where the causes of that violence are and in this way I am raising awareness about why and how something could happen. (Vrbas, Serbia)

We've lived in a common state for 50 years, in one system of brotherhood and unity, shared lunch, breakfast and dinner and built the country through work actions that were exclusively voluntary. We who were educated in this way did what we did in the 90s. If we don't create the Women's court, we'll educated generations who live with two schools under one roof. Children who aren't even five earn that they're different. How will these children live

and work together in 25 years? This is our responsibility. So let's create the Women's court and close this circle, and you, politicians, won't be and aren't right. (Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

In Štip in Macedonia, women work in bad conditions, in three shifts, for a 100€ a month, and they sew uniforms for the German army and NATO – there isn't a developed awareness of labour rights among them either. (Štip, Macedonia)

Women's court, these public testimonies, will actually be an attempt to change public perception and put that story of the individual into public space, and, through this public space, open the possibility for what really happened to be heard, where a woman will really be a woman, where people won't check which ethnicity or nation she belongs to. (Pakrac, Croatia)

Globalisation of solidarity

Resistance to war, the patriarchy and conservatism never was only local for *Women in Black*. It crystallised in protest against all forms of militarism – local, regional and global – because the militarisation of the world rests on deeper and deeper economic, social and other injustices. “The elimination of the welfare state leads to a restructuration of state budgets so that military expenditures, as well as expenditures for security that are justified by the need to fight terrorism, represent an ever increasing part of the budgets of national and supranational institutions. This increase in military and security expenditures strengthens the tendency towards militarisation of the world on the one hand, and, on the other hand, lowers the level of social rights and social achievements.”²²⁹ It manifests itself through imperialism, wars and military interventions externally and through military and police repression of civil population internally. As Rosa Luxemburg wrote almost a hundred years ago, imperialism is nothing else but a “specific method of accumulation” immanent to the

229. Lino Veljak, panel: „Kulturneipolitičkedimenzijeglobalizacije“ u „Ženezamir“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2004, p. 194

capitalist way of production and a condition for its survival.²³⁰ Competition between countries in a fight for territory and power is not a consequence of politicians' idiocy and greed but the only way capitalism grows. "The other aspect of the accumulation of capital concerns the relations between capitalism and the non-capitalist modes of production which start making their appearance on the international stage. Its predominant methods are colonial policy, an international loan system—a policy of spheres of interest—and war. Force, fraud, oppression, looting are openly displayed without any attempt at concealment. [...]"²³¹ "Thus capitalism, thanks to mutual action with non-capitalist strata and countries, spreads further, accumulating at their expense, and erodes and oppresses them step by step, in order to take their place. If more capitalist countries participate in this hunt for accumulative spheres, and if there are less non-capitalist regions that are still opened to world expansion of capital, then the competitive fight of capital for these accumulative spheres becomes bitterer and its cruises on the world stage becomes a string of economic and political disasters: world crises, wars, revolutions."²³²

In short, rejection of unjust globalisation means rejection of a policy of war. These wars are not only armed conflicts and military interventions. These also are invisible wars against poor people (Vandana Shiva), women and minorities at the local and global levels.

For their work, *Women in Black* start from:

- Non-acceptance of the hierarchy of oppression and hierarchy of solidarity;
- The fact that activism against all forms of discrimination and oppression is not only a question of justice, but a political need and a question of political pragmatism. This is a question of which world we want to live in and readiness to create such a world;

230. Roza Luksemburg, "Akumulacijakapitala"- "Antikritika", Beograd: Kultura, 1955, p. 387

231. Ibid, p. 356

232. Ibid, p. 386



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- Solidarity with all oppressed people is not an act of mercy or sisterhood, but a common political interest. Because only by protecting other people's rights will we be able to protect our own ones if/when they are jeopardised;
 - Patriarchal power builds itself on the absence of solidarity among oppressed and different people;
 - The importance of mutual support and cooperation between all oppressed groups.²³³

This solidarity is reflected in *Women in Black's* activities in different ways through street actions and protests, statements, educational activities and cooperation with other organisations and joining various initiatives in protests against the jeopardising of women's labour rights, growing racism and xenophobia, homophobia and nationalistic mobilisation.²³⁴ For *Women in Black*, the realisation of the rights of each person, of each of the various groups in society, is linked and interdependent.

Here are only a few activities organised in 2011:

- *March, 8th, Belgrade: for March, 8th – International Women's Day:* performances and women's street march "For Women's Labour Rights," dedicated to female workers in the textile industry, in the whole world and in Serbia, as well as to international feminist solidarity;

- *March, 23rd, Novi Bečej, Vojvodina:* in the framework of the activity for the *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, *Women in Black* and *Roma Women's Network for the Banat region* organised a number of activities under the title "Stop racism against Roma people";

233. See: izlaganjeStaseZajović „Dežurstvo u solidarnosti“ povodom 15 godina LGBT aktivizma u Srbiji u decembru 2005. Videti: „Ženezamir“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2007, p. 278

234. For a more detailed overview of Women in Black's activities, see: StasaZajović, "Uvek neposlušne", Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2006; from 2005 onwards, see:

http://www.zeneucrn.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=42&Itemid=78



– May, 24th, *Dimitrovgrad*: action of the Dimitrovgrad's Centre for Cultural Affirmation, "Peace is when I live in dignity from my work," joined by *Women in Black*;

– October, 7th, *Belgrade*: "Always disobedient – we leave a trace," vigil on the Republic's Square in Belgrade;

– November, 9th, *Belgrade*: "Anti-fascism is my choice," street action for the *International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism*;

Etc.

**"Everything for peace, health and knowledge –
nothing for armament"²³⁵**

For *Women in Black*, security is not a question of army and police, but needs to be examined from the perspective of human security. For this, the following demilitarisation of security is indispensable at the institutional level: cutting the number of members of the army, cutting military budget and redirecting it into civilian purposes, as well as a reducing arm production and trade. At the level of society, this demilitarisation implies various levels of human security (economic, health, personal, political), as well as the expansion of the values of solidarity, cooperation, justice, respect of human rights, inter-culturality and so on.²³⁶

Membership in international military alliances and participation in military interventions will not advance human security because their accompanying effects are further militarisation of society, as well as increase in violence and organised crime. The biggest victims of every militarism are civilians, first of all poor ones, women and children. In the

235. The slogan of Women in Black's feminist-antimilitarist actions for May, 24th, the International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament.

236. The feminist concept of security articulated itself theoretically through the reflection of activists and theorists through researches, conferences, seminars and workshops, publications and legal initiatives in the framework of activities dealing with UN Resolution 1325 from 2002. For a short overview of these activities, see: "Žene, mir, bezbednost/ Rezolucija 1325- 10 godinaposle," Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2010, pp. 75-81

Serbian context, this also determines *Women in Black's* stance on Serbian membership to NATO, a question that is becoming more and more actual with time. "NATO is a military organisation and participating in it means ecological devastation, growth of militarism and violence against women, and usurpation of a space which is an extremely important resource in Serbia."²³⁷

For *Women in Black* as a pacifist and feminist organisation, discussing NATO membership is an occasion to open a discussion in the public space about the questions of civic democratic control of the army, cost and consequences of militarisation, as well as about alternatives.²³⁸

NATO is a military organisation. Does this mean we'll additionally militarise this already quite militarised society? And this means: we know where women's place is and what they have to bear with, we know where gay people's place is and what they have to bear with, I think this has consequences for the whole of society. But it's important that we talk about it, that we open a space to see what this brings. (Velika Plana)

We need to use these processes to ask some questions that are important for us: who would manage the army, how, and how much would it cost? How to establish democratic civil control on armed forces? We're a pacifist organisation and it's completely senseless to support a military organisation on the level of values. (Bečej)

237. From the July 13th Women in Black's statement for the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence and the Action of Global Solidarity Against Militarism on 13-19 June 2011, organised by the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), that Women in Black joined with many activities under the slogan "Stop militarism – For a society without arms, army, violence and crime." An additional reason was the Strategic Military Conference held in Belgrade. Representatives of NATO, Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Initiative for Cooperation attended the conference.

238. The position on this question took form during the four regional seminars "Women, Peace, Security" at the workshops "Significance of civil democratic control on armed forces – NATO and Serbia" held in 2010 (twice in Velika Plana, once in Bečej and once in Kukavica). For more information, see: „Žene, mir, bezbednost/ Rezolucija 1325 – 10 godina posle“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2010, pp. 110- 120



Women in Black's Network has to participate in the debate in terms of further awareness-raising about the problems of feminist approach to the questions of human security as an alternative to the militaristic concepts of security. It's important to create an atmosphere in which people finally talk about real things, and real things indeed are – what is the army, what is preparation for war, what is a culture of war and what is its contrary, a culture of peace. (Bečej)

«Participation in actions for world's disarmament is a civic duty if we do not want the world to become a jungle. The introduction of a tax on all financial transactions proposed by James Tobin (who won the Nobel Prize in economics in 1981) would eradicate poverty in the world, even if this tax was only of 1%. Only 10% of these means would be enough to cover all health needs of the entire world population. Only 3% of the financial means that the Tobin tax would gather would be enough for the introduction of compulsory primary education, and so on.»²³⁹

The world has never been so connected, so interdependent earlier. Thanks to media and the information revolution, an event is not just local, without influence on other parts of the world, but reach an extremely high number of people in the whole world. The globalisation of injustice requires global answers. These are developed through:

The widening of the movement for democracy and human rights on the global level where human rights and universal democratic values and principles become more important than national states and sovereignty;

The globalisation of punishability and the creation of institutions of international justice such as the International Court of Justice, the Nuremberg Tribunal, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Hague Tribunal) and the International Criminal Court;

The creation of global networks for human rights, women's human

239. Biljana Kovačević - Vučo, panel: „Globalizacija od zdo: o alternativamaneoliberalnojglobalizacija“ u „Ženezamir“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2004, p. 206

rights, peace, non-violence, the creation of global movements against the negative effects of globalisation (against the neoliberal economic globalisation and global military interventionism), the global ecological movement and so on.²⁴⁰

“International networks such as the International *Women in Black* network are the product of contradictory relationships within globalisation itself.”²⁴¹ *Women in Black* are part of various feminist networks. The most significant ones in terms of alter-globalisation are *Women Living Under Muslim Laws/ WLML*, *Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights/ WGNRR*, *The International Women in Black Network / The International Network of Women’s solidarity against War, Marche mundial*, *Self-Employed Women’s Association/SEWA*, *Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing/ WIEGO*, *Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era/ DAWN*, *Women in Developed Europe/WIDE*, *Sisterhood is Global Institute/ SIGI*, *Association for Women’s Rights in Development/ AWID*.²⁴²

Starting from the position on the connectedness and interdependency of all the parts of the world (on the political, economic, cultural and all other levels), on the mutual influence of crises and tendencies in various regions, for *Women in Black*, a different *world* can be built through a policy and action of international solidarity and support, through support to all those oppressed because they are poor, women or members of minority groups (national, religious, sexual and all others), advocating the punishability of all war crimes, the globalisation of social justice and non-violence. *Another world is possible* only in this way. From the very beginning *Women in Black* have, as part of the global anti-war movement, participated in almost all actions against war violence or independently

240. Staša Zajović, „Globalizacija: pitanja i odgovori”, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2008, p. 12

241. Staša Zajović, panel: „Kulturne i političke dimenzije globalizacije“ u „Žene za mir“, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2004, p. 195

242. More details in „Ženskemirovna mreža - mreža ženske solidarnosti” u Staša Zajović, “Uvek neposlušne”, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2006, pp. 23-29; and in Staša Zajović, Globalizacija: pitanja i odgovori”, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2008, pp. 41-45



initiated such actions. They have also organised actions of solidarity with pacifist movements in the mentioned – and in other – regions affected by war. They have also organised anti-war/alter-globalist campaigns at the global and regional levels, international conferences, workshops and seminars. The international conferences include “Let’s globalise feminism and anti-militarism” (2002) and “We create peace by offering alternatives” (2003). Among the campaigns organised are: the regional women’s pacifist initiative “Not in our name nor with our money” (2004), the petition sent to the US embassy “Women say no to war – stop the war in Iraq” (2006). One example of workshop is the series of workshops entitled “Globalisation and I” (2010). These are only a few examples.²⁴³

What characterises *Women in Black’s* work in all its aspects is the refusal to accept the role of passive victims of injustice and violence. One of the most important ideological mantras imposed by global and local political classes is indeed that a world of racism, exclusion, exploitation and military interventions is the only possible world, blurring the fact that its organisation is the result of human work. The extreme right answers with extremely varied fundamentalisms, but there are also answers from the whole spectrum of the left, from progressive to revolutionary answers.²⁴⁴ These answers are feminist, cosmopolitan, anti-militarist and non-violent, based on solidarity with all those whose rights are denied, with demands for opening, human rights and social justice. This is *Women in Black’s* answer.

243. More details in: *ibid*, pp. 47-48

244. MariemeHeli-Lukas, “Fundamentalizmidanas - feminističkiidemokratskiogovori”, Beograd: Žene u crnom, 2008, str. 99 i 108

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Milos Urošević i Lepa Mladenović

On duty in all forms of solidarity Permanent policy of freedom for lesbian and gay – activists

This text is about the undisputed policy to support the freedom of lesbian and gay activists of *Women in Black*, since its establishment. We do remember, Milos has been writing about the activities in the last decade and Lepa since the very beginning. We will provide you with a couple of notes from a written history *Women in Black*.

There have always been lesbians and gay activists among Women in Black

On June 27th 1991, several feminists prepared a little debate in Youth Hall and, for the first time in Belgrade, we marked the *International Pride Day of lesbians and gays*. It was joyful, festive and exciting. When we came home that day, we heard that a soldier of the Yugoslav National Army had been ordered to kill a soldier of the Slovenian army in Slovenia. That day the war started.

On July 15th 1991, the *Center for Antiwar Action* was founded. Among others, in the Center, Dejan Nebragic, Hamdija Demirovic and Duca Knezevic, editors of the magazine *Pacifik*, introducing gay and lesbian pages for the first time.

In front of the *Student Cultural Center*, and later in Republic Square in Belgrade, on October 9th 1991, a group of women rallied in the street, expressing their protest with their bodies, dressed in black, and in silence. Then, in this way and there, *Women in Black* were founded, as an



expression of resistance to Serbian aggressor regime. As a peace group of feminist-antimilitaristic orientation, *Women in Black* became a safe place for many lesbians and gays.

During the winter of 1992, in the first flat of *Women in Black*, in Marko Kraljevic Street, below the market, in a corner near window, Dejan Nebrigić was working at his typewriter. Above his desk hung a poster with a photograph of two young men whose faces were touching in a moment of tenderness. This picture conveyed the tenderness of love between two men, never seen before in a public place in the history of my town. Dejan Nebrigić walked into Women in Black organization saying: I am one of you!

In those years he was writing his novel and was proofreading articles for the journal *Women for Peace*. But every single day, he was going through his own love pangs. The young man he was in love with lived in another town, and we were not sure how much he actually knew Dejan. But Dejan kept on talking of him instead of giving lectures on human rights, instead of workshops on UN Declaration on civic liberties – Dejan Nebrigić introduced anti-discrimination language to *Women in Black*, through his everyday love stories. He cried because of his unrequited love and war. ‘I have cried for hours because of the clash of those so different ‘realities’ of ours,’ Dejan Nebrigić wrote in 1994, ‘which are only connected with the fact that neither of them, in accordance with the laws of human logics can exist. I have cried for hours, too, because I felt what was happening in Sarajevo, and all over Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the places I had been to and I also realized that the killing of children is some people’s reality, too.’

In August 1995, we were attending the International Conference *Women’s Solidarity, against war* in the small town of Tresnjevac, where men had refused to go to war. There was not enough space for everyone to sleep in the small dorm, and most of the hundred women participants slept in tents. It was a painful summer, with grave news of the crime in Srebrenica whose consequences would yet to be heard, and during the

conference came the news of the expulsion of the Serbian population from Krajina. That very same year, my girlfriend, who is from Krajina, was with us, while her relatives were in the lines of refugees. I experienced tremendous pain and uncertainty, along with her. That night, exhausted I was passing through a corridor with Jadranka Milicevic, trying to reach our small room, packed with bunk beds, as if we were on excursion. The corridor was packed full, too and we barely made our way in the dark, so I asked Jadranka: *'What is this?'* But she remained silent, her wise face giving me a sign she would explain later. Afterwards, she told me: *'Two activists were wrapped in one sleeping bag - a new love in Women in Black!'* To this day, I remember the joy I felt because of this scene in the dark.

There was always a space for international lesbian meetings and their support to Women in Black

At International Conferences *Women Solidarity against War*, between 1992 and 1999, there were workshops which gathered lesbians. Here are some of the topics: *'Lesbians:'*

- 'Our silence will not protect us,'*
- 'Being a lesbian and politically responsible,'*
- 'Lesbian rights and civil society,'*
- 'Others among us-Lesbians.'*

In the transcripts of these sessions, we found a variety of quotes.

'We want other women to know who we are, first of all to know that we are lesbians. It is important to us to have our differences visible and valued by others, not because they do not know who we are, but because they do.'

'We ache for different kind of world, to create our new lives.'

'Often I feel guilty for insissting on being a lesbian during the war.'

'While I lived with my first partner, I did not know that there were



other lesbians too in the world. For me, there were only the two of us, so different from the others.'

'The basis of my existence is my freedom, and in order to be free I need to have complete internal freedom, to be what I really am, with my language and my whole body. This property is my otherness, lesbianism is another dimension of expression of my female being. My desire is of a diffuse kind, because female sexuality is polymorphous. I am a renegade woman, an anarchist who rejected the Paternal law. I appreciate more to be one of a kind, than to be that one.' (*Stefica Markunova*)

'In the beginning, when I used to speak against the war in public, in London, I was afraid nobody was going to listen to me, if I said I was a lesbian and that because of strong societal prejudices, nobody will hear me out.' (Rebecca Johnson)

'The safe space I found in the Jerusalem Women's Center has saved my life. I longed for women's space, in which I completely recognized myself. I could say that *Women in Black* vigils are of those experiences which create feminists. I remember how I used to count women on the vigil, every week and how some of us wondered how many of them were lesbians. We were there from the very beginning and we were 30% among the women.' (*Haia Shalom*)

'We had the experience of discrimination and a silent war against us, lesbians, so I joined the action of solidarity with Palestinian women. Then, in 1994, a couple of us from Belgium founded *Women in Black*. The ethics of peace movement should be based on the right of all women and men to speak out publicly and live their different realities.' (*Ria Convents*)

'It is up to us in the peace movement to appreciate those who are different.' (*Rachel Warehum*)

'For me it is hard to live as a lesbian and not to be politically involved, because everything is against us. I am a lesbian and feminist from New York and I have found support for my activism here in *Women in Black*

of Belgrade for years. This space is antimilitaristic, anti-patriarchal and antifascist. As such, it gathers many lesbians and feminists, who support us. For example: Rina Nisim and Dagmar Schults have prepared a book about Neda Bozinovic. Jessica Hauf from Switzerland founded a group 'Lone wolf' for juveniles in the refugee camps who want to learn to use the camera and develop photos. Sandra Butler, Fran and Towa from San Francisco, have brought books for lesbians. There are even more similar examples but for me it is very important to say that our friend Ria Convents donated her car Lavender Reno 4 to our activist, feminist friend Jadranka Milicevic from Sarajevo. That is the beauty of solidarity.' (Laurence Hovde)

There was always support to lesbian activist by non-lesbian Women in Black

In this section we shall enumerate a few activities of *Women in Black* on the line of the policy of non-hierarchy, in their struggle for liberation, or as Stasa Zajovic often puts it: '*It is our duty to provide all forms of solidarity*', or as Fika Filipović use to say: '*I support you in your struggle for what you feel.*'

During December of 2005, *Women in Black* addressed a Declaration: '*Today, Spain – Serbia tomorrow,*' regarding the equality of sexual preference, which was supported by many public figures, explaining the example of Spanish laws on marriage for same-sex couples.

On October 10th 2010, in the early morning hours, two Serbian fascists broke into the premises of *Women in Black* with a bat. It was the morning before the Pride Parade of lesbians and gays. The assault against *Women in Black* activists was politically motivated and they had come to 'look for gays'. '*I am absolutely sure that they would have killed both Goran and Milos, only if they had found them! I am absolutely sure why they brought a meat tenderizer, it was to kill them!*', testifies about the attack



on *Women in Black*, an activist from Svrljig, Persa Vucic, who was injured that morning and had to be rushed to hospital for stitching. This was yet another attack on *Women in Black*, the perpetrators of which have remained unpunished.

After that, in 2010, we participated in the Pride Parade along with the *Women in Black Serbian Network*. Milos Urosevic: *'This is a historic event that happened in our lives and it is a history which exists in our bodies, where no one can take it away from us.'* Lepa Mladenovic: *'We need civil courage of heterosexuals, to jointly expose our frail bodies in to the power of the state which hates us. We need the civil solidarity of heterosexuals because it is a question of freedom of love for all of us.'*

As activists of *Women in Black*, we monitor trials to members of fascist organizations 'Honor' and '1389' for the discrimination of LGBT people. Before the government banned Pride Parade in 2009, Stasa Zajovic said: *'We have to take continual care of all the oppressed.'*

Also, we monitored the trial of fourteen members of the fascist organization 'Honor' for the riots during the Pride Parade in 2010. These are the same ones who dispersed the Pride Parade in 2001, the same ones who in 2009 sent the following message: *'Kill, kill, stamp out the fags'* or *'Belgrade will shed blood but there will be no Pride Parade'* in 2010. *'We are waiting for you'* and *'Gays in the blender'* in 2011. In the *'Proclamation for Serbian enemies,'* on the web site of 'Honor' the *'sexual perverts'* are addressed with the following threats: *'For you, there will be neither human nor God's grace. You will be severely punished and eradicated.'*

During April 2011, the Serbian state reached a verdict with which it is refused to punish fascism of 'Honor.' The Judicial Council proclaimed the defendants guilty but sentenced them to a very mild sentences. The court declared the defendants guilty under Article 344a of the *Criminal Code, for violent behavior at public meetings* and under Article 387 of the *Criminal Code for dissemination of racial and other kinds of discrimination*. Lawyers of the defense argued that sexual minorities dare not entitled to

specific human rights. The state also showed by this verdict that it does not want to make a radical breach with the aggressive fascist ideology which produces violence, as well as that there is no clear political will to respect human rights.

Nevertheless, it is important to us to care for one another with tenderness.

A special section

Wedding of Igballe and Rachel on Fishermen's Island, in August of 1996.

On Fishermen's Island near Novi Sad, we had the Fifth International Conference of *Women in Black – Women's Solidarity Against War*. Beautiful sun and more than a hundred of activists. Our sisters from Bosnia and Herzegovina for the first time with us-Selma and Belma from Sarajevo, who crossed the border on foot! Recounts of how brave they were, what they responded to Serbian policemen in separate rooms at the border! Those two lovers, activists, from the bag mentioned above mentioned bag in the corridor, were waiting for them in a car, on this side of the border. We hugged each other endlessly. Albanian sisters from Kosovo arrived in large numbers. Igballe arrived from Pristina, what a joy! The first day of the conference, Igballe Rogova and Rachel Vareham her partner from London, invited me to sit down for a short chat with them. They put brandy on the table, and she said, 'The two of us, Rachel and I, want to get married here among all of you, at a feminist peace conference!' Ohhhhh, what a surprise! Out of shock, I was silent for a while and I screamed out a bit, as well. She suggested that a couple of us organize a celebration. I look forward to it, I said to myself: I do not have anything else like it in my personal history. 'Maps that were given to us are outdated for years'-I remember the words of Adrienne Rich. 'Let it be, Igballe says, the last night, so that we can dance until dawn! I brought brandy for a toast!' 'Let's play, I agreed, but for the plum brandy...Uh, this is an old map, I thought', 'There will not be any Šljivovica', I say, 'for it is a liquid



form of patriarchate`, `I'll think of something else` ... `Ok` -Igballe says. Happy.

At this conference, I barely managed to attend any workshops, because Piera Stefanini from Bologna and I were sitting for hours in front of our bungalows, thinking up the wedding ceremony. Minute by minute it started to make sense of this whole lesbian feminist fairy tale. `Lesbians are not women because they are fugitives from patriarchy`, said Monique Wittig, I thought to myself. What would it mean today in the context of planning the wedding? But Piera had this fantasy that I could hardly follow, she poured poetic rhymes toward the sky, while we were editing the program, at any time she had associations, dreamed in colours, smells, sounds of women's bodies in love. We were sitting and planning, and then looked for other women through bungalows, wanting them something to say something or contribute ideas, to synchronize our gifts.

The wedding was a big surprise. On an open air stage, amid the Danube landscape, and the ceremony that we devised, which was conducted in three languages, every sentence was translated into Albanian, English and Serbo-Croatian-Bosnian, and continued in Spanish and Italian. Charming Nazlie Bala from Pristina was the Mistress of the Ceremony. Everything went fantastically, it slid, one after the other, women came out on stage, coming out as lesbian couples, Rachel and Igballe exchanged rings, as a token of love, lesbian `Yes`, lesbian girlfriends screamed and tossed bouquets into the crowd of women, who stood in front of us on the plateau where we held morning workshops. We toasted to each other! We toasted with white plastic glasses: of Japanese bitter tea, cooked by Ria Convents on her gas camping stove, which we drank in one gulp. Women were wondering what was happening for real, Stefi Markunova says: `We were stunned with the act which was real.` One of the women refugees asked her: `This is not a theater piece, right?` First maid of honor, Marta Preklapaj, activist from Prizren and the second one Nela Pamukovic, feminist and lesbian from Zagreb. Three Saphos, vestal virgins, three beautiful lesbians wrapped in the hotel sheets, with floral wreaths on

their heads, which Albanian women, our sisters, had braided for hours the previous day. They were walking quietly among women and holding hands. They looked at us without saying a word because everything had already been said.

It is irrelevant for the meeting, except for this record, that they were Irena and Jelka, activists from Ljubljana and one English girl. Judith Hatfaludi as lesbian and feminist from Budapest recited Audrey Lord and gave them the mirror to see themselves, when it appeared to them that they were only lesbians in Pristina. Dagmar Shults,

Dagmar Schultz, founder of lesbian publishing house *Orlando* in Berlin, and her partner, an Afro German woman, donated their books to us. Albanian sisters from Kosovo, six or seven of them, had a special act, my favorite Albanian folk dance, holding their hands, made their way among all of the women and danced full of dignity and joy, quietly and proudly. Their bodies which enjoy the rhythm...a dance I will never forget. Albanian music played out loud - a music from the same country we lived in that we have never heard before! Loudspeakers were blaring and the Danube will remain a silent witness of the event.

And for the end, first there was a love song on the guitar, which was played by a lesbian Ivona from Novi Sad, with a piercing and jeans. After her, Spanish women had their choral point: feminist and anti-war songs. Secretly, for the past two days they had been rehearsing those few songs. Here they are excited, this was their opening night, singing in Spanish with the Greek chorus - four male conscientious objectors - after each paragraph the choir repeats a verse Women in Black: *'Mujeres en negro, Donne in nero...* several times in one and then in another language. The applause emerged in the rhythm of the song, one by one, there were outburst of laughter and applause.

After this ceremonial part of wedding, there was music for everyone to dance, and the night was falling already. Dancing and jumping started, under the clear sky. And then, suddenly, a downpour! Lightning flashed across the sky. There was a rend of happiness! The screaming which broke



the patriarchal iceberg! Nothing will be the same again! We celebrated two women in love. Lesbian love as reality in society and in nature. All of us who were present knew that it was a rain which we would never forget. We jumped and we screamed again and the rain was pouring all over our excited bodies, and it lasted the whole night. Peace activists from twenty different countries who had been drenched to their smooth skin, so happy, declaring to the patriarchy and the night: *'We are joyful, crazy of joy and dancing till dawn,'* as Stefica Markunova, lesbian and poet of Women in Black, said in her song *Amnesty for Rachel and Igballe*:

'Two women who love each other and the rain is blessing them by thunder and drenching them through...The rain was not quenching their thirst, but blessing the women on the Fishermen's island who are in love... Rachel and Igballe are in love.'

...that night on the Fishermen's island, when dancers let their bodies follow the beat, under the cloudburst, and danced till the dawn.



**SOLIDARITY
POLITICS:
OTHERS
ABOUT
US**

Teodora Tabački

I will/I won't or A brief travelogue on the synchronisation of developments

Dear women,

I am using this occasion to first thank all for their political courage, consistency, perseverance and integrity, as well as for all the endless hours of organisation, coordination and last but not least – cooking. I am back home after a record of 32 hours of road traffic. There is something – à propos “European ideals” – that I perversely love in the incidental, visually completely random, police harassment that we rarely have the occasion to enjoy, except in coaches.

Together with the usual suspects, such as Roma people, darker Israelis, Arabs or Africans, they pester me as well, usually carrying out their official duty, which I guess proves that racism produces races, and not the other way around. When I am in a good mood – which was the case this time, thanks to the amazing jubilee – I use such occasions for agitation, that is, to discuss meaningfully social justice with the Šešeljism-imbued Serbian working class, as well as to clarify Germany's renewed unity / Anschluss or even the phenomenon of migration with representatives of West Germans, who are informed about the existence (and criminal disposition) of Gastarbeiter, as well as about East Germans' great anguish for blue jeans at the time of totalitarianism by the yellow press and state television only.

I would not like to fall into sentimentalism, but I have to recognise that meeting again the whole multitude of the living and dead, after all these years in peronospora, kept me on the edge of crying for the whole time. I extremely rarely feel the need to photograph something – indeed, it seems to me that recording images and postponing impressions for

some subsequent perception is essentially self-deprivation of sensation at that moment – but I grabbed my mobile phone when the concert started. Not because I am terribly keen on hardcore or because I think that this particular band would express the essence of feminism and antimilitarism, but because quite an unexpected interaction happened: namely, all activists, not prompted by anything, just stood up to dance with their mini-skirts and perms, moderation took up backing vocals, while the ceiling of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination threatened to collapse. As people’s summed-up impressions later showed, this moment was not only etched into my memory, so I would be inclined to claim that in some way it summarised 20 years of past work as well as one idea of politics. Whenever I have been forced in the West to determine the group’s profile in classical ideological terms, total incomprehension appeared on my interlocutors’ faces: anarcho-feminism and Marxism, but also prevailing belief in open society, liberalism and some enthusiasm towards the EU, piety towards the national liberation struggle and anti-militarism, global perspective and insistence on local responsibility, simultaneous thematisation of women’s experience and deconstruction of being a woman, conciliation of tactical separatism and openness of the group to friends conscientious objectors, etc. However, who spent time in the office and at the vigils during all these years knows that activist affinities were not distributed according to these criteria and that Women in Black’s politics was never a politics of identity: not because we would not be aware of differences, but that incommensurability was never inferred from them: on the contrary, what was inferred from them the possibility of relations – in terms of exchange, solidarity and learning.

Rather than dealing with the patriarchy as abstract transitional order or with the war that always takes place “somewhere else,” feminism interested us as emancipating intervention in a concrete political space. If the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia in the “developed world” seemed to be an impossible excess at times, it is clearer and clearer that “peripheries” in fact much more clearly show the truth of the global, and that, the experience of the region we had a privileged position to understand both

the fascistoidness of each nation, and in old Europe, of the normalised structural racism, masked by hygienic considerations and bourgeois culture, as well as the inseparability of vulgar capitalist exploitation by a state controlling semi-permeability of its own borders. Resisting all forms of institutionalised violence, solidarity with those exposed to it, looking for inconspicuous political alliances with those erased from public space and organising a parallel society, along representative politics, remain all the more universally applicable – and even, I would way, are becoming fashionable again. Indeed, I believe that there is no contradiction between anti-racist, anti-colonial, feminist, queer or anarchist politics on the one hand and class struggle on the other. The real conflict about redistribution of power and values (or the idea of justice) is on the contrary staged again within all the above-mentioned and time and again draws the line of conflict between the paranoid-conservative pole – of the objective minority which, by spreading panic about diversity and the reason of the conceited deficit, successfully protects privileges – and the revolutionary potential of the virtual majority, which invents the new world by recognising spaces of overlap. As we see everywhere (and especially a bit further away from Belgrade's mire), women and men and all those who are differently oriented never had problems to intuitively recognise temporary and lasting allies, and that, across the borders of self-comprehensibility and familiar things of all kinds, this different world think and live. A state, an army or a church that could prevent their gradual appearance does not exist.

The omnipresent production of conformism and cynicism simply proves the fragility of the global movement in literally every point and every interaction.

I am afraid that photographs from my mobile phone rather poorly illustrate the tectonic change in (social) space from which the political subjectivity of that Deleuze's "nation that does not exist" appears, but I nonetheless send them to you in the attachment, together with a decoration from my and Dragan's kitchen – so that it does not look that Women in Black in Berlin are Staša's pure fabrication.

Lots of love, and see you soon, Imbacil



Bojan Tončić

Two decades of Women in Black Honorable part of disgraceful history

What endless joy I derive from the genuine astonishment on a sample of the human species, unable to fathom that I am member of 'Women in Black' (I imagine how it would be to possess a membership card or a certificate to display), who then curiously puts the question: 'Well, what do you do there?' It is that group of people, mostly women, who come across less frequently, and their questions do not have ideological connotation, who experience the vigils on the square as sets of misfits performing some kind of ritual only they can understand, probably fiendish, because they wear black, no questions about their slogans, they do not even register it. And they ask what else we do, for there has to be something more to it, which remains unseen, because it is logical, in some secret premises, by candlelight. It would all be justified if they could breathe in the smell of Staša's magic herbs against tobacco smoke and see her culinary magic.

Those who have become politically aware through systematic brainwashing – let us not sport with outpours of tolerance, I cannot stand them, though it is not in the spirit of this organization – they are, too, openly and frankly amazed, first they read the slogan silently, then they repeat it in low voice, shaking their heads, turning around seeking for allies, which of course they are bound to find. They perceive the slogans, (e.g. "Albanian women are our sisters"), which to the rest of the world would be normal, as an assault against their national awareness, against their understanding of political conditions, discipline, where the average Serb is unrivalled.

Very well, I am malicious, maybe I am something even worse, but while I watch their deep `distress` and concern for future generations, attempts to preserve the State, because everybody is against us, I feel great, why should I pretend. They are in dumbfounded with our insolence, their heads are still bursting with the brutal TV propaganda of nineties. What is more, it was even induced in different forms, always successfully, with the fascist garbage which was sown on well prepared fertile soil. Our antagonists refuse to that in this war of aggression, Serbia crushed Vukovar, because the Yugoslav National Army was allegedly defending Serbs, so that they would not be massacred by the bloodthirsty Croats, and the Muslims were killing their own people so that it could be ascribed to Serbs, how can anybody pronounce names of Muslims, who were allegedly executed in Srebrenica, in the middle of Belgrade? How can they be excavating, while all the others are burying (mass graves)? Who are they working for, who finances them?

It suppose Vojislav Šešelj provided the crucial answer to all those questions and possible ambiguities expressed by numerous citizens, when he said shortly before NATO military intervention, that among other NGO`s which are NATO infantry, Women in Black were within their reach.

Since the circumstances have become too serious, *Women in Black* now organize their vigils `in the presence of the government`, disinterested policemen, who regularly associate with the owners of disturbed minds and fascist puppets (`I've got to do thisman, do you think I feel like standing here with them`), just as there has been an unprecedented fusion of the rightists. *Women in Black* were the only ones who succeeded in reconciling hooligans of Red Star and Partizan, followed by members of Honour, Dveri, Our Folk, and other ideological formations of Serbian new fascism. United in common hatred, they chanted: `Whores in black!` and their favorite one: `Knife, wire, Srebrenica!` With those sounds and outpours of hatred, ended the first cycle of two-decade long protests against war and war crimes. Symbolically, on one side were women against war, violence, militarism, patriarchy, clericalism, anti-modernism, everything which characterizes Serbia of our time and on the other side



was the state, personified in fascist freaks, hooligans, cossets and striking fist of the regime.

Twenty years ago, we could just anticipate the scale of disaster in which the greatest victims were women. We have extended a hand to solidarity to those who have suffered e irreparable losses and will have to face for the rest of their lives. This support comes from a city which was the Headquarters of criminal state armies. True solidarity, and not just removing of blood stains from a criminal environment at a time when the ideology of evil in Serbia continues. In a state which does not disown its criminals, who, from their highest position, have destroyed hundreds of thousands of lives.

Even after two decades, every day there are more and more reasons to organize vigils. Because of the criminals from the top of the government and from our neighborhood, because of the waste of money for military expenses and arms, while children are hungry and cold due to discrimination, fascism, racism and violence. *Women in Black* are a honorable part of a disgraceful history, but they do not live in history, they live their activism, help people, defending those who are in need. Without fear, as always, confronting a dangerous and destructive government.

I was lucky enough to meet this family when I was going through difficult times, when I was starting my new life in Belgrade, as a deserter, as a refugee. Even reluctantly giving up something that might sound pathetic, was easier with them. I knew how afraid I was while I looked at white harnesses of military police, but to them I was hero, just as all the other deserters. Later on, I was honored with their compliments for my writing, I knew then that I had written something good and correct. *Women in Black* have published an anthology of my texts, which we are all proud of .

This is my membership card.

And this is just part of my answer to all the bizarre questions from the beginning of this text.

That is what we do.

Silvia Dražić

Always disobedient – we leave a trace

The twenty-year-long existence and work of *Women in Black* are marked by, alongside other programmes, the exhibition entitled *Always disobedient – we leave a trace*.

Art Clinic is one of the artistic groups that have cooperated with *Women in Black* in articulating and shaping resistance for the last twenty years of our exhausting history.

Art Clinic's work is based on the utopian idea that art can cure and change the world. Through its work, it strives to transgress and subvert in relation to the dominating hierarchy of power in art, culture and society as a whole. Precisely because of this it could agree and work together with *Women in Black*.

Due to our critical and activist relation to the world surrounding us, this exhibition is first and foremost a political testimony. Therefore I will approach it through this view. I will try to delineate *Women in Black's* field of action with a few concepts and key words, without pretending to exhaust it of course. I would thereby cover the exhibition's content at the same time.

It is first and foremost **responsibility**.

It is not easy to briefly say something about responsibility.

Ambrose Bierce wrote that responsibility is a detachable burden easily shifted to the shoulders of God, fate, fortune, luck or one's neighbour...

In our case, in the case of *Women in Black*, responsibility is not transferred to anyone or anything but is consciously, purposefully assumed.



It is hard to mention responsibility without mentioning Hannah Arendt. She principally defined it as a political category and linked it to our faculty to understand events better through reasoning. A whole conceptual *mise en scène* composed of the relation towards the other, accountability, memory, denial, recognition, forgiveness, reconciliation, etc. is activated along responsibility.

For Hannah Arendt, and as we see this can be applied to *Women in Black*, *understanding means to readily confront oneself with reality and oppose it without hesitation – whatever the reality is.*

We thereby come to the second key word, and this is **civic courage**.

Civic courage enables responsibility to materialise, appear and become visible. Activism, a significant aspect of *Women in Black*, would not be possible without it. Civic courage is by all means programmatically inscribed in their common signature and also in the title of this exhibition: *always disobedient*.

In the third place is something that is not only difficult to define but also resists accurate verbalisation. It is a feeling or maybe a knowledge that enables us to recognise the truth, make accurate assessments and separate right from wrong.

This might sound a bit metaphysically difficult, but if we keep the image of the world we live in in mind, in which each truth is distorted by interests and the media many times, it is hard not to be misled ... Maybe it is not even possible.

Still, it seems that appreciating the position of the victims, of those threatened, discriminated against and marginalised in various ways, can be least subjected to misuse. Thus, in terms of accuracy, this approach might be the safest.

Having in mind the power relationships that conditioned the allocation of social roles in our entire civilisation, dividing it into nature and culture, feeling and reason, irrational and rational, female and male, one can say that women, precisely because of their weaker position in this

power relationship, are maybe more opened and more ready to recognise all these strategies of exclusion and publicly articulate them, transforming deficit into gain.

We thus come to the fourth key word, and this is **feminism**.

Feminism reorganised the field of theory in the second half of 20th century. If, until the nineties, one could speak about feminism as an alternative, often excessive view of the world, or as a way to analyse various phenomena in literature, language, art, etc., from the nineties feminist theory has become an unavoidable segment of various scientific disciplines. It changed the meaning of psychology, philosophy, anthropology, literary theory, cultural studies, etc.

But on the other hand, feminism did not emerge of this interaction unchanged. The essentialist politics of identity, based on the hypothesis that being women is crucial for women, was brought into question. Characteristics such a skin colour, national belonging, class status, sexual orientation, age, etc., once rejected as secondary or even unimportant are now becoming the object of research and consideration. The category of women with a capital W does not exist anymore but rather, concrete women in various historically, socially and politically defined contexts. Feminist theory becomes fragmented. Feminism turns into feminisms.

At the same time, feminist movements get fragmented as well. The massive subject that would support it no longer exists. On the other hand, a whole world of women becomes visible.

Adrienne Rich writes on the politics of place, location. This politics is based on responsibility, the accountability for place, for the concrete space of the political community we belong to.

Thus, we come back to the space of the exhibition in which such responsibility is shown in action several times.

The item exhibited by Art Clinic is a photograph of a tank standing in front of the Parliament of Serbia.



In September 1991, Vladimir Živković, a reservist from Valjevo drove his armoured personnel carrier from Šid and parked it in front of the Parliament of SFRY. A few half-lost photographs and forgotten news still testify about this. Yet, it is not entirely clear to many people whether this is an urban legend, a photo-montage, a performance or a lost trace.

The analysis of this event opened up a number of dilemmas about patriotism, treachery and desertism in an inexistent war. Dilemmas that, even today, have not lost their strength and actuality.

This is why this photograph was an occasion for Art Clinic to ask a number of questions:

Is there history beyond history? Events can be interpreted again and again. Some are celebrated and others simply forgotten, thrown out of history. Who enters history? According to which merits? Who gives these admission tickets to history? Who distributes and redistributes them? Following the old truth that victors write history, we ask whether history is not just complementary legitimisation of crimes.

Later, Women in Black took this photograph and once again headed off for to the Parliament, asking their 20 questions about the wars that did not exist and their consequences.

Speech made, in a slightly altered form,
at the opening of the exhibition
Always disobedient – we leave a trace

Where we started from, where are we going?

Interviews conducted by Donna and Semram from the USA, who spent three months in Women in Black of Belgrade as volunteers, in the summer of 2009

Biljana Kovacevic Vuco:

‘I have actually been helping Women in Black since their inception and I participate in their activities, also I lead the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights. We have joint actions, putting pressure on the state to acknowledge 11th of July, to declare it a day of remembrance of the genocide in Srebrenica. We are working on campaigns for the promotion of certain laws and declarations on human rights defenders.

I still remember when, on the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, tear gas was thrown at us. Events showed that Serbia during Milosevic and after its regime had not changed. Then traveling through Serbia, when I went with them. At the workshops, we were open, talked, it was very pleasant. Those were beautiful events I keep in my memory. I think that they are a specific peace, activist organization. They all have the energy and Stasa too, which keeps them working on the most important issues, which are important to us, as well. Their activism is boundless and stunning.’

Borka Pavicevic:

‘I am in charge of the Center for Cultural Decontamination. Our project consistse of theater production, exhibitions and events. I have been in touch with Women in Black since the beginning of nineties. They were established as opposition to the war and regime. They have never



compromised with nationalism. The antiwar movement has inherited antifascism. We work together because they are a feminist group, because they are secular and anti-nationalist. They combine activism and theoretical thought. They constantly engage in field activities and so they have an insight into what they are talking about.

We share the entire nineteen-year old history, in some way. They attend many seminars, we visit each other. We have a sense of freedom and feminine humanity when we work with them.

On the tenth anniversary of Srebrenica, we had a very risky event, where stones were being hurled at us. I remember that moment of solidarity. It's like a family. As if we were sisters. I always know that they are around, and it is a very good feeling. We still live this, so I have not confined it to in my memory, yet. Because we do still live it.'

Dragana Dulic:

'I am Dragana Dulic, I am a professor of philosophy and ethics at the Faculty of Security. A few years ago, I started working with Women in Black. I think the position of Women in Black is highly influential. They are among the few principled, anti-militaristic and anti-clerical organizations. Several non-governmental organizations which are influential in public life are led by women and are the backbone of the core of the activities of civil society. I remember when we were marking the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, a performance at the Republic Square, where women held candles, and behind our backs were young men of fascist provenance who threw tear gas at us. Then, lives of Women in Black were threatened.'

I see Women in Black as an important non-governmental organization whose future activities will exist and as long as discrimination and intolerance keep existing in this country, they will keep working, although they were created in response to the war. Serbia has not made a step towards evaluating its past. Dealing with the past is the precondition for Serbian

society to return to normality, with a desire to resolve societal issues. Women in Black does very much for the education of its members. I love Women in Black, because they are a rare non-governmental organization which has no authoritarian concept of the structure, where all members work.

Sonja Biserko:

I am Sonja Biserko of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. During the war, the Committee has worked closely with Women in Black.

Women in Black are certainly an example which will subsequently be highly valued morally, in this society which refuses to know and do not want to know. They respond directly to all situations concerning violations of human rights, not only in Serbia but also in other regions.

We have gone through a variety of situations and became friends in difficult times, and we often act together, together we write press releases. They are associated with the women of Srebrenica. Women in Black often use our books and reports, and this is very important. It is a kind of interaction which exists between them and all those who are close to them. I have shared many pleasant situations with Stasa, but one remained carved in my memory. We were together in Sarajevo at the workshop for women from all sides. We brought together women from Serbian entities spontaneously and they came to us even though they knew our position regarding Serbia's responsibility for genocide. She knows how to communicate on various levels. Later on, some women were crying, they were excited, and grateful for the discussion, we were learning through listening to each other.

Svenka Savic:

I am a full-time professor of Psycholinguistics at the Faculty of Philology in Novi Sad, where I have worked for 40 years now. I have been working with Women in Black for Twenty years now.

What I think is important for Women in Black is not only the fact



that they are opposing war and the ideology of war, but they are fighting for peace, it is what they consistently create. It is very important to publish what they do. It will remain as a memory, as well as a document of what they are doing. I feel better in this activist role than in the role of professor. One side feeds the other. I am one of the few in the women's movement, who consistently takes account of activism and academic activities, but I make no distinction between those two. Being an activist means fighting or defending ideas that contribute to the deconstruction of patriarchy. Feminism for me is something that is part of my actions, my thoughts and my speech in everyday life.

They have changed some things themselves. I appreciate the fact that Women in Black are working in the field of transitional justice, I think they are the only organization working so consistently on this issue in the region.

Zagorka Golubovic:

For years we have communicated and we are constantly in contact, it is one of the NGOs that is closest to my ideas and my work. They take part in organizing various discussions, not only here, not only among the members of this group, but all over the cities of Serbia. I often went with them and we talked about issues which interest people to talk about, about life here, and developing of Serbia. My contribution consisted of my help for certain issues, which the organization wanted to discuss when organizing panels, to help them understand some things, because my profession is philosophy, sociology, anthropology. They are interested in what is called transition here, where Serbian citizens experiencing difficulties and can not cope, and Women in Black are helping a lot, not only in Serbia but also in neighboring countries and in the world.

All the experiences are worth remembering, all that I had the opportunity to experience with my colleagues from the organization, on the forums, conferences, theater performances. I would say that if there was no organization like Women in Black, it should be established, because it is very rare NGO which works continuously and helps people

in Serbia to overcome many problems which people encounter. I am very grateful that they exist and that they invited me to collaborate with them.

Vesna Rakic Vodinelic:

I am a lawyer. I have also been a professor for thirty years already. I have cooperated with Women in Black, almost since they were established. I think their role is even more significant now than at the time of war. In Serbia, a significant part of the society is trying to forget and bury the evil past. Women in Black have a very important role in the process of confronting Serbia with its authoritarian, evil and infamous past. The role they play is the most important of all NGO`s. They do not only deal with women`s rights, rights for freedom of sexual preference, but for the secular state and they advocate for a whole range of ideas and understanding of human rights violations that were committed in the recent past, learning lessons from it, in order to prevent the repetition of such crimes. I think that the Women in Black of Serbia will have a lot of work on their hands for a long time, unfortunately. During one of the anniversaries of genocide in Srebrenica, young people were throwing the tear gas, on all of us who gathered, and we were just a few. We were coughing, we were affected by smoke. But after ten minutes Women in Black were again on the same spot. My overriding impression is that in this society of Serbia, women are much more courageous than men. I think the future of Women in Black is that they are one of the few organizations which deal with victims in a way that is not offensive and does not imply the abuse of victims.

Particularly interesting in this book are those on the history of the feminist movement in Serbia – and they are all the more important since they are almost completely unfamiliar to the public.

Upon reading the Atanasijević`s book, one realises that committed contemporaries` public acts have their roots in the Serbian Feminist



Movement, which has been lasting for nine decades. We should bear in mind that the ones who most wholeheartedly fought for the dignity of Serbia in time of its greatest disgrace during the reign of Slobodan Milosevic were the feminists themselves.

In May this year, during the Commemoration to Muslim victims of 1992 on the bridge across the Drina in Višegrad, I had the opportunity to hear Staša, a member of Women in Black, speak about her shame and warned us about the urgent need to arrest the perpetrators from all the warring parties. An old lady whose sons were killed at that place held her hand during the whole speech. This kind of solidarity with the victims, of emotional support, is possible in such a direct way only between two women, members of the gender oppressed for millennia.

The same Women in Black, very often subjected to misogynist and severe slanders, were the first and, as far as I know, the only ones to offer succour to the Serbian refugees from Krajina, giving them water and food after Serbian police had stopped them in some desolate place in Vojvodina. When these facts and other similar ones will make their appearance into national history textbooks, then our nation will be free and independent and, as Ksenija Atanasijević said, “the nation which is free and independent has no reason to intrude into other nations’ areas, out of rapacity and wish to rob.”

June 13, 2009.

Zlatko Paković

Feminist Ethics of Responsibility

Thales, the father of philosophy, once said that he was grateful to destiny because of three things: first, because he was born a human and not a beast; second, a man and not a woman; and third, a Greek and not a Barbarian.

A man of unquestionable sagacity and ethics, who is reputed to have been an avowed bachelor, attested by that statement the social status of a Hellenic woman in the 6th century B.C. although he did not claim himself to be a misogynist. For what free member of the polis with a common sense would wish to be a person without a freedom to express, like a woman or an animal deprived of the pleasure of a contemplation; or a barbarian whose life depends on the arbitrariness of the ruler and not on the generally acknowledged laws?

Not more than two centuries had passed when Plato succeeded to produce the idea of the gender equality, despite the unchanged status of a woman in the polis. In the ideal state he conceived, women would be able to participate in all the civil services and educate themselves in the same way that men do. There is no difference between men's and women's capabilities, claimed Plato.

Two millennia after Plato, the French revolution developed the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity (brotherhood) while continuing to be gender-biased towards women as lesser beings. "Woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she must equally have the right to mount the rostrum," Olympe de Gouges protested and shortly afterwards was guillotined because she had "abandoned the care of the household." What kind of a revolution and freedom is that, what kind of a equality and fraternity is

that when half of humankind still remains unequal and not free and what kind of morality is that when it is based upon the essentially immoral prejudice that every slave has his wife for a slave. It was not until the Women's movement set the stage for it that the revolution of social life and genuine emancipation of humans began.

The starting point of feminism, as claimed by Ksenija Atanasijević already eight decades ago, "is a belief in the sanctity of the individuality and its right to freedom and fulfilment of all the needs for its development." From the outset, the feminist movement, which was directed against "numerous inherited prejudices, imposed suggestions, harmful traditions – the whole network of tales spun throughout centuries and strongly-supported theories about woman's inferiority and her naturally-acquired subordinated rank," raised the opportunity for justice and freedom without hypocrisy for the first time. Finally, the true critique of religious prejudices was made possible only when feminism appeared. Thus, if the criticism of society, as Marx said, begins with the criticism of heaven, then the criticism of heaven begins with the criticism of woman's position in society.

The exceptional book 'Ksenija Atanasijević – The Ethics of Feminism' (published by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia) arranged by Ljiljana Vuletić is a collection of works which our most significant and most original female philosopher, as a member of the "Female movement" founded in Belgrade in 1919, had published in newspapers and magazines mainly in the interwar period. Alongside brilliant essays on the origin and development of feminist thought of great minds, male and female writers from ancient to modern philosophy, from Plato and Greek tragedians to Ibsen and Strindberg, the essays that are particularly interesting in this book are those on the history of the feminist movement in Serbia – and they are all the more important since they are almost completely unfamiliar to the public.

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June 13, 2009.



Biljana Kašić

A Glance that stings/aches

Srebrenica, victim's dignity and life: On the occasion of the event that marked fifteen years since war crimes, human phantoms and living concepts of humanity both strained, along with more than two hours loud political speeches which impose procedure and hierarchy of mourning, and after that followed mourning and grieving in human tranquility and respect as it befits.

Burial was a place of human identification, that fizzy 11th July, in Potocari, it was the only moment, when the act of human identification and integration of every individual murdered in the massacre in Srebrenica fifteen years ago, occurred because of the very possibility of burials and repentance. After spending fifteen years in something cynically called register of „unidentified“, every individual whose death was promulgated, ended the agony of the waiting room in which permits for burial became more questionable. Witnesses of this humanly dispossessing and humanly unbearable uncertainty, are family members, mainly wives, for who Aleksandar Hemon says in his significant article “ Network of Srebrenica” that they are hubs without a net, then their dear ones, and on occasion some companion who cares due to human concern. I'm consciously overlooking political elites and their gestures, those whose space of human concern reaches to the functional boundaries of their political profession, which is often drained of humanity.

Every person who had the status of unidentified body or unidentified victim, became human individual when death was publicized, and the public ritual of joined burial gave her/him human staging and name in which are aggregated together time of life and the time that represents identificational mark of living existence that is yet to come. Because of

the implicit conditional that's compressed in the hope that the person registered as missing or unidentified will eventually appear, is functioning in a counter-linear manner, and is always possible same as invoking. For the victims of this terrible inhumane crime, same as for those who were continuously searching for them, past and finished time is taking place at the same time as it is concluding with the cut of with the remains of murdered human beings, in the notch of conditional. While public announcement of the burial indicates the very existence of their lived lives giving them singular acknowledgment, whilst putting their life in constructed war - based time impairs meaning of their existence, time "between" torn life, peeled meaning and waiting for the burial, is the time that is slipping from human coding. Inability to speak about trauma is either stuck or this geopolitical space isn't capable for its processment. Process of dehumanization is working expressively on erasing it, and experiences of those people who are living witnesses of the arrogance of murders should be as soon as possible transformed into amnesia, denial and/or silenced historical story. As Jasmina Husanovic, with reference to Jenny Edkins, wrote in her article, "Ethical- political testimonies of faces and scars: Bosnian stories and traumas as nouns of female gender in plural" - "to recover the victims and re- include them in the power structures, but in the way it becomes harmless, as part of their own reproduction" .

Nela and me arrived along with Teufika and Senada from organization called *Vive Women (Vive Žene)* from Tuzla. I stand crumpled in the mass on the hilly wasteland and the burning sky is multiplying "burning pain". Like sadness, grief, anger and memory, which are, according to Nadia Seremitakis expressions of the Maniat women's lament in Greece , it burns, "dissolving" subject of pain in the funeral rituals and mourning discours. Drowned in the multitude of a vast and sticky physicality around the same act, I constantly have on my mind Jasmina's mentioned suspicion that the annual commemoration of the identified victims that were found in the Memorial center Srebrenica – Potocari of the 11th July is in fact image of that normalization by binding parade elite and

victims survived, and we who arrived there because of various motives, are functioning as its collateral witnesses. Placing this linkage, although ripable, is being done so “the evil of not- thinking”, as Vlasta Jalušić denotes post-totalitarian time with this pregnant metaphor, establishes itself more as an excess and not as a cause of a genuine human concern and critical reflection. Wouldn't the confrontation of political responsibility be delayed in the illusion of current community commemoration? Is the condition of becoming a human being possible only in the sphere of the political, is a condition of obtaining a human face again possible only in articulation of public discourse or ritual?

The rupture that was all the time present among victims survived and political survivors seemed to be covered by bizarre codes of both shame and certain self-acknowledged failures as well as empathy installed into the political speeches, namely by politically- instant effects in order to mimic a political innocence.

On the occasion of the event that marked fifteen years since war crimes, human phantoms and living concepts of humanity both strained, along with more than two hours of loud political speeches, which impose procedure and hierarchy of mourning and after that followed mourning and grieving in human tranquility and respect as it befits. With a religious ceremony, the public act of burial, in which thousands of hands of two human bodies spirals carried coffins accompanied by public announcement of 775 names who walked among us, the most vividly widespread was that feigned bandage of political solicitude, human networks that Hemon referred to as they were re – established. Helicopters were already in the air and a decent number of bodyguards retreated to the improvised points of the main stage.

Is the condition of becoming human being possible only in the political sphere, is a condition of obtaining a human face again only possible in the articulation of public discourse or ritual, I am thinking intensely absorbing names that make loss and vulnerability real, and victims vital. Not realizing that, while I am carefully listening to those names that are

yet to be entered, motionlessly staring at those names that are carved in an alphabetical order, I found myself in front of the white marble slab with last names beginning with the letter S (Sulić, Sulejmanspahić, S...). Surnames and male names in the series, listed in order, the image of Bosniak men and boys between age 12 and 77, victims of the planned massacre in Srebrenica fifteen years ago, stings, and only occasionally a female name. The separation of women from men and boys in the war not only signals the patriarchal – war genealogy, but it is always a prelude to death.

Women and women of Srebrenica. With a clear message, “We will not forget the genocide in Srebrenica,” Women in Black began their solidarity with women from Srebrenica, with artistic-activist campaign in Belgrade, symbolically named: One pair of shoes – one life. “What makes life worth mourning?”, the question that Judith Butler poses in her book *Precarious Life, The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, particularly for Srebrenica exposés the urgency of the question that precedes and follows, and that is, “whose lives count as lives?”

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Biljana Kašić

WOMEN'S CHRONOTOPES AND REMEMBRANCE

*With regard to the promotion of the book *Women's Side of the War* (*Women in Black*, 2008) in Multimedia Institute MAMA on 8 December, 2008.*

I am very glad to be here today, and a conversation about the books women write as though they were writing out the story of their life, biography and/or their personal experience in a form of a text is the motive I find peculiar and irreplaceable. Or, that fundamental connection between women, the order of the undoubted ethical responsibility.

It is a great ceremony to talk about the books which gather the women's prints of a personal experience and the book *Women's Side of the War* is a special book. Primarily it is a testimony of a complex human texture of women in the context of war times, but even more because the women appear as witnesses of that same structure with their statements, speech, dashes, letters, urge to remember and intrusion into the discourse.

A lot of things can be read when one analyses that polyphony of women's statements, compressed and flowing, focused and disjointed, embraced by interwoven meanings which build upon each other. The book houses women's statements which are neither identical nor reducible to the one and same thing. Positioning oneself according to current and past experiences always leads to self-reflection and to that often unspeakable „surplus“ which mirrors the relation between oneself and the others as well as with the texts which are present here; the relation between oneself

and the decisions of the editors to collect the testimonies, bring them to life and realize them through discourse.

Although the absence of memory, especially when one is suffering the most drastic traumas, is a common way of surviving, as stated by the Nadine Fresco, co-editor of the book by the *Le savoir-déporté: Camps, histoire, psychoanalyse* (2004), not acknowledging the non-present memory and/or amnesia when talking about women, seems reason enough for realization of the book.

During the last decade several artistic exhibitions of feminist authors speak about the importance of re-activation of the memory and against the amnesia like Sanja Iveković who, with a series of photographs “People’s heroines” which was created during the nineties, reminds us of a torture, hardship and sufferings of the women in the Second World War. A few books that were written in Croatia deal with the subject in different ways and concern the war in the nineties on the territory of the ex-Yugoslavia: from the book *ACTIVISTS ‘Spelling Out’ Theory* (2000) to *Women Recollecting Memories* (2003.) The book *Women’s Side of the War* published by *Women in Black* talks about it.

How should one speak about the book? Although it is possible to review it from different angles and in different ways, on this occasion I will try to scrutinize it through two forms: one is the form of chronotopes and the other is the form of counter-discourse.

It is observable at the first look that every chapter’s title is not just a simple title, that is, every title has features of a chronotope, that simultaneous koinos and topos, time and place in the one, overlapped and mutual. It does not matter if the word is about the chronotopes that directly mirror the trauma and provoke the clusters of memory like “Vukovar”, “In Front of the Wall of Silence”, “Srebrenica”, “Kosovo”, “The Voices of the Missing Ones”, or about the ones that raise hope like the “Lights in the Tunnel”, “Women Recollecting Memories” or about the ones that transfer the heterotopic features like the title “Crossing the Line”.

The policy of testimony and the policy of hope somehow go together, and although, as humanly precisely Aleksandar Hemon wrote in “The Banality of Evil”, the woman from Srebrenica who “(...) lost a hundred of members of her family (...)” (Hemon, 2005) is actually a node without a network, and even if while listening to her that is testifying her experience we remain mute or do not know what to say at all, we must know how it is to listen and how to deal with it. Personal muteness is only a break, an interval for processing the trauma, for confrontation, for possible intersubjectivity that calls for something larger than empathy. Drawing on his thought, only her, (the witness of her own trauma), is that one “(...) who knows everything there is to know about Srebrenica, because from her node we must weave together a new network.” (Hemon, *ibid*, 2005)

It seems that nothing speaks better about the importance of the book *Women’s Side of the War* than the aforementioned statement, about the way that even the title of chapters, that connecting chronotopes like the nodes of networks, show the connections between women’s lives evenly as fractures, gaps, holes, fissures in the networks, inabilities.

A personal experience, as clearly presented in the text of postcolonial imaginarium of *Bosna* by Jasmina Husanović, cannot be politicized (Husanović, 2008:68); it struggles against every act of politicizing, despite, as paradoxical as it seems, the series of manipulative strategies of political authorities or biopolitical designers, various orders and lines. It is of a different language, format and bonding structure.

Trauma, violence, loss, displacement, pain, vulnerability, broken silence, internalization of the fracture in the format of the multitude of women form new social ground, the one that has transformative taste and transformative possibilities. This book warns about that and opens a conversation about women’s models of action in the form of counter-discourse as a possibility of a personal ethical survival. When Tanja Tagirov in her text in this book says that “(...) I feel tighten within the borders with which they had restricted me and between the memories I have

(...)” (Tagirov, 2008: 399), she speaks of a personal dissent for forced auto-censure, at the same time being aware of the narrowed possibility of choice in the moment in which all the human identities, particularly national, have become front identities, tense and conflicting.

Counter-discourse served as a narrative strategy for many women in which they inscribed their decision, choice, position despite the war and human devastations, traumas and missing spaces in their memory: from Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Rigoberte Menchú Tum to Yvonne Detusch and Staša Zajović. Women in Black have instantly decided to choose the feminist politics of peace, antimilitarism and responsibility for the crimes, and every critical positioning during the war as well as during the post-war period verified the strength and risk of the decision.

I see the Women’s Side of the War as a women’s decision to inscribe the memory of the women in the area of human responsibility.

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Borka Pavićević

Women in Black

Today is 8th of March, International Women's Day, and Women in Black are in the Center for Cultural Decontamination, in accordance with the common law, though it is not prescribed by any law, with their program containing, among other things, the movie regarding the status of women in the labor market of Serbia. Before this, Women in Black, as usually, organized their vigil in Republic Square, marked by the slogan 'For labor rights of women,' assisted by the Roza Luxembourg Foundation.

I read the slogan American women were holding in 1906: 'No woman with self-esteem should work for a party which ignores her sex,' (Susan Antony).

Many years ago, during the seventies and eighties, in the Theater Studio 212, in which I used to be a playwright, on this very date, the trade union gave all the women a present, it was an envelope with a shopping voucher and a rose. Women's lib was not much observed in those days, but I took part in the first feminist gathering in the Student Cultural Center, whose director was Dunja Blažević at that time and I refused to take the envelope and the rose, because I believed that it symbolized inequality of women. It was the time of modernism and today in the time of post-modernism, I would gladly receive this envelope or deliver it to my female associates who make up the majority over our brilliant male colleagues in Student Cultural Center.

'Our employers have got the strength because they are organized,' says a slogan from 1911.

And how organized are those today, together with Women in white?

A serious analysis of the daily newspaper 'Blic' news stratification of 'The most powerful women in Serbia,' which is usually published by the end of the previous and the beginning of the new year, would show how the 'power' of the elected ones, especially in the first line, moves from the authorship to the position of agents of organizations, especially banks, with male chiefs 'at the head,' 'leaders,' 'leaderships,' 'owners'.

Since, a couple of years ago, I saw in the program 'Insider', the author of which is Brankica Stanković's, the PR of Belgrade Port, answering all the questions regarding the purchase of the port, 'within the scope of her authorization', and 'in accordance with the law,' suddenly I realized what the image of woman in the context of our accession toward the European integration process is. A jacket trois-quarts in the oval shape, which frames the breasts, and below a t-shirt, which you can buy on newsstands in all the capital cities globally, in case you did not spend your night at home, predominantly blond hair and dressed, in accordance with the moment, following the face line, longer or shorter, as well as the skirt, and than heels, high heels, between those which clerks or secretaries wear in the banks all their working day, which lasts much longer abroad, or 'dress-up shoes,' and all this adequately selected in order to protect the ordering party and provide the functionality of the environment.

During ma couple of visits I made to Prague, it seemed to me that East-European bureaucracy had shifted very simply and skilfully, the way only bureaucracy can do it, into European integrations, laws, communication, projects, evaluations and implementations.

How does it look so far, in a country which did not have its continuity after the fall of the Berlin wall, which fought a war, and entered transition through the war, on the 'territory' of which only Slovenia is on the level of the economic growth of the eighties?

When 'Otpor' joined the elections for the first time, and when 'Blic' published a new image of the women and men candidates, the transformation was vivid, from the tough to an 'appealing woman'



This is probably the reason why, members of G17, a party of `experts` are dealing with the culture and telecommunications, (`the respective` ministries`) `spirituality` as it used to be called during the time of Koštunica`s government, some time before and some time after it while director Srđan Dragojević entered the Main Board of Serbian Social Party.

Naturally, all of this would be much more difficult to conduct, if it had not been preceded by a war, during which our men became warriors, and their chosen ones-singers, and then most of them became bodyguards, and their ladies favourite models of those who have the power based on money.

During all this time, in Republic Square women have organized their vigils against the war and violence, `Women in Black.`

If there is any continuity between all our and international holidays, between all the connections with the world, of all equality issues that have not been reduced to deterioration and disgrace or else to sheer imitation and excuse (the international community serves as a reference for everything that cannot be accounted for or justified), it is 8th of March, International Women`s Day.

Therefore 8th March has nothing to do with the state, (if it was at least that, then a state would be requisite), especially it has nothing to do with parties, community, or with the troops, tanks or jeeps, with loyalty or hierarchy, with joint venture or resignation. It has to do with the civic, and civilians and women were in the previous war refuges with bundles of bare necessities, then the bundles became chequered carrier bags and today women carry transparent plastic bags through which we can see milk, yoghurt and bread.

08.03.2011.