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Taking a stand in times of violent societal changes: Belgrade and Zagreb feminists' positionings on the (post-)Yugoslav wars and each other (1991-2000)

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CHAPTER THREE

Historical background

The social, political and economic contexts in which the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists have become feminists and produced an impressive legacy of feminist activism are briefly sketched in the first part of this chapter. My understanding of these contexts and the processes of construction and destruction of Yugoslavia is one which conceptualises them as consisting of multiple, sometimes successive and at other times simultaneously occurring events which did not happen overnight nor were completely inevitable and predetermined. Hereby I express my agreement with Dubravka Stojanović (2010:15), who has warned that

in history the possibility of choice always exists...[The] 'history of the present' is a history of 'longue durée', but also a history of contingencies, unforeseen events. That is why the 'history of the present' is also a story about responsibility. If we depart from [saying] that history is not causality and is not determined, then we accept that besides the [existence of] profound processes...individuals and groups bear responsibility for the decisions they had made which have directed the courses of the processes towards the outcome in which we find ourselves.

In the second part of this chapter I portray the Zagreb and Belgrade feminist groups which have been most often mentioned in the discussions of the war-related feminist activism in the two cities in the 1990s. I begin with Zagreb for the same reason as in Chapter 2. In addition to these portrayals, I pay limited attention to the feminist activities in the period 1989–1991. Although this period, strictly speaking, does not fall under the scope of my research, it is important to address it in order to better understand some of the processes which started from the second half of 1991 onward. For example, the enthusiasm and the consuming pioneering work conducted by the feminists in those last pre-war years can partially explain the disappointment, pain, anger and feeling of betrayal which many of them have felt vis-à-vis the feminists with different war-related positionings. Also, attention to some of the not war-related conflicts in the pre-war period helps clarify the divisions which occurred after the beginning of the war violence.

From the state of Yugoslavia to the post-Yugoslav states

Creation and organisation of the Yugoslav federation

Yugoslavia was a federation of six socialist republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia) and two socialist autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina) which were constituent parts of Serbia. Belgrade was the capital of both the federation and Serbia. Yugoslavia was the successor of the monarchy Kingdom of [male] Serbs, [male] Croats and [male] Slovenes,⁶⁴ which was established in December 1918, after World War I, and renamed Kingdom of Yugoslavia in October 1929. The founding principles of the Yugoslav federation were set up in the midst of World War II, in November 1943, at the clandestine⁶⁵ Second Session of the Antifascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia⁶⁶ (*Odluka*, 29.11.1943). Soon after the end of World War II, on 31 January 1946, the Constituent assembly of Yugoslavia drew up its first constitution.

The creation of Yugoslavia during and after World War II required a mobilisation of the population for the processes of liberation and state formation. For this purpose, the communist ideology of equality was employed. This ideology, which was able to politically homogenise the population, was also necessary because of Yugoslavia's great cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, a diversity which would continue to exist throughout Yugoslavia's life. Actually, the communist ideology was used as a substitute for a state-building nationalism which resembled that of the decolonising states in Asia and Africa. As Wim Couwenberg (1994:66) has described it, this type of nationalism

64 In the Kingdom's original name in Croatian and Serbian (*Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*) and in Slovenian (*Kraljevina Srbov, Hrvatov in Slovencev*) the masculine form of the nouns was used as generic. This important linguistic and societal gender discrimination is rendered invisible in the standard (and, in my view, incorrect) translation of the name in English: Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In order to attend to this discriminatory formulation, I add '[male]' in front of each noun designating an ethnic group.

65 Clandestineness was required as during World War II the Yugoslav monarchy was occupied by the Axis powers which had divided the country and installed their own puppet governments consisting of local collaborators.

66 This was the supreme decision making and executive body of the new Yugoslavia during World War II. It consisted of representatives of the national liberation committees from all over the future country (Bilandžić, 1985).

is not directed only against the foreign political, but also against the economic and social domination, including the domestic [one]. Political and social struggle go therefore hand in hand... [This nationalism] does not rely on an awoken national-cultural consciousness of the population. That population consists of very different ethno-cultural groups and its support for the national liberation movements has thus no ethno-cultural background, but rests mainly on the longing to shake off the colonial yoke.

In the Yugoslav case, 'foreign', ie 'colonial domination', was analogous to the fascist regimes which were installed all over the country during World War II, whereas 'domestic domination' corresponded to the undemocratic political system and the big economic and social differences existing in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia prior to World War II. This duality of the struggle which was carried out by the Yugoslav partisans and the Communist Party during World War II was expressed in its official name: National Liberation War and Socialist Revolution. By fighting the fascists and their local collaborators (portrayed by the Communist party as the enemy of the people, ie a national enemy) as well as the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy (portrayed as the enemy of the working class, ie a class enemy), the aim was to create a fascism- and class-free modernised state whose political organisation would be completely different from that of its predecessor.

The new and modernised state, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, was officially a country of brotherhood and unity: a political community of equal nations (ethnic groups) which were united in the creation of a new, advanced and just society. To achieve this equality, the policy tool named 'ethnic key' was installed. This tool for ethnicity-based proportional allocation of positions – which resembles the present-day quota, positive discrimination or affirmative action tools – was created in order to both ensure that all Yugoslav ethnic groups would get a fair share of the pie in the short run and diminish the importance of ethnicity in the long run. While producing ethnically heterogeneous working environments, the unintended consequence of that policy was that the importance of ethnicity increased. It instilled 'a fixation of the thinking in ethnic terms' (Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005:100), and people kept a close watch on the actual distribution of positions. Žarkov has also pointed to this problematic and paradoxical effect of the ethnic key policy:

[I]n socialist Yugoslavia, political power was always distributed among the ethnically divided republics, and within each republic, among the ethnically defined groups. That in itself was not problematic, for it could have been an element adding to the equality of the groups and to the democratization of society. However, it became problematic

at the point when ethnicity became the most significant channel through which political power was distributed (1999:9, emphasis in the original).

This wariness became even more salient in periods of economic decline and scarce job positions: 'Suspicion of ethnic bias was as powerful as its reality, and such resentments particularly threatened poorer, ethnically mixed communities' (Woodward, 1995:56). In addition to this, the immanent criticism of this type of policies – the questionable qualities of the selected people – was occasionally articulated as well (Zukin, 1985).

Officially, Yugoslavia also embraced the full-fledged equality of women and men. This premise was set already in its first constitution of 1946: 'Women have equal rights with men in all segments of the state, economic and socio-political life' (in: Božinović, 1996:151). Indeed, the position of women in Yugoslavia after World War II was in many ways much better than the pre-war one. Women and men were granted full franchise and equal marital and inheritance rights, abortion was legalised, primary education was made compulsory for all children, and women were encouraged to join the work force and political life. Furthermore, varied courses were organised in order to decrease the illiteracy among them and improve their low educational level, as well as to inform them about the new legislative changes granting them more rights (Božinović, 1996; Gudac-Dodić, 2006; Tomšič, 1980). Still, '[w]omen were included and represented as "equal" only on the abstract level as citizens, not through a gender approach' (Kesić, 2002b:68; see also *Svijet*, 09.12.1989).

In other words, women and men were equal citizens and, as such, had the same formal 'public' and 'private' rights and responsibilities, but the practices of daily life showed more often than not another picture than one of true gender equality. By 1958 only 7% of the members of the Federal parliament had been women, and 30 years later, in 1986, this percentage was no more than 16.2.⁶⁷ In 1980 women made up 36% of the labour force (Morgan, 1985), but 'were employed in low wage industries, at the lower professional levels and hardly ever held public offices, except at the lower level of the judiciary system and education' (Kesić, 2002b:72; see also Tomšič, 1980). Child- and eldercare as well as domestic responsibilities remained women's tasks (Iveković R., 1985; Milić, 1994a; Swaneveld, 1984), which meant that employed women suffered from what came to be known as the 'double shift' (Molyneux, 1981) or the 'double burden' (Sklevicky, 1984) of women in socialism.

67 Data from the Yugoslav Statistical Office (in: Božinović, 1996:249).

This is not to say that the double burden of women was unique to the former socialist countries. However, in these countries – including Yugoslavia – the official state ideology and policies emphasised the equality of women and men in all spheres of life, but did not deliver it. While women were expected to actively participate both in the ‘public’ realm (the labour market and the cultural, social and political life) and in the ‘private’ one (the household), there were hardly any stipulations and expectations about men’s active participation in the latter.⁶⁸

Interethnic and gender equality were two but not the only terrains with an observable discrepancy between the official ideology and the actual reality. This discrepancy also existed regarding the economic and political organisation of the federation as well as the workers’ participation in the decision-making and management processes in the enterprises – the famous Yugoslav concept of self-management. In the aftermath of World War II, Yugoslavia was organised as a unitary and strongly centralised country, which was in contradiction with its official federal structure (Tepavac, 2000). The Soviet-like organisation of the economy entailed extensive state planning and control, almost non-existent private ownership and a centralised market.

The Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito was, however, both running with the hare (the Soviet leader Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin) and hunting with the hounds (the Western leaders). Due to the latter alliance, and especially after the split between Stalin and Tito in June 1948, the Yugoslav economy by the mid-1950s underwent different reforms which brought it closer to the free market model. The centralised state planning and control mechanisms were constrained to make space for the policy of self-management. In view of the Cold War, the introduction of such reforms was gladly supported by Western leaders through and outside the international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund. The goal was to ‘keep Yugoslavia afloat as an independent but successful state within the Eastern bloc and thus an attractive example for dissidence’ (Freyberg-Inan, 2006:228).

The law which launched the policy of self-management was passed in June 1950 and was colloquially called ‘Law on delivery of the factories to the workers to manage’ (Bilandžić, 1985:171). The envisioned increased workers’ participation was supposed to lead to ‘decentralization of the economy and creation of some space for market competition and professional competence within that economy’ (Kesić, 2002b:71), as well as expand workers’ class awareness and solidarity at the expense of the ethnic or republican/provincial ones (Sekulić et al., 1994). However, the implementation

68 Concerning Yugoslavia, see the Resolution on the Main Lines of Social Action to Promote the Socioeconomic Status and Role of Women in the Socialist Self-Managing Society (in: Tomšič, 1980).

and the effects of the self-management did not really correspond with the intentions. Whereas some token blue-collar workers entered the decision-making bodies (worker councils), the real power remained with those in the top managerial positions who did not necessarily possess the needed competences but were loyal members of the League of Communists.⁶⁹ In addition to this, women were widely underrepresented in these councils. Finally, the class affiliation did not gain primacy: the uneven development of Yugoslavia's constitutive units unfavourably affected the development of such meta-identification (Kesić, 2002b; Schierup, 1993; Sekulić et al., 1994).

In 1965 a broad set of economic reforms was introduced in Yugoslavia once more, this time in order to counteract the unfavourable economic situation. The reforms included liberalisation of the prices instead of their determination at federal level, transfer of regulatory power from the federation to the republics, greater autonomy to the enterprises and a loosening of the foreign trade rules. Unfortunately, those remedies did not have the desired effect due to being ill-prepared and inconsistently applied. The unemployment rate – and the subsequent economic migration to Western Europe – rose and the economic disparity between and within the republics was exacerbated (Bilandžić, 1985; Stokes, 1997; Žarkov, 1999).

The end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s were additionally marked by big political turbulence. The students protested for political decentralisation, pluralisation and liberalisation, as well as reduction of the social inequalities and the unemployment rate, the Kosovar Albanians demanded a change of the status of Kosovo to that of a constitutive republic, and prominent members of the Leagues of Communists of Croatia and Serbia advocated radical changes in the political and economic organisation of the federation. Those utterances of dissent disclosed the existence of dissatisfaction about the Yugoslav situation and the need for reforms, thereby directly challenging the official (dis)course of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and its power monopoly. There was no consensus and clarity, though, about the solutions which were supposed to be implemented so that the different political options and power struggles would be accommodated:

[T]here was, most often, no clear-cut division with regard to the economic and political demands of liberals, nationalists and communist hard-liners. Questions of political decentralisation, democratisation and pluralism merged with questions of economic liberalisation and the demand for market reforms (Žarkov, 1999:12).

69 In November 1952 the Communist Party of Yugoslavia changed its name into League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The name change also applied to its republican and provincial branches.

The response by the League of Communists to those power challenges was a dual policy of restoration of its monopoly. On the one hand, the Party exercised its power against the leading dissident voices by making sure they lost their jobs and/or were sent to prison. On the other hand, the Party was also aware that some reforms needed to be conducted in order to appease the political and social tensions. For example, although the 1968 protests of the Kosovar Albanians had been silenced by massive police violence and large layoffs, some of their demands were granted in the succeeding years. In 1969 they were granted the right to fly the flag of Albania as their ethnic flag, and the bilingual Albanian/Serbo-Croatian University of Prishtina opened up its doors in 1970 (Clark, 2000; Malcolm, 1999; Pipa, 1989).

The reaction to the Croatian Spring or Maspok⁷⁰ in 1971 was similar. The leaders of this political movement (which gathered, inter alia, dissident voices within the League of Communists of Croatia, intellectuals and students) demanded Croatia's economic and political sovereignty over its territory, including the right to form its own territorial defence forces and exercise full control of all tax revenues collected within its borders.⁷¹ The leaders and prominent supporters of the Croatian Spring, many of whom eventually ended up in prison, were accused of Croat nationalism and fired and/or forced to resign from their jobs and/or positions within the Party. Nonetheless, the Yugoslav constitution of 1974 incorporated some of their demands, such as the transfer of the decision-making power from the federal level to that of the constitutive units and the establishment of territorial defence forces in each Yugoslav republic and autonomous province (Ponoš, 2007; Rusinow, 1978; Stokes, 1997; Žarkov, 1999).

The 1974 Constitution – which would turn out to be Yugoslavia's last – extensively decentralised the federation, with the exception of foreign affairs, foreign trade and defence policies (Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005). While the envisioned territorial defence forces were to be organised on a municipal level, to consist of local personnel and not fall under the jurisdiction of the Yugoslav People's Army, they were nonetheless supposed to support and supplement the Army in the event of a major threat. This constitution removed, in fact, the up to then valid legal principle of all (republics) for one (federation) and one (federation) for all (republics),⁷² thereby

70 The abbreviation 'Maspok' comes from 'Masovni pokret', which means 'a mass movement'.

71 The request for full control of all tax revenues was not coincidental. Due to its profitable tourist sector, Croatia was the second richest Yugoslav republic – after Slovenia – and, therefore, obliged to financially support the less developed parts of the federation (see also Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005).

72 I obviously borrow here the famous adage from Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*.

pushing the country into the direction of a confederation and giving the constitutive units infrastructure and legitimisation to pursue their own interests. The autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina remained *de jure* subordinated parts of Serbia, but were granted a *de facto* status of full federal constitutive units, only without the right to secession. This new status of Kosovo also meant a partial accommodation of the demands of the protesting Kosovar Albanians from several years earlier.

As a consequence of the decentralisation and the disregard for the needs of the federation (Tepavac, 2000), each republic began to attend to its own financial ambitions and 'directly and without prior authorization to contract enormous foreign currency debts that were guaranteed by the Federation' (Iveković I., 2000:55). The increased influx of foreign loans meant that the 1970s were 'the most prosperous time ordinary Yugoslavs have ever known' (Stokes, 1997:116). This prosperity led to improvement of the lives of women since 'electronic goods replaced female labour in the households' (Žarkov, 1999:15). However, the superficially prosperous time did not last long: the economic backlash was just around the corner. The Second Oil Crisis of 1979 accelerated the downward spiral of the Yugoslav economy, and not only because of the increased prices of oil on the world market. Yugoslavia also had to miss much of the remittances from its economic emigrants who had lost their jobs in Western Europe. What made things worse was that these people could not find new employment upon their return in the homeland (Iveković I., 2000; Woodward, 1995; Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005). In 1981 the country's foreign debt almost equalled its gross domestic product, whereas the servicing of that debt 'exceeded the sum of export earnings' (Iveković I., 2000:55).

The following years would be marked by a minuscule average growth of the national income and by hyperinflation. In 1990 the federal prime minister Ante Marković introduced market reforms in the form of the shock therapy approach of the International Monetary Fund. The hyperinflation was brought down in no time and the Yugoslav Dinar made convertible and tied to the German Mark. However, the positive effect of these reforms did not last long and the once again rising inflation caused a decline in Marković's popularity (Freyberg-Inan, 2006). The inflation, the growing unemployment and the other negative effects of these reforms were further exacerbated by their unfortunate timing. Marković aimed at preserving the already quite loose federation at a moment when the key Yugoslav republics had other aspirations, none overlapping with those of Marković. Croatia and Slovenia were headed towards increased decentralisation, while Serbia aimed at undoing the 1974 Constitution and a recentralisation of the federal state with Belgrade as its centre (Iveković I., 2000; Udovički and Torov, 2000; Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005). Moreover,

for the reforms to have a longer lasting positive effect substantial Western aid was needed, but this necessary aid was never obtained. Due to the end of the Cold War, Yugoslavia lost its up-to-then high geopolitical value. Consequently, the preservation of Yugoslavia as a stable country was no longer a priority for the West (Freyberg-Inan, 2006; Udovički and Torov, 2000; Wachtel and Bennett, 2009; Woodward, 1995).

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s Yugoslavia witnessed an increasing political liberalisation. This process was similar to the simultaneously occurring ones in other Central and Eastern European countries, but was more pronounced in Yugoslavia given its already more liberal and open attitude compared to the other socialist countries and the death of Tito – its charismatic president for life – in 1980. As a result of these developments, ‘there was a huge flowering in Yugoslav cultural and intellectual production’ (Slapšak, 2000b:37).

This liberalisation was, however, a double-edged sword. It opened up space not only for the development of feminist, antimilitarist, environmental and human rights discourses, but also for expressions of conservative religious views, peripheral and irredentist nationalism,⁷³ and ethnic hatreds and grievances. The constitutionally guaranteed or simply asserted right of an ethnic group to self-determination and secession,⁷⁴ as well as this group’s alleged historically unfavourable economic and political position in the federation,⁷⁵ became the rationale for all flare-ups of

73 I use here the typology of Hechter (2000). He sees peripheral nationalism operating when a culturally distinctive territory aims for secession or resists incorporation into an expanding state. In Yugoslavia, this corresponded to the Croat, Kosovar Albanian, Macedonian and Slovene nationalism. Irredentist nationalism takes place when an existing state expands by appropriating territories of a neighbouring state populated by co-nationals. This was the case of Serbia in relation to the regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia with a great concentration of ethnic Serbs, and the case of Croatia in the first half of the 1990s regarding the parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina predominantly inhabited by ethnic Croats.

74 Yugoslavia was not a nation-state, but a federation of nation-states. In all its six republics there was at least one ethnic group which was considered as a constitutive nation of that republic. Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia had a single constitutive nation – Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs and Slovenes, respectively. Bosnia and Herzegovina (up to 1971) and Croatia had two ethnic groups as constitutive nations: Croats and Serbs. In 1971 the Bosnian Muslims became the third Bosnian and Herzegovinian constitutive nation. The ethnic groups which were not constitutive nations on the territory of the republic in question were called nationalities, ie national minorities. Despite not belonging to the same category as the constitutive nations, the nationalities had declaratively the same rights. However, while the Yugoslav federal constitutions guaranteed to the constitutive nations the right to self-determination and secession, no stipulations were given on the right to self-determination of the national minorities.

75 This victimisation competition has been aptly summarised by Jović (2009:17): ‘[E]veryone in Yugoslavia was claiming to be disadvantaged and that somebody else was privileged’. See also Žarkov (1999).

nationalism. Up to then silenced and prohibited, they increasingly started losing this status and, consequently, becoming more prominent in the public space.

The Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts is a case in point, even though it was not published in its entirety at the time. Only some parts of it appeared in a Belgrade daily in 1986 (*Večernje novosti*, 24.09.1986, 25.09.1986). The core point of this document was the disadvantaged position of Serbs in Yugoslavia and especially in Kosovo, where they were supposedly exposed to the genocidal practices of the Kosovar Albanians (Mihailović and Krestić, 1995; Milosavljević, 1996; Wachtel and Bennett, 2009). Another example are the protests of the Kosovar Albanians in the spring of 1981. Their initial demands for better living and working conditions for the students changed very soon into requests for Kosovo's independence from Serbia and transformation into a Yugoslav constitutive republic. Some also called for Kosovo's unification with Albania (Clark, 2000; Malcolm, 1999). Finally, in Croatia and Slovenia there was criticism of Serbia's hegemony within Yugoslavia, as well as of the structure of the Yugoslav economy due to which these two republics were financially exploited by the less developed parts of the country (Ramet S., 2006; Wachtel and Bennett, 2009).

The discourse of grievances was supported by the legacy of interethnic atrocities during World War II which the Party had never dealt with properly. No safe spaces were created for discussing the atrocities at school, in the media and in the local communities, or through scholarly or art works. In place of conducting or at least initiating grassroots reconciliation processes, the Party repeatedly illuminated only the legacy of interethnic cooperation and solidarity during World War II. Furthermore, it imposed in a top-down manner the ideology of brotherhood and unity, as well as a black-and-white image of perpetrators, victims, defeated and victors:

Instead of permitting the Yugoslavs to face this unpleasant past, the Communists simply condemned the horrors of the wartime experience as an extreme outburst of bourgeois society and proclaimed that such things could not happen in the new order. Any effort to confront the issues directly was forbidden...The wounds of World War II were covered over, but they never healed (Stokes, 1997:114; see also Höpken, 1996; Jančar-Webster, 1999; Tromp-Vrkić, 1995).

This form of (not) dealing with the past did not only help the revival of nationalism in the (post-)Yugoslav region, but also encouraged the repetition of similar interethnic atrocities during the wars of the 1990s. In other words, the unhealed wounds and the silence they had been surrounded by inspired the victimisation discourse, while also proving to be fertile soil for its further growth and transmission,

as well as transformation into acts of violence. Nationalist politicians used this legacy of socialism to mobilise people as members of homogenous ethnic collectives and demobilise them as heterogeneous citizens of Yugoslavia (Gagnon, 2004).

One component of this demobilisation was the downplaying of the progressive role of the partisans and the antifascist movement, including its multiethnic composition. The nationalist narrative was set in motion first to serve as a reminder of the past atrocities committed against the ethnic group in question and/or its perceived leaders, even when the men in question had been collaborators of the Nazis. Second, this discourse also transmitted a warning of what could happen in the future to the members of that ethnic group unless they protected themselves against their enemies from the other ethnic groups. Finally, as Vesna Pešić (1996:40–41) has pointed out, an important part of this propaganda was the proclamation that the time had come to take revenge and “settle the accounts” from the “unfinished” World War II. This is what Papić (2002), writing on Serbia, has called peregrination of trauma in a context of time fusion and confusion.⁷⁶

The Yugoslav state’s failure to produce reliable statistics on the population losses (including those resulting from interethnic violence) in World War II⁷⁷ further

76 Tony Judt’s (2005) book *Postwar* features a telling visual illustration of this time fusion and confusion: a photograph taken on 28 June 1989, on the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. Despite the total Serb defeat by the Ottomans, this battle is commemorated in Serbia as a symbol of national pride and superiority (Zirojević, 1996). The photograph in question depicts two men with a painted portrayal of Tsar Lazar, the leader of the Serbs at the time of the battle. Next to them, two women hold a photograph of Slobodan Milošević, the then president of the Socialist Republic of Serbia. Obviously, just like in 1389, Serbia was seen as facing a great danger and Milošević was perceived as the reincarnation of Tsar Lazar and a saviour of the Serbs – an analogy which Milošević all too gladly accepted and exploited further. Another telling example is a more recent Croatian one. In April 2011 the ICTY convicted the Croatian general Ante Gotovina for his command responsibility for the war crimes committed in August 1995 against the Croatian Serbs (Gotovina’s release in November 2012 is irrelevant for the point which I make here). His conviction led to mass protests in Croatia. One of the protestors in Zagreb held a banner with the word ‘BETRAYAL: ‘1945’ had been written above this word and ‘2011’ below it (*E-novine*, 16.04.2011). 1945 referred to May 1945, when after the end of World War II, the British troops handed over to the Yugoslav partisan troops several tens of thousands of Croat prisoners of war who would shortly afterwards be summarily executed near Bleiburg (Austria). The banner claimed, thus, that just like in 1945, the Croats were betrayed once more in 2011. See also Vasiljević (2008) on how in both Croatia and Serbia in the period 1991–1995 much of the media propaganda was dedicated to making analogies between the then current interethnic violence between Croats and Serbs and the one during World War II.

77 For a general analysis of this lack of reliable data, see Bogosavljević (1996), Đilas (1990) and Tomasevich (2001). Regarding one specific case, the numbers of victims of the concentration and extermination camp Jasenovac, which was run by the Croat collaborators of the Nazis, see Okey (1999).

CHAPTER THREE

contributed to the growth of the discourse of ethnic grievances and the replication of distorted portrayals of the past. The political liberalisation of the 1980s created space for historical analyses which explored the previously hushed up war crimes, but this process did not, unfortunately, result in the appearance of balanced historical research. Instead, scholarly and literary works started appearing wherein the number of victims of one's own ethnic group was increased, and the number of atrocities committed by members of the same ethnic group decreased (see the criticisms of this trend in Papić, 2002; Sindbaek, 2006 and Štitkovac, 2000). The appearance and acceptance of such an approach to history, which was as one-sided and biased as the previous one, was again possible due to people's insufficient knowledge of the past and the malleability of human memory:

The political mobilization of the masses on the grounds of historical awareness does not at all mean that every citizen possesses a solid knowledge of the past. Quite the contrary, it is ignorance about basic historical facts that opens doors to all kinds of manipulations... [E]very ideology can selectively seek 'historical evidence' to endorse its points (Tromp-Vrkić, 1995:223–224; see also the quotation from Gouda, 2007 in Chapter 1).

Next to the (manipulated) memory of interethnic atrocities in World War II, as well as the political liberalisation, economic hardship and defederalisation, the spread of nationalism was further facilitated by the strategy which many members of the Yugoslav political elite had adopted in order to remain in power at times when the League of Communists and its ideology were losing ground.

[N]ationalism was chosen for...the preservation of the fading political monopoly of [the] communist political elites who were faced with failing economy and the emergence of alternative political projects. These projects, although also based on socialist ideas, were very critical of socialism as it had been practiced in Yugoslavia (Žarkov, 1999:10; see also Udovički and Torov, 2000).

In a similar manner, Michael Ignatieff (1994:16–17, italics in the original) has observed that

[e]thnic difference *per se* was not responsible for the nationalistic politics that emerged in the Yugoslavia of the 1980s. Consciousness of ethnic difference turned into nationalist hatred only when the surviving communist elites, beginning with Serbia, began manipulating nationalist emotions in order to cling to power.

According to Anđelka Milić, this manipulation of nationalist emotions and the transformation of communist leaders into nationalists were in hindsight not all that surprising. Instead of undertaking the more laborious effort of creating a democratic society, these leaders had chosen the easier way of replacing one undemocratic collectivist ideology with another:

Although unexpected, the switch to nationalism by former communist parties seems logical because the distance between the communist collectivist ideology, based on such concepts as ‘the working class,’ ‘the class interest,’ and ‘the class enemy,’ and the nationalist collective ideology, based on such concepts as ‘nation,’ ‘the national interest,’ and ‘the national enemy’ is much shorter than the distance between communism and democracy (Milić, 1993:110).

Such a replacement was possible because, despite the developing political liberalisation and the appearance of political alternatives, the long-term political monopoly had hindered the emergence of wide-spread democratic attitudes. In the words of Papić (1994:12), the totalitarian practices of socialism ‘prevented the rise and growth of the conditions necessary for the construction of the democratic character of people.’

Slobodan Milošević is probably the best example of such a transformation. As the head of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, he gained additional support and power after addressing the protesting Kosovar Serbs in April 1987. The protestors had gathered to express their grievances about the discrimination and harassment which they had been subjected to by the Kosovar Albanians. Having heard Milošević’s infamous words ‘Nobody should dare beat you!’,⁷⁸ the crowd greeted him overwhelmingly. This unexpected support apparently made him realise his power to move people. Moreover, it seems that on that occasion Milošević noticed the hitherto not extensively exploited potential for mobilisation of Serbs on the basis of their alleged victimisation by others. Consequently, he built his political programme upon the already existing Memorandum which had the Serb victimisation as its basic premise (Stokes, 1997; Udovički and Torov, 2000).

By manipulation and replacement of his opponents with his supporters, Milošević managed to become the president of Serbia and in March 1989 change the

78 ‘Niko ne sme da vas bije’ in the original. The Belgrade feminist Nadežda Četković has aptly spotted the discrepancy between those words – allegedly addressed to all Serbs – and the high rate of violence against women in Serbia’s capital: ‘It was said that nobody should dare beat this nation, but the public does not know that in Belgrade every 6 minutes one woman is beaten up’ (*Vreme*, 12.11.1990).

Serbian constitution. Thereby, the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina was 'reduced to a mere token' (Malcolm, 1999:344) and the two provinces placed 'firmly under the control of the Serbian central government' (Stokes, 1997:126). Earlier that year he had managed to convince the leadership of Montenegro to support him, which meant that 'four of the eight positions on the Yugoslav Federal Presidency [were] under the control of one man, creating a "Serb Bloc" that shattered Titoist equilibriums' (Nation, 2003:94).⁷⁹ In a situation where Yugoslavia was already a rather loose federation, Milošević's thirst for power and expansionist tendencies provided an additional justification to the increasing demands of Croatia and Slovenia to restructure Yugoslavia into a confederation or even secede from it.

In January 1990 the Slovenian delegation walked out of the 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, expressing in that way a refusal to further take part in a body which rejected all Slovenian amendments and was heavily dominated by Milošević and his supporters (Jović, 2009; Stokes, 1997). The Croatian delegation opposed Milošević's proposal to continue the Congress without the Slovenians, which resulted in termination of the Congress and a subsequent dissolution of both the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the one-party political system. In this way, the party pluralism which the Slovenian delegation had up to then advocated in vain was soon to become a reality. By the end of 1990 the first multiparty parliamentary and municipal elections were conducted in all Yugoslav republics. As a harbinger of the forthcoming (violent) disintegration of the country, the preceding electoral campaigns showed an abundance of nationalist paraphernalia and discourse: 'In the interests of electoral success, candidates used ethnic stereotypes to simplify voters' choices and avoid debate on difficult issues, and gave themselves permission to exploit openly a language of intolerance and hate' (Woodward, 1995:132–133).

The 1990 elections brought throughout Yugoslavia a victory – albeit not an overwhelming one – of the parties which gave primacy to the ethnic instead of class or civil affiliation and solidarity. Moreover, these parties exploited the discourse of unfairness in the interethnic and inter-republican relations in Yugoslavia (Goati, 2001; Nation, 2003; Stokes, 1997; Woodward, 1995). Next to this, the elections resulted in a dramatic decrease of the number of elected female parliamentarians in all Yugoslav republics. This number had not been particularly high even in the previous single-

79 After the death of Tito in 1980 the presidential function he had performed on his own was replaced with a collective Presidency which was very similar to the present-day one of the European Union. The Yugoslav Presidency consisted of eight members (one representative of each of the six republics and two autonomous provinces), and the position of Chair rotated annually.

party system, but it became drastically smaller in 1990 due to the virtual absence of women on the candidates lists of the big parties.

For example, the percentage of women in the Croatian parliament was 15.8 in 1986, compared to 5.2 in 1990. Serbia experienced the most astounding decrease: from 23.5% in 1986 to 1.6% in 1990. The least dramatic changes occurred in Slovenia, but even there this percentage was reduced by more than 50% – from 24.0 to 11.2. It seems that the formal constitutional equality of women and men additionally went by the wayside due to the abandonment of quotas for women (as a remnant of the previous political system) and the growing nationalist and conservative discourses. Women only figured in these as homemakers and biological and ideological reproducers of ethnic collectives, but definitely not as political actors who would be capable of successfully handling the quite precarious economic and political situation (Božinović, 1996; Lokar, 2004; Milić, 1994b; *Nove omladinske novine*, 20.05.1990; Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989).

The winning party in Croatia was the Croatian Democratic Union – the party of Franjo Tuđman who became the president of Croatia after the elections.⁸⁰ Tuđman was a former partisan, communist and general in the Yugoslav People's Army who had spent two years in prison in the 1970s due to his active role in the Croatian Spring. Despite his partisan past, in order to more successfully claim a continuity of the Croat struggle for independence and nationhood, he sought to remove the hitherto notorious image of the Independent State of Croatia. During World War II this was a fascist puppet state which had been administered by the Croat collaborators of the Nazis, called Ustashas.⁸¹

Tuđman began portraying the Ustashas as honourable advocates of the Croat cause and nation, and played down the severity of their war crimes against the Serb, Jewish, Roma and antifascist (regardless of ethnicity) population of Croatia. But fear among the Croatian Serbs was not only caused by those alterations of Croatia's past which depicted them less as victims, and the Ustashas less as perpetrators. The new Croatian Constitution, introduced on 21 December 1990, removed the Croatian Serbs' status of a constitutive nation of Croatia (a status which they had shared

80 According to the then current electoral laws in Croatia, the president of the republic was elected by the parliament and not through direct elections, as would become the case from 1992 onward. In Serbia the president was decided by direct vote already in 1990.

81 'Ustasha' (in singular, 'Ustaša' in original) means 'the one who has risen/rebelled' (ustati = to rise, to rebel). The Serb collaborators of the Nazis called themselves 'Četnici' ('Chetniks' in English). In singular, 'Četnik' means 'the one who belongs to a band' (četa = a band). Just like the Ustashas, the Chetniks were infamous for their atrocities against the antifascists of all ethnicities and – in this case – the non-Serb (Croat, in particular) population.

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with the Croats) and reduced them to an ethnic minority. Moreover, many Serbs employed in both state-owned and private-owned companies, as well as in the public administration and the police force – where they had been overrepresented – were laid off and replaced with Croats (Glenny, 1993; Nation, 2003; Štirkovac, 2000; *Ustav Republike Hrvatske*, 22.12.1990).

Parallel to this, the Croatian Serbs who lived in the parts of Croatia where they were a majority received extensive political, financial and military (including weaponry) support from Milošević and his allies for the purpose of seceding from Croatia and uniting those ‘Serb territories’ with Serbia. Milošević had started providing such support earlier in 1990, but after the electoral victory of the Socialist Party of Serbia – the party he presided over – in December 1990 he gave this support in his role of the president of Serbia. On 21 December 1990 the Croatian Serbs in Croatia’s region of Northern Dalmatia announced the establishment of the Serb Autonomous Region of Krajina (later renamed Republic of Srpska Krajina), with the town of Knin as its centre. Only a couple of months later, on 28 February 1991, this newly established autonomous region declared its independence from Croatia and its readiness to unite with Serbia.

Facing the rapidly approaching threat of a violent breakup of the country and restructuring of its territory, in the first half of 1991 the presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Alija Izetbegović) and Macedonia (Kiro Gligorov) decided to organise a series of summits of the presidents of the six Yugoslav republics in an attempt to find a peaceful way to transform the federation. It was not a sheer coincidence that this initiative came exactly from the presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. Both republics, while exhibiting great ethnic diversity, were political and economic outsiders in the Yugoslav federation. Gligorov and Izetbegović, therefore, perceived the disintegration of Yugoslavia as a serious threat to the existence of their republics. However, none of the three Yugoslav key players – the presidents of Croatia (Franjo Tuđman), Serbia (Slobodan Milošević) and Slovenia (Milan Kučan) – was willing to compromise. Slovenia and Croatia aimed for increased decentralisation and eventual secession. Serbia opted for the restoration of a centralised federation, while at the same time announcing that it would defend the rights of the Serbs on the whole territory of Yugoslavia (Nation, 2003; Pešić, 1996).⁸²

82 Pešić (1996:44) has described this, only at first glance schizophrenic, position of the Serbian leadership as follows: ‘[E]ither Yugoslavia will be a state tailored to suit the Serbs... or the Serbs will, armed with weapons (“if needed”), hit...the road of creating the Great Serbia which will gather all Serbs.’

The failure of the presidential summits meant the loss of the last chance to reach a non-violent agreement on the (post-)Yugoslav region and was partially due to the role of the major actors of the international community, including the international financial institutions. When Yugoslavia's disintegration began to accelerate in 1990 and 1991, next to the absence of foreign aid or possible debt relief (Freyberg-Inan, 2006), no 'serious commitment to preventive diplomacy or conflict management among key international actors was in place' (Nation, 2003:101). In addition to the international community's foremost preoccupation with the (consequences of the) Gulf War, the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, there was no unanimity regarding the future course of Yugoslavia. The country had simply lost its strategic importance for the West. The United States and the then European Community member-states, with their divergent domestic and foreign interests, did not stop the main Yugoslav actors from pursuing their plans (De Boer, 1992; Freyberg-Inan, 2006; Nation, 2003; Ramet S., 1999; Woodward, 1995).

The reappearance of organised feminism in Yugoslavia

As I have stated earlier, the gradual political liberalisation in the late 1970s and the 1980s proved to be beneficial to the development of organised feminism. It would, however, be incorrect to say that such feminism appeared in Yugoslavia only in the 1970s, since then it actually re-appeared. There had been feminist organisations on the territory of Yugoslavia starting from the second half of the 19th century. Their work had primarily focused on female suffrage, equal pay and marital and inheritance rights, as well as fighting against the different moral standards for men and women (Božinović, 1996; Jalušič, 1994; Kecman, 1978; Sklevicky, 1996; Vučetić, 2004).⁸³ However, the coming to power of the Communist Party after the end of World War II meant, among other things, the installation of an ideology which, while to a certain extent promoting the emancipation and equality of women, simultaneously denounced and silenced

83 Some authors have referred to the Yugoslav feminism during socialism as 'neo-feminism' (Iveković R., 1981, 1985; Jalušič, 1994) or 'new feminism' (Bonfiglioli 2008; Jančar, 1985). In her influential article on women's studies and the women's movement, Rada Iveković (1981:5) has explained her terminological choice as follows: 'I call neofeminism all newer women's movements (from the 1960s onward), including their theoretical foundations; they regularly have a left-wing political orientation'. The use of 'neo-' and 'new' distinguishes the feminists active in Yugoslavia from the late 1970s onward from the earlier ones, while alerting the reader to the important continuity of feminism in the Yugoslav region. While agreeing with this usage, I do not employ it here for practical reasons. The designations which I work with – eg 'self-declared antinationalist feminists' – are already complex enough.

feminism. Feminism was portrayed as a false Western bourgeois strategy of betraying the socialist revolution and separating women's liberation and emancipation from the all-encompassing liberation and emancipation of the working class (Božinović, 1996; Drakulić-Ilić, 1985; Feldman, 1984; Jalušič, 1994; Jančar, 1985; Tomšič, 1987).

It would be only in the second half of the 1970s that a new generation of mostly female and some male Yugoslav intellectuals – academics, journalists, writers, and students of humanities and social sciences – would start re-discovering and reclaiming feminism. They were becoming increasingly aware of the persistence of traditional gender roles and violence against women in the Yugoslav society despite its formal foundation on the principle of equality of women and men. At the same time, the Yugoslav feminism echoed the Western Second Wave feminist movement which had arrived in Yugoslavia thanks to its open borders and the access which these intellectuals had to foreign (academic) literature and international (academic) exchanges. The production of analyses on the position of women (and men) was additionally facilitated by the existence of accessible and detailed gender sensitive statistics which the Yugoslav Statistical Office had started gathering from the 1950s onward (Benderly, 1997b; Blagojević, 2010; Bonfiglioli, 2008; Dević, 1997b; Jalušič, 1994).

The first occasion where feminism was semipublicly discussed was the conference entitled 'Social Position of the Woman and the Development of the Family in the Socialist Self-Managing Society', which took place in Portorož (Slovenia) in March 1976. It gathered many of the women who would later be considered Yugoslavia's leading feminists and was jointly organised by the Marxist centre of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia and the Centre for Ideological and Theoretical Work of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia. The conference proceedings were published by the publishing house of the League of Communists of Slovenia (Hvala, 1979; Jalušič, 2002b). This organisational backing is a good indicator of the porosity of some of the Party structures at the time, due to which spaces started opening up even for feminism. Furthermore, the support shows that some of the future feminists were members of the Party.

This certain degree of proximity is also visible in the example of the international feminist conference 'Comrade (m/f) Woman: Women's Question – New Approach'. It was organised in Belgrade in October 1978 by three emerging Yugoslav feminists: the Belgrade-based Dunja Blažević and Žarana Papić, and the Sarajevo-based Nada Ler-Sofronić.⁸⁴ This conference – first of its kind not only in Yugoslavia

84 The last example of the same phenomenon which I mention here is the scholarly journal *Marksizam u svetu*, which was published by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Its

but in a socialist country in general – provided a significant additional stimulus for the development of feminism in Yugoslavia. The discussions took place at the Student Cultural Centre, which was very popular because of its liberal programming. The rather easy access which the feminists-in-becoming had to this location was due to the fact that Dunja Blažević was its director. The conference slogan ‘Proletarians of all countries – who washes your socks?’ lucidly combined the class and women’s issues, while critically attending to ‘socialism’s unfulfilled promise of women’s emancipation’ (Benderly, 1997a:61; see also Bonfiglioli, 2008; Feldman, 1984).

The re-entrance of feminism in Yugoslavia did not proceed all too smoothly, though. Due to the above mentioned criticism, both the Conference and the reappearance of the concept of feminism in the Yugoslav public space were attacked by the League of Communists and especially by its highly-ranked female officials. Some of these women were veterans of World War II and/or established members of the Yugoslav state organisations dealing with women’s issues as part of class issues. This conflict was, thus, not only grounded in the ideological differences between the two sides, but it also had to do with the rebellion of a new generation which challenged the extent of the achievements its foremothers had fought and were fighting for (Benderly, 1997b; Drakulić Sla., 2005a [1982]; Feldman, 1984; Jalušič, 1994; Jančar, 1985; Perović, 2008; Ramet P., 1983).⁸⁵

The 1978 conference had announced the birth of a small but active Yugoslav feminist circle whose members were mainly located in the three Yugoslav cultural and political centres: Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb (Benderly, 1997b; Iveković R., 1985; Swaneveld, 1984). Actually, many Yugoslav feminists refer to this event as the founding moment of Second Wave feminism in Yugoslavia (Bonfiglioli, 2008, 2009). In the initial phase, between the end of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, the feminists-in-becoming were foremostly concerned with their own education, consciousness raising, and empowerment as feminists (and women). In order to develop their feminist affiliation, positionings and work methods, they read, translated and discussed texts of international feminist authors from different linguistic backgrounds. This

thematic issue on women’s studies and the women’s movement (no. 8–9, 1981) featured articles by international feminist scholars. The guest editor, the Zagreb philosopher and feminist Rada Iveković, introduced the topic with an extensive article which would be widely read and discussed among the Yugoslav feminists (the same article I quoted from in the previous footnote). See also Blagojević (2010).

85 On a comparable generational conflict in the Netherlands between the Second Wave feminists and the women from the Dutch Women’s Movement, see Withuis (1990). The latter was a women’s organisation, jointly established after World War II by resistance fighters and survivors of the women’s concentration camp Ravensbrück. It transformed later into a communist women’s organisation related to the Dutch Communist Party.

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was possible due to the diverse foreign languages which were mastered among the Yugoslav feminists. Consequently, they developed a positioning which was based on the Western Second Wave feminist idea of sisterhood: solidarity of all women due to the shared problems, interests and standpoints which resulted from the same gender-based position within a patriarchal society (Delmar, 1986).

The Yugoslav feminists accentuated the similarities among women and did not pay much attention to the articulation, recognition and discussion – let alone the theorising – of the differences among them. In addition to the discourse of sisterhood, the communist ideology of equal educational, employment and housing opportunities for everybody contributed towards the absence of (articulated) awareness that not all feminists shared the same background, experience or positioning. In fact, the Yugoslav feminists were far too immersed in challenging the proclaimed equality of women and men to be able to also address the other inequalities in the society, particularly those which existed among them and among women in general. In the early 1990s this oblivion would strengthen the disbelief, pain and anger with which these feminists would meet the splits resulting from their divergent views on the war violence (Mladenović and Litričin, 1993; Kašić, 1994a; Korać, 2003; *Žene u crnom - Beograd*, n.d.).

Even though the initial activities of the Yugoslav feminists had been 'synonymous with academic debates and feminist grass root [sic] activism was simply unknown' (Žarkov, 2002:59), by the late 1980s the dominance of the theoretical work has started to fade. More and more activist groups – self-help groups, counselling centres and SOS hotlines for women and children victims of violence – emerged due to the increased awareness among the feminists of the existence of violence against women as a widespread societal problem. The first Yugoslav SOS Hotline for beaten and raped women began operating in Zagreb in March 1988 as the first such hotline in Eastern Europe (Benderly, 1997b; Božinović, n.d.; Iveković R., 1996; Vidović, in: *Vragovi crveni, žuti i zeleni*, 2007). Already in its first month of work it received around 400 calls, and at the end of its third year, this amount rose to 15,000. The Ljubljana SOS followed in October 1989 (receiving around 500 calls in the first ten months) and the Belgrade one in March 1990 – with more than 1,200 calls in the first year (*Informacija*, 19.04.1988; *Informacija SOS Ljubljana*, n.d.; *Informacija SOS Beograd*, 08.03.1991; *Vjesnik*, 26.11.1990). This overwhelming amount of calls was a direct slap in the face of the communist authorities which claimed that there was no violence against women in Yugoslavia and that Yugoslavia had the lowest rape rate in Europe (*Danas*, 28.02.1989; Drakulić Sla., 2005b [1982]; Mladenović and Protić, 1995a).

In the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s the Yugoslav feminists saw sexual violence strictly in gender terms and detached from ethnicity. This is very important to keep in mind in order to understand their later war-related dynamics and positionings. A very good example of the initial gender-based positioning is the joint appeal from November 1987 which was made in reaction to the news – and the subsequent political turmoil – of a statement by the Kosovar Albanian politician Fadil Hoxha. The then representative of Kosovo in the Yugoslav Presidency was reported to have said that the problem of rapes of Kosovar Montenegrin and Serb women by male Kosovar Albanians could be solved by employing more non-Albanian women in the inns in Kosovo, given that Albanian women would not do that kind of work⁸⁶ (Dević, 1997b; Marković, 1996; Mežnarić, 1994; Žarkov 2000, 2007). The Yugoslav feminists reacted with the following appeal:

Women, let's not allow men to divide us into 'whores', 'mothers', 'raped and not-raped', theirs and others'...Rape is an act of violence against women. It has no connection to nationalism. It is women who are raped, while it is men who rape, regardless of ethnic origin, faith, race or political conviction. Let's not fall therefore for the nationalist care for the rape victims! Women of Yugoslavia, let's not allow ourselves to be manipulated on an ethnic basis: let's position ourselves as human beings and not as a private property of all nationalists! (*Klic k razumu*, November 1987; see also *Svijet*, 07.10.1988).

This strictly gender-based conceptualisation of rape included war rape, as can be discerned from the article on the Gulf War written in February 1991 by Staša Zajović and Lepa Mladenović – two prominent Belgrade feminists:

In each war soldiers rape the women of the occupied territory... Women were also raped on our territories by all who ever had the power in wars, Chetniks, Ustashas, Germans, Serbs, Croats, Albanians etc. War rape is not a characteristic of men's ethnicity, but of men's position of power vis-à-vis other men and women (in: *opet Feminističke novine*, March 1991a).

In the late 1980s the Yugoslav feminists also opposed the at the time recurrent voices calling to redraw the borders of the Yugoslav constitutive units and Yugoslavia as a country, and discarded these ideas as issues only men could get enthusiastic about.

86 The framing of Hoxha's alleged statement implies that he used 'working in the inns' as a euphemism for sex work. For the text of this statement and its analysis, see Bracewell (2000).

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In the first days of December 1987 the participants of the 'First Yugoslav Feminist Gathering' in Ljubljana announced that

women would not recognise artificial male boundaries;...they were united in sisterhood, and their common experiences as women over-rode male concerns for territorial rights and geographic boundaries...[T]he male power struggles should not be enacted across women's bodies (Stojsavljević, 1995:36).

As Benderly observes, the Yugoslav feminists 'showed little interest in the [possible] independence of the republics, calling these matters "male politics"' (1997a:61). Moreover, they could not conceptualise how women could take an active role in projects involving ethnic belonging, territories and borders unless they had been manipulated into participating in them by men (Benderly, 1997a; Dević, 1997b; Jansen, 2005; Žarkov, 1999, 2000, 2007). This simplifying conceptualisation was also due to the absence of a theoretical apparatus which could offer a broader conceptualisation of gender, feminism, ethnic affiliation and nationalism. In her interview with Stef Jansen (2005:68), one anonymised Zagreb feminist has referred to this as follows:

[At] the beginning of the war or just before the war...exactly because the women [from Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb] who engaged with feminism were uneasy regarding the issue of nationalism, or at least because the Marxist feminists thought that nationalism was an issue which was not to be questioned since we were all allegedly a priori internationalists and a priori antinationalists, an uneasiness, a problem and a confusion took place...I reckon that there was no theoretical basis among the feminists for a substantiated conversation about what was nationalism and what was ethnic identity.

It is important to note, though, that the absence of scholarly interest for nationalism was not only characteristic for the feminists:

Nationalism was hardly ever theorized by Yugoslav scholars... Within the Yugoslav socialist division of political and academic labour, nationalism was addressed as a political, not as an academic issue. As such, nationalism was banned from academia in general, there was almost no scholarly interest in nationalism nor was it of any significance for academic feminism (Žarkov, 1999:19).

However, when in the late 1980s the emerging nationalist discourses – which were often endorsed by religious leaders – started addressing the birth rate, female sexuality, the up to then constitutionally-guaranteed freedom of choice regarding

childbirth, and the employment of women, nationalism became an academic and activist concern for the Yugoslav feminists. The unfavourable economic situation and the restructuring of the welfare state were also responsible for those regressive proposals. The beginning of a market orientation of the health-care system resulted, inter alia, in cost-cutting policies regarding abortion, due to which this health service was no longer provided for free. In addition, women began to be called upon to relieve themselves from the previously forced upon them double burden by withdrawing from the labour market and returning to their traditional role as child bearers (preferably of more children) and homemakers (Benderly, 1997b; Iveković R., 1995; Jalušič, 1999; Kesić, 2002c; Licht and Drakulić Slo., 1996; Žarkov, 1999).

In spite of the existence of a common general platform among the Yugoslav feminists, most of the concrete work which they conducted in opposing the nationalist discourses and pronatalist legislative proposals was not done jointly at the federal level, but at the republican level and by the feminists who were active in the republic in question. I explain this by Yugoslavia's increasing confederative character after 1974, due to which the specific activist endeavours had to target the legislation and the legislative bodies of the concrete constitutive unit.

For example, the Ljubljana feminists had throughout 1990 and 1991 successfully lobbied to keep the article on the freedom of choice regarding childbirth in the new Slovenian constitution. This article was inherited from Slovenia's socialist constitution, but during the debates on the draft new constitution there were prominent voices – such as that of the Slovenian prime minister – which called for its erasure (Jalušič, 1999, 2002b). In Croatia, one of the amendments submitted to the Croatian parliament by the 'Women's Assembly of Croatia'⁸⁷ was incorporated in the final version of the Croatian Constitution, but this was a partially Pyrrhic victory. The newly proposed provision which stipulated the right to life of the unborn child was indeed erased, but the same happened to the inherited provision on the human right to freedom of choice regarding childbirth (*Vjesnik*, 27.11.1990, 13.12.1990;

87 This was a one-day meeting which was held in Zagreb in December 1990. It gathered around 600 feminist and non-feminist women from all over Croatia and several guests from other parts of Yugoslavia. The assembly was organised on the occasion of the preparation of the first constitution of Croatia – whose first draft was at that time open to public discussion – as well as in reaction to the minuscule percentage of elected women in the Croatian parliament after the elections in April/May 1990 (*Danas*, 25.12.1990; *Kareta feministički časopis*, March 1991a; *Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, 23.12.1990a, 23.12.1990b; *opet Feminističke novine*, March 1991b, March 1991c; *Program održavanja*, n.d.).

Ustav Republike Hrvatske, 22.12.1990).⁸⁸ Finally, the Belgrade feminists repetitively protested in 1990 against the draft law on family planning and the proposed resolution on demographic restoration. These documents did not explicitly object to the freedom of choice regarding childbirth, but nevertheless aimed at controlling it by taxing childless married couples and those with more than three children, while providing benefits for having a third child. As the Belgrade feminists had rightly observed, this discriminatory provision was seemingly ethnically neutral, but factually ethnically based. Since most of the families with more than three children were ethnic Albanians, and most of the families with no or one or two children Serb, the goal was to increase the birth rate of the Serbs, while decreasing that of the ethnic Albanians. The result of these efforts was that both documents were withdrawn even before being put to the vote in Serbia's parliament (Četković, 1998a; Lilly and Irvine, 2002; Milić, 1994b).

The explicitly antinationalist positioning which the Yugoslav feminists were publicly proclaiming in the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was visible in their articles, protests and press releases, as well as in the continuation of the communication, the gatherings, and the academic and activist exchange between them (Benderly, 1997b, 1997b; Blagojević, 1998a; Žarkov, 1999, 2002). However, when in the summer of 1991 the wars in Slovenia and Croatia began, ie the war violence became a reality and Yugoslavia as a country was rapidly becoming 'former', not all feminists wanted to maintain the pre-war communication and cooperation.

Some found it difficult, inappropriate or no longer relevant to maintain the pre-war allegiances. Others chose to put an even stronger accent on maintaining the communication and cooperation across state borders and ethnic boundaries. This was done despite the great obstacles which were posed by the partially destroyed and partially controlled transportation and telecommunication infrastructure, and the closed borders between some of the republics, ie emerging states.⁸⁹ As it was

88 The deletion of the latter provision would enable the opponents of abortion in Croatia to push throughout the 1990s – albeit unsuccessfully – for the criminalisation of abortion (*Call for solidarity*, May 1991; *Danas*, 16.07.1991; *Narod*, 01.06.1995; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 29.03.1995, 17.01.1997; *Večernji list*, 16.01.1993).

89 In addition to the meetings in third countries, another way in which the activists struggled to maintain the communication was through the *ZaMir BBS* (Bulletin Board System: a now outdated system of electronic communication using computers, phone lines and modems). *ZaMir* [= For Peace] was set up in the period 1992–1994 by foreign and post-Yugoslav civil society activists. It connected the activists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia proper, Slovenia and Vojvodina, while also enabling them to exchange emails with people outside of the BBS (both within the post-Yugoslav region and in third countries). The possibility to exchange news and otherwise communicate only by dialling a local phone number via (intermediary) computers and modems was an extremely important communication tool in a context of state-controlled media, closed

increasingly becoming important to publicly take sides and show which side one adhered to, the feminists started using different positionings to declare their affiliations and distinguish among themselves. These practices will be discussed in the following chapters.

The violent creation of the Yugoslav successor states

Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence on 25 June 1991, Macedonia followed later that year (17 September), and the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina was proclaimed on 3 March 1992. The two remaining republics, Serbia and Montenegro, until 2003 remained in a joint federal state, which was called Federal Republic of Yugoslavia⁹⁰ and sometimes referred to in English as ‘rump Yugoslavia’. On 4 February 2003 the parliament of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia approved the restructuring of the state into the looser federation called State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. This union existed until 3 June 2006, when the parliament of Montenegro announced the independence of the country. This resulted in the establishment of two separate states: Montenegro and Serbia. On 17 February 2008 the Assembly of Kosovo declared Kosovo’s independence from Serbia and the establishment of the Republic of Kosovo – a move which is still contested by Serbia and some other countries, such as Greece, Russia and Spain.

The declarations of independence of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were followed by military interventions of the Yugoslav People’s Army.⁹¹ This ironical twist in the process of Yugoslavia’s disintegration requires some

borders, non-functioning postal services and cut-off phone lines between some of the post-Yugoslav republics. Without *ZaMir*, one would need to send a fax from Croatia to somebody in Austria and ask that person to send the same fax to Serbia. Or, a person in Sarajevo would call somebody in Germany and give them the news so that the intermediary would call the person in Croatia for whom the information had been intended in the first place. Obviously, the development of this BBS made communication easier, cheaper, more direct, and consequently – more intense (*Arkzin*, 01.09.1995, 12.04.1996; *die tageszeitung*, 06.07.1995; *Die Zeit*, 09.12.1994; *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 18–19.05.1996; Janković, 2009; Janković and Mokrović, 2011; Knežević, 2000; Stubbs, 1998, 2004; *Wired*, November 1995).

90 Actually, until 27 April 1992 this federation still used the name of the already former state (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). On that day, the Federal parliament of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (consisting at the time only of the representatives of Serbia and Montenegro) created the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The maintenance of the name ‘Yugoslavia’ in the name of the new federation was consistent with Milošević’s claim about struggling to preserve Yugoslavia and protect its legacy which he used for obtaining support for his politics (Vasiljević, 2008; Zaharijević, 2007).

91 The war in Slovenia lasted ten days, whereas the peace agreements marking the official end

explanation. During the existence of Yugoslavia the Army had the role of defending the Yugoslav constitutional order and territorial integrity (Hadžić, 2002; Marijan, 2006). Due to the general conscription regulation for men, draftees were called up from all over the country, and, in order to foster brotherhood and unity, they usually served outside their home republics. The Army headquarters were in Belgrade, and up to 1991 there was some ethnic diversity in the Army leadership and among the officers, despite Serb overrepresentation (Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005; Žunec, 2007).

However, during the war in Slovenia and at the beginning of the war in Croatia many non-Serb members of the commanding personnel left the Army or were laid off and replaced with Serbs (Vasić, 1996; Žunec, 2007). The Army initially justified its intervention in Slovenia and Croatia by its task to defend Yugoslavia. This was not just a cover up. The leading commanding staff was in the beginning indeed divided on what the Army was supposed to protect: Yugoslavia or the Serbs (Jović, 2009; Ramet S., 2006; Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005). Still, soon after the beginning of the war in Croatia, it became clear that the Army had sided with the secessionist Croatian Serbs (and Serbia's official politics) and that it fought – together with their military units and the paramilitaries coming from Serbia – against the military units of the Croatian state in the making.

It is very important to note here that this fighting did not take place between two equally powerful combatants: the Yugoslav People's Army was already in possession of an enormous weaponry arsenal,⁹² whereas Croatia was still in the

of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina would not be signed until November and December 1995, respectively. Different authors offer different explanations for the short duration of the Slovenian war in comparison to the two other wars. Gale Stokes (1997) accentuates the good military strategy of the Slovenian territorial defence forces, due to which they managed to outwit the Yugoslav People's Army. (Although the territorial defence forces had been intended to assist the Army, when the Army intervened in response to Slovenia's declaration of independence, the Slovenian territorial defence fought back.) Stipe Sikavica (2000) claims the same as Stoke, but also points to the agreement between Kučan and Milošević regarding the withdrawal of the Army from the Slovenian territory. Craig Nation (2003:132) traces the explanation to the presence of an internal Slovenian consensus regarding the independence and the absence of a critical mass of secessionist Serbs in Slovenia, due to which the Slovenian independence 'did not threaten the agenda of Serbian national consolidation that had become the core motivation of the Milošević regime'. On a different note, given the short duration of the military violence and the small number of casualties (between 70 and 80; the estimates differ), some authors object to calling the military violence in Slovenia a war and speak instead of an armed conflict (Prešeren, 2009; see also *Novi list*, 24.06.2011).

92 Anton Bebler reports that in the beginning of the 1980s the appropriations for the Yugoslav People's Army had amounted to a spectacular 70% of Yugoslavia's federal budget. Although in that decade they were reduced to 50% of the federal budget, this still very large figure indicates the magnitude of the Army's role (*International Defense Review*, April 1991).

process of establishing and equipping its military forces – the latter task made more difficult after the United Nations embargo of 25 September 1991 on selling weapons to all (post-)Yugoslav republics/countries. This embargo had been intended to affect all sides in the war equally and end the fighting, but it only contributed towards the military supremacy of Serbia and the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs (Hadži-Vidanović and Đurić, 2007; Kipp and Sanz, 1991; Stiglmayer, 1994b).⁹³

On 3 January 1992 a cease-fire came into force in Croatia. Under the provisions of this agreement, the contested parts of Croatia were to be divided into four demilitarised areas under the protection of United Nations peace keeping forces. The local administration (including local police) was to come into the hands of the insurgent Croatian Serbs, and the Yugoslav People's Army units had to withdraw from the whole territory of Croatia. However, one third of Croatia remained Serb-held and inaccessible to Croats. This ethnically cleansed part of Croatia was a thorn in Zagreb's side, but until the spring of 1995 no major attempts were made to restore its power monopoly and ensure the return of the Croats to that territory. The blitzkrieg actions of the Croatian police and army in May 1995 (Operation Flash) and August 1995 (Operation Storm) successfully brought three of the four Serb-held areas under the control of Zagreb. Hereby the Republic of Srpska Krajina ceased to exist.⁹⁴ As a result of these developments, around 150,000 Croatian Serbs fled to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

93 The disparity of military power between the Yugoslav People's Army, on the one hand, and the Croatian Army and the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other, was further increased after the independence of Macedonia. On 21 February 1992 Kiro Gligorov (the president of Macedonia) and Blagoje Adžić (the chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav People's Army) signed an agreement for a peaceful withdrawal of the Army units stationed in Macedonia by mid-April 1992. The agreement permitted the Army to withdraw all its weaponry and other equipment from Macedonia, thereby ensuring Macedonia's peaceful secession from Yugoslavia. The disturbing other side of this very favourable outcome for Macedonia points to its indirect responsibility for the power imbalance between the warring parties. The withdrawn weaponry (the operation was completed on 27 March 1992) had largely benefited the already existing military superiority of the Serb forces, particularly in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would break out in early April 1992 (see eg Maleski, 2012; *Nova Makedonija*, 27.03.2012).

94 The only area which remained under the jurisdiction of the Croatian Serbs was the region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium. After the end of the war in Croatia, this region came under the temporal administration of the UN and became known as the UNTAES-region (United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia). On 15 January 1998 the UN mission was concluded and the region peacefully reintegrated into Croatia.

CHAPTER THREE

Although 5 August – the day the Croat militaries had entered Knin (the capital of the Republic of Srpska Krajina) – was declared a public holiday in Croatia, Operation Storm also represents a dark stain in Croatian history, due to the successive ethnic cleansing. Particularly unsettling is Tuđman's assurance to the Croatian Serb civilians that they did not need to flee since nothing would happen to them. Despite this promise, most of the chiefly elderly Serbs who had remained in their houses were killed. In addition to this, the Croat militaries destroyed the properties of the Croatian Serbs, making their possible return to Croatia even more unrealistic. Several months after these events, on 12 November 1995, the peace agreement on Croatia – the Erdut Agreement – was signed in both Erdut (a Serb-controlled village in Eastern Croatia) and Zagreb. Hereby the war in Croatia was officially ended (Bjelajac and Žunec, 2009; *Poruka*, 04.08.1995; *Radio 101*, 24.01.2009; Šitkovic, 2000; Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005).

The support which the Yugoslav People's Army gave to the Bosnian Serbs provided the ultimate proof that it had ceased to be the army of all Yugoslav people (Hadžić, 2002; Malcolm, 1994). Starting from September 1991, ie seven months before the official beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosnian Serbs had begun declaring their autonomous regions in that republic. In early November 1991 they organised a referendum, in which an overwhelming majority voted for keeping these regions attached to Yugoslavia (Bougarel, 1996). A couple of months later, in January 1992, a Serb republic called Republika Srpska was established within the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Republika Srpska's constitution of 28 February 1992 instituted this new polity as a part of Yugoslavia. This happened only one day before the referendum on Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence from Yugoslavia would be held throughout the whole republic.

The referendum resulted in an almost unanimous support (99.7%) for an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina, although the votes of the Bosnian Serbs were largely missing. That was partially a consequence of the pressure which Radovan Karadžić⁹⁵ and his supporters exercised on the Bosnian Serbs to boycott the plebiscite and the actions which he undertook to prevent the organisation of the referendum in many places in Republika Srpska. Actually, Karadžić had opposed this plebiscite from the beginning. On 14 October 1991 he and his fellow party members had walked out of the session of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian parliament in protest against the

95 Karadžić was the leader of the Serbian Democratic Party – the political party of the Bosnian Serbs which received the majority of the votes of the Bosnian Serbs at the elections in November 1990. Between December 1992 and July 1996 he was the president of Republika Srpska. At present he is on trial at the ICTY.

organisation of the referendum (Malcolm, 1994; Nation, 2003; *Report*, n.d.; Stokes, 2009).

After Alija Izetbegović declared the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in particular after its recognition by the European Community on 6 April 1992, the Bosnian Serbs – supported by the Yugoslav People’s Army and the Serbian government – intensified their attacks on the Bosnian non-Serb population. The Bosniak and Bosnian Croat forces,⁹⁶ in spite of occasional clashes, jointly fought against the units of the Bosnian Serbs. At the same time, already from 18 November 1991 onward, there was also a separate Croat entity formed on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina: the Croat Union of Herzeg-Bosna. This entity – which was transformed on 3 July 1992 into an independent state: the Croat Republic of Herzeg-Bosna – enjoyed generous political, financial and military support from Croatia.

The military cooperation between the Bosniak and Bosnian Croat forces dramatically changed in the spring of 1993, when the Bosnian Croats turned against their allies and the civilian Bosniak population. This manoeuvre caused a tumult in Croatian politics. Not only the oppositional politicians, but also (prominent) members of Tuđman’s party, as well as the Catholic Church, which had up to then been a close ally of Tuđman, openly condemned this move as an act of aggression and territorial expansion. However, it took a year before Franjo Tuđman and Alija Izetbegović would sign a peace agreement in Washington in March 1994.⁹⁷ Despite the resumed joint military operations of the Bosniak and Bosnian Croat forces against the Bosnian Serbs, the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina would not be in sight before the NATO bombardment of the Bosnian Serb positions between 30 August and 20 September 1995. It was only after this bombardment that the leadership of the Bosnian Serbs and Milošević conceded to peace negotiations. The Dayton Peace Accords were agreed upon on 21 November 1995 in Dayton (United States) and signed on 14 December 1995 in Paris (Calic, 2009; Pusić, 1994; Ramet S., 2006; Stokes, 2009; Woodward, 1995).

96 What is often referred to as the ‘Bosnian Muslim forces’ or the ‘Bosniak forces’ – as I also do for the sake of simplicity – actually designates the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was established on 15 April 1992 from the territorial defence forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and several Bosniak paramilitary units. Its goal was to counter the attacks of the Yugoslav People’s Army and the Bosnian Serb paramilitaries. Even though the Bosniaks formed the majority, its personnel also included men of other ethnicities, some of whom in commanding positions. However, as the war progressed, the non-Bosniak commanding staff was increasingly replaced with Bosniaks (Nation, 2003; Udovički, 2000a).

97 The Washington agreement also included the provision for disbandment of the Croat Republic of Herzeg-Bosna and its incorporation in the Bosniak and Bosnian Croat federation – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This Federation and Republika Srpska are the two constitutive entities of the present-day Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina severe war crimes were committed by all warring sides. For example, members of the Bosnian Croat forces were responsible for the killing of Bosniak civilians in the village of Ahmići and its devastation, as well as the destruction of the 16th century Mostar bridge. The Bosniak forces were responsible for the torture and killing of Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb men who were detained in the prison camp in the village of Tarčin, the killing of Bosnian Croats in the village of Uzdol, and – together with the Bosnian Croat forces – for the torture and killing of Bosnian Serb men in the prison camp Čelebići. Still, considering their extreme extent and severity, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is foremostly marked by the war crimes committed by the Bosnian Serb forces, in particular the Srebrenica genocide in July 1995, in which more than 8,000 Bosniak men were murdered and the 1,425-days long siege of Sarajevo, during which 11,541 Sarajevans of all ethnicities were killed (*BIRN Justice Report*, 21.12.2011; Calic, 2009; *ICTY Čelebići Camp*, n.d.; Ingrao, 2009; *Novi list*, 16.04.2010; Woodward, 1995).

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has become additionally infamous for the prevalence of war rapes. Approximations usually vary between 20,000 and 50,000 raped women. Most of these women are considered to be Bosniak women raped by Serb soldiers, although war rapes by Bosniak and Croat men against women of the supposedly antagonistic ethnicities have been reported as well. This type of war crime⁹⁸ has also taken place in the wars in Croatia and Kosovo, but those figures seem to be even more obscure. There are reports of individual cases, but I have been unable to find more reliable extrapolated estimations, as they exist for Bosnia and Herzegovina. What makes these latter reports additionally partial is that they only address the

98 The legal classification of war rape as a war crime was not accomplished until July 1998. The statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Rome defined rape both as a war crime and a crime against humanity. This classification was later confirmed and extended in UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008), which stated that 'rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide'. The ICTY statute treated rape solely as a crime against humanity, but this was, nevertheless, as Kesić (2005) has pointed out, the first international legal document which explicitly mentioned rape under this category. Based on this provision, a historical legal precedent concerning the treatment of war rape took place in February 2001. The ICTY sentenced three members of the Bosnian Serb forces – Dragoljub Kunarac, Radimir Kovač and Zoran Vuković – for sexual enslavement, torture and rape of Bosniak women during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was the first time in judicial history that a person was convicted exclusively for committing war-time sexual violence against women (Dixon, 2002; *Judgement ICTY*, 22.02.2001; *Rome Statute ICC*, 17.07.1998; *Report of the Secretary-General*, 03.05.1993; *UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)*, 19.06.2008). I second Kesić's (2005) observation that this profound step forward in the awareness of women's rights and their violations – in peacetime and war time alike – was largely due to the work of many women's rights advocates around the world.

Croat and Kosovar Albanian women who have been raped by Serb militaries (*Amnesty International*, January 1993, September 2009; *Bassiouni report*, May 1994; *Human Rights Watch*, March 2000; *Mazowiecki report*, November 1992, February 1993; Nikolić-Ristanović et al., 1995; Slišković, 2011; *UN Fact Sheet*, February 2008; *Warburton report*, February 1993; Wareham, 2000).⁹⁹

The end of the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia did not mean a return of peace to the post-Yugoslav region. In 1996 the Kosovar Albanians' military formation Kosovo Liberation Army appeared on the territory of Kosovo and started clashing with the police and armed forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It also attacked and killed Kosovar Serb civilians, as well as Kosovar Albanians who criticised it or were seen as collaborating with the Serbian state. Up to then, the resistance of the Kosovar Albanians had been mostly of a non-violent nature, despite the harsh deterioration of their living conditions since 1989. This deterioration was exemplified by the de facto anti-Albanian police state which Milošević increasingly started introducing in Kosovo, the mass layoffs of ethnic Albanians from the state-owned companies and the public administration, as well as the banning of the Albanian language in the state institutions, including the University of Prishtina.

The leader of the pacifist resistance was the writer and later politician Ibrahim Rugova. On 24 May 1992 he became the first president of the – unrecognised by Serbia – Republic of Kosovo which, following a clandestine referendum, the Kosovar Albanians had declared the year before. Rugova and his non-violent strategies, including the creation of clandestine parallel Albanian para-state institutions in Kosovo, were widely respected by many Kosovar Albanians, but began to lose popularity given the unceasing oppression by the Serbian state. The perceived need to change course grew further after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in late 1995. These accords did not include any provisions which would open up space for Kosovo's disentanglement from Serbia (Clark, 2000; Janjić et al., 2009; Malcolm, 1999; Pula, 2004; Udovički, 2000b; Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005).

Additionally beneficial to the expansion of the Kosovo Liberation Army was the crisis in Albania in the spring of 1997, due to which a great amount of arms, plundered from military buildings, became easily available on the black market.

99 The impossibility to come up with exact figures on the actual magnitude of war rape is caused by several factors: the shame and stigma which are attached to the rape victims (just like in the cases of peacetime rape), the killing of many raped women, the manipulation of numbers for political purposes, as well as the fact that even if a more precise estimation of the number of raped women would be established, it is not feasible to correctly estimate the instances of rape acts. The latter especially concerns the women who were held detained for a longer time.

Partially as a result of this occurrence, the clashes between the Kosovar Albanian forces and the (paramilitary) forces of Serbia – joined by the Army of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – escalated throughout 1998. Each attack of the former was followed by a heavy response of the latter, which were vastly superior in terms of weaponry and personnel. In this period, the violence committed by both parties against civilians was also on the rise. In order to stop the further upsurge of violence, on 24 September 1998 NATO issued the first air strikes warning to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

However, it would be only after the Kosovo Liberation Army had agreed to a cease-fire, and extensive negotiations between Milošević and the American envoy Richard Holbrooke had taken place, that Milošević would announce a cease-fire from his side and allow international preventive monitoring presence in Kosovo. Hereby the threat of bombing was removed and the situation in Kosovo pacified, albeit only temporarily. Milošević was preparing for one more war. On 20 October 1998 the Parliament of Serbia hastily and secretly delivered the infamous ‘Public Information Law’, which legalised censorship also by criminalising the transmission of information from foreign sources (Clark, 2000; Gow, 2009; Ramet S., 2006; *Vreme*, 18.12.1999; Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005).

Despite the presence of international monitors, starting from the last days of 1998 the clashes between the Serb and Kosovar Albanian forces were resumed. In reaction to this, on 6 February 1999 the Contact Group¹⁰⁰ summoned the representatives of the Kosovar Albanians and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for peace negotiations in Rambouillet (France). The proposed agreement, which demanded more concessions from Serbia than from the Kosovar Albanians, was unacceptable to Milošević. The failure of these negotiations, as well as the exacerbation of the killing, harassment and expulsion of the Kosovar Albanians by the Serb forces, served to NATO as a green light to start bombing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. NATO thereby overrode the absence of approval by the United Nations Security Council. Immediately after the beginning of the bombing on 24 March 1999 the federal government declared a state of war and introduced martial law on its territory.¹⁰¹ This was not only the first time in

100 An informal diplomatic pressure group consisting of the representatives of France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – countries with great interest in and diplomatic influence on the Balkans in general. It was established in April 1994 with the goal of facilitating a solution to the war crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see eg Leigh-Phippard, 1998; Weller, 1999).

101 Nevertheless, they were not operational on the territory of Montenegro, since its government did not recognise the decision of the federal government. This situation enabled some of Milošević’s outspoken critics to seek refuge in Montenegro after having left Serbia due to the increased repression (*BBC News*, 15.05.1999; *Los Angeles Times*, 28.03.1999; *NATO in the Sky*, 28.03.1999).

the 1990s that a war was waged on the territory of Serbia proper, but also the first time in this decade that Serbia, by declaring a state of war, did not deny its involvement in the war violence.

During the bombing the Serb forces expelled more than 800,000 Kosovar Albanians to the neighbouring Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro. In Belgrade, due to the martial law, the censorship was intensified and all anti-governmental political activities banned. The murder of the journalist Slavko Ćuruvija – the publisher of an oppositional newspaper and magazine – on 11 April 1999 further increased the pressure on and the fear among the political opponents, including the (feminist) antiwar activists.

After 78 days of bombing, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 9 June 1999 signed a peace agreement in Kumanovo (Macedonia) and agreed to withdraw its armed forces from Kosovo. The bombardment was suspended the next day. Following the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), Kosovo was placed under the interim administration of the United Nations, but officially remained within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Kosovar Albanian refugees returned, whereas most of the remaining Kosovar Serbs – due to the anti-Serb violence and the changes in political power – concentrated in Northern Kosovo. They maintained their own administration which, much to the annoyance of the Kosovar Albanians, still does not recognise the government in Prishtina, but the one in Belgrade (Malcolm, 1999; Nation, 2003; Udovički, 2000b; Zwaan and De Graaff, 2005).

On 17 February 2008, after the UN-led negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia on Kosovo's final status had failed to result in an agreement, the Kosovar Albanian members of the Assembly of Kosovo, in the absence of their Kosovar Serb fellow parliamentarians, unanimously voted for Kosovo's independence from Serbia. This move has resulted in a still continuing political and diplomatic struggle over Kosovo's (non-)recognition. The situation with the Serb enclaves in Northern Kosovo has not been resolved yet either (*BBC News*, 17.02.2008; *Novi list*, 16.03.2012; *The Guardian*, 22.10.2010; *Vreme*, 25.06.2009).¹⁰²

102 In February 2012 the representatives of the Serbian and Kosovar authorities reached a temporary EU-mediated agreement on the way in which Kosovo would be represented and referred to at regional meetings: as 'Kosovo*'. The asterisk indicates the following footnote which should always accompany Kosovo's mention: 'This designation [Kosovo] is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC [Resolution] 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence' (*European Voice*, 24.02.2012; *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 25.02.2012). The referred to opinion of the International Court of Justice from July 2010 states that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence from Serbia did not violate international law (*ICJ Accordance*, 22.07.2010).

Introduction of the analysed feminist groups and some of their predecessors

In the absence of an already existing list which would classify the Belgrade and Zagreb feminist groups in self-declared antinationalist or so-called nationalist clusters, I have compiled one such list by myself. My list does not, however, include all Belgrade and Zagreb feminist groups. I have portrayed only those groups which are commonly mentioned in the elaborations of the war-related feminist activism in Belgrade and Zagreb.

To compile the portrayals of the Belgrade groups I have made grateful use of the edited volume on organised women's activism in Belgrade in the 1990s (Blagojević, 1998a). Due to the absence of a similar publication on the Zagreb groups, during the interviews and the archival search I had to collect more data on them than on the Belgrade ones. These portrayals, thus, bring important novel information to the scholarship on war-related (post-)Yugoslav feminism, but should not be treated as comprehensive since the creation of an extensive historiography was outside the scope of this research. The presented depictions are only a helping tool to better grasp the dynamics between and within the Belgrade and Zagreb feminist groups which were caused by the geographical and temporal proximity of nationalism and (sexual) war violence.

The Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist groups which I will elaborate upon are:¹⁰³ Autonomous Women's House Zagreb, B.a.B.e.,¹⁰⁴ Center for Women War Victims, Centre for Women's Studies, Women's Information and Documentation Center (Women's Infoteka) and Women's Lobby Zagreb (sometimes called: Zagreb Women's Lobby). The so-called nationalist feminist cluster consists of the following groups – all of which will be portrayed here: Kareta, Multimedia Women's Centre Nona, Network of Multicultural Help, O-zona, Women's Group Trešnjevka and Women's Help Now.¹⁰⁵

103 I list here all groups in alphabetical order, whereas in the text below I follow the chronological order of their creation.

104 The acronym B.a.B.e. stands for 'Be active, Be emancipated' in Croatian and English alike.

105 Next to these two clusters of feminist women's groups, there was one more cluster of women's groups which were active in Zagreb in the 1990s. The groups in this cluster (such as Rampart of Love, Croatian Background Front, Croatian Woman, and We – For Our Guard) were established after the beginning of the war in Croatia or shortly before. Since they did not consider themselves feminist nor used that word in their work, they are outside the scope of this research and I will only say few words about them here. These groups shared the standpoints of the so-called nationalist feminist cluster regarding the

The Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist groups which are relevant for this research are: Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade Women's Lobby (sometimes called: Women's Lobby Belgrade), Women in Black and Women's Studies Center.¹⁰⁶ No feminist group has been classified in Belgrade as nationalist, although internal tensions regarding nationalism have been reported in the SOS Hotline, the Women's Party (ŽEST) and the Women's Studies Center. Due to this, I also include the SOS Hotline and the Women's Party in the elaboration. The four Belgrade feminists who have been described to me as nationalists work or have worked in academic institutions and/or (feminist) groups engaged with the development of women's activism or with providing assistance to refugees and other survivors of violence. Some of these groups are listed earlier in this paragraph, whereas the remaining ones – those which have not been brought into any connection whatsoever with nationalism – will remain unaddressed.¹⁰⁷

Zagreb groups before the split

On the eve of the war in Croatia there were three feminist groups in Zagreb: Independent Union of Women, Kareta,¹⁰⁸ and Women's Help Now. Many of the then involved feminists also had the experience of being a member or just attending

definitions of aggressors and victims in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but did not speak of women's rights, let alone feminism. Furthermore, and unlike the feminists from the so-called nationalist cluster, these activists had connections to and cooperated with the Catholic Church, were openly religious, praised family values, publicly defined themselves as mothers, sisters or wives of soldiers, and took upon themselves the traditional women's role of nurturer. They provided clothes and food for the soldiers on the battlefield, and visited and took care of the wounded (Slišković, 2005). In this sense, the feminist groups from the so-called nationalist feminist cluster could be seen as situated in the middle ground between the feminist groups from the self-declared antinationalist feminist cluster and the women's groups from the third cluster.

106 The Women's Studies Center has undergone several name changes. I use its current name in English.

107 I am familiar with the existence of only one Belgrade women's group, established in 1993, which was analogous to the Zagreb groups from the third cluster and, therefore, also not in the focus of this research. This was the group Only the Serb Woman Saves the Serb Man – a word game which was derived from the Serb motto 'Only concord saves the Serb man'. Its members paid visits and distributed humanitarian help to the Serb soldiers in hospitals or on the frontline, were declared Serb nationalists, associated themselves with the political right and the Serbian orthodox faith, and supported the traditional gender roles (*Duga*, 27.02.–12.03.1993; *Intervju*, 19.02.1993; *NIN*, 12.03.1993).

108 The group was named after the title of a poem by the Zagreb feminist poet and activist Jelena Zuppa. Kareta is actually the Latin name of the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta* L.).

some of the activities of Woman and Society. This academic feminist initiative was established as a section of the Sociologist Association of Croatia in 1979, one year after the Belgrade feminist conference 'Comrade (m/f) Woman: Women's Question – New Approach'. Lydia Sklevicky (1989:68), one of the founding members, described this group as 'the first alternative women's studies group in post-war [World War II] Yugoslavia.'

Being an academic group, the activities of Woman and Society focused on organising public debates, lectures and seminars, as well as writing and translating academic and non-academic texts. Its goal was to explore the position of women in Yugoslavia and spread feminist ideas (Barilar, 2000; Drakulić Sla., 2005a [1982]; Swaneveld, 1984). Due to this type of work and the high profile of the group's prominent members – established or rising star academics and publicists – some of the less established members started criticising the, in their view, privileged elitist *Salonfähigkeit* of its activities. After leaving the group eventually, these feminists in 1986 formed the grassroots Women's Group Trešnjevka (Dobnikar and Jalušič, 2002; interviews with Zagreb23AN, Zagreb13N, Zagreb14N and Zagreb6N). In the second half of the 1980s the activities of Woman and Society gradually dissolved. Some of its members joined the newly set up SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence in March 1988 and/or formed the Independent Union of Women in April 1990. I will address the creation of these groups in the text below.

Women's Group Trešnjevka (later: Women's Help Now)

Women's Group Trešnjevka was founded in 1986 as a conscientiousness-raising and self-help group, but not formally registered. When its members launched the SOS Hotline in March 1988, they registered it as a programme activity of the district¹⁰⁹ committee of the Union of the Socialist Youth of Croatia and could temporarily use one of the Committee's rooms and phone lines. Due to the insecurity and unsuitability of this arrangement, the group was in search of more appropriate and permanent housing, but in order to be eligible for receiving such space from the city authorities, it needed to be registered as a separate organisation. At the constitutive assembly in November 1989 the group changed its name from Women's Group Trešnjevka into Women's Help Now and in February 1990 became officially registered under the new name (*Lista potraživanja*, n.d.; *Pozivno pismo za osnivačku skupštinu*, n.d.; *Priopćenje o društvenoj organizaciji*, n.d.).

109 This district of the city of Zagreb is called Trešnjevka. Hence the name of the group.

As all efforts to legally obtain space proved unsuccessful, Women's Help Now squatted two properties. The first squat took place in August/September 1990, after the death of the grandmother of one activist. The group moved into the deceased woman's flat, which was a property of the city of Zagreb, and immediately asked the authorities to allocate the flat to the group.¹¹⁰ Besides for the SOS Hotline and other programme activities, the flat was also used as an emergency shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence (*Danas*, 28.02.1989; *Molba za dodjelu*, 1991; *Peticija*, November 1990; *Vjesnik*, 22.12.1990; *Zahtjev*, 21.02.1990). Shortly afterwards, in December 1990, Women's Help Now squatted once more. This time it took over some large office premises which had also belonged to the city of Zagreb. Within a few days the first shelter in Eastern Europe for women and children victims of domestic violence was opened. A decade of juridical turmoil later, in December 2000, the shelter was finally legalised (*Freitag*, 23.04.1993; *Kruh & Ruže*, 1993; *Lista potraživanja*, n.d.; *Odgovor na otvoreno pismo O-zone*, 08.03.2001; *Prvi skvoterski dani*, December 1990; *Večernji list*, 27.12.1990).

In order to increase public awareness of violence against women and have more impact on its prevention and treatment, some of the members of Women's Help Now – from both future factions (the self-declared antinationalist and the so-called nationalist) – decided to participate in the first multiparty local and parliamentary elections in Croatia in April/May 1990. They had created a candidate list called 'Women's List', but despite joining a coalition of smaller political parties and other groups, did not win any seats. The election programme of the 'Women's List' revolved around violence against women: 'The problem of the abused woman [is] the reason and the core of our action' (*Ženska lista*, n.d.). Within that programme no attention was given to nationalism, interethnic tensions and the future of Croatia and Yugoslavia. Croatia was only mentioned as one of the two levels (the other one being Zagreb) at which the candidates would demand changes in the area of violence against women: eg legislative changes, changes in the court procedures and establishment of shelters.

I propose that the narrow attention for violence against women was due to the broad theoretical and practical expertise which the involved feminists possessed on this issue (Kodrnja and Vidović, 1988; Singer, 1989; *Start*, 25.11.1989; unknown magazine, 09.07.1990; *Vjesnik*, 26.11.1990). By concentrating on it, they were able to assert themselves as knowers and doers alike and strive to obtain legitimacy and a larger (female) electoral support. The latter was also attempted by correctly presenting

110 I was unable to find out when exactly the municipality authorities had granted the group's request.

the problem of violence against women as one which concerned women in general regardless of their ethnic affiliation.

In my view, the absence of any references to Yugoslavia was not coincidental either, but resulted from the increasing contextual (including legislative) differences between the Yugoslav republics since the constitution of 1974. For example, while one of the demands of the 'Women's List' in 1990 was criminalisation of marital rape, Slovenia had already criminalised it in 1977.¹¹¹ Given that violence against women did not fall under the policies which were decided upon at federal level – defence, foreign affairs and foreign trade – there was no point in advocating any changes at that level.

Kareta

Kareta was established sometime in the spring of 1990 after a disagreement between one of the members of Women's Help Now and the rest of the group regarding her candidacy for the local elections in Zagreb. In view of the approaching elections, Women's Help Now had created a prescription about the passive suffrage of its members. Each activist was free to affiliate with any political party and become its candidate – or an independent one – but only as an individual and not as a member of the group. This was done in order to preserve the group's autonomy and prevent its work from becoming abused by parties for gaining electoral support.

The feminist in question was rebuked by the others for disrespecting this decision and agreeing to appear on the candidate list of SKH-SDP¹¹² as a representative of Women's Help Now. She interpreted this criticism as an unfair lack of trust in her ability to contribute in that capacity to the improvement of the situation of abused women, but wrote a letter to SKH-SDP asking to remove her name from the list. In addition to this, she left Women's Help Now and with several other women established the Radical Feminist Group Kareta (*Kareta statut*, 18.11.1990; *Kriteriji ponašanja članica ŽPS*, 13.03.1990; interviews with Zagreb8NA, Zagreb1N, Zagreb23AN, Zagreb7AN, Zagreb16N and Zagreb6N). Nonetheless, after the split of the Zagreb feminists in late 1991, early 1992, this future so-called nationalist feminist resumed the cooperation with some of those who had vehemently opposed her dissidence in the spring of 1990.

111 Croatia criminalised marital rape only 20 years later, in 1997 (*Kazneni zakon Republike Hrvatske*, 1997).

112 League of Communists of Croatia – Party of Democratic Changes; this was the successor party of the League of Communists of Croatia.

Kareta set out to produce the first feminist magazine in Yugoslavia, called *Kareta feministički časopis*. Its first issue appeared in March 1991, but due to the war in Croatia no other issues followed. The group also worked on translating the American feminists Andrea Dworkin, Audre Lorde, Catharine MacKinnon and Adrienne Rich, and in April 1991 organised a celebration of the Walpurgis Night in Zagreb in order to commemorate all women killed as alleged witches (*Globus*, 03.05.1991; *off our backs*, November 1991; *On the Issues*, Winter 1991).

None of the statements made by Kareta's members in those articles, in the first issue of its magazine (*Kareta feministički časopis*, March 1991b) or in *off our backs* (July 1991) revealed any signs of the ethnically-marked positioning which these feminists would start using only several months later, after the beginning of the war in Croatia. The key dichotomy in their pre-war analyses was the one between men as perpetrators and women as victims. No references to ethnic grievances or ethnically-marked perpetrators and victims were made. What was, nevertheless, shared between the war-time positioning of Kareta and its pre-war one – as it had been typically expressed in the American feminist press – was the fervent criticism of communism as an oppressive political arrangement and the laudation of the new democratic system as liberating.

Actually, as I will show in Chapter 4, Kareta's members promoted their opposition to communism to distinguish themselves from the future Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. Their foremost aim thereby was to obtain legitimacy and support for their activities from the Western – American, in particular – (feminist) audiences. This strategy was chosen in spite of the fact that one of Kareta's most prominent members was the same feminist who in the spring of 1990 had been on the candidates list of the successor party of the League of Communists of Croatia.

*Independent Union of Women*¹¹³

The Independent Union of Women was founded in April 1990 by some of the former members of Woman and Society. Their ambition was to create a wide pan-Yugoslav umbrella organisation which would struggle for a factual – instead of the merely proclaimed – gender equality in the country. This was to be done by eg advocating women's reproductive rights and equal representation of women in the political bodies and state institutions, as well as by monitoring the legislation from a gender

113 See the first analysis in Chapter 4, where I address the tensions which accompanied the creation of this group.

lens (*Danas*, 20.03.1990; Dobnikar and Jalušič, 2002; *Osnivači Nezavisnog saveza žena*, n.d.;¹¹⁴ *Programska deklaracija*, Spring 1990; *Razvoj ženskih grupa u Zagrebu*, n.d.; *Statut Nezavisnog saveza žena*, n.d.; interview with Zagreb11AN). The group's programme declaration criticised the position of women not only in socialism, but also in the newly emerging democracies. Women were once more 'in danger of being manipulated in the name of "higher" goals, such as Nation, State, Freedom or Democracy' (*Programska deklaracija*, Spring 1990). With the exception of this sentence, no other (implicit) references to nationalism and polity were made.

In cooperation with Karet, Union of Women of Croatia,¹¹⁵ Women's Group Trešnjevka¹¹⁶ and Women's Help Now, in December 1990 the Independent Union of Women organised the 'Women's Assembly of Croatia'. The group was further one of the founders of the Antiwar Campaign Croatia in July 1991. During that month some of its members also took part in a daily peace vigil in Zagreb and demanded demilitarisation, peace and economic prosperity. The Independent Union of Women did not exist for a long time, though. The dissolution of Yugoslavia and the beginning of the war in Croatia made the development of an all-Yugoslav umbrella organisation unfeasible and the group was disbanded (*Basic information*, February 1992; *Izveštaj sa inicijativnog sastanka*, n.d.; *Vjesnik*, 24.07.1991; *Women War Memory* website; interview with Zagreb7AN). The last mention of this group which I came across was in a statement from December 1992. Together with the other Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist groups, it opposed the use of the women raped in war for propaganda aims and pleaded for a sensitive and women-centred approach in working with them (*Letter of Intentions*, 21.12.1992).

114 This document appears to list the founders of the Independent Union of Women from different parts of Yugoslavia, but I doubt that it is the final version. At least two of the women who are listed (one from Belgrade and one from Ljubljana) actually opposed the initiative.

115 This was the legal successor of the former state organisation Conference for the Social Position of Woman and Family, whose role was to work on the improvement of the position of women in Croatia. After its disbandment in early 1990 the Union of Women of Croatia was registered as an NGO in March 1990. Its programme declaration demanded a preservation of the women's rights obtained under socialism, their further improvement and better practical realisation (*Kruh & Ruže*, Summer 1998; *Programska deklaracija Saveza žena Hrvatske*, April 1990).

116 This is not the same Women's Group Trešnjevka which I mentioned earlier in this chapter. I will address the second Trešnjevka later in this chapter.

The split of Women's Help Now

After the beginning of the war in Croatia there were increasingly more tensions between the members of Women's Help Now with regard to the group's positioning on the war violence. Although the group was one of the founders of the Antiwar Campaign Croatia, as the war progressed fewer women wanted to remain in an antiwar initiative which advocated non-violent solutions and a continuation of the communication and cooperation with the activists from the other republics (*Basic information*, February 1992; *Izvyještaj sa inicijativnog sastanka*, n.d.; Janković and Mokrović, 2011; *Povelja Antiratne kampanje*, n.d.; interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb7AN and Zagreb19EXT).

The existence of the two factions and positionings within Women's Help Now can be read from the statements which were produced in the first months of the war in Croatia and before the final split of the group, ie between July 1991 and April 1992. As the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist Zagreb9AN pointed out in the interview, it had not been required that all members agree upon a certain text in order to have that statement or letter carry the name of the group. That was why the documents from that initial period could contain opposing positionings. In addition, one could witness one positioning or another depending on which member had been invited to a meeting abroad (*Borba*, 28.11.1991; *Molba za dodjelu*, 1991).

At the last joint meeting of the two factions on 12 April 1992 it was decided to split the group in two. The faction of Women's Help Now which did not want to remain in the Antiwar Campaign Croatia and whose positioning on the war violence resembled that of the Croatian government retained the SOS hotline and the squatted flat. The faction which continued feeling allied with the Antiwar Campaign Croatia and used a more moderate language on perpetrators and victims kept the squatted shelter for victims of domestic violence. In June 1992 the latter faction registered the shelter as a separate group called Autonomous Women's House Zagreb.

In an interview published in 1997, one of the key activists of the shelter described the split as being caused by the 'completely different approaches in work [sic]' (in: Renne, 1997b:188). She did not, however, provide any other information on those approaches, including whether they had been in any way war-related. It seems, nevertheless, that the positioning on the war in Croatia and the participation in the Antiwar Campaign Croatia had not been the only reasons for the divide, although they may have been the most articulated ones. Some respondents of mine – from both factions – stated various (additional) sources of tension. One was over the question whether Croat women should get preferential treatment in the shelter, given that Croatia had been attacked, or whether one's degree of victimisation by domestic violence should be the only criterion for acceptance, regardless of one's ethnicity. Other

reasons included the differences in age, education or world view between the women from the two factions, or their dissimilar work preferences: volunteer vs paid work, public advocacy against violence against women vs direct assistance to survivors, and work on an SOS hotline vs work in a shelter (interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb3AN, Zagreb8NA, Zagreb1N, Zagreb21ANA, Zagreb23AN, Zagreb24AN and Zagreb15N).

Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist cluster

Women's Help Now – SOS Hotline

After the split, Women's Help Now – SOS Hotline continued running the hotline and the small emergency shelter which was situated in the same flat. In October 1992, together with Kareta, Women's Help Now organised the international women's gathering 'Women in War' in Zagreb. I will analyse this gathering in Chapter 4 because its preparation and realisation were the subject of a great controversy between the so-called nationalist organisers and the activists of the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb, who were supported by some Belgrade and Ljubljana feminists.

In addition to its work against domestic violence, and due to the increasing influx of refugees arriving in Zagreb, Women's Help Now started providing financial, legal, medical and psychosocial help to refugees. In February 1994, in cooperation with the Zagreb Faculty of Medicine, the group began operating a donated mobile gynaecological unit. This unit moved for two years between the refugee camps in and around Zagreb and provided gynaecological and other medical services to refugees. After the war Women's Help Now abandoned the war-related activities and focused again on the hotline and the emergency shelter (*Novi list*, 07.03.1998; *PAŽ letak*, n.d.; *Pomoć ženama žrtvama ratnog nasilja*, 12.07.1993; *Večernji list*, 16.02.1995, 27.12.2000, 22.09.2006; *Vjesnik*, 26.11.1998; interview with Zagreb8NA).

Women's Help Now was the only Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist group which restored the cooperation with the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. The first common action took place in the spring of 1995 – half a year before the end of the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia – when the group joined the pro-choice petition campaign of the other Zagreb cluster. The next joint activity was the 8 March manifestation in 1996, which was also organised by the other cluster. Next to this, Women's Help Now became a member of several initiatives at national level, such as the Women's Ad hoc Coalition for Monitoring and Influencing Elections¹¹⁷ and

117 This coalition was set up for the first time for the local elections in 1997.

the Women's Network Croatia.¹¹⁸ These initiatives gathered (feminist) women's groups from different parts of Croatia, but were to a great extent shaped by the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist cluster. In 2006 Women's Help Now even received an award from the Women's Network Croatia for its 18 years of continuous work on women's human rights and against violence against women (*Arkzin*, 02.06.1995; *Letak 8. Mart 1996*, n.d.; *Peticija Vladi i Saboru*, 1995; *Priznanje*, 21.09.2006; *Večernji list*, 22.09.2006; *Vjesnik*, 09.03.1996; *Women's Ad Hoc Coalition 1999 Members*, n.d.; *Zaposlena*, 1997; *Ženska izborna platforma*, February 1997, 17.04.1999; *Ženska mreža Hrvatske* website).

At the time of data collection Women's Help Now ran the hotline and the emergency shelter and was a member of the Women's Network Croatia. That Women's Help Now had re-established the cooperation with the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists was due to the rapprochement which both sides had made. On the one hand, the activists of Women's Help Now who had spoken most fervently of the Serbs as the aggressors and the non-Serbs as the victims had left the group, whereas the remaining members had been more willing to cooperate with the other cluster. On the other hand, exactly because of this change in the membership, the self-declared antinationalist feminists had agreed – albeit initially with some caution – to work with this group (interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb3AN, Zagreb17ANA, Zagreb23AN, Zagreb18ANA, Zagreb10ANA, Zagreb7AN and Zagreb24AN).

Kareta

When the war in Croatia began Kareta dropped its project of a feminist magazine and started visiting refugee camps to offer psychosocial counselling and distribute humanitarian and other aid. In 1994 it organised the setting up of a donated gynaecological unit – different from the one operated by Women's Help Now – in one refugee camp in Croatia (*Kareta description*, 23.08.1994; *Kareta izvještaj za 1995.*, n.d.; *The Humanist*, March/April 1995; *Tko je feministička grupa Kareta*, 02.04.1993; interviews with Zagreb14N and Zagreb6N).

The group's main focus was the work against the sexual war crimes committed by the Serb forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. In fact, the co-organisation of the gathering 'Women in War' was Kareta's first big advocacy activity on this topic. In addition to this, its activists collected information and testimonies from the women

118 A network of (feminist) women's groups which was established in 1996 as a platform for joint advocacy activities and exchange of knowledge.

survivors, spoke at conferences and in the media, and otherwise lobbied in Croatia and abroad for the conceptualisation of those war rapes as part of the Serb femicidal and genocidal strategy, as well as for a general recognition of war rape as a war crime¹¹⁹ (Armanda, 1992; Gattin, 1992; *Emma*, September 1992; *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12.11.1992; *Mona Lisa*, 15.11.1992; *Preliminary schedule Basel*, 14.03.1993; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 21.12.1992; *Statement of a Bosnian Survivor Group*, 26.05.1993; *Stern*, 26.11.1992; *The Humanist*, March/April 1995).

The largest advocacy effort of Kareta was the participation in the American civil lawsuit against Radovan Karadžić for, inter alia, genocidal acts of rape, forced pregnancy and enforced prostitution. In this, Kareta worked very closely with the American feminist legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon and her American Croatian former student Natalie Nenadic. The lawsuit was brought to court by MacKinnon in 1993 on behalf of 12 raped women of Bosniak and Croat ethnicity. Its foremost goal was to raise public awareness of the war rapes committed by Serb forces against non-Serb women. The juridical process received assistance also from the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist groups Network of Multicultural Help, O-zona and Women's Help Now, as well as from the Zagreb women's groups Rampart of Love, BISER and Women B&H¹²⁰ (*Declaration*, March 1999; MacKinnon, 2006; *Rape/Genocide Legal Project leaflet*, 1993; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 18.03.1994; *ZamirZine*, 28.02.2007; interviews with Zagreb14N and Zagreb6N).¹²¹

Kareta's local activists did not write many articles. Many of the texts where the standpoints of Kareta and its advocacy work are laid out were authored by MacKinnon or Nenadic (*Everywoman*, July/August 1991; Nenadic, 1996, 2010; MacKinnon, 2006; *Ms.*, July/August 1993, *Northwest Ethnic News*, November 1994). However, in the period 1993–1994, when the war rapes were front page news, one form of textual production was often used by Kareta. Its activists – sometimes in cooperation with Nenadic, other so-called nationalist feminist groups and/or women's groups such as Rampart of Love – wrote letters to conference organisers, editors, and authors of books and articles. In these letters they expressed their disagreement with the selection of women who were to represent Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia or the post-Yugoslav region, or criticised

119 As I mentioned earlier (see footnote 98), the pertinent legal recognition that war rape can be a war crime was incorporated for the first time in the ICC Statute of 1998 and afterwards in the UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008).

120 BISER and Women B&H were women's groups which had been set up by refugee women from Bosnia and Herzegovina who resided in Zagreb.

121 In August 2000 Karadžić was found guilty and in absence ordered to pay a damage compensation of 745 million USD to the plaintiffs (*Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 26.04.2011; *Nacional*, 28.07.2008; *The Washington Post*, 11.08.2000).

the portrayal of the wars and the war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (*Appeal by Sarajevo Women's Groups*, 30.05.1994; *Letter to Beverly Allen*, 14.06.1994; *Letter to Julie A. Mertus*, 21.06.1993; *Letter to Ms. Magazine*, 21.12.1993; *Letter to The New York Times*, 29.12.1993; *Letter to Susan Brownmiller*, 15.08.1993; *Reaction to the MADRE tour*, 18.03.1993).

In 1998 Kareta ceased to exist. Its documentation and archives were brought to the Croatian State Archives by one of its members.

(The second) Women's Group Trešnjevka

In the summer of 1992 two activists of the informal Women's Group Trešnjevka which existed between 1986 and 1990 registered a new group under the same name. Even before the registration the two feminists had used the name of Trešnjevka as their affiliation on separate occasions. The one did so when she co-organised the 'Women's Assembly of Croatia' and when she asked the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights to send letters in support of women's reproductive rights in Croatia. The other used Trešnjevka's name to fundraise for her research on domestic violence (*Call for Solidarity*, May 1991; *Opis*, n.d.; *Project proposal*, 18.12.1991). Since the first group Trešnjevka had never been formally registered under that name, there was apparently no legal problem in reusing the name. Moreover, it seems that these two activists did not feel that they were doing something inappropriate. One of them told me that they had been the only successors of the first Trešnjevka because its other activists had established new groups (interview with Zagreb13N).

In their press releases and letters for (financial) support, the two feminists presented their group as continuously working since 1986 (*Letter to Austcare*, 14.07.1993; *Opis*, n.d.; *Project proposal*, 18.12.1991; *Project proposal*, 03.03.1993). It is, thus, very likely that they had chosen the name Trešnjevka in order to be able to claim a continuity and, consequently, legitimacy for their new group. Nonetheless, the second Trešnjevka should be distinguished from the first Trešnjevka. In spite of the proclaimed continuity, there was a huge difference between the two groups in their memberships and positionings, especially since the first one functioned in pre-war Yugoslavia and the second one in war-time Croatia.

The continuity claim is additionally problematic in light of the apparent gap in Trešnjevka's activities between February 1990 (after the first Trešnjevka officially changed its name to Women's Help Now) and September 1992 (the report of the second Trešnjevka on the war rape camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina – *Report*, 28.09.1992). In my analysis of this period I have come across the group's name only in two documents

and one article on the 'Women's Assembly of Croatia' (*Javni apel*, n.d.; *Pozivno pismo za Ženski sabor*, n.d.; *Večernji list*, 28.11.1990), as well as in two other documents written by the already mentioned two activists (*Call for Solidarity*, May 1991; *Project proposal*, 18.12.1991). Furthermore, when I asked my Zagreb respondents about the activities of these two feminists after they had left the first Trešnjevka and before they had appeared as members of the second one, the respondents could only recall one of them and only in connection to the 'Women's Assembly of Croatia'. Finally, one of the two activists indirectly confirmed the existence of a gap: '[W]ith the beginning of the war, we activated the group' (interview with Zagreb13N).

I was unable to find out when and why exactly the first of the two activists had left the first Trešnjevka. She is the only person whom I did not manage to locate, let alone get in touch with during this research. The other activist left the first Trešnjevka most probably in the spring of 1989, after the group had rejected her idea to analyse the data on domestic violence which had been obtained from the calls to the SOS hotline. This means that after the beginning of the war in Croatia this feminist, just like the member of Women's Help Now discussed above, restored the cooperation (within the so-called nationalist feminist cluster) with some of the feminists with whom she had parted ways before the war regarding a non-war-related issue.

Two different members of the first Trešnjevka – Zagreb1N and Zagreb23AN – recalled that the problem between this particular feminist and the others had not been the topic of the proposed research, but her plan to fundraise not only for the research costs but also for a salary. Since everybody in the group had been an unpaid volunteer, this – at the time uncommon – proposal was seen as an attempt to obtain personal gain from feminism and everybody's voluntary work. As Zagreb23AN communicated to me, in view of the later professionalisation of civil society organisations, the rejection of the proposal might have been exaggerated, but it was due to the group's confusion and inexperience regarding those issues at the time.

However, unlike Zagreb1N and Zagreb23AN, Zagreb13N recalled that the group had not only rejected her idea to create job positions. Some of the members had also disagreed with the topic because they had been unable to see the value of applying scientific and statistical methods in working against violence against women – something which she had particularly pushed for as a sociologist (*Pismo volonterkama*, 13.04.1989; interviews with Zagreb1N, Zagreb23AN and Zagreb13N). As I will show in Chapter 6, when this respondent spoke in the interview about her use of inflated war rape figures in the early 1990s, she created the same dichotomy between herself, who had been acquainted with the impact of statistics, and the others, who had not.

The second Trešnjevka gained great publicity with its report on the war rape camps – or ‘concentration camp-bordellos’, as they were named in the report – in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Report*, 28.09.1992). Its activists were the first ones to compile and send around a list of those camps. Their goal was to mobilise the international community to make an end to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the war rapes committed by the Serb forces. After the production of this report, in late 1992 and 1993 the two main activists of the group were often interviewed or invited to speak in Croatia and abroad as experts on the war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They also cooperated on this issue with the Bosnian and Herzegovinian war government (*Chronique Fèministe*, 1993; *die tageszeitung*, 11.12.1992; *Einladung Deutcher Bundestag*, 27.11.1992, *Emma*, March/April 1993; Fischer E., 1993; *Globus*, 26.05.1995; *Invitation Women’s Peace Meeting*, n.d.; *Letter to Austcare*, 14.07.1993; *Mona Lisa*, 15.11.1992; Mrkić, 1993; *Let the people speak!*, 1993; *Preliminary schedule Basel*, 14.03.1993; Šeparović, 1993).

Next to this, the group distributed humanitarian aid in refugee camps and offered advice and access to medical services to refugee women. In March 1995, together with Rampart of Love and Women B&H, Trešnjevka unsuccessfully tried to organise a food convoy to several war-affected towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Information from Hunger in Bihać*, n.d.; *Newsletter – Women’s Group Trešnjevka*, 25.10.1993; *Let the people speak!*, 1993; *Letter to Ellen Diederich*, n.d.; *Open letter*, 27.03.1995; interview with Zagreb13N). This convoy was the last activity of Trešnjevka on which I could find more information. Concerning the group’s support to the pro-choice campaign of the self-declared antinationalist feminist cluster in the spring of 1995, I only came across its name on the list of the co-signatories of the pro-choice petition (*Arkzin*, 02.06.1995; *Peticija Vladi i Saboru*, 1995). Since I did not find a single record of its work afterwards and none of the people I had spoken to could recollect any later activity of this group, it seems very likely that after the spring of 1995 the group had ceased to exist.

Even Zagreb13N could not provide more information on Trešnjevka when I interviewed her. Following some disagreements between her and the other main activist, Zagreb13N and a few others left the group in the early summer of 1993. In July that year they established the Zagreb branch of the London-based charity WomenAid International. Within the scope of her work for this charity, Zagreb13N was in charge of distributing (financial) humanitarian aid to raped women of Bosniak and Croat ethnicity. However, due to a conflict between her and her superior regarding the allocation of funds, Zagreb13N left WomenAid International and set up a publishing house (*Globus*, 26.05.1995; *Letter from Nina Kadić*, 11.08.1993; *Letter from WomenAid*

International, 29.10.1993; *Letter on the split of Trešnjevka*, 29.07.1993; *Quarterly report*, 19.10.1993; interview with Zagreb13N). In 1995 this publishing house brought out the Croatian translation of Susan Brownmiller's capital work on rape, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (Brownmiller, 1975, 1995). Still, despite this endorsement of the gender-based positioning on war rape, Zagreb13N has never restored the communication with the self-declared antinationalist feminists. After the book's release she withdrew from feminist activism altogether.

Network of Multicultural Help

The Network of Multicultural Help was a spin-off group of Women's Help Now. Initially established in November 1992 as a project of the latter, the two authors of the project registered it in June 1993 as a separate group. This move was a consequence of the different views on how to proceed with the project, as well as of the positive response which the project had received from its target audience – (raped) refugee women who resided in Croatia. As one of the authors explained in the interview, the term 'multicultural' had referred to the exchange of experiences and help between women of urban and rural origin, and not necessarily between women of different ethnicities (*Leaflet Network of Multicultural Help*, n.d.; *Project description*, March 1993; interviews with Zagreb8NA and Zagreb16N).

The group had focused on attending to the 'nonstandard' needs of the refugees, given that 'most of the humanitarian aid did not go beyond clothes, food and accommodation' (Ćupić, in: *Večernji list*, n.d.). In practice, this meant a provision of occupational therapy in the form of eg art and looming workshops and literacy and photography courses. In order to provide a safe space outside the refugee camps and private houses (leased accommodation or at relatives/friends) where these women lived, the activists rented a conveniently located house in Zagreb. The refugees could there attend workshops and classes, make use of the feminist library, receive (legal) advice concerning their refugee status and living, exchange information with one another, or simply relax. Another significant activity of the Network of Multicultural Help was the visit of 150 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina to their relatives who were refugees in Slovenia. This visit in late 1993 involved extensive cooperation with the Croatian and Slovenian state because the refugees did not have the freedom of movement between countries (*Izveštaj za 1995 godinu*, 25.01.1996; *Poziv*, n.d.; *Večernji list*, n.d.; *Vjesnik*, 01.12.1993; interview with Zagreb16N).

After the end of the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia the group primarily conducted advocacy activities against (war) violence against women and

maintained its assistance – in the form of workshops and support groups – to women survivors of (war) violence. The Network of Multicultural Help participated in 1999 and 2000 in MacKinnon's lawsuit against Karadžić and during the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia sent a letter of support to the Kosovar Albanians together with two other so-called nationalist feminist groups (Nona and O-zona). The three signatory groups asked for a ground intervention by NATO to stop the Serb genocide, and for an opening up of the borders of the neighbouring Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro, as well as of those of Croatia to the Kosovar Albanian refugees (*Declaration*, March 1999; *Letak Mreža multikulturalne pomoći*, n.d.; *Priopćenje za javnost*, 02.04.1999; Vidović and Radić, 2000). After 2000 the activities of the group gradually decreased to the largely dormant level observed in 2009.

Multimedia Women's Centre Nona

The Multimedia Women's Centre Nona was established in December 1993 as space 'which encourages, celebrates, and preserves all forms of women's creative expression' (*Grant proposal*, 1995). The accent on the provision of a safe location was also visible in the way in which the members explained the group's name. Nona, ie 'grandmother' in the Dalmatian dialect, signified 'safety, nurturance, and grounding for women in a country still embroiled in the turmoil of war' (ibid). The group's two co-directors¹²² were former members of Kareta. Their aim was to provide space for women in general – and refugee women from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, in particular – where they could create and present art and literary works, obtain (legal) advice, make use of a feminist library, attend concerts of female musicians and participate in public lectures and discussions on feminist issues. Furthermore, Nona organised activities for refugee children, as well as a weekly get-together of refugee women from Vukovar (*Arkzin*, 06.05.1994; *Leaflet Nona*, n.d.; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 29.10.1996; *Vjesnik*, 19.12.1993, 03.03.1995; *Windy City Times*, 16.12.1993).

One one-off activity of Nona was the production of a daily planner for 1995. The planner indicated important events in the history of feminism and provided information on the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, as well as on Zagreb feminist and women's groups which worked with female survivors of (war) violence. None of this information, which was compiled by an activist of Kareta, concerned the self-declared antinationalist feminist groups. Nona also published one book of

122 Since I could not interview either of them (one had died several years earlier and the other declined my interview invitation), my portrayal of Nona is foremostly based on the few written sources on this group which I could access.

poetry and prose and another of photographs authored by refugee and non-refugee women (Jovičić, 1995; Miklaužić, 1994, 1995; *Večernji list*, 31.01.1995; interview with Zagreb14N).

Nona was one of the groups which in May 1996 prepared the demands for fostering the equality of women and men (see in the section on O-zona below) and in April 1999 wrote the support letter to the Kosovar Albanians (see in the section on the Network of Multicultural Help above). After 2000 the group diversified its activities to a great extent. It carried out an analysis of the stereotypes in the Croatian primary school textbooks, worked on raising public awareness of the presence of landmines in Croatia and offered assistance to landmine survivors (*Croatia Landmine Monitor 2003*, n.d.; Jovičić, 2002). The latter was the latest recorded activity of Nona which I came across.

O-zona

O-zona was set up in the spring of 1994 under the name Women's Line. That was a 24/7 crisis hotline for women victims of (war) violence which also provided face-to-face counselling. It was initially one of the projects of Kareta, but after some disagreements, several women who worked as counsellors left Kareta and in 1997 established a separate group under the name O-zona¹²³ (*Kareta description*, 23.08.1994; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 13.04.1999; *Večernji list*, 09.04.1999; *Vjesnik*, 07.04.1994, 06.06.1995; interviews with Zagreb14N and Zagreb6N).

Next to providing counselling services, O-zona actively advocated for changes in the legislation on violence against women and women's reproductive rights. In May 1996, together with the other groups from the so-called nationalist feminist cluster (Kareta, the Network of Multicultural Help, Nona and Women's Help Now), O-zona submitted a set of demands to the Commission for Equality Issues of the Croatian government. Some of these demands were: a constitutional law on the equality of the sexes, state-supported shelters for battered women, and financial state support and tax relief for the women's groups (*Zahtjevi sa sastanka*, 15.05.1996).

In cooperation with the Network of Multicultural Help, O-zona advocated legislative changes in the realm of violence against women, domestic violence in

123 Zagreb6N explained in the interview that she had borrowed the term 'O-zona' from the American radical feminist Mary Daly. It signified a zone without patriarchal pollution. In the book in question, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, Daly (1978:11) described the O-Zone as follows: 'Within this anti-pollutant, purifying, moving O-Zone, the aura of gynocentric consciousness, life-loving feminists have the power to affirm the basic Gyn/Ecological principle that everything is connected with everything else.'

particular. In addition to this collaborative effort, the group also lobbied separately, especially against violence against women (*Amandmani*, 2000; *Jutarnji list*, 09.09.2000; *Kruh & Ruže*, 2004; *Prijedlozi izmjena obiteljskog zakona*, 2001; *Večernji list*, 04.06.2001; Vidović and Radić, 2000; *Vjesnik*, 19.09.2004; *Zarez*, 06.07.2000). By 2009 O-zona was close to being inactive due to lack of funding.

Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist cluster

Similarly to the dynamics in the so-called nationalist feminist cluster, a proliferation of groups has also taken place in the self-declared antinationalist cluster, albeit in a slightly different form. Different from what occurred in the former, there was an overlap in the latter cluster between the members of the different groups, meaning that the same women participated in two or three groups. Due to these multiple affiliations, when the available information only contained the names of individual feminists it was often difficult to impossible to pinpoint the exact group which had conducted the activity in question.

Autonomous Women's House Zagreb

As I explained earlier, the shelter Autonomous Women's House Zagreb was registered as a separate group in June 1992 – after the split of Women's Help Now – by the feminists who wanted to maintain their affiliation with the Antiwar Campaign Croatia. However, the shelter never became a member of the antiwar group, although many activists of the former remained involved with the latter. Two self-declared antinationalist feminist groups which were established later, the Center for Women War Victims (late 1992) and B.a.B.e. (spring of 1994), part of whose staff had previously been or was still active in both above groups, did officially join the Antiwar Campaign Croatia.

Given that this discovery was made after the fieldwork, I can only propose three possible reasons for the absence of an official link between the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb and the Antiwar Campaign Croatia. The first reason could be a wish of the activists of the shelter to protect its vulnerable clients from the potential danger which might result from the group's public declaration of an at the time unfavourable positioning on the war. Second, it is plausible that the activists wanted to keep the shelter accessible to all women survivors of domestic violence, regardless of their political affiliation. Third, given the costs of running such a shelter, it is possible that its activists did not want to ruin all chances of obtaining funds from the city and state authorities.

During the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb continued, thus, to accommodate survivors of domestic violence and to offer to them legal and psychosocial counselling.¹²⁴ The group also maintained its advocacy work against violence against women, just like its activities for raising the public awareness of this societal problem. All these efforts still went on in 2009, despite the constant threat of closure due to the lack of regular and sufficient funding from the state and the city of Zagreb – a problem which has followed this group throughout its existence (*Arkzin*, 01.11.1993a, 22.07.1994; *Feral Tribune*, 12.09.1999, 23.01.2004; *Gong*, Autumn/Winter 2000; *Letak AŽKZ*, n.d.; *Novi list*, 14.02.2009, 07.04.2011; *Vjesnik*, 25.09.2006; *Zaposlena*, July 1998).

In addition to the specialised activities in the realm of peacetime violence against women, and in cooperation with other self-declared antinationalist feminist groups, the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb offered eg psychosocial support to war rape survivors, lobbied for the recognition of war rape as a war crime, conducted reproductive rights advocacy, and participated in the monitoring of the elections in Croatia through a gender lens (*Letter of Intentions*, 21.12.1992; Matijević-Vrsaljko, 2000; *Novi list*, 22.12.1998; *Peticija Svjetskoj konferenciji*, 10.12.1992; *Peticija Vladi i Saboru*, 1995; *Rezolucija*, 17.01.1993, *Reakcija na Appeal*, 05.07.1994; *Ženska izborna platforma*, n.d., February 1997, 17.04.1999; *Ženska mreža Hrvatske* website).

Women's Lobby Zagreb

The increasing war violence and the growing number of (raped) refugee women arriving in Zagreb prompted the self-declared antinationalist feminists to commence new types of activities and initiatives, in addition to running the shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence. In November 1992 the Women's Lobby Zagreb was established as an informal body of feminists who were already active in the Antiwar Campaign Croatia, the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb, the Independent Union of Women and/or the newly set up Women's Infoteka. The goal of this political pressure group was to come together ad hoc to produce press releases on burning issues and do advocacy work on women's (reproductive) rights (*Arkzin*,

124 A refugee woman could also receive accommodation in the shelter, but only if she was a survivor of domestic violence. By preserving the function of the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb as a shelter only for the women and children victims of domestic violence, the feminist activists – next to providing concrete assistance – wanted to make a clear political statement that the peacetime domestic violence did not stop or become less important in times of war (interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb23AN, Zagreb7AN and Zagreb24AN).

01.04.1993a; *Chronique F eministe*, June/July 1993; *Letter of Intentions*, 21.12.1992; *Ve ernji list*, 28.03.1993; *Zagreb Women's Lobby leaflet*, n.d.).

As it would turn out, one part of the activities of the Women's Lobby Zagreb would consist of writing rectifications of articles and statements by Croatian journalists or the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists in which the work and/or the personas of the self-declared antinationalist feminists had been maligned. Some of these were the reactions to the text on the 'five witches' (*Globus*, 11.12.1992),¹²⁵ to the article which slandered Dubravka Ugrešić¹²⁶ and the Women's Lobby Zagreb because of their critical approach to Croatia (*Ve ernji list*, 02.03.1993), to the attack on the Autonomous Women's House and the Women's Lobby Zagreb due to their positioning on war rape (*Globus*, 22.01.1993), and to the press release of Karet and BISER (*Appeal by Sarajevo Women's Groups*, 30.05.1994) in which Vesna Kesić¹²⁷ was defamed for her allegedly damaging and unethical treatment of the Sarajevo women's groups (*Globus*, 29.01.1993; *Ispravak*, 25.01.1993; *Novi Vjesnik*, 14.12.1992; *Odakle Dunji Ujević*, 09.03.1993; *Protest against the text published in "Globus"*, 12.12.1992; *Reakcija na Appeal*, 05.07.1994; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 13.12.1992; *Ve ernji list*, 15.03.1993).

Although according to the information in Barilar (2000) the Women's Lobby had ceased to exist in 1995, I was able to find only one document which addressed an activity of this group after 1993 – the reaction to the press release on Vesna Kesić's visit to Sarajevo (*Reakcija na Appeal*, 05.07.1994). When I asked Zagreb7AN in the interview about the pro-choice petition campaign of the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists in the spring of 1995, she recalled that the Women's Lobby had still existed then. However, since its name was not among the groups which had participated in that campaign (*Arkzin*, 02.06.1995; *Peticija Vladi i Saboru*, 1995), I consider that the Women's Lobby Zagreb had been dissolved somewhere between July 1994 and 1995.

125 See my short elaboration of this case in Chapter 4, in my analysis of the gathering 'Women in War'.

126 One of the accused five female intellectuals.

127 A Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist and one of the 'five witches'.

Center for Women War Victims

The Center for Women War Victims was launched in November or December¹²⁸ 1992 by the activists of Women's Lobby Zagreb with the aim to create a group which would specifically and explicitly cater to the needs of female refugees regardless of their ethnicity. The founding of such an initiative made the Women's Lobby Zagreb the 1993 laureate of the Spanish peace prize 'Josep Vidal i Llecha' (*Arkzin*, 01.11.1993b; *Memorial per la pau* website). Although from the very beginning the activists were aware that some of the female refugees would also have the trauma of war rape, it was decided not to put the terms 'war rape' or 'sexual violence' in the name of the group. Thereby the activists wanted to avoid the potential stigmatisation of those who would receive support. Initially housed at the office premises of the Antiwar Campaign Croatia, after securing sufficient funding from foreign sources, the Center for Women War Victims moved to a larger location in March 1993.

This group would become the biggest feminist group in Zagreb by employing between 30 and 40 women, many of whom were refugees.¹²⁹ The provision of employment to refugee women was a conscious political decision in order to foster solidarity between refugee and non-refugee women, empower the refugee activists, as well as obtain easier access to and more trust within the refugee population. The activists of the Center for Women War Victims visited refugee camps to give psychosocial and legal counselling, facilitate (the setting up of) refugee self-help groups, distribute humanitarian and financial aid, as well as help refugees with their migration to third countries. For the female refugees who lived in private housing the group organised activities at its premises (*Arkzin*, 01.04.1993b; Belić, Borić and Kesić, 1994; Kesić, Janković and Bijelić, 2003; *Report on the status of the project*, 03.03.1993; interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb3AN, Zagreb10ANA, Zagreb7AN and Zagreb24AN).

In addition to providing direct assistance to women, the Center for Women War Victims – separately or together with the other self-declared antinationalist feminist groups – lobbied for halting the war rapes and treating them as war crimes. The group stated these demands at diverse locations: eg at a vigil in Zagreb on 10 December 1992 (UN Human Rights Day), during the MADRE speakers tour in the

128 It is unclear when exactly the foundations of this group were set up. Some documents state November 1992 (Kesić, 2003; *Letter of Intentions*, 21.12.1992; *Pismo namjera* 21.12.1992) and others December 1992 (*CŽŽR Opis*, n.d.; *Interim Report*, 23.08.1993; Kašić, 1994a). Sometimes both November and December are mentioned within a single document (*Interim Report*, September 1994). The group was formally registered in February 1993 (*Report on the status of the project*, 03.03.1993).

129 At one point, 33% of the activists were refugees (*Interim Report*, September 1994).

spring of 1993, and at the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993 (*Interim Report*, 23.08.1993; Kašić, 1994c; *Mother Courage II*, March/April 1993; *Peticija Svjetskoj konferenciji*, 10.12.1992; *Rezolucija*, 17.01.1993; *Statement to the Global Tribunal*, 16.06.1993). At other times, the activists wrote articles, organised petitions, spoke at conferences abroad or gave interviews to foreign journalists (*Arkzin*, 10.02.1994; *Chronique Féministe*, June/July 1993; Kašić, 1994d; Kesić, 1994; *Kruh & Ruže*, Spring 1994a; *New Directions for Women*, March/April 1993; *Petition Boutros Boutros-Ghali*, n.d.; *Village Voice*, 13.07.1993).

After the end of the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, the work with the remaining refugee population in the Zagreb area was gradually reduced. Due to the departure of refugees and the significant decrease of the foreign funds for such activities, the Center for Women War Victims increasingly started to focus on the position of women in peacetime. The group conducted advocacy work on violence against women and trafficking in women, offered one-on-one counselling to women victims of violence, worked on community and trust building in the parts of Croatia which had been heavily affected by the war, actively participated in the Women's Network Croatia and in the different ad hoc women's coalitions in the country, and gave trainings to women's groups both in Croatia and elsewhere in the post-Yugoslav region.

For the purpose of maintaining the awareness of the position of the (raped) women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Center for Women War Victims cooperated with the American playwright Eve Ensler. This cooperation resulted in the autumn of 1996 in the play *Necessary Targets*, which was based on war rape stories from Bosnia and Herzegovina and staged on Broadway. During the war in Kosovo in 1999 several activists went to Albania to transfer their experiences to some of the local women's groups which worked with the Kosovar Albanian refugees. With the exception of the work with refugees, the other activities of the group still went on in 2009 (*Arkzin*, 11.04.1997; Belamarić and Mamula, 2000; *Centar za žene žrtve rata* website; *EIDHR Newsletter*, Winter 1999; *Final report Pakrac*, August 1997; Mamula and Pamuković, 2003; Mamula and Kolarec, 2001; *Novi list*, 21.04.2000; *Slobodna Bosna*, 27.06.1998; *The New York Times*, 13.10.1996; *The New Yorker*, 11.03.2002; *Večernji list*, 29.07.1998; *Zarez*, 09.07.1999).

Women's Information and Documentation Center (Women's Infoteka)

The Women's Infoteka was founded in November 1992. Its purpose was to gather and produce information about and for the (feminist) women's groups, ie be a resource centre on gender issues (*Zapisnik*, 05.11.1992). Therefore, the group created a database of the women's (feminist) groups in Croatia, started to publish the feminist magazine *Kruh & Ruže*¹³⁰ in the autumn of 1993, opened a public feminist library and archive, made monthly press clipping collections on women's issues from the major Croatian dailies, and published local and foreign feminist literature: eg the posthumous collection of Lydia Sklevicky's texts (Sklevicky, 1996) and the classical work of Judith Lewis Herman on trauma (Lewis Herman, 1996). The Women's Infoteka also organised (international) seminars and conferences on different topics, such as: women's and feminist movements in post-socialist countries, class differences in feminism, women and politics, and women in history.

This group played an important role in the first phase of the development of the electronic communication between the women's activists in the post-Yugoslav region through *ZaMir BBS*.¹³¹ The American feminist Kathryn Turnipseed started to work with the Women's Infoteka in 1994 – and later with B.a.B.e. and the Center for Women War Victims – to set up the project 'Electronic Witches'. In the scope of this project she gave computer trainings to women's (feminist) activists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia proper, and helped them obtain computers and modems. After the war years, in addition to its documentation and information activities, the Women's Infoteka participated in the Women's Network Croatia and the different ad hoc coalitions of the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist cluster. Finally, the group also produced gender analyses of the programmes of the Croatian political parties, the electoral process and the election results (*Arkzin*, December 1993; Czegledy, 1995; Knežević and Damjanović, 1998; Knežević and Zaborski-Čunović, 2000; *Kruh & Ruže*, 2003; *Lol@ Press*, 2002; Turnipseed, 1996).

The Women's Infoteka still functioned in early 2009, but I could only access its library collection. The archival materials were inaccessible to the public because of the move to a new office space. It turned out later that by then there had already been a serious decline in the group's activities: the only publication produced that year was the 35th issue of *Kruh & Ruže*. Somewhere in 2011 the group's website stopped functioning. In an article from January 2012 its former long-standing director wrote that the group had ceased to exist (*H-alter*, 03.03.2011; *Identitet*, 24.01.2012).

130 *Bread & Roses*, named after the female textile workers' strike in Massachusetts (USA) in 1912.

131 See footnote 89.

B.a.B.e.

B.a.B.e. was established in April 1994 by feminists already active in the Women's Lobby Zagreb. The goal of B.a.B.e. was to specialise in legal and advocacy issues aiming at the improvement of the position of women in the society. Before the catchy acronym was invented,¹³² the group had signed its documents with 'Zagreb Group for Women's Human Rights'. Afterwards its full name became B.a.B.e. Women's Human Rights Group. The construction 'women's human rights' was a novelty at the time. It had been only in June 1993, at the 'Vienna World Conference of Human Rights', that women's rights had been recognised as 'inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights' (*Vienna Declaration*, 1993, §18).

B.a.B.e. advocated in support of women's reproductive rights and the rights of women refugees in Croatia, as well as against violence against women. The group analysed laws and media contents from a gender perspective, monitored the status of women's human rights in Croatia and protested against their violations, travelled to different parts of the post-Yugoslav region to train women's groups on this topic, and published relevant educational brochures. In 1995 it organised the attendance of the Croatian NGO delegation to the NGO Forum at the 'Fourth UN World Conference on Women' in Beijing (*16 Days of Activism*, January 1998; *Arkzin*, February 1994, 05.08.1994; *Belić*, 2004; *Kruh & Ruže*, Spring 1994b; *Letak B.a.B.e.*, n.d.; Magelssen and Sarnavka, 1998; *Primjedbe na nacrt prijedloga*, 01.09.1995; *Status ženskih prava*, Autumn/Winter 2000; *Večernji list*, 26.05.1995).

During the war in Kosovo and the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia B.a.B.e. produced critical statements on the war rapes in Kosovo, the treatment of the Kosovo refugees, and the NATO bombing. The group accused the international community, UNHCR and Croatia of not doing enough to ensure the safety and the well-being of the refugees, and rebuked Croatia for its generous assistance to NATO. Whereas B.a.B.e. disapproved of any use of military force (including that by NATO), the group expressed the hope that Milošević would be thereby stopped. Moreover, it mentioned the existence of antiwar groups in Belgrade since 1991 and stated to be proud to have cooperated with some of them. Finally, B.a.B.e explicitly contextualised the war rapes in Kosovo as part of the Serb strategy of ethnic cleansing,

132 In the book published on the occasion of the group's tenth anniversary, Kesić (2004) recalled the brainstorm process which had led to Aida Bagić's invention of the name 'B.a.B.e.'. Her suggestion had been readily embraced since it represented a subversion of the word 'Babe' which in Croatian (and, I would add, in Bosnian and Serbian, too) referred to old women in a derogatory manner and in English to a young and attractive woman. The special added value of the proposal was that as an acronym it denoted the same in both Croatian and English: 'Be active, Be emancipated'.

but added that the Serb soldiers were not the only rapists and that rape was a daily reality for women even in peacetime (*Izjava povodom zračnih napada*, n.d.; *Statement on Treatment of Kosovo Refugees*, 07.05.1999; *Statment [sic] Regarding Mass Rapes*, 29.04.1999).

While B.a.B.e. was one of the initiators of Women's Network Croatia (and the ad hoc coalitions), it left the Network in 2004. This move was caused by a disagreement regarding the support which the coordinator of the network had allegedly offered to the only female candidate at the 2004 Croatian presidential elections. In B.a.B.e.'s view, this support had compromised the independent and neutral positioning of Women's Network Croatia (*Novi list*, 21.10.2004, 31.10.2004; *Vjesnik*, 22.10.2004a, 22.10.2004b).¹³³

Centre for Women's Studies

February 1995 saw the launching of the Centre for Women's Studies – three years later than its Belgrade counterpart. This time lag had probably to do with the great demand for psychosocial and humanitarian assistance which the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia had imposed on the Zagreb feminists. The Centre for Women's Studies was a spin-off group of the Women's Infoteka and its aim was to 'approach women's issues from a feminist perspective' (*Women's Studies Project*, n.d.), link theoretical, activist and artistic feminism, and raise public awareness of the position of women.

The realisation of this goal was operationalised by doing research, publishing books and the feminist magazine *Treća*, running a feminist library, as well as organising one-year educational programmes in women's studies,¹³⁴ (international) conferences, seminars and workshops. The Center for Women's Studies was, in fact, the first interdisciplinary educational institution in Croatia in the field of women's studies.¹³⁵ As Barada et al. (2003) have pointed out, its activities had been based on the work of the Zagreb pre-war academic initiative Woman and Society, the activist work from the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the experience of cooperation and networking with feminists from the other parts of the (post-)Yugoslav region.

133 This dispute resembles the earlier addressed one in Women's Help Now on the eve of the Croatian local elections in April 1990.

134 I followed this programme in the 1999/2000 academic year.

135 In October 1997 the Centre for Peace Studies from Zagreb started a similar educational programme in peace studies. I attended this programme, too, in the academic year 1999/2000.

The wide range of issues which the Centre for Women's Studies has addressed included violence against women, gender analysis of language, women in politics, women's artistic practices, women in the economy, women in civil initiatives, women in socialism, women and power, and women in philosophy. Besides this, the group participated in the different women's ad hoc coalitions and in 2009 it was still a member of the Women's Network Croatia. Still, despite this broad expertise and the presence of staff and lecturers who held or still hold university positions, the Centre for Women's Studies has been unable to become integrated in the official Croatian educational system and its certificates are still not recognised by the Croatian authorities (*Annual Report 2000*, n.d.; *Arkzin*, 10.02.1995; Barada et al., 2003; Barilar, 2000; Dijanić, 2004; *Centar za ženske studije Zagreb* website).

The presence of prominent self-declared antinationalist feminists among the Centre's main members notwithstanding, the topics 'nationalism' and 'war' appear to have received only limited and not always very explicit attention in the curricula between 1995 and 2000. This can be inferred from the leaflets in which the courses in women's studies were announced. The experimental programme (February–June 1995) stated the themes 'Women, nationalism and war', 'Women and rituals (socialist and nationalist)', and 'Women and abuse: sexual, militarist and societal'. The curriculum for the academic 1996/1997 contained the topic 'Women and abuse: sexual, militarist and societal',¹³⁶ the one for 1997/1998 announced the cryptic 'Insights about the recent past', whereas the curriculum for 1999/2000 listed the theme 'Women's war writing and exile' (*Ženski studiji '95*, n.d.; *Ženski studiji 1995–1996*, 05.09.2001; *Ženski studiji 1996–1997*, n.d.; *Ženski studiji 1997–1998*, n.d.; *Ženski studiji 1998–1999*, n.d.; *Ženski studiji 1999–2000*, n.d.).

It is possible that nationalism and war violence were more extensively and overtly addressed during the lectures than what the leaflets suggest. Unfortunately, unlike in the case of the Belgrade Women's Studies Center, I could not explore this seeming absence in more detail since it was one of the post-fieldwork discoveries. I would propose, nevertheless, that the lack of more explicit presence of these two topic in the printed materials (and the lectures) was due to insecurity and inexperience regarding how to refer to the then very recent and sensitive violent past in Croatia.

136 It is possible that the curriculum for the 1995/1996 academic year, just like the preceding and the successive one, also contained the topic 'Women and abuse: sexual, militarist and societal' as part of the course 'Feminist approach to violence against women'. I do not know for certain because a more detailed list of the topics which were to be addressed in that academic year was unavailable.

CHAPTER THREE

In October 1996 the Centre for Women's Studies organised the big international conference 'Women and the Politics of Peace' in Zagreb, which was dedicated to the participation of women in war resistance and peacebuilding. Next to participants from other conflict regions in the world, women from other post-Yugoslav countries were present as well. However, none of the speakers belonged to the Zagreb (or Belgrade) so-called nationalist feminist cluster. This exclusion has continued throughout the years. With the exception of two feminists, none of the (guest) lecturers at the Centre would come from or be related to the other Zagreb feminist cluster (*Arkzin*, 08.11.1996; *Centar za ženske studije Zagreb* website; Kašić, 1997; *Program konferencije*, n.d.; *Ženskostudijski spomenar*, n.d.).

The cooperation between the group and one so-called nationalist feminist is not that surprising given that it concerned the feminist who was described by some of my respondents as a bridge between the two clusters and a person who had abandoned her former war-related positionings (interviews with Zagreb22EXT, Zagreb11AN and Belgrade4AN). Much more striking is the collaboration with one Zagreb university professor who had worked during the war years with Rampart of Love and Women's Help Now. The peculiar character of this occurrence becomes more obvious if one considers that in 1993 the Center for Women War Victims – some of whose activists had been also members of the Centre for Women's Studies – had expressed its unwillingness to work with the professor in question. This was due to her criticism of the 'five witches' and her affiliation with Rampart of Love – a group which had participated earlier in the denouncement of the Center for Women War Victims (*Pismo Hrvatskom humanitarnom forumu*, 07.06.1993).

Another in this sense remarkable cooperation is that which the Centre for Women's Studies established in the second half of the 1990s with several scholars from the Zagreb-based state academic institution Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research. In the early war-time publications of some of these academics (see eg in Čale Feldman, Prica and Senjković, 1993) the expressed war-related positionings on perpetrators and victims sometimes resembled those of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists. This shows a certain inconsistency in the Centre for Women's Studies' criteria for (re)establishment of collaboration, ie the not per se decisive influence of one's war-time positionings on that choice. I will return to this issue in Chapter 6.

Belgrade groups

Woman and Society

The establishment of the Zagreb academic initiative Woman and Society in 1979 and the enthusiasm of its members inspired some women in Belgrade to set up a similar initiative with almost the same name – Feminist Group Woman and Society – in 1980. Whereas the Zagreb Woman and Society was more institutionalised by virtue of being a section of the Sociologist Association of Croatia, the Belgrade one was an informal initiative which has never been registered. During the get-togethers, which initially took place in private apartments, feminist literature was discussed and personal experiences were shared. These encounters served, thus, as a platform for consciousness-raising and self-help alike.

A bit later the need was felt to present feminist ideas to a broader audience and in the form of open public debates. The popular Student Cultural Centre was chosen as the location of these debates – the same setting which in 1978 had hosted the international feminist conference ‘Comrade (m/f) Woman’. The covered topics were very diverse: eg women’s writing, images of men and women in the media, family rituals around the first menstruation, sexuality (including sessions on the two groundbreaking American *Hite Reports*), women and crime, the position of women in the system of self-management, women’s health, violence against women, women and art, abortion, and women and the political left. Since the debates were part of the programme of this established cultural institution, they, too, were regularly announced in the main Belgrade daily *Politika*.

Analogous to the Zagreb Woman and Society, wherein some men participated as well, its Belgrade counterpart was initially also open to men. This was to change in the second phase of its existence, after the two initial organisers had withdrawn due to feeling that they had exhausted their personal organisational capacities and the existing format of the debates. In 1986 the organisation of the activities went into the hands of a feminist who was a proponent of women-only activities. It would be in this phase that next to the continuation of the public and private discussions, increasing awareness would be raised of the issues of female homosexuality and (domestic) violence against women, including the setting up in March 1990 of an SOS hotline for women and children victims of violence. This development in the second half of the 1980s belonged to a broader trend in Yugoslav feminism which had earlier led to the establishment of such an SOS hotline in Zagreb in 1988 and in Ljubljana in 1989.

In this period the activists of the Belgrade Woman and Society also started conducting street surveys in order to obtain more information on the position of

women, especially those whom they did not manage to reach through the largely intellectual public debates. Just like the Zagreb feminists in the late 1980s, the Belgrade ones conducted groundbreaking work in exposing the myths about domestic violence and violence against women in general, as well as in raising the public awareness of the existence of those problems in Yugoslavia – contrary to the claims of the state authorities (Benderly, 1994; *Borba*, 10.03.1990; *Conexions*, 1990; *Danas*, 28.02.1989; *Feministkinje protiv nasilja nad ženama*, n.d.; *Praktična žena*, 10.03.1990; *Večernje novosti*, 24.02.1990; Vušković and Trivunac, 1998; interviews with Belgrade15N, Belgrade13AN, Belgrade3AN and Belgrade4AN).

In anticipation of the first multiparty elections in Serbia in December 1990 and the increasing pronatalist discourses in the public sphere, Woman and Society sent out a public appeal. The group warned that in ‘times of social and economic turbulence the inequality of women is constantly hushed up in the name of the “more important” problems’ (*Apel demokratskoj javnosti*, August 1990). Furthermore, the political parties were called upon to pay more attention to the position of women, and women were encouraged to boycott those parties whose programmes did not attend to their needs. Finally, the group demanded that the basic women’s right to decide upon childbirth was to be respected and that ‘none of the so-called interests of the Nation, State, [and] Church should dare endanger this right’ (ibid).

The comparison of this appeal with the declaration of the ‘Women’s Assembly of Croatia’ written several months later (*Declaration*, 16.12.1990) yields a strong resemblance. The similarity of the two texts points to the analogies between the socio-economic and political situations in Croatia and Serbia at the time,¹³⁷ the cooperation and exchange which existed between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, and to their shared positioning on the position of women and the right ways to address it. Furthermore, in both documents there is an observable absence of explicit mention of nationalism, avoidance of referring to the secessionist tendencies in Yugoslavia and the calls for restructuring of the federation, and a (strategically useful) conceptualisation of women as a general category of people who suffer due to their gender and regardless of their ethnic and political affiliation.

137 Ivana Balen – a feminist who was active in both Belgrade and Zagreb – in 1990 drew up a good comparative analysis of the programmes of the then newly established political parties in Croatia and Serbia. She showed that in both Yugoslav republics the majority of the parties had accentuated the ethnic issues and either fully neglected women or spoken about them in the context of contributing to ethnic, demographic and moral restoration (*Nove omladinske novine*, 20.05.1990). Additional information on the ethnic and gender aspects of the political programmes in Serbia – which corroborates Balen’s analysis – can be obtained from the interview with the Belgrade feminists Nadežda Četković and Sonja Drljević (*Intervju*, 23.11.1990).

In late 1990 and early 1991 the members of Woman and Society started establishing or becoming involved in other formal and informal feminist and/or antiwar groups. Consequently, the group would silently – since it had never been registered – cease to exist after 1991. The documents produced by its (former) members, now active in other feminist and/or antiwar groups, would no longer be signed with the name Woman and Society, but with the name(s) of the new groups.

SOS Hotline

The SOS Hotline, set up by activists of Woman and Society, had operated as an informal initiative for almost two years before it was registered as an NGO in November 1992. Similarly to the Zagreb SOS Hotline, which was initially housed in a space allocated to the Union of the Socialist Youth of Croatia, the Belgrade SOS Hotline could work in the beginning in the Home of Youth – an educational and cultural centre belonging to the Union of the Socialist Youth of Serbia. In those times of political turbulence, when the disappearance of the socialist institutions also meant (a temporary) opening up of some previously unimaginable possibilities, the SOS Hotline was allowed to use the office of the director of the Home of Youth after the end of the work day. This situation lasted only for half a year. The need for a more appropriate, permanent and safe housing for the SOS Hotline, which would also include a shelter for women and children victims of violence, made the activists repeatedly write to the city authorities to ask for such a space (*SOS bilten*, August 1990; Ćetković, 1998b; *Pismo predsedniku Skupštine grada*, 09.08.1990; *SOS telefon Beograd* website).

This need became even more pressing after the activists had to move twice within the Home of Youth, but especially after the hotline's premises were broken into and rummaged through. According to Ćetković's (1998b) short reference to this incident, this followed a discussion on the domestic violence which the men active in the Serb paramilitary units in Croatia committed upon their return to Serbia. In 1992 the SOS Hotline was given space owned by the City of Belgrade thanks to then vice-president of the city council Nada Popović-Perišić. Despite her academic feminist work and participation in the activities of Woman and Society, some of the activists felt uncomfortable with this deed because of her membership in Milošević's party. The group kept that space eventually, while the uneasiness seems to have been resolved by obtaining additional space from a local council run by the opposition, as well as by insisting on the group's autonomy and freedom from political pressures (Ćetković, 1998b; Mladenović, 1995; *Report*, January 1994; Zaharijević, 2007; interview with Ljubljana3EXT).

Towards the second half of 1990 it became obvious that the women who worked on the SOS Hotline (the former activists of Woman and Society, plus the newly admitted volunteers) held different views on the worsening political situation in Yugoslavia and the prominence of the discourse of ethnic grievances. These diverse positionings within the group complicated the production of public statements on topics different from the protection of women's rights in general. To solve this problem it was decided that the hotline would only (co-)produce general statements on women's rights and violence against women, without linking them to ethnic issues and the broader political context.

This choice also benefited the hotline's function as a service provider for all women victims of violence regardless of their political affiliation. The feminists who wanted to connect women's issues to other political issues established in June 1990 the informal group Belgrade Women's Lobby.¹³⁸ Those who were active in the SOS Hotline and the Women's Lobby alike were to use a different discourse in their public statements depending on which group they represented at the concrete moment (Ćetković, 1998b; Zaharijević, 2007; interviews with Belgrade13AN, Belgrade3AN, Belgrade5AN and Belgrade6AN).

It seems, however, that the tensions in the hotline continued. Without giving any further details, Mladenović and Litričin (1993:117) have described them – and the way they had been dealt with – as follows:

Despite the fact that the SOS group had a deliberately non-nationalist policy from the beginning, some volunteers were unable to keep their nationalist feelings out of their SOS work. Several attempts were made to reconcile the opposing viewpoints; after that some of the women left and some of them stayed and remained silent.

One Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist rejected this suggestion of nationalism-related frictions within the group and spoke of leadership conflicts, but two other respondents from the same cluster recalled the existence of differences in one's awareness of Serbia's foremost responsibility for the wars (interviews with Belgrade3AN, Belgrade5AN and Belgrade14AN). One cannot detect, though, such variations in the group's public reports and co-signed statements which were produced around the same time as the above essay of Mladenović and Litričin (1993). These

138 Ćetković (1998a) linked the establishment of the Belgrade Women's Lobby to the creation of the Minimal Programme of Women's Demands – the group's programme platform – in September 1990. I have, however, found two documents dated June 1990 which were co-signed by this group (*Peticija povodom donošenja zakona*, June 1990; *Peticija povodom Rezolucije*, June 1990).

documents depict the SOS Hotline as an antiwar group which did not divide women on the basis of ethnicity and worked against nationalism (*Feministkinje Beograda govore*, 26.12.1992; *Niko nas nije pitao!*, 01.03.1993; *Report from December 1992 to December 1993*, January 1994; *SOS Hotline*, 08.03.1993). Belgrade5AN hinted in the interview at this internal presence and external absence of disagreement by saying that some members 'did not have for sure the political clarity and sharpness regarding the war. It [the positioning] was not really homogenised, but the platform was indisputable'.

Next to the provision of phone counselling, the group offered to the women survivors of violence direct support in dealing with the relevant state bodies, such as the police and the medical institutions, and provided humanitarian, psychosocial and other assistance to women and children in refugee camps. Different from their Zagreb counterpart, the Belgrade SOS Hotline did not initially possess any premises where it could shelter the women and children in need. In the most serious cases the activists offered temporary housing either in their own homes or gathered money to put the woman (and her child/ren) in a hotel. From April 1994 onward, thanks to foreign donations, the group started renting private accommodation where it could offer longer term housing and provide better assistance (Ćetković, 1998c; Mladenović, 1995; Mladenović and Matijašević, 1996; Stanojević, 1993).

In December 1992 a special subgroup was formed within the SOS Hotline whose focus was on the women survivors of sexual war violence. The establishment of this subgroup – whose initial name was Group for Women Raped in War – was triggered by the visit of Swiss women's activists in November 1992. They had come to Belgrade to inquire about the position and treatment of raped women in the refugee camps and medical institutions. Due to the observed lack of psychosocial assistance to this specific group of refugees, the Swiss activists agreed to provide financial support and know-how so that the activists of the SOS Hotline could purchase office premises and establish a centre for women who had survived (war-related) sexual violence. This led to the opening of the Autonomous Women's Center Against Sexual Violence on 10 December 1993 – the symbolic Human Rights Day (Ćetković, 1998b; Mladenović, 1995; *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 27–28.03.1993; *Politika*, 13.12.1992; *Tages-Anzeiger*, 29.03.1993). Although the Center started as a part of the SOS Hotline, 'by the end of the 1990s' (*SOS telefon Beograd website*)¹³⁹ it had become detached from it and registered as a separate group. Given that very soon after its establishment its activists started signing their documents and publications only with the name of the Center (eg

139 I could not find a more precise temporal indication in the data which I had at my disposal. The various information from the Autonomous Women's Center only state its establishment in December 1993 (*Autonomni ženski centar website*; *Deset godina*, 2003).

Ćetković et al., 1995; *Rad u ratno doba*, May/June 1994), I will elaborate on this group separately in the last section of this chapter.

The SOS Hotline maintained throughout the 1990s (and the 2000s) its assistance to women and children victims of violence through phone and face-to-face counselling, as well as provision of safe accommodation, legal help and support in the communication with the state institutions. In April 1997 it initiated the creation of the Network against Male Violence against Women. This network gathered groups and individuals mostly from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but also some from the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. Non-nationalism was one of the Network's explicitly stated political principles to which all (potential) members were required to subscribe. In addition, the Network accentuated its boundary transgression character by stating that it did not have language or territorial limitations (*Bilten Mreže*, April 1997; Mladenović and Protić, 1995b; Protić, 1999; *Osnivački dokument*, June 1997; *SOS telefon Beograd* website).

Belgrade Women's Lobby

As I mentioned in the preceding section, the Belgrade Women's Lobby was launched in June 1990 out of the need of some members of the SOS Hotline to articulate public positionings which would address the political situation in Yugoslavia. Just like the Women's Lobby Zagreb established two years later, the Belgrade one was an ad hoc informal advocacy group which wrote public statements against different women-unfriendly practices and demanded the setting up of women-friendly ones.

The name Belgrade Women's Lobby appeared for the first time on two petitions co-authored with the Feminist Group Belgrade¹⁴⁰ and some small political parties (*Peticija povodom donošenja zakona*, June 1990; *Peticija povodom Rezolucije*, June 1990). The first petition was against the passing of the law on family planning. The signatories demanded broad access to contraceptives and public campaigns to raise the awareness of the existence of this form of family planning, easier access to abortion for minors, and full state subsidy of the abortion costs. In the second petition the draft resolution for demographic restoration of Serbia was criticised since it discriminated against unmarried people, those without children, and those from the ethnic groups with a higher birth rate (read: Albanians and Roma). According to Milić (1994b), the several tens of thousands collected signatures prevented the passing of the resolution.

140 There has not been any Belgrade feminist group with this name. I assume, therefore, that this is an instance of *lapsus calami* and that the Belgrade group in question was the Feminist Group Woman and Society.

In September 1990 the Belgrade Women's Lobby produced two documents. The first contained amendments to the draft constitution of Serbia. The group rebuked the proposed constitution for its insufficient democratic character, ie the disregard for women's rights and the treatment of women as second class citizens. The activists' demands included changes ensuring a better treatment of the victims of violence during the court procedures, equality of gays, lesbians, and heterosexual women and men, a stipulation that the freedom of choice regarding child birth was a woman's right instead of a human right, and a guaranteed freedom from violence against women and children.

The second document was the 'Minimal Programme of Women's Demands.' It called on the political parties – which at that time were preparing for the forthcoming elections – to include a gender perspective in their analyses and programmes, as well as a set of demands for improving the situation of women.¹⁴¹ The adjective 'minimal' notwithstanding, those demands required radical societal changes: an end to gender-based discrimination in the labour market, shortening of the work day so that both men and women could equally share the domestic tasks, change of the patriarchal and sexist educational system and school curricula, full respect for women's right to decide upon childbirth, equal participation of both parents in the process of parenting, making violence against women visible, criminalisation of marital rape, improvement of the health care for women, decriminalisation of sex work, and the setting up of a Ministry for women's issues (Ćetković et al. 1995; Ćetković, 1998d).

Some of the later statements of the Belgrade Women's Lobby were an appeal for a peaceful solution to the Yugoslav crisis (March 1991; together with Woman and Society), a protest against the patriarchal and warmongering messages in the school textbooks in Serbia (August 1991), a reminder of what war crimes are – including their punishable character – and a warning against committing them (October 1991; together with the Women's Parliament),¹⁴² an appeal to the citizens of Serbia for

141 Although the list of demands was submitted to all political parties, only two smaller ones incorporated it in their programmes (*Intervju*, 23.11.1990).

142 The Women's Parliament was launched on 8 March 1991 by the Belgrade Women's Lobby, the Women's Party and Woman and Society, in reaction to the tiny percentage of elected women in the Serbian parliament. Led by the idea that there was no democratic politics without women's participation, the initiators gathered women active in NGOs, female politicians from various parties, and individual women. The group, which served as a think tank and a monitoring and advocacy body, was dissolved by mid-1993, mainly because of the shift in its work priorities. Due to the increase of the war violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some members of the Women's Parliament intensified their work in groups such as the Centre for Antiwar Action and Women in Black. Others – members of political parties – left because of the disbandment or restructuring of those parties (Imširović, 1998; *Poziv na osnivački sastanak*, 02.02.1991).

solidarity with the (mostly female) refugee population in the country (March 1994), a letter to Milošević not to sign the new and much more restrictive abortion law (May 1994),¹⁴³ a rebuke of the Serbian regime's violence against the Kosovar Albanians (May 1998; together with the Autonomous Women Center and Women in Black) and in August 1998 a protest against the nationalist pro-life campaign for increasing the birth rate in Serbia (Četković, 1998d; Četković et al., 1993a; *Predsedniku Republike Srbije*, May 1994; *Rat na Kosovu – logika patrijarhata*, May 1998; *Žene za mir*, March 1991).

The last text of this group which I came across was published in April 2000 (in: *Republika*, 01–15.04.2000). The Belgrade Women's Lobby had probably ceased to exist sometime that year.

Women's Party (ŽEST)

The Women's Party¹⁴⁴ or ŽEST was officially registered in October 1990, two months before the first multiparty elections in Serbia. As a word, ŽEST meant strength or force, while as an acronym it stood for Žene (Women), Etika (Ethics), Solidarnost (Solidarity) and Tolerancija (Tolerance). According to Milić (1998), the Women's Party was built upon the tradition of the first Women's Party in Serbia, which had been established in 1927 to advocate implementation of female suffrage. This right had been announced in the constitution of the Kingdom of [male] Serbs, [male] Croats and [male] Slovenes¹⁴⁵ from 1920, but never enacted. Whereas the majority of its members were women – some of whom Belgrade feminists – ŽEST had some male membership as well.

The Women's Party eventually did not participate in the local and parliamentary elections in December 1990 because it was unable to create candidate lists in such a short time. By way of experiment it attempted to take part in the presidential elections. However, its proposal was rejected as illegitimate by the court

143 In Zajović et al. (1994) a retyped version of this letter has been published and attributed to the Women's Parliament. This is probably a mistake since one of the initiators and most active members of the Women's Parliament has stated elsewhere that the group had ceased to exist in 1993 (Imširović, 1998). As to the abortion law in question, Milošević refused to sign it and returned it to the Serbian parliament. It remains unknown to which extent his decision was guided by the letter of the Belgrade feminists. Lilly and Irvine (2002) note the possibility that he might have been persuaded by his wife, Mirjana Marković.

144 In the strict sense, the Women's Party was not a women's group, but I include it in the analysis and refer to it as a group since it has been treated as such by those who have written about it or mentioned it in their writings (Cockburn, 1991; Milić, 1998; Mladenović and Litričin, 1993), as well as by my respondents in their interview narratives.

145 For the explanation of my use of '[male]' in this context, see footnote 64.

in charge since it concerned a shared candidacy of one female and one male party member – a choice made in the spirit of promoting a partnership of women and men in all spheres. The members of the party seem to have been aware that even if they had participated in the elections, their chances of any electoral success would have been quite slim. They had hoped, nevertheless, that their presence in the media would empower women. Next to this, the Women's Party wanted to make the other parties both pay more attention to the position of women and put forth female candidates so that women would become more present and more visible in the official politics. This was indeed the case to a certain extent during the election campaign, but did not have a lasting effect (Cockburn, 1991; Milić, 1998; *Vreme*, 14.01.1991; interview with Belgrade2N).

After the for women catastrophic results of the 1990 parliamentary elections (only 1.6% of the elected parliamentarians were female), the Women's Party – together with the Belgrade Women's Lobby and Woman and Society – submitted to the Serbian parliament a demand for installing a Ministry of Women, and wrote a protest statement after the demand was rejected (*Narodnoj skupštini Republike Srbije*, 21.01.1991, 18.02.1991). In reaction to the increasing prominence of the discourse of interethnic hatred all over Yugoslavia, the party appealed to all citizens not to allow their fear, insecurity, and parental and ethnic feelings be manipulated for warmongering purposes (*Apel*, 31.01.1991).

The later activities of the Women's Party included the action 'A Farewell to Arms'¹⁴⁶ to replace violent toys with non-violent alternatives, the debate for recognition of unpaid female domestic labour, the joint advocacy with the SOS Hotline and the Women's Parliament for changes in the marriage law, and the demand addressed to the parliaments of all Yugoslav republics and to the federal one to end the armed violence by non-violent negotiations which would include women.¹⁴⁷ In July 1991 the party was one of the founders of the Centre for Antiwar Action – the Belgrade counterpart of the Antiwar Campaign Croatia (*Gradskom sekretarijatu za pravosuđe*, 14.06.1991; *Pismo skupštinama*, 05.07.1991; *Poziv na forum*, 10.04.1991; *Poziv na učešće*, n.d.; *Republika*, 01–15.09.1991). The last document of the Women's Party which I found was a letter to the Serbian parliamentarians from October 1991 demanding their recognition of accountability for the war in Yugoslavia and calling on them to stop the war (*Poslanicama Skupštine Srbije*, 31.10.1991).

146 Probably inspired by the title of Ernest Hemingway's book.

147 The need to involve women in peace negotiations was recognised at the UN level in October 2000 by the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

In its Charter of Intentions, next to outlining its determination to work against all forms of discrimination and authoritarian power, and on the democratisation of society and the improvement of the quality of life, the Women's Party outlined its views on the political situation in Yugoslavia. In the section titled 'For peace, tolerance and cooperation between the nations and ethnic groups' the party criticised the fixation on ethnic issues whereby they were conceptualised as detached from all other concerns. Since such a conceptualisation was seen as leading to bloody interethnic clashes and civil wars, the Women's Party was firmly determined to resolve these issues by approaching them as concrete political, economic, social and cultural issues. Next to expressing its protest against 'national-chauvinist madness and hatred' in general, the party appealed to women to unite and mobilise against all activities which would endanger peace and security (*Povelja o namerama*, n.d.).

So, although the Women's Party spoke of partnership of women and men in all areas, when it came to the questions of peace and security, it particularly appealed to women and conceptualised them as more prone to non-violence. Incoherence can be observed also with regard to its antiwar and non-violent orientation. As Adriana Zaharijević (2007) has remarked, the Charter of Intentions in one place contained a positioning which largely resembled one of the two justifications which Milošević had given at the beginning of the 1990s for his politics of violence – the importance of preserving Yugoslavia within its federal borders.¹⁴⁸ The paragraph in question read as follows:

The party will not compromise in opposing and aiming at disclosing each attempt to solve the interethnic relations in a violent and intolerant manner, regardless of who its agents are, and it will in the same way oppose each attempt to attack and breach the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia and its republics (*Povelja o namerama*, n.d.).

This leads to the question why the Women's Party froze its work in late 1991.¹⁴⁹ In several co-authored texts Lepa Mladenović has stated – without elaborating further – that the party had been unable to proceed with its activities because of nationalism-related conflicts (Hughes and Mladenović, 1995; Hughes, Mladenović and Mršević, 1995; Mladenović and Hughes, 2000; Mladenović and Litričin, 1993, 1998). However,

148 The other justification was the protection of Serbs all over Yugoslavia (Vasiljević, 2008; Zaharijević, 2007).

149 It is not fully clear when the disbandment took place exactly. Milić (1998) situated it in the summer of 1991, but I have found a letter written by the Women's Party dated October 1991 (*Poslanicama Skupštine Srbije*, 31.10.1991). Therefore I use 'late 1991' as a temporal indication.

none of my respondents, including the self-declared antinationalist ones who had been members of the Women's Party, could confirm that there had been such conflicts and that nationalism had caused its disbandment. Neither could I find an organisational document or a newspaper article in support of the above claim. When I asked in the interviews the authors of the first text wherein this claim had appeared (Mladenović and Litričin, 1993) to elaborate upon it with concrete examples, they seemed perplexed and could not remember any.

None of the possible reasons for the disbandment of the Women's Party which I came across was war-related: disagreement regarding whether to run for the 1990 elections in coalition with other political parties or independently, insufficient financial means and organisational capacities, lack of willingness to run for the elections, fatigue of the key members, and personal conflicts (Milić, 1996, 1998; interviews with Belgrade16N, Belgrade15N, Belgrade2N, Belgrade3AN and Belgrade4AN). Zaharijević (2007:246) is the only author who has shed some light on this issue by suggesting that the aforementioned paragraph from the Charter of Intentions might have divided the members of the Women's Party: '[I]t is almost certain that not everybody could support [it] easily'. Unfortunately, due to my late discovery of Zaharijević's article and the paragraph in question, I was unable to check whether my respondents would link that positioning of the Women's Party to the alleged nationalism-related conflicts in the group. I suggest, therefore, that the claim that nationalism led to the freezing of its activities be taken with a grain of salt.

*Women's Studies Center*¹⁵⁰

In 1991 some members of Woman and Society, two feminists in particular, started working on setting up a women's studies programme. This move, due to the pressing need for knowledge which recognised women as societal actors, had been one of the resolutions of the 'Third Yugoslav Feminist Gathering' in 1990 (*Zaključci*, 01.04.1990). The aim of the Belgrade NGO-based women's studies¹⁵¹ was to make a bridge between feminist theory and activism by offering education in feminist theory, motivating the students to become feminist activists and, as Duhaček (1998) has summarised, producing knowledge by women, on women and for women.

150 See also the analysis of this group in Chapter 4.

151 This programme in women's studies was different from the formal academic one (not analysed here because of being beyond the scope of this research) which was set up between 1992 and 1993 at the Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy by feminist scholars who had also participated – inter alia as lecturers – in the work of the NGO-based women's studies. For more information on the academic women's studies, see Blagojević (1998c).

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The initial plan was to launch the experimental programme in the autumn of 1991, but its realisation was postponed due to the war in Croatia, which had begun in the meanwhile. The January 1992 peace accords between the Croat and Serb forces in Croatia, which had led to a cease-fire, gave hope to the organisers that the war violence had come to an end.¹⁵² Consequently, the plan to launch women's studies was re-enacted and 8 March 1992 was chosen as the new start date of the experimental programme. Each feminist who was a lecturer in this first programme was also a student, ie a participant in the lectures given by the others. This was done as a form of self-education and exchange of knowledge since different feminists had different expertise. Unlike the women's studies in Zagreb launched three years later, the Belgrade ones were open to men, but only as students and not as lecturers (Dojčinović-Nešić, 1998; Duhaček, 1998; Mladenović, 2002; interviews with Belgrade15N, Belgrade11AN and Belgrade6AN).

Some of the group's council members and lecturers were also active in Women in Black, which regularly protested, published and sent out press releases on war-related issues. However, the Women's Studies Center was not as a group very outspoken on those matters in the 1990s. Its main political activity was the creation of alternative knowledge. It seems, thus, that the situation in the Women's Studies Center was similar to that at the Belgrade SOS Hotline. The Center was generally positioned against nationalism and the wars, but refrained from producing statements on specific war-related topics in order to provide service (education, in this case) to as large an audience as possible.

The council members differed in their views on the mainstreaming of women's studies and in their preference for theoretical academic work or activist practice. Some advocated the incorporation of women's studies in the Serbian official educational system and others their preservation as an independent grassroots group which would be open to everybody with a high school diploma regardless of whether they were enrolled at a university or not. The group's name prior to the split, Center for Women's Studies, Research and Communication, mirrored this diversity. The words 'studies' and 'research' stressed the theoretical component, whereas the word 'communication' referred to the applied component, ie the transfer of (academic) feminist insights to a wider audience (Dojčinović-Nešić, 1998).

A number of Belgrade respondents mentioned this difference as the reason for the group's split. Others singled out the disagreement between the two initiators in

152 Unfortunately, this hope proved premature. The cease-fire in Croatia turned out to be only temporary and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina erupted in April that year.

their positioning on the extent of Serbia's responsibility for the wars and war crimes. This latter divide corresponded to the different preferences of these two feminists regarding the functioning within or outside academia (the academism vs activism difference). One respondent provided a third interpretation: the donor-driven change from the more democratic collective coordination in the form of a council to the more hierarchical single coordination which increased the possibilities for power abuse (interviews with Belgrade16N, Belgrade15N, Belgrade11AN, Belgrade3AN and Belgrade4AN). Dojčinović-Nešić and Popović (2002) have explained the creation of two groups as being a consequence of the branching out of the activities, whereas Duhaček (1998) and Zaharijević (2007) have related the split to the dissimilar war-related positionings on one's country and/or ethnic group. I will return to this in Chapter 4.

After the split in 1998 between the two initiators, the one who was a bigger proponent of activism took the communication component to the newly-established Association for Women's Initiative. This group, which has in the meantime changed its name into Association of Autonomous Women's Initiatives, maintained its grassroots and autonomous character. At the time of data collection it promoted women's cooperatives and small businesses, assisted the self-organisation and networking of women throughout Serbia, published books, and offered low-cost courses in foreign languages.

The other initiator of the Women's Studies Center, whose preference was for theoretical work, added the term 'gender' to the name of the group. The Women's Studies and Gender Research Center, which in 2011 changed its name to Women's Studies Center, has maintained its educational and publishing activities. Since the early 2000s it has been associated as a non-governmental organisation with the Faculty of Political Sciences at the Belgrade University. Many of the women who were active in this group in 2009 were also members of the Center for Gender Studies and Politics, which was an official part of the Faculty of Political Sciences (*Asocijacija autonomnih ženskih inicijativa* website; *Centar za ženske studije Beograd* website; interviews with Belgrade15N and Belgrade11AN).

*Women in Black*¹⁵³

Women in Black was established in October 1991 by feminists and antiwar activists who were already engaged in the mixed gender group Centre for Antiwar Action. The creation of a separate women's group was caused by the need to make women's antiwar public and private efforts visible. More precisely, although the majority of the members of the Belgrade antiwar initiatives – including the Centre for Antiwar Action – were women, men were usually the ones who got the media and public attention. Even more hidden was women's private resistance to the war, in the form of emotional and financial support to their male family members and friends who hid from the mass mobilisation for the war in Croatia, and acquisition of legal and other advice on their behalf.

The inspiration for this type of group came from the activists of the Italian Women in Black who had travelled to different parts of the (post-)Yugoslav region in the early autumn of 1991 as part of a larger group of Western peace activists. The concept of the Women in Black groups, which had been developed by Israeli women peace activists in 1988, was to conduct silent vigils whereby the message was transferred by the banners held by the protestors, their black clothes, which expressed the mourning for the victims of military violence, and the mere presence of (female) bodies in the public space. This at the time novel form of protest was explained on the leaflet which the Belgrade Women in Black distributed at their first vigil on 9 October 1991. On that leaflet (*Žene u crnom protiv rata*, 09.10.1991) the activists also expressed their opposition to 'the war in Yugoslavia', patriarchy and the political rulers in general, without singling out any ethnic group (*Borba*, 05–06.10.1991, 09.10.1991, 12–13.10.1991; *Danas*, 01.10.1991; Fridman, 2006b; Zajović, 1993b, 1995; interviews with Belgrade3AN, Belgrade4AN and Belgrade14AN).

For the greatest part of the 1990s Women in Black held weekly one-hour silent vigils on a central location in Belgrade (in the late 1990s they were replaced with monthly ones, and in the period of martial law during the NATO bombing in 1999 no vigils were held). Next to these recurring protests, the activists – few of whom were men – regularly produced press releases, supported conscientious objectors and deserters, visited refugee camps to offer psychosocial and other assistance and distribute humanitarian aid, organised yearly international (including the post-Yugoslav region) women's peace and solidarity gatherings, and extensively published books, brochures, leaflets and, from 1995, a magazine on conscientious objection. Starting from 1997 the group began developing the Women in Black Network Serbia

153 See also the last analysis in Chapter 4.

– a platform for exchange of knowledge and realisation of joint actions by groups and individual activists from all over Serbia.

Women in Black articulated a very broad political agenda: opposition to war, war rapes, ethnic cleansing, militarism, nationalism, fascism and religious fundamentalism (especially those employed by the Serb political, military and clerical authorities), civil disobedience, solidarity with the (Serb) refugees and the women (and men) of the allegedly inimical ethnic groups, support to non-violence and the freedom of choice regarding use of arms and reproduction etc. In addition to this, Women in Black sharply criticised Serbia's repressive politics against the Kosovar Albanians and paid special attention to the expression of support to and the development of cooperation with the Kosovar Albanian feminist and women's activists (Božinović, 1998; *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, 07.08.1993; *Hronologija*, February 2002; *Naša borba*, 13.08.1997; *off our backs*, October 1995; Zajović, 1993b, 1996, 1999a; *Žene u crnom*, 21.03.1994; interview with SarajevoTEXT).

Despite its positionings, the group was never banned by the state, but this did not mean that Women in Black could conduct their work smoothly and risk-free. Besides the police obstruction of some of their gatherings and actions, the activists were regularly subjected to threats and verbal attacks, in particular during their vigils. Therefore, they had to use a lot of precaution regarding their personal safety and the preservation of the secret address of the group's office premises.

In August 1995, following the denial of entrance to Serbia to some Western feminists who travelled to the women's peace and solidarity gathering, two activists of Women in Black were subjected to police interrogation for several hours. One of the problematic points was the invitation of allegedly Croat women to the gathering at the time when Croatia was ethnically cleansing the Croatian Serbs. In September 1998, half a year before the NATO bombing, the then vice-president of the Serbian government Vojislav Šešelj accused, inter alia, the Women in Black activists for being traitors in the Serbian parliament and threatened them should NATO attack Serbia. Still, the greatest recorded security risks which this group experienced occurred in the late spring and the summer of 2000 – the last months of Milošević's rule. Women in Black was among the groups whose activities and finances were scrutinised by the Serbian authorities. This included confiscation of materials and hard disks, raids of activists' homes, long interrogations and issuing of arrest warrants for two activists. A third activist was detained for one day by the state security service. During the interrogation verbal and physical violence was used and he was forced to produce statements about being involved in espionage against Serbia (*Amnesty International statement*, 18.08.2000; *Hronologija*, February 2002; Mladenović and Matijašević, 1996;

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Women in Black statement, 09.06.2000; Zajović, 2007; interviews with Sarajevo1EXT and Belgrade5AN).

In 2009 the group was still very active in the form of organisation of vigils and gatherings, and production of books and press releases, but this work had undergone some changes in line with the altered socio-political contexts of Serbia and the Yugoslav successor states. For example, there were only occasional vigils to commemorate events which Women in Black considered to be of utmost importance for Serbia, such as the Serb genocide of the Bosniaks in Srebrenica. Also, the members had started paying regular commemorative visits to places which had been particularly affected by the wars, and were actively involved in the Women's Peace Coalition (set up in 2006 by the Women in Black Network Serbia and the Kosova Women's Network). Finally, Women in Black was a vital participant in the coalition for dealing with the past, called Initiative for RECOM,¹⁵⁴ which had been established in 2008 (Zajović, 2009a, 2009b; *Žene u crnom* website; interview with Sarajevo2EXT).

Autonomous Women's Center

The Autonomous Women's Center (whose first name was Autonomous Women's Center Against Sexual Violence) was set up in December 1993 by members of the SOS Hotline. The initial presence of the term 'sexual violence' in the name was intended to increase the visibility of this peace and wartime phenomenon and empower the women survivors not to be silent about it. The need to raise awareness of this issue became even more pressing in light of the war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the intensification of the domestic sexual violence committed by Serb soldiers on home leave.

The group developed a broad range of activities. It offered face-to-face counselling, self-help groups and legal advice for women victims of any form of male violence (thus, not necessarily war-related and/or sexual), set up an SOS hotline which was specialised in sexual violence, distributed humanitarian aid to (Serb) refugee women and children in refugee camps and private accommodation, organised psychosocial therapy for (Serb) refugee women, and during the Serb siege of Sarajevo collected and sent via humanitarian organisations food packages, letters and money to its inhabitants regardless of ethnicity. In addition, as part of its advocacy efforts to combat (sexual) violence against women and improve women's health, the Center

154 RECOM stands for 'Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia in the period from 1991–2001' (*Inicijativa za REKOM* website).

organised educational activities for the women's groups in Serbia and published books and leaflets on these topics, and on women's human rights and feminism in general (*Announcement*, n.d.; *Brief report*, n.d.; Ćetković et al., 1995, 1997; *Deset godina*, 2003; Mladenović, 1998; Mladenović and Matijašević, 1996; Mršević, 1994; *Rad u ratno doba*, May/June 1994; *TV Novosti*, 15.12.1993; Žarkov, 2005).

Similarly to Women in Black, the Autonomous Women's Center was very involved in establishing and maintaining personal and professional links with the Kosovar Albanian feminist and women's activists, as well as in articulating its strong disagreement with the politics of the Serbian state regarding Kosovo and the Kosovar Albanians. For example, in May 1998, together with the Belgrade Women's Lobby and Women in Black, the Center condemned the growing violence and politics of apartheid by the Serbian state against the Kosovar Albanians. The signatory groups called for civil disobedience – including conscientious objection – vis-à-vis the Serb regime, and clearly expressed their support to the women's and peace groups in both Kosovo and Serbia which advocated non-violence.

During the NATO bombing and the war and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo the Center's activists expanded their counselling services also to include the fear of the bombing and the war violence. They prepared a list of phone numbers of their contacts from all over the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (including Kosovar Albanian women) and throughout the whole three-month period, despite the often non-functioning phone lines, repeatedly called these women to talk to them and support them. Hereby the activists were also able to obtain information about the situation outside Belgrade. This was particularly important in view of the media censorship due to the proclaimed state of war. Another type of support was running errands for the women in Belgrade who did not dare to leave their homes due to fear (*Activity report*, n.d.; *Deset godina*, 2003; Mladenović, 1998; *off our backs*, May 1999; *Rat na Kosovu – logika patrijarhata*, May 1998; Žarkov, 2005).

The Autonomous Women's Center was fully operational in 2009. Next to maintaining the provision of legal, psychological and other assistance to women survivors of violence, it has developed into an important advocacy, research and expertise body in the field of violence against women. As such, it did not only provide trainings to women's groups in Serbia, but also to different state institutions, and served as a consultative body for some international organisations (*Autonomni ženski centar* website; *Izveštaj o radu u 2009.*, n.d.).

In lieu of a conclusion

The portrayal of the Autonomous Women's Center from Belgrade concluded this historical overview. Chapter 4 will provide extensive insight into the creation and development of the war-related positionings of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, the processes in which the war-related designations came to be ascribed to one cluster or another, as well as the reasons behind that ascription.