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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 FOUR

War-related positionings and the processes of (self-)ascription of designations

In this chapter I present and analyse nine historical episodes. I selected them based on their importance for understanding the differences and similarities among and between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists in their war-related positionings, the changes which occurred in some of these positionings as a result of new information and/or new developments in the wars, as well as the forging and breaking of allegiances among the feminists. Eight episodes are concrete events (four gatherings, two speakers tours, one proposal for an umbrella group, and the war in Serbia), whereas one is a Belgrade group which was special in the 1990s because it gathered both self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminists. The episodes are: the proposal for setting up a Yugoslav feminist umbrella group (spring of 1990), a speakers tour in Germany (November 1991), a meeting in Venice (February 1992), the international gathering 'Women in War' in Zagreb (October 1992), the 'International Women's Solidarity' meeting in Zagreb (February 1993), the MADRE speakers tour in North America (spring of 1993), a meeting in Medulin (March 1995), the Belgrade Women's Studies Center (throughout the 1990s, including the split of the group sometime in 1998), and the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the intensified war in Kosovo (spring of 1999).

The proposal for a Yugoslav feminist umbrella group (spring of 1990)

The proposal of several Zagreb feminists for setting-up the Yugoslav feminist umbrella group Independent Union of Women stirred up the first recorded conflict among the Yugoslav feminists which has been interpreted as being caused by nationalism.¹⁵⁵ There was no consensus in the scholarship and among my respondents, though, on whether this had indeed been the case, and if so to what extent. Some feminists (also) pointed at other sources of tension which were unrelated to nationalism: the suggested type of organisational structure and the dynamics between the established and newcomer feminists. Another plurality of recollections existed regarding which feminists had supported and which had opposed the umbrella.

155 This is the reason why I include this event although, strictly speaking, it does not belong here since it took place roughly a year before the intensification of the armed clashes in Croatia.

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The 'Third Yugoslav Feminist Gathering' which took place in Belgrade between 30 March and 1 April 1990 appears to be the first occasion where the proposal for a Yugoslav umbrella caused a conflict. The contention continued at the constitutive assembly of the umbrella held in Zagreb on 16 April that year.¹⁵⁶ To my knowledge, the article by Benderly (in: *New Directions for Women*, September/October 1990) is the only text which has addressed the conflict over the umbrella shortly after it had occurred and before the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia. I indicate this because of the quite probable influence of this historical occurrence – and the related splits between the feminists – on the post-1991 interpretations of the conflict. The bias which the (much) later perceptions give to my analysis becomes even clearer if one keeps in mind that I have not come across any minutes of the above two meetings. The conclusions of the 'Third Yugoslav Feminist Gathering' did not contain anything on the proposal for a Yugoslav umbrella and the umbrella's programme declaration did not give even the slightest indication of the disagreements which had surrounded its creation (*Programska deklaracija*, Spring 1990; *Zaključci*, 01.04.1990). This means that, with the exception of Benderly's short observation, the post-1991 written and oral accounts have been my only source of information on the conflict.

Benderly described the objections which had been uttered at the constitutive assembly of the umbrella as addressing the exclusion of some feminists from the 'earlier planning stages' and 'the hierarchical structure and elitism of the founding group' (*New Directions for Women*, September/October 1990). Unlike her, the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist Belgrade11AN (1993:136) portrayed the conflict as involving nationalism and being one of the occasions when the Yugoslav feminists had 'walked into the nationalist trap':

The feminists from Ljubljana absolutely refused to form any kind of movement at the Yugoslav level – it was out of the question, not even a loose umbrella organization, if it was under a 'Yu' sign. The feminists from Zagreb did not agree among themselves whether or not to join. The feminists from Belgrade would have been consistent in their antinationalist position if they had labelled any nationalism as such. However, they were only critical of their own [nationalism] and refused to react to nationalism in other feminist groups.

By saying that the Ljubljana feminists had not been interested in any pan-Yugoslav organisational format and by naming this nationalism, Belgrade11AN implicitly criticised all Ljubljana (and one part of the Zagreb) participants at the

¹⁵⁶ See the description of Independent Union of Women in Chapter 3.

‘Third Yugoslav Feminist Gathering’ for supporting the secession of Slovenia and/or Croatia from Yugoslavia. In other words, in this author’s view at the time, the lack of support and interest for Yugoslavia equalled nationalism. The Belgrade so-called nationalist feminist Belgrade2N also rebuked the feminists from Croatia and Slovenia for not being interested in Yugoslavia and saw their dissent as being responsible for the limited strength of the Yugoslav feminist movement. The importance which she had attached to the preservation of Yugoslavia is also to be inferred from the fact that she was the only one who had recollected the conflict as not concerning the umbrella, but the creation of a common declaration on the future of Yugoslavia:

By the time of Yugoslavia’s disintegration, many differences had appeared among the feminists of the different republics, pointing to the coming breakdown of the state...Feminists from Slovenia and Croatia rejected the common declaration; feminists from Serbia insisted that such a declaration was needed not only because the country’s future was at stake but also to ensure the influence and power of the feminist movement. The Congress ended without any public declaration (Belgrade2N, 1996:179).

The link between the secessionist tendencies of Slovenia and Croatia and the opposition to the umbrella by the feminists coming from these two republics was also (implicitly) made by the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist Belgrade3AN. In the interview with me, Belgrade3AN contrasted these feminists’ positioning with the pro-umbrella one of at least some feminists from Serbia: ‘It was already clear that separate states would be formed and there was resistance towards it [the umbrella], and a person from Serbia was not supposed to insist too much on it’.

This perception of the lack of support for the initiative as a lack of support for Yugoslavia was most probably based on the (private) discussions at the ‘Third Yugoslav Feminist Gathering’ and the constitutive assembly of Independent Union of Women. The programme declaration of the umbrella did not bring the envisioned pan-Yugoslav structure in connection with the preservation of Yugoslavia in any way. In fact, the latter was not mentioned at all. The Yugoslav format was presented as needed because of the subordinated position of women all over the country – the regional variations notwithstanding – as well as the importance for women of mobilising based on their gender instead of party or ethnic affiliation. Put differently, broad membership was required in order to ensure an effective struggle for women’s rights (*Programska deklaracija*, Spring 1990; see also *Danas*, 20.03.1990).

Belgrade3AN’s comment that ‘a person from Serbia was not supposed to insist too much’ on the creation of a Yugoslav initiative indicated another significant

component of the dynamics between the feminists from the three cities. Some Belgrade feminists felt misunderstood by those from Ljubljana and Zagreb because of the latter's accusations that the former's comments and initiatives advocated – just like Serbia's mainstream political and media discourse – a centralised and Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. Although I will return to this issue in my analysis of the meeting in Venice, at this point I will address the directly related comments which Zagreb7AN (a Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist) and Ljubljana3EXT (an external Ljubljana respondent) made in answering my questions on the umbrella. Both comments conveyed criticism of the hegemonic position of the Serbs in Yugoslavia – attitude which was sometimes reproduced by the Belgrade feminists, too.

Whereas Ljubljana3EXT could not say anything specific about the umbrella since she had not attended any discussions about it, she disapproved in general of the 'slight colonial arrogance' of the Belgrade feminists. As members of the largest ethnic group in Yugoslavia (the Serb one), they had been unwilling to understand the specific problems of the others, such as the risk of rebuking one's ethnic group in a geopolitical setting – such as Slovenia or Kosovo – which was much smaller than Serbia. Zagreb7AN was also generally critical of the Belgrade feminists for not taking into account their privileged position in Yugoslavia. She reproved of their unwillingness to learn Slovenian, at least at the passive level, due to their comfortable position as native speakers of the numerically dominant language and the *lingua franca* in Yugoslavia. The greater geographic and linguistic distance between Belgrade and Ljubljana (as opposed to that between Zagreb and Ljubljana) further contributed to their limited understanding of Slovenian. Not being able to follow the information produced by the other side, the Belgrade feminists had become in the late 1980s more susceptible to the Serbian propaganda about Slovenian anti-Yugoslav and separatist tendencies (interviews with Zagreb7AN and Ljubljana3EXT).

Belgrade11AN's accusation of the Ljubljana feminists of nationalism was strongly criticised by two of those to whom it had been addressed. In a joint interview, two Ljubljana feminists (Ljubljana1EXT and Jalušič, 2002) rejected this perception and qualified it as itself resembling nationalism. They have not explained why they considered it so, but it is possible that they perceived it as advocating a unitarist Yugoslavia and thereby negating the right to secession of the constitutive units. Jalušič saw Belgrade11AN's accusation as additionally malicious because it had not been communicated to the Ljubljana feminists in person, but published in an American book. This lack of direct and person-to-person communication between the (post-) Yugoslav feminists regarding each other's alleged nationalism, as well as their internal struggle for legitimacy when interacting with foreign (feminist) audiences, are very

important for understanding the war-related dynamics between and among the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists.

The intensity of Ljubljana1EXT and Jalušič's disapproval can be read from the space they have dedicated to it in the mentioned joint interview and from their explanations stated elsewhere (Ljubljana1EXT, 2000; Jalušič, 1999, 2002b). In those texts they described their opposition as having to do only with the top-down inegalitarian organisational format of the intended umbrella. For example:

[That] the representatives of the Lilit group [a Ljubljana feminist group] did not support the idea of an umbrella organization with the name Yugoslav Women's Alliance [the initial name of the initiative] is no proof of their nationalism but rather the result of the anti-power monopolization sentiment and grassroots consciousness of the new feminist groups within socialism (Jalušič, 1999:117).

In addition to designating the organisational format as being the contested issue, Ljubljana1EXT (2000) further rejected Belgrade11AN's interpretation of the conflict by perceiving it not as one between feminists from different republics, but between theoreticians and activists. In Ljubljana1EXT's (2000:367) words, the 'Third Yugoslav Feminist Gathering'

was attended by a group of theoreticians who put forward an initiative to found an umbrella Yugoslav feminist organisation which would unite feminist groups and individuals. We activists opposed this idea, claiming that co-ordination and co-operation among feminist groups and individuals already existed and that an umbrella organisation would not make sense...However, some years later, a certain theoretician interpreted this refusal in a foreign publication¹⁵⁷ as nationalism on the part of the feminists from Slovenia and Croatia. Another disregard – the author of this interpretation obviously did not know that the initiative was also refused by feminists from Serbia, but above all, she missed the point of why the initiative was refused.

Ljubljana1EXT repeated the same criticism of the organisational format in the interview with me and added that the proposed centralised umbrella resembled the state women's organisations in Yugoslavia. To establish a similar organisation in times of political decentralisation and formation of autonomous women's groups was, according to the opponents of the initiative, a reactionary move (see also Jalušič, 2002b).

157 Belgrade11AN (1993). Full reference given in a footnote at this location in the original text.

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Zagreb7AN's portrayal of the positioning of the Ljubljana feminists backed the view of Ljubljana1EXT and Jalušič. Zagreb7AN disagreed explicitly with the explanation that secessionist or nationalist tendencies had caused the dissent of the Ljubljana feminists. These feminists – just like Zagreb7AN herself and the other members of the Zagreb group Women's Help Now – had not endorsed the umbrella because of its hierarchical, thus unequal, structure. They had argued instead for a horizontal grassroots network at the Yugoslav level.

Contrary to this, the recollection of the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist Zagreb11AN approximated the published ones of Belgrade11AN and Belgrade2N. Zagreb11AN's impression was that the Ljubljana feminists had been more opposed to something carrying the prefix 'Yugoslav' than to the proposed organisational structure. This was corroborated by Ljubljana3EXT's general criticism of the positionings of the Ljubljana feminists around that time. She rebuked their conformity with the widely present political stance in Slovenia which advocated its independence from Yugoslavia and opposed anything 'Yugoslav'. Ljubljana3EXT acknowledged, however, that this compliance might have been at least partially caused by the Slovenian context at the time, in which one's use of a pro-Yugoslav discourse had meant committing political suicide (interviews with Zagreb11AN, Zagreb7AN and Ljubljana3EXT).

Belgrade11AN's (1993) view that the Zagreb participants had been divided on the creation of the umbrella was recalled by Jalušič as well (in: Ljubljana1EXT and Jalušič, 2002). Unlike Belgrade11AN, who did not give any other details on her observation, Jalušič depicted this division as largely corresponding to an earlier one among the Zagreb feminists. Some of them had been established professionals (eg journalists, scholars and writers) and older in terms of age and involvement in organised feminism. Others had been younger feminists (mostly students), newer to feminism and not yet established. Jalušič saw the Zagreb criticism of the umbrella as having the same cause as the departure of the younger feminists from the academic group Woman and Society and their subsequent creation of the activist group Women's Group Trešnjevka (later Women's Help Now).¹⁵⁸ Such a categorisation of academics (theoreticians) and activists could be read also from the earlier quoted fragment from Ljubljana1EXT (2000). The absence of any geographical indications in that quotation implied its relevance for all participants at the 'Third Yugoslav Feminist Gathering'. I have not found any other written or spoken suggestion of a similar conflict in Belgrade or Ljubljana around that time, but even if that conflict was not endemic to Zagreb, it was in any case present in that city.

158 See Chapter 3.

The analysis of Ljubljana1EXT and Jalušič on Zagreb was implicitly corroborated by Zagreb11AN in the interview. She said to have disapproved of the umbrella because the initiators had bypassed the feminists who had worked very hard at a grassroots level against violence against women (mostly feminists from the younger generation). At the same time, Zagreb11AN's own positioning on the umbrella showed the absence of a full overlap between the categories 'established (academic) feminists' and 'supporters of the umbrella', as well as between the categories 'new(coming) activist feminists' and 'opponents of the umbrella'. She resisted the umbrella, while being an established journalist and a member of the academic Woman and Society (Ljubljana1EXT and Jalušič, 2002; interview with Zagreb11AN).

That the division between the Zagreb supporters and opponents of the initiative had, nonetheless, partially to do with the power differences between the established and newcomer feminists could be further inferred from my interviews with Zagreb7AN and Zagreb21ANA. As I mentioned, Zagreb7AN recalled that the activists of Women's Help Now had pleaded for a network of equal members. Zagreb21ANA was even firmer. In her view, all Zagreb feminists had opposed the umbrella since its structure collided with one of the basic feminist principles: equality of all. Her account of a homogenous Zagreb positioning against the umbrella is at first glance confusing if one considers that some of its initiators (Slavenka Drakulić, Rada Iveković and Đurđa Knežević) were Zagreb feminists. I presume, therefore, that the phrase 'all of us' which Zagreb21ANA used referred to the younger generation of Zagreb feminists to which Zagreb21ANA belonged, unlike the above three established professionals.

What about the positioning(s) of the Belgrade participants? Belgrade11AN (1993) reproached them for applying double standards in their criticism of nationalism: being silent about the anti-Yugoslav nationalism of the Ljubljana and Zagreb participants and only speaking out against the nationalism among themselves.¹⁵⁹ She did not specify there, though, what the alleged nationalism of the Belgrade participants had consisted of, how exactly they had positioned themselves on the umbrella, and what her own positioning on the umbrella and on nationalism had been. Nevertheless, her criticisms suggest that she not only supported the creation of the umbrella but also the preservation of Yugoslavia.

159 Belgrade11AN's criticism then largely overlapped with that which the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists started expressing later. They reprimanded the other Belgrade cluster's exclusive scrutiny of Serb nationalism, but never of that of the other ethnic groups. In fact, it was exactly this criticism of Belgrade11AN which the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminist Belgrade12N approvingly quoted in the interview.

Unable to remember during the interview the details based on which she had made those claims in her essay, Belgrade11AN only recollected that there had been passionate discussions at the 'Third Yugoslav Feminist Gathering' and that the ethnic identities had begun setting in. Some women had allowed themselves to be seduced by and to reproduce the mainstream political discourse and, consequently, set aside the joint work or interests as women. She also explained that she had not at the time been all that involved yet. In light of her later criticism of Serb nationalism and accentuation of the Serb responsibility, I would argue that this was another way of saying that she had not properly understood back then what had been going on and that her previous analysis of the conflict had, therefore, been uninformed and perhaps incorrect (Belgrade11AN, 1993; *Učesnice*, n.d.; interview with Belgrade11AN).

Unlike Belgrade11AN, who suggested the existence of a single positioning among the Belgrade feminists, Ljubljana1EXT (2000:367) alluded to the presence of diverse views: 'the initiative was also refused by feminists from Serbia'. She conveyed the same notion in the interview: 'We from Slovenia for sure, and for sure some from Zagreb and Belgrade, were against the founding of such an organisation'. Based on these statements of Ljubljana1EXT and the earlier quoted ones of Belgrade11AN, Belgrade2N and Belgrade3AN, one could conclude that at least some Belgrade feminists had endorsed the establishment of the umbrella. This was contradicted by the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminist Belgrade15N – an outspoken advocate of non-hierarchical organisational structures. She explained in the interview that all Belgrade participants, herself included, had been against and had seconded Ljubljana1EXT's plea for grassroots cooperation.

So, similar to the Zagreb situation, where not all established feminists had supported the creation of the umbrella, not all Belgrade feminists who would later be named nationalists perceived the rejection as an indication of the anti-Yugoslavism or separatism of the Ljubljana and Zagreb feminists. Moreover, the latter perception was shared at the time by some Belgrade feminists who would later declare themselves antinationalists. This heterogeneity warns against the creation of simplified dichotomies and reminds the scholars to always ask what one's alleged nationalism or antinationalism actually entailed and in which context the positioning in question was produced.

The speakers tour in Germany (November 1991)

The speakers tour in November 1991 was a three-week series of public discussions throughout Germany. Three Belgrade and three Zagreb peace activists (two of the speakers from each city happened to be self-declared antinationalist feminists, too) presented their activities and views on the situation in Croatia and Serbia, in particular with regard to the war in Croatia, which had commenced a few months earlier. Next to offering to the German public the perspective of the directly involved peace activists, the tour was meant to raise funds for these activists' peace work. The idea for the tour had come from a German peace activist who had befriended one of the Zagreb participants before the war. After being invited to Germany the Zagreb activists contacted one of the Belgrade feminists asking if there were any Belgrade activists interested in joining the tour. In the following description of this episode, I will pay special attention to the constitutive power of violence, as well as the role which the audience and the larger setting in which the discussions come about can play in the struggle for legitimacy.

The speakers tour took place at a time when the Yugoslav People's Army and the Serb paramilitaries had for slightly less than three months been intensively shelling the besieged town of Vukovar in eastern Croatia, demanding the surrender of the much less numerous and much worse equipped Croat forces. It would be during the tour, on 18 November 1991, that the completely devastated town would fall into Serb hands, leading to the execution of more than 200 (wounded) Croat soldiers and male civilians, and the expulsion of the town's non-Serb population.¹⁶⁰ On the other side of the border, in Serbia, there was no war violence, but the situation was not peaceful either. The Yugoslav People's Army was conducting a mass mobilisation of young men for the purpose of the – never officially declared – war in Croatia, and the Army's heavy artillery was passing through Serbia (including Belgrade) on its way to Vukovar. In November 1991 the Croatian electronic and printed media could no longer reach Serbia and vice versa. The phone lines and postal services were down and all bus, train and plane connections between the two republics discontinued.

160 Some authors suggest that Croatia's president Tuđman was partially responsible for the tragedy of Vukovar by not allowing the deployment of additional Croat troops and the dispatch of more weaponry. Tuđman has allegedly done this in order to use Vukovar's tragedy to obtain a faster international recognition of Croatia's independent status, as well as to militarily secure the creation of Herzeg-Bosna – a Croat entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina which was officially established on the same day Vukovar fell (see eg *E-novine*, 22.11.2011; Greverus, 2009 [1995]; *Novi list*, 19.11.2009, 24.11.2011).

So, starting from August 1991 the gradual disappearance of the means of communication and information exchange between the two republics and the increasing intensification of the war violence led to a progressive widening of the gap between the Belgrade and Zagreb peace (and/or feminist) activists in terms of the information which was available to them. The augmentation of the biased reporting in the media (the majority of which was either state-controlled or supportive of the state politics) further contributed to the differences in perception between the activists despite their critical attitude towards their states' politics and awareness of the existence and influence of warmongering propaganda. One of the Zagreb participants recollected that in the three weeks in which she had been absent from Croatia the intensity of biased information in the media had tremendously increased. Upon her return, she was additionally thunderstruck by the significant narrowing down of the perception of the peace activists who had remained in Croatia and were not exposed to insights from 'the other side', ie Serbia. Having had this exposure at the beginning of the war strongly influenced her subsequent views on (the) war and (the) media reporting (interview with Zagreb20EXT).

Thus, not only did the Belgrade and Zagreb participants set off for Germany from already different contexts, but while they were absent the two republics were rapidly becoming even more dissimilar and alienated from one another. During the tour Germany's fervent support of Croatia's independence and international recognition caused uneasiness among the Belgrade participants who spoke about the preservation of Yugoslavia. Furthermore, they were unpleasantly surprised and felt stigmatised by the anti-Serb propaganda in the German media. The Zagreb participants, for their part, expressed the right of each republic to peacefully secede from Yugoslavia. They felt, therefore, misunderstood by the leftist voices in the audience which idealised Yugoslavia as the promised socialist and self-managing land¹⁶¹ and made them feel as

161 The same comment about the lack of understanding from Western leftist audiences which the activists from Croatia experienced in the first months of the war on its territory was conveyed to me by another Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist. During the interview, in discussing a meeting with Italian activists, Zagreb23AN observed that unlike the activists from Serbia who had defended Yugoslavia, the activists from Croatia who had not mourned the disintegration of Yugoslavia and had supported Croatia's independence were suspected of secessionist nationalism. A Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist spoke about feeling pressured by a leftist pro-Yugoslav German funder to cooperate with the Belgrade feminists and being named 'nationalist' after she had refused such cooperation (interview with Zagreb13N). See in Cigar, Magaš and Žanić (2001), *Oklobdžija* (1993) and Secor (1999) on the perceptions of Yugoslavia as a leftist utopia – an issue which a Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist also touched upon in the interview. She told me how difficult it had been in the beginning to communicate their anti-Milošević positioning to the Italian leftist activists, who had perceived his discourse of preserving Yugoslavia as a

if they were nationalists. In short, the Belgrade and Zagreb participants alike felt that those from the other city were better treated and that their message was obtaining a more favourable reception, ie considered more legitimate.

The long duration and the laden contents of the tour added to the discomfort of and the tensions between the participants. They were exhausted by being on the road for three weeks and having to recurrently participate (and perform) in the same kind of painful and frustrating discussions. The audience wanted unambiguous explanations of and positionings on a situation which was everything but unambiguous. Moreover, the events at home were completely novel to all six speakers who belonged, just like the majority of the feminist and/or peace activists in Yugoslavia, to the post-World War II generations which were raised with the idea that such violent destruction and disintegration of the country were inconceivable. The fall of Vukovar, which was extensively reported upon in the German media and illustrated with photographs of the ruined town, refugee streams and Serb militaries wearing Chetnik¹⁶² insignia, increased the participants' feelings of anger, fear, guilt and pain, thereby further contributing to the discomfort and the tensions among them (interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb20EXT, Belgrade3AN and Belgrade4AN).

Interestingly, I did not discover any mention of these tensions in the German newspaper reports of the tour. It is possible that the frictions were not publicly expressed during the discussions and/or were too subtle to be noticed by outsiders. The journalists portrayed the Belgrade and Zagreb participants as quite like-minded activists working in their respective countries against nationalism and war, assisting draft resisters and deserters, trying to spread less biased information and analyses, and in the case of the Belgrade activists – organising street protests (*Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13.11.1991, 16.11.1991; *Berliner Morgenpost*, 23.11.1991; *Der Tagesspiegel*, 23.11.1991; *Freitag*, 29.11.1991; *Mainzer Rhein-Zeitung*, 12.11.1991; *Münstersche Zeitung*, 11.11.1991).

I came across only two non-journalist publications – a scholarly article (Bilić, 2011a) and a biography (Ćetković, 2000) – in which this event is addressed, but neither of them features an extensive description and analysis of it. Instead, the tour is very shortly presented to illustrate the broader dynamics between the female antiwar activists from Croatia and Serbia in the 1990s. In Ćetković (2000), the prominent Serbian politician and peace activist Vesna Pešić explicitly praised the performance

manifestation of his commitment to protect the dream of a socialist world (interview with Belgrade14AN).

162 See footnote 81.

of the Belgrade activists during the tour and criticised that of the Zagreb ones.¹⁶³ According to her, the Belgrade participants

were on principle against violence and war, [and] for a non-violent conflict resolution, but did not hide behind that generalised and comfortable positioning. We criticised very clearly Milošević's war politics and Serb nationalism, but did not wear sackcloth and ashes as if we, the peace activists, were guilty of something only because we were Serbs. We rejected the idea of collective guilt which was imposed upon us at each step as the only just and most radical peace standpoint (in: Četković, 2000:141).

There are two issues in the above quotation which I find very important. The first issue is the implied notion that while the Belgrade participants – and the other Belgrade peace activists – did not refrain from rebuking their own politicians and the nationalism of their own ethnic collective, the Zagreb ones did. This criticism is more explicitly stated several sentences later, when Pešić said that '[f]or a while, at the gatherings, the colleagues from Croatia insisted on the premise that the Croats were only victims' (in: Četković, 2000:142). Pešić illustrated this with the confrontation she had had with an activist of the women's group Rampart of Love¹⁶⁴ which she explicitly named nationalist. She failed to explain, however, that the three Zagreb participants in the speakers tour did not belong to this group. Moreover, they clashed with it later on the issue of war rape, given that Rampart of Love employed the same positioning as the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists. By not distinguishing between Rampart of Love and the Zagreb participants, Pešić, thus, implied that the latter were nationalists, too.

The second issue is the recurrent theme among and concerning the Belgrade feminist and peace activists: how justifiable is the assumption of Serb collective responsibility for the war crimes committed in the name of all Serbs?¹⁶⁵ Pešić portrayed the Belgrade participants as rejecting this collective responsibility which had been apparently demanded from them in November 1991 also by the Zagreb participants in a – further not explicated – very aggressive manner. She did not mention, though, that two of the Belgrade participants were also members of Women in Black which seven months after the tour would call on the citizens of Serbia to assume their responsibility

163 Pešić did not participate in the tour but attended the meeting afterwards, at which the Belgrade participants shared their impressions with their fellow activists from the Belgrade peace group Centre for Antiwar Action (interview with Belgrade3AN).

164 See footnote 105.

165 An analysis of the notion of collective responsibility is beyond the scope of this research. Nonetheless, I present and reflect upon the places where it was addressed in the interviews, texts and organisational documents.

and protest against the deeds of the Serbian regime (*Poziv*, 10.06.1992). By being silent about this, Pešić created the impression that all Belgrade peace activists shared a unanimous stand on the issue of Serb collective responsibility which, moreover, differed greatly from that of the Zagreb activists (whom she homogenised equally erroneously).

The two Zagreb participants whom I interviewed did not appreciate Pešić's criticism, but unlike Ljubljana1EXT and Jalušič, who had published their rebuttal of Belgrade11AN (see the preceding analysis), the Zagreb participants only planned to do so. The Belgrade participants also did not publish anything on this event. Furthermore, the six of them never came together again to discuss the disagreements which had occurred at the tour. This reluctance to (jointly) reassess the interactions and positionings from the warring 1990s is characteristic for most of the historical episodes which I analyse in this chapter and illustrates how traumatic and sensitive this topic is, particularly for the directly involved activists.

One of the Zagreb participants explains in Bilić (2011a) that the Belgrade participants could not really grasp what it meant to live in a context in which the war violence, or the threat of it, was a daily reality. She recollects an example – which she also mentioned in the interview with me – of those painful and frustrating situations during the tour. Her comment that her grandmother was unable to leave her village in Dalmatia because of its occupation by the Serb forces was understood by one of the Belgrade participants as a lamentation over territories. Similar disapproval of the lack of empathy which the Belgrade participants had sometimes shown regarding the situation in Croatia, and of their claim about the equal responsibility and victimisation of all sides, was conveyed to me by the second Zagreb participant as well.

The Zagreb activists felt that their fear of air-raid sirens was downplayed by the Belgrade ones with comments that the sirens were there only to install fear so that people would approve more of Tuđman's warmongering politics.¹⁶⁶ The dissatisfaction of the Zagreb participants with the manner in which their experiences were received by the Belgrade activists was possibly amplified by the effort which the former had put in in early October 1991 to send the letter inviting the latter to join the tour. Not only were the postal and telegraph services barely functioning, but the accomplishment of

166 The comment about the absence of significant danger from air raids in Zagreb in 1991 would eventually prove correct. An aircraft of the Yugoslav People's Army hit the TV tower on the mountain near Zagreb on 16 September 1991, and on 7 October 1991 the seat of the Croatian government. The other two assaults on Zagreb took place on 2 and 3 May 1995 and were caused by mortar grenades fired from the Croatian Serbs' positions. At the beginning of the war there were also warnings in the Croatian media about Serb sharpshooters on the roofs in Zagreb, but they turned to be a hoax.

every errand in Zagreb was hampered by the frequent going off air-raid sirens (*Pismo*, 04.10.1991).

A different Zagreb respondent, a so-called nationalist feminist who had not taken part in the speakers tour, communicated to me the same disapproval of a different instance of such waving off of the fear of air raids. In her case, it had been her friend, a Belgrade so-called nationalist feminist, who had played down her fear. I was also told of a Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist who had trivialised the air-raid sirens in Ljubljana at the time of the negotiations for a withdrawal of the Yugoslav People's Army from Slovenia (*Ja, ti, one*, n.d.; interviews with Ljubljana1EXT, Zagreb1N and Zagreb6N; see also *Danas*, 23–24.02.2002). There were, thus, both Belgrade so-called nationalist and self-declared antinationalist feminists who trivialised the situation in Zagreb at the time, and both Zagreb so-called nationalist and self-declared antinationalist feminists who strongly rebuked that stance.

This indicates that one's perception of the air-raid sirens (the danger) was greatly influenced by one's geographic location, ie was to a large extent a result of the presence or absence of violence. During the first days of these sirens in Zagreb Slobodan Šnajder – a well-known Croatian playwright and critic of Tuđman's politics and Croat nationalism – wrote an open letter to his friends in Serbia. In the letter, which was published by the Serbian daily *Borba*, he addressed the constitutive power of violence: '[n]othing homogenises a dejected community as much as the feeling of a common peril' (*Borba*, 02.10.1991).¹⁶⁷ Adapted to this episode, the (threat of) anti-Croat war violence made the Zagreb activists feel much more like members of a collective than what they had felt like before. At the same time, the absence of air-raids sirens in Belgrade and of intensive anti-Serb war violence within the borders of Serbia made the Belgrade activists sceptical about the gravity of the danger and fear which their Zagreb colleagues experienced.

Another issue the two Zagreb participants were annoyed about was that, unlike the Belgrade participants, they could not talk about any public antiwar protests

167 A similar notion was expressed by Vesna Pusić (1995:50) – a Croatian sociologist and politician, as well as member of the pre-war Zagreb feminist group *Woman and Society*: 'For many, this moment of empirical sense of danger with the outbreak of war on the Croatian territory was the first time they really faced their collective national identity. The destruction of Vukovar, the shelling of Dubrovnik, Sibenik and, [sic] Osijek and the occupation of a part of Croatia caused the Croatian nationalism to expand faster, more effectively and to a greater extent than any speakers foaming at the mouth, references to glorious past and aggressive expressions of Croatian nationalism by politicians. Political opportunism, sycophancy, and flag-switching came later. But, when the war in Croatia was at its worst, few failed to feel that they belonged to this collective identity, that this identity is valuable and that they wanted to join somehow in its defence and preservation.'

they had been involved in. As they explained, this difference was due to the dissimilar contexts. The public space in Zagreb was dominated at the time by the antiwar protests of conservative groups, such as Rampart of Love, which were supportive of Tuđman's politics. Their message of peace diverged from the one of the Antiwar Campaign Croatia in which the Zagreb participants were active. Due to this unavailability of public space, the constant danger of air raids, as well as the fighting and shelling elsewhere in Croatia, they felt that their call to communicate with and not demonise the other side could not reach the public through protests. Instead, they were publishing an antiwar magazine, planning activities for reconciling the Croat and Serb villages in Croatia, and working on the implementation of the right to conscientious objection regarding the conscription.¹⁶⁸ However, in their view, for the Western audiences these activities did not have the flair of great resistance deeds to the same extent as the actions of their Belgrade counterparts.

On the other hand, the Belgrade participants felt that they were misled, ie that their presence in Germany and their open criticism of Milošević and Serb nationalism was used – also by some of the Zagreb participants – for the purpose of supporting Croatia's independence. They were furthermore irritated by the mainstream German black-and-white understanding of the war and Yugoslavia's disintegration which entailed that Serbia and the Serbs were the only guilty side. In this conceptualisation, there was no mention of the perpetrating deeds of the Croat militaries, such as the besieging of the caserns of the Yugoslav People's Army in Croatia – which were full of young recruits from all over Yugoslavia – and the cutting off of their electricity, food and water supply.

Such a conceptualisation did not leave space either for the anti-Milošević antiwar voices in Serbia. One of the Belgrade participants spoke about the lack

168 The right to conscientious objection regarding the military service did not exist in Yugoslavia. The Croatian constitution of 1990 granted this right to objection on religious or moral grounds, thanks to the proposal which was submitted by the informal Zagreb group Svarun (one of the predecessors of the Antiwar Campaign Croatia; Svarun's broad activist work addressed environmental, peace, women's and spiritual issues) during the process of collecting input from the Croatian public on the draft of the new constitution. Such a right was, however, absent from the Serbian constitution of 1990 which was passed without being open to a public debate (Janković and Mokrović, 2011; *Kulturpunkt.hr*, 14.02.2010; *Ustav Republike Hrvatske*, 22.12.1990; *Ustav Republike Srbije*, 28.09.1990; interview with Zagreb19EXT; personal communication, name withheld). That is why the activists who assisted the draft evaders in Croatia worked on informing the public about the newly obtained right and its actual implementation, whereas the corresponding activists in Serbia helped the draft evaders – with advice or otherwise – to leave the country or in other ways avoid being found by the military police which sought them for not responding promptly to the draft notice.

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of understanding she had experienced from one of the Zagreb feminists who had remarked that the war was not being waged in her vicinity (read: Serbia). This disturbed the Belgrade respondent since Vukovar was geographically closer to Belgrade than to Zagreb and she saw the whole territory of Yugoslavia as her space. Therefore, the war felt to her as real as to those living in Zagreb (*Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16.11.1991; *Borba*, 28.11.1991; *Mainzer Rhein-Zeitung*, 12.11.1991; interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb20EXT and Belgrade4AN).

Obviously, the Belgrade and Zagreb participants alike felt that their experiences and emotions were to some extent invalidated by the participants from the other city. The fact that they were expected to speak in Germany as activists who understood each other and worked on bridging to one another only increased the (unarticulated) tensions between them. By disagreeing among themselves on the war and the possible ways for resolving the crisis, the participants appeared to have felt that they were losing the legitimacy as peace activists due to which they had been invited to Germany in the first place. This very likely only aggravated the tense atmosphere between them.

The meeting in Venice (21–23 February 1992)

The meeting in Venice, organised by the Italian group Women in Black (Donne in Nero), was imagined as a space where (feminist) peace activists from all (post-) Yugoslav republics would come together to exchange their personal experiences of the country's disintegration and the wars in Croatia and Slovenia. Among the participants there were also Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists and soon-to-be-called nationalist feminists from Zagreb – the only two groupings of participants I focus on in my analysis.

Although conceived as a place for listening to one another and sharing solidarity and support, the Venice gathering would end up in anger, disbelief, disappointment and pain, as well as in cessation of the friendships between some of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists. At the same time, this outcome would inspire the creation of other networks and friendships. Due to the great impact of the meeting on the participants, the activists of Women in Black from Belgrade and Pančevo (Vojvodina) would decide to organise an international women's peace and solidarity gathering in summer of the same year. The gathering would prove so successful that it would end up being organised throughout the 1990s.

As I will elaborate below, based on the information published by Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists and the interview narratives, the meeting in Venice unexpectedly but clearly confronted the participants with the different realities they had come from and the great distance between their positionings which had come into existence in the meantime. In a publication by Women in Black (Zajović, 1993b), which is actually a collection of photocopied original statements, the meeting was introduced as follows:

[F]or many of us, it [the meeting] was not just a new experience, but a painful one as well. Something totally unexpected, especially for feminists, arose. The relation towards the homeland and the nation [ethnic group] became contested. Some of the women showed solidarity and identified themselves with their ethnic collective; they experienced it as [being] a victim. A deep gap emerged between the women from Serbia and Croatia. The threads of women's solidarity were not woven as we had expected (*Skup ženske solidarnosti*, n.d.).

In another publication, the same Belgrade group addressed the new allegiances which some feminists felt due to the constitutive power of war violence: 'We realised that the war had changed the relationships between women: that for some feminists the identification with the nation was the primary one whereas that with the female sex suppressed' (*Žene u crnom – Beograd*, n.d.). Finally, Zajović (1995:50) recollected:

I was very shocked when I realized that there were nationalist feminists, that not all feminists are pacifists. This painful recognition became especially clear at the women's meeting held in February (in Venice, Italy). Some feminists from Zagreb erected a wall between us, dividing us: we women from the aggressor state, and they from the attacked state.

Based on the sometimes very fragmentary information gathered from additional sources, it seems that the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists insisted on explicitly naming the perpetrators and victims, and created a clear dichotomy between these two categories. They named the war in Croatia aggression, Croatia was the attacked country or the victim, and Serbia the aggressor or aggressor's country and the sole actor responsible for the crisis in the (post-)Yugoslav region. These feminists were also very articulate about the fact that the war was waged on the territory of Croatia and that those who were conducting the aggression were coming from Serbia (Ćupić, 1993; *Emma*, September 1992; Korać, 1998; Lipparini, 2005; *New Directions for*

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Women, March/April 1993; *Oblaci i plavetnilo*, n.d.; *Rasprava*, 22.02.1992; *Razgovor*, n.d.; Zajović, 1993c; *Žene za mir*, 05.07.1991).

Put differently, for the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists the general categories of 'women' and 'men' were no longer applicable as such in the war context, but had to be supplemented with an ethnic marker. In addition to this, these feminists subordinated the gender marker to the ethnic one, meaning that they treated the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists as co-responsible for the Serb-inflicted war violence in Croatia. This can be observed from the way in which one of these Zagreb feminists, who had not been present in Venice, described the conflict between the Belgrade and Zagreb participants: '[T]he Serb women did not want to believe that their fathers, brothers and husbands did this [war rapes] to the Croat women who were till just recently their neighbours and friends' (*Emma*, September 1992; see also *New Directions for Women*, March/April 1993; interview with Belgrade10AN).

The Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists spoke in Venice about their antiwar activities and against the war in general terms, pointed to the war-related increase of domestic violence against women, and expressed their affiliation with the disappearing Yugoslav space and Yugoslavia as a country. In the essay she read at the meeting, Zajović (1993c) critically spoke out against the nationalism in all Yugoslav republics and against nationalism in general. Her rebuttal was particularly concerned with the role which nationalism assigned to women, as well as the ways in which it manipulated and divided them on the basis of ethnicity. I am not aware that during the meeting the three Belgrade feminists singled out the responsibility of Serbia and Serb nationalism for the war in Croatia. Moreover, it seems that at that time the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists were not yet taking their position into account when creating their positioning. In other words, they had not yet started – as they would later – as a matter of principle to firstly and foremostly position themselves vis-à-vis Serb nationalism and the Serb war crimes because they were citizens of Serbia and usually of (partially) Serb ethnicity. The only instance where they applied this principle already then was when discussing the situation in Kosovo and Serbia's discrimination of the Kosovar Albanians.

The example of Kosovo is very suitable for observing the difference in the positioning on the war in Croatia between the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist and the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists in Venice. One of the premises which were presented at that meeting by a Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist read as follows: 'We deem that...the displacement of the crisis hotbeds in Kosovo, Slovenia and Croatia...basically supposes the same agent of aggression' (*Žene za mir*, 05.07.1991).

Although the authors did not explicitly define the agent in question, it was obvious that they referred to Serbia and/or the Serbs.¹⁶⁹

That the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists used ethnic markers at that time only when addressing the situation in Kosovo indicates that they acknowledged the differences in power between the (Kosovar) Serbs and the Kosovar Albanians and found it essential to explicitly state that the former were oppressing the latter. However, regarding the war in Croatia they did not single out at that time any ethnic group or country as more (or less) responsible, meaning that they treated all sides as equally responsible for and equally victimised by the war. For example, the essay which Zajović (1993c:47) read in Venice featured this sentence: ‘In a war such as this one, there is no difference between the “defenders of the fatherland, home thresholds and hearths” [Croats] and those who are named aggressors [Serbs]’.¹⁷⁰

Another indicative example of the different views on the situation in Kosovo and that in Croatia comes from the same essay:

I have always been very suspicious of the plausibility of a man’s or woman’s claim about being ethnically endangered in a state in which ‘their ethnic group’ is dominant. The endangerment of a woman (and a man) from the minority ethnic collectives is a completely different thing given that in ethno-fundamentalist states they are exposed to oppression (Zajović, 1993c:46).

169 I would argue that the fact that Serbia and/or the Serbs were not explicitly referred to indicates how difficult and sensitive the creation of a heretical positioning was in the beginning for some Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists. This becomes even more visible if the opening sentence of this premise is considered: ‘The peace movements name as a rule the agent of aggression’ (*Žene za mir*, 05.07.1991). Thus, although the authors of the premise had opened it with a general normative claim on the importance of naming, when it came to naming the concrete actor they could not move beyond producing an implicit indication. The use of the more indirect construction ‘agent of aggression’ instead of the direct term ‘aggressor’ is an additional case in point.

170 In the English version of this publication (Zajović, 1993d), this sentence has been quite erroneously translated as ‘In [a] war such as this [one], I fail to see the difference between the “*defenders of the fatherland*” and those who qualify as “*aggressors*” (Zajović, 1993e:43, emphasis in the original). Particularly problematic is the part ‘those who qualify as “*aggressors*”’ because it can be interpreted as Zajović’s implicit way of stating that the Serbs were the aggressors in the war in Croatia. This does not, however, seem to be the positioning she would have employed then (see eg her letter to Alexander Langer in *il manifesto*, 12.01.1992). The translation suggests, in fact, that Zajović shared at that time the positioning of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists. Because of this fallacy, as well as the wanting quality of the few other translations which I compared, I recommend the use of the publication in Serbian (Zajović, 1993b).

To use this sentence for addressing the position of the Albanians (as a numeric minority) and that of the Serbs (as a numeric majority) in Serbia is not necessarily peculiar. Neither is its use if speaking only about Kosovo where the Kosovar Albanians were numerically – but not in terms of factual power – dominant, which was the case with the Kosovar Serbs (the numeric minority there). Nonetheless, this sentence becomes very problematic if it is read to an audience which partially consists of people from Croatia, three months after the fall of Vukovar. By formulating the matter in such a black-and-white manner, Zajvoić glossed over the fact that although the Croats were the dominant ethnic group in Croatia, they were nevertheless in some areas targeted by the Croatian Serbs. Albeit less numerous as an ethnic group, the latter were actually the dominant ones at the time due to the support in weapons and militaries they were receiving from the Yugoslav People's Army and the paramilitary units from Serbia.

Since no Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists was present in Venice,¹⁷¹ I cannot say for certain what their reaction(s) to these two quotations would have been. Still, in view of the constitutive power of violence which I already addressed in my previous analysis, it is quite likely that they, too, would have criticised those utterances. Actually, if the speakers tour in Germany and the meeting in Venice are compared, a partial overlap is visible between the positionings of the Zagreb so-called nationalist and the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. Members of each of the two nascent Zagreb clusters accentuated that the war which was waged at the time was taking place in Croatia, not in Serbia, and that not all sides were equally responsible and equally victimised.

This shared view opposed the positioning of the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists at the time, in which the contexts of Croatia and Serbia were not usually explicitly distinguished from one another regarding the intensity and type of war violence, and in which Serbia was not presented as the more responsible party. Still, as I indicated, the overlap between the two Zagreb clusters was not total. The positioning of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists was more accusatory in tone towards everything and everybody coming from Serbia, including the Belgrade self-

171 Belgrade14AN, a Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist, told me in the interview that these feminists had not been invited by the local Zagreb organiser who was a so-called nationalist feminist. This is quite plausible. Although at that time – February 1992 – the Zagreb feminists had not split yet, the clustering and clashes among them had already begun. One of the first instances where the existence of different positionings on the war in Croatia had become visible was in late July 1991, during the meeting with an Italian women's peace delegation (*Danas*, 30.07.1991; *Žene za mir*, 05.07.1991; interview with Zagreb16N). The clustering-in-progress was probably also the reason why there were no Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists at the speakers tour in Germany in November 1991.

declared antinationalist feminists. The Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists seemed not to always differentiate between those who created, endorsed and carried out Serbia's politics and those who – like Women in Black – publicly protested against those politics. Moreover, the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists seem to have approached the Belgrade participants with distrust. For example, after hearing from a Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist about the estimated number of draft resisters in Belgrade, a Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist insisted to hear the figures for the rest of Serbia (*Rasprava*, 22.02.1992).

Mirjana Ćupić (1993; *Razgovor*, n.d.) offers important information for understanding why the meeting in Venice was so emotional, and why it started with joy and laughter but ended with pain and anger. At the first session, during the introductory round, she shared how touched, pleased and proud she had been to receive, at the time when the tanks had been heading to Vukovar, the telegram of 'empathy and support' (Ćupić, 1993:44) from her friend – a Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist who was present in Venice. In a response to it, she had written a letter while sitting in a basement because of the danger of air raids (on the first of the two occasions in 1991 when the warnings proved justified). A different Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist, who was also present in Venice, told me in the interview how important Ćupić's letter had been for her. She had always carried a photocopy of it and it helped her to cope with what was taking place in Vukovar (interview with Belgrade10AN; see also *New Directions for Women*, March/April 1993).

The meeting in Venice was the first occasion after the exchange of correspondence when this Zagreb feminist and the Belgrade one who had sent the telegram met again. Actually, that gathering was the first time after the beginning of the war in Croatia that all three Belgrade self-declared antinationalist and all three Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists came together. The atmosphere was made even more pregnant by the presence of a Zagreb-based Croat refugee woman from Vukovar who told her story about fleeing from Vukovar and not having any news from her husband, who had been taken as a prisoner of war to a concentration camp in Serbia. So, very soon after its joyful start, the meeting took another turn. Ćupić (1993:44) describes this change of direction as follows:

I met the women from Belgrade...Joy of seeing [each other]. Laughter. I want to talk, hear them and tell them everything. Talk till the morning. On the first day, instead of a conversation, I heard essays, reports on actions, theses... I listen to them and wonder where my friends are. I want to hear them like I clearly heard in the telegram last year the message directed to me and all women

of Croatia. I felt their fear of the war which they had intuitively felt would happen to me. ----- It is hard to think about our further conversations; when will they take place and where. Our further conversations (at this moment) could resemble cockfights in an arena. The audience would be pleased trying to confront the two sides which are to fight. The audience senses the call of fresh blood and flesh...They [the audience and the organisers] are aware that the show will be excellent if I enter right now. That will be a real fight with a lot of blood. That is a real arena, a real life show.

What happened, thus, was that at least some of the participants expected that the meeting would be an emphatic and supportive get-together of (befriended) fellow feminists and other activists. However, once the existence of different positionings and experiences became clear, the meeting turned into a field in which a struggle for legitimacy was taking place, foremostly between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists.

The Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists struggled for legitimacy of their (broad) definition of aggressors and victims, their distress, the affiliation which some of them had with Yugoslavia, and their – and other people’s – antiwar resistance deeds in Serbia.¹⁷² The Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists wanted to obtain recognition of their (narrow) definition of aggressor and victim, their and their country-people’s war-induced suffering, and the intensity of the war destruction in Croatia. Few not war-related but nonetheless legitimacy-related issues added to the latter feminists’ displeasure: the larger number of participants from Serbia (their varied ethnic origin notwithstanding) than from Croatia, the greater inclination of the Italian organisers to share the positioning of the Belgrade feminists, and the unequally distributed task division in which one of the Belgrade feminists was able to exercise more control over the discussions than the other participants by being in charge of the facilitation and the interpretation between Croatian/Serbian and Italian (interviews with Belgrade10AN, Zagreb7AN, Zagreb16N and Belgrade14AN).

Apparently, no grouping could provide to the other one the wanted legitimacy because that would have implied agreement with a quite contrasting positioning. This conflict is visible from the following interview fragment with one of the participating Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists. Zagreb16N explained why she had been particularly upset with Zajović’s conceptualisation of all politicians as acting in the same manner and being members of the same masculine fraternity:

172 In late March 1999 one of the Belgrade participants linked the non-recognition of her pain which she had experienced in Venice in 1992 to the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: ‘Maybe after the suffering in destroyed Belgrade my pain will also gain legitimacy?’ (Četković, 1999:12).

I did not think that Tuđman and Milošević had made a deal since it was Tuđman's land which was destroyed...while there [in Serbia] no house was destroyed...[T]o me that did not look like a normal agreement between two politicians; that they had agreed that the one would destroy...one fourth of the houses of the other and make one fifth of the population homeless.

Nadežda Ćetković, one of the Belgrade feminist participants, recounted another part of the same struggle for legitimacy as follows:

I felt that the discussion was, in a way, the imposition of guilt upon us [the Belgrade feminists]. We had already been protesting on the street here [in Belgrade], and had been exposing our bodies against the regime. That wasn't naive, because we were approached by people who were spitting at us, pushing us, pulling our hair out, shouting that we are traitors; however, all that somehow hadn't been recognised as sufficient, and I couldn't figure out what we were supposed to do – to go to Zagreb and to let the bombs fall onto our heads?! The frustration was enormous, and I did try to understand, but my feelings were hurt (in: Korać, 1998:36).

Ćetković indicated here how much the initial positioning of the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists clashed with the mainstream one in Serbia in the 1990s. While the former positioning entailed equal responsibility and victimisation of all sides, the latter conceptualised the Serbs only as the victims of the war violence. As the historian Dubravka Stojanović has observed, to speak in Serbia in 1991 – and, I would add, early 1992 when the meeting in Venice took place – about all victims was to commit 'the maximal act of rebellion' (*Peščanik*, 23.03.2012).¹⁷³

This initial positioning was publicly manifested in eg the four month long daily silent vigils in front of the Presidency of Serbia, where candles were lit for all victims of the war in Yugoslavia (*Borba*, 23–24.11.1991; *Vreme*, 28.10.1991, 23.12.1991). However, in spite of this deviation from Serbia's political mainstream, this positioning was criticised by the Zagreb feminists from both clusters. They considered it as not doing justice to the war situation in Croatia to which they were exposed. This insufficient understanding for and recognition of each other's (difficult) experiences resulted in tensions both between the self-declared antinationalist feminists from the two cities, and between the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist and the Zagreb so-

173 This clash would become even more pronounced when the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists would change their initial positioning of equal responsibility and victimisation into one which foremostly accentuated the Serb responsibility for the suffering of non-Serbs.

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called nationalist feminists, but it did not bring closer the Zagreb feminists from the two clusters.

Another important issue which Ćetković addressed above is the (imposed) feeling of guilt among the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists in reaction to Serbia's politics and the Serb war crimes. Unlike the feminists from the remaining three clusters, these Belgrade feminists were the only ones who regularly engaged with this feeling of guilt either by expressing it or rejecting it. This issue became even more pertinent with the outburst of the war and war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Deklaracija žena iz Beograda*, 04.02.1993; *die tageszeitung*, 05.11.1992; Fridman, 2006b; *Letter to the women's meeting*, 25.02.1993; Mladenović, 1994; Mladenović and Litričin, 1993; *off our backs*, February 1993a). I will return to this in my analysis of the 'International Women's Solidarity' meeting in Zagreb. Here I will only mention one of the instances in Venice when the Belgrade feminists' feeling of guilt was evoked. It concerned the affiliation with Yugoslavia.

During the introduction one of them said: '[I] was 100% Yugoslav, now I have lost my country, I feel like a person who does not belong anywhere' (Vera, in: *Razgovor*, n.d.). Another pointed to the miscellaneous parts of Yugoslavia where she had resided: 'I was born in Zagreb, lived in Slovenia,...in one Serbian village, [and] two years in Mostar [Bosnia and Herzegovina]' (Nadežda, in: *Razgovor*, n.d.). The next day, the refugee woman from Vukovar rebuked these statements: 'You women from Serbia declare yourselves as Yugoslavs. When one of you said something like that yesterday, I saw that all of you were crying. But today, when we were listening to the women from Kosovo while they were talking about their great suffering, I did not see tears' (Melita, in: *Rasprava*, 22.02.1992).

I did not find any record that the Kosovar Albanian women accused the Belgrade participants in any way at the meeting, although they were very explicit and critical about the everyday consequences of Serbia's politics for the lives of the Kosovar Albanians. On the contrary, before Melita would voice her criticism, one of the Kosovar Albanians had explicitly expressed her gratitude to the women from Belgrade for their support to the Albanian women in Kosovo (*Rasprava*, 22.02.1992). It is quite imaginable, though, that the gravity of the accounts of the two Kosovar Albanian participants had nonetheless contributed to the feeling of guilt of (some of) the Belgrade participants.

The experience in Venice obviously made at least some of the Belgrade participants more cautious about expressing their affiliation with Yugoslavia in public. In a later meeting, the same Vera as above recollected the scene in Venice: 'At one gathering with women from Zagreb held in Venice I said that I felt Yugoslav,

maybe because I felt sadness because of Yugoslavia. But then I realised that it was not legitimate to say that you were Yugoslav' (in: Lipparini, 2005:30, Croatian half of the book). Another Belgrade feminist participant remembered a different part of the criticism of the woman from Vukovar, or maybe remembered the same criticism, but differently from the way in which it was published in Zajović (1993b). Belgrade3AN recalled in the interview that the woman from Vukovar had said: 'A few days ago I left the cellar in which I had spent two months with the children. My husband is in Serb captivity, I have no idea what has happened to him. I have no need or energy to cry for the state which had done this to me'. Upon hearing this Belgrade3AN said to have reacted as follows:

After that I have never shared my Yugoslav story again. I felt guilty for defending that whole [Yugoslav] space as my space. I did feel it as my own, intimate [space], not as a state. But then I saw that that offended some people. That some women had a different feeling of belonging. That that feeling [of mine] was linked to a state which was their enemy and that they experienced that Yugoslavia as an inimical construction, whereas their national state felt safe to them. I stopped with that because I felt that when you were from Serbia, you had a great burden on your shoulders and you could not have any claims to Yugoslavia...[T]hat's a position in which your hands are tied.¹⁷⁴

The Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists' affiliation with Yugoslavia was not only criticised by those with a stronger attachment to their nation state or ethnic group. It was also criticised by the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist

174 The Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists were not the only ones who were aware that the continuous perception of the post-Yugoslav region as a united whole could be tricky when uttered by somebody from Belgrade. For example, to a journalist's question in 2009 to what extent she perceived the existence of a border between Belgrade and Sarajevo (read: between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Belgrade dramaturge and peace activist Borka Pavičević responded: 'I could not care less that that border exists! I do not see that border to the extent that I consider my statement inappropriate because I am afraid that somebody in Sarajevo might understand it as Belgrade's [politics of] unitarisation' (*Dani Sarajeva 2009 bilten*, May 2009). Another example is the Belgrade-born playwright Dušan Jovanović. In a text first published in 1996 in Slovenian he speaks of the difficulties faced by people like him who want to continue describing themselves as 'Yugoslavs' due to their staggeringly mixed ethnic background as well as chosen life-style and world view. One of the difficulties in question is the positioning which this designation connotes: 'Of course, you cannot be a citizen of a state which does not exist! But if you, nonetheless, insist on the Yugoslavism, that means that you consciously take the side of this term's political option and oppose the independence and statehood of your own republic' (Jovanović D., 2007:18).

feminists. As I indicated in Chapter 2, Knežević (1994) implied that these Belgrade feminists were Yugoslav nationalists. Several other Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists also disapproved of this affiliation with Yugoslavia, as eg the following recollection shows: ‘You realise in time that that mourning of Yugoslavia slowly starts to irritate you. Now we have this situation and it is over, you cannot go on with crying. Even Yugoslavia was not the best one possible, just think of Kosovo’ (interview with Zagreb23AN).

The irritation of the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists was additionally (and maybe even more significantly) triggered by their Belgrade counterparts’ nostalgia for the Croatian part of the Adriatic Sea – the maritime nostalgia, as I chose to name it. The latter’s use of the pre-war denomination ‘our sea’ when referring to the Adriatic,¹⁷⁵ even in the context of recollecting one’s pre-war summer holidays, school trips and love stories, was experienced by some Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists as particularly adding fuel to the fire (interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb22EXT, Zagreb12AN, Zagreb11AN, Belgrade10AN, Zagreb23AN, Belgrade13AN, Zagreb7AN, Belgrade3AN, Belgrade5AN and Belgrade4AN).

The feeling of loss which the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists expressed in relation to the impossibility of going to the Croatian coast during the war in Croatia, was seen by some Zagreb feminists from the corresponding cluster as resembling the Serb expansionist tendencies regarding the creation of Great Serbia or a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia¹⁷⁶ or, at least, as the Belgrade feminists’ inability to accept the new geopolitical reality. Their annoyance would be strengthened by the fact that during the war some parts of the coast were not easily accessible to the Zagreb feminists either, due to the Croatian Serbs’ blockade of the direct transportation routes from Zagreb. For many of the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists it was

175 It is important to note that the construction ‘our sea’ was not only employed by people from Serbia. While I have not explored this issue in detail, I know that at least some people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia have used this reference, too. Another, historically much more distant usage of ‘our sea’ was the Roman one: for them, ‘Mare nostrum’ denoted the Mediterranean Sea.

176 Jansen (2005:225) correctly observes that the Yugonostalgia, ie the nostalgia for Yugoslavia, should not be per se seen as an act of antinationalist resistance to the regime, given that in Serbia ‘the hegemonic Yugoslavism and nationalism formed a bizarre team’. More concretely, one of the rationales which Milošević gave for his politics was the preservation of the Yugoslav federation against all secessionist forces (Vasiljević, 2008; Zaharijević, 2007). A telling difference in this context between the Belgrade feminists is that three so-called nationalist feminists have stated that the Yugoslav entities which had striven to secede from Yugoslavia were far from being better-off as independent states. I have not come across such a comment from any Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist (Belgrade2N, 1999; interviews with Belgrade16N and Belgrade15N).

very difficult to encounter such reactions. One of them formulated these dynamics as follows: 'There has been and there still is a feeling here...of being treated unfairly because of the perception that everything pro-Yugoslav is actually pro-Great-Serbian, a domination' (interview with Belgrade4AN).

Similarly to the expression of equal responsibility and victimisation of all sides, which was for the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists an act of rebellion against the Serbian official politics and for their Zagreb counterparts a denial of the real character of the war in Croatia, the expression of one's affiliation with Yugoslavia (and the Adriatic Sea) appears to have been one of the common misunderstandings between these two clusters. In an informal conversation and the interview alike, the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist Zagreb11AN told me how irritated she had been in the early 1990s by the Belgrade feminists' statements on how much they loved Dubrovnik¹⁷⁷ or about their perception of Dubrovnik as part of their homeland.

Although such a pro-Yugoslav orientation could have indeed indicated support of Milošević's politics, sometimes it signalled exactly the opposite. A good recorded example of such an act of resistance, albeit not undertaken by a Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist, is the letter of Mirjana Miočinović. In October 1991 this professor at the Belgrade Faculty of Dramatic Arts, in protest of her employer's lack of a formal reaction against the war and the destruction of Dubrovnik, decided to first freeze her work and then, should the war not end within a month, resign. She began the explanation of her decision by saying: 'Faced with the terrible destruction of the country which I still consider my homeland' (Miočinović, 1997:10; see also Biserko, 2006). I will return to this issue in my analysis of the meeting in Medulin.

The international gathering 'Women in War' in Zagreb (2–4 October 1992)

The international feminist gathering 'Women in War' was the first international event where the existence of war rapes in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was discussed. Still, its foremost relevance for my research topic is that it was during its preparatory phase and at the gathering itself that the split between the Zagreb feminists started becoming publicly known both in Croatia and internationally (foremostly in Europe).

177 A historical and tourist centre on the Adriatic coast which was heavily damaged in the shelling (from air, ground and sea) by the Yugoslav People's Army in the autumn of 1991, during the first months of the war in Croatia.

CHAPTER FOUR

As I explained in Chapter 3, although the different war-related positionings and the related tensions among the members of Women's Help Now had started manifesting already from July 1991, the final split of the group – which had to do also with several not war-related reasons – took place at the meeting on 12 April 1992. The self-declared antinationalist feminists' faction registered as a separate group called Autonomous Women's House Zagreb. Those who remained as Women's Help Now were the so-called nationalist feminists. At the time of the 'Women in War' gathering, the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists were members of the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb, whereas the so-called nationalist feminists were active in Kareta, Women's Help Now or Trešnjevka – a group for which I could not establish whether it had participated in this gathering.

The gathering was financially supported by the German funder FrauenAnstiftung. The money was allocated to Women's Help Now already before the split, for the purpose of organising what would have been the 'Fifth Yugoslav Feminist Gathering'. At the first preparatory session on 23 February 1992 the members of Women's Help Now decided to call the gathering 'International Feminist Gathering' since Yugoslavia did not exist anymore. It was also decided that the topic would be 'Women in War'. The idea of convening feminists from all parts of the former country was to be maintained. However, after the split in April 1992 the feminists who had left could no longer exert any influence on the format which the meeting would eventually receive. The preparations ended up in the hands of Women's Help Now, given that the main contact person for the correspondence with FrauenAnstiftung was one of the feminists who had remained in this group. Kareta became the co-organiser of the gathering. Three of the women organisers were the so-called nationalist feminists who had participated in the meeting in Venice in February that year (*Ja, ti, one*, n.d.; *Organizacija fem. skupa*, 23.02.1992; *Zašto smo odlučile*, n.d.; interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb7AN, Zagreb16N and Zagreb6N).

Already before the gathering had taken place it became a subject of a great controversy because of the organisers' exclusion of the Belgrade feminists. In addition, during the meeting several other conflicts were created, too. I will elaborate upon them briefly. Soon before its start, in an internal dispatch, Heidi Burmeister and Olga Prunk from FrauenAnstiftung declared not to be happy with the organisers' decision not to invite any of the Belgrade feminists. Despite this, they decided not to withdraw the financial support, as this was to be the first meeting of its kind in 'the former Yugoslavia' and, moreover, a way to mobilise more international feminists for engaging with the war in the region and its consequences for women. Nonetheless, in its report on the gathering, FrauenAnstiftung criticised its contents and the behaviour

of the organisers who had made a dead letter out of the call for women's dialogue and solidarity stated in the invitation. In conclusion, the funding agency declared that it would not support the two organising groups anymore and work only with groups which have committed themselves to peace work, such as the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb (*Sachbericht*, n.d.; *Zur Tagung "Frauen im Krieg"*, 30.09.1992).

I have not come across any document written by the organisers in which they explicitly state, let alone elaborate, their decision to bypass the Belgrade feminists. Their critical positioning vis-à-vis them and the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists can nevertheless be inferred from the following part of one of the handouts which accompanied the invitation letter:

[T]he war in Croatia...has divided once solidair [sic] organizations and individuals into those from the countries which are victims of aggression (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo), those from the countries-aggressors (Serbia and Monte Negro [sic]) and those from the countries-observers (Slovenia and Macedonia)...It has become evident that feminism was caught red-handed by the war and aggression on Croatia. Once leading feminists have not yet presented a relevant feminist picture and analysis of the war, while some of them got lost in inarticulate peace initiatives not daring to take up the position and express their attitude (*Who are we? Where are we?*, 10.07.1992).

The texts written by third parties around the time of the gathering stated that the Zagreb organisers had justified their choice for not inviting the Belgrade feminists in two ways. First, in the former's view, the latter had failed to sufficiently unambiguously distance themselves from the official Serbian politics and recognise that Serbia was the main aggressor. Second, the organisers wanted to respect the UN Security Council sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia¹⁷⁸ (*Ja, ti, one*, n.d.; *Sachbericht*, n.d.; *Scheherazade*, September 1992).

However, none of these issues was given as the reason for the non-invitation by the four Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists who addressed this gathering in the

178 The paragraph 8c of the UN Security Council Resolution 757 (1992) stated that all States shall '[s]uspend scientific and technical cooperation and cultural exchanges and visits involving persons or groups officially sponsored by or representing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)'. However, the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists were neither sponsored nor formally representing the state whose citizens they were, but regularly publicly protesting against its politics. Other convenors have been aware of this since it was exactly in this capacity of explicit opponents of Milošević's politics that these feminists were invited throughout the 1990s to participate in conferences and gatherings around the world.

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interview with me – all of whom had participated in its organisation. The first reason which Zagreb16N mentioned was that there was actually no question whether to invite the Belgrade feminists or not, since they would not have been allowed to enter Croatia anyway. This was how an employee of the Croatian Ministry of Interior had answered her inquiry about the entry of women from Serbia. The second reason, which was also evoked by the three other respondents, was the attendance of (raped) refugee women victims of Serb atrocities in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The organisers' idea had been to give these women space at the gathering to speak about their war experiences and suffering in front of an international audience. According to the organisers, had the Belgrade feminists (read: Serbs) been present at the gathering, the safe space for the refugee women to testify about the Serb atrocities would have been endangered and the purpose of the meeting – to have women publicly speak about their war experiences – sabotaged. The refugee women had insisted on the absence of people from Serbia, ie had agreed on sharing their stories on the condition that nobody from Serbia would attend. The exclusion of Serb women from an event where victims of Serb war crimes would testify was for the organisers analogous to and a continuation of the practice of not allowing men at the Zagreb SOS Hotline for women and children victims of male violence. Just like the SOS Hotline, this gathering had been intended to give space to the victims which would be free from the perpetrator's presence (interviews with Zagreb1N, Zagreb16N, Zagreb14N and Zagreb6N).

Regardless of the reason(s) which the Zagreb so-called nationalist organisers might have had for not inviting the Belgrade feminists, it remains a fact that the former did not communicate to the latter why they were not inviting them. The invitation letter and the accompanying two handouts which were sent out in July 1992 did not mention at all the organisers' decision to depart from the agenda which had been agreed upon at the 'Fourth Yugoslav Feminist Gathering' in Ljubljana in May 1991 and confirmed at the first preparatory meeting in February 1992. More precisely, the invitation did not state that a survivors' speak-out would take place at the gathering and that an exclusive invitation policy was employed (*Einladung*, 10.07.1992; *Ja, ti, one*, n.d.; *Why International Feminist Meeting*, 10.07.1992; *Who are we? Where are we?*, 10.07.1992; *Zašto smo odlučile*, n.d.). One of the handouts did state, however, the organisers' goal to inform European women about what was actually taking place in the region and mobilise them to undertake action:

We particularly want to describe the war to the women of Europe who should and must come face to face with the fact that it is the first occupatory [sic] war to be waged on our continent after World War 2. We want to inspire [the] European and world public [by] presenting

them our experience, observations and problems being convinced that each war is fought against each woman, that each bombarded town is the women's town [sic]...According to our knowledge woman has become [sic] a 'war target' or 'war aim'; its [sic] sex has become not only the area for demonstration of military superiority but the area and territory of occupation. We want to present our story, the story of women from an attacked country hoping that we are going to stimulate women[']s organizations and feminists to take more active part on international level in preventing wars generally (*Why International Feminist Meeting*, 10.07.1992).

The Zagreb organisers had, thus, decided not to use the obtained funds for their original purpose: a continuation of the cooperation and exchange between the (post-)Yugoslav feminists undeterred by the war violence and the newly erected state and ethnic boundaries. Instead, they secretly chose another priority: have women war victims testify in order to mobilise international feminists to act in favour of putting end to the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, as well as to the mass war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina disclosed a few months earlier.¹⁷⁹ This change of plan actually meant that the organisers had decided to break the internal agreement and the positioning of the Yugoslav feminists not to allow themselves to be divided on the grounds of ethnicity (eg *Klic k razumu*, November 1987; *Zaključci*, 01.04.1990). The organisers hereby ceased their endorsement of the orthodox feminist positioning and adopted a new, heretical one.

It was exactly this (not communicated) abandonment of the previously agreed upon goal and conceptualisation of solidarity among the Yugoslav feminists that led to the two critical statements which were read at the gathering. The first statement was authored by Mojca Dobnikar, one of the Ljubljana participants, and the second had 14 signatories: nine Ljubljana feminists, four Zagreb self-declared antinationalist ones and one Belgrade/Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist. The latter signed it as a representative of the Belgrade SOS Hotline and Women in Black, but she actually lived and worked both in Belgrade and Zagreb and could, due to her half-Croat ethnic origin, enter Croatia with a Croatian passport.

The statements did not disapprove of the organisers' endeavour to publicise the existence of war rapes and advocate for their cessation and criminalisation.

179 The American journalist Roy Gutman is considered to be the first person to break the news about the occurrence of (Serb-inflicted) war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina in August 1992 (*Newsday*, 23.08.1992; *The Gazette*, 09.08.1992; *The Guardian*, 05.08.1992). In September 1992 the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist group Trešnjevka prepared and distributed widely a report on the Serb-held war rape camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Report*, 28.09.1992).

Nonetheless, they criticised the covert change of the purpose of the gathering, the exclusion of the Belgrade feminists despite their anti-Milošević positioning, and the betrayal of the previously made agreement about the continuation of the cooperation. Furthermore, they rebuked the organisers' choice not to allow anybody who had not been invited to attend the gathering and, consequently, invite only four Ljubljana feminists. At the same time, the authors asked for a restoration of the cooperation, dialogue and gender-based solidarity between the post-Yugoslav feminists (*Ja, ti, one*, n.d.; *Zašto smo odlučile*, n.d.; interviews with Ljubljana1EXT and Ljubljana2EXT).

So, actually, next to the Belgrade feminists, the other Zagreb cluster was almost fully excluded as well, while the number of (potentially) dissenting voices from Ljubljana was strictly limited. It seems, therefore, that the Zagreb organisers used a threefold strategy in their efforts to, on the one hand, stop the wars and war rapes in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and, on the other, obtain a broad legitimacy for their definition of these wars and war rapes. They drastically reduced the chances of dissent, invited war victims whose testimonies supported their own positioning, and increased the number of seats available to feminists from abroad.

When the legitimacy of the organisers' positioning was challenged by the Belgrade/Zagreb feminist who, albeit not invited, had entered the conference room and got the chance to speak about the peace activities in Belgrade (thanks to a German participant who had deliberately passed her the word), the organisers reacted with an uproar. In the interviews three of them explicitly scolded this act for being insensitive and harmful towards the (raped) refugee women¹⁸⁰ and thereby implicitly portrayed themselves as the only sincere advocates of these women's interests and well-being (interviews with Zagreb16N, Zagreb14N and Zagreb6N; personal communication, name withheld).

The two statements which were read at the meeting not only criticised the choices which the organisers had made, but also proposed strategies on how to repair the mistake and proceed together. Dobnikar's suggestion was to have the organisers convene a session on the possibilities for future cooperation among the post-Yugoslav feminists after the end of the official programme or, should the organisers not do this, have all interested participants gather anyway to discuss the same issue (*Ja, ti,*

180 However, not all refugee women seemed to object to the presence of somebody (partially) from Belgrade. A Ljubljana feminist recalled in the interview that one of these women had confided to her that she was pleased with the joint statement which criticised the absence of Belgrade feminists, whereas the uninvited Belgrade/Zagreb feminist told me that she had afterwards been approached by women from Vukovar who were eager to talk to her in private (Dobnikar, 2000; interview with Ljubljana1EXT; personal communication, name withheld).

one, n.d.). The other statement proposed that all participants of the gathering send a joint letter to the Belgrade feminists apologising for their exclusion and explaining the reasons for it, as well as expressing the hope to meet the following year as usual. It also suggested that the organisers send an apology to all uninvited feminists. In an addendum to the letter, the four officially invited Ljubljana feminists refrained from having their hotel and travel costs reimbursed by the organisers and asked them to give this money to the Autonomous Women's House Zagreb, which was in a financial crisis (*Zašto smo odlučile*, n.d.).

The organisers' choice not to respond to these suggestions seems to have created the war-related demarcation line which would divide them from the other Zagreb feminists and those from Belgrade and Ljubljana, and remain largely intact throughout the 1990s and up to present. The Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists – and, to a smaller extent, some from Ljubljana¹⁸¹ – would continue cooperating with each other. They would also keep (underlining) their pre-war positioning of gender-based solidarity between women, although in reality this solidarity would not extend to the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists.

As two Zagreb respondents (one self-declared antinationalist feminist and one external) explained in the interviews, the cooperation between the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists had not indicated an absence of tensions and disagreements, but a presence of a sufficient overlap between their positionings. Zagreb11AN spoke of these feminists as 'de facto thinking the same, even when we have at times a different perception, which is legitimate'. In a similar vein, Zagreb22EXT saw the common choice for sisterhood and disloyalty to the government to be 'more important than the differences which had come into existence, but [which] were not catastrophic. What was shared between them was much larger than that which was not'.

Related developments after the gathering

Another significant issue related to the 'Women in War' gathering is the acclamation – and, even more so, its framing – which the organisers and their positioning on the war rapes acquired from the popular Croatian pro-state tabloid *Globus*. The article in question (*Globus*, 11.12.1992)¹⁸² has received world-wide (scholarly) attention, but

181 See footnote 24.

182 This article is sometimes – in journalist and scholarly texts alike – wrongly dated to 10 December 1992. This mistake is most likely due to the incorrect date information in the English-language press release which the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists

not because of its support for the gathering. The attention was due to the defamatory statements and insults which it addressed to five prominent Croatian female intellectuals: the journalists Vesna Kesić and Jelena Lovrić, the philosopher Rada Iveković, and the writers Slavenka Drakulić and Dubravka Ugrešić. These five women, whom the tabloid named ‘witches’, were severely attacked because of their separate claims that women and not ethnically specific women were raped.

To make the accusation even more explicit, the article was titled ‘Croatian feminists rape Croatia!’, whereby the indication ‘feminists’ in the title did not refer to the organisers of the October 1992 gathering, but to the five attacked women.¹⁸³ In addition to this, (manipulated) parts of their biographies were published in order to underline their alleged absence of loyalty towards the new Croatian state and its war suffering, as well as their supposed privileged life during socialist Yugoslavia – something which had the status of a serious crime in Croatia in the early 1990s (Drakulić Sla., 1999; *Globus*, 11.12.1992; Iveković R., 1994; Kesić, 1993; *Protest against the text published in “Globus”*, 12.12.1992; Ugrešić, 1996; *Večernji list*, 05.12.1992, 02.03.1993).¹⁸⁴

These five intellectuals’ positioning on the war rapes was contrasted with that of the organisers of the gathering. Women’s Help Now and Kareta were praised for arranging an international feminist gathering at which the war rapes were discussed ‘for the first time openly and publicly’. Furthermore, the organisers were commended for creating space for the victims’ testimonies and assisting them in their efforts to raise international awareness of this issue, ie make these sexual crimes ‘the international feminist problem number one’ (*Globus*, 11.12.1992). Contrary to this, the five accused women were rebuked for not using their alleged access to international media and political institutions to draw attention to the suffering of the Bosniak and Croat

had sent to their foreign contacts in order to inform them about the article (*Protest against the text published in “Globus”*, 12.12.1992).

183 Although the article stated that all five women were feminists, only Slavenka Drakulić, Rada Iveković and Vesna Kesić had declared themselves as such.

184 When the article in *Globus* was published, it was not signed with the author’s name but with the anonymous ‘Globusov investigativni team’ (‘Globus’ investigatory team’). Later it was revealed that it had been written by Slaven Letica – a Croatian sociologist and former advisor of Croatia’s president Tuđman. I would argue that it was not coincidental that such an inflammatory article talking about witches who raped Croatia and were therefore a national enemy was written by a sociologist acquainted with labelling theory. In a post-war academic article on labelling theory (Letica, 1997), he analysed the labels used by politicians and media with regard to the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. He did not mention at all, though, the labels he had himself employed in the article on the ‘five witches’ from December 1992.

women, but speaking instead about the suffering of all women in male wars. So, in fact, the praise which was given to the organisers did not so much mean an approval of their work, but rather functioned as an additional argument against the five women and an expression of disapproval of their positioning. In an ironic twist, thus, the same members of *Kareta* who had in April 1991 commemorated all women burned as witches throughout the centuries¹⁸⁵ were used in December 1992 to fan the flames against the ‘five witches’.

None of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist groups reacted to this article, although it was full of misogynous comments and other types of hate speech directed at the five women. For example, ‘The few of them who could, despite their theoretical standpoint [read: feminism] and physical looks, find a partner or a spouse, did it in accordance with the Yugoslav quality norm [read: chose Serbs in order to foster the principle of brotherhood and unity]’ (*Globus*, 11.12.1992). The Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists did react immediately. They sent out a press release to their contacts abroad and to the Croatian media, but not to the tabloid in question because of being – as they stated in the reaction – ‘fully aware of the fact that addressing this protest to the editors of “*Globus*” would be of no avail’ (*Protest against the text published in “Globus”*, 12.12.1992). The press release was signed with Women’s Lobby Zagreb – the informal pressure group of the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists which had been established just the month before. Vesna Kesić, one of the five intellectuals, was also active there.

The group forcefully rejected the contents of the article, but refrained from criticising the ‘Women in War’ gathering or the two so-called nationalist feminist groups which had organised it. In fact, neither the gathering nor its organisers were mentioned in the reaction. Since the attack on the five women had included the claim that the Serb soldiers were the only ones committing rapes, the Women’s Lobby Zagreb used this opportunity also to announce its positioning on the war rapes. The press release was published – in slightly shortened versions – by two Croatian dailies (*Novi Vjesnik*, 14.12.1992; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 13.12.1992), but no Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist group ever reacted to it.

In this press release, the Women’s Lobby Zagreb formulated its positioning on the war rapes in the following way:

[A]re we really incapable to imagine (even if there didn’t exist the relevant reports which confirm that fact and which, like

185 See Chapter 3.

the Mazowiecki [sic] report,¹⁸⁶ can even be found in our daily newspapers) that WOMEN of other nationalities are getting raped as well and that this is also the doing of the Cro-army [Croatian army] soldiers...The assessments, even before serious investigations on these horrifying crimes are conducted, make clear that [the] rapes of women are a psychological strategy of [the] Serbian and Montenegrin army, that these rapes occur more often and are more systematical. However, it is the matter of personal and national honor to accept the deplorable fact that 'our boys' are also doing it. 'Our boys' which we should renounce of if we want to be just in this unjust war (*Protest against the text published in "Globus", 12.12.1992, emphasis in the original*).

So, on the one hand, the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists accentuated the gender component of the war rapes. On the other hand, they underlined that there had also been war rapes committed by the Croat forces and that Croatia should recognise their existence. Hereby they diverged greatly from the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists who have never publicly positioned themselves in relation to the Croat rapes (an issue I will return to a bit later in this section). At the same time, the Women's Lobby Zagreb cautiously suggested in the above press release a difference in intensity and character between the war rapes committed by the army of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and those committed by the Croatian army.

A similar strategy of cautiously singling out the Serb rapes, while denying their alleged disentanglement from the omnipresent war (and peacetime) male violence against women regardless of ethnicity, had already been used by this group in its first press release. However, the rapes by the Croat soldiers were suggested there only implicitly:

In each war soldiers rape regardless of the side they belong to. The news which circulates around the world today says that the Serb military and paramilitary forces on the occupied territories of Bosnia run women's camps in which rape and violence against women are a regular practice. That is only the tip of the iceberg of the violence which continues in peacetime as well (*Silovanje kao oružje, 05.12.1992*).

186 The Women's Lobby Zagreb probably refers here to the third report of Tadeusz Mazowiecki – the Special Rapporteur to the UN Commission on Human Rights – which contained inter alia information on rapes which had been committed by members of the Croat military units in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Mazowiecki report, November 1992*).

The difference in the conceptualisation of perpetrators and victims of war rape notwithstanding, the positioning which the Women's Lobby Zagreb expressed in this first announcement partially overlapped with the one of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists. Both clusters demanded the treatment of war rape as a war crime and a weapon of war, the closing down of all war camps where women were sexually violated, and the establishment of centres where the survivors would receive the needed support (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12.11.1992; *Mona Lisa*, 15.11.1992; *Los Angeles Times*, 30.11.1992; Mrkić, 1993; *Protest*, 24.11.1992).

In its mission statement (letter of intentions) from 21 December 1992, the Women's Lobby Zagreb moved much further away from the other Zagreb cluster. Equally important is that the positioning on the war rapes which was articulated in this document did not fully resemble the ones which had been featured in the two statements from earlier that month. In its mission statement, the group did not single out the Serb responsibility for the war rapes at all, but used a gender-based positioning: 'Women are potential victims of war violence firstly because they are women, [and] only afterwards because they are Croat, Muslim or Serb' (*Pismo namjera*, 21.12.1992).¹⁸⁷

187 This press release can be used to illustrate one of the problems which I encountered in this research, but nowhere in the scholarship on the (post-)Yugoslav feminism: the existence of different versions of the apparently same document. I can only point to the problem with this press release, but not explore it further due to its late discovery. The two edited volumes on the work of the Center for Women War Victims (Belić, Borić and Kesić, 1994; Kesić, 2003, Croatian half of the book) contain the same retyped – not facsimiled – Croatian version of this press release dated 21 December 1992. However, in the English half of Kesić (2003), the featured English version of this press release is shorter. This shortened version, which is the same as an old printout which I have come across in the archives (*Letter of Intentions*, 21.12.1992), does not contain the quotation presented above. The missing quotation is significant since it is the only sentence in the whole press release which contains ethnic markers; the rest of the text generally speaks about support to women victims of war rape from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In other words, the whole press release expresses the primacy of gender over ethnicity in these feminists' conceptualisation of war rape, but the omitted quotation additionally makes it clear and underlines it. There are a few more discrepancies, also previously unreported in the scholarship, between the different versions of this press release. In the archives I found printouts of two other Croatian versions: one dated 14 January 1993 and the other 15 January 1993. Besides the difference in date, these two printouts differ in title from the Croatian version in Belić, Borić and Kesić (1994) and Kesić (2003). The printouts are titled 'Pismo o namjerama' ('Letter on the Intentions'), whereas the published version is titled 'Pismo namjera' ('Letter of Intentions'). The dissimilar dates and titles are not all that significant, but one other difference could be. The version from 15 January 1993 contains a paragraph which is absent from the other Croatian versions and from the English version. This paragraph reads: '[I]t is needed from the beginning to ensure international exchange of experiences and a creation of a network between the institutions and groups (especially women's) which offer help to raped women, *in particular between the states on the territory of the former Yugoslavia so that the help would be as effective and as adequate as*

Once more, the war rapes by the Croat soldiers were only implicitly present in the text.

I have been unable to track down such shifts of accent in the official statements of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist groups. In fact – I need to make a time jump here for the sake of argumentation – their public positioning on aggressors and victims remained unaltered even after the shift in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the spring of 1993. They kept singling out the Serbs as the only aggressors even though the Bosnian Croat militaries, supported by Croatia's government, had initiated the Bosniak-Croat war and started to ethnically cleanse the Bosniak civil population. These feminists' cooperation with and assistance to (raped) Bosniak refugee women who had fled to Croatia earlier, driven away by the violence of the Bosnian Serb forces, was not affected either.

In addressing this continuity of the so-called nationalist feminists' positioning on perpetrators and victims, Obradović-Dragišić (2004:43) has aptly observed that the 'enemy was already constructed and it was all Serbs'. This fixation on the Serbs as the only aggressor and on the Bosniaks and the Croats as the only victims meant that these feminists never publicly spoke of the Bosniaks or the Croats as being perpetrators, not even during the Bosniak-Croat war. A case in point is their absence of reaction to the threats which Vladimir Šeks, the then vice prime minister of Croatia, directed at the Bosniak refugees in June 1993. In an interview on Croatian national television, Šeks said that given the genocide of the Bosniak forces against the Bosnian Croat population, the Croatian government was about to re-examine its policy on the Bosniak refugees residing on its territory, and added:

The Croatian government is in a very difficult position [in trying] to defend them [the Bosniak refugees] from the justified rage of the Croat people. It will have to seriously re-examine their further survival [sic] and their future treatment because it is unimaginable that the [Bosniak] soldiers fight and commit pogroms and genocides...against the Croat people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whereas Croatia provides for and accommodates their families in Croatia (*Slika na sliku*, June 1993).

As I previously mentioned, the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists never spoke out against this proclamation, which had supposedly been uttered in the name

possible' (*Pismo o namjerama*, 15.01.1993, emphasis added). Being unable to explore this issue further here, I would only suggest that this paragraph could have been strategically omitted (or added) because of the quite politically laden character of the emphasised part. It advocated cooperation between the post-Yugoslav states at a moment when some of those states, including the one the authors of the press release were based in, were at war.

of all Croats and in the interest of the whole of Croatia. However, neither did they ever publicly express their agreement with it or with the similar warmongering and discriminating statements against the Bosniaks which were present in the Croatian media and politics during the Bosniak-Croat war. They also seem not to have produced any statements in which they would speak of the victimisation of Croats by the Bosniak militaries or civilian refugee population.

The activists of the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist group Center for Women War Victims reacted to Šeks' television appearance by sending out a protest letter to the Croatian government and the Croatia media. The letter denounced his statements as 'a classical example of hate speech and discrimination which in... [the] current political situation can be understood as an invitation for persecution', and asked the Croatian government to distance itself from his words and bring him to account (*Prosvjed u povodu istupa Vladimira Šeksa*, 10.06.1993). Besides this, in a journalist text Biljana Kašić from the Women's Lobby Zagreb criticised Šeks and the rest of the Croatian government for treating the ethnic groups as homogenous entities. By classifying them either as 'the aggressor' or 'the victim', these politicians were installing fear and uncertainty among the Bosniak refugees in Croatia (*Scheherazade*, July 1993).

My interviews with Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists additionally confirmed the aforementioned conclusion of Obradović-Dragišić that for these feminists the construction of the enemy had been a *fait accompli*. None of the five so-called nationalist respondents whom I managed to ask about their group's positioning on the war rapes by the Croat forces denied or approved of them; some were even very critical of them and the other Croat war crimes. But, although I posed a neutral and open question, ie did not ask why their groups had not publicly positioned themselves on these rapes, my question was apparently understood in exactly this way. The respondents reacted by implicitly justifying their silence. Some distinguished the Croat war crimes from those of the Serb forces. They portrayed the former as incidental, sporadic and intrinsic to each war, unlike the latter, which had been premeditated and conducted on a large scale for the purpose of ethnic cleansing or genocide. The other reasons which were communicated to me were: not knowing about the Croat war crimes, not having the resources to extend one's activities, being focused on seeking legal redress for the victims of the Serb war crimes, and not having contacts with the victims of the Croat crimes since those people would not flee to Croatia¹⁸⁸ (interviews with Zagreb4N, Zagreb13N, Zagreb16N, Zagreb14N and Zagreb6N).

188 Another issue played a role as well. Starting from the summer of 1992 Croatia impeded the entrance of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to this, during the Bosniak-Croat war its borders remained closed to the Bosniak refugees.

I would argue that this non-adjustment to the restructuring of the battlefield was, in fact, predominantly a result of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists' wish to avoid risking their legitimacy and possibly undermining their advocacy efforts on the criminalisation of the Serb-inflicted war rapes. Being the heretical challengers in the Zagreb feminist field and the majority of the Western (academic) feminist fields, they had invested a great amount of capital and effort in trying to establish themselves as legitimate victims of and experts on the (sexual) violence by the Serb forces. Any modification of their conceptualisation of Serbs as the only aggressor – which they exploited in the struggle for legitimacy – carried the risk of losing the already gained symbolic capital, such as the one in Croatia's political field. Moreover, a readjustment of their positioning required a readjustment of their future advocacy strategies and efforts for obtaining legitimacy. This was not, apparently, something these feminists wanted to engage in either.

This lack of public attention for the war crimes of the Croat – and Bosniak – forces has also been noted by Kesić (1994) in her sharp criticism of MacKinnon's article in *Ms.* (July/August 1993). MacKinnon's silence on the non-Serb war crimes was by no means coincidental. As I explained in Chapter 3, she advocated the ethnicity-based positioning of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists and closely worked with some of them on the American civil lawsuit against Radovan Karadžić for genocidal rapes. Kesić's elaboration is further significant for her reprimand of Croatia's war involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the war crimes of the Croat forces there, as well as of the concealment of these war crimes by the Croatian media. In addition to this, Kesić (1994:277–278) explicitly pointed out that the Bosniak forces, too, were guilty of (sexual) war crimes:

The quick development of events and the war's complexity have invalidated some of MacKinnon's theories and discredited the version of the 'truth' that she promotes...The war policy of Croatia in Bosnia-Herzegovina and some Muslim war activities have to date included all the activities that MacKinnon denied: a policy of territorial expansion, of extermination, and of violating women. During the Muslim-Croat war, Croatian officials and the media reported ethnic cleansing and death/rape camps by the Muslim army. However, they never properly reported the massacre in the Muslim village Ahmići in which the United Nations Special Rapporteur reported that at least one gang rape had occurred...Many other similar war crimes in Central Bosnia performed by [the] Croatian Army were ignored here. In mid-1994...the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, Peter W. Galbraith, stated on Croatian television that there are credible reports of Croats raping Muslim women. Croatia has

had an equivocal territorial policy toward Bosnia and Herzegovina which was announced along with the elections in 1990...Thus, actual events in the war have contradicted MacKinnon's evaluation of who the real victims are. No side could stay innocent in this war. Muslims also committed war crimes and brutalized Serbian and Croatian women.

I have found only two exceptions to the silence of the so-called nationalist feminists regarding the Croat war crimes. These exceptions witness the disturbance of the previously held positioning, but neither of them represents an official organisational statement. The first one was a brief comment in one American documentary filmed in June 1993. Speaking about their work in a refugee camp near Zagreb, Žana Stanzl, an activist of Trešnjevka, said:

Now it's really a big mess. Till this time, when there were only Muslims and Croats together, against Serbians, it was...easier. Now you don't know anymore...It is a very difficult situation now... You don't know now who kills whom and why, in the name of what? (in: *Let the people speak!*, 1993).

The second exception concerns Zagreb13N's publication of the Croatian translation of Susan Brownmiller's seminal work *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (Brownmiller, 1975, 1995). It is very important to note, though, that Zagreb13N published this book only after she had withdrawn from Trešnjevka and organised feminist activism altogether and, thereby, left the former struggle for legitimacy behind to a great extent. In the interview, she spoke of being driven by the wish to educate the broader public in Croatia about the historical repetitions of the gender-based patterns of war rape in which armed men, regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds, raped women of other backgrounds. The great impact of the Bosniak-Croat war on her, which was partially due to her partner's Bosniak ethnic background, manifested itself also in her new, gender-based positioning on war rapes: 'When the conflict between the Croats and the Muslims took place, I definitely decided...[that] there were no guilty and righteous ones, just men and victims. That is very important – it is actually the key of this whole story' (interview with Zagreb13N).

This publishing endeavour is a striking exception foremostly because of Brownmiller's conceptualisation of war rape, in which gender has primacy over ethnicity. She later employed the same conceptualisation in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and was, therefore, heavily criticised by MacKinnon (MacKinnon, 1994; *Newsweek*, 04.01.1993; Rejali, 1996). Zagreb13N's foreword to the Croatian edition

contributes to the exceptional character of this move even though she does not openly depart there from her previous positioning. She speaks of ‘the Serb aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina’ (Zagreb13N, 1995:i), but does not say anything about the Croat one. Furthermore, the possibility that the (Bosnian) Croat – and Bosniak – forces might also have committed war rapes is suggested only implicitly: ‘This book shows us that there exists no victorious army which would not rape. Often, unfortunately, the attacked one rapes as well, as was the case with the Red Army soldiers during their conquest of Germany’ (Zagreb13N, 1995:iii).

Another point of difference between the Zagreb clusters concerned the figures on the prevalence of the (sexual) war crimes. The self-declared antinationalist feminists were generally suspicious towards any information on these crimes which came from the (pro-)state media and the politicians. They were reluctant to use any estimates and expressed their fiercest criticism of the manipulation and use of unverified data for the purpose of spreading hate, interethnic hostilities and war propaganda (*Pismo namjera*, 21.12.1992; *Rezolucija*, 17.01.1993; *Silovanje kao oružje*, 05.12.1992). This criticism was not specifically addressed to the so-called nationalist feminists, but it implicitly concerned them as well, since they have never publicly questioned the veracity of the figures they operated with.

Zagreb13N, one of the two Zagreb so-called nationalist respondents who addressed this issue in the interview, claimed not to find the use of exaggerated figures objectionable although she had been criticised for it. Being aware of the power of large figures to set things in motion, she declared to have used them deliberately in order to mobilise the international community to stop the war rapes and the war. Zagreb6N, the other respondent, did not find this practice problematic at all either. Moreover, she disapproved of the – further unspecified – media and groups which had unjustly criticised the Croatian and the Bosnian and Herzegovinian state as well as Zagreb13N for manipulating those figures: ‘If you have several thousands or tens of thousands of reported rapes, should you be silent only to avoid having it [your figures] called propaganda?’

When slightly more reliable estimations of the number of raped women appeared (*Amnesty International*, January 1993; *Bassiouni report*, May 1994; *Mazowiecki report*, November 1992, February 1993; *The Independent*, 06.01.1993; *Warburton report*, February 1993), it turned out that both Zagreb clusters were partially right. The so-called nationalist feminists were correct to point from the beginning to the by far largest extent of the Serb-committed war rapes against non-Serb women, whereas the self-declared antinationalist feminists rightfully maintained that the Croat and

Bosniak forces were also raping women of Serb and, respectively, Bosniak and Croat ethnicity. These reports did not, however, stop the struggle for legitimacy between the clusters.

The 'International Women's Solidarity' meeting in Zagreb (7 February 1993)

The 'International Women's Solidarity' meeting – whose initial name was the 'International Women's Tribunal' – was a one-day meeting which further elucidated the positionings on the wars and war rapes held by the Zagreb so-called nationalist and the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. The German group Perspective Berlin summoned female politicians and feminist activists (foremostly from Western Europe and a few from the United States) for the purpose of writing a joint resolution. The document was to be used afterwards to exercise political pressure to stop the war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, change the international jurisprudence so that war rape would become criminalised as a crime of war, and establish an international war crimes tribunal. The point of having the meeting at local coordinates was not to ensure the participation of local women (from any post-Yugoslav country), since the organiser saw their participation as potentially creating tensions. Zagreb's proximity to the war zones where the rapes were carried out was considered beneficial to the political and media visibility of the meeting, while at the same time the location was safe enough for the participants.

The intention not to invite any women from Croatia was objected to by the then vice prime minister of Croatia, Mate Granić, with whom Perspective Berlin discussed the terms of the organisation of the meeting. Instead of fulfilling his wish to have only members of Rampart of Love represent the (raped) women of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the organiser negotiated a compromise solution. At the end and with last minute invitations, other women's groups attended the meeting as well, including the self-declared antinationalist Women's Lobby Zagreb and the so-called nationalist Karet, Trešnjevka and Women's Help Now. Actually, the Women's Lobby Zagreb was the initial local organising partner. However, the group withdrew from the organisation due to its disagreement with the plan not to invite women from the post-Yugoslav region and involve politicians of Croatia's ruling party in the preparation of the event (ANP, 07.02.1993; *Balkan trail of tears revisited*, 1993; Pollmann et al., 1993; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 08.02.1993, 11.02.1993; *Statement to the meeting*, 07.02.1993; interviews with Zagreb11AN and Zagreb7AN).

Already during the preparatory phase in Germany the meeting was surrounded by many controversies. One of them broke out over the choice not to organise it on neutral soil which women from Serbia would also have access to, but in one of the countries at war. That choice was, furthermore, vulnerable to the accusation of siding with one of the warring parties. Another emerged over the ethics of convening such a laden and sensitive meeting in a rushed atmosphere. The tight agenda would not leave much time to discuss and vote on the end resolution before the German organisers would need to catch their return flights the same day (*die tageszeitung*, 25.01.1993a, 25.01.1993b, 28.01.1993; Pollmann et al., 1993; *Presseerklärung*, 30.01.1993; *The ACTivist*, March 1993). I will, however, only elaborate upon the issues which directly involved the two Zagreb feminist clusters and the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist one.

Similarly to the incident at the 'Women in War' gathering, the unexpected presence and address of somebody (partially) from Serbia caused a tumult in one part of the audience at this meeting as well. This time it concerned Vesna Božić, who worked with the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists and could enter Croatia as an American citizen. Having been given the word by one of the British participants, Božić read out the declaration to the meeting written by the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists. Immediately after she had begun to speak, the participants from Rampart of Love and the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist cluster left the meeting space, and returned only afterwards when one of the Dutch representatives was about to speak (*de Volkskrant*, 08.02.1993; Pollmann et al., 1993; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 11.02.1993, 15.02.1993; *The ACTivist*, March 1993; personal communication, name withheld).

The declaration of the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists made evident both the (imposed) feeling of guilt which they were dealing with and their need to underline their distance from Serbia's official politics:

Some of us feel guilty because of belonging to the aggressor's nation, which might be a repetition of the old and familiar women's feeling of guilt, even when it [the guilt] is not ours...*Having a Serb name does not entail agreement with Serbia's politics, just as having a Croat name does not entail support to Croatia's politics...*In any case, for those who still suspect, *we want to repeat that there is a small but strong women's opposition in Belgrade already since the first military interventions of the Yugoslav People's Army in Slovenia (Deklaracija žena iz Beograda, 04.02.1993, emphasis in the original).*¹⁸⁹

189 A rather extreme example of the distrust in the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists' factual opposition to Milošević is given by Nadežda Radović (2002). She

According to one of the media reports, after having left the conference room in protest, the activists of Rampart of Love said that those ‘whose husbands and brothers kindle, rape and bomb’ had no right to speak in Zagreb – a reaction which, as the above quotation shows, had been already anticipated and responded to by the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists. Informed afterwards about the contents of the declaration which they had chosen not to hear, the women from Rampart of Love stated that leaving the meeting had been a matter of principle (*Slobodna Dalmacija*, 11.02.1993).

It is possible that the above statement of Rampart of Love reached the Belgrade feminists. In their letter to the international meeting against the sexual violence against women in the former Yugoslavia, which was held in Amsterdam in March 1993, they explicitly refused to be perceived in that manner. Although I am not familiar with the reasons for writing this letter, it seems that its much harsher and more determined tone, compared to that of the earlier declaration, was at least partially caused by the way in which Božić’s address had been received by Rampart of Love and the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists in early February 1993:

[W]e refuse to be seen as sisters, wives and daughters of men who rape and kill in this war. We have faught [sic] toghether [sic] with many feminists around the world for years to be seen as autonomous individuals and not as properties of men, therefore our political views are only ours and each woman is responsible for herself. We refuse to be seen as prisoners of our names, [and] national origin (*Letter to the women’s meeting*, 25.02.1993).

Next to witnessing the feeling of guilt, the declaration which Božić read out is additionally significant because of the positioning which it contained. The Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist groups Women in Black, Belgrade Women’s Lobby and Group for Women Raped in War (later: Autonomous Women’s Center) acknowledged that Serbia’s regime had started the war with the goal of ethnic cleansing, rape and abuse of women’s bodies and reproductive functions. Furthermore, they asserted that the Bosniak women were the gravest and most numerous victims, even though there

recalls her interaction with Catharine MacKinnon at the ‘UN World Conference on Human Rights’ in Vienna in June 1993. After having listened to MacKinnon’s address, in which she had called for a military intervention against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Radović approached her to give her a copy of a publication of the Women in Black and inform her that there were also feminists and pacifists in Belgrade who opposed the military regime. MacKinnon reacted by asking: ‘Where did you get the money for this [the publication] from, and if it was against the war, how come that Milošević has not killed you yet?’ (Radović, 2002:71; see also *off our backs*, January 1994).

had been also Croat and Serb women, as well as women of other ethnicities, among the victims. Whom these women were victimised by was left open despite the earlier acknowledgement of the general responsibility of Serbia's regime. The perpetrator was only implied also elsewhere in the text: 'We know very well that women and men were not abused nor was Croatia's natural and cultural-historical heritage destroyed by the Croats themselves' (*Deklaracija žena iz Beograda*, 04.02.1993).

This presence of both a general acknowledgement of the responsibility of Serbia's regime and a reluctance to state its responsibility for the concrete acts of violence witnesses the gradual process of creation of what came to be the Belgrade orthodox feminist positioning on the (sexual) war violence. In February 1993 the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists had not yet begun to explicitly point to the foremost responsibility of the Serb politicians and militaries, but no longer used a strict gender-based positioning on the war rapes and did not speak of equal victimisation and responsibility. The progressive change – which resulted from the appearance of more trustworthy reports on the war rapes, as well as from these Belgrade feminists' interactions with the Zagreb feminists from both clusters – becomes additionally clear if two other texts of the former are compared: one which had been written before and one which was written after the above declaration from February 1993.

The leaflet which the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists had written in late December 1992 and handed out at the February 1993 meeting contained their general criticism of the war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the politicians' instrumentalisation of the war rapes and raped women for spreading hate, inciting violence and advocating armed intervention. At the same time, they spoke about war rape as a military strategy which all armies used, and demanded that war rape be recognised globally as a war crime for which all perpetrators would be convicted regardless of the army they belonged to (*Feministkinje Beograda govore*, 26.12.1992).

This positioning overlapped, thus, to a great extent with that of the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists which was expressed in the press release 'Rape as a Weapon' from 5 December 1992 (see the previous analysis). But differently from their Zagreb counterparts, who had cautiously indicated that the Serb militaries were possibly employing war rape more extensively, the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists did not single out the Serb forces. Instead, they asked the

international community and public to put pressure on and make responsible the regimes of Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić, Alija Izetbegović, Mate Boban [the president of the Croat Republic of Herzeg-Bosna] and Franjo Tuđman so that they would disband all concentration camps, private jails, military brothels and other

institutions in which the women's sexual slavery is legitimised
(*Feministkinje Beograda govore*, 26.12.1992).

In a later text on war rape as a war crime, which was published in early March 1993 as part of a larger publication (Zajović, 1993b), the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists articulated unambiguously the greatest responsibility of the Bosnian Serb forces. Nevertheless, they had no doubts that women of other ethnicities were raped as well. That the gender-based positioning was not abandoned, but only supplemented with ethnic markers, was also visible from the opening paragraph. War rape was described there as a gender-based historical occurrence which was detrimental for women, but did not bring any legal and societal repercussions to the men who had committed it. The afterwards expressed nuanced positioning read as follows:

The feminists of Belgrade and Serbia do not agree with the premise about the symmetry between the executioners and victims of all warring sides in Bosnia. They are aware that Karadžić's more powerful and better armed military and political forces in Bosnia (the Army of Republika Srpska) have on their conscience the largest number of rapes...The above average number of raped Muslim women in the war in Bosnia is not a reason to forget the raped women of other ethnicities, other faiths, as well as the ethnically undeclared atheists. The feminists will advocate help to all women victims of rape, regardless of ethnicity and faith, as well as the bringing to a war crimes tribunal of all rapists and those who have given them the order (in: Zajović, 1993b:90a).

When after the February 1993 meeting Dafinka Večerina from Women's Help Now criticised the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists in a newspaper interview, she did that because of the contents of the leaflet which they had handed out at that meeting. She disapproved of their lumping together of the Bosniak, (Bosnian) Croat and (Bosnian) Serb leaders, whereby their equal responsibility for the war rapes was suggested. By stating not to want to show hospitality to the Belgrade feminists, Večerina possibly also hinted at the choice of her group and Kareta not to invite these feminists to the gathering in October 1992:

I think that the women from Serbia do what they can, oppose the regime. But, I cannot accept, as it has been done in a recently published leaflet, that they equate the victim and the aggressor...I cannot show solidarity with them on that. That equating was the reason why we could not listen to the woman from Serbia [this is

most probably a reference to Vesna Božić and the February 1993 meeting]...As long as the war lasts, I do not want to hear what somebody from the aggressor country has to say. I can privately talk to them, but I cannot reconcile with being their host and showing hospitality by listening to them saying, as they wrote in the leaflet, that Milošević, Karadžić, Izetbegović and Tuđman should be put on trial. I claim that these rapes are rapes against Croat and Muslim women and that they are raped foremostly because of that [their ethnicity]. That is a big humiliation for the two nations (*Nedjeljna Dalmacija*, 03.03.1993; see also *Oslobođenje*, 26.03.–01.04.1993; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 15.02.1993).

Unlike this criticism, the rebuke which the activists of Trešnjevka had uttered at the 'International Women's Solidarity' meeting in February 1993 only concerned the presence of somebody from the inimical ethnic group. These so-called nationalist feminists declared that it was unacceptable to have a person from Serbia as one of the speakers (Pollmann et al., 1993). Still, the letter which they wrote afterwards to their German partner organisation makes it clear that the ethnicity of the speaker had not been the (only) contested issue, but that the struggle for legitimacy had played a role (as well). That they had been invited to participate in the gathering only the night before had apparently indicated to them that they were perceived as less legitimate speakers than the Belgrade activist. The letter also contained their ethnicity-based positioning on perpetrators and victims:

It is impossible to describe our feelings when we saw...that one of the first spikers [sic] after [the] introduction part were Serbian woman [sic] from Chicago...She spoke in the name of 15 serbs Women in black from Beograd [sic]. That was so much...In my country, victim of Serbian aggression too, [sic] where European women came to support women raped in Serbs [sic] rape/death camps, they [sic] can talk without any problem. And we must wait for favour...After [sic] this humiliation we had no nothing [sic] to do there (*Letter to Internationales Frauenfriedensarchiv*, n.d.).

The 'International Women's Solidarity' meeting was also characterised by the disturbance which the gender-based positioning on the war rapes caused in the form of a banner – albeit not one produced by the Belgrade or Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. An Austrian radical feminist and lesbian group hung up a banner in the conference space which read: 'Rape is not a question of nationality, but a worldwide war of men against women'. It caused a strong disapproval among the representatives of Rampart of Love, a few of whom have immediately rushed to pull

it down, leading to great commotion among the participants (*Politika*, n.d.; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 11.02.1993; interviews with Zagreb11AN, Zagreb7AN and Zagreb16N).

The gender-based positioning was also criticised by a journalist of the Croatian pro-state weekly *Danas* even before the gathering. In an article which announced it, the journalist rebuked the German organisers and the groups gathered in the Women's Lobby Zagreb for not naming the perpetrator and the victim, but speaking about wars in an abstract manner and women as eternal victims. Contrary to this, the activists of Rampart of Love, Kareta, Trešnjevka and Women's Help Now were overtly praised for their patriotic positioning which did not consider all warring sides as equally guilty, ie did not deny either the Serb aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, or the Serb organised practice of war rape for the purpose of ethnic cleansing (*Danas*, 29.01.1993).¹⁹⁰

The reproof of the gender-based positioning as not corresponding to the real context, which was repetitively articulated by the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists and the non-feminist women's groups they cooperated with, was also mentioned by two of these feminists in the interview. When I asked about this meeting and the contents of the banner, Zagreb1N disagreed with this – in her words 'international' or 'supranational' – positioning because of being inapplicable to the concrete situation. She acknowledged, nevertheless, that the positioning which contextualised the war rapes and which she approved of was also employed in the official Croatian politics. According to Zagreb16N, the gender-based positioning was a peacetime universal one. It was used by people who lived in peace, as had been the case with those who had hung up the banner, and who were unaware that, unlike in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was no war destruction in Serbia at the time.¹⁹¹

After this explicit delegitimisation of the foreign participants, Zagreb16N implicitly delegitimised the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. Since she could not dismiss them as coming from a peacetime context, she did that by suggesting their lack of expertise in working with actual victims. Unlike her, these activists had distanced themselves from the real situation by sitting behind their desks and travelling abroad to conferences. This manner of delegitimising the Zagreb

190 See the similar but less elaborated criticism in the Croatian pro-state daily *Večernji list* (15.02.1993).

191 However, and quite to the contrary, the adjective 'universal' was also used by local activists. Lepa Mladenović and Vesna Kesić – self-declared antinationalist feminists from Belgrade and Zagreb, respectively – employed it in their separate discussions of war rape in order to underline that soldiers raped in all wars, ie that the war rapes were committed by the 'universal soldier' (*off our backs*, March 1993 [1992], January 1994; see also Kesić, 1994).

self-declared antinationalist feminists by the Zagreb so-called nationalist ones was particularly strongly articulated during the following event – the MADRE speakers tour.

The MADRE speakers tour in North America (24 March – 8 April 1993)

The previous two episodes, the ‘Women in War’ gathering and the ‘International Women’s Solidarity’ meeting, intensified the split among the Zagreb feminists and made it known abroad as well, primarily among the European feminists. The MADRE speakers tour (mostly in the United States, with one stop in Canada) and its echoes, besides further exacerbating the conflict, transported it to the North American continent, causing divisions also among the feminists there. The tour, whose official name was ‘Mother Courage II’,¹⁹² was organised by the New York-based women’s human rights group MADRE. Its purpose was to inform on the wars and war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (ie the former Yugoslavia, as the information package stated), address the world-wide use of rape as a weapon of war and advocate its criminalisation, as well as demand increased attention for women’s human rights at the forthcoming ‘UN World Conference on Human Rights’ in Vienna in June that year. To this end, the tour also included speakers from other countries, such as Nicaragua and South Africa.

In addition to this, the speakers tour was intended to serve as an opportunity for raising funds for the Belgrade and Zagreb groups supported by MADRE. As the information package stated, these were the non-nationalist women’s groups ‘the Autonomous Women’s House, the Independent Alliance of Women, the Information and Documentation Women’s Center [Women’s Infoteka], the Antiwar Campaign, Women in Black and the SOS Hotline’ (*Information package*, March/April 1993). In line with this clear political choice, only Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists were invited, ie given legitimacy. Vivian Stromberg, MADRE’s executive director, explained the exclusion of the so-called nationalist feminists as follows:

We invited people who were interested in addressing the issue of rape from a non-nationalist perspective...You can’t have a nationalist perspective and then invite people from 10 other countries. It doesn’t make sense unless what you want to do is fight (*off our backs*, May 1993a).

192 The ‘Mother Courage I’ tour had taken place in 1991 and called for an end of the Gulf War. The title ‘Mother Courage’ was borrowed from the name of Bertolt Brecht’s antiwar play ‘Mother Courage and Her Children’.

However, as I will show below, this exclusionary invitation policy did not prevent serious disagreements from emerging. It only displaced them from the conference spaces during the tour to the arena of letters, letters to the editor, press releases, and journalist and academic articles. The choice of speakers from Bosnia and Herzegovina caused controversies as well (Helms, 1998; *off our backs*, May 1993a, May 1993b; *Village Voice*, 13.07.1993, n.d.), but with regard to the focus of my research I will elaborate only upon the issues which were raised by the selection of the four Belgrade and Zagreb feminists.

A few days before the speakers tour would begin Natalie Nenadic – who had already begun to work with Kareta intensively – sent to the MADRE office and the tour's stops the protest statement of four Zagreb women's groups: Kareta, BISER, Women B&H and Rampart of Love.¹⁹³ Earlier that year, these groups and Women's Help Now had started working with MacKinnon on the civil lawsuit against Karadžić (MacKinnon, 2006; *off our backs*, February 1993b; *Village Voice*, 13.07.1993; *ZamirZine*, 28.02.2007). Despite this cooperation, Women's Help Now was not one of the signatories of the protest statement to MADRE – a curiosity I was unable to shed more light upon.

The four signatory groups – among which only Kareta was a feminist one – criticised MADRE on three accounts: for excluding them from the tour, for giving legitimacy to exactly those two Zagreb women and the groups they were active in, and for treating the war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia only as a weapon of war. These issues were announced already in the two opening paragraphs of the protest statement:

As representatives of Bosnian and Croatian women's groups and some of us survivors ourselves who have been working with victims of genocidal rape since November 1991 and therefore have the most experience with this particular genocidal war crime, we write to express our concerns about the national tour being sponsored by MADRE... We are troubled that MADRE has not consulted Bosnian and Croatian women's groups, which through long and dedicated work with survivors and some members being survivors are the most knowledgeable about and representative of this issue. Most of our members and members of these other groups literally work 17 hour days, too completely immersed in horror, to perhaps have the same access to Western women's groups which wish to assist survivors as do women's groups which were formed and empowered

193 Given that the alphabetical order was not followed when the signatory groups were listed on the letter, Kareta's first place suggests this group's greatest share in its creation.

during the communist regime and which have only begun dealing in some way with this issue in the aftermath of the media attention our groups worked for over one year to get and the international funding becoming available to apparently assist survivors. We are very concerned about the intentions of these groups. However, given that MADRE is going through the effort of sponsoring some women from Croatia and [the Federal Republic of] Yugoslavia, we believe that it should have researched genocidal rape more thoroughly here and in a manner more representative of and accountable to victims and to the political context in which these rapes are occurring (*Reaction to the MADRE tour*, 18.03.1993).

The signatory groups stated, in fact, that to invite them and fundraise for them would have been the legitimate choice. They were the ones who had worked for the longest time and for the longest hours with the direct survivors of the war rapes and had, moreover, survivors among their members. By saying that the other groups had started to do some work with the war rape survivors only after the issue had received media attention and money had become available, the signatories presented these groups as working in bad faith and not benefitting the survivors. At the same time, they implied that their own (advocacy) work was authentically inspired by the wish to help these women, and was focused on supporting them and being accountable to them. The legitimacy which MADRE had given to the other Zagreb feminist cluster was further challenged by the signatories' claim that instead of working with survivors, its members had spent their time building their Western networks and thereby enlarging the privileged position which they had been enjoying since socialism.

In the remainder of the letter, the other Zagreb cluster and MADRE were reprimanded for their positioning on the war rapes, ie for not calling them by their real name. These rapes were not to be simply considered a universal weapon of war, but a historically unprecedented Serb weapon of genocide against the Croat and Bosniak ethnic groups, which also included the strategy of forcible impregnation. Those who employed the former conceptualisation not only silenced the victims but also equalised perpetrators and victims, thereby obstructing a more determined international intervention. According to the letter's authors, this strategy of 'obfuscation and confusion' which the other Zagreb feminists and MADRE were using – the latter unknowingly – resembled and assisted the strategy of the Serb aggressor.

The signatory groups in the same vein rebuked the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists' gender-based conceptualisation of the war rapes. Similarly to the earlier quoted statement by Večerina from Women's Help Now, this criticism also implicitly explained why the organisers of the 'Women in War' gathering had not put much effort in securing the presence of the Belgrade feminists:

Because of this lack of acknowledgment of genocidal rapes and the silencing over of our most painful experiences and because Muslim and Croatian (and Albanian) women are continuously violated in public forums by Serbian women's position on this (as by that of the very unrepresentative women you have selected to speak for Croatian women), we feel we cannot engage in such forums until Serbian women's position becomes accountable to the genocide (which includes rape) Serbia is perpetrating against us. Moreover, given the types of genocidal atrocities that non-Serbian women have gone through, at this point in time, many survivors are afraid of Serbs, whose position on the issue does nothing to attenuate these fears, which will take time to overcome...[T]o place Muslim and Croatian women in forums which force on them women of the group committing the genocide...might be something like forcing Jewish women to 'debate' with German women while the Holocaust were still going on – and German women who don't even want to acknowledge that a genocide is happening – and then simply calling the whole thing a war. By making this analogy, however, we in no way wish to deny the historical uniqueness of the Holocaust (*Reaction to the MADRE tour*, 18.03.1993).

The use of the particularly laden reference to the Holocaust was not unique to this document. Kareta, including MacKinnon and Nenadic as its close associates, and Trešnjevka regularly made such an analogy between the Shoah or the Nazi ideology and the treatment of the non-Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia by the Serb forces. But, unlike Trešnjevka, those around Kareta extended this parallel to the Zagreb (and Belgrade) self-declared antinationalist feminists, as well as to anybody else who would not name the Serb war rapes 'genocidal'. These activists were accused of collaboration with the Serb aggressors, cover-up of the rapes, and genocide revisionism. Sometimes, concrete feminists were put in the pillory, as was the case with Slavenka Drakulić, Vesna Kesić and Đurđa Knežević (*Appeal by Sarajevo Women's Groups*, 30.05.1994; *die tageszeitung*, 05.02.1993; Kadić, 1993; *Letter to Ms. Magazine*, 21.12.1993; *Letter to The New York Times*, 29.12.1993; *Letter to Susan Brownmiller*, 15.08.1993; MacKinnon, 2006; Nenadic, 1996, 2010; *Northwest Ethnic News*, November 1994; *Reaction to the MADRE tour*, 18.03.1993; *Report*, 28.09.1992; *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 18.03.1994; *Witness Protection Program leaflet*, April 1994).

The protest statement to the MADRE tour was one of the occasions when Vesna Kesić and Đurđa Knežević were explicitly blamed for being silent about the real character of the Serb war rapes. In addition to this, the signatories also questioned the self-declared feminism of these two women. The manner in which Kesić and Knežević were portrayed as working against the interests of women, rape survivors in particular,

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resembled to a great extent Nenadić's criticism in *off our backs* (November 1991; see Chapter 2) and the aforementioned defamatory article in *Globus*. For example: 'They had privileges in a totalitarian system at the brutal expense of others' (*Reaction to the MADRE tour*, 18.03.1993), or: 'In our experience victims are simply distrustful of and do not wish to work with women who were so deeply implicated in the regime which is destroying them and with those who actively participated in the sexual abuse of women through pornography' (ibid).

The four groups referred hereby to Knežević's former post as the 'director of the Museum of the Communist Revolution which was essentially a weapons warehouse in the middle of Zagreb' (ibid) and Kesić's previous employment as 'a writer and occasional editor of the Yugoslav pornography magazine Start' (ibid, underline in the original). The signatories, thus, implicitly made two suggestions regarding the presumed collaboration of the two feminists with the Serb perpetrators. The first was that the weapons which had been exhibited in the museum were used by the Serb forces in the wars against Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The second suggestion was that the allegedly pornographic magazine had inspired the war rapes committed by the Serb forces. The latter suggestion – including the claim about the complicity of some women – would be presented a few months later by MacKinnon in her infamous article 'Turning Rape Into Pornography: Postmodern Genocide' (in: *Ms.*, July/August 1993; see also MacKinnon, 2006).

So, the authors of the protest statement criticised not only the positioning of Kesić and Knežević on the war rapes, but also the cultural, economic and social capital which they had apparently accumulated in the previous system and were further increasing thanks to their interaction with Western women's groups. However, no criticism was articulated about the capital or the privileges of the Belgrade speakers at the tour (or the other Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists). Although the MADRE tour was one of the Western (academic) feminist fields in which the Belgrade feminists participated as well, the so-called nationalist feminists from Karetá did not compete that much with them. The more important struggle was the one to be perceived as the legitimate Zagreb or Croatian (feminist) experts on war rape. This struggle in the 1990s was partially rooted in the tensions in Zagreb in the 1980s between the feminists who were already professionally established and those who were still students.¹⁹⁴

In their reaction to the protest statement, Kesić and Knežević rebuked its defamatory discourse – which was 'a clear study of labeling people politically' (*Answer*

194 See the first analysis in this chapter.

to the letter, 21.04.1993)¹⁹⁵ – and the four groups’ self-representation as the only legitimate speakers on the issue of war rape. They did not comment, though, on the claims about the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists nor the analogy with the Holocaust. The two feminists acknowledged the efforts of ‘Kareta & Others’ (as they put it) to publicise the existence of the war rapes, but criticised their recurrent use of both inflated figures ‘as propaganda to create the picture of [a] “satanic enemy”’ and the reference to mass rapes in Croatia although ‘such (massive genocidal) rapes have not been confirmed by independent monitors’ (ibid). Thereby Kesić and Knežević also reacted to the accusation of silence and suggested the signatories’ agreement with the official Croatian politics:

We are happy that such crimes didn’t happen during the war in Croatia. Is that our sin? Obviously, some facts and interpretations are not welcome in Croatia, where...people who don’t want to accept the only and official truth are easily accused of being traitors, or, paradoxically, for being silent (ibid).

The same suggestion about the signatories’ affiliation with Croatian politics was made throughout the whole text, but without ever explicitly naming the groups ‘nationalist’ or ‘patriotic’. In one of these places, Kesić and Knežević rejected the claim that the indeed good Western reception of their work was due to their good access (ie social capital). In that section, they also implicitly hinted that Kareta’s work might not be based on feminist principles:¹⁹⁶

The truth is that our project [Center for Women War Victims], which began last November, has gotten a lot of attention and approval from foreign women’s groups and nongovernmental as well as governmental organizations. We strongly believe that [that] is because our project is autonomous, non-nationalistic, basically democratic, and in a feminist way oriented to self-help organizing (ibid).

195 A somewhat different version of this reaction – but without any alterations which would be significant for this research – was published in 2005 on the website of the Center for Women War Victims: www.women-war-memory.org/index.php/hr/povijest/raskol-zenske-scene/80-reakcija-zagrebackog-zenskog-lobbyija [16/09/2013]. I use the version which I came across in the archives and which was integrally published in *off our backs* (May 1993c).

196 Although Kesić and Knežević spoke about ‘Kareta & Others’, this questioning of the feminist approach was actually directed only at Kareta. As I said earlier, Kareta was the only group of the four which was a self-declared feminist one.

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The indirect delegitimisation of Kareta's approach as not feminist was articulated more explicitly when Kesić and Knežević contrasted this group's positioning on the war rapes with that of the groups they were involved with and which formed the Women's Lobby Zagreb:

'Kareta & Others' keep on repeating that [the] rapes in Bosnia cannot be extricated from the context of the whole war in Bosnia. We certainly agree. But again, what is their 'context' when they emphasize it? They seemingly, deny all other interpretations and understanding of this tragic phenomenon but the national one, under the state-imposed ideological slogan: 'We are the victims, they are the aggressor'. Everything else – for instance, the legitimate feminist approach, in which war rapes are looked at from a historical and global perspective (without denying that Serbian militias rape in massive numbers and for the purpose of genocide) – is forbidden because it differs from the only approved truth (ibid).

In an interview during the tour Kesić expressed even more explicitly the feminist component of the work of the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist cluster. Without denying the feminism of the groups from the other cluster, she portrayed the one of the former cluster as being the legitimate and classical – I would say, orthodox – version:

I definitely belong to this one [group] which decided to stay on the feminist positions...There are also many other projects which I believe are also very good and built on feminist principles, but they just don't have the same approach. They think that [those] who are raped are Croatian and Muslim women, which is a fact in the large amount of those who are, and is part of the strategy being seen from the Serbian side. But we still think that a feminist approach, a feminist context, a feminist historical point of view and a feminist principle [which entails] that we are going to help any women doesn't matter what nationality she is, is legitimate. So our projects start from those classical principles (*off our backs*, May 1993d).

Kesić and Knežević also addressed the accusation of being privileged under socialism and thereby implied that the four signatories might have been involved in the construction of the case of the 'five witches' in December 1992:¹⁹⁷

When we started the women's movement in ex-Yugoslavia, at the end of the seventies, we were accused by the political establishment

197 See the analysis of the 'Women in War' gathering in this chapter.

of 'importing decadent bourgeois ideology', and were sometimes brutally attacked. Ironically, we are now being accused of 'national treachery'. Even sadder is the fact is that just as the official, 'ideologically correct' women's organizations took part in such witch hunts then, some new 'correct' women's groups are doing the same now (*Answer to the letter*, 21.04.1993).

They observed further that the four signatories were silent about any advantages they might have obtained during socialism. While suggesting their own distance from the previous system, the two speakers gave a few examples to point out that at least two of the signatory groups had not been all that detached from it:

[I]f we accept their approach, shouldn't we accuse 'Kareta' of being the group 'empowered during communism'. One of its members, Katarina Vidovic was a candidate on the communist list in the 1990 elections. In addition, the group was headquartered in the building of the Central Committee of [the] Communist Party of Croatia... We and our groups never had such privileges and benefits in communism. But neither are we so stupid as to think this is significant. 'Kareta' like everybody else, was just using the weakness and confusion of the weakened communist regime, which, in the end, was liberal enough to allow and support funding of 'radical feminist groups' in its building and under the cover of the official women's organizations... Or yet another example: aren't the real 'profiteers of communism' organization[s] like 'Bedem ljubavi' [Rampart of Love], which moved into the offices and took all the property of the ex-socialist 'Conference for social activities of women'? This is what we are reduced to when we accuse people without taking into account the context in which events or facts exist (*ibid*).

Finally, Kesić and Knežević also referred to the accusation of being in one way or another responsible for the Serb (sexual) war violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, partially by virtue of their alleged embedding in the socialist system. They clarified that Knežević's directorship of the museum – 'a monument of the antifascist appraisal of the people of Croatia' (*Answer to the letter*, 21.04.1993) – had not lasted long. Soon after she had become its director and organised an exhibition on totalitarian political design, which included both communist and fascist design, Tuđman's newly-elected party in power shut it down (*ibid*).

As to Kesić's direct involvement in a pornographic magazine, the two feminists explained that the pin-up girl on the cover was the only pornographic element in the otherwise liberal magazine. Not being that controlled by the communist authorities, it could feature affirmative articles on feminism, gay and lesbian rights, antimilitarism

etc: 'Even pornography itself was written about critically. At least one of 'Kareta & Others' should know this, because an article of her's [sic] was also published' (ibid). Kesić would later repeat some of these clarifications in her important rebuttals of MacKinnon's article in *Ms.* In those texts she also rejected MacKinnon's claim that the Yugoslav pornography had been one of the main causes of the Serb genocidal war rapes (Kesić, 1994; *Ms.*, November/December 1993; *off our backs*, January 1994).

I have not come across any published information on frictions between or among the Belgrade and Zagreb speakers during the tour. Similarly to the journalistic articles on the speakers tour in Germany in 1991, the North American articles on the MADRE tour portrayed the Belgrade and Zagreb speakers as cooperating with each other and working in their respective countries against the official nationalist politics and on supporting the (raped) refugee women (*Merric Life*, 08.04.1993; *off our backs*, May 1993e; *The ACTivist*, May 1993; *The Lumberjack*, 31.03.1993; *Village Voice*, 13.07.1993). Kesić indicated that there were disagreements between the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist cluster, but did not specify whether they had occurred (also) during the tour: 'The character of the war – we don't have to agree. This is a legitimate issue to discuss, who is guilty in this war and up to which extent is who guilty?' (*off our backs*, May 1993d).

One Belgrade and one Zagreb participant alike evoked in the interview an example of the discomfort which each had had during the tour and which had been caused by a speaker from the other city. These two examples depict the recurring sources of annoyance for the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. Belgrade10AN talked about the guilt which was repeatedly imposed on them by the Zagreb feminists from both clusters. She implied that the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists were not as critical of Croatia's politics as they were expecting their Belgrade counterparts to be regarding the politics of Serbia. Belgrade10AN illustrated this with a conversation she had had with Zagreb11AN during the tour. She had asked Zagreb11AN to stop talking to her against Milošević and let her do that, but speak instead against Tuđman.

Zagreb11AN did not recollect this conversation with Belgrade10AN, but the difficulties which she had had with Belgrade13AN. Whereas Zagreb11AN had spoken of the rapes committed by both Croat and Serb militaries, Belgrade13AN had preferred to speak in abstract terms against militarism and male violence against women. This had been unsatisfactory for Zagreb11AN. She had expected clear positionings on the deeds of the Serb forces because she had found it impossible not to be informed about them by then. Therefore, she had proposed that each should speak out against the politics of the state she lived in.

There are several significant issues here. Zagreb11AN said, thus, to have directed at Belgrade13AN the same suggestion which Belgrade10AN said to have given to Zagreb11AN. In both cases the reason for that suggestion was the same: the other had insufficiently accentuated the responsibility of the politicians and militaries of the state she was a citizen of. What is further important is that while Zagreb11AN was seen by the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists as having an abstract positioning, in a different interaction it was Zagreb11AN who had rebuked Belgrade13AN for employing an abstract positioning. Finally, Belgrade10AN disapproved of Zagreb11AN's insufficiently articulated criticism of Croatia in the same manner in which the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists criticised the other Zagreb cluster.

Some published statements show either that the above conversations bore fruit or that they did not happen during the MADRE tour but on (a) previous occasion(s). For example, during the stop in Toronto, Mladenović decidedly addressed Serbia's responsibility when she spoke about the positioning of the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists: 'We know they started this war' (*The ACTivist*, May 1993) and '[W]e are completely against the regime of Milosovic [sic] and [the] Serbian regime. We feel that they are the ones who are most responsible for the war. We also think that the other national leaders of the sides who are involved in the war are also contributing' (*MADRE*, 25.03.1993).

In her criticism of the other Zagreb cluster's positioning on the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists, Kesić expressed her recognition of the oppositional message which these Belgrade feminists were publicly articulating:

They accuse them that they are not critical enough of [the] Serbian situation which I don't think is true at all in any sense. I think they are critical enough, just as much as they could be, and they are one of the most critical political groups in Serbia, where there's hardly any real opposition. So if you have a group of women who oppose war and if they release pamphlets and letters to us that they did this, I think this is pretty much a sign that they don't approve of any segment of this war. They don't have to kill themselves to prove to us that they don't approve (*off our backs*, May 1993d).

In the same interview, Kesić was also critical of the way in which the Croatian government and the pro-state media manipulated the war rape figures and stories: 'Everything will have to be actually proven. Nothing must be manipulated, especially not in favor of our governments – none of them if possible – and nothing should be serving for the national and warmongering purpose' (*ibid*).

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As to the positioning on the war rapes, it seems that there was not much difference between the statements of the Belgrade and Zagreb speakers. To my knowledge, the tour was the first occasion where each used the term 'genocide' to address the Serb war rapes. Nonetheless, unlike some Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists, they also mentioned – albeit not always as explicitly – the rapes by the other warring parties and linked this war crime to the general (war) male violence against women:

[W]ar rapes are looked at from a historical and global perspective (without denying that Serbian militias rape in massive numbers and for the purpose of genocide) (*Answer to the letter*, 21.04.1993),

[W]e know from the individual cases, or from Amnesty International reports, that there are gang rapes by Croats, if we even try to say that, let's try to face that our guys are doing it, people are angry. All the militaries are doing it. It can be a different sort of crime. Sometimes it's only a war crime of rape. Sometimes it's a part of genocidal strategy. They really hate us when we say that. They won't accept (Kesić, in: *off our backs*, May 1993d), and

[People in Serbia do not know] that mass rapes are going on in Bosnia, that Serbs are raping Muslim and Croat women and the way it is done, that it's genocide...You know that *Serbian* women have been raped and the official media have all the same stories about how they have been raped, they have been raped in prison or individually [sic], and that's all true. But the media portray all that in a nationalist way. Of course we have this very complicated, contradictory situation as feminists. First we see that rape is presented by the media as a nationalist problem. Then we had to take step one further and say okay, it's a woman's issue but it's also a political issue because if it's done in a massive and systematic way and as instrument of 'ethnic cleansing,' so it's not only a women's issue (Mladenović, in: *off our backs*, May 1993d, emphasis in the original).

In an article written during the MADRE tour but published two months later in a Belgrade oppositional daily, Mladenović expressed the above positioning in a more condensed and clear manner:

The testimonies of women with Muslim names say that the Serb forces use rape, together with killing and setting homes on fire, for the purpose of genocide. (Systematic rapes are committed also by the Croat and Muslim faction, but to a smaller extent. They are judicially treated as war crimes) (in: *Borba*, 29–30.05.1993).

In closing, it looks like the MADRE speakers tour was the last event which was heavily coloured by the conflict between the Zagreb so-called nationalist and the Zagreb (and Belgrade) self-declared antinationalist feminists. Although the UN conference in Vienna in June 1993 was attended by feminists from both Zagreb clusters and from the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist one, I have not come across any information on conflicts between them. It was, however, at this conference that MacKinnon expressed her doubts on the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists' opposition to Milošević by asking them how come that they had not been killed.¹⁹⁸

How is this lack of conflict in Vienna to be explained? To begin with, the feminists from the opposing clusters did not speak to one another. Furthermore, the session where MacKinnon spoke began with the live testimony of a female Bosniak survivor of war rapes in the heinous Bosnian Serb concentration camp Omarska. Although MacKinnon's accusation that the feminists with a gender-based positioning on the genocidal war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were whitewashing those rapes was strong enough to incite many questions from the audience, the gravity of the story of the Bosniak woman left no space for debates (*Borba*, 14–15.08.1993a, 14–15.08.1993b; MacKinnon, 1994; Radović, 2002; *The Nation*, 09.08.1993; interviews with Belgrade13AN and Belgrade3AN).

The gradual disappearance of such conflicts after June 1993, despite the still ongoing mass war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is, in my view, due to several factors. First, the war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina lost their political and media significance both locally and internationally. Second, after the existence of different positionings among the feminists and the depth of the split became very clear, nobody attempted to bring together – let alone reconcile – the feminists with opposing positionings anymore. Third, the heretical challengers, the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists, moved to different (feminist) fields. They established their own networks there and did not come across the Zagreb (and Belgrade) self-declared antinationalist feminists anymore. In consequence, the struggle for legitimacy between them became obsolete. More precisely, as I explained in Chapter 3, Kareta and Women's Help Now continued to a different extent and in different capacities to work with MacKinnon and Nenadic on the lawsuit against Karadžić. In addition to this, the two groups, as well as their respective spin-off groups Nona and the Network of Multicultural Help, worked locally in Zagreb with female survivors of (sexual) war and/or domestic violence.¹⁹⁹

198 See footnote 189.

199 The possible overlap between these categories notwithstanding.

After the split of Trešnjevkica in the early summer of 1993 its (former) members seem to have disappeared from the debates on the war rapes. An important and, to my knowledge, only exception to this was Zagreb13N's one-time reappearance in 1995 with the already mentioned Croatian translation of Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*.

The meeting in Medulin (17–20 March 1995)

The meeting in Medulin was planned to summon the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists who had been encountering each other throughout the war years at events in third countries. This was to be their chance to discuss with one another the conflicts which had appeared among them on those occasions. The direct inspiration for this get-together was the conflict at the women's consultation in Geneva in the spring of 1994.²⁰⁰ That conference gathered feminist and/or peace activists from all over the post-Yugoslav region and was convened by the Women's Lobby Zagreb, with the financial and logistical support of the Lutheran World Federation, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the World Council of Churches. The latter three organisations wanted to end the conference with a joint peace declaration of all participants which could be used afterwards in the advocacy efforts to bring peace to the region.

However, the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist (feminist) participants clashed over the contents of the declaration.²⁰¹ A Zagreb participant recalled that the women from Belgrade had been unwilling to use formulations stating the extent of Serbia's role as a perpetrator, whereas three Belgrade participants recollected the same, *mutatis mutandis*, about the Zagreb ones. The Bosnian and Herzegovinian participants reacted to this conflict angrily – 'We do not want to be at the receiving end of this exchange of shots between Belgrade and Zagreb' (*Danas*,

200 Since I could not obtain enough information on this conflict, I chose not to analyse this event in much detail.

201 In her short report on the consultation, Svenka Savić (1995) observed that the organisers had not taken into account that three days would not suffice to neutralise the differences in positionings which were partially due to the very divergent war experiences of the participants. A similar omission on part of the organiser was, in my view, the choice to have the 'International Women's Solidarity' meeting in Zagreb in February 1993 last only a single day (see also the criticism of Helms, 1998 of the MADRE tour). While I do not want to absolve the post-Yugoslav participants at these meetings from their part of the responsibility for the conflicts, I would argue that the role of the Western organisers should not be underestimated either. Unfortunately, I am unable to explore this issue further here.

23–24.02.2002) – and left the meeting room. Their statement, uttered at a time when the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was still raging, left the involved Belgrade and Zagreb participants with a bad taste in their mouths. They decided eventually to call a meeting where those and similar disagreements and differences could be discussed bilaterally (Ćetković, 2000; Radović, 2002; Savić Sv., 1995; *Women's Consultation*, 1994; interviews with Zagreb11AN, Belgrade10AN and Belgrade3AN).

The American funding organisation STAR Project of Delphi International agreed to fund such a reunion of the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists, but given the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the meeting could not take place in that country. Between the neutral ground of Hungary and the Istrian region of Croatia, the Belgrade feminists chose the latter 'out of sentimental reasons' (*Informacija III*, March 1995). Although the peace had not returned to Croatia as a whole yet, ie one part of its territory was still held by the Croatian Serbs, Istria had remained untouched by any direct war violence and was a safe and tolerant enough location for such an event. As the already quoted information sheet stated, the

[t]heme of the meeting is conversation and dialogue about what we think of one another, and whether our thoughts and relations have changed since the beginning of the war, nationalism and societal hatred. Further: how much are we shaped by the territory we live in; ethnic identity vs gender identity; feminist solidarity in war; conflicts at international gatherings (*Informacija III*, March 1995).

I am not familiar with the manner in which the participants were selected. Some of them did not belong to those who had been encountering each other at conferences abroad, while others who had clashed on such occasions were not present. Still, most of those who attended the Medulin meeting had indeed often come across one another in the preceding four years. The intention of the organisers to tackle the sensitive issues was also visible in the presence of an American trainer in conflict resolution skills, who was there to give a few workshops and assist the dialogue. In accordance with the closed character of the meeting, the local Istrian human rights activists who provided logistical support did not attend the working sessions.

I have come across only three texts which address this gathering. The more report-like contribution of Mladenović and Kesić (1996) is fully dedicated to it, whereas Mladenović and Miličević (1996) describe it more shortly and more affectingly as part of their reminiscence of the several for them very significant peace-building activities in the first half of the 1990s. The latter type of description is also

present in Mladenović (1998), wherein the Medulin meeting is mentioned in relation to the activities of the Belgrade Autonomous Women's Center. If combined, these texts give a good indication of the issues which played a role during those few days. Their further weight is that they belong to the scarce (first-hand) accounts which indicate that there were sometimes serious disagreements and misunderstandings between the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists.²⁰²

Still, none of the three texts contains one of the first issues which the participants of this meeting recollected during the interviews: the superfluousness of the presence of the conflict resolution trainer. The anecdote which was repeatedly narrated to me with a certain dose of pride entailed the following: soon after the meeting had started the participants realised that the presence of an outside person for whom everything had to be translated into English hampered the process instead of assisting it. Having felt skilled enough to go through the painful and frustrating past experiences by themselves, they decided to continue alone (interviews with Zagreb9AN, Zagreb3AN, Belgrade11AN, Zagreb11AN, Belgrade13AN, Zagreb18ANA, Zagreb7AN, Belgrade3AN and Belgrade5AN).

As it would turn out, this meeting would be cathartic, especially for the feminists from Belgrade. One of the Zagreb participants, who had also taken part in the speakers tour in Germany in November 1991, attributed the special character of the Medulin meeting – besides being held in one of the warring countries and focused on the past conflicts – to the fact that its participants did not have to perform as members of their ethnic collectives in front of an audience.

[A]ll other meetings were...foremostly a performance...The three of us from Zagreb and the three from Belgrade did not get the chance [in Germany] to sit for three days to chat with each other and see where the differences between us were and what we have experienced. Instead we were [announced as] peace activists and put on the stage and we had to act. I mean, act... You talk about something, but only there on the stage, in front of those who ask, you realise that you do not actually agree about some things or you do not really understand one another properly. Something similar happened in Venice, Geneva, MADRE in America... All that was a game: 'We brought you peace activists, ask them.' This [the Medulin meeting] was not like that. We had the opportunity to talk without that pressure from the public (interview with Zagreb9AN).

Put differently, the previous encounters occurred in Western (feminist) fields wherein the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists were

202 See Chapter 2.

struggling over the legitimacy of their positionings (also) among themselves and in front of foreign audiences. Freed from the pressure to achieve something, such as produce a joint statement or precisely inform on the character and prevalence of the war rapes, the only agenda points of the Medulin meeting were its participants and their (previous) dynamics. That even a limited outside audience – the conflict resolution trainer, her translator and an American journalist – was not welcome in the end, additionally shows how needed such a secluded encounter was for those who attended it.

Nevertheless, the presence of audiences and conference agendas, and the absence of privacy and time had not been the only reasons why the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists had not managed to discuss the differences between them earlier. To do so would mean entering a political and emotional minefield, as witnessed by the following quotation. Žarkov (2002:61) noted a Zagreb feminist's recollection of the first meetings with the Belgrade feminists after the beginning of the war violence:

Only now I understand what was happening in these meetings. We were so physical! We kissed and hugged and kept [sic] each other's hands, sat embraced all the time. We cried a lot, and laughed a lot. And we brought each other presents. Little things, a chocolate, soap, whatever. Something to hold. But, you see, we were afraid to talk. We actually talked a lot, but there were themes we never opened up. Who is guilty? Who started it all? Is everybody equally responsible? These things we never talked about. We hugged instead. It was too much, you know. There were too few of us left. We could not bear to lose one more with a wrong question. So we kept silent and hugged.

What made the Medulin meeting additionally unique and laden for the Belgrade participants was its seaside location. This was the first time since the beginning of the war in the summer of 1991 that they saw the Adriatic Sea from the Croatian coast, but now as citizens of a different country: '[We] saw our sea. Whose sea? It is not ours any longer. The sea was the same as always, calm and blue, but we are foreigners in the land of sea. We need passports and visas' (Mladenović and Miličević, 1996:10). This fragment seems to have been inspired also by the scene in which the exclamation 'our sea' by a Belgrade participant was met by the comment of a Zagreb participant that it was not their sea anymore. This was a very painful moment for the Belgrade participants who did not get the apparently teasing character of the reaction (interviews with Zagreb12AN and Belgrade13AN).²⁰³

203 During my fieldwork in Belgrade I received two more confirmations of the bias which the

For these Belgrade feminists the Medulin meeting was at once a reminder of their pre-war life, a reality check and a promise of a better future:

[T]here were much more emotions than a text could contain... Nadežda was crying one day long, Slavica two days, Daša two days, I [Mlađenović] sporadically, Ljiljana sporadically, Ana was silent. But all of us were singing the last evening in the Istrian tavern with the Istrian women who were also crying from time to time. So that we would grasp the idea of new states, so that we would leave behind the images of concentration camps and the images of dead people with which we lived because we cared about the suffering of people, so that we would start making plans for the future, this meeting cleansed us and brought us closer to our Zagreb friends. We started loving one another a lot (Mlađenović and Miličević, 1996:10).

In the interviews, the Belgrade participants recollected the encounter in a similar passionate manner. They also mentioned the tears which they had shed intensively during the joint bus ride from Zagreb to Medulin and at the meeting, but especially upon looking at the sea. This was also the case with the Belgrade participant who had chosen earlier in the 1990s to explicitly distance herself from Yugoslavia and the reference 'our sea'. Being aware that many Serbs with a pro-Yugoslav orientation ended up manipulated by Milošević, she decided to – as she put it – radically assume her responsibility:

reference 'our sea' came to carry after the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. Independently from one another, two outspokenly antinationalist friends of mine from Belgrade told me in a similar wording how much they regretted not being able to refer to the Adriatic Sea as 'our sea' anymore. Being afraid that they might be considered Serbian nationalists, they found the situation painful and frustrating, since the Croatian part of the Adriatic Sea had played an important part in their memories of childhood holidays and school trips. Due to these memories, that part of the Adriatic Sea still felt a bit theirs, although they had no problem accepting its territorial belonging to Croatia. It was not a coincidence that these two scenes occurred in May 2009. Starting from that month and during the whole summer the streets of Belgrade featured a visible presence of posters and billboards from the Croatian National Tourist Board inviting people to spend their summer vacation in Croatia. The photos were depicting locations on the Croatian part of the Adriatic coast and carried the slogan 'Kad srce kaže leto, kaže... Jadran!' ('When the heart says summer, it says... Adriatic!'). According to the information on the website of the Croatian National Tourist Board (08.05.2009), this advertising campaign intended to prompt positive emotions, ie a positive appeal in the potential customers. Ironically, the effect which the campaign had on some people in Belgrade was to awake exactly those emotions which they were afraid of articulating publicly. To add to the irony, two of the campaign photos portrayed Dubrovnik (see footnote 177).

I was living by that [pro-Yugoslav] concept and when the war started, I had to deconstruct everything which I loved so much and believed in...Because of all those big crimes and tensions, I said that I would never again utter that that was our sea. We were always saying 'our sea'...And that was an excellent decision because I broke with one type of sentiment...A sentiment pulls you towards something which is politically problematic...I had to be done with that language (interview with Belgrade5AN).

Judging from the way in which the Zagreb participants described the Medulin meeting, it seems that the meeting did not have such a charge for them. Nonetheless, their recurring recollection of the crying of the Belgrade participants and their reaction to the sea shows that they were affected by the encounter as well. The meeting apparently exposed once more, but this time very explicitly, the dissimilar war experiences and the fact that one part of the participants (those from Belgrade) came from the country which had attacked the one wherein the other participants (the Zagreb ones) lived:

Women from Belgrade wanted the sisters from Zagreb to hear and know why some of them were crying already on the bus to Zagreb. Some women from Zagreb wanted their sisters from Belgrade to know why they had decided: 'never again [to go] to Belgrade' (Mladenović and Kesić, 1996:14).

The need of the feminists from each city to communicate their experiences to and be heard by the feminists from the other city indicates the shared feeling of not being understood and not having one's suffering recognised by the other side. Mladenović (1998) noted the absence of trust and the 'us' and 'them' divide which existed between the feminists from the two cities prior to the meeting. As I stated earlier, these issues started playing a role already during the first wartime encounter between the self-declared antinationalist feminists and peace activists from the two cities – the speakers tour in Germany in November 1991. So, on the one hand, there was a burning mutual need to have the other side acknowledge one's difference, while on the other, the feminists also felt the need to reconnect as women and sisters exactly because these differences were threatening the future existence of the gender-based solidarity and cooperation among them.

The insistence on the gender-based reconnection is already observable from the title of the text of Mladenović and Kesić (1996): 'Laughter, Tears and Politics: Dialogue – How Women Do It'. With the exception of the above quotation which states the dissimilar experiences of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, the rest of the text

CHAPTER FOUR

speaks of the similar – if not the same – manner in which women in general do things, including the linking of personal histories and societal issues through dialogue:

A women's dialogue starts from personal stories and arrives at the political level. A women's dialogue begins from tears and laughter, a five hours-long singing in an Istrian tavern, from the level mum/dad/me, from childhood and our grandmothers' stories. A women's dialogue starts and returns to the personal experiences of war, genocide, home, state, nation and develops afterwards to the exchanges of our political thoughts and standpoints on Krajina, Kosovo, Jasenovac, Bleiburg, mass war rapes of women (Mladenović and Kesić, 1996:15).

Although one the purposes of the reunion in Medulin was to create space to discuss the conflicts which had occurred at the international encounters, none of my respondents who had participated in Medulin mentioned a concrete example of such a discussion. What many of them mentioned, though, was the moment when they realised that among them were the daughters – one Belgrade and one Zagreb feminist – of two men who had been on opposite sides in World War II. In May 1945 the father of the Belgrade feminist had participated, as a partisan, in the summary killing in Bleiburg (Austria) of the Ustasha prisoners of war among whom was the father of the Zagreb feminist. Two Belgrade participants recalled this episode as follows:

I had not even heard about Bleiburg before that. You can imagine how that looked; something just pops out, resurfaces...I was bewildered, and I think the others were, too, [about] how multilayered each of our stories was, and [about] the layers which you could inherit.

Me: Even among the activists who had chosen a similar positioning.

Yes, how different those prehistories were (interview with Belgrade5AN), and

The anger of this [woman] from Zagreb, the guilt of this [woman] from Belgrade...In fact, everything was somehow important. And then the conversation started about where our fathers and mothers were, on which side in the wars... What came out above all was that almost everybody's parent was a participant or a victim or a witness of some terrible war crimes! *Each of us* had some crime...in her family heritage...*Lives were changing* because of the [war] crimes and all of us have some similar history behind us. The point was in fact that we feminists end the hatred that our parents might have

had because of the crimes which had determined their lives and deaths...You cannot even grasp what kinds of crimes there were; my generation did not learn much about that at school (interview with Belgrade13AN, emphasis in the original).

This realisation and the ensuing discussion exposed the existence of silenced places in the official Yugoslav historiography of World War II which were nevertheless still vibrating in the family histories of individuals. At the same time, this exchange disclosed that even among the feminists there were issues which they had not touched upon, not even before the wars of the 1990s.

As I stated in Chapter 3, the Yugoslav feminists-in-becoming had mobilised themselves and others by stressing the problems they were all exposed to because of belonging to the same gender. This had left no space for discovering and articulating the differences among them – a phenomenon which was further strengthened by the equalising character of the communist ideology. The Medulin meeting provided exactly this very needed space for a more profound understanding of each other's different backgrounds and sometimes dissimilar positionings, ie for connecting the personal to the political and historical (Mladenović and Kesić, 1996).

In spite of the cathartic moments and the importance of the meeting for the participants, the three already mentioned texts are the only published records of it. In addition to the reasons which I gave in Chapter 2 for the general lack of (scholarly) texts on the conflicts and differences between the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists, I would argue that the omission of this specific episode has also been due to its anomalous character (Douglas, 1966). The encounter both enabled the participants to reconnect as fellow women (sisters) and made them aware of the differences and tensions among them. In other words, the event partially strengthened the myth of sisterhood, while simultaneously diminishing it partially. The safest way to deal after the meeting with such an empowering and disturbing anomaly was to be silent about it. This silence not only manifested in the scarcity of written records and analyses, but also in the fact that the format of the Medulin meeting has not been repeated. The Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists have kept avoiding another such joint questioning of their accustomed classification of themselves as feminists whose unceasing and mutual gender-based understanding of and solidarity with each other transgressed ethnic and state boundaries.

The Belgrade Women's Studies Center (throughout the 1990s)

Unlike the Zagreb women's studies, which were established and run exclusively by feminists belonging to the self-declared antinationalist cluster, their Belgrade counterpart gathered from the very beginning both self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminists. Even the two main initiators and organisers of the Belgrade group, Belgrade15N and Belgrade11AN, belonged to different clusters – a form of joint work which was impossible even to imagine in Zagreb in the 1990s. In view of this peculiar cooperation which, moreover, took place for the most part during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the occurrence of war-related tensions was to be expected.

However, the existence of such tensions and their intensity remain quite unclear if one is to form conclusions only from the very limited and nebulous relevant published information. My interviews managed to throw somewhat more light on the matter, also because the knowledge obtained from them helped me to better read between the lines in the published texts. Nevertheless, many gaps and obscurities still remain, making this group an exemplary location for studying the silenced war-related divisions among the Belgrade feminists.

To begin with, the Women's Studies Center is conspicuously missing from Mladenović and Litričin (1993) – the earliest text which reported on war-related tensions among the Belgrade feminists. The group was neither listed among those 'where the non-nationalist statement is clear' nor among 'all other groups [which] had many problems' (1993:117). The group's portrayal which several years later would be written by Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić (1998) also did not offer any information on the war-related positionings of the group. The existence of any related tensions or agreements was also omitted. The author only presented the different views on epistemological issues and the organisation of the work process, such as the issue whether the knowledge creation and transfer should have the format of an *ex cathedra* university lecture or of a more egalitarian coffeehouse conversation.

Some (covert) tensions appear, nonetheless, to have been present in the Women's Studies Center already from the beginning. This can be inferred from Belgrade11AN (1998:492), despite her cryptic form of writing and use of questions instead of statements:²⁰⁴

[I]n order to be more specific in addressing the problems of establishing a Women's Studies Centre amid a war, one moment

204 Mladenović (2003) is another good example of this implicit form of writing.

should not be bypassed: was it the case that while assuming the anti-nationalist foundations of our Centre we actually wished to avoid clarifications concerning the matter so as to avoid conflicts? Later, in fact, this did erupt in individual conflicts and unresolvable differences in the critiques of nationalism which, in time, we learned to live with...Or, contrary to what Virginia Woolf tried to teach us – do women, in fact, have a country, or a nation?

Belgrade11AN, thus, set up a dichotomy between women who felt affiliated with their country or nation, and those who did not and positioned themselves more critically also regarding nationalism. When I asked her to tell me more about those unresolvable differences the activists had learned to live with, she said that in writing this essay on the eve of the group's split, she had made her 'last attempt to formulate it [the situation] mildly'. As to the differences,

[t]here were those who were not ready to accuse Serbia and the state politics of Serbia that much, and *especially not* the Serbs – that was markedly out of the question. They were not fools not to see what was going on, what was destroyed and how many people were killed; it was said that Šešelj²⁰⁵ was a lunatic and Arkan²⁰⁶ a war criminal, but that they were not us. Those were some paramilitary formations which were in fact not related... There was a refusal to see that that was a consistent state politics which was actually supported by the majority of the population. That was the conclusion which was hard to cope with (interview with Belgrade11AN, emphasis in the original).²⁰⁷

205 Vojislav Šešelj is a Serbian politician and organiser of Serb paramilitaries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo. He is currently on trial at the ICTY, charged with crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war.

206 Arkan, ie Željko Ražnatović, was a leader of a Serb paramilitary unit which had committed war crimes, including murder and rape, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo. He was shot in Belgrade in January 2000 without ever having appeared in front of the ICTY, which had charged him with crimes against humanity, violations of the laws or customs of war and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

207 In 2010, the same year when this part of the interview was conducted, Belgrade11AN's (2010) book on the question of responsibility in the works of Hannah Arendt was published. In the preface Belgrade11AN stressed once more her view on the collective responsibility of the citizens of Serbia, including those who had not committed any war crimes: 'If Serbia is to be developed as a modern citizens' society, founded on human rights, all those who want to be citizens of this society have to face the truth regarding what has been committed "in our name" ...Moreover, my thesis is that *the collaboration with the regime stems from the very status of a citizen, which belongs to the individuals, whereas the citizen's political adulthood can be achieved and acknowledged only if it includes the citizen's responsibility*' (2010:12–13, emphasis in the original). The question of the collective responsibility of the citizens of Serbia for the (post-)Yugoslav wars is not only one of the key issues which

In the introductory text featured in the group's tenth anniversary publication (Dojčinović-Nešić and Popović, 2002) there was not any mention of the presence of such 'conflicts and unresolvable differences in the critiques of nationalism'. The formation of two groups in 1998 was presented as resulting from the diversification of the activities of the initial group. Duhaček (2004) did not mention the split in 1998 at all. In a single sentence she spoke of the dissimilar positionings on nationalism in the group, but placed this sentence within her discussion of the difference among the members regarding the institutionalisation of women's studies, ie the academism vs activism difference. A certain overlap between those who were inclined towards activism and those who were inclined towards nationalism was suggested, as well as – implicitly – between those with a preference for academism and those with a preference for antinationalism. Although it was not stated, this dichotomy referred at least to the two main organisers. The so-called nationalist feminist Belgrade15N was more grassroots-oriented, while the self-declared antinationalist feminist Belgrade11AN was more of a theoretician. However, Duhaček (2004:45) did not elaborate on how those differences and the presumable concomitant tensions had been practically manifested and dealt with:

The suspicion that the academia would lose sight of activism, and should therefore be monitored, was in direct conflict with the argument that theory should have some independence from ideology, even from feminist ideology, if such a thing can be said to exist. What made matters even more complicated was that positions of unwavering feminist activism, though committed, were in some rare cases unclearly positioned, and in even rarer cases, leaning toward Serbian nationalism. This suspicion of theory has been hard to endure, even painful at times, since the vulnerable women's studies project had expected unconditional support from feminist activism.

divide the Belgrade feminists into self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist. It also divides the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists among themselves. Nevertheless, given the major role of the Serbian state in those wars and the accentuation of Serb victimhood in the Serbian politics and media, it is not done for these feminists to express a less radical conceptualisation of the Serb collective responsibility or pronounce themselves on the collective responsibility of the Bosniaks, Croats and/or Kosovar Albanians. Moreover, if they would do so, they would risk being depicted as nationalists by other members of the cluster. This applies, too, to overt addressing of the Serb victims, ie the departure from the orthodox feminist positioning which focuses on the victims of the Serbs. I started realising this pregnant silence when some Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists confided to me their dissenting views which are nowhere to find in print (interviews with Belgrade10AN, Belgrade7ANA, Belgrade3AN, Belgrade6AN and Belgrade4AN). See Chapter 6.

Finally, Zaharijević (2007:247–248), using Belgrade11AN's reference to Virginia Woolf, linked the split of the group exclusively to the existence of different positionings among its members regarding one's country and/or ethnic collective: 'The creation of the Women's Studies and Gender Research Center and, consequently, of AŽIN [Association for Women's Initiative] and some other initiatives led once more, in 1998, to a regrouping of the women in relation to their positioning regarding the famous standpoint of Virginia Woolf'.

The explicit presence of this connection makes the above sentence unique in the body of published information on the Women's Studies Center. Nevertheless, even this text leaves many questions open. There is a lack of further information on the regrouping (ie what exactly those differences in positioning have been), the split is portrayed as immediately leading to the creation of more – instead of only two – groups, and it remains untold that the split was between the two organisers. Put differently, the author asserted, but only half-explicitly, that these feminists had differently positioned themselves on their country and/or ethnic collective. Given that Zaharijević's text was written in the second half of the 2000s and she belongs to the younger generation of Belgrade feminists, her manner of referring to the split indicates that the avoidance of (explicit) portrayals of the war-related divisions among the Belgrade feminists is to some extent still in place.

The second indication of significant differences in the war-related positionings of the members of the Women's Studies Center is a discussion which has evolved around the question how justifiable it would be to shoot to defend oneself and one's children if an armed soldier would appear at the door. The only two authors who partially recorded this episode (Duhaček, 1998; Mladenović, 2002, 2003) used the reactions which had been uttered then to point to the differences among the Belgrade feminists in their positioning on nationalism and the (post-)Yugoslav wars. There is one inconsistency in these contributions regarding the timing of the discussion, but it does not affect the argument which I want to make here. Mladenović (2002) situated the episode in 1992,²⁰⁸ but spoke in a later work (Mladenović, 2003) of the second half of 1991. No temporal indications were provided in Duhaček (1998).

Both Duhaček and Mladenović (implicitly) suggested that not everybody had expressed an antinationalist positioning during the discussion. Due to the great scarcity of information on the differences in the war-related positionings among the

208 The author did not state the year 1992 explicitly, but said that the participants had been students of the first generation of the Belgrade women's studies. This information locates the discussion somewhere between the launch of the studies on 8 March 1992 and the summer of 1992.

Belgrade feminists, I found it very important to learn more about this discussion, including the names of the participants. My search had to be limited, though, to the texts which I already had at my disposal because the significance of the discussion became clear to me only after the fieldwork.

Duhaček (1998) explicitly recollected the participation of two Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists in the discussion. Mladenović (2002) stated that the participants had been students of the first generation of the Belgrade women's studies, while in Mladenović (2003) she mentioned that the discussion had involved Belgrade feminists in general. As I explained in Chapter 3, some of the students of the first, experimental, generation had already been active Belgrade feminists. Next to being the teachers in the first programme, they had also attended the other lectures as students. This means that at least one part of the feminists who had participated in this discussion had continued to work together in this group, making the parallel existence of (very) different positionings inside the same group very probable.

Further in the search I discovered in the appendices of the essay of Dojčinović-Nešić (1998) a version of the first programme which featured the names of the lecturers. In addition to these feminists, it is possible that Belgrade6AN, who spoke of being in the first generation, and Belgrade15N – the other initiator of the Belgrade women's studies – had also participated in the discussion. While the list of participants which I compiled is uncertain, it indicates the probability of diverse views: some of the feminists on it are self-declared antinationalist, others are so-called nationalist. That some of the participants had children – one of them had actually brought her young daughter that evening (Duhaček, 1998) – has probably also influenced their positioning, ie made them more defensive, and increased the heaviness of the discussion.

But what was actually said that evening? After her suggestion that women positioned themselves differently vis-à-vis their country or nation, Duhaček (1998) explained that during the discussion in question Lepa Mladenović and Staša Zajović were adamantly and on principle against the use of arms. Other feminists, whose names were not disclosed, 'were ready to use weapons at least in order to defend themselves' (Duhaček, 1998:493). Next to recollecting two similar positionings, Mladenović (2003) additionally classified the feminists who had employed them. She spoke of pro-nationalists who had justified 'shooting in defence some of the time, but not all of the time' (2003:161) and feminist pacifists or antinationalists who had been against all shooting. In the slightly earlier contribution from 2002, besides addressing the fragility of trust even among women who have known each other and worked together for several years, the same author made an important connection between the discussion in the group and the then recently changed outside context:

Since we did not know how each of us would reply, the concentration among us was incredible. Everybody was surprised by the answer of the other...Those who said 'Yes, I will shoot in defence' felt that they did not have trust in those who would not shoot because, had they happened to be together, the person at the door [with a gun] would have shot them both. Those who said 'I will not shoot' felt uncomfortable when they realised that many others would shoot in defence because of what that meant in the context in which shooting in defence was the basic ideology of the Serb war violence in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. All of us were antiwar, but that term was obviously very broad (Mladenović, 2002:12).

When I initially read these accounts I was surprised that the participants were (implicitly) named one way or another based on how they would react in a hypothetical one-to-one violent situation. Having read, however, Mladenović's above link to the outside context and this author's elaboration of the contradictions among the Belgrade feminists (Mladenović, 2003),²⁰⁹ I realised that the underlying question in the discussion was most likely not one's hypothetical reaction on a micro-level. Instead, the real issue at stake seems to have been one's positioning on the actual war situation in Croatia (and/or Bosnia and Herzegovina, depending on when exactly the discussion took place), ie the macro-level right of self-defence of one ethnic collective when threatened by another.

This research cannot, unfortunately, provide an answer to the question which feminists have positioned themselves in exactly which manner during the discussion and why. The question how one's positioning on this issue corresponds to the classification of the Belgrade feminists on self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist will also remain unanswered. Nevertheless, the mystifying and fragmentary manner in which this episode has been recorded both illustrates and reproduces the silence which surrounds the differences in the war-related positionings among the Belgrade feminists, including those active in the Women's Studies Center. It also warns against the simple referencing of the above works in the discussions of nationalism among the Belgrade feminists, given that the information provided in them is far from unambiguous.

The third indication of the existence of (silenced) war-related differences among the members of the Women's Studies Center is the conference 'Women's Rights and Social Transition in the FR Yugoslavia' which the group organised in June 1997. As will become clear from my succeeding analysis of the conference proceedings, it is

209 I have analysed this elaboration in Chapter 2.

very likely that this event has caused some frictions within the group. This possibility is supported by the silence around this conference: none of my respondents spoke about it, and I have not found any records of it in other publications. I learned about it by coming across its proceedings in an Amsterdam library after the fieldwork.

The proceedings contain three texts in the section on women's rights and war. Since the authors of those essays do not belong to the target group of my research, I will focus instead on the telling choice which the conference organiser and editor of the proceedings made in selecting those contributions (Belgrade12N, 1997). In the first essay (Smiljanic, 1997), the treatment of war rape at the ICTY was discussed in a manner which gave no indication of the ethnicity of the perpetrators and victims of war rapes. In the second article (Jovanović B., 1997), the author addressed the rapes of Bosnian Serb women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and criticised the unethical and depreciatory approach of the ICTY towards those rapes, in comparison to its treatment of the rapes of Bosniak women committed by Serb men. In Jovanović's wording, the ICTY was to treat the Muslim rapes of Serbian women just as it treated the rapes by Serbs against Muslims – as systematic, widespread and aimed at ethnic cleansing. Finally, the third contribution (Stevanović, 1997) reported on the dreadful situation of the women from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia who lived as refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The author did not state their ethnicity, but it is to be expected that most of those people had been of Serb origin, as fleeing to Serbia, ie the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, had been the safest option for them. There were no contributions in the proceedings which explicitly focused on Serbs as perpetrators and non-Serbs as victims. Mladenović, otherwise one of the most vocal Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists regarding the articulation of the collective Serb responsibility for the (sexual) war crimes against non-Serbs, was featured with a non-war-related article on lesbian human rights.

To understand the point which I want to make here, it is important to summon the positioning on the aggressors and victims in the (post-)Yugoslav wars which was held by the four Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists. Without ever denying the Serb (sexual) war atrocities, these feminists – all of whom were in one way or another active in the Women's Studies Center – were not as outspoken about them as the other Belgrade cluster would start becoming from March 1993 onward. Furthermore, the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists did not underline the foremost perpetrator's role of the Serb militaries nor insist on assuming collective responsibility for the (sexual) war crimes committed in the name of the Serbs. Instead, they criticised in general the nationalism of all ethnic groups and the (sexual) war crimes committed by all sides against people of all ethnicities.

The Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists, thus, kept using the positioning of equal responsibility and victimisation – which had also been the initial positioning of the other Belgrade feminists – but, unlike them, usually focused on the suffering of Serbs. This did not only concern the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo, but also those in Serbia proper who suffered from the consequences of the wars next door, the international sanctions and the NATO bombing in 1999. This positioning can be inferred from the extensive scholarship which the three academic feminists from this cluster have produced on diverse topics – texts which also indicate the existence of cooperation between these feminists in the form of eg writing introductions to or recommendations for each other’s books and manuscripts (Belgrade16N, 1994, 1996, 1999a, 1999b; Belgrade2N, 1994a, 1994b, 1999, 2002; Belgrade12N, 1994, 2000, 2001, 2003; Belgrade12N et al., 1995, 1996; *Republika*, 01–15.11.1995). Finally, these feminists sometimes referred to the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia as a ‘civil war’. This reference was avoided by the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists because it was seen as wrongly equalising the responsibility and military power of all warring sides.²¹⁰

The example of the Belgrade conference in 1997 is reminiscent of the situation in the Zagreb group Women’s Help Now, wherein before the official split in April 1992 one could find two types of war positionings signed with the name of the same group (see Chapter 3). Similarly to this, in the case of the Women’s Studies Center one could see the above conference being organised by a group in whose council there were three feminists who had started a few years earlier to (implicitly) state the Serb responsibility for the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia and/or the (sexual) war crimes against non-Serbs (eg Duhaček, 1995; Mladenović, 1994; Papić, 1994). The following mystifying and not further elaborated description of Dojčinović-Nešić (1998:213) might be explaining exactly this co-existence: ‘The selection of lecturers

210 A good explanation of why some activists find the formulation ‘civil war’ problematic is given in Fridman (2006b:117). One of her interviewees stated that among the Belgrade antiwar activists ‘many were anti-Milošević’, but ‘some voices were not crystallized enough in what their position was; they usually say it was a civil war, but what civil war? It was a war of aggression against all these states’. This quotation is further significant for the use of the word ‘crystallized’ to convey that one’s positioning has insufficiently condemned Serbia’s politics. Several other feminists have employed similar formulations to express the same. For example, the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist Đurđa Knežević (1994:4) spoke of a ‘very vague and seldom precise [criticism]’. For the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist Belgrade11AN some activists were ‘unclearly positioned’ (2004:45) and some statements ‘insufficiently politically nuanced’ or ‘insufficiently clearly [formulated]’ (interview with Belgrade11AN), and according to Belgrade5AN – another Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist – there were activists who ‘did not possess a political clarity and sharpness regarding the war’ (interview with Belgrade5AN).

is, let's say, very delicate. The question of "ideological suitability"...is rejected, but not the requirement that the lectures fit by their theme and contents into women's studies whereby the basic criterion is their quality'.

I would argue that the question of ideological suitability was rejected by not being, in fact, explicitly posed and discussed. It was rejected not because it did not matter to the involved feminists, but because their priority was to provide a rich women's studies curriculum. They gathered lecturers by virtue of their expertise on varied topics, and those with divergent war-related positionings avoided discussing with one another the issues which they knew or suspected were contested by the collocutor.

The fourth and last indication of different war-related positionings in this group is the absence of the topics of nationalism and war from the first three women's studies curricula: the experimental one of the spring of 1992 and the two regular ones of 1992/1993 and 1993/1994. In light of the omnipresence of nationalism in Serbia at the time and the vicinity of war violence, it is very likely that these topics were nevertheless at least touched upon during some lectures, such as the one on population politics in 1992/1993 and 1993/1994. This does not, however, take away the question why these topics were not paid any explicit attention in the curricula before the academic year 1994/1995. That year's programme and the following ones – 1995/1996, 1996/1997 and 1997/1998²¹¹ – explicitly announced at least three lectures on nationalism and war (*Leaflet Curriculum for the School Year 1995/96*, n.d.; *Nacrtno programa za školsku 1993/94*, n.d.; *Program nastave za školsku 1994/95*, n.d.; *Program u letnjem semestru 1993*, n.d.; *Program u zimskom semestru 1992*, n.d.; *Program za letnji semestar 1992*, n.d.; *Program Ženskih studija za školsku 1996/97*, n.d.; *Školska 1997/98. godina*, n.d.).

According to Belgrade11AN (1998:491–492), this omission in the programme did not remain unnoticed. The organisers of the women's studies 'were directly reproached and asked why it was that we did not include as the topics of our lectures or workshops the burning issues around us. In our enthusiasm for our women's studies this criticism was unexpected, painful and ultimately rejected'. Since this article did not indicate who the author of the reproach had been and did not contain any other details on it, it was only after the interview with the author that I could link this part of the text to the, up to then unknown to me, episode it referred to: the letter of one Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist.

In the interview, Belgrade11AN recollected that some of the activists of the Women's Studies Center were very much angered by the Zagreb feminist's – in their

211 I was unable to find the curricula for 1998/1999 and 1999/2000.

view unjust – act of teaching them a lesson while not even being around.²¹² Others, including Belgrade11AN herself, thought that the Zagreb feminist had a point, but that she should have also expressed her support for and recognition of the efforts which the activists had put into setting up the programme. In her answer to my email inquiry after the interview with Belgrade11AN, the Zagreb feminist in question confirmed that she had written such a letter after the group had asked for feedback on the programme, but she recollected the contents of her comments somewhat differently. According to her, she had asked the activists to position themselves publicly on the war since it was being waged in their name (read: in the name of the Serbs). She also mentioned, without giving any further details, that she had received one angry reaction.

Belgrade11AN was surprised that I did not know about this letter, as it had apparently stirred up a lot of unrest at the time. This episode is indeed curious: although my interview with her was one of the last ones, nobody had ever brought up this letter nor had I read about it in the organisational documents and the scholarship. The one sentence in her essay from 1998 is the only (implicit) reference to it. Not having seen the letter,²¹³ but being eager to find out more about it and the discussion which it had inspired, I asked the five respondents I spoke to after the interview with Belgrade11AN about it: Belgrade16N, Belgrade15N, Sarajevo3EXT, Belgrade13AN and Belgrade4AN. Since some of them had been very active in the Women's Studies Center, I expected that they would have at least heard about its existence. However, none of them could even remotely recall this event. In my view, just like the silence surrounding the 1997 conference, the silence regarding this letter exemplifies the hushed-up war-related disagreements among the Belgrade feminists. In addition to this, it also illustrates the similarly concealed disagreements between the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists and the Belgrade feminists from both clusters.

212 According to Belgrade11AN, some of them were especially provoked by the opening passage of the letter, wherein the Zagreb feminist had stated that she was writing it while flying to New York. While it is quite plausible that such a contextual indication made some feminists living in war-time Belgrade angry, it could also point to one issue which the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists had almost never publicly articulated – the irritation caused by the class differences among them. The Zagreb feminist was one of the feminists who belonged to the communist elite in Yugoslavia: her parents were former partisans and her father a Yugoslav diplomat. Another or an additional possible explanation could be that, although the Zagreb-born feminist was a resident of Belgrade and Zagreb alike, some Belgrade activists might have perceived her only as somebody from Zagreb. Therefore, they might have been (additionally) displeased by having their choices questioned by a person from the inimical city or, at least, by an outsider.

213 The Zagreb feminist wrote that she had not kept a copy, while Belgrade11AN said that she had the original in her paper archives, but that it would be difficult to find it.

In her 1998 article and in the interview, Belgrade11AN gave three explanations for the absence of lectures on war and nationalism in the first three women's studies curricula: the wish to obtain an official academic recognition of the studies, the need to create a safe place which would be as detached as possible from the daily (violent) reality, and the not publicly articulated – and maybe not even very conscious – knowledge that discussions of nationalism and war might lead to clashes between the organisers. To begin with, she explained that she had always been a proponent of the idea to have the Belgrade women's studies integrated in Serbia's official system of university education. At the same time, none of the initiators of the women's studies had any idea what these studies should look like. Therefore, she had asked some acquainted American feminist scholars, such as Alison Jaggar and Nancy Fraser, to send her reading materials and examples of already existing university curricula in women's studies. To have a programme which would to a great extent mirror those of the established and institutionalised women's studies was for Belgrade11AN a way to obtain legitimacy for the Belgrade women's studies in the attempt to have them recognised by the state. Consequently, the topics of war and nationalism, which had not been given much attention in the American women's studies curricula she had obtained, did not receive much attention in the Belgrade curricula either (see also Belgrade11AN, 2004).

Such a transfer of new – and supposedly superior – knowledge from a Western to an Eastern context without an accompanying critical juxtaposition and supplementation with the local knowledge and context is not unique,²¹⁴ but I see it here as shedding light on something else as well. The Belgrade feminists who had initiated the women's studies were not only beginning to learn how to set up the curriculum; they also had little theoretical background on nationalism. As I already stated in Chapter 3, in spite of the increase of nationalist discourses all over Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and at the turn of the decade, nationalism remained for the Yugoslav feminists a phenomenon which, while being a priori severely criticised and rejected, was not comprehensively analysed. So, in addition to Belgrade11AN's three explanations, it is also possible that nobody initially felt confident enough to lecture on nationalism and war.

214 The absence of local experiences and knowledge in the curricula was soon felt by the members of the Women's Studies Center. Therefore, in June 1994, under the coordination of Marina Blagojević and with a grant from the Fund for an Open Society Serbia, the group organised a conference with the telling title 'What Can We Do About Ourselves?'. It primarily gathered women from Serbia and several other Central and Eastern European countries (Blagojević, Duhaček and Lukić, 1995; Lukić, 1996; *Republika*, 01–31.08.1994).

The need for a safe place and the unexpressed awareness of the possibility of conflicts – the second and the third reason which Belgrade11AN gave for the absence of the topics of war and nationalism in the early curricula – should be seen, in my view, as connected to one another. According to her, the possibility of conflicts was at the same time also a reason to keep at bay the discussions on the wars and nationalism altogether. In a similar manner, the use of the self-designation ‘antinationalist’ served not only to express the group’s war-related positionings, but also to discourage open dissent and thereby create the impression of like-mindedness, ie a safe space: ‘[W]as it the case that while assuming the anti-nationalist foundations of our Centre we actually wished to avoid clarifications concerning the matter so as to avoid conflicts?’ (Belgrade11AN, 1998:492). The important function of feminist groups as safe spaces vis-à-vis the outside world was addressed by several Belgrade and Zagreb respondents – all but one self-declared antinationalist feminists. These respondents commonly observed that the feminist groups had helped them to mentally survive the war years, ie remain sane (interviews with Zagreb12AN, Belgrade11AN, Zagreb1N, Belgrade10AN, Zagreb10ANA, Zagreb7AN, Belgrade1ANA, Belgrade3AN and Belgrade6AN).

The absence of painful discussions of nationalism, as well as the painful absence of these discussions, was also recalled by Belgrade13AN. She did not see this absence as being unique to the Women’s Studies Center, but as a common phenomenon in the Belgrade women’s groups in the early 1990s:

It is a fact that for many years nationalism was not discussed *at all* in the Women’s Studies [Center]...None of us was capable in the beginning to articulate her standpoint and to confront her friend who thought differently. Those were not differences in thoughts and standpoints; lives were in question. Nationalism killed. To my knowledge, in those years we have *never* talked about nationalism in any women’s group, not only in the Women’s Studies [Center]. That was such an emotional issue to everybody that we could not distance ourselves and discuss it. Not in Belgrade. Each of us was defending herself, totally emotionally. I have always thought that we had to discuss it, but I did not know how. We, who were radically against nationalism, considered nationalism as contributing to death. The [feminist] pro-patriots perceived us as traitors...That issue was emotionally intense for them, it was emotionally intense for us and I know we did not exchange our points of view. N-o-t-h-i-n-g.

Me: Was it more difficult to deal with the conflicts related to nationalism than with any other emotionally intense conflict?

Nationalism was extra. I do not know whether there has been any other such taboo topic at the time, a *total* taboo. The Belgrade feminists have talked *only* about [the nationalism of] a third person (interview with Belgrade13AN, emphasis in the original).

This respondent referred to the avoidance of exchanging different positionings on nationalism as being particularly strong in the early 1990s, but implied that it had been resolved later. However, my interviews, the respondents' reactions to and interventions in the interview transcripts, the continual absence of publications dealing with this subject as well as the examples which I have presented in this section witness a perseverance of this avoidance among the Belgrade feminists. As the following and final analysis in this chapter – that of the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the war in Kosovo – will show, the variations in the Belgrade feminists' positionings on the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have not been the only silenced topics.

The NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the intensified war in Kosovo (Spring of 1999)

There are, to my knowledge, only three texts which indicate that there were different positionings among the Belgrade feminists regarding the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the war in Kosovo (Fridman, 2006b; Mladenović, 2003; Zaharijević, 2007). Fridman (2006b) actually spoke about the Belgrade peace activists in general, but my interviews have shown that one of the issues she addressed – the (not) signing of the appeal of 27 intellectuals – also affected some of the feminists. Due to this intertwinement, unlike in the previous analyses, in this one I also look at several statements which have not been produced exclusively by Belgrade feminists.

In an informal conversation before the fieldwork I was told that the divisions which the NATO bombardment caused among the Belgrade feminists were similar to the earlier ones among the Zagreb feminists during the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Given the constitutive power of violence, this analogy was quite plausible and therefore worth exploring, but what made it additionally intriguing was its absence from the scholarship. Unfortunately, despite the special effort which I put into addressing this issue in the interviews – the Belgrade ones in particular – I have been unable to fully grasp the extent and the contents of these divisions. I will, therefore, only give some indications of these differences and divisions here and thereby point to a direction in which they could be explored further in another research project. The

particular difficulty which I and my respondents have experienced in discussing these two historical occurrences was, in my opinion, caused by their more recent nature, the still ongoing strife between Serbia and Kosovo regarding the status of the latter, the silence often mentioned in this thesis concerning the war-related divisions among the Belgrade feminists, as well as the general dilemma among peace activists regarding the justification of military interventions such as this one.

As I stated in Chapter 2, the feminists whom Mladenović (2003) classified as 'pro-nationalist' in connection to the NATO bombing and the war in Kosovo exempted Milošević from the responsibility for the bombing. They only spoke of the NATO-induced suffering of Serbs and destruction of Serbia, while being silent about the Serb ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians. The other group of Belgrade feminists, whom this author named 'anti-fascist', rebuked Milošević for both the bombing and the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians. Among these feminists there were those who approved and those who disapproved of the bombing, and they debated 'whether it was a realistic option or an idealistic option to take a pacifist positioning against both NATO and [the] Serbian fascist ethnic cleansing' (Mladenović, 2003:164).

However, a bit earlier in the same text Mladenović was more critical of those feminists who had not, at least partially, supported the bombing by implicitly accusing them of not empathising with the Kosovar Albanians. She recognised the hardship and the fear in Serbia which the bombing had caused, but suggested that these feminists should have nevertheless taken into account the suffering which had not directly affected them:

[The] [a]nti-fascist feminists in Serbia who were not so explicitly against military intervention wanted to reach beyond their personal feelings of fear by trying to understand the feelings and positions of feminists from Kosova. Many other feminists in Serbia who had lived through the bombings and the accompanying terror did not have any doubts that they were against military intervention, now that it happened over their heads...Some peace activists who chose to agree with the military intervention in 1999 still remained Women in Black peace activists, although Women in Black was against all militarist action, ethnic cleansing, and NATO bombings (Mladenović, 2003:163,164).

I would suggest that this variation within the same text in the description of the different positionings on the bombing and the Kosovar Albanians indicates the laden character of the not very articulated tensions among the Belgrade feminists. Although my interviews were conducted six years after Mladenović's essay, these

divisions proved not to have lost their explosiveness. This was especially true for the frictions among the self-declared antinationalist feminists, including those among the activists of Women in Black. I will return to this later in this analysis when I will address the respondents' interview narratives on the NATO bombing and the war in Kosovo.

The difference among the Belgrade feminists in their degree of support of the Kosovar Albanians has also been observed by Zaharijević (2007). She stated that when it came to empathising publicly with women from allegedly inimical ethnic groups – Albanians, Bosniaks and Croats – the greatest division among the Belgrade feminists was caused by the banner of Women in Black which declared sisterhood with the Kosovar Albanian women.²¹⁵ Zaharijević did not give a temporal indication regarding this cleavage, but it is most likely that her claim concerned – at least partially – the 1998–1999 time period. That is because it was then that the exacerbation of the situation in Kosovo and the (threat of) NATO bombing made the articulation of such a voice of support increasingly pertinent for some Belgrade feminists and progressively controversial for others. This was confirmed by several self-declared antinationalist respondents, some of whom spoke of unprecedentedly apparent differences in positioning among the Belgrade feminists (interviews with Sarajevo1EXT, Belgrade7ANA, Belgrade5AN, Belgrade6AN and Sarajevo2EXT).

Both Mladenović (2003) and Zaharijević (2007) suggested that one's opposition to the NATO bombing should not be immediately understood as being a principled antiwar positioning, but first checked against one's positioning on Serbia's politics on the ethnic Others, the Kosovar Albanians in particular. Mladenović's rebuke of the anti-NATO state-organised concerts in Belgrade – 'the *peace option* became an ideology of the Serbian fascist regime' (2003:163, emphasis in the original) – should be seen in this light. The peace paraphernalia which were present at those concerts only concerned the bombing, ie the suffering of the Serbs, whereas the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians was absent from the picture. In a similar vein, Zaharijević (2007:250) spoke of Women in Black as the only group which 'had the right to condemn...[the bombing], without having that sound like finally conceding to the politics which was unceasingly in place from the beginning of the 1990s to 1999, and based purely on the perseverance of the pacifist positioning it advocated'.

Zaharijević contrasted the anti-bombing positioning of this group to that of one Belgrade so-called nationalist feminist, who had criticised the 'global women's

215 I addressed this example also in Chapter 2.

movement' for its allegedly unanimous full support to the 'NATO aggression',²¹⁶ ie for its 'quasi humanitarian and antiwar positioning' and discrimination between 'nations-victims' and 'nations-aggressors' (in: Zaharijević, 2007:249). Put differently, Zaharijević situated this feminist among the feminists who had not belonged to the same cluster as Women in Black and whose positioning on this issue had sometimes resembled that of the Serbian government.

In my attempt to obtain more insight into the claims of Mladenović and Zaharijević, I looked at eight texts of Belgrade feminists written during the bombing or shortly afterwards. Three texts were authored by so-called nationalist and five by self-declared antinationalist feminists (Belgrade16N, 1999b; Božinović, 1999; Belgrade3AN, 1999; Belgrade2N, 1999; Belgrade12N, 1999; Papić, 1999b; Belgrade6AN, 1999; Belgrade14AN, 1999b). However, the positioning of one of these self-declared antinationalist feminists on the bombing and the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians largely corresponded to the positioning of the so-called nationalist feminists. This was a respondent whom several Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists considered a nationalist in relation to these two events.

The texts can be divided into two categories based on whether the authors foremostly criticised Milošević or not and how they spoke of the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians and the Serbs. Nonetheless, there are also differences between the formulations within each category, such as a more or a less harsh condemnation of Milošević or NATO, or more or less attention for the suffering of the Serbs. Summarily speaking, four self-declared antinationalist feminists decried first the politics of Milošević and only afterwards the NATO bombing. They accentuated the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians, but also mentioned that of the Serbs. Their criticism of NATO, the international community and the media for their role in the bombing and the war in Kosovo was formulated without undermining the primacy of Milošević's responsibility. The other authors – one self-declared antinationalist and three so-called nationalist feminists – primarily rebuked NATO, the international community and/or the media for the bombing (and the destruction of Yugoslavia), as well as for the suffering and demonisation of the Serbs. Although they stated the responsibility of Milošević, they contrasted it with that of the other actors. The expulsion of the Kosovar Albanians was briefly acknowledged (Belgrade12N), mentioned in passing (Belgrade3AN) or overlooked (Belgrade16N and Belgrade2N).

216 The use of the formulation 'NATO aggression' usually indicates one's positioning on the bombing and the war in Kosovo. Those who were very outspoken about the responsibility of Belgrade for the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians and the NATO bombing refrained from using this formulation (Zarez, 11.05.2000; interviews with Belgrade11AN, Belgrade9EXT and Belgrade6AN).

CHAPTER FOUR

While Belgrade14AN (1999b:140) introduced her text with: 'Yesterday it was very difficult to write: I didn't have much time, but mainly it was because of the powerful impact of listening to friends from Kosov@',²¹⁷ Belgrade2N (1999) opened her essay with two stories of children with non-Albanian names who had been killed during the NATO-bombing. Papić (1999b) titled her contribution 'War in Kosov@, Feminist Politics and Fascism in Serbia' and Belgrade12N (1999) 'NATO Aggression of Yugoslavia: Structure, Causes and Consequences of the Victimisation'. Belgrade16N (1999b:31–32) focused on the role of the media in creating the situation, ie the causes of conflicts in Kosovo (and Yugoslavia) and stated that

[i]t would be logical to expect that the real causes of ethnic wars are based in religious tensions and/or discrimination. However, neither of them was present in the former Yugoslavia to any significant degree...[T]he discrimination regarding the ethnic minorities in all republics and provinces was negligible (with the exception of Kosovo, where starting from the 1970s, the non-Albanian population was exposed to intensive discrimination by the Albanian administration and the Albanian population in general).

Božinović (1999:174), however, addressed Milošević's reversal of Kosovo's autonomy which drastically discriminated against the Kosovar Albanians:

Then [in 1989] occurred Slobodan Milosevic's unconstitutional act. He annulled Kosov@s and Vojvodina's autonomies. The Albanians' response was a general strike. The Serbian regime then sent [to the] employed Albanians notices terminating them [sic] from all paid activities and hiring replacements for their functions.

Finally, in their diaries written during the bombing, Belgrade3AN (1999) and Belgrade6AN (1999) addressed the situation of the Kosovar Albanians in quite a different manner. A telling illustration of this difference is their reference to the same Kosovar Albanian activist. Both authors evoked their friendship and past interactions with her, but whereas Belgrade3AN placed the accent on feeling cheated and betrayed by her, the focus of Belgrade6AN's recollection was the victimisation of this activist:

You ask me about my Albanian friends...Viosa [sic; it should be Vjosa] moved to Macedonia during the intensive bombing of Kosovo. She called me the day before she would exit. She was very afraid. She told me that Rugova was killed, that she saw how the soldiers were killing Fehmi Agani and his sons and that everything

217 See footnote 8.

was lost. It turned out that none of that had been true.²¹⁸ I begged her to escape. She was shouting: 'How? How?'. The next day I got news from my friends in Macedonia that she was in Skopje and afterwards in Tetovo. She had a car and a mobile phone. A fax-invitation had awaited her at the border. She gave several statements for the CNN and the BBC. In these statements, she advocates the 'Albanian cause' and approves of the NATO intervention. I cannot understand that she had forgotten that me, my children, her Belgrade friends, are the targets of that intervention (Belgrade3AN, 1999:34), compared to

Then I saw on the BBC my friend Vjosa, an Albanian from Kosovo: a human rights activist, doctor, very beautiful woman. She spoke of the horrors which she had experienced while escaping from Prishtina. I started crying, not because of her story or the similar stories of other feminist friends from Kosovo which I had already heard, but because of her: she had changed, her face had the expression of a person who would never smile again, never be superficial again... I suppose that I look the same, I looked with fear at myself in the mirror. I remember when I went to Zagreb with Vjosa and a bunch of other friends to a feminist conference in 1996. The Croatian border police took her off the bus together with two Serb refugees from Krajina, and only the three of them did not get a visa (Belgrade6AN, 1999:121).

These differences between the Belgrade so-called nationalist and self-declared antinationalist feminists notwithstanding, there were also significant differences among the latter. Different from before the bombing, the self-declared antinationalist feminists no longer functioned that much as a cluster, ie did not produce joint statements. Some of them did this with other, non-feminist, activists. I will present two examples of these ad hoc collaborations: the appeal of 27 intellectuals and the statements of the groups gathering in the office premises of the trade union Independence.

The 27 intellectuals who in mid-April 1999 appealed to Milošević, the representatives of the Kosovar Albanians and the leaders of NATO, the European Union and the United States asked for an immediate cease-fire and use of non-violent means for reaching a compromise. In addition to this, the signatories declared:

We sharply condemn the NATO bombings which have severely exacerbated the situation in Kosovo and caused a displacement

218 Fehmi Agani was a prominent Kosovar Albanian politician who was killed on 6 May 1999 by the Serb forces. Since this concrete entry of Belgrade3AN was from 8 May 1999, it is very likely that at the time of writing the news of his murder had not reached her. It remains curious, however, that she did not add a footnote later to correct her original comment.

of people outside of the borders of, and within, Yugoslavia. We sharply condemn the ethnic cleansing of the Albanian population which is conducted by any Yugoslav forces. We sharply condemn the violence of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) against Serbs, moderate Albanians and other ethnic communities in Kosovo (in: *Vreme*, 17.10.2002).

While the signatories condemned the ethnic cleansing regardless of whether it was conducted by the official forces – the army and the police – or the Serb paramilitaries, they linked the deterioration of the situation in Kosovo and the refugee flows primarily to the NATO bombing, not Milošević's politics. As Fridman (2006b) pointed out, this formulation became one of the points of contestation even among the Belgrade peace activists who were not silent about the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians. One part of them underlined that, contrary to what Milošević was claiming, they were not fleeing Kosovo because of the bombing, but because of being driven out of their homes by the Serb (para)militaries. These activists found Milošević the primary actor responsible for the bombs and stated that the appeal should have been addressed only to him.²¹⁹ Others disagreed: they found it necessary not to gloss over NATO's responsibility for the human losses and the material destruction, as well as for the creation of a homogenising effect among the Serbs – the rally-'round-the-flag phenomenon – which further thwarted their anti-Milošević and peace activities.

Two of my Belgrade respondents were among the signatories: a self-declared antinationalist feminist and a self-declared antinationalist peace activist, both of whom were often involved in the activities of Women in Black. Rereading the text ten years later, the former said that she was not sure whether she would sign it again. She found it obvious that some of the utterances had been softened and insufficiently clearly formulated, although the text as such was not extreme. She disagreed with the construction 'NATO aggression' and the claim that the bombing had caused the displacement of the Kosovar Albanians, but assumed that she had placed her signature because the appeal rightly and explicitly condemned the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians (interview with Belgrade11AN).

The other respondent questioned her own endorsement of the appeal as well. In hindsight she considered it problematic that the text, next to addressing the situation in Serbia, did not state that Kosovo had been 'the epicentre of the bloody

219 In a more recent interview for a Serbian daily, Nataša Kandić – a prominent Belgrade peace activist who had refused to sign the appeal exactly for this reason – shortly reflected upon this, still insufficiently analysed, controversy. With one sentence she indirectly corroborated the comment that the NATO bombing had brought hitherto unprecedented divisions among the Belgrade (feminist) peace activists: 'When the NATO bombing had started, all of us showed our true faces' (*Danas*, 08.02.2013).

drama'. She also indicated her dilemma which accompanied the signing of the appeal, ie her creation of a positioning on the bombing and the ethnic cleansing:

There were people who thought that it [the bombing] was right and that it was *the only* way to stop the actions of...the Serbian state against others. The effect of that [the bombing] is quite questionable. I was listening to...a NATO commander when he was asked on the [BBC TV] programme *HARDtalk* why he was against the bombing. He said: 'Because I was nine years old in Berlin. My mother was an antifascist, but when the bombing started, we homogenised'. That is the question. I do not have the answer. At that time I was wondering what to do. It seemed to me that it was a positive move to speak in one voice from here [Belgrade], but at the same time, that voice was too benevolent for the regime we were under. In fact, the question is whether you had at the time two enemies: Slobodan Milošević and the NATO pact.

Me: One or two enemies?

Yes. Those were very difficult moments because you were aware of both your friends in Kosovo and your friends here (interview with Belgrade9EXT, emphasis in the original).

Obviously, the creation of one such joint voice demanded making concessions with some formulations one might not necessarily use otherwise. As the interviews with the signatories of the appeal show (Ristić and Leposavić, 1999),²²⁰ these intellectuals were everything but a homogenous group with a homogenous positioning. They held different degrees of opposition towards Milošević's politics and Serb nationalism, some used the term 'aggression' in referring to the NATO bombing, while others were less critical of this military action, one signatory used the very derogatory word 'Šiptari' for the Kosovar Albanians,²²¹ some spoke of the victimisation of the Kosovar Albanians by the Serbian government, others (also) pointed to the Kosovar Albanians' nationalism, and yet others hardly referred to them.

220 Given that most of the interviews (22) were conducted during the bombing and the remaining five immediately afterwards, this book offers unique first-hand material for analysing the then articulated positionings on the bombing and Kosovo.

221 In fact, 'Šiptari' is a derogatory designation for the Albanian ethnic group in general in all Slavic languages in the post-Yugoslav region, *regardless* of the fact that it originates from the name of this ethnic group in Albanian ('Shqiptarët'). I do not know when the term received its derogatory connotation in Yugoslavia, but it seems that it has not always had it. As Mrđen (2002) noted, this term was used as one of the population categories in the Yugoslav censuses of 1948, 1953 and 1961. It would be only in the census of 1971 that the term would be replaced with 'Albanians'.

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Nevertheless, it remains an open question how many of the activists and intellectuals still residing in Belgrade²²² would have dared at that moment to put their name under a statement which primarily, if not exclusively, denounced Milošević's politics and linked him to the ethnic cleansing – an act which was possible before the bombing. One good example of this previously existing space is the statement of the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist groups the Autonomous Women's Center, the Belgrade Women's Lobby and Women in Black, which opened as follows:

The autonomous Belgrade women's groups address the public to condemn the violence of the Serbian regime in Kosovo. The war in Kosovo has definitely started. The violence by the Serbian regime is a continuation of the politics of apartheid which the regime has been conducting in the past ten years (*Rat na Kosovu – logika patrijarhata*, May 1998).

Another example is the action of Women in Black on the central square of Belgrade in October 1998. Even though the month before NATO had threatened with air strikes for the first time, this group was nevertheless allowed to have a public activity in which each activist explicitly declared her continuous commitment towards 'firstly denouncing the murderers' from her country of residence and towards 'opposing the Serbian regime's politics of repression, apartheid and war against the Albanian population in Kosovo' (7 godina, 09.10.1998).

The existence of space for articulating dissent did not mean, though, that it was safe to do so. In his address to the Serbian parliament on 28 September 1998, Vojislav Šešelj, the then vice-president of the Serbian government, said the following:

If the USA decides to attack Serbia, it should withdraw on time its quislings, such as the members of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, the Belgrade Circle and Women in Black, and not leave them as hostages behind. We might not be able to grab each plane, but we would snatch those (from the aforementioned groups) who are within our reach (in: Zajović, 2007:66; see also *BH Dani*, 20.09.2002; *Naša borba*, 07.10.1998; Tešanović, 1999).

Even though the accusations made by the 27 signatories of the appeal were much less severe than the previously expressed ones of Women in Black, the state authorities in Belgrade called the signatories 'a bunch of traitors' (Ristić and Leposavić, 1999:209). Whereas such threats were not a novelty, this time the NATO intervention

222 Many publicly outspoken critics of Milošević temporarily left Belgrade during the bombing.

altered the context. Due to the marshal law another penal legislation was in place. Even more importantly, the appeal was sent out only few days after the daytime murder of the prominent oppositional journalist Slavko Ćuruvija in the centre of Belgrade²²³ – an act which made many Belgrade activists feel anxious (Ćetković, 1999; interviews with Belgrade11AN, Belgrade9EXT, Belgrade3AN and Belgrade5AN).

Following the media censorship and the prohibition of all public gatherings – except the daily state-organised anti-NATO mass concerts in Belgrade – the opportunities for expressing one's opposition to Milošević in Serbia were quite limited. One of the available spaces for exchanging information and ideas, as well as for producing joint statements, was the office of the trade union Independence. These semi-private mixed gender encounters gathered members of peace and human rights groups and trade unions, as well as a few feminists active in Women in Black and the Women's Studies Center. I have traced four of their statements, all addressed at different recipients. Without analysing these documents in great detail, I want to point to the positionings expressed in them on the bombing and the expulsion of the Kosovar Albanians.

In the general appeal (*Appeal*, 06.04.1999), the signatory groups declared to be '[d]eeply disturbed by [the] NATO destruction of our country and the ordeal of [the] Kosovo Albanians'. Despite their foremost attribution of the great numbers of Kosovar Albanian refugees to the bombing, which was also Milošević's positioning, these activists claimed their legitimacy as anti-Milošević and peace activists by accentuating their unceasing support to this ethnic group:

The most powerful military, political and economic powers of the world are for two weeks incessantly killing people and destroying not only military but also civilian objects...At the same time, in fear of the bombing campaign and military actions by the regime and [the] KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army], hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanians, in an unprecedented exodus, [are] forced to leave their devastated homes...[We] have courageously and rationally fought against war and nationalistic propaganda and in support of human rights. We emphasize that we have always raised our voices against the repression against Kosovo Albanians and demanded the respect of their liberties and guarantees for their rights. We have also requested the return of the autonomy of Kosovo (*Appeal*, 06.04.1999).

223 The appeal, which was republished in Ristić and Leposavić (1999), was dated 16 April 1999, whereas the date of the same document, republished in *Vreme* (17.10.2002), was 15 April 1999. Ćuruvija was murdered on 11 April 1999.

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The letter to the 'Albanian friends from nongovernment[al] organizations' (*Letter to Albanian friends*, 30.04.1999) was milder in tone regarding Serbia's politics on the Kosovar Albanians. This change was very likely influenced by the increasingly deteriorating political and general climate in Belgrade, due to the continuation of the bombing and Ćuruvija's murder. While calling the 'Albanian friends' to join forces and 'step on the road of peace, democracy, respect of human rights, mutual reconciliation and respect', the signatory groups equalised their own suffering with that of the Kosovar Albanians without any mention of the Serb forces' treatment of the latter. Thereby the displacement of the Kosovar Albanians was portrayed only as a consequence of the NATO bombing, albeit this time implicitly, and their actual double victimisation glossed over. The signatories also implied an equal responsibility of the 'most radical forces' among the Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, as well as the international community:

We are writing to you in these difficult moments of our shared suffering. Convoys of Albanians and other citizens of Kosovo, among whom many of you, were forced to leave their homes...This tragedy, yours and ours, personal and collective, is a result of a long series of erroneous policies of the most radical forces among us and in the international community. The continuation of these policies will take both Serbs and Albanians into [an] abyss...As citizens of Serbia, we today suffer destruction and casualties as a result of [the] NATO bombing, [the] armed conflict in Kosovo and [the] long lasting economic and social tumbles under the burden of the dictatorship's deadly policies (*Letter to Albanian friends*, 30.04.1999).

The third document, addressed to the government and parliament of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the republican ones of Serbia and Montenegro (*To the governments*, 10.05.1999), simply called on the state officials to accept the military supremacy of NATO and agree to work on a compromise peace solution in order to put an end to the human and material losses. The expulsion of the Kosovar Albanians was once more implicitly ascribed to the bombing:

The NATO aggression and continuous attacks against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have lasted 44 days now. Hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanians have been forced to leave their homes...Non-governmental organisations, [sic] have sharply condemned the NATO aggression against our country. But the organs of state must assume political responsibility, realistically estimate the magnitude of losses and damages so far, and on that basis take rational decisions on [the] further steps...We are at war

with an enemy who is many times stronger, and are not in a situation to set down conditions without concessions and compromises. It must not be allowed that a whole population and society should perish in the name of an alleged national and state interest (*To the governments*, 10.05.1999).

Finally, while the previous three documents appear to have originated spontaneously, the reprimanding letter to the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights from 21 May 1999 (in: *Lol@ Press*, July–October 1999) was a response to a letter of this organisation's executive director Aaron Rhodes. In reacting to the appeal from 6 April 1999, Rhodes had criticised the portrayal of the displacement of the Kosovar Albanians as resulting from the bombing and not from the actions of the Serb forces, and expressed his hope for a more favourable reception of the bombing by the civil society (*Letter*, 18.05.1999). The groups gathering in Independence reacted to this request for support to the NATO bombing with an increased disapprobation of it and the politics of the international community on the (post-)Yugoslav wars. In spite of repeating their continuous general condemnation of Serbia's politics, they only implicitly linked this politics to the situation in Kosovo:

The request – received in the midst of war, 'humanitarian intervention' and NATO aggression, in other words, in the midst of a breakdown of the legitimacy of public and political life, at a time of emergency legislation, martial law and very summary trials – asks us to lift up our voices and sharpen political criticism and moral condemnation of the Belgrade regime. Furthermore,...it is expected that, insofar as possible, we accept and even understand NATO military intervention in Yugoslavia...We have opposed both [the] ethnic cleansing suffered by Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and presently by Kosovo, and [the] NATO intervention. We have fought with equal determination Belgrade's murderous policy and the ferocious militarism of the Atlantic Treaty. Within this context, it cannot be expected of us to unilaterally denounce local totalitarianism while showing solidarity with the pretensions of the global hegemony...To end, please may we remind you that the brutal disintegration of the old Yugoslavia and the adjacent nationalist conflicts that ended in the ethnic catastrophe of Kosovo, took place with the complicity of European governments and international diplomacy (*Lol@ Press*, July–October 1999).

During the bombing even Women in Black did not articulate its positioning as explicitly as it had done in May and October 1998. In its appeal to the governments of the NATO member-states, besides demanding an end to the bombing, the group

requested provisions which would enable the return to Kosovo of the 'refugees, expelled and displaced' or their move to third countries (*An Appeal*, 20.04.1999). However, it was not specified nor implied which forces had caused the people from Kosovo – the term 'Kosovar Albanians' was not used – to become refugees, expelled and displaced. Unlike in the past statements of Women in Black, in this appeal Milošević and the politics of the Serbian government were not mentioned at all. In my view, these silent places are quite telling. I suggest that in a context of a state of war and martial law such silence was a way to maintain the group's pre-bombing positioning. By not saying anything at all, Women in Black did not depart from its positioning that the politics of Serbia was the force primarily responsible for the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians.

The divergent formulations in the separate appeal of Women in Black and the joint statements of the groups (including Women in Black) gathering in Independence probably indicate that different feminists were involved in the creation of the separate and the joint statements, and/or that due to the diversity of the groups gathering in Independence and the wish to create a singular voice, significant concessions needed to be made. That some members of Women in Black were in favour of a much more explicit positioning against the Serbian politics and Milošević, also and especially during the bombing, can be read from Mladenović's personal letter to the activists gathering in Independence (*Zašto nema*, 01.06.1999). This letter is one of the scarce published indications of the dissonant positionings on the NATO bombing not only among the activists of Women in Black, but also among the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists in general:

On 25 March 1999 the state declared a state of war. Since then my positioning reads: the Serbian regime is responsible for the beginning and the continuation of the NATO air militarist campaign against this state. This means that the necessity of opposing the Serbian regime and its leader has increased. At the same time, this political activity was prohibited. Unless I am allowed to publicly utter ten thousands of oppositional statements per day against the Serbian regime, I will not publicly position myself. In that case I also will not articulate my opposition to the other militarist formations which did not originate from the country whose passport I hold. I do not equalise the responsibility (*Zašto nema*, 01.06.1999).

Positionings like this one could have been the reason why some of my respondents – regardless of the cluster – claimed that Women in Black had endorsed the bombing, despite this group's formal (joint) statements which explicitly stated its disapproval. Put differently, it is possible that one's individual positioning was interpreted as the organisational one. At the same time, as Belgrade6AN and

Sarajevo2EXT have suggested in the interviews, the repetitive accusations which Women in Black had addressed at Belgrade, as well as the group's unceasing support to the Kosovar Albanians, might have been interpreted as an endorsement of the bombing. These interpretations have imposed, in fact, a false *Tertium-non-datur*-dilemma whereby opposition to the NATO bombing and opposition to Milošević's politics on the Kosovar Albanians were seen as incompatible positionings. And yet, the third option – being able to simultaneously criticise both NATO and Milošević, ie say 'neither/nor' (Cockburn, 2000b) – was exactly that which Women in Black officially, albeit not always equally explicitly, advocated.

For example, in the already mentioned appeal to the NATO member-states Women in Black demanded an immediate stop of the bombing. The group declared further that given that it had 'always been engaged against militarism, that is, against all forms of military intervention', this time it opposed 'the NATO military intervention against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia' (*An Appeal*, 20.04.1999). An earlier statement with the telling title 'Better Pact than War',²²⁴ which was produced and distributed by Women in Black at the time of NATO's second air-strikes warning and the Rambouillet negotiations, read: '[s]igning the agreement at this time is the ultimate act of patriotism and failing to sign it means [a] continuation of [the] killing and destruction'. A compromise 'leads to calming down of [the] conflict and an end to [the] armed violence' (*Better Pact than War*, 23.02.1999).

My interviews confirmed the suggestions of Mladenović (2003) and Zaharijević (2007) about the great differences among the Belgrade feminists regarding Milošević's politics on the Kosovar Albanians. None of the five Belgrade feminists – all four so-called nationalist and one self-declared antinationalist – who had been described to me as having a nationalist positioning (also) on the NATO bombing and the Kosovar Albanians evoked their expulsion in 1999. One of these respondents referred to an article of hers from 1995 where she had indeed mentioned the Serb oppression of the Kosovar Albanians and the denial of their right to self-determination and secession. However, she did not say anything in the interview on their highly exacerbated situation in 1998–1999. In addition to these five respondents, two self-declared antinationalist feminists did not address the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians either and also spoke only of the destruction and victimisation in Belgrade.

224 The title of this statement in Serbian, 'Bolje pakt nego rat', was an alteration of the well-known slogan 'Bolje rat nego pakt' ('Better War than Pact'), which had been used at the demonstrations in Belgrade on 27 March 1941. These demonstrations were a part of the military coup following the decision of the government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to form an alliance with the Axis Powers. In response to the overthrow of the pro-Axis government, Germany bombed Belgrade on 6 April 1941.

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These seven feminists firstly decried NATO and only afterwards – if at all – Milošević. The criticism of Milošević was mentioned in passing, while their criticism of NATO was more elaborated. It concerned the impossibility of bringing lasting peace by militarist means, the false premise that NATO was after Milošević (because the ordinary people were the only ones who were factually exposed to suffering), and the glossing over of the existence of Serbs who were against Milošević. The rebuke of this dichotomised portrayal of the Serbs only as perpetrators and of the Kosovar Albanians only as victims was also visible in some respondents' appeal for a recognition of the suffering of Serbs, as well as in the disapproval of the attitude of Kosovar Albanian women's activists at international meetings: eg their exaggerated portrayals of the situation in Kosovo or their unwillingness to communicate with the Belgrade feminists (interviews with Belgrade16N, Belgrade15N, Belgrade10AN, Belgrade2N, Belgrade7ANA, Belgrade12N and Belgrade3AN).

While the remaining seven self-declared antinationalist feminists mentioned the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians, they had different positionings on the bombing (interviews with Belgrade11AN, Belgrade13AN, Belgrade1ANA, Belgrade5AN, Belgrade6AN, Belgrade4AN and Belgrade14AN). Two were decidedly against and five supported it, albeit three only partially. One of the two who fully approved of it had even left the group she was active in because of the disagreement with the fellow activists who opposed it. The three respondents who were partially for the bombing also expressed their criticism of the international community and the use of militarist responses to crises, but all five underlined that the bombing had not just happened to the Serbs out of nowhere and that there had been a good reason for it: Serbia's politics (see also *Zarez*, 11.05.2000). Consistent with this accent, they dedicated more space in the interview to the expulsion of the Kosovar Albanians than the two respondents who were fully against the bombing. The latter foremostly – but not only – focused on their disapproval of the bombing.

It is quite telling that exactly these two feminists reacted very irritated when I shared with them in the interviews the comment about the analogy between Zagreb (1991–1995) and Belgrade (1998–1999) regarding the antinationalist vs nationalist split among the feminists. I would argue that their strong reactions were triggered by their perception of the parallel as suggesting that their positioning had been a nationalist one, or at least less antinationalist than that of some other Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists. One of them repeated her previously uttered claim that the Serbs had the right to feel bad about some issues as well, while also expressing her awareness of the Serb-inflicted suffering of the Sarajevans and the Kosovar Albanians:

Look, that bombing was disgusting and only a fool can say: 'Great that they have bombed us because we had deserved it'. Although, of course, that was crossing my mind as well and it was then in particular that I understood Sarajevo. At the same time, Kosovo's horror was present in me, but the one did not block the other. Both were present (interview, name withheld).

The other respondent rebuked the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists for not attending the gatherings in Independence in larger numbers. She criticised them for their separatism and hiding behind feminism because of being unwilling to get involved in risky activities, such as those gatherings or the action 'Better Pact than War'. She was also very critical of the activists who, driven by a 'heroic feeling of guilt because of the situation in Kosovo', asked for sharper positionings without thinking about the security of the activists (interview with Belgrade14AN). Further reacting to the analogy which I suggested, this respondent underlined that her anti-NATO positioning had nothing to do with the fact that Serbia was bombed. Moreover, her opposition to NATO differed from the anti-NATO positioning of those advocating a Great Serbian hegemony, anti-cosmopolitanism and so-called Yugoslavism.

The last issue which I will address in this analysis is the situation in Zagreb. The NATO bombing and the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians revealed once more the differences among the Zagreb feminists. The Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist groups the Network of Multicultural Help and O-zona sent out two statements, one of which was also co-signed by Nona (*Action Alert*, n.d.; *Priopćenje za javnost*, 02.04.1999). They expressed their support to the Kosovar Albanians, asked the ICTY to press charges against Milošević and his collaborators, and created an analogy between, in their words, the genocide which the Serb forces were carrying out against the (female) Kosovar Albanians and the previous Serb genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. In addition to this, in the statement which was signed by the three groups, the signatories asked for the entrance of NATO ground troops into Kosovo and for the opening up of the borders of 'Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, as well as Croatia' for the Kosovar Albanian refugees (*Priopćenje za javnost*, 02.04.1999).

The two statements from the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist cluster were less critical of Serbia's politics and less supportive of NATO. In its press release on the NATO air strikes, B.a.B.e. declared its condemnation of 'all use of military force, including that of NATO', but also expressed its hope that 'the destruction of Milošević's war industry will prevent further combat activities' (*Izjava*, n.d.). The group supplemented its antimilitarist message by recalling and praising the work of the peace and women's groups in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, such as the

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Belgrade Women in Black and the Prishtina-based Sisters Qiriaz. B.a.B.e. closed its statement with the gender-based positioning of support to and belief in women, 'given the fact that the victories and successes of each nation are observable on the warrior/diplomatic faces of men, whereas the suffering and the defeats appear on the faces and bodies of women' (*Izjava*, n.d.).

The other statement was written by Women's Network Croatia (which B.a.B.e. was also a member of) on the occasion of 24 May – the International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament. Quite unlike the statement of the Network of Multicultural Help, Nona and O-zona, in which Croatia was mentioned last on the list of countries which should admit the Kosovar Albanian refugees, Women's Network Croatia repeatedly underlined Croatia's duty to host these refugees, as well as all opponents of the war politics of Milošević's regime (*Izjava Ženske mreže*, n.d.):

While condemning the politics of ethnic cleansing, especially [that] against the people of Kosovo at this moment, we also express concern with the role which the government of Croatia has assigned to our country in the war in the FR Yugoslavia. Croatia, by joining the states which support the NATO allied forces, is obliged to bear the consequences of that decision and accept the refugees, as well as those who want to leave the war area.

In addition, the Network called upon Croatia to enable the return of the 'Croatian citizens of Serb ethnicity who live in the areas which are affected by the war' (*ibid*). This referred to the Croatian Serbs who, after having been expelled from Croatia in 1995, were resettled in Kosovo, as part of Milošević's politics of increasing the percentage of ethnic Serbs there. Therefore, the call of Women's Network Croatia for the return of the Croatian citizens convened the implicit criticism of the Croatian authorities for driving out the Croatian Serbs in 1995 and obstructing their return after the end of the war in Croatia.

These different positionings between the two Zagreb clusters appear not to have led to confrontations in 1999 as those taking place between 1991 and 1995. The feminists from each cluster sent out their press releases to their networks, but the two clusters did not interact with each other on that issue, ie did not fight within the same field for obtaining legitimacy of their positioning on the war in Serbia. This confirms once more that the main struggle for legitimacy between the Zagreb so-called nationalist and self-declared antinationalist feminists had taken place during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Conclusion

When in early 1990 several Zagreb feminists put forward the initiative for founding a pan-Yugoslav feminist umbrella organisation, the opposition which one part of the Yugoslav feminists expressed was later interpreted by some Yugoslav feminists as indicating nationalism. Others negated that resolutely or partially and pointed to the non-nationalism-related sources of conflict: the proposed hierarchical organisational format and the tensions between the established and newcomer feminists or those between academics and activists.

The absence of a direct exchange between the most affected parties and the presence of indirect communication through essays in (international) publications, which did not contribute to a better understanding of each other's positionings, are exemplary for the way in which the war-related tensions would be dealt with. The same is true for the later accusations of nationalism and denial of the war reality which were articulated to Western (funding) audiences in printed and oral accounts and aimed at increasing the legitimacy of the author and decreasing that of the criticised feminists. In a context where the feminists were political agents who fought for the legitimacy of their own positioning, ie definition of the situation, those attempts at (de)legitimation held a significant place, especially since they were often related to access to funds, networks, conferences, trainings and other resources.

In the first months of the war in Croatia the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists were confronted with the realisation how progressively profound the gap between Serbia and Croatia has started to become. Not only did the war affect each city differently, but also, given the disruption of the information, communication and transportation channels, the feminists from each city became as good as unfamiliar with the situation in the other city and country. The subsequent divergent perceptions of the war and the extent of the responsibility of each warring side caused tensions and, sometimes, also severe accusations. Those from one city felt misunderstood, disrespected and hurt by their (former) sisters from the other city, leading to a lot of confusion, disbelief, distrust, disappointment, as well as pain and anger on each side.

While the diverse experiences and perceptions between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists remained in place, it gradually started to become clear that a serious split was coming into existence within Zagreb. One part of the feminists there – the so-called nationalist ones – started using war-related positionings which resembled to a great extent those of the Croatian state and offered a black-and-white portrayal of Croatia as the victim of Serbian aggression. This dichotomy extended to the Belgrade feminists as well. They were seen as belonging to the inimical ethnic group and – by

some of these Zagreb feminists – as complicit with Milošević's politics. The other Zagreb feminists, the self-declared antinationalist ones, chose to maintain the cooperation with the Belgrade feminists despite the differences in positionings and the risk which such a move entailed in Croatia. Their perception of the war was more complex. It attended, too, to the utterances of Croat nationalism and did not only criticise the politics of the Serbian government, but also those of its Croatian counterpart and its responsibility for the war in Croatia.

This led to an intense struggle for legitimacy between the Zagreb feminists which was foremostly carried out in the interactions with Western audiences and included to a great extent the use of positive self-ascribed designations and negative ones which were ascribed to the other cluster. After the practice of war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia was disclosed in the summer of 1992 the two Zagreb clusters adopted different positionings. The self-declared antinationalist feminists focused on the gender component of the rapes and thereby kept using what had been the pre-war positioning on (war) rape among the Yugoslav feminists. From late 1992 onward, these Zagreb feminists nuanced their gender-based positioning and started speaking – albeit not always equally explicitly – about the greater prevalence of the war rapes committed by the Serb forces. They never failed, though, to underline the gender component of the rapes and criticise all use of exaggerated war rape stories and figures, including that by the other Zagreb cluster. When the Bosnian Croat forces, supported by Croatia, started fighting with the Bosniak forces in the spring of 1993, the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists rebuked these Croat politics and spoke up against the (sexual) war crimes of the Bosnian Croat forces.

The Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists put great efforts into challenging the gender-based positioning on the war rapes which was not only the dominant, orthodox, positioning among the Yugoslav feminists, but also among the Western ones. Their task was additionally laborious because they had on average less cultural, economic and social capital than the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. In trying to increase the legitimacy of their definition of the war situation and their own legitimacy as the only authentically motivated advocates of the cause of the (raped) refugee women, the so-called nationalist feminists also resorted to denouncing the other Zagreb cluster (and, to a much smaller extent, its Belgrade counterpart). In the letters which they sent to Western feminist authors, groups and publications, they accused the other Zagreb feminists of working against the interests of women – (raped) refugee women in particular – and being covert endorsers of the Serb genocidal politics against the Bosniak and Croat people.

The lesser security of the heretical positioning and position of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists in the (academic) feminist fields was also visible in their lack of a public reaction to the Bosniak-Croat war. Not wanting to disturb their conceptualisation of the (Bosnian) Serbs as the only (sexual) perpetrators – the positioning they employed in the struggle for legitimacy – they chose not to pronounce themselves at all on this war. Nevertheless, despite these two very different positionings, the two Zagreb clusters did not differ much in their practical work with (raped) refugee women. Both clusters provided different types of assistance to these women, such as psychosocial support and easier access to humanitarian help and health services.

The Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists also made the daring choice not to cease the cooperation with the Zagreb feminists, ie with those who were still interested in such cooperation. However, when they met their Zagreb counterparts at conferences abroad, many of them felt that guilt was imposed upon them because of the perpetrator's role of the country whose citizens they were (this was even more so the case in their interactions with the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists). The Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists were criticised by their Zagreb counterparts for insufficiently accentuating the foremost responsibility of Serbia for the wars and war rapes. However, their positioning of equal victimisation and responsibility was already very divergent from the one of the Serbian state, which conceptualised the Serbs only as the victims of the perpetrating deeds of Bosniaks and Croats. At the same time, these Belgrade feminists also objected – in a very similar manner – to the positioning of their Zagreb counterparts. Even though the latter's positioning was also quite dissimilar from the one of Zagreb, the former did not consider it sufficiently explicit on the Croat responsibility for the (sexual) war violence.

Another contested issue among the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists was the former's continuous affiliation with the vanished country Yugoslavia, which was also manifested in maritime nostalgia, ie the nostalgia for the Croatian Adriatic coast. The feeling of loss which these Belgrade feminists expressed with regard to the Adriatic Sea, as well as their use of the pre-war reference 'our sea' even after the beginning of the war in Croatia, irritated their Zagreb counterparts. They saw these utterances as not taking the new geopolitical reality into account and resembling the Serb expansionist discourse about the creation of Great Serbia. In turn, the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists felt hurt and offended by these remarks because they silenced their (peacetime) memories and experiences.

These varied and laden perceptions of each other's positionings, which were experienced in the encounters in third countries throughout the war years, created the

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need among the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists to meet in private, ie outside the official conference settings. The idea was to discuss openly with one another the issues which had led to conflicts and share with each other the emotions and the positionings which had been left unexpressed. However, the single time when such a meeting was convened – in Croatia in March 1995, in a coastal area which had been untouched by the war violence – the experience was particularly emotionally charged. This was not only due to the weight of the wars and previous encounters, the seaside location and the fact that it was the first time since the beginning of the wars that the activists met in one of ‘their’ countries. The experience was hard to cope with also because of the realisation that despite their strong commitment towards the gender-based solidarity among them and the boundary transgressing aspect of their work, there were many profound and not all that easily reconcilable differences among them. Some of these differences were grounded in the (previously unshared) familial histories of World War II.

Even though the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists had started off with a strict gender-based positioning on the war rapes and the positioning of equal responsibility and victimisation of all warring sides, by the spring of 1993 they began to accentuate the Serb responsibility. Hereby, and rather counterintuitively, the positioning of the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists on the (sexual) perpetrators and victims approached the corresponding one of the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists. This change of positioning was caused, first, by the appearance in early 1993 of more reliable accounts of and figures on the preponderance of the Serb war rapes. Second, it was a consequence of these Belgrade feminists’ encounters with Zagreb feminists from both clusters at various events in third countries. During those interactions the latter have demanded from the former a much sharper criticism of Serbia’s politics and a straightforward acknowledgment of its greater share in the (sexual) war violence.

The focus on the Serb responsibility and the (sexual) war crimes committed by the Serb forces meant that the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists became the heretical challengers in the Belgrade feminist field. The Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists maintained the previously dominant positioning. Due to the greater number of self-declared antinationalist feminists and their much more extensive interaction with Western feminists and funders, the heretical positioning soon became the orthodox one and the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists ended up as heretical challengers with less symbolic capital. Their positioning – which was foremostly expressed in scholarly works – was also nuanced by adding ethnicity, although in a different manner than that used by the Belgrade self-declared

antinationalist feminists. While the latter accentuated the Serb responsibility, the so-called nationalist feminists focused on the Serb victimisation. Nonetheless, they never denied the at least partial responsibility of Serbia and sometimes explicitly disapproved of its politics (although not in such fervent terms as the other Belgrade cluster).

These dissimilar positionings did not, however, lead to such a clearly pronounced split in the Belgrade feminist field as had been the case in Zagreb. The large role of Serbia and the Serb militaries in the (sexual) war violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, as well as the state positioning of exclusive Serb victimisation, silenced the creation and/or expression of some positionings. It made it impossible for the feminists to exempt the Serb politics from responsibility even though they differed in their understanding of the extent of this responsibility. At the same time, the self-declared antinationalist feminists who wanted to (slightly) depart from the dominant feminist positioning and also speak about the Serb victimisation did not do so publicly. They were afraid that they would thereby approach the positioning of the Serbian authorities, be consequently perceived by other feminists from that cluster as nationalists, and lose their legitimacy as antinationalists.

This internal struggle for legitimacy among the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists and the absence of such struggle among the Belgrade so-called nationalist ones points to the difference between these clusters, ie to the caution which needs to be applied to the treatment of the so-called nationalist feminists as a cluster. Next to not struggling among themselves for legitimacy, at least not within the feminist field, the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists did not compete much with the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists either. This was also due to the different fields in which the feminists from the two clusters predominantly moved. The main Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists were foremostly academics and the self-declared antinationalist ones mainly grassroots activists. Even when the feminists from the two clusters worked together in the Women's Studies Center up to its split in 1998 – a type of cooperation which was impossible to maintain in Zagreb – the legacy of Serbia's politics, as well as the wish to keep the diverse expertise within the group, silenced the (extensive) articulation of opposing positionings.

A more profound and disturbing, but not more extensively recorded, split among the Belgrade feminists was the one regarding the NATO bombing and the intensified war in Kosovo in the spring of 1999. The bombing was the first time in the 1990s that direct military violence was experienced in Belgrade and Serbia. Its constitutive power, as well as the dilemma regarding the justification of military intervention, brought a division among the self-declared antinationalist feminists. One part of them was for the intervention due to the anger and despair which were

caused by the perseverance of Serbia's warmongering politics. These feminists' sharp rebuke of the Serb ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians was shared by the self-declared antinationalist feminists who disapproved of the bombing as a method of exerting political pressure. Other feminists from this cluster, however, did not talk about the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians at all, but only of the victimisation which was induced by the bombing. In other words, they addressed – more or less explicitly – only the suffering of the Serbs. This was also the positioning of the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists, as well as of the Serbian government. Due to this overlap, the self-declared antinationalist feminists who fervently disapproved of the bombing (while also addressing the ethnic cleaning) felt that their legitimacy as antinationalists was endangered.

The NATO bombing did not cause any turmoil among the Zagreb feminists even though they had different positionings. These positionings were expressed through statements, but no direct confrontation and struggle for legitimacy took place among the two clusters. The so-called nationalist feminists were supportive of NATO and spoke about a continuum between Serbia's genocidal politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and those in Kosovo. Unlike them, the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists opposed both the bombing and Serbia's politics. These feminists did not homogenise the Serbs, but mentioned the existence in the country of opponents of Serbia's politics. Finally, they were also more pronounced than the other Zagreb cluster about Croatia's duty to accept the Kosovar Albanian refugees, and did not forget to remind the Croatian government about its responsibility for driving out the Croatian Serbs in 1995.

In the following chapter I will compare the life stories of the key producers of the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminist positionings. The first goal of that chapter is to explore the biographical differences and similarities between the main Belgrade and Zagreb respondents, while the second goal is to inquire into the possible relations between one's biographical characteristics and participation in one of the clusters.