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**War, Feminist Activism and Identity in Croatia (1990 –1995):  
Case Study of four Feminist NGOs**

A Research Paper presented by:

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## **Abstract**

This study is concerned with feminist activism in Croatia in the years of the war from 1991 - 1995, and the impact of feminist and national identity on feminist activism. The research is limited to four feminist NGO's and their activists. The objectives of this study is to explore the Croatian feminist activism in relation to activists definitions of feminist and national identities in the context of war and to give recognition to women's activism during the war in Croatia in 1991-95. The study is qualitative and explorative using primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through interviews, during fieldwork in Croatia. My main theoretical approaches are derived from the analyses of national and ethnic identities, feminist critique of these concepts, and studies of women and war.

I looked at how women define their gender, feminist and ethnic identities at the individual level and then at organisational level; how those feminist organisations were established, and how they cooperated with each other. The main point of disputes and differentiations among feminists was an understanding of war rape. Some feminists emphasised the importance of ethnicity, others talked about women being raped because they were women, in the first place. Dominant discourses were focussed on ethnicity as main element of exclusion or inclusion, which was marked by women as symbolic and bodily markers of those ethnic boundaries.

This research paper shows that feminist activists in Croatia have found many different ways to deal with the boundaries set by newly established state. Some allowed the victim-status as morally just only to victims within those boundaries, ethnically defined. Others rejected the primacy of ethnically defined victims and perpetrators, and focussed on the gender aspect of war crimes against women.



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*Every initiative was a form of resistance to something. SOS-telephone was a form of resistance to violence against women. Anti-War Campaign was a form of resistance against militarism, in general against possibility of the war, leading party, resistance to war. (Bagic, in Barilar, 2000: 270).*

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1. The Problem and the Background**

This research is concerned with feminist activism in Croatia in the years of the war that started with the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991, and the impact of feminist and national identity on feminist activism. More specifically, it is concerned with how nationalist and anti-nationalist feminist activists defined their identities before, during and after the war. The research is limited to four feminist NGO's situated in the capital cities that were among the first to organise and provide help. War, violence and suffering of thousands of women had motivated feminist women in both nationalist and anti-nationalist organizations to organize themselves and had thus contributed to increased women's activism. Being myself one of the activists in one of the organisations that is researched here I aspire to contribute to the understanding and recognition of women's activism during that period.

To understand the dynamics of women's activism during and after the war it is necessary to understand the specificities of women's position and activism after the World War II and during the socialist period in Yugoslavia.

During the war women were participating in resistance movement as partisans and supporters of antifascist struggle against Nazism. After the World War II women in former Yugoslavia were organised in several

organizations, those emphasised the importance of working with women and gender equality, mainly influenced by leading Communist party and state authorities.

In the Antifascist Women's Front (AFZ) which was formed in 1942, large number of women participated actively in the battle and supported combatants. The main goal at the beginning of the war was the mobilisation of women against the common enemy<sup>1</sup> – and later after the war rebuilding of the country, consolidation of socialist society and revolutionary government, and functioning of everyday life. AFZ, at that time "the only descendent and successor of [feminist and socialist] traditions<sup>2</sup> of women's movement in Yugoslavia" (Sklevicky, 1996:107), was transformed after ten years, and later the Conference for Social Activities of Women was formed as a state supported women's organization.

The first independent women's initiatives started in the seventies and eighties, with emergence of the Second wave feminism. During that period the first independent initiatives were going on. In the 1970's women from academia – most of them feminists - were organizing public debates on role of women in society, in Zagreb. Similarly, women from academia in Belgrade and Ljubljana were organising debates over issues of women's emancipation. The feminist conference "The Women's Question" was held in Belgrade in 1978. Later, the first women's SOS hotline for battered women in the entire region of Eastern Europe was formed in Zagreb and afterwards in Belgrade and Ljubljana. Co-operation between women's groups from the capitals of the three Yugoslav republics was established and experiences exchanged. Other grass roots activities did not exist at that time.

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<sup>1</sup> They were fighting against occupying forces consisting of German and Italian army who were supported by domestic collaborators forces. The main aim was to fight Nazis and fascists but also to participate in socialist revolution and to fight class enemy.

<sup>2</sup> Sklevicky (1996) called those feminist traditions the civic women's movement between the two World Wars whose goal was to involve women in all areas of political, social and economic life. Socialist tradition emerged from women organised within the workers and communist movement, and it was believed that 'women's question' will be solved with revolutionary change of government.



In the late 1980's during the rise of nationalism women's groups were engaged in organising protests against the state due to proposed changes in legislation on abortion, child subsidies, and violence (Zarkov, 2002), still seeing nationalism as problematic.

During the war in which Yugoslavia disintegrated and Croatia acquired independence (1991-1995) many women's groups were formed. They were organising mainly around the issues of war violence and to provide support and aid to women survivors who were at the beginning mainly from Croatia. At that time, big numbers of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, majority of whom were women and children, came to Croatia. Women have faced many difficult situations, some of them simultaneously: They were victims, refugees, some of them also combatants, engaged as individuals or as members of different groups and organisations, and played different roles in the context of political affirmation and contestation of nations and ethnicities. Some of them formed women's organisations others declared themselves feminists. Some of them worked with, and provided help to, all women regardless of nationality/ethnicity, others focussed their activities on certain national (ethnic, religious) group and were under the influence of the newly elected Croatian government. This focus resulted in the presence of diverse feminist organisations, some of which were characterised as nationalist and others as anti-nationalist feminist groups.

Furthermore, many individual women - feminists, journalists and writers - had openly expressed their opinion and wrote about the war from various perspectives, forming public opinion, provoking condemnation and being proclaimed traitors and witches.

All these differences between women's groups and organizations notwithstanding, women were very active in providing practical assistance and psychological and humanitarian aid, helping thousands of other women. All this work was done in war circumstances and was often not recorded and recognised.

## **1.2. The Research: Objectives, Questions, Methodology**

In this study I explore how, in the situation of war and violence in Croatia, feminist and national identities of women activists have influenced and shaped women's activism. This is a puzzle that has many different elements. To analyse it, I focus on four feminist organisations. My objectives are to explore the Croatian feminist activism in relation to activists' own definitions of feminist and national identities in the context of war and, to give recognition to women's activism during the war in Croatia in 1991-95.

This research paper will try to answer two questions. Firstly, how do women feminist activists from nationalist and non-nationalist organisations define their identities, in particular feminist and national identities, at the time of war? Secondly, what were the main points of differentiation between feminist's organisations, and how did this affect their activism?

This study is qualitative and explorative, and I use both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through interviews, during fieldwork in Croatia. A guiding questionnaire was made for interviews with feminist activists, combining open and closed questions giving the interviewed women opportunity to express their opinion, motivation, memories and shifts in identity as well as to speak about cooperation with other organisations and institutions. I conducted interviews with five feminist activists and leaders of feminist NGOs (each lasting approximately between one and two hours). I have chosen key feminist activists who were involved in the feminist movement during socialist period and are still active. They were involved in key feminist organisations that were helping war survivors during the war, had leading positions, and were willing to talk about those years. I also depended on the fact that they were available during my research weeks. These feminists – because they had leading positions in their organisations – were crucial, and their opinion was central to the debate between nationalist and anti-nationalist feminists.

As I was listening about some events in women's movement during the interviews, I wanted to talk with more activists as each story and interpretation

could give one additional element missing in this puzzle of feminist activism in war in relation to feminist and nationalist identities. For example, it would be interesting to hear feminist involved as volunteer in Croatian army and later involved with organisations around Anti-war Campaign.

Interviews were transcribed, and coded before analysis which was guided by the research questions and main concepts. I was looking for the main concepts as set in theoretical framework - nationalism, feminism, gender, identity and activism - in the text of the interviews assigning codes or labels to each paragraph and then I looked at the similarities, differences and linkages between the concepts. In the next phase I looked at other concepts in the interviews which can help explain their activism such as split, communication, cooperation, differentiation, change, manipulation, war. Activist's opinions and positions are quoted directly in the text.

Secondary data, such as organisational documents (press releases and statements, annual reports, letters of intentions etc), were collected and analyzed, looking at definitions of national and gender identities and agency that underpin women's narratives about their own activism, women's activism in general, the war and nationalism. Texts on nation, gender and identity written by the feminists from the region were used as secondary sources.

As to the limitations of the study, the timeframe was one of my main concerns. It was impossible to go back for additional explanations that were needed after the first meetings, and to clarify questions raised during the interviews. Secondly, the (un)willingness to speak and suspiciousness of some possible respondents was also a limitation. It was very difficult to find women from nationalist – or self-proclaimed 'patriotic' - group that were key figures at that time. Due to the sensitivity of the issue with regard to nationalism, as well as illnesses of some activists, and lack of documentation, I had limited access to the feminists whose position during the war was characterised as nationalist.

### **1.3. Organisation of the paper**

Following the introduction, the chapter two presents conceptual framework and reviews the main concepts of nationalism and feminism, and women and war, in exploring women's agency in Croatia from 1991-1995.

The findings from the data are presented in the chapters three and four. I elaborate on how nationalism impacted upon feminism, social reproduction, and gender. Women's activism in the context of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and war violence war will be analysed. These chapters present and evaluate the main issues that affected the work of the interviewed feminists and the four women's organisations. They deal with their history, cooperation and divisions, as well as with their identities and explore the possibilities of future cooperation.

## **Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework**

My main theoretical approaches are derived from the analyses of national and ethnic identities, and feminist critique of these concepts, on the one hand, and studies of women and war, on the other hand. I consider the concept of nationalism and national and ethnic identities important because they have caused divisions between feminists in Croatia that are still present. Thus I look at the conceptualisation of nationalism and feminism, and the relation between the two in the context of war in Croatia. Conceptualisation of women's activism in war informed the second line of argumentation in this paper. I hope that the different positions, with regard to nationalism and war, of women activists and feminists during the war can bring more light on their understanding of gendered and national/ethnic identities, and the relation of these to agency.

Agency is very often understood in the context of war and violence as a concept that traditionally situates women within active resistance to war and militarism, against a simplified and essentialised assumption of women as victims and men as perpetrators. In feminist writings, many (Lentin, 1997; Moser, 2001; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Zarkov, 1997, 2002) explore and argue that women's agency is not totally separate from victimization. As Long has explained "The notion of agency attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion" (cited in Moser, 2001: 4).

### **2.1. War and Violence**

The post – Cold war has seen a resurgence of nationalisms. "The collapse of old political frameworks and the reconfiguration of global economic power have been accompanied by an impulse to redefine, reassert, and reconfigure meaning of the nation on multiple levels" (Ranchood-Nilsson & Tetreault, 2000: 8). According to Eisenstein (2000: 35) post-cold war politics also creates new challenges for masking the racial/sexual/gender exclusivity of nation-building and they are a mix of old and new as a reaction to former

egalitarian rhetoric and the promise of new consumer market. New form of warfare has been conducted and new characteristics of war became more significant. "The new wars are informal rather than formal, open-ended rather than punctual engagements and community-rather than army based" (Munck and De Silva, 2000:1). Mellman (1998:4) also writes that the war strategies are more open - ended and flexible and "the impact of war on entire populations blurred the differences between 'front' and 'rear' in their gendered perspective". In these 'post-modern wars' as Miriam Cook (cited in Yuval-Davies, 1997:94) calls them, cultural and identity factors became important and they have been seen as a result of post-colonialism and of the end of the Cold-war.

Women and men have different roles in the war and sexual division of labour and power is still present although changed. Women started to enter military under the different circumstances and also participated in the anti-colonial and liberation movement in armed forces. They are not homogenous entities and groups of men and women are situated differently in war. This is important because of the naturalizations of the construction of men as warriors (Yuval-Davis, 1997). However, there is a difference between how feminists look at the conscription of women into the military, one group seeing their entrance as becoming equal to men and expecting that women's presence will change the nature of the military, and others asserting that women are non-violent and possess essential nurturing qualities.

Yet, the gendered image of 'beautiful soul and just warrior'<sup>3</sup> prevails in the description of harsh realities in public discourse. Women are depicted as symbols of collectivities, bearers of the nation and also victims; and men as representatives and agents who will protect "womenandchildren" (Enloe, 1990). This construction essentialises and silences women, giving only men legitimate voice. Women are positioned differently from each other whether they are constructed to be victims or as needed protection (Lutz et.al. 1995: 10). But, newer literature is acknowledging women's agency and women are

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<sup>3</sup> Elshtain J.B. (1987) *Women and War*, New York, Basic Books, Inc. Publishers

recognised not only as victims; they participate in the conflicts in many different ways as combatants and supporters (Holt, 2004 ).

War is about killing, destruction and violence and it changes the lives of people completely. As Yuval-Davis (1997: 109) has noted: "Life becomes solely about the survival." Violence was used to destroy others as an explicit political tool. Munck and de Silva's (2000) definition of political violence can be useful to explain what was happening in ex-Yugoslavia. They define political violence as:

*[...] a process where the deliberate use and /or threat of force is carried out to the detriment of perceived enemies, competitors or inferiors, with an intention to cause death and/or injury, and/or destruction of person(s), property and interests, by organised groups or members such as entities, which belong to government or insurrectionary forces (2000 :239).*

Violence and specific forms of that violence was used in ex-Yugoslavia to destroy women and through this to destroy or fight the "other" nation. Sexual violence was used as a specific war weapon.

Brownmiller (1975) in her very well known book *Against Our Will* writes that rape which was used as a weapon of terror and weapon of revenge, has accompanied war of religion and revolution irrespective of nationality or geographic location and in modern times became a criminal act under the international rules of law. Rape was used as a tool to conquer the enemy, to humiliate men through women's bodies and souls. Since rape is about power, it "destroys all remaining illusions of power and property for men of the defeated side" (Brownmiller, 1975: 38).

## **2.2. Nationalism**

The most cited definition of nationalism is that of Anderson who defines nationalism as a positive force "an imagined political community, which thinks

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of the nation with love" (cited in Yuval-Davis, 1997: 42). He has pointed out that nationalism uses sets of constructed symbols like shared history, a common language, slogans, newspapers and anthems and doesn't see the link between nationalism and racism (Lutz et.al, 1995). For Giddens " (1985: 116) nationalism is primarily psychological and he defines it as an "affiliation of individuals to a set of symbols and believes, emphasising communality among the members of political order". But neither of them considered nationalism as gendered, leaving masculinity and femininity out (Enloe, 1993, West, 1997).

History of Europe since the French Revolution may be described as the rise and development of political nationalism, and one of its strongest forces (Kaplan, 1997:7). In Europe nationalism has functioned in both positive and negative ways, but today it has negative connotations. Only in the context of anti-colonial struggles of the Third World, in the fight for independence, nationalism is seen as positive, 'good', progressive, anti-imperialist, and having liberating force; versus 'bad' chauvinist, colonizing nationalism (Salecl, 1997, Lutz et.al. 1995). It seems that 'new nationalisms' are more exclusive and this notion is not restricted only to eastern-European countries. In most nation-states one ethnic group is dominating and multi-national states have to deal with internal ethnic divisions. As Moghadam (2003: 22) claims, collectivities have been redefined and became less universal and inclusive than before - new nation states are established upon more exclusive notions of belonging and citizenship. Robert Milles referring to Great Britain and France considers nationalisation an 'uncompleted project' (cited in Lutz et.al. 1995). The example of Yugoslavia can be considered as one of such uncompleted project, the conflicts and war broke out before it was finished.

Nationalism is generally regarded as an exaggerated feeling of national consciousness that is blind to the claims and rights of other nations (Kaplan, 1997). Kaplan argues that it has been relatively rare for European feminists to align themselves with groups and ideologies promoting nationalism. She found only two examples: nineteenth century Italy and twentieth century Finland.



According to Brinker-Gabler and Smith (1997: 3) the ways people construct national identities are:

*[...] complex, various and differentially intersected with other understandings of identity. They are as well, imbricated in different histories. So it is important to look at what is included in a specific iteration of nationalism's identity contents (such contents as language, ethnicity, territory, history, religion, values, traditions, and so on) and what is excluded.*

Heckmann delineates three concepts of nationalism specific to Western Europe, the first being ethnic nationalism.

*'Ethnic nationalism' is founded on "ethnicity", that is, [...] common language, customs, and history. As political ideology it seeks congruence of national borders with ethnic borders. [...] Once institutionalised as a state nationalism, ethnic nationalism establishes citizenship on the basis of the ethnicity. Thus national subject share a common descent and a collective memory that binds them into an indissoluble whole. In his ethnocentric ideology, national identity is originary. (Heckmann, cited in Brinker-Gabler, Smith, 1997: 3.)*

From ethnic nationalism Heckmann differentiates two kinds of political nationalisms: demotic-unitarian concept of community and ethnic-plural concept, giving examples of France for the first and Switzerland for the second case. Brinker-Gabler and Smith added one more example called "coerced polyethnic nationalism forged out of revolution, war and 'realpolitik'", with examples of Yugoslavia, Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. This form of nationalism acts in "service to an ideological call for socialist revolution" through suppression of differences in histories, languages, ethnicities, religious affiliations and traditions, that can endanger "solidarity and socialist union" (Brinker-Gabler&Smith, 1997: 4). With the collapse of those states and specifically dissolution of Yugoslavia, ethnic nationalism arose in Croatia and Serbia. The dream of internationalism and socialist state in former Yugoslavia was finally rejected in search for differences based on ethnicity, history and culture. How was this possible? It seems that 'belated nations' who

suppressed their nationalism in the name of "brotherhood and unity", with disappearance of former ideological legitimacy of the political system easily accepted new ideology, the ideology of nationalism (Knezevic, 1997: 66).

### **2.2.1. Ethnicity and 'modern' identity**

The concept of nationalism cannot be understood without the concept of ethnicity. Wilson and Frederiksen argue that the concept of ethnicity unites together individuals "who share history, culture and community; who have an amalgam of language, religion, and regional belonging in common" (1995:2). Further, ethnicity can be mobilised to be constitutive of the concept of nation (Smith, in Hagendorn, 1995: 2).

It is important to emphasise that meaning of nation, ethnicity and nationalism is not fixed, their boundaries are blurred. Beckman and Verkuyten (1995) claim that identity may be based on a region, nation, ethnicity, religion or culture each with a complex, ambiguous meaning and shifting according to circumstances. There is difference between individual and collective identities. As Yuval-Davis (1997:43) points out "identities are specific forms of cultural narratives which constitute commonalities and difference between self and others" and they are major tools of ethnic projects. The world is divided on the basis of 'us ' and 'them' and Yuval-Davis (1997) defines ethnicity in relation to the politics of collectivity boundaries and ethnic projects occupied in constant struggle and negotiation aimed at promoting the collectivity. She sees ethnicity as primarily a political process which constructs the collectivity and gender, class, political, religious and other differences as central in to ethnic identity politics.

However, people are also forced to make choices about which specific identity they take on in situation of extreme economic and political domination or armed conflicts. This explains why in the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia ethnic and religious identities became so important. They were not a matter of free choice in all cases, but imposed by outside circumstances or precisely by the fact of power and domination, sometimes becoming matter of life and death

depending on who was in power. Some forms of collective identities are much more potent than others, because they are endowed with social meaning and have become identities that matter.

*The question of how collective identities are constructed is about how some of the many possible features that can be used for group definition are selected and given social meaning. [...]community can be based on religion, language, culture, historic fate, race or combination of these (Beckman&Verkuyten, 1995:18).*

Gender identity is built through set of norms that are not fixed and static and are constantly changing and transforming through social practices. Yet, as Louise McNay argues gender identities are not free-floating:

*Although subject formations receive their shape from prevailing social conditions, certain predispositions and tendencies may still continue to effect embodied practices long after their original conditions of emergence have been surpassed (2000: 18).*

### **2.3. Feminism and Nationalism**

The concept of feminism is important for understanding complexity of women's position in time of rising nationalism and suffering caused by war and underlined by patriarchal systems. The most important issue for feminism is to explain women's subordination, but in liberal, socialist and radical feminisms there is a disagreement on what constitutes women's subordination and how to overcome it (Tickner, 2001). According to Yuval-Davis "... women's oppression is endemic and integral to social relations with regard to the distribution of power and material resources in the society" (1997:7). She found the notion of patriarchy, which has been widely used in analysis, problematic because it does not take into account that women's oppression is mixed with other forms of oppression.

Kaplan (1997:5) points out that: "Feminism is an argument for women's autonomy and signifies a standpoint of dissent, containing the hope for liberation of women with a view toward changing all human relationship for the better".

For Cynthia Cockburn when she uses the word feminism she means by it an "anti-essentialist, democratic feminism, inclusive of women differently situated in ethnic, class and other structures" (1998:44).

The relationship between nationalism and feminism has been largely discussed in global literature. Louise West (1997) argues that we have to understand construction of nationalism as gendered phenomenon and that linking feminism with nationalism has a significant history in which:

*[...] activists women all over the world have been organising around women's and nationalist issues – sometimes quietly advocating non-violence and working for women's citizenship rights, other times working in consort with armed guerrilla movements under situations of occupation (1997: XII).*

Women are analyzing and trying to "re-construct 'the meanings of both nationalism and feminism from a women-centered viewpoint, what some feminists call women's or feminist 'standpoint theory'" (West, 1997: 13).

### **2.3.1. Gender, Social Reproduction and Nationalism**

*One major field in which gender intersects with ethnicity is thus social reproduction and the way that the ethnic line is carried on. Women are bearers not just of children in the abstract, but of children who will grow up to be members of the ethnic group. So it is through controlling women that ethnic boundaries can kept in place and over time demarcate the juncture between internal cohesion and external difference. (Wilson& Frederiksen, 1995:3)*

One area where gender and nationalism is constructed by each other is in the sphere of social reproduction. Gender is an analytical tool that describes

social relations between men and women and a "mode of discourse which relates to groups of subjects which roles are defined by their sexual/biological difference as opposed to their economic position and their membership in ethnic and racial collectivities" (Yuval-Davis, 1997:9). Gender and nationalism are constructed by each other in the sphere of social reproduction.

Women's role in social reproduction came into focus again with the war and national consolidation, and is discussed by many authors (Benderly, 1997; Brownmiller, 1975; Eisenstein, 2000; Jayawardena, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Zarkov, 1997).

Control of reproduction is used as a tool in time of conflict (Zarkov, 1995). Disappointment with the previous regime and the unchanged patriarchal culture contributed to attempts to re-establishing women's role as mother and as the reproducers of symbolic boundaries of the nation. Women, paying the price in this new wave of nationalism (Rai, 2002: 16), "literally the 'reproducers of the nation' were perceived as the site of the ethnic nation, of its continuity and well-being" (Mellman, 1998:7). Yuval-Davis and Anthias, (cited in McClintock, 1993:62) identify five major ways in which women have been implicated in nationalism:

- as biological reproducers of the members of national collectivities
- as reproducers of the boundaries of national groups (through restrictions on sexual or marital relations)
- as active transmitters and producers of the national culture
- as symbolic signifiers of national difference
- as active participants in national struggles

Idealised images of women as mothers transform real bodies of women to national boundaries. 'Other' women were raped, tortured and killed. This was the case in the war in ex-Yugoslavia too. Women were object of rape, conquest and ethnic cleansing by nationalist armies and para-militaires, both as women and as national symbols (Benderly, 1997:62). Eisenstein also agrees, that "because nations are symbolised by women, ethnic cleansing directs its fears and desires onto the bodies of women" (2000:46). As

biological and social reproducers, women's bodies are claimed for the nation and, as a result, often become battlegrounds in nationalist conflicts. Brownmiller (1975: 38) claims "Defense of women has long been a hallmark of masculine pride, as possession of women has been a hallmark of masculine success. The body of the raped women became a ceremonial battlefield."

On the one hand women are idolized and revered, on the other hand they are brutalised, tortured, raped, and often killed. If mother can no longer create safety, she can no longer defend the nation, she is ashamed, defeated and so is her nation (Eisenstein: 2000: 46). This differential approach in dealing with victims of war is influenced by political forces and reporting the violence and rape is also a gendered process like war (Enloe, 2000).

"...the condition under which, when, how many, and *whose* children women will bear are questions of national importance (to men) and matters of civic duty or outright oppression (to women)" (Dresser, cited in Ranchood-Nilsson& Tetreault, 2000:6). Ranchood-Nilsson and Tetreault, alert us that we must be aware of the specific gender meanings invoked at particular times and places and ways these meaning change over the time (2000:7).

Similarly, specific gender meanings or 'forced identities'<sup>4</sup> were invoked in Croatia and women were constructed as symbolic bearers of collective identity, as famous Croatian journalist and feminist Vesna Kesic points out:

*A raped Croatian woman is a raped Croatia. Here was a mystic unity of woman and the country identified through her. Once again, the nation's identity is established through women's bodies. ..There are no individual culprits, but the whole nation, including its women, is culpable (cited in Boric, 1997:39)*<sup>5</sup>

In other words women can gain national prestige or loose it when they are represented as sexual partners and bearers of national traditions (Enloe,

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<sup>4</sup> Amrita Chhachhi's used this term in the context of women and fundamentalism in India.

1993). Also, as Yuval-Davis puts it, the construction of womanhood has the property of 'otherness' where women are not seen as subjects and strategies are developed to keep them in an inferior position (1997:47).

It seems that in Croatia interests of some feminists converged with dominant political ideology, which at that time strongly promoted nationalism, and they got support and attention not because they were feminists, but because they were supporting a specific group of women: women who were defined as bearers of the nation and keepers of the national/ethnic boundaries.

### **2.3.2. Feminism and Agency**

According to Yuval-Davis a major debate within the feminist movement has been the extent to which feminist activism should be automatically linked to peace activism (1997: 94). The history of women's activism in the time of violent conflict is actually showing both women as pacifists and women as combatants and/or perpetrators. Only, the latter is invisible and unspoken in order to emphasise the predominant image of women as naturally peaceful. Elshtain in her book *Women and War* describes and analyses examples of several women's violent acts during the history that are often subject to surprise and incredulity of observers. Socially conditioned mind is giving meaning to those acts. Male fighters and female non-combatants are recognisable as Just Warriors and the Beautiful Souls (Elshtain, 1987: 8). The Beautiful Soul is innocent, helpful and caring. War is men's work, men are authors of organised violence and women just "observe, suffer, cope, mourn, honor, adore, witness and work...But the men have done the describing and the defining of war, and the women are 'affected' by it: they "mostly react" (Elshtain 1997: 164). Some feminists proclaim a "right to fight they, too, can be Just Warriors (Elshtain,1997: 8). Third World feminists argue against "an automatic condemnation of all acts of violence" (Morgan, in Yuval-Davis, 1997: 113). Understood only as victims, women are denied agency in the public discourse. Essentialism assumes that it is natural that women will heal

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<sup>5</sup> Kesic was one of the founders of Center for Women War Victims and B.a.B.e., women's human rights group.

the wounds because women are perceived as naturally peaceful and therefore "better" than men. Feminism is still facing a dilemma to condemn or to join the war – to lament sex differences and deny their importance or to acknowledge or even valorise such differences (Elshtain, 1987). Sylvester who further contests Elshtain's position and this division on war and peace says: "There can be pieces of war in peace and pieces of peace in wartime" (Sylvester, 2002: 27). This makes the whole situation even more complicated and difficult to deal with.

Lentin suggests that victim-hood and agency are in tandem, and are "charting the routes of resistance available to women even when they are most deeply jeopardised" (1997:5). This can be applied in the example of women's agency in Croatia where women were victims and activists at the same time. The need and urgency motivated women to exercise agency and some even joined the combatants, although not in large numbers. Some refused both pacifism and anti-nationalism (Zarkov, 2002:61). Still, there is that question posed by Cynthia Enloe (2000): was Rosie manoeuvred or empowered or both?

Women in Croatia also took on different roles with the shifting of identities that inevitably happens during war. Some women and feminists exchanged previously chosen idea of sisterhood for patriotic ones. Some continue to believe in solidarity among women and the possibility to at least communicate even during the worst atrocities.

Agency has to be understood within the existing power relations that impacts on women's resistance and/or complicity. Agency can be used and misused by political forces in the process of the militarization of society, which usually marginalises and silences women (Enloe, 1993). At the same time, women's organisations can and do use those political forces and alliances to benefit the women who are in need. Of course, the nature and results of those alliances can be contested.



### Chapter 3. Women's Activism, War and Divisions

Women's groups in socialist Yugoslavia were organised mostly around issues of violence against women and advocacy, and cooperated and exchanged experiences. In 1987, the First National Feminist Conference of Yugoslavia was held in Slovenia and at the first meeting the feminist network was created. Annual meetings were held until 1991. Women's groups still emphasised sisterhood and solidarity and they all criticized nationalist ideology. Jill Benderly (1997) claims that the post-Yugoslav feminism has an antinationalist character.

With the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the first free elections and proclamation of independence first by Slovenia and then by Croatia in 1991, differences among people from republics were emphasised and used in rhetoric while building new nations. Everything that reminded people of their socialist past including songs, films, and political ideas suddenly became undesirable, ideologically wrong, and sometimes even dangerous. In her study on war experiences in oral and published testimonies Renata Jambresic Kirin suggests:

*The identity crisis dominant in mostly female oral narratives of displaced persons is grounded in the experience of the past as already disintegrated: narrators look back to the pre-war time for something solid to lean on, but the image of home(land) and peaceful coexistence with ethnic others is made impossible by the prevailing strategy of public history where every positive reference to the socialist past is marked as "yugo-nostalgic" (2000: 76).*

Different meanings and symbols were created. Feminists started to differ among themselves and old principles of sisterhood, solidarity and support were not useful because they belonged to the old times of peace and socialism (Zarkov, 2000:60).

### 3.1. War, Violence and Victims

Answering the first research question, understanding of feminists' definitions of their identities at the time of war depend on the understanding of the context of war as an extreme situation where lives and properties of people are jeopardised with differential impact on men and women. As one feminist explained:

*"When war started I felt like I am dreaming, when Vukovar<sup>6</sup> happened, and that someone will come out of underground tunnels, you know, when you cannot understand difference between reality, like in partisan films, when something always happened that someone saved the situation...my world was falling apart...and first thing you think of is to do something to stop it."*  
(F.3)

War resulted in violence and death, and feelings of fear, rage, anger, shock, and the will to do something about it. It took some time to understand what was really going on, who is on which side, who is "ours" and who is "theirs":

*"I remember that in 1991, many people including me, needed a lot of time to understand what is going on, although I belong to a group of activist that in the 80-s discussed a lot about the possibility of war. (F.2)*

In the period from 1991-1995, around 500,000 displaced persons and refugees were living in Croatia, women and children being the majority. Being a refugee and a displaced person is a gendered experience. During the war-operations men were fighting or hiding, while women stayed at home with children and the elderly trying to take care of the property or just to survive, and later when they were forced to leave they were often subjected to torture, rape and were living as refugees.

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<sup>6</sup> Vukovar is a town in Croatia near the border with Serbia which was completely destroyed in the siege in 1991, people were expelled, killed, detained, many are still missing. The town became a symbol of war destruction.

Stories about rape and particularly about mass rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), reached public attention and several international teams and organisations undertook research to find about the scope of violence. The numbers were varied and contested. Ministry of international Affairs of BH released a statement in October 1992 claiming that "60 000 women were raped by Serbian military and paramilitary, many of them intentionally impregnated" (Kesic, 2001). European Union Investigative Mission of Experts, in February 1993 stated in the report that on estimation of 20 000 women and girls had been raped by Serb male combatants in 1992 (Enloe, 2000: 140). The U.N. Commission of Experts, in the report from 1994 documented 4 500 cases of which large majority of victims were Muslims. The Commission, lead by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Rapporteur on Human Rights, was the first United Nations investigation into rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As Brownmiller wrote, different sides rarely admit the rape and she further goes on saying "Down through the ages, triumph over women by rape became a way to measure victory, part of a soldiers proof of a masculinity and success, a tangible reward for a services rendered" (1975:35). The sexual abuse of women in war was not recognised as war crime at that time.

Activist emphasised the importance of recognition of rapes during the conflict through public attention:

*"I think it is important that rape was discussed in public, because in the history there were too many wars in which women were raped massively, but no one said anything about it or only when Korean women started to talk..." (F.2)*

Determination to deal with war traumas especially rape was one of the motivators for women activists in Croatia to act and not remain silent. Each in their own ways, belonging to different organisations helped women, with different understanding of relations between feminist and national identities.

Some emphasised the importance of ethnicity, others talked about women being raped because they were women, in the first place. Different positioning

vis-à-vis the question of war rapes became the site of dispute and difference between women activists resulted in the break up of contacts and communication, forcing feminists to redefine their positions. The question was around the primacy of gender or ethnic dimension of sexual violence. Activists gathered around *Anti-War Campaign* in Zagreb situated sexual violence within the larger context of patriarchal power relations and saw gender as a central category.

At the same time other four groups formed the coalition. In 1991, *Women's Action Now* and *Kareta* started to work in first refugee camps in Croatia with Croatian women refugees. They have realised that some women were raped while escaping or during their stay in detention camps. This group gathered around the radical feminist group *Kareta*, and supported by U.S. law professor and radical feminist Catharine MacKinnon. They considered rape as a weapon of war within the category of ethnicity as a part of a genocidal strategy (Kesic, 2002). They perceived the 'genocidal rape' as a unique form of war and genocide, and saw the rapes of Muslim and Croat women as unique historical event conducted by Serbs. They considered the position of feminists who held different perspective (be it within Croatia or globally) as equalizing all factions in the war and minimising the crimes of the Serbs. In a response and an Open Letter to an action organized by the international feminist network *Madre Courage* (a *Tour on Rape*<sup>7</sup>) in March 1993, four feminist groups - *Kareta*, *Women BiH*, *Wall of Love* and *Biser* - stated:

*Rape as genocide is, therefore, not the universal rape your tour information states but is very ethnically specific to Muslim and Croatian women in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, who suffer from the double and simultaneous oppression of sex and ethnicity.*

The position of MacKinnon and other groups pursuing the argument of 'genocidal rape' was criticized by anti-nationalist feminists, who saw it as

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<sup>7</sup> *Madre Courage Tour on Rape* in Toronto was organised by *Madre* (an international women's human rights organization from U.S.A.) and guest speakers were Vesna Kesic from Zagreb and Lepa Mladjenovic from Belgrade.

supporting nationalist projects which oppress women, and as anti-feminist and traditionalist in its nature. MacKinnon's argument was used according to Vesna Kesic in the war propaganda "to stir ethnic hatred and promote revenge" (cited in Helms, 2003).

The position of non-nationalist feminists about rape in war is expressed in the following statement:

*"When we say that war rapes are only tip of the iceberg of the daily violence against women, of the structural violence in the patriarchal society ...we do not want to conceal the fact that that some have raped more, some less, or the fact that war rapes in Bosnia were an instrument of ethnic cleansing. ... However, we want to emphasise that rape is an integral part of every militarism, every war, and that it is the culmination of general violence in the society in which the dominant power and crucial decisions lies in the hands of the men after all. The development of the war events has shown that the rapist is not 'the universal Serb' but the universal soldier<sup>B</sup> (Kesic et.al. 2003 :43).*

### **3.2. Women's Activism**

*"I believe that women's groups were the predecessors of civil initiatives and civil society...I dare to say that women's initiatives although they were not strong and didn't have strong organisational form, that they were the ones, who in some way triggered the process of democratization" (Kesic, in Barilar et.al., 2000: 200).*

Women's activism helped women exposed to war violence to cope and survive with their traumas and everyday life as refugees. Actually, women's activism flourished and many organisations were formed around issues of war and domestic violence. Women's studies programs, information and

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<sup>B</sup> This is a part of the presentation at the Center for Women War Victims regular annual assembly held on December 1993.

documentation centers and human right's groups were formed even in the small and middle size towns (Zarkov, 2002).

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that *agency* was present on both sides - feminist nationalists and anti-nationalists - and activism of all women has helped include rape as a war crime in the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia and later in the International Criminal Court.

In this study I have chosen four women's organisations to illustrate the relevance of ethnic, gender and feminist identities in their work. These are: *Center for Women War Victims*, *B.a.B.e.* (women's human rights group), *Kareta* and *Network of Multicultural Help*. All of them were organised and established with the broader aim to support women war survivors and promote women's human rights and issues through various activities. These four organisations, while engaging in similar activities, held different positions on the issue of war and rape, and these differences divided them in two camps and made their cooperation almost impossible.

Some organisations are currently inactive or have very limited activities due to lack of funds and burnout of the staff. They do not have web pages or leaflets, although all have space to work, either rented on commercial terms or given to them by city authorities for a symbolic rent. Others have succeeded to develop various activities from service provisions such as education, publishing and advocacy. Through their leaflets, press releases, and other publications I was able to find out about their goals, activities, and plans.

### **3.2.1. The History of Women's Activism - Communication, Cooperation and Conflicts**

To understand the dynamics of feminist war activism in Croatia during 1991-1995, it is important to go back to the formation of first feminist activist group in Zagreb - *Women's group Tresnjevka*. Active from 1986 to 1990 *Tresnjevka* was involved in consciousness raising actions. This was core group of the *SOS-hotline* for women and children victims of violence that was established

in March 1988 in Zagreb. This was very important step because this group was one of the first in the whole region and it gathered more than a hundred activists. Many of them became founders and members of new women's organisations in years to come and some of them I interviewed. "SOS-line grew into organisation Women's Action Now because we had to formalise our work or incorporate it into the legal context" (Kasic, in Barilar et.al., 2000: 203).

In 1990, women's groups in the newly established state, founded a *Women's Parliament* as a protest to the Croatian Parliament's attempt to limit women's human rights through a ban of abortion. According to Djurdja Knezevic this was the last joint action of different women's groups in Croatia (Knezevic, 1995).

The *Women's Action Now* became the place for feminist engagement, resulting in action of occupying empty space and providing shelter for battered women. It is necessary to mention that in 1991 *Women's Action Now* was a member of *Antiwar Campaign*. At the end of 1991, the group divided in two, one continued to work with the shelter and later in 1992 registered as *Autonomous Women's House*<sup>9</sup> and the other worked with the SOS-hotline. The division happened in the context of the war. In 1991, there was ongoing war and everyday shelling, bombing, refugees fleeing, and air alerts. One of the activists described the meeting where the differences became obvious and the group split into two:

*"At the meeting where we had discussion on whether the group will continue to be a member of Antiwar Campaign, one of the members called and said that Antiwar Campaign is not patriotic any longer in this moment, and for some of us ...if something was patriotic for me this was antiwar action. There was a big meeting and there was a question how to continue to work, are we*

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<sup>9</sup> "Autonomous Women's House Zagreb, was set up in December 1990 as the first women's shelter in Eastern Europe, after squatting an empty state owned apartment. It was officially registered (as AWHZ) in June 1992. It is still the only place in Croatia where women fleeing domestic abuse can find sanctuary. We are a women's non-governmental organisation

*as Women's Action Now still members of Antiwar Campaign and how to go on? And I remember that in one moment I was going around with two papers saying "who wants to join the shelter and who wants to join SOS-line"? This division didn't make any sense, but SOS-line remained on the side that didn't want to stay with Antiwar Campaign."*(F.1)

After that, the term 'patriotic feminism' was used as self-definition by the feminist groups who refused to stay with Antiwar Campaign, as well as by politicians and media who referred to them.

### **3.2.2. Disputes and Differentiations**

A conference held in December 1992, was one of the key events where differences among Croatian feminists came into the open. In 1992, Zagreb was supposed to be the next place to organise a conference within the Yugoslav Feminist Network and this idea was supported at the meeting with women in Germany.<sup>10</sup> The initial proposal was that all women activists should be invited and involved but later this idea was dropped, and finally conference was organised by *Kareta* and *Women's Action Now* – groups belonging to 'patriotic feminists'. As a consequence, women from Serbia were not invited.

*"When we talked about the concept we talked a lot about it, to have papers or... and we have realised that basic feminist principle is to listen to the woman and to trust her and to do something for her, and we decided that some survivors will talk about their experiences. [...] and they talked there because they thought that this would make a difference; that this will stop the war. But they were not feeling good knowing that this has to be continuation of feminist traditional Yugoslav gatherings. For them this was a big problem to have anyone from Serbia there [...] and I think this was all right because we were assuring them that the women present will be the one who will understand. But, the conference was a failure because we were proclaimed*

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working according to feminist principles of support and women's solidarity."  
([www.public.carnet.hr/azkz/azk-hr](http://www.public.carnet.hr/azkz/azk-hr))



*nationalists, and the fact that there was a Croatian flag in the hall was enough to proclaim us almost main Tudjman women's force.” (F.3)*

National symbols have various meanings in different times and places. Although national symbols such as flag are normally part of 'equipment' in official spaces, in the time of nation-building, they may be seen as something to be proud of. But, as state symbols are perceived as representing official politics and moreover nationalistic politics, they can be seen as something undesirable and the subject of resistance by the ones who try to deconstruct official ideology. Anti-nationalist feminists in this case equalized the organisers of the conference who displayed the flag with the official, nationalist politics. Although the flag itself was an official symbol of the newly established Croatian state, during this event it became the visible symbol of the exclusive political platform of nationalist feminists that was criticised by anti-nationalist feminists. This event was crucial in reinforcing the two opposing positions and disputes that reached their peak in 1992 and 1993, and became visible internationally as well. Each group had its own international supporters or collaborators which included also financial support while at the same time nationalists feminists have also had support from the state sources such as office space which they shared with other groups with which they cooperated (in the premises of the former, official, socialist organization for social status of women and family), and access to media and the public sphere.

A feminist from an anti-nationalist organisation who was involved in the disputed conference from the beginning, didn't agree that women from Serbia should not be invited and also instead on inviting other women - victims of war and feminists from abroad. She expected this to be place to discuss issues around the war and violence with colleagues from other Republics - feminists that are already part of the network and had several meetings:<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Frauen Anstiftung, feminist foundation from Germany that later became one of the main supporters of Autonomous Women's House.

<sup>11</sup> Yugoslav Feminist Network has been formed in Ljubljana in 1987, with the aim of exchanging experiences from the work on the SOS hotlines and to raise public awareness on violence against women (Bagic, 2001).

*"There is a letter by Slovenian women who were protesting because Serbian women were not invited...that was a main difference between two sides. I am not talking about women from Serbia in general, but feminists with whom we have cooperation... The idea of the conference was to continue with feminist gatherings. This was the place for feminists who were already in contact to discuss between themselves. This was not the place to broaden the circle with other women<sup>12</sup>." (F. 1)*

After this conference differences became so obvious and were followed by public debate in international feminist circles as well as national public and media spaces. Their conflict was primarily political but it also turned into a conflict which involved personal attacks on some feminists. Feminism, already unpopular during the socialism, now became even more notorious.

Some prominent anti-nationalist feminists, journalists and writers from Croatia became targets of public attack by media, called witches and traitors because they were publishing articles nationally and internationally questioning various social and political issues and opposing nationalism. Their ethnic origins, marital relationship and physical appearance were questioned publicly in national weekly *Globus*<sup>13</sup> because they were not supporting nationalist claims and they were not silent. This article appeared under the title "Croatian feminists rape Croatia". Five women writers and journalists were accused of being traitors and "hiding the truth about sexual violence as the instrument of Serbian racist and imperialistic politics" (Knezevic, 1997: 86). As traitors they were accused of diminishing or decreasing suffering of Muslim and Croat women by saying that others can be victims, and that others - can be perpetrators. Moreover only Serbs, Croats and Muslims had a place in that picture; people from mixed marriages and minorities like Roma, Checks, and Italians were non-existent.

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<sup>12</sup> For this activist 'other women' are the ones who are not part of the Yugoslav Feminist Network.

<sup>13</sup> *Globus*, December 10<sup>th</sup> 1992.

Non-violence which was inspiring women's activism of some groups, as Cockburn (2001) writes, is defined as "peace for justice" or "against war and militarism". Non-violence as principle of refusing to take arms or engage in armed struggle was not popular in Croatia at the time of war and in spite of that, organisations gathered around *Anti-War campaign* were against war and nationalism and were advocating non-violence and anti-militarism. This was the base of their cooperation with feminist organisations from Serbia and Bosnia. The position of non-violence held by some feminists during this war was publicly viewed with particular suspicion because of the possibility to simplify and manipulate the idea of guilt, which became very sensitive issue. In the black and white picture enemy is defined ethnically, he/she is known and guilty; the victims are defined ethnically too, they too are known, and given the right to defend themselves. The feminists who questioned this image were considered traitors.

Talking about differences which came out during one of the meetings in 1991 where activists were still working as Women's Action Now, one feminist said:

*"In the minutes from one meeting you can read that part of our<sup>14</sup> group is taking pacifist position, considering that violence, war and conflict can be solved with political means; and another part thought that to be a pacifist is not patriotic in this moment." (F.2)*

The difference between nationalism and patriotism is very subtle. Patriotism, having more positive connotation than nationalism and linked to emotions of love for one's country, was used in Croatia to describe individuals or groups who are supporting the "national cause". At that time the national cause was establishment of the nation-state and defence in the war. Anyone who questioned that cause and the ways of achieving it were proclaimed traitors, like feminists who were proclaimed witches, traitors, and non-patriots. Other feminists, who emphasised ethnicity of the victims, were called patriots in the

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<sup>14</sup> Those women were later gathered around *Anti-War Campaign*.

public discourse both by media and politicians, by themselves and by some feminists (for example Benderly, 1997).

The enemies were clearly proclaimed by politicians and media and if someone was communicating, not to mention cooperating with them, was seen as committing an act of treason. The ones who dared to communicate were paying the price of limited access to media and limited cooperation with state institutions, while nationalist feminists, in spite of their radical feminism, had access to public spaces and were praised for their work with women.

## **Chapter 4. Identity – Choice or Destiny?**

In this chapter I approach identities as crucial for understanding individual engagements and the work of feminist groups. I will look at how women define their gender, feminist and ethnic identities at the individual level and then at organisational level. Then I will explore how were the four feminist organisations established, how they cooperated with each other and finally how they stopped the communication and cooperation.

### **4. 1. Gender and Feminist Identity: Woman, Feminist, Lesbian**

Identity is a category that has no clear boundaries and changes with time, place and maturity, and is perceived as 'chosen' and 'imposed' at the same time.

All five women I interviewed for this study were both self-declared and known as feminists. They were at some point all cooperating and working together as activists. Some women were engaged in many initiatives, not only in the field of women's activism (for example, having a history of engagement in student and environmental organisations). They were also active in mobilising other women for various actions being aware of the fact that marginalised groups need more voices, sometimes using opportunities to engage in political parties to benefit women's issues. Unfortunately, as they express later, many times they felt misused by those same political interests.

Descriptions of their identities were varied. While some expressed their feminine and feminist identity as social experience, through "belonging to the women's group", others defined it also as social perception of physical appearance and particularly of sexual attributes. Some differentiated between passive, predetermined and actively sought out identities, difference that came out as being between destiny and choice. For example, some times identity is defined as imposed by others and understood as destiny, but at the same time it meant taking responsibility, and responsibility meant activism. The activists differentiated between collective and individual identities where

collective identities were considered more natural than individual. Also, (notwithstanding the limited numbers of respondents in this research) understanding of gender identity as natural and essentialised was present among feminists who were characterised as nationalist feminists.

*"[...] until I have discovered radical feminism, first of all Andrea Dworkin, for me she was the most important to understand my own experience.... I started to think about my own life and I realised for the first time that I am not the one whom I see in the mirror, but something else, that I am woman. I have realised this for the first time when I was playing in the street, I was ten or eleven, and one man passed by and he saw me in t-shirt and he said something about my breasts, which just started to grow." (F.3)*

Women's group is also a place where non-dominant models of living can be learned, allowed and practiced and as such they were attractive:

*"At the beginning it was important to me that I am surrounded by women who can be role models, who do not consider family as center of the world; different model; this was a model that I was probably looking for. The second thing is mutual women's respect.... looking at that world before feminism, it became clear and visible to me that men were respecting each other while me as a woman, I was not completely respecting other women, nor was I respected by them."(F.1)*

The difference between women's and other groups were emphasised, seeing women's groups as a places of support and solidarity: *"[...] this is like some home group; group of my female friends is a place of support, genuine space of solidarity and very good interaction and communication." (F.2)*

Another activist sees women's groups as safe places where she was able to express and gain support for her own non-dominant sexual orientation: *"Today, it is a fact that without the war and my women's groups, who knows if I would be a lesbian. Maybe I would be ... with or without groups, who knows?" (F.1)*

Ordering of the identities according to significance in their lives was one of the ways some activists explained them. For some the identity of being a woman was the most important of all and for others this was just one of the identities and choices in social engagement. The women's group had particular meaning for each activist, and were seen among the most important groups.

*"I am woman in the first place, it is before my professional identity, before my activist identity, before any of my other identities, and therefore this is the most important. It is clear that I belong to women's group...I can say that I accept this from both biological and gender perspective. I can say that I really feel ok when I present myself 'I am a woman and a feminist'" (F.2.)*

One activist clearly rejected essentialised identity of being a woman and further saw feminism as only one of her identities:

*"My personal identity, my intimate experience of myself is not about being a woman [...]. For me this is determined by an individual, own life history, by working environment, and in the first place by political choices; in the case of public identification, choices within which feminism plays a significant role. But, not only feminism and exclusively feminism...I do not believe in essential women's identity." (F.4)*

Feminism was seen as a question of power and political choice, even political program, a consciousness that was developed through the years, sometimes as one of the most important choices and sometimes-just one of them:

*"When I was seventeen or eighteen I considered myself a feminist...I think first of all that feminist is every women who is engaged, not to say fight, I do not like that word, for women's human rights and for equality. When I say equality I really mean equal share of power and responsibility. I think that women have too much responsibility and not enough of power.." (F.2.)*

*[...] at the same point at which the feminism is political attitude, political program, at this point feminism is one of my points of departures.” (F.4)*

Feminism is for all activists very much a conscious choice in their lives and their constant and long-term engagement in feminist organisations and in gender issues shows the importance of that choice for some as one of the choices, and for some as the only and most important. They had other identities which were chosen such as a choice to be a mother or not, to be a lesbian or a heterosexual, to be married or not.

#### **4.2. National Identity - ‘here’ and ‘there’**

Knezevic (1997) points out that feeling of belonging were constantly and consciously developed as a part of feminist ideology and activism. She sees similarities between feminism and nationalism and in spite of many differences, “the sense of belonging sometimes gets transferred to the nation anyway” (1997:65).

Belonging to the nation was sometimes marked by language, culture, art, and membership in majority or minority groups, sometimes seen also as predetermined. Feminist activists are sometimes critical and sometimes defensive towards their presumed national group. This defensiveness could be linked to extreme situations such as war, when some see the need to defend and fight back the enemy, a publicly accepted and proclaimed enemy. Defending the nation in the context of war was seen as patriotic duty by some feminists and some women’s organisations were proclaimed patriotic, while others refused patriotism as a patriarchal concept and continued criticism of the nation and the state.

In the responses of the feminists, nationality defined more through cultural notions left space for choice and agency, while nationality defined through ethnicity was linked with destiny. Fatality about national identity lies outside of the realm of choice and agency and national identity seems natural (Brinker-Gabler and Smith, 1997). Activist who declared herself as radical feminist



talked about fatality, pacifist and anti-nationalist activists' emphasised cultural dimension of nation. That cultural dimension sounds positive, something to be aware of, if not proud, while biological dimension bears fear of being excluded, or carry a critical position because others are excluded. As Zarkov has pointed out ethnicity as basis for nationality gained primacy in Yugoslavia unfortunately only in the context of hatred and violence; womanhood, nationhood and ethnicity became mutually exclusive areas (2002: 66). Zarkov has critiqued anti-nationalist feminists who did not recognize that women do claim nationalism and who defined womanhood and nationhood as exclusive; nationalist feminists collapsed womanhood and nationhood, and thus, also saw ethnicity as a collective identity.

*"You have the language with which you function; you have culture, even if you are opposing nationalism and chauvinism on that base, you are still active in regard to it. I do not react that allergic on Serbian nationalism as I react on Croatian. That means, that I have even some hypertrophic identification with my group, but this is expressed through critique, and not through absolute acceptance.... For me this is not a question of ethnic 'Croatianhood' but question of political 'Croatianhood'" (F.4)*

Differential understanding of nationalism as ethnic, cultural or political carries a significant difference and that difference reflects in activists' attitudes, positions and work.

*"I do not have anything to do with nationalism. If identifying with, let's say, your own people, with your fellow citizens, with the fact that I could be the one there and it is only a coincidence that I wasn't, to survive what they have survived, and that is only because I am not Serbian. If naming the perpetrator means to be a nationalist, then I do not know anymore who I am. But, I was always thinking that feminist action starts with naming. You remember Mary Daly? Naming... You have to name your oppressor, and you have to name oppression. You have to say what is happening to you, you have to name it...The wish to survive means to defend yourself from the attack, and wish to exterminate means to remove people from certain area, to slaughter them, kill*

*them, rape them, and expel them. The rest are details and individual acts for which everyone has to be responsible ... for me it was crucial to name it, no more Auschwitz. ” (F.3)*

The division expressed in this statement of survivors as those who had to defend themselves, and oppressors or exterminators as those who had the wish to kill was not that simple in reality. But, this simplification is the basis for different positions of feminists among whom some divided victims and perpetrator along ethnic lines, seeing perpetrators only as Serbs, and victims only as Muslims and Croats, while others took a position that there were victims and perpetrators on all sides, although they refused to equalise the crimes and defined Serb forces as committing most of the rapes, and Muslim women as being the predominant victims.

One activist talks about the imposed ethnic identity, but imposed not by one's own group but by others - the enemy. This imposed identity was something that the nationalist feminists in their definitions had seen as important and fatal.

*“When you first receive the message that you are undesirable because of who you are, then you have to accept it, the way how someone is putting on you a tag, whether you want it or not. And let's call it - imposed identities. For me it was never important, but in that moment when it is imposed, I cannot pretend, I cannot run away. Simply, there is one kind of responsibility; maybe it is a wrong term, but simply to accept your destiny and turning it into some else, give it positive context. ...You can say “but it is not important to me, I do not even know, I am from mixed family”. In fact biology as in gender is of secondary importance, but that sticker is important.” (F.3)*

There were two positions held by nationalist and anti-nationalist organisations that differed in values accorded to pacifism and non-violence on the one hand, and on another, the right to defend including with arms. Radical position of some feminists made them radical not only in feminism but also in their understanding of nation and war making. Differences between men and

women as well as between enemy and the one who is defending were essentialised – the 'just soldier' became unavoidable. Radical feminism as anti-war feminism in both European and US feminism saw men/masculinity as war-waging and women/femininity as peace loving. In Croatia radical feminism practiced by *Kareta* proclaimed the right to defend for victim side and consider women belonging to the proclaimed enemy as culpable as enemy men. This was unusual because such position of nationalist feminists contradicted Western radical feminist understanding of women as naturally peaceful and shows the intersection between feminism and nationalism.

An activist from nationalist organisation linked feminism and citizenship in a way which equated them with a nation who has right to self-defence:

*"This was conflict between position of Antiwar Campaign and our position of naming, but for me this position was always through what happened to women in this war. ...This mass crimes against women were something that bothers me and not only as a citizen of this country, but also as a feminist. I am for the right of the people to defend themselves." (F.3)*

This position of naming the enemy refers to ethnicity of the enemy and as such is focussed on war violence. The naming meant naming Serb men as perpetrators and Muslim and Croat women as victims.

The differentiation between two feminist groups – national and anti-national - was not a clear cut line and it was altering depending on time, circumstances and organisations that were involved. Sometimes they were closer – for example, when the issue of women's human right were endangered. But when the worst atrocities and war crimes were happening and when they were debated later, positions were radically different.

While feminists were holding two different positions on the issue of war and pacifism, (i.e. pacifist and non-pacifist), sometimes there was no homogeneity of views even within the chosen position. For example, among non-

nationalists gathered around Antiwar Campaign there was an activist who was a combatant in Croatian army.

Another significant, and maybe the most significant point of differentiation and contestation among feminists was their understanding of war rape in relation to ethnicity (Benderly 1997; Kesic 2002; Knezevic ; Slapsak 1997; Zarkov 2002). In this case some feminists from *Kareta*, who supported national cause, found more common ground with organisations and institutions such as grassroots Croatian mothers organisation *Wall of Love* and Bosnian refugee organisations based in Zagreb that did not promote or support feminist ideas but had similar position on war rape and considered ethnic dimension the primary one. Their common ground then was common enemy – the Other - were either members of another ethnic group (Serbs), or of the same group if they are seen as traitors. These included women – former feminist colleagues - from groups which were opposing war and nationalism in Serbia, such as *Women in Black* and *Autonomous Women's Centre* from Belgrade.

Belonging to the majority or minority ethnic group differently impacted upon activist position in everyday life as well in thinking about that reality. But, there is a certain element of choice even in that identity among the interviewed women as well as their gender identity. They identified with the majority or kept a certain distance and critical position, or even renounce their ethnicity<sup>15</sup>. However, specific individual locations, institutions and practices within the society conditioned that choice. As Hobsbawm (1994 cited in Lutz et.al.) argues, referring to the nationalism in the Eastern Europe, violent exclusion is prevailing over universalism and search for unifying elements. There was the reinvention of ethnic symbols emphasising difference with the Other. Language was not enough to unify people although they were talking the same dialect, unless they belong to same ethnic groups. For the Other that particular difference meant exclusion. Relationships with the Other was seen

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<sup>15</sup> During that period some people changed their names that sound Serbian and Muslim, and they changed their ethnicity in the official forms in which section 'ethnicity' was not optional any more.

in the context of belonging to certain ethnic group, and collective identity determined personal position.

*"The fact that you are English, or Serbian from Serbia, is putting you in relation to other group in the position in which you can swear you have nothing to do with it and I can believe you, but first we have to discuss certain things and agree upon them." (F.3)*

The statement that ethnic and national identity is predestined and fixed can hardly sustain the definition of nation as an imagined community since imagining assumes freedom and choice. Indeed, "ways in which groups of people construct national identities and understand themselves as national subjects are complex, various and differentially intersected with other understandings of identity" (Brinker-Gabler, Smith, 1997: 3).

*"National identity is connected with my process of growing up and learning about the language and culture, and it is mostly marked by culture, through painting, writers of Slovenia, with specific distance because I live in Croatia more than twenty years. So, I live my national identity only in memory as identity in which I was member of the majority group. ... The identity I live here is that of minority...My national identity, it is important, but less important than belonging to the women's group." (F.2)*

One feminist from one organisation avoided direct answer on question about nationalism saying that she was too occupied with work at that time and she didn't ask anyone who is who: *"It was normal that at that time Croat women were fleeing away here and Serbian women were fleeing there." (F.5)*

Under the war circumstances in the newly established states, for some people it became 'normal' to identify yourself with your ethnic group. Belonging to one group meant that members of certain ethnic group would have to apply certain new norms and way of living depending on the fact whether they are belonging to minority or majority ethnic group which had to be formally proved

by certificate of nationality.<sup>16</sup> People lost jobs, property, freedom of movement was restricted and even travelling to other parts and territories if you have a 'wrong name' became dangerous, resulting in harassment and deaths. New states were defined along ethnic lines as nation-states.

It is interesting to note that women's groups gathered around *Kareta* were still having good relations with Bosnian Muslim women even after the atrocities between Croats and Muslim armies started in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It seems that enemy was already constructed and it was all Serbs.

*"At that time we had coalition Wall of Love<sup>17</sup>, , Kareta, Women – BiH, and Biser, and also Women's Action Now we were all proclaimed nationalists. But when the conflict started between Croats and Bosniacs, nothing endangers us. There were no problems, in spite of accusations against Wall of Love that they are Tudjman<sup>18</sup>'s group." (F.3)*

At the beginning of the war the common enemy was Serbia, but even when fighting between Muslim and Croats in Bosnia started, activists were still cooperating without disputes. Maybe one of the reasons was that there was no strong personal activist communication before the war with women from Bosnia and Herzegovina. At least the ones who were active in Zagreb - women's Bosnian groups - were new activists and therefore they were the ones who needed help and could not be proclaimed traitors. In this sensitive time of judging and taking the sides when not only lives and property were lost, but also values and friendships, the treason was easily attached to everyone who was not clearly against the "enemy" and who has any doubts about who was right and who was wrong and questioned new values and ideology. Also, Bosnian women were victims, as Spasic (referred in Zarkov, 2002) suggests, and recognised publicly as victims and therefore perceived as good and morally acceptable as collaborators. Particularly Muslim women

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<sup>16</sup> The certificate of nationality is called domovnica in Croatia.

<sup>17</sup> *Wall of Life - mothers for peace*, started as grassroots movement in 1991, initiated by mothers who were protesting their sons being taken into military service and kept there with aim to be sent in war. Later they organise aid to women war victims.

<sup>18</sup> President of Croatia 1990-1999 and leader of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)

were perceived as victims and exclusively as victims (Helms 2001; Zarkov 1997).

The differentiation among feminists and their organisations has affected their activism in those war years and is still influencing possible cooperation. Some organisations were encountering, as Enloe (2000) would say, too warm support by their own militarised government. At the time of war nationalist feminists were given support by the government and their institutions for their work, and they didn't question these new alliances with the state as yet. The promise of democracy and their shared political views were attractive enough to render them open and collaborative towards state politics and politicians. As one of the interviewed feminists describes the situation in 90-ies, just before the first free elections:

*"Women's Action Now was very popular at that time and parties were interested in our support. ...and I have said at one of the meetings, that we will support the party which will tell us how many shelters they are going to open when they gain power. " (F.3)*

In different times and circumstances and having different roles, feminists were allied with governmental bodies. Today, some of those feminists became disappointed and more cautious about alliances and cooperation:

*"I said 'never again' because after all I feel used and manipulated. I would not mind being used if because of that, one-day, women in Croatia would have lived better, that we could say that we have achieved something. (F.3)*

Women were perceived in the times of war as victims and anyone who dealt with this issue was accepted nationally or internationally. That victim identity had clear ethnic and gender notions. Victims were not women only, but mostly women were visible, although men were subjected to sexual violence, too. Without the intention to deny the truth that Muslim women were the majority of the victims, they were the ones who were granted the victim status publicly,

and all other were neglected, for example Serbian and Croat women from Bosnia (Zarkov, 1997).

However, women activists did enormous work to help women severely affected by war, some of them being themselves in the same situation. But, those women refugees and displaced were not 'just' victims, they managed to survive and organise life for themselves and their families in new surroundings. The majority of them came from rural areas and they managed to provide food, send children to school, and take care of the relatives, including their husband's kin. They managed to do all that but women's work remained invisible and women are represented not as agents but only as victims.

#### **4.3. Cooperation – Possibility or Unrealistic Expectation?**

There are few examples where cooperation and communication between two circles happened again towards the end of the officially never proclaimed war when some actions were organised by both sides. To mention just two would serve the purpose in this paper.

An activists from the *Center for Women War Victims* and *B.a.B.e.* said about possibility of cooperation between the two disputed camps:

*"I was at the beginning trying not to radicalise this conflict because it seems clear to me that one day we would have to cooperate in the way you have to cooperate with Church if it is about violence against women, as one day if question of abortion rises again we will have to cooperate. ...One cooperates with anyone and with them we have broader base for cooperation than with the Church for example. (F.4)*

In spring 1995, the cooperation was materialized, as women collected signatures for the petition against new abortion law. "A legislation was proposed to restrict women's access to safe and legal abortion by requiring women seeking an abortion to have mandatory counselling with a doctor, a



social worker and a priest; and to shorten the period of time in which abortion is allowed" (B.a.b.e. 2004). Petition was successful, 20.000 signatures collected and the proposed changes were not adopted, in favour of women's rights.

There was another action where some women from 'another' coalition were initiators. In 2000, when new government was elected, *O-zona* and *Network of Multicultural Help* initiated a campaign for changes in Criminal Code linked to domestic violence and many groups from both sides supported them.

Ten years after the war feminist organisations, majority of whom are still active, are sometimes cooperating in some basic feminist issues such as violence against women, abortion, and initiation of law changes, although, anti-nationalist organisations are gathered in *Women's Network of Croatia* established in 1996<sup>19</sup>, which has antimilitarism and non-nationalism as one of the principles.

It seems that general feminist goals and women's issues are once again dominant over other goals and solidarity among organisations is based again on common problems and work ahead of them. Ethnicity was left behind since the 'enemy' is again the state, men, politicians or clerks no matter what nationality. The nation-state is established and ethnicity is also left behind in the political agendas which are changed for new ones such as joining the European Union. This brings in different public discourses and different priorities. Former feminist nationalist organisations stopped talking about ethnicity of the enemy and victim, focussed on the new issues such as work on gender stereotypes and prejudices, sensitisation of public for gender issues or continuing work on domestic violence SOS-hotline, but still justifying and not rejecting their position on war, rape and ethnicity during the war.

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<sup>19</sup> The Women's Network of Croatia had its first meeting in Porec, Croatia in 1996.



## Chapter 5. Conclusion

War and nationalist discourses were the context in which women's organisations started to organise on issues of war violence and later provided help to refugees and displaced women and their families. Dominant discourses were focussed on ethnicity as main element of exclusion or inclusion, which was marked by women as symbolic and bodily markers of those ethnic boundaries. Nevertheless, this research paper shows that women feminist activists have found many different ways to deal with those boundaries set by new established state. Some believed that victim-status is morally just only for victims within those boundaries, ethnically defined. Others rejected the primacy of ethnically defined victims and perpetrators, and focussed on the gender aspect of war crimes against women.

This research points out the significance of multiple meaning of identity for feminist activists in which feminism, nation and gender are among other identities. I found strong positions on all three identities. All five activists were and still are feminists, one among them radical feminist, and their feminist orientation is a conscious political orientation. They are all aware of different positions of men and women in the society and different problems rooted in definitions of masculinity and femininity in this region of Europe and they challenge these definitions by their way of life and work.

It is interesting that today all of the interviewed feminists consider themselves non-nationalists. It may be that negative connotations attributed to nationalism today in Croatia (which is not dominant political program anymore) contributed to such attitude, as nationalism lost its moral and rightful image (including the right to defence and protection), in public discourse. Nevertheless, one activist, who in spite of declarative rejection of nationalism understands ethnicity only as collective identity, even today denied any choice of thinking and acting differently to the members of ethnicity defined as the enemy, or the Other.

Three activists are holding anti-militarist and pacifist position which corresponds to their organisational values; one activist strongly rejects pacifism seeing it as opposite to defence, and fifth avoided to answer the question whether she sees herself as nationalist feminist.

Flourishing activism seems to prove that women were active agents and not 'just' victims during the years of war and after. In 1996, *Women's Network of Croatia* was formed and more than forty organizations and initiatives joined. It is estimated that there are also around forty other organizations that are not members of this network. In spite of differences and disputes, which brought confusion at the beginning, they managed to cooperate in few common issues, although their divides will remain in the memory of feminist movement in Croatia. Still, almost ten years after the last military actions in Croatia<sup>20</sup>, feminist activists are holding two different positions on the issues of war rape.

This study shows that cooperation will be possible at least between some groups and certainly on some issues like violence against women, and abortion. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that *agency* has been present on both sides. Feminist nationalists and anti-nationalists finally have helped include rape as a war crime in the work of the International Criminal Court.

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<sup>20</sup> In August 1995, there was military action 'Storm' where Croatian military forces liberated territories formerly occupied by rebel Serbian minorities.

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## Appendix.

### I. Feminist Organisations and some information about interviewed feminists:

#### Center for Women War Victims (CZZR)

Zagreb Women's Lobby, informal group that at that time gathered women from Antiwar Campaign, Autonomous Women's House, women active in Independent Alliance of Women, Suncokret - volunteers initiative for work with refugee children, they initiated Center for Women War Victims (CZZR) in December 1992 as feminist organisation focused on psychosocial and humanitarian assistance to women refugees and displaced. Main values are "solidarity, empathy and mutual understanding"<sup>1</sup>. CZZR became one of the very well known organisations supporting women regardless of their nationality. "In 1993, thirty three women field workers, or 'activists', worked in thirteen refugee camps, and organised self-help groups, and individual counselling. (Interim-report, 1994). This organisation belongs to the network of women's organisations that strongly opposed instrumentalisation and media manipulation of rape victims. Several activists from the same circle formed later new organisation B.a.B.e.

#### V. (F.2)

In 2004 she was working as free lance consultant, and trainer. From August 2004, she is engaged in preparation work for Center for Documentation and Research of War, teaches at Women's Studies and Center for Peace Studies.

Co- founder of Antiwar Campaign, Green Action, Center for Peace Studies, Women's Studies, until 1998 she was coordinator of the Anti-war Campaign and together with another peace activist she is winner of Right Livelihood Award (also known as alternative Nobel award).

#### A. (F.1)

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<sup>1</sup> From the Presentation during the Center's annual conference held in 1993, written by Vesna Kesic (Kesic, 2003: 43).

She is co-founder of M.A.P. – counselling, consulting service for social development, and works currently as trainer and consultant. In 1980 she started to work as volunteer at SOS-line for battered women, participated in establishment of Autonomous Women's House, Antiwar Campaign, Center for Women War Victims and B.a.B.e.-women's human rights group. She was working in Women's Infoteka as editor of magazine Bread and Roses and one of the coordinators and lecturers in Center for Women's Studies.

**B.a.b.e. (Be active. Be emancipated.) – women's human rights group**

Women's human rights group established in 1994 with the aim to promote and educate about women's human rights in Croatia and region, monitoring of law and influencing the changes in Croatian law, encouraging women for political participation, senzibilization of public and free legal advice through telephone counseling. As one of the B.a.B.e.'s founders says "When we initiated Babe we started with the famous women's organisational Bible 'Peace and Power'. From there we have written some twenty values, so called feminist principles, such as support, spell out , control the anger, do not judge, keep your space nice and cheer-full etc." (Kesic, in Barilar, 2000: 259).

**V. (F.4)**

She currently works as Adviser for the media in the Ombudsperson Office for Gender Equality.

Also she is engaged on three projects:

- Women Recollecting Memories; two-year project
- Gender dimension of political transformative processes in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia together with D. Goeld from Austria,
- Fulbright New Century Scholarship project within Globalisation and Empowerment of Women.

She is co-founder of Women's Lobby, Center for Women War Victims and B.a.B.e. women's human rights group

## **KARETA**

Radical feminist group established in 1990, with the goal to promote feminist ideas. One issue of feminist magazine was published, later they were dealing with issues of rape in the war or genocidal rape. With the beginning of the war in Croatia they started to work in refugee camps with women survivors of sexual torture in Serbian camps and they were trying to help them in different ways: counselling, psychological support, financial and material aid. Together with Women's Aid Now they have organised in October 1992 international feminist gathering under the title 'Women in war', and together with Catharine A. MacKinnon, they were "collecting evidences on crimes for processing the perpetrators and those that are responsible for war rape used in this war as genocidal rape" (Kruh i ruze, no.0). They believed that women had been target in all wars but they consider this practice of war rape in this war as primarily Serbian tactic directed towards non-Serbs to destroy them completely.

*"We have realised that rape is part of military operations and we have decided to do something about it. First, we have realised that we have to inform international community and public, feminists, and we taught that we have to stop it urgently.... What was a problem in our understanding was that we were able to think about two things in the same time, that women were raped as women, raped by men, but religious and national component was important, too."*  
(F.3)

Women activists from several organisations: Kareta, Wall of Love (Mothers for peace), and two Bosnian refugee women's organisations Refugee women's group "Women BiH" and Biser, gathered around international attorney MacKinnon consider rape a Serbian weapon for which all Serbs-even feminists who oppose the war are guilty. They drew an analogy between nation as victim and woman as victim (Benderly 1997: 67). Kareta ceased to exist in 1998.<sup>2</sup>

### **K (F. 3)**

Activist, co-founder and leader of O-zona - aid to women in crisis. She is working on law changes and publishing articles in national media.

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<sup>2</sup> One of the founders has established new organisation O-zona- aid to women in crisis.

Co-founder of Women's groups Tresnjevka, Women's Action Now and SOS-line, and Radical Feminist Group Kareta who was together with several other organization cooperated with international attorney C. MacKinnon.

### **Network of Multicultural Help**

*Multi-culturality was a basis for our future organisation. It is here because of cultural differences, differences between rural and urban and not national differences. (F.5)*

The organisation was established in February, 1993. They were helping refugees through organisation of workshops: foto-workshop, weaving, making Bosnian food (pita's) self-defence for women and girls, singing group, literacy course, searching for missing relatives, and one action – visiting relatives in Slovenia without passport organised with help of Croatian and Slovenian authorities. Later they have been working through cooperation with O-zona on constitutional complaint for changes in Family Law. They have library that was given to them by O-zona. They made research on women's awareness in reading books in cooperation with libraries.

### **N. (F.5)**

She is currently employed in Ministry for environmental protection and planning and is working on her PhD thesis.

In 70-ies and 80-ies she had participated in Korcula summer school, she was active in Green Action and Student Association. She joined SOS-line for battered women as volunteer in 1989. In 1993 she has established Network of Multicultural Help, organisation in which she is still active.

### III. Guiding Questions

1. What was your role and task in the organization you were involved with?
2. What was your motive for activism in women's group and reason to help women war victims?
3. Is/was your organization feminists and are you a feminist? What does it mean to be a feminist?
4. What does it mean to be women?
5. What is your opinion about governing political party at that time, what do you think about their way of helping women victims of war? How did they 'accept' feminism?
6. Were women used for political goals and 'higher' national interests?
7. What does national identity mean to you? Is it important for you? Did you always feel like that?
8. What is your opinion about the split between feminists in Croatia? Why this had happened? Is cooperation possible today?
9. Are you still active in any organization and which one? What are their main activities?
10. With whom are you cooperating today, in which programs and activities?

