

32. Heitlinger, *Reproduction, Medicine and the Socialist State*, pp. 37–53, 127–145.
33. Slavomil Hubálek, interview, "Erotika a věda," *Forum*, no. 28 (1990): "Morálka, demokracie a pražský striptýz," *Sociologické aktuality*, no. 10 (1990): Rudolf Šmíd, "Nahofe bez," *Květy*, May 10, 1990.
34. "Ženy české proti zkáze . . . a pornografii," *Lidové noviny*, May 28, 1991.
35. Alena Heitlinger, "Current Medical, Legal and Demographic Perspectives on Artificial Reproduction in Czechoslovakia," *American Journal of Public Health* 79, no. 1 (1989): 57–61; Marta Prokešová, "Etici váhají nad zkumavkou," *Mladá fronta dnes*, November 10, 1990.
36. Olga Kučerová-Podkolodnaya. *Report on the Situation of Women in ČSFR*. Presented at the European Forum Conference "Women and Citizenship," Norwick, U.K., June 28–30, 1991.
37. "Program politické strany žen a matek Československa," 1990. Unpublished document.
38. "Žena, rodina—a jak dál," *Právo lidu*, July 4, 1990.
39. Petra Buzková, Czech Social Democratic Women, personal interview, May 29, 1991.

## 10

Women and Nationalism in  
the Former Yugoslavia

Andjelka Milić

---

Nationalism is primarily negativity . . . because nationalism lives on denial and off of denial . . . We aren't what they are . . . Others even have the right to catch up with, to overtake us; that doesn't concern us.

—Danilo Kis  
*The Anatomy Lesson*

## I. Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia

The dawn of new democracies in Eastern Europe following the downfall of communist regimes witnessed two disturbing phenomena: first, nationalism, national separatism, and secessionism, coupled with chauvinistic reactions against the minority population and minority groups in one's own country or neighboring states; second, openly aggressive, discriminatory acts against the civil and social rights of women, rights that were guaranteed by the old communist regime.

While manifestations of nationalism and xenophobia have received notable attention, the subject of women and "the women's question" have been confined to feminist circles in the social sciences and to feminist activists. Epistemological categorization is used to justify giving a more important status to categories such as nationalism on the grounds that they are general, while the treatment of women, and gender, is considered specific.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of worrying about nationalism while treating the conservative restoration of women's status as a marginal issue, we would do better to ask ourselves about the relationship of the two: why and how nationalism degrades women, whether this is always the case, and how and whether women are involved. This is especially pertinent in light of Europe's experience with fascism, which conjoined these two phenomena.

At first glance, national heterogeneity seems to provide the explanation for nationalist conflicts, division, and war in Yugoslavia. This cannot be the main reason, however, because these same nations and peoples were capable of living harmoniously over long stretches of time. Our proposition is that the explanation lies in the connection between the heterogeneous ethnic/national structure and the inadequate political structure. The problem, at least in part, lies in the Yugoslav state's and society's chronic lack of a democratic constitution, and a

political and democratic model inadequate to the significant differences in history, language, culture, religion, economy, and politics that multinationality implies.

The combination of national, political, and state components has been crucial for the existence and progressive disintegration of Yugoslavia, and it has emerged in various institutional forms and with various internal combinations of the three. Considering only Yugoslavia's more recent sociopolitical history dating back to World War II, we can talk about two types of nationalism.

The first type is "nationalism from below": patriotism, which spontaneously emerged as resistance to foreign fascist occupation, but also as a result of the working majority's discontent with their previous social status in society. The energy of national resistance and social revolt was successfully channeled by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which resolved the ever-present, active national element by shifting it to a higher level of universalist, egalitarian communist ideology. This made it possible to unite heterogeneous national forces in joint resistance against fascism and to create the second Yugoslavia along the communist principles of brotherhood and unity among nations. The political solution to the national enigma was to give political legitimacy to the national interest through a federal state with territorial autonomies, while trying on the social level to reduce, suppress, and overcome this legitimate national interest by shaping society along the lines of egalitarianism and the ideology of a "workers' " society.

The more inefficient the communist regime became on the social level, the more the political-national syndrome of divisions and infighting among the federal members grew. The system reacted heavy-handedly and aggressively to mounting nationalism, which only further activated its insidious energies toward destroying the system.

During the phase of reconstituting Yugoslavia and its federal units on the ruins of communism, we find something different, a state nationalism, which bore down with all its might on the vacated social, ideological, and political arena. Reformed republican communist parties took the lead in this reorientation toward nationalism, but they were soon joined by new parties, some of which quickly surged ahead in their rush to protect the national interest of their people.

Although unexpected, the switch to nationalism by former communist parties seems logical because the distance between the communist collectivist ideology, based on such concepts as "the working class," "the class interest," and "the class enemy," and the nationalistic collective ideology, based on such concepts as "nation," "the national interest," and "the national enemy" is much shorter than the distance between communism and democracy.<sup>2</sup>

Nationally oriented parties representing the interests of the majority nation in their respective republics scored landslide victories in the first free multiparty elections. The ultimate outcome was paradoxical: pluralistic elections resulted in single-party parliamentary structures that rushed to establish sovereign national power-structures "to which the establishment of a democratic and civil society was subordinated, whereas the establishment of a social or welfare state fell into

oblivion."<sup>3</sup> In the power struggle between communism and anticommunism, nationalism won out and democracy was again the loser.

## II. Women's Patriotism and Emancipation in Yugoslavia During World War II

Yugoslavia's 1941–1945 national liberation war against fascist occupation, like many anticolonial liberation wars in Third World countries following World War II, was the springwell for women's spontaneous emancipation from their traditional patriarchal subordination in the family. As in these countries, in Yugoslavia women acted as support for the male-dominated resistance groups.<sup>4</sup> The Anti-Fascist Women's Front of Yugoslavia, an autonomous women's organization of resistance to the enemy and support for the revolt, was basically initiated by the Yugoslav Communist Party, which coordinated and steered all its activities until it was abolished by that same party in 1950.

However, irrespective of its subsidiary position vis-à-vis the leading political force in the national and liberation war, the Anti-Fascist Women's Front boasted massive participation. It brought together some 2,000,000 women during the war; approximately 100,000 took part in regular partisan military units, and of that number 25,000 were killed and 40,000 badly wounded. There were also many women who, through their veterans' and political activities, came to hold leading posts in the party and in local bodies of administration, as well as those who became national heroes.<sup>5</sup>

Considering just the number who were active during the war, especially militarily, there can be no doubt that women shouldered as much of the burden of war and liberation as did men. The civil, political, and social rights that women acquired and that were given legal shape after the war were not presented on a silver platter by the communist authorities but had been won and earned. There resulted a formal legal equation of genders. Even more importantly, through the national liberation movement, many women experienced the country's liberation as their own spontaneous, unexpected, direct emancipation from the closed world of their traditional patriarchal families and rural backwaters, where their only fate had been to marry and serve the family.

They could no longer go back to this previous world, even if the new authorities had wanted them to. They went to the city, the factory, a job, education, and to all the contradictions of the newly emerging system. While this system generously meted out social justice on the one side, however, it reduced civil and political rights and liberties on the other. The rest of the story is well known. Despite the rights and liberties they won under communism, women remained subordinated and segregated in all walks of life.

Women reacted to the later erosion of their acquired rights and liberties by returning to the family, to children, and to the home, focusing more on their

private lives and less on political and public life. In these last crisis-ridden decades of the Yugoslav system, the gender gap became visible in all walks of life.<sup>6</sup>

The reversal of women's emancipation, along with the disappearance of women from the political sphere, provided fertile ground for the onsurge of nationalism. With its conservative but militant attitude toward women it was determined to return women to their proper place and role—home, family, and motherhood. At this point the ideologies of state nationalism stepped onto the political scene.

### III. State Nationalistic Projects As Reflected in Gender Relations

What has been the contribution, attitude, and role of women to state nationalistic projects? All these aspects are important for explaining and understanding the dramatic events that led to war, but also created room for an alternative solution in the future. The analysis presented here will show both the manichean logic of ruling by means of destruction, a logic applied by state nationalism and also the birth of resistance to the subordination of the individual's civil, political, and social rights to the abstract collectivity of the nation. Although unequal, this interaction between women and nationalism emerged not only as a new sphere of women's subjugation but also as the beginning of women's own authentic alternative social and political activities. A new, fresh, strong feminist awareness and activity has been making its way into the former Yugoslavia.

This analysis of events and the relationship between women and nationalism will rely on the somewhat revised classification offered for observing the women/nationalism relationship by Anthias and Yuval-Davis. To wit: 1) woman as the biological regenerator of the nation; 2) woman as the ideological focus of symbolization for defining the traits of one's nation; 3) woman as a participant in national-political discourse and practice; and 4) woman as a participant in the national-military conflict.

#### 1. *Woman as the Biological Regenerator of the Nation*

There is no question that woman's biological role of motherhood has been of crucial importance for carrying out the state national project, whatever national group it represents. Its logic of totalizing the nation with a view to leveling out internal social differentiation and suppressing internal social antagonisms always targeting women first—specifically, their biological function of reproduction. This boils down to an attempt to have this function, and hence women themselves, serve the state, instrumentalizing reproduction and women's bodies to numerically increase the nation.

Attempts to confine women's reproductive rights go back to the days of the communist system. The lead was taken by Serbia in the latent conflict between the Serbian-Montenegrin minority and the Albanian majority in Kosovo over Kosovo's status. At the end of the 1980s, Serbia raised the question of an

imbalance in the population's demographic reproduction, with a declining fertility rate for Vojvodina and Serbia proper of 1.8 and a very high total 4.3 fertility rate for Kosovo with its Albanian majority. This issue was raised belatedly and against a backdrop of antagonistic ethnic relations, and solutions were proposed on the basis of the national and state interests of the Serbian majority in the Republic.

The draft Law on Serbia's Population Policy (1990), submitted for public debate, envisaged the revision of certain previous rights and the introduction of new measures and sanctions, some of which were quite unusual. For instance, it punished families with more than three children by divesting them of all the social benefits they had held under previous regulations, and rewarded families with three children by giving them additional benefits. This not only denied the principle of social assistance to large families, but also constituted discrimination in social assistance, because the families with three and more children were mostly Albanian, seldom Serbian. The planned measures were clearly meant to stimulate Serbian growth. The draft law also provided for added taxes on childless couples on the grounds that they too must pay their debt to the nation, investing economically in its reproduction. The sponsors of the law did not dare openly touch the right of women to decide freely about childbirth, but they did try indirectly to confine this right by making the administrative procedures for abortions more complicated. They thus threatened the right to privacy in this very intimate sphere of a woman's life, which forms an integral part of one's civil rights.<sup>7</sup>

All the proposed measures were essentially of a restrictive rather than stimulatory character, clearly intended to impose new reproductive norms on women and families, without paying the slightest attention to the possibility of carrying out such norms. Not surprisingly, the proposal met with widespread public disapproval among women. Numerous measures of protest were sent to its sponsors, and feminist groups organized a public petition against adoption of the resolution, bearing the signatures of thousands of women in Belgrade. Thus, this assault on women's rights was successfully foiled, but others soon followed.

The Law on Social Care for Children, adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on January 26, 1990, places the accent on fulfilling the aims of population policy and on increasing the population's reproduction, instead of on protecting and assisting families and children to ensure the best possible conditions and environment for child development. The newly constituted multiparty Assembly continued this policy, now directly threatening the social rights of women. The proposed Law on Labor Relations used a double yardstick for women—what it gave with one hand, it took away with the other, the result being discrimination in the labor market. Under the proposal, paid maternity leave is granted for a period of up to one year for the first and second child, but for three full years for the third child. It ensures, therefore, that a woman who has three children is excluded from the workplace for five years. It does not take great foresight to recognize the economic unfeasibility of such a proposal, or the covert intention

to eliminate women from the labor market, or disfavor them by making them lose their competitive ability. Under the new economic conditions, the labor market is highly selective and brutal, and under the conditions proposed by the draft law the employment of women becomes almost illusory.

Whereas in the case of reproduction, women are generously "rewarded" for conscientiously performing their "national duty," when it comes to retirement they are punished. The previous law allowed women to choose whether to retire after thirty-five or forty years of service, but the new proposal fixed compulsory retirement at thirty-five years of service for women and forty years for men. The elimination of choice becomes all the more paradoxical given that this proposed law is the result of an earlier independent women's initiative that was accepted by the then communist authorities after protracting haggling. Thus, the socialist majority Assembly abolished the communist-passed laws, which honored the initiative and self-determination of women. Serbia is no exception in this respect. The new authorities in Slovenia and Croatia have openly stated in their constitutional documents what they expect of their female subjects.<sup>8</sup>

These bills make it clear that legislation on reproduction is oriented not toward women's interests but toward the nationalist interest in increasing the population of Croatia. An equal, emancipated woman does not suit such a policy, and women need to be either forced legally to improve the performance of their reproductive function or eliminated indirectly from the public sphere. Such acts of oppression against women prompted the awakening of women, of their feminist consciousness and resistance to official policy. The election campaign in all the republics served as propitious ground for women to organize themselves and step more energetically onto the public stage.

In Croatia and Slovenia, democratic women's alliances were formed with a view to bringing women together on a nonpartisan basis. Women became more politically involved by joining numerous new parties, especially democratic-liberal ones and smaller parties open to women's problems. Some parties even ran separate women's tickets at the elections, although without any effect on the outcome. The most interesting and turbulent election scene took place in Serbia, where numerous feminist groups were active, as were women from the former Communist Party, who saw a chance to form their own organizations and step independently onto the political scene. The Women's Party (ZEST) was founded as the first and only party of women; there was also the Women's Lobby, which was to coordinate the activity of women from different parties, and a Women's Preliminary Parliament, an institution representing and protecting women's civil, political, and social rights and liberties. These newly formed institutions soon became the stage for vigorous activity, propaganda, assembly, and discussion among women concerning all aspects of the political scene, determining the main thrust of their action. The idea was to create a communication network that could later be used for more organized action. Yet this proved to be farsighted, given the harder times that followed.

Nevertheless, this quick, timely reaction by women had its effect. Soon many of the newly formed parties had women in their executive bodies, trying, if only symbolically, to attract the women's vote.<sup>9</sup> Of course, these women disappeared from the political scene once the elections were over.

## 2. *Women As the Focus of National Symbolism and Homogenization*

The woman-mother symbol is also ideal for homogenizing the otherwise differentiated national being and producing a feeling of national communality, or national antagonism against the other side. Thus, woman, as the mother of the nation, on the one hand, and as a sex object in the possession of the male national collectivity, on the other hand, was given top media attention. The growing, frequent use of women in these symbolic images assumed a very important role in preparing the nation to fight the enemy: first, this symbolism was meant to homogenize the nation into experiencing its own sense of danger or superiority; then, this homogenized energy of national discontent was to be reflected at a high level until the proper situation arose when it could erupt against the rival side.

In examining this (ab)use of women by the politics of state nationalism, it is extremely useful to analyze the breach created between the majority Albanian nation in Kosovo and the majority Serbo-Montenegrin population in Serbia. Both sides used women as symbols, albeit for opposite purposes. The importance of women's symbolic function in arousing a feeling of being nationally at risk can perhaps best be illustrated by a photograph taken at the height of the clash in Kosovo pitting Albanians against Serbs and Montenegrins. The photograph showed a mother patrolling a long village road, holding a child in one arm and a gun in the other. It brought together and symbolized all the salient aspects of national identity and what threatened it: the nation's sense of jeopardy was clearly depicted by the mother and child defending themselves, by her readiness to defend her identity by means of arms but also her readiness to persevere as perhaps the last member of the nation. This photograph helped galvanize Serbian public opinion around the threat to the Serbian minority in Kosovo and to create the resolve to settle this situation in favor of the Serbian minority by force if need be.

Another illustration of the use of women is the way the mass media exploited cases of Serbian and Montenegrin women being raped by Albanians in Kosovo to charge the emotional atmosphere on the conflicting sides.<sup>10</sup> Women as sex object, in the context of the ethnic conflict in Kosovo and the patriarchal masculine ideology, becomes the property of the national collective, and hence its sacred, inviolable borders. Violation of this common property by rape meant symbolically trespassing upon the enemy's territory and brutally destroying its physical integrity.

Frequent media references to these incidents had an effect on both sides. For the Serbian-Montenegrin population in Kosovo, and the Serbian population in

Serbia, the rape of Serbian women signaled not only an extreme threat to the Serbs as a minority population but that it was time for state retaliation against an enemy that dared to overstep the borders of national territory and property. It can be presumed that this had an effect, albeit in the opposite sense, on the Albanian side as well, symbolically confirming the expansionist strivings of the Albanian nation and its power to achieve them.

At the same time, the media conceals the devastation that war perpetrates against a nationally mixed population comprised of couples and children from ethnically mixed marriages. The family dramas, agonizing divisions, stress, and trauma experienced by this large group of people are not the subject of mass media interest. According to statistical data, the war-torn regions of Croatia have the highest concentration of children from mixed Serbian-Croatian marriages, accounting for 25 to 35 percent of the youth population in the most afflicted communities.<sup>11</sup> Such family tragedies in the war-torn regions are being suppressed for the same reasons that rape across ethnic lines is highlighted. Mixed marriages symbolize the possibility of mutual assimilation and integration between different nations, the possibility of transcending the borders of national collectivity with no taboos attached.

### 3. *Women and Nationalist Policy in the Former Yugoslavia*

In the above cases, nationalism treated women as passive objects, as victims of legal instrumentalization and media manipulation. But in political participation even nationalism cannot reject the role of women as active subjects, as in the free multiparty elections held in all the Yugoslav republics by the end of 1990. However, elements of the preelection environment negatively affected women's participation. For a good part of the population, the multiparty elections were more confusing than anything else, because people lacked the necessary experience and understanding; women were offered limited electoral options with which to articulate the demands and needs of the times and their own interests; they had limited possibilities for presenting and organizing themselves independently in the political environment, and the leading national parties confined the space for them to engage in decisionmaking and action. Women did not have a proper chance to express themselves as active political subjects or to have their needs and interests properly represented. Let us examine this situation more closely.

The process of constituting political parties was fraught with nationalism. According to an analysis embracing the program documents of some eighty parties in Yugoslavia, "the national supradeterminant [was] stronger than the democratic" in shaping the parties' political views.<sup>12</sup> There was an insufficient elaboration and poor grasp of social and developmental problems, including questions loosely connected to women's spheres of concern, such as the family, employment, social welfare, child care, health care, etc. If it is true that women are oriented more locally and less nationalistically than are men,<sup>13</sup> such an election

platform would have an inhibiting effect on women's joining parties, and later the election process. The extremely aggressive come-on of some party leaders<sup>14</sup> and the strongly masculine image projected by some parties only made this worse, effectively reducing women's participation in the election process and distorting its results.

The few facts available on electoral conduct allow one to piece together a mosaic of women's political views and conduct in the preelection, election, and post-election period, and to draw some conclusions about the party establishment's attitude toward including women in the election process.

The preelection polls in Serbia, which sporadically included the gender variable, indicate that women accounted for a substantial part of the undecided electorate.<sup>15</sup> Asked whether they would go to the polls, 35 percent of the women and 64 percent of the men said, "Yes"; 26 percent of the women and 12.5 percent of the men said, "No"; and 35 percent of the women and 22 percent of the men were undecided. The main reason women gave for their reservations about voting were doubts about the elections being democratic and their view that most of the options offered were unacceptable.<sup>16</sup> According to the same poll, only 13 percent of the women in Serbia had joined political parties, while as many as 70 percent said they did not want to join any party.<sup>17</sup> Younger, better educated women favored democratic-liberal parties, while older women, housewives, and peasant women massively supported the reformed Communist Party in Serbia.<sup>18</sup>

The gender variable is also missing from figures on poll attendance, which shows how interested the parties and researchers are in the female electorate. The fact that voter turnout was high, ranging from 71 to 80 percent in all the republics, indicates that most women did not abstain from going to the polls. The same sources analyzing abstinence at elections point to women as one of the main groups that abstained.<sup>19</sup>

Women were only rarely political protagonists, leaders, and participants in the struggle for power, as shown in the percentage of women nominated as deputies in the republics, which varied between 4.80 percent for Serbia to between 5 and 6 percent for other republics, with the exception of Slovenia, with 18.47 percent of all candidates on multiparty elections. Moreover, there is a strong disproportion between the percentage of women holding top party office and their nomination by these same parties to run on their tickets as candidates for deputy.<sup>20</sup> In Croatia, for instance, women accounted for only 6 percent of the nominations, although their share in various levels of the parties' executive committees ranged from 6 percent to 44 percent.<sup>21</sup> Women ran for deputy more often on the tickets of left-wing, liberal democratic, and generally smaller parties, whereas the leading national parties tended to avoid them.<sup>22</sup>

Limited interest and marginalized presence in the party elections was bound to bring total defeat to the political representation of women. In comparison with the single-party communist system, in which women accounted for 19.1 percent of the membership in all republican assemblies and at the federal level, their

share has been reduced to 4.6 percent. There are only three women ministers in all the states of ex-Yugoslavia.

The overall election process and constitution of a new political system confirmed the darkest fears of women who had tried to fight nationalistic propaganda and its protagonists. Not only were women left without corresponding political representation, they were also left without a corresponding protective mechanism at the state level, given the collapse of the federal commission for overseeing the implementation of international declarations and conventions regarding women's rights. The demand of feminist groups and organizations for setting up a Ministry for Women was soundly rejected. But the worst was yet to come, and it came with the militarization of the conflict in Croatia.

#### 4. Militarization of the Conflict and Women

As one turns back the film of the Yugoslav crisis, one sees a thread of escalating ethnic tensions and antagonisms running through it, ultimately leading to the outbreak of armed conflict. Marked by nationalist policies that finally found legitimacy as sovereign state policies, war grew inevitable almost from the outset.

The logic of these developments kept placing women in a defensive position, until they were finally overpowered and became victims. This observation can be tested by analyzing women's participation and conduct in the armed national conflict. A look at the war scene reveals a nuanced array of women's characters and roles, which does not allow them to be viewed as simply victims. Women are seen as a) passive victims of the war, such as refugees and victims of devastation; b) mothers, actively opposed to the war; c) fighters on both sides; and d) initiators of the peace movement in Yugoslavia. Let us look more closely at these different groups.

Women refugees and the victims of war reflect women in their classic role as passive victims powerless to prevent adversity. The answer is to save one's own life and the lives of one's children,<sup>23</sup> or to leave oneself open to the risks of war.<sup>24</sup> Typical of how the mass media dealt with this situation was their abstract, quantitative approach, their stress on the need for caring for the refugees while avoiding the tales of individual fates. The latter accounts would be useless for intensifying militant homogeneous national sentiments, because they would produce the opposite feelings of pity, commiseration, and suffering, with demands to end the war.

The next largest group of women active in the national conflict still work within women's typical role: the spontaneous resistance by mothers (joined by fathers) to having their children recruited and mobilized by the Yugoslav Army.<sup>25</sup> For the first time we find public resistance to the war and to the ruling forces of the regime. But women still come out as mothers trying to protect their own children. Their protests caused unfavorable and highly negative reactions on the part of official policy and the authorities, who adopted a twofold tactic: to suppress

resistance and at the same time to transform it into protests and events that played into the hands of official policy. The spontaneous resistance of mothers was soon used in all the republics for different political purposes: in some for pro-Yugoslav Army propaganda and the army's protective role toward the Serbian population in Croatia; in others as the "caravan of mothers for Europe" from Zagreb, for propagating abroad the sovereign strivings of the Croatian nation; in others still as a good pretext to refuse to send one's recruits to the Yugoslav Army and thus stress the right to one's own sovereignty (as in Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina). Thus, this spontaneous protest by mothers was not only suppressed; it began to have an entirely different, unplanned effect on the troubled political scene.

Women fighters on both sides remained the most hidden phenomenon of women's participation in the war. There were no figures on the number on either side, and no account of what motivated them to go to war.<sup>26</sup> The mass media were obviously loath to promote this category of women participating in the national conflict. While a woman holding a gun in one hand and a child in the other could be a valuable symbol of national homogenization, in a real war situation the winning logic seems to be that war is a man's affair, with no room for women.

The participation of women as active fighters reflected the same degree of engagement as did pacifist resistance to war, except with a different connotation. In this case, as one might presume, women rallied together from all feminist groups, the Women's Party, and other alternative women's organizations, crowning their numerous protests by forming the Center for Anti-War Action in Belgrade. The peace movement and its antiwar protest actions were greeted by the ruling regime, party officials, and intellectuals, who support the national project with unconcealed hostility. Participants in these drives were openly and from the highest places called "traitors," "cowards," "unpatriotic," and "un-Serbian." Such condemnation led some women who had joined the movement spontaneously to pull back, but it also helped to reinforce the nucleus of feminist actions.

Although this antiwar nucleus was a marked minority on the public scene, the public opinion polls in September 1991 showed that 80 percent of the population in Serbia favored peace—75 percent of men and 86.4 percent of women.<sup>27</sup> This is a sure sign that the future will present a very different picture of participants in antiwar drives.

#### In Lieu of a Conclusion

To end, let us go back to the two questions we started with: to what extent can patriotism and nationalism be delineated by their attitude toward women, and what is the attitude of women toward them?

On the basis of Yugoslavia's experience with nationalism, we would be prone to say that patriotism is the minimum framework for the collective identity

experience; it legitimates the collective in time and space, while giving the individual a sense of belonging. It is based on ethnic identity and traditions, and it emerges largely in relation to perceiving an external threat to the collective. Patriotism gets its energy from inner ethical resistance and individual choice under imposed circumstances. Hence, it is a form of solidarity rather than exclusiveness; it is socially expansive, it integrates rather than segregates, it is not discriminatory vis-à-vis the particularities that constitute the national collective. This explains why women joined the armed resistance en masse, despite their subordinate position in society and the patriarchal society's many socio-psychological barriers to their presence in society and the public sphere.

State nationalism, on the other hand, is a political ideology created by society's elite, and it is efficiently spread by the mass media controlled by these ruling forces. This ideology is internalized by the individual when times are confusing and society is in crisis, when alternative choices and new social projections are obfuscated, and when propaganda can play on an individual's emotions by evoking the past. Behind this euphoric romanticization of the national past is a message to the individual that any behavior to the contrary can incur various sanctions. Hence, this type of nationalism is based on the individual's emotional reactions and fear.

Since nationalism in this case is subordinated to the will and sovereignty of the state, it approaches individuals as objects. It instrumentalizes their feelings with a view to homogenization and in an attempt to achieve its own goals. Women are given a strictly limited sphere of action—to reproduce the nation—and men are instructed to defend it. Plurality both within society and within each individual is reduced, but only temporarily and symbolically. Women, among whom there are many differences, including national ones, reflect these differences in their reactions to the role state nationalism assigns to them. But there is a thread running through women's attitude to nationalism—one of inner resistance, suspicion, and doubt. This is seen externally in women's traditionally apolitical attitude and daily concern for the family. However, this may actually conceal a woman's specific gender rationality, which operates in the form of a silent criticism of men's rhetoric and readiness to be aggressive.

The ruling ideological-political order wants women to abstain from political participation, and in this respect one of its goals has been achieved. But such abstention does not mean that women are ready to take the roles assigned to them. There seems to be an unwillingness that could conceivably turn into open resistance as social and economic conditions deteriorate.

## Notes

1. Sylvia Walby, "Women, Citizen, Nation." Presented at the Conference of the European Network for Women's Studies, The Hague, 1990.

2. Vladimir Goati, *Jugoslavija na prekretnici. Od monizma do Gradjanskog rata* (Belgrade: Jugoslovenski institut za Novinarstvo, 1991), p. 33.
3. Srdjan Vrcan, "Izbori u Hrvatskoj" (Zagreb: Revija za Sociologiju, 1991).
4. Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zen Press, 1986), p. 259.
5. Lidija Sklevitsky, "Organized Activity of Women from Croatia in NOB from 1941-45," *Povjesni Prilozi*, No. 3 1984:97.
6. Anuška Ferligoj, Tanja Renner, and Mirjana Ole, *Zenska, Zasebno, Politično* (Ljubljana: Znanstveno in Publicistično središte, 1990).
7. Alida Brill, *Nobody's Business: The Paradoxes of Privacy* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1990).
8. In response to the women's protests and petitions, the President of the Republic, in keeping with his constitutional powers, asked the Assembly to have the new law retain the old laws regarding women's retirement, and it did.
9. In its election campaign the Socialist Party of Serbia fielded a poster depicting a modern young woman standing next to a man, seen from behind, with the slogan, "The Future Lies with Us."
10. For objective data and analysis, see Ruža Petrović and Marina Blagojević, *Seobe Srba sa Kosova* (Belgrade: SANU, 1988); *Kosovski čvor: drešiti ili seći*, report of the Independent Commission (Titograd, 1990).
11. "Nesreća porodičnog rata," *Borba*, September 30, 1991.
12. Miroslav Pečujlić and Vladimir Milić, *Političke stranke u Jugoslaviji* (Belgrade: Stručna Knjiga, 1990), p. 504.
13. Walby, p. 15.
14. At election rallies, the leaders of some aggressive national parties in Serbia called on women to "multiply and renew the Serbian nation"; others observed that the "legal equation of marital and extramarital unions is a method of special warfare against Serbia." Statement by Women's Lobby, September, 1990.
15. Aleksandra Milićević, "Wise and Cautious," *NADA*, November 24, 1990.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. Public opinion poll conducted in Serbia, November 1990, by the Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, December, 1990.
19. Goati, p. 19.
20. Vesna Pešić, "The Impact of Reforms on the Status of Women in Yugoslavia," Regional Seminar on the Impact of Economic and Political Reform on the Status of Women in Eastern Europe and USSR: The Role of National Machinery, Vienna, April 1991, Table 10, p. 31.
21. S. Leinert-Novosel, *Zene-Politička Manjina* (Zagreb: 1990).
22. Pešić, p. 19.

23. According to existing figures as of October, 1991, there are about 300,000 refugees in the entire country, the majority of whom are women and children.
24. Most often mentioned is the suffering of old women who could not, or dared not, be evacuated from the war zones.
25. See Slavenka Drakulić, this volume.
26. A Belgrade television show features a woman who had gone to the battle front to be with her son, who had been recruited by the Yugoslav army.
27. Public opinion poll conducted in Serbia, August 1991, by the Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, September 1991.

## 11

### Women and the New Democracy in the Former Yugoslavia

*Slavenka Drakulić*

---

When the changes began in Yugoslavia in 1989, women were in the streets along with men, demonstrating, meeting, holding flags and banners, shouting, singing, and voting. But when it came to forming new governments, when it came to direct participation in power, they disappeared, became invisible again. Why? What relation do women have to the new governments?

We have to take into account that because of cultural and historical differences, standards of life, natality, and employment, and, finally, war and national divisions, there is no single Yugoslavia, and there are no "Yugoslav women." During 1989 and 1990, a wave of political changes and elections swept over six Yugoslav republics. In Croatia, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), a right-wing nationalist party, won overwhelmingly, as did the similarly oriented Demos, a coalition of six central-right parties, in Slovenia. The Serbian socialist party (SPS), communists converted into socialists, won in both Serbia and Montenegro. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the Muslim nationalist party, SDA, won in coalition with HDZ and the Serbian nationalist party, SDS. And in Macedonia, a coalition of nationalists (VMRO-DPMNO), communists, and federal reformist forces took power. In June 1991 the noncommunist governments of Croatia and Slovenia announced their independence, and in the same month war broke out, first in Slovenia, then in Croatia, and later in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All of this makes it very difficult to analyze the situation of women separately. In addition, most demographic data come from the 1981 census. Yet the trends and tendencies of the new governments toward women remain apparent.

There is a constant pressure from the church and prolife organizations to ban abortion. The concept of the "fruitful virgin-mother" (whatever that means) is used in any HDZ public speeches addressing women as a group. Prohibitions on abortions took hold in Zagreb in November 1991, when the largest hospital there prohibited its doctors from performing abortions, despite there being no antiabortion law.