

The job as a mountaineering woman made me more confident and stronger. And after the expedition - before people only knew me as female trekking guide - now they know me as an Annapurna climber, yes (laughs).¹¹⁴⁶

Final remarks

The two life-stories presented in this paper illustrate two very different voices of oral history; they represent two ends in the timeline of women's expeditions in the Himalayas. In the 1950s European female mountaineer followed their passion and went off for an adventure to discover unknown areas and peaks. They chose to climb in women's team to avoid male domination and discrimination. Most of the women were organised in alpine clubs and had been active in mountaineering and climbing for years. For Monica Jackson the three-woman party allowed her to plan her own expedition, to take full responsibility for decisions and to exercise leadership on the mountain. When she came back to Great Britain she was invited for talks and media interviews and her book on the expedition was even translated into German and Swedish.

Saraswati Bk became a mountaineer and a high-altitude climber "by luck", as she expressed it. Her mountaineering experiences, climbing capabilities and especially the expedition to Annapurna IV opened up new opportunities for her future professional life. The organization of the women's expedition was part of an internationally supported program to foster women in Nepal. Mountaineering and expeditions are linked with social objectives, for the organisers but also very personally for the members of the group, as Saraswati considers her successful ascent an important contribution to more equality for the underprivileged lower caste people in Nepal.

In both life stories the women's expedition play a central part, however a tremendous shift in the meaning of women's expeditions is revealed. Although western participants of women's expeditions in the 1950s had to overcome several difficulties and gender norms, they were in the privileged situation to realise their plans of a Himalayan expedition. In the contrary the Nepalese female climbers needed the occasion of the expedition to get an opportunity to leave their underprivileged status. Oral history interviews with women climbers are a valuable contribution in the reconstruction of the history of women's expedition. They allow a close view on personal motivations, on organizational networks and also on the perception of power structures in the field of mountaineering.

Zorica Mrsevic (Serbia)

"El miedo y cómo lidiar con él"

"Fear and how to cope with it"

RESUMEN

Narrar las historias es un medio de sobrevivencia, acostumbrado y conocido en todas partes como típicamente femenino, un medicamento contra la desesperación y el desamparo en condiciones impuestas, lo que ha sido la principal e inicial hipótesis de este proyecto. Las historias femeninas son mucho más que esto, ya que la esencia de la narración oral femenina es con frecuencia una verdadera colección de vidas femeninas. A causa de todo esto y con este conocimiento, la intención principal ha sido la de no permitir que esta guerra (se entiende la guerra que la OTAN ha llevado contra la R.F.Yugoslavia/Serbia en 1999) solo se recuerde a través de una la documentación oficial masculina sobre las actividades oficiales políticas y militares. Solo algunos meses, después de terminar dicha guerra, en el Instituto de Ciencias Sociales en Belgrado hemos entrevistado 110 mujeres, en el proceso de recoger las historias

¹¹⁴⁶ Interview Saraswati Bk, 2.10.2013, Pokhara, p. 6.

femeninas que contenían los recuerdos y las experiencias femeninas durante esta guerra. De tal manera ha sido recogida una colección de recuerdos femeninos, como un documento autentico y excepcional sobre dicha guerra, observada desde el ángulo femenino con ojos femeninos. Recogiendo estas historias cumplíamos con nuestro objetivo principal de investigación que era el de dar importancia y legitimidad a los recuerdos femeninos, a la existencia femenina, a las vidas de las mujeres en esta guerra. La guerra les imponía con frecuencia unos forzosos cambios dolorosos, pero también la posibilidad de aprender. Eso era un tiempo en el cual vivían entre traumas, pero también entre nuevos conocimientos. Cuando son las mujeres las que crean la paz, se vuelve aparente una verdad muy simple, que los gastos de una guerra son siempre más altos que todos los posibles beneficios de ella. En nombre de la vida para la cual las mujeres siempre se comprometen, es fácil rechazar la idea misma de la llamada „defensa de derechos humanos“con matando gente y destrucciones de guerra. „Nosotros“son en esta historia, las mujeres de Serbia y nuestros/suyos recuerdos del bombardeo de la OTAN que ocurrió en 1999, mientras que „ellos“son los hombres y su historia oficial. El presente proyecto no deniega, ni ignora los hechos históricos. Lo más preciso sería decir que han sido enriquecidos con los recuerdos de las mujeres de sus vidas privadas y cotidianas, de sus miedos y actividades durante este periodo.

ABSTRACT

The main hypothesis of the project is that story-telling is usual and everywhere known typical women's survival tool against despair and helplessness in the given and imposed surroundings. Moreover, the essence of women's oral histories is no more than the sum of women's lives. Thus the main intention was not to let this War (NATO - Serbian War) to be remembered only through men's official records documenting main stream political and military activities. Only few months after the War was over, in Belgrade based Institute of Social Science we have interviewed 110 women, collecting women's stories, containing women's memories and experiences during the War as an authentic, excellent document of the War watching from the women's point of view, by the women's eyes. With collecting them we pursued our main aim that was to justify and legitimize the women's lives lived in the War. The War was for women painful paths of changes and learning, where they lived between stresses and perception. But when women are those who create peace the simple truth becomes apparent, that the costs of war are always higher than its benefits. It is easier in the name of life to reject the term of defense of human rights by killing and war destruction. "Us" here are women in Serbia and our/their memories on NATO air campaign in 1999, while, "them" are men and their official history. Historical facts are nor denied neither ignored, but rather, added with women's memories on their private, everyday lives, problems, fears and activities of that period.

ARTICLE

Preface

One of the political divisions, on traitors and patriots originated in nineties as a decade of violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, provides us bitter taste of impossibility to accept and to legitimize differences. Making step outside is followed by dangerous label of subversion of patriotic aims and interests. In the context women's, non-violent discourses are always dangerous, just because the environmental impulses to violence. It is particularly difficult in times when violence prevails. This is time when many are ready to say that there are no other but violent ways. Just in that time it is particularly important to show the other way by keeping the living experience of rejecting violence keeping the memory for the time when we all shall heal our war wounds and when the whole community will want to regain different value systems¹¹⁴⁷. "Us" here are women in Serbia and our/their memories on NATO air campaign in 1999, while, "them" are men and their official history. Historical facts are nor denied neither ignored, but rather, added with

¹¹⁴⁷ „Network of women's solidarity against war“, in *Women for peace*, (Beograd: Žene u crnom, 1988), 79-106.

women's memories on their private, everyday lives, problems, fears and activities of that period.

It was too easy to be desperate, it is too easy to find ourselves in blind streets and not to see the way out, it is too easy being exhausted. This is the time for women's survival capabilities. As violence, fear, destruction, mistrust and apathy are everywhere around us and when good is overlapping with evil, this is the time for women's capabilities. As it was said in Voznesenskaya's book, "Women's Decameron", the way of fighting for survival in violent and imposed surroundings is to tell personal stories about various events. This storytelling is usual and everywhere known typical women's tool against despair and helplessness.

Women's War memories express our mutual female refusal to stay speechless any longer. That was the way both migrant and host women were creating a new history, using own voices and experiences. That was the way both groups of women were challenging the traditional concept of history, of what is historically important, affirming that their everyday life was history. Using oral history, women were reconstructing not only their own past but also their future. War generation of women was the generation of the new self generating priorities, different of priorities accepted by generation of their mothers, not to mention their grandmothers.

Historical fact on NATO air campaign against FRY in 1999.

The NATO bombing of Yugoslavia was NATO's military operation against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The strikes lasted from March 24, 1999 to June 10, 1999. The NATO bombing marked the second major combat operation in its history, following the 1995 NATO bombing campaign in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

According to the data of the Commissariat for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia, more than 700,000 people from war affected territories of former Yugoslavia have found shelter in Serbia. They make up almost 10 percent of the country's population. A total of 65,000 of these people still have refugee status, while others have in the meantime obtained Serbian citizenship and IDs. About 210,000 displaced people from Kosovo-Metohija have been registered. The biggest problem of refugees in Serbia, is the solving of their housing and other vital needs, which is supposed to be regulated by law. Over 73,000 refugees live below the poverty line in four regional countries

War women's memories project

The idea of collecting of NATO War women's memories was born in Budapest in winter and early spring months of 1999, during the NATO air campaign against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The project design resulted from formal and informal fierce discussions led at the Central European University among Serbian women scholars who temporarily, intentionally or not, found themselves there. What was at the beginning just an internal political discussion, eventually included the regional and western colleagues inevitably leading to conclusion of necessity to have War women's experiences and memories recorded..

The main intention was not to let this War to be remembered only through men's official records documenting main stream political and military activities. The strong determination was to collect women's experiences during the War as an authentic document of the War watching from the women's point of view, by the women's eyes. The essence of women's oral histories as always, is no more than the sum of women's lives. With collecting them the aim was to justify and legitimize the women's lives lived in the War¹¹⁴⁸.

This women's stories collection was meant to serve in present and future for women's studies scholars as important database of authentic women's experiences with the War. It will provide written records of women's histories as no less important for the historical moment of the War. With this collection women's experiences with the War will not be left to stay invisible, forgotten, erased from collective memories as not exiting at all, as it was the case in previous wars. This

¹¹⁴⁸ „NATO intervencija: stavovi, dileme, akcije“, in *Žene za mir*, (Beograd: Žene u crnom, 1999), 117-202.

will also serve as the collection of typical women's wisdom, women's survival strategies and strategies of overcoming problems imposed by reality of the War. This collection was also meant to serve as a data base also for women writers, poets, historians, art historians, journalist and all interested for this aspect of the war. The project comprises the oral histories/stories of hundred and ten women. The stories were grouped in ten thematic groups: Anger, Fear¹¹⁴⁹ and how to cope with, Activities, Shortages, Being informed, Opinions, Increase of violence and intolerance, Children, Consequences, Funny moments¹¹⁵⁰. Main emotions caused by bombing (interviewed persons were instructed to choose three options from the offered list) were: feeling of injustice 45.6%, fear 28.2%, hope in improvement 24.6%, resignation & hopelessness 23.6%, anger & bitterness 22.7%, hatred & aggression 8.2%. As ways of expressing fear are mentioned permanent & intensive fear 13.5%, low intensity & temporary fear 55.6%, no fear at all 30.9%. As activities during bombing were mostly mentioned (interviewed persons were instructed to choose three options from the offered list): socializing, social games, activities in various antiwar organizations 52.7%, increase intensity of domestic chores 38.2%, following media presentations of war events 28.2%, intensified working and professional duties 27.3%, reading books 19.1%. Shortages during bombing (interviewed persons were instructed to choose three options from the offered list): electricity 59.1%, food 47.3%, money 36.4%, water 27.3%, cigarettes 18.2%. Sources of information (interviewed persons were instructed to choose three options from the offered list): domestic media 24.5%, all sources combined 16.4%, foreign media 12.7%, permanent or temporary ignoring media, 12.7%.

Women talk on fear

When the bombing started I was completely out of myself. I couldn't do anything. My friend sent me some idiotic books and I couldn't read, even those. Not until the end of the war I was able to read. I couldn't think, speak, and communicate. Friends tried to announce to come to see my baby, and I was screaming on them "NO WAY". I wasn't afraid only of the things that were happening, I was also afraid of the things that would happen, for how long those things would go on, what would be destroyed of our poor possessions. We had been on the edge of existence before. It was normal to ask, "What are we going to eat, of what are we going to live?" No answer was usual in that time." (Mother of a small child, having a delivery 2 months before the start of the war, 31 years old, employed as civil servant in health department)

The worst night was the night the Chinese embassy got hit. It is very near and when it was hit, our apartment was heavily shaken, and we ran to the other end of our room. The children woke up in the hallway. My two-year-old daughter started to rant: "boom, boom, NATO is not good, boom, boom." It continued long after the bombing stopped. (Civil servant, 40 years old, married with two children, Macedonian, living in Belgrade)

It hurt me terribly; I ate myself out because I didn't have enough milk. I was in postnatal depression, they call it so, and when I was supposed to come out of it those bastards started to bomb us. And the depression was a very strong one, if you would look at me, I would cry, if you wouldn't look at me, I would cry more. That's the way it was. I was just about to start going out and I came to be calmer about the fact that my baby would not be nourished entirely on her mothers milk, when those bastards started to drop bombs on us. I couldn't have a drop of milk anymore." (A mother of a month old baby, 26 years old, on maternity leave during bombing, nurse by education, married, living in Belgrade, Montenegro by nationality)

We were shocked in a way, but not as shocked as others. My husband is from Croatia and we hardly survived previous wars. We have been in similar situation for 10 years and the bombing was just a logical event in the row of event and we were not very surprised, resentful and we hadn't have thoughts like "How do they dare to do this to us?" Unlike our friends t we didn't feel

¹¹⁴⁹ Expressions of fear: Permanent & intensive fear 13.5%, Low intensity & temporary fear 55.6%, No fear at all 30.9%.

¹¹⁵⁰ Zorica, Mršević, „Novac i struja, ili ženske antiratne priče“, 123-153. in: D. Popadić, *Uvod u mirovne studije*, (Grupa Most, Beograd, 2000).

outraged. In fact, the bombing diminished the feeling of guilt that we had had before. Earlier we had been eating ourselves out because horrible things were happening to other nations and we were asking ourselves why were we “better”, how did we deserve to be exempted? And when those things started to happen to us we didn’t think it was absurd like people around us did. During the bombing the worst thing for me was not what is happening, but what will happen after the war. The “afterwards” I imagined like a hole, black and bottomless. It is not as bad now as I thought it would be. I was afraid that the elementary goods would not be available at all, because I knew that the “plenty” of goods that were in the supermarkets during the war were all reserves that the state had and that it was only a façade for the people to keep the moral. And I wondered what would happen when those were spent.” (Master of political sciences, 37 years old, working in a library, married, mother of two, Serbian living in Belgrade)

The worst for me was when the power went down. I cried then, went to shelter, covered overhead and stayed in bed all day. I thought the power plants have been destroyed for good and that this country will not be able to build them for years to come and that we shall never have power that I shall never be able to turn on the computer or listen to the radio. It was simply the way I felt that my whole life will be a return to the Stone Age. It hit me and shook me.” (A student of sociology, 23 years old, unmarried, no children, Serbian living in Belgrade)

I know that they were selective and that they had high-technology-weapons with which they could realize the selective targeting. But I also knew the mistakes were possible. It was one of the roughest nights, the explosions were all around everything shattered and there were hits very near us. We went to beds, but before that I heard what had been bombed in Belgrade. I realized that they could bomb the barrack that is just 200 yards away from us and that they could level us to the ground along with the barrack. It seemed as a very stupid way to end one’s life. Why do I need that in my life – the roof, the house to fall on my head? You realized that it is the matter of fate in those moments.” (Serbian, unmarried, a lawyer working in Attorney’s office, no children).

I didn’t think about the future, I was only afraid something was going to fall on my head, like an awful pressure and wheezing. I felt that way during the bombings and air raids. Otherwise I didn’t think about anything else except my chores, my kids and that were soothing me. I didn’t sleep enough, I couldn’t sleep in the nights because of the bombs and I can’t sleep during day anyway. (Master of law, child of parents of different nationalities, working in a research institute, 40 years old, married to Muslim, mother of two, living in Belgrade)

I shall never forget May 23rd, the rain was falling all day long, and the day was bleak and dark and it went to night like there was no dawn at all. I wondered if there was anything horrible that hadn’t happened to us already. Also I experienced the most squalling feeling during the war on the night of May 1st when power was gone, because power station had been hit. The power came next day, the damage has been repaired, but from then on, power supply was not regular anymore. (A civil servant, 50 years old, mother of a child, on leave of absence, Serbian, high school graduate).

Women talk on anger

I remember the most about the feeling of rage because of the helplessness to change anything, because of injustice that was happening to us and because the great force attacked us – poor, weak, small us. There is no excuse for something like that, I can’t say there is even theoretical reason to vindicate such barbarism. (Age 53, working at Women Studies, living in Mladenovac, a widow, mother of a grownup daughter).

I am especially angry with politicians, their politicians. We take care of our politicians and they don’t have to show us by bombing their care of our democracy. Well, these shit western politicians talk about human rights, but they don’t respect human rights at all. All of their minorities are fucked, their women are battered, and they come to hear to sell us human rights for peanuts, fuck them all. Like they are defending refugees, hold on, there were not so many refugees until the bombing started. It is like someone has a headache, and someone comes to

help and shoots him in the head and kills him. Yes, the headache will go away, but his life will also go away. Or, I have a headache and someone shoots me in a stomach, because stomach will hurt me more than head. And they call it a solution. Politicians are shitheads and creeps and scumbags and I should not talk about them. (Married, mother of a month old baby, coordinator of a woman's group, 37 years old, working in a home for retired people, on maternity leave during bombing.)

Why didn't they use the money to send a special team to assassinate Him and couple of his buddies? Instead, they bomb the park that I had spent my youth in and that has nothing to do with Sloba. Even three months after the war I was not able to come and see the debris, I was so hurt. The night they killed RTS TV we didn't go to a shelter, we wanted to relax a bit. We didn't sleep all night, I was watching the news on TV on the hour and I was crying constantly. We watched Studio B for most of the times, we actually watched only Studio B and they were airing good news on the hour about what has been bombed and what was happening on political side. (A member of oppositional party, former feminist and pacifist activist, unemployed journalist, 35)

We are a heavy opposition to the Serbian government. I am and everybody I know is. For me the bombing was a great injustice to the people that was not guilty and has done nothing at all. Then they were dispersing leaflets and I was in particular mad because of that. Then I strongly decided to vote for Sloba although I have been protesting against him for years. I spent three months in 1996–7 winters on the streets and I got flu because of that and after I again went to protest against Sloba. But now they wanted to come and teach me whom and how I am suppose to overthrow. On those leaflets they wrote "no power, no water, no this and that and Sloba is guilty for all of that". I am not as stupid as Americans and I don't believe them. I know Sloba is guilty for lot of things but for shortages of power and water you are the guilty party because you bombed water and power plants. It was a good luck that the elections were not organized immediately after the war, because we would all vote for Sloba, we would forgive him everything. You are not going to tell me when I am to overthrow him I'll do that when I please and you are not going to reason me with bombs. I was on the pills all the time. I wouldn't make it without the pills. (A woman living with her partner, no children, 39 years old, working with invalids, Serbian living in Belgrade)

During the bombing I was mad and furious. In fact I was very furious. I was mad at our government and at those who were bombing us and I was mad at our people who were abiding everything. Simply I was mad and furious. I was sick of the whole world. I felt that it was a great injustice. I really felt that was the great injustice. I feel that way still. I really don't care what had happened in Kosovo, everybody knows about that and everybody knows that it had been the case from long ago, even before Milosevic. And they say Milosevic is the only to blame. We all know who is guilty, but it is not human for someone outside to come and to judge in such a way. I lost respect for the world. What about their moral, I ask? For me they haven't moral or ethics, or scruples. It is just a brute force bullying those who are weak and small, like we are. I felt horrible, because I believed in western culture, because I read western writers, I learned by heart poems by western poets. I wanted western political institutions to be accepted in our country. (A married woman with 2 children, 51 years old, working in a research institute sociologist).

Women talk on increase of violence and intolerance around them

I think every war has an impact on men that they become more aggressive and the final result is increase of violence against women and children. It's the same for those who fought and with those who has never been drafted. Simply the state of war creates a specific perplexed psychic condition in them and that makes them aggressive and, I'd say, dangerous. So, my husband became horribly unpleasant, brutal, and violent and he also became a great patriot. Patriotism came after the first seizure of panic. He held patriotic speeches all day long and he chided us because we didn't share his emotions. A couple of times he beat me because of something I had said or had done or simply because he didn't like the ton of my voice. I admit I was also

very nervous and I didn't pander him as I had used to before in order to avoid fights. I openly spoke my thoughts. He was not used to that and had seizures of anger. Like everything else was ok and he should do his fudge. He was "stuffed" with propaganda and he talked to other men and so he would scream in the house "We are not surrendering Kosovo, Kosovo is Serbia!" I would say to him "Oh yes you will surrender Kosovo" and he would get mad and start to break things and beat me. (A woman 39 years old, married, mother of two, Gypsy, unemployed lawyer, living in Vojvodina)

And I got sick of my husband's family. His parents were against Albanians all the time. It was inhuman. When they would hear on the news that Pristina has been bombed, they would holler, "That what they deserve!" They were astonished when I cried, cared and was sad. They said, "So what, they are Albanians, what do you care, why are you crying?" And I asked them, "What if they are Albanians, there are women and little children, are you aware of that? Why should they be bombed?" Or when the group of refugees had been hit I saw on TV a boy, blond one, he was 12 to 13 years old and he was crying by the road. I started to cry too and my parents in law were laughing, "Good, they killed Albanians". Fuck you, are you normal? Horrible! The intolerance toward Albanians increased during the war and Slobo off course managed to manipulate the public. Like, we are being bombed because of Albanians, they called NATO, and they are guilty. And the people felt so and hate Albanians more than anybody else. That's what they think even now, 90% of population. (Serbian, 33 years old, unemployed, BA, mother of a three months old baby, living in Belgrade)

Children from neighbourhood became violent, they were screaming war cries and they were playing war games against NATO enemies. I didn't want my children to learn that behavior, and on the other hand I didn't want my children to be isolated because they were not participating, shouting and hating the common enemy. I afraid those neighbor kids wouldn't play with my children anymore. I didn't want my children to develop the aggressive behavior. (An acting coach, married with two children, 38 years old, Serbian living in Belgrade).

In my neighborhood there was air of intolerance, especially from the people that were intolerant before. Many nationalities live in our building. They took keys of the cellar from the girl whose parents are from Croatia and they stole everything that was in the cellar. We were silent but we felt bitterness and we were afraid we could be next. There were talks about my mother because she is not Serbian. They wanted to know who were her friends etc. I heard stories how the people got more close together because of the situation, but bases on my own experiences I have to say that it had been the case just for the first couple of days. Afterwards everything went down and we all were more nervous and intolerant. (A psychologist, Muslim, married, mother of a child, working in a high school, 39 years old, living in Belgrade).

Women talk on their activities as their ways to cope with the situation

Since I was totally disappointed with people and in that time in fact rarely saw any, I have to admit I became friendly with goats. One of the goats was not mine, but my neighbor's, but she joined us – the goat, not the neighbor. Her owners were some city people who didn't know how to take care of her." (Retired civil engineer, 55, mother of one adult child, feminist activist from Belgrade, spent the War in her country house in western Serbia, in Zlatibor with daughter in law, grandson and two goats).

The sex was great. Usually during the siren I managed to come twice! All my ex boyfriends called me during the war asking me to have sex with them. I was regularly meeting my loves in the afternoons. We have had great sex during the war and afterwards. Nothing has changed in my love life during the war, except the time of our meetings and except everything was more beautiful and exciting. There were more talks on sex and love in the city. Men were courting more than ever. One guy was intensively wooing me only during the war and he did it only to reduce his fear. We went out a couple of times, I was sorry for him because nobody wanted to date him. Sex was more then satisfactory with them, although there were no deeper emotions

from either side.” (Single, no children, living with parents, working in export trade firm, B.Sc., from Belgrade).

I turned into a real housewife and it wasn't unpleasant. I cooked, cleaned, washed and ironed all day long and it didn't fall hard on me. I had no time to be creative. I can't believe people who say that those times were inspiring. I was not inspired at all. But I was completely concentrated on family and I tried to soften everything that was threatening for them. Anyway, I think creativity is not just a mind work but also bodywork and it can be used in everyday work concerning children's needs. For me it was drawing with children, sewing, I made clothes for my daughter's doll. The children behaved unlike while they are in Belgrade, they became more serious, very careful and very responsive. They immediately knew what they couldn't do and they took good care not to annoy or make us angry. It was their contribution.” (Serbian, living in Belgrade, married with two children, lawyer, employed)

To my friends and me it was a fun during bombing to translate some Serbian classics to English language. We wanted to show by doing this that we have a culture that has existed for centuries, that we are not a nation without roots and spirit. So, it is noted in my notebook that on April the 24th we translated a poem by Djura Jaksic.” (A student of English language, 20 years old, not married, no children, Serbian from Kragujevac, studying in Belgrade).

I needed somebody, I was scared to be alone and I considered being with family is normal, because family is a resort. But I couldn't get along with them. I slept a couple of night with them and then I returned. Then my family from Nis had started to panic, my mother especially. She told me to come at once. My final in the school was finished and the first version of my essay was with my professor. The theme is “Rolls' Theory of justice, the methodological aspect”. (A woman, 26 years old, BA in philosophy, from Nis, unmarried, no children, working in Belgrade)

After a couple of first bombing days, we started to call each other on a phone and to settle what to do. So for first time we had gathered together at my place for a cup of coffee, then we met at chairwomen, then at the House of Youth where we usually meet and where we got a term. It was a problem, because public gatherings were forbidden, and the manager of House of Youth had to explain to authorities who were we, why did we meet, was it really necessary during the war and were we suspicious to him regarding public safety. But he considered it was stupid the whole building to be empty and if any of previous users wanted to organize any activities, why not let them, they would be responsible and so he let us in, before he got an official permission. We hold a couple of meetings, not knowing, actually, were we to hide or were we cleared. Those meetings were opportunities for us to simply speak about our feelings, were we afraid and what our problems were. Then, following our steps, I guess, others also started to hold meetings in the House of Youth. We found the psychologists the most interesting, so according the agreement with them we started to attend their workshops.” (A woman, 38 years old, employed but not working, holds a university degree, Slovakian, divorced, mother of a child.)

My family and me we acted as if nothing was happening those days. My husband and me, we both went to work, full time and children went to kindergarten. In the evenings we would go visiting friends or friends would come visiting us, as usual. I didn't listen to the news, nor foreign, neither Serbian, nor satellite channels, so I tried to as isolated as I could. I was chagrined by the situation and I could not see the aim of the troubles that were imposed on the people and only on the people. Some of my acquaintances got killed, some of my close friends ran away abroad, or moved to the country and I wanted only to understand why, for how long and what after. (A clerk spent two years at Law School, employed, mother of two, married, Serbian living in Belgrade)

It was not a diary and I didn't write regularly. I used writing as a vent. Here, I shall read you something in no particular order: Tonight was one of the worst nights in Belgrade, since the beginning of the war. Detonations were hard. And the pictures of TV building toppled were horrible. Yes, we wanted to topple that building eight years ago. But WE wanted. Our Bastille – we should topple. Theatre “Dusko Radovic” is damaged. Also St Mark's church and surrounding

buildings. Rescue teams were uncovering debris and saving wounded and dead people. What pictures! People were hanging from the debris with their heads down, the blood was dripping from their faces and parts of skin and flesh were hanging from their heads. They aired those pictures at 3am on Studio B. Afterwards, for some reasons they haven't aired that anymore. Serbs hide their wounds and their dead. The toxic fog hovers above the black city and passengers and newspaper salesmen talks quietly." (Translator, unmarried, no children, member of Association of professional translators).

We decided to buy tomato seeds, paprika and leek and start to cultivate again our derelict and weeded garden in Tresnja¹¹⁵¹. We took 20 kilos of potatoes and went to Tresnja. We brought all the provisions and put it in front of my pleased Mrs. Mother. The day was overcast, but pleasant anyway, and guys from our neighborhood worked on regulation of water in a dike by the road. They were digging, we were watching and offering help and the planes above us were wheezing and hooting. Anti aircraft defense was firing and than we heard a strong detonation. We saw a dark gray pillar of smoke on the other side of the road. We concluded it was Makis¹¹⁵² or Baric¹¹⁵³. The clouds came in soon, everybody went to their homes, just like the pilots above us but we agreed that we would meet tomorrow. In between the two rains my mother and I have planted the seeds of tomato. I think that it was the fastest planting that I ever have participated. Neighbors told us that it was the bad land, just clay and no water and that it wouldn't do. I thought that so many things in life were useless, and if people would always think that way they would never try anything. If one of the hundred attempts succeeds, it was worth it. I can tell you now that everything we have planted yielded crops." (High school teacher, 33 years old, unmarried, mother of a child)¹¹⁵⁴.

Conclusion

In Serbia little attention is always paid to discussions of contemporary political problems led by women, mostly because social relationship between genders is only formally set up as symmetry but this false symmetry is supported by the symbiotic asymmetry (in power, in minds, in language)¹¹⁵⁵. Manhood and politics "naturally" go hand in hand, therefore everything that stands in contrast to and opposed to the mainstream political life and political virtues has been represented by women, is perceived as natural to their sex and their capacities. Among the greatest wrongs done to women has been their exclusion from taking part as full members and citizens in political debate, deliberation and contest¹¹⁵⁶. The classic theorists, and the construction of the academic canon and political theory, have been instrumental in achieving and maintaining this exclusion. Dominant model of political subject thus is a member of majority nation, white man, younger middle age, socially successful, able bodied and healthy who does not want to accept responsibility for social injustices and therefore does not have interest for them. All what is female appears in relation with the dominant model as second, second ranged, weaker and lower, just a copy. Her opinion about anything important for nation survival is simply rejected, ignored, diminished¹¹⁵⁷. Historically dominant subject is male subject what reflects specially in wartime.

Therefore the issue of female subject is important because through it reflects all patriarchal prejudices hardly noticeable in philosophy, boasting with its neutrality and its universal mission. Recognizing women's memories and experiences, women's say and women's emotions is the

¹¹⁵¹ A village near Belgrade, known as popular weekend resort, a place of hundreds weekend houses.

¹¹⁵² A village near Belgrade, know as a site of Belgrade's main water plant.

¹¹⁵³ A village near Belgrade, know as a site of chemical industry

¹¹⁵⁴ Zorica Mršević, „The Opposite of War Is Not Peace – It Is Creativity”, in Ed. Marguerite Waller & Jennifer Rycenga, *Frontline Feminism, Women, War and resistance*, (Garland Publishing, Inc, New York and London, 2000) 41-55.

¹¹⁵⁵ Staša Zajović, „Militarizam, nacionalizam, seksizam uvek idu zajedno“, in *Žene za mir*, (Beograd: Žene u crnom, 1997), 52-90.

¹¹⁵⁶ May Lyndon Shanley & Carole Pateman, *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994), 3.

¹¹⁵⁷ „Antimilitarizam i neposlušnost“, in *Žene za mir*, (Beograd: Žene u crnom, 1999), 265-314.

first step towards this aim¹¹⁵⁸. Possibilities for stepping out of civilization of power and violence are primarily in establishing different relationships between men and women. This is the source of future expecting and privileging “soft”, “weak” non-dominant, “decent” subject, and very likely female subject as more adequate to anticipated needs of the near future than actual reality. By collecting and presenting women’s War memories we wanted to encourage others to join in reinterpreting and in reconstruction the history¹¹⁵⁹.

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¹¹⁵⁸ Biljana Kašić, *Žene i politika mira*, (Zagreb: Centar za ženske studije, 1997), 27.

¹¹⁵⁹ Staša Zajović, „Militarizam, nacionalizam, seksizam uvek idu zajedno“, in *Žene za mir*, (Beograd: Žene u crnom, 1997), 19-90.