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WAR, FLIGHT, AND EXILE: GENDERED VIOLENCE AMONG REFUGEE WOMEN FROM POST YUGOSLAV STATES ¹

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This chapter analyzes changes in the gender roles and responsibilities of refugee women in the post-Yugoslav states caused by their forced displacement. It begins by addressing the 'logic' of the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism in the region, and the social and political implications of women's forced migration. In documenting the experiences of women I interviewed as they became refugees, the chapter examines changes in their roles and social relations caused by the gendered violence of war, flight and exile. The women are of different ethnic-nationalities and have varied experiences of becoming refugees. Nevertheless, the interviews reveal that these women have much in common. The hardships of their survival in exile and the development of successful coping strategies through which they confront their victimization are both the potential spaces for the creation of new narratives of belonging and multiple identities.

Exclusionary Politics of Ethnic Nationalism

The most significant principle driving change in post-Yugoslav states has been nation-state building embedded in ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism is centrally related to processes of *exclusion*, which are a main characteristic of ethnic-national projects in the region. Ethnic nationalism, as Nodia points out, "aims for a nation-state but conceives of its goal in terms of ethnic purity" (Nodia, 1996:106). Such a state serves the interests of the dominant ethnic-nation and tries to exclude minorities politically, and in extreme cases, physically, through forced expulsion, so-called 'ethnic-cleansing' and genocide.

Even those who doubted in 1991, at the beginning of the war in Croatia, that 'ethnic cleansing' was pre-meditated now perceive that this was the main goal of the conflict. The war transformed Croatia, for example, into one of the most 'ethnically pure' post-Yugoslav states. The heaviest fighting took place in areas with the most mixed populations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Ethnic cleansing in areas unaffected by the war followed territorial cleansing of ethnic minorities in the war zones.

The exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism also breed intolerance of certain groups within ethnic-national collectives, such as individuals who are in or from ethnically mixed marriages, or those who refuse to express their identity in terms of a single ethnic-nation. Therefore, the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism cuts across seemingly unambiguous ethnic-national lines, and also victimizes some people from the majority ethnic-nationalities, those who are marked as 'different'. The politics and practice of exclusion, embedded within projects of ethnic nationalism in the region of what was formerly Yugoslavia, mean that the identities of all those who cannot or do not want to state their 'appropriate' ethnic-national background and/or 'loyalty' to the nation-state are denied and effaced.

Woodward notes that "[i]n ethnonational terms, Yugoslavia was a land of minorities. No group had more than a regional majority, and most communities were ethnically mixed[...]Large parts of the country - including cities and most towns - were ethnically mixed" (1995: 32). This particular context of an ethnically mixed population, as well as a considerable number of people who identified as Yugoslavs, was the rationale for deploying a politics of exclusion.² Such a politics was critical for the success of the political elite in its claim for power over 'ethnically pure' territories.

Multi-ethnic communities were not just the sites of peaceful multi-ethnic co-existence but of genuine cohesion. Ethnically mixed marriages were one of the significant demographic

and cultural characteristics of Yugoslav society (see Morokvasic-Muller in this volume). Although ethnically mixed marriages were more typically found in urban settings, in the areas with the most ethnically mixed population, they were also common in rural settings. Ethnically mixed marriages were an expression of good multi-ethnic relationships in the region. At the time of the 1981 census, the number of people in ethnically-mixed marriages **and from ethnically-mixed background** was greater than the numbers of Albanians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Muslims, and Slovenes. **Approximately two million people out of the population of 22 million were either parents or children of ethnically mixed marriages (Petrovic, 1985).** This group was outnumbered only by Croats and Serbs (Petrovic, 1985). Therefore, in order to realize their projects for 'ethnically pure' states, the political elites had to deploy a politics of biological and cultural 'cleansing', which was a precursor to war. History and language were to be purged of any notion of peaceful co-existence.

Commenting on the results of the first multi-party elections in Yugoslavia in 1990, Woodward (1995) argues that the voters did not make a clear choice for nationalists and independence. They did push the nationalist momentum further, however, not because of the voting results, but because of the use politicians made of them (1995: 118). Processes of ethnic-national purification were essential for politicians who had been seeking more political power over their territories. Nationalistic oligarchies have also actively worked to spread hatred and fear of an 'other', creating a base for an ethnic-national identity that would be suitable for their nationalistic projects.

This is not to imply that the society of pre-war Yugoslavia was without internal national tensions and competing interests. However, the state socialist solution to these ever-present national politics was, as Milic explains,

to give political legitimacy to the national interest through a federal state with territorial autonomies, while trying on the social level to reduce, and overcome this legitimate national interest by shaping society along the lines of egalitarianism and the ideology of a 'workers' society (Milic, 1993:110).

The political solution to the national enigma in Yugoslavia was to grant near statehood to the republics as well as multiple rights of national self-determination to individuals. This meant that Yugoslav society was not successfully held together by political dictatorship or repression of national sentiments, but by a complex system of rights and overlapping sovereignties.³ Therefore, the primary social divisions and inequalities were not, as Woodward argues, "defined by ethnicity but by job status and growing unemployment" (1995: 44).

It can be argued that the revival of ethnic nationalism in the region was in essence a "state nationalism" rather than "nationalism from below" (Milic, 1993). A crucial element in this "state nationalism" is a politics of ethnic-national identity which demands purification and ethnic-national 'sameness', thus, the politics of exclusion based on a hatred and fear of an 'other', represented by an ultimately different ethnic-nation. As a result of such a politics in post-Yugoslav states, 4.5 to 5 million people in the region were uprooted by August 1995.⁴ The data include refugees, internally displaced persons, as well as approximately 700,000 people who left the country since the beginning of the wars, seeking political asylum in European countries.⁵ When we note that the total population before the war was 22 million, these figures mean that every fourth or fifth citizen in what was once Yugoslavia has been forced to flee her/his home.⁶

The massive population displacement of predominantly women has operated as a crucial symbolic and material element in reconstructing boundaries between ethnic-national collectives. In the context of violent conflict over ethnically homogeneous territories and

states, uprooted women have become symbolic and strategic sites of nationalism and a quest for the destruction of a multi-ethnic-national society. The centrality of women in this process is intrinsically related to their roles as biological reproducers and as cultural cultivators of the boundaries of ethnic-national collectives and their ideologies (Yuval-Davis and Anthias eds. 1989).

I have argued elsewhere (Korac 1999) that the creation of divisions among refugee women along ethnic-national lines and within a single ethnic-nationality are central for the establishment of the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism and its projects. Uprooted women, once exiled in one of the post-Yugoslav states, continue to be marked by their ethnic-nationality in a crucial way. On the one hand, the place of exile carries characteristics of a war zone, particularly for women of minority ethnic-nationalities. These women confront a constant fear for their lives and the safety of their children, although they are no longer in an official war zone. On the other, women who share ethnic-nationality with the majority of the population in the host country are also confronted with various restrictions on their rights. The limitations of women's rights serve the state's interest in controlling women in order to 'protect' the 'endangered' ethnic-nation. In justifying such control, the nation-state creates and imposes a notion of women as 'traitors' to their ethnic-nation. This idea easily translates into public stigmatization of women who cross demarcated lines between ethnic-national collectives. They become 'traitors' by marrying inter-ethnically and/or by having children in mixed marriages, as well as by refusing to identify themselves solely according to their 'blood ties'.

Because the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism insists on these divisions among refugee women, all other socially and economically constructed differences - as well as similarities among them - remain hidden. In the following pages I analyze the radical changes of the roles of refugee women as mothers, caregivers, providers for their families,

and wives, resulting from the war, flight and exile. Following an explanation of research methods, I analyze how these changes transcend ethnic-national boundaries, and become the common, underlying characteristic of their individual struggle for survival in exile.

Research Methods

Throughout the chapter I refer to ten refugee women living in exile in Serbia, FR Yugoslavia. The collection of data was conducted during my fieldwork in 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997.⁷ Most of the interviewees were living in Belgrade at the time, while three were accommodated in one of the "collective centres" set up for refugees in towns or villages close to Belgrade. I also refer to three women refugees who were in exile in Zagreb, Croatia, and Ljubljana, Slovenia, and who were interviewed by others.⁸

The refugee women I interviewed were identified through a 'snowball' sampling technique, initially facilitated by my contacts with women's groups in Belgrade. The refugee experience can make those displaced people suspicious of institutions, government(s), and individuals representing these bodies, including researchers such as myself (Moussa 1993: 36). Therefore, I first got in touch with some of the women by attending the women's groups' weekly meetings or by accompanying women's group activists during their visits to refugee centres in and around Belgrade. Three of the women whom I interviewed were contacted through my friends and relatives.

In my initial contacts, I talked about my research but also about myself. Until the Fall of 1992, I had lived in the region. I spoke the same language as my **interviewees**, and knew well the places these women were forced to leave. This was invaluable in establishing trust.⁹ Moreover, although my experience of 'voluntary' exile was fundamentally different from their experiences of forcible displacement, we nevertheless shared feelings of pain because we lost *home*. All these circumstances helped me to be accepted as a researcher, and at the same time as a kind of 'insider'. Although I could have been perceived as 'one of them', I was also

someone who was free to leave and continue a 'normal' life. This placed me in a more powerful position.

I was conscious of this imbalance of power between the women I interviewed and myself. While I was open about my research and myself, during initial contacts, I did not disclose my anti-nationalist politics, nor express anti-government attitudes. Rather, I expressed the compassion and pain I felt regarding the tragedy of all peoples adversely affected by the war in the region.

The women were living in an extremely authoritarian social and political environment that did not allow for open expression of political views that were different from those promoted by the regime. Moreover, since the survival of these women depended on the provisions given by the host government, their personal contact with someone who was openly against that government could have threatened their status and existence. The position of women of minority ethnic-nationalities was even more sensitive in this regard. They struggled for survival in a hostile social and political environment that promoted hatred toward non-Serbian ethnic-nations. The women had reason to fear that their personal contacts with those who were against the regime would be perceived as an open political statement that could worsen their already unfavourable position. I also did not want to jeopardize my access to refugee women who were nationalists, who might have decided not to participate in the research if they knew my political views were very different from their own.

The differences between the interviewees and myself were aggravated in cases in which our socio-economic background and education were radically different. In order to confront and reduce any problems of understanding, I often repeated to the women, in my own words, what they had told me during the interviews, to ensure they agreed with my interpretation. In this way, I tried to overcome barriers resulting from a "lack of shared

cultural norms for telling a story, making a point, [and] giving an explanation" (Kohler Riessman 1987: 173).

This approach was critical for interviewing women with whom I did not share an ethnic-national background. My own location and experience regarding the problems of ethnic-nationality in a conflict involving ethnic nationalism were radically different from the experiences of the women respondents. I found, however, that commonalities in educational background and upbringing helped to bridge the ethnic-national differences and contributed to the development of mutual understanding during the interview process.

The decision to include the experiences of refugee women interviewed by others was based on my highly restricted access to refugee women in other post-Yugoslav states. Although I was a graduate student at a Canadian university at the time of the research, my place of birth, ethnic-national background and citizenship were obstacles to conducting research outside of Serbia. Therefore, interviews with refugee women who were in exile in Zagreb, Croatia, and Ljubljana, Slovenia, represent an attempt to broaden the picture of the situation of refugee women in other post-Yugoslav states.

Embedded in the different economic, social and political situations in these societies, there were significant differences between the situation of rural and urban women in Serbia and between those located in Serbia and in other post-Yugoslav states. Any generalization of the situation of women in or across post-Yugoslav state[s] is bound to be problematic. Nonetheless, there are similarities that stem from a long, shared past by the citizens of these new states, as well as from the recent process of transition from state socialism to ethnic nationalism in the region. For this reason, I include the stories of women located in other post-Yugoslav states. These accounts enable me to trace general trends and identify the ways in which the local populations have reacted to refugees. They provide an avenue to explore how women

have dealt with the hardships of their lives in exile, including the separation from their homes and loved ones.

Becoming a Refugee: Counter-Narratives of Belonging and the Rise of Political Consciousness

Refugee means a person lost in space and time. That is the shortest definition. When I came to Zagreb [Croatia] as a refugee, a woman of 49 at that time [the Spring of 1992], a well established professional, I was a director of a firm, my educational background is law. At the time when I came here as a refugee I was nobody. I was nothing. I was a person without a name, actually on the contrary, I was a person with the name [Bosnian Muslim] to hide, not to be pronounced.¹⁰ I would not wish that kind of feeling on anybody. That is so sad and miserable, you simply don't have anything to look forward to. You don't know where to turn, from whom to get food, from whom to get shelter. I had quite a few friends in Zagreb, whom I met through work, so they were there to help me in the beginning. Yet, they were ready to help for a couple a days, five days at the most. However, my stay was endless. We couldn't foresee when the war would be over, and moreover whether there is a hope it'll be ever over[...]I didn't cry then, I cry now. Somehow I was strong then, I was aware that crying is not a way out, that it would make my situation even worse.

These words, from Biba a Bosnian Muslim woman in exile in Zagreb, Croatia, express a feeling common to most of the women I interviewed.¹¹ Their experiences of becoming refugees stripped them of their individual identity and annulled all attributes of their lives before the war and exile. The words of Branka, a Croatian Serb woman with a middle management position before the conflict, revealed the same feeling of loss regarding her identity: "I'm a refugee. I no longer feel I am anyone or anything. Now, actually, I am no-one

and nothing." This theme of the loss of individual identity is a feeling shared by interviewees regardless of their age, socio-economic background or ethnic-nationality.

McSpadden and Moussa (1993: 209) point out how the legal construct of refugee has "social implications indicating a historical reality outside of one's normal identity[...][that do] not represent the unique qualities of an individual, but reflects the circumstances which impinge upon the person and cause flight from the homeland." In this sense, the women interviewed share the problem of reconstructing their identity and life with other refugee women throughout the world (Afkhami 1994; Bujis ed. 1993; Moussa 1993).

The feeling of being deprived of one's identity and of becoming a nonentity is compounded by a feeling of humiliation for having to rely on humanitarian aid. Branka explained how humiliated she felt when she had to obtain clothing at the Serbian Red Cross Office in Belgrade:

[...]it simply humiliates you [the procedure of getting aid]. I came [to Belgrade] only in summer clothes. When I went to the Red Cross to get something, because I was forced to [by the change of seasons], I went six times [and came away with nothing five times], that is an awful feeling. You go there [to the Red Cross], everyone's grabbing there, wrestling over those clothes. It's awful, and now you go there, and you know you have to take something, and you can't. I was going towards the clothing, knowing I had to take something warm for my child. I had no money to buy anything, there was no-one to give me any. They were fighting over them. I had no intention of entering, fighting, scrambling for a sweater or something else with another woman. It humiliated me so much, until I did it the sixth time, *then* I had to.

Almost all the refugee women I interviewed fled to Serbia (FR Yugoslavia) at the beginning of the wars in Croatia and/or Bosnia-Hercegovina, fearing an escalation of the

conflicts. However, almost all of them had believed that they were not leaving permanently, but for "three-four weeks" or "a couple of months" at most. Tanja, from Bosnia-Herzegovina and of mixed ethnic-nationality, describes the problem of accepting the reality of the war and her new life circumstances:

I arrived and only then realized that I had become a refugee. I had always cried for the refugees in Croatia, be they Croats or Serbs[...]I found that horrible, I would always cry. Then I came here and for days I couldn't accept it. I didn't register. I kept on calling my husband and asking if I could come back. He said, just a bit more, until, one day, he took his parents, drove them to Raska [a town in Serbia] and stayed with us [in the collective centre in Belgrade], because he couldn't stand it any longer [in the war zone].

Among those interviewed, only Tamara, a Bosnian Muslim woman, had a systematic approach to her new status as a refugee. After two years of living in war-ravaged Sarajevo, during which she had her third child, Tamara developed an organized plan for getting to Serbia and then applying for resettlement in a third country. A policy of family reunification would then enable her husband to get permission to leave Sarajevo and rejoin her and their children. For Tamara, being a refugee was finite and she would be able to reconstruct her life. Tamara said:

I, personally, am not hurt by it [by becoming a refugee] because I know that, after I have left my home, wherever I am, until I regulate my documents and my status, if I leave for Canada when I regulate my status, start working, I won't feel like a second-rate citizen. I'm aware that I am now a zero-rate citizen, that I'm starting from scratch. I consciously embarked upon that road and I don't give a hoot because someone here considers I shouldn't be here. I'm not here because I wanted to come and live here or threaten anyone, I am

simply here because I have to be here until I obtain some of those documents so that I can go abroad.

Tamara's experiences in the war, as well as her socio-economic and marital status, enabled her to make decisions and plans long before she was able to leave her home. As a mother of three small children, a highly educated professional who is married inter-ethnically, Tamara was eligible for resettlement in a third country. These set of circumstances, however, are not common in the patterns of flight among refugees in the region.

For women who became refugees in one of the post-Yugoslav states, the places to which they were displaced are familiar because they once belonged to a common 'homeland'. This characteristic distinguishes their situation from most other forced migrations. Those who were fortunate enough to escape immediate life-threatening dangers found themselves in exile, yet in places where their friends, colleagues, lovers or relatives might have lived. Although these women knew the local language and customs, they became "foreigners in a country which until recently was their homeland" (Nikolic-Ristanovic et al. 1995: 13). This situation contributes one more layer to the politics of identity.

Refugees are grounded in the identities they held before flight, as McSpadden and Moussa (1996: 218-219) point out. At the same time, they must forge new identities that will enable them to belong to the host society: learn the language; further their education; undertake additional training in order to get employment; etc. Yet for refugees who are in exile in one of the post-Yugoslav states, the host country is usually not a foreign, unfamiliar place. Thus their adaptation, integration and the creation of a new identity requires an entirely different set of attributes than if they

were adapting to a new culture and country. In the conflict involving ethnic nationalism and the politics of exclusion, the most important element for the adaptation of these women to the host society is their ethnic-nationality, an ascribed attribute that is entirely beyond their individual influence and control. Even the refugee women who are of the same ethnic-nationality as the majority of the population in the host country confront specific problems in recreating their individual identities. Goca, a Bosnian Serb woman, describes the way she has been regrouped as the consequence of her flight:

When I'm with my three sisters-in-law, who are also refugees with their families, I feel like a person[...] But, with all other people who haven't lived to lose their house, their friends, I can't feel comfortable because they don't understand us. They only say "Be happy you're still alive." That sentence is the most important, I don't deny that, but it has become so heavy and sad. Because you have to eat, to sleep, to wear something when you're alive, you have *to think*.

Slavka, a Bosnian Serb refugee woman, expressed similar feelings about the attitude that 'being alive' is the most important feature of refugees' well-being. Slavka said:

In those first moments [at the beginning of her exile] I was just glad to be alive and have something to eat. I thought I was happy. As time passed, I realized that it wasn't what I had expected. I hadn't expected much, I didn't ask for much. I just wished to organize my life somehow. I wanted to work and be of use to myself and society. To forget, so that things would be easier. The persons who were chosen to help, the directors [of the collective centres], they don't have time to talk to us, visit the centre, be with us. They have other work,

things I probably don't know about. They say: "Keep quiet, you have food. Are you hungry?" No, we're not. "Well, then what do you want?" But I didn't think that my life should boil down to lunch and supper.

In this region, the stereotyping and consequent stigmatization of refugees is a common, underlying characteristic of their lives. Refugees are perceived as a homogeneous group of people whose rights are 'protected' and yet restricted in the country of asylum. As a consequence, they are seldom treated as individuals, with individual life histories, problems and feelings. Goca's story reveals the problems she has encountered with regard to this stereotype:

No-one asks us [her and her husband while in exile in Belgrade] what we feel, what we think [...] here in Belgrade, the very fact that you're from Gorazde [a small town in Central Bosnia-Herzegovina], that you're a refugee. I have already told you that my husband and I were well-off because we were hard-working, we're well-off, we liked to dress well, to eat well, to have a good boat, to have a good car, to treat our friends to dinner. After we arrived in Belgrade, we continued our life not by spending, because, you Belgraders can't do that either, but we continued eating normally, acting normally, dressing and living normally. And we were even reproached by our relatives, they're mostly intellectuals, they said "you're refugees now, maybe you shouldn't dress like that, others might criticize you" [...] We refugees practically mustn't eat, dress, talk, wear make-up, have friends. We who have fled should be at a lower level, and the one who tells me that, she/he doesn't know how you lived. At the word "refugee", people put us down [into a low socio-economic category].

Even when these women have been fortunate to come across people who treat them in a friendly way, as persons who have individual histories, needs and interests, they often confront feelings of guilt. It is a sense of guilt for being 'alive' while their loved ones, husbands, relatives and friends in the war zones are in life-threatening situations. "Survival guilt" (Eastmond 1993) is a common feeling among refugees, and it represents, "the psychological result of leaving others behind while they themselves were escaping" (Eastman, 1993: 39). Nermina, a Bosnian Muslim woman, describes her guilt:

This friend of mine, Ivana, she came to visit us [refugee centre for women and children with special needs]. She brought some shampoo for all the women. She talked to me longest. She's also a professor of literature, she came on her own initiative [to visit the Centre][...]I told her how much I had liked to go to the theatre, and that my husband and I had started leaving the children alone at home before the war broke out and we went to opening nights in Sarajevo[...]And then, one evening she called me, and asked if I was free, because she wanted to take me out to the theatre. At first I was delighted and said that I wanted to go. But then I started getting ready, and the situation in Sarajevo at that time was terrible, they didn't have any water, electricity, food; and I was getting ready, and I started to cry. I couldn't go. I thought it would be a betrayal of my family over there, having a good time, going to the theatre, while they were sitting in the dark. I called her and said I couldn't go. Ivana understood.

The stereotyping and stigmatization of refugees are even stronger in the context of flight within post-Yugoslav states. The duration of the conflict, the economic hardship resulting from it, as well as the economic sanctions imposed on Serbia, FR Yugoslavia, have contributed to the perception of the refugees, regardless of their ethnic-nationality, as being a

heavy imposition on the host government.¹² This has made it even harder for refugee women to adapt to their new life situations. Slavka, a Bosnian Serb, describes her feelings about the stigmatization of refugees in Serbia, disclosing a counter-narrative of belonging:

Well, it hurts when they [people in Serbia] say: "Why have you come here? These refugees, they steal, lie, smuggle. Belgrade was a different city before the refugees came"[...]So, I live here, if this can be called a life. They don't understand me, I don't understand them. There are frequent squabbles, and I think that I prefer to talk to refugees of any nationality, that we understand each other better.

The lives of these women exiles in the post-Yugoslav states are narratives of belonging and identity that are often constructed in contrast to the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism and the goals of the state officials and bureaucrats. My research reveals that experience in exile leads to an increase in political consciousness on the part of refugee women, who feel they have become pawns in the hands of the host governments. This excerpt from an interview with Branka, a Croatian Serb woman, reveals this pattern:

We're [women refugees] only being manipulated[...]No one protects you in any way, no one gives you security. Not to help you, but to frustrate you. They keep on showing mothers with children on TV, babies, saying aid is needed, but they [the state officials] are actually only using you for their own purposes.

Tanja, a Bosnian woman of ethnically-mixed background, described one of the ways in which refugee women and their children have been manipulated by the state-controlled media:

When *Politika's* [Belgrade daily and a TV station, viewed as the government mouthpiece] journalists come, everything is rigged. They come when the

director [of the collective centre] tells them to, they go to the nicest rooms and when they film us, then they film the nicest room and my children are not filmed in the poverty in which they live. Then there were cases when children were given toys [just for the purpose of filming], to show how they were having a wonderful time.

The manipulation and misinterpretation of the needs of those in exile are common characteristics of the refugee situation in many countries. Harrell-Bond (1986) points to problems of power related to host governments that speak for refugees and their rights, rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. This pattern experienced by refugees around the world, has been aggravated in the context of the post-Yugoslav states, where developed democratic political procedures were lacking even before the recent conflict. The situation regarding the rights of refugee women is problematic because most of them are not socially accustomed to participating in the public political realm. Consequently, most of them lack the skills to articulate their demands in terms of their individual, social and political rights. The major features of their identity, as women, remain their roles as mothers, wives, caregivers and providers for their families. In the following sections I discuss these aspects of their identity in the context of their lives changed by war and flight.

Refugee Women as Mothers and Caregivers

My interview data on the experiences of refugee women in Serbia, as well as secondary sources, clearly indicate that they constantly feared for their lives and futures, as well as for the lives of their children and other family members.¹³ They try to negotiate between their responsibility as mothers to provide a secure future for their children, and the new circumstances of their lives over which they have lost control.

Seka is a Bosnian Serb who was a working-class woman before the break-up of Yugoslavia. She had divorced her husband long before the war. Seka has three daughters who

were ten, eight and five years of age at the time of the interview. She also had a son who was killed in the war. Seka confessed that it was hard for her to carry on as the one solely responsible for her children's future:

It's extremely difficult. I look at my daughters, they're young, and I'm helpless. I've never felt like I feel here [in exile], I feel incompetent, I fear for them, what they'll do, where they'll go. I don't know how long I can endure this. My health is damaged, I have developed diabetes, there is no financial help, I can't give my children anything, just what they can get in the collective centre. I wonder where I'd make my nest, how I'd earn something. I don't see a future in front of me. Sometimes I live like a robot, overwhelmed by all this. Will it stop? Everything depends on me. Will there be peace, will it be possible to move freely [in the region of post Yugoslav states]. I don't see a bright future for my children.

Nermina, a professional Bosnian Muslim woman, explains her feeling of pain at having sole responsibility for her children and not being able to secure for them the kind of life she herself had as a child:

From this perspective I don't think that I'll be able to give my children even half of what I had, because I really had a nice life[...]And now all they have here is me giving them love.

These words indicate the pain of witnessing one's children suffer in exile, deprived of the love and care of their fathers, relatives and friends. It is, however, even harder for mothers separated from their children.

Refugee women separated from their children because of their flight experience psychological stress and emotional suffering that can be devastating.

Many of these women commit their lives to getting their children out of the war zones. Ivana is a refugee woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina of ethnically mixed background, with a Serbian mother and a Croatian father. She is married to a Serb born in Serbia, and has three children. Ivana lived with her family in a small town in Eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina. She happened to be in Belgrade, where she had come to obtain her husband's citizenship papers, when, suddenly, because of the conflict it became impossible for her to get home. At the time her husband was a volunteer in a Serbian paramilitary force. Ivana describes her fear and anguish for her children and family:

My sister was already here in Zrenjanin [a town in Northern Serbia], and there was no chance of my getting back there [to Bosnia-Herzegovina][...]In the meantime, the children and my parents were in my flat [in a town controlled by the government of Bosnia- Herzegovina][...]And then, you know, when the sirens wail, they all go down into the cellar. I talked to them practically every day. My mother was worried about my sister and me, and I was concerned about them[...]Then the telephone lines were interrupted and since then I haven't spoken with my children[...]I don't know how they are making out[...]There's no market. The shops are closed. You're lucky if you find someone selling something in the street[...]I sent three packages, they didn't get anything. You can't send money, nothing. And you feel bad when you sit down to eat and you know that they don't have anything.

Ivana, however, did not give up trying to get her children out of the war zone, at times risking her own life. On April 2, 1994, she went to Doboje, a Serbian-held town in Eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina when she heard that her children were on the list for an exchange:

I went there, and stayed 40 days, they were supposed to be exchanged every day, and they'd [authorities of Bosnia-Hercegovina and the Republic Srpska] put it off, and so on. I was in Dobož. You know what it's like, they're [the Army of Bosnia-Hercegovina] shelling it from two sides. So that you don't have one day of peace. A shell fell thirty meters away from me, killing four children, four were wounded[...]And you don't have time to run. It's just luck. You pray to God that it doesn't hit you[...]I find it incomprehensible that I'm in a situation where I can't help my child. I can't help the three of them. How can I help them? In what way? I went to UNPROFOR [UN Protection Forces], to fix it up so that my kids could get out. It didn't work. And that International Red Cross. They said: There is a Red Cross branch in Tuzla [a town in North-Eastern Bosnia-Hercegovina]. Only children up to 15 and a mother or father over 60 can get out through the Red Cross. That means if they let them, my mother and father and the child could get out. But what about my other two children and brother[...]How are my parents supposed to leave a son and my two children, and get out with just the little one?

Ivana's deep concern for the well-being of her children is mixed with her feelings of loss of precious elements of her maternal role, watching and helping her children become adults. She says:

The small one writes in a letter: "Dear aunt (to my sister) I'm so small and tiny, miserable. If you were to see me, you wouldn't recognize me, but I'm 100 times smarter than I was." Because the children have grown up, the children have matured in the war. Because of the war, they've matured in a year. And I haven't seen the children for two and a half years.

Refugee women whose children remained in the war zones controlled by an 'enemy' ethnic-nation often fear that their sons will be drafted into the 'enemy's' army and end up fighting against their own ethnic-nation. These women experience intense anxiety resulting from strong social pressure to be a 'loyal woman', and a 'Mother of the Nation' whose sons have to fight for the 'National Cause'. They attempt to negotiate between their role as mothers of their children/sons and their role as 'Mothers of the Nation'. This negotiation becomes particularly difficult in a situation where a woman's 'loyalty' to the ethnic-nation can be considered 'problematic' if her sons are fighting in the 'enemy's' army. Ivana's experience illustrates this problem:

My only wish is that my children come here, and be with me, that they're here, and that's all I want [...] I am very much afraid that they [the Government of Bosnia-Hercegovina] might call up my child. They [people, friends in Belgrade] ask me: what will you do if your child is mobilized and sent to the front there. What would I do? Kill myself? He knows in his soul *who he is*, and he knows that he must go, if he doesn't they'll shoot him, he must[...]Because it's a dirty war. If the wars were clean, then things wouldn't have come to this. That's the worst thing. War was never good, and never will be.

Ivana tried to overcome the dilemma between her motherhood and 'loyalty' to the Serbian nation, as it has been constructed by nationalists, by defining war as *dirty*, especially the war in Bosnia-Hercegovina. She explained how she would have felt if her sons, the oldest in particular, could get out of the war zone and join the 'proper' army, that is the Army of FR Yugoslavia:

I wouldn't let them go now. He [the oldest son] is ready for the army, but I would like him to continue school. Because, if I could just bring the children

back and get them to serve in the *regular* army, here in Serbia. I say God forbid, but if it is fated and war breaks out in Serbia, then he'll *have* to go. What can I do? I wouldn't like my child to go, no mother wants her child to go, a mother would prefer to go instead of her child.

This excerpt documents how Ivana was trapped by the unequal and gendered construction of women's citizenship, as discussed by Yuval-Davis (1993), and the different ways in which women and men are supposed to act out their citizenship obligations and patriotism. For Ivana, being a mother of sons who can be drafted into the army and ultimately killed is reluctantly accepted as the 'destiny' of her gender.

The negotiation between women's role as mothers, their love and care for their sons, and their socially constructed role as 'Mothers of the Nation' were recurring themes in the interviews. There were differences, however, in the ways in which the women confronted the dilemma. The data suggest that women of higher socio-economic status and of ethnically mixed background commonly have a better chance of choosing between their love for their children and their patriotism. Maria, a Bosnian middle-class woman whose mother is Serb and father Croat, fled with her family to Ljubljana, Slovenia she comments: "There is no war, no victory, which is worth the sacrifice of children" (McNeill and Coulson eds. 1994: 17). Women of higher socio-economic status who are in mixed marriages, and therefore have the opportunity to resettle in a third country, were also more likely to overcome the socially constructed pressure of being a 'Mother of the Nation'. Tamara, a Bosnian Muslim professional woman, married to a Bosnian Serb, explained her decision:

I think it is wise [to resettle in a third country] because of the children.

Particularly since I have small kids, sons, there's no end to the war. In ten, fifteen years, time flies, these children will be in a situation to be military conscripts. I don't want them to carry a gun, when everyone else is learning

foreign languages, computers, riding motorbikes, and for some ideas, particularly national, I find that totally unimportant. Not a sufficiently important thing in life for which my child should sacrifice his own.

Regardless of their socio-economic differences, none of the refugee women interviewed embraced the role of mother as 'martyr and heroine' who sacrifices the life of her son(s) to the nation. Some of the women expressed a clear anti-war position. Seka, the Bosnian Serb woman whose son was killed in the war, said:

I think it's important for women to get involved in anti-war groups and politics, and try to stop these people who are willing to make such a thing [war]. To stop them victimizing our children[...]I can't say 100 percent, but 99 per-cent are men [involved in war]. I think no woman, perhaps one out of hundred, would want to conquer countries, property and territories, and to let her child die for it. I don't know why, but I feel that way. Perhaps because I'm a mother. Do men, fathers, feel that powerful, strong, and thus, think that they'd do something better, more, with their warrior ideas?

Seka, however, was aware of the role of women in the production of 'warriors' and war. She recognized women's hesitation or powerlessness to break their socially constructed role as central agents in the process of the socialization of children:

It's terrible what is happening to us [women]. But women make their own mistakes. When we give birth to a male child, we make him a hero; when we give a birth to a female child, we are usually disappointed. Our families are seldom eager to have female children. When a son is born we boost him.

Some of the women articulated the difference between women's and men's attitudes toward war in essentialist terms. This was the case of Tanja, a middle-class Bosnian woman of mixed ethnic-nationality, and a mother of two children. Tanja said:

The men played the greatest part in this war, that's *normal*. They took up weapons immediately, women would've done that differently. I think this would've never happened if women were in charge.

The views of the women were not always clearly articulated as anti-war. However, they all emphasized their role as mothers and their feelings of love and care for their children as the critical factors in their negative attitudes towards war. This recurring theme in the interviews *partially* supports Ruddick's (1995) analysis of women's experiences of mothering and her notion of a maternal politics of peace. I concur with feminist critiques that there is *no necessary relation* between women's role as mothers and pacifism (Carter 1996; Pettman 1996; Scheper-Hughes 1996). My interview data, however, indicate that the socially constructed role of these women as mothers, that is, as the main emotional providers and caregivers, shapes their attitudes towards war.

Freire points out that in patriarchal societies the role of women as mothers is socially constructed as the core of their identity, and it consequently affects women's coping mechanisms in situations of crisis (1995: 20-25). I argue elsewhere (Korac, 1998a) that because these women have lived in the context of a patriarchal culture of post-Yugoslav states, their role as mothers has been constructed in that way. However, this contributes to the development of strategies that enable them to resolve conflict situations in non-aggressive ways. The socially constructed non-violent attributes of their role as mothers give them the *potential* for transforming violent conflicts into negotiations and/or non-violent practices.

The fulfilment of such potential depends **to a great extent** on the particular social, economic and political context in which these women realize their mothering role. Moreover,

the utilization of non-violent attributes by mothers and non-mothers in the politics of peace versus war depends on the historically and geographically contingent positions of women in post-Yugoslav states. Only the efforts of women to gain social space for the articulation of their autonomous political voices can provide a catalyst for transforming violent conflicts into negotiations, so that non-violent politics can be actualized.¹⁴

Refugee Women as Sole Providers for Their Families

A great majority of the interviewed women confront radical life transformations by becoming the sole providers and protectors of their families and households. Their spouses, fathers and brothers have been absorbed into wars, and mobilized in armies, exiled or killed. All but two of the married women I interviewed were separated from their husbands because the men had to remain in the war zones, were fighting or had been killed. This separation is a source of anxiety for women who fear for their spouses and families. However, the separation from their husbands is also a source of tension in communication between spouses. Refugee women have often found it difficult to share the hardships of exile with their husbands who remained in the war zones. Interviews with refugee women from Bosnia-Herzegovina who were in exile in Ljubljana, Slovenia, disclosed this kind of problem:

My husband can't even include a sympathetic word or two about what I'm going through, it's as though he thinks my life here is one long picnic. (McNeill and Coulson eds. 1994: 19)

Even when women do not encounter serious discord in communication with their spouses as the result of separation, tensions regarding the sharing of problems remain. Women who did not work outside their households before their flight at times experience mixed feelings toward their husbands who stayed in war zones. Milica, whose husband remained in a sector of Sarajevo controlled by the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, said:

Well, he probably couldn't [leave Sarajevo]. If he could have, he certainly would have. There must have been a thousand and one reasons to leave and just as many to stay. Because, after all, he'd be leaving his parents alone and they are old, his father was very sick, he was three months in the hospital[...]and then he died. His mother is alone, and old, and there's nobody to look after her, and she's probably ill, absent-minded. What can I say.

Milica went on and confessed why and when she is angry with her husband:

When I find things very difficult and don't know what to do with myself or the children. I had never looked after myself. I was never in a situation where I had to earn my keep, to live alone. I don't say that I wouldn't have managed, if I had found myself in such a situation[...]When I got married, all in the family were working, they had their earnings, so that I never had any financial problems. One comes into a situation when even though you have some money, you don't know what to do with it, how to make the best of it, or even multiply it. When it comes to money, I don't know anything. Really.

Regardless of feelings of incompetency, Milica did manage to find work, to earn money and improve the living conditions for her and her two daughters.

I found some kind of a job [shop helper and occasionally a courier for a small business], the salary is very low and I work without papers [illegally], but the money comes in handy, apart from what I get here [accommodation and food in the 'collective centre']. I don't lack food at least. I won't mention clothes, because that's not important.

Although Milica says that she found the job 'by accident', she reveals that she was able to articulate her needs and feelings about the position she wanted, clearly setting out the boundaries to her commitment to the job:

I walked past a shop window and saw an ad, and I went a couple of times, and the man hired me. I told the man that I'd do some work because I really needed it and said I'd work a week or two and we'd see, without a commitment, he could tell me when I was through, and I'd tell him when I didn't wish to work any more.

Milica's 'accidental' job discloses the development of human agency as a successful survival strategy.

A study of women's and men's experiences in exile indicates (Freire 1995: 20) that refugee women, in general, tend to respond better than their male compatriots to the crises inherent in the process. Freire (1995) shows that women tend to develop better coping mechanisms and adjustment strategies. Marija, a refugee woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, talked about this gender difference from her own experience in exile in Ljubljana, Slovenia:

I've discovered so much about myself during this past eighteen months. Most significantly, I have realized that I am a strong woman. When I look at other refugees I see many strong women coping in similar situations. My experience here indicates that it's more likely to be the men who break down, seemingly unable to find sufficient flexibility or resources within themselves to make the necessary adjustments between life as it was and how it is now. (McNeill and Coulson eds. 1994: 20)

Freire argues that women do better than men when it comes to coping with crises in exile because women in many societies have been socialized to confine themselves to

the microsystems of the family and households (1995: 20). She points out that even highly educated women in most societies continue to be subordinated by men both within the 'public' (workplace and politics) and 'private' (family and household) realms. Thus, work outside the homes only "adds an additional, secondary role to their core identity as mothers and wives" (Freire 1995: 21). This is particularly true of societies based on more patriarchal cultural and gender relations, such as the Latin American societies studied by Freire, and the post-Yugoslav states under scrutiny here. In these societies, women are accustomed to having fewer opportunities than men, to assuming that they must be able to cope with whatever situation arises, to drawing something positive out of the most taxing experiences, and to being thankful for whatever assistance, if any, they receive from others (Freire 1995: 21).

In this sense, women's experiences of the life and hardships of exile have some elements of continuity with their lives in peace. Providing care and love for their families remains women's main concern in exile, as well as the main source of their strength in developing successful survival strategies.

Problems with communication and the maintenance of close relationships with husbands, can lead to women's awareness that their marriages may be threatened. Branka, a Croatian Serb woman, discusses this problem. At the time of her flight in May 1991, her husband was working in a part of Croatia unaffected by war. When the war in Croatia spread, he managed to flee Croatia and reach **the Netherlands**, where he was living illegally at the time of the interview. Branka conveyed the uncertainty of her future with her husband: "Whether or not we'll see each other again, years are passing by for all of us." Branka's struggle for survival also made her aware of her personal strength:

I'm here [in Belgrade], I have some friends, relatives, although they're no great help. It turned out, during all of this, that I am actually alone. And I had been

afraid to go elsewhere [abroad] so as not to be alone, but in essence I am alone here, too.

Although the problems that refugee women confront as a result of exile and separation from their spouses cause pain and confusion regarding their present and future life and plans, they often develop an awareness that they can cope alone. This awareness gives them a sense of autonomy and agency.

Losing Loved Ones

The lives of refugee women whose husbands or other close family members were killed are even more difficult and demanding. One third of those interviewed have lost one or two close family members, either brothers, sons, husbands or nephews. Some of them can hardly find the energy to struggle for everyday survival after their loved ones have been killed. As Arcel's study points out, "[t]he death of a spouse, or the loss of parents for young children and adolescents is the biggest crisis for most people, creating unparalleled stress" (1995: 25).

Anka, a Bosnian Serb refugee woman born in Serbia, had lived in Sarajevo since her early childhood. She was married to a Bosnian Croat, and had two sons. Anka fled with her younger son first to Kikinda, a small town in Northern Serbia where she was born, and later to Belgrade where she was given accommodation in a 'collective centre'. Her husband and her older son remained in a sector of Sarajevo controlled by the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina. She described her and her younger son's first year in exile, before both her older son and husband were killed:

I had some of my own money. We were well off [while living in Sarajevo]. I decided to find a house [in Kikinda] and that's how it was. Sometimes I'd pay, sometimes work in exchange for living there. And so I survived that year, sitting beside the radio, TV. You know, you leave your child, your husband

behind. I'd hear the journalist speaking even when I turned off the radio[...]My son [younger] started school. That is the village in which I was born. There are a lot of my old teachers there. And he finished sixth grade there, they [teachers] were very nice to him. He had some problems [with children], he had a fight about nationality. They called him "Ustasha".¹⁵

Then, Anka found herself in a situation where she could hardly survive:

My husband was killed in front of our building in Dobrinja 2 [Sarajevo suburb]...He managed to survive the first year of the war. He was killed on February 7, 1993 and my son was killed on February 17, that is, only seven days after my husband's funeral. My son was sent somewhere on the front, to fight against the Serbs, he was killed there...Everything has fallen through...I can't go on anymore, I don't have the strength. Another three years and I'll be fifty. I can't, I'd only like to get this child somewhere, if someone'd like to adopt him, but someone nice, to take him, so that he's happy. But I don't live any more.

Anka's is one of many responses to the tragic loss of close family members. Among the refugee women I interviewed, the most common focus was on their personal obligation towards their children. However, drastic changes of life as a result of war and exile are particularly difficult for middle-aged and older women, as Anka's case reveals.

Wives of the Warriors

Refugee women whose husbands have joined the army or paramilitary forces confront yet another set of problems while in exile. They must negotiate between their love, care, and fear for their spouses and the terrifying fact of their loneliness and their economically and

socially insecure lives in exile. Some must also cope with the reality of life with men who have become psychologically destroyed after experiences at the front.

This negotiation often involves the development of a political consciousness on the part of the women, as Ivana's experience shows. Ivana is a refugee woman of mixed ethnic-nationality from Bosnia-Herzegovina. She, as mentioned earlier, had lived with her husband and family in a small town in Eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina. Her husband, a Serb born in Serbia, joined the paramilitary forces, and Ivana described her reaction:

You know, I was fed up, up to here, with his Serbian cause. Because as soon as the war started, he just kept saying: "We Serbs." It starts getting on one's nerves. Because you're not used to someone being singled out. Be a man, no matter who you are and what you are.

Yet the rise of a political consciousness seldom becomes a solution to women's problems in dealing with the individual and broader political consequences of their nationalistic husbands. Most of the women interviewed, as noted earlier, were socialized to confine themselves to the microsystems of their families and the households, and thus lacked an awareness of themselves as 'political' individuals. This situation was compounded with the politics of ethnic nationalism and the social and political pressures to restrict their social space, as well as the expression of their autonomy as political agents. All these circumstances limit women's individual choices and their room for action. Ivana continued her story about the struggle with her husband, who decided to join the Serbian paramilitary forces:

I quarrelled with him. I told him that if he died I wouldn't know where his bones were. Don't go. But he said that he must go, that his comrades were in danger. He was obsessed by the war, because those who have been to the front can't stand silence anymore. He left[...]When he returned...he was practically unrecognizable. But all that aside, he'd flipped psychologically...now he is not

going to the front. He's a 60 percent invalid, but he works for the army, God knows. To tell you the truth, I'm not interested anymore. I've had enough of the army and everything. Up to here.

Women do not always accept their socially prescribed roles as caregivers. They are not always willing to pick up the pieces when 'the boys come home' after the war and "to do so with gratitude for those who fought and took life on behalf of their women and their nation" (Peterson and Runyan 1993: 82).

Ivana's story indicates, however, that men are also victims. They are also affected by various forms of violence, from killing, torture, and body mutilation, to psychological pressures resulting from experiences at the front. Nonetheless, there is a difference between women's and men's experience of violence in a situation of ethnic-national upheaval and social turmoil. Ivana articulated this problem of difference in the following way:

You know what, there is a difference. In war, a man leaves. I mean he knows he's going, but he doesn't know if he'll return. None of the fighters do. After three years, it's all the same to them if he's killed, if he's wounded. He'd prefer to get killed than live without a leg and an arm[...]But a woman, a mother for example, she worries, for her husband and children; she doesn't have to do any particular work, she doesn't even have to be politically committed but she has a hard time. She's torn apart by everything.

The difference in women's and men's experiences of violence in war is based on the fact that the process of militarization of an ethnic-national collective and war represents a struggle for power in which women and men participate differently. Their different locations within this struggle are related to their structurally different access to power in society and consequently, to the means of war.

Concluding Remarks

This journey through women's experiences of war, flight and exile documents drastic changes in their roles as mothers, wives and caregivers. The discussion reveals that radical changes in gender roles and responsibilities, in conjunction with a constant fear for family members who remain in war-zones, contribute to women's difficulties in developing appropriate and successful survival strategies. The centrality of their socially constructed roles as the primary caregivers and emotional providers for their families becomes the main source of their strength in confronting the crisis of their lives in exile. These roles, however, represent a continuation and reinforcement of the hardships of women's subordinated status in peacetime.

Although the ethnic divisions among refugee women, imposed by the politics of ethnic nationalism, tend to overshadow all other differences as well as the similarities among these women, the analysis reveals that the radical changes in their roles transcend ethnic-national divisions. These changes, resulting from war and gendered violence, are shared, underlying characteristics of women's individual struggles in exile. This is not to imply the 'universality' of these categories or practices related to the particular roles of women. Rather, it is to argue that women are similarly positioned in terms of their roles, despite differences in history and location. Women's roles in the family and the practices tied to them, are experiences they can share. In this sense, their experiences as mothers, wives and caregivers provide a common denominator for creating identifications among women across ethnic-national lines. Such fluid identifications can, in turn, challenge the essentialized notion of nation.

¹ This chapter is based on my Ph.D. dissertation, entitled: The Power of Gender in the Transition from State Socialism to Ethnic Nationalism, Militarization, and War: The Case of Post-Yugoslav States, defended in September 1998, at York University, Canada.

² For the information on statistical data about numbers of Yugoslavs see Petrovic (1987: 30).

³ For a detailed discussion of the constitutional system of rights in Yugoslavia see Woodward (1995: 29-46).

⁴ The data refer to UNHCR report, July 1995, as well as the latest instances of 'ethnic cleansing' in Srebrenica and Zepa (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and in the region of Krajina (Croatia). *Nasa Borba* (August 10, 1995), p. 5.

⁵ It is important to note that the distinction between refugees and internally displaced persons is critical for the situation and well-being of those who are forcefully displaced in these wars. Refugees are persons who cross internationally recognized borders (e.g., persons from Bosnia-Herzegovina who fled to Croatia, FR Yugoslavia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Slovenia, or any other country of the world). As such they are protected by the international convention. Internally displaced persons are those who flee their homes but are still within the borders of their country of origin (e.g., persons who fled their place of residence in Bosnia-Herzegovina but have remained on its territory). The UNHCR's mandate does not officially extend its protection to internally displaced people.

⁶ The data presented aims to emphasize the overall consequence of the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism in post-Yugoslav states, in order to stress its importance for the realization of ethnically pure nation-states in the region. However, this does not mean that I do not acknowledge important differences in the extent to which some ethnic-nations,

Bosnian Muslim in particular, have been victimized by this politics. Moreover, the emphasis on a more general pattern embedded in ethnic nationalism in the region, does not imply a lack of awareness of unequal relations of power among ethnic-national collectives in the recent wars, and thus, their differentiated responsibility for the crimes and atrocities committed during the recent conflict.

⁷ The first two field visits were financially supported by the Gender Unit, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University. My visit to Serbia, FR Yugoslavia in 1997 was financially assisted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Without this financial support, for which I am most grateful, this research would not have been possible.

⁸ The interviews with refugee women in Ljubljana, Slovenia, were collected by Pearlie McNeill and Meg Coulson (1994). The interview with Biba, a Bosnian Muslim woman in exile in Zagreb, Croatia, was carried out by Brenda Longfellow for a film, A Balkan Journey: Fragments From the Other Side of War, directed by Brenda Longfellow, and produced by Gerda Film Productions, Canada in 1996. This documentary was filmed in Belgrade, Serbia, FR Yugoslavia, and Zagreb, Croatia, in April and May 1995. I transcribed and translated the interviews with women portrayed in this documentary. The quotes I use in the **chapter**, however, were not included in the final version of the film. A permission to use the interview from the documentary is gratefully acknowledged.

⁹ I am Serbian, born and brought up in Belgrade, and at the time of the research I have not yet become a Canadian citizen.

¹⁰ Refugees of 'inappropriate' ethnic-nationality have often had to protect themselves from the stigmatization and the potential hostile attitudes of the local population in the host

country. This was the case with Biba, who fled to Croatia in 1992, at the beginning of hostilities between Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims.

¹¹ The interview was given for the film A Balkan Journey, *ibid*.

¹² Drakulic (1994: 32-33) talks about her own experience with the stigmatization of refugees in Slovenia, as the result of the economic crisis.

¹³ The interview data was collected in the refugee camps in Ljubljana, Slovenia in Summer 1993, by Meg Coulson and Pearlie McNeill. The entire interviews are published in Women's Voices - Refugee Lives (McNeill and Coulson eds. 1994).

¹⁴ For a discussion of women's organizing in post-Yugoslav states see, Linking Arms: Women and War in Post-Yugoslav States (Korac 1998b).

¹⁵ Ustashas were the Croatian equivalent of the German SS troops during the nazi-fascist regime of the Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945).