

War and Rape: A Preliminary Analysis'

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When Helke Sander and Barbara Johr filmed *BeFreier und Befreite* (Liberators take liberties) about mass rapes in the vicinity of Berlin at the end of World War II in spring 1945, it appeared that this would be a film about the past. During the preceding forty years these rapes had become neither a topic for research nor a political issue, despite their scale, their aftereffects, and the sociopolitical significance of sexual violence against women.¹ According to cautious estimates, 110,000 women were raped in the Berlin area after the war. Less conservative estimates cite the number as 900,000 raped and abused women.²

By 1992, civilizing influences in Europe had become so widespread that many people considered the barbarities of the past war unthinkable in the present. Improvements in women's social status also seemed to guarantee that women could no longer be the victims of mass violence directed explicitly against them. The events of 1992 have taught us otherwise. With camps in the middle of Europe constructed expressly for the purpose of rape or sexual torture, the violence against women has reached a new level. According to information from an investigative committee of the European Community, the mass rapes and sadistic torture of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina can be regarded as a systematic and mandated procedure. There are also sufficient statements from witnesses to verify that the rapes are considered an important element of Ser-

bian war strategy. Aside from the unreported cases, the number of raped women is currently estimated to be 20,000 to 50,000.³

In what follows I will attempt to analyze these events. The first step will be to inquire into the function of rape in a general sense. The second will be to develop five explanations of the function of rape in war. Finally, I will try to throw some light on the logic of silence that continues to be characteristic of war crimes against women.

On the Function of Rapes

Those who inquire about the reasons for rape run up against a confusion of myths and ideologies. The most popular and effective myth is that rape has to do with an uncontrollable male drive that, insofar as it is not restrained by culture, has to run its course in a manner that is unfortunate, to be sure, but also unavoidable. This is predicated on the “pressure-cooker” theory of male nature. According to this idea men are finally not the lords of their own manor. They are seen as involuntary victims of their violent and instinctive nature. The advantage of this theory is that it relieves the individual of responsibility for his actions and exculpates him for the use of sexual violence. In fact, there are good reasons to assume that rapes do not have much to do either with nature or with sexuality. Rather, they are acts of extreme violence implemented, of course, by sexual means. Studies show that rape is not an aggressive manifestation of sexuality, but rather a sexual manifestation of aggression. In the perpetrator’s psyche it serves no sexual purpose but is the expression of rage, violence, and dominance over a woman. At issue is her degradation, humiliation, and submission. To be sure, this violent act is carried out by sexual means.⁴

A violent invasion into the interior of one’s body represents the most severe attack imaginable upon the intimate self and the dignity of a human being: by any measure it is a mark of severe torture. When a woman’s inner space is violently invaded, it affects her in the same way torture does. It results in physical pain, loss of dignity, an attack on her identity, and a loss of self-determination over her own body. Andrea Dworkin notes that any human being’s “struggle for dignity and self-determination is rooted in the struggle for actual control of one’s own

body, especially control over physical access to one's own body."⁵ Because personal identity is so tightly intertwined with sexual identity, the personal self is also touched to the quick when the sexual form of violence is applied.⁶ Investigations of rapes in a civilian context have also shown that the violence employed in the form of blows, choking, and other abuse often goes far beyond what would have been necessary to achieve the rape. In most cases the rape victims themselves experience the act not as a sexual one, but as an extreme and humiliating form of violence against person and body, accompanied by an intense fear of dying. Even the rapists themselves hardly ever speak about a sexual experience: one out of three has trouble performing sexually during the act. The perpetrators themselves articulate feelings of hostility, aggression, power, and dominance.⁷

Additional motives come into play with gang rapes: here the first order of business seems to be a mutual demonstration of masculinity. Gang rapes are often distinguished by a ritualized procedure, that is, the order of the rape is determined by the status of the men within the group. It has also been proved that rapists tend to depersonalize their victim. They hardly perceive her as a real person, and if they did not know their victim previously they are almost unable to describe her later. For the perpetrator the victim is a proxy for "woman" pure and simple, not a real person. To summarize, one can say that the rapist's sexuality is not at the center of his act; it is placed instrumentally at the service of the violent act.⁸ For this reason some studies designate rape as a "pseudosexual" or even "anti-sexual" act. Sexual attacks on women have their origins not in sexual passion, but in hate and the wish to exercise power.

Ethnological research offers a further argument against considering rape in any biologicistic or "naturalizing" way, for some societies have a high incidence of rape and others a low one. The prominence of rape in various societies can be traced in the following manner: societies with few rapes are those in which (a) male supremacy is completely assured (an example would be most Muslim societies, which are considered to have a low incidence of rape) or else (b) women enjoy respect and an honored status in the culture (certain tribal societies can be mentioned as examples). In contrast, societies with a high incidence of rape are those in which (a) male power has become unstable, (b) women have a subordinate status and low esteem, and (c) rigid definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" prevail and are connected to strong hegemonies or hierarchies

of value. Virtually all modern Western societies are counted among those with a high incidence of rape. The United States with its historically strong women's movement and correspondingly weak male dominance is a good example. In the United States the number of rapes is continuously increasing. At the moment rape is the most common felony.⁹

Thus we must conclude that rape can by no means be explained by nature or against a background of human sexuality. For the most part, rather, it is an act that must be understood within the social and cultural context. In seeking the societal function of rape, everything points to the conclusion that it regulates unequal power relationships between the sexes: it serves to maintain a certain cultural order between the sexes or – when this order becomes fragile – to restore it. If women want a clear demonstration of the effect of rape on society, they need only think of themselves. In rape cultures the mere danger of rape and the frequency of sexual violence contribute to women's (and men's) identity formation. We know that women's everyday behavior is influenced by the knowledge that they might become prey to a massive attack on body and mind because of their gender. The terror growing out of the danger of rape shows that rape has the symbolic power to shape a society even when no direct rape is occurring. The mass rapes of World War II and those in Yugoslavia determine and influence women's social position, their identity, and their self-esteem in a way that transcends historical eras or national borders.

On the Meaning of Rape in and after Wars

Before developing a few explanations of the meaning of rape in the context of war, I must first set forth three limitations: first, we must assume that rape has no function that is necessarily common to all times and all societies. Its functions depend on the historical and cultural context and must ultimately be discussed with reference to concrete cases. Second, the following attempts at explanation are not primarily of a psychological nature and thus do not try to determine what is going on in the mind of the rapist. Rather, the main concern is the cultural models that operate more or less behind the backs of individuals and have not necessarily found their way into their waking consciousness. Finally, we must remember that these attempts at an explanation are by no means ex-

haustive. They are meant to single out certain aspects of rape in war and make them accessible to analysis.

THESIS I:

RAPES ARE PART OF THE "RULES" OF WAR

As Sander and Johr have noted, some evidence suggests that rapes have always taken place in the wars we are familiar with – that is, even in societies that presumably had a "low incidence of rape" as defined above.¹⁰ Historical sources tell us that this was true before the beginning of the early modern period. We assume for one thing that there was a lower incidence of rape in this period than in ours, and in addition we are rather certain that the division of the sexes – that is, the established definition of "masculine" and "feminine" – was even looser then and not so rigidly overdetermined, so that a borderline existence was rather more possible than it would be today. In times of crisis, especially, the "boundary between the sexes was temporarily erased or drawn less rigorously."¹¹

If this changed in time of war, however – if mass rapes were always part of wars – a glance at the highly ritualized process of war may help us understand the reasons. War is a ritualized, finely regulated game. I use the word "game" – a strange word given the lethal context – because behavior in war follows specific "rules of the game" (one of the reasons the military hesitates to intervene in Yugoslavia is that it would be dealing with an enemy that is not prepared to recognize these rules). In war well-defined armies are present, the enemy is clearly identifiable, and there are recognizable procedures at the front, with a clear order of command.¹² When looking back through history we find much to suggest that within this ritual one rule of the game has always been that violence against women in the conquered territory is conceded to the victor during the immediate postwar period. We have no evidence that any negotiations have ever been carried out to halt this outrage against women. It also seems to have made no difference whether women's bodies were at soldiers' disposal in other quarters – in brothels, for example. As a member of the highest military court in the United States explained, a rape in a war zone has no relation to available women or prostitutes.¹³ That means that in the "open space" of war, many men simply prefer to rape: it has nothing to do with sexuality, but rather reflects the exercise of sexual, gender-specific violence. Normally the orgies of violence toward women last from one to two months after a war and then abate (as in Berlin in 1945 and Nanking in 1937).

THESIS 2:

IN BELLIGERENT DISPUTES THE ABUSE OF WOMEN
IS AN ELEMENT OF MALE COMMUNICATION

In the context of war, rape can be considered the final symbolic expression of the humiliation of the male opponent. As experience teaches us, the myth of man as protector that is mobilized in most wars is really nothing more than a myth. There is by no means a cultural imperative to protect women from war and its consequences. This is not to say that this myth has no social effect and possesses no psychological reality for many men (and women). Neither do I mean to deny the possibility that isolated men do protect isolated women (just as isolated women protect isolated men). But in principle women are always laid open to the consequences of war. Furthermore, the rape of women carries an additional message: it communicates from man to man, so to speak, that the men around the women in question are not able to protect "their" women. They are thus wounded in their masculinity and marked as incompetent. In the former Yugoslavia, this communicative function from man to man is clearly evident when buses filled with women in their sixth, seventh, or later month of pregnancy are sent back over enemy lines, usually with cynical inscriptions on the vehicles regarding the children about to be born. Sander and Johr's studies also throw light on this aspect: in spring 1945, they report, wartime rape victims' husbands held their wives responsible for the deed or ended their relationships because of the rape. For this reason many women kept silent about having been raped.¹⁴ So we see that many men regard their masculinity as compromised by the abuse of "their" women. At heart is the outcome for the men, not the suffering of the women.

THESIS 3:

RAPES ALSO RESULT FROM THE OFFERS OF MASCULINITY
THAT ARMIES MAKE TO THEIR SOLDIERS, OR FROM THE
ELEVATION OF MASCULINITY THAT ACCOMPANIES WAR IN
WESTERN CULTURES

One of the reasons men find it attractive to become soldiers is that their masculinity is thereby confirmed and reinforced.¹⁵ For many years military service served a symbolic function as a young man's rite of passage on his way to the final acquisition of a specific gender identity or as his "graduation to manhood."¹⁶

Despite the changes in relations between the sexes that have taken

place in recent decades, ideas of masculinity are still significant both for armies and for the relation of army to society. The military profession provides subjective identities that are connected to ideas of masculinity in different ways depending on the country and that have connotations of power and dominance as well as eroticism and sexuality. Thus the military is also dependent on those ideas of masculinity and femininity that are valid in a particular society or on the relations between the sexes that are prevalent there. The attractiveness, status, and social privilege of a profession also depend on these constructions. Certain aspects of the military are scarcely understandable without their more or less subtle implications for the arrangement of the sexes. If we try to “ignore gender – the social constructions of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ and the relations between them,” writes Cynthia Enloe, “it becomes impossible adequately to explain how military forces have managed to capture and control so much of society’s imagination and resources.”¹⁷

The significance of constructions of “masculinity” in armies is also shown by the way the increasingly strong position of women in the American army has shaken the image and professional self-understanding of the soldier, which is currently having to be redefined.¹⁸

If one examines the ideas of masculinity that still apply in Western societies, the definition of masculinity is usually linked almost inextricably to heterosexuality and the monopoly of power: in our culture a homosexual man is perceived as less masculine than a heterosexual one, a gentle, fearful man as less masculine than an aggressive one. Armies make offers of masculinity on both accounts: by excluding women, they associate the monopoly of power with masculinity, homosexuality being outlawed in (almost) all modern armies;¹⁹ dealing lewdly with heterosexuality is a component of everyday life in many units. All this is overlaid with feelings of male superiority.²⁰

Furthermore, Western culture is characterized by its mixture of violence with eroticism or sexuality. Language is revealing here: a “conquest” is made both on the battlefield and in the bedroom; the Germans’ invasion of Belgium at the beginning of World War I was described in the English press as the “rape of Belgium,” just as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was described as the “rape of Kuwait”; a weapon is called the “soldier’s bride.” The list of images that link power and masculine sexuality could be continued indefinitely.²¹

To this extent the construction of armies and the ideal of masculinity

they cultivate, which stylizes masculinity and links it to power in a particular, heterosexual way, results in an inclination (not a predetermination) to rape. This is supported by the observations of David Marlowe, a military psychiatrist, who determined that there is hardly any army in which sexual symbolism plays no role. According to Marlowe, male bonding – the collegiality among men that is required and promoted in the military – is produced by means of the shared language of male sexual identity, in which the metaphor of “soldierly masculinity” produces a strong and superior self-image.²² At the end of World War II, a military sociologist determined that in the purely masculine context of an army the values “that are connected with the ideal of virility play a decisive role in the formation of the soldierly self-image, in the creation of inner tensions and of possibilities for releasing those tensions.”²³

That does not mean that every soldier rapes. But it does mean that the construction of the soldier – or to express it differently, the subjective identity that armies make available, by fusing certain cultural ideas of masculinity with a soldier’s essence – is more conducive to certain ways of behavior rather than others. For in a stress situation like war, how one reacts depends not only on the specifics of the stressful situation, but beyond that also “on the individual and sociocultural availability of certain coping strategies. Part of coping is also the culturally coded manner of dealing with emotions.”²⁴ Whether or not one reacts violently in a certain situation, then, also depends for example on which alternatives are available for the channeling of feelings in a cultural context (and in various cultures and also in various armies that includes varying ideas of masculinity and femininity).²⁵

Reports about gang rapes by Americans in Vietnam also reveal how important the amalgamation of power and masculinity can be in cultural representations. We know that in that war gratuitous atrocities to the victim were taken as a competition for greater masculinity. A very few acts of this kind were reported by soldiers who had witnessed them but had not taken part in the rapes or sexual torture. In subsequent court-martial proceedings, the rapists typically questioned the masculinity of the soldier who had accused them. In a case that became well known, a soldier who had refused to take part in a rape was derided by his patrol leader as a queer and a chicken.²⁶

A further explanation for outbreaks of sexual violence in wars is shown

by the interplay between male psychology and society's construction of masculinity. Joan Smith argues that the military's characteristic denial and suppression of gentle, sensitive, and anxious feelings calls forth a situation in which men must continually hold their masculine identity up for inspection. This happens when "feminine" characteristics such as empathy, sympathy, and gentleness are valued less highly, at least in the organizational context. Entrenched in such a defense of masculinity, she believes, it is hardly possible to deal reflectively with emotions like sympathy, desire, fear, or rage.²⁷ Such feelings are a threat to the carefully constructed masculine existence. If feelings are released in extreme situations, however, the affect they evoke is antifeminine. Subsequently many soldiers have recourse to the "masculine" solution offered by their culture, for which they also have been trained as experts: to violence, which then becomes a specifically sexual violence against women.²⁸

THESIS 4:

RAPES IN WARTIME AIM AT DESTROYING
THE OPPONENTS' CULTURE

To clarify what is involved, we must look briefly at what could be called the inside of war, that is to say, what goes on in war. Current opinion, from the military especially, contends that civilians (and in wartime that is for the most part women) must unfortunately, but sometimes unavoidably, be affected by the actions of war. The armed dispute between soldiers is termed the "actual" action of war. But the results of a research project about the position of women in the civil war zones of Mozambique and Sri Lanka challenge this ideal definition of war.²⁹ These results showed that civilians were greatly affected by war actions. Women in the affected regions perceived the war as anything but men's business. Analysis showed that it was civilians, not soldiers, who stood in the middle of these wars. Furthermore, as tactical objectives, women were of special importance: if the aim is to destroy a culture, they are prime targets because of their cultural position and their importance in the family structure. In "dirty wars" it is not necessarily the conquest of the foreign army, but rather the deconstruction of a culture that can be seen as a central objective of war actions, for only by destroying it – and that means by destroying people – can a decision be forced. We must remember that "the obsessive nature of war is the mutual infliction of harm, and that we often

lose sight of the central meaning of this fact,³⁰ since we so often act as if civilian victims stood outside the target of attack. Terms such as “unintentional” or “unexpected” are bound up with the idea that civilian victims are “by-products” of war. “The latter meaning is especially awkward, for while the others seem only to be disavowing responsibility, the latter term reduces victims on both sides to nullities, whatever the objective of the belligerent dispute might have been.”³¹ Military history shows that dead and wounded people, civilians especially, constitute the path to military victory.

That the civilian population is systematically drawn into war strategy is confirmed by the following numbers: In World War I a disproportionately greater number of civilians than soldiers were killed. The former Soviet Union cites the number of 9 million soldiers of both sexes killed in World War II compared with more than 16 million civilians. Official statements about the Korean War quote a proportion of 1:5, and for the Vietnam War it is 1:13. According to 1989 UNICEF data, in the wars fought since World War II 90 percent of all victims are found in the civilian population, a large share of them women and children. For future wars, a study from 1979 anticipates a proportion of 1:100.³²

Within the context of this systematic involvement of the civilian population, indications are that the attack on women is a conscious military tactic. This thesis was under discussion even before the events in Bosnia and Croatia. The question was posed in 1971, in connection with the mass rapes in Bangladesh. The number of raped women in Bangladesh was estimated at 200,000. At the time an Indian writer was already convinced “that it had to do with a planned crime. The rapes were so systematic and all-inclusive that only a conscious military strategy can have been behind them.”³³ He suspected that the objective was to create a new race and extinguish Bengali national feeling.

We see an additional aspect of cultural destruction in the fact that the female body functions as a symbolic representation of the body politic. Thus artistic portrayals also show that in many cultures a group’s system of meaning is denoted by the female gender, “on whose person, body, and life the construction of the community . . . is created and brought to completion.”³⁴ That also means the violence inflicted on women is aimed at the physical and personal integrity of a group. This in turn is particularly significant for the construction of the community. Thus the rape of

the women in a community can be regarded as the symbolic rape of the body of this community.³⁵ Against this background, the mass rapes that accompany all wars take on new meaning: by no means acts of senseless brutality, they are rather culture-destroying actions with a strategic rationale. A few more examples:

The area around Berlin is not the only one to have reported mass rapes in World War II. In this war they were a mass phenomenon, occurring as a matter of principle in the military conflicts. When Japanese forces captured the Chinese city of Nanking in December 1937, approximately 20,000 women were raped, sexually tortured, and murdered in the first month of the occupation. Foreign missionaries reported at least ten gang rapes a day. The rapes took on such dimensions that the press in response started to speak not of the capture, but of the rape of Nanking.³⁶

In 1943 Moroccan mercenaries fighting with what was left of the Free French Army were given explicit license to plunder enemy territory and to rape. As a result there were widespread mass rapes in Italy resulting, as they do everywhere, in pregnancies. The Italian government later offered these women a modest pension.³⁷

The soldiers of Nazi Germany also committed mass rapes. We know that the German army also ran brothels that were forcibly supplied with women. According to witnesses' statements, the German army command in Smolensk opened a brothel for officers in a hotel, into which Russian women and girls were driven.³⁸ That the army that ostentatiously cultivated the lofty ideology of man as hero and protector also contained rapists is of course hardly surprising if one considers the misogyny of the National Socialist ideology, which in essence defined women as tools for men. Thus Goebbels openly declared: "Man should be trained as a warrior and woman as recreation for the warrior: anything else is foolishness," thereby providing the ideological legitimation for defining the female body as a tool for men.³⁹

These examples of systematic wartime rapes could be extended by many others. In every case women in war zones are in a more precarious situation than men. As civilians they, like children and old men, are the stuff of war. This is corroborated by the stories of Bosnian refugees: "Women, children, and old people hoisted white flags and remained behind, hoping they would enjoy special status as the unarmed civilian population. In isolated cases their naive calculation came out right. In general, however, a person without a weapon is especially open to attack."⁴⁰

THESIS 5:

THE BACKGROUND TO RAPE ORGIES IS A CULTURALLY
ROOTED CONTEMPT FOR WOMEN THAT IS LIVED OUT IN
TIMES OF CRISIS

Along with all the other motives, rape remains an act of extreme violence by men against women that would not be possible without hostility toward women. In her "Report from Zagreb," the Croatian journalist Ines Sabalic pointed out the dimension of rage and hatred toward women that is crucial to explaining specific acts of sexual violence. She mentioned especially atrocities of a quasi-ritualistic character, whose core was the femaleness of the body. Thus, after being raped, women had their breasts cut off and their stomachs slit open. Because of the specific way it was carried out, she interprets this violence as a special expression of hatred toward women.⁴¹

The thesis that rape is primarily a matter of revenge against the enemy, recurring continually in the discussion, acknowledges on the one hand women's condition as "the stuff of war." On the other hand, however, reality carries the thesis ad absurdum. In May and June 1945 not only German women were raped, but also Jewish women who had survived the Nazi regime, and forced laborers who likewise had been victims of the Nazis. It was not exclusively native women who were raped in Kuwait, but in equal measure foreign workers from the Philippines, Egypt, and other countries. In Brownmiller's assessment, women in war are raped not because they "belong to the enemy camp, but because they are women and therefore enemies."⁴²

To be sure, the term "enemy" presents problems in this context. For enemies usually know they are enemies and have theories about why that is so. If one is attacked by an enemy, one usually fights back. But none of these points applies to the gender relationship. Usually women neither expect to be treated with hostility as a group nor know why it is being done. They felt secure – as the women from the former Yugoslavia also report – until the madness broke upon them.⁴³ Getting to the bottom of this definition, we have to say that women are raped not because they are enemies, but because they are the objects of a fundamental hatred that characterizes the cultural unconscious and is actualized in times of crisis. "Times of war and crisis are the external conditions that permit those thresholds that inhibit direct sexual violence, fragile and porous from the outset, to subside."⁴⁴ This applies not only to the direct arena of a war.

Thus during the Gulf War in 1991 the number of rapes in Israel grew noticeably.⁴⁵ Similar changes are reported from Croatia. Since the beginning of the war, the general violence against women has been intensifying there in a frightening way. Thus the “threats to women’s lives and rapes under threat of weapons have also increased within the family by nearly 30 percent. The violence against women increases especially after nationalistically tinged television programs.”⁴⁶

Apparently we cannot escape the knowledge that a virulent misogyny exists to varying degrees beneath the fragile surface of our societies.⁴⁷ And these feelings of hatred and contempt are already evident in peacetime. Hatred is cultivated, for example, in socially accepted pornography, which is a peacetime celebration of the physical power of men over women, offering a system of hate-filled values consistent within itself. With the help of a specific definition or construction of aggressive sexuality (which is described as “normal”), these values are “naturalized” and therefore legitimized. Consequently these hate-filled images seem to most men and also to many women as “normal” and neutral or at least not especially worth mentioning.⁴⁸ A glance at the cultural production of the Western world (which is almost entirely a reflection of male experience) reveals a cultivation or aestheticization of rape, ranging from the rape of the Sabine women to *A Clockwork Orange*. Against this background war becomes among other things “an adventure that affirms and acts out unconscious destructive fantasies against women.”⁴⁹

The Logic of Silence

Until now widespread silence has historically cloaked this cruelty toward women. Sander and Johr also have addressed this silence.⁵⁰ During their research on the mass rapes at the end of World War II, they were astonished to discover that no one had taken up this topic in more than forty years. This silence, too, has a deep-seated cultural meaning and can in no way be attributed to coincidence, embarrassment, or the pain of the women in question. Although it is a mass occurrence in wars and pogroms, rape is also treated historiographically as an isolated phenomenon. Male historians mention rapes in a footnote or use portrayals of sexual violence against women if they want to suggest the particular drama

of a situation. By doing this they deny that rapes have a historical or a structural significance in gender relations.⁵¹

At the beginning of this essay I asserted that rape is a massive attack on female subjectivity that goes so far as to destroy it. If one suppresses and silences this experience, it means that in a cultural context women's experience and therefore women's subjectivity is being extinguished. After that there is only the female body, with which men have experiences, interpreting those experiences according to criteria that leave their social position of power intact. For those who have hegemony in a culture also have the power to name things. "This power of naming enables men to define experience, to articulate boundaries and values, to designate to each thing its realm and qualities, to determine what can and cannot be expressed, to control perception itself."⁵²

By being marginalized, suppressed, or even "naturalized," rape as an extreme and structural act of violence against women disappears from the cultural memory (when rape is seen as an unfortunate but "natural" by-product of war, for example, beyond further analysis, or when, despite the innumerable instances of it, it is interpreted as an atypical "slip" on the part of insane hordes). The experiences, the reality, and thereby the subjectivity of women are being denied. Besides rapes, there are other examples of the silencing of women's experience, particularly in wartime.

Thus during World War II 450,000 women – not counting medical personnel – worked in the German army. If at the end of the War they were stationed near the front – and this could be the case nearly everywhere – a terrible fate usually awaited them: here too rapes and torture were the order of the day. For example, at the beginning of January, air force aides who were stationed in eastern Prussia – a total of approximately 1,000 young women about twenty years of age – were ordered west from their mobilization camp in Königsberg. They never arrived. It is presumed that approximately 25,000 aides disappeared in the East. In southeastern Europe and in southern France a large number of army aides also disappeared. There was never any systematic search for these women.⁵³ There are no statistics about the losses among the so-called army aides. War diaries, like the other portrayals of World War II, remain silent on the topic of "women."⁵⁴

This silence also applies to the current situation in the former Yugosla-

via. The Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations had apparently been informed about the rape camps for a long time without objecting especially strenuously or bringing it to public attention. Allegedly the United Nations also had long possessed similar information. Nevertheless the UN Commission on Refugees asserted as late as October 1992 that “there is no indication of systematic rapes; it is a matter of wandering gangs.”⁵⁵ Ines Sabalic has expressed the fear that the female experience with war may repeat itself in Croatia and Bosnia in that the war crimes against women could go unpunished despite the widespread publicity the mass rapes have received.⁵⁶

For a long time international politics did not react to the rape camps in Bosnia either, although as early as August 1992 an article about the camps appeared in the New York newspaper *Newsday*. Only very recently have there been attempts to restore rape to cultural memory as a systematic historical and political event, to broadcast and problematize it. Only when violence is brought up in this way and made public can there be any change. For only when sexual violence is perceived as a political event, when it is made public and analyzed, can its causes and contexts be probed and strategies to overcome it be considered.

Mobilizing a sympathetic public might have a further effect: it can offer the victims of sexual violence an opportunity to discuss it so that the experience itself can be articulated. According to Sander and Johr, the rapes at the end of World War II are characterized not only by their vast numbers, but also by the fact that the victims do not speak.⁵⁷ That may also be because there was no discourse available to them within which the women could have revealed their experiences while preserving their dignity.

The dominant way of thought included no female perspective and conceded neither women’s experience nor their dignity. Essentially it asserted that rape was natural in war and that women were its natural objects. Governments too tended either to tolerate the brutalities in silence or else to use them for propaganda purposes. If the propaganda purposes vanished, the rapes as crimes against women sank back into oblivion. Thus during the war crimes trials in Nuremberg and Tokyo, rapes were not treated separately.

In 1949, in reaction to war brutality on all sides, international law – an institution that sets norms and therefore also steers our perceptions – did order the special protection of women. This notwithstanding, sexual torture of women and mass rapes have taken place in all wars since World

War II without being given any special publicity. Rape has become a forgotten war crime.⁵⁸ That is to say, until now this central cultural experience of women has been stifled, erased from cultural memory, or else placed on the inevitable margin in the form of biologism or naturalization, in the last analysis natural and historically not very important. It must be brought back to the center of the historical and political discourse.

Notes

1. Helke Sander and Barbara Johr, *BeFreier und Befreite: Krieg, Vergewaltigung, Kinder* (Munich, 1992), p.21.

2. Ibid, pp.46 ff.

3. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 3, 1993.

4. See Nicolas Groth and William Hobson, "Die Dynamik sexueller Gewalt," in *Vergewaltigung: Die Opfer und die Täter*, ed. Jürgen Heinrichs (Braunschweig, 1986), p.88.

5. Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography. Men Possessing Women* (New York, 1989), p.243. Page references in this chapter are to the German edition: *Pornographie: Männer beherrschen Frauen* (Frankfurt, 1990).

6. Harry Feldmann, *Vergewaltigung und ihre psychischen Folgen: Ein Beitrag zur post-traumatischen Belastungsreaktion* (Stuttgart, 1992), p.6.

7. Ibid., p.7.

8. Ibid.; Groth and Hobson, *Dynamik*.

9. Roy Porter, "Rape – Does It Have a Historical Meaning?" in *Rape*, ed. Sylvania Tomaselli and Roy Porter (London, 1986).

10. Sander and Johr, *BeFreier und Befreite*.

11. Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *Frauen in Männerkleidern: Weibliche Transvestiten und ihre Geschichte* (Berlin, 1990), p.47; see also Porter, "Rape," and Ruth Seifert, "Männlichkeitskonstruktionen: Die diskursive Macht des Militärs," *Das Argument*, no.196 (1992).

12. International military law likewise requires a clear order of command with accountability for orders. Weapons must be carried openly and insignia must be worn to identify the people fighting as members of a definite combatant group.

13. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Women and Rape* (New York, 1975), p.80. Page references in this chapter are to the German edition: *Gegen unseren Willen: Vergewaltigung und Männerherrschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1978).

14. Sander and Johr, *BeFreier und Befreite*.

15. See Ruth Seifert, "Feministische Theorie und Militärsoziologie," *Das Argument: Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Sozialwissenschaften*, no.190 (1991).
16. Karl W. Haltiner, *Milizarmee – Bürgerleitbild oder angeschlagenes Ideal?* (Frauenfeld, 1985), p.37.
17. Cynthia Enloe, *Does Kpakı Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives* (London, 1983), p.212.
18. See Cynthia Enloe, "The Politics of Constructing the American Woman Soldier as a Professionalized 'First Class Citizen': Some Lessons from the Gulf War," *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military* 14 (1992); *Time Magazine*, November 30, 1992.
19. President Clinton has attempted to change this in a legal sense, at least. Of course no one expects that everyday life in the army will change for a while (see *Time magazine*, November 11, 1992).
20. See Cynthia Enloe, "Beyond Steve Canyon and Rambo: Feminist Histories of Militarized Masculinity," in *The Militarization of the Western World*, ed. John R. Gillis (New Brunswick, N.J., 1989); Seifert, *Feministische Theorie*.
21. See also Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, vols. 1 and 2 (Reinbek, 1972); Rolf Pohl, "Männlichkeit, Destruktivität und Kriegsbereitschaft," in *Logik der Destruktion: Der zweite Golfkrieg als erster elektronischer Krieg und die Möglichkeiten seiner Verarbeitung im Bewußtsein*, Reihe des Instituts für Politische Wissenschaften (Uni Hannover, 1992).
22. David H. Marlowe, "The Manning of the Force and the Structure of Battle: Part 2, Men and Women," in *Conscripts and Volunteers: Military Requirements, Social Justice and the All-Volunteer Force*, ed. Robert K. Fullinwider (Totowa, N.J., 1983), p.192.
23. Henry Elkin, "Aggressive and Erotic Tendencies in Army Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 51 (1946): 410.
24. Hans-Günther Vester, *Emotion: Gesellschaft und Kultur. Grundzüge einer soziologischen Theorie der Emotionen* (Opladen, 1990), p.144.
25. Ibid.
26. Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, pp.105 ff.
27. The differing ways men and women deal with fear are also illuminated in Frigga Haug and Kornelia Hauser, eds., *Die andere Angst: Frauenformen*, Argument-Sonderband 184 (Berlin, 1991), pp.250 ff.
28. Joan Smith, *Misogynies* (New York, 1990), pp.135 ff. Page references in this chapter are to the German edition: *Misogynies: Frauenhaß in der Gesellschaft* (Munich, 1992).
29. Carolyn Nordstrom, "Women and War: Observations from the Field," *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military* 9, no.1 (1991).

30. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, 1985), p.102. Page references in this chapter are to the German edition: *Der Körper im Schmerz: Die Chiffren der Verletzlichkeit und die Erfindung der Kultur* (Frankfurt, 1992). This insight had also occurred to the military theorist Clausewitz, who described military invasions as follows: "The immediate purpose is neither the conquest of enemy land nor the defeat of enemy forces, but quite simply to inflict general harm on the enemy" (Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 18th ed. [Bonn, 1973], p.219).

31. Scarry, *Body in Pain*, pp.109 ff.

32. See Richard Gabriel, *The Culture of War: Invention and Early Development* (New York, 1990), p.14; Nordstrom, *Women and War*, p.191.

33. Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p.89.

34. Theresa Wobbe, "Die Grenzen des Geschlechts: Konstruktionen von Gemeinschaft und Rassismus," in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Sozialforschung*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt, 1993), p.106.

35. Ibid.

36. Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p.65; see also Leon Friedmann, *The Law of War: A Documentary History*, vol. 11 (New York, 1972), pp.1060 ff.

37. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York, 1977), pp.133 ff.

38. Statement on January 31, 1946, in *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal* (Nuremberg, 1947), 6:404 ff.; 7:456 ff.; Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, pp.55 ff.; see also Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago, 1961), pp.126 ff.

39. In this connection it is worth mentioning that virtually no rapes took place among the Vietcong during the Vietnam War. Although the Vietcong practiced terrorism, rape was not part of their standard repertoire. Aside from possible ethnological peculiarities (many Vietcong had a Buddhist background, and in Buddhism rape is held to be a serious crime), another possible explanation is that the Vietcong had women among their ranks and for this reason depersonalization and contempt for women could not take on great dimensions (see Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, pp.94 ff.).

40. Cheryl Benard and Edit Schlaffer, eds., "Kleiner als ein Stück Dreck," *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg) no. 50 (December 7, 1992): 186.

41. Ines Sabalic, *Nirgends erwähnt – doch überall geschehen: Ein Bericht aus Zagreb*, Publikation der Gleichstellungsstelle der Landeshauptstadt (Munich, 1992).

42. Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, p.69.

43. Benard and Schlaffer, *Kleiner*, p.190.

44. Pohl, "Männlichkeit," p.111.

45. Ibid.

46. Elisabeth Raiser, "Vergewaltigungen als Kriegsstrategie," *Junge Kirche: Zeitschrift Europäischer Christinnen und Christen* 1 (1993): 6.

47. The psychoanalytical side of this process, which must be taken into consideration along with everything else, has been articulated by Pohl, among others. See Pohl, "Männlichkeit," pp.157 ff.

48. See Dworkin, *Pornography*, p.35. Data from various countries confirm that easy access to pornographic material is accompanied everywhere by a considerable increase in rapes (Lee Ellis, *Theories of Rape: Inquiries into the Causes of Sexual Aggression* [New York, 1989], p.25).

49. Pohl, "Männlichkeit," p.161.

50. Sander and Johr, *BeFreier und Befreite*.

51. See Porter, "Rape."

52. Dworkin, *Pornography*, p.26.

53. Another reason for this omission lies in the male bias of international treaties. Thus one of the primary tasks of the International Red Cross was to look for prisoners of war, but not for "civilian displacees." Since the women in question were not given combatant status, they were not considered prisoners of war and therefore fell through the cracks of international regulations. That they were kept by law (but not in reality) from combatant status made these women particularly helpless and vulnerable. Since they were not considered combatants, they could be treated like Partisans and thus be shot according to martial law. Soldiers, in contrast, enjoy the protection of international agreements.

54. Franz W. Seidler, *Frauen zu den Waffen? Marketenderinnen, Helferinnen, Soldatinnen* (Koblenz, 1978), pp.163 ff.

55. *AMI* 23, 1 (January 1992): 22.

56. Sabalic, *Nirgends erwähnt*.

57. Ibid., p.9.

58. Significant in this context is that the economic and social committee of the United Nations warned in 1972 that war cruelty, especially toward women, has been occurring at virtually the same level despite the Geneva Conventions.