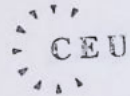


Women, Violence and War

WARTIME VICTIMIZATION OF REFUGEES
IN THE BALKANS

edited by
VESNA NIKOLIĆ-RISTANOVIĆ

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CHAPTER 4

Sexual violence

VESNA NIKOLIĆ-RISTANOVIĆ

Historically, men have always raped and in other ways sexually abused women in times of peace as well as in times of war. In wartime, men continue doing what they have been doing in peacetime, albeit more irrationally and less selectively, and their behavior receives more "understanding" and "indulgence" (Vickers, 1993, p. 16). Rape has accompanied all wars, be they religious, revolutionary, civil or international, and regardless of whether they are "just" or "unjust" (Brownmiller, 1975, pp. 31-32). Rape, unfortunately, also accompanied the war in the former Yugoslavia. As McGeough remarks (Vickers, 1993, p. 60), military sources rarely provide reliable information on what they euphemistically call a "collateral damage." Thus we do not have reliable statistics at our disposal on rape and other forms of sexual abuse in this war or in other wars. Moreover, the unreliability of statistics on rape in war is related to the usual and understandable unwillingness of women to speak about their experiences. Statistics are also rendered unreliable when used for political manipulation and the instigation of war. During war, as Brownmiller remarks, the emphasis on rape as a form of brutality specific to only one side of a conflict, to the army of one nation, was used to produce hatred and an emotional stimulus for the other side to continue fighting. Usually, neither side admits that its soldiers rape but they all readily point to the rapes performed by the enemy. And, "when the war was over, a wholly predictable reaction set in...The crime that is by reputation 'the easiest to charge and the hardest to prove' has traditionally been the easiest to disprove as well. The rational experts found it laughably easy to debunk accounts of rape, and laughably was the way they did it" (Brownmiller, 1975 p. 47).

An almost identical situation could also be found in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The real sufferings of raped women were

overshadowed by the state-controlled media campaigns. All sides involved in the war aimed to prove the culpability of the other side(s) and to promote the war by inciting their own people to vengeance (*Bosnia-Herzegovina—rape and sexual abuse by armed forces*, Amnesty International Report, January 1993, International Secretariat, London, p. 3). The consequences were new rapes and new female suffering. Unfortunately the international community and the media used this kind of propaganda all over the world as well. The Serb man was turned into the symbol of all rapists, and the Moslem woman into the symbol of all victims. As Žarkov pointed out, "in both cases the same process of ethnicization of the perpetrator and the victim was in play, obscuring many significant elements involved in these cases" (Zarkov, 1995, p. 115).

To illustrate this, we will present two examples from the foreign press and one from the domestic media. *Newsweek*, in its issue of January 11, 1993 (p. 21), for example, reproduced a photograph of a group of women with the following legend: "Bitter solidarity: Muslim women at a refugee center in Tuzla, Bosnia, relive the horrors of being raped by Serbian soldiers last June." *The Guardian* of January 20, 1993 (p. 2), also printed the same photograph, accompanied by the following text: "The Serbian soldiers who raped these women were 'normal' men, according to their victims. So what does that tell us about normal men?" On the other hand, the matter of identity protection for the victims who talked about their tragic experiences on Belgrade television is well illustrated by a case reported to us by one of the women that we interviewed. While talking about a woman who shared the same collective shelter with her, Anka said, "We learned true details of her case in a TV program, because somebody recognized her as she was talking, although she was shown from behind. Some reckless people invited her to watch the program and she had a nervous breakdown. I don't know what happened to her later."

Stigmatization, which may be a result of this kind of presentation of raped women, had obvious traumatic effects on these women. Similar effects may have been produced by foreign journalists' way of approaching women in refugee camps, usually followed by the question "Anyone here raped who speaks English?" (Zajović, 1994, p. 231). Also, the media's appetite for raped women sobbing out their tales of sexual violation resulted in a new kind of violence against them and new suffering for these women. One of the most drastic examples of media aggression towards rape victims was provided in the interview that Stiglmeier conducted with a 12-year-old Moslem girl from the town of Foča. Realizing how

painful it was for the girl to answer the questions, Stiglmayer said, "I felt like a criminal while I pressed the little girl, who did not speak very much, with questions about her rape, and I was glad the interview was over" (Stiglmayer, 1994, p. 112). Stiglmayer's stubbornness in the conduct of the interview is indeed astonishing, especially as the girl's mother could have given her all the information she needed.

Given all we have already said, we can only agree with the opinion of McGeough (Vickers, 1993, p. 60) who claims that details about civilian suffering should be sought with refugees. What refugees lived, saw and heard about seems to be the best source of knowledge about the sexual violence against women in war.

As Seifert noted correctly, the international community had long ignored the rapes in Bosnia although the New York daily *Newsday*, as early as August 1992, published a report on rapes in Bosnian camps. "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" (Seifert, 1994, p. 68). The "numbers game" began at the end of 1992 and lasted through 1993. The Bosnian government spoke with about 50,000–60,000 raped Moslem women and claimed to possess information on 13,000 cases. On the other side, the commission for war crimes created in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia brandished the statistic of 800 Serbian women raped in Moslem detention sites. Later on, a special report of the European Community (January 8, 1993) produced the number of 20,000 raped Moslem women, while drawing attention to "possible exaggerations." According to Jeri Laber, executive chief of Helsinki Watch, the report did not demonstrate the ways in which the data had been gathered. A team of UN experts, headed by the special UN envoy for human rights, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, spent eleven days (January 12–23, 1993) in Zagreb, Sarajevo, Zenica and Belgrade looking for data on rape and gathering evidence for 119 cases. In the conclusion of his report, Mazowiecki stressed that no reliable estimate of the total number of victimized women could be reached. Neither could Amnesty International, in its report of January 20, 1993, estimate the total number of rapes, although it claimed that the phenomenon was widespread.¹

In March 1994, the special UN Commission of Experts sent teams of female lawyers and male and female mental health specialists to conduct interviews with victims and witnesses in Croatia, Slovenia and Austria. A total of 223 people were interviewed. However, as is stated in the Final Report, due to time constraints

the teams were unable to meet with all those willing to come forward.² The Commission also sent a team of military personnel to conduct a pilot rape survey in Sarajevo in June and July of 1993, but the study was "relatively generalized" and not aimed at the exploration of specific cases. Unfortunately, the Commission had insufficient time to evaluate the data, as its Final Report was submitted only one month after the completion of interviews. The obvious hurry of the Commission to produce data that would confirm that rapes were a part of a typically Serbian strategy reveals the political manipulation of the statistics of raped women, especially raped Moslem women. However, it is interesting that despite all these circumstances which were supposed to contribute to unreliable conclusions, the Final Report stated that the results of the interviews were consistent with earlier conclusions. Yet it was recognized at the same time that it was difficult to discover the real number of raped women.³

The media and politicians from all parts of the world accepted data given by the Bosnian government as unquestionable. At the same time, the fact that Serbian women were raped as well was completely ignored. This kind of presentation of wartime rape promoted the hatred and hostility of Moslems and Croats and encouraged them to rape Serbian women in revenge. When political and military aims had been achieved, experts finally admitted that it was very difficult to find out the real number of victims. From the end of 1993 on, war rape reports have no longer made top news in the former Yugoslav and foreign media. Still, as *The Guardian's* journalist Linda Grant wrote, "arguing how many women have been raped and why it was done has overshadowed another issue: What has happened to the women since the ordeal ended?"

The careless use of unverified numbers about rape in war is "efficient" from the standpoint of temporary propaganda effects. It is, however, usually counterproductive when the relation of the public toward the actual problem is taken into account. Exaggeration and the use of unverified numbers soon produce disbelief and doubt even about many truthful accounts. There is an obviously illogical contradiction between the extremely low rates of reported rape in pre-war Yugoslavia and the extremely high rate of reported rape during this war (as supported by numerous reports). The significant difference between the rates of report is not a consequence of a change in the attitude of women towards the reporting of rape in war, but a product of immediate military and political goals which are deemed priceless and which allow the manipu-

lation of female suffering as a part of temporary war strategy. It is sad that some feminists, including some famous names such as MacKinnon and Chinkin, succumbed to media propaganda. Although curious about the sudden contrast with the usually low rate of report, they still easily asserted that rapes in the Bosnian war were frequently reported (Chinkin, 1993, p. 205); on the other hand, Serbian victims of rape were completely ignored (MacKinnon, 1993; 1994).

The media-fashioned black and white picture of the war in the former Yugoslavia has produced a biased approach in the study of the sexual abuse of women in the former Yugoslavia, as is well illustrated by Stiglmayer (*italics ours*).

Because of the suffering of Muslim and Croatian rape victims, we frequently forget that Serbian women in Bosnia-Herzegovina are also being raped. Of course, they are not affected by rape as frequently as the Moslems. For one thing, the Serbian army is the victorious army and can better protect its civilians; for another, Moslems and Croats only rarely carried out "ethnic cleansing actions" in the territories under their control (where Serbs are still living)—although hostility towards Serbs is constantly growing and there are recurrent instances of misconduct toward Serbs...But the real reason that Serbian women seldom appear in the reports of rapes in Bosnia might be a different one: *they are the wives, sisters and daughters of the aggressors*. There is hardly a journalist who feels motivated to seek them out, to check up on what has happened to them and thus offer propaganda material to the Serbian side—that is, the bad side, the side "responsible for the war." (Stiglmayer, 1994, p. 138)

Thus, Stiglmayer has brilliantly defined the role of journalists in the creation of the image about war rape in the former Yugoslavia—an image which was uncritically accepted by the majority of experts (including feminists) worldwide. This image has inevitably included the male discourse, which treats women as objects, as a part of male property and not as individuals. By focusing their attention on Moslem rape victims (and to some extent on the Croatian ones), the majority of feminist authors have, willingly or unwillingly, contributed to the male political and military game in which women are divided according to whether they belong to the "good guys" or "bad guys."⁴

Unwillingness to talk with Serbian rape victims and to use data collected by Serbian anti-nationalist feminists and researchers, coupled with an exclusive reliance on Croatian nationalistic

sources and contacts (including nationalistic feminist groups such as Kareta, which represents the main source for MacKinnon's and Stiglmeier's analyses), meant the failure to understand rape in war as an act directed primarily against women. The correction of a similar position took considerable efforts when the Hague Tribunal was established and trials of war criminals were put on the agenda.

In the period when rape statistics were being most brutally manipulated (the end of 1992 and the beginning of 1993) it was very risky to approach the problem in terms of realistic and verified data, regardless of the ethnic affiliation of victims. To talk about the smaller—that is, realistic—number of raped Moslem women was understood as a denial of the culpability of the Serbian side. Also, talking about the realistic (again, smaller) number of victimized Serbian women was often received on the other side with ironic remarks, such as "Oh really, so few?" or "That's nothing in comparison with thousands of raped Moslem females." One could cynically conclude that some people were sad because there was not a bigger number of raped women, as that would better suit their ideas and actions. Or, as Chinkin notes, "there is the important question of how women are portrayed by the government and the media at a time of national crisis such as war. Images of women are typically used both to justify the use of armed forces and to motivate men to join the armed forces. The protection of women is an emotive means of arousing domestic popular opinion in favor of the action" (Chinkin, 1993, p. 208). Or as Brownmiller correctly observes, when commenting on the propaganda surrounding rape in World War I, "as propaganda, rape was remarkably effective, more effective than the original German terror. It helped to lay the emotional groundwork that led us to war" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 44).

The stories of the women we talked with demonstrated that rape represents only one of a large number of the various forms of sexual abuse of women in war, although the public attention drawn to rape represents a certain development of public awareness about violence against women (El Bushra, Lopez, 1993, p. 50). Outside of rape, the sexual abuse of women in war also includes the threat of rape, all kinds of sexual harassment and blackmail, sexual slavery within the context of forced concubinage, and forced prostitution (prostitution in brothels for soldiers and prostitution as a survival strategy). Women were abused in areas affected by the war (during war operations and occupations) as well as in areas not directly affected by war, but where different ethnic groups lived side by side. Women were also sexually victimized

when searched, arrested, interrogated, in prison, while demanding social assistance and as refugees. Of course, in war as well as in peace, women continue to be raped by the members of their own ethnic group, regardless of war and disturbed ethnic relations (Nikolić-Ristanović, 1996b).

General remarks about rape in war

Rape has always been considered "an unfortunate but inevitable by-product of the necessary game called war. Women, by this reasoning, are simply regrettable victims—incidental, unavoidable casualties...Rape is more than a symptom of war or evidence of its violent excess. Rape in war is a familiar excess with a familiar excuse" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 32). In war, as well as in peace, rape results more from the imbalance of power between sexes than from a genuine sexual impulse. The purely sexual content of rape has only marginal meaning—rape is used as a means for goals that have nothing to do with sexuality. This meaning of rape is understood as such by all three participating parties: the man-rapist, the woman-victim and the man-rapist's war enemy. It is the relationship of force in the given moment in the given territory that determines to which side the rapist and the victim will belong.

As usual in a patriarchal society, in wartime women are seen as male property, as pure appendages to the territory and other male belongings. "The historic price of woman's protection by man against man was the imposition of chastity and monogamy. A crime committed against her body became a crime against the male estate" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 40).

Within male-female relationships, rape corresponds to the behavior of conquering troops on the occupied territories (Chinkin, 1993, p. 206). Sexual conquest became an accepted evaluation of manhood, a manner of demonstrating dominance and superiority over women. "If sexuality was not bound up with power and aggression, rape would not be possible. When these attributes of masculinity are accentuated, as in war, rape reaches epidemic proportions" (Jackson, 1978, p. 31). Within the predominantly male character of war, the gap between the man who has power and the woman devoid of power becomes greater than usual. Rape in war is not only an accident produced by the fact that a woman found herself in the wrong place at the wrong time (Chinkin, 1993,

p. 205). Weapons increase the power of man, so that an ordinary man becomes un-ordinary by "entry into the most exclusive male-only club in the world" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 32). On the other hand, women deprived of arms and the protection of "their" men, with their class and ethnic affiliation, educational and professional status, are exposed to the sexual violence of men.

The brutality of rape in war is especially amplified by the fact that in the eyes of the rapist the victim symbolizes the enemy. According to patriarchal principles, women are seen as the property of the enemy men, and the enemy has to be defeated by all means, including also the destruction of his property. Rape in war could be seen as a highly symbolic expression of the humiliation of the male enemy. The myth of the man-protector, which is usually activated in war, turns out to be, as Seifert notes, only a myth.

Rape of women entails also another story: from man to man, so to speak, goes a rumor that the men whose women were attacked are not able to protect "their" women. That is a way to insult them and devalue their manhood. This communication between men became clear during the war in the former Yugoslavia, when buses with women in sixth, seventh or even higher months of pregnancy were sent over the enemy lines—frequently with cynical inscriptions on the vehicles, about the children who will be born...The key point was the consequence for men, not the sufferings of women." (Seifert, 1994, p. 59)

Or, as Brownmiller wrote,

A simple rule of thumb in war is that the winning side is the side that does the raping...a victorious army marches through the defeated people's territory, and thus it is obvious that if there is any raping to be done, it will be done on the bodies of the defeated enemy's women...Men of a conquered nation traditionally view the rape of "their" women as the ultimate humiliation, a sexual coup de grace...Apart from a genuine, human concern for wives and daughters near and dear to them, rape by a conqueror is a compelling evidence of the conquered's status of masculine impotence. Defense of women has long been a hallmark of masculine pride, as possession of women has been a hallmark of masculine success. Rape by a conquering soldier destroys all remaining illusions of power and property for men of the defeated side. The body of a raped woman becomes a ceremonial battlefield, a parade ground for the victor's trooping of the colors. The act that is played out upon her is a message passed between men—vivid proof of victory for one and loss and defeat for the other. (Brownmiller, 1975, pp. 35-38)

Of course, the men belonging to the losing side also rape, but in order to avenge themselves. When roles are changed, and the ex-losers become winners, they too tend to demonstrate their power to finally defeat the enemy. One of the most illustrative examples is the case of Russian soldiers who raped German women towards the end of World War II. A similar situation also occurred in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina where the balance of forces in particular regions determined which nationality the rapist and his victim would be.

It is now possible to outline several "patterns" of war rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, regardless of the ethnic affiliation of the rapists and their victims. These patterns were determined on the basis of evidence discovered in our interviews, and taking into account the final report of the expert group contained in the letter addressed to the president of the UN Security Council by the secretary-general of the UN, in 1994.

- Before the general outbreak of hostilities in specific areas, the tension mounts and the ethnic group in control of power begins to terrorize its neighbors. Individuals and small groups of rapists, who simultaneously rob and threaten members of the other ethnic group(s), break into houses, search inhabitants, beat them, steal property and rape women.
- In the areas directly affected by war, during combat and while conquering territories, the winning army breaks into houses and rapes women there, or takes them away into camps or other places where they are publicly raped.
- In occupied territories or areas under siege, women are raped by individuals or small groups of men during the search of apartments, sudden inspections on fictional grounds, or during arrest. Also, women are abducted and then raped or taken to camps or brothels.
- In the regions not directly affected by war and that still have a mixed ethnic composition, individuals abduct, threaten and rape the women who belong to other group(s).
- Individuals or groups of men apply sexual violence.
- Women are raped who are confined in camps, prisons, hotels and other houses transformed into brothels, for the "amusement" of soldiers (often combined with cruel treatment and the infliction of suffering on women).
- Women are often sexually abused with the help of various objects, such as broken bottles, guns, clubs. There is also some evidence that animals were used.

The female body as a means of male inter-ethnic "communication"

Women married to men of another nationality were potential victims of rape by men of their own nationality, their husband's nationality or men of some other (third) nationality.

In the first case, members of the woman's own ethnic group want to offend and humiliate her husband. In a letter to her sister, Nataša described such a case. "A Croat woman, married to a Moslem man, was raped by Croats, in the presence of her daughter." From the standpoint of the rapists, the rape was obviously meant as a message sent to her husband.

In the second case, the husband's compatriots want to punish the victim's husband through her rape because he did not get rid of a woman who belonged to the enemy nation and who, as such, is not worthy of being the "property" of his nation. Nataša, daughter of a Serbian father and Moslem mother, is married to a Croat. She describes her fear of Croats in the following way. "My husband is no longer able to protect me and my mother. There were instances where they said 'If it is a mixed marriage, you either go away or make your woman go away.' I'm so afraid."

Finally, in the third case, a member of a third nationality, to which neither the husband nor the wife belongs, intrudes into the conflict. He mistreats the woman, aiming thus to punish her husband simply for his connection to the enemy nation. The vulnerability of women in mixed marriages is especially accentuated when the husband is directly involved in military actions against the rapist's nation, or when he is accused of participating in such actions.

Emina, a 28-year-old Moslem woman, told us about the fate of her sister, who remained in Mostar.

My mother-in-law, who is a Croat, told me about that when she came to Belgrade to visit us. Croats mistreated my sister because her husband, a Serb, had decided to stay in the Croatian part of Mostar. They used to live there together. When the war broke out, she thought she would be more secure in the Moslem part (where my mother lived), so she moved there, together with her children. One day, our Croat neighbors came and took her and our mother away. They took them to the left bank, in the park called Buna. There, they began sharpening their knives in the car and threatening them with murder. They threatened my sister with rape and viciously in-

sulted her. Because her husband was absent, the neighbors thought that he was on the front line, fighting against Croats. Fortunately, another Croat neighbor came who knew my father well and he managed to release them. My sister was very shaken by the whole event, especially because she was separated from her husband, who was so near yet so far (fifty meters), since she couldn't cross over and knew nothing of him. For eight months my sister had no news of her husband. Finally, he sent her a letter, in which he stated he would kill himself because he couldn't stand to live that way anymore. Besides, since her mental health seriously deteriorated after the Croat mistreatment, I fear that my sister was not only threatened with rape but also indeed raped. However, neither she nor my mother wants to talk about that.

This case demonstrates again to what extent the psychological suffering of mistreated women becomes accentuated in the context of war, on top of the usual general insecurity and severed family ties.

The cases described in this chapter draw attention to the fact that women who lived in so-called mixed marriages were particularly exposed to the possibility of rape—a fact that is almost completely ignored in all analyses. Rapes of women who lived in mixed marriages have undoubtedly confirmed Brownmiller's thesis that rape in war represents a way for men to settle accounts with other men. Rape is directed against "all women who belong to other men" (Brownmiller, 1994, p. 181). This introduces the third, and it seems the essential, element of the explanation of rape, the fact that the woman belongs to a man of another nationality. In war a woman is raped because she represents the "female and ethnic Other," and her ethnic difference is defined by the man whose "property" she is, without taking into account her own ethnic origin.

Rape as a part of war strategy

Rape as an instrument of expulsion. Rape was obviously used as part of a more general war strategy; it became an instrument of war and a method of "ethnic cleansing." The threat of rape was used as "an instrument of forced exile, to make you leave your home and never want to come back" (MacKinnon, 1993, p. 88). Or, as the final report of the UN expert group demonstrated, rape was

intentionally used in order to expel a particular ethnic group from a particular area. This was demonstrated by the humiliation and dishonoring of the victim through rape in front of her relatives, in front of other prisoners, in public places or by forcing family members to rape each other. Moreover, young women and virgins were frequent targets of rape, together with educated girls and women from respectable families.

Although existing information is not sufficient to point to a conclusion about the existence of an overall policy of rape for the sake of expulsion, it is obvious that there was such an aim and that it was frequently achieved. However, one must distinguish two types of case. In the first type, rape is used as an instrument of threat, direct pressure on the victim to make her leave. In the second, women leave the territory where they live because they become disturbed by what they see or hear happening to other women. This second type of case includes examples where parents, especially mothers concerned for their female offspring, decide to send them to a safe place, away from the region affected by war.

While talking about the physician who was raped in the camp of Dretelj, Gordana said she had left, with her husband and children, to live somewhere else. When mentioning Čapljina, she said she would never again set foot there.

An example of emigration provoked by the fear of rape is well illustrated by Olivera. She explained how she and her husband decided to send their two daughters into refuge.

When the war started, I was ready to leave Sarajevo immediately. My husband did not agree because he had heard that there was mobilization in Serbia and he thought that there were ways of avoiding mobilization in Sarajevo. Indifferent, as men mainly are, he did not even understand that we had to put our children in a safe place. It was a bloody mess: there was shelling, people were taken away and killed, girls were raped. Once, my younger daughter, aged 15, came home all desperate, saying "I'd rather be killed than raped." Then I lost patience and said to my husband, "We have to move the children out immediately. Our daughters are young and pretty. I could be beaten, raped or even killed, but I could put up with everything and continue to live because I have them. But they can't deal with that; just think what they would become if somebody raped them. Their lives would be destroyed." Thus, we decided that they should leave.

Lepa was guided by similar reasons when she decided to send her daughters to refuge. "We decided that our daughter should leave Sarajevo because we had heard that there were brothels; we had heard about assassinations, abductions, mistreatment."

The fear of rape was present in women with young daughters as well as in very old women, due to the cruel and humiliating rapes to which not only young women but even little girls and old women were exposed. While writing about the reality of the fear of rape in Berlin at the end of World War II, Smith-Harchah concludes that "rape of women was an order of the day. It did not matter if they were children or old women. A 14-year-old girl had to lay her head on a stone and she was the object of several men who transmitted a venereal disease to her" (Sandher, Johr, 1992, p. 85). Similar things also happened in the war in Bangladesh (Brown-miller, 1975, p. 40).

While talking about the fear that she had to face while she was in Sarajevo, Desa said that she especially feared for her 8-year-old daughter.

Jasminka had similar thoughts when she was in a maternity hospital, together with two raped and pregnant girls. Vera told us about the events of World War II, similar to the present war in Bosnia. "They came into our house and drove us all away. There were thirty to one. My grandmother begged us to take her with us. 'Don't leave me, please, they can rape me,' she said, 'there are some animals who rape even grandmothers.'"

Rape and the abuse of women's reproductive rights: a deconstruction of the idea of rape as a method of ethnic cleansing. In the Bosnian war rape was also used for the "production" of children of the rapist's nationality. According to the patriarchal pattern, a woman symbolizes family, and family is seen as the basis of society. Within that context, the rape of women with the aim of producing children of the enemy's nationality represents a means for the destruction of the foundations of the enemy's life. In other words, rape is used as a tool to destroy the enemy.

The idea of rape as a method of ethnic cleansing contains a very deep patriarchal construction; women are seen as objects, "recipients" that passively accept male seed without adding anything original, anything personal. Within that context, the identity of the child, a human being, depends only on the man. Thus, the children of the women impregnated through enemy rape will be of the rapist's nationality. "Milena, we have to make Moslem children," replied a Moslem soldier to Milena, when she begged him to stop his "brother in arms" raping her friend in the next room. I. J., a

woman raped in the camp of Slavonski Brod, allowed her testimony to be published in the refugee paper *Odgovor*, in 1993. "When they knew that many of us, including me, had become pregnant, they left us alone for a while. They said they did it for the benefit of future Croat children. They were not bothered by the fact that these are Serb women who will give birth, because, as they said, their fathers are Croats and therefore the children will be Croats too."

It is high time to deconstruct the notion of rape as a method of ethnic cleansing (through forcing women to give birth to children conceived through inter-ethnic rape). The essence of such rape, first of all, is constituted by another crime, that of forced pregnancy, which is still not defined as a crime either by the international community or by the International Court for War Crimes in the former Yugoslavia. We agree with Chinkin that rape as a method of ethnic cleansing has to be investigated and prosecuted separately. This would highlight the seriousness of rape and violent sexual abuse in war outside their relations to other war tactics such as ethnic cleansing (Chinkin, 1993). We think that the phenomenon of children conceived through rape authorizes us to talk about ethnic mixing rather than ethnic cleansing, although men of all warring sides are not ready to accept that. Writing about rape in World War II, Sandher and Johr observe a great historic irony—the war which was made in the name of racial purity, among other things, laid the ground for a gigantic mixing, so that contemporary Europe really does look different from the Europe of the 1940s (Sandher, Johr, 1992, p. 34).

The refusal to accept that rape between members of different nationalities in fact constitutes ethnic mixing produces terrible suffering of women. The rapists want to ensure that raped women will give birth to children of the rapist's nationality, and to remind women forever of the horrors of rape. Unfortunately, they succeed; to feel the rapist's child in their wombs and to be sure that everybody knows these are the children of the enemy, yet knowing, at the same time, that they are also their own children, represents one of the cruelest forms of torture of women in war. At the same time, rapists want to deliver a message to the husbands of the raped women (as well as to other men belonging to the enemy) that their women have become worthless. Instead of giving birth to children of their husband's nationality, the victims give birth to the children of their enemies. This is how the husbands of raped women, as well as other men, understand the message. They despise and reject women who have been raped and have given

birth. A Bosnian Serb, the husband of a raped woman, handed a gun to his wife, advising her to commit suicide.¹⁰ Sandher and Johr quote a similar example from World War II. "A father sent his raped daughter to death, with the following words 'If honor is lost—everything is lost.' He even defined for her the way of dying: he handed her a rope to hang herself" (Sandher, Johr, 1992, p. 100). Husbands' incapacity to accept shame sometimes produces the destruction of the whole family, because "the hallowed rights of property have been abused, and the property itself is held culpable" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 40).

The male abuse of female sexuality and reproductive rights is unlimited, and it is bound up with immediate political and military goals. For example, unlike Serbs and men from other ethnic groups involved in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, in World War II the Germans had other priorities. They were prohibited from raping Jewish women (which, however, does not preclude disobedience), as these acts were defined as "race pollution." This, in fact, was very similar to the "race mixing" prohibited in the American South during and after the age of slavery (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 51). According to MacKinnon, race rape was treated in the American context as "pollution." Children were seen as "filthy" and "contaminated" and they were defined by the race of the mother (assuming white rapist and black victim, as was usual), that is, they were seen as black children. This is in contrast to inter-ethnic rape where the children are seen as miraculously purified. Their ethnic affiliation is defined exclusively by the ethnicity of the father, as "pure" as if there was no drop of mother's blood in them at all (MacKinnon, 1993, p. 89).

The irony goes even further. The Catholic Church gave its blessing to the children of forced pregnancies resulting from inter-ethnic rapes. Promoting an image of woman as a passive recipient of every injustice done to her, the pope publicly invited forcibly impregnated women to "accept the enemy" by giving birth, instead of interrupting pregnancy (El Bushra, Lopez, 1993, p. 57).

Forced impregnation aimed at giving birth to children of another nationality is almost always seen as a product of rape. However, as we will see later, the problem appeared also as a consequence of other forms of sexual abuse, such as sexual blackmail. Moreover, we have formed the impression that the discussion of rape as a method of ethnic cleansing largely overshadowed complex and negative consequences of rape in war. Thus, the problem of women who had been impregnated through rape and who could not abort or give birth in wartime conditions—because of

serious health risks—was completely ignored. The termination of pregnancy was sometimes rendered impossible due to religious prohibitions, blackmail or by detention until a moment when abortion was no longer possible. Some women were rendered sterile by abortions while others who could not accept their pregnancy committed suicide. In war, when food, medication and accommodation are lacking, and when medical care is principally oriented toward the army, childbirth can be an incredibly heavy material and psychic burden for a woman. The psychic state of the woman is furthermore complicated by the fact that the child is frequently seen by her family and/or other compatriots as a “proof” of the woman’s collaboration with the enemy, or as evidence of her immoral behavior. Moreover, rape, as well as abortion and childbirth in inadequate conditions, brings an increased risk of venereal diseases, including AIDS (Chinkin, 1993, p. 206).

Anka and Emira talked about the problems of women who were sexually abused in war and who wanted to abort. For some time Anka shared the same collective shelter with a woman who was raped by Moslems. “She was already pregnant and wanted to abort. However, in the hospital she was told that they would perform an abortion only if she declared that Serbs had raped her. She refused. She took the first convoy out from Sarajevo, in 1993, and arrived here. However, as her pregnancy was already advanced, an abortion could not have been performed. She had to give birth.”

Emina talked about her cousin from Mostar. “As she was in the Croat part of Mostar where abortion was not allowed [every gynecological examination was also witnessed by a nun who insisted that the child had to be born], she could not abort in time.”

In this war, as well as in the previous ones, even women impregnated through rape who were not forced to give birth had a very hard time. Milica’s account illustrates this point well.

I did not know I was pregnant, because I had my regular periods even until the fifth month after the rape. I did not have a medical examination immediately after the rape because I feared that it might become known. Sometime in the fifth month I went to see the doctor, because I realized there was something happening with me. In my town abortion is performed only until the third month, and after that, you can do it provided you have money and connections. I was poor. I did not succeed. I was ashamed to give birth in my town, so I decided to go to Belgrade. I gave my baby up for adoption. The ambience in my town is such that if you are not a whore, if you don’t break marriages, if you are not scum, you can’t survive. You don’t realize where you live until something happens

to you. Only then you can see who's your real friend. I could not accept my baby because it would have always reminded me of the thing that happened to me. I think it would have killed me.

Milica gave birth to a boy which was given up for adoption. After childbirth she was accommodated in a home for unprotected children. She was in a room with her baby, and the personnel constantly reminded her that she had to take care of the child, although she had declared before giving birth that she did not want to see it. However, because of the closeness of the child and the care she provided, she ended up bonding with the baby. She even gave him a name, although she kept refusing the very thought of keeping the child for herself. The conflict between reason and emotions eventually produced a horribly painful trauma, as happened with many women who gave birth to children conceived through rape in war. And not only in war. This is perhaps best illustrated by a letter that Milica sent us, after she had returned to her town. "There is nothing new here. There is war. People are killed. Nothing new, indeed. We can barely make two ends meet. I'm not feeling well. I feel so bad, depressed, irritated. I became withdrawn. My nerves went down the drain. I have nightmares. I don't know what to do. I only smoke and worry. I can't eat, I've lost my appetite. I lost ten to twelve kilos. The other day, I was given an infusion. I don't know what to do."

Mixed, conflicting emotions, constant clashes between love and hatred, between acceptance and rejection, are even more dramatically expressed in the lives of women who decided to keep and rear children conceived through rape. There is not much evidence about the dramas that are experienced by the mothers of children who became living monuments of their suffering, but even those few accounts that we have point out a painful fact; these children very often bear a physical resemblance to their father-rapists. A very telling example is provided by a Jewish girl raped in a concentration camp in World War II. Her confession is reproduced in Simon Wiesenthal's book *Max and Helen*.

But, you would probably like to ask: "Why did you give birth to a child of that evildoer?" That is the question I have often posed to myself too. The whole of my being strongly resisted the idea of abortion. In fact, what was the culpability of that little being in my womb? It did not beg anyone to come to this world. Of course, I could have left him in an orphanage or given him for adoption. But it was my baby, and I was his mother...The child grew. It resembled Schultz more and more. I thought I could not bear it. Will he

also inherit his impulsiveness, his brutality? Will fear ever stop? (Wiesenthal, 1991, p. 117)

The drama of the mother inevitably influences the life of the child. Sandher and Johr interviewed children conceived through rape who lived with their mothers. They found that their relationships were very traumatic, because children constantly reminded mothers of the horrors of rape, and that inevitably influenced mutual relations (Sandher, Johr, 1992, p. 94).¹¹

Milena, another woman we talked with, was traumatized at the very beginning of her attempt to live with the child that was conceived during a seven-day rape performed by three Moslem soldiers. Milena arrived in Belgrade in the seventh month of her pregnancy without realizing that she was pregnant. She was accommodated in a home for unprotected children. She wanted first to have a cesarean in her seventh month, just to get rid of the fetus. She thought it was feasible. She was, however, advised by the doctors that it was better to give birth. While the baby was being delivered, the nurse covered her eyes so that she could not see it. After recovering from childbirth, she returned to her town, but could not find peace of mind because she was torn between her desire for the baby and the emotions produced by her memories of rape. She decided to give up the baby for adoption, then changed her mind and tried to live with the child. She could not bear that test. Due to a serious psychological state, which demanded hospitalization, she could not take care of the baby.

Forced concubinage or sexual slavery

Sometimes, apart from being raped, women are taken away and forced to live in concubinage with men who are members of the enemy side. Thus they become slaves, completely subjugated by their forced husbands. Sexual slavery, which sometimes lasts several years, is usually accompanied by domestic chores, and a general satisfaction of all of the master's needs, including acting as a receptacle for physical abuse. Examples of such treatment of women in war can be found in literature and movies which demonstrate the Nazi abuse of Jewish women in World War II (Wiesenthal, 1991; Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's list*, etc.). Similar cases also existed in the former Yugoslavia in World War II, as well as in the present war.