



In the Name of the Daughter. Anthropology of Gender in Montenegro

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Between Resistance and Repatriarchalization. Women's Activism in the Bay of Kotor in the 1990s

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Abstract: The author offers an account of women's activism in the Bay of Kotor in the 1990s, thereby filling a gap in the academic literature on antiwar and peace activism in Montenegro during the Yugoslav wars. Although the Bay of Kotor saw regular antiwar and peace initiatives organized and led by women, these were unregistered grassroots activities. They went largely unnoticed by the media, which effectively erased them from the view of Montenegrin citizens and hid them from domestic and international historians and social scientists. The author compares the work of two non-governmental organizations, the ANIMA Centre for Women's and Peace Education in Kotor, and RIZA–Bijela. She explores how the two organizations understood the place and role of women in the processes that took place in Montenegro in the 1990s. She assesses the similarities and differences of their respective approaches, and the effects of their work.

Keywords: women's activism, human rights, peace activism, antiwar activism, Bay of Kotor

Introduction

This article explores how the position of women in Montenegro changed in the 1990s. This was the time when the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) came to an end in a series of violent wars, and new countries were formed on the basis of ethnonational logic. The process went hand in hand with the

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transformation of socialism into capitalism. In the 1990s, Montenegro's state projects and political vision were linked with Serbia, since the two countries formed a federation. In 2006 the country (re)claimed its independence through a referendum. Very few academic works have paid attention to the transformation of this economically underdeveloped country—the only former Yugoslav country on whose territory there were no wars in the 1990s.¹ Even fewer have been published on the role of women in Montenegro in this tumultuous period. My study addresses this gap and it does so by comparing the work of two non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the ANIMA Centre for Women's and Peace Education, Kotor (*Centar za žensko i mirovno obrazovanje ANIMA*) and RIZA–Bijela, the town of Bijela being located within the territory of the municipality of Herceg Novi. I ask pertinent questions: How did the two organizations understand the place and role of women in the processes that took place in Montenegro in the 1990s? What similarities and differences were there in their respective approaches? And what were the effects of their work? Since most of the empirical information offered in this text is not available to the academic and wider public, I will first provide brief biographies of the two organizations.

The ANIMA Centre for Women's and Peace Education in Kotor is a civic association established by a group of women who, at the beginning of the 1990s, acted informally in various peace initiatives. In July 1996, ANIMA was registered at the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Montenegro as the ANIMA Association for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence. In 2005 it changed its name to the ANIMA Centre for Women's and Peace Education. In 2013, this NGO won two awards: the Award for Consistent Activist Work in 2013 from the Podgorica Centre for Civic Education (*Centar za građansko obrazovanje*, CGO); and a Recognition for Peace bestowed by the Japanese NGO 'Peace Boat'.

RIZA is the oldest association of women in the Bay of Kotor region. The word *riza* refers to a metal cover protecting an icon of the Orthodox Christian Church, and the name of the organization is a reference to the Holy Mother and her robe. According to Slađana Vučičević, the president of RIZA and editor of a 2005 monograph on it,

¹ Cf., for instance, Florian Bieber, *Montenegrin Politics Since the Disintegration of Yugoslavia*, in: Florian Bieber, ed, *Montenegro in Transition Problems of Identity and Statehood*, Baden-Baden 2003, 11–42; Kenneth Morrison, *Montenegro. A Modern History*, London et al. 2009; Mladen Lazić, ed, *Montenegro. Capitalist Transformation at the European Periphery*, special issue, *Südosteuropa. Journal of Politics and Society* 66, no. 2 (2018).

'RIZA, RIZAS, protector, saviour [...], emphasizes above all the holy act of protecting the most vulnerable—those who believe. So, in its descriptive and nominal meaning, it grows into a PALAGRIJA, MOTHER (Holy Mother), who uses the charisma of her spiritual force to protect all those who need help.'²

The RIZA association has been operating for 78 years. It was founded in 1943 and is a legal successor to the Women's Antifascist Front of Bijela (*Antifašistički front žena Bijela*, WAF–Bijela). The changes in the name of the association reflect changes in wider social relations. When the WAF was abolished at the Yugoslav level in 1953, the WAF–Bijela was renamed the Section for the Social Status of Women (*Sekcija za društveni položaj žena*) and acted within the Organization of Women of Herceg Novi (*Organizacija žena Herceg Novi*). Since 2003, the association has been functioning as an NGO, the Women's Association RIZA–Bijela. In 2004, the association received the October Award from the Municipality of Herceg Novi for 'its contribution to the affirmation of overall social culture through the activities of women'.³

The empirical material for this article was collected in the course of my doctoral research.⁴ It includes written documents from both organizations, such as publications, media texts, and archival sources.⁵ Because the pre-1990 archive of RIZA–Bijela was destroyed in a fire, I had access to the documents about their work only from the 1990s onwards. Most of the earlier documents had been burnt to cinders in 1943–1944, while others were lost in the catastrophic earthquake that hit the Bay of Kotor in 1979. Hence, the beginnings of RIZA's work are documented only in a report of the District Board of WAF–Ercegnovi (*Sreski odbor AFŽ-a Ercegnovi*), dated 8 December 1944, which escaped destruction. According to the current president of RIZA–Bijela, Slađana Vučićević, this is one of just two remaining documents preserved from the lost archives. Finally, the empirical material for this study includes oral history interviews conducted with Ljubomirka

2 Slađana Vučićević, NVO Udruženje žena 'Riza' Bijela, in: Slađana Vučićević, ed, *Monografija nevladino udruženja žena 'Riza'*, Bijela 2005, 9–10. Notably, in Bijela there is a Church of the Riza Holy Mother (*Crkva Rize Bogorodice*) that is sometimes also called the Church of the Deposition of the Virgin's Robe (*Crkva polaganja rize presvete Bogorodice*); cf. Lucija Đurašković, *Kulturna baština. Crkva Rize bogorodice kod Bijele, Montenegrina*, digitalna biblioteka crnogorske kulture, n. d., http://www.montenegrina.net/pages/pages1/religija/crkva_rize_bogorodice_kod_bijele.htm. All Internet references were accessed on 21 January 2021.

3 Vučićević, *Monografija*, 112.

4 Ervina Dabižinović, *Diskursi o ženama Boke Kotorske: rodni identiteti (1815–2015)*, PhD thesis, University of Novi Sad, 2017, <https://nardus.mpn.gov.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/9138/Disertacija.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y>.

5 In addition to Vučićević, *Monografija*, cf. Slađana Vučićević / Andrea Stoilkov, *Drugi o nama. Jubilarna, ilustrovana monografija povodom 70 godina postojanja i rada Udruženja žena 'Riza' Bijela (1942–2012)*, Bijela 2012.

Ljupka Kovačević, one of the founders of ANIMA, and with Slađana Vučićević herself.⁶

I should mention straight away that I have been a member of ANIMA since its creation and that I work as its programme coordinator. I am responsible for publicizing the activities of the two organizations fairly, aiming to maintain objectivity while having the freedom to air subjective views. The politics of feminist antiwar resistance today is a matter for passionate engagement. I concur here with the American feminist writer bell hooks (pen name of Gloria Jean Watkins), who insists that without passion, initiatives like the ones at stake here do not impart the necessary enthusiasm and fail to raise sufficient hope for change.⁷

Blind Spot

Montenegro joined the wars within the territory of former Yugoslavia not just as a constitutive contributor to the Yugoslav People's Army, but also claiming that it was waging a 'war for peace' (*rat za mir*)—a phrase employed by Montenegrin politicians in the early 1990s to express the idea that peace was to be achieved by violent means.⁸ The government used propaganda to justify its violence and to convince its citizenry that this violence was being exerted in defense of the country. Only a handful of academic texts document and analyze this period in Montenegro's recent past. A good overview of the political, economic, and social transformation the country has undergone can be found in the book *Montenegro in Transition. Problems of Identity and Statehood*, edited by Florian Bieber, which has contributions from various Montenegrin, wider Southeast European, and international scholars.⁹ Bieber provides a chronological and empirically rich overview of the role Montenegro played in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, as well as describing its political and economic transformation.¹⁰ He also looks at Montenegro's federal union with Serbia between 2003 and 2006, and the road the country then took to gain its political independence. He analyses how the Montenegrin government supported Serbian nationalism and the reasoning behind

⁶ Author's interviews with Ljubomirka Kovačević in Kotor, 24 July 2014, and with Slađana Vučićević in Igalo, Hercegovina, on 22 July 2015.

⁷ bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*. Passionate Politics, Cambridge/MA 2000.

⁸ According to Morrison, 'it was in Svetozar Marović's column in the daily *Pobjeda* that the Orwellian term "Rat za mir" (War for Peace) first appeared'. Morrison, *Montenegro*, 93.

⁹ Bieber, ed, *Montenegro in Transition*.

¹⁰ Bieber, *Montenegrin Politics*, 11–42.

Montenegro's transformation into an independent state. The historian Kenneth Morrison also provides a good overview of the same period, looking additionally at the role of the media (particularly the daily newspaper *Pobjeda*) in the creation of the discourse of war.¹¹ Neither Bieber nor Morrison pay attention to the role of women, either in their opposition to government forces or in work supporting them.

Srđa Pavlović and Milica Dragojević provide an overview of 'peaceniks and warmongers' with details of antiwar activism in Montenegro in the early 1990s.¹² Drawing on primary sources in private collections, media reports, journalistic texts, and the documents of various political parties, they portray the political space of Montenegro between 1989 and 1995 and the fragile antiwar opposition within it. The citizens and associations who opposed the dominant discourse of war mentioned in their text include: the weekly journal *Monitor* and its journalists; the Civic Forum of Montenegro (*Građanski forum Crne Gore*); the Student Forum (*Studentski forum*); the politician Slavko Perović and his political party; the Liberal Alliance of Montenegro (*Liberalni savez Crne Gore*); the politician Žarko Rakčević and his Social Democratic Party (*Socijaldemokratska partija*); the Alliance of Reform Forces (*Savez reformskih snaga*) led by Ante Marković; Miško Đukić, the journalist and founder of Radio Free Montenegro; writers Mirko Kovač and Jevrem Brković; the poet Vito Nikolić; and several other notable individuals and initiatives.¹³ All these scholarly texts provide important sources of information. They are especially valuable because of the difficulties involved in accessing materials about the period, many official and institutional pieces of information being out of reach, due to the fact that the same political party and its leaders, the Democratic Party of Socialists (*Demokratska partija socijalista*, DPS), were uninterruptedly in power for the 30 years up to 2020. Nevertheless, the antiwar engagement of women remains invisible in all the texts mentioned.

Although Montenegro had regular antiwar and peace initiatives organized and led by women, the local and national media rarely reported on them, effectively erasing them from the view of Montenegrin citizens outside the Bay of Kotor region and from the records of domestic and international historians and social scientists. As Seyla Benhabib puts it, '[t]he exclusion of women and their point of view is not just a political omission and a moral blind spot but constitutes an epistemological

¹¹ Morrison, Montenegro.

¹² Srđa Pavlović / Milica Dragojević, Peaceniks and Warmongers. Anti-War Activism in Montenegro, 1989–1995, in: Bojan Bilić / Vesna Janković, eds, *Resisting the Evil. (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Contention*, Baden-Baden 2012, 137–158.

¹³ For primary sources about the early 1990s in Montenegro cf. Branko Vojičić, ed, *Dubrovnik. Rat za mir*, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade 2006.

deficit as well'.¹⁴ For instance, such exclusion prevents both scholars and activists from gaining new ways of understanding what constitutes antiwar engagement and political action. Unlike other antiwar and peace activists in Montenegro, those of ANIMA did not register as a formal organization until 1996. They believed that formal structures would be too slow to let them keep up with the fast-paced events of the early 1990s. Instead, they self-organized in a number of actions staged in the public squares of Kotor. Here they entered the public space and shared their views on the political reality of the moment, directly and outside any formal organizational framework. Unregistered and operating at such a grassroots level, the ANIMA women's peace initiatives of the early 1990s went largely unreported in the media and were thus beyond the radar of social scientists, who focused on formal, registered organizations and reports available in the Montenegrin media. Exploration of how the women organized themselves at this time to protest against the Yugoslav wars suggests that antiwar activism was a practice that went well beyond formally registered organizations, associations, and political parties. Their antiwar and peace activism was akin to bell hooks' 'passionate politics'.¹⁵ If the picture of 1990s Montenegro drawn by historians and social scientists is to be at all comprehensive, it needs to include the agency of women in resisting the dominant discourses of the time, and the way they generated their own knowledge and forms of organization.

Women are generally absent from most academic works on postsocialist Montenegro. This makes the research of Mileva Filipović, sociology professor at the University of Montenegro, even more relevant. In 2003, she conducted an inquiry into gender and politics. Her rare voice, exploring the social role and social power of Montenegrin women in the 1990s, strove to combine 'science with consciousness' (*nauka sa savješću*).¹⁶ Her book on the 'social power of women' was not referenced in any of the academic works mentioned above, and this further underlines the observation that researchers have turned a blind eye to women's activism, preventing serious analysis of women's potential, and diminishing the chances for women to increase their self-esteem. Not least, the omission reproduces the stereotypical view of women in Montenegro, as 'naturally' engaged only in private affairs and absent from the public domain.¹⁷ Importantly, Filipović's research demonstrates that the 1990s led to an increased marginalization

¹⁴ Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self. Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, Alexandria 1992, 13.

¹⁵ hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*.

¹⁶ Mileva Filipović, *Društvena moć žena*, Podgorica 2003, 27.

¹⁷ For a good explanation of the link between militarism and a particular vision of women, cf. Cynthia Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism. Feminists Make the Link*, Lanham 2016.

of women and the withering away of their social and civic rights, along with pressure for them to be excluded from public arenas.

Remarking that Montenegro cannot be a democratic country if over a half of its citizens are excluded from public affairs, Filipović reveals that the percentage of women in the Montenegrin parliament fell from 12.2% in 1989–1990 to 4.8% in 1990–1992. A similar decline can be seen in other former Yugoslav republics: between 1986 and 1992, the percentage of women representatives in the parliaments of all the Yugoslav successor states fell drastically. Women made up 30% of the Slovenian parliament in 1982, but after the first parliamentary elections in 1992, only 13.33%. In the Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the equivalent figures were 24.1%, in 1986, and only 2.92% in 1990. In the Croatian parliament, the percentage of women dropped from 18% before 1990 to 4.7% after that date.¹⁸

While women are absent from most accounts of recent Montenegrin history, a solid number of feminist texts have emerged in the last 30 years, exploring the connection between war and patriarchy in the former Yugoslav republics and how their intertwining has affected the position of women.¹⁹ Feminist authors from the Yugoslav region and beyond have discussed the relationships between wars, patriarchy, the political economy, and nationalism. As Yuval Davis argues, ‘it is women—and not just the bureaucracy and the intelligentsia—who reproduce nations, biologically, culturally, and symbolically. Why, then, are women usually “hidden” in the various theorizations of the nationalist phenomena?’²⁰ More broadly, a ‘retreat to the household’ has characterized postsocialist transformation.²¹ In the patriarchal and nationalist discourses dominant in Montenegro, in the early 1990s this retreat was justified by references to the ‘jeopardized nation’ and ‘the need to

¹⁸ Filipović, *Društvena moć žena*, 57–62.

¹⁹ Rada Iveković, *Žene, politika, mir*, in: Biljana Kašić, ed, *Žene i politika mira. Prilozi ženskoj kulturi otpora*, Zagreb 1997, 92–105; Đurđa Knežević, *Rod i nacionalizam u hrvatskom medijskom ratu*, Zagreb 2004; Sonja Licht / Slobodan Drakulić, *When the Word for Peacemaker Was a Woman. War and Gender in the Former Yugoslavia*, in: Jelisaveta Blagojević / Dušan Đorđević Mileusnić, eds, *Anniversary Issue 1992/2002 of the Women's Studies Journal*, Centre for Women's Studies, Belgrade 2002, <https://www.zenskestudie.edu.rs/en/publishing/online-material/women-s-studies-journal/296-when-the-word-for-peacemaker-was-a-woman-war-and-gender-in-the-former-yugoslavia>; Lepa Mladenović, *Feministička politika u antiratnom pokretu u Beogradu. Pucati ili ne pucati?, Feministkinje pod paljbom, razmjena među ratnim zonama*, Zagreb 2004; Marija Perković, *Ženska mirovna politika*, in: Adriana Zaharijević, ed, *Neko je rekao feminizam? Kako je feminizam uticao na žene XXI veka*, Sarajevo 2012, 306–319; Bojan Bilić, *We Were Gasping for Air. (Post-) Yugoslav Anti-War Activism and Its Legacy*, Baden-Baden 2012.

²⁰ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, Los Angeles 1997, 2.

²¹ Frances Pine, *Retreat to the Household. Gendered Domains in Postsocialist Poland*, in: Chris Hann, ed, *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, London, New York 2002, 95–113.

protect it'. Good illustrations of such talk can be found in the special reportage on the attack by Montenegrin soldiers on Dubrovnik published by the Montenegrin newspaper *Pobjeda*. In the October 1991 issue, one of the Montenegrin soldiers, called Mirko, was reported as saying: 'When I heard that my nation was jeopardized by the notorious hordes of Ustašas, I didn't hesitate to grab the golden arms'.²² As for the place of women in such discourse, in November 1991 a *Pobjeda* special edition published a text called 'Fighters with a softer heart' (*Borci nježnijeg srca*), which recounted that

It is the Montenegrin tradition: when rifles start singing and the roar of war points to new pages of history, that women from this area become mothers and sisters. They rejoice, mourn, wait. This time they also go to war, and Zora Miljanović, Lidija Kažić, Milka Đaković, Sofija Vukićević, Milanka Dašić and Slađana Todorović, who volunteered to go to the front, are an example of this. It may be war, but not even being in uniform can "kill" their charm and womanliness.²³

Darija Žilić describes the ambivalent position of women in times of war. On the one hand, they are predominantly portrayed as victims of the violence unleashed; on the other hand, they are represented as guardians of the family, children, and the nation:

In time of war, differences conditioned by different socialisations of work come to the fore—whilst men mostly worry about lack of information from the fronts, women are occupied with looking after the children [...]. Thus they still remain in the domain of the private. Namely, gender differences in political socialisation rest on traditional patriarchal cultural patterns and widespread misconceptions and stereotypes that consider politics and public life to be areas reserved for men.²⁴

Women in Montenegro were not exposed to war violence, but they were summoned to be the guardian keepers of all those who needed aid—for instance, they fed and cared for mobilized soldiers as well as for the refugees escaping the war zones. In this way, Montenegrin women were made useful in a highly controlled manner that fitted into the wider nationalist, patriarchal worldview. In the 1990s, women who engaged in the charitable work of caring, through their associations, generally conformed to the role reserved for them in the dominant gender regime. Referring to a nationalist women's group in Croatia, Žilić notes that 'it is interesting how women encounter

²² Vojičić, ed, Dubrovnik, 49.

²³ Vojičić, ed, Dubrovnik, 174.

²⁴ Darija Žilić, Gender Essentialisms. Politicalisation and Peace Activism in the Region of the Former Yugoslavia, in: Helena Rill / Tamara Šmidling / Ana Bitoljanu, eds, 20 Pieces of Encouragement for Awakening and Change Peacebuilding in the Region of the Former Yugoslavia, Belgrade, Sarajevo 2007, 267–281, 270–271.

difficult approaches in politics and thus often define their work as humanitarian because that casts away the political aspects of it'.²⁵ The anthropologist Elissa Helms has demonstrated how, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, participation in voluntary humanitarian activities offered women a chance to be present in the public sphere in a way sanctioned by the nationalist patriarchal atmosphere.²⁶

A significant portion of the conceptual apparatus for theorizing the role of women in the former Yugoslav republics in the 1990s was generated from the feminist peace politics and antimilitary activism of the time.²⁷ This body of literature also provides a good framework for analyzing different initiatives that were launched by women in the Bay of Kotor.

ANIMA – Let's Not Kill Each Other!

Peace activism empowered women in Montenegro. They took part in it, recognizing one another as sharing similar values. In 1996, after several years of unregistered, informal, grassroots initiatives, women peace activists in the Bay of Kotor formally registered ANIMA as an organization aiming to work on educating and empowering women, while developing their gender consciousness and potential for critical thinking.

In the early 1990s, it was very hard to confront the inflammatory war discourse. The media space in Montenegro was filled with fake news about enemy attacks, about the number of enemies, and so on. A good illustration of such fake news can be found in an article published by *Pobjeda* in October 1991—one titled 'Dubrovnik is "defended" by the Kurds!' (*Dubrovnik 'brane' Kurdi!*):

Defeated hordes of Ustašas and various groups of Tuđman's mercenaries from who knows where—including Kurds, Bulgarians, Romanians, Turks, Iraqis, and even Filipinos—are making their last attempts at resistance to the Yugoslav National Army units and reservists who have reached the outskirts of Dubrovnik [...]. The remaining villains, it turns out, have developed a random strategy of destroying ancient cultural-historical monuments in Dubrovnik, in a desperate attempt to save their lives. Dubrovnik's residents are practically their hostages. The Yugoslav National Army strictly respects the principle that not a single civilian should die, even at the price of its own men. But this is why, trying not to damage the valuable cultural-historical monuments, it must make an extra effort to achieve its task: getting the Ustašas to capitulate.²⁸

²⁵ Žilić, *Gendered Essentialisms*, 274.

²⁶ Elissa Helms, *Innocence and Victimhood. Gender, Nation, and Women's Activism in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Madison/WI, London 2013.

²⁷ Filipović, *Društvena moć žena*, 57–62.

²⁸ Quoted in Vojičić, ed, *Dubrovnik*, 31–32.

Such voices significantly overturned women's initiatives for peace. All information that some citizens were against mobilization and war was kept out of the media. For example, the newspapers did not mention the demonstrations by Women in Black that were being held every Wednesday in Belgrade.²⁹ There was no word about the public appearance of the female activists in Kotor. The media just did not want pictures of women clamoring on the streets for a peaceful solution to the Yugoslav crisis—despite the fact that these performances were always public. Since the media blockade was successful and the links between the former republics had been interrupted, women wanting the authorities to pursue the possibility of a different solution transferred their efforts to demonstrations as a powerful channel for sending messages to the public.

Through such demonstrations, female activists in Kotor expressed their political views on the burning issues. In this way they articulated their autonomous voice, without censure or external intervention, and found a space in which women could put themselves forward publicly and empower themselves with a new agency. This started on the streets of Kotor in 1991, 'when a private body [became] a public body, when we [spoke] in the language of emotions and our own experience, translating it into the public discourse'.³⁰ Since 1996, when female activists registered themselves in the ANIMA association, this appearance in public has become a regular way in which women can express protest against the institutions of the state and events that occur in the political domain.

In February 1991, a group of women organized a peace protest in the Square of Arms (*Trg od oružja*) in Kotor. Ljupka Kovačević, one of its organizers, kept a personal diary at the time, which I had access to while doing my doctoral research. On one day in February 1991, Kovačević wrote the following in her diary:

We specify what the protest is about—reason and peace among people [*razum i mir među ljudima*]/! It is high time to say it: reason and peace among people! [...]. The conclusion we have come to is: LET'S NOT KILL EACH OTHER! We are people bound to each other. We are people who deserve to be heard, and not enemies who should be hated, not beings who should be protected, but fellow humans who should live in equality. We, the women, say NO: to lack of understanding, to irresponsibility, to hatred, to hunger [...] we call for order, for law and the state, and above all for PEACE AMONG THE PEOPLES. Let the message of this meeting be—PEACE, a safe future for our progeny and love, because if that is missing, the people will no longer exist.

²⁹ More about the Women in Black in Bojan Bilić, Not in Our Name. Collective Identity of the Serbian Women in Black, *Nationalities Papers* 40, no. 4 (2012), 607–623, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2012.692510>.

³⁰ Dabižinović, *Diskursi o ženama Boke Kotorske*, 15.

Kovačević also published a text reflecting on the ‘Reason and peace among people’ protest, in which she wrote:

When the wars started in the former Yugoslav region, we did not keep quiet. There was rebellion. But its reception was smothered by the attitudes and intentions of the political elites (not just those in Kotor, to be sure). If an event did not “fit in” with what they wanted, it was not written about—that is, it got minimized and forgotten. [...] I remember how the peace initiatives in Kotor were ignored (*pokrivene tišinom*) [...] the media contributed to the fall-out of the initiative and prevented it from becoming a movement, from becoming mass-supported [...] The protest in the Square on 2 February 1991 began with a broadcast of the song “Requiem” (*Rekvijem*) by Đorđe Balašević and ended with the song “Long live love” (*Nek živi ljubav*). Then came the meeting and its message: “We call for order, law and the state and, above all, peace among the people”.³¹

The pacifist, antimilitarist activities of women were directly opposed to the ethos of the leaders of wartime politics. Attacks on women activists were frequent in Kotor, both during and after demonstrations. Women citizens who confronted war politics and nationalism with their peace and antinationalist activities were stigmatized as ‘traitors’, ‘spies’, and those who ‘defend other people’s children and don’t stand up for their own’.³² They were expected to follow nationalist ideologies instead. For example, the peacekeeping activists collected signatures. On one occasion, these called for the return of the Montenegrin recruits who had been sent to Kosovo as soldiers in the Yugoslav National Army to defend the constitutional order of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As a participant in this initiative, I personally heard various citizens of Kotor calling this peace action ‘shameful’ and ‘one-sided’ a platform to ‘defend Albanian mothers and Albanian children’. The female activists experienced a lot of this kind of harassment. The way in which women activists stood alone in their peace actions can be glimpsed from another entry in Ljupka Kovačević’s journal. Describing a protest in the public square with the slogan ‘Silence against killing, destruction of material culture, and spiritual misery’ (*Ćutanjem protiv ubijanja, razaranja materijalne kulturne i duhovne bijede*), Kovačević noted:

Kotor, 10 June 1992

It’s raining heavily [...]. There are around twenty of us in the Square. Some are unknown [to me], a few who certainly support the cause have not come [...]. I only know that we are standing here soaked from the rain [...]. I am crying.

31 Ljubomirka Ljupka Kovačević, 1990/2000 – U Kotoru, neke žene, *Časopis za ženska pitanja: Femina* 1 (2003).

32 Interview with Ruža Danilović in Kotor, 10 June 1992.

Since the early 1990s, the public space of the Square of Arms in Kotor has become a place where the female activists of ANIMA can express their personal outrage in public action. The very first street actions and demonstrations started here.³³ Today it is still a space often used for direct public action. The Square got its name because the arsenal where weapons were kept used to be there during the Venetian administration of the town (1420–1797). It was chosen as the location for the female activists' public speeches because it was the place that symbolized arms as instruments of war. Furthermore, there is a medieval 'pillar of shame' (*stub srama*) in the Square—a structure in the shape of a pyramid where thieves and prostitutes were chained, humiliated, or even whipped during the Middle Ages. The women who later registered as ANIMA found this symbol of punishment and public embarrassment a suitable one, as they raised their voices of peace and reason in resistance to weapons and misused power. The public gatherings in the Square of Arms that began in the 1990s continue today. Organized demonstrations in this location aim to transform it into a place of freedom, play, and joy that can help bring in a different world, where there is freedom of thought.

Over time, activists have developed established rules for their demonstrations. These include wearing black as a sign of respect for the victims of the wars and in acknowledgment of the pain of those who have lost their loved ones and their homes. The women stand in silence with banners bearing written messages and questions addressed to Montenegrin citizens and politicians. Each performance has a theme on which the activists regularly publish press releases. The participants in the public demonstrations are activists who want to participate; those who do not feel comfortable about appearing publicly carry out other functions, such as recording the protests and monitoring the reactions of citizens.

In the demonstrations, women appear publicly and physically. In this way, their actions, as well as their political position, became visible. ANIMA activists have used the demonstrations to communicate political positions on various issues. Since the early days, there have been gatherings to mark important international and domestic dates concerning women's rights, such as International Women's Day on 8 March, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, World Peace Day, and Women's Health Day, as well as gatherings to make statements about the current political situation in Montenegro.

Sometimes audiences have taken an active part in the demonstrations, transforming the public protests into what Judith Butler calls 'alliances' and

33 Ervina Dabižinović, Ples političkog subjekta u Kotoru, *Camera Lucida. Prvi Crnogorski filmski magazin* 5–6 (June/October 2011), <http://cameralucida.net/2018/index.php/elements/progress-bare/86-strane/strane/751-anima1>.

‘assemblies’,³⁴ ‘spontaneous, heterogeneous, largely created by bodies, and silent’, in which ‘people who represent different social groups spontaneously get together—often without clear demands—and present their bodies instead of verbal performativity’.³⁵ In such a gathering, resistance consists of spontaneous, ad hoc reactions, with no scenario planned or known in advance; it uses bodies-in-the-public as its main instrument. Another initiative organized by the same group of activists between 7 March 1991 and 8 March 1996 was the Circle of Women (*Krug žena*, also known as The Circle of Open Doors, *Krug otvorenih vrata*, or simply the Circle, *Krug*). The Circle aimed to provide psychological support both through an SOS phone line and face-to-face and sought to empower citizens by organizing weekly meetings to discuss various topics. The key moment in the formation of the Circle was when the tensions that would result in the Yugoslav wars began to be felt. Members of ANIMA saw that people felt threatened by the ethnic divisions, secession plans, and military action in their immediate neighbourhood. Several were trained psychologists and they perceived that the whole situation and the uncertainty around it were collectively jeopardizing people’s mental health. When it became clear that Montenegro was actively participating in the war, a minority opposed the military attack mounted on Konavle and Dubrovnik in Croatia, only a few kilometres away. People who were against the war quickly joined the Circle. Most joined because they felt personally threatened by the events; there were many people who came to the meetings of the Circle occasionally but did not wish to take part in public antiwar demonstrations.

The Circle was created so that both male and female citizens would have a space to exchange experiences and thoughts about the new situation. Participants discussed different topics in order to address their general sense of hopelessness vis-à-vis the wars. Between 7 March 1991 and 8 March 1996, they organized 188 meetings, and the topics were announced by Radio Kotor. In an interview, Ljupka Kovačević, founder of The Circle of Women, described its potentialities:

I started the Circle in March 1991. It meant holding meetings in the offices of the Municipal Hall once a week. It was very important to me to initiate what I thought at the time would be responsible behaviour. I started on 8 March, so when the attacks on Dubrovnik began, we

34 Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of the Assembly*, Cambridge/MA, London 2015, 66–98.

35 *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* by Judith Butler, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, n. d., <https://garagemca.org/en/publishing/judith-butler-notes-toward-a-performative-theory-of-assembly-by-judith-butler>. Butler’s book was published in a Russian translation in 2017 as part of the Garage publishing programme in collaboration with Ad Marginem Press.

already had our office space. Cica Džuli and I thought that people would feel threatened, as we ourselves did, that they might develop psychological problems and would start calling us via [the SOS] phone. We were given a phone number in the Municipal Hall, but no one rang us. Then I thought that women had an obligation to offer knowledge to the community and that it would be a good thing to band together. I know that I invited women who were active in the local communities, teachers at first, and doctors. Around thirty women showed up and I presented my plan of organizing meetings for discussions. Each of us had to prepare a topic and elaborate on it during these meetings, over coffee or tea. At the beginning, only women came, but later we were joined by men as well. When the war started in Bosnia in April 1992, we organized a lot of different things, celebrating 8 March, arranging social events, and coordinating our appearances on the streets. [There was] a kind of fear again. The women who came to the meetings were interested more in psychological topics than in larger social issues.³⁶

The association was formally registered on 27 June 1996 as an NGO, ANIMA, the Association for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence (*NVO ANIMA. Udruženje za kulturu mira i nenasilja*). During the first years—up until 2000—the activities done within the framework of this registered organization all had the aim of affirming this culture. The themes and values characterizing this first phase corresponded with the professional and personal engagements of the women who formed the association: they developed a peacekeeping programme of professional psychological support. Between 1996 and 2002, ANIMA also organized educational seminars in nonviolent communication. These were for professionals—young people from the political parties and members of women’s NGOs, but also ordinary citizens of both genders.³⁷ The essence of what was taught at these seminars was that people should behave responsibly in both the personal and collective domain. ANIMA activists worked directly with refugees and displaced persons; also with victims of the torture that had been perpetrated in the camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They worked with civilian victims and with those who had suffered from the NATO bombardment in 1999. Their fight to protect what had been achieved in women’s human rights was a logical continuation of their work with those who suffered from marginalization, discrimination and a deep violation of their rights during the Yugoslav wars.³⁸ To this day, as well as spreading feminist ideas,³⁹ ANIMA’s work is characterized by activism and a transformative approach to the culture of peace in the post-Yugoslav realm, which ‘opts for changing power relations so that peace reaches the whole community and especially its weakest members’.⁴⁰

36 Author’s interview with Ljupka Kovačević, Kotor, 24 July 2014.

37 ANIMA Kotor, O ANIMI, 7 October 2013, <http://www.animakotor.org/index.php/o-animi>.

38 Ervina Dabižinović, Žena u vremenu i prostoru, *žinec. časopis centra za žensko i mirovno obrazovanje* 3–4 (2001), 1–2.

39 Ženska infoteka, Tko su i što rade? ŽINEC – ANIMA Kotor, *Kruh i ruže* 23 (2004), 53, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=3293>.

40 Bilić, *We Were Gasping for Air*, 190.

RIZA – Guardians and Protectors of the Vulnerable

The actions implemented by the organization known in 1953 as the Section for the Social Status of Women relied on ‘female knowledge’ and experience as traditionally understood in Montenegro. Renamed RIZA in 2003, the organization has been engaged in activities seen in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav contexts as apolitical, humanitarian, and traditionally female—such as cooking, cleaning fish, and organizing cultural evenings. One of RIZA’s regular activities has been to collect donations for the Children’s Home in Bijela (*Dječiji dom u Bijeloj*), which houses children deprived of parental care, and for Sunbeam (*Sunčev zrak*), an NGO for children with disabilities. Occasionally, the group also organizes a ‘People’s Kitchen’, distributing food to the most vulnerable. With the transformation of the Women’s Antifascist Front (WAF) into the Section for the Social Status of Women in 1953, the social activism of Yugoslav women was transferred to non-political fields. So, in the 1990s, the organization focused primarily on these humanitarian activities.

During its long history, the organization engaged in activities like its ‘kitchen for the poor’ (*sirotinjska kuhinja*), run in cooperation with the Red Cross and known to the people as the ‘colony’ (*kolonija*), which in 1944 provided for 107 of the poorest children in Bijela and for around 30 adults. It assisted ‘Youth’ (*Mladost*), a children’s home for war orphans, established in 1946 (today the Public Institutional Children’s Home *Mladost*). Furthermore, the association was active in cleaning public spaces, picking the herb wormwood, cleaning fruit, and maintaining green areas. It organized educational events for women, such as workshops on knitting and embroidery, fulling wool, and making clothes, also staging fashion shows displaying outfits created by members. It also developed a culture of remembrance through visits to the mothers of dead soldiers, celebrations of significant dates of the Yugoslav revolution, celebrations of International Women’s Day on 8 March, the organization of recitals and festivals, seminars and lectures, and excursions and trips to other cities and parts of socialist Yugoslavia, such as Titovo Užice and Kadinjača. In cooperation with other local associations, it engaged in activities such as cleaning and preparing fish for the community (assisting a local fishing company) and organizing poetic-musical-artistic events. Examples of the latter include children’s masquerades, ‘Children’s Sunday’ for the children’s home *Mladost*, educational lectures, and poetry marathons.⁴¹

After the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Section continued with activities directed towards those who needed help. For many of its members, it was a not unusual thing to rescue refugees and displaced

41 Slađana Vučićević, ed, *Drugi o nama*, Požega 2012, 137–140.

persons. In Herceg Novi, there were still about 9000 displaced persons in 2000—almost a quarter of the municipality's population. According to the 2003 population census, the city had 33,034 inhabitants;⁴² the 1996 UNHCR census had recorded 19,560 Serbs and 4339 Montenegrins.⁴³ The influx of large numbers of people from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina identifying themselves as Serbian has altered the entire sociopolitical environment of the municipality of Herceg Novi, to which the town of Bijela, with around 3000 inhabitants, belongs.

RIZA's activities in the 1990s show how difficult it was for its members to understand what was going on around them, or be clear of their own standpoint, and reject the dominant nationalist political narrative with all its manipulations. In those frightening times and tense political circumstances, the women of RIZA kept out of explicitly political matters, focusing rather on their work in the people's kitchen (*narodna kuhinja*)—which earlier had been a socialist arrangement for distributing food to those unable to survive on their monthly income. This work included sewing, ironing, forming reading groups, teaching literacy, picking wormwood, cleaning green areas, planting fruit, and the like.

However, some important ideological changes did occur within RIZA's ranks. While it had always aimed to be open to all interested women regardless of their nationality and religious denomination, this ideal did not prevent it from shifting towards support of a joint state of Serbia and Montenegro, a plan strongly backed in Herceg Novi.⁴⁴ In this area where one nationality had become politically dominant, the RIZA organization contributed to nationalist attitudes, and it has gone through (and is still undergoing) various challenges to its ideal of remaining open to all women. A good illustration of this can be found in changes to its commemorative work, which has moved from representing a socialist culture of remembrance to a nationalist stance, supporting pro-Orthodox religious and pro-Serbian nationalist sentiment. This change demonstrates how nationalism imperceptibly reshapes everyday practices, in the guise of being benign.⁴⁵

In socialist Yugoslavia, the Section had organized the commemoration of soldiers killed in war and visits to their mothers on two important socialist holidays: Soldier's Day and Youth Day.⁴⁶ RIZA members continued this activity after

42 Opština Herceg-Novi, Zvanična internet prezentaciji, Rezultati Popisa 2011 za Herceg-Novi, <http://www.hercegnovi.me/rss/grad/stanovnistvo-u-herceg-novom>.

43 UNHCR, Komesarijat za izbeglice Republike Srbije i Komesarijat za raseljena lica Republike Crne Gore, Popis izbeglica i drugih ratom ugroženih lica u Saveznoj Republici Jugoslaviji, Belgrade 1996, <http://www.webotico.com/kirs/media/uploads/Dokumenti-i-publikacije/Izvestaji/Popis%20izbeglica%20i%20drugih%20ratom%20ugrozenih%20lica%20u%20SRJ%201996.pdf>.

44 Vučićević, ed, *Drugi o nama*, 57.

45 Vučićević, *Monografija*, 66–69.

46 Vučićević, *Monografija*, 48–52.

the end of socialism because there were still women living whose sons had died in battle. The uneasy conceptual links between maternity as a means of national reproduction and national heroism continued to exist in a clear patriarchal matrix in the new, post-Yugoslav culture of remembrance, though clearly in a different form.⁴⁷ Then members of the Section started to turn to presocialist dates, such as ‘the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo’ (which they commemorated in 1989). In the late 1980s, Slobodan Milošević had revived the Kosovo myth in his bid to restore a feeling of Serbian national identity.⁴⁸ Many Montenegrins did nothing to distance themselves from the new nationalist subtext of commemorating the Battle of Kosovo; and the small women’s organization in Bijela succumbed to it. How had it become possible to establish this link between a date with a clear nationalist meaning and the Yugoslav socialist practice of commemorating dead soldiers and visiting their mothers, given the clear ideological difference between the two? It was probably due to manipulation by the war ideologues who were trying to relativize the historical facts to mobilize people in what they presented as a national cause.

Similar developments happened with ‘Roads of the Revolution’ (*Putovi Revolucije*), the socialist practice of visiting the memorial sites of World War II. This was intended to strengthen remembrance of the victims of fascism and celebrate the victory of socialist Yugoslavia over fascist regimes. The Section was one of the organizations that regularly took their members on trips to memorial sites. The goal was to strengthen the unity of the socialist brotherhood, as Yugoslav citizens, male and female, met in commemoration. Local communities financed the trips—as they did all the activities supporting this culture of remembrance.⁴⁹ In the 1990s, however, the memorial gatherings went to the dustbin of history. In line with what Živković calls the ‘Byzantine revival’, they were replaced by group visits to monasteries and sites of historical Serbian battles.⁵⁰ Since the 1990s, then, the Section has organized trips to Orthodox monasteries in Kosovo; Gračanica and Tvrdoš (near Trebinje in the Republic of Srpska), Bosnia and Herzegovina; Studenica in Serbia; and Đurđevi stupovi in Berane, Montenegro. The funds for these visits have been raised by RIZA

47 Cf. Stef Jansen / Elissa Helms, *The White Plague. National-Demographic Rhetoric and its Gendered Resonance after the Post-Yugoslav Wars*, in: Christine Eifler / Ruth Seifert, eds, *Gender Dynamics and Post-Conflict Reconstruction*, Frankfurt/M. 2009, 219–243.

48 Ivan Čolović, *Smrt na Kosovu polju*, Belgrade 2017, 331.

49 Heike Karge, *Mediated Remembrance. Local Practices of Remembering the Second World War in Tito’s Yugoslavia*, *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire* 16, no. 1 (2009), 49–62, 51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507480802655394>.

50 Marko Živković, *Inverted Perspective and Serbian Peasants. Antiquities and the Byzantine Revival in Serbia*, in: Andrew Colin Gow, ed, *Hyphenated Histories. Articulations of Central European Bildung and Slavic Studies in the Contemporary Academy*, Leiden 2007, 141–166.

members with additional financial support from local government administrations and businesses.⁵¹

Another clear example of the ideological change that occurred in the course of the 1990s can be seen in the discrepancy between the large number of women travelling to commemorate the Kosovo battle and the absence of women ready to support a planned panel on 'The Position of Women in Organized Labour' (*Položaj žena u udruženom radu*). This panel on the working conditions of women never materialized because no one wanted to attend. This illustrates the ideological shift from socialism to nationalism that took place in the broader former Yugoslav space in the late 1980s and early 1990s—well captured in the saying 'They came as workers and left as Serbs'.⁵²

All these examples indicate how, imperceptibly, the politics of the 1990s succeeded in changing the prevailing ideology and the women's programme from one that was socialist-oriented to another that became nationalist-oriented. Women either accepted or navigated this shift. In the form of RIZA's activities, the change may not seem too noticeable—there are still visits to the mothers of dead soldiers and to significant national sites of remembrance. But the focus now is on memorial sites and dates important for the Serbian national narrative.

Similarities and Differences

In this comparison of the work performed by the activists of ANIMA and RIZA in the early 1990s, it has become evident that these two organizations had different understandings of gender roles, women's human rights, and women's position in relationship to patriarchy, wars, and feminism. The basic similarities of the two organizations were that both were concerned with women's everyday lives, both organizations formally belonged to civil society (albeit with different slants) and both operated in the area of the Bay of Kotor. The same differences remain today. However, RIZA and ANIMA share the difficulty of representing women's issues in Montenegrin society. It is a society where these issues are not recognized as significant and pressing, either at the operational level or on the general and theoretical plane.

⁵¹ Vučičević, ed, *Monografija*, 53–59.

⁵² Goran Musić, 'They Came as Workers and Left as Serbs.' The Role of Rakovica Blue-Collar Workers in Serbian Social Mobilizations of the Late 1980s, in: Rory Archer / Igor Duda / Paul Stubbs, eds, *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, London, New York 2016, 132–154.

Basic differences can be observed in the ideological, political, and programmatic agendas of the two associations. ANIMA's activists thrust themselves into the public sphere because they felt a strong need to do what they could to stop the wars in Yugoslavia and demilitarize the public space. Their championship of women's human rights has been shown in active public warnings that the fuller rights acquired in Yugoslav socialism should not be eroded. They continue to defend these rights. The political context remains largely unchanged, as the same political party, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), stayed firmly in power throughout the period 1991–2020. This party was directly involved in the Yugoslav political and military conflict, a circumstance that has often meant 'disqualification' of the topics that ANIMA advocates. Guided by a conviction that the Yugoslav crisis could and should be resolved peacefully, the activists of what was to become ANIMA played their part in an attempt to ease political tensions and to demand accountability for the measures that the Yugoslav leadership was introducing. Since the very beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, ANIMA took a clear critical position towards the political elite who incited Serbian and (later) Montenegrin nationalism. By splitting off the Socialist People's Party of Montenegro (*Socijalistička narodna partija Crne Gore*, SNP) from the DPS in 1998, the political elite opened up a space in which Serbian and the Montenegrin nationalism could become visible and grow.⁵³ Acting at an activist level, ANIMA has consistently pointed out the harmful effects this nationalism has, both on the community as a whole and on inter-community relations, given that Montenegrin society is multiethnic. After officially registering ANIMA as an organization, its members found, in the process of reviewing the past, a significant means of identifying responsibility for crimes, genocide, and ethnic cleansing.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, ANIMA expanded its activities through educational programmes in feminist theory and practice. These have antimilitarist, and antifascist content, backing the association's political action. As a feminist organization, ANIMA produces knowledge and plans interventions with the primary purpose of questioning patriarchal gender roles and affirming the value of struggling for the common good. The organization promotes people's awareness of the importance of freedom and responsibility in society. By practising and encouraging activism and education, it fosters critical thinking and supports the ideas of feminism and a culture of nonviolence.

ANIMA's politics and culture rely on feminist agency and activism. Its activists believe that women should be engaged in public and political activity and that they

53 Erin K. Jenne / Florian Bieber, Situational Nationalism. Nation-Building in the Balkans, Subversive Institutions and the Montenegrin Paradox, *Ethnopolitics* 13, no. 5 (2014), 431–460, 448, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2014.912447>.

should work towards the dissolution of patriarchy. They see clearly that women in Montenegro are positioned as inferior, and that the country's political elite upholds this subjection, using the system of public institutions to obstruct legal solutions to improve the state of affairs.⁵⁴ Under great pressure from the international community and women's organizations advocating equality, the authorities did eventually accept the requirements of introducing gender equality policies into public institutions, building institutional mechanisms for achieving gender equality, and adopting and implementing anti-discrimination legislation. ANIMA actively supported the process of putting this into practice. After the initial enthusiasm of women human rights activists, it soon became clear that Montenegrin public institutions were accepting the legal and policy proposals only formally. Neither the implementation of gender-sensitive policies and legislature nor an understanding of their spirit has yet been achieved. The public institutions responded very negatively when ANIMA openly pointed this out. The organization's advocacy of changes in politics—especially ones concerning the position and role of women in Montenegrin society—have not been met with favour by the ruling political class. ANIMA's desire to preserve its independence is perceived as an anachronism in the contemporary understanding of civil society as a tool of liberal politics, in which NGOs are expected to work with public institutions by 'repairing' or 'supplementing' them.

Working in collaboration with public institutions and the ruling political elites is precisely the path that has been taken by RIZA, and this has been so since its beginning. RIZA's origins can be found within the Communist Party. It has always worked through and within the system—and today it is working on improving the existing social framework. Like many civil organizations, it works within the boundaries politically allowed. After patriarchy and traditional values of gender division were re-established in the 1990s, RIZA won the prestigious Municipal Award in 2004 for its humanitarian work. This work was thus recognized as morally valid, 'feminine', and in line with municipal political structures. In its constitution, RIZA states that it operates in accordance with respect for equality, and with a focus on the 'responsible role of women in society and the family'.⁵⁵ The organization's affirmation of equality follows the pattern learned in Yugoslav socialism—characterized by the established formal equality of men and women, as well as the 'double burden' of women.

54 ANIMA Kotor, Dan braniteljki ljudskih prava, Kotor, 29 November 2014, <http://animakotor.org/index.php/355-dan-braniteljki-ljudskih-prava-kotor>.

55 Statut nevladinog udruženja žena RIZA Bijela, Bijela 2003. Cf. Vučićević, ed, Monografija, 87–93.

RIZA members express attitudes that affirm the traditional division of gender roles: men are those who should be politically engaged in the public, while women support politics quite differently. Women are engaged in care and nursing, and they act in a humanitarian way. This position reflects the patriarchal tradition and the essentialist role of a woman (although both care and nursing have a political character and political effects). From this perspective, women are expected to ameliorate the effects of various crises during wars through charitable work. Natural disasters, poverty, and casualties also occur in peaceful conditions and cause problems for individuals and their families. With its activities, RIZA responds to the population's needs in these situations too. For example, its members offer the poor one-off assistance, in so far as its coffers allow; they diligently raise funds to help the sick go abroad for operations or obtain medicines; and they organize cultural evenings. They work on the premise that women are meant to improve people's everyday life. As an honorary member of RIZA said during a poetry, art, and music event (*Poetsko–likovni–muzički kolaž*) to mark the end of the school year in 2019: 'After all, we weave a song and beautiful words and a tapestry, because meaning can be found in culture, in stories, in faith. This is what RIZA teaches you'.⁵⁶ In this perspective, women are there to help, feed, and dress; to organize gatherings and entertainments and trips, and to promote academic and poetry events. These are the activities through which they compensate for their growing dissatisfaction with their position in society and the position of the family as a whole. Such interventions alleviate current conditions in the short term. But it is difficult to achieve any change in the basic circumstances of people's lives in this way.

Conclusion

In this article, I have traced two alternative forms of women's response to the Yugoslav wars and their aftermath, noting the similarities and differences in the work of two non-governmental organizations run by women. ANIMA is an organization that emerged from unregistered grassroots activities during the Yugoslav wars, bringing in women's agency to advocate peace. Espousing antifascist, antimilitarist, and feminist politics, ANIMA has made a strong effort to expand its pursuit of alternatives. Commitment to women's human rights and their right to act

⁵⁶ Uručene nagrade tradicionalnog konkursa udruženja žena 'Riza' iz Bijele, *Dan online*, 10 June 2019, <https://www.dan.co.me/?nivo=3&rubrika=Kultura&clanak=699899&datum=2019-06-10>.

is a costly project needed to prevent the potential disappearance of these rights in the conditions of a capitalist economy and neoliberal, market-oriented politics. By combining feminist and antimilitarist activities, which include feminist education and the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, ANIMA seeks to effect a change in the position and role of women at all levels. It is not easy to gain support, acceptance, and understanding for this kind of programme in the Montenegrin public context. But it lays the foundation for building peace and trust, and for overcoming disrupted regional connections.

In contrast, the RIZA Women's Association in Bijela—the oldest legally recognized organization for women in Montenegro—has a significant place in the history of women's associations there, continuing, as it does, the tradition of the Women's Antifascist Front and the Section for Women's Social Issues. After the fall of socialism, this organization adapted its actions to the new social and political context. Its work was still characterized by charitable and humanitarian care for vulnerable individuals and groups; moreover, the organization expanded its remit to one further field of action: supporting the cultural life of the community through various promotions and educational, musical, artistic, and sports events. Since the break-up of Yugoslavia, RIZA has formally maintained many of the same activities, but it has abandoned the socialist understanding of a woman as simultaneously a partner/mother and a worker in the public sphere. The focus on a woman as a worker has disappeared. Instead, RIZA's activities have been infused by the traditional understanding of a woman's role in society. They have reverted to a pattern where women care for the home, for children and the weak and vulnerable, and exhibit only the traditionally 'female characteristics' of sacrifice, diligence, and gentleness. This profile can be described as essentially pro-patriarchal.

To what extent can either organization influence the process of changing the position of women in Montenegrin society and the roles they assume? The organizations present two possible directions. One direction is to confirm the stable pro-patriarchal role of women who respond to today's challenges with activities that strengthen the dominant economic, nationalist, and right-wing politics in the region, and do not question the traditional gender role of women or the division of labour between women and men. The other direction is the unpredictable and uncertain one taken by women citizens who go against the mainstream, who oppose capitalism, nationalism, and religious fanaticisms from a feminist-antimilitarist standpoint, and who work towards dissolving the traditional gender roles of men and women in Montenegro. These two approaches embody different conceptions of the role and potential of women in the political life of

society and the degree to which they challenge or accept the repatriarchalization that has occurred in the time of postsocialism. Both responses remain open as possible courses to be taken in the future.

Translated from Montenegrin by Marija Krivokapić.

Bionote

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